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GPPN Conference Tokyo 2013 in Retrospect

Kotoko Ogawa Program Manager, International Affairs Office

The annual Global Public Policy Network (GPPN) Conference, Tokyo 2013 was held from December 6 to 8, 2013. The Conference is hosted in turn by each of the universities that belong to GPPN, with we, GraSPP, having been selected as the 2013 host at last year's board meeting in recognition of our past success in hosting academic and student exchanges.

The GPPN Conference consists of three gatherings that run in parallel: the Executive Meeting, Faculty Conference, and Student Conference. The Executive Meeting provided a stage for vigorous discussion on topics such as the operational strategies of the GPPN, how to proceed with academic exchanges, and future possibilities for public policy education. It was attended by directors and/or representatives of the seven institutions that are full members of the GPPN Network: The School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University (SIPA), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore (LKYSPP), Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po), the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Hertie School of Governance (HSOG), and the Business Administration School of São Paulo at the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV-EAESP). The Faculty Conference was also attended by representatives of these seven institutions, along with formally invitees from the University of British Columbia in Canada, Central European University in Hungary, and Australian National University. Four presentations were given on the theme of "Public Policy for 2020: Medium-Term Agenda with a Better Vision", giving political and economic perspectives on the challenges facing public policy in the medium to long-term, and potential solutions. These were followed by discussion open to all participants. Various other events were staged to provide opportunities for the academics to mingle more closely, including a chance to participate in a Japanese tea-ceremony hosted by GraSPP staff during the luncheon, and an evening banquet to which Masako Egawa, Executive Vice President and Mutsuko Inoue, General

Manager, International Affairs Department of the University of Tokyo were also invited.

The Student Conference was held on December 7 and 8. A public policy seminar at which Haruhiko Kuroda, Governor of the Bank of Japan gave a talk was followed by a Deans' Round Table that brought together leaders from GPPN's member universities for a panel discussion on the topic, "Vision for 2020: What needs to be done today?" Next was a Practitioners' Round Table session at which invited experts offered their in-depth views on specific topics. Professors Toshiro Nishizawa and Keisuke Iida spoke on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Professor Takehiro Kano on "Japan's New National Security Policy in the Changing Regional and Global Security Environment", and Professor Nobuo Tanaka and Dr. Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Academic Fellow of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, on "Fukushima: Post Disaster Management". The question and answer session prompted vibrant discussion on questions raised by students specializing in politics, economics, the environment and other subjects, with vigorous debate spilling over into the reception that followed, bringing the first day to a close on an enthusiastic note. The second day of the Student Conference involved presentations and discussions split into the three fields of economics, international relations, and politics. The 75 presenters were selected from 172 applicants from 32 countries. These presentations were assessed by academic staff and voted on by students to select the winners of the Best Paper Award and Best Presentation Award.

The people who attended the conference were very complimentary about the beauty of the Hongo Campus, the quality of the conference and how professionally it was conducted, the high level of the presentations, and the enthusiasm of the students. When we were first chosen to host the GPPN Conference, we were fearful that staging such a large event might be too much for the international team who were already kept busy by their day-to-day affairs. As it turned out, we have been delighted at how well the event turned out thanks to the help of academic and administrative staff whose cooperation extended beyond the bounds of the projects, and to the support of our excellent and enthusiastic students. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to everyone involved in the conference. Through this event, I hope that we can forge closer relationships and more active exchanges between GraSPP and our partner universities.



GPPN Conference Tokyo 2013

@ Hongo Campus, the University of Tokyo



Student Interview

No. 16

— I understand that you are taking a leave of absence for a year. What are you doing with the time?

I am involved in volunteer work in Arakawa, where I grew up. Taking classes at GraSPP with teachers who had come from outside academia left me feeling that there was much I was unable to take in due to my lack of real-world experience, and that I wanted to get more of a gut feel for the subject. I successfully applied to the Study Support Arakawa program, which was looking for paid volunteers. The aim of Study Support Arakawa is to improve academic performance among children between year 5 at elementary school and year 3 at junior high school. I have heard that some parents of elementary and junior high school children are from the generation who grew up when violence in schools was most prevalent and have the attitude that, “as I was able to graduate from high school and go on to get a job, my own kid(s) should be okay going to whichever high school they can get into.” Career education that includes educating parents like them is a major challenge.

