Maroons and the Communications Revolution in Suriname's Interior

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1 Introduction

From the first until the last day of slavery, enslaved people liberated themselves by escaping from the plantation colony and setting up new, independent communities. These escapees, who came to be called Maroons, settled in the tropical rain forest of Suriname's interior, far away from the seat of colonial power in Paramaribo. Yet they stayed tied to the colonial economy in several ways. The general impression people have is that Maroons lived in total isolation in Suriname's interior until quite recently, about one or two generations ago, but this must now be largely discounted as a myth. This is certainly true in the case of Maroon men.¹ Women, on the other hand, remained comparatively isolated until quite recently as gender-based labour division and traditional notions of womanhood mostly linked women to the domestic sphere and the village context.

This chapter examines the extent to which contact with the outside world formed part of the Maroons' existence, and how contact has influenced Maroon lifestyles throughout history.² Crucially, I explore how Maroons' adoption of new communication technologies is impacting patterns of communication with the wider world and among the Maroons themselves. This contribution does not simply deal with how objects are being adopted by subjects, rather it focuses on what happens to people and their context when they use new technologies and also how new technologies are transformed due to their use in specific social contexts. In their study of the impact of the cell phone in Jamaica, Horst and Miller (2007) call this the "communicative ecology", that is, the wider sphere which is influenced by new technologies. They emphasise the fact that a cell phone can save one's life because it is possible to call immediately for a car or ambulance to bring a sick person to the hospital.

1 See Van Stipriaan (2011) on which this chapter is based.

2 The outside world here means outside of Suriname's interior, therefore, contacts with Amerindians will not be discussed here.

Cell phones also provide the opportunity to almost simultaneously mobilise a transnational network of relatives to help pay the hospital bill.

Another important observation is that when people adopt new technology or new media “[they are] used initially with references to desires that are historically well established, but remain unfulfilled because of the limitations of previous technologies” (Horst and Miller 2007: 7). Recent developments among Maroons who live in Suriname’s interior seem to confirm this. However, the pace at which changes have occurred, and the subsequent consequences, differ. The coming together of a number of new technologies almost at the same time and the resulting explosion of communication was quite revolutionary.³ In order to properly understand the impact of contact and especially the role of new technologies in the changes that took place in communication patterns among Maroon villagers residing in the interior of Suriname, I discuss them with respect to distinct historical periods. I distinguish three principal historical periods of communication based on differences in degrees of intensity of contact and intensity of change in patterns of communication. The relevant periods are: (1) Diplomatic and economic communication with the city, 1760–1890, (2) Acceleration of communication and transport, 1890–1960, and (3) Transport and communication revolution, 1960–present. The posited periods also involved demographic and geographic changes as illustrated in Tables 7.1 and 7.2.

Not much is known about demographic growth of Maroons before the twentieth century. Obviously, marronage from slavery was the main growth factor before 1863, the year of slave emancipation. Since then natural growth was constantly increasing due to more stable circumstances as well as, eventually, improved health care. Today population increase of the Surinamese population is just over one per cent yearly, whereas that of Maroons is three to four times as high, as a consequence of high birth rates (Census 2004). Table 7.2 shows how, despite high natural growth the population in the traditional Maroon territories is decreasing, due to out-migration. Two thirds of all Maroons now live outside their former territory, a majority among them even outside Suriname.

Obviously, mobility was a crucial factor in Maroon history. Mobility was involved in their ancestors’ enslavement in Africa and their enforced transportation across the Atlantic to Suriname. In Suriname, sooner or later they escaped from slavery and settled outside of the plantation area in the tropical rain forest in (temporary) camps and villages. The period and direction of their flight from the plantations eventually turned out to be a decisive factor in the formation of the six different Maroon groups. The first groups that escaped

3 In this article, revolution(ary) should be conceived of more as a process involving definite change rather than as a sudden event, as, for instance, the Industrial Revolution.

TABLE 7.1 *Number of Maroons in Suriname 1680–2004 (incl. Paramaribo)*

Year	Ndyuka	Aluku	Pamaka	Saamaka	Matawai	Kwinti	Total*
c. 1680							c. 800
c. 1760							c. 5,000
c. 1840	2,500	700		3,000	800		c. 7,000
1863							c. 8,000
c. 1900	4,000	400	400	4,000	600	200	c. 9,600
1964	14,600	300	1,650	8,900	1,400	120	27,700
2004	32,000	–	2,800	32,000	3,900	570	72,600

* If the total number is higher than the sum of the six Maroon groups it includes a category 'unknown'.

Sources: Price (2002); Dragtenstein (2002); census (1964 and 2004); Koloniaal Verslag (1863); Teenstra (1842).⁴

TABLE 7.2 *Number of Maroons outside traditional territories⁵*

Year	Traditional Territory	Greater Paramaribo	French Guiana	Netherlands	Total	Maroons outside trad. terr.
c. 1990	c. 40,000	c. 15,000	?	c. 5,000	?	?
2004	39,700	32,900	c. 40,000	c. 10,000	c. 122,500	68%

Based on: de Bruijne (2007); Price (2002); census (2004).

to the east gave rise to the Ndyuka or Okanisi (see Thoden van Velsen and Hoogbergen 2011) who settled along the Marowijne and Tapanahoni rivers. Those who chose a more southerly direction eventually became the Saamaka (see Price 1983) who settled along the Suriname River and, in the case of their offshoot, the Matawai, along the Saramaca River. In order to stop guerilla attacks on the plantations the colonial authorities felt pressed to settle peace

4 Note that the total population of Suriname in 1863 was ca. 60,000; in 1964: 324,000; in 2004: 493,000.

5 Note that today a considerable group of at least several hundreds up to possibly even a few thousand Maroons also live in France (Thomas Polimé and Bettina Migge pers. comm.).

with these three groups at different times during the 1760s. The other three communities, the Aluku in the southeast, who since the 1960s have mainly taken up residence along the Lawa river in eastern French Guiana, the Pamaka who settled along the middle reaches of the Marowijne River in the east, and the Kwinti who reside in the Matawai territory came into being somewhat later.⁶ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mobility increased due to population growth, the scarcity of natural resources in the traditional territories, and the emergence of new opportunities for making a living. As a result, new Maroon villages came to be established somewhat closer to the colonial economy than before, as in the case of the Ndyuka villages that emerged along the Cottica River from the nineteenth century onwards. Another more traumatic form of mobility involved the disbanding of some villages due to religious differences, a phenomenon that increased in the course of the twentieth century. Some Saamaka villages, such as Botopasi, split up because part of the population was christened over time while the other part continued to adhere to their own religion. The split in Botopasi, for example, led to the founding of Pikinse very close by. Mobility in itself was thus not a new phenomenon among Maroons since it has always been one of their survival strategies. Indeed, as will be shown in this chapter, the communication revolution, which was to a certain extent also a transport revolution, was part and parcel of the exponential increase in mobility since the mid-twentieth century (Table 7.2). However, already long before that time there was substantial temporary mobility between Maroon territories and the colony.

