Amerindian Power & Participation in Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy: The Case Study of Chenapou

Sam Airey
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Abstract: International bi-lateral agreements to support the conservation of rainforests in order to mitigate climate change are growing in prevalence. Through the concept of REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) these look to incentivise developing countries to maintain their natural forests. Guyana and Norway formed such an agreement in 2009, establishing Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). In this research I examine the extent to which the government of Guyana has achieved in facilitating the participation and inclusion of Guyana’s indigenous population within the LCDS. This is conducted through a single site case study, focussing on the experiences and perceptions from the Amerindian community of Chenapou. I conducted 30 interviews with members of the community, supporting this with participant observation and an analysis of relevant documents. I find that a deficit of adequate dialogue and consultation has occurred in the six years since the LCDS was established. Moreover, I identify that key indigenous rights, inscribed at both a national and international level, have not been upheld in respect to the community of Chenapou within the LCDS. These findings largely support prior research, identifying a consistent failure of the LCDS to achieve genuine participation and the distinct marginalisation of Amerindian communities. It is suggested that the status quo of marginalisation of Amerindian forest users in Guyana is reinforced within the LCDS. Critique is made of the LCDS model and the perceived failure to act on previous research. It is suggested that contextualised governance, which supports the engagement of marginal forest dependent communities, is required if the LCDS and REDD+ programmes are to be effective. Failure to do so can be deleterious for all interested parties.

Keywords: Sustainable development, participation, environmental governance, REDD+, indigenous rights, Guyana

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Amerindian Power & Participation in Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy: The Case Study of Chenapou

SAM AIREY


**Popular Summary:** Climate change is presenting challenges which require ever further collaborations of countries beyond their boundaries. This has led to some developed countries engaging in partnerships with developing countries in order to safeguard important existing ecosystems. Rainforests represent one of these important ecosystems due to their capacity to sequester CO$_2$.

In 2009 Guyana, a developing country whose rainforest covers 88% of its total land mass, engaged in such a partnership with Norway. Called the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), Norway set out to provide financial incentives to Guyana in return for Guyana retaining its low deforestation rate. This was modelled on the UNFCCC’s concept of REDD+ or Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation.

When written, these agreements acknowledged the importance of the participation of Guyana’s indigenous Amerindian population, who predominantly live in the rainforested areas. This study examines the extent to which the LCDS has achieved in facilitating the participation of Guyana’s indigenous population. This is conducted through a case study focussing on the experiences and perceptions of Amerindians in the community of Chenapou.

I conducted 30 interviews with members of the community. My main findings were that most people in the community feel uninformed and excluded from the LCDS process. Many identified this as yet another example of their political marginalisation as a community. The accounts I engaged with presented a failure on the part of the government of Guyana to uphold important, internationally recognised, indigenous rights.

These findings largely support previous research, identifying a consistent failure of the LCDS to achieve genuine participation. Critique is made of the LCDS model and the perceived failure to act on previous research. I suggest that greater efforts to engage with marginal forest dependent communities are required if the LCDS and REDD+ programmes are to continue. Failure to do so may be negative for all interested parties.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, participation, environmental governance, REDD+, indigenous rights, Guyana

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People living in poverty have the least access to power to shape policies - to shape their future. But they have the right to a voice. They must not be made to sit in silence as "development" happens around them, at their expense. True development is impossible without the participation of those concerned.

All of us - rich and poor, governments, companies and individuals - share the responsibility of ensuring that everyone has access to information, means of prevention and treatment. And our starting point must be respect for individuals' rights.

- Nelson Mandela

2006
# ACRONYMS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>ALT</td>
<td>Amerindian Land Titling</td>
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<td>ADP</td>
<td>Amerindian Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-FLEGT</td>
<td>European Union – Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPIC</td>
<td>Free, Prior and Informed Consent</td>
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<td>GoG</td>
<td>Government of Guyana</td>
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<td>GRIF</td>
<td>Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund</td>
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<td>JCN</td>
<td>Joint Concept Note</td>
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<td>LCDS</td>
<td>Low Carbon Development Strategy</td>
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<td>MoAA</td>
<td>Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (used until 2015)</td>
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<td>MoIPA</td>
<td>Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (formerly MoAA)</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MSSC</td>
<td>Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
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<td>NORAD</td>
<td>Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>NICFI</td>
<td>Norway’s International Climate and Forest Initiative</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Protected Areas Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>REDD+</td>
<td>Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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1 Introduction

“Human interference with the climate system is occurring, and climate change poses risks for human and natural systems” (IPCC 2013).

Growing understanding of the potentially calamitous implications from anthropogenic climate disruption have resulted in calls for effective action to curb the path of climate change (IPCC 2013). If CO$_2$ levels in the atmosphere go unchecked “without urgent action, climate change will bring severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts on all the world's people and ecosystems” (EU COM 2015:3), requiring collective action. Land use change, and in particular deforestation, represents a substantial driver, accounting for somewhere between 7% and 17% of annual greenhouse gas emissions (Baccini et al. 2012; Harris et al. 2012). Forests capacity as carbon stocks, and their role in carbon sequestration underlines their importance as a factor in tackling climate change (Bluffstone et al. 2013).

The majority of the world’s tropical forests are located in developing countries (Walker et al. 2014). A quarter of the total forest area in these countries are considered ‘community controlled’ with many of these communities made up of indigenous groups (Bluffstone et al. 2013). At a conservative interpretation at least 20.1% of carbon stored in standing forests is located in indigenous territories (Walker et al. 2014). As such, at the signing of the Paris Agreement in New York this year Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP, stated that:

“If we want to protect the world’s forests, we must safeguard the rights of the indigenous peoples and forest communities who have sustainably managed their forests for generations.” (Home 2016)

Recognising the need to support the conservation of these remaining forests, a number of international North to South co-operations have developed (UNFCC 1992). Norway has played a leading role in this, disbursing over US$1 billion (Hardcastle et al. 2014: xix) through a series of bi-lateral arrangements with forest rich developing countries. Guyana, a small densely forested equatorial country in South America, was one of Norway’s earliest partners in this process in 2009 when they signed the ‘Norway-Guyana Agreement’ (Office of the President 2009).

At the centre of this agreement is the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). When outlined in 2009 a major proponent of this was the inclusion and recognition of Guyana’s indigenous Amerindian population. Early audits of the LCDS commended this as inclusive and participatory (Dow et al. 2009). However, during the six years of operation since, independent reports have identified failings in facilitating the participation of indigenous groups within the LCDS (Donovan et al. 2010; 2012). A report by Rainforest Alliance in 2012 found that the government of Guyana had failed to respect the rights of Amerindians in the process (Donovan et al. 2012:6).

Taken within the context that one of the expressed goals set for the LCDS is to offer a model for how to achieve effective low carbon development, emphasises the significance of such findings (Office of the President 2013:2). However, besides the report published by the Rainforest Alliance in 2012, there has been a very limited investigation of this issue and no research dedicated solely to it. If Guyana’s LCDS is to represent a model from which the rest of the world can take its lead, then the extent and manner in which indigenous groups are engaged and respected within the process is of critical importance.
1.1 Approach & Aim

My research therefore focuses on this concern. I empirically evaluate the extent to which participation of Amerindians has been achieved within the LCDS process. I will do so through the case study of Chenapou, an Amerindian community, investigating the perceptions and experiences the residents of Chenapou have had with the LCDS. Essentially I will focus on the nature and quality of “participatory governance” (Fischer 2006) associated with the LCDS as perceived by residents of Chenapou village.

Through the emphasis on a single indigenous community, my research highlights the micro-realities, which are often ‘underrepresented’ (Bluffstone et al. 2013) in the research and governance surrounding development policies. I assess the “micro-coherency” (Utting 1994:232) of the LCDS as a measure of how well the efforts of this macro international environmental mechanism are integrated with the concerns, “rights, needs and priorities of local people” (ibid.).

Thus I look to broadly engage with these guiding questions:

i. To what extent have the past 6 years (2009-2015) of the Low Carbon Development Strategy’s engagements with the community of Chenapou been successful in achieving the ‘inclusive’, ‘broad-based’ and participatory outcomes mandated in the LCDS MoU (2009)?

ii. What are the implications of the form of participation that has taken place for Amerindians, the governments of Guyana and Norway and REDD+ approaches more broadly?

1.2 Disposition

I will approach this by first introducing the background to the context of this research in section 2, followed by outlining the theoretical tenets of participation and power on which my analysis is based. Section 3 presents the methodology and methods used within my work. In section 4 I will present the empirical results of my work, following this with an extensive discussion in section 5 where I will address the research question posed and develop upon the results found. Section 6 draws some key conclusions from my work as well as elucidating some areas for further research.
2 Background

In this chapter I will present a review of salient literature which forms the basis of my analytical approach as well as the contextual background to my study area. I begin by introducing the context and location of research before presenting the epistemological framework adopted. This is supported through literature reviews of the more specific theoretical elements of power and participation which will constitute the basis of my analysis.

2.1 Contextual background

2.1.1 Guyana – politics, environment and development

Guyana is a relatively small - 214,969 km² (CIAa 2016) - South American state and former British colony located on the Atlantic coast neighbouring Venezuela, Brazil and Suriname (see Fig. 1). After having changed colonial hands from Spanish to Dutch to British, Guyana formally achieved independence in 1966 (Bulkan 2013).

Situated within the neotropical eco-zone, Guyana is predominantly made up of a large subsection of the Amazonian rainforest known as the Guiana Shield which covers some 88% of the total land mass (Guyana Forestry Commission 2015:2). Due to this expansive rainforest cover, coupled with a comparatively low historic rate of deforestation - just 0.03% per year (Gutman & Aguilar 2012:11) – Guyana is considered a ‘High Forested Low Deforestation’ country (Dow et al. 2009:3). With a population of just 735,000 (CIAa 2016) it has one of the lowest population densities globally (compare to a country of similar size, the United Kingdom with a population of 64 million (CIAb 2016)).
Guyana’s economy is predominantly built upon sugar, rice, shrimp and timber exports and extractive industries of bauxite and gold (CIA 2016). Income from these commodities represents 60% of GDP, giving indication to Guyana’s status as an economically precarious ‘lower middle income’ nation (World Bank 2016). Coupled with this economic dependency upon fluctuating commodities, Guyana is also considered a country beset by political and corporate weakness and corruption (Dow et al. 2009:4). This is signified both in its ranking of 119th out of 168 nations in the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International 2015:7) and the world being considered in the bottom 26.9 percentile for “control of corruption” globally (WGI 2014).

2.1.2 Guyana’s ‘racialized geography’

Demographically Guyana can be broadly defined by two blocs. The term ‘coastlanders’ refers to the ethnic clustering concentrated upon the narrow Atlantic coastal strip that makes up almost 90% of the country’s total population (Bureau of Statistics, 2012:12-13). Coastlanders’ ethnic composition is principally a combination of colonial slavery and indentured labourer heritages along with the contemporary intermarriages of these ethnic backgrounds (Bulkan 2013). Therefore, East Indians (43.45% of national population), African/Black (30.2%) and Mixed (16.73%) ethnic sub-groups predominantly constitute the demographic make-up of this coastlander identity (Bureau of Statistics 2002:28).

Contrasting with this the hinterland or interior is a large expanse of some 67.6% of Guyana’s landmass which has a sparse population of mostly indigenous Amerindians making up just 10.9% of the population (Bureau of Statistics, 2012:15). This population is concentrated in the interior Regions of 7, 8, 9 and 1 (see Fig. 2) which also represent regions with the lowest population densities (Bureau of Statistics 2012:38).

This racialized geography described is rooted in the colonial history of Guyana. Dutch colonisers instigated a relationship with indigenous Amerindians from the 16th century on.
providing presents as “tokens of authority” to select Amerindian leaders. (Menezes 1979). However, by mid-19th century the British were in control of Guyana (then British Guiana) and decided to cease providing tokens and gifts to Amerindians, severing the relationship. This caused the Amerindian population to withdraw into the interior, establishing the dynamic that persists today (Menezes 1979).

Thus Guyana’s population distribution is moulded by racial lines, with ethnic groupings providing the rubric of the map. This cultural/ethnic significance is important background in considering the political participation of Amerindians and specifically the historic roots of marginality experienced by this population (see Bulkan 2014b). The landscape of power in Guyana across these ethnic groupings is of great interest within my research.

2.1.3 Amerindian land rights in brief

Considered indigenous within Guyana, the Amerindian population fall under a specific constitutional context1. In the early 20th century fears of the indigenous race dying out led to establishing the first Amerindian reservations, which excluded non-Amerindian entry (Bulkan 2013:369). Since then there have been a number of steps as Amerindian communities have sought sovereignty over tenure, as Fig. 3 presents:

![Timeline of events in process of Amerindian land rights](Bulkan 2013; MOIPA 2016)

Figure 3. Timeline of events in process of Amerindian land rights (Bulkan 2013; MOIPA 2016)

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1 Constitutionally ‘Amerindian’ means any citizen of Guyana who-
   a) “Belongs to any of the native or aboriginal peoples of Guyana; or
   b) Is a descendant of any person mentioned in paragraph (a)” (Amerindian Act 2006:5)
Under the current Amerindian Act of 2006, ‘titled land’ represents autonomy for the recognised Amerindian community over sub-surface resources within their granted title. This land falls under the jurisdiction of a village council who are elected members from that community. The council is led by a Toshao (or village captain) who acts as the representative for the village in the National Toshao Council (NTC). The NTC is a statutory body established in 2006 where village Tosaos meet annually to discuss issues and policies concerning the communities they represent. The capacity for the NTC to be independent from the main party has been questioned, with Bulkan describing the NTC as an “echo chamber of the ruling Party” (2013:270).

Although there has been some progression, land rights have remained a fairly consistent issue amongst Amerindian communities throughout the past 50 years. The recent general assembly for the Amerindian People’s Association (APA) – a prominent indigenous rights NGO in Guyana– identified land rights as still the “number one priority and concern” (APA 2016) for indigenous peoples in Guyana.

2.2 Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) in Guyana

In 2006, former president Bharrat Jagdeo recognised the emergent value of stored carbon associated with Guyana’s vast tropical rainforests (Gutman & Aguilar 2012:10). He sought to capitalise on this by presenting Guyana to the international climate fora as an apt site for early Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) models. This was grounded in the concept that the ecosystem service of carbon sequestration carried out by Guyana’s rainforest, was of growing value and importance in global efforts to tackle climate change. Jagdeo proposed an opportunity for international donors to put forward funding to incentivise securing the global ecosystem service provided by Guyana’s rainforest whilst supporting the country’s economy (Office of the President 2013:15). This was effectively modelled on the UN REDD+ or ‘Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks’ (UN-REDD website) mechanism.

2.2.1 What is REDD+?

REDD+ is a global initiative, which aims to incentivise non-Annex 1 nation reductions in deforestation and forest degradation through creating “a financial value for stored forest carbon” (UN-REDD 2016). In doing so its principle aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (Angelsen & McNeill 2012). Payments would be provided to promote the protection and enhancement of forest carbon stocks and compensate for developing countries’ opportunity costs associated with non-exploitation of their forest resources. Thus, it is considered that REDD+ offers a pathway to achieving not only environmental but economic and social objectives for participant countries. (Kronenberg et al. 2015:10251).

Established at COP13\(^2\) in 2007 REDD+ was initially conceived as a market-based mechanism, the principle being that it would operate through a global market on which carbon stored in standing forest ecosystems could be given a price and then traded. From the Guyanese perspective, it was an attempt at “correcting the market failure that makes [forest loss] happen” (Office of the President 2013:16) through raising the value of forests such that they are “worth more alive than dead” (Office of the President 2013:7).

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\(^2\)Conference of the Parties (COP) the annual meeting of UNFCCC states to assess progress in dealing with climate change.
The concept proved attractive to many as REDD+ was seen to represent a “win-win solution for most forest actors” (Angelsen & McNeill 2012:34). In comparison with other mitigation strategies it was seen as “big cheap and quick” (ibid.). Projections such as Stern (2006) highlighted that the elimination of deforestation might cost only US $1–2 per tCO$_2$ on average which positioned it as largely inexpensive against other mitigation approaches.

However, in the absence of functioning carbon markets at any viable scale to date, REDD+ in practice is moving towards “a fund based institutional structure that some say is more like foreign aid than a true PES system” (Bluffstone 2013:46).

This “fund-based” system reflects that which constituted the pioneering bi-lateral agreement between Guyana and the government of Norway. As REDD+ is still officially in the process of formulation Guyana’s model is considered an “interim REDD+ arrangement” (Office of the President 2013:8).

### 2.2.1.1 REDD+ safeguards

Early experiences showed that indigenous people were not sufficiently included in REDD+ design and implementation (Schroeder 2010). However, during conception it was evident that indigenous and local communities were likely to play a large role within the REDD+ framework and as such required effective safeguarding (MacFarquhar & Goodman 2015). Therefore, at COP 16 in 2010 a set of safeguards labelled the ‘Cancun safeguards’ were established with two devoted explicitly to the concern of indigenous group rights and access to participation:

i. “Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations [e.g. UNDRIP]”

ii. “The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in [REDD+] actions” (UNFCCC 2011:26)$^3$

These provide specific safeguard principles for the operation of REDD+. Supporting these there are also a series of international obligations which Guyana’s LCDS activities have to operate within. These range from Guyana’s Constitution to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) (Donovan et al. 2012:37). Of relevance here is the central tenet of many of these obligations to ensure that the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are followed when engaging with an indigenous community.

The guiding principles of FPIC can be summarized as a necessity to provide:

i. information about and consultation on any proposed initiative and its likely impacts; and,

ii. meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and representative institutions. (Stone & Chacón León 2010:34)

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$^3$ UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 Appendix, paragraph 2
Collectively these safeguards act to support the fair inclusion of indigenous groups within environmental policies at the national or even global level.

2.2.2 The Guyana Norway Agreement

The Guyana-Norway agreement was signed in 2009 purportedly establishing Guyana as the first country globally to engage with REDD+ nationally (Office of Climate Change 2010). Guyana at this time faced a “national development choice of global relevance” (Office of the President 2013:14); to follow the trajectory of many other developing countries and extract its natural forestry resources for financial gain or seek a more sustainable alternative.

Recognising the significance of this decision the Government of Guyana (GoG) set out the ambition to not simply “complain about climate change, but do something about it” (Office of the President 2013:15). Therefore, the proposition was made that if the right economic incentives were offered Guyana would commit to protecting its rainforests in support of the global effort to tackle climate change.

Norway, the world’s leading investor in REDD+ development to date (Angelsen & McNeill 2012:40), took up this proposition and on November 9th 2009 signed an agreement with Guyana worth a potential US$250 million by 2015 (Office of the President 2013:8).

Alongside the initial agreement and Memorandum of Understanding, a Joint Concept Note (2012) identified a series of objectives which would constitute Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). At its inception the LCDS was presented as aiming to achieve two overarching goals, to:

i. “transform Guyana’s economy to deliver greater economic and social development for the people of Guyana by following a low carbon development path”

ii. to “provide a model for the world of how climate change can be addressed through low carbon development in developing countries” (Office of the President 2013:2)

Evidently the outlook portrayed was ambitious, as the LCDS set out to not only provide a transformation of the Guyanese economy but also to offer a replicable example of low carbon development to the rest of the international political sphere.

