

This article was downloaded by: [Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam]

On: 08 December 2014, At: 03:24

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usnr20>

### Interpersonal and Institutional Distrust as Disabling Factors in Natural Resources Management: Small-Scale Gold Miners and the Government in Suriname

Marieke Heemskerk <sup>a</sup>, Celine Duijves <sup>a</sup> & Mujenca Pinas <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> GOMIAM Research Initiative, Paramaribo, Suriname

<sup>b</sup> Ministry of Regional Development, Paramaribo, Suriname

Published online: 31 Aug 2014.

To cite this article: Marieke Heemskerk, Celine Duijves & Mujenca Pinas (2014): Interpersonal and Institutional Distrust as Disabling Factors in Natural Resources Management: Small-Scale Gold Miners and the Government in Suriname, *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal*, DOI: [10.1080/08941920.2014.929769](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2014.929769)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2014.929769>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

# Interpersonal and Institutional Distrust as Disabling Factors in Natural Resources Management: Small-Scale Gold Miners and the Government in Suriname

MARIEKE HEEMSKERK AND CELINE DUIJVES

GOMIAM Research Initiative, Paramaribo, Suriname

MUJENCA PINAS

Ministry of Regional Development, Paramaribo, Suriname

*This article evaluates recent changes in gold-mining policies in Suriname, focusing on the contrasting perceptions about these policies by the government and small-scale gold miners. The data illustrate that distrust, which is constructed by history and culture, shapes perceptions about what are fair and effective regulations when it comes to access to, and control over, mineral resources. Yet distrust not only exists between the national government and local gold miners, it also weakens strategic positioning and decision making within these groups. The researchers argue that while effective regulation of the gold sector requires that government officials make an effort to establish trust with their constituents, it is as important that gold miners work on becoming trustworthy partners in dialogue and interventions for the government. It is concluded that trust is a process, and particularly in small-scale societies such as Suriname, this process needs to start with building interpersonal trust.*

**Keywords** Amazon, natural resources–environmental sociology, resource policy, small-scale gold mining, trust

David does not exhibit much of his usual cheerfulness as he shows us the tax assessment he received two weeks ago. The archaic-looking printouts display tax debts totaling more than a million Suriname dollars (~U.S. \$300,000) accumulated over the past five years: fees based on tax-service estimates of what a gold miner might earn. “They blocked my bank account,” he sighs, as he hands us another stack of forms containing a bailiff order. David laments his honesty in registering, as a law-abiding citizen, his gold-mining equipment when the government recently called upon gold miners to become formalized. His gold-mining machines have not been in operation for long, nor have they generated the types of incomes the tax service is alluding to. David fears losing his limited savings, just like he has now lost his trust in government assertions that regulation of the gold sector will benefit small-scale gold miners.

David is one of the thousands of owners of small-scale gold mining equipment who have, in the past year, been targeted by the Suriname government in an effort

Received 23 April 2013; accepted 22 October 2013.

Address correspondence to Marieke Heemskerk, Siriusstraat 14, Elizabetshof, Paramaribo, Suriname. E-mail: mheemskerk@yahoo.com

to regulate the small-scale gold mining sector. Since the late 1990s, small-scale gold mining has boomed in Suriname (Heemskerk 2000). At present, an estimated 25,000 individuals may be searching for gold (OGS,<sup>1</sup> personal communication, October 24, 2012). Another estimated 15,000 persons are providing auxiliary services to gold miners in the mining areas, services such as transportation, food, lodging, and other necessities (OGS, personal communication, October 24, 2012). Since the onset of Suriname's gold rush, the government has largely adapted a *laissez-faire* policy toward the sector. The majority of small-scale gold miners are working without a legal mining permit and without paying taxes, and even those who do have formal concession titles typically do not abide by the existing mining laws (Heemskerk 2009).

When the Bouterse–Ameerali government took office in 2010, it spearheaded a policy program to regulate the small-scale gold mining sector. A Commission for Regulation of the Gold Sector, hereafter called Commission OGS, was installed in January 2011 with a mandate to reestablish government authority in small-scale gold mining areas in Suriname. Its aim is to transform the small-scale gold mining sector into a formal economy sector that has orderly structure, complies with the existing laws, and employs only legal and taxpaying residents of Suriname. In this article, we analyze the perspectives of small-scale gold miners and government representatives on past and expected impacts of this program. We argue that the development of a more formal and regulated small-scale gold-mining sector is obstructed by a lack of trust, not only between gold miners and the government but also within these groups.

Even though there is disagreement among scholars about the definition, characteristics, and even the nature of trust (Khodyakov 2007), most operational definitions examine trust as a belief about whether a partner is dependable, cares for your interests, is competent, and/or will act with integrity (Dirks 1999). Our analysis departs from a sociological understanding of trust, as defined by Misztal (1996, 24):

Trust means to hold some expectations about future or contingent or to have some belief as to how another person will perform on some future occasion . . . Trust can be said to be based in the belief that the person, who has a degree of freedom to disappoint our expectations, will meet an obligation under all circumstances over which they have control.

