

Field Diary

First Issue, July 2015



Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Field Diary!

Many of us are out in the field and busy doing our research. Each of us lives through different experiences while we're out there, trekking across the African landscape and elsewhere in the world. There are good times and difficult times, and sometimes we can feel a little disconnected from the rest of the world. That is why we introduce the field diary. We can all share our experiences from the field, the joys, the discoveries, but also the frustrations. And by writing and reading these stories we can share these feelings, and be a little bit more connected again.

We will try to release a field diary at least twice a year, and give each edition a different flavor by giving it a theme that relates to field work. The field diary is an initiative of the REAL project, but everyone is welcome to contribute.

From the editorial team, we hope that you enjoy these stories from the field. We wish you an amazing time in the field and don't forget to look up from your work once in a while and realize how lucky we are to be able to do this amazing work!

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Cover photo 'Weighing produce' was taken by Lotte Klapwijk in DR Congo, 2015

All photographs were taken by the respective writers, except background pictures on page 10 and 12 by Lotte Klapwijk, and page 17 by G W van der Plas

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Where would I be without LT ?

I decided that the best way to conduct my fieldwork would be with a car. To get a car would be the first step. Although it is not as easy as it sounds. It took crossing miles around Nairobi, to learn, compare and decide. Blisters grew while traveling from one car dealership to the next. When walking would be faster than taking a *mata-tu* because the road traffic was so bad.

At that moment, the Nairobi traffic jam still seemed like an alien concept to me. But then, I met LaToya, and she became my new blue, field-research-car. It was love at first sight, and I knew that she would be able to get me to my research interviewees, over the rough terrain, during rain and drought, on hills, in forests, and sometimes carrying cows and hay.

To go for an interview, I had to go with LaToya to the *manyatta* of the person to be interviewed. Some hay was stacked in the car for the cows of my next interviewee, together with his family and friends.. The hay we brought was actually for a sick bull that was weak from a lack of food and could no longer stand on his feet. Eight men tried to lift him up, but it was hard for the bull to keep standing to eat hay, so we decided that it would be better to bring the bull to the green grass instead. And there was LaToya with her pick-up. So we picked up the bull, lifted him in the car and drove off to town where the grass was green. The latest news from the bull is that he is very healthy again!

Actually, after four months of driving around in LaToya I still think it is the best way to conduct fieldwork with a car to study mobile people. It has enabled me to give people rides and gather stories as it gives an opportunity to interact differently and often everyone is more at ease

and willing to share stories. In these four months, we have gone through many phases of happiness, despair, fear, heights, depths and rough roads, together. Through all of these times, I wouldn't know where I'd be, without LT.

Annemiek Pas Schrijver
Stockholm University, Sweden



The bull in the pick-up of LaToya

Giant trees losing their grip

It was a Thursday afternoon. Feeling passionate to get through my planned activities for field work, my fellow PhD student, Geert, and I went to collect soil samples from the Baringo lowlands of Kenya. Baringo was much drier than I imagined, but, it is beautiful. The faulted terrain with pillars of columnar basalts were visible from a distance. It is also a place for unique birds. Soil erosion associated with land degradation is a major problem. The deep gully incisions in the topsoil are so conspicuous and, at some places, it extends meters down. We could observe huge chunks of soil dislodged from stream banks, waiting for the rain next afternoon to make its way to the nearby lake.

We had to walk a couple of miles to sample across a gradient toward the lake; we came across sparsely standing giant acacia trees. I would imagine how these trees, even though few in number, would be important shades for pastoralists and their cattle from the scorching sun. But these trees could not escape the threat from the severe erosion in the area. We observed a significant

impression as if they were losing the grip in to the ground and were fearful of falling. A few meters away, there were trees already surrendered to the erosive flash floods, and had fallen on the ground. Baringo is known for its strong wind-blowing dusts, a small push can trigger these insecurely-standing trees to fall down easily.



Dense Prosopis growth

To the contrary, further down slope toward the lake we observed comfortably growing *Prosopis juliflora* trees. It grows in patches of dense twigs, encroaching into the central areas of the Lobo wetland. This evasive species has colonized the soft soils. We are not sure if it succeeded to protect the soil with its roots, which the giant acacias failed to do. It can be an interesting research question as to how the indigenous species and the evasive species cope in this fragile landscape, being exposed to climate change and human population pressures.