2.2.2.1 Performance payments

The agreement with Norway set out to span from 2010-2015 with continued and detailed monitoring and reporting of forest carbon stocks annually. ‘Performance payments’ would then be made to a trust fund – the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund or GRIF – with the total each year adjusted based on Guyana’s yearly deforestation rates. GRIF are the responsible for ensuring that payments from Norway are utilised to fund activities cohering with the objectives of the LCDS (JCN 2012:14).

However, due to Guyana’s low deforestation rate, payments based purely against the historic reference level of 0.03% were considered insubstantial in terms of revenue that could be accrued. Gutman and Aguilar (2012) projected that were Guyana to only be funded based on this reference level, and were it to reduce deforestation to a rate of 0% annually, Guyana would only earn an estimated US$10 million per year (2012:11). Therefore, a combined approach which included payments rewarding “preventative credits” (Fonseca et al. 2007:1645) wherein Guyana maintained the existing rainforest was adopted. This meant that payments were made based on two criteria (Gutman & Aguilar 2012:11):
i. Guyana’s performance against its own historic reference level - 0.03% per year
ii. Guyana’s performance against the global historical reference level - 0.52% per year

As the average global rate of deforestation - 0.52% - is more than 17 times that of Guyana’s historic rate, an upper threshold of 0.1% was set marking the highest rate at which payments would be received (JCN 2012:8). Were Guyana to exceed this rate in a given year they would receive no funds.

As Fig. 4 shows the incentive for lower rates than this upper 0.1% threshold were set by graded penalties. The payments were based on the US$5/ton CO₂ valuation established in Brazil’s Amazon fund (JCN 2012:8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deforestation rate (%)</th>
<th>Up to 0.056</th>
<th>0.07</th>
<th>0.08</th>
<th>0.09</th>
<th>0.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced compensation (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This agreement does not therefore reflect a pure REDD+ arrangement as, “what Norway is paying for is mostly forest conservation, not emission reductions” (Gutman & Aguilar 2012:11). However, the penalty system in place sees funding cut off were Guyana to reach a rate of 0.1% annually which is still five times below the global average thus ensuring that Guyana maintains a very low rate of deforestation.

### 2.2.3 LCDS and indigenous communities

Amerindian titled land constitutes a substantial percentage of Guyana’s total rainforest – 14% of forested land (GFC 2014:2). Land title provides partial autonomy under the Amerindian Act of 2006, with control over activities such as mining still residing with the GoG. Combined with the geographic concentration of Amerindians (discussed in 2.1.2) it is clear that the indigenous population of Guyana constitute a considerable forestry landholder and therefore are an important actor within the LCDS process (UNDP 2013:5).

This is acknowledged within the details of the Guyana-Norway agreement and subsequent LCDS articulation. Adhering to the ‘communal tenure’ ascribed to Amerindian communities through the Amerindian Act, specific indigenous rights were inscribed into the writing of the LCDS’ Joint Concept Note:

“The Constitution of Guyana guarantees the rights of indigenous peoples and other Guyanese to participation, engagement and decision making in all matters affecting their well-being. These rights will be respected and protected throughout Guyana’s REDD-plus and LCDS efforts. There shall be a mechanism to enable the effective participation of indigenous peoples and other local forest communities in planning and implementation of REDD-Plus strategy and activities.” (JCN 2012:5)

Thus, a Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) was established to ensure ‘transparency’ and ‘effective participation’ within decisions made regarding the LCDS.

Alongside the MSSC the indigenous communities were directly incorporated into the LCDS through three specific projects: the Amerindian Development Fund, the Amerindian Land Titling project and the Opt-In Mechanism (see Table 1. for a summary of each).
The Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) project and Opt-In Mechanism (OIM) represent bedrock requirements for any REDD+ related activities to be successful at a national level. Land title needs to be settled, in order for opt-in areas to be qualified, in order for the parameters of forest for national REDD+ monitoring to be set.

As Bluffstone et al. (2013:46) note, “establishing and enforcing clear property rights…are perhaps the critical prerequisite to increasing forest rents” and establishing well-functioning REDD+ systems. Furthermore, Harada et al. (2015) found in the context of an Indonesian REDD+ model that “ensuring clear and secure rights to the land, forests, and carbon through the social safeguards of REDD+ may guarantee both forest conservation and sustainable local livelihoods.” (Harada et al. 2015:121).

The Amerindian Development Fund is also of great significance due to the socio-economic standing of the majority of the Amerindian population in Guyana. According to a household budget survey in 2006, 78.6% of rural interior households – where most Amerindians communities are located – are considered below the poverty threshold (GRIF 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi-stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC)</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
<th>Progress to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An “institutionalized, systematic and transparent process of multi-stakeholder consultation(s)” on the LCDS (JCN 2012:4)</td>
<td>To enable the “participation of all potentially affected and interested stakeholders at all stages of the REDD-plus/LCDS process” (JCN 2012:4)</td>
<td>IIED report in 2009 found it to be “credible, transparent and inclusive” (Dow et al. 2009:5) but 2012 Rainforest Alliance report found the mechanism “not effectively enabled” (Donovan et al. 2012:7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) project | A project "designed to advance the process of titling the outstanding Amerindian lands currently awaiting demarcation and titling" (UNDP 2013:7) | To complete “land titling for all eligible Amerindian communities by 2015” (JCN 2012:5) | A number of outstanding title claims, demarcation issues and boundary conflicts persist. The ALT required to establish a second phase. (UNDP 2016) |

| Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) | Fund set up to support "socio-economic development of Amerindian communities" by meeting their "own priorities…and objectives" (Office of the President 2013:9) | To support the 166 Amerindian communities with development plans (Office of the President 2013:24) | Phase 1 completed: 
[A] total of US$ 1,298,577 has been disbursed to ninety (90) communities/villages” (GRIF 2016:2) |

| Opt-In Mechanism (OIM) | Policy allowing "indigenous peoples [to] choose [whether] to “Opt-In” to the national REDD+ mechanism and receive a pro rata share of Guyana’s REDD+ earnings" or not. (Office of Climate Change 2014:3) | To be operationally piloted by 2015 (JCN 2012). | Pilot settlement selected but Opt-In pilot has yet to begin. (Office of the President 2015:5) |

Table 1. Outline of Amerindian relevant projects within the LCDS mechanism
Collectively these projects effectively represent the LCDS’ adherence with the relevant Cancun safeguards (UNFCCC 2011:26) – see 2.2.1.1. Therefore, it is clear that the functioning of these projects is of pivotal importance when determining whether or not the LCDS is operating with, and in support of, indigenous communities in Guyana.

2.2.3.1 The LCDS’ slow progress

During the five years of the LCDS implementation the recorded deforestation rates have ranged between 0.05-0.08% annually with an average of 0.064% (Guyana Forestry Commission 2014:9). Consequently, for the five years of accounting Guyana has reportedly earned US$190 million through deforestation performance payments out of a potential US$250 million (LCDSa 2015).

However, progress has not been without complication and the headline figure of US$190 million possibly misrepresents the ease or continuity of the process. Criticisms have been levied at the speed of delivery of funds (e.g., Bulkan 2015; Busch & Birdsall 2016) with GRIF having released just US$35.8 million to projects to date (GRIF 2016). A list of those projects established and the total funding distributed from GRIF to date is shown in the Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount funded</th>
<th>Partner Entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional strengthening for LCDS</td>
<td>$ 7,450,000.00</td>
<td>IDB⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerindian Development Fund (phases I &amp; II)</td>
<td>$ 8,143,042.00</td>
<td>UNDP⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerindian Land Titling</td>
<td>$ 10,755,990.00</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro and Small Enterprise Development</td>
<td>$ 5,127,476.00</td>
<td>IDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System</td>
<td>$ 2,803,896.00</td>
<td>Conservation International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Resilience Strategy and Action Plan</td>
<td>$ 343,297.00</td>
<td>Conservation International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing the LCDS Outreach Programme</td>
<td>$ 1,157,412.00</td>
<td>Conservation International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 35,781,113.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Projects established and funding dispersed by GRIF to date (GRIF 2016)

This is an issue raised by NORAD, the agency responsible for ensuring Norwegian development funds are spent accordingly, who recognise that:

“…there are on-going concerns about the speed of disbursement, and further reform and development of the [LCDS] mechanism is needed as at present it does not represent a functioning ‘model’.” (NORAD 2014:xxi).

As the initial time period of the first agreement has come to an end there are now discussions being had about a possible second phase (Ministry of Natural Resources 2016). Numerous projects have not reached fruition as planned in the given time and so have been afforded an

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⁴ Inter-American Development Bank
⁵ United Nations Development Programme
extension. The decision over a second phase will ultimately determine the fate of the LCDS as a sustained strategy as no alternative funding streams are currently available.

At inception the LCDS represented more than simply an environmental or economic program, with many civil society organisations regarding it as a potential catalyst for wholesale political reform:

“The LCDS provides an opportunity for improving governance and for enabling a shared responsibility with civil society for taking on board a long-term national agenda that is environmentally sound and economically bold with transformative potential for social and political sectors.” (Dow et al. 2009:4)

Yet against this optimistic outlook the experiences to date have been somewhat stilted and to a large degree underwhelming. Audit reports have iterated common perceptions that the LCDS has been slow, occluded and ineffective in a number of areas perhaps principally in terms of indigenous engagement (Donovan et al. 2012).

2.2.3.2 Existing criticisms of LCDS and indigenous groups
As has been shown, in the construction and formal articulation of the LCDS, the participation and engagement of Amerindian communities was acknowledged (Donovan et al. 2010:5). Yet the stymied progress of the LCDS, particularly in terms of access and distribution of funds as well as effective indigenous engagement and consultation, has drawn ardent criticism to date. A handful of both internal and externally sourced reviews within the 6 years of operation of the programme have raised concerns as to the efficacy of the LCDS’ multiple operations (e.g. Donovan et al. 2012; Birdsall & Busch 2016)

A Rainforest Alliance report on the progress of the LCDS conducted between 2010 – 2012 provides the most comprehensive of such audits to date (Donovan et al. 2012). Its findings indicate some significant failings in the LCDS process as the opening statement presents:

“The dominant impression from this audit, based on inputs from all interested parties, is one of frustration and disappointment that more progress has not occurred on a number of Joint Concept Note (JCN) enabling indicators” (Donovan et al. 2012:5)

From a set of 10 “enabling indicators” used by Rainforest Alliance to assess the progress of the LCDS they found just three to have been met, four to have been partially met and a further three not to have been meet (Donovan et al. 2012:5).

Of greatest importance here are the first three of those indicators which I will focus on in detail (Donovan et al. 2012:6-7):

i. “Transparent and effective multi-stakeholder consultations continue and evolve.” – not met

ii. “Participation of all affected and interested stakeholders at all stages of REDD+/LCDS process.” – partially met

iii. “Protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.” – not met

The first (i) indicator essentially refers to assessing how effective the functioning of the MSSC (see Table 1) has been.

Donovan et al. (2012) note that during the initial stages of the MSSC (Jun 1st 2009-Sep 30th ‘10) it was a frequent meeting of almost every week/every second week. Yet from 2010 -2012
the frequency dropped substantially with a period of 13 months leading into the elections in 2011 having had just three meetings. It is noted that from 2012 -2015 the meetings occurred monthly, yet once again this was interrupted and at writing there appears to have been no meeting since the 25th March 2015 (LCDSb 2016).

Reflecting this, an initial assessment conducted by the IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development) in 2009 found the MSSC to be "credible, transparent and inclusive" (Dow et al. 2009:5). Contrastingly, by 2012 Donovan et al. found “a noticeable reduction in the efforts by the Government of Guyana to communicate and consult with stakeholders” had occurred (2012:5).

The second (ii) indicator considers more directly the “local context of consultation” of the LCDS (Donovan et al. 2012:29). Although some interest groups do appear to be engaged Donovan et al. (2012) note that there is a particular failing regarding Amerindian communities wherein they find there is:

“…still a broad lack of understanding, misunderstanding and a perceived paucity of opportunities for feedback and participation on LCDS/REDD+ activities in almost all of the communities that each of the three RA [Rainforest Alliance] team members visited.” (2012:30)

The report identifies concerns from stakeholders that the Government had not kept them updated nor substantially acknowledged their voices and inputs in the process (Donovan et al. 2012:20). This is in part contributed to the ineffective information sharing wherein Donovan et al. find that there is an “over-reliance” from the government on the internet as a medium of information sharing. Whilst acknowledging that this provides important transparency, they highlight that those communities likely to be “directly affected” are amongst the least likely to have the capacity or access to review these documents online (Donovan et al. 2012:19/31).

Thus they find that this indicator was only partially met as:

“Participation, consultation and feedback…specifically from Amerindian communities, was not effectively enabled during this evaluation period” (2012:19-20).

The third indicator (iii) is more generally a reflection on the LCDS’ performance against indigenous safeguards. It is noted that audits during the inception period of the LCDS commended the drafting of agreements for their inclusion of Amerindian perspectives and rights (Dow et al. 2009).

However, this has not been reflected in the LCDS in practice. Issues such as a failure to properly ensure that Amerindian land titling concerns are addressed as well as proper information be provided, are noted in the Rainforest Alliance report.

“Based on Amerindian comments during field visits…it appears that FPIC principles and rules …were not fulfilled in terms of effective participation, consultation and provision of adequate information on the potential impacts of LCDS/REDD+ activities in a form that is understandable to communities and that allows their meaningful participation” (Donovan et al. 2012:38).

They found FPIC to be broadly lacking across the Amerindian communities they engaged with, signifying a fundamental shortcoming in the LCDS process. This was identified as a clear concern amongst Amerindians who participated in the study finding that most:

“…do not feel that they have received the information necessary to make decisions about their participation in LCDS and REDD+. They feel that the GoG has not kept them updated and
often feel strongly that their voices are not being heard, especially with respect to land titling and traditional land extensions.” (Donovan et al. 2012:20)

2.3 Case Study site – Chenapou

Chenapou is a small community of around 500 predominantly Patamona Amerindians. It is considered one of 12 major Patamona Amerindian villages in the Pakaraima mountains. (Davis et al. 2009:7). The name roughly translates from the Patamona, *Chinau kupú*, to mean frog pond on account of the prevalence of frogs in the area.

It is situated on the banks of the Potaro river, 30 miles upstream from Kaieteur Falls (see Fig. 5) within Region 8 (see Fig. 2) - the least densely populated region in Guyana (Bureau of Statistics 2012:15). The falls are a very important geographical feature both in terms of the Patamona cosmology and as the country’s most visited tourist attraction. They are also the predominant feature at the centre of the Kaieteur national park. Recent issues surrounding tourism at the falls and two suicides⁶ had re-ignited a tension between Chenapou and the national park authorities which has been ongoing for some time (explained further in section 2.3.1).

Chenapou is considered relatively remote, with its neighbouring settlement a two-day walk through the North Pakaraima mountains, although it has had an operating grass airstrip since 2011. It has very recently received a computer with satellite internet, although during my research it was evident that perhaps just two or three people in the village are capable of using it. Aside from this the only news they receive is through a radio set and occasional, and often old, newspapers from those who have returned from Georgetown.

Like all other recognised Amerindian communities, Chenapou is represented politically by a village council, consisting of an elected *Toshao* and their associated Councillors. The Toshao is selected by a village-wide vote and holds that position for 5 years. This position is historically dominated by males to the extent that the Amerindian Act (2006), when outlining duties for a Toshao, refers repeatedly to “his duties” (2006:12) and “his functions” (2006:13).

Chenapou was selected as a case site for a number of reasons. Principally I, as a researcher, have an affinity with the community having spent a year living there as a volunteer teacher in 2010-11. The need for teachers reflects the fairly low existing level of education for most in the village, with the vast majority of the community having only received part of a primary level education (Davis et al. 2009:21). Although there are no literacy levels officially documented, my experiences suggest that amongst adults there is a large number who are not able to read beyond a primary school level.

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⁶ Two suicides within a number of months (Kaieteur News 2015) had occurred at the falls which, many in Chenapou felt was a desecration of what is a very important spiritual site.
More importantly, Chenapou offers a key site to interpret a number of ongoing political and environmental processes. It can be perceived as being the confluence point between a series of contested environmental, economic and development dynamics. A push for land title extension, tension over the relationship with the neighbouring national park and a transit site for many illegal gold and diamond operations are all ongoing issues for the community.

Chenapou’s proximity to sites rich in mineral deposits and a lack of viable alternative occupations means that the major income source for most families comes from men involved in artisanal and illegal mining. With mining representing the major driver of national deforestation - 85% in 2014 (GFC 2014: ii) although it is likely to be higher as much of the illegal mining goes undocumented - it is clear that the LCDS and REDD+ mechanisms are of specific pertinence to this community. Moreover, protracted and ongoing disagreements have revolved around land titling and extension of lands which will be considered in more detail below. Suffice to say however, that this means that both the Amerindian land titling (ALT) project and the ‘Opt-in’ procedure are of significance to the community. These dynamics presented Chenapou as an apt site on which to base my research, offering illustration of key features associated with the LCDS and indigenous participation.

2.3.1 Brief history of land titling in Chenapou

In 1974, during a second wave of the Amerindian Land Commission’s titling post-independence, Chenapou’s council received their official title. This provided legal autonomy to 83km² along natural boundaries around the community (Davis et al. 2009:8). Following this there have been a number of occasions where Chenapou has looked to receive extensions to this land, noting that many farms, houses, hunting and gathering locations fall outside these titled lands. To date no extensions have been granted (MacKay et al. 2000:6).

Since 1999 and the most recent extension of the neighbouring Kaieteur National Park (see Fig. 6) there have been ongoing, and at times fractious, relations with the park and the national government over land titling and demarcation. It was, and remains, the opinion of many in the community that the expansion - from the pink area of 12.95km² in 1973 to the black outline of 626.8 km² in 1999 (Fig. 6) - was largely imposed without proper consultation (MacKay et al. 2000, Davis et al. 2009). The feeling of many in Chenapou is that the expansion upstream of the falls takes over a large area of traditional hunting and mining grounds. At the time of extension a number of restrictions were set on these activities, which have since been relaxed such that hunting, fishing and gathering are permitted in the park for Chenapou members. However, mining and logging remain prohibited.

Although there is very limited prior research in Chenapou, the contention over boundaries has been recorded in two reports.

Figure 6. Evolution of National Park Boundary (Airey 2015)
In 2000 the Forest Peoples Programme examined the extension of the park from the perspective of the Chenapou community. The report, sponsored by a number of overseas NGOs\(^7\), found that the conflict over the boundary expansion was “…in large part related to inadequate consultation and lack of Indigenous participation in the project’s design and implementation mechanisms” (MacKay et al. 2000:2). Moreover, they found the governments claims that Chenapou had “fully participated at all stages of the project to date” \((ibid.)\) to not be a reality.