Numerous studies have revealed the importance of stakeholder trust for the success of the natural resource management processes (Brown 2009; Davenport et al. 2007; Gray et al. 2012; Shindler and Neburka 1997). Trust can motivate government officers and resource users to engage in cooperative behaviors toward shared goals and to address shared problems.

Davenport et al. (2007) argue that for local community members, personal relationships are of crucial importance in developing trust in management authorities. In addition to trusting the persons who make the rules, it is equally important that resource users believe in procedural fairness and in the management authorities as an institution. That is, both interpersonal trust and institutional trust are essential ingredients to effective natural resource management.

This article analyzes the roots and expressions of interpersonal trust and institutional trust between small-scale gold miners and the Commission OGS. We argue that interpersonal trust and institutional trust reinforce one another. Poor personal experiences with government officials cause gold miners to believe that “the government” deceives its citizens, particularly those of the interior. Meanwhile,

distrust in the integrity of governing bodies hinders the development of interpersonal trust in their representatives. Our case also suggests that it is not sufficient that civil society trusts its regulators to make good and fair decisions. Effective natural resource management (NRM) also requires that government officials trust citizens to act honestly and responsibly.

In following pages we first provide a background to Suriname and its small-scale gold mining industry, describing the historic developments and cultural contexts that shape current relationships of distrust between local resource users and public resource managers. This section is followed by a description of the theoretical framework and methods. In subsequent sections we expose diverging opinions between government representatives and gold miners, and unravel the heterogeneity within these groups. The conclusion synthesizes our main argument that historically developed interpersonal and institutional distrust, internalized by both government officials and local communities, paralyzes policy efforts aimed at regulation of small-scale gold miners.

## **Background**

Suriname is situated on the northern shores of South America, bordering Brazil, Guyana, and French Guiana. Suriname's population of half a million is concentrated in the country's coastal zone, mostly in the capital city of Paramaribo. Suriname's densely forested interior, which covers approximately 80% of the country, houses and provides sustenance to Indigenous peoples and Maroons, tribal people of African descent.

In the early 1990s, growing numbers of Maroon men from the interior turned to small-scale gold mining to make a living (Heemskerk 2000). Until 2011, the Suriname government was largely absent from the gold fields and did not interfere much in the way small-scale mining was organized on the ground. As long as the various interest groups were not creating too much fuss, they could do as they pleased (Heemskerk 2009; 2011).

The present policies to get a grip on the small-scale gold mining sector aim for a complete change of this economic sector with the installation of the Commission for Regulation of the Gold Sector (OGS). Activities of the Commission OGS have included the registration of gold miners and their eviction from places where they were not allowed to mine. The Commission OGS also has been working with the tax department to design a taxing system for small-scale gold miners, and many miners have, like David, received tax assessments.

The Suriname government does not stand alone in its efforts to gain control over thousands of small entrepreneurs who are digging for gold, often without the required licenses and largely outside the formal economy. In the past decades, soaring gold prices have caused an exhilarating growth of small-scale gold mining activities throughout the Amazon region, in terms of both the number of persons involved and the equipment used to get at the gold.

Small-scale gold miners form a challenge to the national governments of Amazon countries. Public authorities feel they are losing out on direly needed revenues from tax-evading miners, but also are under public pressure to stop environmental damage due to mining activities. An additional challenge to national authorities is the fact that small-scale gold miners often work in areas that are difficult and expensive to reach, where government representation is minimal. Exactly because of the isolated nature

of gold mining areas and the limited state resources to control the vast forested areas, cooperation from the gold miners is of crucial importance in managing this industry in a more responsible way.

### Theoretical Framework

Scholars of varying disciplines have embarked on the challenge to define, understand, and analyze trust (Khodyakov 2007; Rousseau et al. 1998). They have looked at trust by and toward individuals and groups, and studied trust in internal cognitions and social relations. Despite their distinct analytical points of departure, researchers generally associate trust with positive behavior; trust has been found to enhance cooperation, facilitate adaptive organization, reduce harmful conflict, and promote the effective response to crises (Rousseau et al. 1998). At the same time, it has been posed that trust is never absolute, and once granted, it must be actively maintained (Davenport et al. 2007).

In the context of NRM, scholars have identified a trusting relationship between government officials and civil society as an important factor in the success of collaborative efforts (Brown 2009; Gray et al. 2012; Lachapellea and McCool 2012; Shindler and Neburka 1997; Smith et al. 2013). Fair and equitable procedures, constructive dialogue, and transparency are essential ingredients in building and maintaining trust between local resource users and public resource managers (Lachapellea and McCool 2012; Parkins and Ross 2005). Distrust, on the other hand, has long been perceived as detrimental to effective NRM (Davenport 2007). It produces “fear, skepticism, and opposition,” among many other undesirable sentiments and behaviors (Davenport 2007, 354).

