

INDEX	1	Sompo Japan "Risk Management and Public Policy" Third Public Forum : Considering Food Safety — Its Costs and Benefits
	2	Special Public Seminar : "The Science and Technology Policies of the Obama Administration" / International Workshop on Piracy
	3	Student Interview : Mr. Hiroki Nomiyama
	4	The 4th ITPU International Seminar / Topical News

Sompo Japan "Risk Management and Public Policy"

Third Public Forum (45th Public Policy Seminar)

Considering Food Safety

— Its Costs and Benefits

Naoto Adachi

Part-Time Lecturer



The Third Public Forum sponsored by Sompo Japan "Risk Management and Public Policy" convened on March 4, 2009.

In the keynote speech, Ms. Junko Nakanishi (Director, Research Institute of Science for Safety and Sustainability, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST)) discussed that trade-offs emerge when the mitigation of one of the risks amplifies other risks. Using BSE as an example, she described how individual inspection of cattle would result in a slightly lower health risk but the cost would be enormous and other risks might be amplified. Consequently, funding for mitigating other risks would be diminished, thereby, amplifying their potential impact. She emphasized that the notion of "safety" is a relative concept in that it reflects the norms of the era and the situation. The misperception that food safety may need special attention leads to excessive regulation, misrepresentation of threats and other distorted practices. To the contrary, as with other risks, proper risk assessment and evaluation is an ineluctable facet of food safety.

A panel discussion, which was moderated by Dean Yoshitsugu Kanemoto of Graduate School of Public Policy, marked the commencement of the second half of the forum. Panellists included Mr. Atsuo Kishimoto (Head of Governance Group, Research Institute of Science for Safety and Sustainability, AIST), Mr. Kazuhito Yamashita (Senior Fellow, Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry/ Chief Representative Fellow, the Tokyo Foundation), Mr. Yasuhiro Kawaguchi (General Manager, Quality of Life Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan) and Mr. Takashi Seo (President, Sompo Japan Risk Management). The panellists engaged in a discussion that focused on the pros and cons associated with altering perceptions on the costs of food safety in relation to enterprise management.

Special Public Seminar

“The Science and Technology Policies of the Obama Administration”

Sponsored by the Graduate School of Public Policy's Science, Technology and Public Policy Research Unit (SciTePP)

Go Yoshizawa, Project Lecturer

A special seminar was held on March 10, 2009, at the Sanjo Conference Hall featuring Professor Christopher Hill of George Mason University. Professor Hill is a leading authority in the field of science and technology policy in the United States with over 25 years of experience in academia, industry and government service.

Professor Hill began his talk by introducing the main challenges confronting the new Obama Administration. Domestically, a key challenge involves the President's emergency policy initiatives, facilitation of global economic recovery and restoration of America's reputation overseas. In Professor Hill's evaluation, President Obama brings a new perspective to science and technology. Distinguishing features of the new approach includes an amplification of funding for technology and R&D and the employment of world class scientists. An interesting point put forth was that since early 2005, the term “technology policy” was commonly used to denote IT policy. Tech-

nology policy as we now know it was referred to as “innovation policy”. In concluding his lecture, Professor Hill conveyed a strong sense of optimism in responding affirmatively to a query regarding whether or not the Obama Administration was capable of meeting the challenges faced.

Respondent Mr. Michael Rogers, who has long been well-versed in Europe's science and technology policies, cautioned that the process of employing a number of top level scientists does not necessarily mean that the nomination process is transparent. He put forth an argument that it was essential to adopt a balanced approach to science and technology policy that goes beyond the input of scientific advisors and attempts to unite disparate political stakeholders by seeking the input of various specialists and citizens alike. Professor Hill addressed this concern by pointing out that in the government appointment system in the US, scientists occupy a special ground.

