



FairFrontiers Newsletter

Issue 1
May 2023



Commercial forest reserve in Bengkoka, Sabah (photo by Ahmad)

First newsletter!

Welcome to our first issue for FairFrontiers' newsletter. Here we will share some updates from the project, as well as upcoming events. We hope to share a newsletter every three months. If there is anything relevant you would like to share in future newsletters, please contact Ayami (ayami.kan@chikyu.ac.jp). Articles, organisations, etc. mentioned in this newsletter have [embedded links](#).

Methods Training Workshop and Field Visit in Sabah (April 10-17)

A 4-day methods training workshop was held in Sabah, organised with [PACOS Trust](#). The workshop was held to train local youth interns and partners in the FairFrontiers methods on assessing Ecosystem Services and Wellbeing Bundles in preparation for field data collection in Bengkoka Peninsular, Pitas.

Following the methods workshop, members of PACOS, FairFrontiers, and the youth interns spent 4 days in Pitas for a field practice of the methods in Sungai Elo village.



Local youths learning to facilitate a Focus Group Discussion, led by Moira Moeliono



Youth interns practicing the household survey in the village

Bengkoka Peninsular has undergone dramatic land use change since the State-led reforestation and settlement project and development of Acacia plantations in 1979. Local communities continue to struggle for recognition of their customary land rights. More recent land development schemes by various government agencies and private enterprises such as the shrimp farm project and Eucalyptus plantations are both competitors and barriers to land ownership for the villagers.

Overall, it was an intense but productive week for all the participants.

Hosting Ole Mertz and Unai Pascual at RIHN

Ole Mertz spent three months at RIHN from December 2022-March 2023 as an Invited Scholar. The FairFrontiers team had the pleasure to learn from Ole's expertise on integrating ecosystem services and human wellbeing. As an Invited Scholar, Ole shared new trends on research assessment such as the [San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) with RIHN. DORA advocates to limit the use of bibliometric indicators when assessing research proposals and outputs, but rather to assess research on its own merits.

Ole also organized a seminar, titled "*Can agriculture and nature conservation co-exist at forest-agriculture frontiers?*"

Unai Pascual from Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3) and [co-chair of IPBES](#), presented findings from [a study in Kapuas Hulu, West Kalimantan](#). The case examines the dynamism of local uses, desires, and values of ecosystem services in areas of rubber and palm oil plantations. Communities residing in these frontiers both desire the benefits of agricultural intensification, and the preservation traditional ecosystem usages and culture. These contradictions have implications for how trade-offs (values, uses) can be examined, and pose questions about how diverse values can be integrated in equitable development. Unai also provided substantive inputs to ongoing project research.



Unai giving the presentation at the RIHN seminar

The second speaker, **Shinya Takeda** of Kyoto University discussed about swidden transformations and its influence on fallow forests with wild tea and other NTFPs, based on case studies in [Japan](#), [Laos](#), and [Myanmar](#). Wild tea and NTFPs such as cardamom are important sources of income, and these cases show that conservation policies that prevent management and growth of such NTFPs greatly impact the communities that rely on them.

Ole then discussed whether the [separation of protected areas from agricultural land actually works in practice](#). The short answer is no, but this is due to many interconnected causes. Often, restrictions in protected areas lead to leakage in buffer zones and cause further intensification for food production. As discourses of both agricultural production and conservation intensify, what are the implications?

The seminar closed with a group discussion on questions based on the three presentations, in addition to ideas for ways equity can be at the centre of discussions during policy-making.

Following the seminar, Unai, Ole, and a couple of us went on a short excursion to Kochi Prefecture, where we visited a small village of 18 households in Otoyō. Up until the 1960s, shifting cultivation was practiced in these areas. As shown in the photo, these communities are surrounded by vast areas of planted Japanese cedar. Like many parts of Japan, Otoyō is experiencing rapid depopulation and ageing, which poses challenges for how and who will manage these forests.



View of Otoyō town

Sharing research findings to local communities in Campo and Niété, Cameroon (April 19-22)

Following field data collection in four villages in the district of Campo and Niété from August 2022-March 2023, findings from the research were presented back to the villages. The results were presented by the two research interns, [Green Development Advocates](#) and Samuel Assembe-Mvondo. The findings that were shared with the villagers include: the ecosystem services



Research intern presenting the findings to members of the villages

identified from the various land uses, chemical analysis of the soils and water sampled, as well as the impacts of agro-industries and the Campo Ma'an National Park on the well-being of communities in these villages. The community members were very engaged in the research findings. In discussions on what can be done moving forward, they reflected on challenges to address the ongoing environmental degradation and human-wildlife conflicts caused by the Camvert plantation and other projects around their villages.

MOUs Signed

In April, FairFrontiers signed two new MOUs with partners in Democratic Republic of Congo:

- **Centre de Recherche Interculturelles et Interdisciplinaires pour le Développement Durable en Afrique Australe et Centrale** (CERIDAC - Center for Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Research for Sustainable Development in Southern and Central Africa)
- [Forgotten Parks Foundation](#), an environmental NGO that works at the Upemba National Park

Forest & Society - Call for papers for special issue

Forest and Society journal has a open call for papers for a special issue co-edited by FairFrontiers collaborators: [Navigating change in forest-agriculture frontiers: Centering equity and justice in land use transformation in the Global South](#). Submissions are accepted until **August 2024**.

Leaving project member

Boon Kia Meng, our researcher at RIHN is leaving the project at the end of May. Kia Meng would like to thank his fellow FairFrontiers team members and project members for their friendship and kind support throughout his time with the project. If you would like to keep in touch, you can email him at [boonkiameng\(*\)gmail.com](mailto:boonkiameng(*)gmail.com) (Replace the star with @). We will miss Kia Meng!

Upcoming Events and Dates

19-24 June	IASC 2023 - XIX Biennial International Association of the Study of the Commons Conference (Nairobi, Kenya) – FairFrontiers project members will be co-organizing 2 panel sessions and presenting 6 papers
July - September	FairFrontiers will host a RIHN Visiting Fellow from Stockholm Resilience Centre, Dr. Niak Koh , who will be working with the project on telecoupling research
August	Methods workshop and field scoping visit planned in Laos
4-8 September	ECPR General Conference – European Consortium for Political Research – a paper on the Sabah media-based discourse analysis will be presented

For more information on any of the stories above, contact Ayami (ayami.kan@chikyu.ac.jp)