RENKEI

Defining Tomorrow

Strategic Collaboration between the UK and Japan in Academia and Beyond

About RENKEI

RENKEI (Japan-UK Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives) is an international platform for UK-Japan collaboration in higher education, run by the following Japanese and UK member universities, with the British Council as the secretariat.

UK members
University of Bristol, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, Newcastle University, University of Southampton, UCL (University College London)

Japan members
Kyoto University, Kyushu University, Nagoya University, Osaka University, Ritsumeikan University, Tohoku University

RENKEI was launched on 13th March 2012 to meet the challenges of living in a complex, rapidly changing and globalized twenty-first century. Collaboration across sectors is becoming ever more important as the result of economic and societal changes. Through RENKEI projects, member universities in both Japan and the UK are committed to exploring how they can develop fresh and innovative engagement with third-party organisations such as industries, governments and social enterprises to create new levels of professionalism and ambitious strategies that will help define the world of tomorrow.

The UK and Japan have a long history of partnership, and share common interests and concerns in the twenty-first century. The two economically powerful countries are among the world’s foremost producers of cutting-edge research. As such, enormous potential exists for the UK and Japan to learn from each other. They face similar demographics, political, social and industrial challenges, and thus are ideal partners in meeting these demands with innovative solutions.

As well as sharing several commonalities, the UK and Japan have various differences which give rise to a range of opportunities. They offer mutual geographical advantages since they are located in contrasting regions of the world, and they have varying areas of relative strength both within academia and beyond. RENKEI is an exciting opportunity to bring these very positive, complementary factors together in a unique form of constructive collaboration.

As this innovative form of knowledge transfer and research collaboration develops, it will result in shared value, agendas and action points among the participating individuals, institutions and organizations. RENKEI programmes and projects will also lead to closer consultation with potential stakeholders, especially the British and Japanese governments. The long-term benefits of RENKEI will be a sustainable dialogue and strategic relationship that transcends academic disciplines, industrial/public sectors and national boundaries.

RENKEI Projects between April 2013 and March 2016

Since its launch in 2013, RENKEI has been actively delivering projects to tackle some of the global challenges we face in society. More than 200 students and researchers have participated in the projects, gained new knowledge and skills, and built new networks through intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration.

April 2013 – March 2014
• RENKEI Researcher Development School
  Hosted by: University of Bristol, University of Newcastle, and Kyoto University

April 2014 – March 2015
• Japan-UK Joint Workshop on Aerospace Engineering
  Hosted by: Nagoya University, University of Southampton, and University of Bristol
• Understanding Global Challenges through Collaborative Research and Fora
  Hosted by: Tohoku University and University of Southampton

April 2015 – March 2016
• Renaissance Entrepreneurship: Shaping the future of demographic change - Intercultural workshop at UCL
  Hosted by: University College London (UCL) and Osaka University
• Living with an Ageing Society: Interdisciplinary workshop in Osaka
  Hosted by: Osaka University and University of Liverpool
• Aerospace Engineering Workshop: Engaging with Industry
  Hosted by: University of Southampton, University of Bristol and Nagoya University

RENKEI has seen three new projects delivered in 2016-2017, building on these past achievements, and this report provides a brief summary of the overview and outcomes of those projects. For a full picture of RENKEI and its impact, please visit the RENKEI website at www.britishcouncil.or.jp/renkei
Living with an Ageing Society:
Interdisciplinary workshop in Liverpool

Challenge Purpose

Challenge
After the first workshop in Osaka, we needed to change the make-up of the teams and, in some cases, refine the projects. In Osaka, there had been some difficulties regarding the two different styles of academic argument that the two cultures practiced, and a brief description of each was offered to the participants. It was also clear that expectations of the workshop differed, with Japanese colleagues more comfortable concentrating on formal academic lectures and the answering of individual questions. This resulted in participants being very well briefed, with a widespread knowledge of ageing issues, but allowed less time for the teams to fully explore the ideas that they were forming. A further challenge was to continue to explore the dynamics of the teams and their ability to transcend cultural, disciplinary and language barriers. Discussions between colleagues in Osaka and, subsequently, by email and Skype, allowed the aims and objectives of the Liverpool workshop to be shared and targeted toward those perceived difficulties. Indeed, it was agreed in Osaka that a greater emphasis on professional development would stretch and equip the participants better for their careers and their projects. This aspect of the workshop was the most successful in terms of networks, friendships and collaborations.

