Steam and Steel in Suriname

A Socio-Economic Analysis of the Lawa Railway, 1903-1987

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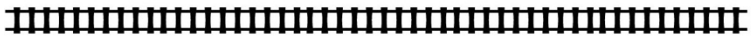
Image on front cover: NL-HaNA, 2.24.14.02, Fotocollectie Van de Poll, inv. nr. 252-6345: De Lawaspoorweg in Suriname, 1947.

“Het was niet nét echt, het was echt”



Rosemarie Currie

PREFACE

A few years ago, I wrote a paper that bore the same title as this thesis, as part of the research seminar *Business of Empire* led by prof. dr. Cátia Antunes. While I was doing research and writing the paper, my fascination for the Lawa Railway in Suriname grew. Not many historians have written about the railway, and if they have, it is often placed in a negative limelight. I tasted a certain sentiment about the disappearance of the railway in the sources. Some people were nostalgic and regretted that there was no railway in Suriname anymore. The research essay I wrote was primarily about the business side of the railway and the economic and political climate in Suriname at the beginning of the twentieth century. When I had finished the paper, I kept wondering how the Surinamese people experienced the railway and which role it played in society, especially over the course of the twentieth century. When I needed to come up with a thesis topic a year and a half later, I immediately knew what it had to be.

I travelled to Suriname in the spring of 2019 to interview people, visit the Surinamese Archives and to get to know a wonderful country. The research trip was partly facilitated by the LUF International Study Fund (LISF), which provided me with a scholarship. This thesis has been realised with help of a number of people wo should not go unmentioned. First of all, my supervisor dr. Peter Meel, with whom I had very useful and pleasant conversations and who also provided me with some contacts in Suriname. Helga Raghoebar, Suze Zijlstra and Truus Kleijwegt dedicated their time drinking coffee with me before my trip and gave me advice and tips about traveling to Suriname, from downloading a taxi app on my phone, to where I could eat the best soup, but also about doing research.

In Suriname, I was invited to the magazine *De Parbode*, where editor-in-chief Julian Neijhorst interviewed me. This resulted in a beautiful article in the July 2019 edition of the magazine. Julian was also very kind in allowing me to publish my e-mail address in the magazine, which led others to e-mail me with more information. I would also like to thank Maurits Hassankhan, who was my first informant and with whom I had interesting conversations about the historical practice in general. He welcomed me into his garden, where he and his wife let me taste delicious homemade *bojo* and *manga* juice. Others who assisted me in my research in Suriname are Hans Breeveld, Hilde Neus, Hugo Pinas, Willy van Leesten-Samson and all others who wanted to speak with me. I thank Rosemarie Currie, who welcomed me into her lovely backyard where we sat all evening to talk about the railway. She

also took me to Republiek, with her good friend Ninon Miranda-Tjong Ayong and a young family friend, Zayn. We had a lovely day in Republiek, where they showed me the remainders of the railway tracks, embedded in the road, and we spent the day at Cola Creek. In Paramaribo, my housemate Sheriva made me feel at home the day I arrived and helped me find my way. I rented a room from Corry Vonk, who let me use her bicycle and who brought me in contact with Fabian, who took me to interview his Maroon family in Zanderij. I thank everyone in Suriname who responded to my e-mails, sent me videos and photo's, had chats with me, suggested good titles and distributed my requests on social media.

There were also people closer to home who contributed to the very existence of this thesis. First of all, my good friend and fellow thesis-writer Melle. Over the past years, we had many coffees, we went for walks in the dunes, we studied together in the library and we had long calls. We often went through similar thesis struggles and it was really nice to have a friend to talk about it. He also provided me with constructive feedback on various sections of my thesis. Floris, who has an exceptionally bright mind, proofread parts of the thesis and has provided me with feedback. My sister Marisca, who helped me create the much-needed map in this thesis. My parents, who let me stay in their house when they were on vacation, so I could enjoy their dish washer, coffee machine and newspaper subscription. And last but not least Mojdeh, who not only proofread the whole thesis, but always comforted me and cheered me up at times I was deeply demotivated. Thank you all.

It was not easy to write a thesis during the global pandemic of COVID-19. Except for the occasional trip to Leiden to get books, I did not visit the library anymore to write. Because of the lockdown, it was also impossible to sit and write in cafes, so my thesis was almost entirely written from my sober 'home office', where at least the coffee was cheap and my cat Donder – although she would walk over my keyboard once in a while – was good company. In December 2020, I was nominated for the LISF Prize for the best report of a university-funded trip abroad. During an online ceremony, the committee announced me as the winner. I was happily surprised, and it really gave me a motivational boost to further work on my thesis. If everything goes according to plan, I may present my research at the annual Cleveringa meeting in Paris in the autumn of 2021. I am really looking forward to this event.

Haarlem, 30 June 2021

Nynke Anna van der Mark

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAPS AND RAILWAY TRAJECTORY

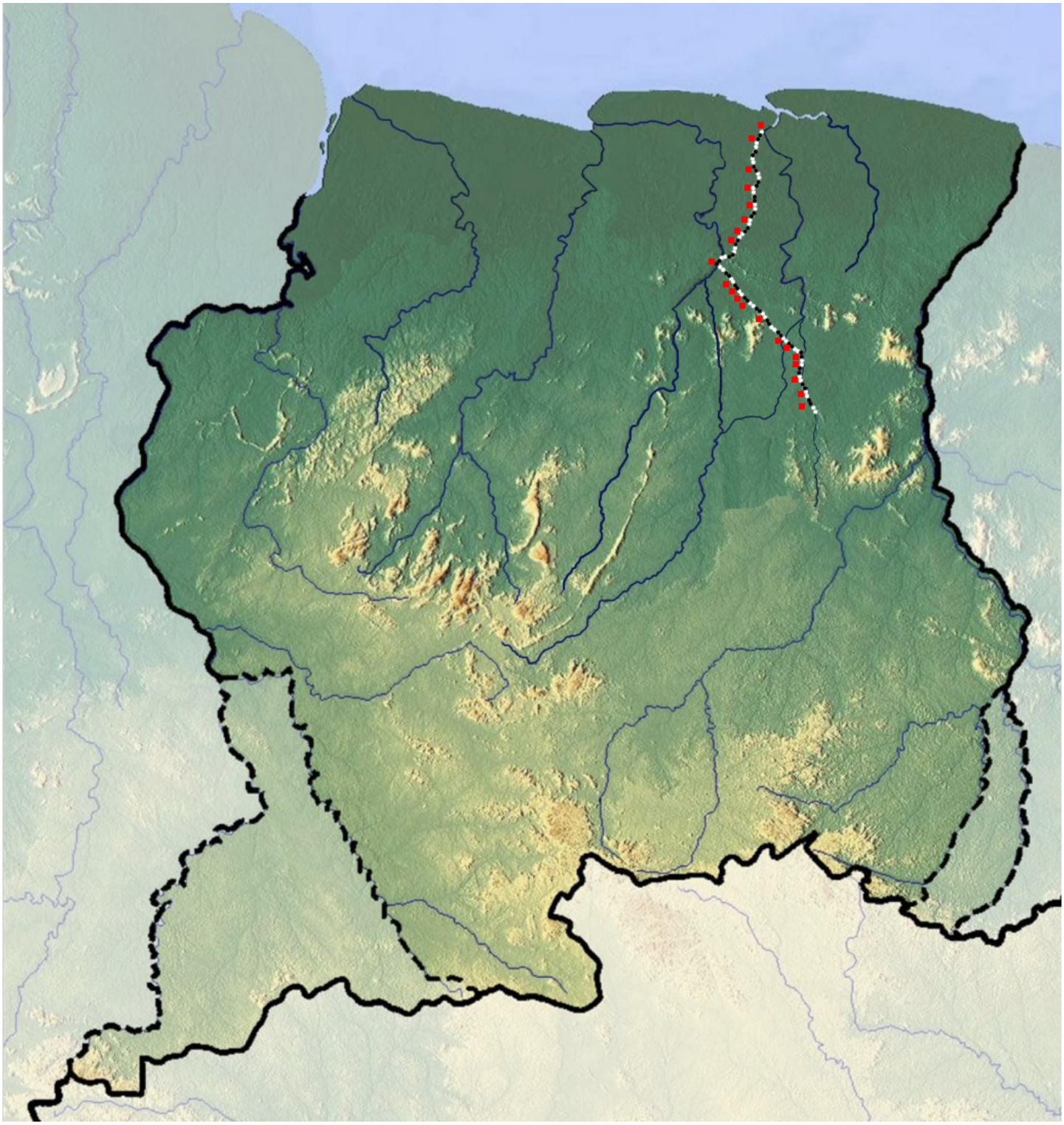


Figure 1: Overview map of the Lawa Railway in Suriname, connecting Paramaribo with Dam over a length of 173 kilometres. This map was created by M.E. van der Mark.

Figure 4: Trajectory of the Lawa Railway

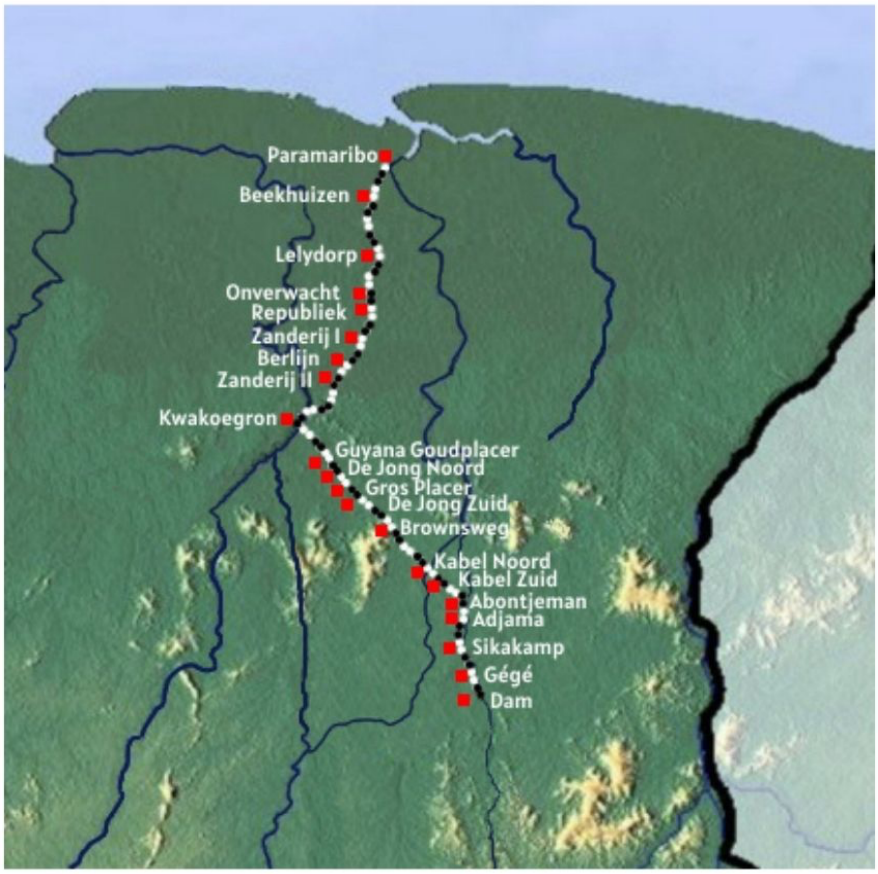


Figure 2: Detailed cut-out of the Lawa Railway (M.E. van der Mark).

Figure 3: Eugen Klein, 'Gezicht op treinstel, station en publiek op het Vaillantsplein in Paramaribo bij de opening van de Lawaspoorweg (Landsspoorweg) op 28 maart 1905' [View on the train, the station and the public on the Vaillantsplein in Paramaribo, at the opening of the Lawa Railway on 28 March 1905], Rijksmuseum, RP-F-F012303-CU.

INTRODUCTION

Observant visitors to Suriname who cross the border between the districts of Wanica – south of the capital Paramaribo – and Para, in which the international airport Johan Adolf Pengel is located, will notice a large yellow welcoming sign at the side of the road that strikes them as rather strange. The oddity of the sign lies not in the fact that it asks to enjoy Para's nature and keep it litter-free, but in the depiction of a classic black locomotive in the middle.[1] The visitor might ask: what has a locomotive to do with Suriname, where there are no train stations, no tracks and no locomotives? If that visitor was very curious and tenacious, they would eventually find out that in bygone times, steam and steel had joined together to form a railway from Paramaribo into the rainforest-covered interior, and that Para's plaquette was an attempt to immortalise Suriname's railway history.

The Surinamese railway used to be known as the Lawa Railway at first, and later as the *Landsspoorweg*. Its name 'Lawa Railway' was derived from its purposed terminus, approximately 220 kilometres from the coast: the region between the Lawa River and the Tapanahony River, both headwaters of the Marowijne River. For purposes of clarity, the name Lawa Railway is used throughout the thesis, also for the later decades of its existence in which it was more common to use the name *Landsspoorweg*. The railway was constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century, against the backdrop of a deteriorating plantation economy. The colonial administration was eager to unlock the interior and diversify Suriname's economy through sectors like gold, balata and bauxite.[2] Small mining companies and individual migrant miners were drawn into the forest, but large-scale gold mining could not take off, partly because of a lack of infrastructure.[3] A railway, as was argued, could solve that problem and so the Lawa Railway was constructed from 1903 to 1911. Its main purpose was transporting materials to the gold mines and gold to Paramaribo, from where it could be exported overseas, but it was also suited for passenger transport.

After running for decades, several trajectories of the railway were closed in 1936, 1957 and 1961 until train services stopped completely in 1987. As a final convulsion, the old

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[1] A photograph of the sign is posted by Marvin Moesan on https://marvinmoesan.wordpress.com/2012/08/06/welkomstbord-bij-de-grens-van-para-heeft-boodschap/ (last accessed 27 May 2021).

[2] R. Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century: Domination, Contestation, Globalization* (New York, 2014), 27.

[3] A. van Putten, 'De Lawa-spoorweg: een vroegtijdige poging tot industrialisatie', *OSO. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 9 (1990), 57-74, 58.

tracks were cleaned, and *Stichting Nationaal Spoor* brought the train back into service to transport tourists on a small trajectory between 1994 and 1996.[4] In 2014, the government of former president Desi Bouterse announced that they would construct a new railway from Paramaribo to Onverwacht and the international airport at Zanderij, but up until now these plans have not been materialised.[5]

The Lawa Railway has not extensively been studied historically. It often appears as a footnote or a paragraph in larger historical works about Suriname. It also appears unregularly in various types of publications, as the topic of a casually expressed statement or observation. Anton de Kom, for instance, wrote of a 'miserable, neglected little railway, which leads to nowhere and was never finished'.[6] He only lived to experience the first few decades of the Lawa Railway, when it was still predominantly a colonial vehicle of resource extraction. De Kom's biographers, Alice Boots and Rob Woortman, go along with his discourse and state that the project was 'wasted energy'.[7] Another author who has paid attention to the Lawa Railway is Albert Helman. He writes that the railway was one of the many development failures of Suriname.[8] The dominant tendency in most works is to describe the Lawa Railway as a failed project. I argue that the failure rhetoric around the Lawa Railway stems from a colonial standpoint, substantiated in the conviction that projects that do not become profitable or do not contribute to the development of a colony to the greater benefit of the metropole are failed projects. This thesis aims to produce a counternarrative to the failure rhetoric, by leaving the colonial development paradigm and entering the realms of socio-economic impact and usage. One the one hand, I have investigated the impact of the railway on the Surinamese people, taking an angle from below. On the other hand, I was curious to how elites and colonial agents have used the railway and how it is possible that the Lawa Railway has existed for more than eighty years, in spite of the fact that it has been appointed the status of a failure. In the next paragraph, the research questions and their relevance are further set forth.

[4] H. Ehrenburg and M. Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, *Geschiedenis van de civiele infrastructuur van Suriname tot 1945* (Volendam, 2015), 272-273.
[5] H. Boerboom, 'Suriname legt spoorlijn van 130 miljoen aan', *NOS* (6 November 2014). URL: https://nos.nl/artikel/2002462-suriname-legt-spoorlijn-van-130-miljoen-aan.html (last accessed 14 April 2021).
[6] '[…] een armzalig verwaarloosd spoorlijntje, dat nergens heenvoert en nooit voltooid werd […]' in A. de Kom, *Wij slaven van Suriname* (Amsterdam, 2020 [1934]), 47.
[7] A. Boots and R. Woortman, *Anton de Kom. Biografie* (Amsterdam and Antwerpen, 2009), 16.
[8] A. Helman, *Avonturen aan de Wilde Kust, De geschiedenis van Suriname met zijn buurlanden* (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1982), 167.

Research Questions and Relevance

The main research question of this thesis is: *What was the socio-economic function of the Lawa Railway in twentieth-century Suriname?* In order to answer this question, three sub questions are formulated. The first sub question is *How and why was the Lawa Railway envisioned and constructed?* This question focuses on the beginning of the twentieth century, when a group of Dutch colonialists presented the idea to establish a railway in the Surinamese rainforest. As mentioned above, the colonial point of view that the railway project was a failure is often centralised in historiography. Most authors focus primarily on the railway's construction and its early functioning. In a reconstruction of how the concession to build a railway was constituted and how tracks were laid down through the forest, it becomes clear in what politico-economic climate the actors navigated and what the direct consequences of the railway were for the people involved.

Through the first sub question, the original purposes of the Lawa Railway as envisioned by Dutch politicians and engineers, are set forth. The next sub question focuses on the use of the railway by colonial agents, such as the colonial elite in Paramaribo and the Moravian mission that was highly present in Suriname: *How did colonial agents use the Lawa Railway?* The third and final sub question is: *How have the people of Suriname repurposed the Lawa Railway?* This question focuses on what happened with the railway after it had been de facto depreciated by the colonial authorities – and by most historians and chroniclers in later times. This sub question aims to go beyond the official side of the railway and its colonial functions. Instead, it addresses the way the Surinamese used, saw and experienced the Lawa Railway through different kinds of practices.

The relevance of this thesis intervention is threefold. Firstly, the Lawa Railway has a peculiar position in historiography. Authors who described it, have done so in fairly marginal terms, and often employ a narrative of failure. This thesis aims to shed a different light on the Lawa Railway. Instead of centralising the negative consequences for the Dutch state and the colony, the main focus point consists of the experiences of the Surinamese train passengers, local residents and other involved people. Extensive attention is paid to the period after 1940 to bring about a shift in terms of periodisation and narrow down the historiographical gap that currently exists for the second half of the twentieth century. Next to focusing on experiences from below, the way the Lawa Railway played a role in various aspects of late colonial life, such as the Mission, are considered. Through this research, the colonial rhetoric of failure is transcended to establish a narrative in which the experiences of the people who actually

travelled by it or benefited from it are taken into account to form a complete portrayal of the socio-economic influence of the Lawa Railway.

Secondly, colonial railways are often portrayed as the engines of empire, because they unlocked and connected vast colonial territories and fostered trade and war efforts. This is especially true for railway networks stretching over thousands of kilometres, for instance in India. The Lawa Railway was a short stand-alone line of only 173 kilometres and can therefore be regarded a drop in the ocean of railway networks. The Lawa Railway never skyrocketed Surinamese industrialisation and formed a thorn in the side of the colonial administration and the Dutch government. It was not an engine of empire or a catalyst of the economy, but it did influence many people's lives. This thesis shows that small and local railways that are considered to be failed can be studied and embedded in the history of colonial railways in order to come to a more balanced perspective on the history of railways.

Thirdly, by focusing on the story of the Lawa Railway, a larger socio-economic narrative of Suriname in the twentieth century is constructed, in which class differences are uncovered and the struggle for livelihoods in a late colonial society is exposed.

Methodology and Sources

This thesis is the product of a qualitative multi-method research project. It encompasses a combination of desk research in the form of historiographical study, various forms of archival research and field research in the form of oral history. At the basis of my understanding of how the Lawa Railway was constructed and the political debates that preceded its construction are archival records, complemented by secondary literature and newspaper articles. Another rich site of source material is formed by the digitised collection of photographs of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. From this collection, I have composed a compilation consisting of 109 photographs which depict the Lawa Railway and closely related scenes.[9] I have also studied photographs from the collection of the Dutch National Archives in The Hague.

The photographs are predominantly derived from a series of albums titled *Souvenir de Voyage*, which are attributed to engineer Hendrik Doijer, an album by the Surinamese photographer Augusta Curiel, a collection of photographs by photographer Eugen Klein, an album by photographer and physician Jacob Evert Wesenhagen, titled *Aanleg van de*

[9] I have made this compilation publicly available through the tool 'Rijksstudio', managed by the Rijksmuseum. It is accessible at: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/rijksstudio/1389987--n-a/verzamelingen/the-lawa-railway

Lawaspoorweg in Suriname and a series of photographs by photographer Willem van de Poll. The work of Augusta Curiel is especially insightful, because Curiel was an authoritative photographer in Suriname at the beginning of the twentieth century. Her photographs are lauded because of their outstanding technical and compositional quality.[10] Furthermore, Curiel was a woman, at a time when men predominantly dominated the field of source creation. She added her perspective to the scarce visual material that is available from early twentieth-century Suriname and that is heavily influenced by the White, male and colonial gaze. The insights of Penny Tinkler were useful to grasp how to adequately use photographs in historical research.[11] Tinkler understands the possible approaches to photographs as a continuum, from perceiving photographic images as transcriptions or copies of the material world on the one end, to a conception of photographs as independent of the material world in front of the camera lens on the other end.[12] I conceive photographs as constructs, shaped by the photographer's choices what to include and exclude, the technological features of the camera, and the fact that the photograph is a two-dimensional fixed representation of a three-dimensional dynamic world. The methodological implication of this approach is that photographs are carefully studied before conclusions about the material and social world can be tied to what is depicted by the photograph, taking into account the socio-historical and technological context of the image creation.