International Workshop on Piracy

Masahiro Matsuura, Associate Professor

The issue of piracy, as exemplified by the recent episodes in Somalian waters, is becoming an issue of vital international concern. As an avenue for examining effective resolution strategies in regard to this issue, the Ocean Policy Education and Research Unit, sponsored by the Japan Foundation, held the “International Workshop on Piracy” on March 16, 2009, at the auditorium of The International House of Japan. The workshop invited scholars in the field as well as practitioners involved in activities affected by these acts of piracy to share their insights and to seek solutions on the issue.

After an opening salutation from Professor Naoya Okuwaki of the University of Tokyo Graduate Schools for Law and Politics delivered presentations on topics ranging from legal aspects of policies to counteract piracy to the design and implementation of such policies. Presenters included Associate Professor Robert Beckman from the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Law, Professor Shigeki Sakamoto from Kobe University's Graduate School of Law and Faculty of Law, Carolin Liss, Research Fellow from Murdoch University's Asia Research Centre (Australia), Mr. Yoshiaki Ito, Executive Director of ReCAAP's (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia) Information Sharing Center

(Singapore), and Joshua Ho, Senior Fellow of Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (Singapore).

Following the presentations, Professor Hideaki Shiroyama of the University of Tokyo's Graduate Schools for Law and Politics chaired a lively panel discussion that clarified the United Nations resolutions to counteract piracy and examined the composition of the groups involved in piracy. Coming on the heels of a cabinet decision to implement anti-piracy measures, participation in the event by members of the general public was high. The Ocean Policy Education and Research Unit, which investigates a number of maritime issues from a public policy perspective, plans to offer more public events of this type in the future.



— I heard that your undergraduate degree is in Engineering. So what prompted you to enrol in a public policy school for graduate studies?

In 2003, I enrolled in the Civil Engineering program mainly because I was enthralled by civil infrastructures. It is quite common for those who graduate with an undergraduate in Engineering to continue on to Engineering graduate school. However, as I was interested in a course taught by Professor Kanemoto called “Economic Evaluation of Public Policies”, I decided to join the Graduate School of Public Policy (GraSPP). The course, which is a core element of the Economic Policy Course, incorporated cost and demand analysis exercises of infrastructure projects. Infrastructure issues are ineluctably entwined with development initiatives.

— You visited the Grameen Bank last summer.

I think that, in the future, I would like to be involved with development activities in developing countries. I want to work for an organization that creates opportunities for people living in those countries by proving suitable social and economic foundations. That is also what the Grameen Bank is aiming at.

In addition to visiting the Grameen Bank’s headquarters in Bangladesh’s capital city of Dhaka, I visited a village in the region in order to meet with individuals that had actually borrowed funds to start up their own enterprises. After seeing firsthand how strong the relationship was between the Grameen Bank staff and the people of the village, I readily understood why the Grameen Bank enjoys such a high rate of loan repayment. I felt that the social system structure for delivering financing to promising impoverished individuals and the grassroots activities designed to support such initiatives epitomized an exceptionally effective balancing of macro and micro activities within the bank. In graduate school, we learn about international cooperation; but, I feel that there is an overemphasis on the macro perspective. The micro-macro perspectives cannot be separated.

— Please tell us why you have decided to search for work with a private financial enterprise.

I feel that I would like to hone my specialisation. The financial institution where I’ll join provides a system that individual students will be able to specify the area they like to engage in. I hope to find work in project finance as an infrastructure specialist, although I realise that profitability is a central objective in private banking. Currently, in the Asia marketplace, such enterprises are only seen as being viable in China, Vietnam and Thailand. I think that establishing such enterprises in places like Bangladesh also hold promise.



Mr. Hiroki Nomiya
Economic Policy Course, the Class of 2009

Student Interview

— I’d like to ask you for your impressions of GraSPP.

In comparison to the economic, law and science graduate schools which aim to cultivate specialists, the objective of the public policy school is to cultivate generalists. The level of student resolve to mastering specific areas is much lower. To put it another way, with such a mindset, the knowledge imparted in GraSPP is knowledge which can be gleaned at the undergraduate level.