In Section 2, I deal with the first period, followed by accelerated communication due to gold mining activities and the construction of the railway line in Section 3. In Section 4, I look at the vast technological changes that have taken place in the most recent period and have impacted the lives of the Maroons, followed by some conclusions in Section 5.

2 Diplomatic and Economic Communication with the City (1760–1890)

As stated above, Maroon societies came into being when enslaved Africans who worked the Surinamese plantations liberated themselves, and settled in the interior. However, from the relative protection of that forested hinterland,

6 The Ndyuka are also called Aucaners or Okanisi; Saamaka are also known as Saramaka (Saramaccans), and Aluku are often called Boni, after their famous eighteenth-century leader.

they launched raids on the plantations. Apart from liberating other enslaved from plantations and augmenting their numbers, these attacks were also vital for the Maroons. Firstly, to ensure they had enough women, and no less importantly, to obtain tools they needed to survive. Being aware of the latter need, the colonial authorities agreed to pay an ostensibly humiliating tribute to the Maroons in the form of tools. This agreement was anchored in the peace treaties set up with the Ndyuka, Saamaka and Matawai. These tools were evidently required in large amounts, since the first delivery sent to the Ndyuka in 1761—a journey of twenty days each way—required no fewer than 265 slaves to carry the tribute (de Groot 1997: 190). After the peace treaty in 1762, the Saamaka received 3,750 axes, hewers, machetes, hackers and ordinary knives, 78 rifles, 15 barrels of gunpowder, 750 gross of shot, 150 razors, 150 scissors, 156 chisels and drills, 1,500 sewing needles, cotton, thread, salt, oil, medical instruments and combs (de Beet and Price 1982: 203–204).

The tribute payments from the colonial authority made further raids unnecessary and created a certain dependency relationship between the Maroons and the colonial economy. More important still in terms of Maroons' contact with the colonial society was the vibrant trade that the Maroons themselves initiated in the late eighteenth century. Silvia de Groot (1963: 48) estimated that by around 1850, the Ndyuka exported goods worth around 36,000 guilders a year and imported around 15,000 guilders worth of dram, sweets and (cooking) bananas. The profit was spent on consumer items in Paramaribo.

It was around the mid-nineteenth century that Herrnhutter missionaries reached the Saamaka. While they did manage to convert some Saamaka to Christianity (see Lenders 1996), most attempts at religious conversion initially failed. It was not until the twentieth century, when missionary efforts in the interior intensified and education became part of their evangelising activities, that Catholic and Protestant missionaries gradually succeeded in converting more Maroons. Despite low levels of conversion in the initial period, missionaries nevertheless increasingly provided a link between the Maroon world and the colony.

While slavery continued, Maroons were forbidden to settle near the plantations. They were, however, allowed to come to Paramaribo. Maroons have, therefore, had a presence in Paramaribo since the first days after the signing of the peace treaty of 1760. Sometimes no more than just a few Maroons, often between 30 and 50, were present in Paramaribo. Some were so-called *ostagiers*, sons of leading Maroons who stayed as political hostages in the colonial capital to guarantee peace. One of them, a Ndyuka named Jeboa, was even sent to the Netherlands in 1667 “to be able to see there the greatness of the whites” (Vrij 2007: 25). Besides such hostages, Maroon delegations were constantly

coming and going. During the first year of the peace treaty no fewer than seven such delegations, totalling some ninety men, came to the city. Three of these delegations came to hand over 27 newly escaped plantation slaves, for which they received a bonus payment, so-called *vanggeld* 'catch money', that is, payment for capturing escaped slaves. This suggests that from the beginning there was also an economic or financial incentive to go to the city.

Of course, Maroon leaders were not always very eager to hand over new fugitives from slavery, and this was often the cause of intense and drawn-out negotiations and conflicts between Maroon leaders and the colonial authorities. Nevertheless, extradition was by no means exceptional, be it sometimes under coercion. For instance, in 1834 sixteen Saamaka, including two leaders, were arrested in order to force the Saamaka to hand over the 'notorious gang leader' Pasop (from Dutch *pas op* 'watch out!') along with eight of his men.⁷ Despite severe discord among the Saamaka, they eventually handed over Pasop and his men and received a bonus payment in return. The same year a Ndyuka "patrol of 46 Bush Negroes" in the Marowijne region chased a group of nine fugitive plantation slaves. Five were killed, four handed over, and a bonus payment of 900 guilders was paid. Moreover, the Ndyuka *Gaanman* 'paramount chief' and the leader of the Maroon patrol, major Guiany, each received an extra fifty guilders "for their cooperation and good will". Not much later a group of Maroons who had settled along the Sara Creek chased the escaped slave population from the timber estate Victoria back to their plantation and received 800 guilders in bonus payment. Thus, that year alone a few thousand guilders that were earned from capturing enslaved flowed to Maroons in villages in the interior.

Apart from these, more or less diplomatic contacts involving an economic impact, there were also Maroon 'refugees' in Paramaribo. These were people who had committed some crime or evil in their home territory and who had taken refuge in the colony. Others came to the city and stayed for longer periods to trade or to work for money. That this sort of contact could be complex and even paradoxical is shown by the fact that in 1781, with the outbreak of the fourth Anglo-Dutch War, some fifty Maroons, Ndyuka as well as Saamaka living in or around Paramaribo, applied to the governor to fight against the British. Forty-six of them were hired, supplied with weapons, and, for the usual pay, were stationed as soldiers at Fort New Amsterdam which was strategically positioned at the mouth of the Suriname and Commewijne rivers (Vrij 2007: 33). This also illustrates, by the way, how well Maroons were informed

7 Examples taken from Den Haag, Nationaal Archief, Gouverneursjournlaals, Gouverneur Generaal der W-I Bezittingen, 1828–1845 (1.05.08).

about the (international) political situation. After 1830, some of the Ndyuka clans moved to the east of the plantations, near the Cottica River. From there, they supplied the colony with timber. Thoden van Velzen (2003: 22) estimates that in the mid-nineteenth century half of the male population of the Ndyuka were involved in the colonial economy, mainly in the lumber trade. De Groot (1963: 48) estimated that around 1,200 Ndyuka visited the colony each year in this period.