The aforementioned archival sources and photographs mostly cover the first decades of the twentieth century, whereas newspaper articles span the whole period under research. Other rich primary sources are travel journeys and books written by colonial engineers and doctors who lived and worked in Suriname in the 1930s and 1940s. The books *In het Surinaamse oerwoud, het leven in de goudvelden* by A. Gouka and *Dokter in het oerwoud* by P.A. de Groot, for example, present detailed descriptions of the Lawa Railway and the role it played in late colonial Suriname.[13] Secondary literature on the Lawa Railway is primarily focused on its construction and on the first years of train services. Finally, oral history is conducted, primarily concerning the period roughly starting after 1940. This historical method is preoccupied with 'memories and personal commentaries of historical significance', which

[10] Web page of the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (Huygens ING), Resources. Lemma: Augusta Curiel. URL: http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Curiel (last accessed 3 February 2021).
[11] P. Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London, 2013).
[12] Tinkler, *Using Photographs*, 3-4.
[13] A. Gouka, *In het Surinaamse oerwoud, het leven in de goudvelden* (The Hague, 1948) and P.A. de Groot, *Dokter in het oerwoud* (Nijkerk, 1953).

are collected through recorded interviews.[14] I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews in Suriname with informants who have memories of the Lawa Railway. This method allowed me to investigate common people's day-to-day experiences of the railway. All interviewees have signed an informed consent form, in which they were notified about the purpose of the interview and by means of which they gave their consent to record the interview and use their answers for research purposes. They had the option to be anonymised in the processing of the data, but none of them wanted to make use of this opportunity. I recorded our conversations with my smartphone and I later turned these into written transcripts.

The insights of Anne Galletta about semi-structured interviews in qualitative research have informed the preparation of the interviews.[15] Galetta lays focus on researcher-participant reciprocity to engage with the participants and on reflexivity to adjust to the emerging narrative. I took her advice to 'focus on the task at hand: eliciting from the participant the meaning he or she gives to the focus of study and capturing that meaning as accurately as possible' to heart.[16] More specifically focused on the historical practice, Donald Ritchie's book *Doing Oral History* was insightful.[17] Ritchie states that 'a good oral history will always leave room for interviewees to speak their minds.'[18] During the interviews, I made sure that the interviewees indeed had as much room as possible to speak their minds. Therefore, I have chosen to use a loose topic list as guideline for the interviews, instead of preformulated questionnaires. Ritchie informs us that it is not necessarily productive to determine how many informants the project needs before conducting the interviews.[19] He states that 'once the interviewing begins, it will be discovered that some interviewees have much more to say than others, are more perceptive and cooperative, and have sharper memories. These are the interviewees to whom it is worth devoting more time.'[20] During the interviews, it became clear that this was indeed the case. The informants with vivid recollections allowed me to ask them to elaborate on certain topics, to get a better understanding of their lived experiences.

After I had transcribed the recordings of the interviews, I coded them with the help of the coding software programme ATLAS.ti to systemise the data and to draw meanings from the interviews about how the Surinamese people have experienced and repurposed the Lawa

[14] D.A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford and New York, 2015 [1995]), 1.
[15] A. Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication* (New York, 2013).
[16] Galetta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond*, 77.
[17] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*.
[18] Ibidem, 16.
[19] Ibidem, 36.
[20] Ibidem, 37.

Railway through a three-step process, consisting of open, axial and selective coding.[21] In the first phase of coding – open coding – I attached codes to paragraphs or sentences within the transcripts that reflected their meanings. This process led to 93 codes that represent the topic of specific paragraphs.[22] After open coding, I axially coded the data by drawing connections between the 93 codes to construct code groups, creating assemblages of related or connected topics.[23] Finally, I selectively coded the data by reviewing the code groups and placing them together in core categories, which came forward as the most central themes in the data. These core categories are regarded as the main elements to which the Lawa Railway was tied in the lives of the informants. The coding software also enabled me to maintain an overview of the transcripts and to quickly navigate between similar paragraphs or sentences to map differences and similarities. An extensive explanation of the coding process and the results are attached in Appendix 2.

Historiography

In most publications in which the Lawa Railway is mentioned, it is often viewed as a desperate and failed attempt to breathe new life into a dwindling plantation economy. Hans Buddingh, author of the standard work *Geschiedenis van Suriname*, has written three pages on the Lawa Railway – which is considerably more than most other authors have.[24] His conclusion is in line with the dominant view that the railway was a failure. From his bibliography, it becomes clear that he based his research on two articles by sociologists Waldo Heilbron and Glenn Willemsen, published in *Caraïbisch Forum* in 1980.[25] They state that railway-building in Suriname proved to be a fiasco, but that it fostered Dutch production with the help of loans to the colony. They furthermore note that the advantages for Surinamese groups were minimal.[26] Their economic analysis is thorough, and they extensively emphasise the fact that the railway was not built for the Surinamese people.

[21] See for instance H. Boeije, *Analysis in Qualitative Research* (New York, 2009).
[22] For instance, the code 'tickets' was attached to paragraphs in which the informant talked about buying train tickets and the code 'school transport' was attached to paragraphs in which the informant talked about riding the train to get to school.
[23] For instance, the codes 'school transport' and 'school trips' were tied to the code group 'education', whereas the code 'tickets' was tied to 'railway management'. It is also possible to group codes in multiple code groups, so that 'school trips' was also placed in the code group 'recreation'. The open codes are thus organised by theme.
[24] H. Buddingh, *De geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam, 2017 [1995]), 268-271.
[25] W. Heilbron and G. Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, nieuwe productiesektoren en nieuwe vormen van afhankelijkheid na 1873, Deel I', *Caraïbisch Forum* 1.1 (1980), 66-84 en W. Heilbron and G. Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, nieuwe produktiesektoren en nieuwe vormen van afhankelijkheid na 1873, Deel II', *Caraïbisch Forum* 1.2 (1980), 87-101.
[26] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', *Caraïbisch Forum* 1.1 (1980), 66-84, 69.

However, they do not take into account the ways in which many of them nevertheless made use of the railway to enhance their lives in one way or another.

There are two publications that are respectively dedicated to the Lawa Railway and to railways in Suriname in general. The first is a little booklet which appeared as a volume in the series *Suriname Informatie* in 2012, titled 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', written by Eric Wicherts and Jan Veltkamp.[27] This booklet contains detailed and technical information about the railway. Wicherts and Veltkamp have meticulously reconstructed the railway's rise and fall and the phase in between. 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg' contains many details, about elements as ticket prices, types of carriages, the trajectory and the timetable. The edition is furthermore endowed with relevant photographs from different photographers. This booklet was very useful as a reference work throughout the research phase of this thesis. For example, it provided me with essential details that helped me shape the questions during the interviews.

The other publication in which the Lawa Railway plays a pivotal role is Luuk van der Veen's *Suriname, "het land waar treinen niet echt hebben gereden"* from 1992.[28] The first part of the book focuses on the Lawa Railway, the second part on the West Suriname Railway. The latter is a 72 kilometres long railway that was built from Apoera to the bauxite mines, but never came to be used. The title of the book - 'Suriname, the country where trains did not really run' – thus refers both to the complete failure of the West Suriname Railway and to the 'fiasco' of the Lawa Railway. Van der Veen's main argument is that the development of railway transport in Suriname was peculiar in comparison to the development of railways in industrialised countries because they never catalysed the industry. Hence, Van der Veen typifies the Lawa Railway as a failure, but he does not take into account the function of the railway after the 1910s. He refers to governor Cornelis Lely's plans to make the railway a multi-purposed project, which would also serve the farmers south of Paramaribo and the inhabitants of the interior. The idea was that these people could also use the train to transport their goods, while city-dwellers could travel to the district of Para, where the popular leisure area Republiek is located. Van der Veen portrays Lely as naïve and describes his vision as 'no more than a list of well-intended wishes.'[29] However, he shoves aside the fact that these purposes indeed became dominant in the remainder of the first half of the twentieth century, as this thesis shows.

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[27] E. Wicherts and J. Veltkamp, 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', *Suriname Informatie* 9 (2012).
[28] L.J. van der Veen, *Suriname, "het land waar treinen niet echt hebben gereden"* (Amsterdam, 1992).
[29] 'Zoals het nu werd geformuleerd was het niet meer als een lijst van goed bedoelde wensen.' in Van der Veen, *Suriname,* 16.

Rosemarijn Hoefte's work on twentieth century Suriname was especially useful to gain a better understanding of the socio-economic backdrop of Suriname in the twentieth century against which the Lawa Railway existed.[30] She notes that 'the construction of a railroad turned out to be a disappointment', because it was 'a heavy drain on the treasury.'[31] These debts were only cancelled in 1950, by the first Drees government.[32] Since Cornelis Lely played a pivotal role in the decision to construct a railway in Suriname, his biographers also paid substantial attention to the Lawa Railway. The first biography was written by K. Jansma and was first published in 1948, of which a revised edition came out in 1954.[33] With respect to the Lawa Railway, Jansma writes that Lely's conviction that it had to be built was one of the rare errors on his account.[34] According to him, it was 'Lely's railway' and therefore Lely's mistake.[35] A second biography was published in 2018, written by Cees Banning.[36] Banning gives a summary of the first years of the railway's existence and acknowledges the financial disaster the Lawa Railway brought along, as well as the general failure it was associated with.

Although minimal, there are also authors who question the failure rhetoric. Civil engineers Hillebrand Ehrenburg and Marcel Meyer have written a chapter on the Lawa Railway in their book *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, which is about the civil infrastructure of Suriname.[37] They note that the Lawa Railway is often represented as a failure and question whether this is a justifiable portrayal. Ehrenburg and Meyer admit that the railway has never been financially profitable. However, they also remark that the total gold revenues until 1938 amount to 62 million guilders and that the Lawa Railway has played a crucial role in transporting the means for the gold industry and the gold itself. As they rightfully state, it is impossible to make a calculation of hypothetical gold revenues for a situation in which the railway would not have existed. Furthermore, the authors also notice Lely's remarks that the railway would serve purposes other than the gold industry. Instead of portraying Lely as naïve like Van der Veen, Ehrenburg and Meyer acknowledge that these envisaged purposes were actually fulfilled. They name the accessibility of Maroon villages and the possibility for their inhabitants to enjoy education and medical care as achievements of the railway.[38] They also

[30] R. Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century.*
[31] Ibidem, 35.
[32] Buddingh, *De geschiedenis van Suriname*, 264.
[33] K. Jansma, *Lely, bedwinger der Zuiderzee* (Amsterdam, 1954 [1948]).
[34] Jansma, *Lely, bedwinger der Zuiderzee*, 102
[35] Ibidem, 103.
[36] C. Banning, *Cornelis Lely, ingenieur van het nieuwe Nederland* (Beilen, 2018).
[37] Ehrenburg and Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, 237-272.
[38] Ibidem, 273.

note that farmers who lived outside the city could bring their produce to Paramaribo and that their children rode the train as a means of school transport.[39] The last purpose of the train, according to Ehrenburg and Meyer, was recreational. They quote Surinamese historian Rudolf van Lier, who reminisces about holidays in Republiek, which were tied to the railway because he and his family travelled there by train.[40]

From the historiography, it becomes clear that most authors have written about the pre-history of the Lawa Railway, about the gold rush in the first decade of the twentieth century, the granting of a concession to build a railway and the process of construction. Relatively few have written about the successive years in which the railway was operative, how it was used by Surinamese people and what its social functions were. From a colonial point of view, the railway was indeed a failure and as many rightly state, it was a financial drain for Suriname and a risky project that was never finished. However, the history of the Lawa Railway goes beyond the colonial paradigm of profits and prestige. This thesis aims to expand the narrative into the socio-economic realms, and into how the people of Suriname experienced the railway and how they benefited from it by making it their own. It furthermore seeks to explain how the railway have come to exist for more than eighty years, by looking into the benefits for colonial agents and elites.

Structure

After the introduction, four chapters follow. The first chapter serves as a theoretical framework, in which the premises that underly the analysis are set forth. The second chapter is about the first decade of the railway. Here, the colonial deliberations that preceded the construction of the railway are reconstructed and the visions concerning the railway are analysed against the political and economic background of Suriname around the turn of the twentieth century. The following chapter is concerned with the use of the Lawa Railway for colonial agents such as the urban elite that was on the state's payroll, and the mission. In three paragraphs, the interplay of transport, connectivity, elitist pleasure, medical care and the Moravian mission is highlighted. The final and fourth chapter is about the way in which the Surinamese people have repurposed the railway. In this chapter, it is analysed what socio-economic role the Lawa Railway played in the lives of the Surinamese people. The last section forms a concluding chapter, in which the main research question is answered.

[39] Ibidem.
[40] A quote from R.A.J. van Lier, presented in M. van Kempen (ed.), *Sirito, 50 Surinaamse vertellingen* (Paramaribo, 1993) in Ehrenburg and Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, 273-274.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework that is at the basis of this thesis is laid down. This research project and analysis are informed and inspired by various theories. In the first paragraph, the position of railway history in general and this research project in particular within the debate on colonialism is discussed. In the second paragraph, the historiographical paradigm *Alltagsgeschichte* is set forth, and I explain why that is a particularly fitting model for this research project.

1.1 Railway History, Colonialism and Postcolonialism

The narrative about the Lawa Railway can be categorised as multi-sub-disciplinary. It falls in the realms of colonial and social history, it is a form of railway history, but it also touches upon the history of technology and it even takes detours into medical history. The technological facet of the narrative appears in the argument of Daniel Headrick. He states that the swiftness of European expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century was driven by an acceleration in technology, which allowed the colonisers to permeate their colonies more thoroughly. Examples of technologies that contributed to this permeation are machine guns to guarantee military dominance, quinine to reduce high malaria-caused death rates, and steamships, telegraphs and railways to assert efficient control over the colonies.[41] Furthermore, these technologies stimulated economic growth in the production of tropical goods, of which metropolitan demand was high. Colonial authorities always sought a way to lower production costs and increase production outcome to foster their position in the colonial-capitalist international trading arena.[42]

Headrick distinguishes three different historical railway patterns from a geographical point of view, of which hybrid forms also occur. The first type is found in highly industrialised regions like north-western Europe and the eastern United States and is characterised by a high density and connectivity between larger and smaller cities and towns. The second pattern is found in less industrialised, though large areas, where the railway connected major towns with each other. Such railway patterns were, for example, found in the

[41] D.R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress, Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York and Oxford, 1988), 5-6.
[42] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, 6.

western part of North-America, Russia, India and South Africa. The final railway pattern represents railways that did not connect to each other, typically found in colonies. These railways generally connected a harbour to an agricultural area or mining activities.[43] The Lawa Railway is a classic example of the latter. Especially in the first decades of the twentieth century, integration of developing economies into world markets heavily leaned on an adequate infrastructure, of which railways were the most reliable components.[44]

In recent years, we have seen a revival of revisionist claims on the history of colonialism. One of the Netherlands' most dominant protagonists of this strand of thought is Pieter Emmer. In his book *Het zwart-wit denken voorbij*, he writes that colonialism 'has dramatically lengthened the life expectancy of colonial subjects, built roads, railroads, telegraph and telephone lines, a plumbing and tap water system, and has reconstituted government and the courts on a modern footing.'[45] Railroads are often mobilised in colonialism's defenders' discourse as a prime example of 'the gift of technology', which the Europeans granted to 'backward societies' as part of a wider civilising mission.

As Pepijn Brandon and Aditya Sarkar have shown, revisionists often employ a costs-and-benefits model of incommensurables. In this narrative, the benefits side of the balance is heavily loaded with education, good governance and indeed railways, while the costs side only consists of a few 'excesses', such as slavery. The advocates of this paradigm argue that the elements on the 'bad side of colonialism' would probably have happened anyway or were just a sign of the times and should therefore be evaluated within their *Zeitgeist*.[46] Analysing the civilising mission as an ideology, Michael Adas notes that 'like most ideologies, it enabled its adherents to defend violence and suffering as necessary but temporary evils that would prepare the way for lasting improvements in the condition of the subject peoples.'[47]

It cannot be denied that the Lawa Railway had some beneficial effects for many Surinamese people. A Maroon woman who had a troublesome pregnancy could indeed travel to Paramaribo by train, arriving there in less than a day, while it would have taken her weeks to travel there by *korjaal* (a specific type of dug-out canoe used for river transportation). For

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[43] Ibidem, 50.
[44] V. Bignon, R. Esteves and A. Herranz-Loncán, 'Big Push or Big Grab? Railways, Government Activism, and Export Growth in Latin America, 1865-1913', *Economic History Review* 68.4 (2015), 1277-1305, 1277.
[45] P.C. Emmer, *Het zwart-wit denken voorbij. Een bijdrage aan de discussie over kolonialisme, slavernij en migratie* (Amsterdam, 2018), 32. Quoted and translated by P. Brandon and A. Sarkar in 'Labour History and the Case against Colonialism', *International Review of Social History* 64 (Virtual Special Issue) (2019), 73-109, 77-78.
[46] Brandon and Sarkar, 'Labour History and the Case against Colonialism', 83.
[47] M. Adas, *Machines as the Measures of Men, Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca and London, 1989), 200.

her, being able to travel by train may have saved her and her baby's life. However, by no means does this simple fact allow for a defence of colonialism or enables a reasoning along the lines of the revisionist paradigm of colonialism. After all, if it were not for colonialism, that Maroon woman would not have been living in the Surinamese forest. Maroon villages had been purposely established in inaccessible places by her ancestors to stay hidden from the plantation-owners for whom they had fled. The history of the Lawa Railway is not a balanced sum on the basis of which it can be concluded that this colonial project was a ribbon of modernisation through the jungle. Although people used the railway for a myriad of purposes, that enhanced their lives, it was predominantly built to extract raw materials from Suriname for the greater benefit of the Dutch and many labourers were exposed to dangerous circumstances, or even passed away while manually having to construct the railway.

Headrick argues that most people outside of the West often resisted the idea of a railway in their lands, but the Europeans 'knew how to apply guile or force' to make it happen anyway.[48] The argument that railways were a 'gift' of European technology to 'backward societies' thus needs to be rejected, because 'the gift' was often not appreciated. Furthermore, the metropoles kept the benefits and profits for themselves, as well as the business opportunities for delivering resources.[49] Railroads also often contributed to the spread of various disease vectors in the empires, as David Arnold shows, because they 'broke through the coastal barriers and destroyed the quarantining effects that distance and slow land transportation had formerly had on the dissemination of imported diseases.[50]

1.2 *Alltagsgeschichte*

Alltagsgeschichte (everyday history) is originally a 1980's German historiographical paradigm of microhistory, which meant to challenge the hegemony of *Strukturgeschichte* that had been theorised by the Bielefeld school of historians in the 1960s and 1970s.

[48] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress,* 49.
[49] Sometimes, colonial railway projects even had devastating environmental or biological effects. Pallavi Das has shown, for example, how the colonial railways in India that were built by the British have depleted India's natural resources. She found that much of the deforestation that is seen in the Himalayas today, can be traced back to the moment when railway construction in colonial India commenced, in Sometimes, colonial railway projects even had devastating environmental or biological effects. P. Das, 'Colonialism and the Environment in India: Railways and Deforestation in 19th Century Punjab', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46.1 (2010), 38-53, 38.
[50] D. Arnold, 'Introduction: Disease, Medicine and Empire' in D. Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester and New York, 1988), 1-26, 5-6.

Strukturgeschichte produced large-scale analyses of long-term historical processes.[51] *Alltagsgeschichte,* instead, focuses on working-class cultures, social structures, experiences and political processes.[52] According to David Crew, proponents of this historiographic agenda examine and reconstruct values, attitudes, needs, wants and desires of ordinary people.[53]

Critics have accused *Alltagsgeschichte* of neglecting the need for theory in historical studies. However, the historians of the everyday have not turned their backs on theory at all. As Crew notes, *'Alltagsgeschichte* attempts to show how "ordinary people", refused to accept their assigned roles as the passive "objects" of impersonal historical developments and attempts, instead, to become active historical "subjects".'[54] In this sense, *Alltagsgeschichte* has many commonalities with Subaltern Studies, a sub-field of postcolonial history, originating in conversations between English and Indian historians who formed the Subaltern Study Group (SSG) in the 1970s. In the essays of the SSG, historians revealed the history of the subaltern and their resistance to the British coloniser.[55] Both subfields of historiography are seen as 'history from below', which gained popularity among social historians after the 1960s, who predominantly focused on marginalised or exploited people and their lives under hegemonic structures.[56] Furthermore, both strands of historiography actively seek to expose the agency of 'common people'.

One of the most adequate angles of analysis to grasp this is 'experience'. Experience is not easily extracted from traditional historical sources like archives. However, methods like oral history are well-suited to study experiences. *Alltagsgeschichte* has furthermore questioned the progress and modernisation narrative, as Crew shows.[57] It forms a postmodern critique on the teleological conception of history, which originated in a rejection of the Bielefeld school's 1960's assertion that Nazism was caused by Germany's failure to modernise in the nineteenth century.[58]

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[51] D.F. Crew, '*Alltagsgeschichte:* A New Social History "From Below"?', *Central European History, 1989-09,* 22.3-4 (2008), 394-407, 395.
[52] Crew, '*Alltagsgeschichte*', 395.
[53] Ibidem.
[54] Ibidem, 396.
[55] The term subalternity was originally coined by the Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci. Ranajit Guha, one of the founders of the Subaltern Studies Group, later stated that one of the aims of the subaltern historians was to practice 'the six-point project envisaged by Antonio Gramsci in his "Notes on Italian History"' in the context of South Asian history to make room for the politics of the colonised people – a topic that mainstream nationalist historiography often ignored. Source: R. Guha, 'Preface' in R. Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1982), vii.
[56] Brandon and Sarkar, 'Labour History and the Case against Colonialism', 94.
[57] Crew, *Alltagsgeschichte*, 404.
[58] Ibidem.

An example of a historian who has studied railways from an everyday-life perspective is Ritika Prasad, who has written the book *Tracks of Change*.[59] She understands 'everyday' as a 'space of continuous, daily, negotiation between people and the technology that permeates their lives.'[60] Prasad maintains the everyday as an angle of analysis to study 'how railway technology, travel, and infrastructure became increasingly and inextricably interwoven with everyday life in colonial India.'[61] Prasad shows how *Alltagsgeschichte* is a particularly fitting paradigm for railway history, because trains and railways are everyday phenomena. This is not only the case because they are 'common', but also because they cause a ripple effect throughout society. Many people's lives are touched by the railway: passengers, personnel, investors, labourers in the raw materials industry, local residents, or as Headrick states: 'Banking, education, government, commerce, travel, industry: almost every aspect of society was transformed by the touch of railways.'[62] In this thesis, I take a similar perspective, to show how the Lawa Railway influenced people's lives on an everyday basis.