This perspective was then reiterated in a 2009 report produced by a Kaieteur national park management team. In this the management team document their own failure to provide adequate information and consultation leading up to the park extension. They identified grievances regarding duration and frequency of consultations as well as with the “inconsistency between what the [park authorities] said and what they did” (Davis et al. 2009:22). They also identified that there was an insufficient allowance for “community dialogues” (Davis et al. 2009:22) during consultations, with too great a focus on a few key representatives. They concluded by noting that “some community members indicated deep distrust” of the national park authorities \((ibid.)\) as a result of these failures in engagement. This provides a brief outline of the historic sentiment and precedent set between the community of Chenapou and the government of Guyana.

2.4 Analytical Framework

I will now articulate the epistemological and analytical framework adopted within my research. I begin by outlining my use of political ecology as an approach or lens to my research more broadly. This is followed by a review of relevant literature regarding the more specific theoretical elements of participation and power, which constitute the basis of my analysis.

2.4.1 Political Ecology as a lens to my research

Political ecology (PE) emerged in the 1970s as a field of research largely in response to prominent apolitical perspectives such as modernist theories of development (Peet & Watts 2002). For PE those modernist conceptions positioned development on a linear tract, interpreting - or even ‘creating’ – the polarising discourse of developed and underdeveloped as managed through the imposition of Western political and economic ambitions (Escobar 1995). Through the PE lens this modernist interpretation of development is seen to be “uniquely efficient” (Peet & Watts 2002:17) for those colonisers or Western sources from whom the theories were birthed.

Within this modernization worldview, many political ecologists sought to challenge what they saw as the Neo-Malthusian understanding that environmental degradations - and thus environmental challenges such as climate change - were simply a factor of population pressure (Dove 2006). Such a view identifies underdeveloped areas as the causal problem of environmental crisis, interpreting their large population numbers and high growth rates as the principal drivers (Robbins 2012:14-15). Simply put this ‘ecoscarcity’ perspective sets out to present environmental crisis as an apolitical matter, one that is simply the combined logics of population growth and natural environmental limits (i.e. ‘Limits to Growth’ (Meadows et al.

\(^7\) Forest Peoples Programme, Bank Information Center, C S Mott Foundation, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Environmental Defense Fund, Rainforest Foundation UK and USA, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
PE sought to challenge this by picking up the largely ignored political-economic factors which weigh in upon causation of environmental degradation (Robbins 2012). In doing so PE set out to link “environmental change to political and economic marginalization” (Robbins 2012:23), thus focussing on the “unevenness of development…on a global scale” (Biersack 1999:10) as political as opposed to apolitical.

In this sense PE offers a Marxist reading of development in regards to environmental conservation and resource use (Peet & Watts 2002:2). Such an interpretation considers that PE is concerned with the conflicts found in unequal “distribution of natural and economic resources, as well as [the] unequal distribution of economic and political power, locally and globally” (Hornborg 2001). In other words, a technical, apolitical understanding of development is seen to belie the structural and systemic elements which constitute apparent disparities. Such a conception instructs practitioners or researchers within PE to methodologically focus with greater emphasis on two key areas:

i. “detailed reconstructions of micro-level processes where meanings of nature and ecology as well as access to resources are produced and negotiated”

ii. “the meaning of the politics and power and their interlinks with the co-construction of knowledge and environmental science” (Alarcón 2015:49)

In this sense PE can be understood as a “research orientation that seeks to link macrolevel political economic processes with microlevel aspects of human ecology” (Dodds 1998:83).

It is within this framing that I utilise PE as a bedrock upon which my research is based, placing emphasis upon the micro-level in order to elucidate the meanings and interlinks of politics and power (Alarcón 2015:49). By adopting this perspective, I look to explicitly address notions of inequity as tied to power and political engagement within the community of Chenapou. Moreover, embedding a PE perspective into my research supports not only addressing the localised political and power dynamics, but also the implications from the macro political landscape – where the development concept originates - upon the localised context.

As Peet & Watts put forward, this focal shift to the ‘micro-level’ in research may counter the prevailing “resurgence of environmentalist concerns articulated explicitly in global terms (e.g. climate change)” (Peet & Watts 2002:2). Thus PE allows me to question what the implications of such discursive focus at the macro level, exemplified in the ‘global environmental management’ discourse (Adger et al. 2001), may have on the localised, community level. More eloquently put PE offers,

“…a field of critical research predicated on the assumption that any tug on the strands of the global web of human-environment linkages reverberates throughout the system as a whole” (Robbins, 2012:13)

It is these reverberations, from the macro governance approaches that promote PES models onto marginal communities such as Chenapou, that I look to assess. PE offers an approach within which to situate such research, providing the necessary frame through which to critically engage with notions of power and marginality associated with technical development systems. It presents a lens through which I may offer a “political-ecological thick description” (Peet & Watts 2002:38) of the relationship between the LCDS as a macro environmental-development policy and the micro realities of political engagement and power for the community of Chenapou.

2.4.2 Participation in politics
Participation is “in theory, the cornerstone of democracy” (Arnstein 1969:216). It is the process through which democracy is enacted, delineating it from the politics of dictation, oppression or coercion to that of inclusion and engagement.

From such an interpretation of the democratic model, it follows that the citizen be understood as an active part of the political community, engaged in and influencing governance decisions and ideas (Eley 2002). What that may constitute more specifically will be discussed later. However, for now we will take the working understanding that participation “is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (Arnstein 1969:216).

This ‘redistribution of power’ is a process which Fischer (2006) notes has only shown particular proliferation in nation-state politics since the 1990s. He suggests that this has come as a result of a failure on the part of the traditional state structure to engage with the contemporary social and political challenges faced - particularly those at the global and supranational levels (Fischer 2006:19). Preceding this, central bureaucratic hubs have predominantly held a monopoly over substantial powers with voting, petition and protest the few avenues of possible engagement offered to the citizen (Eley 2002).

However, contestations of this centralised governance model have been seen to expose “institutional voids” (Hajer 2003) where the traditional model is seen to fail, giving rise to alternative systems wherein participatory governance has flourished (Fischer 2006). ‘Participatory governance’ then can be seen as a ‘subpolitics’ (Beck 1992), moving towards a “decentred citizen engagement” (Fischer 2006:19) as a counter to the both bureaucratic and elitist dynamics which have come to dominate the political sphere.

2.4.2.1 Participatory politics in environmental governance

The proliferation of decentralising or pluralising governance forms has been seen to take on particular relevance in the global environmental governance landscape (Fischer 2006). Functionally we might understand ‘environmental governance’ specifically as the “distribution, exercise and limits of power over decisions that affect the environment” (Foti et al. 2008:3).

Supranational environmental challenges such as global climate change have brought about the need to engage with what had previously been politically marginal global communities. Environmental issues do not function within the confines of nation state bureaucracies and so the role of public participation has come to be seen as a necessity in finding solutions (Fischer 2006). Consolidation of this shift can be seen in two of the principles produced from the landmark 1992 Rio Declaration. Principle 10 speaks directly to participation stating:

“Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level... States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.” (UNCED 1993)

This commitment outlines the prevalence taken on by participatory models of governance. Of further significance here is principle 22 which was devoted to the role that indigenous groups should play in the environmental challenges:

“Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and
enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.” (UNCED 1993)

This has set a precedent of emphasising the role of participation of a wide citizen body, particularly in relation to indigenous groups, in formal environmental governance approaches. The recent Paris agreement is testament to the continued relevance of this, as it is stated in paragraph 4 that nations,

“…should promote, protect, respect, and take into account their respective obligations on all human rights, the right to health, and the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities…” etc. when “developing policies and taking action to address climate change” (UNFCCC 2015).

This elevation of participatory methods builds on accounts testifying to the potential value accrued by genuine participation in environmental policy (e.g. Foti et al. 2008). In a global report on environmental democracy the director of the World Resources Institute states that “improving environmental outcomes depends on the quality of participation” (Foti et al. 2008:ix). The report goes on to find that participation can lead to multiple benefits, such as to (Foti et al. 2008:xvii):

i. Increase the influence of civil society organizations
ii. Ensure fairness of decisions
iii. Foster greater voice and equity for underrepresented groups
iv. Enhance the governments capacity to build consensus and support

2.4.2.2 Restricted/pseudo participation

Although participation is frequently emphasised in these agreements and principles and therefore may represent progress towards participatory politics, it does not ensure it. Instead the potential ambiguity of the concept, and those declarations made, mean that there is an evident divide between functional and pseudo realities of participation in politics.

Majid Rahnema’s articulation of the construct of participation and its capacity for illegitimate application is relevant here. Participation, he argues, belongs to a subset of modern political jargon which carries no content but serves a function. The consequence of such a status being that it is “ideal for manipulative purposes” (1992:116). Rahnema notes that as the concept has grown in popularity, the recognition of its use value has also grown, opening the potential for “important political advantages [to be] obtained through the ostentatious display of participatory intentions” (Rahnema 1992:118).

This is seen particularly in the context of development policies wherein, both for the developed nations and developing nations, participation can become a “politically attractive slogan” (ibid.). It can also be a highly influential and effective concept in the development forum. For instance, shifting power to engaged citizens may act as a viable check and counter to the politics of corruption, self-interestedness and privilege (Eley 2002:231).

However, “participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless” (Arnstein 1969:216). Such a dynamic allows those with power to present their claim that open and democratic efforts are made, whilst action is continued unaltered. This lip-service performance of participation is of particular concern here, especially in the light of Rahnema’s finding that;
“…as the governments of the recipient countries also sense the new advantages of bending with the participatory wind, they are all paying lip service to participation in the hope of continuing to increase their chances on the foreign aid market” (1992:119)

This potential for ambiguity and disingenuous instrumentalisation of participation in politics identifies a strong motivation for close evaluation of projects which claim to adopt participatory measures. It is with this that I look to a framework to aid my objective of assessing the participatory integrity of the LCDS.

2.4.3 Evaluating participation

It is worth quoting Fischer (2006) at length here as he probes the central element of this research, asking the questions which I will argue must be asked in order to constitute legitimate participation:

“Facilitating participatory deliberation raises, to be sure, the question of criteria: What constitutes successful participation? How do we measure or judge it? Certain procedural characteristics related to the question are fairly clear. We can ask about the degree to which the discussion relationship (i.e., a relationship for talking and listening, asking and answering questions, suggesting and accepting courses of action) is governed by clear and fixed rules. Are the rules governing who gets to speak fair and equally distributed? Is the discussion open? Is the deliberative agenda transparent to all participants, or are particular elements hidden and secretive? To what degree are all of the participants represented? Here also arises the question as to whether or not there is a difference between how the participants might be represented and how they think they are represented. These questions depend in significant part on the equality of the power relations in the deliberative setting.” (Fischer 2006:22)

In this Fischer condenses the central elements necessary to evaluate participation, therefore emphasising the very nature of participation being that which requires evaluation. It is not simply enough to state that ‘participation’ has, will or did occur. Rather we need to be able to say how participation occurred, or was perceived, and assess the degree or quality of that which has happened.

As Utting (1994) notes, participation “involves far more than the active and willing involvement of local people in [planning and design]”. For him, “it is also about ‘empowerment’ or the organized efforts of marginalized groups to transform patterns of resource allocation and increase their control over material resources and resource management decisions.” (1994:256).

Utting is of the firm belief that improving awareness, information and discussion alone will not be enough to produce policy which can achieve genuine coherency. Instead he suggests that there is a requirement for “changes in the balance of social forces” to “challenge the power and influence of traditional elites” (1994:248).

Similarly, for advocates of ‘popular participation’ the aim is for “the oppressed and exploited classes and groups” to achieve substantive power which allow them to defend their interests and “advance towards shared goals of social change” (Rahnema 1992:120).

Foti et al. (2008) suggest that in order to access their right to participate, people “need access to the information upon which decisions rest and the opportunity to voice opinions and to influence choice among possible outcomes. Meaningful participation is guaranteed through
“access rights”: the rights of public access to information, to public participation in government decision-making, and of access to justice.” (Foti et al. 2008:x)

Turnhout et al. (2010) emphasise the nuance and categories of participation that Utting (1994), Foti et al. (2008) and Rahnema (1992) represent by underlining that ‘participation’ is not, by its very presence, an a priori “neutral place in which citizens are represented” (2010:1). Instead they perceive it to create “different categories of citizens” (ibid.) varying by what degrees or forms of participation they have access to. This nuance is at the heart of my approach to interpreting how participation has occurred in Chenapou and what the implications are.

Thus, when analysing the role of participation, it is evident that the notion itself is multifaceted, occupying a number of different interpretations and therefore functional realities. This makes for research aimed at assessing the quality and extent of participation to be somewhat complex. However, the process may be aided by utilising a typology of such definitional realities when looking to analyse not simply if participation occurred but what kind of participation has occurred.

Leading from this, I will apply Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) theoretical ‘Ladder of Citizen Participation’ as a guiding framework against which to interpret the evidence of participation in my research. Whilst not without its critics (e.g. Turnhout et al. 2010) it provides a useful classification of the range of possible applications of ‘participation’ between citizenry and bureaucratic bodies (state, NGOs etc.). It allows me to move beyond a discussion of whether or not participation has occurred - a more technical interpretation - and instead offer an analysis of what kind of participation has occurred - measure of the power distribution between state and citizen.

2.4.3.1 Typology of participation: Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation

![Figure 7. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969:217)](image)

“The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principal because it is good for you” (Arnstein 1969:216).

As a response to her perception that the study of participation was occluded by unhelpful rhetoric and euphemism Arnstein sought to produce a framework which might support an “enlightened dialogue” (1969:216) on the topic. Thus she produced a theoretical ‘ladder’ (Fig. 7), functionally categorising differing levels of participation.

As Fischer noted, the questions regarding participation “depend in significant part on the equality of the power relations in the deliberative setting” (2006:22).
Power is identified to be at the heart of questions regarding participation. Arnstein’s model supports this, as power – here the power devolved to citizen control – offers the metric on which her ladder is based. Each step or rung on the ladder representing an increased balance of power in favour of the “have-not” citizens.

At its core, “the ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them.” (Arnstein 1969:217).

2.4.3.1.1 Utilising this framework
Using Arnstein’s ladder provides a frame of reference against which to measure the evidence and information collected describing the type of participation between the people of Chenapou and the GoG regarding the LCDS. She provides labels and constituting criteria to aid the assessment of participation between the government and citizens. Thus, my research findings can be reflected against the criteria of each rung allowing for a theoretical comprehension of the quality of participation.

The first two levels – ‘Manipulation’ & ‘Therapy’ - represent non-participations which are “contrived” to “substitute for genuine participation” (Arnstein 1969:217). These offer the most insignificant levels of power to the citizenry which go so far as to be outlined by Arnstein as being entirely non-participatory. These are often experienced as illusory forms of engagement commonly with an inherent dishonesty regarding the representation of participation on behalf of the ‘powerholders’.

Continuing up the ladder Arnstein identifies a band of ‘tokenism’- ‘Informing’, ‘Consultation’ & ‘Placation’- which allow citizens to “hear and be heard” (Arnstein 1969:217), but offer no certitude that this will actually inform or impact upon political or other forms of higher level decision-making.

The upper rungs represent, for Arnstein, legitimate ‘degrees of citizen power’ – ‘Partnership’, ‘Delegated Power’ & ‘Citizen Control’. Participation fitting this description fosters genuine engagement through the active devolution of control and capacity for ‘havenot’ citizens to influence the political processes.

Thus, Arnstein’s ladder presents a spectrum of participation calibrated into this series of subsections dependent on the degree of power genuinely placed with the less powerful actors. It is this understanding of participation, a measure of the degree to which legitimate power is conferred to the citizen, that I adopt in analysing my research. This offers a useful framework against which I can discern what level of participation people in Chenapou perceive to have experienced with regards to the LCDS.

2.5 Concept of power
Power, perhaps more so than participation, can be seen as a term ubiquitous in use but complex in precise definition. It is one of those concepts to “inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie 1955-6:169). As noted ‘citizenry power’ constitutes the metric at the centre of Arnstein’s (1969) framework on participation however she offers little or no definition of it in her work.

Therefore, in order to set the boundaries within which I am working I will outline the understanding of power that I approach this research with.
2.5.1 Lukes ‘Three-dimensional’ view of power

Steven Lukes (2005) offers a framework which I will apply in this research as my principal articulation of power. In his seminal work Lukes offers his ‘radical’ perspective on power in contrast with alternate positions he deems restrictive in their elucidation of the concept.

His definition of the concept of power which he terms a “three-dimensional view of power”, is as follows: “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests” (2005:37). This in itself is not that instructive however, his focus beyond the overt and explicit understandings of power and towards the more latent understandings is of particular relevance here.

Both one-dimensional and two-dimensional interpretations of power, as Lukes categorises them, are fixated on the overt and explicit expressions of power. A one-dimensional perspective (identified in pluralists such as Dahl 1957) restricts the role of power to only be in play when there is a definable conflict between two partners such that there is “concrete observable behaviour” (Lukes 2006:17, emphasis in original).

A two-dimensional perspective is inclusive of more than just the explicit decision-making conflict of the ‘pluralists’. It includes notions of coercion, influence and authority which may be identified more accurately as power presented through non-decision making. That is the suppression of possible avenues of choice, quietening, silencing or suffocating demands for decisions, which may prove against the prevailing power holders. This is a consideration of those “partly or wholly excluded from the political system” (Lukes 2005:24) however, Lukes finds that this view is still restricted to cases in which interests “are consciously articulated and observable” (2005:24).

Lukes’ three-dimensional perspective encompasses the first two whilst paying particular attention to the less easily observed or explicit aspects of power. He discusses further the exercise of power evident in the exclusion from political processes. He suggests that an understanding of power purely as that which must be conducted with a decision – i.e. an explicit behaviour or choice – is “misleading” (2005:25). Instead, he argues that such an understanding omits some of the ways that individuals and particularly groups, may succeed in “excluding potential issues from the political process” (ibid.).

In other words, the exertion of power does not require the distinctive action or behaviour of an individual or group. Instead he identifies that, “the bias of a system can be mobilized recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the intended result of particular individuals’ choices.” (2005:25).

Bachrach and Baratz develop this further in suggesting that the exercise of power may be unwitting or unconscious and what is of importance is the effect that it may have on “the political process and other actors within the system” (Bachrach and Baratz 1970:50). Here they are principally talking of power in the form of the “bias of a system” which, they contend, is not upheld by discrete, individual acts alone but “more importantly, by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions” (Lukes 2005:26). Lukes essentially argues that the “power to control the agenda of politics and exclude potential issues cannot be adequately analysed unless it is seen as a function of collective forces and social arrangements” (Lukes 2005:26).

This opens up the interpretation of power to move beyond explicit and conscious action and allow it to be sensitive of conditions wherein the maintenance of status quo itself can be understood as an exercise of power.
Such an interpretation is of value when considering it within Arnstein’s framework, particularly at the lower levels of her ladder with concepts such as manipulation. Manipulation, as well as authority, are both examples of types of power which, Luke argues, can operate without explicit conflict. As such Lukes argues that power need be understood as able to operate without the necessary presence of conflict. Ultimately, it is about understanding power in its more mundane forms, a sensitivity that can allow for readings of power in more subtle and complex ways. The control over legitimacy, information, access and choice may all be inferred, tacit and non-obvious or deliberate but, Luke states, nevertheless hold great importance. It is the subtlety of Lukes ‘three-dimensional’ interpretation of power that I wish to adopt here in my analysis of Chenapou’s engagement in the LCDS.