Aynalem Z. Degefa
Ghent University, Belgium



An uprooted tree lies fallen down

Farm stay



After floating for some time in literature about all sorts of issues in agriculture, participatory approaches, resilience, and much more, I realised, I had never really experienced farm life. I had no image of the things I was reading about, and would soon start working on. So, I proposed to my supervisors to go and spend some time on a farm and join the farmers with their daily activities. A few weeks later, I drove my Nissan Pulsar up a slippery, 20 km long gravel road and met my hosts.

My research will focus around farming in the hilly areas of New Zealand, where erosion and nutrient leaching are major environmental issues. Also, the socio-economic situation tends to be challenging in these areas. The farmers that I visited had experienced a devastating storm that caused major erosion in the year after they bought the farm.

For me, seeing the works put in place to overcome the damage of the storm event, their daily trade-offs, and participating in two meetings of the Sustainable Land Use Initiative and another with a British supermarket that imports meat products from New Zealand, provided important context that will help me to further develop my research ideas. Besides, the stunning views, drenching fawns and being outside, were very nice experiences, and a welcome change from my desk and computer.



Florentine van Noppen

Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand



Searching for perspective during fieldwork in the Amboseli basin

The ambitions of the Resilience in East African Landscapes (REAL) project are grand in scope, and as a collective, members are tasked with illuminating novel facets of human-environmental interactions in East Africa. The aim of our project is to contribute to the realization of pathways to sustainable futures amongst various communities in Kenya and Tanzania. As a member of REAL, my PhD work examines how people have moved about the Amboseli region of southern Kenya throughout the past 500 years. My intended contribution is dialoguing how people in the recent past related to their environment and interacted with a wider East African economic and cultural sphere. During my research, however, I have found that fieldwork can at times eclipse my grander research aspirations; though pathways to perspective do transverse the research landscape.

As an individual researcher conducting archaeological fieldwork in Amboseli, more often than naught, I feel my focus and energies are consumed by the countless logistical challenges that running field surveys and excavations pose. The aim of my project for the last few months may be summed up as the realization of pathways to and from camp to field sites. Even this seemingly benign goal has proved at times unattainable despite the best efforts of my antiquated Land Cruiser. The combination of tight schedules, unpredictable weather, finite budgets, harsh terrain, and the responsibilities of leading and caring for a team all add up to a sort of

“More often than naught, I feel my focus and energies are consumed by the countless logistical challenges”

tunnel-vision settling over one's gaze: find the artefacts, map the sites, eat, sleep, repeat. To maintain the momentum you assure to yourself that you can think about what it all means later, or at least when it is not so bloody hot.

Certainly it is important to tend to the small things, the hundred upon hundreds of little tasks that must be completed so you can move on to the next problem to be solved. Yet we must also afford our minds moments that are unscheduled and unstructured to be able to observe our surroundings and discuss our thoughts with others. It is in these moments of relative stillness that you can begin to associate all of the components of the research, which can at times seem to just be fragments of data adrift in a sea of spreadsheets, JPEGs, audio files, and vector layers.

Such a moment was recently forced upon me, when I had no choice but to look up from my clipboard, stop asking questions, and listen. The short rains of October and December 2014 were well below average in Amboseli, and the livestock herders of Olgulului group ranch, where I have been conducting surveys, have been uneasily awaiting the long rains, rains expected in March and prayed for in April. Without these rains the rivers do not flow, the water holes do not fill, the grass does not grow, and animals do not survive. To many inhabitants of Amboseli this is a matter of concern. Their sheep, goats, and cattle may be perceived as the essence of their financial, nutritional, and cultural security. ➡

“It is here that the conversation turns to people expressing their desire to understand the variables of the human-environmental interactions”

I have listened to various research assistants as they hopefully opine that the arrival of the rains is imminent, and describe wistfully how the landscape transforms as the seasons transition from dry to wet. I have driven past *bomas*, small enclosed homesteads dotting the landscape, and noted the ceremonial sacrifice of animals to appeal to the powers above to send the rains down. Every seemingly minute change in the landscape held meaning to the older generations of livestock herders as they studied their surroundings to decipher Amboseli's future. For instance, when the white blossoms of certain *Acacia* trees began to blanket the ground around them, this I was assured, meant rain. Or when the ostriches started to squawk and cry and the frogs croaked during the day, this told of the coming rain. More spectacularly, when the winds swirled the dusts in the basin into hundred foot high howling columns known as dust devils, people forecast rain.

