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**Sustainability governance and scale framing: the case of palm oil**

Authors: Dr. Otto Hospes, Public Administration and Policy Group, Wageningen University. Annemoon Kentin, MSc, Wageningen University. Corresponding e-mail address: otto.hospes@wur.nl

**Abstract**

In this article I will use scale frames to describe controversy and rivalry between different state and non-state actors in the development of principles and partnerships to promote sustainability. My case is about the promotion of sustainable palm oil in Indonesia, being one of the top two palm oil producing and exporting countries of the world. The first objective of the article is to use the concept of scale frames to describe scale-sensitive governance of sustainable palm oil as a political practice and means of disparagement of views and voices in policy debate. The second objective is to assess whether and how sustainability governance of palm oil can be enriched by the use of scale frames as an analytical tool.

The central question of the article is: what discursive practices are used by state and non-state actors to define the scale at which the problem of sustainable palm oil in Indonesia is experienced and the scale at which it should be politically addressed and resolved? To address this question, I will describe the interactive development of global and national principles and criteria to promote sustainable palm oil in Indonesia. I will focus my description on three key players, their actions and interactions: the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil as a global private partnership, the Indonesian Palm Oil Committee (IPOC) of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Indonesian association of palm oil producers (GAPKI).

The article consists of five parts: in the first part, I will briefly discuss the role and contribution of scale frames to debates and approaches to scale and governance. In the second part, I will describe the development of the global standard for sustainable palm oil as organized by the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and how the national interpretation of this private standard triggered public authorities in Indonesia to develop the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) standard. The third part provides an account of scale frames and counter-scale frames that have been constructed and used in the making of global and national standards for sustainable palm oil. The fourth part draws some conclusions on scale frames and counter-scale frames in the case of palm oil. The fifth part offers a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of scale frames to enrich sustainability governance of palm oil.

The article is based on a comparative case study of framing of sustainability and the use of scale frames at two events on sustainable palm oil that were nearly organized at the same time: the annual and international conferences of the RSPO and GAPKI at the end of 2011 (Kentin 2012). It also draws on a series of earlier desk and field research on the RSPO as a new form of governance (Hospes et al. 2009, Hospes 2011a, Hospes 2011b, Pooter 2008).

## 1. Scale and scale frames

The concept of scale keeps puzzling natural and social sciences in their efforts to explore processes and dynamics in human-environment systems. Cash et al. (2006) distinguish seven types of scales: spatial, temporal, jurisdictional, institutional, management, networks and knowledge. Though they observe that, 'Our understanding of patterns of scale and cross-scale dynamics in linked human-environment systems has advanced substantially in the past decade', they acknowledge that, 'there is still little understanding of the dominant mechanisms of cross-scale interaction'. In practice, the use of scale is often limited to geographical, temporal or jurisdictional scale. Whereas scientists have clearly defined level as 'a location on a scale' (Gibson et al. 2000: 18), the concepts of scale and level are often used interchangeably by policymakers. Even social scientists sometimes treat level and scale as synonyms too.

Some consider the concept of scale as a potentially unifying concept for natural and social science (Gibson et al 2000). Others accuse each other of misunderstanding the use of scale in research (Leitner and Miller 2007, Marston et al. 2005). Anyway, to develop scale as a unifying concept and to break through the controversy, three fundamental but related differences in the use of scale need to be acknowledged and discussed. First, scale is ontologically given versus scale is socially constructed. Second, scale is a structural property of natural and social systems versus scale is a product and expression of agency, of actors framing reality and constructing knowledge. Third, scale is a scientific tool versus scale is a weapon in power struggles. An example of a science-based and science-biased approach is the widely cited definition of scale as 'the spatial, temporal, quantitative or analytical dimensions used to measure or study any phenomenon' (Gibson et al. 2000: 218). The emphasis is on 'measuring' and 'studying' and on the use of scale by natural and social scientists. An example of a social constructivist approach to scale to unravel the politics of scale is the view of Brown and Purcell (2005), stating that scale is 'not an independent variable that can cause outcomes' in struggles over the environment but rather 'a strategy used by political groups to pursue a particular agenda' (p. 608).