Scholars concerned with citizen participation in NRM have pointed at the benefits of “critical trust” (Parkins 2007). Although scholars often see “trust” as “positive expectations” and a rather uncritical “willingness to be vulnerable” (see also Rousseau 1998), critical trust combines general trust with a high level of skepticism (Parkins 2007, 2010). Critical trust is particularly important where lay persons are involved in NRM and where general trust is pervasive. In these cases, efforts to enhance trust further may be counterproductive or corrosive. In the Suriname case however, where the gold miners are the primary targets of NRM decisions and where trust is minimal, a workable level of trust must be established first.

Our theoretical stance in this article builds on three theses. In the first place, trust is expressed in the present yet is historically constructed and cumulative. Our case suggests that distrust that has developed over the course of an extensive period of repetitive violations of trust is extremely difficult to take away—probably more so than more recently developed feelings of distrust or distrust based on one incident. This argument implies that managing relationships of trust between different social actors requires a thorough understanding of their shared history. We pose that understanding this historic context is particularly important when the resources in question are part of the customary heritage of local communities. In this article, we define local community as a group of interacting people sharing a locality, identity, and “sense of belonging” (Cohen 1985). In such local communities, repetitive violations of trust by a third party become part of the collective memory, which, in turn, constitutes the basis of members’ future interactions with outsiders.

Second, we argue that personal trust and institutional trust are inherently distinct yet interwoven and mutually reinforcing, particularly in small-scale societies such as

Suriname. Interpersonal trust differs from institutional trust in that it involves a participant attitude, as the trustee is consciously engaged in interaction with the trustor (Lahno 2001). Institutional trust, on the other hand, does not primarily rely on the realization of some particular action by specific individuals. Instead, it is directed to the functionality of a system of action. Both interpersonal trust and institutional trust build on perceived connectedness by shared aims, values, or principles, but institutional trust also builds on an assumption that these fundamental aims and principles are enforced by a more abstract impersonal system (Lahno 2001).

While interpersonal and institutional trust are different analytical concepts, Suriname gold miners may in practice not distinguish the two. Not only is institutional trust fundamentally grounded in interpersonal trust, but interpersonal trust is also shaped by institutional trust. The case of Suriname suggests that in cases where institutional and interpersonal trust have melded together, it is particularly challenging to reduce or eliminate citizen distrust in NRM institutions.

Third, we stipulate that the role of trust in NRM can only be understood if scholars analyze the viewpoints of policymakers and resource managers as well as those of civil society members. Various studies have analyzed the perceptions of resource users about the resource management institutions (Davenport et al. 2007; Gray et al. 2012), but fewer studies have assessed the opinions of government officials about community resource users—perhaps because social scientists have traditionally had a stronger engagement with those whose voices remain unheard (but see Brown 2009). Understanding the visions and preconceptions of political decision makers is, however, of elementary importance in understanding how trust and distrust shape NRM opportunities.

## **Methodology**

Fieldwork was conducted in and around the Maroon community of Brownsweeg, between 2010 and 2012. The area around Brownsweeg is rich in gold, and a large share of villagers are mining for gold or providing auxiliary services to the miners.

Data were collected through in-depth qualitative interviews, a quantitative survey, and informal conversations. Throughout the three years of research, the researchers regularly conducted qualitative nonstructured interviews with gold miners in and around the community of Brownsweeg, including the members of three local gold miners' organizations. These interviews took place in the community or at the mine site, and served to explore miners' perceptions on mining policies in Suriname. Particular emphasis was on past and expected impacts of the activities of the Commission OGS on miners' livelihoods. Qualitative interviews were also conducted with the chair of the management committee of the Commission OGS in the capital city of Paramaribo, two lower-level politicians, and traditional village authorities.

Quantitative data were collected through a survey with 100 small-scale gold miners in the Brownsweeg gold mining area, between January and March 2012. Random sampling was not possible because there is no location where all gold miners are registered, and gold miners are mobile, moving around between mining areas. Instead we took a purposive sample, interviewing every gold miner who was encountered in the greater Brownsweeg area during the survey period and active as a miner in one of the gold mining sites in this general area. Three-quarters of the surveyed gold miners were Maroons, and the remaining quarter consisted of Creoles, Brazilians, Hindustani, and people of mixed ethnic descent.

In addition to the formal interviews, informal conversations and participant observations were invaluable in gaining understanding of stakeholder relations and perceptions. Field data were validated with literature sources.

## Field Results

### *Gold Miners' Perspectives*

The grand majority of interviewed gold miners (90%) were of the opinion that regulation of the gold sector is necessary (Table 1). Three quarters (75%) agreed with the idea that gold miners have to pay taxes, and 59% of consulted gold miners conveyed that they were not opposed to evictions of small-scale gold miners from selected locations, as long as the government would provide them with an alternative location to mine. We did not find significant differences between machine owners and gold mine laborers in their opinions about these matters.

