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Suriname Revisited: Economic Potential of its Mineral Resources

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Marco Keersemaker
Faculty of Civil Engineering
and Geosciences
Delft University of Technology
Delft, The Netherlands

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Preface

It has been an eventful start of the century for Suriname's mining industry: we have witnessed the closure of its bauxite and alumina industry as well as the development of two world-class gold mines and the recent kick-off of the South American Exploration Initiative or SAXI, which will hopefully lead to more developments. As one of the last employees of BHP Billiton Maatschappij Suriname, I was closely involved in the departure of my employer after another failed attempt to develop the Bakhuis bauxite project. That was a painful experience for me and my colleagues.

During my time in the country, I occasionally visited the archives of GMD and BHP Billiton archives and saw numerous publications and maps on the mineral exploration work done in the past. Local and foreign scientists spent many years exploring the interior and identified several mineral occurrences of a range of commodities. Some of these documents from the period after the Second World War are still the most recent reports available and I often wondered if there was a chance that under current market circumstances, any of them would possibly be economic.

Besides my years in Suriname, I have also spent almost a decade working on mines and mine projects (gold, manganese, bauxite and iron ore) in West Africa, which shares a geological history with the Guianas. The difference in mineral endowment and economic mining activities is significant, which strengthened my belief that there must be hidden opportunities in Suriname.

Professor Wong et al. were the last to review in 1998, but the recently commenced South-American Exploration Initiative (SAXI) is putting the spotlight back on Suriname's geology and I considered it an appropriate time to have another look at historic research by experienced and knowledgeable geoscientists and to give my updated interpretation as a mining engineer with an economic perspective in the hope that the country can benefit from our combined contributions.

Delft, The Netherlands — Marco Keersemaker

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