As the remaining days in the month of April passed, however, anticipation morphed to desperation. Thankfully, some rain did unexpectedly fall in May and has provided a small cushion of pasture. Yet, recognition of an impending drought is now upon the people. The collective mindset of hope has been shattered and livestock owners are examining their contingency plans and attempting to chart a course forward. The severity of hardships to come will depend on the ability of livestock herders to gain access to adequate pasture and water. Negotiating access to necessary resources in Amboseli appears to be becoming increasingly complex. Olgulului group ranch members are expressing their anxieties about the precariousness of their situation with regards to landscape use. In Amboseli, the current trend with land is that of subdivision, fencing, cultivation,



A dust devil winding its way through the Amboseli basin

reservation, development, and general demarcation of historical grazing commons. Potential for conflict arises between wildlife and herders, and between herders and various other human stakeholders in Amboseli.

I have gloomily mentioned to group ranch members that contemporary challenges of livestock herding are forecast to be compounded in Amboseli, as models project that over the coming decades temperatures will rise and variability in rainfall will increase. Consistently, the reaction to this challenging nugget of information is rapt attention. It is here that the conversation turns, much to my amazement, to people expressing their desire to understand the variables of



the human-environmental interactions in Amboseli. It is recognized that the ability of even the most knowledgeable *mzee* (older gentleman) to predict the timing and quality of the rains has suffered. The signs of old, which were once so clear and reliable are coming to mean less and less, and when I ask these forecasters “when will the rains come?”, they sigh and exclaim “it is not for me, but only for God to know!” ➡

Silabule, a Maasai from Olgulului Group Ranch and research assistant for the project poses in a dried out waterhole

“Amongst those I have spoken to in Amboseli, a desire to plan for the future has been clearly expressed”

Amongst those I have spoken to in Amboseli, a desire to plan for the future has been clearly expressed. People want to collectively and democratically make informed decisions to safeguard their choice of livelihoods: be they agricultural, livestock keeping, tourism, or conservation or any other. One major obstacle for the realization of a positive and inclusive future planning is the unavailability of appropriate data regarding natural and cultural landscape changes in Amboseli. The REAL project is making strides toward providing this kind of knowledge, a knowledge people in Amboseli are expressing a genuine desire to acquire and contribute to.

In an organic way, I and the people I work with in Amboseli are coming to see how our interests are so closely aligned,

and it is a tremendously motivating and inspiring realization. At times I have found myself thinking the act of research spans the spectrum from numbingly esoteric to overwhelmingly chaotic and broad, but I am grateful for these moments of connection with a bigger picture. Just a reminder to colleagues facing similar struggles, whatever shape your own personal Sisyphean complex takes, make the time to look around you and realize that your research really does matter to somebody out there. And then keep pushing that rock. More about the REAL work at www.real-project.eu

Anna Shoemaker

Uppsala University, Sweden

In the eye and mind of the Anthropologist

The social situation was rather different than I expected. The Maasai were not in their popular traditional red *shuka* (cloth) nor did they have large herds of livestock that frequently define them. Except for one or two *manyatta* (kraals), the landscape of Enoosupukia, Narok County, was dotted with iron sheet-roofed houses made of timber or mud. It seemed quite difficult at first to distinguish the Maasai from Kikuyu or other groups. Even Dorobo, a previously hunting community in Enoosupukia, were not easily distinguishable from other groups. The majority people speak Maa and Swahili and interact normally in their day-to-day activities. Intensive cultivation, which quickly strikes the eye as the main economic activity in the area, is practiced by almost everyone, as opposed to pastoralism. As a result, previously pastoral landscapes have been converted into small and medium-size farm plots that scatter across the undulating landscape of Maiella and Enoosupukia. Except for short grass, scattered trees and the occasional presence of cattle, nothing much can be seen of the former Enoosupukia forest.

I expected to observe ethnic conflict in whatever form. This was my initial topic of interest – to explore violent interactions in the face of changing environmental and socio-political landscapes. Enoosupukia and Maiella had hit local and international media in the 1990s for reasons relating to ethnic conflict and forceful transfer of populations. The popular narrative was that migrant farmers of Kikuyu community were no longer welcome to live or farm in the area. However, the opposite was evident. Extensive interactions between Maa-speaking people and the migrant population of Kikuyu descent were evident in trading centres, farmlands and in related social-economic spaces. Coexistence was the rule as opposed to violent conflict. Except for some concrete relics of the former Enoosupukia trading centre, the image of destruction and war is not visible elsewhere.