Purpose
To give colleagues from Japan and the UK who are researching the ageing society opportunities to collaborate and socialise, learn from each other and develop skills and behaviours to benefit their research, their research careers and their overall employability.
Living with an Ageing Society: Interdisciplinary workshop in Liverpool

How could we use cross-disciplinary approaches that could contribute and combine to provide solutions to the challenges of an ageing society and provoke discussion to create new questions and ideas to research?

Overview

Activities took place under three main themes: ‘Provocations’, which took the form of lectures, site visits and workshops on specific ageing-related research matters; ‘Interventions’, which focused on personal and professional development activities in order to give the participants useful tools and the opportunity for reflection on their skills and attributes; and ‘Collaborations’, where the main project work was conducted by the teams themselves, with expert guidance on hand from the tutor team if needed.

There were six formal lectures overall, ranging from Dr Masayuki Nakamichi’s Grandmother Hypothesis, based on observation of a Japanese monkey cohort, to Dr Kate Bennett’s Ethical Issues session looking at intercultural research ethics. These provocations also included the stimulus of site visits, most notably to the Reeve Court Retirement Village, St Helens. The collaborative theme involved the participants forming teams, working on their projects and eventually delivering presentations to a group of experts drawn from the University of Liverpool and the ageing service community. However, collaborations also encompassed the social aspects of the workshop, including a formal evening dinner with the Vice Chancellor, Professor Janet Beer; the screening of David Lynch’s The Straight Story; and a visit to ‘The Story of Glass’, the museum of the St Helens Glass Industry.

Outcome

The projects produced a set of interesting presentations exploring ideas around servicing the ageing population and discovering new research questions. The projects included the following:

- Intergenerational relationships through food
- Promoting social participation through ageing volunteers helping tourists at the forthcoming Tokyo Olympics
- A ‘Smart Toilet’ designed for use in public spaces
- Ways to make it easier for older members of society to find useful and rewarding work to help prolong their lives
- ‘Death Education’, a project that explored ways in which people could prepare for the end of their life in a sensitive but enlightened manner

Networks, friendships and collaborations were the main outcomes that emerged from the collaborations and the overall experience.
Globalization has introduced new social and cultural norms that require a multidisciplinary engagement which was truly achieved in both RENKEI workshops, in Liverpool and in Osaka. This workshop was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me to meet and interact with various people from different backgrounds in the field in which I conduct my research.

One of the most attractive sessions was the one on group games that we played in Liverpool to become more familiar with one another and to learn to achieve a shared goal as a group. Of course, the other sessions, including those on ethical issues and evaluation of the project impact, were also quite thought-provoking and interesting. When developing new ideas, it is our duty as researchers to consider various aspects of the project, including its impact on society and the environment, as well as the ethical aspects involved.

As a professional researcher, I have always had a flexible mindset to understand the many different questions in the field of mobility. Moreover, the workshop provided me with a deeper understanding of how many more aspects may be involved in an elderly mobility project, thanks to the presence of other researchers from different backgrounds whose help was necessary to achieve our goals in the project.

The opportunity to work with researchers from different backgrounds, including public health, architecture and civil engineering, to develop a framework that could help to understand how to improve the quality of life for elderly people and the challenges they face, was of great importance. In this regard, understanding of the challenges we are facing and the importance of collective creativity in developing practical approaches to dealing with the accompanying issues and promoting a healthy and active ageing society, is absolutely essential.

There was a lot of interesting activities and insightful lectures and discussions over the course of the programme. Of these, the most thought-provoking part was the teamwork on the final project. Given our different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, the whole process of working on the final project offered us many chances to learn about each other and about how to work as a team in a very amicable and relaxing way, through outdoor and other activities.