3 Methods

3.1 Methodological Approach

3.1.1 Positionality

Taking account of my role as an active researcher is of central importance to my methodology and in discerning my results. I consider the subjectivity or presence of the researcher to be intractable from their research, and that to present otherwise can be inherently misleading (Pielke 2007). Thus, reflexivity within my research was important. Situating myself as an actor imbued with, and exerting influences within, the process I was studying. As Dove (2006:202) notes, “the uneven topography of power in the world makes neutral representation by anthropologists impossible.”

As a result, Les Field suggests that contemporary anthropological or social science researchers should be, "hyperconscious [about their] strategies of research, writing and activism" (Field 1999:198).

This, he suggests, being done through an emphasis of reflecting on why they are there, how they are conducting research and how they will present that work (ibid.). In that vein what I aim to do here is comply with Altheide & Johnson’s remarks that attempts to present “clear ‘tracks’...showing the hand of the ethnographer” (1994:493) should be made in social science research. This guidance has broadly informed my selection of methods, case site, approach and final results as signified in the stylistic preference of first person reference.

However, it should be stated that although I acknowledge and engage with my subjectivity and influence as an active researcher, in so far as was possible I set out “to look for and to recognize underlying assumptions...[my] own and those of [my] subjects, and to try to override the former and uncover the latter” (Anderson 2000:11).

3.1.2 Research design: Case Study approach and selection

I considered a single-site qualitative case study based on narrative interviews and ethnographic principles to be the most valid structure to my research. In part, my prior knowledge and position with the community of Chenapou helped me to design the approach I used (discussed in detail in 3.1.3). This, combined with temporal and financial parameters, motivated my selection of a single case site over a multi-sited approach along with the additional benefits of allowing for greater depth of analysis (Creswell 2007:76).
Furthermore, and perhaps counter to the “conventional wisdom” (Flyvbjerg 2006:220) surrounding the case study method, as the research process developed it became evident that this approach could offer valid commentary on broader debates (Flyvbjerg 2006, Creswell 2007). The case study method offers a sensitivity to contextual nuance and complexity which is seen to be “underrepresented” (Bluffstone et al. 2013) in the more prevalent macro-level research conducted on environmental challenges to date (O’Brien 2011). Therefore, such an approach may support and inform the existing macro-level discussions on the topic, providing the much needed rich detail at a micro-level.

Utilising ethnographic principles and selecting methods which did not impose formal structures – such as narrative interviewing - was in part motivated by the findings of a 2009 document of discussions between the Kaieteur national park and Chenapou community. In this there was the expressed concern that prior research in the community had been inaccessible and one-sided (Davis et al. 2009:21). Therefore, I developed my research approach in light of this, being transparent and more accessible in the way I engaged with the people of Chenapou.

Ethnography can be considered a discrete subtype of the case-study approach (Gerring 2004:342) which is readily associated within anthropological research. Full ethnography broadly entails extended (normally in measure of years), situated research wherein the researcher aims to embed themselves into a case in order to interpret and understand complexity and particularities from an emic (local) perspective (Madden 2010; Schutt et al. 2014). Whilst I was not able to, and so did not propose to, conduct such research in full, I found it both supportive and appropriate to adopt certain ethnographic principles within my fieldwork.

Therefore, I designed my research to focus upon the subtlety of interpretations to reveal tacit as well as expressed perceptions. In so doing I, as far as was possible, looked to avoid the constrictions of more formulaic methods such as surveys and heavily structured interviews so as to reduce producing “false positions” (Parfitt 1997:91) in participants. I felt this was of particular relevance within the field of development which is seen to be shaped by powerful discourses (Adger et al. 2001) and so it was pertinent to focus on the ethnographic tenets of observation and conversation. Therein it was an attempt to utilise the depth of knowledge I had as a researcher alongside methodological freedom to allow for the values and narratives of participants to orient the research (Armstrong 2008).

This methodological approach was critically important in refraining from the implication that I am speaking on behalf of the community as Spivak (1988) warns efforts to do so typically result in further subjecting and muting of the marginalised. Therefore, the methods applied were motivated through a desire to achieve a dynamic of ‘active participants’ (Gubrium and Holstein 2001) allowing for the existing local narratives to take prominence.

3.1.3 Selection of Chenapou

I selected Chenapou as the case study site for a number of reasons. In 2010-2011 I lived in the community for almost 11 months as one of two volunteer teachers in the small primary school. We had been sent as part of a program which aimed to provide remote and under resourced schools with the support of young volunteer teachers. I led a class of grade 6 pupils through their academic year and lived in the centre of the village building strong bonds with many in the community.
During my time in Chenapou in 2010-11, a frequent topic of concern was based around land and resource rights. When not teaching I spent much of my time attending village kayaps\(^8\), working in the farm and going on fishing and hunting trips. It was during these everyday activities that we would often discuss the concerns that people had in Chenapou. From my time spent in the village I picked up basic Patamona, however conversations were always had in English. It should be noted that English is spoken by many in the community well, with the exclusion of the most elderly in the community who predominantly speak Patamona exclusively.

In 2015 I returned to the village whilst working for WWF in Guyana. I was sent as part of a workshop team in October 2015 for 10 days to help develop community based solutions to problems they might face. I was working with WWF throughout the period or research as an unpaid intern. Whilst I had no specific title, my role was predominantly with Amerindian community outreach and engagement during my time there.

In my visit to Chenapou in October I was able to reunite with many former close friends, colleagues and pupils, often discussing at length the issues and problems people and the community faced both in and outside of the workshop. This led to the village leader or Toshao and I discussing the value of me carrying out my research within Chenapou and, when a number of other people responded positively to the idea, I was motivated to arrange it. Prior to this visit I had not planned to base my research with Chenapou or the LCDS specifically.

However, concerns over land rights, indigenous voice in politics and a vague concern for forest governance policies were all acutely apparent amongst those I spoke with during my initial conversations. These aligned well with my academic background and interests. My existing relationship constituted a rapport and trust with members of the community -often considered critical to qualitative research (Flick 2009) – and provided access to a remote and often inaccessible area\(^9\). This also meant that I had an established knowledge base from which to build on and a degree of familiarity with local culture and practice. These features combined to present an outline from which to build my research around the community of Chenapou.

These elements along with the sentiment that research would be of value and was of interest to the Toshao and those in the community that I spoke with, motivated my return in early December to conduct my extended second stage of fieldwork (see Fig. 8). During this second period I spent almost three weeks in Chenapou, which was funded and organised entirely independent from my role with WWF (which had ceased by that time).

### 3.1.4 Research Process

\(^8\) *Kayaps* are sessions where the community collectively work on a task, often farming related, to support a village member. Men and women will collectively offer their labour in order to complete a task that would otherwise take the host a long time (such as clearing a farm, ploughing or cutting a path). In return the host will customarily provide food and drink for the workforce which will be had collectively once the work is done. These are weekly occurrences in Chenapou, rotating between villagers depending on who has work to be done. These are usually attended by upwards of 30 people, varying as to the size of the task. These are a very social occasion with the drinking and eating after the *kayap* often going on for many hours whilst playing dominoes, cards or telling stories.

\(^9\) Both geographically and politically. As a village the only access is through chartering a flight which is both expensive and difficult to do without the right contacts. Politically, all recognised Amerindian communities in Guyana must be approached and have formally granted access by the community through the ministry of indigenous peoples affairs in order for outsiders to visit.
As noted, the research design was not consolidated at first phase but continually formed in an iterative process best represented in Fig. 8, developed from Grandin’s (2016:39) similar method of representation.

In Figure 8 I represent the processual steps involved in my research as consistent interpretation, evaluation and re-addressing of the study occurred throughout the phases. As stated earlier, my research evolved from that first, unplanned return to Chenapou, which became an integral part of the process. Such a design allowed my research to be influenced by new findings and viewpoints, particularly those of the participants involved (Stake 1995:9, Cresswell 2007).

The reflection journal I kept was a constant feature of the research. I would return to it frequently to consider preliminary analysis and interpretations. These notes informed my ‘progressive focusing’ (Parlett & Hamilton 1976) and helped me to refine my ideas and the insights I developed throughout the different phases of my research. The entire process as

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*Figure 8 : Research process chronologically from top right to bottom right. (*PAC = Protected Areas Commission)*
depicted here spans from September 2015 until May 2016, with a little over a month accumulated time spent in Chenapou.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Narrative Interviews

During the second phase of fieldwork in the community (Fig. 8) I conducted 30 recorded interviews which were supported by numerous participant observation sessions such as attending village works (Kayaps) or community meetings. It was within the latter half of this second fieldwork session that I made the majority of the audio recordings. During the first half of my time in Chenapou, as well as during the initial fieldwork session, I focussed on broad discussions - both in terms of topic and those involved. I spent much of my time observing discussions and conversations, developing my research around those topics which appeared most important. The majority of these conversations and observations were in English. That being said there were also times, for instance when I would sit with women whilst preparing cassava, that a more elderly villager would speak to me through their younger relative translating. That being said, all recorded interviews were conducted in English.

The first period of my time in Chenapou clearly shifted the focus of my research. I had initially set out to understand the differences and experiences between the individual Amerindian oriented projects (see Table 1). However, when I brought up details of issues such as REDD+ or the LCDS people often moved to discuss more broadly the notions of participation and consultation. It was evident that there was not the depth of knowledge I had presumed there would be to allow for me to have a meaningful discussion about individual projects. Thus, when I began to sit down for extended recorded discussions I was prepared to orient the discussion around those prominent topics, moving away from technical details. This was a testament to my methodology which allowed me to respond and adapt to the participants’ concerns.

This was an approach that I felt was suited to the existing culture of social interactions in Chenapou as both researcher and interviewee become ‘active participants’, collectively producing meaning (Gubrium and Holstein 2001) within the process.

As noted I chose to not engage in structured interviews and surveys as a response to the contextual parameters and the nature of the research topic. Therefore, the interviews which were conducted acted as culminations of the process of discussions, observations and document readings leading up to that point. Within these I wanted the dynamic of free discussion and participants’ development of answers associated with that of ‘narrative research’ techniques (Creswell 2007). Whilst within that format I also sought to utilise ‘narrative stimulus’ (Flick 2009:200) as prompts to orient discussion (see Appendix A) to the topics that were evolving from my research process, all the while ensuring that the participant had the freedom to develop their responses. This process offered far greater sensitivity to the nuanced understanding of how people in Chenapou perceived the LCDS (Flick 2009:150).

3.2.1.1 What are narratives?

A “narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected” (Czarniawska 2004:17). This fairly broad definition may suffice in my use of narrative but for the notion and prevalence of chronology associated to narratives. Instead, my approach falls on the side of an “analysis of narratives”
rather than a “narrative analysis” as Creswell (2007:54) distinguishes. The latter is concerned more closely with a plot line and the series of time-mapped events, whereas the former is oriented towards “using paradigm thinking to create descriptions of themes that hold across stories or taxonomies of types of stories” (ibid.).

In other words, I am analysing the narratives of a phenomenon, namely the engagements and interactions of the government and LCDS policies with the people of Chenapou. Narratives are an account through which to interpret and understand thematically a phenomenon or event (Lejano et al. 2013). This understanding of narratives moves away from the importance of beginning, middle and end chronology to instead focus on narratives as elements of social construction (ibid.).

For Lejano et al. narratives bind actors together, lending them identity, collective and shared meaning and resilience (2013:56). They are seen as “powerful devices for knitting together communities” (Lejano et al. 2013:57), often bringing together potentially heterogeneous persons and personal positions under a shared and working coalition or network (Prince 1990). Here the concept of a network is simply defined as, “groups of actors connected by social ties or relationships” (Lejano et al. 2013:5).

Thus, an analysis of narratives offered me an insight into perceptions from those in Chenapou towards the ongoing LCDS process which was nuanced, sensitive to “more complex understandings of human-environment relationships” (Lejano et al. 2013:9) and democratic (ibid.).

3.2.1.2 The contextual applicability of narratives

When approaching the perceptions and experiences of members of the Chenapou community to the political process of the LCDS it was important to consider how those perceptions might be formed and shaped. As noted (section 2.1), Chenapou is remote and poorly serviced in terms of communication and media links. This places heightened importance on discussions and story-telling at a local level as there are seldom newspapers and no radio, television (other than DVDs) or social media present to provide engagement with the wider political sphere. Village meetings are certainly a space for knowledge sharing and political discussion although these are infrequent and often attended by a core and unchanging group (Personal Communication 2015). Thus, politics happens for many in Chenapou in the everyday interactions between other members of the community whether at the river – where most people will wash their clothes, catch fish or collect water - at a kayap or over food and the local cassava drink; cassiri. Engaging with this reality was important if my research were to not speak for the community (Spivak 1988) from an etic perspective but to genuinely engage with people’s experienced realities.

Stemming from this, my understanding of Chenapou was that narratives really do operate as the “foremost vehicle for knowledge” (Lejano et al. 2013:50) of a political sort for many. Emphasising these in my research was important. This allowed for novel interactions and understandings to be developed whilst had I to simply set questions and posed them from the outset I felt I would create and constrict choice, rather than inquire and explore perception (Lejano et al. 2013:9).

3.2.1.3 Narrative interviewing in practice

Selection of participants involved within the research followed both opportunistic and deliberate sampling strategies as I sought to cast the widest net during first stages of research
and narrow my interactions as I engaged with more specific members of the community (Creswell 2007:126). More deliberate sampling efforts sought out those who might offer most in approaching the core research questions (ibid.) such as village council members, LCDS workshop attendees or simply more vocal community members. As I knew many village members prior to my research, I began with discussing with them initially, however I felt it important to expand beyond those who I already knew and interact with less vocal members of the community.

During interviews I took notes in a field journal and, when interviewees gave their consent, I recorded them. As I completed more interviews a process of overlapping and re-iteration began to occur with greater frequency. Following the principle of ‘theoretical saturation’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967), I continued to carry out discussions and seek new participants so long as alternate or new insights were offered. The point of saturation, whereby I approached the sense that little or no additional insights were being generated, provided my criterion for determining that an adequate and representative sample size had been found (Glaser & Strauss 1967:61).

3.2.1.4 Chenapou

After I had engaged and observed broader discussions I began to spend more time speaking specifically about my research topics. In these sessions I often requested time to speak to an individual, but I did not wish to conduct these interviews isolated from others. Instead it was a discussion, often with many other family members and friends present – as is common in village life – wherein we would be eating the local dish of tuma or drinking some cassiri. We would usually be sitting by the fire and sometimes the participant(s) would be engaged with everyday activities like weaving crafts or preparing cassava as we spoke. At other times it was just myself and the participant, although inevitably others would join or interject during the process.

By allowing for this I hoped to foster a more relaxed environment of view-sharing and discussion. These elements are important when considering that narratives as co-constructed as well as personal (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). Allowing for these ‘joint narratives’ (Flick, 2009:200), wherein multiple persons could contribute to a discussion, was important. This approach allowed me to observe collective perceptions alongside personal views, instead of treating the community as disconnected individuals.

3.2.1.5 Georgetown

Within Georgetown the style of interview was altered as those I spoke with predominantly provided background and the wider political context to my research. Therefore, more structured discussions were had with members of WWF, the Protected Areas Commission and independent consultants focussing on their understandings and views about the LCDS and its engagement with Amerindian communities. Participants were selected regarding both their engagement with Chenapou or similar Amerindian villages and through my position as an employee with WWF during that time. In total 4 recorded interviews were taken and further discussions with various members of associated organisations. Furthermore, I attended and made observations at several meetings and conferences that took place during my five month stay in Georgetown. I also had a number of meetings and discussions with people who had lived in Chenapou but had re-located to Georgetown.

I considered it important to engage with these ‘co-producers’ (Holmgren 2013) of development policy discourses as it gave me the opportunity to situate the concerns and information I was
receiving from Chenapou in a wider context. However, the substantial focus of my research was upon resident perceptions and views from those living in Chenapou.

3.2.2 Observations

Concurrent with ethnographic principles (Flick 2009:233) I considered the value of observation, note taking and participation in everyday practices as potentially insightful to community dynamics whilst in Chenapou. Furthermore, in the process of this more subtle research I was able to develop understandings that could form, adapt and compliment my subsequent research and interviews.

At the beginning of my extended period in Chenapou in December (see Fig. 8) I introduced myself formally to the community, explaining my purpose as a researcher and my subject area. I invited anyone interested in the subject matter who wished to share their thoughts and experiences with me to approach me at any time. Some did approach me personally after this and it also acted as a spark for many discussions between other members when I was present, which I was able to observe.

During my time in Chenapou, certain activities such as kayaps (village self-help sessions see Fig. 9), events (weddings, parties etc.), everyday farming and fishing trips and communal meetings (e.g. ministerial visit) were key sites of interaction, discussion and observation. Kayaps represented a particularly rich vein of political discussion as this is commonly where politics happens in the community of Chenapou. After a period of work on a farm, house or path those assembled to work will often return to the host’s home and eat tuma (fish and meat stew) and drink cassiri. Here the discussions were often politically charged and open as it was amongst other local community members and not official or governmental persons. Many agreed to further interviews and recordings following discussions during these post-kayap periods.

During these periods of participant observation my focus was not solely upon the words spoken but the tacit, imbued meanings behind them. Altheide & Johnson (1994) remark that it is “the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding that is often manifested in nods, silences, humor, and naughty nuances” (1994:492-493) which constitutes this tacit and unarticulated
meaning which can be felt deeply. These can and were, highly informative to my understanding and sense of villagers’ perceptions and experiences towards the LCDS and participation with government policies.

3.2.3 Documents

Documents were observed and analysed both outside the community and whilst in Chenapou. In order to support the narrative evidence of interviews I took account of the visitor records in Chenapou from the village guest book. This is a feature of most Amerindian communities in Guyana which is used to document visitors to the community. Such a record is motivated often by the fact that access to an Amerindian community requires permission from the village council due to the partial autonomy granted to indigenous communities (Amerindian Act 2006). I was able to find information from the period between 1998-2015 with the absence of information for 2010 and 2011. It should be noted that the upkeep of this record is not always entirely diligent and so the conclusions taken will be accordingly limited. However, in the absence of alternative records, it is the most accurate account available.

Although the veracity of this may be questioned it nevertheless offers a rough record against which to reflect or triangulate suggestions and sentiments about the frequency of visits, for instance, from representatives of the government to the village. Alongside this I was also shown a limited number of documents people had kept from outreach publications. These offered an insight into the kind of communication, framing and format typical of information shared with community members.

Outside of the community, a thorough reading of LCDS policy documents was important so as to establish an understanding of the development of the policy at the national level. Those documents, both observed in Chenapou and read during the interim stage (see Fig. 8), were not simply regarded as objective texts. Instead they were analysed for their framing, intentions and discourse as is important particularly with ‘official’ texts (Flick 2009). They provide a validation or contrast to findings in community discussions and, through a hermeneutic reading, can provide key insights (Flick 2009:334).

As with any research, these and my observations were informed through a wider reading of relevant development, anthropological and political literature around the topic.