The concept of scale frames is based on a socially constructivist notion of scale as used and developed in political ecology, political geography and also public administration (Brown and Purcell 2005, Harrison 2006, Kurtz 2003, Leitner 1997, Lieshout et al. 2011). Kurtz (2003) has defined scale frames as 'discursive practices that construct meaningful (and actionable) linkages between the scale at which a problem is experienced and the scale(s) at which it could be politically addressed or resolved' (p.894). The giving of meaning to the linkage between the scale of a problem and the scale of politics is an outcome of interactions and power struggles between different actors. The scale of a problem is not defining the scale of politics, and vice versa: the scale of politics does not define the scale at which a problem is perceived. 'There is nothing inherent about scale' (Brown and Purcell 2005): one can neither assume an ideal scale of politics nor one way to frame the scale a problem. Cross-scale dynamics is socially constructed.

As a tool and outcome of power struggles, scale frames reflect and are subject to controversy. Kurtz (2003) distinguishes scale frames and counter-scale frames to show how different actors construct the problem of environmental justice and use scale frames as a means of inclusion and exclusion of actors in political debate. This implies that the social construction of a scale frame is often a reaction to another one and/or may trigger the construction of new ones. Scale frames assume rivalry and

lead us to explore social interaction and processes of inclusion and exclusion of voices and values. If governance is basically about organizing voices and values, then scale frames can be seen and studied as governing practices or mechanisms of governance.

Scale frames can be fluid as a result of on-going political struggles but also be fixed or routinized into 'relatively enduring and hegemonic structures' for certain periods of time (Brown and Purcell 2005). Seen this way, scale frames can be used as a bridging concept in debates on scale as a structural component of social systems versus scale as an expression of agency (Leitner and Miller 2006, Marston et. al 2005). The discursive practices of actors that construct meaningful linkages between the scale of a problem and the scale of politics, are both reproducing and changing power, normative and cognitive structures. Scale frames can be seen as a structure-agency or structuring concept (Giddens 1979). They are discursive practices of actors that both discipline and challenge ways of thinking, speaking and acting on problems and power. Scale frames are not limited to, or the product of one individual, but emerge in social interaction and serve to guide, organize and legitimize collective action. Kurtz (2003) conceptualizes scale frames as 'a type of collective action frame' (p.894).

The concept of scale frames has been used in case studies to describe scaled discourse over environmental effects in a relatively small geographical area: the plan to build a PVC production facility in a parish in rural Convent of Louisiana state (Kurtz 2003), the effects of the air-borne movement of pesticides on a small agricultural community in California (Harrison 2006), and the establishment of a mega-farm in a small village in the Netherlands (Lieshout et al. 2011). Though not limited to them, the case studies are biased towards the construction of scale frames by activists, social movements or local communities that fear environmental effects of, or feel threatened by some kind of industrial plan. The case studies show how these actors use scale frames to articulate the problem and to seek support or build strategic alliances with other actors to obstruct top-down industrial or business plans.

My own case study is not about controversy over environmental effects in a small geographical area and does not address discursive practices of activists at community level in the first place. The controversy addressed in this article is about environmental and social effects of palm oil production in Indonesia, covering some 5 million hectares and accounting for 40-45 percent of the total world production. The case study is about the scale frames of a global partnership of business and civil society actors to contribute to sustainable production all over the world and how these scale frames have evoked a counter-scale frame of the national government of Indonesia, seeking support from Indonesian palm oil producers.

## 2. The development of global and national principles for sustainable palm oil

Palm oil is the leading tropical vegetable oil due to the rapidly growing global demand for this oil as an input for food products, cosmetics, animal feed and bio-energy. Whereas the production of palm oil is largely concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia (together accounting for 80-90 percent of world production), the trade and consumption of palm oil is truly global: commodity chains of palm oil have spread worldwide to reach nearly 70 countries importing palm oil, including China, India and the EU-27 as the main importing countries (USDA 2011, Index Mundi 2012).

The rapid growth in palm oil production and trade has generated income and employment to millions of people and foreign currency for many countries. At the same time, this growth has given rise to concerns on negative environmental and social effects of palm oil production. Environmental effects are first of all associated with deforestation for the planting of oil palm. This leads to loss of biodiversity through habitat loss. Deforestation and the exploitation of peat soils also lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions, such as CO2, and to soil erosion. In case forests are cleared through burning, air quality problems may result from it. There may also be pollution of waterways due to the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The industrial production of palm oil in mills and the transportation of products are other sources of pollution of air, water and soil (Danielsen et al. 2009, McCarthy and Zen 2010, Reijnders and Huijbregts 2006, Tan et al. 2009).

