

New release!

Watch [our animation](#) and get in just 3 minutes the complexity of the oil palm supply chain in Cameroon.

Does this ring a bell? Many of you have played the game with us already !



More thoughts on our video and method on this link: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/just-game-claude-garcia/>

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Indonesia: The challenges of certification

Or when government officials criticise their own actions

In August 2019, the Indonesian Team played its new ISPO game with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the game, the officials played the role of smallholders or of the government. Very soon, the smallholders started complaining to the government about the ISPO certification (Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil). They did not understand why they should comply with it, and what benefits they would obtain. Also they did not know whether, and how, certification would affect prices.

This session just proved once more how powerful the approach is. It empowers participants, it frees speech. It helps grasp the big picture, the different perspectives and the complexity of the system. The participants found out by themselves why the implementation of ISPO is so challenging.



Participant Ms Ita Munardini, the head of plantation processing and marketing, said in her closing remark that “this game is positive, reflects a portrait of ISPO with its components, offers us to reveal problems, a useful tool to further refine plantation development policies”.

Read the whole story [here](#).



Photos Arya Hadi Dharmawan



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Impact in Colombia

Facilitating governance processes

La Cuenca is a board game developed by master students* of ETH Zurich under the supervision of the OPAL team. Its original purpose is to support WWF Colombia in a process to address water allocation conflicts in the Cravo Sur basin in Los Llanos region. The model and game aim to understand how land users make decisions on water collection, and under which scenarios they could collaborate to improve the governance of this resource in the region.

A four-day workshop took place in August 2019 in Yopal city with local government representatives, citizens, NGOs and producers of the Cravo Sur basin. A succession of game sessions and facilitated discussions.

“It is a game, but it shows how reality works” one player said, “there is a fight for water, that is what the game is showing” another one called and “we have to make agreements to use water, a precious liquid for us all” concluded one participant. The topics discussed were similar in each session of the game, but the solutions to solve the problem were different among each group.

In one session the players decided to invest heavily on the forest recovery where the river is born and create a fund with resources from all producers to maintain it. In another session they decided to create a restriction on water usage for producers and the towns represented in the board. In the session held with players from the environmental authority, they put into place one of their programs known as water harvest. All these solutions had been previously discussed by the actors, but it is the first time they could try to put them into action and recognize the barriers and difficulties along the way to implement them.

The Cravo Sur river is born in the Andes at 3.800 meters above sea level and flows through Colombian eastern plains in Casanare department. La Cuenca is a game inspired by this river and its landscape. Through its participatory dynamic, the game has promoted a better dialogue and understanding among the actors who are making the key decisions to conserve it. The process will continue as the game players get back to reality to promote some of the actions discussed during the play session. As for the game, it will be adapted to be played in another region in Colombia sharing the water usage problem.



Photo: Carolina Escallón Wey (WWF Colombia)

* The game was developed by ETH Students Linus Ender, Abigail Fellay, Tim Juchli, Katja Schiendorfer, Ariel Spanowicz and Eliane Steiner.

Learning sustainability through games

NES Naturaleza has been running many game sessions with smallholders who supply Fresh Fruit Bunches to different mills. The significance of good agricultural and environmental practices have been a major topic. Smallholders realize that being sustainable helps to avoid additional and often hidden costs. The game shows, in a great manner, the value of sustainability, even more when the results in the game are quite similar to the issues that smallholders are facing on the ground, in real life. Smallholders showed great appreciation for the game.

In July 2019, NES Naturaleza played a new version of the game with RSPO, Cenipalma and also a representative from the local government. Attendees reinforced their knowledge about the importance of sustainability not only within their own palm plantations, but also throughout the supply chain. In addition, they created awareness on how the individual actions can affect the collective directly or indirectly, for example, in the use and collection of water, among others.



New game version played in July 2019.
Photo: Alejandra Rueda

Outreach in Switzerland

Forum the future of palm oil (ETH Zurich, April 2019)

The OPAL Swiss Team co-organized with the Embassy of Indonesia a large event in April 2019 at ETH Zurich to discuss the future of oil palm using the models developed in the three countries where we work. The event was attended by a group of Indonesian delegates and Swiss stakeholders, including the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, ALDI Suisse, Bio Suisse, SWISS AID, SECO, Ecoinvent, Zurich Zoo, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), among others. Discussions centered on the common challenges and differences in each country and the policy efforts that have been in place to address these challenges.



Player negotiating palm oil prices at the market.
(Photo Nur Hasanah)

Informing the Swiss public about the palm oil issue

Palm oil has a bad reputation in Europe. Many Swiss consumers would tell that palm oil is bad and should be avoided. But do they really know the facts behind palm oil? As the OPAL project is also about reaching out to the wider public, Ariane Hangartner (ETH) started a series of presentation to the general public in the local language. The first presentation called « Palmöl - besser als sein Ruf? » (Palmoil, better than its reputation?) took place in front of a large audience during the ETH Treffpunkt Science City event on 7 April 2019. The recording of the presentation is available [here](#) (in German).