When activities of the Commission OGS were executed in the miners' own backyards, increasingly more negative sentiments were heard. In April 2012, the Commission OGS ordered approximately 500 small-scale gold miners to leave the Brownsberg National Park, one of Suriname's main tourist attractions, and placed a control post at the entrance to prevent the miners from returning to the area. Brian, a small-scale gold miner from the Maroon village of Brownsweg, was among those who had been mining in the national park. He stated angrily:

They [OGS] go everywhere to chase away the boys . . . They never notified us and never talked with local authorities . . . Almost all the people from the commission [OGS] have family members who are working in gold mining. Let them begin to regulate those guys.

In voicing his opinion of the Commission OGS, gold miner Brian not only condemns the institution responsible for the evictions, but also expresses his distrust

**Table 1.** Opinions from small-scale gold miners ( $N = 100$ ) about the Commission for Regulation of the Gold Sector and its activities in Suriname

Question	Yes/ agree	No/ disagree	Don't know/ no opinion
Do you believe that regulation of the gold sector is necessary?	90%	10%	0%
Are you familiar with the goals of the Commission OGS?	6%	94%	0%
Did you register with the Commission OGS?	51%	49%	0%
Do you approve the taxation regulation for gold miners?	75%	10%	15%
Have you been sufficiently informed by the Commission OGS?	5%	85%	10%
In your opinion, does the Commission OGS listen to the small-scale gold miners?	3%	78%	19%



in the representatives of the Commission OGS, who, in his eyes, do not treat people equitably. In addition, Brian criticizes the means of communication applied by the Commission OGS. In the perception of a majority of surveyed gold miners, the Commission OGS does not listen to gold miners (78%) and has not provided them with sufficient information about the regulatory activities (85%). As a result, most (94%) surveyed gold miners remained in the dark about the overall goals and objectives of the Commission OGS (Table 1).

Some gold miners expressed understanding for the fact that one cannot mine in a protected area. Nevertheless, they felt that the government should provide them with an alternative. Their low educational achievement does not help in finding alternative employment in the city. Thirteen percent of surveyed gold miners had not been to school at all, and half (49%) had started but not completed elementary school. Another 5% had completed elementary school but not gone beyond, and another quarter of respondents had dropped out from middle or high school without a diploma. With few alternative work options, gold miners had returned to the National Park a couple of months later.

In theory, the Brownsweg miners have, like other Suriname citizens, access to formal mining rights through the governmental concession application process. In practice, political liaisons and favoritism determine who have, and who do not have, access to mining lands. Local gold miners feel that although powerful members of society have obtained concessions in the past couple of years, others—like themselves—are deprived of a small piece of land to make a living. “The people of the Commission [OGS] all have their own concession,” argues one gold miner. “It is just a political game; they remove just us paupers.” This legacy has caused local miners to internalize a large degree of institutional distrust vis-à-vis the government institutions responsible for managing the gold sector.

Distrust in the good intentions of the government is not something new today. History has left the Maroons with a deeply entrenched institutional distrust against successive governments and interpersonal distrust against the urban creoles who have since independence mostly dominated the national governments (Price 1995; Thoden van Velzen and Hoogbergen 2011). On the other hand, many urban citizens have prejudices against Maroons, who are regarded as uncivilized (Dew 1994; Price 1995). These feelings continue to shape relations between those making the rules about forest use—typically not Maroons—and those traditionally living in that forest—for the largest share, Maroons.

A red thread in the current conflictive relations between the government and local gold miners is the contrasting perception about resource ownership. In Maroon culture, the members of a particular community have customary rights to the land and resources around their traditional village (Kambel and MacKay 1999). These natural resources serve to sustain the villagers by providing agricultural land, timber and nontimber forest products, and hunting and fishing grounds. Even though the national law of Suriname does not recognize tribal land rights (Kambel and MacKay 1999), local Maroon gold miners claim to have mining rights to specific areas because they pertain to their customary community territory (Heemskerck 2009).

The community of Brownsweg is a transmigration village that was established by the government in the 1960s when several traditional Maroon villages were flooded to make a place for a hydropower lake. The then Dutch government promised the inhabitants who had been forced to move access to modern facilities. Yet they left there to fend for themselves: without electricity, running water, or public services. Now that

they have found a way to make a decent living, community leaders argue, they are hindered in their activities. In Maroon communities, where agreements are typically closed orally rather than by written contracts, breaking a promise is severely frowned upon. Repetitively breaking promises eliminates trust and jeopardizes future willingness to collaborate.

