

Fellows Experience: JSPS postdoctoral fellowship in Kyotanabe Tüze Kuyucu

Host Institution: Department of Information Systems Design, Doshisha University,

Host Researcher: Ivan Tanev

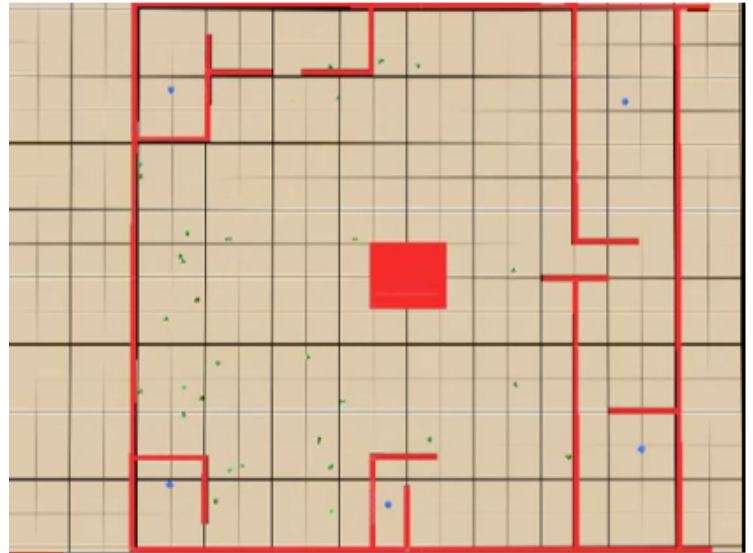
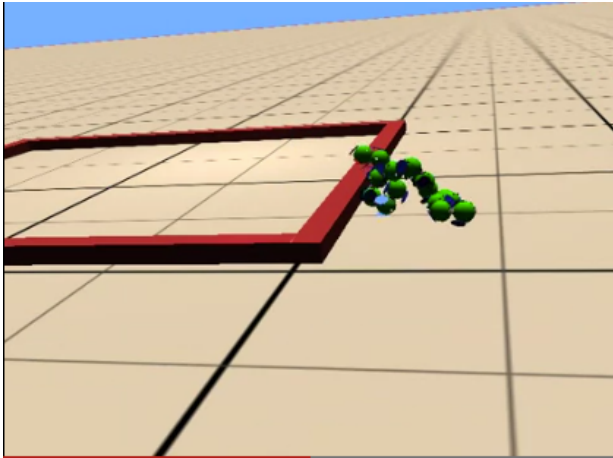
Fellowship Period: November 2010 – November 2012

Kyotanabe city is situated between two larger tourist cities: Kyoto and Nara. The biggest attraction of Kyotanabe is possibly the large university campus that hosts the privately owned Doshisha University. Doshisha University is a “global 30” university in Japan, meaning that it is one of the 30 universities that are dedicated to providing education in English. Even though Doshisha is committed to providing education in English, the number of English speakers within the university is minimal. The university does not have many foreign students, but it employs a (relatively) large number of foreign faculties. One of the most striking features of the university is the immaculate campus on a forested hilltop.



Doshisha University Library.

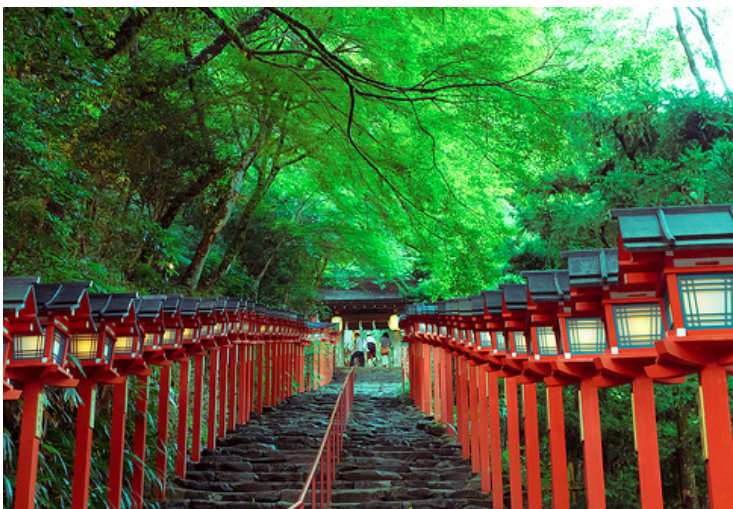
I worked in Doshisha University as part of the “Socio-Informatics” group, which focuses on evolutionary computation and multi-agent systems for research. My research topic was involved with the development of a controller for a multi-purpose collective robotic system. The developed control systems were used to coordinate a large number of robots (swarm of robots) in search and exploration of unknown environments. The developed control systems could also allow the robots to form larger robotic organisms by combining together in order to overcome larger obstacles. Although I did not personally know my host before my visit, I had great fun working with him. He was by far the most welcoming and helpful supervisor I have ever experienced.



Screenshot from two simulation runs where robots demonstrate two different modes of function. First screenshot shows 15 robots joined together, moving as a Snake-like robot, and the second screenshot shows 50 robots moving in coordination to find the hidden blue circles.

Working as a JSPS fellow has many benefits for research, one of which is an ample supply of funds for hardware. It is important for prospective JSPS fellows to know that their funds would be supplied in chunks of academic calendar years, which starts every April. So Even if you start your fellowship in February you will have funds that need to be spent before March. The research environment in Japan can be quite restrictive, if one is not a member of a large research group. Within a department there are many research groups, which are almost always formed of 2 faculty members. There is almost no communication between different research groups under one department, thus it is important to know about the members of your research group before you commit to your journey.

Knowing Japanese is not essential, but it would make life much easier than not knowing. Learning Katakana and Hiragana (preferably in that order) is also highly recommended. Japanese is not a difficult language to learn (just don't get hung up on learning the correct level of addressing everyone!), so there is no need to feel intimidated. Japan is a great place to live for a short period of time. There is so much to learn about life, different work ethics, and culture by just being there. The food is possibly the best in the world at very affordable prices, and there are endless numbers of places to visit. Thus an early start to exploring the country is recommended.



Japan has a lifetime supply of beautiful attractions to visit. Traveling long distances with the railway system can be very quick and convenient, but only a few dozen miles in your local area can be painstakingly slow!