RUPUNUNI IMAGINARIES

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Abstract:

Migration activity across the Guyanese-Brazilian border has increased considerably recently, and is impacting both the peoples and the environments of the Rupununi. The activities resulting from these migration movements threaten to increase pressures on Indigenous territories within Guyana, resulting in the annexation of traditional ancestral lands, leading to potential losses of subsistence and livelihood practices. By examining these movements through the lens of relations between the Indigenous Makushi and Wapishana peoples of the Rupununi and place-making, this dissertation aims to identify how accepting Indigenous ontologies as one of many perspectives of the world(s) helps in understanding places as multiple. Through this understanding and acceptance of multiplicities, these ontologies also contribute to new ways of imagining future(s). This ethnographic study was conducted through sixteen months of fieldwork within five Rupununi villages - Aishalton, Annai Central, Karasabai, St. Ignatius, and Shulinab - researching together with the Makushi and Wapishana peoples of the region who collectively live within the forest-savannah ecotone, mostly maintaining subsistence based lifestyles. By exploring personal histories, environments, and cosmologies, the possibilities for different, multiple, imaginar*ies*-as-realit*ies* of the Rupununi are presented. In doing so, this study finds that Makushi and Wapishana ontologies are counter-imagining places, lands, and territories by re-engaging with the imaginaries of their ancestors, producing a complex set of alternate geographies. In using these imaginaries to produce different visions of place, Rupununi peoples are empowering themselves to create positive change within their lives in terms of how they want to build and develop their communities, livelihoods, environments, and cultural and political institutions.

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Chapter One: Rupununi Imaginaries

Like gold ... imbued with violence and greed, glitter that reeks of transgression ...
Taussig, My Cocaine Museum, 2004: xi.

Imagined as a place in the forest made of gold, the dream of El Dorado enchanted the Europeans who arrived in America to plunder its riches and to conquer its people, irrevocably changing their worlds and disturbing forever the 'land without evil'.[1] The dream had already come true – twice, for both Cortés and Pizarro who found their riches among the Aztec and Inca of Mexico and Peru. However, the search for this final El Dorado was to continually lead the Europeans 'beyond the next mountains', 'across that far river', or 'deep into that forest' – but always further from 'here' as the people wished the conquerors and the evil they had brought away.

El Dorado became the object, if elusive destination of a multitude of expeditions into the interior. Beginning with the golden kingdom of Manco Capec, the defiant Incan repulsed from Cuzco (Raffles, 2002: 86), El Dorado then became the lands of the Musica, a group of people living around Lake Guatavita, near present day Bogotá (Slater, 2002: 25). As the legend continued to enchant, El Dorado transformed again, and became instead of a place, a person, the resplendent monarch of Manoa, first mentioned in Quito, who was said to be so rich he adorned himself with gold dust daily, which he then washed off in his golden lake (*ibid*). This golden Lake Manoa itself then wandered around the continent as the site of El Dorado, first to the Amazon Basin, then to the Orinoco River (Raffles, 2002: 88), before coming to rest in the Rupununi, with one final transformation, becoming a city on the side of Lake Parima (Henfrey, 1964: 169; Hemming, 1978a: 148; 1978b: 223; Watkins, 2010: 5).

European certainty in the El Dorado imaginary was reflected by the persistent presence of Lake Parima in official cartographic records. Claiming that

> It lieth southerly in the land, and from the mouth of it unto the head they pass in twenty days; then taking their provisions, they carry it on their shoulders one day's journey; afterwards they return to their canoes, and bear them likewise to the side of a lake, which the Jaos call Raponowini, the Charibes Parime, which is of such bigness that they know no difference between it and the main sea. There be infinite numbers of canoes in

[1] A Tupi-Guarani prophesy of a earthly paradise, where, instead of gold, the land without evil was a place where crops grew themselves and people spent their time feasting and dancing (Shapiro, 1987: 131). The land without evil is sometimes referred to as the Encante (Slater, 2002: 58).

> this lake, and I suppose it is no other than that whereon Manoa standeth (Keymis, cited in Ralegh, 1596: lii),

Lake Parima became fixed in the savannahs of Guyana. These imagined stories of Ralegh's so enchanted Europe that his "*Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtifvl Empire of Gviana*" became an enduring colonial inspiration (Raffles, 2002: 78), and upon its release, Europe's imagination followed that of Ralegh's, with cartographers such as Hondius adding Lake Parima to maps of the region (see Figure 1). This imaginary was so strong that Lake Parima remained on colonial maps for almost three hundred years, until von Humboldt, another European, finally shifted the imaginary, erasing the imagined lake (Henfrey, 1964: 169; Hammond, 2005: 407; Watkins, 2010: 191).

Figure 1: Jodocus Hondius's "*Nieuwe Caerte van het Wonderbaer ende Goudrjcke Landt Guiana*" (1598) (Watkins, 2010: 190)

But perhaps Lake Parima is not imaginary at all. In the fluid geography of the Rupununi, vast savannahs on the fringe of the Amazon basin shaped by the rains and the rivers, streams, creeks, pools, ponds, and lakes they generate, ephemeral floodwaters create places that become imaginary with time, only to re-appear with the return of the rains. These waters are named by

those who reside beside them, (Lake) Amucu,[2] and are known and expected in their transience. And while locally they are thought to be beautiful, shining and glittering across the landscape, the prophesy 'all that glitters is not gold' haunts the European imaginary. Once imagined as the site of El Dorado, European disappointment instead cast Amucu as "a barren expanse of reeds and water, half concealed by mist" (Henfrey, 1964: 169).

These inconsistent imaginaries demonstrate the possibilities of place in the Rupununi. Currently imagined as the southern savannah region of Guyana, itself imagined as a former British colony on the north-east shoulder of South America, the Rupununi straddles enormous differences: in watershed geography (across the Amazon and Caribbean drainage basins), in tropical ecology (across savannah and forested environments), in political history (across British, Portuguese, and Brazilian domination patterns), and in cultural and social diversity (across Indigenous and colonial traditions). In part, it is these differences that encourage such a variety of imaginaries to emerge. In part, however, it is *who* is imagining that furthers these multiplicities. *How* these multiplicities and imaginaries are expressed through Indigenous ontologies is the focus of this dissertation.

Research Questions

This study is guided by, and prioritizes, the voices of the local Indigenous peoples who reside in the Rupununi; the Makushi and the Wapishana. While national and regional hegemonic decisions continue to contribute to the silencing of Indigenous voices, in contrast, this study seeks to promote Indigenous ideologies (systems of beliefs), epistemologies (ways of knowing), and ontologies (ways of being).[3] These principles have guided this research project, and consequently have influenced the research questions which, in addition to examining specific issues of the Rupununi, aim to interrogate colonialist assumptions about the politics of knowledge.

The central research question of this project asks *how can integrating Indigenous ontologies help in understanding multiple place(s)*? In seeking to answer this question, a series of secondary research questions are posed, including:

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[2] Also Amuku (Henfrey, 1964; Lighton, 1950) or Amacu (von Humboldt and Bonpland, 1826: 515).

[3] I follow Cree Scholar Shawn Wilson's use of ontology here. He goes one to explain that "in an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities ... [where] reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. Thus an object or thing is not as important as one's relationship to it. This idea could be further expanded to say that reality is relationships or sets of relationships. Thus there is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology" (2008: 73).

- Who is imagining this/these place(s)?
- How is the Rupununi imagined by different peoples as they co-produce place(s)?
- How can different times and places affect imaginaries?
- How do multiple imaginaries influence alternate and multiple ideas of place(s)?
- What role can maps play in the geo-power of politics?

The question of *who* is imagining place is central to this study, both in its basic empirical sense and by respecting the voices of the Indigenous peoples of the Rupununi. However, other voices are both present and are presenting alternate imaginaries of place which are entangled in Indigenous conceptions. The lens of the imaginary, itself a variety of reality historically constituted (Mason, 1986: 43), is active and dynamic as the quality we attach to place (Said, 1993: 48, 59), as products of the mind which "contradict or contrast with a postulated constant order of reality" (Magaña and Mason, 1986: 9), and which weave together, "made and re-made, shaped and shaping, active and reactive" (Elden, 2013: 17). In particular, this dissertation is concerned with *how* places are imagined, as through our material, spiritual, psychological, or emotional connections we convert them into places with meaning (Said, 1993: 48, 59).

The question of *co-production of place* is important to this entanglement, as well as understandings of places as relational and dynamic, concepts integral to Indigenous epistemologies. Embedded within these relational understandings of places is an acceptance that because personal histories, environments, experiences, knowledges, and cosmological understandings influence outcomes and realities, these different perspectives, and different ontologies, "are brought into being by showing that reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped in these practices" (Blaser, 2009: 11; see also Massey, 1994; Mol, 1999: 75).

The questions of *temporality and spatiality* allow for a richer understanding of the histories and geographies of the Rupununi, giving a sense of perspective to the concept of place(s), as well as expanding on and strengthening the dynamism and multiplicity of the region. Consequently, the question of *multiplicity* emerges, since arguably multiple places enact multiple imaginaries. Furthermore, the exploration of these multiple imaginaries leads to epistemologically different understandings of place, outside of western[4] awareness. Introducing

[4] The term 'western' is used throughout this dissertation to refer to a heritage of customs, cultures, norms, values, or beliefs that have some association with Europe, either through historical connection or through relations of influence.

Indigenous ontologies as a contributing factor to these alternate understandings of place(s) further challenges and disrupts western thought and knowledge about the construction of peoples, places, and their worldviews.[5]

Finally, these research findings are accompanied by a series of *maps*[6] that suggest possible imaginaries of the Rupununi, locating central points of interest, overlaying cultures, practices, knowledges, experiences, cosmologies, and ontologies over places, demonstrating how places are constructed, and how the Rupununi is changing. These maps, presumably of the 'same place', however drawn through the lenses of different imaginaries to alter our understandings of place help expose the inherent power of maps, particularly in their ability to transform the facts they portray (Sparke, 1995; 1998; 2004; Wood, 2010). However, it is important to note that this transformative power resides not in the map itself, but rather in the power possessed by those who deploy the perspective of that particular map, and by exposing inscribed territorial imaginaries as merely the products of particular imaginaries/ontologies, the fragility of associated imagined territorial boundaries is questioned (Burnett, 2000: 208).

Thus, this dissertation examines how various knowledges, experiences, practices, and understandings in the Rupununi support the possibility of multiple worlds, or multiple ontologies. This shift argues that experiences, connectivity, relationality, and holism should be valued and respected, essentially suggesting a new politics (after Braun, 2002: 13), where instead

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[5] It is not the intention of this dissertation to set up a dichotomy between 'western ontologies' and 'Indigenous ontologies'; separating and siloing the two is misleading and problematic. Instead, it is important to recognize that within ontologies, polyvocal and/or polyperspectival realms of discourse are present. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, conceptualizations of ontology are in fact not isolated, but exist in always emerging relationships between the multiplicity of ontologies that are always changing.

[6] The use of western maps in this project is however problematic. Following Sparke's example of the cartographic work of Shawnadithit, the last Beothuk of Newfoundland a whole set of essential and Eurocentric notions of identity, space, and history need reviewing (Sparke, 1995: 1). Sparke argued that Shawnadithit's cartographic work survived as an example of a differently imagined territory (1998: 308). However, Shawnadithit's maps were merely re-interpretations of a colonial tool, used for ease of communication, implying both a legitimization and acceptance of western cartography. As Wood states, "[western] mapping forces Indigenous peoples to adopt a technology of those who used that very technology to seize Indigenous lands in the first place" (2010: 141).
Sparke's second example, that of the 'map that roared', evokes stronger resistance in remapping, or re-imagining of the land (2004: 468). Sparke described the territorial land claim argued in Canadian courts, wherein the Gitxsan and the Wet'suwet'en attempted to "insert their voices and speak their claims in a way that would successfully communicate their primarily oral knowledge and understanding of territorial jurisdiction to a white judge trained in the abstractions and textual formalities of the modern western state" (2004: 471). Songs and performances including the *adaawk* (a collection of oral traditions about their ancestors, histories, and territories) and *kungax* (a spiritual song or dance or performance tying them to the land) were successfully provided as alternate cartographies (Sparke, 2004: 472; Wood, 2010: 141). Unfortunately, this type of contrapuntal cartography did not emerge from this study, and I have consequently mimicked Sparke's first error, albeit with this acknowledgement of the inherent problems associated with western cartography.

of the compartmentalization and hierarchy previously seen, an inherent acceptance of equality and interrelatedness emerges and negotiates for more ethical politics.

The secondary questions posed above should not be seen as hierarchical, but as interactive, with each one impacting and influencing the others while building on the primary research question. In summary, this research project aims to address these interrelated research questions while simultaneously providing an ethnography of how the Rupununi is changing; in this regard, the questions of *how the Rupununi is changing* – socially, ecologically, politically, or economically – may be the fundamental contribution this dissertation makes.

The Rupununi

This study focuses on the Rupununi (see Figure 2), a vast savannah lowland region officially demarcated as Region 9, or the Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo administrative region of Guyana. It is the largest administrative region in Guyana, with an estimated area of 74 000 square kilometres (Henfrey, 2002: 54; Torrado, 2007: 17), and its geography is distinct from the rest of the country, with the tropical forests that cover much of Guyana giving way to the seasonally flooded grasslands, crossed with small meandering creeks. However, the geography of the Rupununi is itself divided; many of these small creeks drain eastward to the Rupununi River which flows to the Essequibo River and on to the Atlantic Ocean while many others drain into the Takutu and Ireng Rivers and south across the border to northern Brazil, into the Rio Branco (a Brazilian river), and onwards to the Amazon River system, making the Rupununi the northern fringe of the Amazon River Basin (Bridges, 1985: ix; Colchester, 1997: 45). This division between the Caribbean and the Amazon/South America is present in almost every aspect of Rupununi living.

However, the Rupununi is not merely a vast savannah plain. Intermixed with the grasslands are wetlands, bush islands (small pockets of forest), and mountain ranges. Indeed, the savannahs are flanked on the north by the Pakaraima Mountains, and the region is broadly divided into the North Rupununi and the South Rupununi by the Kanuku Mountains (Brock, 1972: 42; Smock, 2008: 229), although the region is politically divided into five sub-regions, or districts, including the North Rupununi, South Pakaraimas, Central Rupununi, South Central Rupununi, and Deep South Rupununi.[7] The region is marked by two distinctive rainy seasons

[7] This explains the logic behind the choices in fieldwork villages, wherein one village from each district was chosen, in collaboration with representatives of Rupununi governing organizations, in order to gain a broad overview of

(South Central and South Rupununi District Toshaos Council, 2012: 62, 100), with eighty percent of the variable annual total precipitation falling during the primary rainy season, between May and August, often causing extensive seasonal flooding followed by widespread desiccation and local water shortages at the height of the dry season (Henfrey, 2002: 55). The geology of the Rupununi is ancient, and is located within the Guiana Shield, which comprises of some of the oldest still-exposed rocks on earth (Watkins, 2010: 19).

Although the soils are very poor (Henfrey, 2002: 56; Salisbury *et al.*, 1968: 11), being some of the oldest on earth, heavily weathered and not well suited for agriculture (Watkins, 2010: 23), the Rupununi is one of the world's most biodiverse wetlands (Watkins, 2010: 47), with approximately 1500 different plant species represented (Smock, 2008: 229-230). The savannahs are also home to healthy populations of endangered animal species, including the giant river otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), giant river turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*), black caiman (*Melanodsuchus niger*), giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), and the arapaima fish (*Arapaima gigas*) (Watkins, 2010: 1), and the region may be one of the most important areas for fish diversity in South America (*ibid*: 35). The ecological patterns and habitat diversity seen today are in part the consequence of the area's long geological history, which in turn has defined the Rupununi's social, economic, and cultural development.

Furthermore, the Rupununi is primarily an Indigenous place,[8] and is home to approximately 16 000 people, the majority of whom represent three of Guyana's Indigenous peoples; the Makushi,[9] the Wapishana,[10] and the Wai Wai[11] (CI, 2010: 3; Hills, 1968: 36). Lethem is the administrative centre for the Rupununi with an approximate population of 2500

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perspectives from the Region. These villages included Annai Central (North Rupununi), Karasabai (South Pakaraimas), St. Ignatius (Central Rupununi), Shulinab (South Central Rupununi), and Aishalton (South Rupununi).

[8] Although the rocks, the trees, the birds and the insects, as well as the spirits and ancestors may disagree, arguing instead that the Rupununi is primarily a geological place, or primarily a biological place, or primarily a mystical place. These perspectives will be further explored in Chapter Six. However from the purely *human* perspective, the Rupununi is primarily an Indigenous place.

[9] Of the Carib linguistic family.

[10] Of the Arawak linguistic family.

[11] The peoples of the Rupununi *today* include the Makushi, the Wapishana, and the Wai Wai, although they acknowledge that the peoples are more multiple than this, stating that "Our grandfathers tell us that long ago the Rupununi was home to a variety of Indigenous peoples. These peoples included the Atoradnao, Daozai, Tarabainao, Chiibizai dinnao, Arokonnao, Parau yannao, Paowishiyannao, Maoyanao, Karapunnao, Taromnao, Nikanikarunao, Burokotonao and Macushi peoples, as well as our own people: the Wapichannao" (David *et al.*, 2006:9). For a detailed refutation of extinction in the Caribbean, please refer to M.C. Forte (2005; 2006) and Ramos (2003). This study focuses on the Makushi and Wapishana, since the Guyanese Wai Wai population is very small (approximately two hundred people (CI, 2010: 3)), who reside in an extremely isolated region in the Deep South.

Figure 2: The unbounded and unmarked Rupununi

(Smock, 2008: 264), however the vast majority of the Makushi and Wapishana live in some sixty villages scattered across the savannahs (CI, 2010: 3), with the majority of the Makushi residing in the North Rupununi and the majority of the Wapishana residing in the South Rupununi.

The majority of both the Makushi and Wapishana employ a subsistence mode of production, relying on hunting, fishing, gathering, and rotational agriculture for their basic needs.[12] In terms of dietary importance, agriculture is central to this subsistence lifestyle (Henfrey, 2002: 81), with bitter cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) being the principal crop (Torrado, 2007: 24). The products made from bitter cassava are the staple food sources in the region primarily because they have a high calorific yield per acre, they are relatively drought tolerant, the roots can be stored in the ground until required, and the plants grow in relatively poor soil (Dummet, 1968: 21). Tubers reach maturity in nine to twelve months, with one plant usually bearing six roots, each approximately fifty centimetres long (Brock, 1972: 137). However, cassava soon exhausts the soil, and can only be planted twice in the same place, which is why people are perpetually 'cutting new fields' (Bridges, 1985: xiii), and working several farms simultaneously (Henfrey, 2002: 84).

In addition to rotational farming, Makushi and Wapishana rely on the forests and rivers for much of their food supply, although the proportions of meat or fish consumed in each village is variable and depends greatly on their location, with those villages nearer forested areas relying more heavily on hunting, while those closer to rivers that fish inhabit relying more on aquatic food sources[13] (*ibid*). Most hunting still occurs with bows and arrows (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14), while fishing can be with cast nets, fish traps, or with ethnocultural fish poisons (South Central and South District Toshaos Council, 2012: 47). Fishing is more common in the dry season, since it is far more productive (Melville, 1956: 39). The gathering of forest products is also still an important source of food, as well being essential for construction and craft materials, bush medicines, and *bina* (charms) (South Central and South District Toshaos Council, 2012: 14).

Before contact with Europeans, the Makushi and the Wapishana were semi-nomadic peoples who shifted location frequently for subsistence purposes (Watkins, 2010: 165). The Rupununi savannahs were likely used as hunting, fishing, and gathering territories prior to

[12] Although this lifestyle is changing, and is the focus of Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.
[13] 'Black water' rivers are high in tannic acid, and do not support much aquatic life. 'White water' rivers are much more useful for fishing (Forte and MRU, 1996: 7).

settlement (Hills, 1968: 40), however dating all early movements is exceptionally difficult due to the poor archaeological record of the region. Most researchers, as well as local oral history, agree that prior to Makushi and Wapishana arrivals, other groups of Indigenous peoples were present on the savannahs, with the most commonly cited being the Atorai or Atorad and the Taruma[14] (Henfrey, 2002: 63). Hills (1968: 37) dates the Taruma arrival to approximately 1670 BCE, and his colleague Salisbury (*et al.*, 1968: 14) believes the Atorai/Atorad arrived before the end of the eighteenth century. As the new groups entered the region, the original peoples were displaced or assimilated.[15]

Most researchers also agree that the Makushi have an Orinoco origin (present day Venezuela), while the Wapishana originate from the Rio Negro region (Brazil) (Evans and Meggers, 1960; Hammond, 2005: 421; Hills, 1968: 40; Schomburgk, 1923). Rivière (1963: 62-64) supports these claims by observing certain cultural and linguistic affinities that support a historical origin in a more northern origin for the Makushi, although he notes that there is no indisputable ethnographic evidence of where the Makushi originate. Similarly, Rivière notes that there is no irrefutable ethnographic evidence regarding the movements of the Wapishana prior to the mid-eighteenth century, however what evidence is available concurs with a Rio Negro origin (*ibid*: 115-116; see also Henfrey, 2002: 61; Hills, 1968: 42).

The Rupununi was originally part of the Gran Sabana (Venezuela) and the Rio Branco savannah (Brazil), a geography artificially divided along political lines,[16] and some researchers believe that it became an Indigenous refuge largely because of those same colonial politics and political divisions. Hammond (2005: 421) suggests that escape from Spanish and Brazilian/Portuguese slave-raiding parties may have pushed many Indigenous peoples to seek protection in the relative (although temporary) safety of Guyana, an opinion shared by many (e.g.: Alexiades, 2009: 2; Edwards and Gibson, 1979: 167-170; Forte and MRU, 1996: 10; Henfrey, 2002; 62; Hills, 1968: 42; Hemming, 1978b: xv; Riley, 2003: 154; Rivière, 1963; 127-128; Watkins, 2010: 165). Economic asylum is also suggested as a motivation for migration by Rival (2001: 61), who explains that the expansion of cattle ranching, particularly in northern

[14] Similar to the argument above, many Wapishana and Makushi today do not believe that the Atorai/Atorad or the Taruma are 'extinct', although this is how they are reported by many academic researchers (eg. ARU, 1992: 1-2; Henfrey 2002; Farabee, 1918: 135-136).

[15] However many people I spoke with continue to claim that Atorai/Atorad and Taruma still reside in remote locations, and some researchers have made note of potential populations and/or language speakers (Peberdy, 1948: 18; Williams, 1979a: 136; 1979b: 146).

[16] These artificial boundaries will be further explored in Chapter Four.

Brazil, caused land conflicts and increased pressure on Indigenous peoples to work as domestic labourers or cowhands, inciting many to leave their residences. However, these suggestions, that Indigenous peoples 'left' or 'migrated' are predicated on political divisions understood outside of Indigenous conceptualizations of place: this original migration is merely imagined as such by those who accept the political boundaries initiated through colonial negotiations. The Makushi and Wapishana[17] view this movement from a different ontological perspective, where the savannah is recognized as a whole entity, and movement was consequently *within*, not *between* place(s).

These conflicting perceptions of place(s) and borders have led to ongoing problems both within the region and within the country of Guyana. Indeed, the politics of territory in the Rupununi has a long and complicated history of colonial dispossession, unfulfilled land claims, and deliberate misinterpretation of understood customary land uses. Originally, British law assumed that all lands not already allocated to settlers could be treated as Crown Lands, owned and administered by the colonial power (Colchester, 2005: 279). At first they conceded special status to the "Aboriginal Indians of the colony" by recognizing their "traditional rights and privileges", however, as competing interests began to move into the interior, these rights were progressively curtailed (*ibid*). Yet, as a condition of Independence, the colonial British government insisted that Indigenous peoples of the country should be granted

> legal ownership or rights of occupancy over areas and reservations or parts thereof where any tribe or community of Amerindians is now ordinarily resident or settled and other legal rights, such as rights of passage, in respect of any other lands where they now by tradition or custom de facto enjoy freedoms and permissions corresponding to rights of that nature (British Guiana Independence Conference Report, 1965).

In partial fulfillment of this legal obligation given to Guyana at Independence in 1966, the Amerindian Lands Commission was established, which attempted a comprehensive review of the Indigenous peoples' land situations and documented Indigenous land claims. However, extensive delays in the granting of customary lands continue until today.

When community titling did eventually begin in the Rupununi, in both the South and the North the Commission recommended areas substantially smaller than the territorial claims made by the peoples of the area to the Commission (*ibid*: 285). The Makushi and Wapishana continue

[17] As well as the now presumed extinct Atorad and Taruma. However, a similar difference in ontological perspective insists that from the Indigenous perspective, these groups continue, although subsumed largely within the Wapishana.

even today the struggle for recognition of their traditional lands, places they see as constituted by "memory as much as they are by ecological attributes and functions" (Tiam-Fook, 2011: 5), wherein their long-term inhabitation of the savannahs, bush islands, wetlands, and mountain landscapes of the Rupununi, together with the co-evolution of diverse land use, agriculture, and livelihood practices have modified these places such that the Makushi and Wapishana are "socially and culturally embedded in their landscape by means of the historical and ecological forces that shape their identity" (Whitehead, 2003: 62). Although the Rupununi is primarily an Indigenous place, it is certainly not totally one, and this dissertation is in part about these different perspectives, and what it means to the Rupununi as a place, or places.

Analytical Framework

This study invokes a three-part analytical framework. First, this research project addresses the central concept of place(s) through an investigation of the material social practices of place-making. Place-making in the Rupununi is recognized as relational, where experiences, practices, processes, and understandings are constructed through inter-being networks beyond western understandings, and the theoretical underpinnings for this acceptance are explored conceptually in this section.

Second, Indigenous voices and perspectives are prioritized in this research to underscore a conceptual understanding of Indigeneity that is fundamental to understanding the project. Moving away from definitions, my understanding of the concept of identity formation moves towards an acknowledgement of Indigeneity as a process, or as a becoming, one that is left necessarily ambiguous.

Finally, an exploration of the interface between/within the social and the natural is analysed through the conceptual lens of social-natures, a branch of political ecology (Castree and Braun, 2001). By embracing the relational world first introduced through place-making and Indigeneity, then integrating Indigenous ontologies as integral to understandings of the world(s), the daily practices of being, knowing, and doing demonstrate how social-natures can entangle the social with the natural worlds, uniting them.

The interdisciplinary nature of this analytical framework means that this study draws on a wide body of literatures, with a purposeful focus on geography and anthropology, the two disciplines most engaged with place-making, Indigenous peoples, and political ecology.

Place-making

While place is now a central concept in geography, Cresswell notes that it is only since the early 1970s that it acquired the set of meanings and attachments we now associate it with (2009: 169). Contributing to this opening up of place as a central concept were Tuan's critiques of positivist science, as he claimed that experiential perspectives needed to be valued as a means to understand what "'being-in-the-world' is truly like" (1977: 201, see also Casey, 1996: 13). As a result, humanistic geographers began to focus on the relationships between people and their places, through the realm of experience (Cresswell, 2009: 172). This emphasis on individuals' experience in the world as the phenomenological concept of lived space, and its societal parallel, the social landscape, used the ways that social groups interact with places to produce "the lived world in physical form", focusing on "everyday practices, human agency, movement, … and social and environmental ethics" (Pickles, 2009: 529). In this way, phenomenological approaches honoured the actual experiences of those who practiced them (Casey, 1996: 16; Feld and Basso, 1996: 3).

This new approach to place, which valued the relationship between people and places, opened up room for discussion of what a 'sense of place' meant to different people (Brown and Raymond, 2007: 91; Tuan, 1977: 7), including an emotional and symbolic identification with place (Kaltenborn, 1998: 169), where a sense of place was seen as dependent on the depth of experience with settings (Tuan, 1980), as well as various social relationships with those settings (Relph, 1976). From these perspectives, studies tended to emphasize the individualistic dimensions of, and relationships with place, obscuring the collective nature of relationships between people, identities, and their environments (Brown and Raymond, 2007: 91; Boyd and Norman, 2013: 2; Rodman, 1992: 641; Tuan, 1980: 3). Arguing that place is interpreted and constructed by humans in particular contexts and situations (Kaltenborn, 1998: 171-185), where people are seen as layering their own understandings onto abstract space in order to create "subjective places" (Jones and Evans, 2012: 2319), allowed for a sense of place to become a cultural construction, one continually re-created and reproduced (Stokowski, 2002: 368-372).

However, contrary to those who promoted place as 'individual', these re-created and reproduced places were then argued to be *socially* constructed since much of what a person knows about places, or feels about places, or does in places, is initially mediated by others (*ibid*: 372), and what gives place its "specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it

is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey, 1994: 154). Because the significance of place emerges through interaction with others, each effort to create place becomes an "elaboration of the beliefs and values of some collection of people, expressed and fostered in their promotion of a preferred reality" (Stokowski, 2002: 374) as people actively create meaningful places through interaction. In this way, further multiplicities, greater dynamism, and increased relationality are embedded in what we mean by place.

These multiplicities, dynamism, and relationality allow for a focus on studies of place that take discontinuities and multiplicities of voice and action into greater account, claiming that "places are not inert; they are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" (Rodman, 1992: 641). While a 'sense of place' often refers to an individual or group's ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular places based on a combination of use, attentiveness, and emotion, the very same setting can mean very different things to different individuals or groups associated with it, often depending on the very same uses, attentiveness, or emotions (Stokowski, 2002: 369). Or alternatively, places are "known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over" experientially and expressively through different identities (Feld and Basso, 1996: 11), consequently creating places with multiple identities which "shift and overlap creating conflict and richness" (Jones and Evans, 2012: 2320, see also Massey, 1994: 153).

This argument against static and essentialized notions of place also implies an acceptance of places as processes, "conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together", where "these interactions themselves are not motionless things" (Massey, 1994: 155). In this way, place is a setting for becoming, where materiality, meaning, and practice are all connected in such a manner that places themselves are practiced. These "dynamic, multisensual, and consistently oscillating" cultural processes (Feld and Basso, 1996: 6) are part of being in place, or becoming in place, where to know a place is to become aware of one's consciousness and presence in the world.

In this way, places are more than simply geographic sites with definitive physical and textual characteristics – places are also fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory (Stokowski, 2002: 369), enfolding and unfolding the world and self/ves (Wylie, 2005: 240). As such, places are produced through connections to the rest of the world and

therefore are inherently heterogeneous (Cresswell, 2009: 176). By using the concept of place in this way, as multiple, dynamic, boundless, and relational as discussed above, I raise questions about how the study of place relates to experiences of living in places. In particular, this study is grounded in the local voices that animate the places discussed, as I seek to illuminate the different ways in which place is both voiced and experienced, connecting places to social imaginations and practices. As one of the most central concepts in geography, place has occupied a range of authors in various disciplines with its experiential qualities, and how places are consequently built based on individual and community relationships with them, including how place meanings develop, and how people become attached to places. This dissertation contributes to this literature by expanding on the accepted conceptual understandings of place as multiple, dynamic, boundless, and relational, exploring place as a meaningful site/s (Cresswell, 2009: 169) while integrating in particular local voices and a multiplicity of perspectives, thereby challenging the ontology of *place* (singular) in the Rupununi.

Indigeneity

Similar to embracing a multiplicity of place, I argue that rather than seeking to define 'Indigenous' in a singular manner, Indigeneity must also be discussed as a process. Although much early literature essentialized Indigeneity in attempts to clarify and define exactly what was meant by 'Indigenous peoples', in most policy discourse as well as much academic literature today, a clear shift is emerging, as researchers attempt to move beyond simple 'definitions'.

One set of literature draws on contact-based contextual understandings of difference, which emerged primarily from historical comparisons that emphasized that Indigenous people "are not a monolithic entity" (Redford and Stearman, 1993: 251), and were therefore beyond definition. Instead, these arguments suggested that Indigenous peoples should be recognized as produced identities within contingent colonial, historical, geographical, and temporal patterns. From this perspective, recognition of 'First Peoples' in North, Central, and South America, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand, as well as some other Pacific Islands were "generally uncontested", and researchers operating within this stream of thought used colonial contact as a signifiying break between 'Indigenous' and 'non-Indigenous' peoples (Hodgson, 2002: 1037, see also Béteille, 1998: 188; Kingsbury, 1998: 414). This use of colonial contact as a proposed deterministic, definitional method for distinguishing Indigenous people was supported in the language of international declarations by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the

United Nations (UN) in their various conventions, statements, and directives, both of which claim Indigeneity can be defined and constructed against the historical records of invasion and conquest (Cobo, 1986; ILO, 1989). Apart from the obvious problems implicit in such a Eurocentric definitional understanding of Indigeneity, further difficulties are revealed by examining the various assumptions implied through the application of this understanding. Specifically, the homogenization effect upon individual groups of Indigenous peoples, both globally through agglomerations such as 'Pan-Indigeneity' (Brosius, 1997: 65), as well as regionally (Sundberg, 2004: 47; 2008: 571), or locally (Afiff and Lowe, 2007: 75), and the further confusion presented by populations of mixed heritage, as well as the tangible existence of Indigenous peoples in Africa, Asia and Europe who fall outside of a colonial contact definition expose the gaps this research has left.

A second set of literature emerges in part as a reaction to these homogenizing designations that obscure within the term 'Indigenous' differences within and between identities and their respective histories, beliefs, and futures. In response to increasing confusion and uncertainty in particular geographical areas and within specific cultural conflicts regarding the insufficiency of 'Indigeneity' as a conceptual tool, most obviously in parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe, researchers began to suggest that a singular term was unfeasible. The World Bank's (WB) directive statement responds to the issues raised by the ILO convention and the UN statement, and further notes the importance of acknowledging global diversity, highlighting the consequent inherent inability to provide a singular definition for Indigenous groups to identify with (1991). This position was further supported by Kingsbury who argued that "the experience of international agencies and associations of Indigenous peoples demonstrates that it is impossible at present to formulate a single globally viable definition that is workable and not grossly under- or overinclusive. Any strict definition is likely to incorporate justifications and referents that make sense in some societies but not in others" (1998: 414).

Tania Li's research in Indonesia and her subsequent explanations of Indigeneity have proven to be ground-breaking, specifically her introduction of the notion of the 'tribal slot' which she sees as linked to issues of power and representation (2000; after Trouillot, 1991). She perceives Indigeneity as an "invented strategy, as opportunistic, or inauthentic", and specifically criticizes the International Labour Organization convention 169 definition of Indigenous and Tribal people, arguing it to be completely irrelevant within the country (Li, 2004: 341). Li

recognizes the negative construction of the 'tribal slot' by those with power through their depictions of "ethnic or tribal identities, cultural distinctiveness, livelihood practices, and ancient ties to the places inhabited" often presented in program documents as problematic, or as evidence of closed minds and "developmental deficits" on the part of the 'Tribal' people (2000: 154). In this instance, Indigenous peoples are not only being asked to negotiate their identities within and according to preconceived stereotypes, but in addition, this essentializing process occurs in a manner such that Indigenous peoples, and their cultural practices are construed as inferior (Afiff and Lowe, 2007: 81; Braun, 2002: 96; Dove, 2006: 199; Hodgson, 2002: 1040; Sundberg, 2008: 572). As Li argues:

> A group's self-identification as Tribal or Indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted or imposed. It is rather a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as Indigenous, realigning the ways they connect to the nation, the government, and their own, unique tribal place, are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of articulation (2000: 151, emphasis in original; see also Li, 2004: 339).

In response, Braun argues that if we diversify our interpretation of modernity, escaping the Eurocentric historic discourse of 'Other' (Said, 1978), and instead embrace one that is a heterogeneous and global, potentially space is created for multiple Indigeneities to emerge, each with different political and ideological effects (Braun, 2002: 93). However, "multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organization belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system" (Deleuze, 1994: 182). This offers a way out of the impasse in which those who historicize the identities or traditions of 'Others' are accused of undermining subaltern political projects founded upon originary, perhaps essential truths (Li, 2004: 343; Spivak, 1999).

Rupununi Indigeneity is indeed being reproduced in tandem with exogenous intrusions and usurpations, and Indigenous political organization is in part a systemic and structural outcome of foreign conquest and continued expansion (Collomb, 2006). The situation of Indigenous peoples even today is reminiscent of the colonial experience (Bulkan and Bulkan, 2006), and "a deafening silence can be intuited from within dominant society on the subject of an

applicable value to modernity from Indigenous Amerindian[18] knowledge" (Mentore, 2007: 58). However, despite the ravages of five centuries of European conquest, the Indigenous peoples of the Rupununi have survived (M.C. Forte, 2006: 3; Wilson, 1997: 8). Today, Guyana's Indigenous peoples are often engaged in resistance, and Indigenous organizations have emerged to challenge dominant politics and to assert their rights to their own cultural identities and traditions, a movement strengthened through links to wider South American and Caribbean Indigenous confederations and transnational Indigenous networking opportunities (M.C. Forte, 2006: 3). Many of these organizations were integral to this research project, in particular the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), the South Central Peoples' Development Association (SCPDA), and the District Toshaos'[19] Council (DTC), and their contributions to, and voices of resistance against these dominant, colonial ideologies are highlighted in this dissertation.

Social Natures

Since early conceptions of political ecology first appeared based on a combination of ecological concerns with a broadly defined political-economy (Blaikie, 1985; Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987), scholars have been focusing on the articulation of wider political and economic factors with specific environmental uses, within a historical context (Braun and Castree, 1998:10). Blaikie and Brookfield's early studies of soil degradation radically undermined the idea that nature was somehow an external and absolute limit to population growth by focussing instead on the political ecology of resource use (Braun and Castree, 1998:11, see also Hecht and Cockburn, 1990/2010; Peluso, 1992: 4, Watts and Peet, 2004: 7-11). Consequently, more than ever before scholars are recognizing that nature is something made (N. Smith, 2008). For some, this represents the 'end of nature' (McKibben 1989), a response rooted firmly in a modern dualism in which nature is seen as external to society as its 'other' (Braun and

[18] The term 'Amerindian' is used to describe the Indigenous peoples of much of Amazonia, including Guyana, but it is a problematic, and somewhat contentious term. In Guyana, while revising the antiquated 'Amerindian Act' in 2006, A. Bulkan found that Guyana's Indigenous peoples objected to the term 'Amerindian', arguing that it arose out of a historical mistake, and suggested instead the use of the internationally recognized term 'Indigenous' (2008: 10). Ultimately, this submission was rejected. Since the majority (but certainly not all!) of the people with whom I spoke with concurred with this internationally recognized terminology, I have chosen to use 'Indigenous' in this dissertation. Furthermore, I follow the editorial precedent set by Hylton in Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada, where words such as 'Aboriginal', 'Native', and 'Indigenous' are capitalized in the same manner that words such as 'European' and 'American' are capitalized when referring to specific peoples (1999).

[19] Toshao is an Amazon-wide term used to denote a village leader. Therefore, the DTC is the council of Toshaos in a particular district, in this case the South Rupununi District.

Castree, 1998: 3). But inherently, the production of natures brings attention to the shifting artificiality of the nature-culture divide (Raffles, 2002: 172).

This division between 'nature' and 'culture' (or society) has a long history of acceptance. As Latour explains, comparative anthropology and science previously assumed an inherent contrast between Ancients and Moderns, a Great Divide between Them and Us, a divide he explained as that between myth and reason (1993: 10-12). While pre-modern systems of belief could be explained by reference to culture, religion or politics, our beliefs, as moderns, were perceived as independent of these influences, and thus could be explained by reference against nature alone (Braun and Castree, 1998: 26). Latour then goes on to argue that we 'have never been modern', faulting our inability to see past objective science and the work of purification to the work of translation, networks, hybrids, monsters, or what Haraway calls cyborgs and tricksters (Haraway, 1991, cited in Latour, 1993: 11; 47). Haraway and Latour further refer to these hybrid nature-cultures as 'illegitimate couplings' or 'quasi-objects', "entities that until now have had no standing in modernity's accounts of itself, yet all the while have silently worked to organize social and ecological life" (Braun and Castree, 1998: 31; see also Braun, 2000: 39). Braun and Castree recognize these complex intertwinings of nature, culture, science and technology as where "political hope lies" (1998: 31).

Whatmore also challenges us to fundamentally rethink the ways in which we understand nature and the natural world and to question our assumptions about relationships between humans and the natural world through the intentional breakdown of the binaries between human/nonhuman, social/material, culture/nature (2002; see also Raffles, 2002: 9). Following Latour, Whatmore sees the shift away from binaries as integral to the recognition of the role relationships or networks play in socio-natural interactions, advocating for hybridity between society and nature (2002). By investigating the presumed/assumed role of human as 'subject' (contra nature as 'other' or 'object'), and through relational observations, Whatmore challenges accepted ideas of rights; human rights, civic rights, and ethical rights (*ibid*: 148).

Braun uses the term 'social nature' to indicate this inevitable intertwining of society and nature in any and all social and ecological projects, and he describes the recent scholarship outlined above as one that seeks "to capture this intricate mixing of the material, textual, cultural, political and technological" (2002: 10). From this perspective, 'human' can be understood as "the contingent and occasional substantiation of a ramifying and *a priori* inexhaustible tangle of

folds and flows which, in its endless inclusivity, scrambles conventional distinctions and demarcations of culture and nature, human and nonhuman" (Wylie, 2010: 105). He recognizes the discomfort this suggestion imparts upon some western environmentalists who fear that challenging notions such as society, or concepts such as pristine nature or wilderness undermines efforts to 'save nature', and gives free reign to the transformation of nature by humans (*ibid*; Castree and Braun, 1998; Cronon, 1996). However, Braun argues that "properly understood, the concept of social nature is an important source of analytic and political hope in the face of the radical social and ecological displacements effected by postcolonial capitalisms", as well as presenting the best way of approaching ecologically sustainable and socially just futures (Braun, 2002: 10). By showing the production mechanics of this idea called nature, it becomes possible both to write a "genealogy of nature as the absence of culture (wilderness) and to destabilize claims of authority that are built on this absence"; society *is* nature (Willems-Braun, 1997: 11-12).

Many Indigenous scholars representing their peoples inherently respect this entanglement of the social with nature, expressing it as a variant of their own multiple ontologies, in which multiple identities (Indigeneities) and multiple places/multiplicity of place support a more dynamic, heterogeneous social nature (eg. Cajete, 2000; Koster *et al.*, 2012, Kovach, 2009; Louis, 2007; McGregor *et al.*, 2010; L.T. Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001; 2008). Furthermore, Rocheleau argues that from this perspective, "each actor has a distinct vision of any given network, based on their position, and their experience of shifting terms and configurations of connection over time" (2011: 216). This perspectivism views the world as populated with different types of being, human, nonhuman, or more than human[20], who conceive the reality around them according to their own relative viewpoints, thereby arguing for a relational understanding of the world, through subjectified perspectives, knowledges, and practices (Sundberg, 2014: 35).

Viveiros de Castro studied Amazonian Indigenous philosophies to advance the notion of 'perspectival multinaturalism', wherein he too found that the world encompasses many different natures, based on the experiences of various peoples, animals, or sprits that share a place, thereby extending the idea of multiplicity (1998: 478). In contrast with multiculturalism, which Viveiros

[20] After Abram, 1996, who uses the term to generate a sense of conceptual space that embraces spirits or master spirits, moving beyond simple binaries of human-nonhuman.

de Castro recognizes as a unity of nature and a multiplicity of culture, multinaturalism is instead seen as a "unity of spirit, diversity of bodies" where "culture or the subject would ... take the form of the universal; nature or the object the form of the particular" (2005: 37, see also Blaser, 2014: 52; Cruikshank, 2012). From this perspective, an internal 'human' form is present in every being within this highly transformational world (Rivière, 1994). Accordingly, Viveiros de Castro insists that perspectival multinaturalism must be seen as relational, not relativist, arguing, for example, that while a fish or a snake to us is a fixed noun, in perspectivism, it compares to how "somebody is a father only because there is somebody else of whom he is the father [the child]: paternity is a relation ... something is *also* only a fish because there exists somebody of whom this thing is the fish" (2005: 56, emphasis original, see also Bryan, 2012: 219; Escobar, 2008: 62). Hence, we cannot say 'it is a fish for somebody', just as we would not say, 'he is a father for the child': he *is* a father, it *is* a fish only because we see it as so. In this way, the 'actual world' is like 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', altering its meaning according to perspective (Viveiros de Castro, 2005: 57).

Blaser expanded on Viveiros de Castro's notion of multinaturalism in developing his concept of political ontology, within which he argued for a shift away from ontology as a recognition of different perspectives of the world, to an understanding of ontology as the enacting of different worlds, or for the existence of multiple ontologies (2009: 11; 2014: 51). Århem supports the idea of multiple ontologies by claiming that "any perspective is equally valid and true" and moreover, that "a true and correct representation of the world does not exist" (1993, 124, quoted in Viveiros de Castro, 2005: 52). One of the implications of adopting the viewpoints of other kinds of beings (or perhaps of having them adopt ours), is that through this knowing, we are required to inhabit different worlds (Kohn, 2007: 7). Arguably, this transformative process allows attributes and dispositions to become "dislodged from the bodies that produce them and ontological boundaries become blurred", thereby breaching the "nature-culture divide" (*ibid*). Blaser suggests that 'things' can be active and sentient beings (2014: 52), while geographers, including Hinchliffe (2005; 2008), Bingham (2006), Lorimer (2006; 2007), and Braun (1998; 2002; 2006) are working to blur or even erase these ontological boundaries that have long divided the discipline, still remembering that "becoming is not an evolution, it concerns alliance" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 238).

Furthermore, by adopting multiple worlds, we must also accept re-imaginings of these worlds, as seen from the multiple standpoints of complex actors (Rocheleau, 2011: 209). Indeed, according to Anderson and Harrison (2010: 8-9), the term 'world' should be seen as:

> The context or background against which particular things show up and take on a significance: a mobile, but fairly stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies, and affordances ... We come to know and enact a world from inhabiting it, from becoming attuned to its differences, positions, and juxtapositions.

Similarly, we must also begin to re-imagine the multiplicity of worlds that necessarily exist, including the possibility (likelihood) of infinite worlds since:

> Neither animals of different species, nor men of different cultures, nor any individual, animal, or human, inhabits the same world as another, however close and similar these living individuals may be, *and the difference from one world to the other will remain forever uncrossable ...between my world and every other world there is initially the space and the time of an infinite distance ... There is no world, there are only islands* (Derrida, 2003, unpublished document; cited in Wylie, 2010: 109, emphasis original).

This acceptance of multiple worlds, or multiple ontologies, necessitates a corresponding acceptance of multiple identities, multiple natures, multiple territories, multiple beings, multiple places, multiple cosmologies, multiple lands, multiple environments, *and etcetera*, and allows for continual, kaleidoscopic understandings, wherein each individual's knowledges, experiences and practices contribute to their own ontological understanding of their world(s). The Rupununi is itself also multiple; not a site, but many sites, as the many worlds of the many identities, natures, territories, beings, places, cosmologies, lands, and environments come together as always emergent assemblages created through change as their constant component, consequently creating socialized nature.

Context

While not 'political geography' as it is formally known, this dissertation is in a sense *a* political geography of a particular place, the Rupununi. Consequently, a number of terms common to that sub-discipline are used throughout the study which need locating, including *border/s*, *territory/ies*, *identity/ies*, and *mobility*. Although these terms are defined and situated within the specific chapters to which they relate, I am introducing them here to give a broad understanding of the direction that this dissertation will take.

Borders

A boundary can be seen as both a geographical marker and a geographical maker of authority in social relations (Sparke, 2009: 55). Whether formalized borders, such as those between nation states, or simply socially constructed boundaries, as in instances of group ethnicities (Nevins, 2002: 8), borders are made meaningful and relevant by those who reside within and across them (Basch *et al.*, 1994: 33). In this way, borders both shape and are shaped by what they contain and by what crosses or is prevented from crossing them in a mutually formative manner (Anderson and O'Dawd, 1999:594). Indeed, borderlines are often understood as demarcating, and occasionally as creating, obvious otherness (Delaney, 2005: 64; Newman, 2006a: 143; 2008: 124-125). However, the assumed overlaying of space, place, and culture implied by the construction of 'other' is grounded in a problematic belief that distinct cultures occupy discrete spaces (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b: 34). From this perspective, the border can be seen instead as an active subject, displacing and deterritorializing identity (*ibid*: 48).

Indeed the consequent borderlands, the zones of varying widths in which particular relationships between people emerge from within the region and across both sides of the borderline allow unique affiliations develop between other people and other institutions of other nations or states (Zartman, 2010: 1) leave the idea of the border as an unfixed topographical site (Delaney, 2005: 65; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a:18; Newman, 2008: 127) as a site of fluidity, ambiguity, and mutual constitutivity (Delaney, 2005: 65). Pushing beyond this liminal understanding of the border, several scholars[21] now argue that all boundaries are 'artificial', since they are determined by people, and these multilayered constructions are often re-interpreted between local populations, their neighbours, and the dominant powers that affect them (Wilson and Donnan, 1998: 5), leading to practices quite different from what was intended by the original production of the border (Baud and van Schendel, 1997: 211).

One interesting regional iteration of this practical differentiation at border sites is the practice of 'living frontiers' (J. Forte, 1996b: 82-83), or 'living borders' (Baines, 2005: 4; Ricardo and Santilli, 2008; Santilli, 1994). Specifically focused on Brazilian geopolitical ambitions, living borders were a military practice of settlement along international borders, perceived as "flexible membranes capable of expanding or contracting", where the practice was

[21] Baud and van Schendel, 1997; Berg and van Houtum, 2003; Diener and Hagen, 2010; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2003; Newman, 2003; 2008; 2011; Newman and Paasi, 1998; Sletto, 2009a 147; 2009b; Thom, 2009; van Houtom, 2011; Wastl-Walter, 2011; Wilson and Donnan, 1998.

deliberately introduced to describe "how a strong nation's boundary line might expand into a weaker neighbor's territory" (Salisbury *et al.*, 2010: 51; see also Child, 1985; Foresta, 1992). This practice contradicts both formalized understandings of the 'border' and the 'borderland', emphasizing the fluidity of the region, while suggesting the need to redefine 'territory', the next geographical term I will explore.

Territory

Territory is typically defined as a "unit of contiguous space that is used, organized, and managed by a social group, individual person, or institution to restrict and control access to people and places", and the dominant usage has always been political, involving implied power relations between peoples and/or places (Agnew, 2009: 746). In allowing individuals, groups, or otherwise the possibility of claiming geographic space, the bounding of that space is implied, which necessarily entails a division between an 'inside' and an 'outside' (Delaney, 2005; Samers, 2010: 40).

Whereas previously political power was concentrated in the state, more recently, a re-proportioning of power between non-state actors, including organizations and local or global territories has given "rise to a world whose territorial compartments are hierarchical and multidimensional" (Newman, 2008: 133), a situation that has a significant impact at the local level. Within the Rupununi, political designations have begun to appear within Indigenous place references as part of the process of re-claiming customary lands from the state, where 'lands' have become 'territories' through interactions with colonial and (post-)colonial governments. Places previously referred to as collective, or customary lands (David *et al.*, 2006: 10) are becoming 'territory' through political manoeuvres, including use of Indigenous language to imply 'authenticity' (L.R. Graham, 2002: 183-188). Furthermore, Makushi and Wapishana are politically using the term 'ancestral territory' (David *et al.*, 2006: 10) as a means of reference, even though the traditional definitions of territory above do not fully apply in an Indigenous ontology, consequently implying a pointedly political bias in their choice of terminology, the shifting of which will be explored in this dissertation.

Implicitly, for some groups, including the Rupununi's Makushi and Wapishana, territory plays a significant role in the way in which their identity is expressed (Newman, 2008: 134). However, it is necessary to remember that territory is "a regime of practices triangulated between institutionalisations of power, materialisations of place, and idealisations of 'the people'" and

consequently, territory should never be conceptualized in isolation (Ó Tuathail, 1999: 140). Thus, it is to the concept of identity to which I turn next.

Identity

A geography of identity is defined as a sense of belonging both connected with, and in co-creation with, different socially produced places (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 27). While identity can be seen as the multiple, universal, and unstable basis of self-representation (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a: 12), without 'others', there is no means by which to recognize 'self' (Hall, 1995: 8), and hence, "co-relative imaginaries generate and sustain an ideational horizontal integration with a shared space, through a form of interpellation which correlates subjectivities and social spaces" (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 28).

That identity creation is an ongoing process (Anderson, 1991: 154; see also Garner, 2008: 32; Wolford, 2010: 77), or historically contingent (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a: 13) is logical, since identity is under constant individual, cultural, social, *etc*. flux, involving invention and construction with no fixed final destination (Chambers, 1994: 25; see also Hall, 1995: 5; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1993). This becoming that is identity formation is of course mirrored in places, and the social processes of place creation strengthen individual identities, while shaping and supporting collective identities (Stokowski, 2002: 373). Similarly, Delaney sees identity as directly related to territory, due to the relational quality of its construction, thereby reflecting complex networks of social relationships and belonging (2005: 11). From this perspective, reconceptualising community allows for a reterritorialization of space (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b: 37), a process often demonstrated through mobility of peoples and their associated cultures, accompanied by an assumed erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of place and an associated loss of identity (*ibid*). However, this negates the possibility of identity construction *through* mobility, often a defining feature of Indigenous peoples. This issue of mobility will be explored next.

Mobility

Alexiades, a specialist on Indigenous mobility, defines mobility as "all forms of territorial movement by people", arguing that these movements occur at different spatial and temporal scales, reflecting a variety of underlying factors and motivations (2009: 4). Mobility is often understood as movement across boundaries, however these boundaries are multiple and can be understood as political, geographical, ecological, and cultural, wherein some of these boundaries

are tangible or clearly marked, while others are not (*ibid*: 26). In border theory, which tends to depart from static visions of territory and emphasize instead mobility, margins become central with the focus on borderlands as sites of mixing or hybridity due to the generalized mobility of people (Cresswell, 2006; Delaney, 2005: 64), emphasizing an inherent bias in academic thinking for recognition of the nation state as the primary means of dividing people into territories.

Instead, Favell (2008) argues that mobility and migration should be accepted as the norm, thereby lessening reliance on the nation state as a means of reference determining mobility and stability. Indeed, scholars who work with Amazon communities have argued that contemporary migration negates western concepts such as borders and boundaries, since mobile people construct their own social fields that ignore geographic, political, and cultural boundaries (deTheije, 2006: 132). In this context, borders and nations lose their importance for mobile people, as the quest for social and economic security in the Amazon region overrides the importance of legal frontiers and the role of the nation state (*ibid*).

Migration, as a particular practice of mobility and movement, refers to mobility that involves a directional change in residential location, generally across larger temporal and spatial scales (Alexiades, 2009: 4). Often individuals, families, or communities superimpose movement between multiple, transient households (such as between a primary residence and an agricultural residence), with larger scale migration movements across recognized borders or boundaries for the purposes of employment, schooling, or other social need. These scenarios both are very much present in the Rupununi. These migration processes, in which people may live lives stretched across national borders, are now commonly referred to as transnational, and engage individuals, families, or communities in their countries of origin in constructing an ideology that envisions extra-territorial migrants as continuing in their 'home' country, even as immigrants develop networks, activities, patterns of living and ideologies that span their 'home' and 'host' societies (Basch *et al*., 1994: 4; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b: 34; Slocum and Thomas, 2003: 559). Through a circulation of populations between home and host societies, there is an ongoing involvement within the social and political life of transmigrants within multiple countries, and rather than living within a fragmented social and/or political existence, these activities, spread across state boundaries, seem to constitute a single field of social relations and an interconnected social experience (Basch *et al*., 1994: 5; deTheije, 2006: 132; Glick Schiller *et al*., 1995: 48; Margolis, 1995: 29).

As transmigrants operate in the national arena of both their country of origin and country/ies of settlement, they develop new fields of social relations, and in their daily activities transmigrants connect nation states while living in the world shaped by the interconnections that they themselves have forged (Basch *et al*., 1994: 8). The diversities ensuing from transnationalism and the flow of populations and cultural goods have not only opened possibilities for new pluralities and hybrid identities, but, most significantly, created new demands for establishing 'belonging' (Dávila, 2001: 11). While the term 'transnational' is unknown within the Rupununi region, the meaning behind it actively constructs the daily lives of a vast majority of residents.

Dissertation Structure

The Rupununi, its peoples (and other beings), ecologies, territories, movements, and places, presents a unique opportunity to explore the relationships between these same entities in a particular location. The possibility of alternate and multiple ontologies allows for an acceptance of relational places, defined by ongoing negotiation and continuous transformation, hence encouraging a connectedness and a politics of responsibility wherein active members act "responsibly towards those entities with which we are connected, human and not" (Escobar, 2010: 42, see also Blaser, 2014: 55).

To argue for this, I have written and organized this dissertation in a particular way. To begin, after exploring common methods and methodologies in geography, *Methodologies and Methods* (Chapter Two) develops and contributes to an Indigenist research paradigm. Since Indigenous voices continue to be silenced within Guyana, by engaging in Indigenist methodologies, including exploring life histories, story-telling (myths), and memories with a critical consciousness and an emphasis on respecting the voices of those traditionally unheard, this study includes many perspectives often left unheard, greatly expanding the 'who' of 'who imagines' the Rupununi. Furthermore, in doing so, this dissertation approaches cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of the methodology, shifting away from oppressive and discriminatory colonialist research paradigms, and consequently situates perspectives and practices in ongoing negotiations and renegotiations. This respect for Indigenous and Indigenist methodologies creates potential for Indigenous politics to strategically alter how places come to be.