People were asked before the presentation (photo left) and after (photo right) whether they considered palm oil as bad (red), good (green), or don't know (yellow). The change of opinion after the presentation is clear. (Photo John Garcia)

Following that, the « Ohne » bulk store in Baden and the Biberburg in Hirschthal invited Ariane to give the same presentation to their respective public.

The public appreciated to receive balanced and scientific facts on palm oil. At the end, and after the open discussions, they felt much more informed on the issues at stake.

Podcast in Swiss German

Also OPAL participated in the following podcast: « [Wieso ist überall Palmöl drin? Und kann Palmöl nachhaltig sein?](#) » by Migros M-Generation.



Our models presented at the German Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil (Berlin, May 2019)



Workshop with FONAP (Photo Ariane Hangartner)

The OPAL team was invited by the German Forum für nachhaltiges Palmöl (FONAP) to demonstrate our tools and methods during a one-day workshop in Berlin. Nearly 20 people from Ferrero, industrial bakeries, Borneo Orangutan Survival, WWF Germany, GIZ, Federal Department for Environment, journalists and other NGOs dealing with sustainability. We played La Cuenca game and had great discussions about sustainability during the debriefing. As a direct result of this activity, we were invited by WWF Germany to facilitate, through the same game, discussions on the conservation of natural savannas in Colombia and Paraguay. This session was held in Berlin in September 2019 and co-organized by WWF Colombia and ETH Zurich with participants from delegations from Colombia, Paraguay and Germany.

Ongoing work in Cameroon



In Memoriam

On 19th January 2019, Micresse Kamto passed away from illness.

She was the OPAL project technical assistant at WWF Cameroon and a key person in the project in her role as facilitator of the CoPalCam game sessions.

Micresse was young, joyful, intelligent.

The whole OPAL team misses her deeply.

OPAL Project Workshop in Cameroon

WWF Cameroon hosted the OPAL annual project meeting from the 12-15 March 2019. It brought together all project partners from Cameroon, Colombia, Indonesia and Switzerland. During the meeting, the OPAL team reviewed the project outcomes for the last three years based on the theory of change and defined key priorities for the next three years. These new priorities are expected to generate outputs to leverage policy outcomes in the different project countries.



The one-week meeting took place in Douala and included an one-day field trip to nearby plantations and mills. Here some photos:



Developing smallholder cooperatives

WWF Cameroon has initiated the organization and structuring of smallholders around SOCAPALM plantations in Dibombari into smallholder palm oil cooperative. Environmental Governance Institute (EGI), a local NGO, that has carried out a similar experience in the Southwest Region is facilitating this process. It is expected that their facilitation of this process shall draw from their own experiences from participating in the COMMOD game with smallholders and agro-industries in the Southwest Region. The outcome of this process shall help develop a partnership between SOCAPALM and smallholders and become a critical element in SOCAPALM's RSPO certification process.

Soil analysis in Switzerland

In May 2019, Damien Essono from Cameroon spent a month at EPF Lausanne in the ECOS Lab of Prof. Alexandre Butler. He analyzed the soil samples he and his team had previously collected back home. The analyses serve to measure the level of soil fertility in different management models of oil palm plantations: with or without fertilization, with or without intercropping. The work is ongoing and Damien is spending another month in Switzerland in October 2019.

Ongoing Studies:

- Dynamism of the palm oil sector focusing on the impacts of CPO imports on the domestic production and the secondary transformation sector.
- Update of the study on the legal and institutional review of palm oil sector. This will help in the RSPO national interpretation in Cameroon.

Towards sustainable oil palm in Indonesia

New movie

The OPAL Indonesia Team just released a new video on the [Future of Sustainable Oil Palm Plantations in Indonesia](#). It presents OPAL and the work done by IPB and CIFOR.



Contribution to SDGs (Sintang district, West Kalimantan and Siak district, Riau (May 2019))



Bayu and Rizka demonstrating an OPAL game.

The OPAL Indonesia Team contributed to the development of sustainable production of agriculture commodities and sustainable landscapes by attending two series of events by LTKL, an increasingly popular platform that promotes district sustainable landscapes. The events were organized to help districts improve their regional competitiveness by equipping them with a portfolio of programs that offer investment opportunities to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reduce emissions. The team was invited to share District lessons on the use of an innovative tool, the ComMod game, to facilitate dialogues among stakeholders and help them learn about the complexities around the oil palm sectors and sustainable landscape. To further increase the visibility of the OPAL project and the ComMod game approach, Rizka Amalia and Bayu Eka Yulian (IPB) showcased their games and had productive discussions with participants.

