



# FairFrontiers Newsletter

Issue 2

September 2023

In our second issue, we share some reflections from the IASC in Nairobi, a telecoupling workshop held at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, and other updates from the past few months. Articles, organisations, etc. mentioned in this newsletter have [embedded links](#).

## **XIX Biennial IASC Conference in Nairobi, Kenya (June 19-28): ‘The Commons We Want – Between Historical Legacies and Future Collective Actions’**

*“The law locks up the man or woman  
Who steals the goose of the common  
But leaves the greater villain loose  
Who steals the common from the goose”*      Anonymous, 17<sup>th</sup> century

For the full poem, see this [link](#).

Ruth Hall and Moenieba Isaacs of the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies ([PLAAS](#)) used this poem to start off their keynote speech, its pithy phrases aptly capturing the overwhelming body of research at the conference which documented the onslaught of corporate, elite and state-backed land and resource grabbing and territorialization that is rampant across the African continent and the Global South, and the diversity of responses from below.

FairFrontiers researchers and members presented our work at the conference and co-chaired two panel sessions with the [FOREQUAL project](#) (University of Helsinki). The first panel, co-chaired by Maria Brockhaus, Ahmad Dhiaulhaq, and Grace Wong, examined ‘infrastructures of inequality in the transformation of forest commons for large-scale commodity production’. Papers in this session highlighted how ‘infrastructures’, encompassing both physical structures (roads, railways plantations, systems of labour) as well as underlying institutions and policies, facilitate flows of capital, discourses and incentives, and invisible patterns of power that (re)produce inequalities.

The second panel, titled ‘The colonial enterprise and the commons: conflict or congruence over ideas institutions for colonial productivity and today’s development’ was co-chaired by Samuel Assembe-Mvondo, Patrice Bigombe, and Moira Moeliono. Papers examined how colonial discourses remain deeply embedded in present governments across both Global South and North in driving market-based development, despite the often expressed aim of decolonizing laws to be more suitable to local cultures and contexts.

For more details on the talks, please look at the [Presentations section](#) of our website.

## FairFrontiers – FOREQUAL Workshop on Telecoupling Approaches to Assessing Inequalities (June 15-16)

Grace Wong

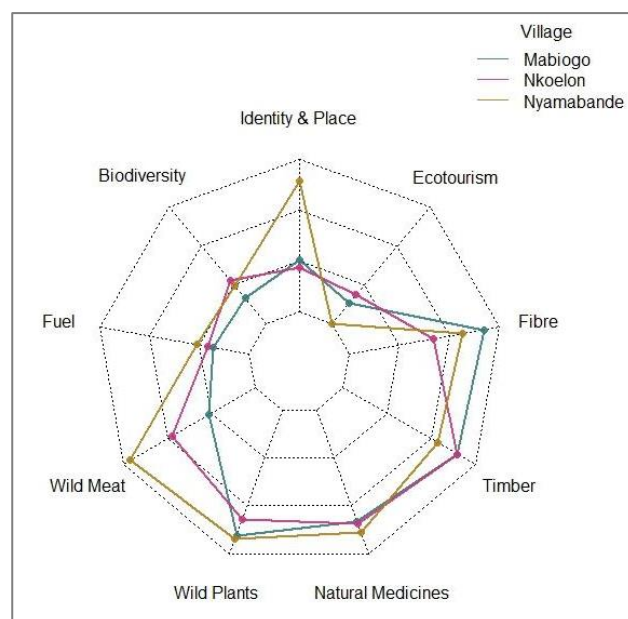
Over the past year and half, researchers from FairFrontiers and [FOREQUAL](#) have been collaborating on several analyses using the telecoupling approach. The objective of this workshop was to enable the sharing of different experiences and analytical methods, as well as empirical findings. A rich and diverse set of case studies were presented, including the case of tree plantations and local dispossession in Pitas, Sabah (Sarah Ali and Helena Varkkey, see Research Brief 1 in the Publications section), an analysis of historical economic flows between Germany and Cameroon from 1885-2022 (!) (Hannah Ehrlichmann), REDD+, competing land use finance and corporate links in Mai Ndombe, DR Congo (Niak Koh and Niina Pietarinen) and the investigative tracing of wood commodity flows from DR Congo (Alizee Ville). Odi Selomane presented work on upstream-downstream impacts of growing oranges in South Africa for EU market and Ana Paula Aguiar and Hanna Sinare on their ongoing research of how global discourses and demand for labor and commodities (tomatoes, wind energy) is displacing local farmers in Brazil and driving precarity amongst migrant workers in Spain. Collectively, these studies push boundaries on how telecoupling approaches can be applied to examine complex issues of inequalities/ inequities and the underlying historical structures reproducing these. There were lots of excitement and inspiration in the room and papers in the making ... stay tuned!