3.2.4 Validity of information

In order to achieve validity and reliability within my research I drew on a number of key qualitative research strategies put forward by Creswell (2007). Prolonged engagement, triangulation, clarifying researcher bias and thick description (2007:208) are all strategies which I implemented to some degree that Creswell outlines as being of value in achieving reliability.

Although I was unable to prolong research to the lengths associated with full ethnography, a major feature of validation is in “building trust with participants” (Creswell 2007:207), which I was able to do through having established relationships during my 11 months stay in Chenapou as teacher in 2010. Through document studies, repeated visits and observations I was able to triangulate the information derived from recorded interviews whilst also continually ‘member checking’ as I posed my early interpretations or views to participants for their critical appraisal (Creswell 2007:209). Finally, in producing my results I have
endeavoured to offer both a rich description and to clarify my positionality throughout so as to engender greater validity and transparency within any research outcomes.

Further, Becker (1958) offers three criteria to assess authenticity of the research process in qualitative research:

i. Credibility of the informant: can the researcher trust the participant, do they know them etc.
ii. Spontaneity of response: Was it a constructed response to a limiting question or a more spontaneous piece of information.
iii. How does the presence of the researcher affect the data? May be hard to assess but must always be considered as a potential restriction.

These criteria also informed my approach in selection and particularly in conducting interviews to ensure as far as possible the reliability of the information that I obtained from participants and their accounts in my research.

3.3 ‘Data’ Analysis

I approached the analysis process much like the entire research process itself, in an iterative and progressive manner. As I showed in Fig. 8 I sought to repeatedly return to notes, early findings and accounts throughout the process of research, which helped me to refine and inform subsequent passages of work.

Once all recorded information and sessions were transcribed in full, the analysis process itself broadly progressed through the five phases put forward by Yin (2011:177):

i. Compiling – sorting and collating field notes, transcriptions etc. into a database
ii. Disassembling – fragmenting and coding collated data
iii. Reassembling – thematically clustering those fragments of data
iv. Interpreting – identifying trends, relationships and patterns to assembled themes
v. Concluding – bringing together your insights into final outputs

Whilst appearing linear in form here, in practice these phases had “recursive and iterative relationships” (Yin 2011:179, emphasis in original) between one another, with insights and information driving frequent returns to different stages in the process. So I listened to the recordings and re-read the transcribed texts numerous times, reflecting and note taking as I did so. This formed a similar pattern that Creswell defines as the “data analysis spiral” (2007:151) as the analysis is built up through the stages of continual thematic breakdown.

This close relationship with notes, text and recordings and my emphasis on ‘re-listening’ (Yin 2011:183) to material, was motivated by the importance given to grounding any interpretation or outcomes in the recorded data (Flick 2009:41).

3.3.1 Presenting data

10 ‘Data’ is a term which carries connotations of an objectivity I would prefer to move away from as it seems ill-fitting with the observations and principles utilised here. However, for purpose of semantic continuity I will speak of discussion transcriptions, readings and observation notes collectively as my ‘data’ within this research format.
During the processes of transcription, analysis and presentation (see Fig. 8) I wanted, as far as was possible, to retain the accuracy of accounts from Chenapou. Therefore, I followed the principle of transcribing and producing those accounts as I felt the research question required (Strauss 1987). I felt it unnecessary to deal with a detailed conversational analysis and transcription, but wished to document the accounts as honestly as possible, providing they remained manageable for myself and readable for others (Bruce 1992). Thus, the accounts are deliberately presented as they were spoken, with concerns of grammar considered to be less important.

3.4 Methods limitations

The nature of the qualitative research that I adopted is context dependant. This is an important element of my research, allowing me to focus on the micro-dynamics in the community, however I also acknowledge that this focus limits my capacity to generalise my findings (Creswell 2007:74). Were the opportunity and capacity to have allowed, I feel that much could be gained through repeating this process with a number of other communities.

Alongside this, although I do not claim to have conducted a full ethnography, my methodological approach would have benefitted from further time with the community (Flick 2009). My time in Chenapou was limited and had I the opportunity, a third visit would have been preferred. This would have allowed me to more fully engage in ‘member checking’, where I could gather “participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell 2007:208) I had made.

My positionality and identity within the community is also an influential, and potentially limiting, factor in my research. Being white, male and British all carry associated expectations, perceptions and status which I tried to remain reflexively aware of. Moreover, my role working with WWF could have had a large influence over those I engaged with as many expressed mixed views about NGOs in general. The fact that I was not completely new or foreign to many in the community supported my negotiating of these potential difficulties. My existing rapport with many provided me the capacity to be understood beyond my immediate identity, allowing discussions to occur more casually and allowing me to rely less on constructed methods. I also made it very clear that I was in no way working under the capacity of WWF whilst conducting my extensive fieldwork session. That being said, my positionality it is a factor which undoubtedly had influence over who I spoke to, or who spoke with me, whilst in the community.

Whilst in Chenapou I attempted to ensure as broad a range of voices within my research. However, being male I was much more easily able to engage with the viewpoints and discussions from other men than women. For example, village works or kayaps are often divided in terms of task by gender. Similarly, as people rest with food and drink - as is customary after the work - this will often be segregated between men and women, meaning that I had much greater access to the male dominated discussions. In order to mitigate this bias I attempted to reach out specifically to female community members to provide a balance of the accounts within my research. My status as a former teacher in the community, a female dominated profession, supported me in these efforts. I also spent time doing what are considered female tasks such as cassava work (scraping, grating, squeezing etc.). Whilst these activities can be seen by some as emasculating I was able to take on these roles because I had already established myself within the community.
Nonetheless although I made this effort, I would maintain that the accounts used within my research are more representative of male experience than female. As Bulkan notes "(m)ale-dominated Amerindian traditions have mostly excluded women from the top positions in village and community councils" (2013:377). This can be said to be true of Chenapou whose Toshao and the majority of Councillors are male. The limitation of gendered research is one which should be addressed in further research and is also an important aspect of marginality which I do not explore thoroughly in this work.

There is also a danger of false representation within qualitative social science research such as this. West (2006) talks of the anthropological tendency in research to create groups of peoples who might otherwise identify as disconnected and heterogeneous. This is often done for clarity of representation or analysis (ibid.). My prior knowledge of the community dynamics helped me to identify different views and perspectives in Chenapou and engage with those nuances. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that any conclusions and representations are influenced by the approach and perspectives I engaged with in my research and do not necessarily represent the full spectrum of experience of all 500 persons in Chenapou.

4 Results

This chapter presents the empirical accounts of participants involved in my research. I begin by addressing most directly the first research question; assessing whether genuine participation has occurred within the LCDS process. I then go on to recount the evidence and proximate consequences of what is largely a failure in participation as expressed almost universally across those I spoke with in Chenapou. This is then reflected against the expressions from many concerning the participation they desire. Finally, narratives which concern trust and support for the political process and LCDS are recounted within this section.

Accounts are anonymised as agreed with the interviewees and reference made only to the recording number (i.e. I:x). Quotations in italics refer to my comments in the recordings.

4.1 Participation – consultation experiences

4.1.1 Infrequent, quick in and out consultation

Consistently, accounts of consultation or participation that those in Chenapou had experienced with the government during the LCDS presented very similar depictions. As the former nurse of the village explains:

“They [the government] come in for an hour, mostly just 30 minutes, talk and then leave for their boat to Kaieteur. You can’t expect people to understand all that so fast. Then they call that consultation” (I:2).

Almost unanimously this sense that the government come too infrequently, and when they do it is a rushed and insubstantial session, was evoked several times by community members I spoke with. The frustration in many accounts is clear:

“These government officials come and spend one day and keep meeting for two hour and beat out and go back to town. They don’t got time to stay, they schedule always busy” (I:3)
“Within two hours we wanted to put forward things they must do. You know, give people a chance to talk, you know?...Only three or four persons got to say something, what about the rest?... And they want you to listen to them and they don’t want you to talk” (I:23)

“Coming for a little two hours isn’t going to make it, they need to spend a night man, give the people a chance to talk.” (I:20)

The duration of time within the community that government personnel would spend during visits was a frequent issue. As these excerpts show, there is a sense that the opportunity to participate is curtailed by such short sessions, the clear message from those I spoke with being that sessions did not adequately allow community members to engage. These sessions allowed for the visitors (government) to speak without adequate time for community input or response. Furthermore, the reasoning behind such curtailed and infrequent consultation was felt to be unjustified. One account from a participant aware of the Guyana-Norway agreement put it like this:

“…but I know with this LCDS and this FLEGT\textsuperscript{11} they are getting a lots of funds to do these programmes which they are not really doing. I mean with these workshops that I have been attending so far I have learnt that a lot of money being put into Guyana to do these consultations to do these, what you call it…outreach programmes they call it – in communities that may be affected by the programme that they are planning now.” (I:28)

4.1.2 Guest book account – frequency of consultation

Below (Table 3) is a representation of collated data from two copies of guest books dating back to 1998. (At the time of collecting my data there was an unaccounted absence of data for 2010 and 2011, which are thus omitted from the table.).

These records appear somewhat consistent with a sense of political visitors being relatively infrequent. Across the 16 years documented I found that researchers, WWF and the mining commission have visited Chenapou much more frequently than the representatives from the regional or national government. With this stated it is also noted that no firm conclusions are drawn from this document on account of its discontinuity.

Supporting these entries are often accompanying notes or messages left by visitors. Most are expressions of gratitude to the village for their hospitality however an entry on the 19\textsuperscript{th} November 2013 from the then Regional Chairman documents concerns about the non-inclusion of Chenapou in political activities:

“Found the villagers to be very warmed. However, the villagers complain of being neglected by the authorities over the years. Several government infrastructures in need of urgent repairs.” (19/11/13)

\textsuperscript{11} EU- FLEGT is a mechanism set up to reduce illegal logging and promote sustainable forestry by certifying sourcing of timber to the EU (EU-FLEGT 2016). It is not a part of the LCDS formally but was confused by many in the community as being associated with the LCDS mechanism.

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\(^{12}\) Kaieteur National Park - Protected Areas Commission  
\(^{13}\) Guyana Geology and Mines Commission  
\(^{14}\) World Wide Fund for Nature
4.1.3 Complicated, unclear and inaccessible information

Supporting the sense that the consultations were infrequent and hurried was a concern about the inaccessibility of information provided to the community. Only one of those I spoke with had any documents or material regarding the LCDS and many complained about the language of information provided. One document that had been distributed to the community was intended to support the understanding of the sustainable forestry initiative, EU-FLEGT. This had been distributed through a village member who had attended a workshop away from Chenapou.

Below are images (Fig. 10) taken to convey the nature of these documents:

Figure 10. Pages from documents given to Chenapou members showing complexity of information provided (Airey 2016)

One participant explains the issues with this format of information:

“(T)he large documents we get [from external programmes] are hard to read and long…we think that they should come more in our own language [Patamona] that would be easier for us to understand” (I:18)

Having been able to view the copies that people I spoke with had in their houses, I realized that these were not accessible and rather complicated documents. Most were highly technical, filled with jargon and not specifically designed for a community where English is considered a second language for many and the vast majority have only been formally educated to a primary school level (Davis et al. 2009:21).

Comments were also made about the process of information sharing resulting in further inaccessibility. The common model of outreach programmes was described as one where a member or two would travel to a central location to be informed and then pass that message to
the rest of the community. This format was criticised both by those community representatives sent and others in the community dependant on this source of information as this account illustrates:

“You see the other thing with this one, one person or two person right, just training a few and take them out and ting you see in the line. When you see they train you and you working with them, when you come here [return from training] you must be looking for information to suit their system you understand? But that is not how it is supposed to be, you is supposed to be looking for information to suit both of the parties, not just because you are working for whoever you are working with for their benefit. That is how everybody, when they come they are just looking for certain information and ooh, take back, this is what happened and this is how it happened, just to suit them.” (I:21)

In other words, the sentiment here was that it produced a one-way flow of information, effectively reducing the space for discussion from those in Chenapou. I also found that the representatives themselves did not support this approach, describing again the sense of a lack of investment from the GoG:

“I really don’t like this two persons going out to town, I mean it may be cheaper for them yes but then I think they need to get more funding. I think they are getting enough funds, but they are using the funds in a different way.” (I:28)

It was felt that the consultation process was not attempting or achieving genuine outreach:

“Well to my knowledge or to our knowledge here, well consultation to me is really giving full information of what their intentions are, not just part of it or not just coming with 50 pages or 20 pages and within ten minutes trying to say this is what we are doing and just leaving it like that. No proper explanation without even asking people questions of what they think about it, what they would like to contribute to it before they would really work towards that plan that they would have.

That is what many of the, let’s say the government been doing so far. Whatever policy they are coming up with they haven’t consulted with we the Amerindians enough so we can understand fully what their intentions and what they plan to do. They just come just like that to tell us in ten minutes, fifteen minutes and then you know. Whereby they would have asked us more questions in detail, let us know more in detail of what they are doing and see what contribution we may have on that as well.

Especially when it comes to LCDS and the FLEGT, they haven’t done that even in Chenapou so far and to my knowledge going through one or two other communities it is the same. It is not to say it is only Chenapou, other communities are complaining about the same thing. They really should take more time and explain.” (I:28)

This account gives a detailed insight into the desire to participate as well as the clear and consistent criticisms levied at the current system.
4.1.4 Timing of participation

Supporting the criticism that consultations were infrequent, too short, and produced inaccessible materials were concerns about the timing of engagement. Many participants stated that when sessions did occur they were consistently coming at a point where there was no longer any genuine deliberation possible. The following account reflects this complaint.

“I heard the minister was saying they have some plans, now drafting out some plans and ting. We need to be involved in the plan making you know? Because sometimes the plan is something which might not suit us you understand. So in the decision or when you are making plans we must know what is the plans. We didn’t hear anything about what is for Chenapou or Region 8…you know that is how it is supposed to be drafted you know: ‘Okay Chenapou hear what happened we have, we have some plans ahead for next year: this is plan A, plan B, plan…you know?

Treating you like a partner instead of being a pupil and telling you this is what you’re going to do?

Right. Exactly. So everybody would have a more clearer understanding, okay so now we are working like partners but you just can’t come an tell people this and then you gone. So when the plan is already gazetted and registered and verified and ting, you come: ‘Oh you know something, last year when I was here I told y’all about a plan and now we get it to pass’…you understand. And that is what we get all the time.” (I:21)

For some in the community this was not a phenomena restricted purely to the events of the preceding 6 years of the LCDS program, but was a recurring and established malpractice:

“This has been happening for numerous decades, I have to say, they make all the decisions and then when it reach up to us it will be on the later part of it and they want us to agree with what they are going with and it is not like that.” (I:29)

A sense that the lack of genuine opportunity to participate or mould policy in these sessions is more than simple negligence was also conveyed by many as this account reflects:

“Right, always at the end when they have everything you know. And they don’t even put in nothing that we really say they just calling us just to say yes we had consultation. Just to say well yes we were there and then they do their own story.” (I:28)

It is to this notion of disingenuous, ‘lip-service’ consultation that I turn to next.

4.1.5 Lip service participation

When discussing reasons for why outreach sessions were infrequent and, when they did occur, were insubstantial and short, a fairly consistent interpretation was offered. This quote is illustrative of that sense of dishonesty/instrumentalisation felt about the consultations:

“They say they are busy and they are making a special time to visit, but really they are just coming, talking and going. Then in town [Georgetown] they can make like they consulted the whole community when they didn’t even listen to them!” (I:20)
Here the sentiment of ‘lip-service’ participation behind what are largely considered superficial and insubstantial consultations is made clear. The duplicity between what is conducted within Chenapou and the perception of how that is reported favourably and unrealistically by the government externally is evident. A participant who had recently moved to Georgetown, but had spent the majority of their life in Chenapou, affirmed this sense:

“They say one thing and do another…they think buck-man\textsuperscript{15} are stupid when really they are some brilliant people. The government just think they can get away with telling them [Amerindians] what they like and then going back to town and telling everyone they have consulted the Amerindian.” (I:2)

A more intensified sense of anger was reflected in the accounts of those who felt that this was an instrumentalized dishonesty on the part of the GoG. Others interpreted less deliberate manipulations behind seemingly insubstantial participation sessions, offering instead that they were simply ineffectual:

“They [GoG] listen right, but the response…they respond after a very long time” (I:7)

\subsection*{4.1.6 Minister of Tourisms session}

Following months of tension amongst many in Chenapou over tourism and the suicides at the Kaieteur falls the minister of tourism, Kathy Hughes, along with a member of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MOIPA) visited the community. Their visit was explained as an opportunity to respond to, and to understand the concerns that the Chenapou community might have.

I was able to observe the meeting and it offered further evidence as to the nature and experience associated to such outreach efforts. In total the contingent of five governmental personal were in Chenapou for a little over two hours having flown directly from Georgetown.

The session was made up of speeches by both ministers followed by a period of questions. After the second question the minister of tourism prompted the assembled community that “…we haven’t much time” (I:16), attempting to wrap up the session, which was not received well by those waiting to pose further questions. In response to the disquiet produced by this abrupt ending the Minister stated that a final two questions could be asked. After attempting to wrap up after those two questions more were provoked with a further four questions being posed amongst numerous comments of discontent. One attendant expressed the community’s frustration with the brevity of consultation directly to the minister:

“Just for future, for the record. Sometimes we are tired with government officials coming to speak and really spending just a small time. Sometimes, you know, some people are very slow and they might have something to say and the time has gone up…

[interjection from another community member present] That is what happening right now.

\textsuperscript{15} This term is generally considered a derogatory, racial label carrying connotations of a lack of intelligence towards an Amerindian.
…in future we would like that you come to visit often, you would stay with us and listen to all who want to talk and then you could get a good note once every things has taken place and you can have a very balanced view. And I hope that in future our senior minister Allicock16 is coming here, we do not want only to have visit when the time is up [end of administration wherein the government can do no more]. That has happened in the last administration and we do not want that to occur in this new administration.” (I:16)

The minister responded to this apologetically, was held to another two questions as she made her way to the exit and when attempting to say thanks for the third or fourth time one vocal member in attendance signified the general frustration felt:

“She going?…No, no, no man this not no meeting you all can’t leave yet. We got nuf discussion to have.” (I:16)

The small group left to a chorus of discontent and grumbling of dissatisfaction at the session, which had been spoken about for a number of days previously and had lasted a little under two hours, evidently frustrating many.

4.2 Knowledge of the LCDS

“No one really understand about it…We ain’t getting the understanding. It is only down there [Georgetown] they is getting to know what is happening” (I:14)

Knowledge of the LCDS and an understanding of what it entails is a useful indicator of the success of engagement with those in Chenapou. Across the 30 recorded sessions I conducted, more than two thirds of participants responded that they either had never heard of the LCDS and Guyana-Norway agreement or had heard of it but could give no explanation or detail as to what it was. The ambiguity of understanding is illustrated in the response given when I asked this participant to explain the LCDS:

“Low, something, carbon, something…I can’t remember…Low carbon something something. We don’t really hear nothing about that, them just come and tell we one thing and we don’t know…they just left we in the dark man. They don’t like Chenapou people.” (I:3)

Few were aware of the LCDS and a very small number could offer any kind of functional explanation of its implications. Perhaps most illustrative of this lack of knowledge is the response given by the principal representative, whose role it is often to teach the rest of the community what these concepts are:

“So how would you explain LCDS in terms of your understanding of it?

