

Short Report for JSPS London Website

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Current Affiliation: The Conflict Analysis Research Centre, The University of Kent.

Host Institution: Graduate School of Law, Kobe University, Japan.

Host Researcher: Atsushi Tago

JSPS Fellowship and Period: Short Term Postdoctoral Fellowship, November to December 2014.

From November to December 2014, I completed a short-term research fellowship at the Graduate Law School at Kobe University. The fellowship offered a unique opportunity to collaborate with world-leading political scientists on a research project that is developing a new methodology for measuring the quality of post-conflict peace. Using data that captures the variation in light emissions within post-conflict states, we developed a method through which a change in the geographical distribution of light within a state can act as a proxy for changes in the nature of horizontal (group) economic inequalities. The working environment at Kobe University was exceptional, and offered the perfect location to develop our research project. The beautiful campus is positioned near to the top of Mount Rokko, offering wonderful views of Kobe and Osaka. I found the campus to be far quieter than British institutions, and the time difference meant that emails were less of a distraction. The campus canteen was also a real treat, offering a range of delicious Japanese food for very reasonable prices.

My host, Professor Tago, was incredibly supportive throughout the whole process. Prior to my arrival he helped me to find suitable accommodation, throughout my stay he was constantly responsive to all of my needs- helping to arrange travel, meals and resolve any other issues that arose. More generally the faculty and administrative staff were also friendly and welcoming, and helped me to feel at home in the new research environment. I was offered the opportunity to present my research to students and faculty members, teach a class focused on my research area, and attend departmental seminars. The whole experience offered a wonderful insight into the impressive political science programme that is growing within Kobe University. A number of stimulating conversations about shared research interests also helped to highlight a number of interesting avenues for future collaborations with my host, many of which I am looking forward to pursuing.

In addition to the rewarding professional elements, the JSPS fellowship also offered an incredibly enriching cultural experience. At the weekends I had the opportunity to visit a number of unforgettable sites, most notably the quite spectacular Kyoto and the sobering Hiroshima. I cannot speak highly enough of the friendliness, kindness and all-round warmth of the Japanese people I met throughout the trip. Everyone I encountered helped to make the experience both magical and unforgettable. I would strongly recommend staying in shared accommodation (e.g. AirBnB or alike), as this offers an additional opportunity to interact with a range of local people from outside of the university.

If you have the opportunity to apply for a JSPS fellowship, I strongly recommend that you do so! My stay at Kobe University was one of the highlights of my career, for which I will always be grateful to both my hosts and the JSPS.

Picture 1: The View from Campus over Kobe.



Pictures 2 & 3: The Spectacular Kyoto





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Picture 4: The Unforgettable Hiroshima