[59] R. Prasad, *Tracks of Change, Railways and Everyday Life in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 2016).
[60] Prasad, *Tracks of Change*, 10.
[61] Ibidem, 3.
[62] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, 52.

CHAPTER 2

From a Vision to a Concession to Construction

In this chapter, the early days of the Lawa Railway are central. The first paragraph dives into the politico-economic climate in Suriname, which formed the backdrop of the emergence of the railway. Before the railway was actually built, a long process of discussion and deliberation took place, which finally resulted in issuing a concession. This process is set forth in the second paragraph. The third paragraph then discusses the actual construction of the railway. Through these paragraphs, this chapter answers the sub question of how and why the Lawa Railway was envisioned and constructed.

2.1 The Politico-Economic Climate in which the Lawa Railway Came into Being

Since Francisco Pizarro's sixteenth century expeditions into South America, rumours of a city of gold, reigned by a king who bathed in gold-dust every morning, had been circling around in Europe. The so-called myth of El Dorado was 'perhaps the most powerful and enduring of the many myths that held the imaginations of European adventurers', in the words of John Silver.[63] It sparked an early-modern gold rush within the Spanish and Portuguese colonial territories, which only led to disappointment. When it became apparent that El Dorado was not located in the Iberian empires, it was believed the land of gold had to be somewhere between the Orinoco River and Portuguese Brazil. Sir Walter Raleigh had already written that there were many rich fields of gold in the Guianas in *The Discovery of Guiana* in 1595.[64] However, El Dorado was never found, and the myth became less dominant – although always shimmering in the back of the heads of European fortune-seekers. Centuries later, the myth revived when geologist Friedrich Voltz found rocks of which he presumed they contained gold in the Marowijne in Suriname in 1853. Voltz's discoveries sparked a renewed gold rush in the Guianas.

Voltz had been correct, because not long after, gold was found in the Upper Sara Creek and the Lawa area in Suriname. In 1875, the first gold bar, weighing five hundred kilograms, was sold to the *Surinaamsche Bank*, which shipped it to Europe.[65] In the years thereafter, the gold lands were divided into concessions, bringing the total acreage of gold

[63] J. Silver, 'The Myth of El Dorado', *History Workshop* 34 (1992), 2.
[64] Sir W. Raleigh, *The Discovery of Guiana* (Gloucester, 2007 [1595]).
[65] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', 70.

concessions to 5.870 square kilometres.[66] The enthusiasm for gold mining has to be seen in the light of a high global demand for gold in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. This high demand was the consequence of the implementation of the gold standard, a monetary system that legally required central banks to support every bank note they issued by its value in gold. In other words, if more money was brought into circulation, more gold reserves were required, which consequently increased global demand for gold. It also meant that a state's currency was more powerful on the valuta market if its central bank had higher gold reserves. Because of that, gold mining companies were required to sell eighty to ninety percent of their revenues to state governments, that needed it to improve their economic position in the global capitalist arena.[67] Another resource that was in high demand was balata, a rubber-like product that is harvested out of trees. Balata was needed for the production of telegraph cables, that were increasingly laid down over the globe at the end of the nineteenth century as part of a wider revolution in communication.[68]

Furthermore, the metropolitan market for colonial products skyrocketed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Alongside with industrialisation and the rise of capitalism in Europe, the extraction of tropical products and raw materials increased. Next to cash crops like tobacco and cotton, which were already exploited in the colonies for centuries by means of slavery and indentured labour, minerals and balata were now also increasingly extracted from the colonies.[69] At the turn of the twentieth century, Suriname was facing economic problems due to unexpected periods of rain and drought and various crop diseases. Decline had already set in at the end of the eighteenth century, when the period of economic flourishment had come to an end in most Caribbean colonies.[70] For the administrators, it was clear that Suriname's economy had to be pushed in another direction, away from plantation mono-agriculture towards new industrial sectors. Many large plantations on which enslaved people and indentured labourers had produced cash crops for centuries, were subdivided into smaller agricultural plots or were neglected and eventually taken back by the jungle.[71] The dominant administrative sentiment was that some drastic economic measures had to be taken to conserve Suriname as a meaningful colony.

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[66] Ehrenburg and Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, 220.
[67] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', 70.
[68] W. Heilbron and G. Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, nieuwe produktiesektoren en nieuwe vormen van afhankelijkheid na 1873, Deel II', *Caraïbisch Forum* 1.2 (1980), 87-101, 87.
[69] Ibidem, 68.
[70] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 1.
[71] R.A.J. van Lier, *Frontier Society, A Social Analysis of the History of Suriname* (The Hague, 1971), 217.

Whereas agricultural plantations in the Atlantic colonies were usually established at the coast or close to navigable rivers and accompanied by a good infrastructure, minerals and resources from uncultivated trees, such as balata, were situated in difficult terrain, often deep into the dense forest. In attempts to efficiently unlock these natural resources, colonial powers increasingly established railways, which had been conquering industrialising Europe since the 1830s. Ronald Robinson states that when the locomotive proved its capacity and profitability in Europe and the United States, 'railway mania spread abroad.'[72] The heyday of this tendency was in the second half of the nineteenth century and around the turn of the twentieth century. At the other end of the Dutch Empire, this had already materialised into a large railway network in the Dutch East Indies. Railway-construction served as an instrument of empire-building and it was a vehicle for European expansion.[73] However, often-times attracting enough capital proved to be a problem. Robinson argues that the railway projects were 'too risky for the private investor and of too little strategic importance to attract more than dribs and drabs of imperial subsidy.'[74] Part of the reason why railway projects were so risky was that investors anticipated on economic growth, instead of meeting pre-existing demands for transport.[75]

2.2 The Concession to Construct a Railway

Against the background of a railway mania, increasing discoveries of gold in Suriname in a gold-demanding global economic climate and the conviction that Suriname had to diversify its economy, ex-member of the Council of the Indies Jan Arnold de Gelder, ex-minister of Marine Affairs Joannes C. Jansen, and a lawyer, W.F. Struben (Committee De Gelder) requested the permission to construct a railway at the office of the governor of Suriname, Hendrik Jan Smidt, on 25 August 1896. Cornelis Lely, who just finished his first term as Minister of Water, Trade and Industry, was originally also part of the ensemble, but he pulled out of the group before an official committee was formed. The leader and name-giver of the group, De Gelder, was an influential and experienced political figure, who previously had been involved with the development of harbours and railways in the Dutch East Indies.[76] Next

[72] R.E. Robinson, 'Introduction: Railway Imperialism' in C.B. Davids, K.E. Wilburn jr. and R.E. Robinson (eds.), *Railway Imperialism* (Westport, 1991), 1.
[73] Robinson, 'Introduction: Railway Imperialism', 1-2.
[74] Ibidem.
[75] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, 51-52.
[76] W. Heilbron and G. Willemsen, 'Suriname en het Nederlands kapitaal aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw', *Caraïbisch Forum* 1.3 (1980), 25-48, 27.

to constructing a railway, the ambition of the committee consisted of conducting geological research between the Suriname River and the Marowijne River. Furthermore, they requested a concession for one kilometre wide strips of land on both sides of the future railway and a land concession of more than 500,000 hectares inside the Lawa region.[77] Committee De Gelder wanted to divide this large concession into smaller concessions to give out to private parties in order to assemble the capital that was needed for the construction of the railway. The committee believed a railway was necessary in order to transport all materials that were needed for the large-scale gold mining they had in mind, as well as the mined gold back to the coast. The gold reservoirs had namely been found two hundred kilometres away from the coast. Transportation by river was the easiest way through the dense jungle, but the outboard motor was not yet invented, so it was rather slow and ineffective.[78] In 1897, the colonial government agreed with the request and gave out a concession that consisted of a) the construction and exploitation of a railway, suited for passenger transport as well as goods transport, from Paramaribo to the Lawa and b) to mine and exploit everything in and on the ground between the Suriname River and the Marowijne River, not exceeding a total surface of 500,000 hectares.[79]

Committee De Gelder established the Maatschappij Suriname NV (Maatschappij). The colonial administration decided that the Maatschappij was only qualified to give out concessions to Dutch nationals, residents of the Netherlands, residents of Suriname or companies that were settled in the Netherlands or Suriname.[80] Vice-chairman of the colonial Board of Directors J.W. van Oosterzee stated that these regulations were necessary to prevent foreign influence in the colony.[81] This fits in the political climate to keep Suriname as Dutch as possible. As Bram Rutgers – who was governor of Suriname from 1928 until 1933 – informs us, 'all that was possible [was] being done by the administration to fuse the entire population, both white and brown, and black and yellow, irrespective of whether they are Europeans or Americans, Africans or Asians, into one cohesive language and culture community with a uniform administration of justice right down to matters pertaining to marriage and inheritance.'[82] This political climate was also a consequence of the investment

[77] Buddingh, *De geschiedenis van Suriname*, 270.
[78] Wicherts and Veltkamp, 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', 5.
[79] 'Verordening betreffende het verleenen van Concessie aan de Maatschappij Suriname', *De Ingenieur. Orgaan der Vereeniging van Burgerlijke Ingenieurs* 13.24 (1898), 314.
[80] National Archives, The Hague (NL-HaNA), Handelingen van de Staten van Suriname (Gedrukt), 2.10.44, inv. nr. 7 (1898/1899-1900/1901).
[81] NL-HaNA, Staten van Suriname / Handelingen, 2.10.44, inv. nr. 7 (1898/1899-1900/1901).
[82] 'Daar [in Suriname] is van bestuurswege al het mogelijke gedaan om de gehele bevolking, blank en bruin, zwart en geel, onverschillig of het Europeanen of Amerikanen, Afrikanen of Aziaten zijn, op te smelten tot één

policies of the colonial powers, which were monopolistically oriented. However, in practice, foreign companies simply registered in Suriname of the Netherlands, and so German, British, American, and French companies still invested in the Surinamese industry. The French company *Compagnie des Mines d'Or* was the largest among them and stayed in the gold industry the longest.[83] Along with the transition of the plantation economy to the exploitation of natural resources like minerals, wood and balata, came a high level of control from the metropoles over the depots of raw materials in the colonies.[84]

In 1898, member of the board of the Administration of Suriname M.S. van Praag, presented an amendment of the ordinance of the railway concession. In this amendment it was written that as long as the railway was not completed, the Maatschappij had to pay the colonial administration ten percent interest on their profits from giving out concessions. They would get these profits back only if the railway had been completed.[85] Since the Maatschappij's concession was enormous in size, this led to considerable income for the colonial administration. For example, when the Maatschappij gave out 2.4 percent of their concession out to *Maatschappij Granplacer* for 410,000 guilders, the colonial administration was entitled to 41,000 guilders in interest.[86] This drainage of income for the Maatschappij was an incentive to construct the railway. From this amendment, it can thus be concluded that the colonial government's first interest was completing the railway, about which they were apparently worried.

The concerns of the colonial government were justifiable, because the Maatschappij could possibly earn great profits with giving out concessions. Abandoning the idea of constructing a railway could lead to great losses for the colonial administration. It was estimated that ten to twelve million guilders were needed to realise the railway. Private capital was searched in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, but could not be generated.[87] Ex-governor of Suriname, Titus Van Asch van Wijk had become Minister of the Colonies in the Kuyper Administration in 1901. He was convinced that the Lawa Railway should become a reality and if the Maatschappij would fail to generate enough private capital, the Dutch state should take over all financial necessities. In the end, it indeed proved to be too difficult to scrape together the ten to twelve million guilders for the Maatschappij and it went bankrupt.

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ongedeelde taal- en cultuurgemeenschap, met één rechtsbedeling, tot in de zaken van huwelijksrecht en erfrecht toe.' in A.A.L. Rutgers, *Ons Koninkrijk in Amerika, West-Indië* (The Hague, 1957), 17.

[83] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 40.

[84] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', 67.

[85] NL-HaNA, Staten van Suriname / Handelingen, 2.10.44, inv. nr. 7 (1898/1899-1900/1901).

[86] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Suriname en het Nederlands kapitaal', 30.

[87] Jansma, *Lely, bedwinger der Zuiderzee*, 100.

In the meantime, Van Asch van Wijk had asked Cornelis Lely – who is known for his *magnum opus* the Zuiderzee Works by the wider public: a major land reclamation and water drainage project in the Netherlands – to become the new governor of Suriname in 1902. Lely had already gained the necessary political experience by filling in the position of Minister of Water, Trade and Industry twice (1891-1894 and 1897-1901).[88] Lely's biographer Jansma states about this request to become governor of Suriname that it was 'an honour, although not that great for a member of Parliament, who had been a successful Minister twice.'[89] It shows once more that even the highest ranked colonial position in Suriname was just a minor honour, because of the state of the colony at the turn of the twentieth century. It might not have been the greatest honour, but Lely nevertheless accepted the governorship of Suriname. However, he set two conditions: the Lawa Railway had to be constructed and his term would be three instead of the usual four years.[90] Jansma sees two grounds for that Lely decided to accept the offer, 1) the fact that he was 'out of office' and wanted to work and 2) the financial benefits that would flow to him, since his late father's inheritance had to be shared with so many people that it would not make Lely financially independent.[91]

It became clear that the Dutch government agreed with Lely that the Lawa Railway had to be constructed, when Queen Wilhelmina held her annual speech on the financial plans of the government for the coming year (*Troonrede*) in 1902, in which she announced to the public that the state would finance the Lawa Railway.[92] A magazine cartoon of 17 May 1903 suggests that investment in the Lawa Railway was necessary because the Americans were eager to get their hands on Suriname and its natural recourses.[93] In this cartoon, Lely is depicted while he is asking the House of Representatives for money. In the back of the image, Uncle Sam is watching from behind the curtains (see Appendix 1). The United States did not have a colonial empire from which they could extract natural resources themselves and were propagators of the so-called 'open door policy'.[94] This foreign policy was originally targeted

[88] Jansma, *Lely, bedwinger der Zuiderzee*, 57-98.
[89] 'Het was natuurlijk een grote eer, maar toch niet zo heel groot voor een kamerlid, dat al tweemaal met groot succes als Minister was opgetreden.' in Ibidem, 101.
[90] NL-HaNA, Staten van Suriname / Handelingen, 2.10.44, inv. nr. 8 (1901/1902-1903-1904).
[91] Jansma, *Lely, bedwinger der Zuiderzee*, 101.
[92] 'Zoodra door het Koloniaal Bestuur van Suriname de noodige stappen zullen zijn gedaan, om den spoorwegaanleg naar het Lawa-gebied en het nader onderzoek van dat gebied van Bestuurswege ter hand te nemen, zal ik U voorstellen om dit werk, dat ik noodzakelijk acht, van Rijkswege te bevorderen.' in *Troonrede* by Queen Wilhelmina on 16 September 1902, available on the web page 'Troonredes', a side project of the dissertation P.C. Lagas, *Besturen op de rand van chaos* (Delft, 1999). URL: https://troonredes.nl/troonrede-van-16-september-1902/ (last accessed 1 February 2021).
[93] KITLV, Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images 50M2, J.C. Braakensiek, 'De Lawa-Spoorweg in de Tweede Kamer', *De Amsterdammer, Weekblad voor Nederland* (17 May 1903).
[94] W. Heilbron and G. Willemsen, 'Suriname en het Nederlands kapitaal', 27.

at opening up the Chinese market to American interests, but encompassed a wider ambition to gain access to the foreign markets and trades of colonial powers, which were usually closed to foreign competitors.[95]

In the meantime, the geological research that the Maatschappij had conducted was finished. De Gelder wrote in 1903 that the gold mining industry in Suriname could 'never develop on a large scale', because the gold that was found in Suriname was alluvial, meaning it was found in sediments and transported by rivers.[96] According to De Gelder, this meant that gold could be found scattered over large territories, and in small amounts. He furthermore stated that the expenses of mining activities would in most cases be higher than the gold returns and that profitable mining activities in Suriname would be exceptions on the rule.[97] His conclusion was: 'the results of extensive and multiannual geological research, which was issued by the Maatschappij Suriname and conducted by a group of specialists in the colony, do not lead to the expectation that the colony can cherish any hope on a mining industry.'[98] De Gelder attributed the fact that he had been a proponent of railway construction to facilitate the large-scale gold mining industry, to 'the endemic character of optimism in Suriname', to which he fell victim as well.[99]

However, despite the realisation that Suriname would never be the dreamed of El Dorado, De Gelder did not oppose the construction of the railway after all. He acknowledged that Suriname was a burden for the metropole, and that it would probably never be a meaningful and profitable colony. Despite the financial burden Suriname entailed for the Netherlands, De Gelder was of the opinion that the metropole had a certain obligation to keep Suriname as a colony because it was the ancestors' legacy, which should be taken care of.[100] He deemed a railway still necessary, because foreign competitors, of which the United States were the most threatening, should not have given the opportunity to accuse the Dutch of neglecting their colony.[101] Adriaan van Traa mentions that not long after the Maatschappij had obtained the concession, an American company had offered the governor to build a

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[95] M.P. Cullinane and A. Goodall, *The Open Door Era, United States Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2017), 1.
[96] 'Het alluviaal goud moet op deze gronden plaatselijk ontstaan zijn en dit neemt veel weg van de illusie, dat Suriname positief een rijk goudland zou wezen. De wording van het alluviaal goud in Suriname brengt mede, dat het verspreid kan voorkomen, doch zelden in groote hoeveelheden.' in J.A. de Gelder, *Het heden en de toekomst der Kolonie „Suriname"* (Paramaribo, 1903), 13.
[97] De Gelder, *Het heden en de toekomst der Kolonie „Suriname"*, 14.
[98] 'De resultaten van het uitgebreide en veeljarige geologische onderzoek, dat vanwege de Maatschappij Suriname door een staf van deskundigen in de kolonie is ingesteld, geven niet de hoop dat de kolonie in de toekomst eenige verwachting op den mijnbouw kan koesteren.' in Ibidem, 15-16.
[99] Ibidem, 34-35.
[100] Ibidem, 41-42.
[101] Ibidem, 42.

railway from Paramaribo into the interior, if he would grant them a concession of 500,000 hectares.[102] The fear for the influence of American economic activities in Suriname thus seems substantiated. Furthermore, the railway had been turned into a *conditio sine qua non* for Lely's governorship and the Dutch state had already taken over the helm, so it was no question anymore whether the railway project should be abandoned and they went through with the project despite the concerns.

2.3 The Construction of the Lawa Railway

On 16 September 1902, Lely went aboard a ship that was headed to Suriname.[103] Only two weeks after his arrival in Suriname as the new governor, he handed in a draft ordinance of the railway to the colonial authorities. In a speech to the Surinamese people, he promised to 'develop' the colony.[104] He envisioned a railway with a length of 220 kilometres and estimated costs of seven million guilders for the railway and one million guilders for the geological research and exploitation of the soil.[105] On 16 October 1902, Lely stated once more that the construction of the railway was the necessary means to reach the fertile inlands of the colony. He compared the Lawa Railway to the railways of other European colonies in Africa and Asia. This was also the first time the Lawa Railway was presented as a multi-purpose project.[106]

Lely wrote that the railway would also serve the farmers south of Paramaribo, who could increase their agricultural revenues by using the train, and the inhabitants of Paramaribo, who could use the train to go to the district of Para, for recreational purposes.[107] Meanwhile, the colonial government decided to conduct geological research in the Lawa. They sent mineralogist C.J. van Loon, who arrived in Suriname in 1903 and published his geological report in 1904.[108] From this report, it becomes clear that the expedition had not been without difficulties. Almost all expedition members suffered from severe fevers – probably caused by malaria – and Van Loon himself got dysentery. One of the police officers that accompanied the team died of his fever upon return in Paramaribo and one of the workers

[102] A. van Traa, *Suriname 1900-1940* (Deventer, 1946), 138.
[103] The departure of the ship had been delayed by one day, in order for Lely to attend the Queen's *Troonrede*, in which she publicly announced the upcoming realisation of the Lawa Railway. From C. Banning, *Cornelis Lely, ingenieur van het nieuwe Nederland* (Beilen, 2018), 109.
[104] NL-HaNA, Collection 398 C. Lely, 2.21.210, inv nr. 60: Stukken betreffende zijn benoeming en ambtsaanvaarding. Augustus-oktober 1902.
[105] Van der Veen, *Suriname, 'het land waar treinen niet echt hebben* gereden', 14-15.
[106] 'Memorie van Toelichting voor de Koloniale Staten op 16 Oktober 1902' in Ibidem, 16.
[107] Ibidem.
[108] C.J. van Loon, *Rapport over de Exploratie van het Lawagebied* (The Hague, 1904).

ended up in the rapids in the river Lawa and broke his arm.[109] Van Loon notes that transport to and from the gold placers in the Lawa was generally difficult. Groceries, tools and other necessities were transported by Maroons and Native Surinamese by *korjaal* from Albina. These transports took three weeks on average and sometimes it even became impossible to pass the rapids, due to high water in rainy season and low water in dry season.[110] Van Loon also notes that the availability of boat men was limited. According to him, the Maroons did not really sympathize with the gold miners – which is not really surprising given the fact that strangers suddenly settled in their territory and extracted natural resources from it.[111] However, the gold mining companies and their personnel were highly dependent on Maroons and Native Surinamese to transport them over the rivers, because only they had knowledge of the dangerous rapids and waterways. In Van Loon's opinion, 'private entrepreneurship has not been able to develop the Surinamese gold industry to a reasonable level.'[112] He argued that private entrepreneurs not only lacked capital, but also did not have any know-how or the perseverance that was needed to boost the gold industry. He therefore agreed with Van Asch van Wijk that state intervention was the only viable solution, both in the gold industry and in the construction of the railway. He furthermore concluded that as long as the Lawa Railway was not constructed, it would be almost impossible to start grand-scale gold mining in the Lawa because of the transportation difficulties.[113]