Following this explanation of the relevance and importance of Indigenist methodologies for this project, the core of this dissertation is divided into four empirical chapters, each one a window to a different 'place', wherein the various 'hows' of co-produced Rupununi imaginaries are explored. The perspectives framed by each chapter embrace this subjectivity, these interconnections, and the processes they encompass, demonstrating the multiplicity of place and the associated imaginaries. *Rupununi Hauntings* (Chapter Three) discusses the ongoing impacts of colonial processes and how these impacts flow between people and places, entangling generations, cultures, and borders, necessarily changing perspectives of place. In this chapter, the 'who' is expanded beyond peoples, as traditional narratives are challenged by the inclusion of thing-voices and thing-histories as bound to people-histories. While all four empirical chapters have a temporal aspect, by focusing on the history of development within the Rupununi, Chapter Three in particular addresses how different times and places can affect imaginaries.

Intimate Borders (Chapter Four) further blurs the distinction of places within the Rupununi by demonstrating the multiplicity of border perceptions, consequently re-defining how this/these place(s) is/are experienced materially and epistemologically. This chapter specifically takes up the question of 'who' by forwarding various perspectives of a singular place, indicating that a being's personal ontology influences imaginaries of place(s), allowing for multiplicities to emerge. This chapter also begins to concentrate on the importance of Indigenous politics, or the absence thereof, when negotiating place officially, while simultaneously suggesting that a radical re-interpretation of the border, as a basic geographical concept, can contribute to a resurgence of Indigenous geographies.

Becoming Places (Chapter Five) shifts the viewpoint away from Indigenous to Brazilian, or 'Guy-Braz',[22] introducing alternate perspectives, or a different 'who', revealing the potential for 'outsider' Rupununi imaginaries to emerge and influence constructions of place. Additionally, this chapter addresses the question of spatial variation in imaginaries, as it traces various Brazilian influences across the Rupununi, including significant social and environmental impacts in the south, central, and north regions. This spatial variation is complicated by a geopolitical narrative that threatens to overwhelm the Rupununi, further revealing that places are indeed continuously changing, always becoming.

[22] Local term for people who see themselves, or who are seen, as being across official nationality.

The final empirical chapter, *Telling Stories* (Chapter Six) demonstrates how active construction of places, through being, knowing, and doing, can encourage an acceptance of process as integral, becoming as essential, and re-imagining as welcome in Indigenous worldviews. By introducing alternative geographies of place, specifically through the Indigenous lenses of myth and practice, this chapter focuses on how multiple imaginaries can influence alternate and multiple ideas of place(s). Furthermore, the Indigeneity of these particular, and particularly multiple, geographies contributes to the recognition of Indigenous politics as fundamental to both traditional[23] and modern understandings of the Rupununi.

The concluding chapter, *Imagined Territories* (Chapter Seven) brings together the empirical research of the four preceding chapters to challenge western epistemologies by arguing that since relational abstractions are foundational to Indigenous ontologies, or to perspectival realities, accepting Indigenous ontologies necessarily helps us to understand place as inherently multiple. By linking Rupununi imaginaries to imagined territories, this chapter then engages with the (re-)emergence of Indigenous politics by linking them to multiple ontologies, the acceptance of which challenges the very core of western knowledge, experience, and politics (Kovak, 2009: 29).

[23] The term 'traditional' is used sparingly throughout this dissertation to refer to a *perceived* cultural difference, generally with reference to an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior. Although there are inherent problems with any such cultural construction, another term of equal value and utility from a purely semantic perspective did not suggest itself.

Chapter Two: Methodologies and Methods

> *Research is ceremony ... Let us go forward together with open minds and good hearts as we further take part in this ceremony.*
> (Wilson, 2008: 11)

As the underlying principles that outline the approach taken towards a research project, consideration of methodology is essential. Within the last few decades, methodological approaches in geography have shifted enormously, causing concurrent changes in both how research is produced, and what type of research is produced by geographers. This chapter highlights the approaches that most strongly influenced this research project. Following this, I explore some of the main principles of these key methodologies, and I and discuss their importance to this project, including how these principles apply to the methods chosen.

However, I argue that parallel to these developments in geographical research methods and methodologies, alternate approaches, guided by culturally, intellectually, and ideologically different paradigms have evolved.[24] Of key importance to this research project, focused as it is on the Makushi and Wapishana peoples of the Rupununi are those approaches that identify specifically as Indigenous. Therefore, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the history and philosophy behind Indigenist[25] research practices, methodologies, and associated methods, and explain how they influenced both this research project and me as a researcher.

Methodology and Geography

As the study of the earth and its physical features, as well as how human activity is both affected by and affects the world, geography is a rich and complex discipline, bridging across physical and human sciences. Because of this diversity, geography embraces a wide variety of methodological approaches, usually divided into quantitative approaches and qualitative approaches (Cope, 2010: 25). Quantitative approaches are generally influenced by scientific approaches, such as modelling or statistical analysis, and tend towards the pursuit of objectivity and generalized knowledge (deLyser *et al.*, 2010: 4; K. Graham, 2005: 9). In contrast, qualitative methodologies prioritize a humanistic approach, emphasizing that phenomena should be seen as "subjective, complex, messy, irrational, and contradictory" (Clifford *et al.*, 2010: 5), with a concomitant recognition and validation of human experience (deLyser *et al.*, 2010: 5;

[24] The alternate approach of this dissertation is best explained by Hunt as the difference between Indigenous ontologies, and western ontologies of Indigeneity (2014: 28).
[25] To be defined below.

Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 10). Most researchers today accept that quantitative and qualitative approaches are not incompatible, simply representing "different ontological and epistemological approaches to knowledge and data" (deLyser *et al.*, 2010: 6), further diversifying the possibilities of geographical research.

In particular, feminist and other critical geographers have shifted methodological approaches to research. In response to increasing concerns regarding geography's foundations in difference and hierarchy (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; 2008a: 166), as well as the allocation of privilege and power to particular people at the expense of others (Peake and Kobayashi, 2002: 56), critical geographers began exploring the 'power geometries' (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Massey, 1993) of geographical research. In recognizing the politics of representation embedded within power relations (DeLyser, 2010b; Hyndman, 2001: 263; Mohanty, 1988: 61; Nast, 1994), feminist scholars in particular argued that research cannot be undertaken without considering the pervasiveness of power and the impacts and effects upon the researcher, the researched, and the research itself (Cannella and Manuelito, 2008: 50). Feminist theories sought to "explain, challenge, and hence change existing power relations of oppression and inequality" (Burns and Walker, 2005: 66), including both the historical and contemporary contexts for oppression (Dillard and Okpalaoka, 2011: 148; Freire, 1970), and "differences, tensions, and conflicts were explored, not as problems, but as spaces of conceptual and indeed political opportunities and negotiations" (F. Smith, 1996: 165). In this way, understanding and acknowledging power relations became seen as a sort of landscape or background to all feminist research (Rose, 1997: 308), and by approaching research from this feminist perspective, and acknowledging the latent hegemony in society, concerns regarding differences in power can be addressed (Cannella and Manuelito, 2008; Dyck, 1997; England, 1994; Haraway, 1987; 1988; Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1997; Hyndman, 2001; 2003; Hyndman and de Alwis, 2003; 2004; Katz, 1994; Nagar, 2013, D. Smith, 1992).

This development of counterhegemonic approaches to knowledge production within oppressed communities has also entered into the methodological practices of geographers, feminist and otherwise, through Participatory Action Research (PAR) (MacIntyre, 2008: 3). Defined as a "collaborative process of research, education, and action explicitly oriented towards social transformation" (Kindon *et al.*, 2007: 9), PAR represented a significant challenge to dominant research practices, similar to feminist geographers, in that it recognized the importance

of the perspectives of the oppressed, or the 'unpowerful', in society. Emphasizing collaborative approaches to knowledge production, PAR was particularly interested in developing an awareness amongst the 'unpowerful' of the forces affecting their lives, and then using this awareness as a catalyst to political action, a movement Freire coined with the term 'conscientization' (1970). This recognition by PAR and feminist scholars of the historical misrepresentation and ongoing oppression of 'others' (Dillard and Okpalaoka, 2011; Gregory, 2004; Said, 1978; Secor, 2009) explains why this research project refers primarily to these methodological approaches and seeks guidance from their key research principles and methods.

Methodologies and Methods

Geographers following methodological paradigms similar to feminist or PAR approaches began drawing on methods that would allow them to explore the "meanings, emotions, intentions, and values that make up our lifeworlds" (Clifford *et al.*, 2010: 5). Seeking to explore the world in its 'found form' (deLyser *et al.*, 2010: 6), these methods were often intensive and immersive, embracing subjectivities, situated knowledges, and reflection. The methodolgoies and methods I chose for my research project reflect these objectives.

Ethnography as Methodology

Ethnography, as the art of "writing about people" (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005: 16) is a methodological approach that allows the researcher to express and communicate ideas and knowledge specifically gained by living together with people and sharing their lives. Bound within this approach is an understanding that the researcher will "spend time in the field, look closely and relatively unobtrusively, and develop analyses that aim for faithfulness to what is actually happening" (deVault, 1999: 47).

Encompassing elements of critical engagement and process-oriented research, ethnography was essential to this research study. Early ethnographic research often objectified, marginalized, and contributed to the colonization of ethnographic 'subjects' (L.T. Smith, 1999). In contrast, critical ethnography seeks to de-centre hegemonic knowledge production by focusing on the voices, knowledges, and practices of *people* (not 'subjects'), a key tenet of this research project. Furthermore, my ability to share in the everyday experiences of the Makushi and Wapishana contributed to the enrichment of the research product, most obviously through the feedback and validation field visit, while being present in the landscape of the ecologies, stories, and cosmologies of the Rupununi gave me a deeper appreciation of the processes of living in the

Rupununi. Finally, as ethnography acknowledges that all peoples interpret their world differently, and that there is an 'ontological constructivism' (Crang, 2003: 494) as well as a "need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and which they both construct and utilize" (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005: 16), ethnography was an ideal methodological approach for this research project, focusing as it does on place-making and multiple worlds.

Fieldwork Design

This project is based on sixteen months of field research in the Rupununi, carried out in three fieldwork sessions between 2010 and 2013.[26] During this period, I spent considerable time in five Rupununi villages, including Shulinab, Aishalton, St. Ignatius, Karasabai, and Annai Central (one representing each sub-district of the Rupununi) in order to gain a broad overview of perspectives from the Region (see Figure 3). These villages were chosen in consultation with the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), the South Central Peoples' Development Association, and the District Toshaos' Councils (DTCs), identified as the representative organizations within the Rupununi regions. In addition to representing each of the five sub-districts of the Rupununi, these five villages together suggest a broad representation of other differences within the Rupununi. Two of the villages (Annai Central and Karasabai) are dominantly Makushi, and one village (Aishalton) is dominantly Wapishana. Shulinab is a traditionally mixed village (Makushi-Wapishana),[27] while St. Ignatius is a village that has recently undergone significant demographic change, and is now recognized as a mixed village (Makushi-Wapishana). The villages range in size from comparatively small (Shulinab, with a population of 545 (South Central and South Rupununi District Toshaos Council, 2012: 95) is one of the smaller villages in the region) to comparatively large (Karasabai, with an approximate population of 1600 (Kaieteur News, 2013), is one of the largest villages in the region). Importantly, NRDDB, SCPDA, and the Deep South DTC headquarters are located in three of these villages (Annai Central, Shulinab, and Aishalton respectively), and by locating this research study in these villages, greater access to organizational leaders was made possible.

Important practical considerations needed to be acknowledged in village selection as well. Annai Central and St. Ignatius are both located on the main Georgetown-Lethem Road,

[26] See Appendix 1: Fieldwork Timelines for further details regarding the timeframes for individual activities.
[27] One of only two within the region, the other, Parabara, being mixed Wapishana-Wai Wai.

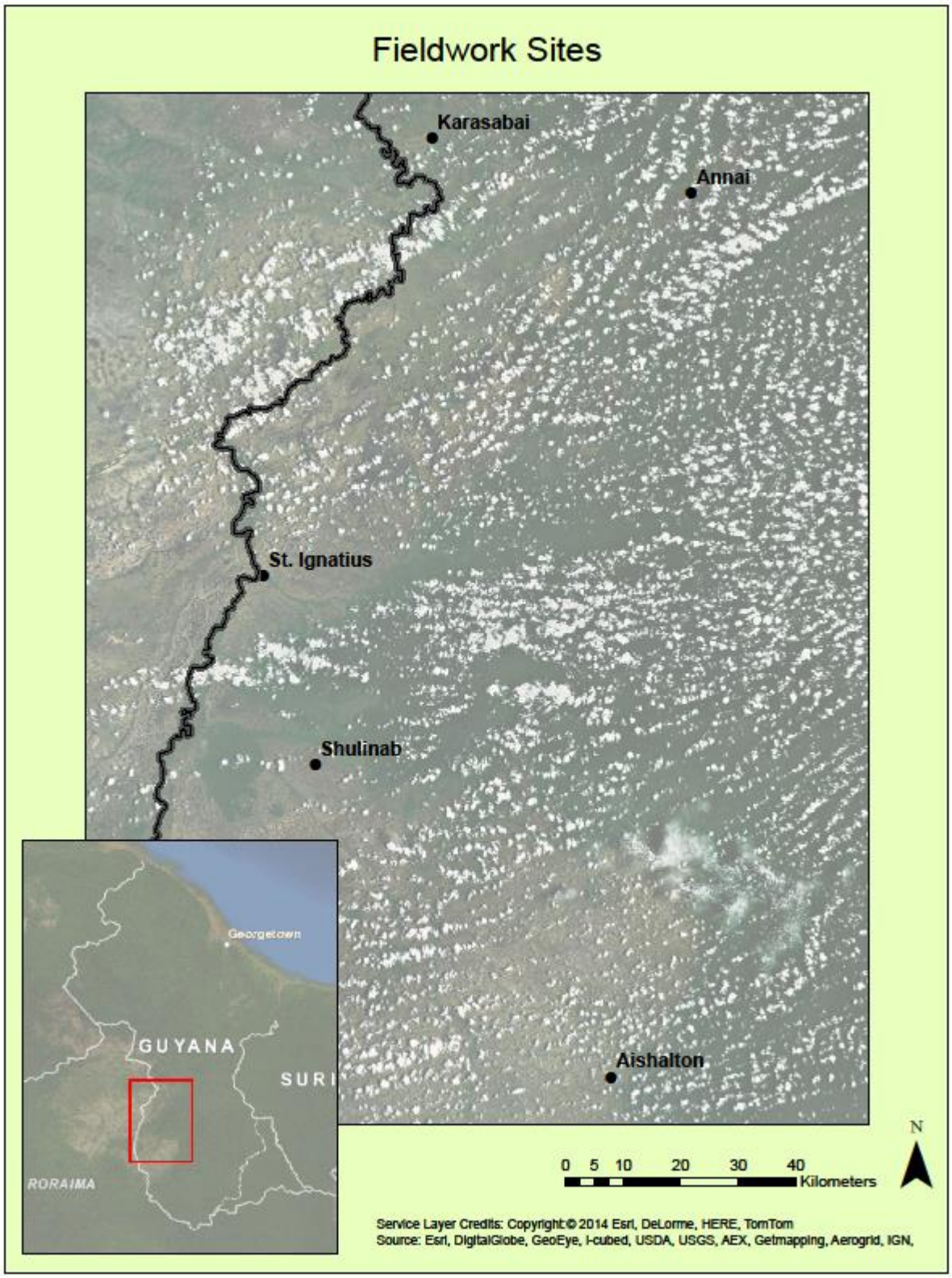

Figure 3: Map showing the location of the five villages selected for fieldwork.

hence access was relatively straightforward for these villages. Additionally, Shulinab and Aishalton are both located on the main trail through the South Rupununi, and access was facilitated by the comparatively high traffic this road sees.[28] However, Karasabai, and all of the South Pakaraimas sub-district, is accessible only seasonally due to extensive flooding along the rough track that connects the sub-district with Lethem, and this limited accessibility needed to be factored into my fieldwork plans. Indeed, the extensive rainy season impacts the entire region significantly. During the primary rainy season, the South Rupununi is often cut off at the Rupununi River due to high waters, and even those villages along the main Georgetown-Lethem Road can be isolated for periods of time. By consulting and collaborating with the NRDDB, SCPDA, and the DTCs, many of these potential logistical problems were contained.

Methods[29]

Participant-Observation

Participant-observation expands the research expectations beyond those of ethnography as 'immersion' within a community, to the more specific observation of and participation within those same communities, calling on researchers to spend time being, living, or working with people and within communities (Laurier, 2010: 116; Cook, 2005: 167). Careful and patient observation (Laurier, 2010: 117) is recommended as an active pursuit, where regular activities, special events, particular incidents, and specific encounters are recorded by some means. Participation is similarly active, and a deliberate involvement in the everyday activities of the people and communities the researcher is working with and within is suggested, while the formation of relationships is seen as integral to successful participation (Cook, 2005: 167).

While always observing, it was to greater and lesser degrees that I participated within communities. In Aishalton, I was invited to participate in the Women's Group, and was included in the planning and preparation for several seasonal events, as well as sharing responsibilities for the execution of these key events. In Karasabai, I was included in seasonal cultural activities, including Holi and Women's Day activities. In several villages, I shared in community work and childcare responsibilities, and in Shulinab I visited local farms, participating within my own capacity in activities undertaken during these visits. Furthermore, in both Aishalton and

[28] Often one or two vehicles travel this road daily, primarily in order to supply the mining regions in the south.
[29] See Appendix 2 for a discussion of how the data was analyzed.

Karasabai I shared a living space and sleeping area with local community members, sharing meals and preparation responsibilities.

St. Ignatius, however, presented a unique challenge for me. In large part due to the divided geography separating Lethem from St. Ignatius,[30] I often felt distant from community members.[31] Although I lived with a local family in Lethem, not being resident within the St. Ignatius community definitely impacted upon my research. However, upon my return to St. Ignatius for the feedback and validation presentations, much of this distance had dissipated, and I was invited by the community members, including the village Toshao, to participate in local activities, including the fourth 'Meeting of the Border Regions of Brazil-Venezuela-Guyana: Borderlands Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights' held in Boa Vista, Brazil, as a representative of St. Ignatius and of Guyana. I feel that by returning to the village to share my research findings, greater trust was developed, and a broader acceptance of my presence within the community was supported by key community members. Supporting this, Cook (2005: 167) acknowledges that participant-observation research should change relationships, which in turn, often subjectively, changes the research. And while this subjectivity needs to be acknowledged and included in all research project findings, the goal should not be elimination. Instead, acceptance for acknowledged limitations can be a strong argument for the use of qualitative research methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Cited as "the most common [qualitative] method" (Crang, 2002: 649), the semi-structured interview has been described as self-conscious talking (Longhurst, 2010: 103), or as "a conversation with a purpose" (Valentine, 2005: 111). By creating an informal space, where conversation and dialogue can flow relatively free from restraining structure, people involved in the process can discuss their own experiences and knowledges from their own particular perspectives. One of the advantages of this approach is the prioritization of local knowledge, with an in-built sensitivity to cultural differences integral for this research study. Furthermore, because strict reins are not held, the information generated is often "rich, detailed, and multi-layered" (*ibid*) allowing for the possibility for the research to grow in important directions not immediately apparent to the researcher. With this comes a responsibility for the researcher to

[30] Lethem and St. Ignatius are adjoining communities, however they are physically separated by Moco Moco Creek, and more importantly, culturally separate (St. Ignatius is still largely an Indigenous village, whereas Lethem is a town mixed with coastlanders).

[31] With one notable exception of a large, extended family group I met on a previous field visit to Sand Creek who openly welcomed me into their homes repeatedly.

listen carefully and attentively to what is said, both verbally and non-verbally, as well as what is not said.

As already indicated, this research is rooted in the belief that objectivity is an impractical and valueless goal for social science research since all work is informed by the individual experiences, aims, and interpretations of the researcher. With this in mind, it is important to note that semi-structured interviews cannot be representative of broader perspectives, but are likewise indicative of individual peoples' experiences of the world(s) and reality/ies they live in. Since exploring this multiplicity is a central objective of this project, semi-structured interviews were seen as an ideal method to employ.

As noted above, five villages were visited during these fieldwork sessions, one representing each sub-district of the Rupununi in order to gain a broad overview of perspectives from the region. Semi-structured informal interviews were arranged and organized using purposive sampling,[32] and conducted with a wide range of community members, including; migrants, migrants' families, community elders, community leaders, culture specialists,[33] and representatives of local Indigenous organizations. An ideal target range of between fifteen and twenty interviews per village community was set, and this goal was met or exceeded in each of the representative villages, with an interview breakdown as follows:

Table 1: Village Interviews

Village	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**
Shulinab	10	10	20
Aishaltion	8	15	23
St. Ignatius	5	12	17
Karasabai	14	12	20*
Annai District	9	12	21
Total	**46**	**61**	**107**

(*One group of seven were interviewed together)

This total of 101 informal interviews with 107 people included an unfortunate gender imbalance, with only 43 percent women to 57 percent men. This gender imbalance is in part attributable to the effort made to conduct interviews with the community Toshaos and Senior

[32] Valentine (2005: 112) suggests that due to the subjectivity of the method, "choosing who to speak with is often a theoretically motivated decision."

[33] Those members of communities specifically identified as particularly skilled at certain recognized cultural practices.

Councillors, especially where multiple Toshaos were interviewed (eg. Aishalton), and particularly within the Annai District, which is composed of five villages, all but one of which was led by men at the time of research.[34] Furthermore, Toshaos and Senior Councillors from other villages present in targeted communities at the time of research were also interviewed when possible (total four), all of whom were male. However, I decided that the importance of community leaders' voices for this research project outweighed the inherent problems of gender imbalance, in particular with regards to the overview information provided by Toshaos and Senior Councillors.

Overall, the use of semi-structured interviews presented me with an opportunity that, while still relaxed and relatively unstructured, was still formal enough to allow me to investigate key issues and ideas that arose both during initial discussions about the direction the research may take, as well as within each individual conversation. This sharing of experiences and knowledges, as well as the exchange of ideas and information, were important aspects of these interviews, as relationships grew and were formed during the process. I feel very fortunate, as some of these relationships have continued beyond the fieldwork time and place, and I continue to engage in ongoing correspondence with several individuals, primarily through the post. I consider these relationships the most valuable aspect of this research project, and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to continue them.

Secondary Information Sources

A series of secondary sources were made available during this fieldwork period, many of which are unavailable outside of Rupununi communities. Often, these rare documents were lent out after informal conversations between myself and the owners of the materials. That community residents were willing to share these documents is both an indication of the trust in the research relationship, as well as of the importance of the research for communities. These secondary sources are noted with an asterisk in the Reference List of this dissertation.

Key Principles of Qualitative Methodologies

As noted above, the recognition of the need for a historical and geographical contextualization of the theories and methods used and of the knowledge they produce is an important component of the research project. Such work demands a "serious engagement with

[34] Indeed, in the most recent round of Toshao elections within the sixteen communities of the North Rupununi sub-district (April, 2012), only one woman was elected as village leader (Rupertee).

the complexities of identity, representation, and political imagination as well as a rethinking of the assumptions and possibilities associated with engagement and expertise" (Nagar, 2013: 1). By applying PAR and feminist research principles, this research project seeks the guidance of those who have already approached these issues. Thus, this section of the chapter focuses on the key methodological principles of qualitative research that investigate issues such as identity, representation, and expertise, and explores how I engage with these complexities and rethink my assumptions.

Situating Self

Qualitative geographers and geographies, in particular feminist and PAR practitioners, have made some of the most significant contributions to situating the politics and positionalities of geographical research and researchers (e.g. Houston *et al.*, 2010; McDowell, 1992a; Miles and Crush, 1993; Momsen, 1993; Mountz *et al.*, 2003: 41; Peake and Kobayashi, 2002; Raghuram and Madge, 2006; Rose, 1997). Early theorists argued that a researcher is positioned by her gender, age, 'race'/ethnicity, etc, as well as by her biography (e.g. England, 1994: 85), and that we must recognize and account for our own position, and, by starting with your own acknowledged position[35] (Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 276), maintain an openness to other positions, including those of your research participants (England, 1994: 80; McDowell, 1992b: 409; Rose, 1997: 305), consequently identifying power structures and imbalances (McDowell, 1992b: 413), and recognizing our places within these relations of power as 'transparent selves' (Rose, 1997: 309).

Furthermore, Katz (1994) and Kobayashi (1994) have emphasized the need to maintain non-essentialized or flexible perspectives of research positions, and to recognize the reality of multiple positionalities (Nast, 1994; Routledge, 2001; 2002; Shaw *et al.*, 2006: 273). Hyndman (2001) and Stasiulis (1999) elaborate on these multiplicities, referring to the multiple relations of power that intersect in complex ways to "position individuals and collectivities in shifting and often contradictory locations within geopolitical spaces, historical narratives, and movement politics" (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004: 539). By allowing for multiply positioned actors (*eg.* as mother, as culture specialist, and as schoolteacher), a heightened awareness of the partiality of each perspective ensues (Katz, 1994: 67).

[35] Because this chapter is attempting to bridge between methodological approaches (western and Indigenous), in order to reduce repetition my positionality and how it impacted this research project will be addressed more explicitly in the final section, 'My Journey' (pages 50-63).

However, more recently, theorists are beginning to realize that positionality is more complicated than "the customary laying out of the 'me' in the usual race, class, and gender mantra" (Puwar, 2003: 27). Indeed, this emphasis on customary 'me' positionality contradicts the problematizing of the essentialist nature of social categories that researchers are committed to challenging (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 269). In response, Larner (1995: 187-188) argues that if positionality is to be more than merely a presentation of personal characteristics, "we must address the dilemmas that arise out of … the politics of negotiating not just multiple, but discrepant audiences" (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 276, see also Robertson, 2002: 790).[36]

Thus, while "positioning is … the key practice grounding knowledge" (Haraway, 1991: 193) due to its ability to recognize and name those power relations that enable the production of knowledge, it is important to realize that our positioning in relation to those with whom we work is not pre-determined; rather it emerges and evolves through our encounters through embedded structural positioning (Butler, 1990; Nast, 1994; Valentine, 2002: 120). With this in mind, Mullings (1999:4) suggests that researchers seek 'positional spaces' "where the situated knowledge of both parties in the interview encounter engender a level of trust and cooperation" to find "'transitory shared spaces' that are not informed by identity-based differences" (Valentine, 2002: 119).

Nagar emphasizes this researcher subjectivity by noting that "the process of producing knowledge about a single event is often informed by complex journeys and relationships in an alliance" (Nagar, 2013: 8). Harding (1987) first criticized the goal of objectivity in traditional research claiming it obscured the partiality and the privileged positioning of those constructing the knowledge, a claim that has broad support from researchers (Burns and Walker, 2005: 67; DeLyser, 2010a; 2010b; England, 1994: 85; Olesen, 2011: 135; Peake and Kobayashi, 2002: 55; Rose, 1997: 305). Acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher is crucial in the research design, and must similarly be taken into account during data interpretation to reduce distortion (Burns and Walker, 2005: 67; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 277). By being conscious of "the processes of selection and our pre-knowledges that influence how we know what we know, we can justify our choices and see – and make visible to others – their effects" (Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 279).

[36] This research project actively operates against this 'laying out of the me' by presenting a more nuanced researcher positioning which purposefully demonstrates how it 'emerged and evolved' in the final section of the chapter, 'My Journey' (pages 50-63).

This need to situate knowledge is predicated on the understanding that who is making the knowledge in part determines what knowledge is made (DeLyser, 2010a; England, 1994; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Rose, 1997: 306-307; Valentine, 2002: 116). Haraway was one of the first feminist researchers to explain the importance of situating knowledge through her oft-cited 'god-trick', wherein:

> The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity – honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy – to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interest of unfettered power … but of course that view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god-trick (Haraway, 1991: 188-189).

By acknowledging the 'god-trick', researchers simultaneously recognize the need for a historical and geographical contextualization of the theories and methods they use *and* of the knowledge they produce (Moss and Al-Hindi, 2008: 12; Olesen, 2011: 130; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 280). In this way, situated research is about "interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood" (Haraway, 1991: 195; see also Rose, 1997: 318; Stanley and Wise, 1993: 157). This selection and inherent incompleteness acknowledged through acceptance of situated knowledges allow for a recognition of partiality in research: both that it is partial (not whole), and that it is partial (biased), reflecting the interests and circumstances of the researcher (England, 1994: 86; Hyndman 2001: 266). Key to situating knowledge within the practices of knowledge production is an emphasis on respect for both the research participants, and for the research processes, including, as noted above, a careful consideration of the methods employed and the reasons for engaging in a particular research project. In embarking upon this research project, respect for the peoples involved (outlined below) was a priority during both the proposal and research phases, and consequently careful consideration of the processes and relationships was integral to the project.

Co-creation of Research, Research Collaboration, and Relationships

While feminist and PAR methodologies have always stressed the importance of listening to the voices of others so that research is a collaborative process (DeLyser, 2010a; Hyndman, 2001: 268; Sharp, 2004: 72; Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2006), by supporting and facilitating collective research (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 282), these researchers are now realizing that collaborative efforts help shift away from the complex problems surrounding the politics of difference (Nagar, 2013: 5; Peake and de Souza, 2010: 105). Consequently, engaging in research

from a feminist or PAR methodological approach requires the involvement of the people you plan to work with in creating, conducting, owning, and judging research about themselves (Cannela and Manuelito, 2008). Research questions should be co-produced in dialogue so that the priorities of the researched are embedded with the project from the very beginning, ensuring that research is not limited by the concerns of the 'experts' (Escobar, 1995; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 276). This dialogical process is consequently influenced by both the researcher and the researched (England, 1994: 84; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 271). Furthermore, in recognizing that "the 'sole-conceptualized/sole-authored' model of research will likely have little use value" for communities being researched (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 281; see also Nagar, 2013: 4), collaborative methodologies are challenging traditional academic norms, and engaging in "emancipatory projects" (Olesen, 2011: 137, see also Peake and de Souza, 2010).

This structure of knowledge production largely allows researched peoples to interrogate, evaluate, and dislodge the knowledge produced by the 'expert', helping dissolve the hierarchies that elevate theory and academic research (Nagar, 2013: 2), minimizing knowledge appropriation by avoiding misrepresentation (England, 1994: 86), and extending the idea of a reciprocal research alliance between the researcher and the researched (Davis, 2010; Dillard and Okpalaoka, 2011: 148; Olesen, 2011: 136). Seeking reciprocal relationships based on mutual respect and sharing knowledge, including by both holding workshops (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004: 537) and by sharing the prepublication text with the researched for feedback (England, 1994: 82) are components of a methodology of accountability (Nagar, 2013: 13) which strives to acknowledge and accept that "the knowledge of the person being researched (at least regarding the particular questions being asked) is greater than that of the researcher" (England, 1994: 82).

However, it is important to continuously challenge the politics of knowledge production as long as the published text remains the final construct and responsibility of the researcher, who continues to exercise power over whose voices will be heard (England, 1994: 86; Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2006). Additionally, positionality and reflexivity question the politics and ethics of "who is entitled to research particular topics" (Valentine, 2002: 117). While obviously still an outsider within the country and particularly within the Rupununi region, I am extraordinarily fortunate to have had support for this research from one of Guyana's strongest research and advocacy organizations. The summer before I began my fieldwork in the Rupununi, I was invited to help my academic advisor, Professor Linda Peake, in Georgetown at

the women's organization she has been connected with for over thirty years, the Red Thread Women's Development Organisation. Red Thread is a grassroots, Guyanese based, women's organization that values autonomy "as a way, organisationally, of addressing unequal power relations among women" (Trotz, 2007: 73), and whose "goal is to organize with women, beginning with grassroots women, to cross divides and transform [their] conditions. [They] provide services to women and children exploited in unequal power relations and simultaneously work to change those relations" (Red Thread, 2014).

Red Thread is a widely recognized and respected women's organization, both nationally and internationally, and the willingness of Red Thread's women to share their deep knowledge of their country and the issues it is currently facing helped inform this study. This opportunity, to work with the women who make it powerful and consequently make Guyana a better place, helped change and shape my positionality through my engagement with the people, the communities, and the issues they are facing (Nagar, 1997; Rose, 1997: 308), encouraging me to commit to "social change that promised greater political-economic equity, social justice, and cultural freedom as well as widened access to the means of existence and basic rights" (Katz, 1994: 70). And in turn, this commitment prompted me to re-think my own assumptions and perspectives about what I hoped my research project would attain, and how it would change me.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the researcher's own "self-reflection in the meaning-making process" (Kovak, 2009: 32). Reflexivity "is self-critical, sympathetic introspection, and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994: 82, emphasis original; see also Valentine, 2002: 117). Reflexivity is making one's position and the implications of it explicit and known in order to overcome false notions of neutrality (DeLyser, 2010a; 2010b; McDowell, 1992a; Mattingly and Al-Hindi, 1995; Moss, 1995). Indeed, reflexivity is a critical practice for the conduct of research as it induces self-discovery and can lead to valuable insights (England, 1994: 82; Houston *et al.*, 2010; Nagar, 2013: 5; Olesen, 2011; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 272) by challenging normative definitions of knowledge and knowledge producers (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 281). Furthermore, a more reflexive and flexible approach to research allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that academic work almost always raises (England, 1994: 82; Kobayashi and Peake, 2008a; 2008 b; Rose, 1997:

305), and by employing critical reflexivity, the researcher can purposefully give "space for the political examination of location and privilege" (Kovak, 2009: 33).

As discussed earlier, PAR and feminist methodologies demand a "critical reflexive lens" that acknowledges the politics of representation within research and by employing self-reflexivity, the researcher recognizes that his or her subjectivity will necessarily influence the research findings (*ibid*). Reflexivity in general is being advocated by scholars as a strategy for situating knowledges (Rose, 1997: 306), as it often implies analysis of *how* the production of ethnographic knowledge is shaped by the "shifting, contextual, and relational contours of the researcher's social identity and her social situatedness" (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 2). In this way, self-reflexivity allows researchers to be continually aware of their own potential biases within the research, and because qualitative research is interpretive, "the stories of both the researcher and the research participants are reflected in the meanings being made," allowing for both multiple truths and the inclusion of multiple voices in research practice (Kovak, 2009: 26-27). Self-reflexive research is "not about the search for the truth, authority or objectivity; its goal is to challenge, contest and resist the production and control of knowledge by the powerful" (Fitzgerald, 2004: 236), allowing for a deeper investigation into the processes and procedures that constitute the act of research (Hodge and Lester, 2006: 42; Olesen, 2011: 135).

For my research project, field notebooks were one of the key means by which I could engage in critical reflexivity, since in addition to their use as an aid to memory, I used field notebooks as a process for generating new perspectives and making connections (Altrichter and Holly, 2005: 28). Engaging in a reflexive practice of field note taking allows the researcher to shift easily between simple knowledge acquisition and analysis, synthesis, and critique, since "reflective learning is essentially the process of considering what we know or have learnt in order to generate new knowledge" (Dummer *et al.*, 2008: 460-462). Field notebooks can include information obtained: through observation, conversation, or more formal interviews; contextual information about the places and people visited; ideas and plans for future research practices; as well as additional items, such as photographs, letters, drawings, or newspaper cuttings (Altrichter and Holly, 2005: 24; Taussig, 2011: xi). However, it is the inclusion of reflection, what Taussig refers to as "the imaginative logic of discovery" (2011: xi) that shifts the notebook from a stagnant collection of inert 'facts' to a dynamic knowledge producer, as "something alive" (*ibid*:

xii), where notebooks "[cross] over into the science of social investigation and [serve] as a means of witness" (*ibid*: xi).

The excerpts I include in this chapter demonstrate the research process as much, if not more so than the research 'data.' The frustration emitted through reflections of my ignorance of cassava farming, and my imaginary wolves and subsequent inability to explain them illustrate my initial discomfort in my place. However, later entries, where familiar faces appear, and where the moon suggests stories signify my growing ease with my place within the Rupununi. My field notebooks provide evidence to me that my research has changed me; hopefully this "process of living" (Latham, 2003: 2000) has led to "deeper learning" (Dummer *et al.*, 2008).

Listening to the Silenced

Feminist and PAR academic discourse is concerned with the serious problem of appropriating the voices of marginalized people, including the effects of 'othering' those voices, asking "can we incorporate the voices of 'others' without colonizing them in a manner that reinforces patterns of domination" (England, 1994: 81)? Or more problematically, can subaltern people ever speak, or are they always silenced (Krog, 2011; 381; Mohanty, 1988; 2003; Spivak, 1999)? In response, feminist and PAR research challenges the silencing of voices in society and research (Burns and Walker, 2005: 66), arguing that the purpose of research is to make visible those voices that have been marginalized, or seen as threat to power (Cannella and Manuelito, 2008: 56). It is an approach that involves talking and listening carefully (De Vault, 1999; Krog, 2011: 384; Malkki, 1995; Nagar and Geiger, 2007), recognizing that the voices of the subaltern can become a means by which to decentre the privilege of academics (Behar, 1993; Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Fine, 1992; Olesen, 2011; Ortner, 1995: 190; Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 271-272).

This analytical approach allows for a range of voices to be heard by acknowledging that the culturally constructed nature of the social world needs to be embraced (England, 1994: 81). Consequently, "there are many versions of social reality, all of which are equally valid" (Burns and Walker, 2011: 68), as multiply situated knowledges are "rooted in different (and often mutually irreconcilable) epistemological positions" (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 276). These multi-vocal, fluid, and hybrid approaches to qualitative research help identify the material effects of oppression, and through exposure acknowledge the gaps in meaning recognized in diverse knowledges (Cannella and Manuelito, 2008: 49; Rose, 1997: 318). In this way, these multi-vocal

presentations help disrupt 'authored' voice representations and offer alternatives to constructing a "singular, coherent, and seamless account" (Burns and Walker, 2011: 71).

However, ultimately, this brings us back to the role of power relations in research, and the parallel issues of voice, representation, and ethics in the practice of qualitative research (Fine, 1992; Mauthner *et al.*, 2002; Spivak, 1999). As Appadurai (1988: 20) notes, "the problem of place and voice is ultimately a problem of power", since in the end, the person who presents the research remains in a powerful position, choosing which voices are heard, and interpreting those voices by directing the flow of discourse, and deciding where, and in what form it should be presented (Houston *et al.*, 2002: 296; McLafferty, 1995: 437; Olesen, 2011: 136).

Questions of representation and legitimacy in speaking of and on behalf of other voices persist (Peake and Kobayashi, 2002: 52), and researchers continue to ask how exploitation and distortion of voices can be avoided (Olesen, 2011: 136), recognizing that "domination is about whose knowledge and agenda are front, centre, and definitive" (Dillard and Okpalaoka, 2011: 149). Accordingly, voices are heard in research when relationships are non-hierarchical and when the researcher is prepared to invest her own personal identity in the relationship. Furthermore, respectful listening demands a critical reflexivity regarding the assumptions we bring to our research and how we conduct our research, as noted previously (Burns and Walker, 2005: 67). Evidently, PAR and feminist methodologies are well placed to respect the voices of those traditionally silenced.

However, perhaps not all voices are being heard even yet. According to Kovak, there is a "fundamental epistemological difference between western and Indigenous thought and this difference causes philosophical, ideological, and methodological conflicts for Indigenous researchers" (2009: 29). By critically investigating the dominance of western approaches in research, the politics of knowledge production and inquiry used by most research frameworks are exposed, and we see that particular epistemologies and ideologies are privileged to the absolute exclusion of alternative worldviews (*ibid*: 79). Wilson argues that although "an Indigenous research paradigm has existed for millennia, it is only in the past few years that the research discourse has allowed for the expression or acceptance of this paradigm in mainstream academia" (2008: 43, see also Cajete, 2000; Johnson and Murton, 2007). This marginalization of alternate philosophies, epistemologies, and axiologies has led to a reliance on western methodologies in most scholarly research.

Indigenous resistance is however strong and growing, and Indigenist scholars argue that the development and acceptance of an Indigenous research paradigm by a broader academic audience has progressed from an initial stage (stage one) where "in order to have their work considered in scholarly academic realms they [Indigenist scholars] strove to be western researchers" (P. Steinhauer, 2001: 15), through an intermediary stage (stage two) where Indigenous perspectives were 'allowed', but generally "defined in terms of the exotic", consequently "marginaliz[ing] Indigenous perspectives in the world of research" (Urion, Norton, and Porter, 1995: 56-57). Many scholars now argue that Indigenous research has reached a point of 'decolonization', a third stage, best articulated by L.T. Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), which suggests a process of Indigenizing western methodologies, while challenging the use of western methods for Indigenist research. Importantly *Decolonizing Methodologies* powerfully discusses the role "colonizing knowledges" plays in the establishment and privileging of western knowledge using Said's (1978: 7) notion of "positional superiority" (L.T. Smith, 1999: 58). As Scheurich and Young (1997: 7) state, "when any group within a large, complex civilization significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the ways of the dominant group not only become the dominant ways of that civilization, but also these ways become so deeply embedded that they typically are seen as 'natural' or appropriate norms rather than as historically evolved social constructions." Hence, research methodologies continue to operate within western epistemologies, and socially constructed knowledge is generated through these privileged epistemologies and methodologies, with the result that a "racialized research industry still prevails" (Rigney, 1999: 113), inferring a western supremacy (Mentore, 2007: 68).

Wilson argues that in response, Indigenist scholarship is entering a fourth stage, one where the acceptance of Indigenous paradigms within academia will allow for "research to honour and illuminate Indigenous worldviews", as well as explore Indigenous methodologies and methods as legitimate within academia (2008: 54). Although academic racism will "not be overcome by simply changing the attitudes and values of researchers, nor will it be overcome by simply adding Indigenous researchers to the academy of research and stirring" (Rigney, 1999: 114), from a knowledge paradigm perspective, the introduction and acceptance of Indigenous methodologies clearly identifies an epistemological positioning distinct from western research epistemology (Kovak, 2009: 81). Shifting away from colonizing methodologies allows for an overcoming of the colonial legacy that continues to define engagement with Indigenous peoples

and to contribute to the process of allowing Indigenous peoples to define themselves (Peters and Wolfe-Keddie, 1995: 100). From this perspective, Indigenous methodologies become a legitimate and autonomous research process, allowing research with Indigenous peoples to be carried out respectfully and ethically from *Indigenous* perspectives, thereby challenging western research paradigms (Louis, 2007: 130). If accepted as such, knowledge production is no longer acultural nor apolitical (Kovak, 2009: 30-32).

Geographic research and engagement with Indigenous peoples in particular continues to be inextricably linked to colonialism, and consequently, "studying Indigenous geographies is fraught with ethical and political dilemmas" (de Leeuw *et al.*, 2012: 180). Early geographic research often conflated Indigenous peoples and the natural environment through the narrative of the 'noble savage', where the world was envisioned as "a benign Indian landscape" (Denevan, 1992: 369) or as "a pristine natural kingdom" (Shetler, 1991: 226). Through this narrative, Indigenous peoples were contrasted with 'modernity' (Blaut, 1992; Braun, 2002: 33; Sack, 1986; Sauer, 1975; Tuan, 1971), thereby further fixing an essentialized assumption of 'Indigeneity' within the discipline.

More recently however, geographic research increasingly recognizes this colonial history, and is shifting towards more complex understandings of Indigeneity (see Cameron *et al.*, 2014; de Leeuw *et al.*, 2012; Mollett, 2013; Robertson, 2011; Sundberg, 2014; Valdivia, 2005). While continuing to recognize Indigenous responsibilities and relationships to land, Indigenous geographies now require geographers to acknowledge the essentially different meaning that landscapes, places, and environments can hold for different peoples (Shaw *et al.*, 2006). By engaging with Indigenous paradigms as a critical element of Indigenous methodologies, geography, and this project as a contribution to that discipline, can begin to recognize how these Indigenous geographic understandings are different.

Thus, although methodological approaches for working with Indigenous communities are often in line with those identified by scholars as feminist or PAR methodologies, as noted by Fitzgerald (2004), Shaw *et al.* (2006), and L.T. Smith (1999), and while it is similarly accepted that these geographers have made some of the most significant contributions to situating the politics and positionalities of geographical research and researchers in subaltern communities (e.g. Cameron *et al.*, 2014; de Leeuw *et al.*, 2012; McDowell, 1992a; Miles and Crush, 1993; Mollett, 2013; Momsen, 1993; Roberson, 2011; Rose, 1993; Sundberg, 2014; Valdivia, 2005), it

is important to recognize the cultural, intellectual, and ideological differences in paradigmatic approaches of Indigenous methodologies. This project aims to push beyond 'decolonizing methodologies' (stage three) and contribute to the active acceptance of Indigenous research methodologies as a legitimate and independent alternative to western methodologies (stage four).

Indigenous Methodologies

Engaging in research with Indigenous peoples has historically been fraught with notions of cultural appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous knowledge through western paradigms of essentialist, imperialist methodologies and the classic Orientalist division between 'us' and 'other.' This process of distinguishing 'us' from 'other' creates the necessary distance between worlds or cultures, and allows for the formation of a "collective daydream" of the 'other,' one often composed of inaccurate or exaggerated mythologies of place inscribed and/or reinforced upon western thoughts (Said, 1978: 52-55).

In contrast, since the early 2000s, Indigenous scholars have begun writing about Indigenous research paradigms and principles,[37] and increasingly they have been joined by non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous communities.[38] Indigenous scholars and these politically aligned non-Indigenous scholars argue that the traditional research model is complicit in producing many of the historical circumstances that are undermining Indigenous peoples' autonomy (for example, Battiste and Youngblood Henderson, 2000). For Indigenous peoples, Indigenist research is not the complete rejection of all western theory, research, or knowledge; rather it is about centring Indigenous ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies, and understanding from Indigenous perspectives and purposes, through the use of Indigenous paradigms (Louis, 2007: 131-132; L.T. Smith, 1999: 39). However, Indigenist research methodologies "shift the *power* of the research in controlling the research knowledge, processes, and outcomes, allowing expressions of Indigenous voice and representational involvement in interpreting findings" (Kovak, 2009: 82, emphasis mine).

As a scholar who has dedicated much of his life work to defining Indigenous paradigms, Wilson argues the need for a shift to these alternate paradigms as an essential component of Indigenous knowledge, the philosophy behind that knowledge, and Indigenous research and

[37] See for example Ball and Janyst, 2008; Cajete, 2000; Graveline, 2000; Kovach 2009; Little Bear, 2000; Louis 2007; Simpson, 2004; L.T. Smith 1999; E, Steinhauer, 2002; Tester and Irniq, 2008; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson 2008.

[38] For example, Castleden *et al.* 2008; 2012b; DeLemos, 2006; Hodge and Lester, 2006; Koster *et al.*, 2012: 197; Lemelin *et al.* 2010.

research methodologies by all researchers committed to socially just research with Indigenous peoples (2003; 2007; 2008).[39] He defines paradigm as a "set of underlying beliefs that guide our actions," and these beliefs include "reality (ontology), knowing reality (epistemology), ethics and morals (axiology), and how we get to know reality (methodology)" (Wilson, 2008: 13). He includes as essential to his understanding of an Indigenous paradigm the inclusion of Indigenous beliefs, values, and customs within the research process, thereby improving sensitivity; an insistence upon Indigenous decision-making with regards to study subjects; incorporation of Indigenous cosmology, worldview, epistemology, and ethical beliefs into the methodologies; and operating from the distinct perspective of Indigeneity (*ibid*: 15). Finally, Wilson argues that a strong Indigenous research paradigm can provide access to the uniqueness of Indigenous cultures and encourage a greater appreciation of Indigenous history and worldviews, thus allowing Indigenous peoples to look towards the future and lead to a better understanding of, and provision for, the needs of Indigenous peoples while allowing for the critical examination of the differences Indigenous people have in terms of their ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (*ibid*: 19-21).

Consequently, Rigney, supported by several Indigenous scholars,[40] insists that Indigenous peoples be involved in defining, controlling, and owning epistemologies and ontologies that value and legitimate the Indigenous experience as part of Indigenous methodologies (1999: 114). Similarly, Brosius and Hitchner (2010, 156) suggest that a new politics of knowledge is needed that embraces research methods designed to support multiple perspectives and forms of agency. Mulrennan *et al.* further claim that such an alternative research paradigm would acknowledge the equitable involvement of all partners in the research process and the democratization of knowledge through a validation of alternative perspectives, knowledges, methods (2012: 246). It would also emphasize the need for equitable, useful, and timely dissemination, and would be committed to action and fostering social change as an integral part of the research process. It was with these concerns and responses in mind that I approached my research project. In this next section, I outline some of my own experiences of research within an Indigenist

[39] Wilson's philosophy is echoed by several other Indigenous scholars cited in the following passages, including: Cajete, 2000; Deloria, 1995; Koster *et al.*, 2012: 198; Kovach, 2009; Louis, 2007; Makokis, 2001; Rigney, 1999; L.T. Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 2001 amongst others.

[40] See also Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Cole, 2002; de Leeuw *et al.*, 2012; Graveline, 2000; Kovak, 2009; Louis, 2007; Martin, 2003; McIvor, 2010; Simpson, 2004; L.T. Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2008.

methodological approach, as well as sharing how this research project changed both my intellectual processes and my perspectives on those processes.

My Journey

Ball and Janyst (2008: 38) speak of a time for self-confrontation. And so I am now confronting myself and my research methodologies – did I "do it in a good way" (Ball and Janyst, 2008; Kovak, 2009), and did I engage with the research within Indigenous paradigms, with the guidelines of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility? Did I follow some, all, or any of the research principles discussed above (see also Atkinson, 2001: 10; Kovak, 2009: 48; Makokis, 2001: 96-97; Schnarch, 2004: 81; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008: 59)? Was I grounded in Indigenous epistemologies? Wilson argues that research is ceremony, and that the "purpose of ceremony is to build stronger relationships ... and to raise levels of consciousness and insight into our world" (2008: 137) – did I create ceremony?

Much of what is written on Indigenous research and Indigenous methodologies writes from the perspective that western researchers have no place in conducting Indigenous research (McGregor *et al.*, 2010: 119; Rigney, 1999; L.T. Smith, 1999; E. Steinhauer, 2002: 70). From her Indigenous perspective, L.T. Smith quite clearly states that:

> It galls us that western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. It angers us when practices linked to the last century, and the centuries before that, are still employed to deny the validity of Indigenous peoples' claim to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-determination, to the survival of our language and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems for living without our environments (1999: 1).

Reading several articles, books, and pages of academic literature written from L.T. Smith's perspective leaves me seriously doubting my place in Indigenous research. How can I argue with the cries and complaints of the marginalized, how can I ignore these Indigenous voices calling for freedom from continuing intellectual colonialism, and why would I wish to impose myself upon Indigenous peoples when they have already been imposed upon by dominant cultures for centuries? Louis and Grossman acknowledge that these types of intense controversies over research ethics lead some researchers to "avoid working with Indigenous peoples, in fear of causing offense or misunderstanding" (2009: 4). However, they go on to state

that they "feel that it would be a mistake to avoid working with Indigenous communities due to the sensitivity of this relationship. If anything, building mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous nations are a challenge for geography as a discipline to overcome its colonial and imperial past, and a unique opportunity to remake itself. It is the arrogance of powerful academic institutions that generates most of the friction with Native peoples" (*ibid*: 4).

Ward Churchill first proposed the term "Indigenist research" as a means of including both Indigenous scholars and politically aligned non-Indigenous scholars, defining an Indigenist as "one who not only takes the rights of Indigenous peoples as the highest priority ... but that also draws on the traditions – the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of value – evolved over many thousands of years by Native peoples the world over" (1996: 509). Simpson advocates for the idea that Indigenist thinkers encourage the recovery and promotion of "Traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems as an important process in decolonizing Indigenous nations and their relationships with settler governments," in particular by advancing critiques to and creating alternatives to present social, political, economic, and philosophical conditions (2004: 373). Importantly, *Indigenist* in this context is not synonymous with *Indigenous*, since "Indigenous scholars may not work from an Indigenist or decolonizing theoretical framework, and similarly it is possible for a non-Indigenous scholar to work from within an Indigenous framework" (*ibid*: 382, fn1).

Unsurprisingly, various scholars have differing opinions as to how to define Indigenist research. While Rigney defiantly states that "Indigenist research is research by Indigenous Australians whose primary informants are Indigenous Australians and whose goals are to serve and inform the Indigenous struggle for self-determination" (1999: 118 see also Rigney 1995; 1997a; 1997b; 1998), other Indigenous scholars support the idea of non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous communities, as long as they are willing to engage with Indigenous paradigms, adhere to Indigenous research principles, and accept Indigenous epistemologies (Ball and Jaynst, 2008; Churchill, 1996; Castleden and Kurszewski, 2000; Davis, 2010; Koster *et al.*, 2012; Kovak, 2009; Louis, 2007; McIvor, 2010; Simpson, 2004; Wilson, 2003; 2007; 2008).

Churchill (1996), Simpson (2004), Wilson (2007), and McIvor (2010) insist that "an Indigenist paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets" (Wilson, 2007: 193), and that it neither can, nor should be claimed solely by those who identify as "Aboriginal" (*ibid*). Koster *et al.* argue that Indigenous paradigms can emerge when researchers are attentive

to the needs and voices of the community they are working with (2012: 205). Grande introduces the similar concept of 'Red Pedagogy,' claiming it is "at the liminal and intellectual borderlands where Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars encounter one another" (2008: 234), and Davis has collected a mixed group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars together to explore the idea of 'ethical space,' which "articulates the possibilities of potential relationships that lie at the confluence of two disparate ontological and epistemological worlds" (2010: 3). Furthermore, McIvor (2010) outlined a list created by a group of Indigenous scholars to help define Indigenist scholarship, which nowhere suggests that ethnicity defines ability to conduct what she defines as Indigenist research. I hesitate to enter into this definitional conflict, however it seems that as a term that deliberately includes supportive, non-Indigenous researchers willing to adhere to important, particular tenets, 'Indigenist research' so defined simplifies the language necessary to discuss important differences in methodology, and so henceforth, I will apply this understanding of the term.

During my year of fieldwork, I met with several challenges, and was presented with many opportunities. What I have learned about conducting research within Indigenous paradigms principally comes from exploring these challenges and opportunities in a critically reflexive way, including incorporating feedback I received prior to, during, and after the fieldwork visit. So what have I learned?

1. I learned that co-creating my research project is important, not just for the peoples for whom the research is for, but for the research itself.

The co-creation of a research project begins with being welcomed into Indigenous communities, and in this regards, it must be a community choice to establish a partnership. Furthermore, asking permission, and only proceeding when granted access demonstrates respect for Indigenous peoples, communities, and worldviews (Koster *et al.*, 2012: 207). I travelled to the Rupununi prior to beginning my research to seek permission from each of the Village Councils, from the District Toshaos Councils, as autonomous regional governing bodies, and the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), the South Central Peoples' Development Agency (SCPDA), and the District Toshaos Council (DTC) as representative Indigenous organizations within the region. In seeking this permission, I offered the communities the choice of whether to establish a partnership or not, and in doing so, I accepted

Indigenous "ethical checks and balances to ensure that research [would] be conducted with communities in a manner that respected cultural and ethical protocols" (Castleden *et al.*, 2012b: 165).

When I first approached the communities I visited for this research project, I arrived in each village with a proposal prepared, in line with university requirements, however unfortunately defiantly outside of Indigenous methodologies. Nevertheless, I was presented with a challenge that I feel evolved into a great opportunity. While I was presenting my ideas for a research project focused on Brazilian migration into the Rupununi region of Guyana to the District Toshaos Council, several of the Toshaos expressed interest in the project, with a slight twist – the vast majority felt that the opposite migration pattern was of far greater interest to the communities (Indigenous migration from the Rupununi into Brazil), and they felt that this research project could be very helpful for the region. My journal notes:

> *As the Toshaos gathered around me, their apparent interest growing, they began to ask questions, but they were really far more interested in Indigenous migration to Brazil. They are very interested in the ideas of the border, and Rick*[41] *says if the work can be used to lobby for the continuance of rights they have now to pass freely across the border it would be good. They have suggested two villages that would be particularly interested in this research project....*

I was being challenged to shift the focus of my research project, already approved by the university. However, the opportunity I was presented with was to co-create my research project, vastly improving the relevance of my research for the communities I would be working with. I feel grateful that the District Toshaos Councils and Village Councils were willing to discuss my project with me considering I had developed the initial ideas outside of community consultation, however, I am even more grateful that together we improved the research proposal since as Koster *et al.* (2012: 205) note, "working together executed a project that met the most important needs of the community while also meeting academic needs," and Indigenous paradigms can emerge only "when researchers are attentive to the needs and voices of the community."

[41] All names are pseudonyms. To be discussed further below.

2. I learned that collaboration in the interpretation of knowledge is both more engaging and leads to more accurate conclusions.

This is similar to my first learning, in that it encourages the co-creation of the project, but this learning expands upon this initial concept, suggesting that co-creation of the research *process* is also essential to the success of the project. As Castleden *et al.* note, there is a need to "not only involve, but also collaborate with communities" through all stages of the research process (2012b: 162), and that "sharing the journey with Indigenous peoples is the most important part of such a research process" (Hodge and Lester, 2006: 45). This is a lesson I am still learning.

