OPAL NEWSLETTER

Oil Palm Adaptive Landscapes

Nr. 9 October 2018

Cameroon trains its journalists in oil palm issues

In order for journalists in Cameroon to gain a better understanding of the oil palm value chain in the country, the OPAL Cameroon team organized a 2-day training workshop in Douala, Cameroon in September 2018, where they let the journalists play the CoPalCam game. The aim was that through this better understanding, the journalists would be able to write articles of better quality on the topic and have more impact on the different actors.

"Playing the game […] was like a revelation because you could see everything […]. It is very difficult to educate somebody using PowerPoint or by just feeding him with knowledge, but if you allow this person to play the game like we did, you see immediately why certain things happen, what can be done about it, and this is very interesting. [...] I now better understand the system." said Evambe Thompson Atra, Journalist at Bonakanda Rural Radio during the TV talk show "Planet rise" on palm oil that followed the event. (Canal 2 English, link below)

The session brought together journalists from local (Bonakanda Rural Radio, Radio Beach FM, Nkulu Makeli community radio), national (Cameroon Radio and Television, Canal 2 English, The Post, La Nouvelle Expression, Mutations, Le Massager, Vision 4, Camer.be, Cameroon Business Today (SOPECAM)), regional (Jeune Afrique) and international media houses (Reuters, BBC World, The Wall Street Journal).

Many of them reported the experience in their own media:

Videos: TV Talk show by Canal 2 English (length: 27:34 minutes)

Reportage by Vision 4 (length: 1:59 minutes)

Newspaper: 6 articles in local press (The Post, Le Messager, Quotidien Mutations, Cameroon Business)

Journalists playing the CoPalCam (Photo WWF Cameroon)

Also in this newsletter...

Policy engagement in Indonesia

In the framework of a collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia and UNDP's Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative (SPOI), our OPAL researcher Bayu Eka Yulian (PhD Student at IPB) has been called as expert advisor to help draft **Technical Guidelines on Company's Responsibilities to Facilitate the Development of Smallholder Plantation**. The assignment ran from June to October 2018.

His main responsibilities have been:

- Developing collaborations at all levels (government, industry, civil society organizations, scholars).
- Gathering input from stakeholders (experts, policy makers, professionals, governance unit).
- Drafting and finalizing the Guidelines, by synchronizing policies from several existing regulations.

We are looking forward to seeing the results.

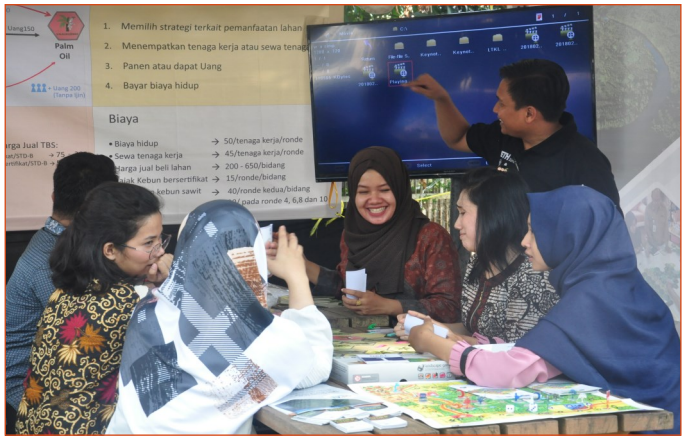
NEW: follow us on Twitter @OPALoilpalm

Outreach

Landscape festival (South Sumatra, Indonesia, July 2018)

The OPAL team in Indonesia attended a conference called "South Sumatra Landscape Festival 2018" upon invitation from the organizer Lingkar Temu Kabupaten Lestari – a new coalition that brings together district governments committed to implementing sustainability. Key people from national, provincial and district agencies (mostly in Sumatra) who are concerned with green growth development, sustainable development and landscape approaches attended the conference.

The OPAL team was invited to share lessons from the innovative tool they use, that is companion modelling (role-playing games) to help stakeholders learn about complexities around oil palm sectors, and to explain how such a game could help facilitate dialogues and decision making in constantly changing landscapes



Conference participants playing the « Land use change and oil palm expansion game » (Photo Heru Komarudin)

To get a first-hand idea, the interested participants could play the game on the spot. Members of the local university, local government and NGO played the game "Land use change and oil palm expansion" (LUCOPE) developed by Bayu Eka Yulian (PhD student, IPB). After nine rounds, players gave feedback on the usefulness of the tool in enabling people to better understand their resources and how to better protect, manage and sustainably use them.