A situation of this kind is very interesting to study. How did formerly violent conflicts develop into peaceful interactions? Can coexistence and cooperative use of resources be understood as a response to environmental stress and scarcity, or broadly as a reaction to social-economic, climatic or political dynamics? With a new topic of interest I spend time to study archives in Nairobi and Oxford in a bid to contextualise the history of intergroup relationships. And the rest is history.

Eric Kioko

University of Cologne

A weedy road: from hating to loving weeds

One of my favorite professors, Jorge Arce, a crop production expert at EARTH University, once explained us that what agronomists call weeds do not actually exist. He said weeds are only plants that consider 'our' production site as a very nice environment to develop and that we, humans, have not managed to find a use for them. I really liked that vision and believed it since. But it was not until my first time in Ethiopia that I fully understood the concept. Since February 2014, I have stayed on and off in two places in Ethiopia, Hawassa and Arsi-Negele, and I will talk about these places. The main activity in these areas is crop production of corn, wheat and potato, as well as livestock, which is an important and almost unavoidable element of these smallholder farming systems. Besides some exceptions, most of the farmland is planted with annual crops followed by some grasses and perennial crop areas.

Walking with Gutao through his farm I could not help myself of thinking *"woooow, this grassland looks soooo weedy. If he just took out that one weed species, so much more grass could be produced. I should tell him something"*. How naive I was, I could only see as far as the windows of perception let me. This farming system and its management have been evolving since many-fold my life time. But... who would know better? I kept my mouth shut and a couple of weeks later I had seen that he had harvested all those weeds. I was as curious as a 4-year old, so I asked, "Why? What for?" He did not give me one answer, but many: "the roof of my son's new house", "for food containers (see picture)", "making brooms, baskets and even the bowl to gather the milk". Then everything made sense: those were not weeds, but a self-planting, no-maintenance, highly-productive crop that was requiring no additional planting area. Way to go!

As in most of our world, annual cropland in Ethiopia offers a paradise for weeds: beautiful sunshine, a soft and spongy bed, all-you-can-eat restaurant (nutrient-rich soils) and in many cases, there are not even many others to share this paradise with. There is reduced competition when soil is bare or the main crop is still young. As an agronomist, I have learned with time that managing weeds can quickly become the most difficult and time demanding activity, and for what? It is true we give advantage to our crop with the dream of a higher productivity, but all the solar energy

stored in weeds was mainly lost. I was misunderstanding the concept of productivity, but the farmers of these Ethiopian crop-livestock systems had a far greater vision. Nothing gets lost, and it comes about through clever creativity. Weeds are not a waste of time, but are a great source of energy both for livestock fodder and fuel for cooking. It happens that I was studying energy flows and like that I came to know that on the 12 farms that I studied, weeds represented up to 25% of the fuel used for cooking. This



Kuna, made out of weeds. Kuna is used as a food measuring unit or to serve and store enjera (bread or fermented cereal pancakes)

represents a great saving of money but also of wood that would potentially come from the highly exploited forests and communal lands. From the 9 farms that own livestock, 8 were using weeds as a fodder and they represented from 10% to 40% of the animals' diet yearly.

I will not tell you much more, but this is only a small sample of the diversity of uses for weeds in the smallholder farming systems I have had the chance to visit. I have also been showed plenty of medicinal plants and spices, and even a toothbrush commonly used in Ethiopia that comes from a weed. I guess that Jorge Arce was right. Weeds are an anthropocentric concept that we invented when we were not creative enough to know what to do with all those gifts of nature. Now I really get it.

Jean-Yves Duriaux Chavarría

Research Fellow for CIMMYT-CIFOR project: The new agrarian change

Lotte's fieldwork in DR Congo and Rwanda

I believe that the best part of my work is the fieldwork.

After many months of preparing, proposal writing, planning, etc., my fieldwork was finally ready for take-off this past March. First, we started with household surveys and interviews, then investigating the distribution of weighing scales and notebook. These are used so the farmers could do their very important tasks; measuring how much of which type of fodder they were feeding to either their cattle, goat(s) or caviés. I am working closely with two Congolese students, named Nadege and Samuel, and one Rwandese named Xavier. Each have their own site where we manage to visit about 25 farmers each week, to pick up the notebooks with daily measurements, leave new books, and discuss the data and whatever happened during the past week – whether it be good or bad.