As a healthcare provider, I used to overly focus on health promotion and maintenance. At the workshop, however, I came to understand how providing a better life for the elderly requires us to deliver interdisciplinary solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing communities.

The workshop activities stimulated me to interdisciplinary learning and thinking. I acquired many novel ideas and opinions from this programme. I also shared the outcome of the workshop with my colleagues and others. I believe that more and more people can benefit from interdisciplinary learning. Art has done, by thinking more about how to perform monochromatic research from a cross-disciplinary standpoint and how to deliver better diversified services for older people in the community, as well as how to bridge the gap between research and practice.

Alireza Abouhossein
Postdoctoral Fellow in Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering University of Leeds

The RENKEI interdisciplinary workshop “Living with an Ageing Society” was fascinating, well-designed and informed, and lived up to my expectations. It helped me gain various perspectives on aging. It gave me a better understanding of the challenges we are facing and of the importance of initiative and creativity in developing practical approaches to dealing with the accompanying issues and promoting a healthy and active ageing society.

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I took part in the RENKEI Ageing workshop to learn the most recent insights provided by the research into aging, and my expectations were met. I had the opportunity to study the issues related to aging from a multidisciplinary perspective. Thus, I could explore the phenomenon of aging from beyond my field of expertise (i.e. cognition). Evolutionary, social, and emotional aspects of aging were also taken into consideration.

In my opinion, the most interesting aspects of the workshop was the one on the SONIC study. This longitudinal study of several cohorts of old people represented the best example of how aging is not a mono-dimensional construct. Rather, aging is affected by the interaction of many variables with each other. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between aging and healthy aging. While this former is just the common trajectory of everyone’s life, the latter is a fundamental goal in order to live a happier and more satisfactory old age. In brief, simplistic descriptions and explanations cannot account for this important part of life.

Beyond expanding my knowledge of the phenomenon of aging, the RENKEI workshop has helped me to understand how research into aging must be carried out. Assuming the complexity of aging, the experiment has to be implemented advanced and multi-variables research methods to examine the nuances of the topic.

In summary, the workshop has made my understanding of aging more robust and detailed. Likewise, my awareness of the importance of the research in the field has significantly increased. Moreover, the research into aging and its correlations is one of the most important enterprises of the new millennium, with huge societal and economical implications.

Ric Ogasawara
3rd year Doctoral student in Human Sciences Osaka University

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The ageing population is a problem that burdens many developed nations as they struggle with the demographics of younger generations becoming a minority as overall health, hygiene and nutrition and healthcare standards enable the average age of death to continue to rise. Japan and the UK are two countries where this situation requires long term planning, new solutions, research and new ways of thinking in order to mitigate the problems posed for society and the individual by an ageing society.

Overall, the balance of the programme between the three main themes of provocation, collaboration and intervention was spot on. Early career researchers are often engaged in discovering their self-identification, and many young doctoral researchers are keen to realize that research is not just about pushing the boundaries in their discipline but something else about how they direct themselves. While it was very important for the workshop to have clear aims and objectives within the RENKEI programme, participants sometimes lost sight of these objectives and demanded more informal interactions. Getting that balance right was often difficult from an organisers perspective.

The projects were interesting and innovative; they engaged the teams, who produced enthusiastic presentations stimulating the judges and the audience. The projects could be the basis for further collaborations if the team members wanted to pursue them. Together, the various individuals who contributed to their research and their personal learning. In particular, the most valued aspect of the workshop was the personal connections, friendships and contacts that the participants made, and the cross-cultural, which will spur many to continue their work on work units or simply to support each other on a personal level through the avenues of their research experience.

The main experience, as outlined above, was social and collaborative. It is up to each individual to decide how best to exploit the experience for their overall career aim. I am sure that something they will never forget.

