

Last autumn I spent two months at the Graduate School of Mathematical Sciences of Tokyo University as a JSPS Short Term Postdoctoral Fellow, working on the project 'Noncommutative topological entropy, index theory and quantum groups'. My host was Professor Yasuyuki Kawahigashi. Two months do not seem to be a very long time, but the quality of expertise available in Tokyo, friendly atmosphere among permanent staff, graduate students and visiting researchers, and very good working conditions (in particular excellent library) allowed me to make substantial progress in the research. Weekly seminars and advanced lecture courses provided a welcome variety in the office days. As my field of mathematics, theory of operator algebras, has had a long and illustrious tradition in Japan, the visit gave me a chance to meet and talk to the authors of standard monographs from which I first learned the subject still as an undergraduate student. In many ways it was like meeting your childhood heroes (or, as one of the very senior professors joked, 'seeing the dinosaurs with your own eyes').

The time spent in Tokyo was very interesting also for non-scientific reasons. It was my first visit to Japan. The beauty of the country, intricacies and richness of its history and kindness of the people made a very strong impression on me. November additionally enriched fascinating views of Tokyo with 'koyo' – autumn leaves, which paint the landscape into a rainbow of colours, from dark red through orange to bright gold. I would definitely recommend to future fellows actively seeking opportunities to meet socially with Japanese colleagues. Evening discussions or weekend lunches were a precious source of information about the culture, traditions and practical aspects of daily life in Japan. I do not speak Japanese, and despite this it was perfectly possible to survive comfortably just communicating in English, I felt it would add another side to my experience if I had put some effort into learning basic characters and expressions before the trip. I will definitely do it next time – I hope that the next opportunity to work in Japan will come before long...

Currently I am an EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellow at Lancaster University.