Each trip to “the field” teaches me new things. It brings me at least one surprise, takes me to beautiful places, and I enjoy being welcomed to the homes of many wonderful people, which, in the end, is the reason why I think I am so incredibly lucky... All right, it's time to close this diary. I still have to pack, and get up at 5.30am tomorrow, to cross the border into Rwanda early enough to catch the boat to Karongi and join Xavier on his round, passing all the farmers of Gomba.



Lotte Klapwijk

*International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kalambo, DRC;
Wageningen University, the Netherlands*

Carib in da village

May 11, 2015. This morning, I woke up in a village. A new village for me, Kindi, North-West Burkina Faso. I knew a bit about it, of course, because of our research activities, but this was my first night sleeping there.

We arrived last night, had dinner with our hosting family, and it started raining before we slept. Long-awaited rains that indicated a new planting season. When I opened my eyes, as early as 4:30 am, the rural silence made me forget where I actually was. I was reminded of my own origins from up there in the mountains of Puerto Rico, above the Caribbean Sea. The fresh temperature and the emerging sunlight made me feel as if I had woken up in a coffee plantation, one of those which I am used to since I was a kid. I stretched, got dressed and went out to start my work.



When Rasta meets Africa: Georges partying with Fatimata in a Burkinabé village.

Before getting in the car, I just thought about how lucky I was, and still am. I smiled, and stopped for a second to accept the fullness of the moment. The moon was still shining and birds were chanting. I started the engine and noticed I had music in the back of my head. These reggae tunes that carry me around are ever present, yet this morning was different. I realized it was him and I smiled again, as sleepy as I was. I went out of the village and while on the road, I asked a question to myself, “Could Bobby Marley have had a better gift than having a *Boricua** Rasta wake up in an African village on the day we celebrate Honorebel Marley’s Life and Death?” The answer was clear. The day was inspiring.

* *Boricua* is the demonym of a person from Puerto Rico, an island in the Caribbean archipelago formerly referred to as *Borikén*, in ancestral Carib-Taíno language. *Borikén* means “land from where the sun rises” or “land of the Great Lord.”

Georges Félix

Farming Systems Ecology, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Mystery Mounds of Nyabuiyabui

Nyabuiyabui Swamp is located at 2920 m asl in the industrial forests of Eastern Mau. The wetland is covered with grasses and sedges and is important to local wildlife and many species of birds.



Location of Nyabuiyabui Swamp

Currently, the wetland is in phase of rapid drying, likely due to a combinations of climate change, land use and land cover change, as well as the legacy of past land use activities including clear cutting, water extraction and industrial logging. Nowadays the swamp is primarily used by cow or sheep cattle herders for grazing by the local Ogiek people. At the far northeast of the swamp there is a series of mounds arranged close together and some in a linear formation. The mounds are not very tall, ~1-1.5 m, and are about 3m wide and 4-5 m long. It is unclear whether they are natural or human made. If they were built by humans, was it recent movement of earth for digging or are they more ancient with a much more interesting provenance?

Colin J. Courtney Mustaphi

*York Institute for Tropical Ecosystems, Environment
Department, University of York, UK*



Arrangement of the mounds and cow herd

Grazing and sedentarisation in East Africa savannahs



Participants at Zumaya

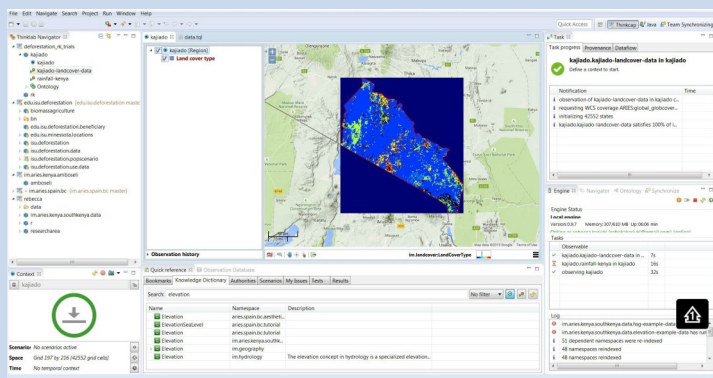
Tropical savannahs ecosystems are characterised by varying proportions of grass and woody vegetation. In East Africa, they are extensive and support large numbers of humans, livestock and wild animals. Additionally, they provide numerous ecosystem services to a wide range of people and livelihoods. Savannahs are relatively dry areas, thus are not often suitable for rain-fed agriculture. For thousands of years, they have supported pastoral communities and their herds who maintained the diversity of local livestock breeds using cyclic and migratory strategies. Since the late 20th century, however, pastoralists began embracing increasingly sedentary livelihoods.

