

JSPS-Summer Programme 2010

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During my stay in Japan as a JSPS summer programme fellow I greatly profited from Japanese hospitality and the intellectual air I experienced at Kansai University and, this I would like to state upfront, would recommend it to any doctoral student as well. Not only is one able to gain valuable insights about a different and exciting culture and life-style, but the resources and capacities Japanese universities offer are second to none.

During my months at Kansai University, I was able to work on a chapter of my doctoral thesis which intends to analyse Hans Morgenthau's world-view, an American political scientist of the 20th century of German-Jewish origin. The chapter I elaborated there looked particularly into the development of Morgenthau's epistemology, hence, knowledge-construction. Morgenthau was one of the founding fathers of International Relations and, although my research topic had no direct relation to Japanese political science, I was able to work on it very well since their library was very well stocked which facilitated my work greatly. Even French books of Morgenthau from the 1930s were available at the library. Further to this, I profited from the generous hospitality of my host professor, Prof. Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru, who even organised a workshop for me in collaboration with Kwansai Gakuin University. This facilitated my acclimatisation in Japan very much which was already supported by the induction week in Hayama, south of Tokyo, where one could get to know the other participants and their projects. Further to this, we experienced there Japanese cultural events and life-style, not least because a weekend was spent with a Japanese host family.

Although Japan is not only geographically far from Europe, but also its culture, customs, and traditions might make it at first a bit difficult to adjust and understand everything, soon one will find oneself enchanted by this beautiful country and its friendly people if one is open-minded enough. The friendliness and helpfulness of the people are beyond anything I have experienced in Europe and I also believe Japan is an exceptional place for food-lovers. Furthermore, in times where in Europe people are more and more bereft of their dignity and identity due to unsecure jobs and a "hire-and-fire"-mentality, I have learned to admire the Japanese work ethos where people perform their tasks with pride and dignity and customer satisfaction is not only an empty phrase.

To conclude, this is a chance of a life-time for any doctoral student and maybe the beginning of a life-long love.

