

International Graduate Programme for East Asia Sustainable Economic Development Studies

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This is my third time visit to the beautiful country of Japan. The first time was in 2009, and all those visits were for my study's purposes. However, this time is different since it became my longest stay in Japan. This allowed me to learn a lot of things: not only academic knowledge I gained from the class, but also the first-hand experience that I noticed from observation of everyday life during my 2-month stay.

The surroundings of and atmosphere at Kyoto University are incredibly friendly for students to study. My friends and I spent most of our free time in the main library, which provided users a number of seats in different zones for various functions as well as a bunch of interesting books in there. The professors including visiting professors from overseas were outstanding in their academic fields and their lectures allowed me to learn a lot of topics, which were different to the classes my home university provided. Also, the staffs were very helpful and kind enough to make us feel very warm welcomed. Kyoto city is beautiful and I guess as it has always been. However, the winter in Kyoto at this time, unusually with few days of snow (only 2 days in 2 months), was somehow telling us about something in the world that was changing.

The classes given in this programme are mainly on sustainable development, and some more topics. I have got an eye-opening experience of how the idea of sustainable development is getting more and more attention from scholars and policy makers internationally. Natural resources are as important as human beings with regards to being a part of nature. To sustain our species last longer, the environment should be treated well enough. To develop the human civilization, agriculture as a fundamental structure should be emphasized. However, the hardest part of this idea, in my perspective, is to find the middle ground in which it would be the most enjoyable end for anyone in the circumstances (for example, to balance the community, environment and capital). This somehow led me to recall my study background and what I learned when I was an undergraduate student. As a religious studies' student, the core idea of sustainability is likely a middle path, as mentioned in Eastern religion. Compared to finding the current problems, considering the factors, and setting the goal, approaching to be in the middle path is the most challenging. Because development is a contested idea that means there will be obstacles or contradictions along the way to the goal. However, we cannot deny that everything has changed, and everything keeps changing. Nothing lasts forever. What sustainability can do here is to slow the process of breakdown of substances.

In my perspectives, sustainable development can be applied to any sorts of management as well as developments. There is a right or wrong definition based on the intention of use and point of view. On the other hand, I would add the conceptual idea of sustainable development to my on-going research back in my home university as well which is about international migration of skilled labor according to economic liberalization in the ASEAN region. Sustainable development, therefore, should be an input to the decision-making process as well. And in the sense of integrated development, in order to have a healthy outcome from this liberalization for all stakeholders such as skilled labors themselves, both for the local and the overseas, governments (politics and economic aspects), relevant private sectors, should collaborate with another. Hence, the process should be concerned not only top-down but also from the bottom-up. In addition, the idea of sustainability is not far from my daily life any longer. It's not only important on just what we are doing right now for what we want for, but the vision concerns consequences in a time yet to come.