Giovanni Sala
PhD Candidate in Cognitive Psychology University of Liverpool

RENKEI Ageing workshop was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me to meet and interact with various people from different backgrounds which appeared viable to the experts who were there on the amount of funding to implement projects which seemed viable to the experts who were there. Perhaps it would have been an even greater opportunity if those involved in any of the projects had been able to apply for a larger amount of funding to implement projects which appeared viable to the experts who were there on the final day to observe and rate the projects.

Chen Sannei
Postdoctoral Fellow in Public Activity Epidemiology Kyushu University

The working group was the one on group games that we played in Liverpool to become more familiar with one another and to learn to achieve a shared goal as a group. Of course, the other sessions, including those on ethical issues and evaluation of the project impact, were also quite thought-provoking and interesting. When developing new ideas, it is our duty as researchers to consider various aspects of the project, including its impact on society and the environment, as well as the ethical aspects involved.

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Chen Sannei
Postdoctoral Fellow in Public Activity Epidemiology Kyushu University
Intercultural workshop at Osaka University: Renaissance Entrepreneurship

Shaping the future of demographic change

How should we tackle the social issues that arise in the course of demographic change?

Challenge

Japan is the most rapidly ageing country in the world, which means that it is the most advanced case study in an international society whose demographic structure is changing. Some social issues have already become apparent, while there are other areas in which it remains unclear what issues will arise in the future. This situation is both characteristic of and the most problematic aspect of societies undergoing demographic change. The participants in this workshop were asked to discover for themselves the social issues that will arise as the world undergoes ever greater demographic change, think of solutions, and put these into practice.

Purpose

The aim of this workshop was for the participants to cross the boundaries between countries, cultures, and academic fields, contributing their knowledge and ideas in an environment with diverse values, and to be prompted by stimuli from the actual situations in which the issues are arising, coming up with creative solutions to the social issues caused by demographic change and putting these ideas into practice. This project also aims to construct an environment which produces future leaders who can understand and utilize the latest ideas from the humanities and the sciences in order to bring about systemic reform for a better society and can act as hubs for intellectual exchange.
Dawn Reeves of “facilitate this!” in the UK was invited to act as facilitator of a two-week workshop. The first week was used to share the direction of the RENKEI workshop with all the participants, focusing on ice-breakers, team building, and social visits. The second week centred on discussions within the teams and mini-lectures from various specialists in order for each team to make its project a reality. On the final day, a symposium was held at Osaka Innovation Hub (OIH) in the centre of Osaka, during which each team presented its initiative to 81 participants from industry, government, academia, and the public.

This workshop welcomed 15 participants from the Japanese and British RENKEI member institutions. 10 of the participants had also taken part in last year’s workshop, while 5 were participating for the first time this year.

In addition to the two teams active since last year, Renaissance Home, a project to tackle the phenomenon of vacant houses and put them to use, and Gengoal, which aims to bring about language acquisition and social inclusion for isolated groups such as the elderly and foreigners through the development of an app, the new participants formed the COMSHIKA team, which aimed to solve the regional issues faced by Shikanoshima, an island in Fukuoka Prefecture. Each of the three teams worked on their projects through the workshop.

The workshop participants came from six different national backgrounds, giving the workshop true linguistic and cultural diversity.

Each of the three teams is continuing with activities to make its project a reality, and there are firm expectations that they will each produce concrete results to tackle the social issues on which they are working.
Comments from the participants and organisers:

Intercultural workshop at Osaka University: Renaissance Entrepreneurship - Shaping the future of demographic change

Paco Giudice
2nd year PhD student in Philosophy
University of Southampton

I joined the RENKEI workshop 2016 without a clear idea of what the programme would be about. The broad topic that was presented and discussed in the introduction became clearer day by day. Being in Japan and getting to know about the demographic changes and challenges gave me a lot of insights and knowledge. The participants and the organisers were great at maintaining an inspiring atmosphere.

I personally enjoyed the hands-on activities in Osaka City the most. We had the opportunity to tour around one of the most challenging city areas in Japan, where homelessness and poverty are the biggest issues. Luckily, we had a well-guided tour that gave us as much information as possible about the current situation and the possible solutions.