Negative social effects of expansion and large-scale organization of palm oil production include social-political unrest at community level due to land conflicts, food and income insecurity and broken promises (McCarthy and Cramp 2009, McCarthy 2010, Rietberg 2011). Increasingly, concerns are being raised about the low productivity of smallholder production as part of large-scale plantation schemes, providing incentives for plantation owners to expand production and acquire licenses to cut forest. The negative effects of expansion and large-scale organization of palm oil production are also considered to be the (more or less direct) result of the ways in which international private corporations and funding agencies influence and organize palm oil processing and trade.

To advance more sustainable production of palm oil, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Unilever took the initiative to organize the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil. From 2002 onwards they started to invite as many as possible of traders, manufacturers, producer organisations and NGOs to contribute to the development of a global standard for sustainable production of palm oil. In response to the urgent and pressing global call for sustainably produced palm oil, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was registered as a foundation under Swiss law in 2004 with the objective of 'promoting the growth and use of sustainable oil palm products through credible global standards and engagement of stakeholders'. On the basis of multi-stakeholder consultations involving representatives from the spheres of business and civil society from more than 40 countries, 8 global principles and 35 criteria for production of sustainable palm oil were adopted at the General Assembly of the RSPO in 2007.

This decision marked the beginning of a new series of negotiations on the 'national interpretation and implementation' of these principles and criteria in seven palm oil producing countries, involving both state and non-state actors. National teams were organized to ensure that the implementation of the global principles and criteria is 'congruent or compatible with the norms, laws and values of countries, or sovereign states' (RSPO 2009). In Indonesia the national teams consisted of 65 members, of which 21 high officials from six different ministries, the national agency for standards and the national agency for land (RSPO 2008). The public-private consultation at the national level was not meant to integrate or insert global principles into national laws but rather to use knowledge about national laws on how to adapt the global RSPO principles to the national context.

However, the process of adapting the global standard to the national context and the participation of state actors in the national interpretation of the global private standard was not satisfactory enough to the national government of Indonesia. In his key note speech at the eight international RSPO

conference in 2010, the Indonesian Minister of Agriculture announced that the government is preparing the launch of a national standard: Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO). Whereas the obligations that must be met by oil palm planters and millers are nearly an exact copy of the eight RSPO principles, the government thought it necessary to introduce the ISPO. The official argument was that the RSPO principles and criteria are not good enough to promote sustainable production of palm oil in Indonesia: these principles and criteria are voluntary and therefore considered ineffective or too slow to change agricultural practices. The ISPO is an obligatory standard for all palm oil plantations.

Shortly after the official launch of the ISPO in 2011, the association of Indonesian Palm Oil Producers (GAPKI) decided to resign from membership of the RSPO, saying that the association wanted to concentrate on the development of the ISPO. GAPKI has almost 500 members, ranging from state-owned plantations and private-owned plantations to cooperative-based oil palm planters. The main aim of GAPKI is 'to unite all stakeholders in Indonesian palm oil industry and to constantly increase and uphold Indonesian palm oil competitiveness, promoting sustainable palm oil practices, as well as becoming government's partner in improving national welfare through smallholder empowerment' (GAPKI 2012).

## 3. The interactive development and use of scale frames

On the one hand the initiative of the government of Indonesia can be seen as a positive spin-off of the RSPO, its principles and the national team for the interpretation and implementation of these principles and criteria. The ISPO obligations are nearly a copy of the RSPO principles and have nation-wide coverage. On the other hand, the discourse on palm oil and sustainability of the Indonesian government and GAPKI and the scale frames that are used to legitimize the introduction of the ISPO suggest that the ISPO is not about a race to the top and going one step further than the RSPO in promoting sustainability. The introduction of the ISPO is rather about a power struggle between a coalition of international companies and NGOs on the one hand and a coalition of Indonesian authorities and palm oil producers on who is to sit behind the steering wheel to define and promote sustainable palm oil in Indonesia. Scale frames play a key role in this power struggle. They are used to exclude certain actors in the development of principles and herewith their values or ideas on sustainability.

With so many different actors that have participated in the discussions on RSPO principles and criteria and in international conferences of the RSPO, it is a bit daring to identify *the* scale frame of the RSPO. Also, the RSPO is an institution that has gone through a number of phases, with the agenda shifting accordingly. Till 2007 the emphasis has been on developing the global principles and criteria for sustainable production of palm oil, afterwards giving way to issues of implementation and adaptation to the national context, certification, monitoring and organization of dispute settlement. Also, the RSPO put 'the smallholder' and 'market access ' on the agenda to discuss challenges at both ends of globalized palm oil commodity chains. The annual conference of 2010 was called 'The RSPO is also for smallholders' whereas the one of 2011 was entitled 'RSPO certified: transforming the market together'. In 2012 the RSPO embraced the following objective or vision: 'RSPO will transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm' (RSPO 2012). Finally, the concept of 'stakeholder' was explicitly broadened to include consumers and governments. These new challenges were brought together in a new mission of the RSPO adopted at the General Assembly of 2012:

- to advance the production, procurement, finance and use of sustainable palm oil products;
- to develop, implement, verify, assure and periodically review credible global standards for the entire supply chain of sustainable palm oil;
- to monitor and evaluate the economic, environmental and social impacts of the uptake of sustainable palm oil in the market;
- to engage and commit all stakeholders throughout the supply chain, including governments and consumers.