An impression I gained through the activities arranged by the people I met at Study Support Arakawa is that modern-day poverty is not so much about a lack of material goods as it is a moral poverty that includes a lack of relationships with people. In the case of Japan, everyone has a mobile phone and is able to go to school. Deprivation is exceedingly difficult to spot. I believe one of the reasons is a breakdown in the relationships between parents and children (especially older children) due to reasons such as complex family arrangements and difficulty coping with the pressures of life. Similarly, systems for looking after children have become rarer as city residents see little of their neighbors. Instead, the children end up buying their evening meal from a convenience store and being stuck at home with nobody to talk to. I know that struggling families have little contact with the outside world, whereas if people's situation is less constrained, this means they have more freedom to enjoy the world around them.

Given that there is a limit to what can be done in policy terms to solve problems like this, it seems to me a case where volunteers should come in. A generous donor provided us with an unoccupied house he owns where these children can come and spend time. From that base, our plan is to start by offering evening meals. We are looking to food banks to procure the supplies we will need.

We also want young people to participate. The tendency of older people to impose their own experiences and values makes it harder for children to open up. Our idea is to create a scheme that the young people in the neighborhood will feel comfortable about joining. With the aim of encouraging such people, I have started working with friends to offer a free “high school selected-candidate entry exam preparation course”. We provide guidance on interviews, debating, and essay writing. This goes beyond what would be offered by a typical cram school. As only a limited number of students who sit entry exams are accepted, the children who are looking to take on this challenge tend to be motivated and talented, making them likely candidates for the activities we have planned. We are at the very early recruiting stage and planting the seeds for a long-term result. As this year's entrance exams will give us the first results of our course, I am waiting with bated breath to see how it went. While it is a mixed blessing that many parents will simply be attracted by the word “free”, I am buoyed up by the friends and helpers who are lending a hand free of charge simply out of their own enthusiasm and motivation, and by the determination and bright-eyed demeanor of the students attending the course.

I tend to be rather nosy person and enjoy meddling in other people's affairs. I also like hearing what all sorts of different people have to say. Bringing together people like this creates a community. It also seems to me that people acting together to work on society constitutes a form of “public policy” in its own right.



Ken Hatasa

Public Management Division, 2nd Year (on a leave of absence)



— Will you also be looking for a job?

Yes! My parents agreed with my taking a year off so that I could do some more study of my core subject. To tell the truth, I kept it a secret from my parents that the real reason for taking a break was to work as a volunteer. I will use this as an opportunity to come clean. In any case, it's too late to change things now and I'm sure it will all work out.

My desire is to find work where I can use my language skills. I love languages, and they made up about a third of my courses at Keio University SFC, where I studied English, Chinese, French, and German. I spent a short time studying in Germany in the summer of 2012 thanks to a grant I received from Der Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service). After I came back, I was able to act as an interpreter for some dignitaries from Vienna who were visiting Arakawa. I have also joined Athénée Français to brush up on my French. The reason I first got serious about learning German and French was so that I could keep in touch with the friends I made during my time as an exchange student at Xi'an Jiaotong University back when I was at Keio SFC. Also, my mother is Chinese and speaks Cantonese, so we talk to each other in that language. Like the Hokkien dialect, Cantonese is the language of overseas Chinese and I remember being struck by how I could make myself understood using Cantonese in a Chinatown in the Netherlands. China is such a diverse country that I suspect Chinese people are more conscious of whether someone is from Shanghai, Hong Kong, or Beijing, say, than they are of being Chinese.

