

2018 Re-inventing Japan Project (Long-Term)

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The period between April and August of 2018, was full of emotions, joys, discoveries and impacts in my life. That happened because I had a unique opportunity to go to Japan, the country on the other side of the world, which is spend around 24 hours to get there. I already had an opportunity to visit when I was a teenager, however this time was different, now I could see this country with the university student view. Almost of the time, I could see Japan as a wonderful place, but sometime I had a culture shock. However, all the experiences in Japan was very important to change my mind and to turn myself in the new person.

Japan always was a country of my dreams, because I am a Japanese descendent and japanese culture had always been very present in my life, such as in the food, music, movies, habits and in the language. When I knew a possibility to go to Japan through the “Re-inventing Japan Project”, I was very excite about that. Because, now I had a possibility to joining two great dreams, go to Japan and study/know more about the forest around the world.

On April 3, I arrived in Japan, week before start activities in the university, so I had a possibility to go around the neighborhood and knew the new city and new people. I shared the room with Gabriela Guatura from Brazil and Monica Baca from Mexico. They were a very nice roommate and we had a many culture differences, so every day was very interesting and funny.

Before start the class, I had a possibility to choose some subjects that was most interesting for my major. I choose five subjects from especial program in English, such as, Vegetable Production Technologies; Forest and Forestry; Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture; Comparative Nature Study from Cultural Perspective; Life History and Application of Landscape Plants; and four subjects of Japanese Language (advanced and intermediate).

The subjects was ministry completely in English, so was easily to understand. At the class, we had a many opportunities to discuss with classmates and to learn about Japan agriculture reality. Most of the subjects were teach in the classroom, but some also had field trips and practice.

Subject and Field Trip

On April 21, we had our first field trip realize in Satoyama of Hayano Seichi Park, at Kanagawa prefecture, in order to attend the subject of Life History and Application of Landscape Plants. The aim of this field trip was kwon what is a satoyama and a importance for Japan. Satoyama is an area of forested mountains that are surround by villages, where the local community manages the forest and practice agriculture.

The activity was remove bamboo shoots that were growing in the mountain. Because, bamboos have a very fast growth and intense multiplication capacity, they need to be remove from the environment to preserve the plants diversity in satoyama.

That was our first contact with satoyama village, I already had read about, however visit and participate in the community was very different experience. I could feel the social, environmental, religious importance of satoyato for japaneses.

On May 6, we back again to Hayano Seichi Park (satoyama), but no longer with the intention of knowing the plants on the mountain and the importance of them.

We were accompany by a group of elderly people belonging to the botanic community, who were very attentive to us, helping us to identify the existing plants in the place. The professor introduced us to the local plants, from the creeping plants to the larger trees, explaining their uses and the history behind their name. The name of the plants are often tied to its shape, utility, color, etc., such as, inushide - that specie has a fur look like a dog in the sheet. We learned some name of plants, for example: *Lindera praecox*, *Styrax japonica*, *Tricyrtis hirta*, *Chloranthus serratus*, *Quercus salicina*, etc.

I was surprised by the elderly people's knowledge about plants and saw how they valued even the smallest plants and seemingly economic unimportant. For Brazilians, plants that do not have any economic importance are ignored, but for the group not. They knew the plants, their names, something impressive.



Image 1. Study of Japanese Landscape in the Nature Park of Mount Takao, Tokyo



Image 2. Identifying plants with elderly people in Satoyama

For a long time forest were see as a great enemy for farmers, therefor the forest were withdrawn. However, culturally to the Japanese, the forest is not seen as an enemy, but as a friend be able of providing food and shelter. Nowadays, in Japan forests is more relate to culture and religion than economy.

On May 12, we went to Tamagawa River – Tokyo - to know the composition of the landscape around the river. We walked around the river in order to identify plant species that developing there. Most of the existing species were exotic from Japan, brought from many countries around the world.

On June 30, we went to Asakusa, one of the most famous tourist spots in Tokyo, and we went to a place where was selling ornamental plants and fruit trees in the street. We could see several plants, such as cactus, bonsai, blueberry, strawberry, etc. After that, we walked to the port along the Sumida river, we could see several parts along the river that had just been built (there were small plants, which had been planted shortly).

We went from Asakusa to Odaiba by ship, where we could see an interesting mix of modern constructions with plants along the way. It was an interesting experience, showing that even in greatest cities as Tokyo, plants remain an important part of landscape.

On July 14, the field trips of Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture started. The first visit was in Kamakura city, Kanagawa prefecture. The goal of the field trip was see some traditional architecture and landscape around Kamakura city.