During the course of my project, I worked together with community leaders, representatives, and Councils in the development of research questions, I accepted suggestions for interviewees, and was open to methods I had not considered, such as focus groups and landscape-conversations (discussed further below). However, I failed to include the communities during the analysis component of my project, constrained by my belief that as a graduate student learning to do research, I was required to engage with this in traditional, independent manners. Having learned more during this research journey, I would accept Castleden *et al.*'s assertion that "shared analysis increases accuracy, it provides context, it ensures a community voice, it's respectful, and it's analysis with community, not about community" (2012b: 170), and if presented with another opportunity to engage in research with Indigenous peoples, I would change this aspect of my process.

However, I do recognize that exchange of knowledge is essential to ethical research, and in light of this, I sought 'peer-review' from the Indigenous peoples with whom I originally spoke, as well as their communities within the broader region. I returned drafts of chapters, as requested, for review, and incorporated suggestions that were presented. And I returned to the region for a second field visit purposefully to present my results for feedback, criticism, or confirmation. During this second field visit, a copy of a draft summary was given to each research participant, and for each participating Village Council. While these presentations were distanced from the difficult academic language generally used in the production of research results, I still felt that oral communication would be the most effective means for communicating with the communities, and therefore organized community meetings, suggested as the best means of engaging community members in the review and corroboration of results (*ibid*: 170).

Mulrennan *et al.* argue that oral presentations, supported by photographs and other visual material are an effective alternative or supplement to written reports for knowledge sharing, and for these feedback and validation presentations I prepared a series of posters created for display in order to better communicate the research findings (2012: 254).[42] And indeed, the findings changed based on feedback incorporated during these sessions.

These feedback sessions were clearly appreciated by the communities, and the validation received for the research project was for me the most rewarding experience of the entire process. One community member's comments were particularly memorable, as he stood up to say:

> *Our ancestors of the Rupununi would have wanted to see this presentation and would have applauded it and said these things for themselves. Our feelings for the border, you brought it out how they saw it, you captured how the ancestors would have said it ... We need to stand up and live our histories.*

Through his passionate words, a confirmation that the research was conducted with respect for Makushi and Wapishana epistemologies is evident. But perhaps more importantly, this research project may be encouraging the Makushi and Wapishana to remember and 'live their histories,' and to re-engage with those same Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies that define them as Rupununi peoples.

Ball and Jaynst highlight the complications that can arise by allowing communities to control the outputs of research projects in this collaborative manner, including lengthy turnaround times for community review and feedback, higher expenses, and indeterminate outcomes, but they point out that valid, useful findings potentially as part of the larger goal of "restorative social justice" can emerge only when Indigenous participants are recognized as partners in generating and interpreting data (2008: 44-45).

Finally, since Koster *et al.* believe that sharing results in meaningful ways, helps maintain research honesty, and increases the utility of the research (2012: 207), a copy of the final research report, of this dissertation document, will be given to each participating Village Council upon completion, which they will own and have the rights to use in the ways they feel are most useful for them.[43]

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[42] See Appendix 3: Feedback and Validation Posters. Due to the lack of infrastructure (*ie*. electricity), other types of visual/presentation materials were not practical.

[43] This type of research arrangement is explained by Peake and de Souza (2010: 114) as 'academic feminism', where while the benefits of the partnership for the academic are acknowledged, transformative, locally defined benefits for the communities working with the researcher are prioritized.

With all of this in mind, Grimwood *et al.* have introduced the term "engaged acclimatization" as an attempt to balance power relationships between different knowledge systems, arguing that the researcher must approach the research field learning perspective to "facilitate the shift from research driven by expertise, certainty, and efficiency to humility, ambiguity, and a willingness to deal with the flux in the processes, practices, peoples, and places that constitute research" (2012: 221). Nakamura suggests that this learner perspective allows researchers to "be sensitive, open-minded, and ready to deal with unexpected issues while striving to avoid misrepresentation, misinterpretation, and exploitation of Indigenous knowledge" (2010: 100). While not only do I firmly believe in my status as a student, I found it very important to consistently position myself within the community as a learner, which was apparent in so many ways beyond the research motive. In one village, I was invited to accompany two women to their farm, and my ignorance could not have been more apparent:

> *They begin to lift up giant leaves arranged on the ground – banana leaves I am told after enquiring, mixed with cassava leaves and others that naturally grow together with the cassava plant that will impart the kari[44] with a good flavour.... Then they start with the cassava. John starts to pedal the upside down bicycle frame that has been connected to a giant grinder, Bessie washes the cassava in their murky soaking water, and Jessa grinds. The tub it fills is a re-claimed tire, and Jessa says "when y'all waste a tire, we are still using it." The matapi[45] comes out, and they have constructed a lever system to help strain the troughs of grated cassava.... We tidy up and then get on our bikes. Bessie has all the staples left behind previously (sugar, flour, etc.), and a pumpkin, and a set of potatoes. Jessa has the big pail of kari on her bike rack and a towel on the seat, which is broken, and I have the other pail of kari over one handle, making the bike very difficult to handle, but I won't complain, as I want to help, since I have been left useless during the farming activities....*

Layers of ignorance appear upon close reading of this passage. The botanical knowledge of plant species identification by leaves; the cultural knowledge embedded in the processing and production of bitter cassava products, wherein the original plant as the staple food source in the Rupununi is highly poisonous; technological ignorance, demonstrated by the re-use of a bicycle, a tire, and the lever system; and physical ignorance as I struggle with transporting my share of the produce while my colleagues do not seem to have problems, even though Bessie is a young child, and Jessa's bicycle is broken. I am very aware that I am no expert.

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[44] Kari is a traditional drink made in the Rupununi from bitter cassava (*Manihot esculenta*).
[45] A matapi is a type of basket woven from plant fibres used to squeeze the naturally occurring cyanide from grated cassava as part of the process to make the root safe for consumption.

3. I learned that privileging Indigenous voices is challenging but more exciting and more relevant research is the result.

I have two key points to make here. First, engaging with Indigenous peoples in a respectful way means being prepared to listen to the knowledge they choose to share with you. Wilson notes that "to share information is to make connections with ideas" and "to criticize or judge another is really only showing ignorance of the possibility of other points of view" (2008: 133-134). During more formal conversations purportedly about migration across the border, I learned much about Indigenous language, conservation and resource management, traditional cultural practices, local cosmology, and Indigenous perspectives on climate change. Perhaps this is a reflection of my skills as a researcher, that I could not guide the conversation in an appropriate manner. However, I feel it is more an example of respect, by listening to what people want to tell you and allowing their ideas to guide the conversation. Mulrennan *et al.* (2012: 250) and Wilson (2008: 135) also note the importance of listening, and Nakamura expands on their ideas, claiming that flexibility is an important aspect of cross-cultural research, since as you listen to Indigenous voices, you can reflect upon what you are learning from them, instead of what you are demanding from them (2010: 101).

Furthermore, informal conversations often allow the researcher to gain important insights into village complexities, and can undoubtedly add context to any research project. As Grimwood *et al.* state, "research is not only about listening to stories, but also listening *for* stories" as learning "thus becomes indirect, embodied, emotional, and imprecise" (2012: 221, see also Hunt, 2014: 27). I recorded some of these experiences in my fieldwork journal, and re-reading these passages transports me back to the places I was in by reminding me of events or particular concerns that were shared with me:

> *I watch the full moon rise, a big orange ball, and I feel like it's the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Devin comes to chat, and says he should have brought me to the farm yesterday to a full moon storytelling session his aunts participate in, where they share cultural stories in an informal way, sometimes in Wapishana, sometimes in English.... He lives outside the village, outside the titled area even, and he has a theory about village life. When you stay living in the village, you become a villager, more Guyanese than Indigenous or Wapishana, and you forget your way of life....*

Reading this reflexively, I feel that Devin was expressing a common concern amongst villagers and communities, of a loss of culture, of a potential loss of language, and how he feels his community needs to reflect on these changes by engaging in traditional storytelling like his

aunts, or escaping from the village to live on the farm. While these were not the central concerns of my research, they were important issues raised by several villagers across the region, and potentially, by listening deeply, I can hear how these concerns also impact upon migration, particularly of the Wapishana and Makushi across to Brazil. I listen, and let the stories tell themselves.

By privileging Indigenous voices in research, Indigenist research focuses on the "lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations, and struggles" of Indigenous peoples and "given the history of exploitation, suspicion, misunderstanding, and prejudice, it is particularly appropriate that Indigenous [peoples] access and express their experiences" (Rigney, 1999: 117). Essentially, by privileging Indigenous voice, Indigenist research is demonstrating respect to Indigenous peoples, communities, traditions, and cultures, an important component of Indigenous paradigms.

The second point I would like to make about embracing Indigenous voice is on the question of anonymity in research. Traditional research ethics call for protection of sources and confidentiality of information, and when I submitted my research proposal to the university for Ethics Approval, this is what I promised.[46] However, I have come to understand that many people, when they give traditional knowledge, would prefer that it be acknowledged as theirs (Castleden *et al.*, 2012b: 172), since "naming is part of Indigenous oral tradition that calls for identifying the source of knowledge and situating knowledge with reference to particular places and cultural communities" (Ball and Jaynst, 2008: 42). Other researchers working with Indigenous peoples have begun to argue for this, and have devised various means of compromising, as for example Ball and Jaynst (2008) who ask participants if they wish to be anonymous or if they prefer to be named (including communities), and include both variations together in their research reports. Mulrennan *et al.* (2001: 254) suggest that with the incorporation of direct quotes, both local perspectives and local voices can be privileged, allowing for knowledge sharing within Indigenous paradigms to be highlighted. Finally, Grimwood *et al.* (2002: 216) note that there is a growing acceptance for the Indigenous protocol of granting participants the choice of being named in the research, "which signals special knowledge-sharing relationships and the participants' custodial ownership of that knowledge."

[46] Although my supervisor assures me it is quite common outside of Indigenous research to name research participants if they wish to be named, I was unaware of this when I began this research project (Peake, personal communication).

Following all of this advice, and following traditions sacred to Indigenous peoples, I would offer research participants the choice of anonymity if given the opportunity to engage in Indigenist research again. This is something else I am still learning.

4. I have learned that building and maintaining relationships is the most important component of a good research methodology, and that the research process is more important than the research outcome.

Eleven months is a long time to spend in a place, even if that time was spent shifting from one village to another. During my time on this fieldwork visit, I reconnected with friends from the Region that I had met previously in Georgetown, sometimes in unusual circumstances:

> *We chance a cut across a grassy expanse, but we get stuck. Simon smiles over at us, and laughingly says, "this road made a monkey out of me." First they try putting a big rope under one wheel, but the tires still spin, and we sink deeper into the mud. Then, they take the planks off the sides of the tray to wedge under the back wheels, and try to reverse onto them, but the truck only digs deeper down. Then they get out a jack and a spade, and they jack up the three worst wheels, using the fourth plank to support the jack, but when the third wheel (front) gets up, the truck falls onto it, shattering the wood. We try again to move, but we still can't get out. Then, Harvey arrives and drifts across the savannah to help – I know one person in the whole Rupununi, and it's him that comes to pull us out.*

However, it is not long that I know only "one person in the whole Rupununi," and soon I am finding myself settling into various networks. As I shift from one place to another, I am offered suggestions of where to go and who to speak with in the next community. And as I wind my way back out, I re-connect with friends I have made during my time there. As Wilson emphasises in his discussion of relational accountability, relationships are essential to any research endeavor, and he believes that "relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality" (Wilson, 2008: 6). Castleden *et al.* (2012a: 157) note that relationships can help strengthen customary institutions, and build local research capacity, and de Leeuw *et al.* (2012) suggest that friendships forged allow for a more ethical research paradigm.

The relationships I developed while undertaking this research were vital to both the research project, and to my growth as a learner and as a person. The generous gifts of knowledge were obviously crucial for the completion of the research project. However, more valuable from my perspective were the time and friendship so freely given, the cup of tea, the kind word, the stories shared, the invitations to experience different places and events, and the

generosity of spirit devoted to living in the Rupununi. As Louis and Grossman (2009: 4) note, continuing relationships beyond the research project is expected, and I presume that my ongoing communications from new friends and colleagues from the Rupununi will continue to inform my research, as well as to develop our relationships. From my perspective, the forming of these relationships has been the most important part of this research process.

However, another important aspect of process includes the methods chosen when conducting Indigenist research, specifically focusing on Indigenous methods. Wilson explains that traditional Indigenous research emphasizes learning by "watching and doing" with the aim of gaining familiarity with a group, and to "emphasize face-to-face relationships and sharing of daily living experiences" (2008: 40). Similarly, observation is suggested by Deloria (1999: 34) and Kovak (2009: 34) as a means to learn about relationships in the natural world, and the relationship building that this sharing and participating entails is an important aspect of ethical Indigenist research (Wilson, 2008: 40). Weber-Pillwax (2001: 171) believes that by living in communities and spending time on the landscape, the researcher can gain a deeper appreciation of the peoples who live there and the context within which they live, allowing the researcher to better understand the information and stories they are given. Grimwood *et al.* note that "elusive and powerful lessons" can be absorbed through an immersive experience, and by unforeseen opportunities to interact with community research participants on the land, as "informal conversations and serendipitous moments are opportunities for place-based learning and relationship development that add depth and meaning to the formal project components" (2012: 222, see also Johnson, 2010: 7). Much of my time during fieldwork was very usefully spent "watching and doing," contributing to both my intellectual and my personal development.

Additionally, Indigenist research tends to prefer conversational and storytelling approaches (Ball and Jaynst, 2008; Cajete, 2000; Chamberlain, 2000; Christensen, 2012; Cole, 2002; Johnson, 2010; Johnson and Murton, 2007; Kovak, 2009; McGregor *et al.*, 2010; McIvor, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Wilson insists that if interviews are required, they should be open-ended and dialogue based, to allow information sharing, and he notes this type of conversational method contributes significantly to the relationship development (2008: 41), however he insists that it is the responsibility of the listener to learn and grow (*ibid*: 135). For me, storytelling was an important method of information sharing during my research experience. Occasionally stories interrupted conversation, but more often, stories were the focus of the discussion, and through

listening to the various levels of stories, from the sacred, the mythological, or personal (*ibid*: 98), separate or intertwined, I was able to 'listen, learn, and grow,' while situating my research within Indigenous epistemologies.

Significantly, I found that combining these two techniques was one of the most useful research methods, in a type of 'landscape-conversation,' or 'walking-interview.' Grimwood *et al.* suggest that being in place while conversing made more tangible the meanings and experiences that the participant inscribed within place (2012: 222), and I found that often when moving upon the landscape, people were inspired to tell me stories they likely would not have recalled in standard interview practices. For example, in one conversation I had with a woman while walking through her village to the edge of the pond nearby, we stopped to look at some hills in the distance. While the intent of the walk was to show me the pond, as we moved through the landscape, Doris shared many other stories with me, as for example:

Doris: And that's mango trees. Behind this here mountain, you go right in the middle of the ground is, is a road there, on both sides is planted cassava. Right to the end. They have different mountain here, you see, and from there they have a little bush, like that tree there? They call that Caterpillar Mountain.
Katie: Caterpillar Mountain?
Doris: Um-hm.
Katie: Ok.
Doris: If you have farm now, and you start like, you have to burn the farm, and it reach that part there, it will affect that part, it have rocks there, you cannot touch it. If the fire touch it and burn down right through, in rainy season time, you cannot see cassava. Plenty plenty plenty caterpillars come out. Because of the burn down. Yes. So if you see black, green, all up on the cassava plant, they will eat it up, eat it up, eat it up. So they, they, when they have to cut farm, they avoid from burning it.
Katie: Yeah.
Doris: Yeah, because the caterpillar's Mother is there, they say, there in that rock in the rock is there, so that's why they say avoid burning it, so they have to make it, when it's rainy season, they burn, so that it doesn't go there. But once it burns, then you will see caterpillars.
Katie: Everywhere?
Doris: Everywhere, they will have, Karasabai will have, everywhere, just because of the same mountain.

In just this one excerpt, while walking along a village trail discussing common crops planted within the region, I am introduced to the story of Caterpillar Mountain, how it relates to Indigenous cosmology (through the Caterpillar Mother), the impacts upon the surrounding landscape (a plague of caterpillars), and how the peoples of the region relate to the story, thereby

controlling the impacts upon the environment (careful burning of farmlands). By engaging in this type of specialized conversation, and listening intently, I learn far more than merely about Indigenous agriculture, which while the topic of this initial conversation, obviously is also not the subject of my research. Grimwood *et al.* caution researchers to be "cautious to avoid rigid schedules or unbendable research protocols during community visits. Patience, flexibility, and a willingness to adapt and deal with uncertainty are traits of a respectful researcher" (2012: 222). Grimwood *et al.* also recognize the role of process in research, acknowledging that "uncertainty, variation, and creativity pervade the methods, places, and peoples involved in research," and that "circumstances found within a community, and the relationships crafted between researchers and those communities" are what drives research conducted within Indigenous paradigms (2012: 226).

Essentially, my learnings have taught me that when conducting research with a community it is important to establish a partnership between the community and the researcher based on respect for Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, where the researcher is welcomed and the community participates in developing the research, setting its course and outcomes, and is represented fairly and accurately in the final dissemination of findings. Indigenous peoples have been conducting their own research since their time began (Wilson, 2008), and my inadequacy in these attempts at Indigenist research has often been apparent. I have been humbled by the experiences and relationships I have been exposed to and there are many things I would do differently if given a second chance to conduct further research. Wilson generously notes that "if research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (2008: 135), and Louis and Grossman concede that "individual researchers may make mistakes, but honest mistakes can be forgiven. If we assume we're guests, we may be welcomed, but if we assume we'll be welcomed, we're no longer guests" (2009: 4). "Change is a growing awareness of what I am doing and why" (Wilson, 2008: 136), and while I hope I conducted this research "in a good way" (Ball and Janyst, 2008; Kovak, 2009), even more so I hope I have grown and learned from my research, and that I will continue to be welcomed into the Rupununi communities and afforded the opportunity to 'do it in a better way' in the future.

Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings

The world is a profusion of entangled events (Foucault, 1980: 155).

Walking through the dusty red roads of Lethem, I feel the breezes blow, reminding me that the next rains are never far away. Although carved out from the surrounding savannah landscape, the town is hardly separate from it, with noisy parrots screeching overhead and graceful jabirus taking flight as I pass their nests. The Kanuku Mountains rise up in the distance, allowing simple orientation and navigation through the otherwise confusing village trails that evolved organically rather than through intentional planning. With one exception. As I near the edge of the town, a single dusty red road does not dwindle away as the others do, but continues endlessly into the distance, its destination a different place, far from the savannahs, the jabirus, and the soft breezes.

I wait by the edge of this dusty red road in the gentle rain which has finally come as dawn breaks over the Kanukus, lightening the sky, and I watch the mud-splattered mini-buses arrive, carrying people from inside the savannahs to this town on the edge of the country. But looking at the people arriving, it is already obvious that they have not come to Lethem to stay at this edge. Their presence here is ephemeral, like the floods that accompany the rains, and these people will disappear like the water, slipping away in the same direction the flood water goes once the rains subside: to Brazil.

Raffles argues that "social spatialities are simultaneously contingent yet located," and he uses Massey's entanglement of space and time (Massey, 1994: 120) to describe places as "particular moments in intersecting, spatialized social relations, some of which are 'contained with the place; others stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated too'" (Raffles, 2002: 183). The social relations of the Rupununi are materially embodied in the 'dusty road' and the movement of people along and beyond it, as 'particular moments' of the entangled historical geography of the Rupununi weave together, producing a relational place, where the ghosts of colonialism haunt the people and the places of the present.

These hauntings of the savannahs and their inhabitants, these figurations of colonialism, can be both a window and a mask, since they permit us to peer into earlier times even as they conceal the social realities of the present. Shipley Coddington argues that "haunting is an

analytic that foregrounds connections between the past and the present day" (2011: 743), reinforcing material connections between the "unfinished, contested nature of colonial and postcolonial geographies" (Cameron, 2008: 364). Within Amazonia, Viveiros de Castro (1996: 194) notes that "present-day Amerindian ways of life are not evolutionary events, but rather the consequence of political choices, historical decisions that privileged certain values at the expense of others." Certainly this is the case in the Rupununi, where global economics and regional geopolitics have influenced the development of the savannahs, enfolding the Makushi and Wapishana communities into a foreign world view; a strange place where rubber[47] tempted and cattle invited danger in a strange geography of labour migration and infrastructure development. But how?

By connecting ideas and events that can appear unrelated, haunting can "force attention to elements of the colonial past as active elements of the present" (Shipley Coddington, 2011: 748), a present where cattle haunt the roads and balata haunts the people. Examining the entangled history of early development in the Rupununi reveals patterns, and the interconnections between these industries and their patterns weave a complex picture of the current region, one scarred by this colonial haunting. And as I stand by the side of that dusty road, watching the people empty their lands, I realize that the landscape is still being negotiated, as "places are never stable, and space is never empty. Both are always active, always being made, always in process and in practice. Place and space are always in that flow of becoming ... [where] shifting historical sedimentations form the unreliable ground on which lives are made." (Raffles, 2002: 183). My presence entangles me with these processes and practices, and so I become part of these negotiations.

Beginning with a historical narrative of how cattle came to the Rupununi, this chapter then goes on to link this early history of the cattle industry with the need for a ground connection with the coast and the capital, Georgetown. The resulting 'cattle trail' that emerged as the precursor for the current road is the connector between the colonial past (cattle) and the haunted present (the road), and the impacts of this road development on both the peoples and the places of the Rupununi demonstrate the ongoing injustice of colonialism within the region.

[47] Rubber comes from the *Hevea brasiliensis* tree. In Guyana, close relatives of *Hevea*, the *Manilkara bidentada* and *Manilkara huberi* trees were tapped to produce what is locally known as 'balata'.

Similarly, the colonial history of balata collection is introduced in the second half of the chapter, and similar linkages are drawn from this balata industry, to the introduction of and growing dependence on a cash economy, and finally to the increasing emigration patterns emerging in the Rupununi, where Makushi and Wapishana are leaving their villages to work in Brazil. The impacts these changing migration patterns are having on Indigenous lifeways[48] are of great concern to Rupununi residents, and represent another example of how colonial history continues as a presence in the Rupununi present.

In tracing these colonial spectres to the present, this chapter represents and reflects upon the current concerns of the Makushi and Wapishana peoples of the savannahs, who identified both past and future development of the road as the most important change happening in the Rupununi. Intricately interconnected to the road, this chapter will similarly be the first study specifically focused on labour emigration from the Rupununi,[49] a topic of research specifically identified and requested for examination by the communities during my exploratory field visits. I employ the metaphor of haunting to draw the connections between a colonial past and the material impacts in the present, in a manner similar to Taussig's plea: "What interests me and I hope interests you, too, about the end of the earth where the rain never stops and the trees reach the sky is an ambition as old as the hills, namely, to combine a history of things with a history of people ... forced to find their way through these things" (2004: xix). Thus, this chapter challenges traditional narratives by listening to things (roads, balata) and thing-histories (cattle ranching, migration) as bound to people-histories, and in particular to the voices of the people 'forced to find their way through these things', while haunted by them still.

Cattle Haunting

The early history of the Rupununi is intimately connected with that of Roraima State in neighbouring Brazil, and this is particularly so with regards to the introduction of cattle to the region (Forte and MRU, 1996: 13; Torrado, 2007: 25). When Europeans began exploring the northern savannahs of the upper Rio Branco, there was substantial interest in the "fine grasslands" and their potential for cattle rearing (Hemming, 1990: 322). In 1787, Colonel Manoel da Gama Lobo d'Almada, the future governor of the Captaincy of Rio Negro arrived and

[48] Specific traditions and practices that integrate Indigenous knowledge into everyday life.
[49] The reality of labour emigration from the Rupununi is not absent from the literature (Forte and MRU, 1996; Henfrey, 2002; Riley, 2003: 146; Watkins, 2010: 201), but this is the first study that specifically focuses on the history and future impacts of the migration movement within the region.

noted that "those fertile plains are covered in excellent pastures for cattle, studded with clumps of bush that would afford shade for the animals during the fiercest heat, irrigated by creeks which render them fertile, and with innumerable lakes" (cited in Hemming, 1990: 322). Sometime between 1787 and 1793, Lobo d'Almada began driving cattle into this northernmost extremity of Brazil, and founded the Fazenda Nacional of São Bento (Hemming, 1990: 323; Myers, 1993: 26). He was followed in subsequent years by the Commander of Fort São Joaquim, Nicolau de Sá Sarmento, who founded a ranch at the meeting of the Lower Uraricoera and Takutu Rivers and Captain José Antonio Évora, who founded a ranch on the east bank of the Rio Branco on land behind the fort (Hemming, 1990: 323). As cattle ranching expanded in Roraima State through the end of the 18th century, some of the cattle crossed the rivers, and began running wild in Guyana (Hemming, 1990; Forte and MRU, 1996; Schomburgk, 1840; Watkins, 2010: 199). The ambivalence of the borders in the region[50] allowed Brazilian ranches to settle on the eastern shores of the Takutu River by 1887, with at least one in 1900 at the "present Government station at Bon Success (Lethem)" (John Ogilvie, pers. comm. to Myers, 1993: 14; 26; 28, see also Baldwin, 1946: 37). After the border settlement between Britain and Brazil (1904), many Brazilians opted to stay in British Guiana, while the British took control over those ranches left behind (Baldwin, 1946: 37; Myers, 1993: 14; Torrado, 2007: 26). According to Forte and the Makushi Research Unit (MRU), this introduction of cattle into the "Rio Branco basin[51] in Brazil from 1787 onwards would over time transform the Rupununi economy" (1996: 13).

Consequently, most Rupununi scholars[52] trace the modern history of the Rupununi to the 1890s with the arrival of Harvey Prideaux Colin (HPC) Melville, a Scottish-Jamaican gold prospector.[53] After arriving in Guyana, Melville went to the Rupununi where he almost died of malaria before being rescued by an Atorad[54] family near the Essequibo River, who then adopted

[50] This border ambivalence will be further explored in Chapter Four: Intimate Borders.
[51] Within which the Rupununi falls.
[52] Including: Baldwin, 1946: 45; Bridges, 1985: 6; Farage, 2003: 110; Forte *et al.*, 1992: 14; Henfrey, 1964: 170; Melville, 1956: 30; Myers, 1993: 17, fn 26; Peberdy, 1948: 9, 31; Watkins, 2010: 199.
[53] Of Scottish descent, born in Jamaica. "It has so far proved impossible to give an exact date for the arrival of HPC Melville in the Rupununi. However, John, the eldest child by Melville's first Wapishana wife Janet, was born in 1888, so that 1887 is most likely the latest date for his arrival" (Myers, 1993: 17, fn 26).
[54] The peoples of the Rupununi today include the Wapishana, the Makushi, and the Wai-Wai, although they acknowledge that the peoples are more multiple than this, stating that "Our grandfathers tell us that long ago the Rupununi was home to a variety of Indigenous peoples. These peoples included the Atoradnao, Daozai, Tarabainao, Chiibizai dinnao, Arokonnao, Parau yannao, Paowishiyannao, Maoyanao, Karapunnao, Taromnao, Nikanikarunao,

him "and gave him two young sisters to marry" (Bridges, 1985: 6; see also Myers, 1944: 77; Peberdy, 1948: 9, 31). In 1892, Melville acquired 300 cattle from de Rooij (a Dutch trader and one of the first permanent European settlers in the Rupununi) and the family settled near Dadanawa,[55] and set up as cattle ranchers importing cattle from Brazil (Bridges, 1985: 6; Henfrey, 1964: 170; Melville, 1956: 30; Watkins, 2010: 199).

Dadanawa Ranch[56] extended as far as a boat would go up the Rupununi River, into the middle of Wapishana territory (Bridges, 1985: 8) (see Figure 4). In 1919 (Bridges, 1985: 6; J. Forte *et al.*, 1992: 14), or 1920 (Watkins, 2010: 199), Melville sold his herd and Dadanawa Ranch to the Rupununi Development Company (RDC) which continues to hold the land on a ninety-nine year lease[57] (Brock, 1972: 13). Now the largest cattle ranch in Guyana, with 3320 square kilometers of land covered by grazing rights and 25 000 head of cattle[58] (Lighton, 1950: 175; Melville, 1956: 9), the vast grazing lease of the RDC still dominates the South Rupununi geographically.[59] Similar ranches were formed by other early arrivals to the Rupununi, including the American Ben Hart who arrived in 1913, married into the Melville family, and settled at the Good Luck Ranch at Pirará (Bridges, 1985: 119, fn 1; Waugh, 1934: 104); Edward 'Tiny' McTurk, born in British Guiana of British descent, who arrived in 1922 and settled at Karanambu Ranch (Watkins, 2010: 199); and John Ogilvie, a Scotsman who dabbled in the cattle trade in the North Rupununi[60] (Melville, 1956: 30).

And just as the cattle were originally acquired from Brazil, similarly the motivation for ranching in the Rupununi was firmly placed in the Brazilian economy. Manaus and much of the upper Amazon was experiencing a "rubber boom" (Grandin, 2009; Hecht, 2013; Hecht and Cockburn, 2010; Rambali, 1993: 211). From the early eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century the Brazilian Amazon supplied nearly all of the world's rubber, "demand for

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Burokotonao and Macushi peoples, as well as our own people: the Wapichannao" (David *et al.*, 2006:9). For a detailed refutation of extinction in the Caribbean, please refer to M. Forte (2005; 2006) and Ramos (2003).

[55] The Hill of the Macaw Spirit (Watkins, 2010: 199).

[56] Stanley Brock provides a very personal account of Dadanawa Ranch in his memoir "Jungle Cowboy" (1972).

[57] Melville continued to live in the Rupununi, working first as a Local Magistrate and Protector of Indians, and then as the District Commissioner before abandoning his family and leaving for Scotland in 1927 (Bridges, 1985: 6; Farage, 2003: 110). He died in 1930.

[58] Many cattle were left free as approximately 5000 were too wild to ever corral (Brock, 1972: 55).

[59] Importantly, the ranch provides many essential infrastructural services – notably in maintaining road access during the rainy season via a pontoon across the Rupununi River, and has a predominantly Wapishana staff (Baldwin, 1946: 45; Farage, 2003: 110).

[60] Hart and Ogilvie were much more influential in the balata trade, the subject of the second half of this chapter.

Figure 4: Map of the early cattle ranches and balata stations important for the Rupununi

which steadily increased as the Industrial Revolution in the United States and Europe took off" (Grandin, 2009: 26). Vast numbers of people were swarming to the natural groves of rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*), and Brazilian rubber barons were in need of supplies for their workers. Consequently, there was a steady demand for Rupununi cattle for beef (Henfrey, 1964: 171; Melville, 1956: 30; Myers, 1993: 28; Waugh, 1934: 29-30), and during the rainy season, "steam launchers came right up the Takutu from Manaus, to call at the ranches and ship bullocks for the Manaus market" (Bridges, 1985: 23).

The collapse of the Brazilian rubber industry in 1910[61] damaged the cattle industry of the Rupununi (Slater, 2002: 12). However, Hart and Melville persuaded Georgetown of the need to develop a 'cattle trail' to transport live animals from the Rupununi to Georgetown, thereby replacing the Brazilian market with a Guyanese demand (Colchester, 1997: 52; Farage, 2003: 111; Melville, 1956: 31). Hart had previous experience cutting a trail in Mato Grosso (Brazil), and funding was granted to the project because of a World War I influenced increase in demand for beef (Waugh, 1934: 20). Construction of the cattle trail began in 1917, and by 1919 it was completed, with the first herd travelling in 1920 (Melville, 1956: 31). From Lethem,[62] "the trail followed the foot of the Kanuku Mountains for twenty miles [thirty-two kilometres] and then, after rounding the westerly spur, cut across the flat infertile Makushi [North Rupununi] savannahs" (Brock, 1972: 70), through the Essequibo River at Kurupukari, and emerged at the Berbice River, where the cattle would then be transported to the Georgetown market aboard a steamer (Bridges, 1985: 113; Brock, 1972: 50). Many of the cattle were held at Tacama for several weeks, as the steamer journeyed only once per week, and could only manage between fifty and sixty head per trip; from New Amsterdam, they were shipped by rail the one hundred and thirteen kilometres to Georgetown (Brock, 1972: 98).

The trip was arduous. Davidson describes the journey by land along the cattle trail as "a not very pleasant walk or ride of a fortnight or more, a large part of which runs through dense forest. The trail is maintained, but in rainy seasons suffers in parts from swollen creeks, and it is not the custom to drive cattle from the savannas to the coast during certain months of rain"

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[61] This collapse was initiated when Henry Wickham smuggled out 70 000 *Hevea brasiliensis* seeds or plants (some say disguised as orchids) from the Amazon. They were taken to London's Royal Botanic Gardens, and later shipped to Malaysia where rubber plantations could grow, free of Amazonian pests (Grandin, 2009, 31-32; Hecht, 2013, 153-154; Slater, 2002: 12).

[62] Lethem is 100 kilometres north of Dadanawa. The entire cattle trail is approximately 290 kilometres (Melville, 1956: 3).

(Davidson, 1935: 270). Areas were cleared along the trail for rough pasture for cattle during the two week journey (Colchester, 1997: 52), including at the present sites of the villages of Aranaputa and Surama, which essentially evolved due to this cattle-trail industry (Forte and MRU, 1996: 35-41). However, after World War II, the trail gradually fell into disuse due to the establishment of a slaughterhouse and a refrigeration plant at Lethem, linked by a highly subsidized airfreight service to the coast (Colchester, 1997: 52), and by 1953, the trail was considered "closed" (Watkins, 2010: 201). Ranching collapsed entirely after the Rupununi Uprising (1969),[63] as key ranches and out-stations were burned down, and all ranches run by Melville or Hart descendants were converted to state ownership (*ibid*). However, because subsidized flights were no longer available as part of the government response to the Uprising, the trail re-gained its role in cattle transport for the region,[64] although at a greatly diminished capacity.[65]

However, while the trail was gradually declining, Brazilian interests in the route were growing, and the Brazilian government began advocating strongly for a continuous road linking Manaus, across the international border, and through the Rupununi to Georgetown, thereby connecting the Brazilian interior with the export economy of the Caribbean, with further links to global trade.[66] The extant cattle trail appeared to them to be a good template for this future

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[63] Instigating a threat for succession of large areas of Guyanese territory just three years after Independence and after yet another fraudulent election, a group of ranchers and Indigenous peoples, who found themselves increasingly marginalized by decisions made in the capital, seized the government offices in Lethem on January 2nd, 1969, assuming the support of Venezuela (Baines, 2005: 6; A. Bulkan, 2008: 370; Colchester, 1997a: 49-50; Colchester, 1997b: 37-38;). However, no foreign support materialized, and the Guyana Defence Force flew in a well-armed unit which torched ranches and Lethem was retaken, with many rebels (both ranchers and Indigenous peoples) being killed (Baines, 2005: 6; Colchester, 1997a: 50; Colchester *et al.*, 2002: 118). Unable to apprehend any ringleaders, as they had fled across the border to Brazil and then on to Venezuela, the army took 28 Makushi and Wapishana captive (Colchester, 1997a: 50). The rebellious action led to serious consequences for both the ranchers and the Indigenous peoples, as from that time on, the secession and the loyalty of the Makushi and Wapishana to Guyana was openly questioned by the government (Colchester, 1997a: 50; 1997b: 38; Colchester *et al.*, 2002: 26, 118; Hennessey, 2005: 51; Mentore, 2009: 205; Ribeiro, 2006: 29; Whitehead, 2003: 180). Government support for the ranchers was withdrawn, veterinarian services reduced, subsidized flights by the Guyana Airways Corporation were cut back and the cattle herds declined by 85-90% due to the flight of the ringleaders to Venezuela and the decline of air flight service (Baines, 2005: 6; Colchester, 1997a: 50; Colchester *et al.*, 2002: 26, 118). In general, the Uprising marks the "beginning of a time of shortage, political persecutions, and consequent populations movements" (Farage, 2003: 116), in particular towards Brazilian villages, the subject of the second half of this chapter.

[64] Aided in part by the new government policy of 'securing national frontiers', the cattle trail was upgraded between 1971-1973 to a "rough trail ... which allowed access to the Rupununi by four-wheel-drive vehicles during the dry season" (Colchester, 1997: 52).

[65] By the 1990s, the presence of cattle in the Rupununi had declined to less than 10 000 (from a peak of 80 000) and the Rupununi contributed less than 3 percent of national production (Forte *et al.*, 1992: 14; Watkins, 2010: 201).

[66] The advantages of a road linking the Northern Brazilian states to Georgetown include a decrease in shipping times, as trucking freight up to Georgetown reduces time to transport goods from Brazil to North America by one

development, and in 1971, "a joint declaration was signed between Guyana and Brazil for bilateral cooperation in the construction of roads" (Colchester, 1997: 52; Henfrey, 2002; Torrado, 2007: 67). By 1981, the Brazilian government had offered a loan of US fifteen million dollars[67] to the Guyanese government for the construction of the first phase of the road (from Lethem to Kurupukari) (J. Forte, 1996b; Torrado, 2007: 67), and by 1982, a "Memorandum of Understanding on the interconnection of Guyanese and Brazilian Highway Networks" was signed[68] (Colchester, 1997: 52-53). In 1989, the national government agreed to allow construction to begin on the trail, upgrading it to an all-season laterite road which opened in 1992. However, the Guyanese media and local researchers were adamantly clear that this road was not in the interests of Guyana nor of the Rupununi. For example, Colchester states that the primary aim of the road improvement was "to facilitate the traffic of goods and people *from* the state of Roraima in Brazil *to* Guyana's capital, Georgetown" (*ibid*: 53, emphasis original). Similarly, J. Forte notes that "the road is *not* a road from the Guyanese coast to Brazil – it is a road *from* Brazil, practically and symbolically, and from this fact already follow geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations" (1996b: 61, emphasis original). J. Forte (*ibid*) goes on to cite local Guyanese news sources that report that through the "traffic of goods and people from the State of Roraima, the road will provide an important outlet to the Atlantic for the people of Roraima," further emphasizing the suggestion that the road development was biased in favour of the Brazilian nation.

Upon completion of phase one of the road, in 1992 an additional US fourteen million dollar loan was offered to Guyana by Brazil to complete the second phase of the road (between Kurupukari and Mabura Hill) (Colchester, 1997: 54; Torrado, 2007: 67). However, concerns raised by the International Monetary Fund, including policies about structural adjustment measures, caused that organization to veto the loan offer (Colchester, 1997: 54; Torrado, 2007: 67). In response, Brazil claimed that the completion of the road was "essential for their

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week, simply because of the advantages of land travel *versus* water travel (travel to Manaus, downriver, plus one day sailing up the Atlantic coast all necessitates water travel) (Colchester, 1997: 59; Torrado, 2007: 30). Supporting this claim, an official from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations was cited as saying that "... through construction of ... the Lethem-Georgetown road ... Roraima [will] gain access to the markets of the Caribbean and the Northern Hemisphere by a much shorter line ..." (Cited by Ely, 1997: 98).

[67] Financed as a tied aid package securing the services of the Brazilian mining transnational Paranapanema to construct the road and establish ferries at the Takutu and Essequibo rivers (Colchester, 1997: 53).

[68] Brazilian geopolitical interests will be further explored in Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

economy" and offered the completion of the road to Guyana[69] in exchange for lumber, sugar, and rice valued at US five million dollars, and this pressure "pushed the final link to be completed within six months" (Torrado, 2007: 67-68).

Further plans to improve the road into a highway through additional loan extensions from Brazil have been continuous[70] (eg. Guyana Transport Sector Study, 2005), and have been monitored closely by national media and local researchers (Anonymous, 2007a; Anonymous 2007b; Colchester, 1997; J. Forte, 1996b; Gajie, 2007; Henfrey, 2002; LaRose, 2007a; 2007b; Torrado, 2007: 71). That these plans continue and are ongoing is demonstrated by the fact that while I was working on this research project, the World Bank was conducting an investigative study into the potential social and environmental impacts of highway development in the North Rupununi.[71]

Situating the Rupununi into the field of tropical road development, J. Forte (1996b: 66) claims that "if the world has learned anything from the experience of road building through Amazonia, it is that the social and economic costs far outweigh the advantages of easy land communication." Processes involving road construction have been well studied in Amazonia, and most of the findings suggest that the introduction of roads, together with other development projects that follow, can bring deep and significant changes influencing local and Indigenous livelihood strategies and political actions,[72] as well as environmental conflicts to the communities that live in frontier places through land use change.[73] Road ecology, which deliberately "explores and addresses the relationship between the natural environment and the road system" (Forman *et al.*, 2003: 7) has consistently found that as a result of the physical changes road infrastructure brings to a region, numerous projects aimed at improving existing

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[69] Again by Paranapanema.

[70] The recent opening of the Takutu River Bridge is a component of this highway development, and is further explored in Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

[71] I was told by an NRDDB representative that "*a feasibility study was done, and depending on the outcome of the feasibility study, and how the analysis or the assessment of that study within this region, will determine whether the IDB is ok with the road because the people are happy to see the benefits, the people will see how the road will be useful to their development, only then they will go ahead. Otherwise, if they say no, they will not do the road*."

[72] Arima *et al.*, 2005; 2013; Arementeras *et al.*, 2006; Behrens *et al.*, 1994; Behrens, 1996; Bunker, 1985; Fairhead, 1992; Fearnside, 2002; Forman *et al.*, 2003: 7; Hamlin and Salick, 2003; Hecht and Cockburn, 2010; Kensinger, 1995; Nepstad *et al.*, 2001; Santos-Granero and Barclay, 2000; Schmink and Wood, 1992; Scott, 1998; Stewart, 1994; Torrado, 2005; Wilson, 2004.

[73] Alves, 2002; Arima *et al.*, 2005; 2013; Beckerman, 1987; Bunker, 1984; 1985; Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005; Chomitz and Gray, 1996: 487; Fearnside, 1986; Hamlin and Salick, 2003; Kirby *et al.*, 2006: 442; Lima *et al.*, 2006: 31; Morán, 1993; Perz *et al.*, 2008: 86; Pfaff *et al.*, 2007: 113; Salick and Lundberg, 1990; Shoemaker, 1981; R.C. Smith, 1982; Walker *et al.*, 2013: 239; Wilson, 2004.

roads in the Amazon still continue to produce patterns of conflict and degradation (Fearnside, 2002; Nepstad *et al.*, 2001; Torrado, 2007: 40). Roads are unfailingly associated with increased state power and control over communities (Fairhead, 1992; Scott, 1998; Torrado, 2007: 57; Wilson, 2004) and deforestation[74] (Chomitz and Gray, 1996: 487; Pfaff *et al.*, 2007: 113; Walker *et al.*, 2013: 239), typically by "induc[ing] in-migration, increas[ing] agricultural rents, and foster[ing] economic development" (Arima *et al.*, 2005: 525; see also Fearnside, 1986; Lima *et al.*, 2006: 31).

In comparison with research findings surrounding tropical road development within Amazonia, Rupununi road ecologies are fairly typical, and the hopes and concerns of the Makushi and Wapishana reflect those of other communities faced with similar infrastructural development.[75] In particular, many Rupununi residents considered road improvements an enormous benefit for their communities, greatly easing regional access and transportation concerns.[76] While still just a simple laterite road subject to heavy flooding during the rainy season, the post-1992 road has allowed regular communications to be maintained within the region as well as between the North Rupununi communities and both Lethem and Georgetown. Forte and MRU (1996: 51) noted that the post-1992 road made local farming activities easier, particularly during the rainy season. In addition, several residents reported that prior to the road improvements, they were obliged to ride bullock carts, bicycles, or most commonly walk the length of the trail to reach Lethem. In comparison, one community leader reflected that "*now is more easier. The time you find a mini-bus. You go Lethem, you find mini-bus, and go down there and bring you back the same afternoon. Yeah. We hoping that maybe later on in the future we can have more transportation, more easier*." This desire for improved road access is one of the

[74] In Brazilian Amazonia, nearly 90% of the deforestation has occurred within 100km from major roads established under federal development programmes (Alves, 2002: 2903; Kirby *et al.*, 2006: 442; Pfaff *et al.*, 2007: 117).
[75] Arima *et al.* (2005; 2008; 2013) found that tropical roads are often extended beyond the initial planned network, and that these roads can often cause more damage ecologically and socially because of their unregulated nature. During my fieldwork in the South-Rupununi, the South-Central Rupununi, and the South-Pakaraimas District of the Rupununi, I found local residents were equally (and occasionally more so) concerned with this type of road development in and through their communities as the residents of North Rupununi and Central Rupununi. Consequently, in addition to investigating the principal Georgetown-Lethem road that evolved out of the cattle trail (which directly affects the North and Central Rupununi Districts), I am including concerns presented by these three other communities for analysis, since both the South road and the Karasabai road are currently being developed by the Government of Guyana (although without Brazilian funding, and with no current intentions of paving), thus presenting similar development concerns.
[76] Colchester (1997: 54) describes the road as being "of variable quality and some parts are of single lane width, lack proper culverts and are rapidly being washed out," noting that the worst section (between Kurupukari and Mabura Hill) has "been churned into mud."

most frequently mentioned items across Amazonia, as residents reflect on the associated improvements in service provision, especially in health and education (Hamlin and Salick, 2003: 172-3; Wilson, 2004: 525). In the North Rupununi, the Government of Guyana recently made available a health vehicle, permanently stationed at Annai Central. However at least one community researcher was critical of the length of time it took the Government to respond to their needs,[77] stating "*We have, the health vehicle right down there. You know how long we was asking for that vehicle? It recently we get it*." Unfortunately, education services are still awaiting improvements that can be conclusively attributed to the road, as this Toshao notes, "*it difficult really, there is, the children going to secondary school from around here is a problem with them, we have been asking the government to, about seeking a bus or something for the children, that along the road. But we didn't anything*."

However, many Rupununi residents remain optimistic about the possibilities for the road, in particular with regards to improved market access, for both inter-regional and external purchases, as well as for sales of produce outside of communities, including at the national-scale. One Wapishana man noted that there are "*a lot of business interests coming down from Georgetown. Coming down from Georgetown, now you're noticing, slowly, people looking for different opportunities, business opportunities, coming down, going down, you find trucks coming and sell stuff, looking for, opening markets*," indicating that the improved road is facilitating the transportation of goods to more remote areas with greater frequency, and consequently creating business opportunities. Similarly, this Makushi man maintained that "*since this, the road now, was built in '92, it's kind of change, the situation change a little better, because you know, the stuff is now coming from Georgetown, and it is here, and there were people opening up business places and so on where they can sell to the people. And the villagers are now getting their basic needs just nearby, so it is kind of improved*," suggesting that local shops can now be more readily supplied, satisfying basic needs at a local scale, eliminating the need for long journeys along the trail to distant markets.

Common throughout the greater Amazon region, road development assists the facilitation of local market access (Hamlin and Salick, 2003: 164; Perz *et al*., 2008: 86). More importantly, improved road infrastructure and access permit "market access for rural producers [and] allow

[77] While road construction finished in 1992, this conversation was conducted in 2012 indicating a twenty year wait for a health services vehicle to be supplied to the District.

integration among economic sectors" (Perz *et al.*, 2008: 86). Hamlin and Salick (2003: 164) argue that "by linking communities to markets, improving communication and transportation, and allowing more access to the wider Peruvian and global environment – cultural, economic, political, and military – new roads are potent forces in the Amazonian hinterland." One regional leader in the Rupununi echoed this claim, seeing the potential for the road to bring "*market demand in here for raw materials and so forth*" which would allow for:

> *the possibility of opening small industries, instead of sending raw materials, it will now be processing into other products, so that, that's what I see. Even at the village level we have started those small cottage industries where we process peanut to make peanut butter, right, and that's what we use to supply to the snacks program in the schools. So these kind of things that I am talking about. Little spin off, economic spin off, but largely, the market it will be here.*

By claiming that the road will not merely ease transportation within the region, but that there is a potential to vastly alter the area by facilitating the development of local industry, this Wapishana man is arguing that the entire regional economy could be altered through improved road access.

However, there are concerns running parallel to these optimistic market predictions for further improvements to the road, including the possibility that large investors could gradually monopolize local business[78] (J. Forte, 1996b: 67; Schmink and Wood, 1992: 146). Some community members were already noting a growing sense of inequality within the region, recognizing that "*people who have financial opportunities to do business go for it [the road]*," and at least one business venture was suppressed by village-elites politicking.[79]

Similarly, the potential for exploitation of local people and their natural resources within the Rupununi is a real concern, as J. Forte (1996a: 42) notes "Indigenous people ... are often ignorant of these ramifications and can get swamped or even tricked by sophisticated outsiders with access to ready capital." However, situations like these are often more a result of power inequity than ignorance, since just as road building already stimulates deforestation (Perz *et al.*, 2008: 101), the opening of roads can aggravate "the contests over land, minerals, and forest

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[78] These concerns are further explored in Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

[79] It was explained to me that in one village, there was a suggestion for development of a mini-bus service from Lethem. However, the existing local elite of that village already held a monopoly on both the shops and the private transport into this village, and they were reluctant to permit a service that would decrease their profits. They arranged a village meeting, and illicitly attached the attendance sheet as 'signatories of approval' to their proposal to ban the service extension, thereby denying both the local entrepreneur and the local villagers the opportunity to gain greater access to market. Sanders sees these sorts of actions as "the first significant step towards social differentiation within these communities" (1972: 38).

resources" by turning natural resources into commodities (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 140). Concerns over land were increasingly becoming apparent in the Rupununi, and one Toshao explained to me that he "*got like, three calls people call me to ask about land, I told them, I can't speak about lands over the phone. ... And some like, ranching at the road, and I just put a stop to it ... And can I get a land, and I said, no.*" Additionally, illicit extractions were an ongoing concern, particularly in Aishalton where several villagers commented on the presence of Brazilian interests in local amethyst deposits.[80] One Wapishana man described his experience, stating that upon discovering unknown vehicle tracks in his village, he "*get to find out that Brazilians are taking out this purple rocks,*" while another commented more generally that "*materials are being taken out, right, like recently you had the, the interests in semi-precious stones*." That these activities are illegal is presumed, as this woman noted, "*I don't know if they have, they are supposed to have the papers from there, Geology and Mines, but that's why they are here, looking for the amethyst.*" Furthermore, suspicions that these invasions are facilitated by earlier improvements in the road are corroborated by this Wapishana woman who notes that, "*since the road is opening up more, you have more mining going on, more exploitation of Indigenous people*."

Indeed, pessimistic concerns about further road development were voiced from within all villages visited, often largely based on existing outcomes from the previous upgrading of the trail to the road in 1992. One pervasive concern was with the increased invasion of communities by non-community members and the violence associated with their presence. As this Wapishana woman clearly states:

> S*ince they connected that road and the road has been improved, right, you see a lot of coastlanders coming through your communities. Probably heading to the mines, but it's still passing through your communities. Right now you have no control, and they are actually doing the road again, they're working on the road now, right? So if this road becomes a highway sometime in the future, you're then more vulnerable to having, cannot sleeping with your windows open, right, your safety is at risk, because you don't know who passes through, right? So these are some things that I feel the road is bringing. You are going to have an influx of people coming through your communities you don't know who they are, what they bring with them*.

[80] In addition to these smaller mining concerns, there is the large scale problem of the invasion of Brazilian miners into the gold producing areas of the Rupununi, which will be explored further in Chapter Five: Becoming Places. However, it is important to note that this larger scale mining is also being facilitated by the opening of the road, as for example this Wapishana woman notes "*the traffic, is the machines coming ... along the road. I don't know how many excavators pass through here*."

The issue of invasion and violence was described in several manners, and included concerns such as "*stabbing and killing ... slicing up of faces*," "*thieves coming in now*," "*bandits coming up, robbing people, killing people*," "*people from outside, they become some intruders, or some robbers*," "*young girls being kidnapped, they got raped*," and people who "*carry they guns and kill up*." This violence is often perceived to be accompanied by the introduction of drugs and/or alcohol into communities, and the road is generally seen as the conduit, as this Makushi woman notes "*the road is getting bad, and the trucks, the people them, the truck drivers, and the mini-bus, everything running now. So they could easily drop all the 'packages.'*"[81] This increase in violence, banditry, and drug and alcohol activity associated with community invasion is unfortunately common in road-development areas, and the accompanying social insecurity affects communities deeply[82] (Forte and MRU, 1996: 52; Hamlin and Salick, 2003: 163; Schmink and Wood, 1992: 150; Torrado, 2007: 5; Wilson, 2004: 544). As one community leader noted, "*now everybody can reach here. That's what we got to be careful of*."

In addition to violence, drugs, and alcohol, the roads are vectors for seemingly benign or even potentially beneficial introductions as well. However, the opening of local shops and the purchase of vehicles, as well as the acquisition of material items including generators, zinc roof-tops, and radios are viewed with unease by some, as they are seen as examples of how Makushi and Wapishana culture is being corrupted.[83] Within the Rupununi, Colchester finds that "Amerindian communities on the road express mixed opinions about the potential benefits of it being upgraded – some believe the road may lead to their demise as a distinct people" (1997: 54), and J. Forte notes that in "facilitating the migration of landless peoples into new areas [the road has] heralded the destruction of the lifeways of the Amerindian people" (1996b: 66). Henfrey traces these problems back to the opening of the cattle trail, claiming that as the Rupununi was brought under Guyanese influence "changes affected the Wapishana and Makushi, as the presence of ranchers suggested new standards – their control of the land and offers of employment disturbed the Indians old way of life ... Change had destroyed their way of life and their sense of identity – the land was their only livelihood, and it was now controlled by a handful of ranchers" (1964: 171-183).

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[81] 'Packages' in this instance refers to deliveries of drugs, generally marijuana.
[82] During one conversation, I was told that the injury of a Makushi elder and the death of one of her family members while I was in the community was the result of violence associated with a drug overdose.
[83] This will be discussed in more detail below, as it is a significant component of 'Balata Haunting'.

Similar findings from across Amazonia confirm the potential for the demise of 'fragile livelihoods' or 'dispossession of resources' that can occur with the introduction of cultural change to small communities (Bartlett, 2005: 342; Beckerman, 1987; Behrens *et al.*, 1994; Behrens, 1996; Hamlin and Salick, 2003; Kensinger, 1995; Morán, 1993; Wilson, 2004: 527), and Rupununi residents reflect these concerns in their commentaries about both previous and future road development. One man in Aishalton noted that the road has brought "*a lot of changes. I think it's affecting them a whole lot in terms of, culture, and in terms of food, and stuff, their lifestyle, I guess to a certain extent, maybe. How they live. Their food type, I'm not too sure. But it's been a whole lot*." This Makushi man was saddened by what he was seeing, saying: "*Now, these things we seeing now, the road is there, and people want to live like the foreigners, they want to copy their way of living. You know. ... We are going to allow, or give permission for these things to happen, but we still have older folks living in the village, and they are the ones that are scared*." With the possibility of the road further upgrading to a highway, these concerns will only be magnified by the increasing numbers of people able to gain access to the Rupununi, bringing more and more outside influence into the villages, with both positive and negative outcomes for Rupununi residents.

Across Amazonia, the entangled nature of development in Indigenous communities presents a difficult situation. Schmink and Wood (1992: 290) found Amazonian populations caught in a 'progress cycle', where community resistance was disdained by national majorities since Indigenous peoples were, and to significant degree still are, targeted as obstacles to be removed from the path of 'development' and the building of a modern nation (Blaser *et al.*, 2004; M.C. Forte, 2006; 2005; Ramos, 2003). However, Indigenous residents were weary of foreign expectations and domination patterns (Bulkan and Bulkan, 2006; Collomb, 2006; M.C. Forte, 2006: 12; MacKay, 2006), and Schmink and Wood cited one resident as saying: "with the road, everything will change. There will be twenty percent improvement and eighty percent problems, principally with regard to land. This is progress. Progress arrives the same way in every place; it homogenizes everything" (in 1992: 290). Similarly, Rupununi residents share this troubled outlook, with one Wapishana woman arguing that "*the change obviously is because of the highway, there is a lot of development in the Rupununi*," and this Wapishana man stating that, "*the roads that are being made around here ... they're just destroying. They call it development, but they's just destroy, they are just destroy*," while this Makushi man noted that

"*the road is doing good of course, but on the other hand, you know, it brings negative things back.*"

Wilson argues that the "current privileging of accessibility partly reflects the unproblematic way that infrastructure is addressed in development planning literature where rural or feeder roads tend to be considered as socially and politically neutral, or as a technological fix" (2004: 526), and claims that these roads need to be better situated within relations of power. The Lethem-Georgetown road, as the "road from Roraima State" (Forte and Benjamin, 1993) can hardly be considered politically neutral. The politico-economic needs of Brazil are obviously dominating discussions surrounding the development of the road through the Rupununi, and Forte and Benjamin's 1993 concern that "to date, there has been no public discussion of what consequences a road designed and built by Brazilians to meet Brazilian needs might have on our interior, our Indigenous peoples, indeed on the issue of sovereignty itself" (1993: 1) is equally relevant today. Because roads have such great symbolic and political resonance for states, they often become an essential element in territorializing projects, enabling the extension of control "associated with the exercise of power by the state" (Fairhead, 1992: 21). However, in Guyana, the road may be facilitating an encroachment of an external state power within the region, emphasizing the idea that "power relations that characterize any historically embedded society are never transparently clear" (Gordon, 1997: 3).