The workshop itself was an interesting opportunity to connect with Japanese people and culture. Too often, living in a Western society narrows our view about many social and personal issues. My participation in the programme opened up some new possibilities for me and the others as well.

Although my studies are unrelated to the subject matter of the workshop, I think I gained some management skills that will be useful for my future plans and work.

The whole experience was very interesting and I am sure I will treasure the memories gained in these two weeks.

Kazuki Kino
Undergraduate student in International Public Policy
Osaka University

During the RENKEI programme I was able to establish many bonds with rather different RENKEI members, which was very helpful in forming and developing a social enterprise idea. With good teamwork, the processes of thinking, development and discussion were extremely smooth and fun to participate in.

I thought the most interesting thought-provoking session was the Kamagasaki visit. Although it did not have a direct impact on our final idea of a language acquisition programme, it did expand my awareness of social problems which exist in Japanese society and the dilemma which comes with it. It was especially interesting to see how in a country where prostitution is illegal, unlike the Netherlands, for example, the red-light district was clearly visible and no efforts were made to conceal or hide it. The helpfulness made by the homeless and the support available for them were also very dramatic and thought-provoking.

Although I was already aware of some of the issues surrounding today’s society and the inequality that those problems bear, participating in this programme, after doing it, became more determined to contribute to solving some of these issues. Before the programme, a part of me had given up on finding any real contributions to the above complexity of the task, but having engaged in visits, talks and discussions during the programme, I now believe that any small step will eventually have a significant impact.

As aforementioned, I obtained a knowledge of social problems in Japan. I also learned more about multiculturalism, as well as different perspectives and views on social problems offered by participants from a wide variety of backgrounds. My communications, presentation and teamwork skills also improved as a result of our activities, both within and outside workshop hours. I would like to continue working on our project while pursuing my studies, and hope to be able to impart some of the knowledge I obtained in my approach to philosophical debates, and use my improved communication skills to put my ideas into words effectively.

Emiko Nakano
Undergraduate student in International Public Policy
Osaka University

I found this programme very inspiring and thought-provoking, since there were a variety of people participating in tackling social issues. Reaching a consensus on our business plan was a long and involved process because we discussed it from various perspectives.

I thought the idea of going out for excursions, such as to the Kamagasaki area, which has problems with prostitution, and the national art museum in Nakanoshima to get artistic inspiration, was very interesting. It was also helpful in thinking the model. I learned what was really needed in an area, what had been done and what effective things had been done, by listening to the views of local people. I found it important to compare different areas with similar problems in order to figure out what we could do.

I originally thought, based on my past experience, that it would be very difficult to come up with a business model on which we could engage in the long term. I felt that our business would work well, but in the end, we abandoned our plan after considerable analysis of costs and benefits and of existing competitors. However, I considered our plan from the standpoint of underprivileged without hearing from existing businesses (we decided to use abandoned houses by collaborating with business universities in rural areas).

With good teamwork, the processes of thinking, development and discussion were extremely smooth and fun to participate in.

I feel that I had a very good experience as part of the RENKEI programme this year. While my major is not as closely related to social enterprise as those of some others in the programme, I felt that as students, we were struggling with very similar problems and difficulties.

The most thought-provoking session was the discussion in which we all shared one thing we wanted to change about ourselves. It was very interesting to see how the changes that each person desired were part of deeper problems correlated to emotions and worries, usually stemming from fear and uncertainty. This was the fundamental core of what most of the students shared. I found it comforting and became more at ease when I learned that I was not the only one struggling.

Through participating in the programme, I realized that with enough motivation and support from their surroundings, even people without professional backgrounds can start a social movement. The programme really motivated me to work on the CONFUSIA project with my colleague Natsuko here in Kyushu.

Through this programme, I learned the skills of bringing together a team, negotiating our differences through discussion and reasoning, and actually resolving the conflicting arguments. In the near future, I would like to use these skills, along with these skills, along with studies related to my major, to help alleviate at least a little bit of the suffering in the world.