The LCDS programme I see, or the LCDS programme that our government has, as they call it the strategy, well for me I mean there are many times that they are leaving us out, the people, who are in the forest. Because well, we know that the contribution of emissions of carbon is from trees and this is where we live and we cut down trees for houses yes, and we cut down trees for farms yes and we understand that we are contributing to the emission of, and we understand that.

16 Sidney Allicock - Vice President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples Affairs.
But this is our way of life, now the strategy the government is planning, or they are working on— they call it strategy— there is nowhere they involve the Amerindian people very much in there and again they haven’t educate us enough for us to understand exactly what they are planning.” (I:28)

This is not the account of someone who is thoroughly versed in understanding what is a complex technical, economic and political mechanism. Perhaps most alarming though is a perception alluded to that the LCDS is in place because of the impact of Amerindian traditional living. Reflecting this against the Guyana Forestry Commissions findings that 85% of deforestation was attributable to mining in 2014 presents the inaccuracy of this understanding (GFC 2015:9).

The general dearth of understanding around the LCDS is likely to be connected to the process through which information has been shared. As already covered this was an area of discontent for some in the community. An account of how LCDS training was conducted offers further explanation as to why knowledge of the LCDS may be so poor in Chenapou:

“I can’t remember it was about two years ago, two years only again as I am saying it was just a ten, fifteen minute story so people don’t know anything at all in Chenapou what they are really doing or what LCDS really is. You understand? When you see there is this big, big long. I mean they have the book, they have the draft what you call it [LCDS document] but they don’t really, I mean one or two people would read it they may understand it in one or two parts, but then all this different, different things you know. It is difficult, it is difficult.” (I:28)

The training session had occurred some two years ago and instead of being a trip focussed only on the LCDS it was a combination of training and communicating numerous policies. The LCDS itself was presented in just ten or fifteen minutes, accompanied by a few copies of the LCDS update from 2009 which is a lengthy (100+ pages) and fairly inaccessible document. The participant also asked if I was aware of any more recent copies, worrying that they might only have a draft that is far out of date. It is clear from the LCDS website that there have been progress reports almost annually and several updated LCDS documents that were completely inaccessible to a community like Chenapou, with the results that the information people do have is at best, several years old.

4.2.1 Confusion – LCDS and EU-FLEGT

Further evidence of the lack of understanding of the LCDS was shown as many in the community were unable to determine the difference between the LCDS and the EU-FLEGT arrangements. Moreover, those that were able to differentiate the LCDS from the EU-FLEGT found the policies in themselves to be contradictory to one another as this account illustrates:

“But again Sir, look at what is happening now in this country now they want to export timber from this country to Europe

Is this the FLEGT?”

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18 “Sir” is the title given to a male teacher in the community and so I was still referred to as “Sir”
Yeah the FLEGT, you see that is going to hambug a lot of people. Now you are saying to preserve the forest [with LCDS/REDD+] and instead of preserving the forest you are actually destroying the forest.

*Its’ confusing isn’t it?*

Yeah. One says keep, the next one says you can extract timber. Well you would be destroying the forest when you do that. I don’t know what really is happening.

4.3 Participation desired

Amongst many of those I spoke with there was a want for genuine and constructive participation. This was often supported in many of our discussions with an articulation of how participation should be constructed as this participant describes:

“…the way how I see it is right, that if they can come in as I was saying to explain exactly what they are doing and to hear from people. I mean they can do their part that side like of planning in Georgetown or whatever, do their part the way they see it and then coming to say well you know this is about how we think it should be, now what do you think?

You know, let us hear from communities to hear what it is they think about it. And then to say well alright you know on our part here is to say it doesn’t work good for us you know. So if it could be like this – and put in something – and make sure they put it in there as well. Because they would say okay, okay and then it is a different story.” (I:28)

The account offers a clear articulation of the nature of participation desired. This sense of partnership acknowledging that those I spoke with are not looking for total control but simply for a more engaged interaction. This was often rooted in participants’ emphasis on their understanding of the local context and environment as one participant explains:

“So, we are willing to help preserve the land, the forest and maybe more or less the animals because – like I said in the meeting there – we know these mountains and we know how to live among these mountains and rivers and trees and whatever.” (I:21)

“Yeah buddy, we need to be more informed and we need to make decisions to suit our area you know…So that is how we need them to involve us to make decisions for our villages and so.” (I:21)

This often came from a concern that local factors are important and need to be considered in decision-making. The incoherence in the fact that politicians in Georgetown were deciding policies which were based on rainforests in the interior was a frequent comment as one account displays:

“LCDS: forests, FLEGT: forests. And we are the ones that supposed to be [benefitting], really they supposed to be telling us exactly what they doing so you know ‘if we do this what do you think?’ Something like that. ‘Now we plan like this how to do, what do you think about it?’ Now this is where people might say

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19 Slang for upset, irk or frustrate
‘oh if you do that, that is going to affect our lives because that is we do so why don’t you…you know’. (I:28)

As well as reflecting on the failures in participation there was a clear sense that in holding such insufficient sessions the LCDS itself was deprived of what could be valuable insight from the people of who have a better understanding of their environment.

They just come the ministers or the REOs\(^{20}\) they would just come for a twenty minutes, a thirty minutes then they gone again. Which we don’t like because there are people who may want to say something but they don’t even think about. What I am saying is that they in Georgetown…some ideas that some people here might come up with in relation to what they are here for which they might want. But the time that they have, it is only that two or three people talk and that is not Chenapou you understand? I mean even though some people might say something that is a little out of the way it is good to hear from people. Cause some people might want to say something but they won’t go to the point they will go all the way around you know! Haha. (I:28)

Not only was there a sense that the government and the LCDS missed out as a result of the poor participation, some felt that the concept of REDD+ itself could work for Amerindians if they were given a voice. When I asked one former leader of the village whether payment for forests could work this was the response:

“It could be you know, it could be an alternative. It could be a reasonable alternative but the systems again and the big offices this is where it is affecting us a lot you know. Like I said they [the government] are the ones making the decisions.

No matter what it is, it will always fail unless they [GoG] change the way they organise?

Yeah buddy, we need to be more informed and we need to make decisions to suit our area you know. The Savannah people they live different to us, they have their own different way of surviving you know but in the jungle. We live in the heart of the jungles out here and we know what is best for us and we need to give this input to them so that they know, ‘yeah boy these people are from deep jungle and it’s only, lets say for the roads, heavy duty equipment could do these things [build roads] properly. Because saws and cutlasses and matoks\(^{21}\) and these kind of things we’ve been trying with it for the last thousands of years and it still hasn’t been done so we need real heavy duty equipment to, you know, do these things.” (I:21)

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\(^{20}\) Regional Executive Officer – Head of regional government

\(^{21}\) A handheld hoe, a common farming tool amongst those in Chenapou
The participant here is making reference to building a road to exemplify why local knowledge is of importance in getting development to work more effectively. In referring to the savannah, a large area in Southern Guyana which also has a high Amerindian population, the point being made is that the government have treated all Amerindians the same, regardless of their local geography. The participant suggests that such an approach leads to ineffective approaches which are not based on the local realities or knowledge of the environment. Here the connection is being made that with such an approach from the government the LCDS cannot be successful and so has to overcome this in order for those in Chenapou to have trust in any future government policies.

4.4 Alternative notions of development

Many of those I spoke with readily offered their ‘alternative notions of development’ (Escobar 1995) in coherent and considered manners. These experiences underline what can be at stake and the valuable contextual knowledge that is available, but is not considered due to the dysfunctional participatory system. Plans for the development of tourism, commercial farming, movement away from mining dependence and the construction of roads amongst other schemes came from various members of the community. As one account typifies, many of those in the community were not averse to developments but rather determined that they be engaged in their own futures.

“You see why, now, this is my vision of my village in the next 20 years or 10 years from now is that okay: our village must be transformed from what it is now, at least, to a higher level - we live with the times – we live with the outside world okay this world now is modernised. And we are looking forward to living in the modernised world as well. You can’t keep us down all of the time.

Yeah, you are ready to modernise

Yes, we are ready to elevate ourselves and use the resources that we have in order to build ourselves less dependent on the government. We have the resources, let us build on the resources that we have, that is what we are looking for.” (I:29)
As this account emphasises, great importance is attributed to the decisions and actions involved in the ongoing LCDS process. The forests and surrounding environment are pivotal resources to the livelihoods of those I spoke with, not only for the present but also the future as one member of the community identified:

“This isn’t just for me you know, this is important for generations you know. Maybe not me but for my children, our children you know…what will they have left?” (I:19)

4.5 Wider implications from failing participation

As well as resulting in the neglect of local notions for development and a lack of technical understanding, insufficient participation was associated with a number of sincere concerns. These were addressed in many conversations after the more specific comments had been made, as accounts reflected participants’ perceptions for wider implications.

4.5.1 Mistrust in politics

Perhaps the most common of these responses was one of mistrust in the political system and disenchantment from the political process. The dearth of engagement was manifest in a sense of opposition with many people in Chenapou feeling the GoGs inactions were deliberate. One account presented it as such:

“Really and truly Sir, the government don’t like Chenapou. Chenapou has a big voice and will stand firm to government and its rights which the government don’t like, so they play politics against us”. (I:20)

This illustrates a sense of alienation and opposition common to many I spoke with when referring to the government. The phrasing of politics as something instrumentalized actively against the community emphasises the degree to which some felt a dis-trust of the government. Moreover, the perception of Chenapou is as a stoic and outspoken community with a sense of pride further contrasts it with a government not wanting to engage with such autonomy.

The manipulation of politics was for some evident in the lack of information shared. Their perception was that the lack of participation and information was once again intended, ensuring that Chenapou remains unaware of what is going on as these accounts explain:

“That is what is going on in our community, we is not really getting information about these things. That is why I say they does hide up a lot of things from us, man. We is the last village they does come to, always be the last.” (I:3)

“…every time somebody come, maybe the come with some sort of promises and next thing you know they disappear. When you ever get to meet them again, ‘Oh I had so much of work to do’ and em sorry about it I forgot about this and that and ting. And it is another long story you hearing about again.” (I:21)

“There you see they were just showing a face, with a different intention. They just come in and tell us they did this and did that but their intention were different you know.” (I:21)
Others I spoke with offered a more despondent response towards the government whilst maintaining the perception that they as a community are overlooked.

“The government don’t really care for here Sir, they don’t really mind Chenapou” (I:25)

“Those [the LCDS] are town [Georgetown] things Sir, they don’t really bother us” (I:27)

As well as this general distrust towards the government, there was a more pointed response from several members of the community who had at least a basic, although often vague, understanding of the LCDS/REDD+/FLEGT. These raised concerns about land-grabbing or loss of land sovereignty as well as misappropriation of funding as illustrated by these passages:

“They [GoG] just grabbing from the Amerindian’s all the time, they just. They are destroying our freedom too, with this FLEGT thing they gone destroy the freedom, they gone really destroy our freedom, because we accustomed to cutting bushes how we want to but now as they doing this they getting money, they don’t want us to do these things. It’s affecting us. It is going to start affecting the community, all the communities and furthermore it is we who got the trees, it is we who supposed to get the money, not them.” (I:3)

A local teacher and formally educated member of the community raised suspicions about where all the investment from Norway has gone:

“And where is it going? In the government pocket” (I:22)

“where has the money gone really? We get some little solar panels and that’s it” (I:2)

“Georgetown getting all the money and Georgetown ain’t got a tree! We got the trees” (I:22)

22 This participant’s description of EU-FLEGT was really a working explanation of REDD+. So when interpreting this comment I infer it more as a reflection on REDD+ (the reference to who should be getting the money shows this) than EU-FLEGT.

23 In 2011 a Hinterland Electrification Programme set out to provide solar panels to Amerindian households throughout Guyana. This was not a part of the LCDS.
The distrust in the political system for many in Chenapou was couched in a distinction between the Georgetown politicians and the Amerindian population. Many felt that at the heart of the issue of LCDS participation was the active lack of respect given to indigenous rights. This was directly articulated through one resident during the ministry visit discussed earlier (see 4.1.6):

“I’m asking the government, or the heads, to show more respect to what we say as the Patamona people because we born here, we grew here and we know what around us. We know how to live with our mountain, with our rivers and what we say I think this is what should be respected before any other rules and regulations from the government side” (I:16)

Non-inclusion in the LCDS is understood as a denial of the rights given to them as indigenous land owners. It is with a deep sense of injustice that the exclusion has been interpreted from many in Chenapou as exemplified in these accounts:

“Right, so you know these documents. It seems that there is nothing really, nothing to do with the Amerindians communities when you look at it. The FLEGT and the LCDS that is how I see it: nothing really to do with the Amerindian. So if they could consider us in whatever they are doing in the future that would be so great and then come in to tell us and let us know.” (I:18)

“That is how it is. That is how I look at it because so far like, when I look at it was scampishness going on, they just want to secure themselves and don’t even want to hear what we have to say about how we feel or you know, the effect it have upon us. So I don’t know how things, this government will deal with it but we need to know, we need to get more information” (I:21)

“So it kinda, when you really look at it – they just want us to listen to what they are saying and they don’t have no respect for what we are saying to them and that is how it is all the time. All the time.” (I:21)

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24 Slang term meaning sly, deceptive and immoral behaviour
Responses to this sense of injustice varied from those of dismay and despondency to more forthright and determined positions. The first of those is illustrated in one participant who, after a long discussion of the numerous anecdotes wherein the GoG had failed to help develop their community, posed the rhetorical question:

“Really Sir, how long have we [Chenapou] been behind?” (I:11)

Contrastingly another participant presented a much more stoic and determined response to their perception of a government which has not supported their indigenous rights:

“I study these things and I said look, I think the time is now for us to stand for our rights, it is time. For too long we have been deprived from our rights. We have been deprived in this country for a long, long time. It is now that we know our rights and we try to share with our people that this is our rights, this is what should happen this is not what should happen. Don’t let people tell you: ‘this here is good for you’ when you know it is not good for you. Let the people know that no, that is not good for me this is good for me. That is what we told them.

Yeah, decide on their own

Yeah we decide what is ours, we decide what is good for us, you don’t come from the coastland and telling us that this should be good for you- we decide together, we decide what is good for us that is what we must tell you. And you must adhere to these things but what is happening with this government, and it has been happening for years, now I am 43 years old sir…” (I:29)

“Yeah they is to serve not to be the boss over you, they are there to serve and this is what I try to encourage my villagers and I know that they does listen to me and today I can see that people start to rise up now and voice so, so, so, so! That is what we wanted, all the time we be shy, shy and frightened, frightened but not in this time Sir.” (I:29)

5 Discussion

I have presented the results of my case study research in the form of quotes from the interviewees. These show the reality of participation for people in Chenapou, an Amerindian community that is included in Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy, which is to large part funded by the government of Norway. The accounts from those I spoke with offer an insight into not just whether participation has occurred, but also into the quality and form it may have taken. I will address this first, reflecting back on Arnstein’s typology of participation to situate the experiences of those in Chenapou within her framework. This provokes a discussion over what the consequences of such a form of participation are for the GoG, the LCDS programme itself and the indigenous community. From this I will offer a broader contemplation on wider implications that my findings have for the REDD+ model and environmental development approaches in general.

5.1 Poor public participation in LCDS
The accounts from Chenapou offer illustration into the perceptions and experiences of Amerindian participation with the LCDS. Taken generally the overwhelming sentiment is that they have been very poor. Infrequency of information, insubstantial and short consultations, complexity of material provided and insincere engagements are all experiences that typified community member’s perceptions of the LCDS.

In light of these results I will now return to the first research question posed:

To what extent have the past 6 years (2009-2015) of the Low Carbon Development Strategy’s engagements with the community of Chenapou been successful in achieving ‘inclusive’, ‘broad-based’ and participatory outcomes as mandated in the LCDS MoU (2009)?

I will use Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation here as an aid to structuring my analysis. As a first step, I can qualify where the LCDS’ intentions for citizen participation at inception might be placed in Arnstein’s framework. The founding concept note for the LCDS provided lengthy assurances that the “effective participation of indigenous people and other local forest communities in planning and implementation” (JCN 2012:5) would be ensured. Further the GoG explicitly articulated that the LCDS would adhere to respecting “the free, prior and informed consent of these [indigenous] communities” (ibid.). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Guyana and Norway stated that the whole system would “enable the participation of all affected and interested stakeholders at all stages of the REDD-plus/ LCDS process; [and] protect the rights of indigenous peoples” (MoU 2009:3).

These discourses reflect the early intentions, at least at the level of discourse, for substantial levels of participation to constitute the LCDS. The reference to “effective participation” alone locates the intended dynamic within the upper rungs of Arnstein’s framework (see Fig. 13). She defines this sub-section – ‘Degrees of citizen power’ – as requiring the potential that the views of citizens be "heeded" (Arnstein 1969:217). Put simply, to be designated within this upper section the participation need allow for the possibility of the ‘have-nots’ (in my case the indigenous community) to influence an action or outcome. It is, for the purposes of my research, immaterial whether the intentions of the LCDS would constitute placing on the sixth, seventh or top tier. Instead it suffices to find that the LCDS,
at inception and within the documents and agreements signed, supported and published, sought a level of participation identified in the upper band of Arnstein’s framework.

By locating the accounts of those in Chenapou within the framework I can compare the intentions of the LCDS with the experienced reality. We can discount the top three rungs immediately as a match for the experiences in Chenapou. These represent a situation wherein “power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders” allowing for citizens to “have some genuine bargaining influence over the outcome of the plan” (Arnstein 1969:221/222).

With the relative absence of information, let alone negotiations leading to a re-distribution of power, it is evident that the experiences do not fall under this description. Arnstein labels the band of participation below these rungs as ‘tokenism’, signifying the superficiality of such forms of engagement. These define varying degrees of being informed and being heard by the government, whilst being unassured meaningful influence over a project (1969:217). For some of those I spoke with, such as the community representatives, this description applies.

However, although this section may define some of the accounts given in order for ‘tokenism’ to be achieved Arnstein notes that it requires, at minimum, that the powerholder “allow the havenots to hear and to have a voice:” (Arnstein 1969:217). This has not been the unanimous experience of those I spoke with. Instead many felt that the central issue was their lack of opportunity to be heard as an indigenous community within proceedings. The infrequency of government visits and the selective nature of engagement left many entirely unaware of the LCDS and offered little if any opportunity to voice their own concerns. Therefore, it is reasonable that the experiences of many in Chenapou would be misrepresented even as tokenism and would be better placed in Arnstein’s lowest section: ‘Nonparticipation’.

It is important to note that when discussing the community of Chenapou I do not suppose it to be a single unit or coherent group (Berkes 2007). Arnstein also notes this in her reflection on the typology, stating that “neither the have-nots nor the powerholders are homogenous blocs” (1969:217). In light of this I have visually mapped the range and spread of experiences from those I spoke with onto Arnstein’s ladder (see Fig. 13). This shape is an attempt to reflect predominant views, as width represents more common or more frequently held positions and where it thins represents more minor positions held by fewer community members. This is in no way absolute in its representation, but gives a helpful illustration of the results from my research.

