



Editor's letter: pride of place

I would like to use my introduction to this issue of the Sansai Newsletter to celebrate the unique venue for the sustainability-related events held recently at the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies (GSGES), Kyoto University. Sansai Gakurin has housed 15 generations of Kyoto University presidents and provides the base – for now, at least – for the activities of GSGES's Tertiary Education for Sustainable Development Initiative.

Sansai Gakurin enjoys a serene situation amid fragrant pines, glorious moss and towering maples. Taking the traditional East Asian triad of ten (天), chi (地) and jin (人) – heaven, earth and humanity – as its motto, Sansai Gakurin has supported the research and educational activities of GSGES since it was established in April 2002. The building's 100-year-old wooden walls have survived decades of use, disuse and renovation, shrugging off rot, mould, leaks, termites, earthquake tremors, the heat of Kyoto's summers and the cold of its winters. It has played generous host to the professors and students who come here today to exchange ideas about sustainability. It is hard to imagine a venue better suited to discussions on this subject.

Sansai Gakurin has been both haven and workplace for me since I first joined GSGES in 2003 to develop and launch the department's journal. I never tire of watching this building work its magic on those who open its tiny wooden gate and take the stepping stones across the moss garden to the entrance, their reverence for this special place increasing as they venture inside. Sitting on cushions in its tatami-matted meeting room or around the round table under graceful, vaulted ceilings, visitors to Sansai Gakurin are privileged to have such beautiful surroundings in which to exchange their ideas.

I take great pleasure in devoting this newsletter to GSGES's recent attempts to investigate the importance of place-based education in the teaching of sustainability and would like to emphasize the importance of this very special place. Let us celebrate, in the words of Satish Kumar (who spoke here in February), "the spirit of the house" and its garden. Sansai Gakurin is a venue that has sustained all the activities that have taken place here in recent months, inspiring all those who have taken part.

Tracey Gannon, associate professor, GSGES

Faculty unveils tertiary-level education initiative with a focus on sustainability

By Jane Singer, associate professor, GSGES

At GSGES, we have been educating graduate students for nearly a decade to research and address environmental issues through coursework, research activities, internships and collaborative exchanges with universities around the world. Today, however, the depth and complexity of environmental problems – from climate change and natural disasters to resource depletion and pollution – demand a more inclusive approach that transcends academic and geographic boundaries. Increasingly, the need to promote sustainability requires students and faculty to act as change agents, educating university colleagues, policy-makers and the community at large about environmental issues and transforming awareness into pro-environmental action.

Contents

Faculty unveils tertiary-level education initiative with a focus on sustainability

Jane Singer, associate professor, GSGES

Workshops get the Tertiary ESD Initiative off to a flying start

Melina Sakiyama, master's student, GSGES

The participants' view: two students evaluate the first workshop day

Sunil Parashar and Glenn Fernandez, doctoral students, GSGES

Jottings from the field: defining 'our ESD' and the sustainable development of mountain communities

Jason Hon, doctoral student, GSGES

Activity focus: coastal watching in Amanohashidate

Noralene Uy, doctoral student, GSGES

Summing up the workshops: identifying challenges and making achievements while defining 'our ESD'

Andreas Neef, professor, GSGES

The Teaching Sustainability training program for teaching assistants

Melina Sakiyama, master's student, GSGES

Reconnecting ourselves: soil, soul and society

Melina Sakiyama and Meghan O'Connell, master's students, GSGES



Mindful of the urgency of this task, a group of 11 GSGES faculty members, led by Prof Tracey Gannon, initiated a three-year program in the spring of 2011 entitled the Tertiary Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Initiative. This grant-in-aid program, funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, aims to develop a comprehensive, widely replicable approach for tertiary-level ESD. The project's specific objectives are to:

- explore the language, concepts and methods of ESD, paying particular attention to ESD applications at the graduate school,
- develop an ESD course, including curricula and learning materials, to be offered to undergraduates at Kyoto University and other Japanese universities,
- adapt the course for use at universities abroad, particularly in developing nations, to determine the universality of the new approach, and
- develop an evaluative framework for gauging the effectiveness of the ESD course in enhancing students' eco-literacy and in fostering environmental advocacy.