Hee Yung Woo
Undergraduate student in Agriculture
Kyushu University

Creative and sustainable solutions to social issues require collaboration between the industrial, government, academic, and civil society sectors. Furthermore, it is essential to create and utilise novel and universal issues such as those caused by demographic change, the need for intellectual collaborations and emergence which transcended the boundaries between academic disciplines, nations, and regions is known to all.

What is extremely important in the realisation of these academic collaborations in the existence of leaders who act as hubs connecting various sectors, skilled officers, and so on. As this programme was designed with the aim of compiling such leaders and forming an environment to foster their development.

Japanese and British university students and early career researchers with a wide variety of attributes came together, examining social issues and creating proposals through the two-week workshop. In particular, this year’s programme focused on leading up proposals from the standpoint of sustainability, and these were presented at a symposium which brought together many participants as well.

The symposium succeeded in giving the audience’s understanding about the development of young leaders and their enthusiastic support, which will continue into the future.

It is hoped that the workshop participants will continue to enjoy intellectual environments in which they cooperate with a variety of people, and that they will demonstrate their leadership in order to find solutions to social issues.

Yasuo Kanematsu
Professor
Office for Industry
Kyushu University

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RENKEI PAX School 2016
– Enslaving the Mind –

A transdisciplinary grand challenge - how can we lay the intellectual foundations for building peace in our times?

Leading universities: Ritsumeikan University / University of Liverpool (in cooperation with Kyushu University)

Challenge

Peace is not the prerogative of a few but a state of well-being whose structures must be maintained by all of us. The background to this programme is the transformative change that is happening around the world in regard to peace and security. Nation states appear to be at a loss to deal with trans-border issues such as parastatal terror, and the call for collective security has grown stronger.

Japan too is at an important crossroad, with the current government’s proposed revisions to the postwar Peace Constitution tending to polarize public opinion. In the UK, too, the nation is struggling to understand what breeds “home grown terror”, which operates in distant lands overseas, in search of ways for dealing with it.

Against this background, we address the theme “Enslaving the Mind” and look at how structures of peace get enmeshed into structures of war, co-opting the public in the process.

Purpose

1. To bring together early career researchers from the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences together to discuss a grand challenge that continues to plague human society.
2. To explore how engagement with societal institutions can be fostered in executing the programme.
3. To lay the foundations for reasoned advocacy and creative public engagement by early career researchers working collectively in a trans-border context.

www.britishcouncil.or.jp/renkei
Overview

The programme was held on 14 - 23 September 2016 at Ritsumeikan University, the home to the world's first peace museum founded by a university. Twenty-two participants of fifteen nationalities joined the research endeavour. The program consisted of three parts:

Part 1: LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Part 2: THEATRES OF UNCERTAINTY TODAY

Part 3: SHAPING OUR SHARED FUTURE

Part 1 started with a visit to Ritsumeikan’s Kyoto Museum for World Peace. To help the participants understand how the public gets co-opted into war or conflict, we invited a special speaker, Mr. Keiichiro Hirano, an award winning novelist, who advocated the significance of “dividual”, as oppose to “individual” and how it could affect the mindsets of the public through his lecture “What is ‘I’? – Individual or ‘Dividual’”. Part 1 also included a field visit to Nagasaki, where the group visited Nagasaki Peace Park, Hypocentre Park, and Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum before visiting Nagasaki University Research Centre for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (RECNA) for lectures by Prof. Tsuchiya on “The Antihumanitarian Consequence of Development and Detonation of Nuclear Weapons”, and Prof. Suzuki on “Overcoming the Nuclear Dilemma: A Proposal for a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NEA-NWFZ)”. The group also had a chance to interact with Nagasaki City Mayor Mr. Take, as well as Mr. Taniwaki, an 82 year-old atomic bomb survivor.