When asked whether they had registered with the Commission OGS, half of the surveyed gold miners (51%) answered affirmatively. Many miners are, like David, not unwilling to pay taxes. However, the taxes should be proportional to their incomes and they should apply to everyone. In 2011, the director of the tax department reported that the few gold entrepreneurs who were registered with the tax department paid, on average, only about US\$60 per year in taxes (T. Van Dijk, quoted in *Starnieuws* January 6, 2011a). These entrepreneurs included concession title holders and small firms that produced several kilos of gold each month, the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Given their limited trust in the equitable application of governmental rules and regulations, Maroon gold miners are convinced that they are targeted while the big fish are spared.

### *The Government's View*

From the viewpoint of the Suriname government, comparable feelings of distrust exist toward the Maroon gold miners. Not only the colonial history already described but also more recent conflicts contribute to these feelings. In the years 1986–1992, a civil war was fought between the then military government and Maroon insurgents. This period of civil unrest, during which ferocities were conducted by both parties, fed negative stereotyping of the Maroons (Price 1995). In addition, new stereotypes have come into existence about small-scale gold miners, who are typified as Wild West cowboys, uncivilized and violent.

The government perceives small-scale gold miners as miners who operate illegally—at least the largest share of them. They usually do not have a valid mining permit or concession and a significant share of foreign gold miners even do not have proper residency status. They do not pay income taxes or comply with other regulations in the mining law. Small-scale gold miners also, we heard politicians comment, pollute the environment, are hard-headed, and have little will to cooperate with the government.

In order to help small-scale gold miners to become formal, the Commission OGS has developed a registration system. By the end of 2012, approximately 17,000 persons had registered with OGS, among whom were 11,000 Surinamese nationals.<sup>2</sup> However, many gold miners continue to work without proper registration.

The reasoning of policymakers is straightforward: Persons who are mining without the required documentation cannot be equal discussion partners. Gold miners who were evicted from the Brownsberg and other sites were involved in illegal activities. Tribal resource rights are not recognized by Suriname law, and hence Maroon miners cannot claim rights to land or resources. The government is willing to search for a way to open up an area where the people who were evicted from the park can mine. However, this should occur under conditions defined by the government.

In the eyes of policymakers, Maroons mine without any regard for environmental impacts and next call upon the government for help when things go wrong. A government legislator provided an example. In October 2012, villagers from three interior communities traveled to Paramaribo to draw attention to gold-mining-induced water pollution and related health problems in their living area. Ironically, the delegation

that came to the Commission OGS for help included local small-scale gold miners. The official pointed out that the community members directly and indirectly earned a living in the gold sector, and hence they themselves were to be blamed for their problems. In order to extend a helping hand, Commission OGS field teams trained gold miners from the area in methods to reduce wastewater spillage. Meanwhile, the head of the Commission OGS management team expressed his skepticism about the traditional leaders, who collect money and fuel from the gold miners and thereby are impetuous polluters of their own water supply (director of the OGS management team, personal communication, November 6, 2012).

Communication between government officials and small-scale gold miners has been suboptimal—in the eyes of the government, primarily because the gold miners do not listen. Since the installation of the Commission OGS, argued an interviewed representative, the Commission OGS has invested in communication in different languages, in various locations, and with various stakeholders. Seminars were organized, a gold conference in the interior has been organized, radio announcements have been broadcast, and local authorities have been informed. The lack of transparency experienced by the gold miners, conveyed the government official interviewed, cannot be blamed on his organization but rather is the result of “a breakdown in communication caused by their own people” (director of the OGS management team, personal communication, November 6, 2012).

Moreover, as long as local miners are poorly organized and do not have an accepted spokesperson, it difficult for the government to discuss mining policies with, and provide assistance to, gold miners. The aims and means of the Commission OGS have been explained many times, the researchers were told, and if gold miners claim they do not understand the intentions of the Commission OGS it is because they do not want to understand (director of the OGS management team, personal communication, November 6, 2012).

### *Distrust within Groups*

Besides a lack of trust between small-scale gold miners and the government, there is also distrust among local actors. Sentiments of distrust among gold miners both cause and are a result of the limited success of efforts to work as organized miners' groups. We provide one example of miners from the gold miners' association named Makambo, in a village near Brownsweg.

Makambo used to collect money from small-scale gold miners who were working in mines near their community. This money was to be invested in the development of the village. Several community projects have been realized with the proceeds from the gold miners, including the construction of a community meeting hall. In recent years, however, gold miners started to refuse payment to Makambo because of internal disagreement about its functioning. Some miners complained that the same people were always at the foreground, while others were not listened to. Village authorities also became increasingly discontented with the miners' association, mainly because they no longer received any money for community development. The mining cooperative largely disintegrated when it became known that one of the headmen had embezzled the accumulated miners' fees. Ronny, a community gold miner, admits:

There is a lot [of money] on the gold fields and there is little trust between the people who work here . . . We must unite . . . and form a front with the

village and communicate with the government. But someone should take the first step.