According to Unesco, ESD is "the educational process of achieving human development in an inclusive, equitable and secure manner" (2002). Education for sustainable development is typically multidisciplinary, values driven, participatory, holistic and rooted in the demands and exigencies of one's surroundings. In ESD, we consider the economic, social and environmental factors that affect the long-term sustainability of a particular community and students are encouraged to develop analytical and problem-solving skills that draw on independent and collaborative research.

To help us prepare Building a Sustainable Future: Principles and Challenges, the ESD course we will be offering Kyoto University undergraduates this spring, we held a series of workshops last autumn, entitled Defining 'Our ESD'. We brought together academic experts in ESD and related environmental disciplines, government and NGO representatives, architects and planners, students and local residents. The participants discussed the building of sustainable communities during an

exhilarating week-long exploration, which began at our campus then moved to Kyoto city, a tiny mountain village in the forests of northern Kyoto prefecture and, finally, to a nearby seaside resort town.

We have asked some of the participants to give our readers a flavour of the workshops by sharing their impressions, comments and summation of their experiences in this newsletter. We also recap on some more recently sponsored events, including a visit in February by world-renowned environmental philosopher Satish Kumar, founder of Schumacher College in the UK.

WORKSHOP DIARY: DAYS 1 and 2

Workshops get the Tertiary ESD Initiative off to a flying start

By Melina Sakiyama, second-year master's student, GSGES

The Defining 'Our ESD' introductory workshop was held at Kyoto University's Shiran Kaikan and opened with warm welcomes from Toshio Yo-



koyama (Sansai Gakurin's first warden and professor at the Research Institute for the Humanities, Kyoto University) and Takeshi Katsumi (vice-warden of Sansai Gakurin,



Nagata (citing a student): "ESD is an education to make good things last"

professor of GSGES, Kyoto University). Its organiser, Tracey Gannon (GSGES, Kyoto University), then gave a brief introduction to the Tertiary ESD Initiative and outlined the main goals of the series of workshops.



Sato: "Destruction is not just done by people but by relations between people"



Ichinose: "start over with ESD post March 11"

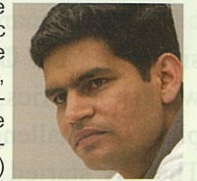
Next up were the keynote speakers: ESD specialists Yoshiyuki Nagata (associate professor, University of Sacred Heart, Tokyo), Masahisa Sato (associate professor, Tokyo City University) and Tomonori Ichinose (professor, Miyagi University of Education). They, together with GSGES faculty members Jane Singer, Kazuhiro Ueta and Rajib Shaw and GSGES students Le Thi Hien Nhan and Melina Sakiyama, gave presentations and led discussions in a brave attempt to shed some light on the cloudy context of ESD. Topics included the history of environmental education, ecological economics, ESD as a paradigm shift in higher education, Asia-Pacific perspectives on ESD and ESD practices and programs being carried out in Japanese schools in northern Japan as well as at GSGES. A panel-led, open-floor discussion then provoked insightful contributions from the audience.

By the end of the first day, the workshop participants had collectively identified four key issues for the Tertiary ESD Initiative to explore over the course of the workshops and in the future. These were the importance of locality, the question of ESD competencies, the importance of linking personal and societal transformation and finding ways to bridge the gap between knowledge and pro-environmental action and, last but not least, the need to redefine what it is we are seeking to sustain –



Participants evaluate the first workshop day

"The first workshop was very informative and useful in understanding the basic concept of ESD. It was also effective in bringing out the important obstacles, with speakers sharing some of the current challenges to ESD in Japan. One speaker talked about the Forum for Environment Education and Learning (Feel) in Sendai, the chief body for ESD in that region, which works in collaboration with 18 other organizations. Feel faces two challenges to ESD: it is mainly confined to environmental education and there is not adequate collaboration with elementary and junior high schools.