Lumber remained crucial even after the abolition of slavery and the Maroon monopoly continued to grow, mainly because the so-called timber plantations, where wood had been worked on a commercial basis, practically disappeared after 1863. While the lumber trade was officially subject to regulation, in practice Maroons were left to their own devices. It is not hard to imagine that since that time Maroon timber production increased and, consequentially, interaction with the colonial economy and influx of consumer goods as well. However, it was not until 1919 that the government determined that south of the east-west line crossing the first river rapids, the lumber trade was free;⁸ north of this line the Maroons had to pay compensation (see Scholtens 1994: 57–58, 182).

The discussion above suggests that Maroons were in regular contact with the city from the 1760s onwards, enabling them to acquire products from there for their everyday needs. It was with some surprise that expedition leader A.J. van Stockum noted in 1905 in Maripaston, some 50 kilometers southeast of Paramaribo, that “Communication with the city [...] is easy here, and that is certainly why all the household utensils, crockery etc. consist of things made in Europe” (quoted in Luijt 2008: 47). For most Maroons, however, communication with the city was mainly a one-way affair involving Maroon men going to the colony and coming home with colonial goods. The general impact of these contacts must have been rather superficial until the end of the nineteenth century. Only a few missionaries and so-called postholders (representatives of the colonial government who had to see to it that the Maroons did not harm any colonial interests) who lived among the Maroons, could exert some influence, but due to their small numbers and their overall lack of clout, their impact was not substantial.⁹ One-way contacts were not simply confined to trade relations,

8 This was the informal border where military checkpoints had been positioned and where until 1863 Maroons had to report if they wanted to go to the city.

9 The mere existence of this institution of postholders, actually ambassadors of a kind, in combination with the peace treaties that were renewed several times, meant a *de facto* recognition by the colonial state of the political and territorial autonomy of Maroon societies. And this is exactly what later governments of Suriname, to the present day, have been trying to undo, thus, it has often been subject to bitter disputes.

but also involved diplomatic ties that existed between the traditional Maroon hierarchy and the colonial regime. In the early twentieth century, Paramaribo began trying to exert more control over the interior, with a particular eye to exploiting the raw materials that are found in Maroon territory. One way of achieving this was to pay granmans a salary and to summon them to the city at regular intervals. When Gaanman Amakti went to Paramaribo in 1916 to swear an oath of loyalty to the Dutch queen, he was accompanied by an entourage of no fewer than forty people (van Lier 1919: 63).

3 Accelerating Communications and Transport (1880–1960)

At the end of the nineteenth century, relations between Maroons and the outside world changed following the discovery of gold in the interior of Suriname. Since the colony's early days, stories had circulated that Suriname's soil contained gold and over time several attempts had been made to verify this. When gold was found in exploitable amounts in neighbouring French Guiana in the mid-nineteenth century, the search also began in Suriname (see also de Theije, this volume). Dozens of expeditions were organised to look for mineral resources and to map Suriname. These large-scale expeditions which continued to explore the country until well into the twentieth century led to more intensified contact between Maroons and urban society. Expeditions were headed by Europeans and escorted by about a dozen European military personnel as well as a team of around twenty freight bearers and other miscellaneous personnel recruited from among the colony's population. However, it was Maroons who generally took care of inland transport and served as guides (see Wentholt 2003; van Stipriaan 2009a).

Gold was indeed discovered and by 1875 concessions for over 52,000 hectares had been issued to nine prospectors. By 1877, almost 300 kg of gold had been mined, rising to around 1,000 kg annually after the turn of the century (Benjamins and Snelleman 1914–17: 310–320; see also Hoogbergen et al. 2001). Soon after, another boom product emerged in the interior: *balata*, or natural rubber, tapped from the *bolletrie* that grows in the wild. In 1885, slightly over a ton was exported and this rose to more than 1,100 tons in 1911 (Benjamins and Snelleman 1914–17: 67–73).

All these economic activities were enormously labour-intensive and again it was the Maroons who guided the way, provided the transport, and were part of the work force. Around the turn of the century, between one and two thousand labourers were employed as *balata* bleeders, as they were known, and in the peak years, between 1910 and 1915 this number rose to as many as 5,000 to 7,000.

In that same period, between 4,500 and 5,500 people also worked in the gold fields (Heilbron and Willemsen 1980 I: 101 and II: 84). Most of these were from the city, while some had come from abroad. At the same time, however, considerable numbers of Maroons were also increasingly participating in these activities. For instance, when the balata boom collapsed in 1931 and the *Balata Compagnie* closed down, 309 of the approximately one thousand workers who were made redundant were Maroons (Scholtens 1994: 94).

However, considerably more Maroons found employment in cargo shipping on the Marowijne river, as their skills and expertise gave them a complete monopoly. Cargo shipping reached its peak between 1890 and 1920 during the boom years of gold and balata production. Much of this activity took place in eastern Suriname and neighboring French Guiana and mainly involved Ndyuka, Pamaka and Aluku Maroons as well as a large number of Saamaka.¹⁰ Maroons were able to earn significant sums of money. It is estimated that on average, a *bagasiman* 'shipper' earned about four guilders a day, with an average annual income in the years 1880–1920 of between 1,800 and 2,500 guilders, a considerable sum in those days (Samuels 1944: 60; Thoden van Velzen 2003: 25).¹¹

Cargo transport also contributed significantly to the penetration of the money economy into Maroon society due to the large numbers of people who directly or indirectly benefited from the money earned through this trade. Scholtens (1994: 62) estimated that between 1,000 and 2,500 cargo shipments were carried out per year involving at least two or three Maroons working on each boatload. This means that hundreds of Maroon households—probably even more, since many men had more than one wife—benefited from the shipping industry.¹² This work did not only involve constant contact with the urban population, but it also benefited the colonial economy since most of the money was spent on products from the city because the internal economy among the Maroons was still principally based on barter. This claim is supported by an interesting description recorded by Samuels from the turn of the century. According to this description, Maroons earning on average 1,800 guilders, purchased the following kinds of goods: eight painted drums and/or varnished chests full of hammocks, curtains (to protect against bats) and several hundred *pangis* 'cloths'; two rifles (breechloaders) with attributes; 400 kg salt; ten cases of kerosene oil; 40 liters of rum; five cases of soap, three barrels of

10 Around 1920, there were already approximately 2,000 Saamaka in French Guiana, mainly attracted by the growing cargo trade (Scholtens 1994: 81).

11 In the city, a craftsman earned between one and two and a half guilders a day, a contract worker on a plantation might only earn 60 to 80 cents a day (Scholtens 1994: 62).

12 Scholtens (1994: 89) estimates the total number of Maroons in 1945 at 19,000.

biscuit, a barrel of flour, a barrel of bacon, a barrel of salted meat; pots, pans, plates, bowls, glasses; chairs, tables, a lamp, and amusements such as a clock or music box (Samuels 1944: 60).