On the basis of the discussion on global principles and criteria for sustainable palm oil and the implementation agenda after 2007 geared towards market transformation, I want to distinguish two scale frames of the RSPO:

*Scale frame 1: global private governance of local palm oil production*

In the first scale frame the scale at which the problem is experienced is local and situated in production areas whereas the scale at which it could be politically addressed or resolved is global. The kind of activity or the problem being targeted by the RSPO principles and criteria is large-scale production of palm oil. The eight principles and 35 criteria are to be applied by growers and millers in plantation areas. The principles and criteria were not specifically geared towards smallholders, whether contract farmers at plantations or independent producers. The normative content of the principles and criteria is not limited to or biased towards one particular sustainability dimension or value, but consists of economic, environmental, social and legal ones (Hospes 2011).

For developing and discussing global principles and criteria for sustainable palm oil, WWF and Unilever agreed that it was essential to invite palm oil producers from Indonesia and Malaysia to participate in multi-stakeholder consultation but at the same time thought it wise not to organize the RSPO as a public-private partnership. They feared that participation of officials from different countries would slow down and complicate decision-making, with the risk of not reaching consensus at all on global principles and criteria. When the RSPO was established as a foundation under Swiss law in 2004, national governments were excluded from membership. This way the round table could not evolve as an intergovernmental institution. Business and civil society actors created their own political space and situated themselves at a global scale to exclusively define principles and criteria for the production of palm oil. The principles and criteria are not intergovernmental but global: they are not based on an agreement between states, yet to be followed and used for certification in any location where palm oil is produced.

The framing of the discussion format and political space as a ‘round table’ does not refer to any scale in particular at which to develop principles and criteria for sustainable palm oil production. However, it clearly suggests the importance of bringing together different players of ‘vertical’ commodity chains into a kind of ‘horizontal’ decision-making platform, in which all can be heard and have an equal say. The RSPO distinguishes seven categories of members: oil palm growers, palm oil processors and traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks and investors, environmental and nature conservation organizations, and social and development organizations. These constituencies have equal voting power at the General Assembly. Whereas oil palm growers are the ones to adopt the principles and criteria and to get certified, they do not have more voting power than any other constituency of the RSPO.

*Scale frame 2: global private governance for global market transformation*

After the adoption of the global principles and criteria, decision-making power of the RSPO was not shifted to national agencies, let alone public authorities. The interpretation of these principles and criteria by national teams of private and public actors does not refer to another scale of governance but to another level of the global scale to advance sustainable palm oil production. The scale at which to discuss the implementation of principles and criteria and newly emerging issues remained global.

However, with the adoption of the principles and criteria for sustainable palm oil, the focus of the agenda of the RSPO gradually shifted from defining sustainable production to market transformation. The problem of defining sustainability was considered done. With the certification of oil palm growers and millers, the problem statement has shifted from stopping negative environmental and social effects of palm oil production to selling certified palm oil. The 'market' has to accept the RSPO standard as the benchmark. Certified palm oil has to become the mainstream in global palm oil commodity flows to China, India, EU-27 and other palm oil importing countries. The scale of the problem is not so much local production any longer but the global market. In this light, the proposal of the RSPO Board at the General Assembly of March 2012 to create a new category for transnational companies and organisations to become ordinary members, indicates the eagerness of the board to involve these companies and organisations in mainstreaming certified palm oil in global markets. The proposal was not accepted (Kentin 2012).

*Counter-scale frame: the Indonesian government is to address an Indonesian problem*

At the 8$^{th}$ international conference of the RSPO and in a newspaper article appearing shortly after this conference in November 2010, the chair of the IPOC explained that the government of Indonesia is preparing a national obligatory standard for Indonesian sustainable palm oil to overcome the limited outreach and effectiveness of the voluntary RSPO principles and criteria. In her presentation of the ISPO at the GAPKI conference one year later, the chair provided a more fundamental critique on the RSPO and began to challenge the scaling of the problem by the RSPO. The problem of sustainable palm oil was reframed at a national scale as an Indonesian problem: "The problem of sustainable palm oil is not for anybody else in the world, but for us, for our environment" (Kentin 2012). In her view, a national problem requires a national solution in the form of the standard for Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) that is based on Indonesian law.