If we accept Gordon's notion that haunting "describes that which appears to be not there but is often a seething presence" (1997: 8), Melville's cattle are 'haunting' the geopolitical reality of the Rupununi today through the continued existence of the road. By tracing the colonial history of the cattle, and the context of the evolving trail/road, a different perspective on the past permits a "transformative recognition" of the present (*ibid*), where ongoing marginalization and neglect are 'seething' through the 'development' of the road. While Holloway and Kneale (2008: 298) argue that ghosts can represent past tragedies or injustices, I argue that similarly, our encounters with ghostly hauntings can reveal ongoing injustices. Injustices that can similarly be traced back beyond mere cattle-hauntings, to the entangled nature of Rupununi histories and geographies which are intimately connected to the greater Amazonian region, both in terms of 'ghosts' (causes) and 'hauntings' (outcomes). For cattle are not the only ghosts haunting the Rupununi. Entangled within, and certainly enabled by the development of the road, a parallel colonial history continues to haunt the peoples of the savannahs, as the early

balata industry remains spectrally present in the Rupununi in the form of emerging emigration patterns, which themselves influence and impact upon the peoples and places of the savannahs. A seething presence indeed.

Balata Haunting

Alongside the nascent ranching economy, the early nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of the balata extractive industry in the Rupununi, which was the second most important economic activity in the region[84] (Forte and MRU, 1996: 9; Lighton, 1950: 172; Watkins, 2010: 199). And just as the cattle industry in the Rupununi is directly linked to the arrival of HPC Melville and his associate, John Ogilvie in the 1890s, so is the balata economy (Forte and MRU, 1996: 13).

Although Hammond (2005: 441) believes that interest in balata began in 1855, with commercial quantity exports achieved by 1863, Edwina Melville[85] writes in her memoir that it was Ogilvie who arrived first to look for balata near the end of the nineteenth century. After meeting HPC Melville, together they taught the local Indigenous peoples to work bleeding the trees, claiming it "was the first sign of development in the Rupununi" (1956: 31, see also Watkins, 2010: 209). Regardless of the specific time of introduction, shortly thereafter, balata collection points opened at Karasabai, Apoteri, Surama, Karanambu, and at the confluence of the Essequibo and the Siparuni Rivers (Watkins, 2010: 201). Tiny McTurk[86] was the North Rupununi's agent (situated at Karanambu), and HPC's son John was the agent in the South Rupununi (located at Witchibai) (Melville, 1956: 34) (see Figure 4).

The mark the balata economy has made on the region is significant if one considers the number of villages that were established by the industry. For instance, Thomas Daniel, the first settler of Kwatamang was a prominent balata bleeder, while Rewa Village was first opened and settled during the balata era, and Surama was the site of two balata bleeding operations, Daylight

[84] By 1955, cattle and balata were tied as the primary industry (Melville, 1956: 44).
[85] HPC's daughter-in-law. She married Charles, HPC's first son.
[86] In an interview with Philip Sander (2006), Dianne McTurk (current owner of Karanambu, and daughter of Tiny McTurk) recollects that her "father was told to find a place for a headquarters midway between the confluence of the Essequibo and the Rupununi River at Apoteri, and Wichibai, the southern station — and by chance he went in the wet season, so there were very few places along the river that were above water, because the flooding was so extensive. That was in 1927, when my mother came out. My father was fortunate in getting to Karanambo, which actually was not recommended to him — nobody would live here, because it was twice accursed, according to myth and according to legend" (further explained in Chapter Six: Telling Stories).

and Garnett[87] (Forte and MRU, 1996: 39-41; Tiam Fook, 2011: 277, fn 20). Furthermore, Tiam Fook notes that a large proportion of balata bleeders were Makushi and Wapishana[88] (2011: 277, fn 20), with J. Forte *et al.* (1992: 43) claiming that Garnett and Company's balata business had "so many Indigenous people working there that other industries had difficulty getting workers" (see also Forte and MRU, 1996: 13), and Henfrey (2002: 67) contends that "even in the earliest years of the century, surveyors working on the demarcation of the Brazilian border reported difficulty in finding sufficient workers, due to the number of people away working balata." Current research indicates that the balata industry affected nearly every family in the Rupununi, as for example Henfrey's (2002: 38-39) life history research which indicates that for much of the twentieth century, the majority of Wapishana men were employed in the trade in some capacity (*ibid*: 67, see also Amerindian Lands Commission 1969: 75; Baldwin 1946: 44).

Economically, balata was an extremely important national export from its early extraction period until the late 1940s, with a peak extraction of approximately 726 000 kilograms in 1917 (Colchester, 1997: 47; J. Forte 1995a: 2; Forte and MRU, 1996: 13; Hammond, 2005: 441; Melville, 1956: 26). From this peak demand dropped slowly, however production continued steadily, and from the Rupununi district alone extraction was approximately 450 000 kilograms annually until the late 1940s[89] (Baldwin 1946: 44; Henfrey, 2002: 38-39; Torrado, 2007: 25). Clearly in parallel with the Amazonian rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) boom, balata (*Manilkara bidentada*, *Manilkara huberi*) was increasingly recognized for its useful properties including as golf ball interiors, underwater cable insulation, packing moulds, polder liners, and machine belting (Hammond, 2005: 420).

By the close of the nineteenth century, Hammond (2005: 420) claims that thousands of balata bleeders were traversing the forested interior. Baldwin estimated a balata workforce in the

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[87] Indeed, in 1944, local historian Iris Myers was informed by the District Commissioner R. Baldwin that along the Rupununi River, above and below Apoteri, there were still a few settlements growing and increasing in numbers within forest clearings, and that these settlements were formed of balata bleeders (Myers, 1953: 8).

[88] Itself a mark upon the cultural landscape since the traditional territory of the Wapishana is in the South Rupununi. Forte *et al.*, (1992: 43) note that balata bleeders worked as far west as Suriname, and the Kwitaro River was once a major route for balata bleeders who worked the surrounding areas and went down river into the Rewa and from there into the Rupununi River, their final destination being Apoteri where the Rupununi River joins the Essequibo River; in this way, over time "a significant number of Wapishana settled at Apoteri and Rewa and intermarried with Makushi."

[89] "The Great Rubber Boom of Brazil" (together with the concurrent balata boom) finally ended in 1945 after experiencing a brief comeback in World War II due to the geopolitical split between the Axis and the Allies, leaving Malaysia (then the world's primary source of natural rubber) in enemy territory, and hence economically beyond reach (Hammond, 2005: 439).

Rupununi of around six hundred people (with approximately half being Makushi and Wapishana) in 1944 (cited in Henfrey, 2002: 38-39, see also Watkins, 2010: 201), a number which is supported by Colchester's estimate of three hundred Indigenous people employed every year between the early 1900s and the 1940s (1997: 47). Importantly, the balata industry was "the major source of wage labour for [Indigenous] people for much of the twentieth century" (Henfrey, 2002: 67, see also Amerindian Lands Commission 1969: 75; Baldwin 1946: 44).

Unfortunately, unlike Brazilian *Hevea* which bleeds continuously, balata trees require an approximate fifteen-year plus recharge for commercial tapping due to the structure of *Manilkara* plants (Hammond, 2005: 442). Hammond goes on to indicate that "this distinction affected the way in which latex was collected, since rubber tappers can work continuously around the same *Hevea* stands, while balata collectors had to roam over vast areas of forest, seeking untapped trees" (*ibid*, see also Henfrey, 2002: 38-39). Importantly, balata collection occurs during the rainy season when the sap rises (Sander, 2006; Sanders, 1987: 64; Watkins, 2010: 209), hence balata employment was compatible with subsistence activities, particularly agriculture, leaving the Makushi and Wapishana families "free to concentrate on farming and fishing in the dry season" (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14; 45, see also Henfrey, 2002: 67; Torrado, 2007: 25).[90] In this manner, cash incomes complimented rather than replaced subsistence production.

Consequently, due to this seasonal compatibility of the industry, combined with the extensive involvement of the Indigenous populations of the Rupununi, "extraction of tropical tree latexes exceeded all others [non-traditional forest products] in terms of both socio-economic and environmental consequences[91] to forests and forest based livelihoods" (Hammond, 2005: 439). While businesses and governments were profiting from balata, personal incomes for bleeders also rose substantially, and the extractive economy represented an important source of revenue for communities existing in a primarily cashless society (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14; Hammond, 2005: 441; Salisbury *et al.*, 1968: 8; Torrado, 2007: 25). Hemming (1978b: 116) argues that with contact came the creation of new 'needs',[92] including cloth, salt, metal goods,

[90] Some literature paints a very different picture, that of forced labour working year round without resting or "halting in the work to plant fields or have a feast," in a "mild, but very real form of slavery" leading to starvation in some communities (Bridges, 1985: 147). Henfrey (1964: 198) traces this to the lower wages offered in British Guiana, and Hammond suggests that Rupununi residents were caught in "debt-servitude" (Hammond, 2005: 442). Since the majority of research points towards the seasonality of the industry, I have chosen to include that history here.

[91] By the end of the nineteenth century, commercial balata bleeding was thought to have killed between 900 000 and 4.8 million *Manilkara* trees (Hammond, 2005: 444).

[92] Many of these goods are now essential to their way of life (Sanders, 1972: 37).

and soap that Makushi and Wapishana people could not easily produce for themselves, and it was through engaging in the labour economy, that people could begin to obtain goods that were not readily accessible within local communities (Sanders, 1972: 37; Torrado, 2007: 25). This reliance on extractive industries and their associated income dependence is common throughout Amazonia as well. For example, Hamlin and Salick (2003: 177) found economic resource booms amongst the Yanesha of Peru caused increased dependence on "cash and market goods," while Salisbury and Schmink were told in western Brazil that "during the time of rubber, we did not lack for anything" (cited in 2007: 1240).

However, by the 1970s, a combination of international as well as local factors had led to the decline of the balata industry to the point of near disappearance. Globally, the demand for balata had decreased with both the advent of wireless telegraphy, and the introduction of synthetic substitutes, particularly polyethylene (Baldwin 1946: 44; Hammond, 2005: 441; Henfrey, 2002: 38-39; Watkins, 2010: 201). These technical changes coincided with the imposed destitution of the region that accompanied the post-Rupununi Uprising era ranching industry collapse, and the coastal government was not particularly interested in propping up the region's economy (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14).[93] Between the collapse of the ranching economy and the collapse of the balata industry, most Rupununi residents were effectively removed from the cash economy. However, dependence on market goods continued (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14; Sanders, 1972: 37-38).

This sudden economic desolation and ongoing requirements for market goods combined opportunely with the rapid growth of neighbouring Roraima State in Brazil,[94] creating the necessary conditions for a substantial labour emigration pattern to emerge (Forte and MRU, 1996: 14; Riley, 2003: 146; Watkins, 2010: 201). No longer able to supplement their subsistence economy in their own villages due to the increasing marginalization of the Rupununi post-Uprising, Makushi and Wapishana began seasonally migrating to Brazil in search of employment, most commonly in the ranching sector (men) or for domestic labour (women) (Forte and MRU, 1996: 47; Henfrey, 2002: 233-234; Riley, 2003: 146). Pinedo-Vasquez and Padoch (2009: 87) found that "over the last several decades, migratory flows in Amazonia have

[93] The export market finally collapsed completely in the 1980s (Hammond, 2005: 441), and currently only local use and a small one-village project funded by Conservation International to supply the emerging tourist industry with carved balata ornaments require supplies (Henfrey, 2002: 39).

[94] The causes and consequences of the growth of Roraima State will be further explored in Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

increasingly brought people to cities," and this pattern is evident in Roraima, with the majority of Rupununi migrants settling in Bonfim[95] or Boa Vista.[96] The construction and development of the road has also obviously facilitated the mobility of people (Hamlin and Salick: 2003: 173-176), consequently further haunting the lives of the Rupununi residents.

Directly traceable to this dual collapse of industries in the Rupununi, Forte and MRU (1996: 51) suggest that lack of employment opportunities in the region is still one of the major problems in the region,[97] a notion that was strongly supported across the five villages I visited. Each village shared a similar message: in Shulinab I was told that people go to Brazil "*because they want a job, you know, there are no jobs in the village*"; in Aishalton, "*I think it's lack of job, or, because we don't have no job, we have just the village*"; in St. Ignatius, "*because there's no job opportunities within the communities, so that is the only way they get their income*"; in Karasabai, "*they don't have no kind of job here, where people could stay and work, so it hard*"; and in Annai Central, "*because the situation was really difficult here, you know, no jobs*." Similarly, Forte and MRU found that "with few avenues for development or jobs in their own communities ... the young and able bodied trek out of the ... savannahs and towards Roraima State" (1996: 51).

But employment is merely the entry point, the necessary action to ensure continued access to material goods and commodities outside of the traditional subsistence economy, which the Makushi and Wapishana have become increasingly reliant upon. Several people described the differences in income between Brazil and Guyana, [98] as for example this Makushi woman who explained that "*I think, some of them, like whoever would work in, like ranches, they get good money, like 100 000 a month, plus if they got the wife, the wife does get 60 000 in a month, and then domestic work, there in Boa Vista is like 70 000 dollar*[99] *per month ... So people now, you know they can work and save their money and buy what they want*." These incomes were then often translated into commodity purchases, many of which have changed since the 1970s.

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[95] Directly across the Takutu River from Lethem.
[96] Roraima State capital.
[97] They also include a lack of educational and training opportunities, the lack of marketing strategies for the agricultural produce of the area, and the lack of agricultural machinery and transportation facilities to enable farmers to cultivate larger areas and get their products to marketing centres (Forte and MRU, 1996: 51).
[98] A direct comparison of wages was provided by a different Makushi woman who states "*Down there [Brazil] domestic workers are getting like about fifty, sixty thousand a month, while here in Guyana you barely getting like thirty*."
[99] CN $1 = G$190.

Traditionally, "*Amerindian basic need is just three things: soap, salt, and match. You know. This is what the old people, our ancestors look for, to survive ... So now, people have to go to Brazil, that's our neighbouring country, and they go here for employment, they would go to spend one or two months, work with somebody, and then purchase their, these three things, and then return home*." However a more recent list includes several more expensive items, including: clothing, lights, electrical tools, iPods, MP3 Players, radios, CD players, televisions, computers, chainsaws, bicycles, gas stoves, solar panels, parabolic dishes, generators, refrigerators, freezers, and motorbikes, as well as several items needed to improve housing structures, including: burned bricks, wooden rafters, cement, and zinc rooftops.[100] One elder Makushi man traced local dependence from the traditional items noted above, to a growing material dependency by claiming that "*they would still go Brazil and look for work. And they would want to buy, not soap and match, they would want to buy transportation, you know, motorcycle, some would want, even they buy vehicles, such as this, and so that is what they are looking for*." The mobility of the Makushi and Wapishana peoples for the purposes of employment has had a significant material impact upon their lives, and together with the transfer of commodities across the border increasingly helps shape Indigenous notions of self, place, space, and territory (Alexiades, 2009: 21).

One manner in which Indigenous emigration and the accompanying commodity importation affects the Rupununi is through the increasing familiarity with modern conveniences "like electricity, running water, telephones, and internet" (Riley, 2003: 143). One Wapishana man explained to me that "*some don't migrate like go over there to live forever, they just go there to work, to get money, and then they come and build a, their house, and but seeing that most people when they go over there, they would see how the Brazilians live, with a fridge, television, nice CD player. The current is there, so most people try to, especially the young people, who leave school, they would tell their parents, we going to Brazil, and when we come back, we will buy zinc, for our house, and buy television, and stuff like that. Yeah.*" [101] In

[100] In addition to these commonly cited needs, one Makushi woman worked to pay for school fees for her four children, and one Makushi man and one Makushi woman opened businesses (local shops) with their Brazilian income.

[101] In addition, some residents noted that returning migrants could bring back desirable skills with which they could help their communities. One Makushi elder commented that "*some of the positive things is that they go there, right, and they learn a trade, right, and some of them are able to build new structures because they learned while they were over there ... so they could come back with a skill and help the community*," while this Makushi man noted that

leaving their traditional homes to work in Brazil, Makushi and Wapishana migrants are removing themselves from their traditional lifestyle, and are often exposing themselves to modern living arrangements for the first time. Consequently, upon return to their villages, many of the labour migrants return with the modern conveniences to which they have become accustomed, hence the material extension of perceived 'needs' above, and the shift from 'soap, salt, and match' to televisions, generators, and motorcycles. As one Wapishana elder said, "*they like the city*."

Within the villages to which they are returning, particularly the elder community members are becoming progressively more concerned with the impacts that both the migration experience as well as the material/commodity expansion are having upon traditional lifeways. Significant changes within communities can occur both when considerable numbers of people depart and remain absent, and again when returning migrants re-enter villages, bringing with them their experiences, incomes, attitudes, and material goods.

Ongoing departures of substantial numbers of community members have left many villages concerned even about the basic impact of population loss. One Makushi man noted that "*it does break down the population, like, sometimes it hard to get up*," and one Wapishana leader pointed out that "*we are never too sure whether they are coming back or not. So that is going to have a negative impact on our, on our population records*." Any decrease in population has practical consequences for small-scale, self-reliant communities, particularly with regards to governance and communal activities, including village labour responsibilities. However many Rupununi residents noted that in particular, it was the youth population that was absent from the region, an opinion shared by local researchers (Forte and MRU, 1996: 51; Hammond, 2005: 460; Henfrey, 2002: 233-234). One regional leader noted that "*when you look at the village works that are taking place, you don't find a lot of young people there, for the meetings, you don't find a lot of young people there ... there's that gap, of about the middle, the early twenties to the late twenties really*," demonstrating both a local governance and communal labour gap. Similarly, this Wapishana man notes that "*you find the older generation kind of dominating village life in terms of decision making and things ... Although you have some left back here, but you find*

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people "*can go non-skilled over there, and come back here and you know, do their skills right here. That they learn over there ... New skills, and they help*."

probably forty-five and over dominating and making decisions for the village,"[102] emphasizing the changing governance structure of the villages. Furthermore, this Wapishana community leader notes that "*because a lot of young people, we think, who are our assets, and who could really contribute to our community, you know with activities, are not even there. We have work to do, we have the older folks, they might not have the skills that the young people have. And they might not be as strong as the young people. They might not be able to tolerate some of the working conditions, you know, things like that. So right now we have a lot of work being done, we have to do, and we just don't have the human resources, we don't, we just don't have the young people anymore*." This Wapishana Toshao put it quite clearly, while stressing the fundamental loss villages are experiencing through these patterns of increasing labour migration: "*Sometimes we might lose the person who always contribute to the community, you know?*" And while these statements do not directly indicate that migration to Brazil is the specific cause of these problems, a different Wapishana Toshao made this connection quite obvious when he asked himself, "*Why is it we are not coming out in full numbers to those village works? And when I check out the census, most of my people are in Brazil*."

The migration of primarily young adults of child-bearing age is also having consequences for the local schools in the Rupununi. Children are removed from the village to accompany their parents to Brazil,[103] often without the knowledge of the local Village Councils, as this Wapishana Toshao explained, "*yeah, because when some people go, they carry their children ... they would carry their children from school, even without informing the village council*." The problem intensifies if government regulators visit the villages to review school registers, upon which village schools are dependent for continued funding. This Wapishana man noted the effect the migration was having on the school registers, claiming "*it affects the school now, and the registers*," while this Makushi woman connected the register to the school's funding stating, "*it's affecting the attendances ... they [the government] have the money, those people fund*

[102] This is corroborated by a Makushi woman elder who states, "*when we want our youths to be involved in some project, they are not here, they're across, you know, and you find, like my age people only focusing on it*."
[103] Several teachers expressed concern with this practice, as often children are not placed in schools in Brazil, hence halting their education, as for example this Makushi teacher, who stated that "*when they come back, it's a little two, three years after they leave, and when we put them in another class, they aren't developing, you know? So they were wasting all this time. When they should have been in school*," echoed by a Makushi teacher from a different village who noted, "*they will be the slow learners*." Alternatively, and also problematically for many, they *are* placed in schools, but upon return to Guyana after several years in Brazil are no longer conversant in English, and quickly fall behind, as this Makushi teacher explained, "*because when they tend to learn Portuguese, and they don't do the English words properly ... will be hard on them too*."

entrances." Losses of government funding can be ruinous to schools already operating at an extremely small scale, and this Wapishana Toshao noted that because of the migration, "*there's a decreasing of the population of communities, which will cause problems, like the schools degrading*."

While these issues related to population decreases and ongoing community member absences are problematic, of far greater concern to the local Makushi and Wapishana populations are the impacts of returning migrants, together with their incomes, commodities, and experiences, upon Rupununi villages. In particular, local Makushi and Wapishana perceive significant changes in the outlook and expectations of the former residents, and the attitudes of returning migrants often impact the villages themselves. These shifting attitudes are most often attributed to an increased focus on important aspects of Brazilian culture that had been adopted while away. Several community members commented broadly on the perceived increase of Brazilian influence upon returning migrants, as for example this Makushi Toshao, who noted that "*when they comes back now, is like they, they adapting their, their culture, you know. Yeah, the Brazilian culture. They bring it back to the village*," a concern echoed by this local Makushi teacher who similarly stated that "*when they go Brazil, they go across in Brazil ... they come back with that way of living, with that lifestyle or whatever, so they come back like that*."

However more often community residents commented upon specific aspects of Brazilian culture that were perceived as impacting their villages. Some impacts attributed to returning migrants, such as clothing style, were seen as merely inappropriate, as this Wapishana woman notes, "*maybe they would come back, like, let's say the Brazilian people put on, how you say, little pieces of short pants, or little skirts, or armless clothes, you know, that is not appropriate, well here you don't really find people dressed like that. Only the 'Brazilians.'*" Similarly, impacts related to changing preferences in music and dance were seen as changing society, but in rather trivial, or unimportant ways. One community leader noted that "*the music, already changing all the time with the boys who go over there and come back, they bring that all the time*," suggesting an increasing acceptance of these changes, an opinion supported by this Rupununi resident, who pointed out that "*the only thing they listen to, they listen to other music, but, they only thing they're really interested in is for example, on the dance floor, and you start playing English or Caribbean music, it might empty, it might end up empty. And everybody, but if you playing* forró*, which is the Brazilian music, they fill it right up there*." This widespread

enjoyment and acceptance of Brazilian music and dance seems to imply that while impacting traditional cultures,[104] the changes are not significant.[105]

However, other impacts were seen as both more significant and more dangerous, in particular those impacts directly related to increasing drug and alcohol abuse as well as the very commonly related increases in violence within communities. In his discussion of the general Brazilian attitudes brought back to communities, this Wapishana community leader noted that:

> *when people go to Brazil, they adapt the, they kind of adapt to the, to the lifestyle of the Brazilians. They have practices that is unacceptable when they return to the villages, like for example, criminal acts. Acts of violence. You might end up using a weapon, it mightn't be a gun, but a lot of people who go over to Brazil, they, they say well, the Brazilians said I'm on their land, just like the, you have the, the, what you call it, the bandits, they play as though they are the bandits, you have like, they drink at like, party places, and they get into an argument with somebody, and the first thing they go and they say, well, I have a knife on me, that I could go in you, and I could kill you on the spot. I seen, I've seen, I've known this and I've seen people practicing these things. So it's really a social problem. Apart from that, alcoholism has also been a really major problem. Here and in Brazil, they go places and they drink a lot, they call it* cachaça, *it's basically the rum, they drink these drinks and they get into all manner of activities, they get into drugs, to that extent. So, it is really a problem.*

These connections between an initial migration to Brazil and a greater tendency towards violence were supported across the Rupununi, including this Makushi Toshao who found that "*when they go to Brazil, they adopt the street boy style, like fights and breaks and stuff, they come and adopt it here. So we, can't control it right now, as they behave bad*." Further elaborating upon the dangerous impacts of the migration movement on the villages this Makushi elder noted that often migrants "*got into alcohol and drugs and gang violence, so when they come back here, that is what they tend to come back with. And that is really something, you know, harmful to the community*." This potential for damage to communities was confirmed by this Wapishana

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[104] However, one woman elder traced the introduction of Brazilian music to the decline of traditional Makushi culture, noting that "*the music around here is mostly Brazilian ... Well, most is Brazilian, Brazilian tunes. And the people here, they will dance with you. I don't know if it is correct, how they dancing in the right way? Yeah, that is their change too. The dance, although, long ago we never had, well, the people before us, they never hear about Brazilian music, and all them music that you hearing around here now. Their culture was only the Makushi traditional music, so you had the hummingbird dance, and the parishara [a traditional dance], and I don't know what, that is in a different manner, how to dance it, you can't see that today. The old sets died, so everything is going down the drain*."

[105] This may also be due to the fact that Brazilian music and dance have been infiltrating the Rupununi for a significant amount of time, since no national radio or television stations are broadcast to the region, thus residents are often reliant on Brazilian signals for entertainment in those locations that have access to radio equipment. This can be further traced to the historical isolation of the Rupununi from the coastal region, a situation that was exacerbated by the Rupununi Uprising.

woman, who when speaking generally about migrant attitudes, noted that "*another change would be the attitude of the, attitudes, a social change. Attitudes that come back from the other side for me is not too healthy for the community*."

In addition to the potential for direct harm to communities through the introduction of foreign cultural elements and increasing violence, indirect harm is also seen as a significant consequence of labour migrants returning to the villages of the Rupununi. Several Rupununi residents noted that in particular, migrant attitudes had shifted towards a Brazilian mindset and simultaneously away from 'traditional' or 'Indigenous' ways of thinking, as this Makushi man explained, "*let's say like me, I go to work, I work a two, three months, then I want to come back, and then you pretend that you don't do this things, you don't want to do your traditional thing, your culture, practice your normal thing, they want to be like that now, you know when they go and work and come back and don't do these things*," or this Makushi woman who pointed out that "*when they come back, they don't want to be part of the thing, the Amerindian culture, like, they just think of this modernity*."

This shift away from tradition and towards 'modernity' is principally manifested through cultural loss according to most Rupununi residents. One Wapishana community leader spoke quite emphatically about this decline and the growing potential for loss, stating that

> *our culture is almost dying, I must say in all the communities, so. Some people are not, very few people are hunting, very few of our youths could, let's say for example, make the handicrafts, make our staple foods, very few, they now rely on the older folks to, you know, make it more conveniently ... The traditional way of life is, is basically under threat. You know, and this is because of the external influence, you know, people coming, things are changing, modern way of living is coming into our communities, communications, technology, all these things ... So the culture again is something that is really, is going to be under threat. It's going eventually decline, and have a negative impact. And that is what determine who you are*.

The most commonly cited indicators of 'determining who you are', and consequently cultural loss for returning migrants included an immediate loss of Indigenous language and shifting traditional lifeways, in particular the decline of subsistence farming and an accompanying reliance on 'shop foods', as this Makushi man observed, "*when they come back from Brazil, they don't want to eat farine*[106] *... they don't want to speak their own Indigenous language*."

[106] Farine is the principal staple produced from cassava and is a type of dry, fine, mealy cereal.

The loss of language was a recurrent topic of conversation, and several reasons for the demise of Indigenous dialects were suggested,[107] however most common were connections with the continuous migration to Brazil. One Wapishana community leader noted that "*I'm pretty sure very soon the language is going to change, you know, the language, because people go to Brazil and they speak Portuguese, and they spend years and then come back here, and they're not even speaking their language anymore*," while a different Wapishana Toshao more pessimistically explained that "*about 30 years ago,[108] every, the language was very much alive. The Wapishana language, all through the Wapishana area. It was very much alive. And today it's not so. Not so, many people have lost the language, and at the rate it is going, if nothing is done, you know in another 10 years or so it will be gone*."

Other Rupununi residents connect the loss of Indigenous language with the previously observed attitude of returning migrants, as this Makushi elder notes, "*they want to do what the Brazilians would like to do. But not really, but just like, what I could say, they, they just want to be like more than anybody and they come back like, they gone Brazil so they could, they learn to speak the Portuguese, they want to talk like that, nuh?*," a sentiment supported by this Makushi community leader who argued "y*ou will see, the young people don't even want to talk their own language. Like the Makushi language ... I ask, why you pretending not to be a who you are, you know?*" There is collective agreement that local languages are declining, a loss directly attributable to the population migration and the consequences of return.

Similarly, many Rupununi residents pointed to a loss of traditional lifeways, most clearly manifested through a decrease in subsistence farming, including the loss of traditional skills involved in planting, harvesting, and processing cassava, and an accompanying increase in reliance on 'shop foods'.[109] This Wapishana elder noted that "*traditionally we live on subsistence farming, but today, most people in Aishalton, is what I am seeing now, if you go to their homes, they would say, I have nothing to give you. You understand. They say why, I don't*

[107] Including English-language schooling, increasing coastland presence in communities, and widespread national level discrimination against Indigenous peoples.
[108] This timeframe precisely aligns with the demise of the balata industry and the subsequent increase in labour migration to Brazil.
[109] Including non-traditional food products like rice and tinned meats that are costly to purchase, and often of lesser nutritional value. One Wapishana leader connected the increasing reliance on store bought goods and decreasing health in communities, stating "*before you had these external type of food coming, people hardly used to maybe, people hardly suffer from, let's say, hyper-tension, diabetes, cancer and all these things, but now you have an emergence of all these health related problems ... so health wise, that is also having an impact, because they are now ignoring their traditional food, their staple food and all*."

have farm." Another community resident noted this loss and the potential future effects, claiming that people are increasingly "*giving up on some of the traditions, like farming. You know, I, these are some simple things that something has just went totally wrong, because I cannot see families going without farine*." He went on to argue that in his community, people now "*come to the shop to buy their farine*." A fellow resident from the same community supported these statements, and further revealed that "*we were figuring out a while ago, that most of the people doesn't want to farm, most of the people doesn't want, doesn't have a farm. That they depending on the businesses, shops and so on for food*."

One Wapishana Toshao from a different community commented upon this loss of subsistence agriculture and its associated cultural traditions, noting that some villages with substantial numbers of returning migrants "*don't really see their way of living important. They're adopting other people way of living now ... some of them don't even have farms*," connecting the loss of culture to external influences. That the loss can be directly attributable to the migration of Makushi and Wapishana to Brazil was emphasized by this Makushi elder, who mourned the loss of her culture claiming that "*in terms of the knowledge, of maintaining traditional knowledge, I see by a whole generation of youths running across to Brazil, there's a big gap of knowledge between the elderly people and the younger generations ... they lost the opportunity, right, because they were in Brazil*."

However, Rupununi residents also traced the decline in traditional lifeways to a loss of elders from within communities, as this Wapishana community leader notes, "*you're losing your elders. You're leaving a huge gap*." This loss of elders is generally attributed to the superior social benefits offered in Brazil, and many Rupununi elders, either on their own or with the assistance of their children, collect substantial Brazilian pensions across the border,[110] as this Toshao explained that a resident could "*easily help his father to get this pension, you know the pension is big. Right here is only seven thousand, seven thousand five hundred a month, but there is like 50 000. It's just like 50 000 a month. Right? So the old people like, they go over there, just, they wouldn't work, they just, they can afford to live on that*."

Regardless of why the elders are leaving communities, their loss, when combined with the gap in traditional skills transference between elders and youths both because of migration and

[110] The logistics behind the collection of pensions, as well as other social benefits in Brazil will be discussed further in Chapter Four: Intimate Borders.

because of shifting attitudes towards traditional lifeways, is causing a substantial decrease in community participation in subsistence agriculture, and a consequent loss in practical and intellectual skills inherent to Makushi and Wapishana culture. Henfrey (2002: 233-234) insists that "wage migration is a big factor in this" and he found in his study that "the consequent failure of many young people to acquire a full range of subsistence skills is a matter about which many among older generations expressed grave concerns," a finding that this research supports. Indeed, two elders I spoke with lucidly expressed these concerns, and eloquently summed up the intrinsic nature of the problems being faced by Rupununi communities. The first comment was from a Wapishana Toshao, who said: "*Ok, we go to a shop and we buy a, we forget, our ways, and our own ways of doing things, we get an issue there, which is dependence on the shop, where you have change in our, what do you say, cultural changes. Right? Type of food we eat, the type of clothes we wear, they type of music we listen to, all these sort of things have been happening. It's happening too*." The second commentary was made by a regional Makushi leader, who urgently stressed that

> *our traditional way of life, must not die. Because how it is, how the world is changing, you're talking about some people, you're talking about different, the dress itself, the music, that's what we talking about. Whatever the world is changing. But me as an Amerindian, I want to be left, I want to be how we are. But at the same time, I must be able to live my culture. Live my traditional way of life. But, to me, as a leader, I see this a problem. Because many of the young people, they are not up for the traditions anymore. You know. They are up for the outside world. Because of the culture influence, they outside influence, the dress, the music, what, whatever. You think about it, you will get the picture. Because if you go to a city, and you see certain things in the city, I would come back here, and I would try to copy a style which is not my culture, you copying other people culture*.

In each of these statements, it is clear that both minor cultural changes (such as clothing choice, or musical influence) as well as more significant shifts in Indigenous traditional lifeways are implicated in the overall loss of culture by Rupununi residents, a loss which Henfrey pessimistically extends to a potential for loss of cultural identity (2002: 233-234). However, these changes are taking place as a result of shifting values and choices, often in response to a desire to earn a cash income, unfortunately unavailable to most within their home villages.

Hence, the extent of the loss entailed in the collapse of the balata industry presents itself spectrally in the present. Although previously communities could engage with the cash economy through the balata industry while successfully maintaining their traditional ways of life, the

resulting outcomes of this cash dependency, currently manifested through labour migration, are overwhelming communities, instead threatening those same traditional ways of life. The Makushi and the Wapishana increasingly "live between two paradigms – the past lifestyles, and western life" (Watkins, 2010: 168), and yet often seem uncomfortable with either. Heightened mobility patterns, further exacerbated by the development of the road, have shifted populations to more urbanized environments, consequently decreasing reliance on traditional lifeways, while simultaneously increasing dependency on centralized state services and the presence of the state[111] within the region, with significant community change the unwelcome consequence.

The balata industry continues to haunt the Rupununi, not merely through decreasing populations and associated and perhaps potentially inevitable changes to traditional ways of life, but by changing the worldviews of Makushi and Wapishana residents themselves. Extending Viveiros de Castro's (1998) model of multinatural perspectivism, arguably any movement in space entails a change in perspective as well as material circumstances, consequently altering a person's relationship with the world and important places within it. In this way, "colonial history ... manifests itself as an active, purposeful, and often-malevolent presence in current tribal struggles," and haunting exposes this "material, purposeful, active and unjust nature of the colonial experience" (Shipley Coddington, 2011: 744-748). By recognizing the circumstances behind the material injustices created by colonial practices, perhaps a shift towards justice can begin.

Re-Imagining the Future

The road and the emigration of peoples from the savannahs are the scars left behind by the introduced cattle and balata industries haunting the Rupununi, and the consequences of the colonial past continue to unfold in the present, and will continue to haunt the future. However, the Makushi and Wapishana have recognized these 'malevolent presences', and by both the NRDDB and SCPDA naming road development and labour emigration as their greatest community concerns, the ideas expressed in this chapter represent the recognition of colonially inspired material injustices Shipley Coddington implies is required for the shift towards justice (*ibid*).

[111] Although which state is more influential is still up for debate, and will be further discussed in both Chapter Four: Intimate Borders, and Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

Back on the side of the dusty road, I watch while the mini-bus empties, its passengers scrambling to escape the strengthening rains. I approach the driver to make arrangements to 'travel the trail', to journey up that dusty red road into the savannahs, following the parrots and the jabirus. I will travel, moving in space through the history, the geography, and the social relations of the Rupununi. And in doing so, I will be shifting perspectives, both my own, but also those who will eventually read this chapter, including, and in particular, those who inspired it, the Makushi and Wapishana of the region. Ideally, these combined 'renegotiations of landscape', where histories of things and histories of people collide to produce alternate imaginaries, will acknowledge – but not accept – the ghosts of colonialism. Importantly, while the 'ghosts' may be passive and unchanging as the local struggle (re-)emerges, the present 'hauntings' are cracking and twisting from resistance, complications, and re-workings, and Makushi and Wapishana participation in this contingent space, this place in the 'being-made' are consequently re-imagining the spectral present.

Chapter Four: Intimate Borders

What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging? What abstract line will you draw and at what price, for yourself and for others?
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 203).

Figure 5: "It's just water."

Before the European conquest, the areas today known as the Rupununi (Guyana) and Roraima State (Brazil) were conceived of as one territorial region, inhabited by several Indigenous groups. Colonial land surveys, missionary outposts, and important trading relationships helped initiate lines, which were still tenuous and permeable, rapidly dismantled and reconstituted. However, in 1904 an international border was firmly inscribed between the emerging nations of British Guiana and Brazil, fracturing these original conceptions (Baines, 2005: 3-4). Raffles argues that "not even locality is contained within spatial borders though," and concepts of the border, as well as the territories, the states, and the nations they define, continue to shift, to evolve, and to emerge as "permanently in the being-made" (2002: 182).

Within the Rupununi today, a graduated scale of lessening formality with regards to both perceptions of the border itself, and peoples' experiences in crossing the border is emerging, and these competing perceptions and everyday interactions with the political boundary are causing some questioning of western border concepts. With much of the border fluvial, Raffles' argument about imaginative places provokes, with his denunciation of rivers as "both guardians and betrayers of places ... [since] despite often being themselves the borders that make places, they are place too, as mobile as can be" (*ibid*). Perhaps all places betray though, if we accept

the original ideas of borders as fluid and multiple, as 'lines of drift' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 203).

After introducing the history of the formally recognized political border between Brazil and Guyana, including an acknowledgement of the role cartography has held in these power negotiations, this chapter will present four 'points' along this scale of lessening formality by looking at different conceptual perspectives of what the border means to the people in the Rupununi. The four points range in formality from *'the International'* and *the thick line*, as examples of regional acceptance of the colonially defined boundary, albeit a modified acceptance for the latter, to *the inconsequential* and *the non-existent* as examples of less formalized conceptual understandings of what the border is. Following these descriptions, this chapter goes on to explore how the peoples of the Rupununi experience the border through material practices of movement within and through territory, again ranging along a sliding continuum of formality, beginning with the official international border at the Takutu River Bridge, then to unofficial 'crossings', and finally to an epistemologically distinct practice where the river is 'just water', totally absent of all political relevance, and movement is once again within rather than between place(s). While perspectives along these continuums must be acknowledged as infinitely multiple, this chapter focuses on the points that intersect most definitively in Rupununi lives, influencing their ways of being in place(s).

In Amazonia

In the poorly mapped interior of the South American continent, the international boundaries of Amazonia were historically traced over existing political struggles for natural resources driven by colonial global markets, which included minerals, timber, rubber, cattle, and often the peoples themselves who were seen as 'naturally present' for European enslavement (Salisbury *et al*., 2011: 147-152). Within northern Amazonia, around the present day Rupununi-Roraima border, historical anthropologist Peter Rivière notes that the Portuguese had "almost certainly arrived within the Rio Branco during the 17th century, and from the early 18th century were making expeditions up that river and its tributaries to collect forest produce and reduce, or occasionally make alliances with, the Indigenous peoples of that area" (1995: 3). At this time, as noted by Salisbury *et al.* (2011), there was "a fundamental vagueness about the frontier[s]," particularly between Portuguese and Spanish territory in South America, and "being in *de facto* possession greatly strengthened any claim" (Rivière, 1995: 3). Reports of Spanish explorers

arriving from the Orinoco region to the Uraricoera River[112] prompted the construction in 1775-1776 of Fort São Joaquim, which overlooked the confluence of the Uraricoera and the Takutu Rivers, where they join to become the Rio Branco, thus marking the beginning of the permanent presence of the Portuguese in the area (*ibid*).

In 1837 according to Henfrey (1964: 170), or 1838 according to Rivière (1995: ix), a British missionary named Father Youd founded an Anglican Mission in the interior, at a place called Pirará,[113] which he had assumed was British Guiana. This was contested by the Brazilians,[114] and in 1839 a Brazilian military unit advanced from Fort São Joaquim to seize the Mission, claiming that it was on Brazilian territory (Henfrey, 1964: 170). Father Youd and Senhor Ayres, a new Brazilian commandant of Fort São Joaquim, discussed the location of the international border, and it soon became apparent that Senhor Ayres of Brazil believed that the Treaty of Utrecht[115] had delineated the Rupununi River as the boundary between Brazil and British Guiana, while Father Youd insisted that "the most natural boundary would be from the head of the Mazaruni River, crossing the end of the Pakaraima Mountains, following the course of the Mahu and then across the savannah to the head of the Essequibo" (Rivière, 1995: 35).

Further confusing the matter were the Treaties of Madrid and San Ildefonso,[116] which argued that in principle, the northern boundary of Brazil was the watershed divide between rivers that flowed into the Amazon River basin (in this case, the Takutu River to the Rio Branco, Rio Negro, and into the Amazon River), and rivers that flowed north into the Caribbean Atlantic (the Rupununi River into the Essequibo River, and into the Atlantic Ocean) (Bridges, 1985: ix; Hemming, 1990: 307-308; 1987: 340). Unfortunately, these divisions were (and still are) made irrelevant annually during the rainy season, since the low, flat savannahs consistently flood, and the waters of the two drainage basins coalesce, swirling and blending the proposed boundary, confusing matters even more (Hills, 1968: 32). By this reasoning, Pirará which is directly on the portage between the Takutu and the Rupununi Rivers, seasonally transforms into an area territorially difficult to determine.

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[112] Also spelt Uraricuera or Uraricaá (Rivière, 1995: 1).
[113] Pirará is said to be named after a small, red speckled fish found in abundance in the area's creek (Rivière, 1995: 1).
[114] Brazil declared independence from Portugal on 7 September, 1822.
[115] A series of treaties signed in 1713 in response to French and Spanish aggression, designed to restore the 'balance of power' in Europe primarily by settling boundary disputes within the colonies.
[116] 1750 and 1800 respectively, again signed in response to French and Spanish aggression in Europe.

Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Brazilian government owned large farms that "occupied the entire peninsula between the Uraricoera and Takutu Rivers, stretching north hundreds of kilometers to the unexplored Pakaraima hills ... [and] eastwards towards the Rupununi"[117] (Hemming, 1987: 351). If not settled quickly, the ambiguous border was going to cause serious economic, social, and political problems for most of those who newly lived in the border region.

British troops responded to these Brazilian advancements, and a British boundary commission was ordered to survey the frontier (Henfrey, 1964: 170; Rivière, 1995: ix). Hired by the British, Schomburgk was initially more interested in the western boundaries (with Venezuela) than with the south-west, and during his first visit to the southern interior, he "referred to the boundary as the Rupununi River at Annai" (Rivière, 1995: 174). However, in 1838, Schomburgk reconsidered his proposal,[118] and suggested instead that the boundary should "be formed by the rivers Takutu and Surumu (also called the Catinga)," a line much further west than had ever been previously proposed (*ibid*: 40). Brazil counter-claimed that the Siparung River, a tributary of the Essequibo River, should be the international boundary (*ibid*). By the end of the century, there was still no agreement, and in 1901, the two governments decided to settle by arbitration, and the case was put before the King of Italy (*ibid*: ix).[119]

During negotiations, Brazil proposed the Rupununi River as the boundary, while the British proposed the Takutu/Ireng(Maú[120]) Rivers (*ibid*: 166). The King of Italy made his decision three years later, on 6 June, 1904 when he announced that contrary to earlier Treaties signed in Europe, he had been "unable to accept that either country had established unquestioned right over the disputed territory and finding it impossible to divide it into equal portions ... drew the boundary along 'geographical' features, the Rivers Mahu and Takutu" (*ibid*: 167-168) (see Figure 6). Thus Brazil 'lost' more than 14 000 square kilometres of territory to British Guiana

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[117] As discussed in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings, the rubber boom in Manaus was causing a huge demand for meat, leading to an increase in cattle ranching on the Rio Branco plains, where 20 000 head of cattle grazed in wait to supply the city (Hemming, 1987: 351). This is one example of how natural resource struggles have influenced boundary disputes in Amazonia (Salisbury *et al*., 2011).

[118] Schomburgk was concerned about slave-raiding in Brazil, and was attempting to include as much territory under British protection as he could (Rivière, 1995: 39). He furthermore stressed the urgent need to fix the boundary between Brazil and British Guiana both because of the importance of the Pirará portage, which he saw as key to the development of commerce in the area, and because of the rich fishing grounds within the disputed area (*ibid*: 66), motivations that Salisbury *et al*. (2011) concede in their analysis of boundary settlements in Amazonia.

[119] The King of Italy was agreed upon by the King of Great Britain and the President of Brazil as a neutral party.

[120] Also spelt Mahu.

Figure 6: The official international border between Guyana and Brazil

(Baines, 2005: 3-4; Bridges, 1985: ix; Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 112). The fledgling, newly independent state of Brazil chose not to engage in conflict with the British Empire, and accepted the decision. However, Pirará is still marked as Brazilian territory on current military maps of the region (personal communication, member *Forças Armadas Brasileiras*, 4 August, 2011).

On the Edge of a Place

Maps were originally used as complete and accurate surveys of all landholdings and were therefore perceived of as the "ultimate simplification"; however in codifying local practices, mapping was simultaneously an immensely political act (Scott, 1998: 36-37). This rational ordering of space in the form of cartographic innovation led to the definition of a variety of spatial entities such as property rights in land, territorial boundaries, and administrative areas (Nevins, 2002: 156). Anderson notes that the discourse of mapping was the paradigm by which both administrators and military institutions operated, and consequently, he argues, European style maps worked on a basis of a totalizing classification, leading towards "policies with revolutionary consequences" (2006: 173-174). Without maps, land was perceived as "an illegible surface, a disorientating space, not yet a territory," and the function of cartography was thus to transform seized space into legible, ordered imperial territory (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 4). Indeed, these mapping innovations "led to the depiction of the earth's surface (for the first time) within a single spatial frame, facilitating the rise of 'Otherness'" (Nevins, 2002: 156; see also Said, 1978; 1993). These politically charged simplifications were not simply maps, but maps that when allied with state power would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade (Scott, 1998: 3).

Cartography was inherently embedded in the politics and power that accompanied imperialist explorations of the 'New' World, and maps continue to be acknowledged as expressions of socially constructed ideas of world hegemony, or of dominant patterns of geographical knowledge, naturalized through these concealed patterns of power. 'Imaginative geographies' (Said, 1978) and the projections of unknown space made possible by cartographic technology provided an exemplary arena for exploring "how the representational productions of empire produced a diorama of the world, a stage for dramatic imperial gestures. By ordering chaotic spaces, maps created imperial places, by making distant places visible, they satisfied the scopic and gnostic drives of a conquering people ... by providing a textual base map they enabled European nations to inscribe their ambitions on inaccessible places" (Burnett, 2000: 6). In this

way, territory was (re-)constructed through cartography as a re-inscription of space in order to legitimize colonial expansion.

Indeed, "every act of measurement was an act marked by the play of power relations" (Scott, 1998: 27), and maps were seen as "embedded in a history they help construct" (Sundar, 2000: 87). The resulting concretization of 'the nation' owes much to the colonial state's imagining of history and power (Anderson, 2006: 185), and this final point is crucial to understanding cartographic power, since the power of maps must be seen in the ability for them to transform the facts they portray. However, it is not the map itself that holds this transformative power, but rather, the power lies with those who deploy the *perspective* of that particular map, and "from the seventeenth century until now, the most transformative maps have been those invented and applied by the most powerful institution in society: the state" (Scott, 1998: 87-88). Hence, it can be surmised that maps are instruments of control which both reflect and consolidate the power of those who commission them, and that "cartography is active, as it portrays one reality, while helping to obliterate the previous" (Kain and Baigent, nd, cited in Scott, 1998: 47).

The power relations apparent during territorial transformation, particularly the practices and processes that separate territorial entities from each other, are indicative of how notions of ownership, access, and control operate to attain particular outcomes, including economic, political, and cultural hegemony over particular places (Paasi, 2009: 217; Sletto, 2009b: 256; Storey, 2012: 11). Boundary-making, as an example of the state's attempt to achieve this hegemony, makes "real the system of knowledge, the formulation of culture, and the relations of power in which these concepts are located" (L.T. Smith, 1999: 48). van Houtom argues similarly that because "a map not only re-presents the world, it also is productive ... a map of a border is therefore *active*: it represents space which facilitates its domination and control, it communicates a truth, it actively *constructs knowledge*, it silences the unrepresented, it exercises power" (2011: 52, emphasis original). As power creates the map, power creates the border.

In recognizing the role of power in cartographic inscriptions, there is a consequent acceptance of the imaginary in geopolitics, as political geographers unite in declaring the socially

constructed nature of borders.[121] And if borders are a construction of reality and truth in a particular context, then "what is seen as truth in one domain can be a lie in the space and/or eyes of an other" (*ibid*). Different individuals or groups will interpret the border through various experiences, worldviews, interests, conventions, social relations, or situations (Berg and van Houtum, 2003: 2), and as a consequence, any one border comprises "a layering of 'senses' of that place, based on the particular meanings invested by the individual or group" (Corsane and Bowers, 2012: 249). These multilayered constructions can then be re-interpreted as both spatial and temporal records of relationships between local populations, their neighbours, and the dominant powers that affect them, generally the states on all sides of the border (Wilson and Donnan, 1998: 5). The practical consequences of these variously constructed borders are often quite different from what was intended by producing the border (Baud and van Schendel, 1997: 211).

In colonial situations, ideological transformations of territory such as border inscriptions lacerated traditionally understood places. Such places went through various processes of deterritorialization, rendering invisible existing relations between Indigenous peoples, their immediate surroundings, and the complex cultural/political institutions that organized these relations (Willems-Braun, 1997: 18). Radcliffe and Westwood note the naturalization of colonial territorializations, citing Escobar *et al*. who state that "it was by means of a process of subjective representation, recognition and cartographic design that the invention of the contents of a 'natural' state territory took place and that a legitimate discourse about national sovereignty was developed" (1994: 347; cited in 1996: 56). By ordering traditionally understood spaces, state control of subjects and territory proceeded, nationalist ambitions were further enabled, and geographical productions sought to "arrange and display the world around a sovereign centre of judgement" (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 34). Even worse than mere control, Burnett notes that "the process of conducting surveys [can be seen] as an ambivalent process of progressive erasure" (2000: 256, see also Barreiro, 2006; Bulkan and Bulkan, 2006; Collomb, 2006; Guitar *et al*., 2006; M.C. Forte, 2005; 2006). In this way, colonial constructions did not merely replace originary conceptualizations of territory; imperial cartography was seen as a means to "transform '*terra incognito*' into bounded, colonial territories" (Burnett, 2000: xii), and to dispossess

[121] See for example Baud and van Schendel, 1997; Berg and van Houtum, 2003; Diener and Hagen, 2010; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2003; Newman, 2003; 2011; Newman and Paasi, 1998; Sletto, 2009b; Thom, 2009; van Houtom, 2011; Wastl-Walter, 2011; Wilson and Donnan, 1998.

Indigenous communities of land and resources (Johnson *et al*., 2006: 89; Salisbury *et al*., 2011), simultaneously concealing the existence of previous territorial constructions, reinforcing differences and inequalities in the colonial present (Wainwright and Bryan, 2009: 154).

Rupununi Border Concepts

In response, researchers have proposed that borders and territory should not be seen as static or fixed, and instead suggest that while the "boundaries themselves may remain untouched ... their meanings and interpretations are changing" (Laitinen, 2003: 15). As Balibar notes; "to mark out a border is to define a territory, to delimit it, and so to register the identity of that territory or to confer one upon it" (2002: 76); however, "all identity is fundamentally ambiguous" (*ibid*: 57), and "we cannot attribute to the border an essence which would be valid in all places and at all times, all scales, all time periods, and experienced in the same way in all individual and collective experience" (*ibid*: 75). Borders are influenced and affected by history, politics, power, and ideology as well as by cultural and social issues (Wastl-Walter, 2011: 1). Consequently, these singular, colonial territorializations may give way to multiple discourses in order to truly represent the practices of the border in reality. In this chapter, I argue that in the Rupununi, border concepts are fundamentally multiple, as the material practices of daily activities shape local relationships to ideas such as 'territory', 'land' or 'nation'. Conceptually, recognition of the colonial border extends along a continuum of formality. Makushi and Wapishana peoples collectively, and occasionally individually, perceive the border multiply, ranging from acceptance of the political boundary ('the International'), to negotiation with this political understanding (illustrated here with the example of 'the thick line'), to rejection of the colonially imposed border (inconsequential), and finally to an epistemological alterity (in this case, a non-existence of the imposed border). Although these are only four points along the continuum, they are diverse enough to begin to explain the inherent multiplicity of border concepts within the Rupununi.

Beginning with acceptance of the political boundary, it is important to recognize that the only official point at which to cross the border from Guyana to Brazil is in Lethem at the Takutu River Bridge. This legitimacy is marked by local people referring to the official border as 'the International', and is generally accompanied by an acknowledgement of state presence at the Bridge, and an implied state absence elsewhere. Comments made by local residents discursively recognize the specific status of the Takutu River Bridge in comparison with other, unofficial

crossings, such as this Wapishana man who noted that "*Yes, we have the International crossing, but there are a lot of crossings which are used now by people going across*." Indeed, often these comments are made with reference to a local crossing point like: "R*ight there to Lethem is different. It's International, you know*?," or with reference to the state, "*They prefer come to the International crossing with, the Takutu Bridge, pass through the immigration*," or even with reference to the border itself "*I don't think that there's a recognition of an international line. I think the only place that people may see the International border is probably at Lethem*." And those who deny the international status of other crossings "*No, it's not international...*," while simultaneously elevating the International to bureaucratic heights, "*...but Lethem is International. You know, bridge. It has the immigration officers, it has customs, everything down there, so you cannot cross just so, you got to get a visa. You got to have a passport*" indicate both a localized presence and absence of state. 'The International', as a symbol of the border created and imposed upon the social and the spatial landscape of the Rupununi, is an example of van Houtom's geopolitical "fantasy" (2011: 56), where the border exists only when people choose to believe in it.

Another fantasy, (or perhaps the same one?) is a second Rupununi border concept which negotiates with this official understanding of the border, by transforming the boundary from the thin line on the map to a thick line[122] in practice, through policy, and with populations. With the recent opening of the Takutu River Bridge, former Presidents Bharat Jagdeo and Luis Inacio Lula-DaSilva began extended foreign policy discussions between Guyana and Brazil, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) designed to facilitate movement within the Boa Vista-Kurupukari area. The importance and relevance of the MoU for Rupununi residents is reflected in their observations regarding the thickened border, from an economic perspective, as this Makushi Toshao states: "W*ell, when, since when the Bridge did open, that was the President of Guyana, of Brazil, well, there were plans was that they'll ... [be] bringing goods from there over here, without no, how would I say, without no VAT,*[123] *From here, from there to here, they wouldn't charge you, unless if you cross ground, over Mabura, they'll have to charge you*," and which this Wapishana man echoes: "*So what they did was just declare Region 9 a duty-free zone for a portion of stuff*." But also in terms of legal identity, as this resident notes: "*Yeah, so now,*

[122] This 'thickening' is meant to reflect a widening of the border across territory to produce a 'band' rather than a 'line', not an increase in bureaucracy.
[123] Value Added Tax.

with the agreement between Guyana and Brazil, Jagdeo will allow them to go, as long as you don't cross, where is it, Kurupukari, but anywhere else before that, they can enjoy without getting any proper documentation or anything," and legal travel, since "*It's just a zone where they allow free movement ... Guyanese people can go over to Brazil, up to a certain point*." Or finally, from a political perspective, with reference to traditional systems of passage, where a Toshao's letter would have previously sufficed: "*You have to sleep at the border first, so you have to get a letter to reach to the council there ... [but] heading to Boa Vista ... you're on your own, you have to get passport. My letter don't work*." Similarly, residential patterns indicate that the Boa Vista-Kurupukari band is seen as an extension of either and both countries, with Brazilians living and working extensively throughout the Rupununi,[124] but also Guyanese similarly occupied in Roraima,[125] as this Makushi leader notes: "*You see, if you go to Boa Vista, there are so many Guyanese living in Brazil. Not just the city itself, I call it village, a foreign village, if you see how many Guyanese people have houses there ... All these places, they are sheer Guyanese people*."

Zartman (2010: 1) argues that there are distinct identities and dynamics of communities living in the borderlands. He defines borderlands as "zones of varying widths, in which people have recognizable configurations of relationships to people inside that zone, on both sides of the borderline but within the cultural landscape of the borderlands, and, as people of the border, special relationships with other people and institutions in their respective nations and states" (*ibid*). A large portion of the borderlands literature specifically focuses upon "meetings of difference" between populations living on opposite sides of the line (for example, Baud and van Schendel, 1997; Blake, 2000; Herzog, 1990; Martinez, 1994; Minghi, 1991; Newman, 2011; Pavlakovich-Kochi *et al*., 2004), and it is to this literature that the above definition speaks. However, within the Rupununi-Roraima region, where the border was imposed upon a "previously single cultural landscape, the ethnic groups continue to have a natural affinity with the people living on the other side, rather than with the majority population of their own country of residence, but with whom they have no common religious, cultural, or linguistic past" (Newman, 2011: 37). For these groups, Anzaldúa provides a more pertinent definition, arguing that "a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an

[124] See Chapter Five: Becoming Places.
[125] See Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.

unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (1999: 25).[126] As a zone of transition, these areas allow for graduated belongings to place; where local populations 'belong' to their 'home', also insisting that home stretches beyond the imaginary boundary, while simultaneously accepting aspects from this beyond into 'home', thereby creating new belongings. Using the metaphor of the ecosystem, Howitt characterizes borders ("edges") as incredibly diverse and complex, and therefore sees them as places of great possibility (2001: 240). Because of this diversity, complexity, and shifting senses of belonging, Zartman insists that "borderlands need to be understood, not as places or even events, but as social processes" (2010: 2).

