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TROPICAL ECOLOGY | 2018

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR TROPICAL ECOLOGY (GTÖ)



**CHALLENGES IN
TROPICAL ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION -
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES**





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HUNTING IN TIMES OF CHANGE: INDIGENOUS STRATEGIES IN THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON

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The Amazon region, following a tropical pattern, is experiencing socio-economic changes at an exceptionally high rate, generating pressure on the people that need to adapt to new settings. Despite the change, indigenous people still rely on the forest they are embedded in and – among other activities – do hunt and trade wildlife in order to meet their livelihood requirements. Their forest dependency combined with added external pressures forces them to walk the fine line between overhunting and exacerbated poverty. Individual strategies, shaped by the hunters' values and ambitions as well as external conditions, need to cope with the novelty and evolve accordingly. For the effective implementation of conservation initiatives, we, as scientists, should acknowledge this delicate balance and take into account people' strategies with their underlying drivers and their adaptive capabilities. Lacking the understanding that drives decision-making of the forest dwellers can lead to frustration and mistrust by both parties while at the same time delivering poor outcomes hampering present and possibly future initiatives.



To uncover hunting strategies in the Colombian Amazon and their evolution under the current socio-economic transition, we co-designed a role-playing game together with the relevant stakeholders. The game simulates the mosaic of activities that hunters perform in the wet and dry season, while also allowing for specific hunting strategies. Conditions change while the game unfolds, opening up to alternative potential scenarios that have been suggested by the stakeholders themselves. Will hunters give up hunting when given the opportunity of an alternative income source? Will institutional changes affect their livelihoods? These are some of the questions that we have been able to explore through the game.

When it comes to coupled human-nature systems, the best way forward to produce just and resilient conservation strategies might be triggering an adaptive process of experiential learning and scenario exploration. It is about identifying the strings that pull the system and adjusting our strategies whatever direction we take. The use of games as "boundary objects" helps us eliciting the plurality of those strategies, their drivers and how outside change affect them.

Merian Award Applicant