As this plot signifies I find that the experiences of those in Chenapou, at best, fall within the band of tokenism and at worst could be defined as nonparticipation (Arnstein 1969:217). I will now discuss in greater depth the rungs which I have placed Chenapou within, arguing each in turn and discussing how I have come to such analysis.

5.1.1 Consultation/Informing

“…they don’t even put in nothing that we really say, they just calling us just to say yes we had consultation. Just to say well yes we were there and then they do their own story.” (I:28)

Consultation, in Arnstein’s framing, refers to the process of both informing and “inviting citizens opinion” (Arnstein 1969:219) on a given project. However, the point is made that this may still prove insubstantial if the consultation is not connected to initiating real change or
influence. Arnstein defines the effect that this disconnected form of consultation has such that “participation remains a window dressing-ritual” (ibid.). Here she is suggesting that disconnected consultation appears to give citizens access to the power of participation, whilst not transferring any genuine control or power.

This can be found to have particular significance in the accounts from those which referred to experiencing ‘lip-service’ participation in Chenapou. The duplicity of this form of interaction was a clear concern for many who observed that the consultation was a calculated operation to fulfil a remit, rather than a process of functional engagement. Arnstein outlines the outcomes of such a disconnected form of consultation:

“What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have “participated in participation.” And what powerholders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving “those people.”” (Arnstein 1969:219)

Thus, it is a performance of participation. This is relevant to the experiences of those in Chenapou who described the consultation received as frustratingly perfunctory. However, as the figure shows this was not a view reflected by many that I spoke to. The reality is that sessions were so infrequent and the time and space for discussion allowed so few to engage that even this sense of participation is not widely representative of most community member’s experiences.

Instead, as Figure 13 shows, a more predominant experience of participation for those in Chenapou is represented by the ‘informing’ stage. This signifies a decrease in the degree of genuine participation on offer. It is defined by Arnstein as possibly the “most important first step towards legitimate” (1969:219) participation. However, although it is an important element Arnstein emphasises that this alone does not confer power to citizens. Her description of a major flaw often encountered with this form of participation resonates strongly with the accounts of those in Chenapou:

“…too frequently the emphasis is placed on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens - with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation.” (Arnstein 1969:219)

This reflects a complaint held by many in Chenapou that sessions to inform them were short and infrequent meaning that those who wanted to speak and engage were unable to do so. Frequently it was stated that information sessions were controlled by the government representatives, curtailing the opportunity for open dialogue with overly brief meetings. This restriction on feedback and the local voice was particularly evident during the ministry visit I observed while I was on fieldwork in Chenapou (see 4.1.6).

Furthermore, not only is this supported in the accounts from those I spoke with in Chenapou, it is also a criticism levied at the wider political bodies allocated to represent indigenous communities. Janette Bulkan, a prominent Guyanese forestry professor, states that:

“The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the statutory NTC25 are one-way speakers for communicating government intentions downwards.” (Bulkan 2013:375)

This is highly indicative of the tokenism that Arnstein refers to and offers evidence to support the claim that the participation experienced is not achieving the intentions laid out in the LCDS

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25 National Toshao Council – political council of all Amerindian community leaders
documentation. Bulkan provides further argument that the participation is a symbolic token when stating that:

“None of the Amerindian-related LCDS projects was [sic] developed from participatory consultation with Amerindians. No LCDS project has been discussed strategically at MSSC meetings, or the priorities between projects, or the proposed budgets.” (Bulkan 2013:373)

Her findings suggest that the tokenism identified from the accounts of those in Chenapou is not isolated to this community, but is far more systemic. The disconnected feeling of consultation that many reported in Chenapou is proven by this wider failure for consultations to inform the LCDS’ development.

Although this represents the case for some I spoke with, I have tapered the illustration of Chenapou’s experiences in the ‘informing’ tier to reflect the inconsistency with which it has been applied. Only a third of those I spoke with could offer a description of the LCDS and of those that did, many were remarkably unclear or misguided. Evidently even a one-way flow of information was not comprehensively conducted for all community members to access and so participation for those was further diminished.

### 5.1.2 Therapy/Manipulation

“…the government don’t like Chenapou…so they play politics against us”. (I:20)

The majority of participants having had no firm idea of what the LCDS is, signify a large number of the community effectively having had no participation in the LCDS process. Arnstein’s lowest forms of participation - suitably labelled ‘non-participation’ – would appear to best represent the experience of those unaware of what the LCDS was.

Numerous accounts reflected a strong frustration with the lip-service sentiment of participation. Herein, there was an awareness that the engagement was, to use Arnstein’s terminology, ‘contrived’ and essentially a “substitute for genuine participation” (1969:217). These persons voiced concerns at the duplicity they felt that the GoG was operating with in what were clearly not legitimate efforts for participation (see section 4.1.5).

Whilst the term ‘therapy’ may not have much contextual significance to my research the tenets of “an illusory form of participation” (Arnstein 1969:218) are relevant. These lower rungs represent the weakest forms of participation experienced by the members in Chenapou who either felt isolated from all government activity, or were entirely unaware and uninformed of the LCDS.

‘Manipulation’ presents a more cynical reading of the failures in participation on the part of the government. At this point, “instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders.” (Arnstein 1969:218). There were certainly accounts given by people in Chenapou, which resonate the sense that engagements were entirely for show and deliberately constituted no opportunity for genuine input on behalf of the Amerindian community. The frustration felt at the end of the ministry meeting (section 4.1.6) and the distrust of the political persons involved in meetings (section 4.5.1) exemplify this feeling that participation was being conducted in a manipulative fashion.

A further example of this comes in the total absence of materials and information present in Chenapou. For the duration of my time in the village, amongst the range of community
members I spoke with, only one person held a document relating to the LCDS. This was itself inadequate as it was a six-year-old document that was described as “hard to read and long” (I:18). Furthermore, a number of those I spoke with asked why information wasn’t available in their native Patamonan when that is what many elderly members speak almost exclusively. This presents a concerning failure on behalf of the outreach efforts intending to provide ‘stakeholder awareness’.

However, a document detailing the “Stakeholder Awareness and Engagement Plan” produced in 2015 details the efforts to “increase education and awareness on climate change and the LCDS” (Office of Climate Change 2015:1). Within it there is an outline of the strategies employed to achieve this outcome, including listing the ‘range’ of communication materials produced (see Fig. 14):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach/Tools</th>
<th>Implementation Arrangements</th>
<th>Key agencies/stakeholders</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • A range of cross-cutting materials and communications tools for targeted, national and international awareness | Materials and Communication tools will be developed to include:  
1. Fact sheets  
2. Brochures  
3. FAQ booklet  
4. FAQ DVDs (thematic)  
5. Stories on the LCDS from different perspectives  
6. Posters that depict key elements of the LCDS  
7. Climate change and LCDS information booklet | OCC and other relevant agencies                                                            | Ongoing    |

Figure 14. Stakeholder Awareness & Engagement Activities (Office of Climate Change 2012:4)

Yet this provokes the question of why, more than six years since the inception of the program, there are practically no documents available in an indigenous community where most lack any understanding of the policies? These materials could provide a proportion of the much needed awareness in a community who are clearly cautious and untrusting of a program which has been so conspicuous in its lack of information.

Furthermore, whilst Chenapou is a community which has recently received a computer with satellite internet, the medium is patently not accessible for the vast majority of inhabitants. The internet is costly, slow and at this stage incomprehensible to all but the Toshao and one or two returned students. Therefore, this reiterates the importance that physical materials such as those outlined in Fig. 14 might have for a community like Chenapou. The 2012 Rainforest Alliance report findings support this, noting that the “heavy reliance on the internet for communication” of the LCDS would not “ensure easy access to transparent information on contributors to Guyana’s REDD+ and LCDS efforts…particularly Amerindian interests” (Donovan et al. 2012:42).

Informing citizens about a project or policy distinguishes even tokenistic efforts at participation from total ‘non-participation’ in Arnstein’s framework. Without any accessible materials to provide such information many in Chenapou have no understanding of the LCDS and so participation to date cannot be considered as anything other than ‘non-participation’.

The community have not been engaged proactively in adequate consultation sessions. They instead describe brief, occasional, cursory visits wherein government persons offer little more than a one-way flow of discussion. They have not been consistently, adequately and broadly informed. Instead a majority hold little or no understanding of the LCDS and its impact, confusing it with other policies and generating much of their knowledge on scant official information. As a community they have been functionally ostracised from the LCDS for the
intervening six years since inception. As such it can only be found from the evidence in Chenapou that there has been an abject failure in the implementation of the LCDS to provide a ‘broad-based’ and ‘inclusive’ (MoU 2009) participatory system.

5.2 Why has participation been so poor?

Understanding why participation with Chenapou and the broader Amerindian population has failed to meet the LCDS’ intentions is not straightforward. Whilst not the central objective of my research, it may be helpful to offer some reflection upon possible causes of this lack of participation. Therefore, it is instructive to inquire whether the failings are the result of poor management, negligence or more deliberate intention on the part of the national/regional government. Building upon the accounts in my research I will discuss a few proximate interpretations briefly. Then, I will point towards areas that require further research.

5.2.1 Inadequate outreach techniques?

One reading into why participatory efforts have failed suggests that the approaches and techniques used were inadequate for the full and effective participation that was aimed for in the documents that established the LCDS. This understanding points towards a weakness of institutional capacity to develop and orchestrate the LCDS outreach with the different Amerindian groups of Guyana, resulting in a deficit of Amerindian engagement.

The outreach model experienced by those in Chenapou provides evidence to support this claim. Almost exclusively the approach used to inform people in the community about LCDS programmes has been through village representatives being sent to information sessions in the capital, Georgetown. The people I met and talked to found this approach frustrating. It was frustrating not only for those who are dependent on representatives to pass on information second hand to them, but also for the representatives themselves. Representatives spoke of how these sessions were too short, often combining multiple policies in a single day thus making them complex to follow and providing little material with which to pass on the information once they returned to their community (section 4.1.3). Those I spoke with also felt a great sense of responsibility as they were tasked with explaining extensive and complicated information to the whole community.

For the rest of the community there are a number of issues resulting from this particular communication/outreach approach. Their knowledge is largely determined by the capacity of the representative to faithfully recount all the requisite information. Any failure to understand or detail missed on behalf of that representative will therefore manifest itself amongst all those who are reliant on them. Moreover, this approach de-contextualises the information, rendering it less sensitive to local nuance and therefore specific concerns may be glossed over. Having a number of representatives from different communities meet at a central session results in those being generalised, treating the different communities as homogenous. This approach also distances the majority of the community in a location like Chenapou from the process, appearing ever more so as though ‘they’ from the coastland are dictating what ‘we’ Amerindians are to do.

This is reflected in the concern that questions and two-way dialogue are so unsatisfactorily dealt with. Some felt that a single representative who is a member of the community relaying information removes others capacity to ask questions and de-couples the participatory process. This concern of a government largely unresponsive to direct Amerindian queries, is emphasised
by the failure of the GoG to address questions at the launch of the LCDS as Bulkan (2013) notes:

“The failure of the government (MoAA and NTC) to reply to hundreds of questions raised at the 13 hinterland meetings following the launch of the President’s LCDS in mid-2009 is a major example of government not responding to Amerindian concerns.” (2013:375/6)

It was also noted by one community representative I spoke with that this format had been justified as cost effective. As the representative then alluded, this is not a viable explanation in light of the fact that approximately US$190 million has been earned from Norway to date (LCDSa 2015). The slow dispersal of this funding is an issue raised by NORAD, prompting them to say of the LCDS that, “at present it does not represent a functioning model.” (NORAD 2014:xxi).

A suite of Amerindian oriented policies have been outlined in project documents (see Table 1). Whilst these are commendable concepts, the reality is that so few in Chenapou could explain or understand the LCDS let alone these specific projects. Therefore, the merits of these are largely lost due to inadequate outreach and slow engagement. This presents an imbalance between the discourse and commitments shown in the policies and agreements for the LCDS, with the reality of the LCDS in practice. For many in the community, explaining this failure to achieve genuine participation as simply the product of governmental incapacity does not suffice.

5.2.2 Participation as manipulation of power?

Evident amongst many of those who were frustrated by the lack of consultation was the feeling that the government were aware of their inaction. This interpretation of the shortfall in engagement being in some way manipulated on the part of the GoG offers an alternative understanding as to why participation has largely failed.

Some in Chenapou held the view that political power has been utilised or misappropriated through the governance of the LCDS. The references to the GoG as “them” and as using politics against the community or deliberately not engaging with Amerindians are evidence of this. These members conveyed a sense of being manipulated by insubstantial consultations, suggesting that the GoG was using its power to restrict their access to the LCDS process or even money.

Whilst this represents a legitimate concern and interpretation from the people of Chenapou, this manipulation of power has probably occurred to some degree, but without the deliberate prerogative of those in government. It is unlikely that individuals within the GoG have deliberately sought to marginalize, outcast and profit from Amerindian communities within the LCDS. Whilst there may be some truth to such a claim – particularly when you consider Guyana’s standing in the corruption perception index - I find that certain factors render this unlikely. In the time since the LCDS’ inception there has been a change of presidency and then a change of party, making the claim of persistent and deliberate manipulations of power by individuals in the explicit sense somewhat untenable. More importantly, the nature of such a claim of conscious manipulation requires firm and compelling evidence, which I do not claim to have.

Instead I wish to return to Lukes (2005) “three-dimensional” view of power to offer a possible explanation for the failure in participation which I feel has stronger grounding. Lukes’ suggestion that power does not require the distinct action or behaviour of an individual or group
in order to operate, is of value here. He suggests that the “bias of a system” may be held up not only by the deliberate action of an individual or group but also, “by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions” (Lukes 2005:26). In other words, an understanding of power as systemically applied based on a status quo provides a possible interpretation of the failure of the government to adequately engage with a community like Chenapou.

The point of issue here is that I do not necessarily argue for the governments intent behind the failure to engage with Chenapou, but this does not disregard the effect of that failure to engage. Here I take my leave from Bachrach and Baratz who suggest that when studying power “our main concern is not whether the defenders of the status quo use their power consciously, but rather if and how they exercise it and what effects it has on the political process and other actors within the system” (1970:50).

The exertion of political power in the form of control over information, dialogue and engagement with the LCDS process has marginalised the community of Chenapou. They have been subjected to the discern of the government over their access to information about the LCDS and their capacity to have their voice heard and included in the discussion.

Here I want to suggest that poor participation may be seen as a marker for the exercise of power in its latent form. Whilst some accounts and feelings of those in Chenapou suggest a sense that the manipulation of power is deliberate and conscious it may alternatively be argued that it is systemic. Considering Chenapou’s history of marginality in relation to processes such as the Kaieteur National Park extension and land titling, there is past evidence to suggest that the status quo has been to not ascribe Chenapou with deliberative power. There has instead been a precedent set of information asymmetry with Chenapou often politically disregarded and insufficiently engaged, at least from people’s own perspective.

This dynamic is supported on a national scale as signified by Bulkan’s (2013) notion of a ‘racialized geography’. Her concept refers to more than simply the quantifiable demographics of census data. It serves as a commentary on a deeply embedded social, cultural and political division which is present at the core of Guyanese society. This is encapsulated well by anthropologist Andrew Sanders:

“In Guyana the distinction between the Coast and the Interior is more than merely a geographical one. It dominates the Coastal society’s conception of its country … The town … is a bright, exciting place, full of interesting people. At the other extreme the Bush is a dark, dangerous, uninteresting place, inhabited by fierce animals and backward, furtive Amerindians.” (Sanders, 1987:11)

This is an oppositional framing born from the colonial disregard for the indigenous communities in Guyana (Bulkan 2013). Bulkan identifies this cultural divide as persisting in contemporary politics, finding that “although Amerindians constitute almost 10% of the population and are increasing most rapidly in net percentages, political issues and resource allocations are still dominated by the coastland parties and their concerns” (Bulkan 2013:373). She broadly identifies a restriction on Amerindian autonomy within the governance sphere, noting that village councils - the sole political representation of Amerindians - “have no formal link with the Regional system of government, which deepens Amerindian isolation from the political process.” (Bulkan 2013:375). Power – politically, financially and culturally – has always resided in the coast since Guyana’s colonial existence, often excluding the Amerindian population. This “racial politics” (Bulkan 2014b:249) reflects “the divide-and-rule strategy practised by small numbers of colonial masters over large numbers of slaves.” (ibid.) and appears concurrent today.
Prior research, such as the 2012 Rainforest Alliance report, supports this presence of a power imbalance, restricting and subduing Amerindian’s political role in the LCDS (Donovan et al. 2012). Donovan et al. identify that Amerindian stakeholders “feel that [the] GoG has not kept them updated and often feel strongly that their voices are not being heard, especially with respect to land titling and traditional land extensions” (2012:20).

Such a phenomenon has, I argue, come to represent the status quo within a country where a racialized geography has embedded into the political dynamic giving rise to a “system bias” (Lukes 2005). Chenapou is at the receiving end of this asymmetry, which is highlighted by the non-participation experienced during the past six years of the LCDS process.

5.3 Consequences of failed participation: ‘Opportunity costs’

Observing and identifying these failures in participation is important, yet essentially poses the question of what the consequences of such (in)action may be. Addressing the implications of the existent participation experience offers insight into why it is unsustainable to continue a strategy of not participating with the people in Chenapou. This can offer a broader warning to the implementation of similar environmental/development strategies globally. I will now address the sub-question (ii) of what the implications might be of this failure to achieve the participation outlined at the LCDS’ inception.

The experiences and accounts of those in Chenapou offer an illuminating understanding of this. The LCDS, and more particularly REDD+, can be understood based on the premise of providing financial incentive, on a national level, to replace opportunity costs incurred in reducing deforestation (UN-REDD 2016). However, it is the costs invoked by a failure to adequately engage with indigenous communities that may represent the most significant opportunity lost on the part of those establishing the LCDS. I will argue that the government’s failure to support legitimate participation has resulted in missed opportunity with regards to the knowledge and creativity of Amerindians. As well as this, it has also resulted in the growing disillusionment and mistrust of the government by those in Chenapou and potentially many other similar communities.

5.3.1 Alternative notions for development

In my discussions with locals in Chenapou they frequently presented clear outlooks about how future development should and could occur that were both detailed and pragmatic (section 4.4). By not engaging with the community the GoG cannot benefit from these potentially valuable insights. Concepts ranging from local eco-tourism and road construction to sustainable commercial farming all represent a community rich in ideas of where development should progress.

The failure to allow participation can clearly have the consequence of delimiting the field of ideas, inputs and creativity possible when forming and instigating national policies. As Foti et al. note:

“Access allows society to tap the potential of all of its sectors — the public and the private, government officials and citizens — to contribute to the betterment of public policy.” (Foti et al. 2008:xvi).