Before the actual tracks could be placed, a lot of preparatory labour had to be done. An exploration commission was appointed, which started 'exploring' already in 1897, when the Maatschappij was still in charge.[114] The Minister of the Colonies approved the Maatschappij's request for railway experts from the Dutch East Indies.[115] P. Th. L. Grinwis Plaat, who had been actively involved with tramway construction on Aceh and railway construction on Sumatra, was put in charge of the exploratory activities.[116] Because it was difficult to attract skilled Dutch engineers, German mining experts and geologists were added to the team as well. Another complication was that the team was in constant need of new members. Two team members already died of respectively erysipelas and malaria and two of them left

[109] Van Loon, *Rapport*, 5-6.
[110] Ibidem, 12.
[111] Ibidem, 13-14.
[112] 'Hij [Van Loon in the third person] hoopt duidelijk aangetoond te hebben, dat de particuliere ondernemingsgeest niet in staat is geweest die industrie [gold industry] tot een behoorlijke ontwikkeling te brengen.' in Ibidem, 54.
[113] Ibidem, 61.
[114] Polak, *Historisch overzicht,* 92.
[115] The state promised these experts that the period in which they would be employed by the Maatschappij, would count as state service for the benefits of pensions and promotions, in Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, 91.
[116] Ibidem, 92.

because they were ill.[117] In the following five years, many expeditions into the interior were sent to explore possible pathways and research the soil. Throughout the jungle, labour camps were installed. A photograph, which is attributed to Hendrik Doijer, shows that a labour camp at the Saramacca Creek consisted of a small canvas tent with a mosquito net.[118]

In 1903, the construction of the railway could finally commence. The project was led by engineer J.C. van Reigersberg Versluys. To prepare himself for the task, he had researched various narrow-gauge railroads in Europe, because the Lawa Railway would also make use of a narrow gauge of one metre.[119] The decision to use this relatively small gauge was made for two reasons. The first reason was purely economic, since narrow tracks required fewer materials and were thus cheaper. The second reason was that Brazil also maintained a gauge of one metre and in British Guyana, plans to construct a railway with a one-metre gauge were already drafted up, although in the end, a railway in British Guyana was never constructed.[120] In this way, possibilities to connect the Lawa Railway to the railway network of Suriname's neighbours were kept open.[121] However, there was also a downside to the narrow gauge: the drawings and tools that were used in the Dutch East Indies could not be reused in Suriname, because a wider gauge was maintained there. When the first sleepers were laid down, the purposed length of the railway was 220 kilometres and the envisioned terminus was the confluence of the rivers Tapanahony and Lawa into the Marowijne River.[122]

In September 1903, a little more than two hundred men began working on the railway, a number that – according to Van der Veen - increased to eight hundred labourers in only two months.[123] Polak's numbers are slightly different. He speaks of twelve hundred labourers at the end of November.[124] Sandew Hira also notes that a few hundred contract labourers were

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[117] Ibidem.
[118] H. Doijer, *Souvenir de Voyage I*, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum (NG-1994-65-1). Photo 'Meetkamp met muskietennet aan de Saramaccakreek' (NG-1994-65-1-12-1).
[119] Ibidem, 208-210.
[120] 'Spoorwegen in Suriname', *Op de rails* 29.9 (1961), 107.
[121] Decades later, the idea to connect the Surinamese railway to the Brazilian rail network suddenly emerged again. In 1958, the ambassador to the Netherlands in Brazil received a letter from a Brazilian mining company, in which inquiries about the Surinamese railway gauge were requested. The Brazilians had just commenced with the exploitation of manganese in Amapá, south of Suriname. They had constructed a railway of 195 kilometres with a gauge of 1.435 meter and were already anticipating on the possibility to connect this railway to Suriname and French Guyana. The ambassador forwarded the letter to the governor of Suriname. The governor answered that the Surinamese gauge was one meter, but that an extension of the railway was not very likely. Instead, he assumed the railway would soon be closed. Source: NL-HaNA, Digitaal Duplicaat: Gouverneur van Suriname, Kabinet, 2.10.26, inv. nr. 2381 Briefwisseling met de Nederlandse ambassade in Rio de Janeiro naar aanleiding van een verzoek van de directie van de Braziliaanse Indústria e Comercio de Minérios S.A. om inlichtingen over de spoorbreedte in Suriname.
[122] 'Spoorwegen in Suriname', 210.
[123] Van der Veen, *Suriname, 'het land waar treinen niet echt hebben gereden',* 20.
[124] Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, 228

employed at the construction of the railway.[125] Hoefte remarks that the number of labourers in the early years of construction varied between six hundred and seventeen hundred men, among which were Javanese, British Indians (now generally referred to as Hindostani), Afro-Surinamese and West-Indians.[126] She also points to the role of malaria, which came to be a huge problem once the railroad reached the interior, because only Afro-Surinamese and British-Guianese were immune to this illness.[127] Polak furthermore states that the labour force consisted of 'free coolies' – with which he probably means British Indian immigrants – plus two hundred indentured labourers who were currently out of work on the plantations.[128] According to Polak, those two hundred labourers were complemented by 170 labourers that were shipped in from the Dutch West Indies, organised by the colonial government of Curaçao.[129] However, these labourers were sent back before their contracts ended because many of them got ill with malaria.[130] Technical personnel was shipped in from the Netherlands.[131] All construction labour was done manually, because it was too costly and difficult to get large machines into the jungle.[132] A report by the Moravian mission in Suriname states that the average labour force between 1 April and 15 May 1909 consisted of 600 men.[133] Polak also makes note of a transport of 57 men, nine women and five children from Java with the sole purpose of working at the railway. However, 'malaria and climatic influences' threw a spanner in the works and only a year later, they were on their way back to Java.[134] During Van Loon's exploration, it was also investigated if it was viable to appoint a doctor in charge of taking care of the exploration's personnel. Ironically, the doctor in question was – in the words of Polak 'not suitable for the hardships of a life in the jungle' and left because of illness himself.[135]

The whole project was now in the hands of the colonial government, which established the department of Colonial Railways (*Koloniale Spoorwegen*). At the Ministry of Colonies, in the meantime, there were concerns about the railway project. In a letter to David Hendrik

[125] S. Hira, *Van Priary tot en met De Kom, De Geschiedenis van het verzet in Suriname, 1630-1940* (Rotterdam, 1982), 192.
[126] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century*, 41.
[127] Ibidem.
[128] Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, 227.
[129] Ibidem.
[130] Ibidem, 228.
[131] Ibidem, 227.
[132] Wicherts and Veltkamp, *Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg*, 9.
[133] Het Utrechts Archief (NL-HUA), 48-1 Zeister Zendingsgenootschap, inv. nr. 1406 Koloniale Verslagen, 1909-1912, en Surinaams Verslag, 1930, inzake bestuur en staat van Suriname door het ministerie van Koloniën. Gedrukt, page 13.
[134] Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, 229.
[135] '[…] deze proef mislukte, daar de geneesheer niet bestand bleek tegen de ontberingen van het boschleven en reeds zeer spoedig, wegens ziekte moest terugkeeren.' in Ibidem, 247.

Havelaar, who was the director of the construction department, Reigersberg Versluys admitted that Minister of the Colonies Van Asch van Wijk lost his enthusiasm and that the secretary-general assumed that the railway would not be profitable in the first 25 years. Furthermore, he knew to tell that 'the West' appeared very disappointing to Mr. and Mrs. Lely.[136] Nonetheless, the mission to construct a railway was not aborted, because, in the words of Reigersberg Versluys: 'All in all, I get the impression that it is believed that the government as well as Mr. Lely have somewhat been disadvantaged by Minister Van Asch van Wijk and that the project will only continue because we have come this far already.'[137] In another letter he ascertained Havelaar of the fact that he was committed to the technical aspects of the railway, but that he was too down-to-earth for a leap in the dark, and that there was not much enthusiasm for the railway left at the Ministry.[138]

The lack of enthusiasm partly stemmed from the high costs. All materials had to be financed by means of Dutch capital and were imported from Europe. Even the wooden sleepers for the tracks were imported, although better wood could have been easily provided by Suriname itself.[139] More than that, if Colonial Railways had chosen to use tropical hardwood instead of European pine wood, it would have decreased the chances that the sleepers had crumbled and rotten in the humid tropical climate. At the end of 1905, tracks were laid down for the first 91 kilometres and the line was prepared for the first 102 kilometres.[140]

Next to the tracks, a marshalling yard, a swing bridge across the Dominee Creek and four rail bridges were built and the excavating work for the main station building had started as well.[141] On 28 March 1905, the governor opened the first section of the railway: Paramaribo, where the main station was located at *Vaillantsplein* to Republiek. From *Vaillantsplein*, the tracks ran at the side of the streets of the city, much like modern-day tram rails are embedded in the streets.[142] The route of the railway in the city was through

[136] NL-HaNA, 2.21.183.29, Collectie 063 Havelaar, inv. nr. 30: Brieven van jhr. J.C. Reigersberg Versluys te 's-Gravenhage, directeur der Koloniale Spoorwegen in Suriname, Letter to D.H. Havelaar (28 March 1903).
[137] 'Zoo alles bij elkaar krijg ik de indruk dat men hier meent dat én het Kabinet én de heer Lely eenigszins gedupeerd zijn door Minister v A. v. W. en de zaak eigenlijk alleen door zal gaan (waarschijnlijk) omdat men reed te ver op weg is.' in NL-HaNA, 2.21.183.29: Havelaar, inv. nr. 30, Letter from Reigersberg Versluys to Havelaar (28 March 1903).
[138] NL-HaNA, 2.21.183.29, Havelaar, inv. nr. 30, Letter from Reigersberg Versluys to Havelaar (5 March 1903).
[139] Heilbron and Willems, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', 69.
[140] Ibidem.
[141] Ibidem.
[142] This is clearly visible in photographs and glass negatives, for example in the following photographs of Augusta Curiel *SSM gn 27-297* and *SSM gn 27-490 / TM 60006341* from the collection of Stichting Surinaams Museum in Paramaribo and also presented Dijk van J., H. van Petten-van Charante and L. van Putten, *Augusta Curiel, fotografe in Suriname 1904-1937* (Amsterdam, 2007) numbered 91 and 92.

Heiligenweg, *Saramaccastraat* and *Zwartenhovenbrugstraat*. Then, the Dominee Creek – now Saramacca Canal – was crossed via a swing bridge and the rails continued their way to Beekhuizen, a former plantation turned marshalling yard and workplace just outside the city. Beekhuizen was directly connected to the Suriname River through a pier, so that large materials could easily be transferred from ship to train. Maintenance of the rolling material was possible through a work pit, which enabled mechanics to submerge under the vehicles.[143] From Beekhuizen onwards, the route of the train followed *Pad van Wanica*, which is now the *Indira Gandhiweg* and forms the main road between Paramaribo and Zanderij I and II, passing Lelydorp (before 1908 known as Kofiedjompo), Onverwacht and Republiek.[144]

On 1 August 1905, the second section was ready: Republiek - Capasikamp and on 1 January 1906 the section Capasikamp – Kwakoegron, which was located 79,5 kilometres from Paramaribo, was put into service.[145] Here, a police and customs duties post was established, to register gold miners and collect taxes.[146] On 13 August 1907, the section Kwakoegron - Guyana Goudplacer was finished.[147] From Kwakoegron, the gold placers De Jong Noord and De Jong Zuid were connected to the railway, as well as Brownsweg. After Brownsweg, Colonial Railways stumbled against a problem in the form of the wide and fierce Suriname River, which had to be crossed. Both the possibilities of a bridge and a cable cart were on the table.[148] Because of the width of the river and its turbulent stream, it was decided that a stable and durable bridge would be too costly. Instead, steel towers were erected at both riverbanks and a suspension cable was installed in between. It was possible to attach a passenger cabin capable of carrying twelve passengers as well as a freight platform to this cable, which was able to hold six tons of weight.[149] The two train stops on both sides of the river were named Kabel Noord and Kabel Zuid, '*kabel'* being the Dutch word for cable. From Kabel Zuid, the gold placers at Abontjeman, Adjama, Sikakamp, Gégé and Dam formed the stations.

In the meantime, an advisory committee had researched the development possibilities of the Lawa area.[150] The damning indictment of this research was that the high expectations that the Lawa would contain loads of gold were simply not met. From 1907, no further explorations in the Lawa area were undertaken. The colonial administration was also short on

[143] Wicherts and Veltkamp, *Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg*, 9-10.
[144] Ibidem, 10.
[145] Ibidem, 231.
[146] Ibidem, 13.
[147] Ibidem, 236.
[148] Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, 240-242.
[149] Wicherts and Veltkamp, 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', 15-16
[150] Polak, *Historisch overzicht*, i.

capital and was not able to make ends meet to establish the last part of the railway. The consequence was that it was finally decided that a continuation of the railway into the Lawa region was unnecessary. It was now decided that Dam would remain the final destination of the railroad and the intention to extend the railway to the Lawa area was let go.[151] In 1912, the railway reached a length of 173 kilometres and construction was finished.[152]

This momentum coincided with the end of the heydays of railway transport in general. Around 1918, the transport revolution shifted its focus onto airplanes and automobiles. In the decades that followed, uneconomic lines were closed everywhere around the globe.[153] However, because the Lawa Railway was not connected to a larger railway network and it served as local transport, its function could not be overtaken by airplanes and because of the harsh environment and bad infrastructure, automobiles could also not easily take over its function. Although the Lawa Railway never reached the Lawa and it was a financial burden on the colony's treasury, it was thus not closed. Heilbron and Willemsen attribute the disappointing results to a combination of a lack of thorough research, overcapitalisation, incompetent leadership and the fact that the colonial government allowed foreign companies to let the revenues flow abroad. They state that colonial policy let the extraction of resources prevail above the interests of the Surinamese population by not reinvesting revenues in Suriname itself.[154] Therefore, they see the railway question as 'one of the biggest catastrophes in the post-slavery colonial economy of Suriname.'[155] Suriname had become even more financially dependent on the metropole, through loans that had been necessary for the exploration and exploitation of the Lawa and subsequent subsidies to achieve colonial budget balance.[156]

In the discussion between the governor, the Colonial Estates of Suriname (*Koloniale Staten van Suriname*, a political representative body consisting of a small elite) and the Minister of the Colonies, the financial burden of the railway indeed plays a pivotal role. They all knew that the railway would never be profitable, if only because an annual payback of

[151] Reigersberg Versluys already mentioned speculations about this outcome at the Ministry of Colonies in 1903. In a letter to Havelaar, he notes that he was called in at the office of the Minister, who told him that he was unsure of a positive outcome of the explorations into the Lawa, and he deemed the possibility of a shorter railway quite realistic. In NL-HaNA, 2.21.183.29, Havelaar, inv. nr. 30, Letter from Reigersberg Versluys to Havelaar (5 March 1903).
[152] Van der Veen, *Suriname, 'het land waar treinen niet echt hebben gereden'*, 16.
[153] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, 50.
[154] Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Goud- en balata-exploitatie in Suriname, Deel I', 71.
[155] '[…] in de spoorwegkwestie tot een van de grootste katastrofes geleid in de koloniale ekonomie van de na-slavernij periode.' in Heilbron and Willemsen, 'Suriname en het Nederlands kapitaal', 31.
[156] Ibidem, 35.

loans was tied to it.[157] The Lawa Railway had become a failed project and a burden, but it was nevertheless not destructed. In the following chapters, the role it would come to play in Surinamese society is further explored.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Lawa Railway emerged out of an administrative sentiment that Suriname's economy had to be drastically diversified from a plantation economy to a resource-based economy in which mining and foresting would play a large role. Upon high expectation of gold finds in the Lawa area, the Dutch and colonial governments decided that a railway would be a necessary means of transportation. However, the Maatschappij Suriname NV, which was in charge of constructing the railway, went bankrupt because they could not generate enough private capital. Partly because Cornelis Lely made the construction of the railway a *sine qua non* for to become the governor of Suriname, the Dutch state took over all obligations and provided a loan to the colony, which consequently established Colonial Railways. The Lawa Railway was constructed over a length of 173 kilometres, from Paramaribo to Dam, but never reached the Lawa. By the time the railway was finished, gold revenues had dropped, and the railway never became profitable.

[157] There were also no substantial alternative modes of transport into the interior, besides river transport – which was unreliable because of the dangerous rapids and changing water levels. Civil servant F. Greiner expressed the need for laying down roads at the end of the 1920s. He saw it as problematic that there were virtually no roads after Lelydorp and the only possibility was the train, for which one had to pay.[157] He adds that it was a mistake to lay down the railroad on top of the older *Wanicapad*; a road that consequently fell out of use. In: F. Greiner, 'Het Suriname-probleem', *De West-Indische Gids* 9 (1927/1928), 531-541.

CHAPTER 3

Elitist Pleasures, Health Care and the Mission

In this chapter, the sub question *How did colonial agents use the Lawa Railway?* is central. The Lawa Railway was originally built to accommodate the gold industry, but since gold revenues soon dropped, it had to be rebranded and repurposed by the colonial authorities. Two of the main ways of doing so, were making it advantageous for health care, primarily provided by the medical mission and by giving it a dominant place in the colonial sphere of elitist pleasure. The first paragraph of this chapter goes into the elitist pleasures and is predominantly based on Surinamese newspaper articles of the 1930s and 1940s. The second and third paragraphs delve deeper into the way the railway was tied to health care and the medical mission, analysing how the railway played a role in reinforcing the colonial state, the Moravian mission and the civilising mission. Sources that corroborate the relationship between the railway and the provision of health care, among other sources, the book *Dokter in het oerwoud* by P.A. de Groot and various photographs.[158]

3.1 Elitist Pleasures

> One of the most picturesque phenomena in modern technology is the steam train. It is closely related to the steam-driven motor bike and the whistling kettle. It shares the family characteristic of being able to move over the globe swiftly with the steam-driven bikes. Its consanguinity with the whistling kettle is proven to the serious scientist by the fact that both develop steam and produce a whistling sound when water boils in their throats. Is it not a scenic sight to see a locomotive covered in steam at a crowded platform? It is ready to rapidly reach far-away places, accompanied by rattling and sissling noises. The carriages with people and freight are the epitomes of a yet withheld, but soon unbridled strength: a noble and wild Mustang that smells the prairies. These are the thoughts that undoubtedly come to mind when one enters the station hall at Vaillantsplein. On one of the platforms, the Surinamese Pullman Express is all set to leave.[159]

[158] De Groot, *Dokter in het oerwoud*.

[159] 'Tot de schilderachtigste verschijnselen in de moderne techniek behooren de stoomtreinen. Zij zijn van vrij nabij verwant met de stoomfietsen en de fluitketels. Met de stoomfietsen hebben zij de familieeigenschap gemeen dat beiden zich in snelle vaart over den bol der aarde kunnen voortbewegen. Hun bloedverwantschap met de fluitketels blijkt voor den ernstigen onderzoeker duidelijk uit het feit dat beiden stoom ontwikkelen en fluiten gaan als het water in de keel kookt. Is het geen schilderachtige aanblik, een locomotief onder stoom gereed te zien staan voor het van menschen krioelend perron? Blazend en sissend rekt zij haar leden, gereed tot den sprong naar de verte, om te trekken in pijlsnelle vaart en ratelend gedender de wagons met menschen en met vracht, een toonbeeld van nog ingehouden, maar straks toomeloos voortijlende kracht, een edele wilde mustang die de prairiën ruikt. Zulke gedachten rijzen onweerstandelijk bij u op, wanneer u de stationshallen betreedt op

The above paragraph is the opening section of a newspaper article in *De West* in 1940. The author describes a journey from Paramaribo to Zanderij I, applying every railway cliché to his narrative, from comparisons between the railway and wild horses because of their 'unbridled strength', to the notion of far-away places and the American frontier. However, the article becomes a tale of disappointment when the author later admits that 'one has many opportunities to admire the tropical landscape, because the train holds at almost every tree'.[160] This cynical remark is further strengthened by an included anecdote of a tourist who planned to undertake a pilgrimage by train to Kabel and Dam. He allegedly asked the employee at the station's counter for a railway timetable to study transfers and connections – which was ironic because these were unheard of at the small trajectory consisting of a single line. It is not traceable to what extent this anecdote is fact or fiction, but it shows how this author thought about the Surinamese railway: as a pitiful little extract of the great Iron Horse.

When talking about 'the train', the Surinamese refer to the steam train: a large black locomotive, followed by steel-and-wooden passenger and luggage carriages.[161] However, the steam train was not the only kind of rolling material Colonial Railways and later the *Landsspoorweg* possessed. There were, for instance, sleeping cars that were used by track labourers and railway personnel.[162] There was also a whole different kind of train: the draisine. This was a more compact diesel train, that was faster than the steam train, but less powerful. One of the informants explains:

> Sometimes, it occurred that the train could not be employed. Then, railway management had to bring out the draisine. Many people do not know about the draisine. You could compare the draisine to… the bus in the Netherlands! […] Everyone was always so happy, because transport by draisine was really different. We felt so pleasant. It was really – one could say – for the elite. Every time, we hoped that the train could not go, so that we could go on the draisine. And the draisine could take quite a few people, but not as much freight. I cannot remember ever seeing a draisine with more than three or four carriages. But they had – I have to say – very luxurious interiors. You just felt pleasant![163]

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het Vaillantsplein. Op een der perrons ziet u de Surinaamsche Pullmanexpress gescreend en wel gereed staan […]', 'Een spoorwegcocktail', *De West: nieuwsblad voor en uit Suriname* (4 March 1940).

[160] 'Een spoorwegcocktail'.

[161] Interview 5: Rosemarie Currie (30 April 2019) and Interview 6: Willy van der Leest-Samson (13 May 2019).

[162] Wicherts and Veltkamp, 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', 21-22.

[163] 'Het kwam wel eens voor dat de trein niet kon rijden. En in plaats daarvan zette de leiding van het spoor de draisine in. En de draisine is bij veel mensen niet bekend. Maar de draisine zou je kunnen typeren als… de bus in Nederland. […] Iedereen was heel erg blij omdat het vervoeren met de draisine heel anders was. Je voelt je prettig, het was echt, je zou bijna kunnen zeggen voor de elite. En we hoopten zo iedere keer dat de trein niet kon rijden, zodat we met de draisine gingen. En de draisine die kon ook aardig wat mensen nemen, maar natuurlijk niet zoveel vracht. Ik kan me niet herinneren dat ik ooit een draisine heb gezien met meer dan drie, vier wagons. Maar heel, ik moet zeggen, luxueus ingericht. Je voelde je lekker!' in Interview 2: Hugo Pinas (3 May 2019).