First, professor took us to Tsurugaoka Hachimanju shrine and explained about the historic importance of Kamakura. The city was call “city of samurais”, because of the military government in the past. Kamakura had the original military culture. After that, we went to visit Hokokuji Temple, where we found a small bamboo grove and many beautiful details in the landscape. In addition, we went to a very quiet and small Buddhism temple. There we could appreciate a beautiful Japanese garden. That was incredible place because I could feel calm and peace immediately when I entranced in the temple area, incredible power of nature.

On July 21, Kurita professor took us to Nature Park of Mount Takao, Tokyo. The goal of this field trip was see the architecture of old temples and know how they compose natural landscape.

The field trip started at 10 am, the temperature and humidity of Tokyo city was high, however on the mount it was little bit more cold than in the city, helped us to climb. To climb the mountain they have 2 way, one is climbing by foot and other one is go up by lift. In that day, we used chair lift to get there faster. After that we kept climbing up by foot for 1 hour to get on the summit, during the course we could appreciate beautiful virgin forest of Tokyo cities. On the course we saw the octopus cedar tree (takosugi), they started to call that because of the root`s shape is similar as octopus, besides different plants and beautiful view of the city.

We had an opportunity to visit one Buddhist temple Yakuo-in, which is considered a symbol of this mountain. The temple had a historic atmosphere and I could see different elements of Japanese culture expressed in the architecture. After that, finally we could get on the summit and appreciate nice view from 599 metres of altitude.

The two places we visited through the Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture field trip was interesting, because there preserve forests and ancient atmosphere of the temples and shrines are very close from greatest city (Tokyo). This strong relationship between religion and nature is very especially characteristic of Japan. Besides being very beautiful as the Japanese value all this, and continue to preserve their temples and forests.

Laboratory Activities

Beside the subjects, we had to belong to a laboratory. I was allocated in the Laboratory of Erosion Control and Forest Restoration, my host professor were Fukunaga Kenji and Tachibana Ryuichi. I was delighted with the receptiveness of the members and their care for me. It was very good to share a little bit about Amazon and Brazil with them.

My activities in the laboratory was help the students research and participate in the field trips with them. I went twice to Okutama to have a practice with Forest Science students, from NODAI. In the first time, we learned how to collect soils and to use instruments to measure soil density. In the second time, the purpose of the lesson was to identify plants and study forest ecology. The nature of Japan and Amazon is very different that it is fun to study. I climbed the mountains for hours to get in the practice place, it was very hard but it was worth. The both opportunities I had practical experiences at the Japanese forest and I could make friends. At night, we made a barbecue and we had an interaction time, they were very interesting in Brazil and kind with me.



Image 3. Field trip with laboratory members



Image 4. Farewell Party

In addition, I had many trips to different places in Japan with members of laboratory. In June, I went to Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, to planting trees in destroyed place by the tsunami. Before the natural disaster in 2011, the site chosen for planting trees was a city

with many houses, schools, shops, hospitals. However, nowadays, nothing is seen near the sea. The objective of the voluntary work was the implantation of forests in order to protect the city against future natural disasters that may occur. They realized that the places surrounded by trees did not have as much impact of the tsunami. After the activity in Sendai, I attended a seminar on forest restoration of an area destroyed by a volcanic eruption in Nagano province (certainly one of the most beautiful places I have visited in Japan).

For my Farewell Party, the laboratory prepared a Japanese foods and giving me many souvenir. I was very happy with everyone's affection and dedication to having such a memorable farewell party. I have no words to thank the Laboratory of Erosion Control and Forest Restoration for taking care of me during those 5 months.

Other activities in NODAI

In NODAI, we also participated in many activities to improve the interaction with international and Japanese students. On May, had the international student party, when the foreign students can show a bit from the culture of them. To representing Brazil, we brought Paçoquinha (Brazilian sweet) and danced Forró. It was a pleasure show a bit of my culture and appreciated the culture of other students. I was surprised that there are so many foreign students and it was a good opportunity to make friends all over the world.



Image 5. International Students Party

The University have many clubs around the Setagaya camps, such as sport clubs, art, botanic, etc. In Japan, most of the students belong to some club to make friends and to do extra activity in the university as well. I found a very interesting club in NODAI, called Immigration Club. My family are immigrants from Japan, so I was exciting to kwon what they have studying about that. For my surprise, they was searching about Japanese immigration to Brazil. They invited me to give a short presentation about Japanese immigration to my hometown (Tomé-Açu). I felt honored to be able to talk about the

history of my city and happy to know that there are people interested in knowing about the Japanese immigration in Brazil.

In addition, on July, I give a presentation to Latin America Cafe, about my university, the research I have developing there and how the experience in Japan has been. It was very gratifying to share that information, because in this way we were able to spread more about our country and university.