Transport was fundamentally transformed in the early twentieth century. In order to make the goldmines more accessible, it was decided to lay a railway line to the Lawa, extending for some 220 km. Between 1903 and 1912, 173 kilometres of tracks were laid from Paramaribo via Koffie Djompo (renamed Lelydorp in 1908), Republiek in the Para district, and Kwakugron on the Saramacca to Kabel on the Upper Suriname. At Kabel, people and goods crossed the river by cable—the cable, spanning 300 metres and capable of carrying 6,350 kg, brought people and goods in a cabin gliding along it, across the river to the train waiting on the other side. The second track ran via Kadjoe to Dam on the Sara Creek. The plan had been to continue the tracks another 50 km to the Lawa region where most of the gold was mined, but this section was never built due to the costs involved. The cost of the track that was built had already amounted to almost nine million guilders, a substantial sum considering that at the height of mining, only around a million guilders worth of gold was being mined each year. Meanwhile, hundreds, perhaps as many as 800 to a thousand workers had been employed in the construction of the railway. Most workers were brought in from outside, yet many Maroons also found employment here too (Van der Veen 1992: 16–19).

With a rail line linking the Upper Suriname region with the coast, movement between the interior and the city became theoretically much easier, particularly for some of the Maroons of central Suriname. Apart from the daily trains to Onverwacht in Para, a train went twice a week to Gros (102.6 km from Paramaribo) and another to Kabel station. A connecting train stood ready on the opposite bank of the Suriname River bound for Dam. Including a wait of between an hour and ninety minutes to cross the river, the journey from Paramaribo to Dam, which used to take twenty days, now took 10½ to 11 hours (Van der Veen 1992: 16–19). Yet not everybody was able to profit from the railway line as the train was expensive. In the 1930s, a single ticket from Kabel to Paramaribo cost ten guilders (Spalburg 2005: 171). In fact the train was not intended for Maroons, but for freight and for people from the coast involved in raw material extraction in the interior. After the gold and balata booms collapsed the train was used to transport agricultural produce and the section between Dam and Kabel was abandoned. Maroons would ride the trains, as Hermanus Adams of Botopasi (born in 1926) recalls, however noting that despite the train to Kabel, the journey from the city to Botopasi still took on average seven days (Corinde 2010: 46).

In this period, Maroons who went to the city only did so about once a year, generally by *korjaal* 'dug-out canoe', to buy produce such as oil, tools, clothes and household utensils. Most would stay for one or two weeks at most, if they had a place to stay, as was required. Some stayed with relatives or friends, others hired ramshackled former slave shacks, and later on the authorities provided a poor shelter for Maroons in (Nyu) Combé, located not far from the main market place (cf. Van Stipriaan 2009b: 148–149). Not all Maroons went to town to trade, however, some also went to find temporary work, or to continue their education. Moreover, the city was not the only place that Maroons migrated to. In a pattern repeated throughout Surinamese history, the decline of the gold and balata sectors in the second quarter of the twentieth century was soon compensated by the rise of a new booming natural resource, bauxite, used for the production of aluminium (see Van Stipriaan 2009b and c; Bruijning and Voorhoeve 1977: 44–50). Bauxite had already been found in Suriname around 1900, and the first shipments of ore from Moengo on the Cottica River took place in 1922. Moengo was then a deserted Ndyuka Maroon village and the region was very much in the interior. At that time, there was no road to Paramaribo and all transport was by river. The village quickly grew into a mining town with a couple of thousand inhabitants who were all directly or indirectly working for the bauxite industry. A large number of (Ndyuka) Maroons figured prominently in the workforce. In 1940, Billiton began mining bauxite between the Suriname River and the Para Creek near the old Onverdacht plantation. At first, this did not involve many Maroons, but it brought industrialisation closer to the Saamaka region. Nevertheless, despite the train, Maroons continued to use traditional modes of transport such as *korjaal* or rafts of timber logs for sale to travel to the city. This economically driven contact with the city and other population groups invariably involved only men. Women, by contrast, remained in the villages, and were the main beneficiaries and consumers of the goods bought with Maroon men's earnings. It was also women who adapted urban products for domestic and social use.

4 Transport and Communications Revolution: 1960–Present

Major developments between 1940 and 1960 brought massive changes to the Maroons of Suriname's interior. During World War II, the crucial importance of bauxite for the aircraft industry brought Suriname into closer contact with the global economy. An international airport was built in the district of Para. At the same time, not far away, an enormous bauxite processing plant was built

at Paranam, enabling Suriname to export semi-finished products. Plans were also made for the construction of factories to manufacture the end product itself, aluminum. At the time, the only problem that hampered these plans was the lack of a substantial energy supply. In order to overcome this difficulty, the so-called Brokopondo agreement was signed in 1958 between the colonial government and Suralco, the Surinamese subsidiary of the American multinational Alcoa, Suriname's largest bauxite producer. This led to the construction of a dam in the Suriname River for the production of hydro-electric energy.

Building the dam involved flooding an area that contained twenty-seven Maroon villages, mainly inhabited by Saamaka, and thus around 5,000 to 6,000 people, who had not been given a vote in the matter, were displaced. Between 1964 and 1965, most of these Maroons migrated to new villages, known as transmigration villages, situated north of the dam and thus nearer to Paramaribo. Only a minority of the displaced people preferred to resettle further south, in the traditional Saamaka region. A contemporary remarked "We didn't want to go there, because we would become dependent on the city" (Anema 2006: 35–36; my translation). This is precisely what eventually happened since there were few economic opportunities in the transmigration villages and the city was indeed near, accessible via a direct road from the dam at Afobaka. Ironically, the construction of the dam had for a while provided many Maroons with paid employment.

For those who relocated to the south, the city seemed to be quite far away. In addition to the huge new lake of around 1,600 km², which was too dangerous to cross in a dug-out canoe, the dam itself blocked the river route to the city, so that boats and, equally importantly, rafts of timber that were to be sold could no longer be floated down in the traditional way. At the same time, however, an infrastructure began to form linking more and more of the interior with the urban economy.

In 1959, Operation Grasshopper was launched, creating seven small airstrips to facilitate access to the interior for geographic and economic expeditions whose aim was to map the country and to chart its natural resources.¹³ The possibilities and ease of air travel to the interior were immediately obvious. More airstrips were quickly built in other places as well and many villages became accessible by plane. Air travel proved especially important for health care, missionary work, government business, and NGOs, gold mining and tourism. Regular flights, provided by two commercial airlines, started flying to and

13 Airstrips were built at Palumeu, Tafelberg, Kabalebo, Kuruni, Kaysergebergte, Ulemari and Sipaliwini.

from the city and even the health service got its own aircraft. Although tickets are still expensive, today a substantial number of passengers are Maroons.