As the above quoted informant already hinted towards, the draisine was seen as a more elitist mode of transportation. It was not only employed when there were difficulties with the steam train, it could also be rented privately.[164] When high-class foreign visitors came to Suriname, the same itinerary was recycled again and again. A standard programme item was a draisine trip to Kabel, followed by a *korjaal* trip along the Maroon villages. The mayor of Amsterdam, Arnold Jan d'Ailly, experienced this programme in 1949, as well as Prince Bernhard in 1950, Prince Bernhard once again, now accompanied by Queen Juliana in 1955 and Crown Princess Beatrix in 1958.[165] Especially the visit of Queen Juliana was prepared down to the finest details, stemming from the high popularity of the Dutch royals in Suriname.[166]

Many urban professionals from Paramaribo also travelled by draisine along the Lawa Railway in the context of something I call elitist pleasure. A newspaper article in *De West* from 1947, for example, shows how a group of prominent people travelled by draisine. Among them were members of the Parliamentary Commission, a district commissioner and his secretary, a couple of engineers, the chief of infrastructural business and even six members of the Estates of Suriname (*Staten van Suriname*, the political continuation of the Colonial Estates of Suriname since 1937, which can be considered the equivalent of a parliament since World War II).[167] The ensemble enjoyed a breakfast consisting of sandwiches aboard the draisine, after which they halted at a pineapple factory, where they were welcomed with the Surinamese anthem and where they were offered a tour through the factory. Afterwards, the men were gifted pineapples and other fruits. The group travelled all the way to the end point of the line, with stops at the geological tunnels at Gros Placer and at the gold mines further south, where they were given demonstrations. At Kabel, the company transferred to *korjalen*, in which they were taken to several villages by a Maroon guide. Afterwards, they found a dining table prepared at Kabel. On the return journey, there was only a small delay at Kwakoegron to 'enjoy an aromatic cup of tea.'[168] From reading reports on expeditions like these, the question arises what their purpose was. Although the gentlemen are given tours and demonstrations of geological and industrial facilities, it seems that the

[164] A newspaper article notes that the rental price of a private draisine was 375 guilders in 1940, but official renting policies are not available in the sources. '*Een spoorwegcocktail*', *De West* (4 March 1940).
[165] 'Bezoekprogramma Burgemeester van Amsterdam', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (7 October 1949), 'Prins Bernhard naar de Antillen', *De Surinamer: nieuws- en advertentieblad* (5 January 1950), 'Het koninklijk bezoek aan de West, interessante corjaaltocht naar het binnenland', *Limburgsch Dagblad* (31 October 1955) and 'Geanimeerde conversatie van Prinses met Surinaamse studerende jeugd', *Amigoe di Curacao* (22 February 1958).
[166] See G. Oostindie, *De parels en de kroon. Het koningshuis en de koloniën* (Leiden and Amsterdam, 2006).
[167] 'Naar het eindpunt van de Surinaamsche spoorlijn', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (17 January 1947).
[168] 'om te genieten van een geurig kopje thee', 'Naar het eindpunt van de Surinaamsche spoorlijn', *De West*.

train journey was not a means to reach destinations where work had to be done, but instead turned into the main activity. Draisine trips thus became popular colonial pastimes.

Undertakings like these were not without critical remarks from the public, which were especially targeted at the Geology and Mining Service (*Geologische Mijnbouwkundige Dienst*). The editorial board of *De West* for instance writes: 'Instead of heading towards the places where important minerals are found, the gentlemen prefer short draisine excursions. […] When will these excesses stop?'[169] Exemplary of the way the activities of the Geology and Mining Service were perceived is a satirical article by G. Finn, published by *De West*, in which Finn (F) portrays a fictional interview with engineer Schools (S) of the Geology and Mining Service:

> **F**: Mister Schools, can you tell me something about the Geology and Mining Service?
> **S**: Of course, mister Finn. However, I don't have much to tell you. We are planning to draw up a geological map of Suriname, which has to be done methodically.
> **F**: But mister Schools, that will probably take a hundred years.
> **S**: Yes, but I will have earned by pension by then.
> **F**: Do you occasionally go into the forest to do research?
> **S**: Well, I make a trip per draisine once in a while. We are now looking for diamonds.
> **F**: Do you expect something special?
> **S**: No, not really, but in this way, we give the impression that we are actually doing something. Our superiors cannot judge our work. That is where our biggest strength lies.[170]

Finn thus suggests that the geologists and engineers of the Geology and Mining Service are not really engaged in actual research, but instead just ride the draisine for fun – which indeed appears so from the reports.

Among interesting regular draisine passengers were solo pilots who landed at the airstrip in Zanderij and took the draisine to their residencies. Among them were American writer Laura Ingalls, who undertook a solo flight to Suriname in 1934, the Spanish pilot Juan Ignacio Pombo who flew from South-Africa to South-America in 1935 and Amelia Earhart, who would go missing above the Pacific Ocean only one month after her visit to Suriname in

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[169] 'In plaats van zich te begeven naar plaatsen waar belangrijke mineralen zijn gevonden, maken de heren liever korte excursies per draisine. […] Wanneer zal aan deze wantoestanden een einde komen?' in 'Het werkelijke Bestuur van Suriname', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (22 July 1955).

[170] '**F**: Mijnheer Schools, kunt u mij vertellen van de Geologische Mijnbouwkundige Dienst? **S**: Zeker mijnheer Finn. Er is echter weinig te vertellen. Wij zijn van plan een geologische kaart van Suriname te maken. Dit moet methodisch geschieden. **F**: Maar mijnheer Schools, dat zal dan wel honderd jaren duren. **S**: Ik heb dan intussen mijn pensioen verdiend. **F**: Gaat U het bos wel eens in voor onderzoekingen? **S**: Af en toe maak ik een tochtje per draisine. Wij zoeken thans naar diamanten. **F**: Verwacht U iets bijzonders hiervan? **S**: Dat niet, maar wij wekken zo de indruk, dat er wat gedaan wordt. Degenen, die boven ons staan, kunnen het werk niet beoordelen. Hier ligt onze grote kracht.' in G. Finn, 'Interview van Ir. Schools', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (23 September 1950).

1937.[171] All these pilots were transported by draisine to their places of residency. The author of the newspaper article about Pombo's visit was sent to pick up Pombo from the airport. From his report, it becomes clear that the circumstances of travel were highly class-related. While queens, princes and mayors were accommodated in their draisine journeys with all kinds of comforts, middle-class visitors were treated less luxuriously. The author namely writes that riding the draisine was not fun at all, because it was slow and produced a deafening noise. Moreover, the whistle was continuously used to chase chickens away from the rails and the passengers needed to get out once in a while to remove dirt from the tracks.[172] The author was clearly ashamed that he had to take Pombo to Paramaribo by draisine, because he writes:

> To make matters worse, we had to transport Pombo to his residency by draisine. He had probably expected a grand reception, and now he was transported by a roaring and rattling toy train in a very uncomfortable position. Luckily, we could not have a conversation because of the noise.[173]

The Lawa Railway has thus been utilised as a source of elitist pleasure, but it also entailed a shameful, slow and noisy means of transport. On the one hand, the Surinamese elite used the fancy draisines to go on seemingly meaningless expeditions, to enjoy meals and cups of tea aboard, visiting all kinds of fun places along the way. On the other hand, the less fancy draisines turned out to be a shameful means of transportation, because they were slow and loud. The trips of the urban elite and foreign visitors were, however, not the only *raisons d'être* of the Lawa Railway, as I will show in the next two paragraphs.

3.2 Health Care on Wheels: The Train as Policlinic and Ambulance

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the occurrence of the infectious tropical disease known as malaria increased in the interior of Suriname. Geert-Jan Hallewas notes that there were 407 cases of malaria reported in 1904, which increased to a prevalence of 1,507 in 1905, of which 351 people deceased.[174] The reason of this increase was probably that the number of

[171] 'Hulde aan Miss Laura Ingalls', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (30 April 1934), 'Vliegavontuur op Suriname, de landing van Juan Ignacio Pombo', *Het volk* (20 September 1935) and 'Amelia Earhart in ons land', *De Surinamer: nieuws- en advertentieblad* (5 June 1937).
[172] 'Vliegavontuur op Suriname'.
[173] 'Toen moesten wij Pombo tot overmaat van ramp in de draisine naar huis brengen. Die had wellicht een grote ontvangst verwacht en werd nu op een brullend en ratelend speelgoedtreintje, in allerongemakkelijkste houding, vervoerd. Gelukkig liet het lawaaierige ding geen conversatie toe.' Ibidem.
[174] G-J. Hallewas, *De gezondheidszorg in Suriname* (Groningen, 1981), 143.

people working in the interior rose in this period. They were working in the interior for long uninterrupted periods in railway construction or gold mining. There was already a doctor stationed in Republiek, but during the first years of railway construction, a hospital was built there as well to accommodate the many cases of malaria. This hospital was teared down when the tracks reached Republiek and sick people could easily be transported to Paramaribo.[175] Eventually, the doctor also left Republiek in 1909, only leaving behind a policlinic which was staffed from Lelydorp. There, a doctor came to be permanently stationed from 1929 onwards, providing policlinic services in and around Lelydorp.[176] As a result of the railway connection with Paramaribo, Lelydorp – formerly known as Kofiedjompo – had become a popular place of residence.[177] Probably because the success of Kofiedjompo was allotted to the railway, the village had been renamed Lelydorp in 1908, after the spiritual father of the railway.

Hallewas furthermore mentions that the policlinics were served from the train in Republiek, Onverwacht and Kabel. Sick people who came from the gold concessions could be treated in Onverwacht where facilities for temporary admissions were built.[178] It is unclear if Hallewas meant that a doctor would travel to the policlinic by train, or that the policlinic was held at the train. At least from the 1930s, the latter occurred, as I will show below.

The train primarily functioned in the health care network in two main shapes: as an ambulance and as a policlinic. In a meeting of the Colonial Estates of Suriname about the colonial budget for 1933, member Anton Dragten addressed the poor circumstances in which medical care was provisioned 'at the railway' and the consequences thereof:

> If the train stops at Lelydorp, the doctor has to treat all waiting patients in five or ten minutes. The patients are lined up and have self-diagnosed. The doctor decides which remedy is fitting and his assistant distributes medicine. When someone's tooth has to be pulled or the doctor needs to cut something, it can happen that the screeching whistle of the train that signals its departure sounds, amidst the intervention. What can we expect of treatment under such conditions?[179]

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[175] Hallewas, *De gezondheidszorg in Suriname*, 143.
[176] Ibidem.
[177] Suriname National Archives, Paramaribo (SR-NA), inv. nr. 03.0001.005, Philip Dikland, *Lelydorp (Kofidjompo) aan het Pad van Wanica* (2004).
[178] Ibidem, 143-144.
[179] 'Heeft men wel eens den toestand gezien aan den spoorbaan? Als de trein boven Lelydorp stopt, dan moet de dokter in vijf of tien minuten de wachtende zieken helpen. Zij staan er in een rijtje. Iedere patient maakt zelf zijn diagnose, waarna de dokter de therapie bepaalt en de oppasser de medicijnen ronddeelt. Is er een kies te trekken, of iets te snijden, dan weerklinkt midden onder die bezigheid het snerpend geluid van den trein, ten teeken van vertrek. Wat moet er onder zulke omstandigheden van de behandeling worden?' in the speech of Anton Dragten during a budget meeting in the Colonial Estates of Suriname, published in: 'De begrooting voor 1933. II. De Burgerlijke Geneeskundige Dienst', *De West* (6 May 1932).

From this speech, it becomes clear that the train functioned as a policlinic on wheels.[180] The doctor transported himself to the different places via train, where he would get off and treat as many patients as possible on the spot. A more extensive description of this practice can be found in a book titled *In het Surinaamse oerwoud* by engineer Adriaan Gouka, who travelled to Suriname during the late 1930s. According to Gouka, on every first Tuesday of the month, a doctor would ride along, accompanied by an assistant. Gouka witnessed one of these doctor's rides:

> At every stop, I witnessed the same scene of waiting patients. The heavily ill were carried by family members, who might have carried their burden for hours along uncomfortable forest paths. The ones with bandaged limbs or swollen faces due to a toothache stood in the background, patiently waiting their turns. The rear balcony of the passenger car had been turned into a waiting room, with a fountain to wash your hands. The familiar hospital smell drifted into the passenger carriage, where the travellers watched the doctor's procedures with interest. The patients were treated in a fast pace, but the train could not wait until everyone was helped, because it had to arrive at Kabel Station before dark. Patients who were still able to walk climbed into the train and the doctor would continue treating them in his moving clinic. When a patient was provided with a bandage or medication, they thanked the doctor and jumped off the moving train, which continued at a speed of 25 kilometres per hour through the jungle. The faster patients were treated, the shorter the way they had to walk back home. There was a frightened young fellow whose tooth had to be pulled – which was also part of the doctor's activities. The boy fainted when the doctor grabbed his pliers and he had to walk 15 kilometres home, when he was relieved of his pain.[181]

A similar narrative was published in *Amersfoortsch Dagblad* in 1933, reported by a Moravian missionary.[182] He also states that the doctor was stationed at the rear balcony. At Lelydorp,

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[180] See also the section 'Brieven uit Republiek', *De banier van waarheid en recht* (31 January 1934): 'Dinsdag 11. deed de geneesheer dienst per draisine, maar, o wee! Bij K.M. 35^5 raakte het rijtuig onklaar en kon de dienst niet worden voorgezet. Met de trein werd het weggehaald.' Translation: 'On tuesday 11, the doctor was on duty on the draisine, but alas, at K.M 35^5, the carriage broke down and he could not continue his duty. The carriage was taken away with the help of the train.'

[181] 'Bij iedere stopplaats zag ik hetzelfde toneeltje van wachtende patiënten. De zwaar zieken gedragen door familieleden, die hun last misschien al uren lang vervoerd hadden over ongemakkelijke bospaden. De overigen met verbonden ledematen of door kiespijn gezwollen gezichten, vormden de achtergrond en stonden daar geduldig hun beurt af te wachten. Het achterbalcon van de personenwagen was herschapen in een wachtkamer, met een fonteintje om handen te wassen en het bekende hospitaalluchtje zweefde de coupé van de reizigers binnen, die vol belangstelling de manipulaties van de geneesheer gadesloegen. In snel tempo werden de patiënten geholpen, maar toch kon de trein niet wachten, tot allen waren behandeld, want voor het invallen van de duisternis moest Kabelstation zijn bereikt. Dan klommen de patiënten die nog lopen konden in de trein en op weg naar het volgende station ging de geneesheer onverstoorbaar verder in zijn rijdende kliniek. Zodra er weer een zieke was verbonden, of voorzien van medicamenten, werd de dokter bedankt en sprong de patiënt snel van de trein af, die met een vaart van 25 km per uur verder pufte door het oerwoud. Hoe vlugger de mensen geholpen werden, hoe korter de weg die ze naar huis terug moesten lopen. Een angstige jonge kerel, die een kies moest laten trekken, want ook dat hoort tot de bezigheden van de treingeneesheer, viel flauw toen de dokter naar de tang greep en moest een wandeling van 15 km maken, nadat hij van zijn pijn verlost was.' in Gouka, *In het Surinaamse oerwoud*, 97-98.

[182] 'Met den dokter Suriname in. Per trein door het oerwoud', *Amersfoortsch Dagblad* (5 August 1933).

the missionary notices, swarms of sick people came to the train to ask the doctor for medicine. There were also plenty of healthy people who wanted to replenish their medicine stock. Since the doctor only came once a month, it was important to have a little supply just in case. The missionary corroborates Gouka's narrative that the train had to leave before all patients could be treated. He furthermore observed that the first class carriage was turned into an operating room, where severely ill patients were treated and injections against syphilis were administered. The same scene was repeated at every stop. At De Jong Zuid, not only medicine were distributed among the inhabitants, there were also letters that had to be passed out. A post employee leaned out the window of the train and announced the names and addresses on the letters he had with them. The addressees would then rush toward the train to get their letters. After a journey of twelve hours, the train arrived at Kabel. The next morning, Maroons from Gansee and Koffiekamp arrived with sick villagers in their *korjalen*, who the doctor then treated in Kabel before he returned to Paramaribo.

The second configuration of the railway in the health care network was functioning as an ambulance. Surinamese newspaper articles from the 1930s and 1940s report about accidents and incidents and how the wounded and ill were transported by draisine. For example, in 1933, an American filmmaker who was filming in the interior for Metro Goldmayer Film, was severely ill and was transported to the military hospital by draisine.[183] In 1943, a Moravian brother and four forest labourers got severe burns when a can of gasoline exploded nearby Jacob Condre. They were transported to Lelydorp first, where a doctor gave them emergency care, after which they were transported to Paramaribo by draisine to be checked at the hospital.[184] Patients did not have to wait until a train or draisine arrived according to schedule. Instead, draisines could be sent to pick up patients.[185] In a newspaper article from 1946, it is written that a draisine was sent to Kwakoegron to pick up a sick person. However, on its way there, the draisine had a collusion with another person. This person who got heavily wounded in the accident, was taken aboard and also transported to the hospital.[186] Next to serving as an ambulance, it also happened that the draisine had to operate as a hearse. In 1946, a seventeen-year-old boy drowned during a family getaway in

[183] 'Zieke per draisine in de stad aangevoerd', *Suriname* (28 March 1933).
[184] 'Ongeluk', *De West* (30 August 1943).
[185] If trains and draisines were not available, it also happened that the pump trolley was employed. Mission doctor Wim Vlaanderen explains how he and a few assistants went from Kabel to a gold placer by pump trolley, after they got a phone call in which an accident was reported. The 9 kilometre ride took them an hour, and after arrival they put the unconcisous patient on a stretcher onto the trolley, to get back to the hospital at Kabel. in W. Vlaanderen, *Jaja Dande*. *Medische avonturen in Suriname* (Nijkerk, 2007), 48.
[186] 'Aanrijding Draisine', *De West* (2 January 1946).

Republiek. His body was transported to Paramaribo by draisine.[187] Patients that were not severely ill or life-threatening wounded, were often treated by doctors and nurses that were stationed in the interior.

3.3 *Prinses Juliana* Mission Hospital

Whereas the colonial government generally provided health care in Paramaribo and other villages, health care in the interior almost completely lied in the hands of the mission, which had stationed doctors and nurses in different places in the interior.[188] This is in line with the imperial mission in general, which made hospitals and dispensaries central elements of their mission strategy.[189] According to Hallewas, the characteristics of the medical mission were that the medical posts were quite isolated, but that the communication between the doctors was frequent and that the central organisation was well-orchestrated.[190] The organisation of the medical mission in the interior was raised to a higher level in 1947, when the Moravian Brotherhood (*Evangelische Broedergemeente*) opened a new hospital in Kabel: the *Prinses Juliana* Mission Hospital.[191]

At the head of this mission hospital was doctor P.A. de Groot, assisted by his wife, two nurses and a keeper.[192] Originally, De Groot was given the assignment to build a hospital at Gansee. Here, a Dutch deaconess, Nelly de Borst, had run a small clinic on her own since 1934.[193] Upon arrival of doctor De Groot, the services of De Borst were no longer needed, and she went back to the Netherlands. Soon, it became apparent that the Maroon councillors (*gransoema*) of Gansee were not willing to give consent to build a larger hospital, including outbuildings and residencies on their land. De Groot was demotivated at first, but his despair quickly vanished when he realised the better location for a hospital was Kabel, because it was

[187] 'Verdronken', *De West* (5 August 1946).
[188] Hallewas, *De gezondheidszorg in Suriname*, 197.
[189] Arnold, 'Introduction', 17.
[190] Hallewas, *De gezondheidszorg in Suriname,* 264.
[191] The name of the hospital was chosen strategically. The hospital was named after the Dutch crown princess and soon to be queen Juliana because the Moravian Brotherhood thought it was an appealing name for the wider public, which was needed to attract funding. NL-HUA, 48-1 Zeister Zendingsgenootschap van de Evangelische Broedergemeente 1793-1962, inv. nr. 1100, Letter from P.A. de Groot to the Moravian Brotherhood in Zeist (26 July 1946).
[192] 'De inwijding van het Prinses Juliana Hospitaal op Kabel Station'.
[193] Once in every two weeks, the doctor from Lelydorp came to Kabel to help her, but they had difficulties with the distribution of medicine and when World War II broke out, it became impossible for him to travel to Kabel, from Hallewas, *De gezondheidszorg in Suriname*, 125 and 'Bouw van een zendingshospitaal in het boschland', *De West: nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (10 March 1947).

a ‘transport hub’, located both at the railway and at the Suriname river.[194] In this way, it was easy to supply the hospital from Paramaribo by train as well as to receive visitors. At the same time, De Groot could travel to the surrounding Maroon villages by *korjaal* to treat patients on location, having the possibility to urge very sick patients to let him treat them at the hospital.[195] Another important argument for building the hospital in Kabel was formulated from the point of view of the mission. De Groot writes to the Moravian Brotherhood in Zeist that the ‘heathen Maroons’ would have the possibility in Kabel to come into closer contact with the culture of the ‘big world’ as he phrases it, consisting of the wood and gold industries and the railway, which all came together and were highly visible in Kabel.[196] A discourse in which the railway had a pedagogic function had been around in missionary circles for decades. Missionary Henry Weiss travelled to Suriname in 1914 and visited the villages along the Suriname River. He stated that the railway was a ‘pedagogical factor’ for the common people as well as the railway employees.[197] For him, the pedagogical element of the railway was grounded in the assumption that punctuality was not a common feature for Surinamese people.[198] This is a well-known colonial and racist trope, which consists of the idea that people of colour were lazy and inefficient. Moreover, as Giordano Nanni shows, time-discipline was tied to morality, since the early Christian monasteries in medieval Europe, where ‘wasting time’ was first designated a sin.[199] Not being punctual was thus considered immoral and in order to civilise, one needed to be taught punctuality and efficiency, especially in the context of the mission. The new mission hospital at Kabel would thus serve multiple intertwining colonial functions, from providing health care, to converting heathens and to civilise and raise the local inhabitants by means of pedagogical elements, of which the railway was one.