Low carbon oil palm development

Drawing from OPAL key findings on land use changes and deforestation due to oil palm expansion across Kutai Kartanegara district, the team further contributed to the development of strategies for low carbon oil palm development in East Kalimantan. As part of a declaration on sustainability made by Governor of East Kalimantan and all district heads in the province in 2017, efforts are currently made by the provincial Plantation Office and related stakeholders to develop strategies for developing low carbon oil palm development. Heru Komarudin (CIFOR) took part in a workshop on this topic organized by the Provincial Government of East Kalimantan in April 2019 and in a focus group discussion organized by Kutai Kartanegara District Plantation Office in June 2019. He presented OPAL and highlighted the importance of delivering commitment towards sustainable oil palm development, and taking into account different stakeholder perspectives. The team will continue supporting local stakeholders in the district site in Kutai Kartanegara in devising strategies for identifying, protecting and managing selected forested areas (HCVs, HCS), linked to research on future scenarios currently conducted by OPAL PhD student, Fakhrizal Nashr.



Heru Komarudin discussing OPAL results

Sustainable palm oil: from regional initiatives to national action plans

OPAL Indonesia Team was involved in a series of events to show the importance of not only making sustainable palm oil a reality, but also of improving the wellbeing of local people and smallholders. Heru Komarudin participated in two stakeholder platforms focusing on sustainable landscapes (Lingkar Temu Kabupaten Lestari). On the last day, the OPAL Indonesia Team in collaboration with East Kalimantan Provincial Plantation Offices organized a workshop themed “Strengthening sustainable and adaptive oil palm governance in East Kalimantan”. PhD Candidate, Rizka Amalia and Dr Arya Hadi Darmawan presented OPAL research findings on land use changes and livelihood impacts of oil palm expansion in Kutai Kartanegara, and smallholder readiness towards ISPO certification. During the workshop, they also engaged the heads of plantation division (Coordinating Minister for Economy and Directorate General of Plantations of the Ministry of Agriculture in a plenary discussion on how subnational (in East Kalimantan) and national initiatives and action plans for sustainable palm oil can be synergized.

Conferences

Asia Pacific Forestry Week 2019 (Incheon, South Korea, 19 June 2019)

Heru Komarudin (CIFOR) took part in organizing a panel discussion themed “Turning sustainability commitments into actions: Indonesia’s oil palm sector takes steps towards zero-deforestation”. He moderated discussions focusing on challenges and potentials for effectively achieving sustainability commitments.



Alejandra Rueda from NES Naturaleza has been promoting the work of OPAL in different international conferences:



- ISCC Annual Sustainability Conference meeting in Brussels (February 2019)
- the International Conference on Biofuels in Colombia (March 2019)
- Globoil International Conference held in Dubai (April 2019).

European Conference on business games, Stuttgart, Germany (June 2019)

Manuel Stamm (ETH Zurich) won 3rd Price at the "[Deutscher Planspielpreis 2019](#)" for his Bachelor Thesis on "Role-playing games as an educational tool". He was invited to present his work at the conference. More on this [link](#).



New peer-reviewed publications

Quezada, J.C., Etter, A., Ghazoul, J., Buttler, A., and Guillaume, T. Carbon neutral expansion of oil palm plantations in the Neotropics. *Science Advances*, in press.

Hasanah, N., Komarudin, H., Dray, A., and Ghazoul, J. (2019) Beyond palm oil: perceptions of local communities of environmental change. *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, Volume 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ffgc.2019.00041>

Kamto, M., Halleson, D., Ngom, E., Fauvelle, É., Salihovic, A., & Garcia, C. (2019). Using role-play to explore strategies for improving palm oil production and sustainability in Cameroon. *ETFRN News* volume 59, 139-146. <http://www.etfrn.org/file.php/452/5-1kamto.pdf>

Other publications on <http://www.opal-project.org/outputs.html>.

Team information (departures, graduations, new arrivals)

Thomas Guillaume (EPFL, soil Team) ended his postdoc with OPAL in July 2019. He will stay involved in a couple of projects and publications. He just started a Postdoc at Agroscope (Nyon), the Swiss Research Center into agriculture, nutrition and the environment.

Gabriele Manoli (ETH, Hydrology Team) also ended his postdoc with OPAL in July 2019. He is now Lecturer in Environmental Engineering at the University College London.

Pablo Pacheco, scientific lead, left CIFOR for WWF.

Bayu Eka Yulian (IPB) and Dya Ita Mardiyansih (IPB) defended their PhD Thesis in June 2019.

Fideline Mboringong (WWF Cameroon) who was already in charge of coordinating activities of OPAL at WWF has been selected to take over the job of Micresse Kamto.