Their argument is that by not effectively engaging with a wide citizenry the government are depriving themselves and thus the outcome of their efforts are diminished.
“In a participatory process, the resulting decision will reflect the specialized knowledge and variety of perspectives that participants bring to the table. This raises the substantive quality of the decision relative to its intended outcomes.” (Foti et al. 2008:xvii)

By opening the process to functional participation a scheme is able to “build upon, rather than ignore, the existing stock of knowledge regarding natural resources and resource management systems.” (Utting 1994:243-4). It is clear that in the case of Chenapou that stock of knowledge from those community members has largely been ignored and overlooked. Paradoxically the value of local insight and citizen engagement has been identified as pivotal for the longevity of the LCDS by the GoG themselves:

“The long-term success of the LCDS is dependent in a large way to broad-based, inclusive domestic support within Guyana. The LCDS therefore requires an institutionalised, systematic and transparent process of multi-stakeholder engagement, enabling the participation of all potentially affected and interested stakeholders at all stages of the REDD+/LCDS process.” (Office of Climate Change 2015:1)

By the government’s own admission, the failure to properly engage citizens jeopardises the “long-term success” of the LCDS programme. However, this lost opportunity extends beyond the national scale. Providing a model from which lessons could be drawn was an important feature of the agreement between Norway and Guyana. Set out within the Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments were a number of “Pillars of Cooperation” (MoU 2009), one of which emphasised:

“Collaboration, knowledge building, and sharing of lessons learned within the field of sustainable, low-carbon development, with REDD-plus as the key component of this.” (MoU 2009:3)

Therefore, the costs of a failure to engage with indigenous communities is not only experienced as an opportunity lost for the GoG, but also for the government of Norway. Instead of developing a model which can be implicated across a number of burgeoning sites, as Norway seeks to develop the REDD+ model (NORAD 2014), Guyana’s LCDS experience offers little more than a warning of how not to engage with forested communities.

5.3.2 Lack of knowledge leading to distrust in the political system

Another outcome of poor levels of information sharing about a policy is the absence of citizen knowledge. Within Chenapou this was apparent as little more than a third of those I discussed with had even heard of the LCDS concept, let alone understood it.

The range of Amerindian oriented policies and the recognition of Amerindians and their indigenous status within documents such as the Joint Concept Note, are commendable. However, in failing to overcome the “most important first step towards legitimate [participation]” (Arnstein 1969:219), of informing citizens of the political process, the value of these policies is lost. If, as is articulated, the government seek to support, respect and engage indigenous communities within the LCDS process, then the reality that the majority of those in Chenapou had no understanding of what it is does not reflect well.

Similar levels of awareness were documented by the Rainforest Alliance report who found that Amerindians were, “still confused about basic principles of the LCDS, what it entails and what potential benefits might be gained by their villages from LCDS. How trees or forests have anything to do with carbon or climate is not widely understood. The link between protecting
forests (reducing deforestation) and moderating a changing climate is not understood…”
(Donovan et al. 2012:32).

Clearly there is a dearth of knowledge amongst Amerindians regarding the LCDS. Without an understanding of the process the communities are further isolated from the policy which, in Chenapou, has given rise to a proliferation of fear and dis-trust (section 4.5.1). The accounts I have presented showed that members of the community did not have a firm grasp of what REDD+ was. In place of this lack of understanding, narratives of land-grabbing, political corruption and malpractice of the government became readily associated with the LCDS. These were built on unclear and imprecise flows of information, proliferating narratives of mistrust and fear which went unchecked by the largely absent government.

As such, a consequence of the lack of knowledge created by the poor participation becomes a wide-spread distrust of the political system. As Foti et al. identify, this can be avoided with effective engagement: “Participatory processes such as public hearings raise awareness of—and can build public support for—government initiatives…[they] can lessen opposition and conflict when the decision is implemented” (Foti et al. 2008: xvii).

This is of particular significance as distrust can be instrumental in whether or not a national policy will have support. Moreover, trust endures such that a legacy of distrust can effectively be politically immobilising and require great effort to overcome (Twyman 2000). This is evidently the case in Chenapou, specifically as historic failures to show respect and participate with the community – such as the contention over land title and the KNP (section 2.3.1) - have lasting significance. This means that even a political transition and well-meaning intentions may be compromised by pre-existing perceptions and feelings.

A specific concern from those I spoke with in Chenapou was that of the misuse of funding. Of those who were aware of the LCDS to some extent, many felt that there was an injustice in the fact that Norway had supposedly provided so many million dollars and yet they had very little tangible evidence of this funding in Chenapou. One account worth repeating expresses the incredulity at the notion that the government are unjustly profiting from the LCDS arrangements:

“Georgetown getting all the money and Georgetown ain’t got a tree! We got the trees” (I:22)

Again, this sentiment from my case study of Chenapou can be seen to have commonality with the much broader findings of the Rainforest Alliance report. Amongst the Amerindians they interviewed they similarly identified “(a) perception that the GoG is receiving LCDS resources whilst beneficiaries in the field are not” (Donovan et al. 2012:19).

The distrust in state and authoritative institutions on the part of indigenous, marginalised populations is also not unique to Guyana. Utting identifies it as a common theme across the continent stating:

“The mass of indigenous population in Central America has experienced a history of repression, exploitation and marginalization that has created a culture of mistrust which now affects relations with the institutions involved” (Utting 1994:248).

He goes on to articulate the consequences of this mistrust:

“When livelihoods are affected negatively people often respond in ways involving conflict, illegal activities or ‘apathy’ and ‘non-cooperation’, which make programme/project implementation extremely difficult.” (Utting 1994:232).
This is a very real and existing consequence of weak participation that was observable amongst those I spoke with in Chenapou. Failure to engage the community in the democratic process has clear and lasting implications for the government which should not be underestimated.

5.4 Broader Implications

One of the central objectives outlined for the LCDS process was to “provide a model for the world of how climate change can be addressed through low carbon development in developing countries” (Office of the President 2013:2). Such an ambitious scope for the impact of this national project confers an added responsibility for it to offer value beyond its setting. As such I will discuss further two broader implications from the LCDS in practice from which other models may learn. Firstly, I will offer some critique of the development model itself, reflecting beyond the national government of Guyana to consider Norway’s role in the LCDS and that of REDD+ more generally. Following from this I will discuss the importance and put into context the significance of a failure to allow participation with indigenous communities.

5.4.1 Critique of the model of development

Asking why there have been such noted shortfalls within the LCDS is important. I have put forward arguments which focus on the role of the Guyanese government, but consideration should also be made of the bi-lateral partner, Norway.

An initial criticism, that the Norwegian aid department recognise, is that the selection of Guyana was done in haste as the opportunity to present the REDD+ model at COP 15 (2009) approached (NORAD 2014:25). Bade (2012) goes further to suggest not only that Guyana was “decided on in a rush” (2012:51), but also that it was a political decision taken by the then environmental minister Erik Solheim26, which largely ignored prevailing professional aid opinions. This was clearly a flaw as the Norwegian government entered a bi-lateral agreement not fully informed of the local political context and dynamics in Guyana. Of the four “most established” partner countries that Norway has engaged with – Brazil, Indonesia, Tanzania and Guyana – Guyana is considered the least transparent, ranking lowest on the Corruption Perception Index (NORAD 2014:8). Nevertheless, Norway signed an agreement worth US$250 million with almost no prior knowledge of the country and, importantly, with no on the ground presence. Again these are issues latterly acknowledged by Norway:

“The NICFI [Norwegian climate and forest initiative] operations in two key partner countries (Guyana and Indonesia) were less well regarded, both in terms of staffing levels and operational experience with these country partners…the number of staff is perceived as small, particularly the operational capacity in two countries with large bilateral programmes” (NORAD 2014:xxviii).

In the context of Guyana the lack of personnel is particularly inhibiting. Guyana is not a country with clear and transparent reporting measures, there is little online and external channels of information and so without an internal presence an accurate understanding of events is very difficult.

Therefore, the model adopted by Norway needs to be questioned. Norway has provided substantial sums of money to a country with a recognised issue with political corruption and

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26 He has just been appointed the executive director of UNEP (UNEP 2016)
transparency, where it has little oversight and no internal presence. If there are failings in the application of funds and the representation and inclusion of indigenous groups, the Norwegian aid department must carry some responsibility (Kronenberg et al. 2015). Evidently, Norway has sought to take a removed role in funding these interim REDD+ projects, but, as has I have presented, the costs of offering little effective operational staff and simply putting forth almost unmanageable funds are manifold. With no oversight Norway has been unable to ensure that the LCDS would provide the participation and inclusivity of Amerindians as mandated in the Norway-Guyana agreement. Bulkan emphasises the consequences of such limited prior knowledge stating that:

“REDD illustrates how dispensation of international aid, without robust checks and balances, can maintain and extend entrenched power” (2014b:249)

There is a failure on the part of planning and process awareness from Norway and NORAD which is being felt most by those who are being stripped of rights and opportunity to engage in the LCDS. Marginalisation is thus reinforced through the cultural bias or status quo (Lukes 2005) such that indigenous Amerindian communities are further disconnected. It is deeply concerning to read admission of this lack of awareness within NORAD’s reviews and yet have observed the continuation of those same dynamics:

“NICFI presence in some partner countries is perceived as being too limited. This is particularly so in Guyana where despite excellent technical progress, there is considerable dissent among wider stakeholders at the limited progress on enabling activities and a view that Norway has an incomplete view of how its funds are being spent. It is concluded that the staffing situation in Guyana requires deeper consideration of alternative options.” (NORAD 2014:xxxii)

That “deeper consideration” does not provide improvement to the LCDS and indigenous communities unless it is supported by effective action. Moreover, as Norway looks to play such a pivotal role in REDD+ globally (NORAD 2014) any consideration of their approach in Guyana could, and should, provide reflection applicable to their entire development aid model.

5.4.2 Poor participation is a transgression of fundamental indigenous rights

I have discussed the potential consequences of poor participation for the LCDS and government, but now turn to consider what the implications are for indigenous communities such as Chenapou. The level of participation observed and documented falls well below the rhetorical intentions of the LCDS at the time of establishment. The experiences of those in Chenapou fall between Arnstein’s (1969) sense of tokenistic and inconsistent informing to total non-participation (see Fig. 13).

This failure to uphold the sentiments of the LCDS documents holds further implication as those principles were built upon more fundamental rights. The LCDS and REDD+ programme fall under the umbrella of a number of safeguards and principles (see Section 2.2.1.1), which often exist in particular to protect the rights of marginal communities. A central tenet of this protection is the principle of FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent).

I have found that the provision of information and consultation, along with the “meaningful participation of indigenous peoples” (Stone & Chacón León 2010:34), which constitute FPIC, have not been upheld in practice in the context of Chenapou. Thus not only has FPIC not been respected, but the “full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders” (UNFCCC 2011:26), as called for in the Cancun safeguards, has similarly not been observed in the LCDS.
To “participate in decisions that affect their environment” (Foti et al. 2008:x) is a right given to all people. However, this right is only accessible when information about the impacts is given and the “opportunity to voice opinions and to influence choice(s)” (ibid.) is present. Without those there is a restriction of this right, rendering the process a restriction of access to justice, which effectively denies the “democratic legitimacy of environmental governance.” (Bäckstrand et al. 2006). By not respecting FPIC and not upholding the Cancun safeguards, the LCDS and GoG have critically failed to respect the rights of the indigenous community of Chenapou.

This sets a worrying precedent when it is reflected upon the findings of the Rainforest Alliance report which also found the LCDS to have failed to protect “the rights of indigenous peoples” (Donovan et al. 2012:7). These findings should raise a warning flag. Consistent and documented failings to respect fundamental rights of a large number of people within the constructs of the LCDS is a serious concern. If the LCDS or REDD+ are to be considered long-term solutions, with the capacity to be modelled and replicated in a number of sites, then it is necessary that acknowledgement and genuine adjustment be made to avoid repeating these transgressions of fundamental rights. Moreover, the continued suppression of indigenous rights in Guyana presently calls for substantial and committed revision of the governance process within the LCDS.

6 Conclusion

At the inception of the pioneering LCDS programme the government of Guyana set out a commitment to guarantee the participation of all stakeholders and to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples (JCN 2012:5). Guyana presented itself as a “global model for REDD+” (Office of the President 2013:41), leading the way in achieving low carbon development. It set out to transform “economic and social development for the people of Guyana” (ibid.) and provide a path for the rest of the world to follow.

My findings call into question the extent to which some of those founding principles have been achieved. Through my case study analysis of Chenapou village it is evident that the ‘inclusive’, ‘broad-based’ and ‘participatory’ (MoU 2009) tenets of the LCDS have not been realised in this community.

The prevalence given to Amerindians and participatory methods within the establishing documents of the LCDS is commendable. The acknowledgement of the need for multi-stakeholder engagement from Guyana and Norway, followed by favourable initial assessments (Dow et al. 2009), shows that the LCDS began positively. However, my assessment of experiences over the past six years of operation in the village of Chenapou show that this early progress was not maintained.

Using Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation as a framework through which to assess the achievement of these intentions it has been shown that they fall far short. Participation in Chenapou can, at best, be considered an uneven one-way process of fairly insubstantial and tokenistic informing. At worst, the accounts reflected a situation which is aptly described as ‘non-participation’, reflecting the absence of any awareness or understanding on the part of many in the community. These findings should raise sincere concerns not only for the implementing bodies in Guyana but also for the project funders in Norway.
The implications of such a deficit between intention and reality are manifold. Non participation has a number of consequences for the LCDS and REDD+ projects, for the governments of Guyana and Norway and for the indigenous community. I found it to generate a great deal of frustration and dis-trust amongst the community towards the process and thus the government. As was indicated by example of prior political issues over land boundaries, such discord between community and government is likely to embed a generational dis-trust. This can act to restrict future governments regardless of their intentions.

More importantly, the failure of effective participation represents a direct omission and suppression of indigenous rights. Constructs such as FPIC are written into extensive national and international charters to which both Guyana and Norway are signatories. By continuing, in the light of prior audit warnings, to fail to respect these fundamental statutes the LCDS jeopardises its potential role as a model to the international community. Moreover, it transgresses the rights of Guyanese Amerindian’s, treating them as a sub-set of citizen and exacerbating an existing socio-ethnic divide. Such implications are far reaching and effectively defy the democratic principles of Guyana’s constitution.

In order to rectify this situation I suggest that, amongst other steps, engaging in genuine two-way dialogue with Amerindian communities become a priority before further LCDS progression. This dialogue must become more accessible, not relying on the internet or single community representatives to streamline the process as these have proved ineffective to date. The deficit of knowledge and growing frustrations are clear indication of the need for change and progress should be re-oriented to consider this a primary current objective.

The Government of Norway and the operative institutions also have a role and responsibility in this. The lack of advance planning and contextual knowledge prior to establishing the Norway-Guyana agreement has had clear and damaging implications. Furthermore, the absence of in country presence has meant that oversight is minimal. Going forward, greater assurances need be made that indigenous communities are functionally involved within the LCDS process and that the transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement, which was heralded in the first months of the process (Dow et al. 2009), be revived.

Supporting this, further research into safeguards and the democratic or participatory qualities of environmental policies such as the LCDS, is required. Within this I suggest that there is a need to focus not only on the macro developmental landscape, but also the micro-contextual level as I have sought to do. Doing the latter may provide valuable insights which can inform future implementation and project design, leading to the democratisation of environmental governance hoped for. As Foti et al. note, “improvement and institutionalization of access rights is not assured without continued independent assessment and ongoing advocacy and collaboration.” (2008:xix). This research is a submission in support of that principle and I hope that it engenders, at the very least, further discussion of the issue.

Aspects such as the unequal impacts by gender, the impacts on non-indigenous marginal communities and whether or not participation is actually desired and contextually realisable are all worthy of further investigation.

The failure to engage local actors and to respect indigenous rights in the case of Chenapou is of significant importance. At best it is a negligence which is deleterious to both the Amerindian community and the instigators of the LCDS mechanism – the Governments of Guyana and Norway. It produces frictions, power asymmetries and resistance which need not exist. At worst, it is a transgression of fundamental rights which, if unchecked, could be corrosive to future successes of the LCDS and the REDD+ models that follow it.
7 Acknowledgement

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8 Reference List


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UNFCCC (1992) Treaty


9 Appendix A – Interview prompts

**External actors (NGOs etc) CHENAPOU**

Thank for coming...this is part of my Masters research into narratives of development and the balance of environment and economic benefits - try not to be too leading should be around 30 mins

** Ask permission to record audio for playback and analysis purposes
This will remain anonymous

* * *

(Opening topic) Perceptions of Amerindian Development

- **How** do you see ‘development’ for Chenapou (CP)? What is your/your community’s vision for the future of CP?
  - What does development look like for
    - The community?
    - Yourself as an individual/family?

**LCDS perceptions & understandings** - *I am working around the interaction between the LCDS and Nor-Guy agreement and indigenous groups so wanted to know:

- **What** does the LCDS mean to you? How do you understand it/ how would you explain it?

- **What** has your role/interaction- that you are aware of- been within the processes of LCDS?
  - As an individual
  - As a community

- Do you think there is any **confusion** to the LCDS (allow them to being up notions of ALT/ADF without prompt)?
  - Do you think that most of the CP community is aware of what these policies are? Or agree with what they mean for them?

Ask their perception and understanding of specific concepts:

- Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) project
  - Specifically in regard to Chenapou (this is an important topic)
  - Untitled traditional lands

- Amerindian Development Fund (ADF)
Evaluating the conceptual coherence and design [compare LCDS narrative to indigenous development]

- So reflecting back, how does your concept of development/vision for the future fit with what the LCDS is about?
  - Do you think the LCDS has brought development that you would want for Chenapou? Does it represent your/or your communities vision for a future for Chenapou?
    - Why? Why Not?

LCDS assessment of actual implementation- their perceptions

- What has been the greatest impact of LCDS to your life (if any) since 2009?
  - What kind of impact and in what ways?

- Who has benefited from the LCDS the most in reality? Ask them to reflect on intended benefit vs achieved.

Consultation

- Do you feel that what you want for development for CP has been listened to?
  - Do you feel the community has been consulted in the LCDS process

Cite this:

- RA (2012) conducted an audit between 2010-12 on GUY-NOR REDD+ development and identified a frustration and disappointment in progress generally. They identify three indicators which they deemed had not been met:
  - “Transparent and effective multi-stakeholder consultations continue and evolve”
  - “Protection of the rights of indigenous peoples”
  - (less important) “Measures by the GoG to work with forest dependant sectors to agree on specific measure to reduce forest degradation.”

- Particularly of the first two, from your perspective how do you feel about these findings and in what specific ways?

LCDS Future (looking forward with the LCDS and REDD+) - summing up

- Has the LCDS overall been a good thing/a success/met expectation:
  - For Chenapou and the people of Chenapou?
  - Do you think it has been so For the rest of Guyana/ For Norway?
Do you think the LCDS should be extended/ the Guy-Nor agreement re-negotiated?

[Their concept of the future of LCDS]

- **If it is to go forward**: What would you like the LCDS to achieve and what changes would be required to realise that change?
  
  - What would you like to see for development in the future for yourself/ for CP?
  - Where should it focus on, how would a second phase (if supportive of this) be different from the first? How could the GoG support the development you desire?

  *
  *
  *

  Thank you for your time, and participation.
  I will be producing a Masters thesis by summer of next year and would be happy to share the final report with yourself (collect email).
  If you had any more questions then I am happy to help.