Sunil Parashar, doctoral student

The wrap-up discussion at the end of the day brought up additional challenges to the understanding of ESD. Workshop participants and presenters asked how ESD differs from environmental education and what makes it effective, examined the scope of its implementation and follow-up programmes and pondered the gap between knowledge and action. I asked how ESD could be useful for Asian megacities, such as Mumbai, where over half the population lives in slums. People living in such difficult conditions are likely to prioritize more immediate issues – their families' health, diet and livelihood – over environmental conservation. An understanding of these challenges provides essential input for improving ongoing and new ESD programs." **Sunil Parashar**



Glenn Fernandez, master's student

"While many ESD initiatives have been developed at the international and national level, there are considerable shortcomings with regard to their effective implementation at the local level. One area of particular concern is the absence of mechanisms to provide sustainable support for local ESD programs and projects. More implementation strategies and funding are needed, along with an increase in interest and political will to implement national ESD policies at the regional, municipal and community levels.

Despite numerous challenges, it was shown in the presentations and panel discussion on the first day of the Defining 'Our ESD' workshop series that some local-level ESD endeavors are highly successful, thanks to the will and commitment of a few very dedicated advocates and facilitators. These ESD champions are crucial catalysts who spearhead ESD campaigns in their areas by motivating others to adopt ESD, providing vital encouragement and support and demonstrating the benefits of ESD. These ESD champions help change stakeholders' attitudes towards education, sustainability and development.

The Greater Sendai Regional Center of Expertise (RCE) on ESD is a specific example of the pivotal role local ESD champions can play. Although many RCEs in other parts of the world became moribund after they were established, the Greater Sendai RCE continues to remain active, largely due to the efforts of its few but fervent champions. They ardently believe in the merits of ESD and take every opportunity to endorse it in the Sendai region. Their enthusiasm and positive can-do attitude garners support for ESD initiatives from a variety of local stakeholders. Encouraged, they press on with extra effort to foster excitement for ESD in the face of apathy or cynicism.

Local ESD champions are hard to find. It would be interesting and helpful to learn what motivates the local ESD champions who featured in (or gave) the presentations on the first day of the workshop series, what contexts facilitate or impede their work and what training is necessary to become an ESD champion. The Decade for ESD is going to end soon. We must therefore find answers quickly if we want to move ESD from theory to practice." **Glenn Fernandez**



not only tangible natural resources but cultural and spiritual assets.

The focus narrowed again in the morning session at Sansai Gakurin on the second day of the workshop series, when participants set out to explore the challenges of living sustainably in cities. The day started with a lecture from Koichi Nagashima (architect and urban planner, Architecture Urban Design and Research Consultants), which led us through a brief history of Japanese architecture and explained why our modern architecture is so chaotic and disconnected from traditional building designs.

Prof Nagashima said the Tohoku disaster was a wake-up call for Japan that asks us to realize – and not to repeat – our past mistakes. Instead of denying our history and customs, we should look into the traditional Japanese proto-landscape, or *genfukei* (原風景), as well as *fuudo* (風土), which encompasses the complexity of an area’s natural characteristics – climate, landscape, soil, etc. He said that as we recover from last year’s catastrophe, the main aspects of *genfukei* and *fuudo* will help achieve a more “internalized perspective of landscape”. By taking into account the scenery, climate and local livelihoods, the Tohoku residents



Nagashima: the importance of place in defining local culture

will be able to retain their sense of identity as it relates to their memory of the area.

He also introduced the concept of “glocal architecture”, which he defined as “environmentally symbiotic architecture in line with *fuudo*, built with local materials and using local skill”. This, he suggested, will be essential for sustainable urban living.

Prof Nagashima’s inspirational talk was followed by two very interesting presentations on sustainable initiatives in two Japanese cities. Masayoshi Ogawa introduced a project in Nishinomiya city, Hyogo prefecture, implemented by an NPO called Leaf (Learning and Ecological Activities Foundation for Children.) Leaf has involved citizens of all ages – from elementary school pupils to senior citizens – very successfully, thanks to its close links with local government. Leaf is a well established model for bottom-up environmental governance, efficiently integrating different sectors of society, empowering citizens and increasing their responsibilities in relation to environmental, social and economic issues. It demonstrates that ESD is a powerful tool for achieving environmental awareness and increasing citizens’ commitment to promoting social justice.