The international borders of Guyana were determined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through both colonial surveying and the consequent negotiations with neighbouring imperial powers, especially Spain, France, and the Netherlands as well as independent Brazil (Burnett, 2000; Peake, 2009; Hennessy, 2005: 56), and none of these frontier agreements were made with reference to the Indigenous peoples (Colchester, 2005: 278). As Audrey Butt Colson has noted:

> From the point of view of the Indigenous occupants of these territories, the treaties represent an international carve up, in that national sovereignty was assigned in distant capitals of the world, principally in other continents, and boundaries were created without reference to the traditional rights of the occupants. These superimpositions could make no sense in terms of local structures, for they cut across and divided geographical, ecological, social and cultural unities, placing in separate political areas populations which conceived themselves to have been in possession of the land 'from the beginning of time' and as being far more closely interrelated amongst themselves than the peoples and cultures of the nation states which were engulfing them (1983, cited in Colchester, 2005: 278).

This blurry boundary across the savannahs, which as Butt Colson suggests, divides the obvious, original "geographical, ecological, social and cultural unities" is gaining attention within the region, since as Sletto notes "the cartographies of post-colonial landscapes are

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[126] In their study on the borderlands of Burma, Grundy-Warr and Dean (2003: 75-76) use the term minority for these peoples in relation to the nation-state. In a situation remarkably similar to that of the Rupununi, they state: "In actual numerical terms neither the Kachin [Wapishana] nor the Karenni [Makushi] people are 'minorities' in their respective border 'states' [Rupununi and Roraima], and it is only recently that there has been an influence of Burman[Guyanese] settlers into these areas. Minority is also a contentious term as it implies a form of political domination over people who are called 'minorities', bur for long periods of Burma's[Guyana's] independence *de facto* political control was beyond the effective reach of the Burmese [Guyanese] authorities of Rangoon [Georgetown] in many of Burma's [Guyana's] borderlands." This was further examined in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.

typically unstable, contested, and contradictory, and the often arbitrary lines drawn on maps or on a computer screen come to symbolize competing desires for the Other, for belonging, for the rights to be modern, developed, traditional, Indigenous, and so on" (2009b: 273). While often social, cultural, economic, and political identities are influenced by the border, in many cases, they remain undefined by it, and primarily due to the perceived artificiality of the boundary, local populations slip beneath official renderings. In these situations, communities regard the impacts of borderland living as real, but the physical perception of the border is as if merely inconsequential, as van Houtom questions, "why would people who live in a certain land on the globe, where the political borders of that land are neither natural nor self-evident and where the political borders have been established by unpredictable historical coincidences, believe in the self-evident truth of those borders" (2011: 56)?

While still acknowledging the existence of a border, Rupununi peoples consistently make reference to this inconsequentiality. Statements such as "*Amerindians over there, Amerindians over here, and we communicate with them, we go to Boa Vista, and they come here*" indicate that the speaker is aware of a border, through reference to 'there' and 'here' as differentiated places, however the crossing of that border is perceived to be a natural, not a political event. More definitively, one Wapishana man explained to me that "*Yes, they recognize the border. But, I don't know what is it really you know. Yeah, they see it as a border, but I don't know, they don't see the importance of living across there*," intuitively explaining that while people 'recognize the border', it is disregarded in terms of importance when choosing a place to live. Some bitterness towards the border is also apparent, but is often tempered by the acknowledgement that it is inconsequential for daily activities. In separate discussions, two community leaders wove together this tempered-bitterness, with one stating, "*I think people are conscious of the national border, but at the same time, you know, they are accustomed to moving back and forth ever since, without any hindrance*," and the other claiming that it has been "*ages they been people living here, no borders. And we move when we feel to go, and where we want to go, and that is it. But they recently put more restrictions in place, even so, I think we have a common understanding that Indigenous people can go visit the border and we can go across it, yeah, they cross when they want to do that*."

However that the border still impacts these peoples, even while admitting inconsequentiality, is apparent. Socially, culturally, economically, and politically, Rupununi

communities interact with the border and the Roraima communities that mirror them on the other side.[127] Socially, Rupununi communities regularly access health and education facilities in Brazil. A resident medical professional for Region 9 explained that because the Lethem Hospital "*offers only basic services*" (no surgeries or specialist appointments), Rupununi residents are often referred to the hospitals in Boa Vista. Rupununi residents are often also redirected to Boa Vista in cases of emergency, since the hospital is much closer than Georgetown, and the logistics of transportation are far simpler. In addition to these essential services, Brazil offers all Indigenous people of the greater region access to a specialized hospital for Indigenous peoples, called the Casa do Índio, also located in Boa Vista, which accepts patients (even without documentation), provides language assistance, and makes provisions for a family member to stay nearby, arguing that basic health care is a fundamental human right[128] (personal communication, FUNAI,[129] 1 March, 2012). All medical costs are covered, as noted by this Makushi woman, who told me, "*you don't have to pay a cent for no medication*," and transportation to and from the hospital is provided. Furthermore, if someone passes away while under care at a Brazilian medical facility, FUNAI "*would come and put them in a casket, in a coffin, from over there, and they would pay the driver to bring the dead body up to the landing. That's how good the FUNAI is over there*." These social services are regularly accessed by Rupununi residents without concern for the border, although they are certainly aware they are in a 'different place'.

Culturally, families continue to interact across the border, especially during seasonal festivals, when "*in the communities you would find, people would just go in and out, like for Easter, people come back. Yeah, like Christmas time, Easter time, August time, different different times, depends. Yeah. Visiting their families.*" Traditional festivals also continue to be celebrated across the border. Brazilian families participate in Amerindian Heritage festivities, often upon the invitation of the NRDDB or SCPDA, and Guyanese families are invited to Indigenous celebrations in Brazilian Indigenous Territories,[130] such as when the Makushi won

[127] Many of these impacts have been discussed in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings, therefore a few examples will suffice.
[128] Because Brazil is a signatory to ILO Convention 169, they are obliged to recognize the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples, including universal health care, regardless of nationality (personal communication, FUNAI, 1 March, 2012).
[129] Fundação Nacional do Índio. National Indian Foundation of Brazil, the agency responsible for establishing and implementing Brazilian Indigenous policy in compliance with the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988.
[130] Indigenous Territories in Brazil are those which have been federally demarcated and officially recognized as Indigenous lands.

the rights to their traditional territories in the Raposa Serra do Sol, and several Rupununi residents attended the celebration in Matamuka. One Toshao explained the close connections, saying that he had "*carried like sixty people from the North Rupununi. Yeah, and it was very good to be there for them, because they were Makushi brothers. Because they had gotten their territory, it was more or less, in Guyana we have like, Heritage Month, it's something like that they have, celebrating*." These cross-border connections are made and fostered from a young age, as children and youth are encouraged to participate in 'international' sports[131] competitions at least "*once a month*," where nationality means nothing, and instead village representation defines the competition.

The border is fundamental, although unconsciously traversed for economic motivations and interactions as well. Beyond the employment opportunities, the higher pensions, and the social benefits available on the Brazilian side,[132] traditional economic activities such as hunting and fishing extend through the landscape, obviously "transgressing the usual meanings of the border" (Sturgeon, 2005: 7). Residents noted these interactions, as this Makushi man told me; "*So you find a lot of [Brazilian Makushi] in the river, whereas, we fishing too, so there is this movement, going up and going down, but you know we don't trouble them, and you know they don't trouble us, you know, when you're hunting for fish, everybody looking for fish*." These activities extend in both directions, unifying the economic landscape through traditional activities.

Perhaps of greatest importance are the politics experienced at the border. As previously noted,[133] many Rupununi residents have Brazilian documents, which require them, as citizens, to participate in Brazilian elections,[134] necessarily breaching western border definitions of 'nation',

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[131] Usually soccer (football), itself interesting for its connections with the continent (South America), rather than the majority of Guyana's region (Caribbean), where cricket dominates.

[132] See Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings for further explanation.

[133] See Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings for further explanation.

[134] With the cyclical counterpart that many Indigenous Guyanese initially attain Brazilian citizenship through political manoeuvres via an exchange of institutional support for citizenship applications in exchange for political support in elections. In other words, people get their citizenship papers "*during elections, nuh, they need people to vote, so if you are over there and can speak the language, and you have some family over there, they will try and register you to get your papers. The more people to vote for them. So each party will try and do that*." Wilson and Donnan note that "border peoples not only have to deal with the institutions of their own state, but with those institutions of the state/s across the border – entities of equal and sovereign power which overshadow all border relations" (1998: 8), a point that resonates strongly across the Rupununi-Roraima border. Furthermore, people who live in borderlands, as a result of their location at the intersection of multiple systems "draw strategically on multiple repertoires of identity" (Sturgeon, 2005: 30), including Indigenous, Makushi/Wapishana, Guyanese, Brazilian, and 'Guy-Braz'.

'sovereignty', or even 'citizenship.' But parallel to these national political responsibilities, regional Indigenous politics encourage and facilitate further border negotiations. These community politics, where villages and councils liaise and "*work together, all the Toshaos*" allow for 'international,' which is locally perceived as 'inter-village,' collaboration, consultation, and cooperation. As one Toshao explained, "*They does invite us to attend their meeting, consultation, because it's the same, we all talk Makushi. So we doesn't have a problem communicating. I call the best people out here too. To consult with their leaders, and let us interact together and have a better system*." The border is undeniably present, as the Toshao emphasizes how international linguistic problems are easily overcome by shared Indigenous language. However the importance of the border is diminished through the highlighted preference for Indigenous cooperation across the region, disregarding the artificial boundary.

This debordering "allows us to better comprehend the complex 'entanglements of domination and resistance' in Indigenous landscapes" (Sletto, 2009b: 257), and opens the possibility of multiple understandings of 'the border' to co-exist. Additionally, if the border is multiple, then border negotiations should allow the border to reformulate, to be in a state of process (Sturgeon, 2005: 30), or transformation (Zimmerbauer, 2011: 211). Rupununi-Roraima community members not only perceive the border as conceptually multiple, there are also still a significant number of people who do not perceive the border at all, who instead speak of the places it defines as one *place*, rendering the border non-existent. Across the Rupununi, in each of the five villages I visited, many people are doing this deliberately, seemingly as an act of political resistance, defiantly announcing the missing border, with statements such as: "*for us Amerindians, there's no border. There's no border for us. We love our freedom*" (Shulinab), or "*it's just like, there's no border like around that area*" (Aishalton), or "*it's not really seen as a border, not really a border*" (St. Ignatius), or "*there is no border for Amerindian people*" (Karasabai), or "*there's no borders, they [Amerindian people] just go over anytime they feel like*" (Annai Central). Arguably, for these people, the border is not non-existent, although they believe it clearly *should* be.

But more interesting are those who do not see the border at all. These people spoke of 'crossing a river', or 'visiting a village', with no recognition that they had entered a different geopolitical space. One Wapishana woman was explaining events in the region, and said "*but for the longest while, I think, around here in Aishalton, but other places, other places, like near*

the river, near the Achiwib, near the Takutu, it's still going on." Here, the river has reverted to a mere waterway, the significance of the political border absent in this conversation. Similarly, a Makushi man spoke of his daily activities, stating "*so if I go [see] somebody in Normandy, you know, normally a little lunch, or dinner, they know you're local*." This Makushi man lives in the border community of Karasabai, and is speaking of visiting a nearby community in Brazil (Normandy), but in conversation, eliminates the difference in states, the difference in nationality, or the acknowledgement of crossing a political boundary, emphasizing this erasure by suggesting that he is 'local'.

This erasure, both the political and the unintended, appears to be common amongst Indigenous peoples in other places. Thom's 2009 study of Coast Salish[135] peoples' reactions to borders reflects these sentiments, with one community member stating "the governments put these division lines between us. But we always seem to come to the conclusion that we are all related and that these boundaries shouldn't be there" (quoted on page 194). Luna-Firebaugh (2002: 163-178), cites court records that state "from the Indian's viewpoint, he crosses no boundary line. For him, this boundary line does not exist," and she claims that Indigenous people are "people with no border," supporting her argument with testimony from across North America[136] (*ibid*). In La Gran Sabana,[137] Sletto has argued that boundaries are a non-Indigenous phenomenon, carrying a "sense of ownership and exclusion that are antithetical to genuine Indigenous values" (2009b: 266). Echoing the Makushi and Wapishana of the Rupununi, Sletto cites one Pemon elder from the region, who states "we don't have boundaries like outsiders do. They make boundaries and no one is allowed to enter. But people from other communities can come here. Our brothers from Mapauri ... and Chirikayen also have gardens here. Well, we can't say that they shouldn't come there. The land is for everyone. We are all Pemon" (*ibid*:

[135] Peoples of the Pacific North West coast of North America.
[136] "There are no borders among our people," "We are crossing over this international border that we do not know and do not recognize," and "It just so happened that they put the line between us" are examples (Luna-Firebaugh, 2002: 178).
[137] La Gran Sabana is generally recognized as part of the same geological, geographical, topographical landscape of Roraima and the Rupununi, being largely an extension of the savannah environment into Venezuela. It factors less in this study as Makushi and Wapishana people occupy only the Roraima and Rupununi portions of these savannahs. Although from a scientific perspective, the Makushi are present in Venezuela as Pemon , the use of this alternate cultural identifier indicates the peoples themselves recognize significant differences within their cultures, a difference respected from this researcher's perspective.

268).[138] What is important here is not the lack of boundaries acknowledged, but the type of boundaries, as Sletto insists Indigenous boundaries exist, but as "fluctuating, porous, and often wide zones that are commonly agreed upon, semi-permanent, and contingent on changing social relations and geographies" (*ibid*).

These processes of 'debordering' and 'rebordering' result in the production of new boundaries and the erasure of others in ways that are often unpredictable, and Indigenous "boundary-(re)makings must therefore be understood as cultural productions, performed as part of a complex repertoire of resistance, which in turn is informed by entangled, spatially contingent relations of domination and resistance" (*ibid*: 272). Fox argues that once fixed, western cartographic representations of territory emerge, the fluid, flexible nature of Indigenous thinking[139] is lost (1998: 3). Johnson *et al*. (2006: 87) argue that without these characteristics of Indigenous thinking, fixed boundaries become acceptable, consequently shifting Indigenous social relations generally, leading to a loss of traditional ways of life, including cultural interactions across imposed borders.

However, through both the unintended disregard for the political border, and particularly through the defiant rejection of western boundary lines, these Rupununi-Roraima communities are shifting perceptions of the border, questioning and perhaps erasing the importance of the political line, which was always considered imaginary. Baud and van Schendel (1997: 237) argue against the legitimacy of many existing borders in the region, in particular those drawn without consideration of "indigenous ethnic and spatial structures," while MacMillan (1995: 26), Henfrey (1964: 169), and Hills (1968: 33) support Audrey Butt Colson's (1983) assertion that the colonial border imposed upon the Makushi and Wapishana makes no sense geographically, ecologically, socially, or culturally. And some Rupununi communities spoke of traditional border perceptions when reminiscing about the past, stating "*Guyana and Brazil was like sharing one border, everybody, you know, there's no border in other words. There was no border*." Others linked those traditional border perceptions to current practices, as this regional leader in

[138] Similarly, Tiam Fook (2011: 249) found that village elders insisted that individual villages did not have boundaries, since all Makushi were considered "one people and could walk freely and cultivate, harvest, and use resources from one another in responsible ways."

[139] Rundstrom (1998: 7-8) defines Indigenous thinking as including "the principle of the ubiquity of relatedness; non-anthropocentricity; a cyclical concept of time; a more synthetic than analytic view of the construction of geographical knowledge; non-binary thinking; the idea that facts cannot be dissociated from values; that precise ambiguity exists and can be advantageous; an emphasis on oral performance and other non-inscriptive means of representation; and the presence of morality in all actions."

Karasabai who stated, "*I believe that it [the border] don't mean nothing to them, it is just, like they living in that long ago, it's just a crossing. It's just water*," demonstrating a connection to traditional understandings of Indigenous territory (see Figure 5).

Makushi and Wapishana community members express these traditional territorial conceptualizations through other themes, including state-community relations, community-region relations, and international community relations. Local relations with the state are often tense and/or uncomfortable, a legacy of years of neglect and abandonment,[140] and Rupununi peoples often simultaneously expressed their discomfort for living in Guyana and their concomitant ease with Brazil:

> *Well, the difference now, from living in Georgetown among those people, and the difference over there in Brazil; you're living, you're a living breathing Indigenous person. Among Brazilians, they don't downgrade you. I find that they don't downgrade you. I feel at home, more than you feel at home, even though we are here in Guyana. But you are a stranger in Georgetown. Yeah, so that's it, that's why I like Brazil.*

Henfrey notes that historically, Brazilian, rather than Guyanese culture has shaped Indigenous peoples development in the Rupununi (1964: 169), and this preference for Brazilian culture is often transformed into respect for Brazilian political symbols, as for example, a recognition of Boa Vista (the Roraima state capital) as the Rupununi *de facto* capital. This local historian further explained that "*At one time, people here used to look at Boa Vista as our capital, you would go to Boa Vista, you don't really go to Georgetown. You go to Brazil, you go to Boa Vista, right?*" This sentiment was confirmed by both a regional leader whilst explaining the close relationship of Rupununi to Roraima and Brazil generally who stated, "*So now with the strengthening of the ties with Guyana and Brazil, like it, I mean, that's our soil for us*," and by a local resident who stated "*Brazil is just an extension of us*." In this way, the Makushi and Wapishana are challenging the concept of the political border and what it represents within Rupununi communities. Throughout the literature, reference is made to the continuous nature of the Rupununi-Roraima place, as Melville (1956: 2) and Henfrey (1964: 169) explain the Rupununi as "an offshoot of the great Rio Branco grasslands" of Brazil, while Waugh (1934: 28-29), Hills (1968: 32), Rival (2001: 60), and Watkins (2010: 5) refer to the area as the Rio Branco-Rupununi savannah. Bridges acknowledges this contiguity, while politically critiquing it, as he states that "an extensive savannah here stretches actually right across this *arbitrary*

[140] See Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings, and Chapter Five: Becoming Places for further explanation.

frontier, from the Rupununi River in Guiana into the Territorio do Rio Branco of Brazil"[141] (1985: ix, emphasis mine). He then goes on to note that while the east-west line of the Kanuku Mountains that separate the homelands of the Makushi from those of the Wapishana remains a far more significant 'border' than the north-south international frontier, "which cuts through them, not recognizing that both tribes live west as well as east of the Takutu," the Rupununi savannah "hardly differs from its continuation in Brazil, and is much more akin also to La Gran Sabana or the Caroni district in neighbouring Venezuela than to the coastal areas of Guyana itself," since "there you are in the West Indies: here in Latin America" (*ibid*: ix-x).

That this Rupununi-Roraima place operates as one entity is evident through observations of where populations live. Several Rupununi residents commented on the location of 'Guyanese' Indigenous, noting "*well, we have Makushi people living, from Achiwib to Brazil, right, most of the people who make the community over there, they call Jacamí, is all Guyanese, Achiwib*[142] *people*." This Wapishana man was explaining that while Jacamí is physically located within Brazilian territory, the majority of people living in the village originally came from Achiwib (Guyana). Similarly, this Toshao explained that "*the people living across there, I would say more than fifty percent in the villages across there are Guyanese. They're from my village, they're from other villages around, they're from there, they're from Awarwaunau, Maruranau, right down to Sand Creek, right down to Annai. You will find these people. If you go over there, and ask if it's Indigenous community, they speak English with them, they will answer, because they are Guyanese*." The urban areas are also mixed, from immediately across the border in "*Bonfim, where all the housing schemes, all of them, more than three quarters of them are Guyanese*," to even as far as permeating the Roraima state capital of Boa Vista, where this community leader argued that "*if you go to Boa Vista, there are so many Guyanese living in Brazil. I call it a foreign village, if you see how many people have houses there. It have Raio do Sol, Pinto Laranga and all these places, they are sheer Guyanese people*," naming those neighbourhoods that are predominantly a Guyanese majority.

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[141] Roraima shifted status from the Rio Branco Federal Territory, and became a state in 1988 (Hemming, 1990: 295; Pereira, 2006: 209).

[142] The tension in discussing the 'non-existent' border concept is apparent here, as the Rupununi speaker notes that the residents of Jacamí are 'Guyanese', likely to clarify for me as an outsider. However, they immediately re-define the people as 'Achiwib people', reverting back to Indigenous conceptualizations of place and identity. These ideas are further explored in Chapter Six: Telling Stories.

This fluid movement of people across the inscribed boundary is challenging colonial border concepts within the region, as well as nationalism itself. Baud and van Schendel argue that when a border divides a previously distinct population, "politically these people belong to a state that demands their unswerving loyalty. Ethnically and emotionally the feel part of another, nonstate entity" (1997: 215), and Sahlins emphasizes that likewise, the state's power in the border areas may remain unstable (1989: 276). Since many of the community members argue against the reality of borders across this territory for Indigenous peoples, this deliberate erasure may be representative of a revolutionary mode of thinking, wherein the interests of established political nations are perceived as irrelevant, and instead, Indigenous politics and geographical world views are re-emerging. From this perspective, Indigenous territory is conceived of as "entire regions and local landscapes where groups of people have invested themselves (their thoughts, values, collective sensibilities) and to which they feel they belong" (Basso, 1996: xiii), demonstrating the "phenomenologically informed view of Indigenous relationships to land and formulations of community" (Thom, 2009: 179) that Rundstrom (1998: 7-8) insists upon when working with fluid, Indigenous conceptualizations of borders.

However, as demonstrated, this return to original conceptualizations of territory within the Rupununi-Roraima region is merely one perspective. The non-existent border accompanies the inconsequential border, the thick line, and 'The International' (as well as potentially endless variations) within local epistemology and ontology, where it could be argued that "the physical reality of the border is created by the meaning attached to it" (van Houtom, 2011: 50). Thus, the border is contingent, based on where you are, or who you are, or what traditions you follow, allowing for dynamic and multiple understandings to emerge.

Rupununi Border Experiences

These contingent, multiple border concepts are also mirrored by multiple border practices, and there appears to be a parallel graduated scale of lessening formality with regards to experiences of crossing the border. Most formally, Rupununi residents acknowledge the Takutu River Bridge as the official entry point between the two countries, and their experiences of crossing the Bridge generally reflect the official nature of the crossing. Several people commented on the increased security of the Bridge, both generally, as this regional leader notes: "*It kind of got complying with the governmental structure, in terms of security. It makes it easier to regulate and monitor the flow and so on*," and individually, as this Makushi man explains:

"*You just got to show your I.D. card, and you pass. You have to pass there and you telling them, hold on, you going so. And then you coming back, because, you know they will, they will still remember you, because right there you have to pass back. Yeah, it's just that, more stricter*."

Comparisons with pre-Bridge times were common as people reflected on increased difficulty in crossing, especially for families, as this Wapishana woman explains, "*It's not easy, because you don't go, well before, that's how the people go there with their children and everybody they used to go there, they go across nobody didn't say anything, but now it's not like that, they have this people checking who going*," but also on perceived increased safety, as this Makushi Toshao noted "*they used to cross with boat, nuh, from here over, all side, but all sides now are blocked up. Can't really cross how you like now. So it's more, let's say, more safer than before, nuh?*" A component of this increased security is a heightened awareness of the need for official documentation to cross the border, occasionally in the form of a passport, or more commonly, a national identification card. Several Rupununi residents remarked that with the opening of the Bridge, documentation became an increasing concern, such as this Makushi woman who said "*You have to have these papers see, you have, it's really, you know, it's how to say more strict like, you have to have some papers to reach into there then, into the, into the over there, nuh?*," or this Makushi man who insisted "*You got to get passport, and that kind of thing, I.D. card and so on. Them keeping. Especially documents*."

However, more often Rupununi residents acknowledged that crossing the border was easier for Makushi and Wapishana, or other Indigenous peoples living along the border than it could be for other Guyanese or Brazilian nationals. Some Makushi and Wapishana felt it was an "*Amerindian privilege*," or because "*Amerindian people are less harmful*," "*because of family*," "*because of language*," "*because you can't make any distinctions that easily by just face value*" (i.e. between a Guyanese *versus* a Brazilian Indigenous person), or the complete opposite, "*because they know Guyanese Makushis*." As well, the now familiar "*because there is no border there for Amerindian people*," or simply "*because they Amerindians*." In contrast to those few who highlighted the increased security of the Bridge as border, this greater ease of entry for Indigenous peoples is generally supported by perceptions that Indigenous peoples do not need documents to cross the border. One Makushi man explained to me his father's experience crossing the Bridge: "*You know, we don't need documents here. And he let you pass. You understand. And like for instance, like my father for instance a couple of days from now. He*

don't know to speak Portuguese properly, and has not documents and thing. But my watch with he, oh, he's an Indian,[143] *and he goes right through. Go enjoy yourself. You understand?*," while a Wapishana Toshao explained how Indigenous identifiers, such as language, could be enough 'documentation': "*When I'm going to speak, answer them, it's in Wapishana. Yeah, although I know Portuguese, nuh? We talk to them in Wapishana, and say, oh, he's an Indigenous person, pass. So I'm passing free. That's how I does pass. Yeah I don't got to show my I.D. card, and that is why I got a passport – my language, my dialect, yeah*."

The exceptions to this perceived relative freedom for Indigenous peoples to cross the Bridge-as-border include during election times (on both sides of the border, but particularly during Brazilian elections)[144] and during periods of increased surveillance, such as immediately following a narcotics or weapons event at the border. Because of the frequency with which people use election periods to gain 'citizenship', particularly in Brazil,[145] immigration officials and Brazilian 'Federals' are especially vigilant during these time periods, and Rupununi residents often noted the need to be wary of the border during these times, stating that they might "*send you back, right back, especially like if they are voting, they send you back*," while others note that it is "*only during voting time*," or "*when there is elections*" that people experience difficulties crossing the border.

However, problems also may occur during times of border stress, such as when "*somebody got caught with drugs or with weapon, or somebody get killed on the road, and body being found, some things like that*." At these times of heightened security, more frequent verification of documentation as well as increased patrols of the border become normalized, and Rupununi residents express caution when crossing the border at these times, as this Makushi

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[143] 'Indian' is the commonly accepted word for Indigenous peoples in Brazil (Índio, in Portuguese). Because this Makushi man had just returned from spending twenty years in Brazil, he was likely accustomed to using the Brazilian classification, rather than the Guyanese 'Amerindian', or the international 'Indigenous', and it should not be assumed that he was speaking of Guyanese of East Indian descent, as the term 'Indian' is commonly used in Guyana.

[144] Due primarily to the above mentioned campaign corruption, wherein Brazilian politicians facilitate Brazilian citizenship for Guyanese Indigenous peoples in exchange for political support during elections, as this Makushi leader explained, "*Politics at its best. The same government wants, the parties over there, they all want more votes, so what they do is, if these people don't have documents, what will happen sort of like, promise to vote for them during the elections. Um-hm. So the more votes they get, the better, if I can go over there and say I will vote for Dilma, I need documents, in a couple of days time you get your documents*."

[145] As this resident explained "*Because some of these people from here go across there, and they take out their papers so that they have voting rights, so when during election time, they try to come there and vote for whichever person they want. So they get them from over here and they carry them over there to vote. And they vote, a sort of campaign, right?*"

woman (who does not carry Brazilian documents) says, "*That's why they take up Brazil documents. Once they have Brazil document, but I don't have, and I am afraid ... there is time, like they have smuggling going on, and they bring drugs, and if they get caught, that's the time they will have Federals at the bus stop now,*[146] *Checking, checking, asking for documents*." This 'thickening' of the border is acknowledged throughout the region, the experiences of this Wapishana man reflecting those of the Makushi woman, as he explains, "*Sometimes, like, especially when things go bad in the border, like, somebody doing trafficking of drugs, is really, they do checking. Sometimes they carry you from here, til after a certain point, and then stop the bus, and then check, check, and if you don't have I.D. card, they put you down, you left right there*." He goes one to say "*it's really hard, like when somebody trafficking drugs, or something go wrong, something bad go wrong. It's really bad. You really go to be careful*," further emphasizing the caution required if someone chooses to cross the border at these precarious times. However, in these circumstances, Rupununi residents simply choose to avoid the Bridge during these events, occasionally delaying or cancelling a crossing, but more often opting to use the many unofficial crossings scattered throughout the region.

In the South Rupununi, these crossings traverse the same Takutu River as the bridge in Lethem. The river is slow moving, and only seasonally floods, meaning that for most of the year, any point along the river could be used as a crossing since "*there's an open place about 2300 miles*[147] *stretch of savannah border, and in any crossing you could cross the river and go across*" as "*there's nothing that could stop you there*." However, there are several localized unofficial crossings that are recognized and identified as such throughout the South, including nearby to Wakadanawa, Kraudar, Achiwib, Baitoon, Sawariwao, and Potarinao,[148] and at these recognized crossings, savannah roads approach the river on either side of the river-border, making crossing and travelling easier. While local communities frequently use these crossings for their travel, often Rupununi residents from other communities also prefer to travel to these

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[146] The increased patrols are not only *along* the border, they also increase the *thickness* of the border, and the entire route from Bonfim to Boa Vista becomes subject to more intense surveillance (see also Pereira, 2006: 217).
[147] 3700 km. In actuality, the political border with Brazil is approximately 1600 km. However, Guyana's total borders are approximately 2300 km, and perhaps this is what the speaker meant. Regardless, even 1600km of unpatrolled border concedes the likely possibility of multiple 'crossings'.
[148] There are also many unofficial crosssings that continue to use Wapishana, Atorad, or Taruma names, including Bai Wao Wa Nuh (Duck Creek Mouth), Ka Waz Wao Wa Num (Poison Tree Creek Mouth), and Chudkar Pad (Cassava Meal Falls), which contribute to a cultural landscape, a theme that will be further explored in Chapter Six: Telling Stories.

unofficial crossings, as this Wapishana man noted, "*I was in Sawariwao the other day, and there was motorcycles up and down, between Awarwaunau and across there*."

This preference for the unofficial crossings is only in part due to the possibility of difficulties in Lethem with the official Bridge crossing, as this community leader notes, "*once you cross through the back here, it's not like nobody can stop you, because we don't have police, we don't have Federals in that area, it's just a back road*." More frequently, Rupununi residents complain of the distances to Lethem, difficulties with transportation, and of course, the likelihood of their 'international' visit being merely 'inter-village.' One Rupununi resident was estimating the differences in time that would be required of someone from Achiwib wishing to cross the border and visit Boa Vista. He states that from Achiwib, "*they would go cross with their motorcycles and bicycles to the village [across the river/border], leave it there, and then catch the bus to Boa Vista, do what they got to do, and then go back. It takes about one, one and a half hours from there, and if you come this side [Lethem], it's about six hours*.[149] *That side it's a lot easier for them*." The transportation options, such as this bus to Boa Vista, are also one of the significant reasons why unofficial crossings are used. While no public transportation is available in the South Rupununi, across the border in Brazil "*transportation from Boa Vista coming there, like every other day*." Not only does this save time, the expense involved in hiring a private vehicle in the Rupununi is often prohibitive, and by crossing to Brazil and using public transport, Rupununi residents can take advantage of a far more economical means of travelling. As this Wapishana man notes, "*It's very difficult to go straight to Lethem from Achiwib, straight to Lethem, it cost about 90000 dollar. Yeah. And we now, just go across to Jacamí, and pay twenty reis, twenty reis is like 2000 dollar, straight to Boa Vista*." Of course, not everyone is crossing the border to visit Boa Vista, as the majority of crossings are made simply to visit family or friends across the river-border, and this Wapishana man acknowledged the simplicity of crossing at Baitoon for short trips, saying "*there's a village called Baitoon, and just across there, there's another village, over in Brazil. So they use that. And nobody like check or ask any questions there*."

[149] This is a best case estimate for length of time between Achiwib and Lethem. If the road was in poor condition, the trip could take significantly longer, and during the rainy season, the trip would likely be impossible. One and a half hours (plus crossing time between Lethem and Bonfim) would also need to be added to reach Boa Vista from Bonfim.

In the North Rupununi, most residents "*have to come through Lethem, that's the only way for them to get into Brazil*," since the majority of people who live in the North live closer to the road than to the border/river. However, the Takutu River meets the southward flowing Ireng River (Rio Maú) just near the village of Pirará in the northern half of the Rupununi, forming the northern Rupununi[150] border with Brazil, and those communities that live nearby, especially those in the South Pakaraima District, continue to cross the river at unofficial crossings when they need to travel into Brazil. Unlike the Takutu River, the Ireng River remains too deep and fast year round to cross straight through with a vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle; however, boat transportation services are often provided for the crossing, and in some cases villages have "*three boats going up and down, the village boats*." Similar to the South Rupununi, the increased surveillance in Lethem causes concern, as this resident notes, "*you can't go without document...*" prompting residents choose the unofficial crossings because of lessened bureaucracy, "*...so that is why they're doing in this route most of the time*." Also similarly, northern Rupununi residents are weary of the time and distance required to travel to Lethem, as the savannah road that connects the villages of the South Pakaraima District is seasonally flooded for on average four to six months of the year, completely disconnecting the District from the Region, including all governmental and health facilities. Because of this, Rupununi residents often use the unofficial crossings combined with Brazilian public transport not only to access the villages and cities of Roraima, but also simply to access Lethem, as this community leader noted, "*when everything wet, [Karasabai] by itself. And then you get the Brazil road now, you got to get the bus now. If you want to go Lethem, you have to catch the bus to Boa Vista, and you pay the half price and you come out at the junction now. There you are at the junction, waiting for a bus that comes this side. And then you take it to the border, to the Bonfim."*[151]

What is particularly interesting about the unofficial crossings in the northern Rupununi is that while they are still technically 'unofficial', village boat services, various governmental services, and a census-type surveying lend them a quasi-official status. For example, many of

[150] The North Rupununi is a political sub-district of the Rupununi (together with South Rupununi, South-Central Rupununi, Central Rupununi, and South Pakaraimas). However, it can also be used as a broad divider within the region: South – North. The North includes the North Rupununi, as well as the South Pakaraimas. In the interest of clarity, I have chosen to use the terminology 'northern Rupununi' in place of South Pakaraimas for much of this discussion, in order to clearly contrast with the South.

[151] This Makushi woman is explaining that to access Lethem during the rainy season, Karasabai residents cross the Ireng River entering Brazil, and then catch a Brazilian bus headed to Boa Vista as far as the junction (paying only half fare), where they transfer to a connecting bus which takes them to Bonfim, across the river from Lethem.

the boats used for the crossings are privately run, although particular village families are responsible for the operation of services. However, additionally "*they have a government boat,*[152] *but they don't use it. Because it too big. And the water now, it's shallow. So that's why they use the private boat*." Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture has a strong presence at the crossing, with "*a little foot a mouth camp there, a house. So people that come from that side, they have to spray*," and a strict watch over the types of food entering Guyana, as this regional leader notes, "*It's frozen chickens that come across there, but no cows, or food can come across. Because there is a ban, on these kinds of animals, unless they get certified by the authorities and so*." Finally, "*they have records of how much people, how many people cross per day*," records controlled by the "*two officials there, at the crossing*" who "*collect the names. Who's leaving, and then when you come back*." That this governmental boat access, informal immigration control, and a form of customs for food and agricultural goods are all present at this crossing implies that while it may still be technically unofficial, the states of Guyana and Brazil are certainly aware of the activity that occurs there, and are simply relaxed with regards to these customary movements. As van Houtom noted, "the border is not present, yet it is not absent" (2011: 49).

However, having such a porous border is not always a convenience, for either the states, or for the local communities. Particularly in the South Rupununi, where the crossings are multiple and simple for most of the year, Rupununi residents are finding that as they can enter Brazil freely, so do Brazilians enter Guyana. Many of the problems with *garimpeiros*[153] entering the country[154] can be traced back to the unregulated borders of the South, as this Wapishana man notes, "*they would go to Wakadanawa first, and then they would go up to Marudi*." In particular, the mining equipment often comes through the unofficial crossings since the garimpeiros usually have several excavators or dredges working in a particular area that local residents explain "*come on a trail going through, near Kraudanawao, that's where they go through. It's there, to Parabara*."

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[152] What this indicates is while the crossing is technically unofficial, the government still maintains semi-official boat services across the river, either by means of the government boat which is used for larger parties, or more commonly through the services of a village family contracted to provide regular access.
[153] Brazilian small-scale miners. The Portuguese word is commonly used in the Rupununi to specifically indicate Brazilians, in contrast with the Guyanese term 'pork-knockers'.
[154] Explained in detail in Chapter Five: Becoming Places.

Cattle rustlers also frequent these unofficial crossings, causing serious problems for Rupununi residents, who acknowledge that those communities closer to the border have greater concerns, as this Wapishana man noted, "*It's still occurring to the back. Achiwib area. Yeah, Achiwib, Kraudar, they still have rustling from outside*." One Toshao from a border community further explained that the Brazilians "*cross their cattle over and graze for the afternoon and carry it back, yeah, and mostly they carry ours too*," a statement supported by a resident from a nearby village who stated that these problems arise "*every dry season. When the water's low in the Takutu. Every dry season*." The problems of cattle theft are exacerbated by the threats to society the rustlers bring "*because they have a lot of weapons over there, which, which we don't really have here*."

Furthermore, South Rupununi residents complain about illegal hunting and fishing practices occurring on their traditional lands. Most people readily acknowledged that Indigenous peoples move across territory, however, Wapishana and Makushi individuals were more concerned with non-Indigenous Brazilians entering Guyana because "*we have a route going from Kraudar, let's say ten kilometres from the borderland. Brazilians, they come across, and do night hunting, around*," with "*high-powered rifles, spot-lights and things. And raiding out our deer stock, the savannah deer. Yes, savannah deer, the white-tail deer, yeah. And killing them by the tens, fifteens. that we don't do. We Amerindians, we only kill one, two, that's enough*." While the hunting is a problem generally during the dry season, the Rupununi communities have difficulties with illegal fishing activities "*during the rainy season time. They come in boats...*" because "*...they can't patrol all the border*." Furthermore, the Brazilians tend to use more advanced equipment, as one Toshao noted, "*They knock off everything with nets*." While occasionally occurring in the northern Rupununi border areas, these problems are not nearly as prominent, and northern Rupununi community members speak of having extremely collegial relationships for the most part with their Brazilian neighbours, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Perhaps because of this collegiality, the people of the northern Rupununi seem to spend more time crossing the border and visiting with neighbours, who are often both family and friends. And perhaps because of *this*, even though the quasi-official crossings offer simplicity and structure, the other, multiple crossings figured more strongly in cultural understandings of the river than in the South. In this least formal experience, Rupununi residents would only

acknowledge that what they were crossing was just another river, simply not recognizing the colonially imposed idea that the river is meant to be representative of the international boundary. While obviously likened ideologically to the 'non-existent' border concept discussed above, the experiential understanding permeates actual practices, where the river is no longer (or not again) a geopolitical boundary, whether observed (the Bridge) or not (the unofficial crossings). It is instead "*just water*." And as the regional leader who explained that the river is 'just water' noted, for these people, it is "*like they living in that long ago*." For these people, their practices of territory remain in the past, from that era before the Pirará conflict, before the reality of 'Brazil' or 'Guyana', from before the existence of the boundary between 'there' and 'here', or at least the colonially constructed 'there' and 'here'. Together with the other potentially endless variations within local epistemology and ontology, these competing perceptions and everyday interactions with the political boundary question traditional border concepts, in particular the notion of a singular, structured, static border.

However, these multiple renderings of the border are often disguised by cartographic efforts. Instead of appreciating Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, western geography does not generally break with historically legitimate conventions for imagining space.[155] By attempting to abstract, and thus to some degree conceal, the reality of the fluid, shifting, and socially contingent nature of lived, Indigenous spatial relationships, western cartography lessens subaltern power over variously constructed geographical concepts such as territories and borders (Sletto, 2009a: 147). Or, as Johnson *et al*. state, "to engage the technologies of western cartography is to involve Indigenous communities and their knowledge systems with a science implicated in the European colonial endeavor" (2006: 82). Instead, a geography that recognizes the importance of "complexly networked social groups enmeshed in locally rich property relations, reflecting a relational epistemology of kin, travel, descent and sharing" would allow territorial boundaries to be "attributed less to state-endorsed political structures, and more through Indigenous idioms of kin, ancestor, sharing, and residence affiliation" (Thom, 2009: 197), allowing for a re-inscription of space along contingent patterns.

[155] In contrast with Brody's (1981) and Tsing's (1999) studies of Indigenous spaces, which demonstrate over-lapping patches and entangled lines marking histories of individual and collective use.

Contingent Borders

The flowing borders; borders that flow. Contrary to arguments that claim borders as fixed, static, or immutable, as a sacred feature of the western geopolitical landscape, or the defining characteristic of territory (Diener and Hagen, 2010: 4), others insist that borders are fluid (Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2003: 93), vacillating (Vaughan-Williams, 2009: 10), impermanent (Bäschlin and Sidati, 2011: 549), provisional (Mountz in: Johnson *et al*., 2011: 65), variable (Wastl-Walter, 2011: 1), dynamic (Berg and van Houtum, 2003: 9; Newman, 2003: 288), subjective, contrived, negotiated, contested (Diener and Hagen, 2010: 3), processual (Sturgeon, 2005: 201), multilayered (Zimmerbauer, 2011: 213), multiple (Newman, 2006a: 156), becoming (Mountz in: Johnson *et al*., 2011: 65; Paasi, 1996; 2009: 217) relational (Amin *et al*., 2003: 6; Paasi, 2011: 20; Thom, 2009: 197), and contingent (Paasi, 1996; 2009: 217) From this perspective, a border such as the one between the Rupununi and Roraima only "represents the boundary at a particular time" (Newman, 2003: 288), since political territoriality is always influenced by past and present political and social formations, as well as by regional geopolitics and the related balance of power (Bäschlin and Sidati, 2011: 549; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2003: 94).

Accordingly, I have argued that borders, like places are produced by those who live with/in them, and throughout the Rupununi-Roraima region, the concept of 'border' is being re-imagined simultaneously as determined, thickened, ignored, and unreal, amongst others, but always evolving. These multiplicities need to be acknowledged in recognition and acceptance of an ambiguous understanding of this place, the wider region, Rupununi-Roraima, where "a line of drift [(colonial boundary disputes)] intersects a customary line [(Indigenous territory)]"; or perhaps "a line of drift [(Indigenous territory)] intersects a customary line [(international boundary)]" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 203): or perhaps both... and multiple others. The consequences of accepting these multiple, ambiguous places, not just in the Rupununi, but in other ambiguous places (Luna-Firebaugh, 2002; Sletto, 2009b; Thom, 2009) suggest a greater awareness of the dynamism, fluidity, and multiplicity being explored through place-making studies (Cresswell, 2009; Feld and Basso, 1996; Jones and Evans, 2012; Massey, 1994; Raffles, 2002; Rodman, 1992; Stokowski, 2002). By accepting that reality does not precede practice, but is instead shaped by and with practice as seen through Makushi and Wapishana experiences of the border (Blaser, 2009: Mol, 1999), we can encourage and push for the emergence and

acceptance of multiple ontologies in everyday existence through a greater understanding of how individual and/or social knowledges and experiences can help shape different ontological understandings of the world(s).

Chapter Five: Becoming Places

> *The forest lay sleeping its never interrupted sleep. Over it passed the days and the nights. The summer sun shone above it, the winter rains fell upon it. Its trees were centuries old, an unending green overrunning the mountain, invading the plain, lost in the infinite. It was like a sea that had never been explored, locked in its own mystery. Owls hooted by the yellow light of the moon on nights of calm. Their cries were not forebodings of evil, for men had not yet come to the giant wood…* (Amado, 1943: 27)

Yet people ('men') *had* arrived to the 'giant wood' now known as the Amazon, maybe some 30 000 years previous (Mann, 2005: 192). Indeed, the Amazon basin, most of which is covered by forest, is still home to approximately four hundred Indigenous groups (Survival International, 2012). But perhaps these are not the 'evil men' to whom Amado was referring? Perhaps they were yet to come. Perhaps they were encouraged to come.

Since despite the presence of the Indigenous peoples, the Brazilian government in particular believed there was too much 'empty space' in the Amazon (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 69), and that this perceived emptiness was a threat to the sovereignty of the Brazilian nation. A series of policies, programs, and projects were implemented, specifically to encourage more people to populate the Amazon region (Hemming, 2008: 293). However, in a forested place, where does one place end and another begin? Do places end? Guyana's Rupununi region is also part of the Amazon region, as it forms the northern perimeter of the Amazon basin, sharing hydrologic, geographic, topographic, biologic, ecologic, and cultural traits with the greater region. This chapter argues that there is also now a shared history and geopolitics across the Amazon regions of the two countries, initiated in large part by this Brazilian encouragement for migration.

Following an historical account of the geopolitical motivations for the evolving legislation, political action, and program and project implementation decisions that impacted the Brazilian Amazon, this chapter traces the interventions that caused three *specific* Brazilian populations to shift north as encouraged, and then east to the Rupununi, arguing that these international migrations are merely extensions of the national migrations. Each of these specific cases concludes with an analysis of the environmental and social impacts these migrations are having upon the places and the peoples of the Rupununi. The chapter concludes by suggesting that since many of the dominant changes occurring in the Rupununi today originate elsewhere, that in changing the Rupununi through their introduced activities and practices, the Brazilians

may be changing the way those places are understood locally. Whether this new 'becoming' matters is obviously of concern to the Makushi and Wapishana who live in these places. However it might also be a question that concerns Guyanese at the national level.

Producing Amazônia

Over the last four decades of the twentieth century, a shift occurred within national understandings of Amazônia.[156] In 1964, following a military coup d'état, the Brazilian military began purposefully pursuing an aggressive territorialization program within the Amazon region in the north of the country. The objective at the time was to fill 'empty spaces',[157] and a philosophy of colonization and 'development' was promoted via a set of policies, programs, and projects implemented in the region (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 69). Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s the geopolitical ideologies of increased security and secure sovereignty dominated legislative action at the federal level. Road construction, urban development, resource exploitation, and above all migration contributed to the radical changes occurring within the region. As Amazônia became connected to other centres by land for the first time, regional investment soared, and local populations increased from approximately four million to over twenty million (Intituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2002; for a detailed discussion of changing population levels in Amazônia over this time period, please see Sternberg, 1999).

Even before the military coup d'état, southern Brazil was concerned about its northern regions, and the Superintendency for the Economic Valorization of the Amazon (the Superintendência de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia, SPVEA) was created in 1953 to oversee the long term development of the region. SPVEA began by enlarging the legal area of Amazônia,[158] and then immediately began to institute changes in the economic support in the region. SPVEA converted the Rubber Credit Union (Banco Crédito da Borracha) into a regional development bank (the Bank of Amazônia, BASA, Banco da Amazônia) in 1966, thereby opening the possibility for future investment expansion within the region (Browder and Godfrey, 1997: 64). Most importantly, SPVEA initiated infrastructural development within Amazônia, specifically beginning with road construction, with the first linking the new capital of Brasília with the mouth of the Amazon River (Belém), thereby making the north accessible by land for

[156] Since Amazônia is a term specific to Brazil, hereafter it will be used to refer to the Brazilian Amazon region.
[157] Completely ignoring of course the 200 000 Indigenous people believed at the time to be resident within the area (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 69).
[158] Annexing parts of Mato Grosso, Goiás, and Maranhão (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 111).

the first time (Hemming, 2008: 292). While all three initiatives contributed to the nascent development of the region, it was the final initiative of infrastructural development, specifically in the form of road construction, which was to have the highest impact.

The military government's first policy, Operation Amazônia (Operação Amazônia), was initiated in 1966. Designed as a program of regional occupation, including a commitment to agricultural development, resource exploitation, and commercial investment, Operação Amazônia continued the work of SPVEA under a new Superintendency (for the Development of Amazonia, SUDAM, Superintendência para o Desenvolvimento da Amazônia) (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 120). The military was concerned primarily with the defense of the frontiers in the north, and the geopolitical security of Amazônia (Browder and Godfrey, 1997: 66; Foresta, 1992: 138). National integration policies were promoted and colonization of the region was encouraged through increasing road development, agricultural support, and large scale economic investment. These three policies were tightly interwoven, entangled by their symbiotic interrelationships, as the roads facilitated the migration of the agricultural workers ready to take advantage of the agrarian shifts, supported through development assistance, provided by enhanced economic opportunities, the most important of which was the creation of Manaus as a Duty Free Zone (the Zona Franca de Manaus, ZFM, 1966).

Due to its isolation, Manaus had been in decline since the 1910 collapse of the rubber boom.[159] In 1967, with the declaration of the ZFM designed to stimulate industrial and commercial investment in the region through a series of tax incentives and fiscal opportunities, the military provided the economic support required for the colonization and defense of the region, and enacted legislation that consequently brought about extensive economic, demographic, social, and cultural change (Motta, 1995: 182). Manaus was viewed as a target sector, or a development pole, a concept which advocated for a deliberately unbalanced approach to incentives for development culminating in regional growth, leading to overall advancement for both Amazônia and the nation of Brazil. Tax breaks, land concessions, trade opportunities, and an increasing availability of loans and credit were seen as fiscal incentives for private investment (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 119).[160] These incentives succeeded because Brazil

[159] Further explained in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.

[160] Browder and Godfrey detail examples of these various incentives including "a reprieve from corporate income taxes for a period of ten to fifteen years, lower import duties on material needed for land development, and tax credits allowing up to fifty percent deductions on total liability... as long as the savings were invested in approved

suffered from artificially high taxes and tariffs, and through the ZFM, prosperous Brazilians were willing to relocate to Manaus to take advantage of these policies, supporting the economic development of the region, and further encouraging the colonization of Amazônia (Hemming, 2008: 292).

These economic policies and programs were further complemented by the military government's subsequent legislation, the National Integration Plan (Programa de Integração Nacional, PIN, 1970), the intent of which was to shift Amazonian development from an economic to a social perspective. Once again, the key motive of frontier defense through regional colonization was advanced as the military government formalized their objectives through significant migration schemes facilitated through large scale infrastructural developments, including roads. In part motivated by severe droughts in the country's North-East, President Médici famously proclaimed later that year that Amazônia was open, to provide "a land without people for a people without land" (Browder and Godfrey, 1997: 74). The road network that emerged from this Plan began with the Transamazônica (BR-230), a "penetration road" or "a road going nowhere," beginning on the northeast coast of Brazil, and roughly following the Madeira River across the entire region to Acre, the westernmost state on the Peruvian/Bolivian border (Hemming, 2008: 293). Implemented without research or planning, the sole purpose of the Transamazônica was to encourage colonization of the interior, particularly the frontier areas in need of 'defense'. To complement this highway, roads linking Cuiabà in Mato Grosso (the southern Amazon) with Santarém on the Amazon River (BR-163), Porto Velho in Rondônia (Amazonia's far west) to the river bank opposite Manaus (BR-319), and from Manaus to Roraima in the far north, and onwards to Venezuela and Guyana (BR-174) were constructed (*ibid*).

As well as facilitating the movement of people, these roads provided the basis for land distribution along '*faixas'*, ten kilometer wide bands of social occupation alongside the newly constructed highways in one hundred acre plots. In addition to cleared land, new migrants would receive "a medical examination, six months of salary, a modest house, guaranteed prices for agricultural goods, and education for their children" (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 71). The

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Amazon development projects" (1997: 73). Schmink and Wood would add to this list funds made available through BASA for loans or equity for approved projects (1992: 60), as well as government credit loans at negative rates of interest (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 120), and the exemption of foreign and value added goods from taxation (Motta, 1995: 182).

military government created the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA, Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária, 1970) to administer this colonization project, and INCRA quickly nationalized the vacant lands (*terras devolutas*) adjacent to the highways, removing them from individual state to federal control, vastly increasing military power within the region (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 123).

However, this social occupation scheme failed. Migrants arrived, but with farming skills inappropriate for the region. Additionally, engineers demarcating the agricultural plots of land had failed to account for topography, access to water, or soil quality in their grid method. Furthermore, land erosion, limited access to credit, inadequate professional advice, and health problems, including malaria were additional constraints. Many agricultural settlers either sold their plots to large land owners and stayed on as labourers, or moved further into the region, to claim another plot of government land. This combination of impediments, compounded by an acknowledged insufficient primary migration to the region, and with only a few thousand colonists settled, many of whom were already failing, led to the cancellation of the project in 1974 (Foresta, 1992: 133).

Meanwhile, the military government was actively seeking new ways to develop Amazônia. Potential mineral resources were being detected through soil sampling, prospecting, and several aerial surveying projects in the 1970s, the largest of which was Project Amazon Radar (Projeto RadamBrasil, 1975). Preceding the massive program of road development, in the 1960s the military government paid for the survey of Amazônia by an aircraft equipped with side looking aerial radar (SLAR), which allowed the Project to locate mineral deposits beneath the forest cover (Hemming, 2008: 295). Published at a reconnaissance scale of 1: 1 000 000, RadamBrasil confirmed the coincidence of particular geologic formations with the presence of gold and diamonds, tin and cassiterite, and iron, thereby confirming existing mining operations, while identifying potential future areas (MacMillan, 1995: 26). While this survey was in large part conducted to secure both the territory of Amazônia and to protect the potential mineral resources from frontier appropriation by neighbouring states, RadamBrasil also gave the military government the opportunity to encourage further colonization and economic investment in the region by promoting regional resource exploitation. Furthermore, the military government went on to purposefully plan many of the roads within the region in relation to mineral deposits identified through these surveys, hence the settlement pattern of the agricultural colonists often

coincided with potential mining operation locations (Fearnside, 1984: 47). Consequently, a relationship formed between agricultural development and mining, and as the agricultural schemes failed, many migrant farmers shifted to small-scale mining activities, either as professional *garimpeiros* (small-scale miners), or simply to supplement their agricultural income[161] (MacMillan, 1995: 57), and the *garimpos* (the mines) absorbed people who would otherwise have been unemployed.

In planning the roads to coincide with mineral deposits, the military had originally intended the resulting labour surplus to be used in the corporate mining sector. However the state failed to attract commercial investment into the regional mining economy, thereby leaving many areas open to informal mining. Furthermore, the many new roads made the many recent migrants mobile, and populations began to shift to areas perceived as more desirable. Similarly, the military government shifted its development focus from a social perspective back to the economic focus of Operação Amazônia, and in abandoning PIN, introduced its next plan, the Program for Agriculture, Livestock, and Mineral Development Poles in the Amazon (Programa de Pólos Agropecuários e Agrominerais da Amazônia, Poloamazônia, 1974).

Essentially considered a refinement of Operação Amazônia, Poloamazônia "emphasized a corporatist mode of frontier hegemony" (Browder and Godfrey, 1997: 79), that envisioned fifteen development poles as enclaves of exploitation wherein infrastructure and investment could be concentrated specifically into areas perceived of as having high economic potential, including cattle rearing, large-scale agriculture, and mining operations. The perception was that with fiscal incentives and subsidies, these poles would attract the industries that would drive growth in other sectors, once established. In line with earlier development plans, a persistent focus on the security of frontier areas continued to be a primary objective, hence development poles were specifically created in remote, frontier environments. Consequently, due to the expansive mineral deposits discovered by RadamBrasil, and ideal savannah grasslands for cattle ranching, just over half of the State of Roraima[162] was identified as one of these economic growth poles. SUDAM promoted four key objectives for the Roraima Pole, including supporting the construction of the BR-174 and its associated colonization projects, developing the ranching

[161] This trend has been discussed in various Amazonian contexts, including Peru (Maennling, 1987), Rondônia (Milliken, 1992), northern Mato Grosso (Coy, 1991), Araguaia (Filho, 1984), southeastern Pará (Butler, 1985; Schmink and Wood, 1992), and in Maranhão (Cleary, 1990).
[162] Both the northernmost territory of Amazônia and the state that borders Guyana.

sector, further researching mineral resources, and expanding trade with Guyana (MacMillan, 1995: 17). Due to the emphasis of Poloamazônia on remote frontier areas, Indigenous territories began to be penetrated and invaded both illegally and, more problematically, with the consent of the state authorities, with repercussions that will be discussed below.

In 1985, the military government of Brazil was replaced with a civilian government, the first since the 1964 coup d'état. In 1986, only months after the military relinquished power, the civilian government announced the implementation of the Northern Trench Project (Projeto Calha Norte). Envisioned as both a development plan and as a military zone along the international borders between Brazil and neighbouring Amazon countries, and with the official title of "Development and Security in the Region to the North of the Rivers Solimões and Amazonas" (Oliveira Filho, 1990: 156), the plan called for military control and development of fourteen percent of Brazilian territory, or twenty four percent of Amazônia, with priority given to the 6500 kilometre long northern border with Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana (Allen, 1992: 73). The Calha Norte Project envisioned an extensively increased military presence along the northern frontier, and a forced pace of development to "tie northern Amazônia more securely to the national economy" (Foresta, 1992: 138). Importantly, while it was a civilian government behind the development of the Project, Calha Norte very much reflected the ongoing military dominance of the region.