Roads began to be built in the interior in the 1940s. Initially, these were designed for the transport of lumber. By 1973, the system of unpaved forest roads capable of carrying vehicles of up to twenty tons covered more than 1,100 kms (Bruijning and Voorhoeve 1977: 94). In the 1940s, a road had already been built from Paramaribo to Zanderij where the international airport was located. Around 1960, with the construction of the dam, a road had also been built to Afobaka, with secondary roads to Brownsweg. The Afobaka road has since been extended along the lake to Atjoni, with several additional side roads. The 1960s also saw the construction of an east-west link in the coastal region, running from Albina to Nickerie, making the Cottica area, including Moengo, accessible by road. More recently the unpaved road network has also been extended to the Pamaka town of Langatabiki. Plans are currently being made to continue the expansion of the road network into the Saamaka and Ndyuka regions, via Palumeu to the Brazilian city of Santarem and maybe even to Manaus. Paved roads will then connect both Asidonhopo and Diitabiki (see Van Dijk 2009). There could hardly be a more direct link with the urban environment.

Despite the growing importance of roads, waterways continue to provide the key transport infrastructure for Maroons. Yet here too, revolutionary changes have taken place. In the early 1950s, the outboard motor was introduced into the interior. At first, few Maroons could afford these new motors, although the advantages were immediately obvious to all. The need to earn money to buy an outboard motor provided an extra incentive for people to look for work outside the Maroon region. In time, outboard motors became an integral part of Maroon life. A journey to the city that might once have taken several days or even a couple of weeks could now be completed in a matter of days or even hours. A person could leave Asidonhopo at seven in the morning and be in the centre of Paramaribo by three thirty in the afternoon, with the time becoming shorter as more of the road from Atjoni to Paramaribo became paved. This compares favourably with travel times a few centuries ago. For instance, in 1762 it took Lieutenant Vieira and his men twenty days to bring the peace gifts to the Saamaka.

Just as the car typifies the city, the outboard motor now typifies the interior. Today, a Maroon man should have at least a 15 hp motor, however that is still considered child's play. Real status starts at 40 hp, and anything above that, up to around 115 hp, earns genuine respect. Outboard motors are much more than a means to maintain contact with the outside world. They have changed the perception of time and space. Once, a daughter who went to live in her husband's village would disappear from sight; today, her mother can visit her

regularly. Women used to stay for extended periods of time on pieces of family land that were often far away to tend to their crops, since it was impossible to commute back and forth. Now, with the ease of travel, they tend to remain for much shorter periods of time and travel home more frequently. In theory, no child now lives too far away to attend school. A wide network of school boats brings children to and from school. Outboard motors have also benefited tourism. Each year, thousands of tourists stay at the dozens of eco-lodges along some of the rivers, 'bringing' the outside world to the interior. Transport, always a key source of income for Maroon men (see above), is therefore still of major importance. Boats may have changed, but the dangers of rapids, rocks, and waterfalls still remain and even today only Maroon—and Amerindian—men know how to traverse their own rivers.

Boat design has been adapted to accommodate outboard motors. While they were once tapered at either end or curved up, they are now cut square at the stern (Saamaka model) or have a hole in the stern to accommodate the outboard motor. The boats can also carry much more. Ten-metre boats did exist, but most of them were smaller. Today, a boat of 15–18 metres long is a common sight. The largest boats, with the most powerful outboard motors operate in the Marowijne-Tapanahoni region, where they transport goods including gasoline and oil as well as heavy machinery, such as bulldozers, needed mainly for the gold mining activities in the area. A boat's capacity is generally measured not in length but in the number of (oil) barrels it can carry. A forty-barrel boat is no longer exceptional, especially not in eastern Suriname. It is an indication of the important role gasoline now plays in the interior following the introduction of the outboard motor and, shortly afterwards, of generators to supply electricity. Oil barrels have become an everyday sight in villages and houses, as have fuel stations along the rivers.

At the same time, outboard motors have raised the cost of living and have created new divisions in society. Once, a husband would provide a wife with a boat. In theory this still applies, but it may not always be a boat with an outboard motor. Men generally keep the motor for their own boat and rarely have money for more than one. In addition, outboard motors are a male concern; women are rarely seen operating a motor, although this is now changing. Women are, therefore, all the more dependent on men. Women can often be seen standing by the waterfront waiting to be taken to their distant fields. Unless a boat is already full, or chartered for tourists, it is considered good manners to offer a waiting woman a lift. There is also a social division between men with an outboard motor and those without one. From a rough estimate based on a headcount in several Saamaka villages, one in three men appears to own an outboard motor; among the Ndyuka the percentage appears slightly higher,

although it is still no more than half. Boat transport is expensive, but below the Langa Tabiki-Atjoni line it is vital. In 2010 a 15 hp outboard motor cost around six thousand Suriname dollars, and a 40 hp motor cost between ten and twelve thousand dollars.¹⁴ A 40 hp motor uses around one litre of gasoline per four-five kilometres; a litre costs around five Surinamese dollars. The distance from Asidonhopo to Atjoni is about 100 kilometres. It costs around nine hundred dollars to hire a boatman for the journey. Passengers pay around seventy dollars per head (including a large amount of baggage). In eastern Suriname, the cost of cargo boat transport is generally paid, or at least calculated, in gold. Thus, renting a large cargo boat of around fifty barrels from Diitabiki to Albina might cost 90 grams. When the first outboard motors appeared in the early 1960s, the trip still took three days (Hansen and De Wagt 1967: 94); now the distance is covered in about one day.

Outboard motors have brought other changes to Maroon cultural and social life. 'Motorist' has become a new profession; mechanics repair and maintain motors, and boat-making is increasingly becoming a much more specialised profession than before. Some men lease boats, and women make *pangis* 'cloths' to protect motors. Alongside the traditional motifs with which boats used to be decorated and which are now in decline, boats are now decorated with industrial paints and global popular culture has also begun to intrude. At the same time, boats continue to have a unique quality since most now have a name on their hull, often reflecting something of the linguistic humour inherent to Maroon culture, like the one I saw on the upper Suriname River called *Ting No De*, which could mean 'there's no time (left)', or 'time does not exist'.

Comparable developments have been observed in Africa where a similarly dialectic process of appropriation is going on with new technology (Gewald et al. 2009: 16). The way people there relate to new technology is nothing like the way they relate to dead objects like cars or outboard motors. The new technology is appropriated, integrated and attributes meaning to all kinds of transactions and activities, although this may differ between the sexes. Maroon men giving personal names and messages to boats is an example of this dialectical process. And at the same time, for example, traditional textiles used for Maroon clothing which are all named—mainly by women—after social events, now receive names referring to new technology, like *Sitangaali* 'rocket' after the European space centre opened in French Guiana in the 1960s, or *Tumumbii* 'automobile' (Price and Price 1999: 98).