Ogawa: sustainable cities

Hiroaki Hori (Environmental Policy Bureau, Kyoto city) then introduced us to Kyoto’s environmental activities, focusing on the city’s commitment to pursuing sustainable living, improv-



Hori: Kyoto initiatives





Students share their thoughts at the end of the second day

ing waste management and campaigning on waste reduction. One very successful initiative concerns bio-diesel, which is produced from oil discarded by households and businesses and used to power the city's local bus fleet.

In the afternoon session, we boarded a bio-diesel-powered bus to visit a facility that separates recyclable waste. We realized how little we knew about the waste we produce and received a much needed wake-up call in how to process our waste better. We also visited the city's bio-diesel production plant, where we were briefed on the production process. We were greatly impressed to see how community involvement has been key to the success of this project, with Kyoto householders working closely with the city hall in managing the project.

We returned to Sansai Gakurin for a wrap-up discussion, where the students shared what they had learned. In the morning, Prof Nagashima's talk had shown us the goals of a sustainable city. We had learned that humanity must embrace nature and its limitations, understand our surroundings – our *fuudo* – and celebrate living with nature instead of fighting against it. In contrast, Mr Ogawa's and Mr Hori's lectures had invited us to focus on how to achieve urban sustainability. Their two contrasting approaches – Nishinomiya's integrated,

bottom-up governance and Kyoto city's centralized role and top-down structure – had strengths and weaknesses. Slowly but surely our discussions led us towards a well-rounded view of sustainable living.

WORKSHOP DIARY: DAYS 3 and 4

Jottings from the field: defining 'our ESD' and the sustainable development of mountain communities

By Jason Hon, second-year doctoral student, GSGES

On 2 November 2011, with the buzzwords 'sustainable development' dominating our thoughts, we left Kyoto to embark on a three-day field trip to the towns of Seya and Miyazu in northern Kyoto prefecture. Having started out thinking there was nothing especially difficult to understand about these two commonly used words, two days of workshop sessions left us wondering if we actually understood sustainable development at all. We hoped that a trip to the mountains to see how the people there live would help us better understand the concept.

Our first stop was Ichijikan Park, which looks out over the bay of Miyazu and the famous Amanohashidate or 'bridge to heaven' – a 3.5km sandbar lined with old pine trees. It is said that one must bend over and see the view through the legs to cherish a truly amazing view of an inverted landscape, depicting a bridge leading to the heavens. Those with stiff backs may



The inverted view of Amanohashidate, as seen through the legs



choose to turn their cameras upside down instead and photograph the scene. While the image is the same, the experience is not: one would miss the rush of blood to the head that makes one realize that reaching the heavens takes quite some effort!

A priest's perspective Of course, we weren't there just to bend over and look between our legs. We looked at the surrounding mountains and understood why they are important to the formation of Amanohashidate. We were told that when the sand washed down from the mountains ended up in the bay, the action of the water currents helped to form the sandbar. We learned that because Amanohashidate links the sea with the mountains, we should be careful of what we do up in the mountains because that is where the sandbar's life begins. Perhaps we had taken our first step towards understanding sustainable development.

We next proceeded to Kono Shrine, also known as Motoise Kono Shrine, where the Grand Ise Shrine is said to have originated. Amabe-san, the priest there, gave us a detailed explanation of the shrine's history. One important aspect of his talk touched upon the concept of sustainability, which was already a consideration when the Grand Ise Shrine was built hundreds of years ago. The shrine is dismantled every 20 years and an exact replica built. The Japanese cypress trees used for the reconstruction have been planted over the centuries by successive generations of local people, who plan for future needs on the basis of current action. Knowing that they would need a lot of wood to rebuild the shrine every two decades, they foresaw

the need to replant trees to secure a continuing supply of raw materials. Without this foresight, the rebuilding exercise would have stopped long ago. This example of forward planning to ensure an uninterrupted supply of natural resources perhaps helped us take our second step towards understanding sustainable development.