Two broader concerns were present in Amazônia at this time. The first was connected with increasing international environmental challenges regarding Amazônia, specifically regarding suggestions for the 'internationalization' of the Amazon. Some American and European politicians and nongovernmental organizations had begun to pressure Brazil, condemning the country's management of the forest, especially in light of the significant forest fires of the previous few years, as well as concerns about cattle ranching and associated deforestation. These political actors were seeking to transform the Amazon into "an area of global interest ... requiring transnational and supranational solutions" (Martins Filho and Zirker, 2000: 106), threatening Brazilian territory with "international ecological imperialism" (Zirker and Henberg, 1994: 259).

President Sarney publicly denounced the interference of international ecologists in Brazilian domestic politics, and in an official speech entitled Our Nature (Nossa Natureza, 1988) he elaborated upon the potential threats to Brazilian sovereignty posed by international entities

who would use the language of ecological preservation in order to conquer Amazônia. According to Perruci, this threat of internationalization provided the military with three new security concerns: "to guarantee that the Amazon would remain Brazilian sovereign territory; to protect the territorial integrity of the Brazilian frontiers in the Amazon; and to fend off the growing environmental pressure of the international community" (1999: 168). The resulting Plan, also entitled Nossa Natureza called for a further mapping of Amazônia, as well as increased enquiry into how to appropriately develop the region, while recognizing the need to address toxic pollution generated by gold mining and to protect the intact forest. These admissions pacified the international community. However, the inclusion of environmental protection initiatives within the Plan initiated localized conflicts within Amazônia, hence an increased military presence was organized for the region to manage these disputes, a political win for the military.

The second broad concern in Amazônia in the late 1980s was directly related to the Calha Norte Project, and involved the Indigenous peoples who were suddenly thrust into the throes of Brazilian nationalism, as migration, development, and a military presence began to drastically alter their lifestyles. One of the key objectives of the Calha Norte Project was to define an "Indian policy appropriate for the area" (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 137). This proved to be challenging as many of the previous and ongoing policies and legislation were specifically focused upon resource exploitation and land colonization in the region, much of which was then beginning to take place on proposed demarcations of Indigenous territory. Coincidentally, and problematically, many of the large mineral deposits located by the RadamBrasil survey were coterminous with Indigenous territory, particularly in Roraima.

Furthermore, from the beginning of the Calha Norte Project, the military controlled official Indigenous policy "transforming the National Indian Foundation [FUNAI] into a mere branch of the secretary-general of the National Security Council" (Ramos, 1998: 230), and from 1980 on, the decision making power for the demarcation of Indigenous lands was gradually taken from FUNAI. Due to the policies and programs of Calha Norte, the northern borders of Amazônia had increasingly become militarized, and the military were exercising control over regional decisions, including land use, with the majority of military bases and airstrips established in or adjacent to Indigenous areas (Zirker and Henberg, 1994:272). The justification for this militarization was frontier defense; looking back, however, academics insist that this

infrastructure was aligned with the potential for resource exploitation within the region, as identified by RadamBrasil (Albert, 1992; Allen, 1992; Schmink and Wood, 1992; Ramos, 1998; Zirker and Henberg, 1994; MacMillan, 1995; Chernela, 2001).

Internationally, the same American and European political and activist actors concerned about the environmental issues in Amazônia perceived the military control of Indigenous land as severely disruptive to Indigenous life, and accused Brazil of ethnocide, in addition to the previously noted environmental irresponsibility. This in turn caused the military to accuse the Indigenous peoples of sedition, and of collaborating with the international organizations to create their own states, separate from Brazilian territory.

In summary, it is obvious that Brazilian Amazon policy and legislation during the period of the military dictatorship, and on into the nascent democracy, was specifically focused from a military perspective on colonization, resource exploitation, and frontier defense. Through a series of plans, projects, and actions, the military's imperative remained consistent with the protection and habitation of areas perceived as vulnerable along Brazil's sensitive international borders. These objectives were met through colonization schemes, the provision of financial incentives for regional investment, and through a focus on security and development within the region. However, serious land conflicts were erupting throughout Amazônia, amongst land holders (primarily either ranchers or mineral rights owners), migrant agriculturalists, garimpeiros, and Indigenous peoples. These conflicts are the focus of the next three sections of this chapter which trace the histories of three particular incidents from their origins in Brazil, through their impacts in Guyana, and finally to the consequences these Brazilian policies and programs are having today on the peoples and the places in the Rupununi.

How Garimpeiros Arrived in the Rupununi

In 1973-1976, in line with the military's objectives outlined above, the Northern Perimeter Highway (Perimetral Norte, BR-210) was cut along the north-western borders of Brazil, through 225 kilometers of southern Yanomami[163] territory in Roraima (ARC, 1981: 2). Envisioned as the ultimate manifestation of Brazilian frontier defense, the Northern Perimeter Highway was to run east-west along the northern edge of Amazônia, from the Atlantic Ocean to the border with Colombia. Development of the highway was eventually abandoned due to economic concerns, but not before it brought disease, disruption, and invasion to Indigenous

[163] An Indigenous group that lives across the Brazil-Venezuela border.

peoples along its route (Hemming, 2008: 294). Indeed, before the highway, the Yanomami were presumed to be "the largest remaining, virtually uncontacted tribe of forest Indians in South America" (Allen, 1992: 80), and the highway, and the associated contact, has had serious consequences for the Yanomami.

Since 1968, there had been a continuous and active campaign in support of the demarcation of a Yanomami territory in Brazil (Ramos, 1979). These efforts became more intense in the 1970s, primarily due to construction of the Northern Perimeter Highway and in response to exploitation threats implied by the RadamBrasil survey. In 1985, in accordance with the Indian Statue of 1973, FUNAI identified 9 419 108 hectares as Yanomami traditional lands. However by 1988 the agency had reduced the size of the territory by thirteen percent (8 194 624 hectares), and in 1989, the reserve was partitioned into nineteen separate 'island reserves', leading to a total territorial reduction of approximately thirty percent (6 593 376 hectares) (Chernela, 2001: 6). Thus, while support for the creation of a continuous Yanomami territory increased within the scientific, international, and Indigenous communities, these decreases in territory within Brazil increasingly signified the military's opposition to the establishment of the territory.

In 1979, gold was found in Pará, the easternmost state of Amazônia. The resulting gold rush saw tens of thousands of garimpeiros arrive in the area. Within months, the Brazilian government was encouraging garimpeiros to prospect across Amazônia in the hopes that gold, trading at its highest rates ever, would help provide the foreign exchange required to alleviate the pressure of the one hundred billion (U.S.) dollar international debt (MacMillan, 1995: 3). By the mid 1980s, declining production in Pará encouraged garimpeiros to shift to alternative locations. Because RadamBrasil had identified significant deposits in Roraima, it was targeted as an area to exploit, and by late 1980, a large gold rush was occurring in the Uraricaá River Basin, within Yanomami territory (ARC, 1981: viii). By 1986 further deposits had been located at Apiaú, Alto Alegre, Mucjaí, Paapiú, Igarapé da Caveira, Catrimani, and Couto de Magalhães amongst others, and by 1987, Yanomami lands were under a full garimpeiro invasion, with estimates of anywhere from 30 000 to 100 000 garimpeiros present in Yanomami territory at the time (with 40 000 being the most commonly cited number) (Allen, 1992: 80). When compared to population estimates of Yanomami, approximately cited as 10 000 at the time (Chernela, 2001: 6), the scale of this invasion becomes more apparent, and in light of the military's promotion of

colonization and resource exploitation, the government's support for the garimpeiros becomes concerning. Indeed, the unprecedented price of gold, the relatively accessible alluvial gold deposits, the infrastructural investment in highways and airstrips, and the stimulation of colonization were all supported by the political climate encouraging mining to fulfil the military's mandate of regional occupation and economic growth.

The Calha Norte Project document itself notes that "the location of Indigenous reserves [are] in areas which are coincidentally rich in minerals" and that "the big problem with mineral exploration in Roraima, as in other areas to the North of the Rivers Solimões and Amazonas, is that the richest deposits are situated in Indigenous territory, or in that which is presumably Indian territory, in particular the area inhabited by the Yanomami Indians" (cited in Oliveira Filho, 1990: 167). Indeed, the Governor of Roraima stated in 1975 that "in an area as rich as this, with gold, diamonds, and uranium, we cannot afford the luxury of preserving half a dozen Indian tribes who are holding back development," echoed by the Governor in 1989, who stated "We are not going to hinder 20 000 Roraimenses, who need the gold for the development of the state, for 12 000 Indians, because they will bring us down. We will look for a solution that will not impede the region's progress" (cited in Allen, 1992: 91). This led observers to argue cynically that "the Brazilian government has failed to act on the Yanomami Park proposal ... because it wants to ensure the systematic and rapid development of the mineral resources of this region without the burden of having to protect Indian resources and lands" (ARC, 1981: viii), and that the military "decided to absorb and attempt to control the dynamic garimpeiro frontier in the Yanomami area, in spite of its considerable ecological and social costs, thereby furthering the fundamental objectives of the Calha Norte; the economic and military occupation of northern Amazonian frontier space to the detriment of its Indian populations" (MacMillan, 1995: 37).

Although the military government had been under constant pressure from the garimpeiro community as well as the state governments in Amazônia to legalize the invasion and to increase mining activities within the region, the same campaign that argued for the need to demarcate the Yanomami lands was appealing to the international community for support for Indigenous rights within the country. Citing studies indicating declining populations due to contact, the result of introduced disease, as well as direct violence against Yanomami, advocates for the protection of Indigenous Brazilians went to the Brazilian courts to argue for the removal of the garimpeiros from Yanomami territory. Operation Roraima (Operação Roraima, 1987), initiated as the first

plan for removing the garimpeiros, failed "because of a lack of political will to tackle the problem with conviction" (MacMillan, 1995: 35). In 1989, the Federal Court ordered the removal of the garimpeiros, however, the Federal Police argued the task was impossible, leading to a second court order requiring the armed forces to intervene (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 120). Meanwhile, inaction was encouraging mining activity, as the garimpeiros became increasingly aware of the government's reluctance to intervene in Yanomami territory, and in early 1990, pro-garimpeiro demonstrations were held in Boa Vista, where the Minister of Justice agreed instead to reduce Yanomami territory by a further seventy percent from the 1988 designation (5 781 710 ha), allowing the miners to stay in the region (Allen, 1992: 93; Chernela, 2001: 6).

In 1990, President Sarney was replaced by President Collar, the first democratically elected President of Brazil since before the military coup d'état in 1964. He was determined to expel the garimpeiros from the Yanomami territory, and properly demarcate the reserve. After revoking all of the Sarney government's previous injunctions against the demarcation of the Yanomami reserve, Collar implemented Operation Free Forest (Operação Selva Livre, 1990), which mandated the destruction of clandestine airstrips, the destruction of mining equipment, particularly the motors and engines of dredges, and the removal of garimpeiros from the territory. This removal of the garimpeiros from Yanomami territory culminated in the creation of the joint Brazilian-Venezuelan reserve in 1991, just before Brazil hosted the Rio Earth Summit, against the wishes of the Brazilian military signifying to some "that the Projeto Calha Norte has been 'deactivated'" (Zirker and Henberg, 1994: 274). Indeed, by creating the Yanomami reserve, the economic boom in Roraima was effectively halted, since three quarters of the state's potential gold production was removed (Godfrey, 1992).

The complex interrelations among these processes of economic expansion, state-building, and nation-building ultimately had international geopolitical implications, as the evicted garimpeiros searched for new territories to mine. Venezuelan Federal Police noted several instances of territorial invasion by Brazilian garimpeiros (Albert, 1992; Allen, 1992; MacMillan, 1995), as did Suriname (Heemskerk, 2002; Hoogbergen and Kruijt, 2004; 2006; MacKay, 2006; de Theije, 2006; 2008) and French Guiana (Simonian and Ferreira 2006) in their southern border areas near Brazil. In Guyana, although the South Rupununi has a lengthy history of gold mining, particularly in the southern areas near Marudi Mountain (see Figure 7), I argue that since the eviction of the garimpeiros from the Yanomami territory, the presence of garimpeiros within the

Rupununi, as well as the intensity of mining activity in the region has increased significantly, which I consider to be a direct consequence of the removal policy, as well as the colonization and development policies that proceeded it.

Furthermore, this escalating arrival of Brazilians, typically for the purposes of mining activity is a constant and growing concern for Rupununi residents (J. Forte, 1996a; 1996b; 1999; Colchester, 1997a; 1997b; Colchester *et al.*, 2002). People across the region noted the increase in garimpeiro arrival, with statements such as:

> *Probably from Brazil they does come and look for work. Come for minerals, that's the only time you see them, nuh?*
>
> *Yes, of recent years, Brazilians are coming like wildlife, but Brazilians ... but because of this new interest now in the gold and diamond and all this thing in Guyana, there's been a, a heavy of inflow of Brazilians coming over*.
>
> *But the Brazilians now, they want to come to Guyana, because through the mining site. Most of the time, you see Brazilian going into the mining area*.
>
> *Oh, what happening now is more Brazilians are coming, they're going to the mines. That's what you're seeing that thing. The Brazilians, they take over in town, and they're coming here to take over. Mining*.

Indeed, the co-incidence of garimpeiros and mining activities is further demonstrated by several people who locate Brazilians specifically in mining locations, such as Marudi, Parabara, and Wakadanawao, as for example these three individuals who state:

> *Well, the Brazilians, there are a lot of Brazilians going to the mines too, here in Guyana. You know. Even in Marudi you find, Marudi mining area you find Brazilians mining there*.
>
> *Yeah, they coming in plenty. With the road right here, Marudi and this Wakadanawao, just Brazilians in there*.
>
> *Yeah, well, where you find big gold, you find a lot of Brazilians. Because that is like in Parabara, you find a lot of Brazilians in Parabara. ... you have Brazilians coming in, they're bringing their fuel from Brazil, and everything coming in from Brazil, yeah. It's easier to come, because there's a huge road there and you just head across to the mines*.

Or the Brazilian Consul in Lethem[164] who stated, *Yes, I think the Brazilians come here for gold*.

[164] That there is a Brazilian Consular Office in Lethem is of itself an indication of the growing importance of Brazilian migration in the region.

Recognizable specifically as Brazilian garimpeiros by their appearance, they are often further identified because of their language, which becomes apparent when they ask for directions, as one Makushi-Wapishana woman noted, "*Because you see trucks going, and you see Brazilian stuff, not only is they working in, but they're talking in Portuguese, and asking where is Marudi. ... They going straight to the mines.*"

Of greater concern to Rupununi residents is the inability to control either the migration or the mining activities of these Brazilians. Most of the issues raised by the local population are specifically geographical, since the Rupununi is a large territory with a small population and an extensive and porous international border. One former Toshao from Aishalton noted that "*there are a lot of illegal Brazilian activities at the back there which we have complained about, steps were taken, but, I don't think Guyana will ever have the kind of human resources to manage, manage the responsibilities that it, the different Ministries are, they get involved, but that has always been a problem for me, especially the GGMC [Guyana Geology and Mines Commission]. You will see a lot of mining concessions and mining blocks or mining whatever, but don't have the human capacity to monitor those properly.*" The GGMC in Lethem agrees with the communities, and notes that patrolling the area is extremely difficult due to both the low population and the long, nearby border, stating, "*I mean, there's this places called Wakadanawao, which is near Achiwib, they, we have to go there remove Brazilians on a very frequent basis. For the simple reason that it's easier for them to just come across when we going, then they come back into Guyana. Right? They go, then come back in.*" Community residents recognize the difficulty of the border,[165] as this Wapishana man notes, "*Brazilians are there, and some, those who are the managers, carry in their local Brazilians to work as well. And they carry them illegally like. Yeah. ... Yeah, they use the backtracks."*[166]

In addition to the issue of regulation, many people further noted the potential complications that increased mechanization posed for their communities and their environments.

[165] As discussed in Chapter Four: Intimate Borders.
[166] Unofficial border crossings.

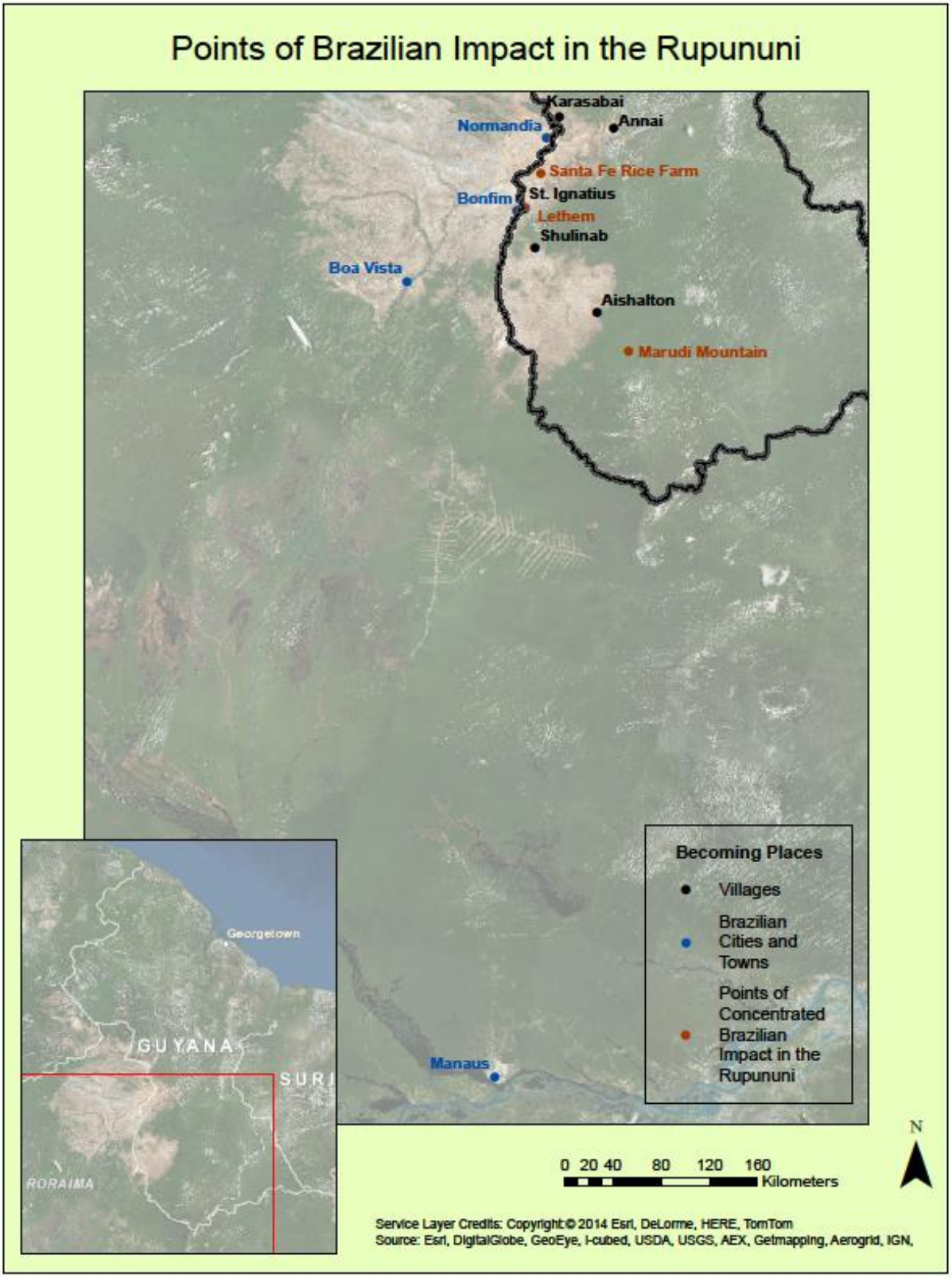

Figure 7: Points of concentrated Brazilian impact in the Rupununi

Indeed, the sheer number of dredging machines currently operating in the region is significant, and the connections between specifically Brazilian miners and the introduction of machinery is obvious, with one Wapishana man stating, "*Wakadanawao is mostly Brazilians ...[and] you get about twelve working dredges. Now. Parabara is, I don't know, maybe about twenty*." While still making the link between Brazilians and mining equipment, the GGMC estimates the numbers as follows: "*And in Wakadanawao, it's like about 9 dredges at the moment. Parabara it's about 13, and at Marudi it's about 5. The last count was 10 dredges, 10 dredges and 5 excavators in Marudi. ... I mean, in terms of production and output, Marudi is far away the biggest. Right. And, but this Marudi, ... there's a 10 dredges and 5 excavators. Right. Parabara has one excavator, and Wakadanawao there's none. And the excavators maximize the amount of work that can be done. Brazilians come in with them.*" The introduction of dredges and excavators to the Rupununi has been compounded by the geographical concerns raised above, since equipment can enter the country unofficially, as one Wapishana man notes, "*They call the line, and they call the shout, and the motorbike, or even the four wheel drive could go in there. The largest as I understand, there were 7 or 8 dredges working there. All by Brazilians... they come on a trail going through, the second, near Kraudanawao, that's where they go through. It's there, to Parabara. Um-hm. Yeah, they could reach in Parabara.*"

Colchester (1991), and J. Forte (1996b) suggest that these increases in both activity and intensity can be attributed to the removal of garimpeiros from Yanomami territory in Brazil, noting "that there is now a steady trek of Brazilian miners into Guyanese territory, a movement that has intensified since the attempts to expel garimpeiros … working illegally on Yanomami lands" (J. Forte, 1996b: 74), and that previously "the flow of these miners was a mere trickle, the prospectors trekking south into the Kanuku and Marudi Mountains. In early 1990, however, the flow accelerated dramatically, with 10 000 miners reportedly crossing into the land" (Colchester, 1991). This was mirrored in local narrative, as I was told by this Wapishana man living near the mining sites that "*Marudi was a mining area for like, since before I was born. And you, it took like just like, just like in the last 15, 12, 15 years that a dredge started coming there to operate, and it caught on, too.*" Similarly, this Makushi woman noted, "*Yes. Lot of Brazilians in Guyana, plenty. Brazilians working in the gold mines. Yeah. It wasn't like that before, but right now there are plenty of gold miners, Brazilians.*" Furthermore, a local historian in Lethem explained to me that "*In '92 ... well, that's the time when we had all these Brazilian cars and all*

that ... they opened the doors for people to come in and develop the mining industry. And, the people who were developing the mining industry were Brazilians. And so that's how Brazilians started infiltrating Guyana, and coming in, getting into the mining industry, right? ... Guyana ... we have pork-knockers as we call it, right, who go into the gold bush, and do a little mining manually and so on. But the Brazilians had the technology, they had the knowhow. To get into the industry, right?" The specific timing of the appearance of land and water dredges according to Colchester (1991), the Wapishana man, and the local historian all indicate that this mechanization only began to occur after 1990, the year Operação Selva Livre was implemented in Brazil to finally remove garmipeiros and their equipment from Yanomami territory.

Furthermore, the increasing presence of garimpeiros and mining activity has had serious social and environmental impacts in the Rupununi, which together are critically undermining traditional life (Colchester, 2005: 289). The overall results are increasing dependence on mining and permanent wealth differentiation, corruption of community leaders, and the undermining of village politics with consequent fragmentation of villages (*ibid*). This was evidenced in the Rupununi, as one SCPDA employee noted, "*We were figuring out a while ago, that most of the people doesn't want to farm, uh-huh, most of the people doesn't want, doesn't have a farm. That they depending on the businesses, shops and so on for food. That, maybe because of the mines, because most of the, our people goes there, and they don't have time to do farm.*"

These and other social impacts (increased drug and alcohol use, increased sex work, increased incidences of sexually transmitted infections, increased incidences of malaria, increased violence within communities, and loss of traditional ways of life) as well as environmental impacts (land and water degradation, mercury pollution, and decreased game and fish availability) caused by small-scale mining activities are well documented in the literature,[167] and the problems currently faced in the South Rupununi follow these familiar patterns. A Wapishana woman living in Shulinab told me that they "*have illegal coming from the other side of Brazil, to South, Aishalton ... And they're having a negative impact, because since the road is opening up more, you have more mining going on, more exploitation of Indigenous people as I see, and then you have this negative stuff of prostitution coming with it, yeah*," while her brother living in Aishalton states, "*I think the outsiders that are coming in for me been just too, just too*

[167] See for example Bulkan, 2008; Colchester, 1997a; 1997b; 2005; Colchester and LaRose, 2010; Colchester *et al*., 2002; Forte, 1996a; 1999; Griffiths and Anselmo, 2010; Harvard Law School, 2007; Heemskerk, 2002; Hennessey, 2002; 2005; Marcus *et al.*, 2004; Peake, 2009; Roopnaraine, 2002; Trotz and Roopnaraine, 2009.

fast, right? If you look at Parabara as an example, literally over night that community place became a mining village, from a very quiet community, you would see, who relied on their farms, and lived that quiet life, over night became a community that went with alcohol, and all other things too." The GGMC, although a state-based agency also noted the impacts Brazilian migration was having on Rupununi villages, stating, "*And there was, of course, a whole culture change, use of drugs, alcohol, things like that. Right. In Parabara, that was one of the biggest problems, Parabara was like a very traditional village, but, you know, it was, it wasn't like how it was originally, but it was a very quiet community, they're very religious and so on. After they had the gold shout in there, they had a strong change in the system, and they everybody started drinking, it was of course the influence from the outsiders.*"

Likewise, malaria is a growing concern in the region, with the increases in dredging activity creating artificial pits which are ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. The malaria epidemic is exacerbated by the itinerant nature of miners in resource extractive industries, who often contract the disease in a mining area, and then return to their home villages to spread it among sedentary residents. As this Wapishana man notes, "*maybe within the last three years, they had one or two dredges that were there. But, within the last 3 years, maybe, you've seen a huge increase in dredges operating within the Marudi area. All right? And that brought strangers. I remember three years ago? When there was an outbreak of malaria, the Medex here reported to the community at a public meeting, saying that he felt that it was because of the flow of miners from other areas that brought the malaria into this community, yeah.*" Rupununi communities are concerned that careless policy enforcement is encouraging dangerous elements to enter their areas, and they link the increases of Brazilian mining activity in the region to the reluctance of the authorities to enforce law and order (Colchester *et al*., 2002: 39).

Environmental impacts of small-scale mining activity, as previously noted, include land and water degradation, mercury pollution, and decreased game and fish availability; however these impacts are often exacerbated by social impacts, such as corruption. As mining technology has become increasingly sophisticated and expensive, control of the local economies has become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands (Colchester, 2005: 290). That environmental degradation has been compounded by social deterioration is recognized within the Rupununi, as this Wapishana woman notes, "*Dredges. Dredges, in there. You should see the destruction that's actually happening in there. Brazilians are taking over there. Brazilians run the village of*

Parabara now. Because they're like this [fingers crossed] *with the Toshao. They have the money, so who has the money makes the shots, you know? What we say, you do. Yeah, so it's really really sad. It's really sad what's happening*," a sentiment echoed by her SCPDA colleague, who explains a recent conversation held with a woman from the new mining community of Parabara, saying, "*and she said, now water's a problem, because, where they bathing is where people drinking, bathing, washing, just a whole mess, she said diarrhoea, with blood and that kind of thing going on, and she says it's not like before, yeah. And they're blaming the Toshao mostly, because she says that he's taking bribes, from the different dredges that are going*."

However, environmental degradation can also be experienced by communities directly, as for example how this Makushi woman from the North Rupununi explains her experience, stating "*It will, it will come through. Right through, as pollution will come. Because, we had the experience last year, the fishes were dying all through the river, they don't know what happen to the fishes, but when they get to find out, it was from the Marudi Mountain. So, we are really worried about all these things that are happening in the future*." Unfortunately, the GGMC lack the biologists, toxicologists and laboratories required to monitor adequately what is happening in the interior and consequently most mining is unregulated and unsupervised (Roopnaraine, 2002: 84). The GGMC and Ministry for Amerindian Affairs deny that they have responsibility to regulate these incursions, saying that it is a matter for the police and the Guyana Defence Force, and the Minister for Mines admits that the GGMC has a weak monitoring capacity (Colchester *et al*., 2002: 39). Although the Government of Guyana is cognizant of these environmental frustrations, its weak capacity impairs its ability to effectively monitor and control this sector, and all of these structurally weak and inefficient administrative bodies are in a disadvantaged position to ensure and enforce preventative actions against invasive mining practices (Roopnaraine, 2002: 83). Therefore, while the social impacts of small-scale mining activity must be viewed as highly damaging for Rupununi communities, understanding that specifically environmental impacts can affect larger regions should perhaps give cause for equal concern, particularly in light of the weak governance of the sector.

Looking at the causes and impacts of mining, particularly at the mechanization and intensification of activity in the Rupununi that followed the increase in migration of Brazilians garimpeiros into the region allows observers to recognize the importance of policy making and

related events within their geopolitical context. If we accept that the link between garimpeiro expulsion in Brazil and increased migration and mining activity in the Rupununi exists, the significant effects that Brazilian military projects and programs had and continue to have in the Rupununi indicate their local importance. In an area such as the Amazon, of which the Rupununi forms the northern periphery, where the borders are permeable, populations mobile, and nationality seemingly irrelevant, places can be extended beyond their assumed borders, and the importance of regional geopolitical events and their sphere of influence upon other places must not be underestimated.

How Lethem Became a Brazilian Free Port

This section continues the history of the economic support systems implemented in Amazônia to encourage colonization and to enhance the defense schemes of the military, tracing the policies and programs from their introductions, to the unforeseen impacts seen presently in the Rupununi. As discussed above, the city of Manaus had been in decline since the 1910 collapse of the rubber boom, and was fading from the national horizon because of its deep isolation in the centre of Amazônia. However, in a 1940 speech, President Vargas presented an initial vision of what Amazônia could achieve in Brazilian history. He stated,

> 'Nothing will stop us in the movement [towards development] which is, in the twentieth century, the highest task of civilizing man: to conquer and dominate the valleys of the great equatorial torrents, transforming their blind force and their extraordinary fertility into disciplined energy. The Amazon, under the impact of our will and our labour, shall cease to be a simple chapter in the history of the world and, made equivalent to other great rivers, shall become a chapter in the history of civilization' (cited in Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 118).

This speech, given in Manaus presciently detailed the priorities of successive governments, highlighting the endorsement for migration, the need for environmental domination, and the importance of economic development of the region to reinforce the "integration of this geo-economic space with the rest of Brazil" (Allen, 1992: 73).

In declaring the ZFM in 1966, designed to stimulate this industrial and commercial investment in the region through a series of tax incentives and fiscal opportunities, the military enacted legislation that consequently brought about extensive economic, demographic, social, and cultural change (Motta, 1995: 182). As previously noted, the ZFM was implemented as part of Operação Amazônia, however the free trade zone and its ultimate objectives of industrial and commercial investment were carried through successive projects and policies, in turn further

impacting upon regional decisions and policy-making. In particular, the ZFM was perceived as a base for commerce within Amazônia, and as an opportunity for expanded international trade. Thus, policies that emphasized these ambitions should be considered as supporting the creation of the ZFM, as should instances of legislation or policies of development advancing these priorities, two examples of which include Poloamazônia's intention to expand trade with Guyana (MacMillan, 1995: 17), and a recognition by the Calha Norte Project of the importance of international road networks, and the expansion of regional consuls (Hecht and Cockburn, 2010: 136-137). Furthermore, in 2002, Brazil published a five year development plan entitled Forward Brazil (Advança Brasil), which anticipated increased spending for infrastructure in Amazônia, specifically the creation of new roads, and the paving of previous ones, including the BR-174 (from Manaus to Boa Vista and on towards the Venezuelan and Guyanese borders and beyond) (Hemming, 2008: 313-314). The funding of this road and others through Amazônia continues to be largely from Brazilian development banks, with the expectations that increased international infrastructure will lead to increased Brazilian exports.

Indeed, the Brazilian government has been advocating strongly for a continuous road linking Manaus, across the international border, and through the Rupununi to Georgetown,[168] thereby connecting the Brazilian interior with the export economy of the Caribbean, with further links to global trade.[169] The PIN began road construction from Manaus to Boa Vista (BR-174, 1977), and onwards to Guyana (BR-401). Furthermore, bilateral agreements were signed in 1989 between President Hoyte of Guyana and President Sarney of Brazil, which included Brazilian funding for the road to be continued from Lethem to Kurupukari. Upon signing, Paranapanema, a Brazilian construction and mining company with close links with the Brazilian military was contracted to expand the former 'cattle trail' to an all season road linking the interior to the coast. This construction was funded primarily through a Government of Brazil loan to the Government of Guyana for approximately US fifteen million dollars (J. Forte, 1996b: 65).

In 2003, President Lula (Brazil) and President Jagdeo (Guyana) officially confirmed the decision to construct a bridge across the Takutu River border between Guyana and Brazil as part of the Northern Arc Project (Projeto Arco Norte, which includes Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, and

[168] Approximately 1350 kilometers.
[169] This was discussed in detail in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.

French Guiana) (Mallay, 2010), and in September 2009 a bridge built by the 6th Engineering and Construction Battalion of the Brazilian Army, with funds again provided by the Brazilian government (IIRSA, 2009), opened across the Takutu River, and the leaders of the two nations met again to discuss the future surfacing of the extant track from Lethem to Linden (Office of the President, Republic of Guyana, 2009). In 2011, it was estimated that four thousand cars crossed the bridge daily (Gildarie, 2011), and that over 120 000 cars crossed over the course of the year (Gildarie, 2012). The significance of these infrastructural projects is immense in terms of movement of people and goods, and in formal recognition of this, in 2011 Brazil and Guyana signed a historic agreement designed to further increase trade between the two countries, with the possibility of developing a free-trade zone between them (Gildarie, 2011).

Once again, the geopolitical implications of these complex interrelations among the processes of both national and international economic expansion are made apparent, as well as those of Brazilian state and nation-building within the greater regional sphere of influence. However, in this case, instead of evicted garimpeiros seeking new territories to mine, there is an encroachment of Brazilian economic systems and their associated programs and people slipping across the Guyanese-Brazilian border, consequently, and essentially subsuming Lethem into the economic sphere of Brazil.

Raffles asks of Amazônia, "how *did* this place come into existence" (2002: 53), and walking around the dusty streets of Lethem (see Figure 8), I ask myself the same thing.

Figure 8: Lethem roads

Although at the end of the road from the coast, far from the national capital, and all things Caribbean or even Guyanese, Lethem represents these places as the administrative capital of the Rupununi (see Figure 7). However, simultaneously Lethem is the end of another road, the road from Manaus, from Boa Vista, from Bonfim, just across the river, but in Brazil. Depending upon the chosen perspective, the story will have different meanings, for "places ... have a consuming materiality" (*ibid*: 61) and what one chooses to see will influence one's final conclusion.

On this particular trip down the street, what I see includes green fields and gold mines laid out upon the starry blue sky, the twenty-seven stars visibly aligned with 'order and progress.'[170] I see '*lojas*' – '*de sapatos*', '*de celulares*', or *'de roupas*', I see '*restaurantes brasileiros*', '*churrascarias*', '*farmácias*', and '*sapatarias*', from whose doorways I am greeted, '*bom dia*', '*boa tarde*'. I am cautioned: '*limite de velocidade 50*', '*diraja com cuidado*', '*mantanha-se sempre do lado esquerdo*', and '*saída de veículos pesados adiante*'. I read street signs that tell me '*bemvindo*', '*retorno*', or '*ponte*'. I look inside the '*lojas*', and I can see: '*vende-se*' – '*Antartica*', '*Brahma*', '*Guarana*', '*Seda*'. I wonder where I am, or better yet, since I know where I am but am seemingly confused, *how did this place come into existence*?

Lethem entered the consciousness of Brazil years previous with the ranching economy of the late nineteenth century;[171] however with the opening of the Takutu River Bridge (through Operation Bonfim (Operação Bonfim, 2009), it became the latest link of the Calha Norte Project, and an essential part of the Manaus duty free zone. But how did a Guyanese outpost enter into the international economic relations of Brazil?

Perceptive business people soon realized the value of the relatively nearby ZFM, and began sending trucks down to Manaus from Boa Vista to purchase goods; food stuffs, rations, electronics, appliances, furniture – all available duty free. However, selling these goods in Boa Vista would not garner profit for such an arduous journey, as Boa Vista is decidedly outside of the ZFM, and Brazilian duties would need to be collected. Lethem, on the other hand, is not subject to Brazilian duty, and Guyanese trade policies have been welcoming to Brazilian businesses within the border area (see Figure 7). Furthermore, while the distance from Boa Vista to Manaus is approximately 780 kilometres, with a travel time of approximately eighteen hours

[170] The symbolism of the Brazilian flag includes green for the lush pastures, gold for the rich mines, blue of the wide skies above Rio de Janeiro, and a star representing each State. The motto embossed on the flag is 'Ordem e Progresso', order and progress. Representations of the Brazilian flag are ubiquitous in Lethem.
[171] Further discussed in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.

on my last voyage, the distance from Boa Vista to Lethem is only about 120 kilometres, taking only one and a half hours. Residents of Boa Vista are quite willing to travel to Lethem to take advantage this nearby, quirky extension of the ZFM; a Brazilian free port in Guyana.

The absurdity of enormous truckloads of senseless items, such as colossal quantities of garlic, entering the Rupununi is not lost on local residents, as this Shulinab resident notes, "*because you see, this big, long haul trucks coming in, 6, 4 wheel, downloaded, that is, filled with garlic."* That these items enter, only to return to Brazil is equally acknowledged, as the same man states, "*Lethem can't use all that garlic, right? So garlic goes over there by the truckload,*" a statement echoed by a Lethem resident who claims Brazilians buy it by the truckload, buying "*thousands of garlic*." Furthermore, that these items originate in Manaus is common knowledge, as the same man goes on to state:

> *Guyanese buy more like oil, cooking gas, chicken, beers, Brazilian beers, because it's cheaper than the beer here, and the drinks, most of the large 2 litre drinks, and those drinks like that. It's far cheaper from Brazil. Especially from Manaus. Yeah, and most of the business people, deal direct from Manaus. Yeah, so the goods come from Manaus. Yeah. And you find the Brazilians from Boa Vista now, coming and buy from here, because driving from Boa Vista to here is near, than to go to Manaus*.

Consequently, my place-based confusion is becoming clearer: Lethem sells Brazilian goods like Brazilian beer and soft drinks ('Antartica', 'Brahma', and 'Guarana' – popular Brazilian brands), in shops designed specifically to attract Brazilian shoppers ('restaurantes brasileiros' – Brazilian restaurants , 'churrascarias' – barbeque restaurants).

This also further explains why the road signs are in Portuguese, to caution Brazilian drivers accustomed to driving on the right to 'mantanha-se esquerdo' (keep left), and to help guide them back across the river via the 'ponte' (the bridge). Traffic in dusty Lethem occasionally becomes more exciting because of this difference, and "*because it's a right hand drive system over there, and as opposed to here it's a left hand*" the result is "*compromised traffic*." Does it also explain why goods in the shops are priced in *reis*, the Brazilian currency, and that Brazilian currency is not merely accepted, but generally expected? Is this overstepping a line, or perhaps in this case a border? And Guyanese dollars? Not always accepted, and rarely expected, as this man relates how "*The shops are catering for the Brazilians, not catering for the Guyanese, right? Like they'll put things cost 18 reis, that's 1800 dollars, right? And you know that. But when you go to pay for it, with 1800, no you have to pay to the Brazilian exchange,*

right? ... And so the price of everything again, then you have to pay, if the price is in reis, and whatever is the exchange rate you got you have to pay by the Brazilian rate. That's what is going on now. Yeah."

Finally, does this possibly explain the aural signals I received while walking down the streets of Lethem? Clerks, waiters, taxi drivers, petrol station attendants, in fact all service positions address me first in Portuguese, before welcoming me to their business, or as one woman living in nearby St. Ignatius stated, "*I still see Brazilian shops, and Brazil language living this side.*" Portuguese, the 'Brazil language', is indeed 'living on this side', as families greet each other in this foreign language, and Village Council offices, regional administrative offices, and public services such as the library and the post office happily conduct their business in Portuguese. This erosion of standard national symbols such as the country's legal currency and language, and of course the encroachment of the ubiquitous foreign flag painted throughout the town leads to further confusion of place.

But let me look at this situation from the other perspective. Perhaps instead of seeing Brazil, I should look for Guyana in this dusty town to help me decide how this place came to be. But of course, Guyana is strangely absent from this place called Lethem. The local historian told me a story to explain why:

There was like no border. At one time. Right. Why is this so, because, this is the interior of Guyana, this was neglected more or less by, by the centre of Guyana, Georgetown and so on, because of the distance, because there was no road at one time, the only way to get to in here was by aircraft, and everything came in by air. ... So prior to that, we depended heavily on Brazil for everything. Right, because, because like I said, everything had to come, to be flown in. ... Brazil only got active after 1969, after 1969, Brazil, that part of Brazil, prior to 1969, that part of Brazil was also neglected. Right, so the government of Brazil wasn't really looking at Bonfim, and maybe even Boa Vista that much. It was kind of, it was an interior too, it was a territory at one time, and then it became a state and so on, right? So after 1969, what happened in 1969? In 1969, you had the Rupununi Uprising. On the second of January 1969. And you can still see, that building when you come off the aircraft there, you see that big building facing the airstrip there, that was one of the rebels who owned that building. And they fled, and they left Brazil, in fact that is the only building that is standing now after the Uprising, because all those people who were involved in the Uprising, they left, they fled, and the government destroyed all the buildings, and confiscate their animals, and, they were ranchers.[172]

So after this, Brazil opened their eyes and said you know what, Brazil actually sent their troops to the border. And our army came, you know to try to quell the whole situation, pacify everything as well. ... So prior to that, it was like, everybody lived as one. The Brazilians lived

[172] See Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings for a detailed discussion of the Rupununi Uprising.

in Guyana, they went to school here, many of them moved, were, they had floating shops on the river. ... Right, so it was after then, after the Rupununi Uprising, then they built the road to Bonfim, Bonfim get, move everybody who was living on the border, and establish the town, the proper town of Bonfim, and so on. And, but, life continued like that because like I said, we still depended on Brazil. And before then, Brazil bought a lot of stuff from Guyana, when it was British Guiana. Because remember in 1966, Guyana became independent, so prior to 66, a lot of stuff from Guyana was exported to Brazil. Right, from England through here, through the port of Lethem, because you had, there's an old crossing, which is blocked up, but if you go you will see it, and that's where all the goods would have gone to Brazil, and most of the trading was done at the time during the rainy season. Why? Because it was then, like the only way they could get it was by water, so when the water is high, the boats would come in and pick up the stuff and go back.

I see in this story a tale of neglect, from early times when transport was not available and neglect was merely just neglect, through to the post-Uprising era when neglect shifted to a more purposeful abandonment. The historian continued his story, explaining the role the Rupununi played during the years of the socialist cooperative government when Guyanese were forced to trade covertly to support themselves during the government's imposition of import substitution.

Indeed, when I look around not only Lethem, but throughout the Rupununi today, I see indications that this reliance upon Brazilian trade goods continues, with a specific dependence on cooking gas, cooking oil, chicken, eggs, tinned milk, tinned protein products, salt, appliances, bicycles, and generators. One Makushi woman explained to me the happy supremacy of Brazilian cooking gas, stating "*You see, this cooking gas is from Brazil. We buy it in Normandia,*[173] *sometimes we buy from Brazil, or from Lethem, but they buying it from Brazil. And we buying it from them. But it's the same thing. Yeah, but mostly we buying it from Normandia,*" or this Makushi woman who explains how "*cooking gas, chicken, eggs we get ... still coming from Brazil*." Indeed, the failure of coastal Guyana is a sentiment often shared within the Rupununi, as this Makushi woman from Rupertee noted "*I cannot bring a bicycle to here from Georgetown, but you could bring it from Brazil. Most of our bicycles are from Brazil, you didn't get anything from Guyana*." Thus it appears that not only are Brazilian goods present and welcome in the Rupununi, primarily in Lethem, but they are necessary for the economic development of the town, as are the Brazilian shoppers who support the local economy, and the Brazilian business people who provide local employment.

[173] A Brazilian border town across the Ireng River from Karasabai.

However, the presence of Brazilians and their goods are impacting upon Lethem and the peoples who live in town and nearby beyond the loss of their language and national symbols. Loss of traditional lifeways is an ongoing problem, as primarily Makushi and Wapishana youth engage in 'shop work', leaving their home communities, losing the associated skills of farming, hunting, fishing, *etc*. Alarmingly, residents also note substantial increases in violence and crime, smuggling (including drugs), and environmental dangers, such as increased road traffic.[174] One Lethem resident commented that these problems should have been easily predicted, stating, "*right, so there's an increasing crime, theft. Murders. These revelings, and fightings, and all these things, it's increased. Unfortunately. And that was foreseen. I foreseen that coming long, I mean, it's obvious that that would happen."* Similarly, the increases in commercial populations are adding pressure to local infrastructure, generally incapable of handling increased requirements. For example, Lethem's electricity is generated by diesel generator, and while three years ago (2010), one generator was sufficient to meet the town's needs, upon my return visit (2013), three generators were insufficient, and Lethem experienced daily, scheduled blackouts, with only seventeen hours of electricity provided per day. Finally, many local residents noted the increasing problem of garbage on the streets of Lethem. Although some was attributed to the increasing presence of coastlanders in the region, most people felt the majority was produced by Brazilians returning to their country with duty-free purchases in excess of allowable limits, and were therefore discarding packaging to give the appearance to customs that the goods were not newly purchased. The Toshao of St. Ignatius explained that "*they cannot take back x amount, right. So if they buy something in box or bags, they take all the product alone, and just dispose the bags and boxes on the road, you know, that's what people see them doing."* Clearly, the economic expansion of Brazilian policies and programs linked to the ZFM has seriously impacted the Rupununi, both socially and environmentally.

Politically, Brazil continues to suggest strengthening ties between the countries through development projects, not simply by merely financing the bridge across the Takutu River, and continuing new projects such as the proposed road connecting Lethem with Linden, and on towards the coast with construction of a deep water harbour, but also through local development

[174] Often driving on the wrong side of the road despite the road signs advising 'Keep Left' in Portuguese.

projects, such as the Moco Moco hydro-electric project[175] which the Lethem Brazilian Consul has suggested Brazil is interested in reviving, and the creation of a high speed communications system throughout the region (Mallay, 2010: 15). So now my confusion is not merely observational; it is official.

Interestingly, this flow of Brazilians, Brazilian goods, Brazilian culture, and Brazilian money across international borders, causing confusion is not unprecedented. Indeed, several instances of 'living frontiers' have prompted both frontier concerns across other Amazonian frontiers, and in more serious instances frontier conversion. Several scholars write about Brazil's living borders throughout Amazônia,[176] the most famous of which is undoubtedly the story about how Bolivia lost the territory of Acre to the influx of rubber-tappers, officially ceding it to Brazil in 1903 in the Treaty of Petrópolis. J. Forte condemns "the Brazilian method of getting territorial expansion" suggesting the country lets "their population flow into an area to the degree where they subsequently gain at least *de facto* control, if not outright annexation" (1996b: 82), while MacMillan goes further, connecting the geopolitical ambitions of Brazil to the policy of 'living frontiers', seeing them as enabling "the military to fulfil some of the principal objectives enshrined in the Calha Norte Project" (1995: 37). Indeed, the local historian noted that *"after the Rupununi Uprising, then they built the road to Bonfim, Bonfim get, move everybody who was living on the border, and establish the town, the proper town of Bonfim, and so on.*" In the 1990s, J. Forte asked "what could Guyana do in the face of *de facto* control of the Rupununi by Brazil?" (1996b: 83). I would argue that Lethem might already be there.

How Brazilian Rice Farmers Were Welcomed to the Rupununi

The final example of encroaching Brazilian hegemony in the Rupununi is still unfolding, although the pattern should seem familiar. Similar to the expulsion of garmipeiros from the Yanomami territories of Roraima, the Brazilian Makushi fought to evict illegal rice farmers (*arrozeiros*) from their territories, tracing parallels between colonization and conflict, territory and resources similar to those of the Yanomami. Similar outcomes could be assumed.

The Brazilian Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol was legally identified by the government in 1977 as the traditional lands of the Makushi, Wapishana, Ingarikó, Patamona, and

[175] Funded by the Chinese government, the Moco Moco hydro-electric plant was destroyed by a landslide three years after it opened (1999-2002). It has remained inoperative since.
[176] Including French Guiana (Forte, 1996b: 82-83), Bolivia (Bunker, 1985: 3), Surinam (Hoogbergen and Kruijt, 2004: 34), and Venezuela (MacMillan, 1995: 37).

Taurepang (with the Makushi forming the majority in the region with approximately 13 000 members), and the process for the demarcation began shortly thereafter. FUNAI formed four separate work groups between 1977 and 1988 to begin delimiting the area, the last within the realm of the Calha Norte Project. In 1998, the Brazilian Ministry of Justice declared the land a permanent Indigenous possession, and preparations began for the eviction of non-Indigenous peoples from the territory. However, in 1999 the State of Roraima contested the judicial approval on the basis that demarcation of the area would impede economic development of the state (Alvarenga, 2009: 89), and challenged the demarcation utilizing a new legislative procedure, Decree 1775 (Akerman Sheps, 2010: 268). President Cardoso had signed Decree 1775 into Brazilian law in 1996, justifying the reform by claiming it increased constitutional protection of Indigenous peoples' lands from future development projects by allowing state governments and commercial interests to challenge land demarcations, the logic being that in allowing counterclaims, the demarcation process once completed could not be challenged on the basis of unconstitutionality (Moore and Lemos, 1999). Condemned by Indigenous rights advocates as an erosion of Indigenous rights, many speculated that the Decree was signed for political reasons to gain support from the commercial, industrial, and economic sectors of Brazil, and to encourage the assimilation of Indigenous Brazilians into mainstream society. Several scholars have claimed Decree 1775 is merely an extension of the Calha Norte Project which sought to integrate Indigenous peoples perceived as a threat to national security (Allen, 1992; Schwartzman *et al.*, 1996; Moore and Lemos, 1999). As if proof was required, within the year more than 644 appeals were filed against Indigenous lands in Roraima, with 515 against the lands claimed in the north-east of the state, exposing 99 percent of the TI Raposa Serra do Sol area as contested territory (Moore and Lemos, 1999: 459-460).

One of the greatest concerns were the land titles held by fourteen ranchers in areas issued by INCRA in the 1980s as part of the regional colonization schemes of Poloamazônia and Calha Norte, and thus the challengers proposed replacing the continuous territory with 'reserve islands' much as was recommended for the Yanomami ten years previous; this position was "endorsed unanimously by Roraima's congressional delegation" (Chernela, 2001: 8). The Makushi, Wapishana, Ingarikó, Patamona, and Taurepang adopted a network approach, and together with the Indigenous Council of Roraima (the Conselho Indígena de Roraima, CIR), contacted international Indigenous rights and environmental advocacy sectors to campaign against the

discontinuous territory, which resulted in a favourable decision for FUNAI from the High Court of Brazil, likely as a result of international pressure.

In 2005, President Lula signed the decree ratifying the borders of the Raposa Serra do Sol reserve as a single, continuous, Indigenous area, comprising 1 747 464 hectares of land in the north-east of Roraima. Based on this decree, the Supreme Court determined that all non-Indigenous peoples occupying the territory were required to leave the reserve, and all further motions against the Rapsoa Serra do Sol remaining in the Court were retired. The arrozeiros made a formal request to the Ministry of Justice seeking permission to remain in the area until the end of the harvest season, which was granted, however upon harvest, they chose not to depart (Akerman Sheps, 2010: 298), and instead increased the area of their rice plantations (Zhouri, 2010: 266). In 2007, the Supreme Court ordered the eviction of remaining arrozeiros within the territory, and Brazil's Federal Police and National Forces were ordered to initiate the removal of all non-Indigenous as part of Operation Our Land III[177] (Operação Upatakon III, the Upatakon is in Makushi language). However, due to increasing violence and conflict, including instances of kidnapping, roadblocks, car bombs, arson and other forms of property destruction, as well as the assassination of twenty one Indigenous leaders of the area (Especial RSS, 2010: 5), and in response to the state government of Roraima, "together with federal senators and congressmen from the state, who supported the rice producers and saw the demarcation of Indigenous land as an unreasonable appropriation of territory which challenged economic development in Roraima," Brazil's Supreme Court temporarily suspended the evictions in 2008 (Zhouri, 2010: 266). However, in 2009, the Supreme Court voted in favour of maintaining the Indigenous area in a final decision, recognizing the importance for Indigenous peoples' struggles, and the remaining arrozeiros were removed from the territory and compensated for their losses.

Once again, the culmination of military policy had affected a specific area, with rice producers from other Brazilian states arriving through agricultural colonization programs implemented historically by the military government, specifically in Roraima as an area of high importance, to 'strengthen the national presence' along the 'vulnerable international border' and a stubborn insistence for the priority of economic development over Indigenous rights (Zhouri, 2010: 266). However, with the success of Operacão Upatakon III, many Brazilian arrozeiros

[177] Upatakon I was conducted in 2005 and was mostly a demarcation exercise, while Upatakon II was an inventory of arrozeiro property conducted in 2006

were seeking new opportunities for their rice plantation activities. Since the Rupununi is directly across the political border from Raposa Serra do Sol, the climate, the topography, the soil type, and the ecosystems are identical, and accordingly, several of the arrozeiros began enquiring about the possibility of opening up rice plantations in the Rupununi.

Unfortunately, however typically, this possibility of opening up the rice fields was explored within Guyana without consulting the peoples or the organizations of the Rupununi, many of whom were still reacting with surprise to notifications that suddenly appeared posted around Santa Fé in the North Rupununi advising them of a shift in land tenure (see Figure 7).[178] One community member returning from Georgetown along the road had been surprised to see a sign, "'*No Trespassing' …"* and commented " *… Yeah, in the middle of the swamp, right? There was this sign, 'No Trespassing.*"' As a SCPDA member, he began investigating the origin of this sign, in what is considered by many to be the traditional territories' of the Makushi people, and

[178] This lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples regarding their territories is disturbingly common in Guyana. For example, the national Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) has been heavily criticized by national Indigenous organizations in Guyana who feel that the consultation processes with Indigenous peoples were irrelevant, insufficient, indiscernible, and in extreme cases, non-existent. Within the Rupununi, I was repeatedly told that the consultation process had left out particular groups of people physically (by not consulting within a geographically feasible location for example) as well as intellectually (by failing to provide translation for example), and that generally Guyanese Indigenous peoples had a low rate of comprehension of the proposal. Some people presented subtle criticisms, such as this SCPDA member who stated "*we just keep hearing this is what we'll benefit from it, but how is it actually going to work? We are not hearing that*." Others presented harsher criticisms, specifically of the process. This sentiment was reinforced and expanded upon by another community leader who argued,

> *I'm not sure if even consultation is the right word to use all these meetings and all these people. You know, they presenting a document to a simple set of people, who didn't go very far in school, maybe you expect problems with the language, I mean, what is the knowledge that you use in the document. It's never fair, never fair. While you have all your advisors, and you know, you have other people write up your document that you're going to present, it's not right. I keep saying that all the time. … There was never [a consultation], there was one meeting, and nothing after, so I don't know what they talking about. ... And it happened right here in Aishalton. I told the Minister, I said that is a technical document Minister. Do you expect that man to sit there [and understand it]? I told her that, I said it can never be consultation, and I am telling you for records, I would like it on record, that this is not a consultation. Not information sharing. I told them that.*

By failing to properly consult with the Indigenous peoples, as the primary inhabitants of the areas to be directly impacted by the LCDS, the Government of Guyana not only neglected to protect the rights of the country's most marginalized citizens, but the government effectively silenced the voices of these key stakeholders of the proposal, erasing their potential contributions to the conversation and marginalizing their collective and individual Indigenous knowledges about their traditional lands and the customary practices,

A regional example of this lack of consultation can be found in the development of the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (KMPA), and local residents argue they were not included in the discussion for the proposal, creation, or development of the area. An indication of this lack of consultation is a lack of local understanding as to the status of the protected area, including at the leadership level, with at least one Toshao stating, "*I don't know what, if it is open as protected areas as yet, I don't know I can't really say*," and several village elders reflecting that more information was required of Conservation International. The arrival of the rice farm is just one more example of this disrespect for Indigenous peoples.

he found that the "*whole area was given up right now to the Brazilian and Venezuelan company for soya and rice farms*."

Indeed, throughout the Rupununi, I was confronted by the same story from concerned community members, as for example this Wapishana man who commented that "*They are farming there now, the rice farmers*," a statement which was further elaborated by this Toshao who stated that "*They want, they have a lot of plans, you can see what's going on in the North Rupununi, right? In the North Rupununi there's rice plantations, that kind of thing .... to outsiders*," importantly indicating that it is outside interests dominating the agricultural plans.