Motorised transport is a booster of change. Not only does it change the concept and consciousness of distance and time, it also brings new opportunities.

14 At the time of writing there are roughly four Surinamese dollars to one euro.

It has given birth to the rise of (eco-)tourism and the construction of a relatively large number of tourist resorts and eco-lodges along the upper rivers in Suriname's interior. A new status symbol next to the outboard motor are quads, the four-wheel motor bikes used by men working in the, once again, booming gold fields. Whereas until recently *korjalen* 'canoes' were the only mode of transport and rivers the only roads in the interior, today more and more motor bikes and quads are used to travel along small bush paths to neighbouring villages or gold digger camps. This greatly increases the reach of small entrepreneurs such as bakers and carpenters, although this development has so far not (yet) resulted in the rise of local markets. Motorised transport and the improved infrastructure has also substantially facilitated traffic in drugs and illegal gold.

At the same time, motorisation has stimulated migration enormously, even to transnational levels. It is so much easier now to follow the call of the city or to go to the euro-economy of French Guiana, and it is also easier for migrants to visit their home villages and show off their relative affluence. It almost makes migration the only natural thing to do these days (see Goossens 2007). The communication and transport revolution also helped many thousands of Maroons escape the violence of the War of the Interior (1986–1992) which devastated large parts of the interior. Yet while it probably saved a large number of lives, it was also instrumental in on-going depopulation of Maroon villages because many of these refugees never returned to their home villages.

Perhaps just as important as the technological transformation of mobility in Maroon society, is the arrival of wireless communication. It has existed since the 1960s although it remained extremely limited for many years. Radio transmitters were introduced, especially at medical and missionary posts and airstrips, when Operation Grasshopper was completed. Over the years, private individuals were allowed to use the transmitters to contact people in the city in emergency situations, as in the event of a death. Thus an operator at a medical post would contact the main office in the city, where contact would be made with the telephone company which then connected the caller to the desired phone number. Back at the medical post, the caller had to wait until the recipient called back in order to exchange a brief message.

By the 1960s, it was also possible to receive national radio broadcasts from Paramaribo on transistor radios in the interior. These radios were consumer items with status, the sort of item a Maroon who had worked abroad for a long period would bring home. In the late 1990s, satellite dishes began to appear in Maroon villages, bought by wealthy Maroons who, like city dwellers and people in the Brazilian prospectors' camps in the interior, used them to receive Brazilian television stations, bringing TV and video culture to the interior. A

rather hilarious example of the changes this has brought was observed by a Dutch engineer, Menno Marrenga, who has lived in several Saamaka villages for the past several decades, where he runs technical workshops. One day, he writes, when he is asked to come to a village to repair a generator, he has to work there with a “bleating radio” which tells him all day that there is only one God, “one God in virtually all musical styles, from *kaseko* to rap and reggae—which was moaned, groaned, screamed and chanted, hour after hour” (Marrenga 2011: 37, my translation). This particular radio station had obviously been hired by one of the upcoming charismatic evangelical churches. Missionary activity among Maroons, particularly the Saamaka, is a long-standing phenomenon. Some of these evangelical denominations, often with American roots, have become very popular among Maroons, in particular since the civil war, probably also because the gospel is brought to them by Maroons themselves who are easily able to link up with local knowledge and habits, notwithstanding the fact that they are rigidly opposed to Afro-religious practices (see Van der Pijl 2008). This has more than once resulted in frictions within the village communities.

To continue Marrenga’s story, when the generator is finally repaired, he wants to go home, but instead has to watch DVDs with a group of young villagers. Until only five years ago, he then observes, children enjoyed themselves by making music or playing football. Since the advent of the DVD, the whole extended family is now gathered around the DVD player watching action and war movies or porno, enjoying watching how whites are alternately killing each other or having sexual intercourse with each other in a variety of positions. But even that new tradition has already changed. Today, he says, it is only video clips of “dance, dance and dance by boys in sagging pants and girls in flashy bras, including young Maroons” (Marrenga 2011: 37, my translation). This suggests that this video culture and urban popular culture, in general, have increasingly become appropriated by Maroon youth and are now part of daily life in the interior as well. Urban music by Maroon musicians, such as I Ta Ves or King Koyeba, American movies dubbed into a Maroon language or Sranantongo, as well as local productions can be heard everywhere. The fast and smooth incorporation of these new media is more than a top down process, it is also a new means for Maroons to tell their own stories.

Telephone

In the 1990s Telesur, the national telecom provider, began installing public, and for a number of officials also private, telephones in parts of the interior. This development soon began to accelerate. Because of the scarcity of these telephones no real telephone culture emerged, but it did enable large groups

to contact people in the city (and beyond) directly. Then at the turn of the twenty-first century, technical innovations allowed radio telephones to be set up in the interior. Some Maroons recognised the commercial possibilities and opened phone shops (*telefonu*) in the interior. A few villages had more than one of these shops, in which calls to numbers in Suriname could be made for a dollar a minute and abroad for between five and ten dollars. Some people made a lot of money at the time. And suddenly the world was much closer. Within a couple of years, this rage subsided as a new, foreign provider introduced a mobile phone service: Digicel decided to capture the interior before attempting to exploit the cities. Soon a network of transmission poles had been set up covering the area and using a strategy akin to dumping—sixty dollars for a cell phone with ten dollars free credit—the interior switched *en masse* to mobile telephony. Telesur, realising that they could not afford to ignore the new phenomenon, moved quickly to catch up lost ground. Today, it is possible to use a mobile phone in practically every Maroon village. Although this development is still recent, the changes it has brought are already evident and more will doubtless follow. Because one thing is clear, the next stage, which has already started, is the arrival of internet.

The main problem with all these innovations and concomitant changes is that they are increasingly expensive, and this is particularly true for villagers since there is little paid employment in the villages. In order to earn money, the men go to the goldmines, the city or abroad, mainly to French Guiana or to the Netherlands. One major difference today is that villagers are now finding it far harder to return home once they have left, a trend that started with the migration that followed the construction of the dam at Afobaka, increasing exponentially with the flight from the interior during the War of the Interior and that continues to the present day. Yet, although most of the people who leave do not return, they continue to seek contact with their home village and vice versa. Villagers need their contacts in the diaspora, they need money from abroad to help them survive financially. Mobile phones are a solution, but also part of the problem. Phones enable people in the interior to keep in touch with distant relatives and to re-establish dormant contacts. However, many Maroons have accumulated debts through excessive use of these phones, which may indeed be a universal problem. Contacts abroad are necessary in order to pay for the phone. Whereas people who came to the interior would once bring bags of rice, tinned foods, bread and drink, today the most valued gift a person can bring is phone credit. Households cut costs wherever they can and sometimes entire pensions are reserved to be able to buy phone credit. However, phone calls are not just to ask for financial aid. The main purpose is to maintain social networks, which traditionally involves extensive, elaborate linguistic forms

and *tori* 'stories'. Of course, in the end, the network is crucial for survival and is, therefore, related to money. However, as Horst and Miller (2007: 165) observed for Jamaica, "the cell phone is not central to making money, but it is vital to getting [to] money". In order to reduce costs, a new cultural phenomenon has evolved—and not just among the Maroons—the missed call (popular speak: *misscall*). A caller phones a number and quickly hangs up, hoping that the recipient will return the call and so pay for the conversation.