We then left Motoise Kono Shrine and moved towards the mountains. As our bus headed for Kamiseya up steep and winding roads, we gazed out on treetops to one side and rocky cliffs and tree trunks to the other. No buildings, no conbini (convenience stores) and no neon lights.

We soon arrived at a remote spot where local farmers from Kamiseya village were busy building a temporary farm hut. With the harvest safely in, they had time to build the hut and they were doing this collectively, using natural materials obtained from the nearby forests. Each of the farmers owns agricultural plots surrounding the hut and this small and humble shelter is where they will rest and eat their lunch during the long days spent working their fields. Perched on high ground, the hut overlooked the terraces and vegetable plots. We were told that this was a satoyama landscape – a mixture of manmade areas and wild forests, where wildlife and humans co-exist and are interdependent on one another. With this knowledge, we were taking another step towards understanding sustainable development.

On the way to our lodge, we stopped at a hydrology research sampling station that monitors water flows and sedimentations. The Seya area is unique, with numerous springs arising from the combination of soft and hard



Monitoring and sampling water flow



Farmers from Kamiseya build a hut and work the land



Our mountain lodge, surrounded by colourful foliage



rock structures. Historically, there was a peat bog at the top of the mountains where agriculture was carried out. We were told how important hydrological properties are for the formation and continued existence of Amanohashidate. Activities carried out upstream in the mountains affect the environment and, with it, the people below on the coast. Careful planning and the restriction of certain activities detrimental to the environment are important closer to home, too, with many people in Seya still dependent on spring water. Good coordination of resource use and an awareness of the need to maintain clean resources, such as water, was another step towards understanding sustainable development.



Examining plants

Retiring for the night at our destination, a cosy lodge surrounded by lush greenery, we slept to the sound of crickets and awoke the next morning to the chirps of birds and the sight of colourful autumn foliage. Our second day in Miyazu began with a nature walk led by experienced birdwatchers, who taught us about the birds we might expect to see in the area at different times of the year. It was late in the morning and the timing was not ideal for birdwatching.



*Top: buckwheat drying
Above: thatched roof*

We heard far more birds than we saw during our walk, which took us through harvested paddy fields, past an abandoned amusement park from the bubble era, and up to a mountain peak that offered a wonderful view of the Seya region with the bay of Miyazu beyond. Here we rested and listened to Prof Kazue Fukamachi, who gave a brief talk on how local people use different types of plants (specimens of which we had collected over

the course of our walk). These forest plants are harvested for culinary, medicinal and cultural uses and were good examples of some of the functions of a satoyama landscape.

Next we went to Kamiseya village, where we had lunch in a traditional farmhouse that is now used as the local office of the Satoyama Network Seya NPO. Two villagers generously prepared fresh soba noodles for us, using buckwheat flour harvested from the farms up in the mountains (the same place where we saw the hut being built the day before). It was a true delight to be able to savour fresh, local soba. All the dishes served for lunch that day used ingredients grown in Kamiseya. This truly home-grown and home-made produce provided us with another clue to the meaning of sustainability.

Before returning to our lodge, we leaped at the opportunity to walk around the village, eager to talk to the local people and learn more about their way of life. As we wandered past traditional houses roofed with metal – apparently because it is too troublesome and expensive to maintain traditional thatch made of bamboo leaves – we realised there was almost no one to be found. We eventually managed to talk to a local farmer, who had just finished working in the vegetable plot behind his house. He was clearly delighted to receive so many outsiders and was happy to share his successful story of a bountiful harvest (I learned after this field trip that he works elsewhere and, like many others who farm in the area, only returns to the village at weekends and holidays to tend his land). We could not find any other villagers to talk to. We realised later that Kamiseya has a population of only 25 and, on the day we took to its streets, our party outnumbered the local residents at least five fold. This is a sobering thought – such depopulation presents a major challenge to the propagation of sustainable development practices.