The lack of consultation was apparent through statements such as "*Yeah, they have leased the land. And there's a big argument about that*," as well as a general state of confusion about the legality and the potential for the rice farm. For example, the Chairman of the NRDDB stated that "*I don't think it's going to go through, people in the Rupununi is very concerned about any large scale agriculture development because traditionally, this is a flooded area, right? And if you do big rice farming here, or any big farming, I mean, regardless of what people think, it's going to affect every single person in the Rupununi.*" This statement was supported by a local Toshao, who went on to further state that "*here in Annai, because they wanted to, the savannah you seeing there, they wanted to, you see they wanted to irrigate the place, to plant paddy, rice, or whatever. ... So we, gave them a negative answer to their query.*" One village leader explained to me the NRDDB's role in the rejection, stating "*based on the pressure we created, because we had to be an advocate, for you know, to outline all the possible impacts of the impact, that that could do in that area, so we've created a kind of challenge, and they've realized that it's not a suitable area. To do the rice farming. ... We went to lobby, we had to advocate, that's NRDDB with the State. Or the government, to express our frustration and dissatisfaction.*"

However, upon my return field visit,[179] the confusion had cleared, and these same leaders admitted that the challenge was over and the rice plantation was now a reality, attributing the decision to Georgetown. One Wapishana woman noted, "*There is this big Brazilian rice farming people that want to come and do farming in the wetlands of the North. And approval by the Guyana government has been approved. Yes.*" Partly the decision was based on the fact that

[179] The feedback and validation field visit was conducted from January to March, 2013,

Guyana had just launched the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS, 2010),[180] which included land drainage for agriculture or possible development of rice and soy farming on savannah lands in the Rupununi by foreign agribusiness (FPP, 2009: 9). One SCPDA member made these connections explicit, stating, "*potentially I see, because through the Low Carbon Development Strategy, right? The government is proposing the savannahs along the Takutu area, is a very rich, rich, rich savannah. Right? ... And those are the areas that have been identified to do large scale agriculture. Right? If you read the LCDS document, they want to put a lot of the savannahs to it.*"

However, in part the decision was made on the basis of policy originating from outside of Guyana. The Guyanese Minister of Agriculture Robert Persaud noted that in Guyana "any private involvement in the sector will give a boost to rice production and allow for farmers and millers to tap into Brazil's large rice market, *especially with the impending opening of the Takutu Bridge*" (Stabroek Staff, 2009, emphasis mine), connecting once again the Brazilian military's Calha Norte Project across the border and into Guyana. Further connections were traced to the conflict in Raposa Serra do Sol, with the Guyanese press reporting that "Paulo Cesar Quartiero, a large-scale Brazilian rice producer who is among a group recently ordered by the Brazilian Supreme Court to vacate the Indian reservation Raposa Serra do Sol, has alleged that the Government of Guyana has proposed to lease him land for 99 years" (Stabroek Staff, 2009). Indeed, this connection was also obvious to Rupununi residents, with one Toshao stating "*Yeah, that was, some of those chaps, I think they come from that side. I think they were the ones who were thrown out of Brazil. ... They were, these farmers were farmers farming across in Brazil. I think you should know the story of the, it was a long battle with the Indigenous people over there, these farmers, well the farmers eventually lost. ... And they meet to after that, they approach the government of Guyana for, and that's how this project came about, I think so*," and this Makushi woman who lived in Brazil during the conflict, stating "*And the same man who's doing the rice plantation is one of them who the Indigenous people put out from the same thing here. Yes, he is one of them. It is he that kill the Indigenous leader. And when he told me this, I said, is he coming in here.*" The very real concerns of the Makushi and Wapishana people of the Rupununi, based on the known history of the conflict in Brazil, coupled with the ongoing marginalization of

[180] As part of the global shift to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and (forest) Degradation (REDD and REDD+), with the goal of re-orienting Guyana's economy "onto a low carbon, environmentally sound trajectory" (Office of the President, 2010: 5).

Indigenous peoples in Guyana, have yet to be addressed by those who made the decisions to lease the land to the arrozeiros without consultation of the Rupununi residents.

Other social impacts, such as increasing reliance on wage labour and the potential losses to traditional culture associated with this shift, are already apparent in the Rupununi,[181] however may be exacerbated with the introduction of rice farming, as for example, this SCPDA member claims, "*It will have a social impact, because the people now, won't be able to go out and practice their fishing skills, all the areas, cuz they know certain areas, there's a whole set of knowledge that will be taken away by that*," implying that with the loss of territory, traditional skills based on particular territories may be lost.[182] Significantly, however, it is this loss of territory that is of primary concern to the Makushi and Wapishana peoples, since most people from the Rupununi have not forgotten their traditional territories, once an unbroken savannah expanse. Many people are currently fighting for recognition of this continuous territory, as it was explained to me:

> *And our project, what we want to do is that we must have no space between our titles. So all will be a whole territory, and that's what the government don't want, and that's what we're fighting for. That's what it should have been originally. That's what the old Chiefs wanted, and that's what we're fighting for. To make it one big territory.*

If the Government of Guyana leases large swaths of land away from Indigenous control, outstanding land claims cannot ever be settled, a clear violation of both the Amerindian Act (2006) and of conditions set out at Independence.

These concerns are further discussed in an initial report written by the Wapishana of the Rupununi, where they state:

> We occupy and use our collective land according to our own customary system of land tenure and resource use that still operates across our territory. All of us Wapichan feel a strong connection to our ancestral territory that we call *wa wiizi* "our homeland." We say *wa wiizi wuru'u aonaa turuu wakasha paan niiz* "this is our land and we cannot be parted from it." We feel affection for our territory because our foreparents lived here and because this land provides for us like a mother. We also believe that the animals, birds and fish in our territory are like our ancestors and they give themselves to us so we may survive. This is why we love our land. Our forefathers advised us to stay on our land and to live and share together (David *et al.*, 2006: 10).

[181] Described in detail in Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings.
[182] Further explored in Chapter Six: Telling Stories.

This commitment to care for land and for all beings who inhibit their territory (animals, birds, fish) gives the Rupununi peoples further reason for concern with the intruding rice plantations. As noted previously, seasonal floodwaters overwhelm the savannahs annually, and problematically, the Santa Fé rice farm is located near Pirará, and is hence coterminous with the watershed divide between rivers that flow into the Amazon River basin, and rivers that flow north into the Caribbean Atlantic (Bridges, 1985: ix; Hemming, 1990: 307-308; 1987: 340). The Wapishana and Makushi are concerned primarily because of the reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides plantation agriculture generally has, as this Makushi Toshao who noted that *"Because of the ecosystem that we have. Is wetlands, and if you're going to do rice farming, the chemicals that you will be using can get in the waterways, it will affect the fishes, the wildlife, the birds, everything else. You know, that's our fear."* While the potential to damage the immediate area is obvious,[183] when the coalescing of the two watersheds is taken into consideration, it is evident that large portions of the greater Amazon region could be affected.

Of further concern to both local and national Guyanese residents may be the integrity of the Rupununi as a Guyanese territory, which has arguably been further diminished through the leasing of Guyanese lands to Brazilian agriculturalists. One Wapishana man said it best, stating "*So that part is Brazil already? ... Yeah, I seen the place has been marked up. There are tags on it. There are signs there.*" This is the 'geopolitical implication' that has been implied throughout these three instances of Brazilian economic expansion, Brazilian colonization schemes, and Brazilian development trajectories; that the borders truly are 'living frontiers', and the Rupununi is essentially *becoming* a part of Brazil.

In the Flow of Becoming

In speaking about nature, Raffles has learned, that it "is always in the being-made, that it is indissoluble from place, that it is multiply interpellated in active and vital politics, that its brute materiality cannot be denied, and that it resides in people as fully as people reside in it" (2002: 8). But I am sure he would agree that this can be reversed to say that 'place is always in the being-made, indissoluble from nature', further continuing the claim that it (nature/place) can be "formed again and again from presences that are cultural, historical, biological, geographical, political, physical, aesthetic, and social" (*ibid*: 7). Likewise, place could be substituted in

[183] In particular, the Makushi are concerned about the Arapaima fish, a sensitive species that they have been culturally managing back from near extinction by the NRDDB.

Braun's argument about nature as "an ontology immanent in the practices by which it is continuously reconstituted, but where these practices are seen as irreducibly multiple" (Braun, 2000: 39), and through this lens, places are thus seen as dynamic and heterogeneous.

Within the Rupununi, significant changes are occurring with the ongoing infiltration of Brazilians and their introduced practices into the region. These changes include the intensification and mechanization of mining in the South Rupununi, the increased economic development in Lethem (Central Rupununi), and the introduction of plantation agriculture in the North Rupununi, all of which are having substantial social and environmental impacts upon the Makushi and Wapishana peoples and places. A review of the history of Brazilian legislation, political action, and program and project implementation decisions that impacted the Brazilian Amazon revealed that Brazilian geopolitical ambitions in Amazônia, specifically focused on colonization, economic development, and security caused and intensified both national migration and natural resource exploitation within the region. Further investigation reviewed three specific interventions that caused Brazilian populations to shift first north, and then east to the Rupununi, and argued that the international migrations into Guyana are merely extensions of the national migrations into Amazônia. Due to these connections, I argue that national decisions in Brazil have significantly impacted upon the peoples of the Rupununi, and I suggest there is now a shared history and geopolitics across the international border, linking the two regions into one, and consequently that the Rupununi is in part 'being-made' by Brazilian policies, programs, politics, and peoples.

As Raffles (2002) and Braun (2000) suggest, a place in the 'being-made' is being (re)-produced through 'cultural, historical, biological, geographical, political, physical, aesthetic, and social' practices, in essence, *becoming* a different place. However, whether this newly produced place appeals is debatable. While several Rupununi residents are amenable to Brazilian interests, noting for instance that they would rather work on a Brazilian dredge than a Guyanese one, or work in a Brazilian shop in Lethem rather than stay on the farm in their community, and certainly many Brazilian goods and services are both appreciated and considered necessary, in part due to ongoing national neglect for the Rupununi region, serious social and environmental impacts have resulted from the 'Brazilianization' of the Rupununi, indicating that not all the changes are appreciated locally. More importantly, both local Rupununi residents and the broader Guyanese society need to be aware of the Brazilian precedents of 'living frontiers' and

wonder if, as J. Forte (1996b: 83) suggests, *de facto* control of the Rupununi by Brazil has already begun.

Chapter Six: Telling Stories

The difference of Space returns as the sameness of time, turning territory into Tradition, turning the People into One.
Bhabha, 1994: 149.

Historically, travellers in Guyana encountered the Indigenous spirit landscapes as inescapable parts of any entrance into the interior, and the dynamics of those encounters were essential to the process of exploration (Burnett, 2000: 183). Nineteenth century interior explorers quickly discovered that nearly every rock, river, and valley they encountered was associated with Indigenous mythologies and cosomologies (*ibid*; Butt Colson, 2009). Indigenous conceptions of their socio-ecological environment were, and today still are, like a network of reference points and trails to which particular communities and individuals can be connected in physical, social and cultural space in an "unbounded landscape linked to their appearance in narratives, songs and legends" (Tiam Fook, 2006: 6). These stories, although embodying elements of both myth and history, served as maps and catalysts for colonizers, helping them navigate through the watery landscape, simultaneously "becoming charters of possible future action" (Trotz and Roopnaraine, 2009: 249). Indeed, Indigenous accounts of powerful sites in the landscape narrated through myths and legends initially served colonizers as convenient starting points in the spatial differentiation necessary for constructing landmarks (Burnett, 2000: 185).

Sletto believes that Indigenous landscapes have a spatial extent more properly defined as 'meshworks', determined by cultural kinship links and relational networks, and these ancestral conceptualizations may be difficult for colonizing cultures to grasp (2009a: 148; see also Escobar, 2008: 34-35; Kuper, 2003: 391). Deloria noted that "to name the land was for many Indians a way of claiming it, a way that proved more than adequate until Europeans arrived and started to claim the land for themselves with considerably harsher methods" (personal communication with Basso, 1996: 156, fn 2). Freire argued that naming is an act of existence and that in doing so, people can transform the world (1970/2009: 88), and L.T. Smith states that "by 'naming the world', people name their realities" (1999: 157). Cajete furthers this concept by emphasizing that since "Indigenous people are of place ... the nature of place is embedded in their language" which "is a kind of map they carry in their heads and transfer from generation to generation" reflecting the "spiritual and mythic geography of a people" (2000: 74). For Wilson,

these mythic and spiritual connections to land are seen as a form of knowledge by Indigenous peoples and as a means of reinforcement for understanding that "the ground and environment from which we came is what makes us" (2008: 88). Kovak echoes these relationships, claiming that the "web of interconnection" is what forms knowledge, and epistemological interrelationships between peoples, places, and language influence ontology (2009: 62); "to be connected is to be whole" (L.T. Smith, 1999: 148).

Traditional narratives, storytelling, or mythology are all recognized methods of connecting people with territory. Cajete argues that myths can reveal people in relationship to places, as they are simultaneously evolutionary, ecological, spiritual, psychological, and creative (2000: 13). Citing Indigenous creation stories, L.T. Smith highlights these connections to "the land, to stars, and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants" indicating that relationships to other creatures, cosmology, and, in particular, the environment are emphasized (1999: 148). Kovak notes that "stories often transcend time and fasten themselves to place" (2009: 96), and Read *et al.* claim that spiritual landscapes should be mapped, by those for whom they matter, to further demonstrate that sense of place is also important (2010: 213). Indeed, knowledges transmitted through stories or myths can in themselves connect peoples with places through the direct naming of ancestors and their actions within particular spaces. The idea of landscape as a repository of knowledge is most fully developed by Basso, who sees territory as a symbol of culture (1996). He develops the idea of 'place making' as a cultural activity, wherein portions of the past are brought to the present through story, connected through social traditions in such a way that "we *are* in a sense the place worlds we imagine" (*ibid*: 7, emphasis original).

These relational connections of people with places help demonstrate how, in this case specifically Indigenous, ontologies are integral to understandings of the world(s), and help expand upon the rethinking of social natures ongoing in political ecology. Since cultural knowledge is expressed through territory, places become people, or people become places (Basso, 1996: xiv; Bolaños, 2011: 45; Chamberlain, 2000: 127). Furthermore, this entanglement, of peoples and places with nonhumans, more than humans, ancestors, histories and cosmologies allows for a dynamic contingency of place to emerge, where the world(s) is(are) conceived of according to their own relational perspective, through subjectified perspectives, knowledges, and

practices (Sundberg, 2014: 35). Rivière's recognition of the internal 'human' form present in every being within this highly transformational world reinforces this (1994).

Within the Rupununi, many place names continue to be known by variations derived from Indigenous[184] languages. Some place names refer to mythical events,[185] wherein ancestors moved within a given area, leaving physical evidence of their presence upon the landscape. Many other Indigenous place names are derived from environmental or ecological designations, usually of plants, animals, or spirits that inhabit a particular area, knowledge known by the peoples of the area. Archaeological sites also receive Indigenous place names, relevant to either events that occurred at those places, or ancestor remains that were found there more recently by Makushi and Wapishana peoples. These place names territorialize the landscape of the Rupununi, since place names can inscribe geopolitics on maps, as not only do place names help shape imagined geographies, but they can be powerful tools in asserting territorial claims and legitimizing geographical identities. Spatial and temporal scales, as well as different histories, environments, experiences, knowledges, and cosmological understandings of the places around them impact upon narrations, influence outcomes, and affect realities. By linking Makushi and Wapishana cosmologies, languages, and activities with varying conceptions of environments, geographies, and lands through mythologies, practices, and history, the Wapishana and Makushi peoples of the Rupununi are inherently linking their identities with their territories.

Mythology of Territory

> *Now these people were hungry, and there was a very big tree, on a mountain. Now, this is in the part, in the border of Venezuela and Guyana. Now that the mountain is called Mount Roraima. In our language, we call it Roreem. Roreem, it means a tree with different kind of, a variety of fruits. With all the fruits you could think of, that one tree. So they decided to cut, say 'we will cut it.' So they start to cut, and cut, and cut, and cut. These person, the fruits were different, and the fruit was just there, all the time. And nobody used to go there. And so it happens just like that. Yeah. They cut the*

[184] Generally Makushi or Wapishana, however, as noted previously several other Indigenous groups have lived, and continue to live in the Rupununi (including the Atoradnao, Daozai, Tarabainao, Chiibizai dinnao, Arokonnao, Parau yannao, Paowishiyannao, Maoyanao, Karapunnao, Taromnao, Nikanikarunao, Burokotonao and the Wai Wai (David *et al.*, 2006:9)), and consequently have contributed to the naming of places.

[185] 'Myths' or 'stories' were the terms commonly cited by Rupununi peoples when describing these narratives. Although myth is defined as "a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon" (Oxford Dictionary), indicating a sense that they are historical narratives, modern understandings of the term have been infused with a sense of fiction, or super-naturalness not present in local understandings. Although this shift is beginning to emerge amongst some Rupununi people, for the purposes of this project, I have chosen to retain the language of the Makushi and Wapishana culture specialists, and note that in the Rupununi, myths can be seen as either historical records or as cosmological understandings of the world.

> *whole tree. But within that ancient time, they were able to get some of the fruits, the different fruits for they plant, and, to eat, you know, that's how they get their fruits. They plant, they had their banana, they get this and that, you know? And when the fruits start to fall you know, where the fruit falls, there's some of these are to grow in different regions of different areas, different places. Yes, the chips of that same wood, ok, those, those that, those left in there, into the Venezuela, or in Venezuela the country, that's where they get a lot of minerals. The gold, that was the chip of that old, big tree, yes. But anyway, the fruits came all around this here. And all the branches, as it fall, those branches turn into rivers. That's how the Takutu meet in there. Yes. The Amazon and so forth. Yes. Because when the whole big tree fall. So when the place get bright, it was all total different. There were no more big tree. But all what was left was a big mountain, turn into a mountain, the stump turn into a mountain, into a big mountain, Roraima, or Roreem, yes.*[186]

This is the mythological beginning of the Rupununi region as told to me by a Wapishana elder, when the 'tree of life' was cut down, creating the world as it is known now. Evident in this story is the origin of Wapishana gardens, or 'nature farms', the rivers, and the mountains[187] as markers on the landscape. Cajete notes that "a people's origin story maps and integrates the key relationships with all aspects of the landscape" (2000: 75), while Viveiros de Castro argues that "mythology is a discourse on the given, the innate," and notes that mythology often addresses "the initial conditions with which humanity must cope and against which humanity must define itself" (2004: 478). Indeed, Rupununi peoples continue to be influenced by myths and legends describing places, landscapes and environments, while the cultural heritage of Indigenous[188] territories represented through ancestor stories simultaneously integrates both the geographical heritage and the environmental heritage of the Wapishana and Makushi peoples within the region.[189] Consequently, places named through myth demonstrate continuity with the

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[186] These stories were shared with me during my time in the Rupununi, generally by cultural specialists, although not exclusively so. I have chosen to share these stories as they were shared with me, retaining the dialect and vocabulary of the Makushi and Wapishana to further emphasize the methodological approach of this project, which specifically aims to highlight Indigenous voices, a goal I feel is particularly important for this chapter. Those stories that I feel need further explanation are clarified within the text, however it is important to remember that these clarifications will now already be shadowed through my own lenses of understanding. Stories are cited at length in order to retain the character of the narration, and will hopefully be seen as a sign of respect, not as a means of 'othering' the Makushi and Wapishana. This chapter, and the use of the stories within it were very well received by the Makushi and Wapishana during the feedback and validation trip, a point that will be explained in detail later within the chapter, signifying at least to me local satisfaction with the process employed.

[187] Mt. Roraima indeed has the appearance of a giant tree stump. Erosion of a giant sandstone plateau has revealed the granite base beneath, and the geological formation resulting are called tepui, meaning 'place of the gods' in the local dialect.

[188] Including the Makushi and Wapishana, as well as other Rupununi Indigenous groups previously noted.

[189] Walter Roth extensively studied Indigenous Guyanese myth and includes a detailed collection of catalogued stories in his "An Inquiry into the Animism and Folk-lore of the Guiana Indians" (1915).

land since the time of the ancestors, linking present with past. Furthermore, mythological place names demonstrate an alternative way of knowing the land, where unnatural beings, fantastic encounters, and important lessons are drawn upon the landscape while being conjured upon the imaginations of the Makushi and Wapishana peoples of the region. In this way, Rupununi peoples render places meaningful, imbuing them with social importance which can then be translated to territorial identity.

Several places in the landscape named for mythological beings and/or events are well known within communities, and iconic or symbolic stories are often repeated by several village inhabitants, with subtle, yet significant variations, indicating organic multiplicities for understandings of cultural territory. One example is the story of *Ootu-Koobu*[190] (House Lake), this particular version from a Makushi elder:

> *Used to be a man, and he get wife. And he get two sister in law. And he go down to the farm, and he tell them, I go to the farm he tell the two sister in law, and y'all don't touch this here goobi. Nice little goobi. It's a jar. It's a jar. With water inside it. And then he tell them not to trouble that little jar. Don't trouble it. And then he went. And they know, they know, when anything happen at home, he know. And then he was cutting the farm down. And then the sister in law trouble that jar, and then tried to hide it, it was heavy, heavy, heavy, and this water throwing up. And then he come back now. He tell them, y'all could turn birds now.*

This story tells how an immense lake in the middle of the savannahs appeared one day when a careless woman spilled water from an enchanted jar. The man who had left the house to cut his farm knew immediately that the goobi (jar) had been spilled, and returned home to punish the women by turning them into birds. Such was the spell on the jar that the water that spilled far exceeded that of the container, and in time, a lake covered kilometres of grasslands. The posts of the house where the women had been working can still be seen in the middle of the lake, and this is why the people of the area know this story is true. Other versions of the story had different numbers of sisters in law, or the wife might have stayed home or not, or the man might be ill, hurt, or covered in sores, loved by his wife or not, or the women were merely lost to the lake rather than 'turning birds'. And in some versions, as the one told to me below by a different Makushi elder, the man continued to move through the landscape, leaving further traces of himself upon the lands:

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[190] Many Indigenous place names have been written phonetically.

> *The man collect his wife, and gone straight to the same mountain too. And so the both of them went, and her husband and his wife, and there is a hole, big like this. That is where people used to go, they gone in the mountain, and so it remains big hole. It's a cave, like. The sores man went in the mountain, and it left there, they went in the mountain, so it went in there. And so all the sores, what be in he, it left, right there on the mountain, shining there.*

Similarly, a Wapishana elder shared this version of a common story in Aishalton, of how the mountain Maokatao was named:

> *You know, the first place, there were two young beautiful sisters, and their parents went to the farm, leaving the two girls to look after the home, right, they carry the home. And instead of concentrating on doing something before their parents reached, they just look, what should I put it, they just look after their lice. Yeah, they're just combing and picking out the lice from each other's head. Yeah, yeah. So all the time they were doing that, in the absence of their parents, all the time, always sitting down. Doing nothing, or they just checking their head, yeah. So, according to the story, they turned into rocks. Yeah, that is how, so that is how they are there on top of the mountain. On top of big rocks too. Maoka. Yeah, the two sisters' names are Maoka.*

In this story, two young girls are left to care for the home by their parents who leave for the farm. Disobeying their parents, the girls (Maoka) carelessly neglect their duties, and instead sit at the top of the mountain (tao) to remove lice from each other's hair. Some accounts of the story have the parents 'overseas', or the father away gold mining. Other versions of the story suggest the girls were forbidden to go outside because they were menstruating, while some revealed that the girls were forbidden to look at men (but did), or they had been asked to fetch firewood (but had not). Most versions of the story further explain how the sisters turned to rock, some elaborately, such as this one, which shares how:

> *These two young ladies were putting spell on the people, you know. So they did ask somebody more wicked then they to put an evil spell on them. Upon them, so that how come they turn into rock.*

Thus, the girls were cursed into rock formations.

Multiple acts of remembering and imagining can inform each other in complex ways (Casey, 1976; 1987), and the familiarity of these stories within communities and between people allows an insight into the broad attachment to territory the peoples of the Rupununi have. That most people in a village nearby to one of these mythological places could relate a version of the specific story indicates the presence of a common knowledge of myth, and how landscape stories operate within Makushi and Wapishana conceptions of place.

Conversely, *intensity* of territorial knowledge is demonstrated by culture specialists, generally elders within the Rupununi, who display vast knowledge of surrounding lands. For these specialists, every point within the landscape speaks to them, tells a story, and relates the history of both the peoples and their territories. I was told stories about the placement of particular rocks within the landscape that were once people passing through, magically turned to stones by a wicked man. Other stories told how families were petrified beside creeks, transformed into cliffs. Stories about caves filled with giants, and caves formed by giant snakes. Stories of pools formed by lightening, lakes filled with water-tigers, and rivers filled with the voices of people lost there. Stories explaining the different coloured markings on the bed of a creek, red being the blood of an ancestor who was killed in that place. And stories of how ancestor-spirits painted, carved, and sculpted the fishes into the rivers.

Perhaps more interesting than these static mythological events, locked into one place, set in the landscape by virtue of their morphology are myths that can be traced through the landscape. These flowing myths that move through space touching several places can reveal deeper cultural connections to territory. And myths do flow, in various ways. Some stories could be told in variation across the region, across vast distances, with slight differences between them. Across three villages I heard about giant bats plaguing villages, stealing people away to a mountain top far away. In Shulinab I heard:

> *No, you see they had a big bat, a bat. A big bat, a bat. In this mountain. And every day somebody was missing. No, not every day, every night. You see that, every night. Indians was missing. If not here, there. And they wanted to know who is doing this, all this, the people missing. Well, one day now, they had a disabled old lady, and she come out to urine, and they tie a piece of firewood, nuh? And of course, it's still lighting, right, and they tie it up on her, see the old lady didn't know, she come out and she passing her urine, and the big bat comes out, BOOP, collects. You see, ahhhhh, when she holler, everybody come out, they see, come and see everybody, everybody comes, everybody see, nuh? BAM, on the same mountain there, that big mountain there. No, right, you can't see it. And right there that thing set, POW. The fire, neh? Up there. And they had a man name of, what was his name? Kamaiyewah. You see those people got those names, nuh? We don't, we don't know how to call it in English, so far, you know it's like that. Kamaiyewah. Kamiyewah means a shoot-man. All the other rest tried, but they never, because they bat was always there. You could see it from here, upon the mountain, up on the rock, you know. On Menahmerii-Ping. Upon the same Menahmerii-Ping, the bat was there, everybody seeing these two. Everybody try, and then them arrows coming back, and thing. Same Kamaiyewah now gone, and he said, I believe I am going to destroy this thing here. When he do so, and the arrow gone straight upon the man heart, that is why they call it Kamaiyewah. TANG, and it placed,*

and it left there. And it, and where it, where the Kamaiyewah shoot the bat, and the person left, into rock.

In this version, the bats arrive to the village and an old woman is taken. But the clever villagers have tied a lit piece of firewood to her, so when the bats arrive at their dwelling place, their secret location is revealed when the surrounding bush catches fire, and the ancestors can ask a skilled hunter to chase down and kill the bats. Importantly, the tellers of this story name the place to where the bats went, Menahmerii-Ping, within the village of Shulinab.

However, in Aishalton, I was told:

You cannot see it from here, but it is a mountain, that is called the Bat Mountain. Bat Mountain. And there was a second man near, there is a savannah called Parabara. Yeah. They called it Parabaz, but now they call it Parabara. Parabaz. Yeah. Parabaz. There was a, there were two huge bats. That used to carry and eat those villagers from there. Every time, every night. Whenever they goes out to do farming, and them bats go back, and carry them out. Every time, every night. And so the people thought it wise, so one night, they set fire. So what they did, they tied to an old woman, say she will be the last to go, you know? Uh-huh, yes, they, so when, after they had built this fire, they light this, the two sticks on her as well, you know? So when she went out, the bats would carry her away, she alone went. So the people start looking on, and on, and on, and on. When they start looking, so, they saw where it landed. Because of the fire. And so they say now, we know it is. So early the next morning they started to cut line. And they cut, they cut, they cut, and cut, and cut, and cut, and cut. They started to cut the line. There was a big mountain, they call it Pokorii-Tao. When they look, they saw Pokorii-Tao. So, they, they saw the big mountain. It's a big rock. Yeah. There is a big rock, the mountain is, just like that one there, you see. Is big big rock. Yes, so they started to cut line until they, when they get up there, they saw these two big huge bat. Two big bats, that used to eat these people. And on the ground beneath the bats they found their bones, you know, so they found these big bats now, but not knowing what to do, how to kill them. You know? Anyhow, there was a huntsman, and this huntsman, they call it Kamai. Is a man, is a real huntsman. Yeah, he's a marksman, and he's a huntsman, that is how he is. I don't know where he come from. I don't know who really he is, which tribe. But anyway, any good marksman, we call Kamai right here. Uh-huh, yes, in our, thing, language. Kamai is a marksman, a good hunter, a huntsman. Yes. So this Kamai say, look I will do it, what happened, they say that we, you see how many bones are there? Now we are now getting very few and so on, we will be wiped out, so we really wanted to get rid of the big bats. Said, ok, I will do that, and he started with his poison, curaré, he shot, he can't missed, what he is. Because the target is there, and he got one, and then he shot, he got the other one. Just in a little while, this curaré, the poison worked on them, and so they fell right to the ground. The two huge bats on the ground. The people, the man who was there, he get, they were very annoyed, they need to kill, so they start to chop and chop and chop, into small pieces. The two big bats, the two big bats. And they thank the same Kamai for saving them. But what happened is that the little pieces turned into small bats. Yes. That was why

> *my father was telling, if they had burned it, you would never had bats, never get bats, you know? So, when they all finished what they were doing, after the chopping, only small bats started to fly all over. So that's how we get its name, Bat Mountain. And still up there now, there are many bats stay there. Little species of bats are still there.*

Here we have much the same story, of bats capturing an old woman, who is sent with fire to reveal the lair, only to be killed by a hunter with much the same name (Kamaiyewah *vs.* Kamai). However, in this rendition, the mountain is located near Parabara, far, far away from Shulinab. Similarly, the story told by one in St. Ignatius revealed the same bats, stealing babies however, before returning to their mountain lair, this time located near Shiriri; far from both Shulinab and Parabara. Myth has flowed through territory, affecting more places, and more peoples.

However, myth travels through territory in ways other than possible repetition and sharing of story. The myths themselves can also flow, as stories often do. One story managed to capture ancestor presence within several places in the landscape:

> *... And the man, he gone to that mountain, now you see that mountain? The high one, with rock up there. And right there he gone. He gone inside that cave right there, that, they call that Menahmerii, Menahmerii-Ping. And when he go in now, he bend down, and then make little thing. Mogowetta. That is the creek name, Mogowetta. And then, when he come in, he pass the rock, when he go in with his walking stick, he burn the rock with the Taiwa. You could see the marks on the rock, when he go into that mountain now. And he make that cave, he did leave Taiwa. And Kwitaiwa, that's where he rest little bit. We call it Kwitaiwa. And when he getting up, he hold his head. That's why we call it Mong Pu-baiba-taiwa ...*

This story tells of several notable features of one mountain landscape, all of them culturally modified through the ancestor who walked through that place, marking it for future generations, tracing myth through the landscape.

However, individual mythological cultural figures can also appear in myths across the region, and reappear in many other places, at different events further indicating mythological flow. For example, Inchkeran and Ahneegay are two brothers, mythological figures in Rupununi stories. It was these brothers who built the Kanuku Mountains in the South Rupununi, as I was told in St. Ignatius:

> *I was told that Inchkeran and Ahneegay were to a built, it's like, how the mountains really came up is by digging, the creek drains, the creek beds, nuh? Digging it and then to the Rupununi. Is like so they keep digging, so they keep piling. And that's how it actually came up, and they say that when they were doing that, the stuff was very soft,*

> *and eventually it became hard, well, that's what the legend, I can't recall it all. My great-grandmother told this story.*

However, I was also told they had been at work in Rupertee in the North Rupununi, fighting with the Makushis against the Caribs during the time of tribal wars:[191]

> *Coming down the river, the Caribs, they have a Karinambo, where you have a big stones along the river side, they say those are the Caribs. Those are the Caribs, rocks, so when they were travelling, they have, they had, like a spiritual people in a story, they had their names, so those are the people who tell them you stop there, y'all ain't going nowhere so, once they tell them for stop, they turn to rock, yes, that is the stories about the Karinambo rocks, Caribs, Caribs stopped right there, they turned into rocks. My grandmother used to tell me, is some spiritual beings, they name, one of their names is Neegay in Makushi, Neegay, and what is the other one, what is the brother name? Can't remember this brother name, but there's two brothers. They are spiritual beings, that is, turned them into rocks, so turned them into whatever. Oh yes, Inchkeran is the brother. Inchkeran. Is the brother for Neegay. Is them does doing it.*

And some further credit these brothers with cutting down the tree of life in Roraima (Rodway, 1899), across the river in Brazil, thereby expanding even further the flow of myth across the region.

Thus, the cultural familiarity of the Makushi and Wapishana with their territory and landscapes across both space and time is expressed through the telling of stories of ancient ancestors and mythological peoples and events. The beauty and detail of the stories mirrors the beauty and formation of the landscape, but for the peoples of the Rupununi, what matters are the connections to land demonstrated by this knowledge. These connections traced between peoples and places are evident both through the broad knowledge of mythological landscapes displayed by entire communities in the telling of commonly understood stories, such as House Lake, or Maokatao and through the intense knowledge of territory revealed by culture specialists, who relate stories connecting people to places upon every point in the landscape, every river, pond, or pool, each mountain peak or range, across the savannahs, bush islands, and forests, through coloured rocks and caves, and which often flow across the landscape. Indeed, the mythological interaction between land and people in the region is vast, but seemingly, the depth of knowledge about the environments and the landscape features is more so. "With myth, the land takes on a

[191] Tribal wars are still actively remembered by oral history accounts (Forte and MRU, 1996: 7), and are thought to have been ongoing as recently as the1880s (Watkins, 2010: 165-168).

different cast, a density of meaning and with it a formidable strength it did not have before" (Basso, 1996: 28).

Through these types of story, we begin to learn about how places that are important to the peoples of the area came to be named, wherein certain events and the actions of those who came before left their identities behind on the landscape, which in turn became incorporated into modern identities. As Kovak argues, "this is why name-place stories matter, as they hold identity and reveal history" (2009: 61). But can they also reveal geography? Or instead, *are* they geography? Perhaps these place names, originating from mythological ancestor stories involving whimsical pasts, intrepid cultural figures, as well as their exploits against the demons, dragons, and devils that reside in the Rupununi engrave Makushi and Wapishana culture upon the landscape, and in turn, the landscape then informs Makushi and Wapishana culture. That different people told different stories, and often the same stories had different beginnings, middle or endings indicates that the peoples of the region understand their histories and their territories in different ways, from different perspectives. Spatial and temporal scales, as well as different histories, environments, experiences, knowledges, and cosmological understandings of the places around them impacted upon the narrations, influencing the outcomes, affecting the realities. For the Makushi and the Wapishana, mythological events, recorded in and through the landscape represent a component of their alternative cartography, myths as maps perhaps. As I was told, there are "*a lot of stories about this mountain. A lot. The creeks, the hills, the bush, we know all their names, so we don't want people to come to tell us, well, this here is no-name bush, no-name mountain, no-name creek. We know them all*." That all places have a name represents their claim to these territories. But not all places are named for mythological events, which could be easily brushed aside by dominant ideology.[192] Other means of naming places incorporate Makushi and Wapishana practices and often indicate a further intermingling with the landscape, through cultural modification, observation, or ecological knowledge which in turn modifies culture in a cycle with neither a beginning nor an end, but always becoming.

Etymology of Territory

Knowledges transmitted through stories or myths can in themselves connect peoples with places through the direct naming of ancestors and their actions within particular spaces, as seen

[192] This links back to the definition of 'myth', which has been subsumed by modern usage to indicate fictional narratives.

above. But secondary connections can also be drawn through mythology, as peoples connect to the other beings who share their territories, through mythologies wherein animals are seen to behave as peoples and through understandings that peoples can become animals. Several stories were told to me of beings enacted as turtles, snakes, tapir, fishes and jaguars. In these stories, people disguised as common forest animals enact fantastic possibilities and demonstrate the follies of transgressing understood norms. This inter-species shifting is not restricted only to imagined stories and cultural mythology however. The peoples of the Rupununi also hold within their cosmologies that shamans can shift into other forms, most particularly that of the jaguar when enacting dark magic (Kohn, 2007; Whitehead, 2002), as Mentore notes, "relentless stalking reveals the jaguar to be nothing other than a *yaskomo*, in this instance, a shape-shifting dark shaman attempting to steal the life of another human by using *tono* and becoming infamous as murderer" (unpublished document).[193] This fluidity between beings must be understood from the perspective of the peoples of the Rupununi, wherein these points where what some perceive to be separate 'natures' and 'cultures' as distinct operatives have fused, wherein encounters between "humans and other beings generate mutual ecologies and co-produced niches" or become real (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010:546, see also Fuentes, 2010), and humans, animals and spirits are seen as "endless mimetic doubles of one another" (Willerslev, 2007). These mutual ecologies explain how all beings co-construct each other's positions in behavioural, ecological and physiological senses (Fuentes, 2010: 601). Logically, as peoples who are intimately engaged with other beings of the forest through hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering, the peoples of the Rupununi "must treat these beings as selves and engage with them as such," and Kohn goes on to argue that one of the implications of adopting the viewpoints of other kinds of beings, or of having them adopt ours, is that through this knowing, we are required to inhabit their different worlds, and they ours (2007: 7). He goes on to argue that this transformative process, which he calls becoming, allows attributes and dispositions to become "dislodged from the bodies that produce them and ontological boundaries become blurred," thereby breaching the "nature-culture divide" (*ibid*).

By 'being' in a place where one and all can be the same through this process of ontological 'becoming', the place itself can likewise become part of the being. Thus, the peoples

[193] George Mentore is a Guyanese anthropologist who is a leading authority on the peoples of the Rupununi. This is an excerpt from a forthcoming work.

of the Rupununi, through their actions within the forest, their practices of being, enact practices of being their territories, however individual to each perspective from which the act began. These ephemeral connections to territory through practice are, however, just one way in which Rupununi peoples practice their identities through their territories.

The Makushi and Wapishana believe deeply that they have a responsibility to care for the land and its resources "in order to maintain abundance for present-day communities and for their future generations" (David *et al.*, 2006: 37). Each part of their collective territories, including the savannahs, mountains, forests, wetlands and bush islands is an important place, and a part of their identities as Rupununi peoples. This connection to territories is demonstrated in various ways, beyond just stories that connect the peoples to the animals, fishes, birds, insects, and plants through spirit ancestors, spirit masters, spirit keepers, or physical territory. These connections to territory can be demonstrated additionally through Makushi and Wapishana place names which are derived from environmental or ecological designations, usually of plants, animals, or spirits that inhabit a particular area, or through more complex demonstrations of Indigenous knowledges via hunting techniques, astronomical calculations, farming activities, burning cycles, or meteorological predictions. These various knowledges, which operate as connectors of peoples to lands are particularly individual; often gendered, or reserved for leaders, elders, or shamans, or specific to exact locations or types of territory. Thus, the peoples of the Rupununi understand that it is important for themselves "to consult with an *aichipa'o* 'one who knows' about a resource before we use it. It is also advised to talk to the *aichipaotum* 'person who knows the place' before using resources in a part of our territory that one is unfamiliar with. This is our custom" (David *et al.*, 2006: 37). All is seen as traditional knowledges, with close connections to the peoples who mind them.

That the etymology of many Rupununi names includes environmental designations provides a base for the automatic linking of identity with territory. Within the Rupununi, the name of the region itself is derived from a Wapishana word, *Ropanan*, which is a type of fruit.[194] But some community members are unaware of this original meaning,[195] and instead attribute the

[194] Several definitions for ropanan were given to me, but 'a type of fruit' was the most common, and thus I present it as such.

[195] In part because the word is Wapishana (Makushi and Wai Wai speak their own languages), and in part because Indigenous language is eroding in the region.

naming of the Region to the Rupununi River[196] which flows through the area, marking the entire space:

> *Rupununi came about because of the river. It's the name of the river. And you don't say Rupununi. The word is 'Ropanan', or something like that. Right, because the Rupununi River runs right from way up in the North, way down to the South, so that is why I feel it is named Rupununi. Because of that river, it runs throughout the territory.*

In addition to major waterways such as the Rupununi River, the Takutu, the Essequibo, (which is originally known as Chiip Wa'o by some of the peoples), the Kuyuwini, and the Kassikaityu (also known as the Umanawunuo) Rivers, most of the village names are derived from local languages ranging from Makushi, Wapishana, and Wai-Wai, to some places still being known by names originating in earlier languages, such as Atorad or Taruma, and the majority remain connected to natures, environments, places, and ecologies within the region. For example,

> *Sand Creek is Suburuin-tao. Suburuin-tao that's baboon place, or something like that. Parkiwarinao is called the Sparrow Hill, because of the little birds, the sparrow. That's how it got its name. Potarinao, came from the word 'Potaradii', 'Potaradii', means, it's like a big sting ray. Katoonarib 'Katoonar'. Katoonarib is a place more with bush islands, so it is called Katoonar. Marora Naawa it is the giant armadillos, they were in abundance in that area. So some communities have their names behind something, it's named because of, a reason, you know, a reason.*

Other names have been changed slightly, either by other Indigenous groups, as in 'Kanuku', the dominant mountain range in the South Rupununi:

> *Well, Kanuku Mountain, it is a name, it is a Wapishana word, Kanook, right? But the Makushi I guess adapt the word, nuh? It's a forest, nuh? That's how they call it. Kanook. High forest.*

Or by colonizers unable, or unwilling to correctly record the place names:

> *Like Aishalton, is 'Aishara Toon', right? That's the Wapishana name for it, it is the people, the English people, or whoever was running Guyana first that changed it into Aishalton. Right, so Aishalton really got its name because in the area where the village is situated it has a lot of poisons used for fish, the 'Aishar', right?*

Within these comments, place names are derived from fruits, plants, including culturally modified plants, such as the Aishar poison, trees, particular environments, such as mountainous

[196] Of those who knew that ropanan was a type of fruit, by most accounts the River was named for the fruit. While this indicates connection to land through adaptation of language, it does not demonstrate an etymological connection, which is the focus of this section.

or forested areas, as well as animals and birds. Butt Colson saw this ecological context in naming as particularly important, as it "most directly records the link between communities and the pre-eminent and distinguishing features of their land bases," and she saw this as crucial for understanding "the identity of the Indigenous peoples and their occupation of their respective lands" (2009: 83), which automatically links peoples "to their geographical base and thus endows them with a territorial identity" (*ibid*: 13). Here we see peoples connecting with their places, defining identities and territories.

While connecting peoples to places, these etymological names also served to differentiate peoples, who would then refer to themselves in relation to the environments from which they came in a symbiotic naming relationship. This Wapishana woman explained that:

> *Because, like at the DTC[197] meeting or at a meeting held in Wapishana territory, you would stand up and say my name is Judy Downes,[198] I am Sawari Wa'o - San. That means, I am from Sawari Wa'o. Or a Sawari Wa'o person. So you are, your association to your community is, or that is your set of identity.*

Further connections indicate that the names of places, and hence of peoples are not only derived from the natural worlds, but also from the cosmological understandings of the worlds around the beings, and indeed the Wapishana and the Makushi know that the whole of their territories are populated by spirit beings. Many of these named places are recognized as sacred or sensitive places, and all of them are protected by spirit masters or guardians which should not be disturbed, and include:

> Places such as big lakes, certain mountains, areas with rock engravings, rocky outcrops and some mineral springs ... We tend to avoid these areas that we call *akaa ki kiizai* "dangerous places." If someone wishes to visit such an area, then ritual precautions must be taken that involve *powan* "blowing" the person. Failure to follow the proper procedures can cause a person to *shokordianni amazada* "offend the spirits in a place" (David *et al.*, 2006: 37).

These bush spirits must be asked permission, approvals sought, or reparation given if a person wishes to use materials, hunt, trap, or fish within the area, open a farm, or otherwise use the resources over which the spirit protects, as in this example, wherein a couple who entered a protected area promise to 'pay' for materials taken:

> *'Husband', I say, 'yes sweetheart.' 'Now I need a spindle handle.' I said 'the only place you can get it is the bush island.' But of course she know the trick of it, nuh?*

[197] District Toshaos Council.
[198] A pseudonym.

> *'Ok, let's go.' And we gone. As soon as I be there, yeah, 'I'm here, not to really humbug you, but I need something here, but I'm going to pay you, I'm going to pay you for it.'*

Within this account, a husband and wife approach a sensitive area, wishing to cut a tree to carve a new spindle. However, a trade is offered, and the couple leave behind an offering to the spirit owner of the bush island to ward off harm. If these measures are not taken, consequences should be expected:

> *So you dare not eat that thing, because why? It is spiritually, like spirit people keeping this thing, right? They are protected, it's not people, it's spirit. Like, if you eat it, you will get, you will tremble, tremble, tremble and get fever, fever. Unending fever. And so now the old people say not to trouble it. It's only animals does eat it.*

Thus, the physical environment or landscape is named by various Indigenous peoples, in various Indigenous languages according to their own experiences, perceptions, practices, activities, or cosmologies. Occasionally, these names are modified by other Indigenous languages according to *their* specific experiences, perceptions, practices, activities, or cosmologies. These new names are then re-adopted by various peoples living in those places, which through naming and practice help to serve as identities, in part allowing for a becoming *with* territories. Hence, the ways peoples see and imagine their worlds influence their definitions of territories, and consequently, their ideas of identities.

But it is not only in the naming of places that we see the practice of territories influencing the creation of identities, perceptions, and perspectives, but also in the knowing of those places. Customary use of biological resources within the Rupununi is organized and shaped by a set of traditional practices, which encompass cultural values, beliefs, institutions, norms, and resource use techniques. Within Rupununi territories, access, use, and sharing of resources are ordered according to a set of customary land and resource rights that specify the entitlements, obligations and duties of community members.

> *This is, you know, our way of life, we live off the land, right? We toil off the land. And our life is the land, you know, and that is our closest connection to mother earth, right? That is how I feel, right? And the way we treat mother earth, she's going to respond to you back the same way, right, that if you toil the land, and you do not waste, and you live the way you should live with nature, things are going to be ok, but when you destroy and destroy and destroy, that is when all the negatives happen, you know?*

One example of the strength of these Indigenous knowledges, in this case specifically Wapishana, has been captured within a South Rupununi Seasonal Calendar (South Central and South Rupununi Districts Toshaos Councils, 2012), which documents important markers in the seasonal cycles, such as the times of rains or winds, the sightings of particular animals, birds, or new-growth plants, and arrivals of particular constellations or individual stars in the skies. This Seasonal Calendar further connects these occurrences with important activities, such as the planting of cassava, opening of new farms, or specific times to hunt or fish. The Calendar can be validated or renounced by a recounting of personal experiences by individuals within the communities, allowing for a flexible approach to customary resource management, based on different ways of knowing or experiencing the places peoples have been. Thus, in both the introductory document *Wa Wiizi Wa Kaduzu* (David *et al.*, 2006), and in the Management Plan written by the peoples of the South Rupununi, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of their customary Makushi and Wapishana knowledges.

Naming places, and knowing the names of places in the landscape, as well as knowing and owning the knowledge required to be in those places, all contribute to an intimate relationship with territory. That the names are culturally significant is important, as one Makushi elder said, "*they know why they name it and why they call it that way, nuh*." But more important is the dynamic interaction between places and people, where landscape can contribute to self or community identification, to being in territory; "*I am Sawari Wa'o – San*." Naming territory, and naming people as territory further supports claims for the land, since these intermeshings of place and person within Indigenous epistemologies fuse Makushi and Wapishana peoples both linguistically and corporeally to the land, where separation of one from the other would necessarily change both and alter their realities. Nevertheless, dominant conceptions of space persist in imposing structure on the Rupununi, insisting upon the continuance of colonial names and naming practices, even while state based geography remains rudimentary or occasionally inaccurate. However, there is yet another means by which the Wapishana and Makushi name their territory, one that is both more recent, and for some, more real.

Documenting Territory

While telling stories, often Rupununi residents will reveal knowledge about places, landmarks, natural formations, or environments that incorporate evidence of historical events. These types of ancestor stories, which can include biological remains and archaeological

artifacts, further connect peoples with places, as these stories in a sense document belonging in territory for the Makushi and the Wapishana. The physicality of these connections, as opposed to the spiritual or cultural connections provided through myth and practice, give a corporeal identity to the territory surrounding the peoples, and provide a tangible relationship to landscapes for those outside the realm of being in the Rupununi.

Much of this past is recorded as part of the era of tribal wars, when conflict ranged throughout Guyana, and across into Brazil between the various Indigenous groups of the area. Makushi and Wapishana recount tales of the Carib and the Arawak arriving, peoples who reside distant from the Rupununi today, and the battles that emerged from these unfortunate meetings:

> *Well, I had, now let me see, well, before, well, there is an only thing I don't know the full history about it, is that, first they had the, the Arawaks or the Caribs, used to come from away from so, and we had the Makushis and the Wapishanas, that living, the people there used to live up in the mountains and things. They had one, one is like up to now we cannot find the cave, or that is right up in the mountains there, and we have one right here, by this House Lake they call, and they had, those are the field battles then, and from here over to Shiriri, there is a next field battle there again. The Arawak, and the Caribs. Well, them were like a, they could know where and where you stay, that's gone hunt for you.*

Several people agreed that the land nearby to Shiriri was a historic battle ground, however, many accounts had Makushi warring with Wapishana, while some had Atorad and Daozai[199] as the enemies, and other accounts named "*the tribes in Brazil*" as the historic foes.

Sometimes history meshes with myth (or not, depending on your perspective). I was told of one place named Aiyekwiitao, a famous battle field near Aishalton. For the Wapishana, Aiyekwiitao means brains, and the place was named so because "*they killed a portion of people there, and their brains stained the rocks, and you can see it from far*." Further removed is the story recounting how people knew the war was coming:

> *You know, they would know when the enemy would be coming. So they would be working cassava, especially like grating with their hands, right, grating, grating, I don't know how it comes, true, when the women were grating the cassava, when she look at her, the grated cassava, there are, I don't know how come, a blood stain there. A blood stain. So that, they just, indication that the enemy is coming near. So they would just leave everything and fled from there. Yeah. So, when the enemy came around, there were no one there, you know. So instead of coming back and labour again, they would*

[199] Considered 'extinct' today, however, M.C. Forte (2005; 2006; 2009) as well as other Indigenist scholars (Barreiro, 2006; Bulkan and Bulkan, 2006; Guitar *et al.*, 2006) question the usage of the word 'extinct' for Indigenous populations, claiming that their blood and their culture remain influential today, a sentiment shared by many people I spoke with in the Rupununi.

> *move in farther into the, into the jungle. So that is how they move from here Aishalton to the bush edge, to the patches of savannah in the bush. Next to the other rivers, in the jungle. That is how, so if you go there then, you will see how the pages of earth move to where they, where they used to live, farm, those such things, like. So it's very interesting to walk there.*

While historically influential, interwoven as they are into often verifiable accounts, these stories distract from documenting territory. Returning to material presence within the landscape, there are several accounts of artifacts, some also from the time of tribal wars, but others from much longer ago. Items such as stone axes, whet stones, and sharpening grooves, jars and clay goblets, beads and necklaces that litter the entrances of caves and overhangs or are found scattered across the historic battle fields, lingering in places once occupied by ancestors. Sometimes more than archaeological artifacts remain, and biological evidence of ancestor use is found in interments, skulls and bones inhabiting the clay pots and jars. These places too are named. Koolbratiie[200] and Niwau Dikuo (Skull Mountain) near Shulinab, Duwattoon (place of goblets) near Aishalton, and the familiar battle site, the mountain of Shiriri again.

While these artifacts in places, which come to be named in a significant manner for the Makushi and Wapishana, act as dioramas into their past, what about the actual tracings of ancestors upon the landscape? Did the ancestors inscribe themselves upon the land in such a way that the territory becomes the story of the people? Quite literally, yes, "*through the writing of petroglyphs, some message symbol*" present throughout the Rupununi. Guyanese archaeologist Dennis Williams studied Rupununi petroglyphs, including those at Aishalton and Kurupukari, and through comparisons with other glyphs in other places, he dates them to within 5000 and 3000 BCE (1979a). This is indeed a connection within the landscape between territory and people documented as ancient and extensive.

And while local people are unsure as to their meaning, as for example this Wapishana elder who told me that *"the petroglyphs have a lot of sayings. A lot of meaning as well, but I don't really know about them*," Williams imagines meaning for the writing, suggesting they are perhaps a ritual system of enumeration indicating the presence of specific resources in different areas (1985), a theory supported by Vidal who claims they are the "marks of the ancients," written to teach future generations about resource management (2003: 72). The petroglyphs

[200] No translation was forwarded to me for this place, however it was named as a place where ceramics and skeletal remains were found.

present on the landscape indicate that Wapishana connections with territory are extensive and real. That the petroglyphs are conceived of as natural resource management records only further solidifies the cultural presence of Wapishana upon territory, for 'nature' is not as natural as often presumed.

Environmental modification of the landscape occurs, however, not unintentionally by the Makushi and the Wapishana. Bolanõs, with the support of many[201] states that "Indigenous peoples have for centuries re-shaped and managed the forest ecosystems on which they depend to sustain life and much of what is defined as primary forest is in fact a socio-historical and cultural landscape" (2011: 46), or as one Wapishana woman noted, the "*area is intact because of people like us, who live here."* This creation of 'nature' by the Wapishana and Makushi can be documented in the landscape, particularly through the existence of concentrated use-plants. For example, the Makushi acknowledge their ancestors presence through the existence of *bina* in the landscape:

> *Bina is what they call charm, the word bina itself. Bina. Let's say this is a bina. And if you want the charm, you get from there, so we call Bina Hill. Because years ago, they had their plants here, there were plants here, if you wanted you came for it. If you wanted to be an athlete, you came here, if you want a husband, you come here you look for a special plant to charm him, if somebody wanted a wife, same thing, if you wanted to be a hunt man, the same thing, you know. So all the plants, years ago, they claim, according to history, grow here. But the bina itself is charm, we call it charm. That's why they call it Bina Hill, the hill is because they had a lot of plants for different, different stuff, that's why they call it Bina Hill. They say it grow here so here is where you came for it, all them bina, or all them charm. Here was the place. Yes.*

Here, Makushi ancestors, identified from the time frame 'years ago', cultivated a source of magical plants (charms), although certainly some were traditional medicines and herbs (Forte and MRU, 1996). Similarly, the Wapishana document the gift of nature farms, *kotu'ainao zakapun k'i*, that "our forefathers left behind ... [and which] we highly value for their ancient seeds, root suckers, and bina, which we harvest carefully up until today for use in our farms and gardens" (South Central and South Districts Toshaos Councils, 2012: 69). Braun (2002) uses the term 'social nature' to indicate this inevitable intertwining of culture and nature in any and all social and ecological projects, acknowledging that Indigenous peoples have been modifying and adapting the environment to their needs symbiotically. The idea of social nature, as a nature

[201] Baleé, 2003; Coomes, 1992; Denevan, 1992; Gibbons, 1990; Gómez-Pompa and Kaus, 1992; Heckenberer *et al*,. 2003; 2007; Posey and Baleé, 1990; N. Smith, 1980.

inhabited and manipulated, a nature no longer required to be westernized as pristine and pure, indeed, as a recognition that natures have always been social is a concept readily embraced by Makushi and Wapishana conceptualizations of their environment. Social nature demands a different politics, one that does not traffic in purity but instead understands responsibility or ethics in terms of "relationality" (Whatmore, 1997, cited in Braun, 2002: 13). Although not a 'writing' as such, the cultural imprint upon the land cannot be denied, and through environmental management, the Wapishana and Makushi ancestors indeed told a story to their successors.

Likewise, the South and South Central Rupununi Districts Toshaos Councils write that "our ancestors have left behind many valuable places and things that teach us of our past," and they argue that "these sites are spiritually sensitive and link us to the history of our peoples and territory" (2012: 69). Battle grounds, burial sites, and the cultivated wilderness they live in, as well as the tangible traces of ancestors evidenced through ceramics, stone tools, and rock carvings provide historical links to significant places in Rupununi territories, and further enrich the Makushi and Wapishana geographies established through myth and practice. Indeed, documented territory may be considered the strongest evidence for a cultural connection the Makushi and Wapishana with their territory by some, however, for the Wapishana and Makushi themselves, the synergy and strength of all their culture is the means by which they are their territory. In seeing the world outside of an individuated perspective, the assemblage created in thinking of Makushi and Wapishana as territory accepts constant change as a natural component as it expands its connections. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no one substance, only an always-differing process, a plication, a folding, unfolding, refolding (1987: 255), thus, incorporating new names, new places into Makushi and Wapishana territorial ontologies should be seen, and accepted as an expanding multiplicity.

Being and Becoming Territory

We have seen how landscapes are culturally produced and constructed (Mentore, 2011: 24; Vadjunec *et al.*, 2011:10), and by exploring mythology, etymology, and archaeology in the Rupununi, a richer understanding of how places that are important to the peoples of the area came to be named emerges, wherein certain events and the actions of those who came before left their identities behind on the landscape. These cultural landscapes in turn became incorporated into both current Indigenous knowledges and modern identities, as places come to generate their own individuated meanings (Basso, 1996: 108). One meaning for territory that resonates in the

region is as resistance to dominant politics, and when I suggested to one Toshao that these landscapes defined by Wapishana and Makushi culture could be used to reterritorialize, or re-map the Rupununi, his response was:

> *Beautiful. That would help a lot, because, because I'm already seeing things as you talk here. Especially through my area. How much, how much stories are linked to our land. Right. Yeah, right through, coming back to Deep South. I, nearly all the mountains that carries name, have story behind it. All the deep lakes, deep pools that has a Wapishana name, Atorad name, have story behind it. A little hill, has story behind it. The bush island has a story behind it. Even the ité palms have story behind it. Yeah, trees. Important trees have story. So.*

Toshao connects the idea of myths and naming and land instinctively, and the suggestion of using what already exists to demonstrate relationships acknowledged by some, however not by those in power, ignites his imagination with possibilities, with future potential (see Figure 9). This is a project begun with this initial research, but which I will give to those from the Rupununi to complete.