During the period of August 3 to 7th, I participated in the internship in Institute of Environment Rehabilitation and Conservation (ERECON). The aim of this activity was know more about one Japanese institute and have a practical experience about how they are developing works with farmers there. In this internship, Koji Miwa was our professor, who belong to this institution. We went to satoyama to know this Japanese sustainable agriculture, which have doing for long time. In addition, we could have contact with farms and discuss about environment issues in our country.



Image 6. Receiving Internship Certification

Tourism around Japan

I still have relatives in Fukushima prefecture and I went there to visit them. It was wonderful to hear many stories about my grandfather's childhood and his immigration to Brazil. The house where my grandfather grew up is surround by mountains and is a very peaceful place. However, when he decided to immigrate to Brazil, Japan was in a difficult situation. I heard from my uncle stories about why my grandfather emigrated after second war. The knowledge about the history of my family was important to value more my descendants because of the all forces and courage to start new life in other country.

For the summer holidays, we were able to plan to travel to Nara and Kyoto prefecture. In both places we preferred not to just stay in the city, but explore more the country side of the prefectures, in Kyoto we went to the island of Amanohashidate (天橋

立) and in Nara we went to Mitarai Valley (みたらい溪谷). In both places, we could feel the peaceful preserved and beautiful nature of Japan.



Image 7. Kyoto city tour



Image 8. Amanohashidate Island

Conclusion

When I applied this program, one of the reason was because of the gaining knowledge of new technics and technologies in forest production. However, I confess that during the field experience with the Japanese, I was impress not only with the technology they was using in the forest, but also mainly on their mentality about nature. I found it incredible how they value, respect and know each species, from the creeping plants to the large trees.

In Japan, I was able to experience many good and sometimes, shocking things that also made me reflect. I would like to use all this experience to professional and personal growth. Using all those knowledge I hope contribute to sustainable Amazon development and change the really of the people from my region. I am thankful for this partnership between NODAI and UFRA, because I get more than just technological and academics knowledge, it was a possibility to expand view for the world issues and for a sustainable society. After all these experiences, I feel responsible to share everything with UFRA's students and professors, to increase the information about Japan and how the Japanese take care of their natural resources. Because Japan is an example of respectful people, secure and sustainable country.

For future exchange students my advice is allow to immerse yourself in a new culture and open your mind to new possibilities. We have many things to learn with Japaneses and others exchange students around the world. Use this chance to know more people as

possible and share your experiences with them. In addition, believe in your capacity to communicate and go ahead!

Thank you very much Tokyo University of Agriculture, JASSO and Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia for make my dreams come true and change my view about the world. I hope contribute with the connection between Japan and Brazil for help more students to participate in exchange programs. Someday I wish back to this beautiful country.

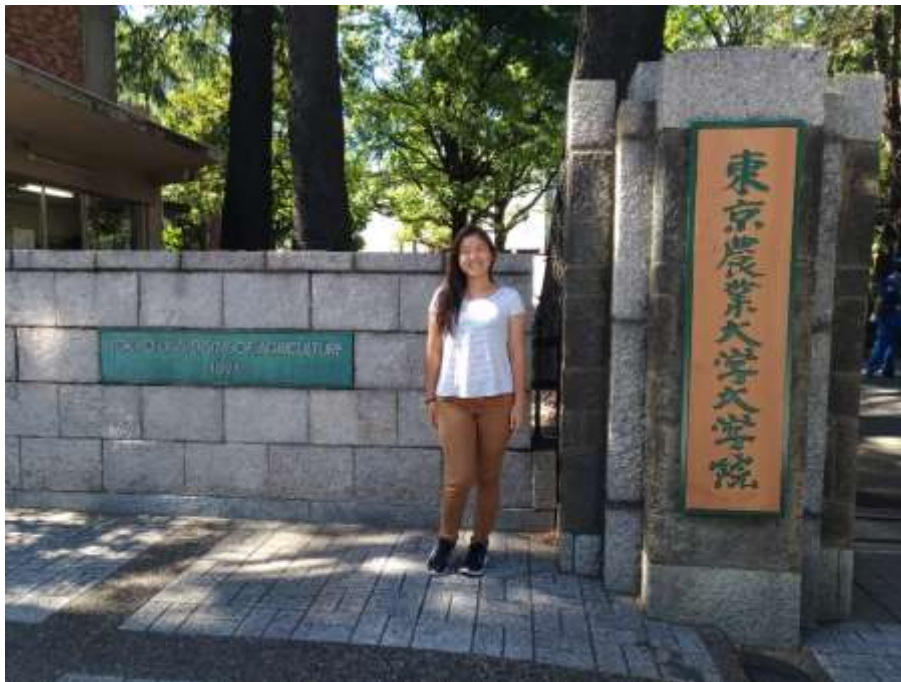


Image 9. Tokyo University of Agriculture