As among miners, distrust also is overtly present within the government. Particularly, members of the opposition parties are very critical toward efforts of the Commission OGS to regulate the sector in a transparent and fair manner. A Maroon member of Parliament was quoted in the newspaper as follows:

The sector is characterized by greedy elites, which include government representatives, people at strategic positions in this country, or their social circles. The regulation is characterized by fear. (Chandralall 2012)

He pointed at the continuation of illegal transactions in the sector and accused the Commission OGS of confiscating gold-rich areas from small-scale gold miners in the name of government-allied elites.

Selected coalition members also have criticized the Commission OGS. "These people are sharks," complained a coalition official who owns various gold concessions. "They take the best places for themselves and their friends" (R. Brunswijk, quoted in *Starnieuws* 2011b). Given his personal stakes in the small-scale gold mining sector, it is not unlikely that this parliament member's criticism was motivated by self-interest rather than by a genuine concern with sustainability of the sector.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Small-scale gold mining provides an income to thousands of families with few opportunities in the Amazon region, but also causes substantial environmental damage. Public concern about mining-induced pollution, coupled with the fact that small-scale gold miners hardly pay taxes and are often perceived as a national security threat, has motivated regional governments to seek ways to control and regulate gold miners in their countries. In Suriname, a newly installed Commission OGS has been charged with the task to bring small-scale gold mining to the formal sector and within the sphere of influence of the government.

This article focuses on relations between government regulators and small-scale gold miners in Suriname, but also exposes the interests of other stakeholders. Table 2 lists the main stakeholders in the Brownsberg area, as well as the key alliances and disputes between and within stakeholder groups. Cooperation between these groups is a prerequisite for regulation of the gold sector but is extremely challenging, given the multitude of stakeholder groups, the many overt and hidden interests, and the fact that the mining area is large and difficult to access. Trust is an essential ingredient for enabling cooperation. However, the analysis revealed that distrust not only frustrates relations between the government and small-scale gold miners but also mutates effective decision making within these groups.

The case of Suriname is not unique in demonstrating that perceptions of policy-makers about their policy interventions differ from those of the people who are targeted in these interventions. Many small-scale gold miners perceive the actions implemented by the government as unfair and only favoring the political elite. In their turn, government officials are challenged to regulate a group of resource users who, in their eyes, do not have government permission to mine for gold, evade taxes, are unwilling to collaborate with the government, and are unable to organize themselves.

**Table 2.** Stakeholder table, depicting key alliances and disputes in the small-scale gold mining sector in the Brownsweeg general area, Suriname

Stakeholder group	Civil society			Government	
	Small-scale gold miners (SSGM)	Maroon communities	Traditional authorities	Commission OGS (government)	Government, general
Small-scale gold miners	Largely similar interests. Some SSGM may distrust SSGM organizations to represent their interests. SSGM organizations have no unified vision.	Many community members earn directly or indirectly from SSGM. Tensions may arise about access to resources	Seek alliances. Some community leaders allow mining on community lands against a fee. Miners may refuse payment because leaders keep it for themselves.	OGS is willing to accommodate organized local SSGM but sees most individual SSGM as illegal and unsuitable discussion partners. Miners distrust OGS to bring benefits.	SSGM are often perceived as illegal, tax-evading, and polluters. Some parliament members “defend” SSGM.
Maroon community members		Some community members benefit from SSGM while others suffer from the (environmental) impacts, bringing tension in communities.	Traditional leaders have used profits from mining on community lands for their own benefit, thus undermining their credibility.	Community members historically distrust the government, yet they do seek assistance from OGS when there is a problem with SSGM.	Mutual historic distrust. Maroons in Parliament have defended Maroon interests
Traditional authorities			Traditional leaders may have opposing interests, depending on their personal gains from gold mining		Traditional Maroon authorities historically distrust government and feel offended when policy interventions in “their” area are not discussed with them in advance. OGS complains that traditional leaders do not share information with their communities.

(Continued)

**Table 2.** Continued

Stakeholder group	Civil society		Government	
	Small-scale gold miners (SSGM)	Maroon communities	Traditional authorities	Commission OGS (government)
Commission OGS (government)				Within OGS, leadership appears to be on one line.
Government, general				Opposition and coalition members have accused OGS of a lack of transparency and political favoritism. Internal divide between politicians with SSGM interests and those without.

The Suriname case is particularly complex because of a high degree of historically developed distrust, which colors the perceptions of both parties.

While expressed in the present, trust is historically constructed (Khodyakov 2007) and accumulates over time. The presented case suggests that removing distrust between local resource users (Maroon gold miners) and public resource managers (Commission OGS) is particularly challenging in cases where violations of trust have accumulated over a long period of time. The level of distrust of the other, which is deeply entrenched in both Maroon collective memory and governmental institutional memory, leads to prejudice and negative stereotyping, minimizes willingness to cooperate, obstructs dialogue, and incites conflicts between the parties. In line with Lewicki and Wiethoff (2000, 101) we find that “Once such negative expectations are created, actions by the other become negative self-fulfilling prophecies . . . which often lead the conflict into greater scope, intensity, and even intractability.”