Over 7-17th April 2015, I participated in a course on modelling ecosystem services at the Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3) in Bilbao, Spain, to understand the impacts of temporal, spatial and societal changes in grazing and sedentarisation of east African savannahs. The aim of the course was to learn how to develop models that can run on the ARIES

(Artificial Intelligence of Ecosystem Services) integrated-modelling platform and to model ecosystem services pathways under different scope and scales. This platform uses an integrated approach to incorporate spatial data and different models, such as climate and dynamic global vegetation models, in analysing cultural, provisioning, supporting and regulatory ecosystem services. Additionally, it can be used to model the flow of ecosystem services in relation to biophysical factors and the economic and societal consequences of their provisioning.



The ARIES modelling platform uses a Graphical User Interface (GUI) called ‘thinklab’ – a user friendly viewer. The interface is made up of modular windows that display maps, show modelling syntax, display the knowledge dictionary of available data, and options for adjusting the spatial and temporal resolution. The modelling syntax for the interface is intuitive to learn and can incorporate the dynamic Groovy language used for Java platforms. ARIES focusses on beneficiaries, probabilistic analysis and dynamics of ecosystem flows in space and time thus modelling can be done for different ecosystem services.

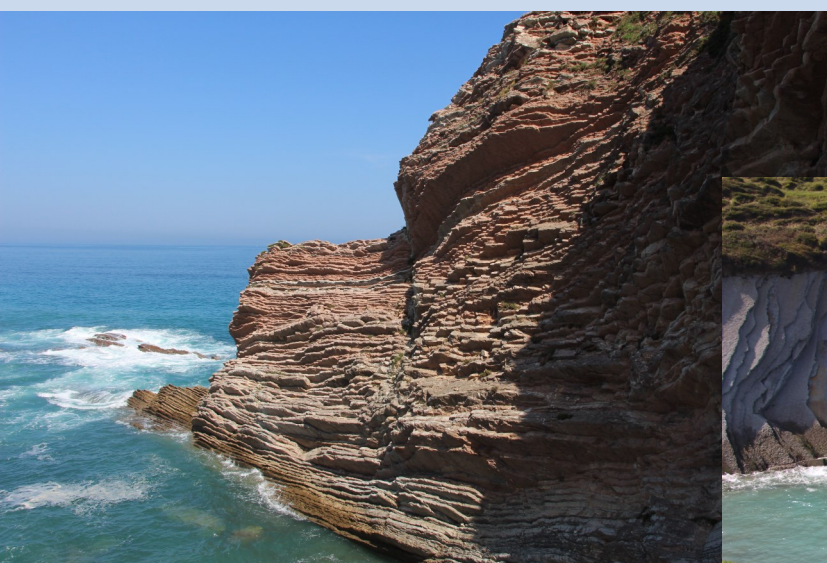


Thinklab modelling interface

It is done from the viewpoint of beneficiaries and the main elements of the outputs are maps with resource use and sink regions, where the service is provided and accessed. The ARIES modelling platform can analyse different scenarios of the impacts of climate and land use changes. With the course coming to an end, the ARIES team offered the participants a chance to continue working with them on ecosystem services modelling.

In addition to learning loads on ecosystem services modelling and enjoying the wonderful spring weather, the iconic Guggenheim Museum and the pintxos of Bilbao, the participants had an opportunity to visit Zumaya and San Sebastian (Zumaia and Donostia respectively in Basque). These scenic towns with lovely people are also located in the Basque Country. Zumaya, in particular has an interesting geology with its beaches having long continuous rock strata. “It is like reading chapters and chapters of a book” one local stated (Figures 2-5). Being a famous tourist destination in Spain, San Sebastian is a stunning city with wonderful beaches and a variety of drinks and seafood.