One representative of the President's Office for Climate Change and of the Package Foundation, said that she found this game useful and could give a different approach to addressing complex issues. She asked whether the game could be used to assist their missions to educate young generation to better understand social-ecological system and appreciate the importance of keeping forests and natural resources intact.

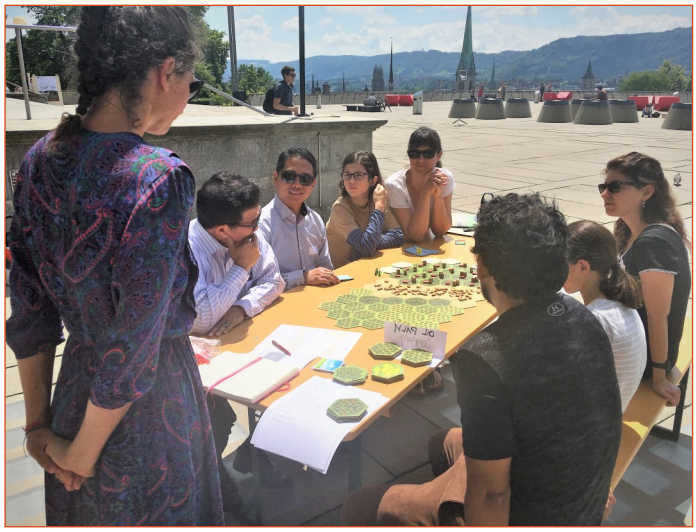
More on these two links:

https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/28704/qa-cifor-landscape-games-feature-at-indonesias-sustainable-districts-festival/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6u7TITUVwY&feature=youtu.be (video in Indonesian language)

Latsis Symposium (ETH Zurich, Switzerland, June 2018)

Two OPAL games where played on 9 June 2018 during the public events of the Latsis Symposium 2018 on "Scaling-up Forest Restoration": the German version for school children of the CoPalCam game as well as the ComMoDo game developed by Nur Hasanah (PhD Student from ETH Zurich). The Ambassador of Indonesia in Switzerland attended the session of the Indonesian ComMoDo game and played the role of a palm oil producer.



Participants listening to the game master`s introductions (Photo Nur Hasanah)

The Embassy subsequently published a press release on the event, which was taken over by mutliple news agencies in Indonesia. A selection of those articles is available here.

A blog entitled « Wearing Borneo's farmers shoes through role-playing game » was written by the facilitators of the game and published on the ETH Ambassador Blog.

The Ambassador of Indonesia showed great interest in our project and methods. We are thus planning future activities together.

Impact

Upscaling OPAL: CoPalCam helps shape the future of oil palm in Uganda

Claude Garcia (ETH Zurich/CIRAD) & his team have been facilitating a 3-day workshop in Uganda in April 2018, using the OPAL Cameroon supply chain game (CoPalCam). It took place on Buvuma Island, situated in the Lake Victoria in Uganda. There are plans in Buvuma to introduce and expand oil palm cultivation. While this could improve the national economy and provide income to impoverished rural areas, one would also have to count with negative impacts as it has happened to other islands in Lake Victoria where oil palm has been introduced: forest loss, conflicts over land tenure and displacement.

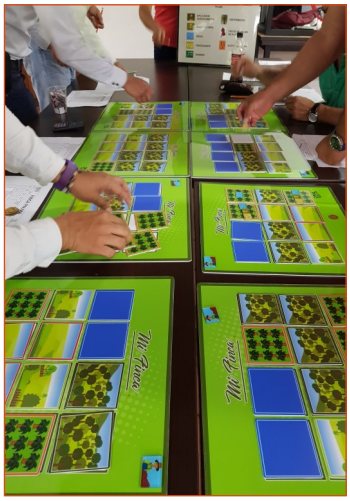
24 participants attended the workshop convened by Tropenbos International through its Green Livelihood Alliance (GLA) programme. The aim was to draw lessons from the experience from the other islands (e.g. Kalangala) to improve the future of Buvuma.

Through the game, the participants learned the imbalance of power and the need for cooperation and information. After the sessions, some participants thought the venture of growing palm oil is too risky and not suited for the island, while a majority had a more nuanced message. They could see the risks, but have also identified winning strategies, stressing the value of information, of trust and of collective action among peers.

Participants of the workshop reported high levels of satisfaction with both the content and the form of the workshop. The workshop could convey complex, powerful messages, outline a jointly constructed action plan for the coming year, and indicate possible avenues for collaboration between the local communities, the project partners, the local authorities and private companies. It is still open whether Buvuma will cultivate oil palms, but whatever they choose, they will have done it in a more informed way.