In effect, the oral culture is becoming digitalised. Women no longer have to go to the waterfront to exchange stories while they do the washing; they can phone. Daughters and relatives in other villages who would once have made regular trips to exchange news, now phone. If visitors come while the husband is out hunting or working in the forest, the wife can phone him. Women are no longer cut off from the village when they go to tend their crops. People who need to travel can call a boatman to book a ride. While people used to communicate easily from their dugout to the riverbank—voices carry far and clearly across water—these days people use a phone. Even during a serious *kuutu* 'meeting' participants can often be heard talking on their phone, while speakers are regularly interrupted themselves by their own phone. When a death occurred it used to take weeks for people to gather in the village; these days, everyone knows of the death within a matter of hours, even relatives abroad.

Mobile phones also play a vital role in male-female relations, since the complex stratagems that were once necessary to arrange a clandestine meeting are now a thing of the past: a phone number is enough. At the same time, social controls have also increased, since it is now possible to call and check what a person is up to at any given time. In a culture in which jealousy and adultery play such a central role, phones are a complicating factor. This phenomenon was observed in African societies too. De Bruijn et al. (2009: 19) discovered that the mobile phone "encourages people to lie. No exact information is exchanged, or lies told, about the place or situation of the person called" leading to "a lack of trust in a phone relationship". On the other hand, they claim, it enables women to organise their lives more independently while still taking the societal norms seriously. They may now date a man without others knowing about it. The mobile phone opens up a new social space for communication between the sexes, which provides women with more (surreptitious) control over communication with men, outside of traditional moral constraints. These same developments were told to the author by Maroons in the interior of Suriname.

Accessibility by phone has even intensified political involvement. In addition to the crucial role that the interior plays in elections, due to the low quotas in rural constituencies, mobile phones provide an excellent way to attract voters, both as a means of communication and in the form of gifts. Political

and administrative leaders in the interior now maintain regular contact and discuss with party operatives and leaders in the city. This has allowed Maroon leaders in the interior to be more directly involved with national politics and has enabled them to exercise political pressure. They can now also phone experienced associates abroad for advice on political matters.

It is not only men who are in physical contact with the outside world. These days women also go to the city to buy products and maintain their networks. This is not just due to the dramatic changes in communications, a major contributor was the War of the Interior that sent entire communities on the move. Women became less dependent on men as a result and acquired a much clearer insight into the way that the outside world works and how they can participate. At the same time it is enlightening to read again one of Menno Marrenga's observations in 'his' Saamaka village today. "This morning I heard Jaaja calling her sister by mobile phone to arrange to see each other at the riverside to do the washing up. This sister lives thirty metres away from her house and so they could have heard each other without their mobiles. And that is not Jaaja's only telephone conversation of the day. Her daughter lives in Bendikwai, a village much further up the river. Formerly they met once or twice a year, now they call every day. Jaaja wears her phone on a string around her neck, also when she is busy washing on the riverside. She has to be reachable at all times, suppose her daughter calls?" (Marrenga 2011: 34, my translation).

Jaaja uses at least one prepaid telephone card per day and instead of once or twice a year she now travels to her daughter every month. The problem is, says Marrenga, that this ever-increasing consumption pattern is not compensated for by ever-increasing income from production. And it is not just telephones and outboard motors that have dramatically increased the cost of living, but people are also buying refrigerators, televisions, DVDs, zinc roofs, etc. As a result, people in the interior have become more and more dependent on those who work in the gold mines or in town and abroad. The mobile phone, of course, facilitates sustaining their network of dependency relations. That might actually be the most crucial function of the cell phone, and at the same time the best explanation for all these telephone conversations. It is not the actual contents of the conversation, it is, what in Jamaica is called the "linking up" that counts. Horst and Miller (2007: 173) even state about the Jamaican situation that "the potential of the cell phone that is most fully realised lies in its ability to facilitate this social networking". It seems that among Surinamese Maroons that is no different.

Like many Maroons in Suriname's interior, the phone has also become an integral part of Jaaja's social life. The culture of orality no longer requires face-to-face interaction. Although a substantial number of Maroons are still

illiterate or only partially literate, using the phone has greatly increased their knowledge and use of ciphers. Ciphers and numbers have become more than a means to count or to trade, they are now related to people, they form new identities. It is not enough anymore to know someone's name(s), you also have to know his/her mobile number. People write telephone numbers on their walls just to remember, their own or the numbers of relatives and acquaintances. Of course, mobile phones contain contact lists, but to use these one has to be able to read, and many Maroons are not sufficiently literate. Literacy is also the main reason why text messaging is not increasing as much among Maroons and other so-called oral societies as in other parts of the world, even though it is much cheaper than calling (see de Bruijn et al. 2009). Eventually, use of the mobile phone might be an incentive for people to acquire literacy skills. However, it raises some crucial questions such as, in which language will Maroons send text messages? Dutch is the official language taught in school, but many Maroons are afraid to use it because they know their command of that language is inadequate. However, if they were to use it as their digital language, it could eventually replace their own in their oral communication, that is, their language would 'dutchify' at a much quicker pace than it is now, much like French is now encroaching rapidly on Maroon languages spoken in French Guiana.¹⁵ The other possibilities are texting in one of the Maroon languages. However, only very few people have learned to write in a Maroon language, though that is changing somewhat in French Guiana where writing in the vernacular is taught in some schools. Finally, Suriname's *lingua franca* Sranantongo, is a possibility too, but it carries the same disadvantages and it is also the language of townspeople who often look down upon them.¹⁶ It will be interesting to see what developments will occur here and what choices will be made. At least among younger Maroons in the more urbanised areas texting seems to be on the rise. Bettina Migge (personal communication) observed that even though people do not learn to write in any creole language in school, people do use it in writing. However, this writing system is often closer to Sranantongo than to Maroon languages. A lot of these young people are doing multilingual texting. For them, not being proficient in Dutch is not really an issue because if they have had some schooling they are at least able to transpose literacy practices to their own linguistic sphere. Could this result in a new kind of language?

15 Observation of the author.

16 At the same time, it is also true that Maroons, particularly in town, are appropriating Sranantongo for their own purposes, to link themselves to urbanity.