Part 2 included lectures and discussions looking into the uncertain situation of the Middle East. There was a special lecture by a Palestinian award-winning writer human rights lawyer, Mr. Raja Shehadeh, entitled “The Danger of Peace: What does Israel fear from Palestine?” which focused on the transformations of the mindset of current political actors in order for peace to be possible. Group work started from part 2, and participants formed 4 teams who conducted investigations, created a storyboard and developed these into a game and an exhibit poster on a chosen theme related to “enslaving the mind” and the issue of peace. This was intended to be each team’s final presentation.

Part 3 encouraged the participants to work together on their final presentations. It also contained lectures about peace museums throughout the world and discussion on the relation of this year’s programme to next year’s workshop in Liverpool. The final presentations were given on the last day of the programme.

Outcome

The participants gained a deeper understanding of how the public are co-opted into the process of war and conflict through the lectures, discussion and field work in which they participated during this programme.

As a RENKEI project that emphasises the importance of public engagement in achieving positive social impact, the final outcome was created in the form of exhibits and games that mainly target primary school and junior high school students. The participants formed four groups and each group chose a topic. Each topic had a related artifact (two groups chose the same topic and used the same artifact) that were chosen by a curator of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, and was used as part of their presentation.

Group 1: Fearless (topic: fear / artifact: a gas mask) – The exhibit shows the use of gas masks around the world in the past and the situation in Japan after World War 1 to allow visitors to understand what impact it had on people’s minds. The game enables players to rethink whether or not all given information is correct, and experience how to overcome fears.

Group 2: Kazuo’s Bento Box (topic: atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki / artifact: a “bento” lunch box that belonged to a boy in Hiroshima and was damaged by the atomic bomb) – The exhibit shows the story of a fictional character, “Kazuo”, who was killed in the atomic bomb attack in Hiroshima and asks visitors to think what they can do to create a peaceful future. The game is associated with the actual geography and buildings of Nagasaki City that stood when the city was hit by an atomic bomb.

Group 3: The Game of Truth (topic: censorship / artifact: a blacked-out textbook) – The exhibit shows the purpose of censorship and how it has been used all over the world, encouraging visitors to think of the effect it has on people’s minds. The game has messages for peace that are covered; players need to find the truth by themselves.

Group 4: Overcoming Fear (topic: fear / artifact: a gas mask) – The exhibit tells of the forgotten tragedies in China caused by the Japanese army during the Second Sino-Japanese War and shows messages written by the participants and faculty members of the project wishing for peace. The game gives three players different roles, a government official, a police officer and a citizen, and all try to survive a situation in which there is the fear of a gas attack by working together.
Overall, the PAX school programme was a very positive experience for me. I was most delighted about being able to meet other fellow researchers, academics and professors with different backgrounds, and engage together in very meaningful and productive discussions. The group exercises involved were also a plus, introducing our group to a variety of topics that are worth reflecting on and considering.

On the other hand, the time given to accomplish our goals through the workshop was quite limited, making it a rather tiring and arduous activity. Other than that, everything seemed to flow quite well.

In my opinion, most sessions were meant to be thought-provoking in order to stimulate a sense of thought necessary to accomplish our final task. Personally, I felt that the session by Mr. Raja Shehadeh and the lecture given by an atomic bomb survivor in Nagasaki were the most meaningful lectures I have heard. Those sessions urged me to think critically about human nature and why we still exist in the 21st Century. It also made me realize that conclusion to which the solution has to start with small steps, which are better than no steps at all.

I think that my mindset did not change in a "mind-blowing" type of way, since it was already oriented in the direction of what I learned through this programme. Nevertheless, I was able to consolidate a more peace-focused perspective and build up arguments to share with people who have other kinds of mindsets.

In the end, one of the most important lessons I learned from this workshop was how to cooperate with others who think differently and understand the cultural context it is the key to any activity/job work that I do now, or will do in the future.

Dr. Pradeep Panthi
PhD student in International Development
Rikkyo University

My experience as a participant in the RENKEI PAX School programme was both a learning and an inspiring experience. Over the course of two weeks, I had multiple opportunities to interact with passionate and dynamic scholars, government officials, and engaged citizens, working together to promote peace at all levels of society. From these interactions, I came away with a broader appreciation of the value of the connections between the public and private sectors within society that are working to address challenging global problems.

