

Senior Researcher/ Researcher (Contracted Employee), under FairFrontiers, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN)

1 position for Senior Researcher/ Researcher in social sciences, to be located at the [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature](#) in Kyoto, Japan

Project description

Fair Frontiers (Fair for Whom? Politics, Power and Precarity in Transformations of Tropical Forest-Agriculture Frontiers)

Forest frontiers are rapidly being converted to the production of commodity agriculture throughout the tropics, leading to radical transformations in landscapes and livelihoods. Diverse land uses in frontiers – often mixed swidden cultivation systems and forest mosaics under some form of customary tenure – provide multiple ecosystem goods and services, and support social, cultural and livelihood needs. This diversity is being lost with increasingly high social and environmental costs.

Studies show that promised win-win outcomes of agricultural intensification are difficult to come by and win-lose trade-offs are more common. Forest communities often benefit less than local elites and external investors in the transformation of frontiers, reflecting underlying institutional and power structures around forests and land-use tenures. These inequalities also reflect political narratives, interests and policy preferences, when decisions to criminalize certain land uses prioritize particular ecosystem services and narrow wellbeing outcomes. The many ways in how local people navigate these politico-economic and social-ecological landscapes depend on their ability (or not) to navigate and negotiate change, and exercise agency to pursue their own development aspirations.

In this intersection of economic growth ambitions, ecological changes and the politics and power dynamics underlying forest and land use decisions, we question: *whose interests drive transformations of forest-agriculture frontiers, who benefits and who is made precarious? What are the different ecosystem service-human wellbeing bundles associated with specific development trajectories? What are possible policy options that can deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes?* The research will be carried out in the Congo Basin (Cameroon, DR Congo), mainland Southeast Asia (Laos, Myanmar) and Malaysia Borneo (Sabah, Sarawak).

Job description

The Senior Researcher/ Researcher will carry out research activities under Module 3 (*Well-being in frontiers: local communities negotiating, navigating and adapting to change*) of the FairFrontiers project, in close collaboration with country partners and under the guidance of the PI and module leads.

Specifically, the Senior Researcher/ Researcher will carry out field based mixed-methods research to understand the contexts, constraints, creativities and agency of local people in changing forest-agriculture frontiers. S/He will carry out qualitative and quantitative analyses to assess the relationships between different aspects of wellbeing in dynamic social-ecological systems, and to apply a telecoupling perspective to understand the local impacts of distal drivers. The research will be conducted in close collaboration with country partners, and will draw on theories of access, social-environmental justice and everyday politics.

The Senior Researcher/ Researcher will support project management and coordination duties, including supervision of field research assistants, data management and reporting. In addition, S/He will contribute to methods training and presentations in policy and stakeholder workshops in the case study regions.

Qualifications

- 1) PhD or equivalent in relevant social science and the humanities (including economics, rural studies, development studies, anthropology, human geography and related fields).
- 2) **Senior Researcher:** Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members, minimum of 6 years of interdisciplinary research experience and project management skills.
Researcher: Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members, experience in interdisciplinary research projects.
- 3) Familiarity with field-based research methods and approaches required. Experience in the case study regions (Congo Basin/Central Africa, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia Borneo) is preferred.
- 4) Knowledge of software supporting text-based content analysis (e.g. NVivo or Atlas.ti).
- 5) Familiarity with quantitative statistical analyses is an advantage.
- 6) Scientific proficiency in English is a must; knowledge of the languages in the case study regions (French, Lao, Myanmar, Bahasa Malaysia) is an advantage. Japanese language skills is an advantage.

Terms of employment: Fixed term contracts, renewable annually until March 31st, 2026

Salary and insurances: Daily wage 15,170 JPY (researcher position) or 19,220 JPY (senior researcher position), plus commuting and housing allowances. Successful candidate will be enrolled in the Health Insurance and the Employees' Pension Insurance, and the Employment Insurance in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Only the travel costs (flight, per diem and accommodation) will be provided for the relocation of international researchers to Kyoto.

To apply, please submit the following documents in English:

- 1) Curriculum vitae
- 2) cover letter explaining your interest, motivation and expertise for the position (2 pages maximum)
- 3) list of publications, and copies of what you consider as your three most important papers/ publications with a brief explanation of their relevance to this position
- 4) at least two references and their contact information

Application Deadline

30 July 2021 by 17:00 Japan time

Selection Process

A short list will be made by a selection committee on the basis of application materials. Candidates on the short list will be asked for an online interview in August 2021.

E-mail your Application Materials to:

Prof. Grace Wong, project leader, FairFrontiers

E-mail : grace.wong[a]chikyu.ac.jp ([a] should be substituted by @ when in use)

Other:

RIHN guarantees equal opportunities to all individuals regardless of nationalities and gender orientations. RIHN promotes gender equality. We look forward to receiving a number of applications from female candidates.

RIHN seeks to prevent passive smoking by prohibiting smoking in all our facilities except in designated areas.