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Institute for Sustainable Energy Policy (ISEP) Internship Report

Today concludes my one-month internship with ISEP; my last day working in this colourful office amongst the diverse team of interns. Though I've undertaken a number of interesting tasks and projects whilst onboard, my most valuable experiences may arguably be the time spent talking to other passionate change-makers within the office, including our supervisor Yamashita-san. Through this internship report, I hope to provide a glimpse of what my experience here entailed, and perhaps encourage others to join the ISEP family as well.

To provide a brief background of myself; I am half Japanese, half English, and grew up in Singapore. I am currently studying Physics at the Imperial College of London, with hopes to enrol in Environmental Engineering after. My interest in renewable energies sparked during my 1.5 year stay in the Philippines, working in rural development. I saw potential in the industry not just as a tool to combat climate change, but as a viable energy source to provide poor, rural areas with reliable electric connection. As a scientist, I had interest in the technology side of renewables, but had never thought about the political influence; in order to gain a better understanding on how the country is involved with our energy advancements, I decided to join ISEP.

The Learning Environment

The ISEP internship program was unlike other internships I had with bigger corporations. Yamashita-san and the ISEP team works hard to provide a conducive learning environment that helps young people gain a deeper understanding about renewable energy policies, and ignite their passion about green movements.

The first floor where we work is cosy and welcoming, filled with interns from different walks of life, and different countries.

Yamashita-san is involved and well known within the national committee and other energy organisations, and so is often part of meetings and interviews regarding the renewable energy situation in Japan. During my one month at ISEP, I have had numerous opportunities to sit-in these talks to not only learn a great deal from his answers and perspectives, but also to gain insight on what Japanese magazines (and by extension Japanese people) are curious about.



My first day at ISEP captured by the mind map and polaroid tradition



Intern team I worked with.
From the top left:
Martin (Germany), Judy (USA), Me!,
Yamashita-San, Hiro (Japan), Kota
(Japan), Lilian (USA), Andreea
(Romania), Pearl (Vietnam), Emi
(Japan)

Key tasks undertaken at ISEP

Energy Chart Automation Project

One of my biggest projects in ISEP was to automate the manual compiling of energy data from different energy companies in Japan. Every month, the energy chart on the ISEP website gets updated manually. Though I only had basic Python skills, I was tasked with helping to automate this process to lessen the time spent on data analysis.

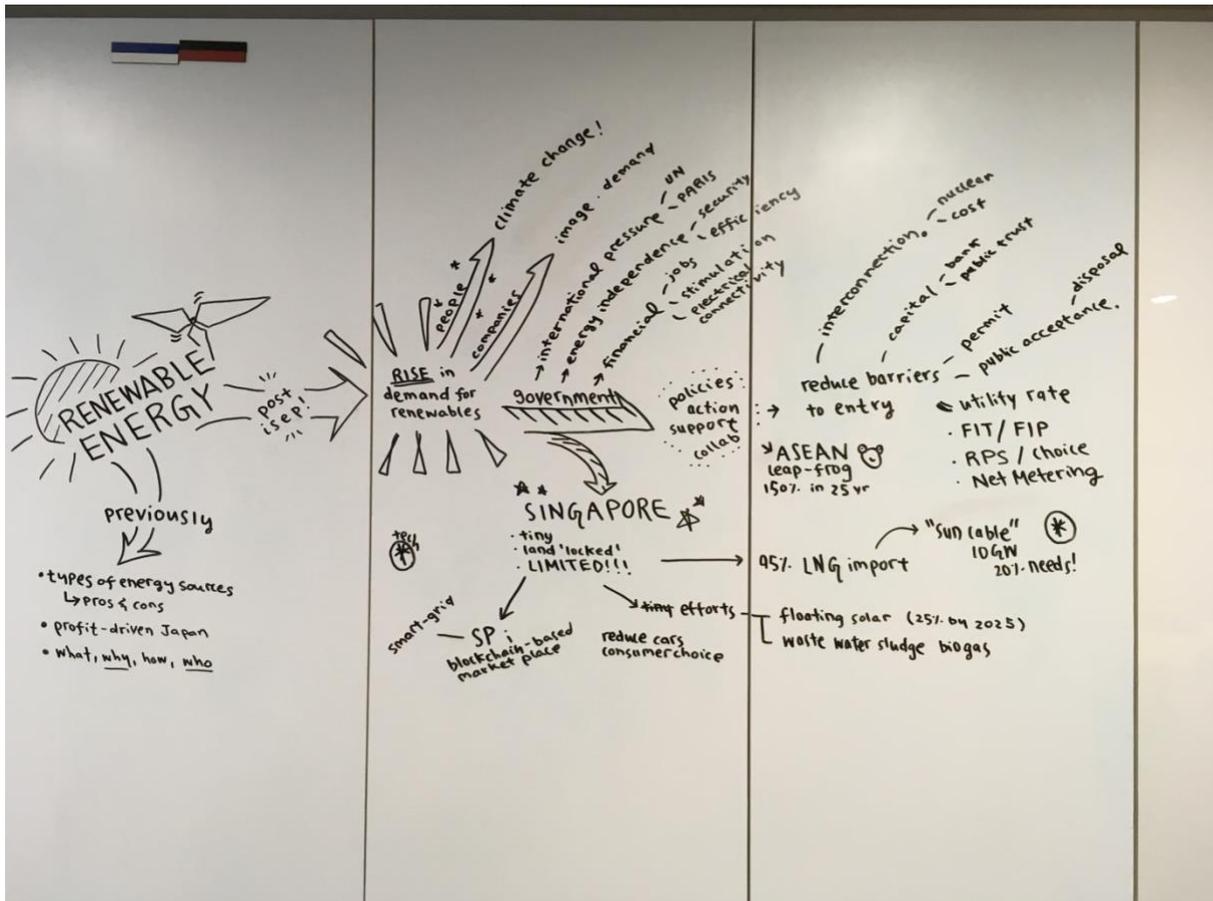
Translation + Editing

Being bilingual in English and Japanese, some of my tasks involved translation and editing between these main languages at ISEP. This is a common theme within the tasks of the interns. I enjoy translating projects as it forces me to gain deep understanding of the text I read, and potentially learn new technical vocabulary in different languages.

When interns first join ISEP, there are a couple of prepared activities to help them settle in; these could be administrative tasks, or quick assignments to familiarise yourself with the office and the Japanese energy industry. I helped prepare an English version of the intern basic energy quiz that gives an in depth perspective and explanation of some energy related topics. The original material comes from Yamashita-san's intensive lectures he gives at Japanese universities, and so the quiz is designed to teach young people interesting views on the Energy situation.

Conclusion

As a bicultural person between Japan and the West, I often thought that Japan lacked drive and interest when it came to progressive ideas about environmental change. I have always been slightly disappointed about the lack of passion I felt from the country as a whole. However, working in ISEP and meeting passionate staff, interns, and Japanese personnel from other organisations, I regained hope; hope that there is indeed a community of change-makers in Japan that are as desperate as everyone else to Green their country.



My final mind-map after my 1 month stay