The official reason for GAPKI to leave the RSPO was to support the development of the ISPO. The Secretary-General of GAPKI clearly suggested that this was not the only reason. He reframed the scale of the RSPO by calling it a European initiative instead of a global partnership. He also qualified RSPO certification as an option and ticket for accessing the European market, not as a global benchmark: "Companies in Indonesia that have European companies needing the RSPO standard, can proceed with the RSPO membership. For companies with no business in Europe, it does not matter". The main palm oil importing countries in the world are currently India and China, with the EU-27 ranking as third (Index Mundi 2012). By calling the RSPO a European solution, he undermines the view of those European companies and members of the RSPO, who believe that the RSPO is superior to the ISPO because "the RSPO is accepted by international markets, whereas the ISPO is not yet". The chair of the IPOC even wonders whether there is a real demand for sustainable palm oil in

Europe by saying: “When I travel to Europe, I could not find anybody who knew what sustainable palm oil is” (Kentin 2012).

The launch of the ISPO and the resignation of GAPKI from the RSPO have also reinforced the earlier heard critique from the side of palm oil producers that there is no equality in sharing the burden of adapting to RSPO principles and criteria. They also feel that the voting system of the RSPO is unfair and biased towards non-growers. Last but not least, the launch of the ISPO and withdrawal by GAPKI suggest that the problem of defining and assessing sustainability is not at all solved. At different meetings in Indonesia and abroad, whether organized by RSPO, GAPKI or the World Bank, the government of Indonesia has taken the opportunity to emphasize that the economic benefits of palm oil production and expansion in terms of income and employment should not be underestimated. At the international conference organized by GAPKI in 2011, only positive social, environmental and economic effects of palm oil production were highlighted (Kentin 2012). Participants mentioned that Indonesian palm oil producers have their own definition or appreciation of sustainability, either considering it of lesser importance than economic prosperity or as part of economic development: ‘What is more important: to feed the people or the orangutan? The title of the GAPKI conference in 2013 is: ‘Palm oil as an engine to sustain economic growth and expand trade’.

The programs and discussions at the RSPO and GAPKI conferences that were nearly held simultaneously at the end of 2011, reflect a discursive and power struggle between a coalition of international companies and NGOs on the one hand and a coalition of Indonesian palm oil growers and authorities on the other hand. At the 9th Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil, the discussion was mainly about social and environmental issues, only paying attention to economic issues in relation to smallholder development. The audience consisted of a wide range of business and civil society actors from 34 countries from all over the world.[1] At the 7th Indonesian Palm Oil Conference and Price Outlook organized by GAPKI, the discussion on sustainable palm oil was about economic growth and the Indonesian environment. The audience largely consisted of participants from Indonesia.[2] At the GAPKI conference, palm oil growers from Indonesia do not form a minority, like in the RSPO conference and General Assembly. The GAPKI conference provides them with an opportunity to frame sustainability as part of, or even of lesser importance, than economic prosperity. Palm oil is not seen as a problem but an opportunity, a ticket for economic growth. The launch of the ISPO by the government of Indonesia provided GAPKI with an exit opportunity from the RSPO.

With GAPKI emphasizing the importance of palm oil for sustainable economic growth and the government of Indonesia considering any problem with sustainability as an Indonesian one, the scale frames of the RSPO are seriously being challenged. Remarkably, at the RSPO conference of 2011 both the launch of the ISPO and resignation of GAPKI from RSPO membership have been ignored or downplayed. The ISPO is either considered to be based on a bunch of laws that never proved to be effective, or a stepping stone for RSPO certification. The vision and discourse of the RSPO is market transformation, emphasizing the need ‘to revolutionize the market’ in India and China and to explore ‘new frontiers blazing the trail’ in upcoming palm oil producing countries. The RSPO board is more concerned about how to get transnational companies accepted as a new category of members and

[1] The total of 886 participants included 324 from Malaysia, 207 from Indonesia, 138 from Europe and 12 from China (Kentin 2012).
[2] The total of 1145 participants included 920 participants from Indonesia, 80 participants from Malaysia, 36 participants from Europe, 11 from India, 9 from China and 3 from India (Kentin 2012, RSPO 2011).

voters than with the ISPO as a rivalling standard, both in Indonesia and abroad. The government of Indonesia does not only present the ISPO as an obligatory standard for all palm oil producers in Indonesia but also seeks recognition for this standard at the WTO, Codex and international organisations for standards (ISO, IEC). The government also wants to use the ISPO when discussing new bilateral trade agreements with palm oil importing countries.