Back in Kyoto city, two days later, I started to ponder what I had learned from the field trip. I personally found the hut a subject of great interest. It is logical to think that the building of a communal, temporary resting place springs from a common ideology based on sharing. If we could apply the same ethos to most of our daily actions, perhaps



we could move closer towards being more sustainable. By sharing, we use less energy and fewer resources. Can we accomplish this or have we evolved into a selfish society in which we compete to outdo one another, gulping up all the resources we can afford and depriving others? In our quest for achievement and personal development, we leave behind trails of unsustainable actions (think of our increased carbon footprints). Perhaps the lesson of the hut and our visit to the people in Kamiseya is how to live in moderation.

But is this a lesson that anyone wants to learn? Kamiseya's shrinking population – consisting today of mostly elderly people – shows that the younger generation no longer wants to live in such an environment. Although the village is barely 15 minutes from the nearest town, it is almost entirely cut off economically, lacking such conveniences as shops and a post office. What improvements to human wellbeing would help attract the younger generation to the village or bring back those who have left for pastures new? The local people's lifestyle – notably its dependence on the forests, symbolised in the satoyama landscapes – taught us what sustainability means. However, with a shrinking population that is aging fast, how much longer can the village sustain itself?

Could 'our ESD' be used to encourage the younger generation to abandon city life and make that brave journey back to the mountains? Certainly, the elder generation in Kamiseya has a strong sense of belonging to their surrounding environment. Can ESD tap into this by using Kamiseya



Kamiseya village: depopulation threatens sustainability

as a case study to promote a new way of living, incorporating it into school curricula and, by doing so, influence younger people? ESD could send students to such environments not only to learn traditional approaches to sustainable living but to discover the problems affecting such communities. Exposed in this way to the realities of rural life, students could bring their experiences back to the towns and compare the challenges of rural and urban life.

In many countries and in many settlements, human behavior has caused biodiversity to slowly diminish. Sometimes, the decision to do nothing (non-intervention) is the best approach to take to achieve biodiversity. This is not the case in Kamiseya. Here, the abandonment of agricultural activities in the mountains will lead to the disappearance of terrace rice fields. Satoyama landscapes that intertwine agricultural land and human landscapes with natural forest are important to enrich biodiversity. In short, we must do something to create biodiversity.

In conclusion, the issues plaguing Kamiseya show that the topic of environmental sustainability extends beyond the environment itself. It also includes how people live with and use the surrounding environment and considers how they will be able to continue doing this in a sustainable way. When it in comes to sustainable development, the human populace will always be part of the environment.



In Satoyama landscapes, man and nature coexist happily

WORKSHOP DIARY: DAY 5

Activity focus: coastal watching in Amanohashidate

By Noralene Uy, second-year doctoral student, GSGES



The coastal watching activity, which was conducted in Amanohashidate as part of a workshop on the sustainability of coastal communities, gave its participants a unique opportunity to learn directly from residents about the local conditions and issues affecting them.

ESD is holistic in its approach, taking into consideration the dynamics of both natural (ecological and physical) and human (socio-economic) systems. In the coastal watching activity, participants were divided into physical, socio-economic and ecological groups before setting off to explore the local vicinity. Participants were able to observe at first hand the positive and negative factors at work in the area, make an account of resources and gain an understanding of system interactions. They also got the opportunity to interact with local stakeholders and regain an appreciation of nature. An extra dimension was added in that all participants were given an extra task: to obtain an understanding of the context of Amanohashidate for better coastal zone management in view of its goal to achieve Unesco World Heritage Site accreditation.

This activity brought certain challenges, however. It required thorough guidance at the beginning,



Teamwork was essential to the success of the activity

especially during the explanation of the activity and the area to be studied. In addition, the participants had to work as a team and gain the support of the local community. Finally – and most importantly – time was critical throughout the whole activity: from the time needed for the guidance, to the time spent walking (or, in some cases, cycling) and watching, to the time needed to collaborate in making maps and to summarize what had been observed.