The rhyzomatic nature of these connections, myths *and* naming *and* land, "shakes and uproots the verb 'to be'" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 25), yet Indigenist scholars persist upon its use when dealing with places and territory. Within Amazonia, Viveiros de Castro states that "Amerindian myths speak of a *state of being* where self and other interpenetrate, submerged in the same immanent, presubjective and preobjective milieu" (2004: 464, emphasis mine), where 'other' can be understood as 'territory' in his multinaturalist ontology (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). Similarly, Chamberlain explains how "stories don't establish possession of the place, they show how the people are possessed *by* it" (2000: 127, emphasis original), while Native American scholar Basso claims that "places are as much a part of us as we are a part of them" (Basso, 1996: xiv) and Indigenous rights scholar-activist Bolaños argues that "landscape becomes part of what people are" (2011: 45). By this logic, people being territory is the natural outcome of Makushi and Wapishana epistemologies, wherein relationships formed with the land preserve culture and allow peoples to learn from their ancestors in place.

However no culture is static, and arguments for 'preserving' or 'reviving' traditions suggest essentialisms best forgotten.[202] Basso acknowledges that "sensing places is dynamic" (1996: 107), and Viveiros de Castro goes on to state that "metamorphosis is a fact of nature. Not

[202] For examples of why essentialism should be forgotten, please see Afiff and Lowe, 2007; Braun, 2002; Dove, 2006; J. Forte, 2005; 2006; 2009; Hodgson, 2002; Li, 2000; 2004; Sletto, 2009a; Sundberg, 2008.

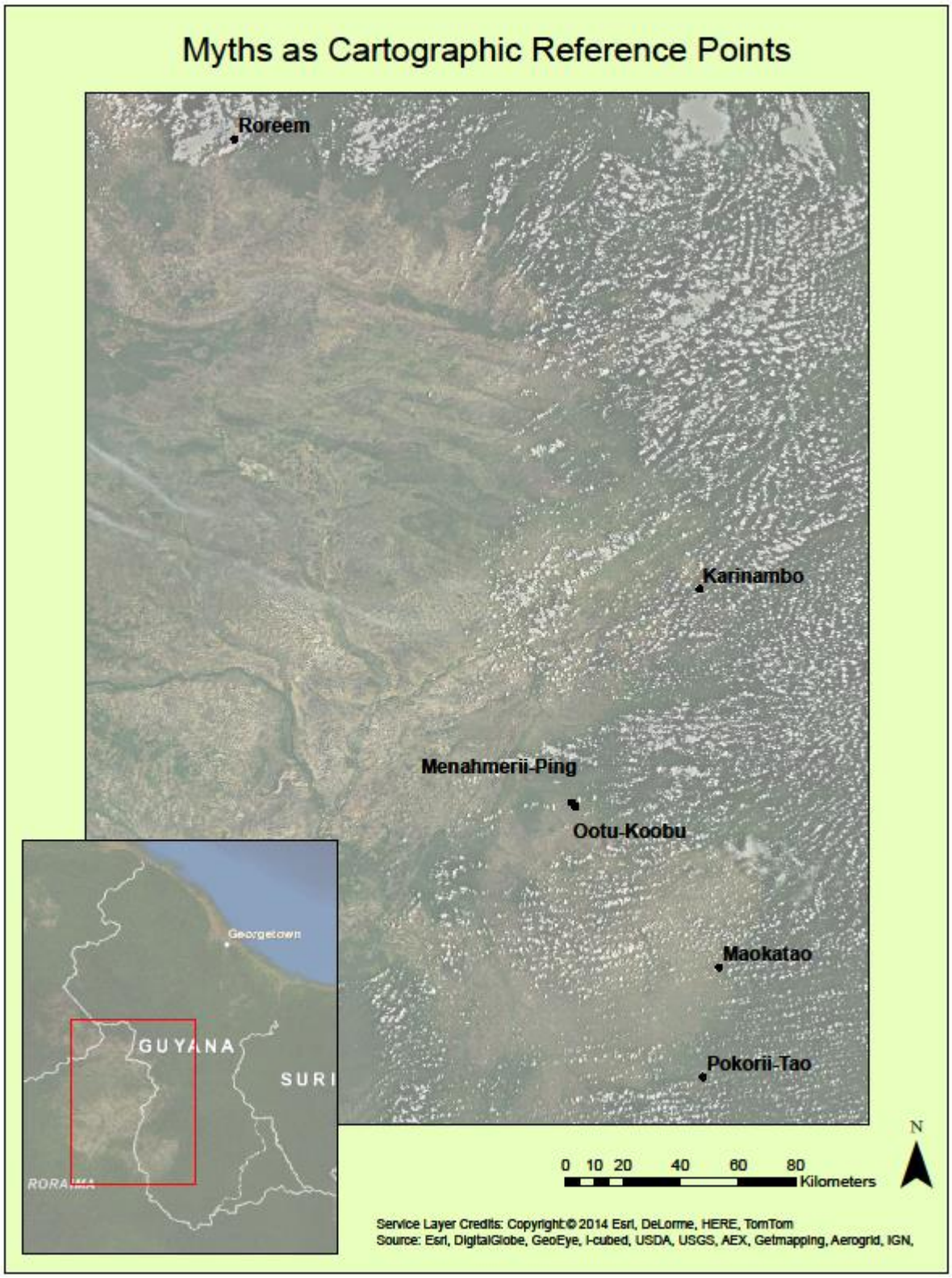

Figure 9: Stories linked to land, reterritorializing the Rupununi

only is metamorphosis the standard etiological process in myth, but it is still very much possible in present-day life" (2004: 476). In this way, stories, myths, or tales are seen as "narratives and statements of becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 242). And indeed, the Indigenist scholars were not wrong, remembering Basso's statement, "places are as much a part of us as we are a part of them," which intrinsically acknowledges the cycle, since as place becomes us, we become place, which must then shift to accept us, necessitating a new reality, a becoming, allowing for multiplicities to emerge between territory and people.

Chapter Seven: Imagined Territories

Substances and daydreams: gold, trees, earth, visions, and all kinds of animals, plants, and beings ranging from those of the sea and the rivers to those of the forests and the infra- and supra-worlds.

(Escobar, 2008: 34)

The Rupununi savannahs, mountains, forests, wetlands and bush islands; the animals, the birds, and the fishes; the Makushi and Wapishana peoples, along with their rituals, practices, knowledges, and cosmologies; and the more than human spirits, masters, and mythological creatures together maintain their complex socio-natural[203] relations, continuing connections by inscribing meaning upon the lands and themselves within those interactions. Despite several hundred years of colonialism, imposed territorial divisions, several decades of transnational extractive activities, and nascent manipulations of Indigenous knowledges, the Makushi and Wapishana remain conscious of their history, their presence, and their future in the Rupununi as their place. Or, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, place*s*.

While states have historically played a crucial role in the popular politics of place making and in the creation of naturalized links between places and peoples (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b: 47), Indigenous ontologies are counter-imagining places, lands, and territories by re-engaging with the imaginaries of their ancestors, pushing colonial understandings through always shifting, always evolving imaginaries. Embedded within the relational understandings of places common to Indigenous ontologies is an acceptance that spatial and temporal scales, as well as personal histories, environments, experiences, knowledges, and cosmological understandings of places impact upon narrations of these places, thereby influencing places and affecting realities. Different ontologies "are brought into being by showing that reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped in these practices" (Blaser, 2009: 11; see also Mol, 1999: 75). The notion that these multiple ontologies, or multiple worlds,[204] exist is itself the product of historically situated practices, constituted by mutual interactions (Blaser, 2009: 11; Haraway, 1997; Mol, 1999; Restrepo and Escobar, 2005: 211).

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[203] 'Social nature', explained in detail in the introduction and in Chapter Six: Telling Stories, is the term used to denote a hybridity between society and nature (Whatmore, 2002).

[204] As noted previously, Blaser expanded on Viveiros de Castro's notion of multinaturalism in developing his concept of political ontology, within which he argued for a shift away from ontology as a recognition of different perspectives of the world, to an understanding of ontology as the enacting of different worlds, or for the existence of multiple ontologies (2009: 11; 2014: 51).

Indigenous lifeways, epistemologies, and worldviews have always been consistent with these ideas of multiple ontologies, assemblages, becomings, or multiplicities. Indigenous epistemologies accept relational abstractions as foundational to their ontologies, or to perspectival realities. Through this lens, places are seen as dynamic and heterogeneous, "formed again and again from presences that are cultural, historical, biological, geographical, political, physical, aesthetic, and social" (Raffles, 2002: 7), and therefore these social places demand a different politics, one that is more accepting of multiplicity, process, and becoming, one which values relationality as an ethical and responsible means of engaging with others (Braun, 2002: 13). I argue that this dissertation demonstrates how Indigenous worldviews and their associated politics are emerging, or re-emerging, in the Rupununi as the dominant[205] epistemologies and that accepting this shift away from colonial perceptions towards Makushi and Wapishana epistemologies is another step towards respect for Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, since the Makushi and the Wapishana people interact with the Rupununi in multiple ways, and have modified, and been modified by the landscape cyclically, they are necessarily "socially and culturally embedded in their landscape by means of the historical and ecological forces that shape their identity" (Whitehead, 2003: 62). That these material relationships can be further linked to multiple territories is ontologically logical, since, as Basso notes, "we *are*, in a sense, the place-world we imagine" (1996: 7, emphasis original).

The different perspectives of the Rupununi are addressed in this dissertation through the lenses of development (Rupununi Hauntings), multi-politics (Intimate Borders), destiny (Becoming Places), and socionature (Telling Stories), and translate to different, multiple, Rupununi imaginaries of places. Importantly, imaginaries, those products of the mind which "contradict or contrast with a postulated constant order of reality" are not false representations of reality (Magaña and Mason, 1986: 9). Instead, they are a "variety of reality which [are themselves] historically constituted" (Mason, 1986: 43), and which weave together, "made and re-made, shaped and shaping, active and reactive" (Elden, 2013: 17). Imaginaries as a process of continual transformation, always becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

With this in mind, singular territorializations give way to multiple discourses, as they intersect with each other, swirling and producing a polyphonic and complex set of alternate geographies, of *imagined territories*, thereby undermining any notion of a fixed or single

[205] Dominant in this case referring to the most accepted within the Rupununi.

'official' discourse about a national territory (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 57). How we imagine territory is similar to imagining places,[206] and is reproduced through our spiritual, psychological, emotional, and material practices of daily activities that shape our relationships to places. Importantly, those activities can continue to be sources of imagined territory even after they no longer represent the everyday realities and activities of daily life, and the resulting un-imagining of territorialities and re-imagining of counter possibilities offers opportunities for opening alternate representations of place. Connecting Rupununi imaginaries with imagined territories is exactly what this chapter seeks to accomplish.

Imagined Territories

As a political term, territory references the particular set of cultural ideas that merge the importance of control over land and resources, or sovereignty, with jurisdictional ideas of rights to a particular geographical setting, thereby producing a socio-spatial configuration of power relations (Delaney, 2005: 12; Bryan, 2012: 216; Elden, 2013: 4; Murphy, 2013: 1212). Newman argues that:

> territory constitutes an important component of our individual, group, and national identities, not simply because our state territories are delimited by fixed boundaries but because territory has a symbolic dimension which determines our attachment and affiliation to particular spaces and places, attachments which are taught – consciously and subconsciously – through processes of political and territorial socialization (2006b: 87).

And while it is generally accepted that territories are continually produced and altered through time and historical processes (Delaney, 2005: 2; Bryan, 2012: 216; Elden, 2013: 17), the implied linearity consequently excludes all other perceptions of territory.

Simultaneously, while not particularly different, as an ethological term, territory refers to the dominance over a space in which an individual and/or species reproduces and obtains resources (Echeverri, 2005: 231). However, one important difference in this scientific understanding is the fact that one or more species can define different territorialities within the same area, in a type of overlapping epistemology of territory different from the singular political definition. If instead we look at "the braided strands of social and ecological history that [link] every feature" in a territory, thereby "encouraging voice and action on the part of those who

[206] As place is socially constructed, always becoming, and necessarily infused with meaning, I argue that political territory practiced ethologically (see Rocheleau below) is similarly socially constructed, always becoming, and necessarily infused with meaning.

[have] long been silenced," we can begin to see territories as complex, rooted networks, as assemblages, or as rhizomes (Rocheleau, 2011: 10; see also Agnew, 2013: 2). This multiplicity of territories is entangled in both the material relationships of socio-ecological networks of extraction, production, circulation, and consumption, as well as being enmeshed with the spiritual socio-natural relationships of reproduction, exchange, cosmology, and transformation. From this perspective, territory cannot be seen as a container, but as a nexus of relations, or as a patterned logic of contingent connections (Massey, 1994). Gregory observes that in addition to material and spiritual relationships, psychological or emotional elements such as anxiety, desire, and fantasy operate to transform territory through imagination (1995: 452). Furthermore, Said argued that the tangible, physical *place* is far less important than our *imaginary of it*, or the quality we attach to that place through our material, spiritual, psychological, or emotional connections as we convert them into *places with meaning* (Said, 1993: 48, 59).

Within this dissertation, the Rupununi imaginary of development, which emerges from *Chapter Three: Rupununi Hauntings*, unwillingly but compulsively embraces globalization, which for Indigenous people can represent "a continuation and intensification of the processes of colonization" (Medina, 2003: 3). Medina further argues that the ongoing adoption of globalized practices promotes the continuation of political and historical processes that erode Indigenous cultural bases, "diminishing the capacity of the communit[ies] to respond to the inevitable transformations of global pressures" (*ibid*: 4). Increasing exposure to outsiders who move along the improving road network, as well as the outside influences coming with them, or being brought back by returning migrants (along the same roads) has had a noticeable impact on the local communities of the Rupununi, including significant shifts in Indigenous lifeways, resulting in instances of, and growing potential for, increasing cultural fragmentation and instability.

However a re-imagining of development as proactive, as by and for the Makushi and Wapishana, or as new cultural strategies to "maintain cultural continuity *vis-à-vis* globalization that may or may not imply cultural changes" (*ibid*: 4), can be seen as a counter-imaginary. Both the NRDDB and SCPDA envision different development futures for the Rupununi than that of a place ruined by ongoing colonialism. The NRDDB claims that they are "committed to improving the well-being and quality of life of the North Rupununi communities through social and economic development and through the affirmation of heritage, culture, traditional knowledge and Indigenous rights" (NRDDB, 2014). Similarly, SCPDA "is dedicated to securing

and sustainably managing Wapichan traditional lands in Guyana and improving the livelihoods of the people in these communities through support for income generating activities, taking under its mandate aspects of natural resource management, and focusing increasingly on issues and projects with potential implications for livelihood and food security of the area" (SCPDA, 2014). As the principal community organizations in the Rupununi, the positive development imaginaries they embrace can be seen as evidence of resistance, and importantly, imply a commitment to self-determination as a key factor in their development activities.

The imagined territory of development is similarly bifurcated – between those who see it diminishing *versus* those who are strongly negotiating for Indigenous rights, often primarily through territory. Drawing from Anderson's ideas of 'imagined communities' (2006), imagined territory situates the construction of geographic imaginations within particular constructions of place and spatial practices. And within the development imaginary, variously constructed ideas of place and practice necessarily influence imagined territories. The current development situation, as one of increasing outside exposure, ongoing colonial influence (demonstrated by stalled territorial negotiations that situate Indigenous space as a set of 'island reserves'), and increasing loss of culture, imagines a stagnant territory, as one without a future, a territory eroded by cultural attrition, where culture is no longer connected to place, or where attachments between land and memories fade; a territory simultaneously eroded by outsiders' imaginaries.

However, in contrast, the imagined territory of the neo-development imaginary allows for an expansion, in place, in thought, in use, and in history. Although Guyana's Indigenous-State territorial relations today are the direct result of colonial influences, mandates, and polities which operated to exploit Guyana's Indigenous people through race-based policies (Hennessey, 2005: 53), ongoing negotiations of territory are re-introducing Indigenous politics. And with this shift, the 'land' itself has transformed to 'territory' through an emerging political language (L.R. Graham, 2002: 183-188), including the increasing use of Indigenous language in claims (for example, *Wa Wiizi*, 'Our Territory', the title of one of the Wapishana natural resources management guides).

This imagining of territory coincides significantly with the Rupununi imaginary of multi-politics, so named because of the inherent multiplicity exposed through the examination of the border, which emerges from *Chapter Four: Intimate Borders*. The political imaginary of the State (either Brazil or Guyana) generally stands in stark contrast to the political imaginaries of

the Makushi and Wapishana peoples, who see the border along a sliding continuum of existence; including as 'the International', as a 'thick line', as inconsequential, or as non-existent. The issue of frontiers, boundaries, property claims and their contestations, or perhaps re-transformations by alternate (illegitimate, subaltern, outsider, Other) perspectives seem to lie at the heart of identity (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 58), and borders can be perceived as interstitial zones of "displacement and deterritorialization that shape the identity of the hybridized subject" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 48). In this way, the political imaginary shapes identity as well as territory, since it "is our shaping perception that makes the difference" (Schama, 1995: 10; see also Santos-Granero, 2005: 125).

The imagined territor*ies* of the multi-politics imaginar*ies* similarly lie along a continuum. The imposed colonial inscription of space mirrored by the imaginary of 'the International', whereby the imagined border is understood as the site of a formalized performance of immigration and customs procedures, with requisite identification and documentation, and a State presence in the form of security personnel, immigration and customs officers, Guyanese Armed Forces, or Brazilian Federal Police, accepts the imagined territories of the political states of Brazil and Guyana. This political imaginary creates 'nation-states', as exclusive social spaces where belonging is contrasted with 'Other' and boundaries reinforce differences between sameness and alterity along state-based territorial fragmentation of places (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 23). But this political assumption *is* an imaginary, and the theoretical contrast between 'here' and 'there' diminishes in the messy reality of the border, evident as we slide along the continuum towards 'the thick line'.

While 'the thick line' also accepts State-based imagined territories, the previously sharp line distinguishing the two places blurs significantly, weakening the contrast between the 'nations' of Brazil and Guyana, between 'us' and 'Other', and between the territorial distinctions of 'here' and 'there'. The borderland, as a "vague and undetermined place ... in a constant state of transition" (Anzaldúa, 1999: 25), becomes less a discrete space, and more so a place of possibility, of becoming. In generating this fluidity or ambiguity, De Genova argues that "the border is everywhere" (1998: 106), shattering the imagined territory of the State. Thus, while the imagined territory of 'the thick line', with its indistinct edges, continues to align with official political imaginaries, the borderland imaginary challenges State imaginaries by introducing

alternate, although still rather formalized perspectives, generally guided by inter-governmental agreements.

However, as we shift along the continuum, the political imaginaries also shift, from State-based to Indigenous. Recalling that "from the point of view of the Indigenous occupants of these territories ... boundaries were created without reference to the traditional rights of the occupants" and made "no sense in terms of local structures, for they cut across and divided geographical, ecological, social and cultural unities" (Butt-Colson, 1983), the imagined territories of 'the International' and 'the thick line' appear increasingly nonsensical. Instead, Indigenous political imaginaries emerge and confront the border. Imaginaries that include the inconsequential and the non-existent.

The imaginary of the inconsequential border presents a quandary of liminality, where 'us' and 'them' or 'here' and 'there' still exist, however the border is perceived not as a political place, but is merely acknowledged as an inconsequential (colonial) marker of space. The border is both real and not-real. In this imaginary, Makushi and Wapishana are present within a world of transnational employment, familial relations, economic opportunities, State services, political involvement, educational and health facilities, and trade and recreation possibilities. That they participate across *both* places is a latent acknowledgement of the border; that they participate *across* both places is an overt acknowledgement of the insignificance of the border in their lives.

The imagined territory of the inconsequential political imaginary is similarly liminal, caught partway 'betwixt and between' State based and Indigenous imagined territories. While the "territorial norms of the modern state system continue to exert a powerful hold on the identities, ideologies, and geopolitical aspirations of peoples" (Murphy, 2013: 1213), "a strategically articulated subaltern political discourse ... creatively draws on and mobilises lived experience and re-constructs collective memory in an identity politics" (Oslender, 2004: 963). These overlapping imaginaries fold together (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 255) in the inconsequential imagined territory, producing a transformed, mutant geography, where combined subjectivities produce murky, undefined space. How can you imagine a place that is neither real nor not-real? Of course, although definitions elude, it *is* real, and the Makushi and Wapishana operate comfortably in this liminal space as an imagined territory that acknowledges, although perhaps does not necessarily fully accept, both State politics and Indigenous politics.

However, by extending this inconsequence beyond acknowledgement, some Makushi and Wapishana are (re-)imagining an original politics; pre-colonial, pre-Brazil, pre-Guyana. Within the imaginary of the river as river (not border), the non-existent imaginary, colonial inscriptions of space disappear as the border fails to register either conceptually or practically for the Makushi and Wapishana. Instead, previous connections among people are nurtured, as witnessed by increasing co-operation between Rupununi Indigenous organizations (including the DTC in the South Rupununi and the NRDDB in the North Rupununi) with the Toshao Councils of Roraima and the influential Conselho Indígena do Roraima (Council of the Indigenous Peoples of Roraima, CIR), indicating a strengthening of solidarity across Indigenous peoples; Indigenous politics prevailing, or perhaps even triumphing over colonialism.

Motivated by such important social and cultural incentives, as well as traditional, historical reasons, the imagined territory of the river imaginary sees the colonially imagined territories of Roraima and the Rupununi stretching and connecting across the imagined boundary, annulling the border and restoring Butt-Colson's divided geographical, ecological, social and cultural unities. The imposed border is being politically erased, or perhaps, and more politically, it never really existed. Instead, Thom's suggestion, of a geography that recognizes the importance of networks, meshworks, rhizomes, or relational geographies can allow for a re-inscription of space along contingent, socially, geologically and ecologically, relevant patterns (2009: 197). This imagined territory is not shaped definitively, but rather it is shaped by the values of society (Hierro and Surrallés, 2005: 17), where boundaries exist only for the beings that recognize or experience particular landscape-territories (Escobar, 2008: 42). Territories so imagined lack clearly delimited boundaries and thus can be perceived ethologically, as networks of niches interacting, connecting, entangling, and competing with one another (Echeverri, 2005: 231). These multi-politics imaginaries present only four points along the continuum ('the International', 'the thick line', inconsequential, and non-existent); however, by viewing these points as examples of places multiply understood, a complexity of territory is exposed.

Further imaginaries are revealed from the perspectives of people arguably outside of *this* place. The Rupununi imaginary of destiny which emerges from *Chapter Five: Becoming Places*, is seen for instance from the perspective of the Brazilians entering the Rupununi; the garimpeiros, the businesspeople, and the agriculturalists. Similar to the Indigenous imaginary of 'the river as river', Brazilians entering the Rupununi are operating outside of colonial

inscriptions of space and are disregarding the border. Simultaneously, and perhaps just as importantly, Brazilian consumer goods (including food stuffs such as tinned meats, powdered milk, and cooking oil, freezers, generators, zinc for roofs, and motorcycles), cultural elements (including typical foods like *churrasco* or *feijão*, music and dance, specifically *forró*, and style of dress), and development assistance (most obviously with the recent construction of the bridge, but also the proposed road and hydroelectric plant in Moco-Moco) are drifting across the imagined border, themselves transforming the lives of Rupununi peoples.

From this destiny imaginary, how is the Rupununi being imagined by Brazilians entering the region, and how are these imaginaries impacting upon the Indigenous peoples and places of the Rupununi? Albert (2005: 200) notes that both within Amazonia, as well as extra-territorially, "the development frontier (highways, agrarian colonization, ranching, mining, logging, etc.) subjects the sociosymbolic[207] coordinates of Indigenous territories and the collective identities they sustain to disruptions that are as profound as those suffered by their systems of productions." Brazil's geopolitical ideology of 'living borders'[208] imagines the Rupununi merely as an extension of Brazilian territory, allowing its population to flow into spaces garnering "*de facto* control, if not outright annexation" (J. Forte, 1996b: 82). This absorption of the Rupununi into Brazil, becoming one territory, is not without Brazilian precedent.[209] Furthermore, this meshing, of place with place, this imagined, expanded, unitary territory, is neither incompatible with Indigenous imaginaries, nor is it necessarily unwelcome due to the ongoing neglect of the Rupununi and its people by the coast-based government of Guyana. With a noted preference for Brazilian dredge work in the South, the introduction of Brazilian agriculture in the North, and the accepted dominance of Brazilian business (including language and currency, measured by both Portuguese and Real fluency) in Lethem, this may indeed be a shared imaginary.

However, Indigenous counter-imaginaries are also evolving. One Indigenous Rupununi imaginary that directly evolves from Indigenous ontologies is the socionatural imaginary, which emerges from *Chapter Six: Telling Stories*, in which places are co-productions between people and the environment as they mutually constitute and impact upon one another. Escobar

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[207] Symbolic within a particularly defined society, in this case, either Makushi or Wapishana.

[208] See J. Forte (1996b: 82-83) for a study of Brazilian expansion to French Guiana; Bunker (1985) for a study of Brazilians expansion to Bolivia; Hoogbergen and Kruijt (2004: 34) for a study of Brazilian expansion to Surinam; and MacMillan (1995: 37) for a study of Brazilian expansion to Venezuela. See Salisbury *et al.* (2010) for a summary of 'living borders' and the impacts in Amazonia.

[209] Bolivia lost Acre to the influx of Brazilian rubber-tappers, officially ceding the territory to Brazil in 1903 in the Treaty of Petrópolis (Bunker, 1985; Grandin, 2009; Hecht, 2013)

elaborates on this concept, stating that "the making of a socionatural world ... understands the complexity of relations between the biophysical and human domains that account for particular configurations of nature and culture, society and nature, landscape and place, as lived-in and deeply historical entities" arguing that through their daily practices of "being, knowing, and doing, local groups have actively constructed their socionatural worlds" (2008: 29-31). A socionatural imaginary embraces and reflects the subjectivity of place as a necessary result of the interconnections between social and environmental processes (Oslender, 2004: 962). This relational assemblage, constituted of the human, nonhuman, and more than human, is further shaped by, but not determined by place (Blaser, 2014: 54; Braun, 2002; Bryan, 2012: 220; Kosek, 2006; Moore, 2005; Raffles, 2002;).

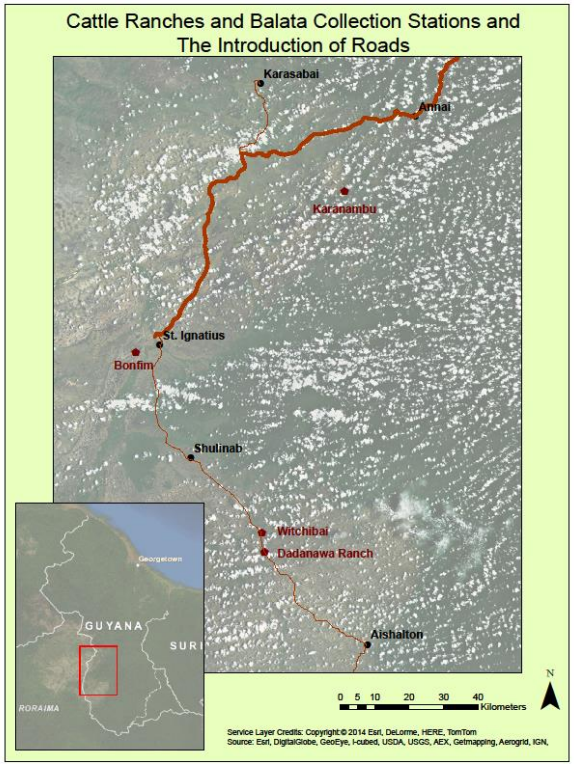
The socionatural imaginary produces a different imagined territory, better seen as territor*ies*, since as noted above, perspective is always becoming and multiple. Similar to Hierro and Surrallés (2005: 20), I argue that within Indigenous perceptions of imagined territories, the environment is not merely seen as a place of survival, but rather as a relational space, between beings and places. Echeverri (2005: 232) claims that although Indigenous imagined territories encompass settlement, productive, and extractive areas, they could also include areas not necessarily associated with economic production, such as those geographies which represent the bond between a group of people, their landscape, and their history, connecting people to past events, be they personal, historical, or mythological. These relationships, networks, channels, pathways, *etc*. demonstrate that the imagined territory is not a fixed place, but is a becoming, in the process of constant constitution and reconstitution. Those Makushi and Wapishana who shared their own personal, historical, and mythological connections to their imagined territories are participating in this socionatural, relational, imaginary.

The term 'territory', however, has become an important keyword in Indigenous confrontations, and territorial struggles often compose an essential component of power negotiations with colonial powers. Recently, political designations have begun to appear within Indigenous place references as part of the process of re-claiming customary lands from the State, where 'lands' have become 'territories' through interactions with colonial and (post-)colonial[210]

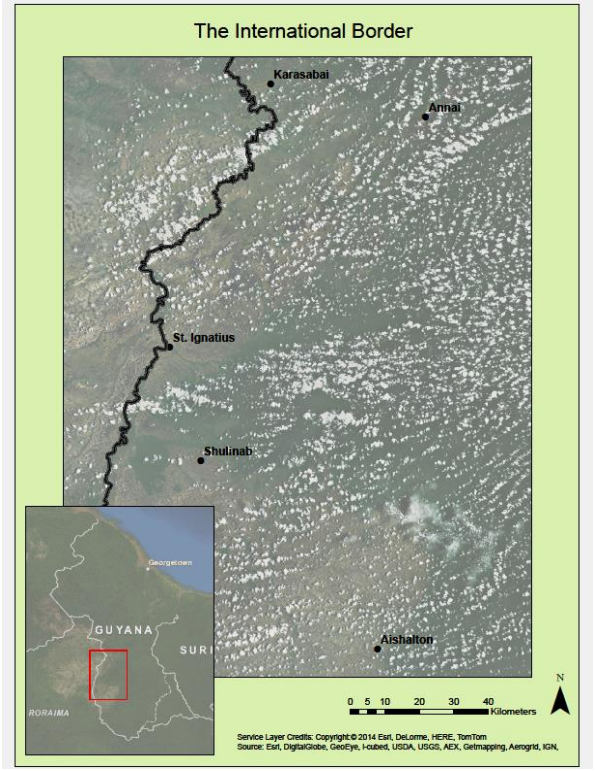
[210] Amongst others, Smith sees (post-)colonialism as an uncompleted, perhaps impossible project, and states that "naming the world as 'post-colonial' is, from Indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business" and the "mix of science, cultural arrogance, and political power continues to present a serious threat to Indigenous peoples" (L.T. Smith, 1999: 99).

governments. Indigenous mapping projects, such as the one produced by the South Central and South Rupununi Districts Toshaos Councils (2012, see Appendix 4: Wapichan Wiizi) often challenge dominant imagined territories by including these personal relationships to territory, including ancestor history, cosmology, and mythology within the final cartographic products, culturally 'legitimating' their claims to territory, or their own imagining of territory. Nevertheless, the Wapishana need to recognize that map-making is entangled in the webs of power which are shaped by the positionality of those who direct Indigenous mapping projects, adding multiple imaginaries to one imagined territory (Sletto, 2009a: 148). Furthermore, as Wood notes, "*maps are instruments of the state* ... That is, all this supposed counter-mapping is not only state mapping but deeply colonialist, thoroughly imperialist!" (2010: 139, emphasis original). While there is a certain utility to Indigenous counter-cartography, it is important to recognize that because of its fixity and its adherence to colonial imaginaries, it falls outside of the socionatural imaginary, which insists on contingent relational geographies and the possibility of becoming.

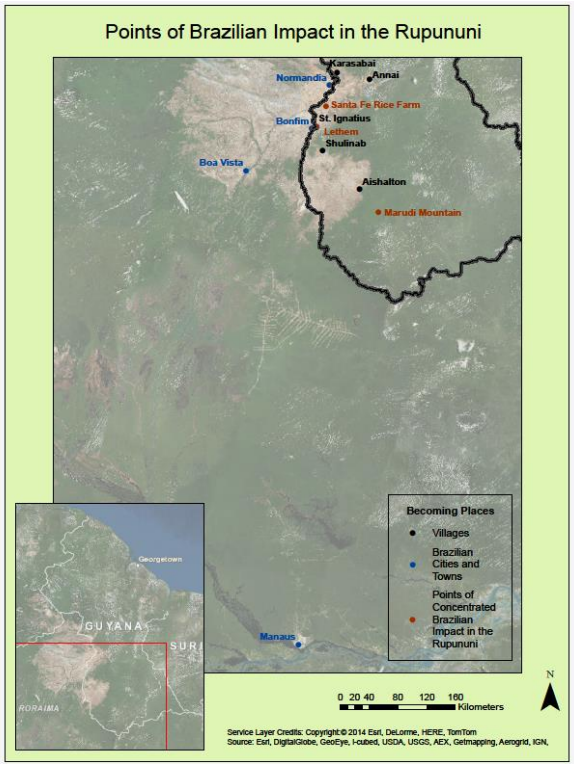
Four different perspectives of Rupununi geography were introduced as four chapters in this dissertation, discussing the colonial development in the region, the non/influence of the border on the Makushi and the Wapishana, the impact of an increasing Brazilian migration into the area, and the (re-)introduction of Indigenous mythology into understandings of place. These perspectives have now been explored more fully as imaginaries, including the development imaginary, the multi-politics imaginary, the destiny imaginary, and the socionatural imaginary, and their associated imagined territories have been suggested (see Figure 10). Gregory now merely provokes when he claims that spatial metaphors contribute to identity through the "universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs'" (1995: 456), since 'ours' and 'theirs', or 'here' and 'there' are constantly changing, contingent on perspectives and relations to places. What has become apparent is the entangled nature of the Rupununi and the multiplicity of approaches to understanding it, as well as a realization that the invisible can become legible when you change your perspective, including the 'invisibility' of Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, and methodologies.



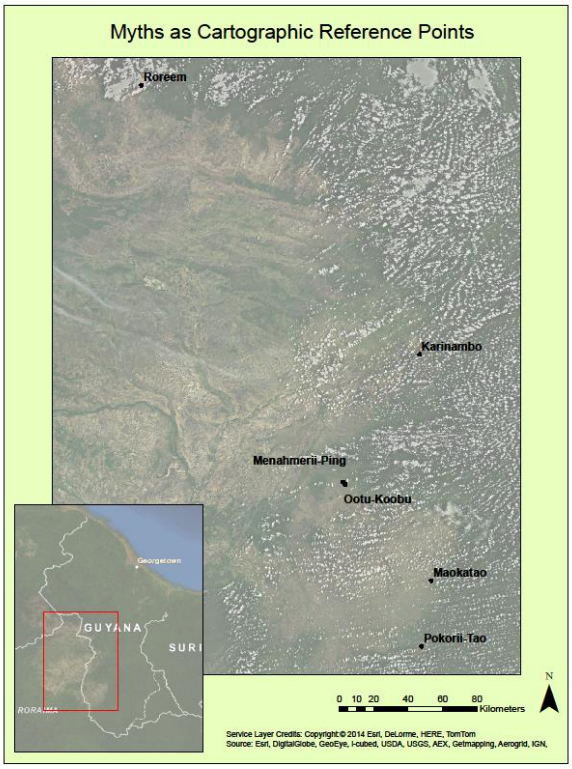
Chapter 3: Development Imaginary.



Chapter 4: Multi-Politics Imaginary.



Chapter 5: Destiny imaginary.



Chapter 6: Socionatural imaginies.

Figure 10: Differing ways of imagining territory

Accepting Indigenous Worldviews

If we, myself the writer and you the reader, now return to the fable of El Dorado as the focus of British ambition in South America, we see that like those rapacious explorers who came in the obsessive pursuit of ill-gotten wealth, we have learned much about the imaginaries of place and how knowledges and experiences or stories and myths can transform our worlds. Indeed, El Dorado, that place which first appeared as a "concrete, mappable reality" with a singular yet elusive nature (Slater, 2002: 31), has transformed, has shifted away from that dream, monstrous in its isolation, to a multiplicity of place. But have we not listened well? For the story told in this place is not a colonial tale, that of El Dorado, but is a narrative filled with greater mystery, with magic, and with wonder... that of the 'land without evil' – the Encante.[211] The Encante is an ideal place, where everything is like this world, but better, or easier. The food is the same cassava and fish, but plentiful and easy to obtain. The houses are cool, free of pests, and beautiful. The hammocks are made from cloth that is smooth, and embroidered exquisitely. There are no enemies. Entrance is by invitation only, although shamans are often welcomed. And despite regular references to *the* Encante, there are multiple enchanted places, simultaneously elusive and momentary. The Encante represents visions of other worlds.

In doing so, the Encante sits opposite El Dorado, in that it "does not invite conquest, but instead affirms the limits of human definition and control" (Slater, 2002: 26); not a place to seek, but a place of invitation. Furthermore, "in contrast to accounts of El Dorado, which render an alien nature familiar through the process of fragmentation and containment, stories of the Encante emphasize its fundamental strangeness even while asserting its proximity, when not its outright permeability" (*ibid*: 61). These differences in stories simply emphasize the multiplicity of place, inviting transformation. Those who live in the Encante, the *Encantados*, relentlessly metamorphose, much like the shaman who becomes jaguar, and this fluidity between beings recalls Kirksey and Helmreich's mutual ecologies, where "humans and other beings generate ... co-produced niches" (2010: 546), and humans, animals and spirits are seen as "endless mimetic doubles of one another" (Willerslev, 2007).

Wylie's (2010: 105) "inexhaustible tangle of folds and flows" that creates humans echoes this contingent nature of the Encantados and their relational understanding of their worlds. This intrinsic, Indigenous acceptance of multiple worlds, or multiple ontologies is reflected in the

[211] Introduced in the first chapter, the Encante is the 'land without evil' (Slater, 2002: 58).

Rupununi, itself also multiple and filled with imaginaries. George Simon, a Wapishana elder shares his traditional knowledge of inter-being communication in a document created by the Wapishana to protect their territories where he states that their shamans "relate with the tree spirits and *tapikinao* (spirit masters) in the forest so that the areas may be healthy for fishing and hunting grounds and for our farms. He [the shaman] encourages them to see us as their neighbours" (South Central and South Rupununi Districts Toshaos' Councils, 2012: 12). Here, Viveiros de Castro's (2005: 37) "unity of spirit, diversity of bodies" demonstrates how perspectivism can influence epistemologies, allowing for acceptance for the existence of humans, nonhumans, and more than humans *between* natural, political, and cultural change.

Furthermore, the transience of spirit places, of Encantes, is supported in the Rupununi by a Wapishana man, Simon Saba, who notes that "when game animals are abundant in a place, that means that the *tapik* lives nearby" (South Central and South Rupununi Districts Toshaos' Councils, 2012: 42). As animals (or plants or rocks or water, for they have *tapik* too) move throughout the landscape, the place itself changes, as does our perspective of it, creating and re-creating worlds. These ever shifting places encourage each individual's knowledges, experiences, and practices to contribute to their own ontological understanding of their world(s), worlds constantly becoming.

These knowledges, experiences, and practices also contribute to the Rupununi imaginaries of the Makushi and Wapishana peoples, themselves historically constituted, but ever transforming (Mason, 1986: 43). And these imaginaries translate to imagined territories, as the outcomes of our contingent spiritual, psychological, emotional, and material practices of daily activities that shape our relationships to places. As multiply imagined territories, the Rupununi (a multiple plural like *the* Encante) is contrasted against the rigid territorial structure of the modern state system, which is "poorly suited to deal with a world of complexly intertwined peoples with different political and cultural identities and aspirations" (Murphy, 2013: 1222). Bryan recognizes that Indigenous peoples' "territorial claims do not challenge the existing socio-spatial order so much as they help create it" and that "recognition of their rights enables the extension of that order rather than fundamentally altering it" (2012: 216). Thus, a recognition of the possibility of alternate ontologies is realized through the acceptance of Indigenous imagined territories as multiple worlds, and as a network of relationships, or interconnected and fluid in their essence (Echeverri, 2005: 235; Murphy, 2012: 1222).

This shift to Indigenous ontologies, presaged through the adoption of Indigenist methodologies for this study, argues that the relational perspective fundamental to Makushi and Wapishana epistemology, which honours "the primacy of direct experience, interconnectedness, relationship, holism, quality, and value" (Cajete, 2004: 66) essentially suggests a new politics. In contrast with western conceptual models, seen as compartmentalized and hierarchical, Indigenous politics tend to be mutually and perpetually informing, tangibly embracing experiences of reality, while simultaneously and continuously being informed by that reality, inherently accepting that all things are equally and undisputedly interrelated (Churchill, 1996: 279-280). Whereas a singular worldview creates oppression and discrimination, such as colonialism has in its attempts to maintain a singular social order "by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews" (Little Bear, 2000: 77; see also Churchill, 1996: 281), Indigenous worldviews, inherently multiple, situate perspectives and practices in ongoing negotiations and renegotiations with ecological knowledge, cosmological knowledge, historical knowledge, and experiential knowledge creating ethical spaces. Such spaces have the "potential to become political and politically strategic for Indigenous peoples and their allies to transgress the occlusion and dominance so often engendered within" colonial settings (Tiam Fook, 2010: 306).

The acceptance of relationality also makes apparent the arbitrariness of the spatial orders deployed in geography through definition of determined territory, generally along political lines. Indeed, a place perspective "stresses the always open and contingent nature of this relation, and the multiple ways in which resistances are acted out in particular places" (Oslender, 2004: 981). The re-imagining of territories such as those in the Rupununi as "non-liberal territorialities" (Escobar, 2010: 42)[212] align with Massey's (1994) relational space, where places and communities are always situated within networks of relations and that those places and communities are always the sites of negotiation and continuous transformation.[213] The ethics of connectedness that necessarily follow this acceptance insist upon a politics of responsibility, which call for all those connected to act "responsibly towards those entities with which we are

[212] Seeking to break away from colonially accepted forms of territory, in terms of pre-constituted political divisions (nation states, departments, provinces, municipalities), non-liberal territories recognize collective territories and collective rights, and shift towards relational understandings of territories (Escobar, 2010: 41-42).

[213] This is not to imply that Indigenous ontologies are consistently unproblematic and ethical, as there are some real ongoing concerns within the Rupununi between existent alternative ontologies. This is more a call for the recognition of interconnectivity present in most Indigenous worldviews and an acceptance of what this would mean for modern politics.

connected, human and not" (Escobar, 2010: 42, see also Blaser, 2014: 55). Hence, Escobar goes on to argue, "the emergence of relational ontologies disorganizes in a fundamental way the epistemic foundation of modern politics" (*ibid*: 39, see also Hunt, 2014: 30).

However, it is important to remember that these multiple, relational ontologies, which eschew the divisions between nature and culture, individual and community, 'us' and 'Other', 'here' and 'there' that are central to singular worldviews, are fundamentally Indigenous. In light of this, Blaser further argues that:

> it is important to stress that the political implications of engaging Indigenous ontologies seriously necessarily goes beyond the immediate politics of a given project or institution to involve the inherent coloniality of the modern ontology. Indeed, if Indigenous worlds and ontologies were taken seriously, the modern constitution would collapse (Blaser, 2009: 18).

Since Indigenous consciousness has always included, along with the practical relationships of "*all our relations*, be it air, water, rocks, trees, animals, insects, humans and so forth" (Steinhauer, 2002: 72), relationships with the more than human spirits, masters, and histories, as well as places, lands, and territories, why do we rely on western analyses? Instead, acceptance of Indigenous ontologies, in the spirit and the practices of Indigenist methodologies, challenges the very core of knowledge, experience, and politics. And in the Rupununi, the Encantados, those who can speak with the birds, those who are the fish and the snake, and those who become jaguar, could finally represent Makushi and Wapishana politics... if we could finally listen.

Appendix 1: Fieldwork Timelines

Initial Field Site Visit (2010):

Activity	M	J	J
Introduction to Guyana and volunteering with Red Thread (RT)	■	■	
Exploratory research trip to the Rupununi field site			■
Return to Georgetown to share findings with RT			■

Fieldwork Timeline (2011-2012:

Activity	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M
Arrival in Georgetown	■											
Intensive Portuguese classes in Brazil		■	■									
Visit Rupununi villages and Indigenous organizations to discuss the research project				■								
Return to Georgetown, securing of required permissions to conduct research in Guyana					■							
Relocate to Lethem to begin organizing South Rupununi fieldwork logistics					■							
Fieldwork in Shulinab						■						
Fieldwork in Aishalton							■					
Return to Lethem to organize North Rupununi fieldwork logistics								■				
Fieldwork in St. Ignatius									■			
Fieldwork in Karasabai										■		
Fieldwork in Annai Central											■	
Return to Georgetown to share findings with SEES[214] and RT and to discuss the impacts of research in Guyana												■

Feedback and Validation Return Visit (2013):

Activity	J	F	M
Research Brazilian organizations FUNAI and Casa do Índio (Manaus and Boa Vista)	■		
Feedback and validation visits to Shulinab, Aishalton, St. Ignatius, Karasabai, and Annai Central		■	■
Return to Georgetown to share findings with SEES and RT			■

[214] School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Guyana.

Appendix 2: Data Collection and Analysis

Methods employed for this research project included participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, field note recording, and research journal entry. The first three methods are explored in detail in the dissertation text (pages 35-38). Field notes were recorded during casual conversations, semi-structured interviews, and the one focus group to document information, and were particularly important in those nineteen instances where digital recording did not occur (either for pragmatic or personal reasons) as the sole record of the interaction. Field notes were also recorded during the Feedback and Validation return visit during the discussion period after research presentations to document suggestions for improvement, criticisms offered, as well as support for the information presented. These field notes provide an important source of information, although it must be acknowledged that a complete record does not exist for those un-recorded sessions, and thus the notes must be recognized as a partial record, already filtered through the author's interests.

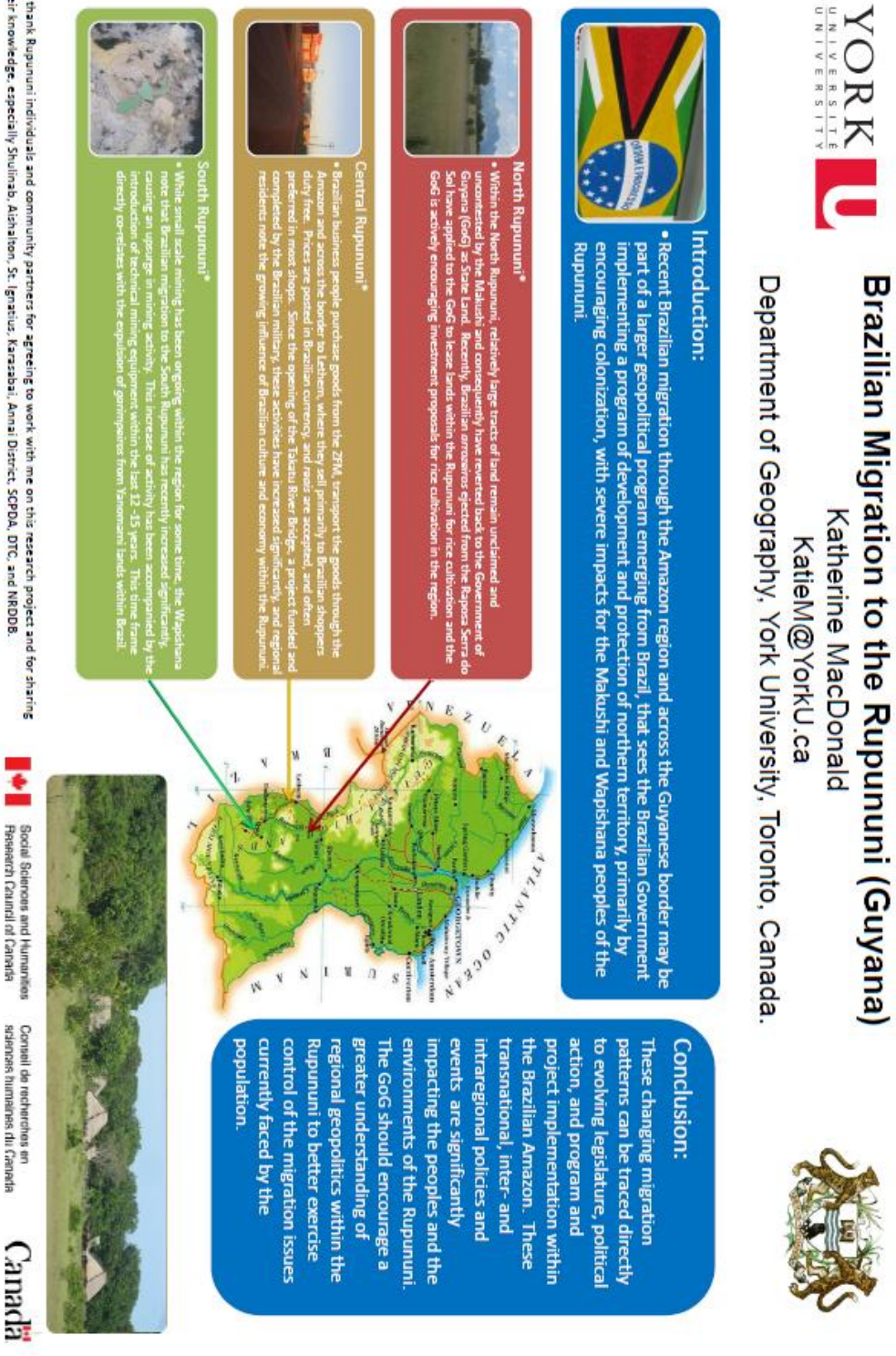
Those interviews which were recorded were transcribed by the author over the course of three months upon return from the Rupununi (transcriptions could not be completed earlier due to the infrastructural limitations of the region). Together with the field notebooks, these two sets of data were coded using NVivo software. NVivo is recognized as an ideal qualitative analysis tool for very rich, text-based information sources, and is useful in organizing unstructured data in order to better examine emerging relationships.

The Feedback and Validation return visit itself should also be seen as a mode of analysis, in collaboration with the Makushi and Wapishana community members who initially participated in the research project. The presentations themselves often unfolded organically with participation from the communities, and together with the engaged discussions that followed, provided an additional lens through which the information was filtered: that of the Rupununi peoples themselves. The Feedback and Validation return visit also allowed for correction of mistakes/misunderstandings, for enhancement or further elaboration of ideas and interpretations of them, as well as providing the opportunity for community feedback regarding the real research needs of the people, resulting in the inclusion of an additional chapter within the dissertation. Ball and Jaynst highlight the complications that can arise by allowing communities to control the outputs of research projects in this collaborative manner, including lengthy turnaround times for community review and feedback, higher expenses, and indeterminate outcomes, but they point

out that valid, useful findings potentially as part of the larger goal of "restorative social justice" can emerge only when Indigenous participants are recognized as partners in generating and interpreting data (2008: 44-45).

The research journal entries (discussed on pages 44-45) served as both a documentation, and as a reflection tool, and help provide context for the research analysis. In particular, the research journal entries will continue to be a source of ideas and plans for future research practices.

Appendix 3: Feedback and Validation Posters



Border Concepts

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Introduction:
Traditionally the Rupununi-Roraima region was conceived of as one territory inhabited by several Indigenous groups. In 1904, an international border line was inscribed between the emerging nations of British Guiana and Brazil, fracturing this original conception. However, today there appears to be a graduated scale of lessening formality with regards to perceptions of the border, and peoples' experiences in crossing the border.

'The International':
Most formally, some Rupununi-Roraima inhabitants speak of the border as 'the international', where the 'Federals' (Brazilian Federal Police) patrol, most specifically at the Lethem-Bonfim crossing over the Takutu River. Immigration and customs procedures are mandatory, hence identification is required to pass through the border. This border perception directly aligns with typical definitions of a border.

The Thick Line:
The recent opening of the bridge across the Takutu River opened further foreign policy discussions between Guyana and Brazil. Presidents Bharat Jagdeo and Luis Inacio Lula-DaSilva signed a Memorandum of Understanding designed to facilitate movement within the Boa Vista-Kurupukari area, greatly thickening the border from a line to a band across the region. Under this MOU, residents of Guyana and Brazil are permitted to travel between these areas freely.

THE BRIDGE

BACKTRACKS

'JUST ANOTHER RIVER'

Inconsequential:
While many residents theoretically acknowledge the existence of the border, most admitted to disregarding the concept of an international crossing practically. Perceptions of uni-regionality were obvious, as inhabitants lived within the reality of transnational employment, familial relations, economic opportunities, educational and health facilities, and trade and recreation possibilities.

Non-existent:
In this least formal conceptual understanding, national inscriptions of space disappeared as the border failed to register within either the ideas or the practices of the inhabitants. Instead, the Rupununi-Roraima region was perceived to be one continuous area, aligned with Makushi and Wapishana ancestral landscapes, and traditional Indigenous territorial imaginaries.

Significance:
These competing perceptions and everyday interactions with the political boundary question traditional border concepts. Furthermore, due to the absolute porosity of the border, the colonial reinscription of space within the Rupununi-Roraima region into 'Brazilian' and 'Guyanese' territory is seemingly not recognized locally. Instead, perhaps Indigenous territorial conceptions will re-emerge.

* I thank Rupununi individuals and community partners for agreeing to work with me on this research project and for sharing their knowledge, especially Shulinab, Aishalton, St. Ignatius, Karasabai, Annai District, SCPDA, DTC, and NRDDB.

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Landscape Stories

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Introduction:

Knowledges transmitted through stories or myths can connect peoples with places through the direct naming of ancestors and their actions within particular spaces. In this way, place names can inscribe geopolitics on maps, as not only do place names help shape our imagined geographies, but they can be powerful tools in asserting territorial claims and legitimizing geographical identities.

Significance:

How we imagine territory is reproduced not only through discourses, but also through material practices of daily activities that shape relationships to land and nation. Indigenous mapping projects are reminding national, colonial authorities of traditional names of places. These significant documents are inscribing Indigenous geography, through etymology, mythology, and documentation upon dominant imaginaries.

Makushi and Wapishana conceptions of the socio-ecological environment include:

Etymology of Territory:

Quiko = Ité Palm

Mythology of Territory:

Monaiying = Twins Mountain

Documenting Territory:

Aishalton Petroglyphs

* I thank Rupununi individuals and community partners for agreeing to work with me on this research project and for sharing their knowledge, especially Shulinab, Aishalton, St. Ignatius, Karasabai, Annai District, SCPDA, DTC, and NRDDB.

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Appendix 4: Wapichan Wiizi

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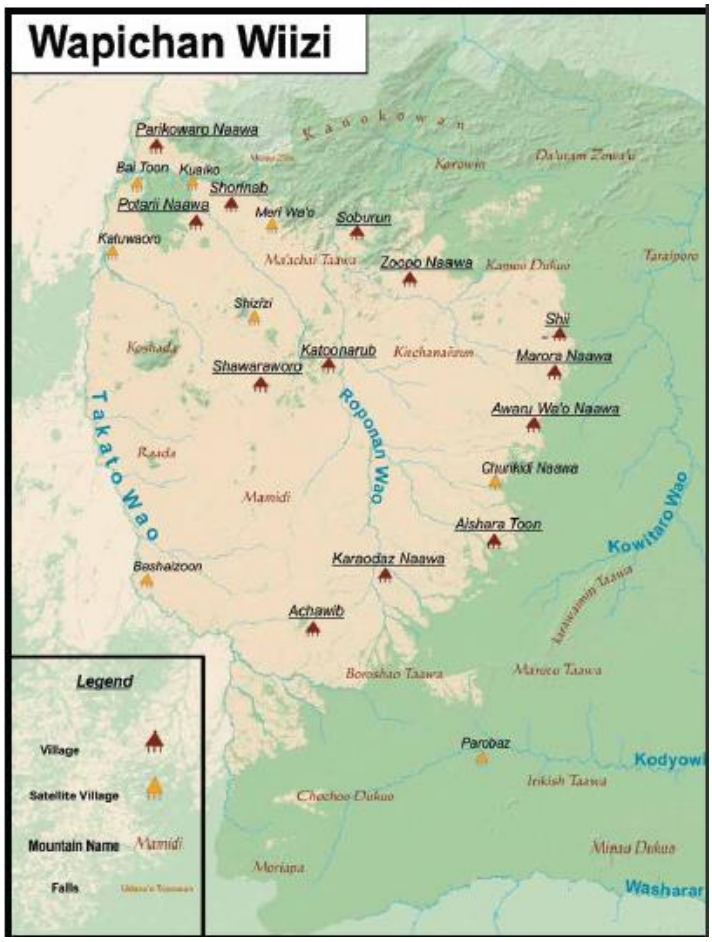

Wapichan Wiizi: (Wapishana Territory) as imagined by the Wapishana (South Central and South Rupununi Districts Toshaos Councils, 2012: 4).

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