On 20 October 1947, an excursion train left the main station in Paramaribo, followed by a draisine as soon as it reached Beekhuizen. Both vehicles were headed for the inauguration of the *Prinses Juliana* Mission Hospital. Aboard the excursion train were hundreds of people that saw an opportunity for a special family getaway, while aboard the draisine were only officially invited guests. Among the guests were the medical inspector

[194] De Groot, *Dokter in het oerwoud*, 36 and NL-HUA, 48.1 Zeister Zendingsgenootschap, inv. nr. 1100, Letter from P.A. de Groot to the Moravian Brotherhood in Zeist (3 February 1947).
[195] De Groot, *Dokter in het oerwoud*, 56-94.
[196] NL-HUA, 48.1 Zeister Zendingsgenootschap, inv. nr. 1100, Letter from P.A. de Groot to the Moravian Brotherhood in Zeist (3 February 1947).
[197] H. Weiss, *Vier maanden in Suriname* (Nijkerk, 1915), 100.
[198] Weiss, *Vier maanden in Suriname*, 100.
[199] G. Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time. Ritual, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* (Manchester and New York, 2012), 38.

annex representative of the governor, several politicians, a military commander, the head of the Department of the Repression of Endemic and Infectious Diseases (*Dienst ter Bestrijding van Volks- en Besmettelijke Ziekten)*, the director of the main hospital of Paramaribo (*'s Lands Hospitaal*) and directors of large companies. Many of them had brought their wives. The inspector of the mission schools W.F.E. Smelik welcomed the passengers aboard, and started to tell an anecdote: years ago, he accompanied a doctor on his visit to Berg en Dal, one of the Maroon villages in the interior. The doctor had two hours to treat all ailments, from pulling teeth to bandage wounds. After that short visit, the next possibility for the villagers to see a doctor would be six months later.[200]

The purpose of Smelik's anecdote was to show Paramaribo's elite that the medical care for the inhabitants of the interior had enormously improved, thanks to the Moravian Brotherhood. The passengers would see the materialisation of this progress with their own eyes in less than four hours. Upon arrival at the hospital, medical inspector Dr. Schuitemaker committed to an opening address, in which he made clear that the hospital was primarily built to provide health care for the Maroons. He also said: 'Medical and hygienic progress cannot take place without social improvement, such as better housing, proper nutrition, cleanliness and getting rid of bad habits.'[201] Here, Schuitemaker articulated the civilising mission quite literally. The Moravian brothers did not only build a hospital to provide the interior's inhabitants with medical care, it was also their intent to raise them to become proper Christians with corresponding morals. On the first row of the audience, nine Maroon captains were seated. Dr. Schuitemaker turned to them and insisted that they should let go of their traditional medicine.[202] Schuitemaker's speech and his remarks towards the Maroon captains fit in the vision of late European colonialism and colonial medicine. David Arnold states in this context that for many 'European administrators, reformers and physicians, the hazards and depredations of disease were an established part of a hostile and as yet untamed tropical environment.'[203] They regarded European medical knowledge superior and according to them, only European medical intervention could civilise the social order of the colonies.[204]

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[200] 'De inwijding van het Prinses Juliana Hospitaal op Kabel Station', *De West: Nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (22 October 1947).
[201] 'Medische en hygiënische vooruitgang kunnen eenmaal niet zonder sociale verbetering, zoals betere woningbouw, doelmatige voeding, zindelijkheid, verandering van slechte gewoonten.' in: Dr. Schuitemaker's addressing speech at the inauguration of the *Prinses Juliana* mission hospital, published in 'De inwijding van het Prinses Juliana Hospitaal op Kabel Station', *De West: Nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (22 October 1947).
[202] 'De inwijding van het Prinses Juliana Hospitaal op Kabel Station'.
[203] Arnold, 'Introduction',3.
[204] Ibidem.

Another part of the civilising mission was an assimilation strategy, which was aimed at educating all inhabitants of Suriname to become good citizens, substantiated on a Dutch and Christian model. To arrive at this accomplishment, it was deemed necessary to strip the various ethnic groups of their religious and cultural practices, languages and customs. As Stephen Snelders shows, regimes of standardised knowledge were regulated through colonial health policies. These characterised what he calls the 'authoritarian modernist' late colonial state.[205] Snelders argues that the colonial rulers considered cultural and religious folk practices as harmful, because they were associated with 'black magic', which could be used against them. At the same time, the Dutch had been interested in African and Native American medicine since the seventeenth century, because they hoped they could gain knowledge about how to treat tropical diseases.[206] However, it was never the intention to transfer non-Western medical regimes to colonial medicine. Instead, elements of folk beliefs and medicine were disposed of their underlying world views or religious bases and carefully implemented into colonial medical discourse.[207] Doctor De Groot found that Maroon public health should not be considered high-standing: 'with a few exceptions, their knowledge of plants and herbs with health benefits is not great.'[208] He furthermore notes that the low levels of civilisation and mentality among the Maroons formed obstacles to develop efficient health care.[209]

The *Prinses Juliana* Mission Hospital was built directly next to the railway tracks, as is indicated by a 1947 series of photographs by Willem van de Poll.[210] The series consist of dozens of photographs of the hospital and its surroundings. On most of the pictures, doctor Duurvoort is portrayed. From a letter De Groot sent to the Moravian Brotherhood, it appears that he was enjoying a vacation at the time Van de Poll visited Kabel and doctor Duurvoort replaced him during his absence.[211] Van de Poll's photographs show the hospital terrain, enclosed by a fence and a wooden gate which is connected with the tracks by a less than fifty metres long path.[212] What we see here is a well-orchestrated colonial interplay of transport and medical care, suffused with a strong taste of the Christian mission. This ties in closely

[205] S. Snelders, *Leprosy and Colonialism, Suriname under Dutch Rule, 1750-1950* (Manchester, 2017), 119.
[206] Snelders, *Leprosy and Colonialism*, 199.
[207] Ibidem, 199-200.
[208] 'Op een enkele uitzondering na is de kennis van heilzaam werkende kruiden en planten niet groot.' in De Groot, *Dokter in het oerwoud*, 114.
[209] Ibidem, 117.
[210] NL-HaNA, Fotocollectie Van de Poll, 2.23.14.02.
[211] NL-HUA, 48.1 Zeister Zendingsgenootschap, inv. nr. 1101, Letter from P.A. de Groot to the Moravian Brotherhood in Zeist (11 June 1948).
[212] NL-HaNA, Fotocollectie Van de Poll, 2.24.14.02, inv. nrs. 252-5995 to 252-5997, 'Het Juliana Zendingshospitaal in Kabel' (1947).

with observations by British colonial adventurer David Livingstone, who 'regarded railroads and telegraphs as important instruments for breaking down barriers to Christian conversion.'[213] The Lawa Railway brought missionaries and mission doctors into the interior and facilitated transport of ill forest inhabitants into medical mission institutions. The Moravian Brotherhood in Paramaribo now had a reliable lifeline with the interior.

Conclusion

This chapter asked how colonial agents used of the Lawa Railway. The first finding is that the urban elite from Paramaribo, consisting of engineers, geologists and all kinds of directors rode the railway to go on excursions in the interior. On of the main activities during these excursions was riding the draisine, in which the gentlemen were sometimes served breakfast. The fancy draisines of the Lawa Railway were thus deployed for elitist pleasure. These luxurious draisines were also a regular component of the programmes of royal and high-class visitors from the Netherlands. At the same time, the less-fancy draisines were utilised to accommodate middle-class foreign visitors, such as writers and pilots. In this way, class became an important signifier as to which kind of rolling material was employed.

The second finding is that the railway was highly connected to the Surinamese healthcare network south of Paramaribo. First by functioning as a policlinic on wheels, second as an ambulance and third by playing its part in a convoluted interplay of the railway, the mission and health care in an overarching colonialist structure. The *Prinses Juliana* mission hospital was located in Kabel, directly at the railway tracks. In this way, the Moravian mission had a permanent connection to the interior, where they felt substantial mission work had to be done. Moreover, in missionary discourse, the railway played a pedagogical role in civilising the Maroons and teaching them punctuality and a modern time-sense.

[213] David Livingstone, paraphrased in Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men,* 206.

CHAPTER 4

Repurposes: Education, Recreation and Livelihoods

In this chapter, the third sub question is central: *How have the people of Suriname repurposed the Lawa Railway?* As I mentioned in the introduction, I have interviewed various people in Suriname who have experienced the Lawa Railway in one way or another. The purpose of the interviews was uncovering Surinamese people's memories of and experiences with the railway. Seven in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten different people have been conducted. These interviews form the basis of this chapter, although they do not form the sole source of material. Primary and secondary literature and newspaper articles are studied to substantiate the analysis. From the qualitative analysis of the interviews, four central themes emerged: medical care, livelihoods, education and recreation.[214] The topic of medical care has been extensively treated in the previous chapter. The other central themes are discussed in this chapter. In a paragraph about education and recreation, I show how rural children who lived close to the railway went to school in the city by train, while urban middle-class children rode the train in the other direction to celebrate the school holidays in Republiek. The third paragraph goes into livelihoods, predominantly in the interior, shaped by activities like mining, vending and trading.

4.1 School Days and Holidays

In Suriname, compulsory education had been implemented for children between seven and twelve years old in 1874.[215] Education was seen as a powerful means to assimilate and civilise all population groups in Suriname. In order to arrive at this objective, all children were educated in Dutch and parents did not have to pay school fees.[216] However, in the middle of the twentieth century, education in the rural districts was still less well-organised than at urban schools, and the absence rates were high, probably partly due to the fact that rural children often were expected to help in the field.[217] Another problem was that many rural children, often from Javanese or Hindostani descent, lived on agricultural plots that used to be plantations. Their homes were thus not concentrated in towns, so many of them had to walk a

[214] See Appendix 2 for an extensive explanation.
[215] Van Lier, *Samenleving in een grensgebied*, 142.
[216] Ibidem.
[217] NL-HaNA, Ministerie van Koloniën: Collectie Grijs [Drukwerk], 2.10.64, inv. nr. 5, H. van Bohemen, 'Surinaamse onderwijszorgen', a copy from an article in *De West-Indische Gids* 32 (1951), 65-91, 7.

long distance to get to a school.[218] For children who lived relatively close to one of the stops of the Lawa Railway, however, there was a reliable possibility to go to school in Paramaribo, to enjoy education of a higher quality.

In the region south of Paramaribo, the train stopped at many places that were not official stations, for instance at Saron, Ephraimszegen, Frederikshoop, Hanna's Lust and Helene Christina – most of them old plantations. Here, the children that lived nearby got on the train, like one of the interviewees. He used the train as school transport for three years, starting in 1958, when the interviewee was ten years old. From his home in Welgedacht C, he travelled by train to Beekhuizen, from where he took a bus to cover the last stretch to his school in de *Keizersstraat* in Paramaribo.[219] He said the whole journey took him two and a half hours, making it a total of five hours of travel time a day. It took so long because the train was slow, tells the interviewee:

> I know of an anecdote that I can remember well. There was a well-known person from the *Commissarisweg*, who would ride alongside the train on his bicycle. He could keep up with the train's tempo. The boys [in the train] greeted him and talked to him. He wanted to draw attention, this gentleman.[220]

During the long train ride, the interviewee played games with his school friends. They had maps with them for geography and quizzed each other with it. He remembers that other children played card games and that occasionally, there were fights between rival groups of students. The train conductor would only come into the carriage if the fighting was over.[221] When asked about tickets, the interviewee recalls that there were special tickets for school children that could only be used during certain times of the day. At these times, the train was packed with school children and students. He does not know the exact prices anymore, but he said the tickets must have been cheap because his parents were 'very poor'.[222] That was also the reason that he only rode the train to go to school. He never went to visit Lelydorp or other places southwards, because his family could not afford these kinds of luxuries. Moreover, his parents were farmers and the family did not have time for recreation because they had to take

[218] NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Grijs, 2.10.64, inv. nr. 5, Van Bohemen, 'Surinaamse onderwijszorgen', 14.
[219] Interview 7: M. Hassankhan (25 April 2019).
[220] 'Dan heb ik een mooie anekdote, die ik me goed herinner. Elke dag was er een bekend persoon van de Commissarisweg, die op de fiets langs de trein meereed. En hij kon het tempo van de trein bijhouden. Dan gingen de jongens tegen hem praten en hem groeten. Dus hij wou ook aandacht trekken, deze meneer.' in Interview 7: (M. Hassankhan) (25 April 2019).
[221] Ibidem.
[222] 'Ja de trein was vrij goedkoop, dan moet ik niet jokken. Want ik kwam zelf uit heel arme ouders en mijn ouders die stuurden me met de trein naar school.' in Interview 7: M. Hassankhan (25 April 2019).

care of the farm. In 1961, the trajectory between Lelydorp and Beekhuizen was closed. The government started deploying school buses from that moment on, which was something positive for this interviewee, because the bus was quicker than the train, although the downside was, he had to wait inside the bus while the other children were brought home.

Another interviewee lived close to Onverwacht and he took the train to go to school in Paramaribo, around the same time as the previous interviewee, when he was six or seven years old.[223] He remembers:

> It was quite the experience, because as a rural kid, you generally had to stay at your village. However, we had the pleasure to go to school some 30 or 35 kilometres away. So, for us it was quite the adventure to experience something like this. It was very pleasant. We left our homes early in the morning and we returned between 2 or 3'o clock in the afternoon. Maybe even later. The train was the only means of transportation from the far interior, and there were a lot of stops. But the stops were also exciting, because it gave us the opportunity to do some mischief… […] I was just a small kid, so I experienced it, but I could not participate in it. […] So, what happened? At certain stops the Javanese were selling peanuts in special packages, and they were also selling the Javanese-Surinamese dish *petjel*, that is made of yardlong beans, peanuts, sambal et cetera. And they sold it in banana leaves. […] When the train had stopped, people had to go on and off, and maybe they also needed to load and unload freight and, in those moments, people came to the train to sell their goods. People on the train, the older kids, got off and asked the Javanese women for peanuts. But they waited until the conductor blew on his whistle and when the train was already moving, they quickly jumped on it. The vendors never got their money.[224]

Both interviewees have pleasant memories about riding the train to school. Although it was slow, it was an adventure and it provided the opportunity to play games with friends and to witness mischief. The quoted interviewee also pointed to another railway phenomenon: vending. This phenomenon is further analysed in paragraph 4.3. Throughout the literature, short descriptions and fragments are found that corroborate the function of school transport.

[223] Interview 2: H. Pinas (3 May 2019).

[224] 'Het was een hele belevenis omdat je op de eerste plaats als districtskind, als jongeling, zou je op je dorp moeten blijven. Maar wij hadden het genoegen om van het dorp ongeveer 30, 35 kilometer verder naar school te gaan. Dus voor ons was het een hele belevenis om dat mee te maken. Het was erg prettig en we gingen vroeg 's morgens van huis en we kwamen ongeveer zo tussen 2 en 3 uur terug. Misschien iets later zelfs, omdat die trein het enige vervoermiddel was toen, vanuit het verre binnenland en hij had heel veel stops. Maar die stops waren natuurlijk ook enerverend omdat we ook heel wat kattenkwaad uithaalden. […] Maar ik was klein, dus ik maakte het mee, maar ik kon niet eraan meedoen. […] Wat gebeurde er? Op bepaalde plaatsen waar de trein stopte verkochten de Javanen pinda. Er was een speciale ouderwetse verpakking en ze verkochten ook het Javaans-Surinaamse gerecht *petjel*, dat is van kousenband gemaakt, pinda, sambal, enzovoort. En dat werd verkocht in bananenblad. […] De trein stopte en terwijl de trein mensen eruit kwamen en misschien moesten ze ook spullen uitladen, vracht enzo, kwamen de mensen spullen aan de man brengen bij de trein. En de mensen van de trein, dus de kinderen, iets oudere, ze stapten uit en ze vroegen die Javaanse vrouwen een pakje pinda om het maar zo te zeggen. Maar ze wachtten totdat de conducteur op z'n fluit blies, dat betekent de trein gaat vertrekken en dan betaalden ze niet! En wanneer de trein eenmaal begon te lopen sprongen ze in de trein, waardoor de mensen hun geld niet kregen.' in Interview 2: H. Pinas (3 May 2019).

Karin Sitalsing for instance, writes about her *boeroe* ancestors: Dutch lower class farmers who migrated to Suriname in the nineteenth century. Twentieth-century relatives of her lived in Lelydorp while going to school in Paramaribo and travelled there by train.[225]

Children from the countryside thus rode the train northwards on schooldays. The situation was quite different for urban middle-class families. They, by contrast, only rode the train during the weekends or holidays, leaving Paramaribo behind while pulling southwards. Some fifty kilometres south of Paramaribo, a popular recreation spot is located: Republiek. Some people believe that the cool dark brown waters of the Coropina Creek (popularly known as Cola Creek because of the water's colour) have healing effects.[226] Middle and high class families from the city regularly celebrated the summer holidays in Republiek. One of the interviewees recalls that she went there by train as a kid, with her siblings and her mother in the 1940s and 1950s. Her father could not enjoy the holidays, because he had to work. Nevertheless, he came to Republiek by train after work to join his family and left the next morning around five or six 'o clock to go back to work.[227] This interviewee has very pleasant memories about the train, which she fondly calls *boemeltreintje*, a word for a slow omnibus train, often used as a tourist attraction. She reminisces about the holidays in nostalgia:

> Oh, that was the pinnacle of – let's say – fun! Because there weren't playgrounds for children, but you had the Coropina Creek. And that's why I began to love Republiek so much. Even in the years thereafter, I kept coming there. […] Swimming in the creek was fun and we had a little boat, and we spent our days like that. It was a luxurious life! Because you are young, and you do not do much. My mother made us breakfast, we drank tea and then we went out. Almost everyone was there, many people were on holiday. You went to your neighbours, then a little further by boat, and then you got out of the boat again. At 2 o' clock you were hungry, so you went home to eat. My mother had prepared food. No one had a refrigerator; some people did not even have electricity. So, she had to prepare things that stayed good […], canned corned beef, canned corn, and of course rice stays good and beans […] Well, those were our days: swimming, fishing… Every afternoon I sat at the creek, taking those fish out of the water. That was our life during the holidays. Unbelievably nostalgic. We never went abroad for the holidays. We went to Republiek.[228]

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[225] K. Sitalsing, *Boeroes, een familiegeschiedenis van Witte Surinamers* (Amsterdam, 2018), 157.
[226] Interview 5: R. Currie, (10 May 2019).
[227] Interview 5: R. Currie, (10 May 2019).
[228] Quote: "Oh, dat was het einde van, laten we zeggen, van vertier! Want je had niet een speeltuin of speelapparaten voor kinderen, maar je had die kreek daar, dus de Coropina. En ik ben zo gaan houden van Republiek hierdoor en ook de jaren daarna ging ik altijd naar Republiek […] Ja, het zwemmen in die kreek was leuk en we hadden daar een bootje en onze dag werd zo doorgebracht. Het was een luxe leven, want je bent jong en je doet niet veel. M'n moeder maakte ontbijt, eten, thee drinken en dan gingen we op stap. Want iedereen was bijna daar, veel mensen waren met vakantie. Je buren, dan ging je daarnaartoe en dan ging je verder en dan ging je de boot in en dan ging je een eindje varen en dan stapte je weer daar uit. Twee uur heb je honger, dan ging je naar huis, dan ging je eten, heeft je moeder dingen klaargemaakt en wat ze dan klaarmaakte, want in die tijd had niemand een koelkast omdat sommigen hadden niet eens elektriciteit. Dus ze moest altijd dingen meenemen die

Another interviewee also has pleasant memories about holidays in Republiek, speaking about the 1960s, when she would go there with her children. They would rent a holiday home for a week. She recalls that many people who could afford it had a holiday home in Republiek.[229] Not all interviewees experienced the holidays themselves. Someone I spoke to worked for the government in 'observation and research' and drove past Republiek to go to work. He remembered seeing many people in Republiek during the holidays.[230]

The written sources about Republiek are limited. In some books and articles, small remarks about a holiday at the Coropina Creek are incorporated. For example, historian Rudolf van Lier used to go to Republiek by train to celebrate the holidays.[231] Another example is former Surinamese prime-minister Henck Arron, who also went to Republiek by train during the summer holidays.[232] Coen Ooft wrote about holidays in Republiek in his collection of stories titled *Spanhoek*. He tells that the flying sparks, coming from the locomotive's chimney, burned little holes in his clothes.[233] This is a recurring anecdote, told by many of the interviewees. Ooft tells how he and his family got home from a 'holiday train journey' (*vacantietreinreis*), bringing home memories of a burning sun during the day but cool nights.[234] He remembers the dark water of the Coropina Creek and the white hot sand underneath the railroad tracks. However, he also says that he got the impression that Republiek got less popular as a holiday resort and that 'it is just day visitors, who barely have time to eat a sandwich or bath a little, because in no time the train or draisine is ready to take them back.'[235] He seems to partly base this statement on the observation of two groups of nuns and patients from the Catholic hospital, who came to Republiek for just one day.[236] He does not go into the reason why they could only stay for one day, but it might well be that they had a hospital to run and could not stay out of the city any longer.

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goed bleven, dus blikjes corned beef, dat blijft je dan ook bij van die tijd. En mais in een blikje en natuurlijk rijst blijft goed en bruine bonen […] En nou dat was onze dag en dan was het zwemmen en vissen, hengelen. Elke namiddag zat ik aan die kreek met de hengel die vissen eruit te halen. Dus dat was het leven van onze vakantie daar. Ongelooflijke nostalgie. We gingen vroeger nooit naar het buitenland met vakantie. We gingen naar Republiek.' in Interview 5: R. Currie, (10 May 2019).

[229] Interview 6: W. Van der Leest-Samson (13 May 2019).

[230] Interview 4: D. Oudega (30 April 2019).

[231] A quote from R.A.J. van Lier, presented in Van Kempen (ed.), *Sirito, 50 Surinaamse vertellingen* in Ehrenburg and Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust*, 273-274.