## 4. Conclusions

The development of global and national standards for sustainable palm oil in Indonesia is characterized by the construction and use of scale and counter-scale frames. By framing the scale of the problem as local and linked to production and by framing the scale at which to develop principles and criteria as global, business and civil society actors effectively created and used the RSPO as a political space in which governments were excluded and palm oil producers had to accept a minority position. By reframing the scale of the problem as global and adopting the discourse on market transformation , business and civil society actors tried to further emphasize the importance of the RSPO as a global and private form of governance. In reaction to these scale frames, Indonesian authorities and palm oil producers developed a counter-scale frame in which the scale of the problem was framed as Indonesian and the scale of the authority to deal with any sustainability problem was defined as national. With this counter-scale frame, the Indonesian authorities and producers created a political space in which a national standard for Indonesian sustainable palm oil was developed and in which it was much more accepted, if not: 'normal', to speak about the contribution of palm oil to sustained economic growth or economic prosperity for all.

The development of global and national standards for sustainable palm oil in Indonesia show that state and non-state actors involved are very scale-sensitive. They frame the scale of a problem and the scale at which to discuss and develop standards in such a way as to include or exclude certain actors and ideas on sustainability. The launch of the ISPO particularly shows that the Indonesian government is re-positioning itself as a key actor in sustainability governance of global commodities, developing own standards and building new coalitions and networks in the context of globalization (coming close to the 'entrepreneurial state' as distinguished by Andonova 2011). The downplaying of the launch of the ISPO and resignation of GAPKI from the RSPO suggests that RSPO leadership has not come to terms with this re-positioning yet. The vision and discourse of the RSPO are directed at market transformation whereas the initiatives of Indonesian palm oil producers and authorities suggest that it is equally, if not more, urgent to discuss the institutional transformation of the RSPO, or for that matter: version 2.0 of the RSPO as a multi-stakeholder initiative or multi-organisational partnership.

The case study of palm oil confirms the finding of Smith and Fishlein (2011) arguing that, 'The impetus for creating a competing network most often stems from groups of stakeholders that are either excluded from the creation of the initial effort or feel disadvantaged by the course its development is taking' (p.514). The government of Indonesia was not involved in the creation of the global principles and criteria of the RSPO. The adoption of the global principles and criteria and the national interpretation triggered the Indonesian government to launch the ISPO. Indonesian palm oil producers were invited and involved at an early stage but felt disadvantaged by the RSPO decision-making process and implementation. They found the voting system unfair and too much biased towards non-growers. They found that the burden to reduce or minimize negative effects was not

evenly distributed over all chain actors but largely put on them. And in the first place, they felt that there was too little understanding and appreciation for palm oil production as an engine for economic prosperity for all. The on-going and unresolved conflicts about these issues pushed the association of Indonesian palm oil producers to the exit door, leaving the round table and committing themselves to the development of the ISPO.

## 5. Strengths and limits of scale frames to explore sustainability governance

The concept of scale frames is useful to study sustainability governance in the context of globalization processes, in which flows of goods, people, norms and ideas explain increasingly complex relationships in human-environment systems. This very much applies to the governance of sustainable palm oil. Whereas the production of palm oil is largely concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia, the trade and consumption of palm oil are global. This has led to controversy on who is to blame for negative environmental and social effects of palm oil production and what could be legitimate and effective forms of governance to address these effects. In such a situation, the concept of scale frames is useful to explore how different state and non-state actors construct the scale of a problem and the scale(s) at which to politically address or resolve this problem. State and non-state actors use differently scaled discourse to organize collective action, to discipline thinking on problems and solutions, and to establish partnerships or networks.

Whereas the concept of scale frames emphasizes that scale is a social construction, it is not so helpful to explore what social relationships are developed and used to frame the scale of a problem and governance. The case of sustainable palm oil, characterized by the emergence of rivalling governance networks, suggests that sustainability governance not only requires an understanding of the politics of scale but also the politics of networks (Bulkeley 2005). Scaling and networking can both be seen and studied as mechanisms or strategies to include or exclude actors and principles in governing sustainability in a globalizing world.

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