Rebecca Kariuki
University of York, UK



Geology of Zumaya



Old maps, plans, and... spiders?

I've been visiting the water basin authority office for part of my studies of the recent history of irrigation development in the upper Pangani River basin, northern Tanzania. The office contains stacks of papers, books, reports, photograph negatives, meteorological records; you name it, they might have it!

I say might, because no one knows exactly what is actually stored there, or where things are for that matter! But luckily the people there are incredibly helpful! Mr. Macha, a hydrotechnician at the basin office, believed in saving large stacks of papers from the office of a retiring colleague to preserve the history of the basin authority. He has given me many hand-drawn maps and sketches of all the furrow systems that carry water on Kilimanjaro – an impressive colonial exercise from the late 1950s and early 1960s. He is also the one who trusted me enough, once after I had proved that I could actually repair and digitize the documents once he gave them to me – a good trick! To give me the freedom to go through every piece of paper in the office. That was the start of a very dusty and lengthy search.

Some of the saved papers were indiscriminately stored, or should I say jammed, in a cupboard where even spiders did not survive. I took out every single piece of paper, including flyers of orphanages, random photographs, receipts, pay slips, and a comb, judged whether it was relevant, and sorted it in two piles. After sorting through, my hands were black, I was sneezing, and had a large stack of documents to go through. All in all, a good day!

I continued my search in the official archives in Dar es Salaam, which was the very first time I worked in an archive. I got my hands on many more stories on irrigation development plans, this time covering the colonial period. I am yet to analyze it all and construct one clear overview, but what I have learned so far is that historical work is fascinating, diverse, and rather dusty...



Chris de Bont

Stockholm University, Sweden

An example of the Pangani Basin Water Board "archive"

What's next?

Special Issue on Field Assistants

For the next issue we welcome any contribution related to Field Assistants, stories of trying to find one, of working together, of happy times and friendships, challenges and other issues. Field Assistants themselves are invited to contribute!

But also

- Participate in the **photo competition** for the cover of the next issue and try to beat Lotte!
- Email us with **events** that you want to share in the Field Diary
- **Meet** another REAL or non-REAL person

Upcoming Events

- [BIEA PhD Student Forum](http://biea.ac.uk/) welcomes students working in East Africa for the BIEA PhD student organized conference in October, 2015
<http://biea.ac.uk/>
- 2nd IHOPE [Historical Ecology](#) meeting Vancouver, November 13-15, 2015

Recommended Readings

Caretta, M.A. 2014. "Credit plus" microcredit schemes: a key to women's adaptive capacity. *Climate & Development*. DOI: [10.1080/17565529.2014.886990](https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2014.886990)

The paper presents the provision of "credit plus" training activities, conditionally and jointly with microloans by Equity Bank and by Swedish non-governmental organization Vi-Skogen in the area of Kisumu, Kenya to women's groups as a key to improving women's capacity to adapt to climate change. Groups received training in small business administration and agroforestry, which produced positive outcomes or a virtuous spiral in their families' economy, well-being and in their intra-household bargaining power. In agroforestry and new farming practices, group training enhanced the women's set of planned adaptation strategies. In a context where formal financial institutions are still reluctant to provide credit to subsistence farmers, this case study shows the beneficial effects that credit would generate for women's adaptive capacity.

Martina is soon finishing her PhD at Stockholm University, on gender relations in traditional irrigation systems in Kenya and Tanzania, which has been partly already published in a series of articles, which you can find here: <http://www.su.se/profiles/mcare-1.188528>

Meet the editor: Geert

Hi everyone, I am one of the REAL early stage researchers at the Limnology Department at Ghent University in Belgium. I am a Paleocologist, studying past interactions of humans with the landscape in East Africa.

<http://www.real-project.eu/geert-van-der-plas-contact-info/>



Meet the editor: Colin

I am a Marie Curie Experienced Researcher at the University of York Institute for Tropical Ecosystems, UK. I work on palaeoecological research on wetlands in East Africa: Amboseli, Mt Kenya, Marsabit, Eastern Mau Forest and Serengeti. I have done field work in the Arctic, Rocky Mountains, eastern Canada, Kenya, and Tanzania.

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Meet the editor: Annemiek

I am also one of the REAL early stage researchers, at the Human Geography Department at Stockholm University, Sweden. I study pastoral migration routes in Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu, Kenya.

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