[232] P. Meel, *Man van het moment. Een politieke biografie van Henck Arron* (Amsterdam, 2014), 31.

[233] C. Ooft, *Spanhoek* (Paramaribo, 2007 [1958]), 52-53.

[234] Ooft, *Spanhoek*, 53.

[235] 'Het zijn tegenwoordig allemaal dagjesmensen, die na aankomst nauwelijks de tijd hebben een boterham op te peuzelen en even pootje te baden, want in een ommezien staat de draisine of de trein weer klaar om hen mee te nemen.', Ooft, *Spanhoek*, 54.

[236] Ibidem.

From photographs in the collection of the The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), it is clear that at least from the 1930s onwards, Republiek was a recreation resort. On three photographs dated 1932, a large group of people is photographed while sitting and lying on the creek side, bathing and boating in the Coropina Creek.[237] On another series of photographs, dated 1936, the holiday of a woman named Nelly Spalburg in Republiek is captured.[238] She is portrayed swimming, boating, posing with other women on a bridge, lying in a hammock and having a meal with other women. On one of the photos, the holiday home is portrayed: a wooden house with multiple storeys, slightly lifted above ground level.[239] Another photo shows the tracks of the railway, with in the background the train driver's residency.[240]

4.2 Livelihoods in the Interior

As I have shown in the above paragraph, there was a clear distinction between lower working-class families from the districts, who were lucky enough to live close by one of the train stops and could therefore send their children to school in Paramaribo one the one hand, and urban middle-class families who used the railway as a family getaway to Republiek. More southwards, where the interior was located, the railway started to fulfil a whole different function. There, for many people, it was a vehicle for the enhancement of livelihoods. The term 'livelihoods' is understood as the ongoing pursuit of necessities and activities that are essential to one's everyday life. Examples of this are making sure there is enough food to feed the family or seeking ways to earn money. For working class people who made a living from resources from the forest, the train was a primary means of transportation, especially for gold miners. Others benefited from the middle and high class city-dwellers that used the train as a fun ride to their holiday homes, by selling snacks and meals at the train stops.

Since the Lawa Railway was originally constructed to serve the gold industry, gold miners were expected to make use of the train regularly, especially when the tracks had just been laid down. Initially, there were many gold miners: in 1900, the government contracted

[237] KITLV, Southeast Asian and Caribbean Images (SACI), shelf marks 38264, 38266, 38267, all titled 'Een picknick te Republiek in Suriname', dated 1932.
[238] KITLV, SACI, shelf marks 38310 to 38321, all titled 'Vakantie van Nelly Spalburg in Republiek aan de Coropinakreek', dated 1936.
[239] KITLV, SACI, shelf mark 38320, Vakantie van Nelly Spalburg in Republiek aan de Coropinakreek (1936), note: Het vakantiehuis.
[240] KITLV, SACI, shelf mark 38311, Vakantie van Nelly Spalburg in Republiek aan de Coropinakreek (1936), note: Machinistenwoning van de Surinaamse Waterleiding Maatschappij.

5,513 miners at gold placers.[241] However, there were also so-called pork knockers; individual fortune-seekers who did not work for state-contracted companies, stayed on their own in the forest, and hoped on the day they would find a large lump of gold. [242] Especially for the pork knockers, but also for the official gold miners and balata bleeders, life was generally hard.[243] One of the interviewees lived in the Saramacca Street in the 1930s, where the tracks were embedded in the street. As a young kid, she always noticed when the gold miners came back to the city, as she explains:

> The train with all the gold miners returned on Thursday nights, and depending on the gold [finds], they made music at the train! So, if the train went towards the main station late at night, you heard all the music and the singing – but this, again, depended on the finds.[244]

In the early 1920s, Surinamese livelihoods had become the subject of a political discussion about the value of the Lawa Railway when governor Gerard Johan Staal and the Dutch Minister of the Colonies decided that effective 1 January 1921, train transport would be limited to the trajectory Paramaribo – Kwakoegron and that the cable cart at Kabel as well as all railway buildings between Kabel and Dam had to be teared down as soon as possible after that date, in order to sell the materials to the highest bidder.[245] The remainder of the railway would then be 79 kilometres, less than half of its original 173 kilometres long trajectory. The decision was not without critical remarks from the Colonial Estates of Suriname. Member of the Estates Pieter Hering submitted a resolution to the Estates in which he expressed his concern about the commercial activities in the area between Kwakoegron and Dam, that 'provide a livelihood for several thousands of labourers and their families.' The consequence of this, according to Hering, would be that the revenues of these activities would increase, and the colony would irreversibly suffer from the lack of development in foresting activities.[246] Hering opposed the governor's decision to shut down part of the railway and his resolution

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[241] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 40.
[242] Ibidem
[243] Ibidem.
[244] 'Donderdagavond keerden ze terug met al de goudzoekers en afhankelijk van het goud werd er veel muziek gemaakt in de trein en als de trein dus ' avonds laat naar het hoofdstation reed, dan hoor je een muziek maken en zingen. Nogmaals, afhankelijk van de vondst.' in Interview 6: Willy van Leesten-Samson (13 May 2019).
[245] 'De koloniale spoorweg in Suriname', *De West-Indische Gids* 2 (1921).
[246] Resolution submitted to the Colonial Estates of Suriname by member P.W. Hering on 4 August 1920:, '[…] dat door een dergelijken maatregel de voorzetting in gevaar wordt gebracht van de in die streek ondernomen wordende bedrijven, die aan eenige duizenden arbeiders en hun gezin een middel van bestaan verschaffen; overwegende, dat als gevolg daarvan de opbrengst van de daarmede in verband staande middelen belangrijk zal dalen; overwegende dat bovendien de kolonie in het algemeen een onherstelbaar nadeel zal worden berokkend door de belemmering van de verdere ontwikkeling der boschbedrijven in die streken […]', published in 'De koloniale spoorweg in Suriname', *De West-Indische Gids*, 426-427.

was passed. Willem Kraan – another member of the Estates – furthermore noted that the Moravian mission would be limited in its missionary activities in the interior with the disappearance of part of the railway. The Estates understood that the railway was a financial burden, but they feared that closing part of it would make financial matters even worse. Instead, they proposed to increase freight rates.[247]

The Minister of the Colonies was unconvinced by the argument that the commercial activities in the interior would be disadvantaged with the disappearance of the railway. According to him, the gold and balata companies would easily adjust to the fact that rail transport would not be possible anymore.[248] However, the protests of the Colonial Estates of Suriname were successful, because with such overwhelming opposition, the Minister of the Colonies and the governor had no choice but keep the railway in service.[249] Governor Staal indeed increased freight tariffs, but also almost doubled tariffs for passenger transport. He explicitly stated that the introduction of the new tariffs would show if people really appreciated the train and were willing to pay more for their tickets.[250] One of the consequences of this was that small farmers could not afford train tickets anymore. Anton de Kom, for instances, notes that in the 1930s, the railway tariffs were so high, that small-scale farmers transported their produce largely by means of oxen and donkey carts, spanning walking distances of sometimes more than forty kilometres alongside the railroad.[251] The Lawa Railway had thus become the materialised depiction of class differences in Suriname, in an attempt by Staal to 'prove' the railway's worthlessness. In the end, the last trajectory endured until 1936, when was finally and irreversibly decided that the trajectory south of the Suriname River, from Kabel Zuid onwards would be closed.

The Lawa Railway can be typified as the space where an interplay between vendors and travellers took place. In the first paragraph of this chapter, we already saw how schoolboys deceived Javanese women at the train stops, telling them they wanted to buy peanuts and then quickly jump on the moving train without paying. Another interviewee remembers that as soon as the train stopped, vendors would swarm towards the train. The family bought folded bread filled with pineapple through the open window at Onverwacht. If the train started to move, the vendors started running next to it, to sell even more food. More inwards, at Republiek, the Maroons sold *parakoranti* to the train travellers, round and flat

[247] 'De koloniale spoorweg in Suriname', *De West-Indische Gids*, 428.
[248] Ibidem, 429.
[249] Ibidem, 592.
[250] Ibidem, 539.
[251] A. de Kom, *Wij slaven van Suriname*, 160.

cassava cakes.[252] For travellers who went further than Republiek, the next opportunity to buy refreshments was at Kwakoegron, where next to customs duties and police, there was a small general store that sold household items as well as cool drinks and sandwiches.[253]

Vendors made a living off the train, without having to ride it themselves, but there were also many people needed the train to transport their produce to the city to go to the market. In 2002, film maker Hans Hylkema made a documentary about the Lawa Railway, titled *De Goudlijn*.[254] Hylkema travelled to Suriname and followed the old trajectory of the Lawa Railway. In Berlijn, 52 kilometres from Paramaribo, Hylkema talks via an interpreter (I) to two elderly women, Nellie Bijlhout Linger (B) and Gertruida Groenhart (G) (the documentary has Dutch subtitles). He asks them if they used to train, back in the day.[255] Their conversation went as follows:

> **I**: Have you used the train in the past?
> **B**: Yes, to go to the city, if we had something to sell.
> **I**: And what did you sell?
> **B**: *Tayer* [arrow leaf elephant ear] and ginger.
> **I**: And you planted that too?
> **B**: Yes, but not anymore. We cannot do it anymore.
> **I**: You have become old?
> **G**: We have stopped that a long time ago, but that was how it went back in the day. If you had to go to the city and you had a lot of cargo, you had to get up really early. You walked to the station where there was a little shelter. You put your stuff down and you walked back. After three times back and forth, you had to wait until the train came. If it came, you got on it with your cargo. And then you went to the city.
> **I**: And there you sold the stuff from your provision grounds [*kostgrondjes*]?
> **G**: Yes! We had certain people who we sold to. If they resold it, we got our money. It was like that right, neighbour?
> **B**: Yes. I sold the same stuff… Ginger, *nappie* [a purple or white root vegetable]…[256]

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[252] Interview 5: R. Currie (30 April 2019).
[253] Vlaanderen, *Jaja Dande*. *Medische avonturen in Suriname*.
[254] H. Hylkema, *De Goudlijn: Paramaribo - Dam*, a documentary produced by Peter Huystee Film and Humanistische Omroep (2002). Available at Leiden University Library, Special Collections.
[255] It is not clear about which period the two women talk, but given the presumed age of the two and the year in which the documentary was made, the period presumably falls somewhere between 1940 and 1980, dependent on how long they have pursued these activities.
[256] '**I**: Maakten jullie gebruik van de trein? **B**: Ja, om naar de stad te gaan. Als we iets te verkopen hadden. **I**: En wat verkochten jullie in de stad dan? **B**: Tayer en gember. **I**: En dat plantten jullie ook? **B**: Ja, maar nu niet meer. Dat kunnen we niet meer. **I**: Jullie zijn oud geworden. **G**: Dat is al een tijd geleden opgedoekt. Maar zo ging dat vroeger. Als je naar de stad moest en je had veel vracht, dan stond je heel vroeg op. Je liep de eerste keer naar het station. Daar had je een wachthuisje. Daar zette je je spullen neer, en dan liep je weer terug. Na de derde keer lopen moest je wachten tot de trein kwam. Als hij kwam, stapte je in met je vracht. En dan ging je naar de stad. **I:** En daar verkochten jullie van je kostgrondjes wat jullie… **G**: Ja, we hadden mensen aan wie we leverden. Als die 't hadden verkocht, kregen we ons geld. Zo was 't toch, buurvrouw? **B:** Ja. Ik verkocht hetzelfde. Gember, nappie, noem maar op.' Hylkema, *De Goudlijn* (2002).

The above conversation shows how women in the interior grew vegetables on their provision grounds (*kostgrondjes*), transported their goods to Paramaribo by train, where they sold them to middlemen. As Hoefte noted, women often worked on provision grounds, because since the missionaries had installed metropolitan notions of the nuclear family with a male breadwinner, women tended to do unpaid labour in and around the house.[257] Selling produce from the provision grounds was not seen as a main job, but as a side gig. The harvested fruits and vegetables from the provision grounds were also meant to feed the family. It is not clear, if this pattern was also why Bijlhout Linger and Groenhart tended their provision grounds, because those topics are not discussed in the documentary. Because smallholders used the train to get to the city so frequently, Van Putten mentions, it was nicknamed 'market train' or 'milk train'.[258] One of the interviewees for this research lived in Onverwacht as a child during the 1950s. When he heard the train whistle, he rushed towards the platform in the hope elderly people arrived, who came back from the market in Paramaribo. The children helped unload their freight and if they were lucky, they got an orange or a *bacoven* (banana) in return. His mother was a farmer and she also brought her produce to the market in Paramaribo by train.[259]

The railway did not only have an impact on the livelihoods of people in Paramaribo and the villages close by, but also on the inhabitants further in the interior. The gold industry that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and the subsequent construction of the railway had a profound impact on Maroons living in the interior. Alex van Stipriaan has shown how the discovery of gold intensified relations between the Maroons and urban society.[260] During the colony's preparatory expeditions in search of gold and the best lines for the railway, Maroons often functioned as guides and boat men, but they also worked in the gold and balata industries.[261] While the raw materials industry intensified in the interior, Maroons monopolised cargo shipping and enabled their communities to take part in the money economy. Van Stipriaan notes that cargo shipping established direct contact between Maroons and the urban population, but also indirect contact because Maroons needed to take their money to the city to spend it, since among Maroon communities, barter was still

[257] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century*, 16.
[258] Van Putten, 'De Lawa-spoorlijn', 70.
[259] Interview 2: H. Pinas (3 May 2019).
[260] A. van Stipriaan, 'Maroons and the Communications Revolution in Suriname's Interior', E.B. Carlin, I. Léglise, B. Migge and P.B. Tjon Sie Fat (eds.), *In and Out of Suriname. Language, Mobility and Identity* (Leiden and Boston, 2015), 139-163.
[261] Van Stipriaan, 'Maroons and the Communications Revolution' 146.

dominant.[262] If they could afford it, it was easy to take the train to Paramaribo for at least part of the journey, where they generally stayed for a couple of weeks, if they had relatives or friends in the city. Moravian mission doctor Wim Vlaanderen, who arrived in Suriname in 1958, noticed the many Maroon families on the platform in Beekhuizen, waiting for the train to arrive.[263] He particularly remarked the many pieces of luggage they were carrying, among which were not only bags and suitcases, but also bowls, baskets, pots, pans, buckets and boxes.[264] These types of luggage indicate that they indeed either spent their money in Paramaribo to buy these kinds of necessities for living in the forest, or that they brought it along with them for a long stay in the city. However, despite the train's existence, Maroons also continued to use their *korjalen* to travel to the city, probably because many could not afford a train trip.[265]

After World War II, for many inhabitants of the interior, it became more difficult to structure livelihoods because for some, the prerequisites of life were fading away. During World War II, Suriname's economy gained importance due to its bauxite reserves. Aluminium was namely in high demand during the war and Suriname delivered approximately eighty percent of the bauxite that was needed for the US war effort.[266] In 1950, a Dutch engineer, W.J. van Blommestein, had drafted up an advice about the construction of a hydroelectric dam in the Suriname River, which could generate the electricity that was needed for the aluminium furnaces to turn bauxite into aluminium.[267] Eight years later, the state of Suriname closed an agreement with the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) and its subsidiary the Suriname Aluminum Company (Suralco): the Brokopondo Agreement.[268] In this agreement, it was agreed upon that the hydroelectric dam would be built in the Suriname River near Afobaka.[269] The water reservoir behind the dam would submerge half of the territory of the Saramacca Maroons, creating Lake Brokopondo (officially Prof. dr ir. W.J. van Blommestein Lake).[270] Kabel would also submerge underneath the water surface, as well

[262] Ibidem, 147.
[263] Vlaanderen, *Jaja Dande. Medische avonturen in Suriname,* 16.
[264] Ibidem, 16.
[265] Van Stipriaan, 'Maroons and the Communications Revolution', 149.
[266] Jones G. and E. Captain, 'De Tweede Wereldoorlog en de verschoven staatkundige verhoudingen met de Oost en de West', in G. Jones and E. Captain (eds.), *Oorlogserfgoed overzee: De erfenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Aruba, Curaçao, Indonesië en Suriname* (Amsterdam, 2010), 36-64, 47.
[267] Buddingh, *De geschiedenis van Suriname*, 313.
[268] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 96.
[269] H.A. Zaalberg, 'Brokopondo', *Erts, maandblad der Billitonbedrijven* 10.7 (1958), 139.
[270] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 96.

as part of the railway tracks. The *Prinses Juliana* Mission Hospital had to be teared down, but the mission decided to build a new hospital further upstream.[271]

Approximately 6,000 Saramaccan Maroons were forced to relocate from their ancestral grounds. Two-thirds of them moved to state-organised transmigration villages, one third ventured further into the forest. In the documentary *De Goudlijn*, Hans Hylkema speaks with Cornelis Woutkamp, an inhabitant of the transmigration settlement Nieuw Koffiekamp, after the old and now drowned village Koffiekamp. He says:

> We are from Sara Creek originally, where Oud Koffiekamp was. We moved here because of the railway. It was a lifeline for us and it gave us many advantages. That is how we came here! But ten years ago, or let's say 25 years ago, they destroyed the railway and they have abandoned the interior. We are not located at the river anymore, nor at the railway. It's broken down, until the present day. We are desperate.[272]

Hylkema's ambition was to tell the tale of the railway from beginning to end, so he wanted to find Dam, which was supposed to be located somewhere in the middle of Lake Brokopondo. He assumed that he the villagers of Lebidoti, on the shores of the lake, could tell him more about it, and the crew tied up their boat so that Hylkema could ask for inquiries. Eventually, the captain of the village, Johan Bapo, agreed to talk with him, but the conversation did not follow the direction Hylkema had hoped: 'Suddenly, we are put in the dock at the end of our journey, and we are confronted with our role of ex-coloniser.'[273] Captain Bapo explained how his community was forced to migrate away from their lands for purposes of constructing a hydroelectric dam and lake, but the electricity never flowed back to them. Instead, they live without electricity at the shores of a lake that ruined the ecosystem of the river. Captain Bapo says the smelly water makes them sick and causes the fish to die. The reason the water got intoxicated is that the lake is quite shallow and the decomposition of the organic matter underneath the surface deoxygenated the water and generated the toxic gas of hydrogen sulphide.[274] Moreover, he expresses: 'Look, they find it too expensive to install electric

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[271] Ibidem, 23.

[272] 'We komen oorspronkelijk uit Sarakreek, daar was Oud Koffiekamp. De spoorbaan heeft ons hierheen verhuisd en was een levensader voor ons. Hij gaf ons veel voordelen. Zo zijn we hier gekomen. Maar een jaar of tien geleden, of laten we zeggen 25 jaar geleden hebben ze de spoorbaan vernield en nu laten ze het binnenland in de steek. We zitten niet meer aan de rivier, noch aan de spoorbaan. Die is kapot tot op de dag van vandaag. We zijn radeloos.' Cornelis Woutkamp, in an interview with Hans Hylkema, presented in Hylkema, *De Goudlijn* (2002).

[273] 'Plotseling zitten we aan het eind van onze reis in de beklaagdenbank. En worden we aangesproken op onze rol van ex-kolonisator', Hans Hylkema in Hylkema, *De Goudlijn* (2002).

[274] M. Barlow and T. Clarke, *Blue Gold: The Battle Against Corporate Theft on the World's Water* (Toronto, 2002).

cables, and then they come here to film us for free! What did do we do to deserve that?'[275] Captain Bapo furthermore says: 'When we had the railway to the city, we did not know poverty.'[276] Just like the railway had compressed time and space for the Maroons at the beginning of the twentieth century, its demolition decompressed time and space at the end of the twentieth century. Captain Bapo accuses the foreign companies and investors of extracting resources from his land, without sharing the benefits, and the filmmaker of objectifying him and his community by filming them without compensating them. This forms a powerful postcolonial critique of neo-colonialism and exoticism.

Conclusion

This chapter asked how the people of Suriname have repurposed the Lawa Railway. From the interviews, primary sources and a documentary from 2002, it has become clear that next to the purpose of medical care – which has been treated in the previous chapter – three main purposes stood out: education, recreation and the enhancement of livelihoods. Whereas the colonial elite from Paramaribo and royal visitors from the Netherlands were offered luxurious trips through the jungle in fancy draisines in which breakfast was served, working and middle class people had to pay for their train tickets in order to reach their destination.

School children from the rural areas south of Paramaribo rode the train twice a day to get to their schools, not seldom with a total traveling time of more than three or four hours a day. The train was a means of social cohesion for the children, who played games together and could be mischievous together. Urban families from Paramaribo equalled the train to holiday pleasures. Their vacation started when they embarked the train at *Vaillantsplein* or Beekhuizen, which took them to Republiek where they would enjoy a carefree holiday. A third way in which the Lawa Railway was repurposed was through the enhancements of livelihoods. Many people who lived in the hinterland of Paramaribo appropriated the train as a way to bring their produce to the market, as a sales market for their vending activities or as a means of transport to their resource-based occupations. The relationship between the city and the interior changed through the railway, because a material connection was built. The closure of the most southern part of the railway, the displacement of Saramaccan Maroons for the greater benefit of an American company, and the submersion of the transport hub at Kabel, decompressed time and space for the communities living in the interior.

[275] 'Kijk, ze vinden het te duur om elektriciteitskabels aan te leggen, maar ze komen ons wel gratis en voor niks filmen. Waar hebben we dat aan verdiend?' Johan Bapo in Hylkema, *De Goudlijn* (2002).
[276] 'In de tijd dat de spoorbaan uit de stad kwam kenden we geen armoede.' in Ibidem.

CONCLUSION

I started this thesis with the tale of a large yellow welcoming sign at the border of the district of Para, that depicts a classic black locomotive. This sign has immortalised a part of Suriname's history that has not been studied extensively before, and shows how much the bygone train means to Suriname. This sentiment is not very well reflected in the existing historiography about Suriname. Authors who have written about the Lawa Railway have done so in fairly negative terms, reflective of colonial and capitalist discourse in which 'success' is measured against a yardstick of development and profitability. Moreover, historiographical remarks about the Lawa Railway are mostly limited to the discussion preceding its construction and the first years of its existence, but do not take into account how the railway played a role in society in later years.