We will highlight work in the project modules in each newsletter. In this issue, we share findings from ongoing work in Module 2:

Catherine Hepp

**Sabah:** Since the methods training workshop and field visit back in April, local youth interns have made considerable progress on the field data collection. Through focus groups discussions, they are currently building community maps and history timelines of twenty villages in Pitas, who have formed an alliance (the 'G20') to defend their customary land rights against the encroachment of land development schemes. Once this is completed, a smaller group of villages will be selected for the household and land use surveys.

**Cameroon:** The field data from the three villages in Campo and Niete district have been completed and analysed. Two main findings from the study in regards to ecosystem services and land use will be shared briefly here. One is that amongst the ecosystem service bundles examined, forests (referring to forests/forest land that these villages have access to) had the most diverse set of ecosystem services identified across all the villages surveyed. The other finding is that perceptions for valuing various ecosystems services/land use was distinct between two ethnic groups—many households from the village Nyamabande, who are of the indigenous *Bagyeli* group, perceive the forest as highly important to their identity and sense of place compared to those of *Bantu* ethnicity, some of whom associated cassava systems with their identity and sense of place (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Star plot of the identified forest ecosystem services and their rankings in terms of supply or importance by village. Mabiogo (n=11); Nkoelon (n=10); and Nyamabande (n=11)

For those who want more details, keep on the look out in the next months for the article titled 'Perceived Ecosystem Service Bundles across Forested Landscapes in Transition: A Case Study in Southern Cameroon'

**Reflection from field work so far for Module 2:** While the field work in Cameroon led to the collection of valuable and informative data, upcoming field studies may benefit from additional information along with the ranking and valuation of ecosystem services. These include identifying the various species of animals and plants that are valued between different villages or community groups, or understanding emerging usages of certain plants as a result of land use change.

## Simulation game inspired by project for children

Ayami Kan

Inspired by the concept of ecosystem service bundles and land use in communal land and forests, a simulation game was designed, which was later used at two of RIHN's outreach events in Kyoto and Tokyo. In a group, the children need to make decisions about their land and forests together. The game, designed for children 8 and up, was popular at both events, and gave them the opportunity to learn how land and forests can be valued in diverse ways.



*Children need to decide how they want to use the communal land together*

## Publications

### • Carbon footprint shifting cultivation landscapes: current knowledge, assumptions and data gaps

Bruun TB, Hepp CM. Carbon footprint of shifting cultivation landscapes: current knowledge, assumptions and data gaps. Carbon Footprints. 2023; 2(2): 11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20517/cf.2023.06>

The paper summarizes the the available – and unavailable – data and knowledge required to calculate the carbon footprint (CFP) of shifting cultivation and highlights the methodological challenges and problematic assumptions behind the blame for its contribution to climate change.

### • FairFrontiers Research Brief 1: When distal flows meet local realities: A history of *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* plantations in Pitas, Sabah

Sarah Ali and Helena Varkkey (Universiti Malaya)

Using the telecoupling approach, the brief examines the flows of ideas, finances, and commodities surrounding the expansion of tree plantations in Pitas, Sabah since the late 1970s, which has resulted in a changed environment, loss of customary land, contestations and an uncertain future for local indigenous communities. The brief has been uploaded [here](#), on the FairFrontiers website.

### • Blind spots and spotlights in bureaucratic politics: An analysis of policy co-production in environmental governance dynamics in Indonesia

Sahide, M. A. K., Fisher, M. R., Sirimorok, N., Faturachmat, F., Dhiaulhaq, A., Maryudi, A., Batiran, K.B., Supratman, S. (2023). Blind spots and spotlights in bureaucratic politics: An analysis of policy co-production in environmental governance dynamics in Indonesia. *Development Policy Review*

[This article](#) sheds light on the politics among the numerous actors shaping ideas that drive environmental policy in Indonesia. The authors focus their theoretical engagement on a framing of bureaucratic politics to explain the formal and informal processes that influence environmental governance outcomes.

- **Kehampaan Hak: Masyarakat vs Perusahaan Sawit di Indonesia**  
**(Rightlessness: Community vs. Palm oil companies in Indonesia)**

Berenschot, W., Dhiaulhaq, A., Afrizal, A., Hospes, O. (2023). Kehampaan Hak: Masyarakat vs Perusahaan Sawit di Indonesia, Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia

Based on the [Palm oil conflict and access to justice in Indonesia Project \(POCAJI\)](#) carried out from 2019-2022 and the first large-scale documentation of 150 cases of palm oil conflict, this book discusses the causes, characteristics and consequences of conflicts between palm oil companies and rural communities in Indonesia.

## Comings and goings

It has been a hectic last couple of months with a changing team in Kyoto ...