On the other hand, the importance of voice to ear contact still remains intact, because particularly in the personal and cultural sphere, not everything can be transposed to another language, and the problem of orthography still remains. Saamaka, for instance, unlike Sranantongo, contains tonal diacritics, which means having to use non-standard symbols. Furthermore, and maybe even the most important point here is that oral communication is much more valuable in sustaining one's social network—the Jamaican 'link up'—than an impersonal text message. That choices have to be made, therefore, is certain. Before long the internet will play a much larger role in this new communication technology, and that will lead to the development of more reading skills than the telephone could ever do.

It is conceivable, however, that for some time to come the mobile phone will remain much more important than the use of the internet, even with a Blackberry internet is more complicated to handle and above all much more costly. Not surprisingly, there seems to be a clear relation between one's level of education and financial situation on the one hand and the use of internet on the other (cf. Horst and Miller 2007: 148–166). Again, Menno Marrenga in one of his columns (2012) underlines this with observations of his personal communication revolution in Suriname's interior. Years ago he tried to establish a postal service by boat—with outboard motor—along the river. Today, in order to be able to receive e-mail from the rest of the world he needs a new computer—many times the price of a cell phone—, more powerful batteries, and solar panels as well as ADSL, if only because the rest of the world does not write letters anymore and sends increasingly 'heavy' files with color pictures and intricately designed headings.

5 Conclusions

Clearly, Maroons have always been in touch with the city, and urban society has always played an important role in their material existence and survival. Maroons never lived in complete isolation, if only because all their weapons, metal goods and textiles always came from the city and were paid for with money earned through the colonial economy. After the abolition of slavery, people came in increasing numbers from the city when the interior's rich natural resources made it a far more attractive place. This chapter reviewed the nature and extent of contacts and the general impact of various means of communication rather than changes resulting from education and missionary work, or, more recently, the impact of the many thousands of Brazilian prospectors in the interior (see de Theije 2007; Hoogbergen, Kruijt and Polimé 2001).

In any case, it is clear that between 1870 and 1940, large numbers of Maroons worked with and for people from the city and seamlessly integrated all kinds of products obtained from the urban economy into their domestic life. The tools and weaponry they used improved significantly over time, they started to use kerosene oil and soap, trains became familiar to some, many adopted the techniques and rhythm of working in gold mining, balata bleeding or lumber cutting enterprises in the interior, while others moved to the coastal area to work temporarily in bauxite mining and other industrial or urban activities. It seems that the observation by Horst and Miller (2007: 7) quoted in the introduction, about the relative ease with which people adopt new technologies and new media, applies to Maroons too, because “[they are] used initially with references to desires that are historically well established, but remain unfulfilled because of the limitations of previous technologies”. However, the most direct interaction and communication of the Maroons with others took place outside the home and outside the village.

All this changed dramatically with the transformation that occurred in transport and communications after World War II, which may be described as little short of revolutionary. Links between villages and the outside world increased steadily and increasingly involved women, while the men, even more than before, were forced to become more involved with the outside world in order to earn the money to pay for these changes. The two most far-reaching changes, transforming the dimensions of time and space for Maroons, were the introduction of the outboard motor in the 1950s and 1960s and the more recent introduction of mobile telephony. The construction of the dam, the new gold mining boom and the migrations triggered by the War of the Interior provided the context in which the impact of these changes became irreversible. It is not unlikely that in the near future the Afobaka-Atjoni and Moengo-Langatabiki roads will be considered to have been the third revolutionary change opening up the interior, in this case by vehicular transport.¹⁷ The way the outboard motor and more recently mobile phones have been integrated into Maroon society in Suriname’s interior suggests that the result of an intensification of contact and communication with outsiders need not be catastrophic. Nevertheless, for change that is sustainable, it is necessary for people to be able to earn enough to pay for the new lifestyle. And for some that may mean joining the two-thirds of Maroon society that no longer live in the Surinamese interior. This will make the dependency of those who stay behind

17 The Afobaka-Atjoni road is already functional and is used intensively, while the Moengo-Langatabiki road exists but has not yet been surfaced.

on those who have left and on new means of communication to sustain those relations ever more important.

Undoubtedly, the new means of transport and communication have served as vehicles for increased income differentiation and, thereby, also increased individualism. Those who can afford one or more outboard motors can make more money than those who do not have any. Those who deal in gold, or drugs or any other commercial product for the urban or the world market, cannot do so without the easy availability of small airplanes, powerful outboard motors and, of course, cell phones. Many of those who have been able to save some money settle in urban areas outside of traditional Maroon territory, among other things to give their children a proper education, can do so more easily, because now they have the communicative means to stay in touch with the home village on a regular basis. These new technologies are very much used to strengthen the social network, but at the same time make individuals more independent as well. This undermines traditional hierarchies of gender, generation and politics, because it is used for personal gain more than for the kinship group. At the same time, it strengthens the bonds with the original 'home' in new ways, contrary to the almost definite goodbye of migrating Maroons of former times. These developments are exactly in line with what Horst and Miller (2007) define as the new "communicative ecology", referred to in the introduction of this chapter.

Obviously, like almost everywhere in the world, there is a new connectedness among Maroons which offers new opportunities, but which has its negative aspects too. New means of communication are both part of infrastructure and infrastructure itself for new lifestyles, which are shaped by increased consumerism, as well as a lack of income. Traditional kinship connectedness is now helped by new communication systems that allow communication over long distances. This communication helps to satisfy increasing demands of those from 'back home' with the aid of their relatives 'abroad' who want to stay connected with 'home'. This may lead to asymmetrical expectations as well as to misunderstandings because people 'back home' do not understand the difficulties confronting migrants, while the relatives abroad at times forget the hardships of those who stayed behind. The result is like that which de Bruijn et al. (2009: 16) have observed for Africa: "The mobile phone that compresses distance also brings distance home to people and may lead to more of them moving to the purported world of infinite abundance that they have been deluded into internalising". Adoption of new technologies of communication might still be relatively easy, but it is not always easy to come to terms with their effects. At the same time, the way that outboard motors, and even more so, cell phones have quickly become part of everyday Maroon life reveals that

indeed it is much more than the adoption of objects by subjects, it is about the contradictory way new technology becomes part of a “communicative ecology”, a wider context which is influenced by the new technology and influences, in turn, new technology and its use (Horst and Miller 2007). The contradictory part, of course, is clear. The outboard motor made communication with urban areas much easier, but at the same time stimulated migration; the cell phone creates opportunities for women and men to meet unobserved by the elders, but also stimulates a habit of lying to each other. In effect, the revolutionary pace of the new technologies of communication leads to much-improved connections, but it also brings about greater degrees of disconnectedness.