The railway has indeed never become the industry catalyser the initiators had assumed, and it did not grease the palms of foreign investors, the Dutch or Surinamese state, nor those of the Surinamese people. Curiously, however, the railway functioned for more than eighty years, and although the predominant aim of the railway was to transport gold, it was also suited for passenger transport. Therefore, this thesis aimed to transcend the failure rhetoric in terms of profit and instead look at how the Lawa Railway functioned socio-economically. Through a paradigm of *Alltagsgeschichte*, I aimed to unravel the meaning of the railway throughout the twentieth century. My primary interest was to investigate how different groups of 'common' people experienced and repurposed the railway. However, in order to write a narrative of repurposing, it was necessary to outline the original purposes of the railway. Therefore, the first sub question I set out to answer was how and why the Lawa Railway was envisioned and constructed.

I found that Dutch politicians, lawyers, engineers and colonial agents took a leap of faith when they started constructing a railway in Suriname to revive its wretched economy, to restore Dutch colonial prestige in the Atlantic, and to foster the gold industry. It proved to be difficult to attract investors, and the company that originally started to lay down the tracks in the Surinamese jungle soon went bankrupt. However, partly due to the perseverance of future governor Cornelis Lely, the Dutch state took over all obligations and started constructing a railway. The Dutch believed this railway would catalyse the emerging gold industry, of which was hoped it would become the mainstay of the transitioned industrial economy. The geological research projects that were carried out, however, did not prove to be very

successful in terms of gold finds. During the early years of construction, the Ministry of Colonies already expressed concerns about the railway, as did the director of the construction department of Colonial Railways. A combination of factors contributed to the fact that, in the end, no one pulled the plug from the project that was not expected to be profitable anytime soon. Firstly, Cornelis Lely had been asked to become governor of Suriname, and he had only accepted this position because he was promised that the railway would be constructed. Secondly, the Netherlands wanted to latch onto Suriname and were taking extraordinary risks in the hope to turn the tides and make Surname a meaningful colony again.

During construction, labourers, who got exposed to dangerous circumstances and deadly diseases, floundered through the forest for almost a decade, manually constructing the colonial railway. In 1911, the 173 kilometre long Lawa Railway was finally finished. By that time, it became clear that the dream of a full-fledged gold industry in Suriname would never be more than a dream, and it was decided that Dam at the Sara Creek would be the end station instead of the intended Lawa region. This railway became a financial burden. Nevertheless, the railway persisted and continued to be the main mode of transport from the capital city of Paramaribo into the hinterland, be it in differing disguises and trajectories.

Since the colonial authorities and the Dutch government had decided to go on with the project, and kept pumping money in the train, I hypothesised that the Lawa Railway had been mobilised in a web of colonial activities. Therefore, the second sub question I asked was how colonial agents have used the Lawa Railway. Through a thorough study of newspaper articles and primary sources, two findings stood out. First and foremost, that the Lawa Railway played a large role in the health care infrastructure, not only as an ambulance, but most interestingly as a policlinic on wheels. Through the train, health care could be provided to more people, since the doctor was mobile and severely ill people got a chance to get treated. At the same time, this practice was very provisional and the waiting times were too long because demand was higher than the policlinic on wheels could meet.

In 1947, the Moravian Brotherhood opened a mission hospital at Kabel right next to the railway tracks. Here, the civilising mission was materialised. Sick Maroons in the surrounding villages were treated by the mission doctor at the policlinic or – when they were severely ill – admitted to the hospital ward. However, treating them with medicine was not the only objective of the mission in Kabel. Of course, Christianisation was an important objective, but they were also to be raised into civilised citizens, disposed of cultural traditions that were seen as backward and lifted into what was seen as modernity. It was tried to bind them to the Moravian Brotherhood and familiarise them with ‘the big world’ that was highly

present in Kabel, articulated by the hospital, the chapel, the gold and wood industries and the railway. The second finding was that urban elites used the railway for pleasure and pastime, while the colonial administration employed the draisine to accommodate prominent visitors. The rolling material of the Lawa Railway came in different guises that corresponded with the societal position of the passengers. The elites regularly rode a fancy draisine, which was used as an excursion train.

The third and final sub question of this thesis was how the people of Suriname have repurposed the Lawa Railway. Focusing on the way the Surinamese people used, saw and experienced the railway, I have found that they primarily used the railway in three guises: to go to school, to recreate and – out of necessity – to enhance their livelihoods. Some of them had to ride the train to sell their home-grown produce, others needed to get to the forest to mine gold. Some people did not even have to travel by train to make a living off it. Instead, they vended snacks and meals through the train windows. For Maroons in the interior, the train compressed the perceived distance to Paramaribo by significantly shortening the traveling time to the city. In many different ways, Surinamese have thus repurposed the Lawa Railway. It may have been a failed project in the eyes of the (colonial) state, however, the inhabitants of Suriname have appropriated the railway to enhance their livelihoods to a large extent. When Alcoa and the Surinamese state agreed to construct a hydroelectric dam in the Suriname River in the late 1950s, the last stretch of the railway submerged in the man-made Brokopondo Lake. The territory of thousands of Saramaccan Maroons also vanished in the lake, forcing them to transmigrate. The disappearance of the railway in the interior decompressed time and space for the inhabitants and forced them to restructure their pursuit of livelihoods.

The present study shows how it is possible to transcend a colonial rhetoric of failure, by closely following the narrative of the ‘subject of failure’, in this case a small, stand-alone railway that never became profitable. Through a story of gold-mining, vending, recreating, illnesses and hardships in the jungle, I have in a holistic way exposed the socio-economics of life in Suriname in the twentieth century. I have followed various protagonists: colonial engineers, school children, middle class families who enjoyed their holidays, vendors, gold-miners, farmers, doctors and patients. They were labourers, passengers, decision-makers or visitors, but they had one thing in common: the Lawa Railway has shaped their lives, in one way or another, be it profoundly or minimally.

EPILOGUE

From 1903 to 1987, railway tracks ran through Suriname, in different trajectories and over various distances through the decades. Several trajectories were closed, respectively because of the widening of the road to Paramaribo, the deterioration of the gold placers south of Kabel and because of the submersion of a large territory in the Brokopondo Lake. The last stretch of the Lawa Railway officially came to an end in 1987.

The End of the Lawa Railway

The 1980s were a period of great disruption in Suriname. On 25 February 1980, sixteen non-commissioned officers launched a military coup against the government, after which a military dictatorship commenced.[277] Although a process of redemocratisation had been set in motion from 1984 onwards, the difficulties had not ended in Suriname, because the Interior War was fought between 1986 and 1992.[278] This conflict was an ethnic guerrilla war, primarily between the National Army and the so-called Jungle Commando, consisting of predominantly Maroon men and led by Ronnie Brunswijk.[279] Against this violent background, the draisine on the Lawa Railway made its last trip. In the documentary *De Goudlijn*, ex-train conductor A. Vrede tells of the last time the draisine pulled through the Surinamese landscape. He narrates of 6 December 1987, when the draisine came from Kwakoegron. The soldiers of the National Army stood close to the tracks, signalling the train driver to stop the draisine. However, it was difficult to get a draisine to halt immediately, which led the soldiers to believe the train driver refused to stop. The military men started shooting, thereby hitting a young girl in her leg, who luckily survived. This incident was, however, the end of the Lawa Railway. All material was brought to the station's terrain in Onverwacht, where it was left to crumble away.[280]

The Immortalisation of the 'Dam' in Lelydorp

In 2019, I interviewed a retired politician who had been ex-district commissioner of Wanica, Para and Brokopondo and who is an ex-parliamentarian: Hugo Pinas. While we drank coffee at the terrace of the popular restaurant and bar *'t Vat* in Paramaribo, he told me how he was

[277] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Twentieth Century*, 133.
[278] Ibidem.
[279] Ibidem, 149-152.
[280] Wicherts and Veltkamp, 'Geschiedenis van de Landsspoorweg', 37.

involved in the establishment of the railway monument in Lelydorp. The old rolling material of the railway had been rusting away since the railway's closure, and Pinas came up with the idea to renovate one of the locomotives, the Dam, and turn it into a monument, in honour of the district of Para and on the occasion of 25 years of Surinamese independence in 2000.[281] He passionately narrated:

> 'We have placed a plaque and we officially opened the monument. It did not happen unnoticed, because it is a piece of the history of Suriname. Do you understand what it means to have a railway for years and years? That thing was left to die and no one can tell you anything about it. So, we have immortalised it. […] In this way, I have preserved the nostalgia, the history of the railway.'[282]

Figure 6: The locomotive 'Dam' as a monument in Lelydorp. Photo: N.A. van der Mark (10 May 2019).

[281] Interview 2: Hugo Pinas (3 May 2019).
[282] 'Er is een plaquette daar geplaatst. We hebben het officieel in gebruik genomen hoor! Het is echt niet met de stille trom gegaan. Omdat het, het is een stukje geschiedenis van Suriname! Weet u wat het betekent om tig jaren het 's Lands Spoor te hebben? En dat ding bloedt dood en niemand die wat kan vertellen. Dus hebben we hem vereeuwigd. […] Dus zo heb ik die nostalgie, die geschiedenis van de trein kunnen behouden.' in Interview 2: Hugo Pinas (3 May 2019).

A Brief Revival of the Railway

In the 1990's, John Defares, ex-minister of Transport, Communication and Tourism, carried out an ambitious plan: the revival of a part of the old railway. After workers had refurbished the tracks and the locomotive, the twelve kilometres long section Onverwacht – Bersaba – Republiek was opened in September 1994.[283] However, the sleepers were too rotten and the rolling material was too severely decayed and the line was closed in 1996.

Figure 7: The locomotive 'Para', covered in foliage in Onverwacht. Photo: N.A. van der Mark (10 May 2019).

[283] C. Buma, 'Voor het eerst na jaren weer met de trein door Suriname', *Algemeen Dagblad* (3 September 1994).

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The interviews have been recorded using a smartphone and afterwards transcribed. All interviewees have signed an informed consent form and explicitly consented for using their names in the research. They have been given the option to be anonymised.

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3: H. Mets, H. Biswane and A.A. Mets (14 May 2019), audio recording and written transcript.
4: D. Oudega (30 April 2019), audio recording and written transcript.
5: R. Currie (30 April 2019), audio recording and written transcript.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: 'De Lawa-Spoorweg in de Tweede Kamer'

Source: KITLV, Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images 50M2, J.C. Braakensiek, 'De Lawa-Spoorweg in de Tweede Kamer', *De Amsterdammer, Weekblad voor Nederland* (17 May 1903).

Title: De Lawa-Spoorweg in de Tweede Kamer
Translation: The Lawa-Railway in the House of Representatives

Caption: *Gouverneur Lely: Mevrouw, laat de zuinigheid de wijsheid niet bedriegen: er zijn kapers op de kust.*

Translation: Governor Lely: Madam, do not let your frugality deceive your wisdom: there are rivals just behind the corner.

Cornelis Lely is depicted standing in the middle, the lady on the right represents the House of Representatives and the lady on the left represents Suriname. The man on the far left represents the United States of America.

(Translation N.A. van der Mark)

Appendix 2: Code Analysis

I have conducted code analysis to systemise the written transcripts of the recorded interviews. The tool I used for the coding process is the software programme ATLAS.ti. The coding process consisted of three distinctive phases: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.[284] Through open coding, 92 codes have been attached to paragraphs or sentences in the interviews, that indicate the topics of those sections. Some paragraphs and sentences have been coded with more than one code, if more than one topic was touched upon in these sections. The topic of 'railway personnel' has been discusses most, namely 21 times, followed by 'recreation' (20) and 'trajectories' (16). Since the interviews were semi-structured by means of a loose topic list, some of the subjects that were discussed during the interviews were not anticipated. Because of the qualitative nature of this research, codes with a high occurrence do not necessarily reflect the importance of these codes for the research results. The codes and the corresponding paragraphs have been thoroughly studied to extract their meaning and relevance, instead of taking the quantitative statistics as leading parameters. After having openly coded the transcripts, I have axially coded the data by drawing connections between the 92 codes, that eventually formed 19 different thematic code groups. Some codes have been grouped in multiple code groups. In the table below, all 92 codes are listed. In the right column, the code groups that were attached to the codes are visible.

Code Name	Occurrence	Groups
01. Railway personnel	21	Train infrastructure
02. Recreation	20	Recreation and tourism
03. Trajectories	16	Train infrastructure
04. Nostalgia	14	Emotions
05. Republiek	14	Locations
06. School transport	14	Education / People's lives / Types of transport
07. Plans for a new railway	11	Possible new railway
08. Draisine	10	Types of trains
09. Goods transportation	10	People's lives / Types of transport
10. Beekhuizen	9	Locations / Train infrastructure
11. Lelydorp	9	Locations
12. Vaillantsplein	9	Locations / Train infrastructure
13. Flying sparks	8	Anecdotes
14. Onverwacht	8	Locations
15. Remnants	8	End of the railway
16. Brokopondo Lake	7	Locations
17. Gold mining	7	Gold industry / Natural resources
18. Obstacles to a new railway	7	Possible new railway / Problems
19. Tickets	7	Train infrastructure
20. Class	6	Angles
21. Gold transportation	6	Gold industry / Natural resources / People's lives / Types of transport

[284] For an extensive explanation of this process, see for instance H. Boeije, *Analysis in Qualitative Research* (New York, 2009).

22. Kwakoegron	6	Locations
23. Maintenance	6	Train infrastructure
24. Maroons	6	People's lives
25. Politics	6	Angles
26. Steam train	6	Types of trains
27. Traffic safety	6	Traffic
28. Deterioration of the railway	5	End of the railway
29. Mischief at the train	5	Activities on the train / Anecdotes
30. Railway management	5	Train infrastructure
31. Trolley	5	Types of trains
32. Water	5	Train infrastructure
33. Abri	4	Train infrastructure
34. Accident	4	Problems
35. Budget plan for a new railway	4	Possible new railway
36. Danger	4	Problems
37. Financial crisis	4	Problems
38. Kabel	4	Locations
39. Locomotives	4	Types of trains
40. Opinions on a future railway	4	Possible new railway
41. Passenger transport	4	Types of transport
42. Speed	4	Train infrastructure
43. Tourism	4	Recreation and tourism
44. Vendors	4	People's lives
45. Balata	3	Natural resources
46. Bauxite	3	Natural resources
47. Interior War	3	End of the railway / Historical events
48. Connectivity	3	Possible new railway
49. Coup	3	Historical events
50. Customs duties	3	Gold industry
51. Disappointment	3	Emotions
52. Native Surinamese	3	People's lives
53. Trajectory of the new railway	3	Possible new railway
54. Trauma	3	Emotions
55. Work transport	3	People's lives / Types of transport
56. World War II	3	Historical events
57. Ambulance	2	Medical care
58. Climate change	2	Problems
59. Crossings	2	Train infrastructure
60. Enthusiasm	2	Emotions
61. Fun ride	2	Recreation and tourism
62. Justification for a new railway	2	Possible new railway
63. Monument	2	End of the railway
64. Playing in the train	2	Activities on the train
65. Prestige	2	People's lives
66. Prinses Juliana Hospital	2	Medical care
67. Rehabilitation of the railway	2	Train infrastructure
68. School types	2	Education
69. Singing	2	Activities on the train
70. Traffic jams	2	Traffic
71. Whistle	2	Anecdotes / Train infrastructure
72. Zanderij	2	Locations
73. Anger	1	Emotions
74. Betrayal	1	Emotions
75. Disappearance of the tracks	1	End of the railway
76. Excursion	1	Recreation and tourism
77. Expansion of Paramaribo	1	Angles
78. Fights	1	Activities on the train / Anecdotes / Problems
79. Interior	1	Locations
80. Lack of medical care in the	1	Medical care / People's lives

interior		
81. Logistics	1	Train infrastructure
82. Loss of tradition	1	People's lives
83. Making friends on the train	1	Activities on the train
84. Medical care	1	Medical care
85. Party	1	Activities on the train
86. Poelepantje	1	Locations
87. Pollution	1	Problems
88. Shop	1	Train infrastructure
89. Taxi	1	Types of transport
90. Timetable	1	Train infrastructure
91. Urbanisation	1	Angles
92. Welgedacht C	1	Locations

Below, the nineteen code groups that have been created on the basis of the 92 codes, are shown. Some codes have been attached to various code groups at the same time. The code groups are alphabetically ordered to stress the qualitative instead of quantitative nature of this research.

Anecdotes
Flying sparks (8), Mischief at the train (5), Whistle (2), Fights (1).

Angles
Class (6), Politics (6), Expansion of Paramaribo (1), Urbanisation (1).

Education
School transport (14)**,** School types (2).

Emotions
Nostalgia (14), Disappointment (3), Trauma (3), Enthusiasm (3), Anger (1), Betrayal (1).

End of the railway
Remnants (8), Deterioration of the railway (5), Interior War (3), Monument (2), Disappearance of the tracks (1).

Gold industry
Gold mining (7), Gold transportation (6), Customs duties (3).

Historical events
Interior War (3), Coup (3), World War II (3).

Locations
Republiek (14), Beekhuizen (9)**,** Lelydorp (9), Vaillantsplein (9), Onverwacht (8), Brokopondo Lake: (7), Kwakoegron (6), Kabel (4), Zanderij (2)**,** Interior: (1) Poelepantje (1) Welgedacht C (1).

Medical care
Ambulance (2), Prinses Juliana Mission Hospital (2), Lack of medical care in the interior (1), Medical care (1).

Natural resources Gold mining (7), Gold transportation (6), Balata (3), Bauxite (3).
People's lives School transport (14), Goods transportation (10), Gold transportation: (6), Maroons (6), Vendors (6), Native Surinamese (3), Work transport (3), Prestige (2), Lack of medical care in the interior (1), Loss of tradition (1).
Possible new railway Plans for a new railway (11), Obstacles to a new railway (7), Budget plan for a new railway (4), Opinions on a future railway (4), Connectivity (3), Trajectory of the new railway (3), Justification for a new railway (2).
Problems Obstacles to a new railway (7), Accident (4), Danger (4), Financial crisis (4), Climate change (2), Fights (1), Pollution (1).
Recreation and tourism Recreation (20), Tourism (4), Fun ride (2), Excursion (1).
Traffic Traffic safety (6), Traffic jams (2).
Train infrastructure Railway personnel (20), Trajectories: (16), Vaillantsplein (9), Tickets (7), Maintenance (6), Railway management (5), Water (5), Abri (4), Speed (4), Crossings (4), Rehabilitation of the railway (2), Whistle (2), Logistics (1), Railway laws (1), Shop (1), Timetable (1).
Types of trains Draisine (10), Steam train: (6), Trolley (5), Locomotives (4).
Types of transport School transport (14), Goods transportation (10), Gold transportation (6), Passenger transport (4), Work transport (3), Taxi (1).

The last phase of the coding analysis consists of selective coding. During this review process, the codes, code groups and underlying transcripts, paragraphs and sentences are thoroughly reviewed to uncover overarching themes. From this review, it emerged that some of the codes and paragraphs behind the code groups mainly contained contextual information and one code group emerged as out of scope for this research. The code groups that remained can be considered part of the four core categories, which came forward as the most central themes in the data relating to the research question: education, recreation, livelihoods and medical care. The contextual code groups are regarded to be relevant for the overarching backdrop to which

the Lawa Railway existed, while the information behind the core code groups are actual representations of how the Surinamese people used and gave meaning to the railway. The connections between the core code groups and the four core categories are visualised in the figure below.

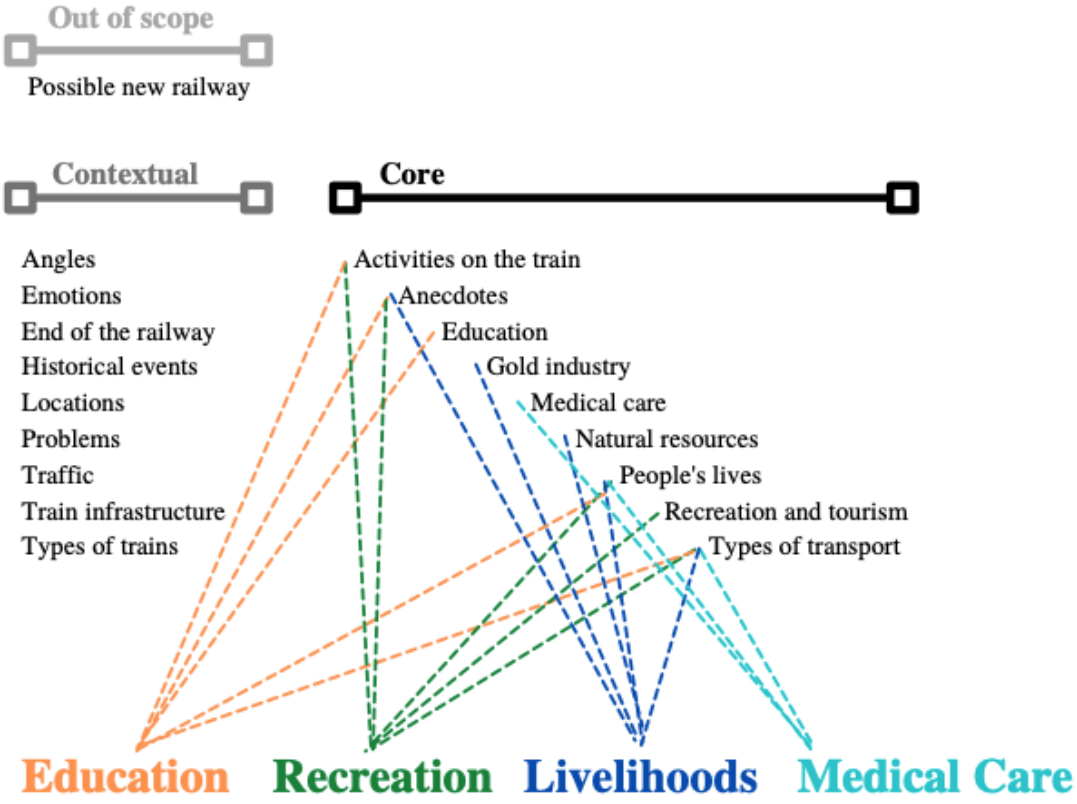

Figure 8: A visual representation of the phase of selective coding