As a learning process, coastal watching is enjoyable, enlightening and highly interactive. Nonetheless, education should not be limited to gaining knowledge – it should translate that knowledge

into action. What makes ESD valuable is that it allows one to benefit from learning opportunities while providing opportunities to act and contribute towards a sustainable future.

WORKSHOP DIARY: DAY 6

Summing up: identifying challenges and making achievements while defining ‘our ESD’

By Andreas Neef, professor, GSGES

The series of workshops, the field trips in Kyoto city and in Miyazu and the lively discussions during these events have shown that ‘sustainable development’ and ‘sustainability’ are contested and politically loaded concepts. There can be significant trade-offs to be made between the economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainability. So any attempt to define these concepts precisely and absolutely is bound to fail. Every society, community or group needs to negotiate its own terms of sustainability or sustainable development. This should include attempts to clarify what is to be sustained, over what period, for whose benefit, in what area and measured by what criteria. ESD should, therefore, foster students’ awareness of the complexity of sustainability and improve their skills for analyzing sustainable development as a societal transformation process.

Two important features emerged from the discussion of ‘our ESD’. First, our approach to ESD combines global and local perspectives and wants to give students a broad understanding of how global or national processes and policies can affect



Neef: "We need to foster new generations of graduates who are team oriented, ethically conscious, socially responsible and open to local and international exchange"



Soundbites

Comments from the final workshop on Day 6

"We have this idea of wanting to sustain Kamiseya but we have to understand it in a more dramatic sense and accept deterioration, loss and change because villages like this haven't always been here. They were built as a reaction to what was needed at the time." **Mai Kobayashi, doctoral student, GSGES**

"The ownership of local communities is at the core of sustainable development. When we talk about sustainability, we need to think about whose sustainability it is." **Fumiko Noguchi, coordinator, ESD-Japan**

"I ask myself 'Why?'. Here in the village, everything is good. But they are all old men. No children here. No young people to do the work. Ten years on, what will happen to this village?" **Vu Tuan Minh, doctoral student, GSGES**



Ice breaker: participants introduce themselves in a name game

BEYOND THE WORKSHOPS: OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

The Teaching Sustainability training program for teaching assistants

By Melina Sakiyama, master's student, GSGES

This one-day training workshop was organised by Sara Turnbull, a London-based sustainability consultant, to brainstorm interactive and holistic teaching techniques for stimulating sustainability-related learning. It prepared graduate students to

work as teaching assistants on a 15-week undergraduate course beginning this month at Kyoto University. The course, entitled Building a Sustainable Future: Principles and Challenges, combines classroom-based learning and fieldwork



Turnbull: quality thinking

local attempts to foster sustainable development and vice versa. Second, our ESD is an area-based approach that looks at sustainability issues in cities, sustainable development in mountain communities and sustainability of coastal areas from diverse perspectives. In doing this, the links and interdependencies between these areas should be emphasized, enabling students to better understand the connections between urban, mountainous and coastal environments and communities.

Our discussions showed that ESD requires interdisciplinary and integrated approaches since sustainability issues cannot be addressed adequately within disciplinary boundaries. ESD needs to provide knowledge, skills and tools that are relevant to solving practical problems. This requires a dialogue between teachers, students and local people and involves experiential learning processes. Finally, ESD should foster a new generation of graduates that are systems and team oriented, ethically conscious and open to local and international exchange. If this can be achieved, our ESD will have real transformative power.



The next generation of sustainability teachers



to teach sustainability concepts to undergraduates not majoring in environmental studies.

The day started with tea, cookies and some lively games. The games served to introduce the participants to one another while providing some useful ideas for ice-breaking activities we could use in the classroom. Our laughter set the mood for the whole day and made us comfortable in expressing ourselves. One of the workshop's main objectives was to personalize existing ESD activities and techniques to fit the undergraduate course being developed so Ms Turnbull encouraged us to exercise our creativity in devising course activities and techniques. She also gave a series of short presentations on topics such as how to define and measure sustainable learning outcomes and how to connect global issues with local perspectives. Throughout the day, the future teaching assistants and faculty members participated equally in ice-breaking activities, discussions, brainstorming sessions and exercises mapping campus and city sustainability. The result was a number of exciting and innovative classroom and fieldwork activities that will help the undergraduates think creatively and improve their analytical and communication skills. We also hope it will motivate them to grapple complex concepts by making the issue of sustainability personal to them.