On the other hand, one of GraSPP’s main strengths is that there is a closer relationship between faculty and students. There are no other schools where one can connect in such a collegial manner with leaders from all fields. The ratio of teachers to students is also noteworthy. The program is ideally designed for individuals who are willing to take the initiative in their studies. I hope that the future students shall bring a stronger sense of problem awareness derived from specialised or social experiences.

I think one of the hidden secrets that distinguish this graduate school is the elevated level of communication between students. In other graduate programs, students don’t have nearly as much interaction, whereas in this school, there is a lot of group work. Studying together with highly motivated, intelligent individuals is something that I have come to treasure.

(interview and text by editor)

The 4th ITPU International Seminar (46th Public Policy Seminar)

Katsuya Hihara, Professor



An international seminar sponsored by the Graduate School of Public Policy's (GraSPP) International Transport Policy Research Unit (ITPU) was held in collaboration with Todai Policy Alternative Research Institute (PARI) on March 19, 2009, at the Sanjo Conference Hall. In July 2007, ITPU held a seminar on congestion in general. This time, the seminar focused on airport congestion.

Presentations by Professor Jan Brueckner of the University of California Irvine, and Assistant Professor Yosuke Yasuda of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies recounted the theoretical underpinnings of transportation economics and market structure respectively. This was followed by presentations by Associate Professor Hideki Fukui of Ehime University and Mr. Yasuhiro Shinohara, Director of the Aviation Industries Division of the Civil Aviation Bureau at the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. The two presenters explained the slot allocation process at congested airports in the United States and outlined the state of affairs related to airport congestion in Japan. Following these presentations, a panel discussion ensued featuring the four presenters who were joined by Mr. Arata Yasujima, Vice President

at Japan Airlines, Mr. Junichiro Miyagawa, Manager at All Nippon Airways and Mr. Yasushi Muto, executive director of Starflyer Airlines.

At the panel discussion, it was generally agreed that a form of government intervention was necessary to mitigate congestion and environmental impacts. However, it was also acknowledged that there are various approaches to tackling these challenges such as combining free slot auctions with secondary transaction between airlines. It was pointed out that a flexible system design was essential to ensure that tangible concerns related to competitive conditions of the marketplace and information asymmetry amongst stakeholders have been sufficiently addressed. In designing such a system, a completely different approach is needed which does not forget to prioritise user benefits and which aims to minimize administrative costs. To address the challenge of seeking such a solution, it is exceedingly important to forge opportunities for theorists and practitioners to come together to share insights. Accordingly, there was a consensus amongst the principals of the event that there was significant merit in striving to build on the momentum generated from this seminar.

Topical News

DDNet 2009 & GraSPP Day Held

On March 15 & 16, 2009, two international events (DDNet 2009 & GraSPP Day) took place under the sponsorship of GraSPP. DDNet 2009 was organised to allow faculty and support staff engaged in international academic affairs from universities involved in the Global Public Policy Network (GPPN) to come together to discuss emergent challenges and resolution strategies associated with realisation of double degree programs.

On March 16, about 40 students from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs joined approximately 50 students from GraSPP for a day of an academic discussion event as GraSPP Day. In addition to providing an opportunity to share scholastic interests, the event provided a venue for establishing interpersonal networks.

(Kotoko Ogawa, International Student Advisor)

Social Gathering for Departing Foreign Students and Support Team Members with University President

On March 5, 2009, foreign students who have graduated or completed their stay in Tokyo joined members of the support team for a social gathering with University President (now President Emeritus), Hiroshi Komiyama at Ueno's Totenko Restaurant. Six students from GraSPP joined the gathering to exchange accounts of their experiences. Bambang Indrawan Cahya Putra, a GraSPP student from Indonesia spoke on behalf of the GraSPP foreign students. He delivered a sincere speech which conveyed his impressions of life in Japan and expressed gratitude to those involved in managing the program. (Kotoko Ogawa, International Student Advisor)



Editor's
Postscript

This edition of the newsletter described a host of intriguing seminars. The type of academic diversity highlighted in this edition exemplifies the practical nature of research which is ongoing at GraSPP.

(Editor)

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