Trust is not only defined by history; it is also shaped by culture. Reciprocity and interpersonal trust are at the basis of the social fabric of Maroon communities in the interior of Suriname. Even though the traditional forest communities become ever more integrated in the national economy, most social and economic transactions continue to be based on oral agreements rather than written contracts. Violation of (oral) agreements is detrimental to future willingness to cooperate with another person. When this happens over and over again, it becomes very difficult to rebuild trust (see also Davenport et al. 2007). The preceding implies that improving relationships of trust between resource users and resource managers will gain from conscious efforts to understand and address the historic developments and cultural sensitivities that have shaped perceptions of distrust in their relationship. “Going back to the roots” is particularly relevant in work with local communities with their tightly knit social fabric, where lessons learned from past interactions with government officials are passed on from generation to generation as a guide for future behavior. The limited willingness of gold miners to follow the new governmental regulations cannot only be interpreted as a lack of institutional trust in the government in general and in the Commission OGS in particular. In small societies such as Suriname, where interpersonal relations traditionally pave the roads to jobs and political favors, institutional trust and interpersonal trust amalgamate and local resource users do not necessarily distinguish the two. Our empirical data show that gold miners’ perceptions of government officials are colored by a deeply rooted lack of confidence in the institutions and organizations of the Suriname State. As a result, government officials are subject to both evidence-based and unsubstantiated accusations of benefiting family members and arrogating mining rights for themselves. On the other hand, distrust in individual political figure heads, based on experiences with corruption, enforces the idea that government procedures are inherently unfair and only benefit the political elite. The data support our argument that particularly in small-scale societies, interpersonal and institutional trust are two sides of the same coin and reinforce one another.

Although various researchers have analyzed citizen trust of natural resource management institutions, the present study shows that in order to understand the local NRM context we must also elicit the perceptions of policymakers. Policymakers who do not trust local leaders to communicate their messages to the community, who are confronted with internally divided citizen groups, and who believe that resource users are not transparent and honest will not be inclined to

discuss NRM decisions with local resource users or to allow for citizen participation in NRM. Hence, while it is essential that government officials make an effort to establish trust with their constituents, it is as important that gold miners and their representatives work on becoming trustworthy partners in dialogue and in interventions for the government.

Even though challenges are vast, we do not want to leave the impression that Suriname and its small-scale gold mining sector are stuck in a futureless situation. Recent developments suggest that both groups realize that they cannot reach their personal and group goals without at least some degree of cooperation. We have observed that small-scale gold miners and other representatives from miners' communities are increasingly finding their way to the Commission OGS offices to ask for assistance in solving mining-related problems, including pollution and conflicts with third parties. In its turn, the government is increasingly reaching out to local small-scale gold miners in an effort to secure their livelihoods. For example, in November 2012, three areas were identified by the Commission OGS with the intention of making sure that local gold miners who had been evicted from other areas would obtain an alternative places to work. In June 2013, the first one of these areas was prepared for usage, and interested gold miners from a local community were registered. A senior anthropologist has become part of the management team for this small-scale gold miners' zone, and two other anthropologists have been asked to conduct an independent participatory evaluation of the process. Unimaginable a year ago, a senior official of the Commission OGS publicly announced that success of regulation of the gold sector depends largely on the buy-in and voluntary participation of small-scale gold miners.

Khodyakov (2007) rightly argues that trust is a process, and this process takes time. The Suriname case suggests that rebuilding trust may take longer and may be more difficult when distrust has accumulated over an extensive time and results from violations of cultural norms and codes of conduct. More research is warranted to determine whether this assumption holds in different contexts.

We propose that establishing stakeholder trust in the small-scale gold mining sector in Suriname needs to start with building interpersonal trust, for various reasons. In the first place, it is customary in Suriname to deal with institutional matters, including government affairs, on an interpersonal level. People in need of a government service tend to first establish who they know in the specific department and trust to resolve their case. Second, building trust requires that one knows a person well enough to be able to predict his or her future actions. Getting to know a person is easier than getting to know the government or a government department, which may be internally divided.

For the reasons mentioned, we propose that establishing good interpersonal relations with regulators will pave the way to a greater trust in the more abstract institutions responsible for management of the gold sector. A higher level of interpersonal and institutional trust between and within local gold miners' groups and the national government, in turn, will benefit efforts aimed at regulation and formalization of small-scale gold miners.

### **Acknowledgments**

The researchers are grateful to small-scale gold miners and policymakers in Suriname for their cooperation and information.



## Funding

This study was conducted as part of the Amazon-wide GOMIAM research initiative (www.gomiam.org), which is funded by the CoCooN international research program (www.nwo.nl/cocoon) of the Directorate General of Development Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

## Notes

1. The Commission for Regulation of the Gold Sector (OGS) is the main government institution in charge of the implementation of government policies and regulations in the small-scale gold mining sector.
2. Commission for Regulation of the Gold Sector (OGS), e-mail message to author, October 24, 2012.