**Samuel Assembe-Mvondo** left the project in August and will be starting his new job as the Climate, Migration, Peace and Security Policy Scientist at the [Alliance of Bioversity International and International Center for Tropical Agriculture \(CIAT\)](#) based in Dakar, Senegal. We wish him the best of luck and look forward to continued collaborations! You can reach Samuel at: [aboto10@yahoo.fr](mailto:aboto10@yahoo.fr)



**Catherine Hepp** will unfortunately be leaving the FairFrontiers project in September and returning to Alberta, Canada with Yoan and Felix. We are also looking forward to continuing our collaborations. She has appreciated working with the entire FairFrontiers Family. *"It has been exciting to be part of such a collaborative and international project!"* You can contact Catherine at: [heppcm@gmail.com](mailto:heppcm@gmail.com)

**Ahmad Dhiaulhaq** will be returning to Indonesia at the end of September for family reasons. *"I am so grateful for the great collaboration, support and guidance from all FairFrontiers members during my time at RIHN."* He looks forward to continuing the collaboration and staying in touch. You can contact him at: [ahmad.dhiaulhaq@gmail.com](mailto:ahmad.dhiaulhaq@gmail.com)

A new researcher has joined the team in August! **Alimata Sidibe** is working on Module 2, and leading the field work on land use and ecosystem services. She is from Mali, and graduated with a PhD from Department of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University. She has field experience in West Sub-Saharan Africa, where she examined air pollutants emission and exposure sources and their relationship with anthropogenic activities and health. Alimata can be contacted at: [alimata@chikyu.ac.jp](mailto:alimata@chikyu.ac.jp)



## The project is now recruiting for Researchers in Social Science (2 positions) and a Research Associate in Land Use and Land Change Detection

For more details:

Researcher - <https://www.chikyu.ac.jp/rihn/news/careers/detail/52/>

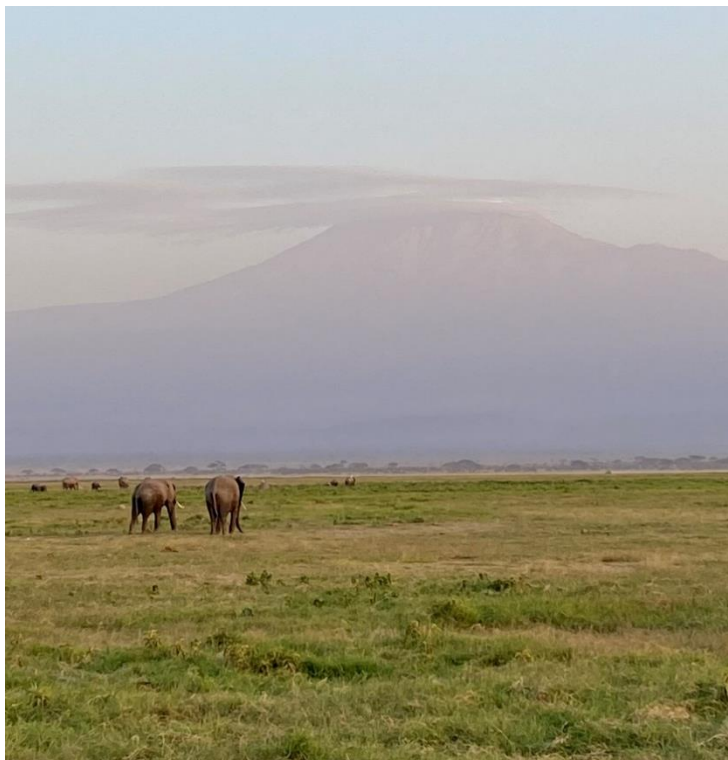
Research Associate - <https://www.chikyu.ac.jp/rihn/news/careers/detail/53/>

The deadline for applications is 29 September, please share with your networks!



## Upcoming Activities and Events

<b>September 10-18</b>	Methods workshop and field scoping visit in Laos (Oudomxay province) in collaboration with Prof. Sithong Thongmanivong and his team at NUOL
<b>October 11-29</b>	Methods workshop and field scoping visit in DR Congo. We will be carrying out fieldwork in the Upemba National Park in Katanga province with our partners Forgotten Parks and University of Lubumbashi
<b>November 6 - January 7</b>	FairFrontiers will host a RIHN Visiting Fellow from Stockholm Resilience Centre, <a href="#">Dr. Niak Koh</a> , who will be working with the project on telecoupling research
<b>January 2024 (exact dates TBC)</b>	Refresher field workshop in Sarawak with UNIMAS
<b>January 2024 (exact dates TBC)</b>	Photovoice research activity in Pitas, Sabah with Pacos and BorIIS, UMS
<b>February 6-8</b>	EREC Board meeting, RIHN
<b>February 15-16</b>	RIHN International Symposium: <i>Re-thinking "Policies" in Transdisciplinary Research</i>
<b>April</b>	<a href="#">5<sup>th</sup> International Forest Policy Meeting (IFPM5)</a> , University of Helsinki. Deadline for submission of panels and papers is <u>30 September, 2023</u> . We are organizing a panel, please get in touch for more information
<b>Aug/Sept</b>	FairFrontiers 2024 annual meeting in Sulawesi! The meeting will be hosted by Prof. Alif Sahide of the Forest & Society Group at Universitas Hasanuddin. More details to come in next months



*A herd of elephants in front of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Amboseli National Park, Kenya*

Taken by Grace