

Reflections: Life as a Kyoto University Student

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I am not sure if I should be embarrassed to admit it, but, I had not learned about the concept of sustainability academically until when I first visited Kyoto University in September 2015 for a week-long seminar program. Indeed I was familiar with the idea of the concept but did not care enough to study it in-depth. It might be because my background is in mass media studies where the emphasis is on the present rather than the future. So this two month intensive exchange program at Kyoto University was compelling and challenging, which to me was fun.

Following the regulation, I enrolled in total of 4 courses (7 credits): Field Research in Japan A, Comparative Development Studies, Environmental management, and ASEAN Economy & Sustainable Development 2. The courses were rich supported by lectures, readings, and research presentations. Personally, I enjoyed the amount of time we spent on discussions. Listening to other students with diverse background and knowledge was a good opportunity to broaden my perspective towards sensitive issues such as nuclear energy, environmental gains vs economic gains, and the transition of agro industries.

Certainly this includes the contributions from the lecturers as well. For instance, in field research course, we visited Fukui nuclear center to understand the issue from the professional's perspective. Through the guest lecturer in comparative development class, we learned about the European way of life whereas in the ASEAN Economy & Sustainable Development class we were able to discuss the issues happening closer to us. In environmental management class, students were able to openly suggest and present solution to real-life problems. All this would not have been possible without carefully thought-out plan by the lecturers and the program directors. As cliché as it may sound, I do sincerely appreciate their time and effort to stimulate the students.

If I were to pick out one key point that I learned from the courses, I would say that within the concept of sustainability, there is no right or wrong answer to solving a problem. This is because those who work towards sustainability want to bring the best into the world. We are different individuals; it is natural to have differing views. That's why it is important to have a discussion to understand each other's point of view. Interestingly enough, courses at Kyoto University have reflected this matter by applying discussion sessions during class. It is not a surprise to see how many great minds came from Kyoto University. It will be interesting to see how many more it will inspire.

As a full-time first year master's student, I am still in the search of my passion. But from attending this exchange program, I grew fond of the ways businesses today incorporate the concept of environmental sustainability and responsibility. More people need to realize that it is possible to operate environmentally and socially friendly while at the same time generating profit. This is especially important in the ASEAN region; the economic integration has just begun, the region can be easily exploited for profitable gains. Therefore I would like to examine corporate environmental management strategies in the region.

Overall, it was an unforgettable experience that I would recommend to other students back in Thammasat university. It is an opportunity that can inspire and motivate you in the long run.