## References

- Brown, C. L. 2009. *Insights for improving trust management in participatory natural resources management processes: A case study on stakeholder trust perceptions in the Bridger-Teton National Forest collaborative process*. Master's thesis, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Alnarp, Sweden: Southern Swedish Forest Research Centre.
- Chandralall, B. 2012. Regering krijgt vuile was goudsector voorgeschoteld [Government is confronted with its dirty linen]. *Times of Suriname*, November 14.
- Cohen, A. P. 1995. *The symbolic construction of community*. London: Tavistock.
- Davenport, M. A., J. E. Leahy, D. H. Anderson, and P. J. Jakes. 2007. Building trust in natural resource management within local communities: A case study of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. *Environ. Manage.* 39(3):353–368.
- Dew, E. M. 1994. *The trouble in Suriname 1975–1993*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Dirks, K. T. 1999. The effects of interpersonal trust on work group performance. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 84:445–455.
- Gray, S., R. Shwom, and R. Jordan. 2012. Understanding factors that influence stakeholder trust of natural resource science and institutions. *Environ. Manage.* 49(3):663–674.
- Heemskerk, M. 2000. *Driving forces of small-scale gold mining among the Ndjuka Maroons: A cross-scale socioeconomic analysis of participation in gold mining in Suriname*. PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.
- Heemskerk, M. 2009. *Kleinschalige Goudwinning in Suriname. Een overzicht van sociaaleconomische, politieke, en milieu-aspecten* [Small-scale gold mining in Suriname. An overview of the socioeconomic, political and environmental aspects]. Report. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Centrum voor Studie en Documentatie van Latijns Amerika (CEDLA).
- Heemskerk, M. 2011. *Small-scale gold mining in the transboundary areas of Brazil, Suriname and French Guiana. Social and environmental issues*. Report. Paramaribo, Suriname: United Nations Development Programme.
- Kambel, E. R., and F. MacKay. 1999. *The rights of the Indigenous peoples and Maroons in Suriname*. Copenhagen, Denmark: The Forest Peoples Programme & International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.
- Khodyakov, D. 2007. Trust as a process: A Three-dimensional approach. *Sociology* 41(1):115–132.
- Lachapellea, P. R., and S. F. McCool. 2012. The role of trust in community wildland fire protection planning. *Society Nat. Resources* 25:321–335.
- Lahno, B. 2001. Institutional trust: A less demanding form of trust? *Rev. Latinoam. Estud. Avanzados* 15:19–58.

- Lewicki, R. J., and C. Wiethoff. 2000. Trust, trust development, and trust repair. In *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice*, ed. M. Deutsch and P. T. Coleman, 86–107. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Misztal, B. 1996. *Trust in modern societies. The search for the bases of social order*. Cambridge, MA: Wiley.
- Parkins, J. R. 2007. The distrustful citizen: Theories and observations from small-group settings. In *Reading sociology: Canadian perspectives*, ed. L. Tepperman and H. Dickinson, 280–283. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Parkins, J. R. 2010. The problem with trust: Insights from advisory committees in the forest sector of Alberta. *Society Nat. Resources* 23:822–836.
- Parkins, J. R., and R. E. Mitchell. 2005. Public participation as public debate: A deliberative turn in natural resource management. *Society Nat. Resources* 18:529–540.
- Price, R. 1995. Executing ethnicity: The killings in Suriname. *Cult. Anthropol.* 10(4):437–471.
- Rousseau, D. M., S. B. Sitkin, R. S. Burt, and C. Camerer. 1998. Not so different after all: A crossdiscipline view of trust. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 23(3):393–404.
- Shindler, B., and J. Neburka. 1997. Public participation in forest planning: Eight attributes of success. *J. For.* 95(1):17–19.
- Smith, J. W., J. E. Leahy, D. H. Anderson, and M. A. Davenport. 2013. Community/agency trust and public involvement in resource planning. *Society Nat. Resources* 26:452–471.
- Starnieuws*. 2011a. Nieuw systeem inning belasting goudsector [New system tax collection gold sector]. January 6. <http://www.starnieuws.com/index.php/welcome/index/nieuwsitem/4057> (accessed 12 December 2012).
- Starnieuws*. 2011b. Brunswijk bespreekt vrijdag in coalitietop ‘goudsector’ [Brunswijk discusses ‘gold sector’ in coalition meeting Friday]. October 19. <http://www.starnieuws.com/index.php/welcome/index/nieuwsitem/7673> (accessed 12 December 2012).
- Thoden van Velzen, H. U. E., and W. Hoogbergen. 2011. *De Okaanse samenleving in de achttiende eeuw* [Okan society in the eighteenth century]. Caribbean Series 29. Leiden, the Netherlands: KITLV Press.