

1st December 2020

Season's greetings from Tokyo!

It is month three of the work placement section of the Daiwa Scholarship. This sadly means we are edging ever closer to the end of the scholarship and that it is my last month at ICLEI (Local Councils for Sustainability) Japan. I am spending the next three months at The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, though in reality I will be sitting at the same desk and continuing with the research I have already started. The two organisations work very closely together. By completing an internship at both I am able to see how both an international and national policy research centre operate. As a town planner with an interest in how to adapt cities to mitigate climate change, it is motivating to see how policies are being carried out in Japan and their impacts.



My work placement has been very enjoyable. I am fortunate to have someone to eat lunch with when I am in the office and I have been plied with books in Japanese and even a small TV so that I can improve my language skills when at home (language skills which are still lacking considerably as I try to read through 400 pages of government data on low carbon development.) My work has involved checking documents in English on a variety of topics, blog writing, translating, and research. I did not expect such a variety in topics. It has made me realise how much there is going on in Japan in my field. In particular I have started a research topic on Zero Carbon cities which I'm excited to work on for the next few months.

There have been some noteworthy changes due to COVID -19. I go into the office two days a week and work the other three from home. For me, moving into a shared house with large communal spaces has made teleworking really enjoyable. Three of my housemates are architects, so there is a definite city theme as we all work together. In terms of how the organizations collaborate there have also been changes. ICLEI's international conference, Daring Cities, was conducted entirely online during October. This was very useful for me since I could watch the events held during the day across the world at a convenient time in Japan. IGES also held their ISAP conference in a virtual venue where you entered the room as an avatar to look at the presentations by different cities. It was definitely a first attending a speech given by Saitama prefecture council as a giant robin.



In final geography news, Japan has been found to be the second most resilient city to COVID-19 according to the Bloomberg resilience index. While I was of course intrigued by this from a spatial

perspective, especially in how cities like Tokyo have mitigated the virus' spread, I also am very aware our cohort has received a unique experience and we have been incredibly lucky to have been able to continue our homestays and work placements due to this adaptability. I hope everyone remains well in the UK and has a lovely Christmas and New Year.



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