More here: https://www.tropenbos.org/news/new+insights+into+oil+palm+impacts+through+role+playing

Colombia: sustainability dialogue with smallholders through game sessions



The Colombian game as further developped by NES Naturaleza (Photo Alejandra Rueda)

During the first semester of the year, NES Naturaleza, OPAL partner in Colombia, had the opportunity to build the model and the ComMod game but also to play 2 game sessions with a group of palm oil producers in the Llanos Region.

Before going into the field, the game had 3 pilot sessions with people from diverse backgrounds; some of them were related to the palm oil sector and others didn't know about it before.

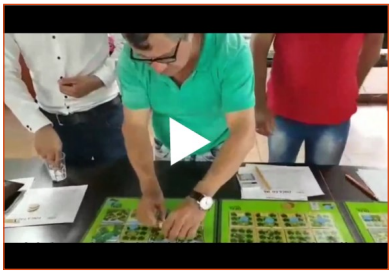
Once in the field, the game was reflecting the different behaviors and decision making of the palm producers when facing different supply and demand situations that occur in the day to day activities of the crop. Some of the situations arising during the game were climatological phenomena like floods or droughts, fall in prices of the palm fruit as well as development of different diseases.

The game sessions were faciliated by NES Naturaleza with the Palm oil suppliers of Hacienda La Cabaña, one of the most important mills in Los Llanos Region. During the sessions, the smallholders noticed the significance of sustainability and how it is related to the good agricultural practices but also with the biodiversity and ecosystem around the plantations.

Videos have been produced after each of the two sessions. Click below to watch them:

Session 1:

Session 2:



Research

Understanding water management in Colombia through participatory approach

After three years of work in the Llanos Orientales region, the OPAL team of Universidad Javeriana (UJ) is taking the Companion Modelling approach to another area of the country: the Colombian Caribbean and more precisely the Magdalena Department. The work in this new region is being carried out by Valentina Fonseca and Daniel Castillo as the advisor. Valentina is doing her Masters in Conservation and Use of Biodiversity at the UJ.

The problem they aim to approach is related to the strategies for water catchment for oil palm production in the coastal plain. One of the hypotheses is that oil palm plantations have generated changes in the hydrological balance of the region. These changes have created a scenario of uncertainty on water availability, both for palm crops and for the ecosystems. Since local social norms for water management and its dynamics are little known, it is essential to understand them and their changes over time. In this sense, the team is interested in exploring coordinated institutional arrangements for water management from a participatory approach.

Addressing those questions contributes to the objectives of the OPAL project, allowing us to analyze how the relationships between oil palm landscapes and natural resources are configured and promoting platforms for dialogue between different social actors to identify possible paths of resolution of conflicts. In addition, the results and analyzes found in both regions of the country will enrich each other and help understand and address the adaptability of oil palm landscapes in Colombia.

International research collaborations in Indonesia

Two students conducted research in East Kalimantan, Kutai Kartanegara district, after receiving advice on research locations and assistance (research permits) from the IPB OPAL team in Indonesia.

PhD Student Jia Yen Lai (University of Edinburgh, Scottland, UK) spent 4 months (April-July 2018) in the districts of Kutai Kartanegara and Berau. Her study is entitled: “Procedural justice in environmental decision-making: The social implications of Environmental Impact Assessment (AMDAL) on Indonesia’s deforestation”.

Master student Hiroki Okita (University of Tokyo, Japan) conducted research from early July to mid-September 2018 in Pulau Pinang Village, Kutai Kartanegara District. His research is entitled: "Modernization process by indigenizing oil palm: The case of the tribe study of Dayak in East Kalimantan, Indonesia".

The collaboration and exchanges of information is continuing and both students will write a paper together with the Indonesian OPAL Team. We are hopeful that through this type of collaborative research, more and more data and information from the field will be obtained to strengthen the OPAL study in Indonesia and increase the number of publications that can be carried out by this activity.

More research in Cameroon by the soil teams

The EPFL team has extended its partnership with the team in Cameroon that is composed of Prof. Mesmin Tchindjang, Dr. Damien Essono and Eric Voundy. The research that started in September 2018 is titled “Impacts of intercropping on soil fertility, plant diversity, productivity and income”. Intercropping is a common practice in Cameroon but under-evaluated so far. It has the potential to increase land-use efficiency, soil quality, incomes and social links between worker and plantation owners. It is in addition a good example of an interdisciplinary work between natural and social sciences on a relevant topic not only for Cameroon, but also for the main producing countries.