Furthermore, I now recognize my role and responsibility as an academic to create and maintain these connections, not only for the benefit of my own research, but for the benefit of my institution and peers as well.

In addition to the above points, the RENKEI programme also helped augment my existing international collaboration skills and widened what I could have received at my current university within such a condensed period of time. Such skills are difficult to develop in a classroom setting or via single-day professional development workshops, but this programme offered a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted approach, giving exposure to an international and collaborative environment where those skills could be developed and honed. Going forward, particularly given the growing cultural divide found within academia, I am confident that these international collaborative skills will be regularly put to use and allow me to engage in international collaborative research opportunities more effectively with peers who lack similar skills and experiences.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in the RENKEI programme. My experience better shaped my perception of the British Council for providing and sustaining the necessary support to make such unique opportunities available to early career researchers like myself. With regards to the wonderful faculty and staff at Ritsumeikan University, I am truly grateful and hope to remain in contact with them in the future. Finally, I would like to thank my peers for all their hard work and efforts to share personal reflections about topics covered during our two weeks together. Hopefully, our experience together through the RENKEI programme will lead to many more fruitful exchanges in the future.

Dr. Christopher Wheeler
PhD student in Politics
Nagoya University

The theme chosen for this workshop reflects the growing concern regarding human security in the light of political turmoil and the rise of authoritarian states, the environment, confronting failed states and the co-operation of minds by both governments and their opponents, as well as the impacts of the violence and violations that invariably accompany the above. Considering that there are situations we find in both developed and developing countries, the workshop introduced participants to think about the conditions that lead societies into such situations, using the programme’s inspirational lectures and the collection of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace to stimulate thought.

Viewing the destruction of peace as a subject that affects all humanity, EMANCIPATING THE MIND was up to the mark in terms of which transferrable skills could be imparted to participants. The core points of the programme were structured to lead participants from awareness using lessons from the past (Part One) through analysis of a current hotspot (Part Two) to synthesis and expression of their thoughts to the outcome expected from this programme (Part Three). The content expected from this group work was the creation of a museum display and a participatory game, using one artefact from the museum collection per group. Interaction was initiated but part regarding how museum contents develop exhibit displays and how games are developed.

There was some impatience among the organizers as to whether, given the short time available, participants could reach the final desired outcome. These fears dissolved on the last day, when the groups made their presentations. It was a rare opportunity for young researchers to experience the pressures involved in creating the outcome, via research around the theme selected for public engagement, creation of a strong narrative (storyboard) and expression of that narrative, either as a display or a game, the dialectic within and across groups but also a very useful creative result. In addition to this, the possibility of following up on this outcome through publication in academic journals (as some did with excellent reviews), linking it to the 2017 programme in Liverpool on EMANCIPATING THE MIND, also appears to have contributed to the outcome. Overall, the potential of the workshop, the format of the course at the University of Liverpool has also been working towards engaging the private sector for the 2017 second leg of the PAX SCHOOL and indications are that they are likely to succeed. Finally, the continuity of such successful programmes within RENKEI and the organising institutions is an issue that requires consideration. At Ritsumeikan University, the programme is to be located in the Peace Education and Research Center of the University’s Kako Museum for World Peace. Similar arrangements are being discussed at the University of Liverpool.

In conclusion, the organizers wish to thank all individuals and institutions involved for the financial, logistical and intellectual support extended to the programme. We apologise that the list is too long to name here but hope you will continue to work with us into the meaningful yet unacknowledged territories to which RENKEI programmes aspire.
RENKEI is the Japanese word for ‘Collaboration’, and is an acronym for Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives.

UK

- University of Liverpool
- University of Bristol
- University of Southampton
- University of Leeds

Japan

- Ritsumeikan University
- Tohoku University
- Nagoya University
- Kyoto University
- Kyushu University
- Osaka University
- Tohoku University
- Kyushu University
- Osaka University