(Interview and text by editor)

Visit to Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration, and Internationalization of GraSPP

Hisashi Yoshikawa Project Professor

In late September, Professor Kazumasa Kusaka and I visited Hanoi in Vietnam. The reason was to spend time at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMA), a government research and educational institution, where we lectured on "Economic and Industrial Policy in Postwar Japan" as part of an education program for future leaders run by the Academy. Beginning this year and running over three years, the program divides approximately 500 candidates for leadership positions into six groups, and then puts each group of about 80 students through a four-month training program. As their performance in this training will be considered in future recruitment decisions, the program is a very important one. The program began in the first half of 2013 and this is the second round. Japan's contribution consists of the Japan International Cooperation Agency handling part of the curriculum (the public policy module) at HCMA and supporting on-site training in Japan, with overall support provided by the National Personnel Authority.

We presented a two-day course. The sessions started with a lecture utilizing texts and other reference material already translated into Vietnamese that we handed out, followed by a group discussion on topics of relevance to the current situation in Vietnam (privatization of state corporations, attracting investment, etc.). At the end of this, we presented conclusions which were then discussed and reviewed. The participants were organization leaders who already had considerable exposure to public administration and politics in a wide variety of



fields, including the judiciary, public security, and energy policy. As a result they combined a very clear understanding of the problems with an extensive knowledge of Japan, and actively involved themselves in the debate and questions where they were able to make accurate and pertinent contributions. Subjects that provoked a particularly high degree of interest included the privatization of state corporations and the encouragement of supporting industries.

On the day before the course, we visited Bac Ninh Province on the outskirts of Hanoi. Mr. Chiến, Chairman of the province's People's Committee, had attended the program in the first half of the year 2013 and gave us a warm welcome. We visited a number of Japanese companies such as Canon with operations in the industrial districts of the province, which not only gave us a feel for industry in Vietnam and its dynamic growth but also allowed us to hear what people had to say on subjects such as policies encouraging foreign investment and the difficulties that foreign companies experience, and to incorporate this into our course. What stands out in Vietnam these days, however, is the presence of South Korean companies. I understand that investment from Korea is making a major contribution to exports from Vietnam. While Japan has already built close relationships at the economic and diplomatic levels with Vietnam, one of the main ASEAN nations, I believe that there remains considerable scope for deeper cooperation in the future in the areas of research and education. In particular, HCMA not only supplies many graduates to the economic sector and to political and administrative fields, it also takes students from nearby countries such as Laos. As Vietnam and the other nations of the Mekong River region become increasingly globalized, I believe there is considerable scope for contribution as a public policy school and for our own further internationalization.



Topical News

The "Reconstruction Symposium: 2013 Public Policy for Who?", presented by GraSPP Alumni Association as part of GraSPP Homecoming Day, was held on October 19, 2013. In addition to discussions, the comprehensive program also included lectures by Professor Akira Morita, the inaugural Dean of GraSPP, and Ms. Hiroko Tonosaki, a member of the Miyagi prefectural assembly. As a branch of GraSPP Alumni Association, we at GraSPP Reconstruction Support Network run voluntary activities by alumni and current students aimed at speeding up recovery and preparing for future large earthquakes. It is three years since 3.11. With a particular emphasis on public policy aspects, we are seeking to help Tohoku as it makes a new beginning, and to spread the lessons of the earthquake throughout Japan. We want to draw on the GraSPP network and work with local residents, prefectural assemblies, mayors, and various other actors to keep up a long-lasting involvement.

Satoshi Ito (Director, GraSPP Reconstruction Support Network, third-year)



Kesennuma Port today

Editor's
Postscript

Looking back over the last year, I feel that I have been involved in numerous situations that could be described as "exercises" in thinking about various issues from a variety of perspectives. These have provided frequent opportunities for me to listen to differing views on issues such as local government, foreign relations, energy, and politics from a regional perspective, an international perspective, a business perspective, or a young person's perspective. This gave me more than enough material to chew things over for myself and come to my own conclusions. Even more so when it comes to opinions on vital issues, I am coming to the conclusion that it is crucial to present your case to people without becoming shrill or emotional, difficult though this may be. (Editor)

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