The team in Cameroon is about to start the field work. The first step will be to find a set of plantations with different management practices that can be compared with each other (= with and without intercropping, with and without fertilization), the second step will be to take soil samples in the selected plantations and to carry out botanical surveys (using the transect method), and finally to analyse the samples and plant surveys. Interviews and surveys will be done in parallel to analyse the impact on productivity and income on these same sites.

Compared to the research done previously, this new one will be extended to other oil palm growing regions of Cameroon (Central, Southern, Coastal and South-Western Regions) in order to have an almost exhaustive view of the impacts of oil palm development and management in the country. This research project should take about two years and result in the publication of three peer-reviewed articles.

Conferences

19th International Conference on Palm Oil (Cartagena, Colombia, 26-28 September 2018)

Alejandra Rueda (NES NATURALEZA, Colombia) and John Ulloa Garcia (ETH Zurich) attended the 19th International Conference on Palm Oil organized by Fedepalma, and had the opportunity to present different topics related to the OPAL Project. During the session of Sustainability and Market Environment, John Garcia presented part of his, Natalia Ocampo-Peñuela's (ETH Zurich) and Andres Etter's (Universidad Javeriana) work on biodiversity. In this same session, Fedepalma presented its project Biodiversed Palm Oil Landscapes (GEF Palmero), which has also been led by WWF Colombia. This project presented insights on how to implement landscape management tools in the field. The conference included a wide range of presentations, including Gernot Keppler from ISCC who discussed the implications of the Renewable Energy Directive of the European Community.

LandAC (Utrecht University, Netherlands, 28-29 June 2018)

Bayu Eka Yulian (IPB), Heru Komarudin (CIFOR) and Jaboury Ghazoul (ETH Zurich) attended the LandAC seminar Land Governance And (Im)Mobility: Exploring The Nexus Between Land Acquisition, Displacement And Migration. The topic addressed the rural transformations induced by large-scale industrial crop production. These panels tried to understand the meaning of rural transformation in oil palm areas, and explored emergent initiatives to address negative consequences of such transformations. Bayu Eka Yulian, et al. presented: Oil Palm Expansion: Livelihood Dilemma of The Rural Household in East Kalimantan. Heru Komarudin et al. , presented: Who's Responsible? Contestation over Forestland in the Midst of Indonesia's Oil Palm Development. Bayu's presentation is available here.

Webinar on Adaptive Landscape Approaches by the Global Land Programme (GLP) (October 2018)

Claude Garcia (ETH Zurich/CIRAD) mentions the OPAL work in Cameroon as example to answer a question from the audience. As part of a GLP working group called Co-production of Sustainable Land Systems, Claude participated in a webinar together with three other members of the group. Claude's intervention about OPAL starts at 1h25m34s:

https://glp.earth/news-events/news/second-glp-co-production-webinar-recording-and-materials-now-available

New peer-reviewed publications

Meijaard, E., Garcia-Ulloa, J., Sheil, D., Wich, S. A., Carlson, K. M., Juffe-Bignoli, D., & Brooks, T. M. (2018). Oil palm and biodiversity: a situation analysis by the IUCN Oil Palm Task Force. https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2018.11.en

Yulian, B. E., Dharmawan, A. H., Soetarto, E., & Pacheco, P. (2018). Livelihood Dilemma of The Rural Household Around The Oil Palm Plantation in East Kalimantan. *Sodality: Jurnal Sosiologi Pedesaan*, *5*(3). http://dx.doi.org/10.22500/sodality.v5i3.19398

Guillaume, T., Kotowska, M., Hertel, D., Knohl, A., Krashevska, V., Murtilaksono, K., Scheu, S. and Kuzyakov, Y. (2018) Carbon costs and benefits of Indonesian rainforest conversion to plantations. Nature Communications volume 9 2388. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-04755-y

Ocampo-Peñuela, N., Garcia-Ulloa, J., Ghazoul, J. and Etter, A. (2018). Quantifying impacts of oil palm expansion on Colombia's threatened biodiversity . Biological Conservation 224, 117 – 121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.05.024

Manoli, G., Meijide, A., Huth, N., Knohl, A., Kosugi, Y., Burlando, P., Ghazoul, J., and Fatichi, S. (2018). Ecohydrological changes after tropical forest conversion to oil palm. Environmental Research Letters *13 064035.* https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aac54e

Manoli, G., Ivanov, V. Y., & Fatichi, S. (2018). Dry-season greening and water stress in Amazonia: The role of modeling leaf phenology. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 123. https://doi.org/10.1029/2017JG004282