Reconnecting ourselves: soil, soul and society

By Melina Sakiyama and Meghan O'Connell, master's students, GSGES

On 21 February, more than 40 people gathered in the tatami room at Sansai Gakurin for an enlightening talk by eco-philosopher Satish Kumar, the founder and program director of the Schumacher College International Centre for Ecological Studies and a campaigner for peace and for the planet. His talk focused on the forgotten values of "soil, soul and society", Mr Kumar's personal vision of a sustainable, harmonious existence on earth.

Speaking first about soil, Mr Kumar reminded us that in modern times, soil has come to be dismissed as "dirt" – something low that is touched

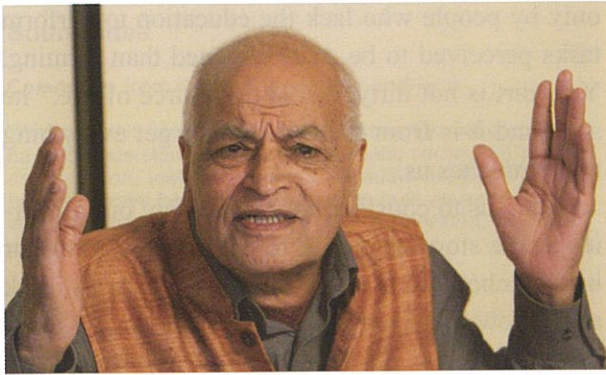
only by people who lack the education to perform tasks perceived to be more elevated than farming. Yet "dirt is not dirty, dirt is the source of life," he said, and it is from the soil that we get everything that nourishes us.

Asking us to consider how we all buy our groceries at the store or go out to eat at a restaurant or in the school cafeteria without stopping to think about how the food gets to our plates, Mr Kumar said: "We are so disconnected from nature that we forget how dependent we are on it." Nowadays, he continued: "You don't want to grow food because growing food is a sign of backwardness. If you are advanced, if you are progressive, if you are educated, if you are rich, then you manufacture a car or a television, a computer or some gadgets." Still, our gadgets won't feed us. We need food and, therefore, we need soil. Mr Kumar reminded us that we touch our cellphones probably a hundred times a day but we don't once touch the soil once.

Talking next about how many apples we can grow from one seed, he recalled the generosity of the soil and compared it with humanity's arrogance in placing ourselves – just one species among millions sharing our earth – above all as the dominant species on the planet, when we cannot even produce one apple without soil. We are so busy admiring our own intelligence and pointing out how different we are to other species that we are blind to our similarities, especially to the fact that we are all part of the planet and are dependent on nature for our very existence.

After soil, comes soul, which Mr Kumar defined as the spirit, the emotions and the consciousness of the universe. "We are the microcosm of the macrocosm; an amalgam of the totality of the universe," he said. "There is nothing in the universe that is not in us and there is nothing in us that is not in the universe. Our body has earth, air, fire, water, imagination, creativity, consciousness, history. In our genes and in our cells, we are as old as this earth – 4.6 billion [years old]. We have been recycled and recycled – the ultimate recycle." The soul is our most inner self, where we reconnect with the universe.

Encouraging us to take better care of ourselves, to reconnect with our inner selves and to understand



Kumar: "we are an amalgam of the totality of the universe"

that everything we need is already within us, Mr Kumar shared with us his belief that our greediness, our chronic dissatisfaction and our sense of emptiness all arise from a disconnection from the inner self and a disconnection from the universe. In other words, he said, we have lost touch with our souls. With self-realization comes peace and the certainty of belonging to this world. When we realize that we are at one with nature, we understand that nature should be respected.

Society was the third key word of the day. Over the past 50 years, the world's population has increased dramatically and many countries' economies are booming, leading to an increased ecological footprint and the immense expansion of technological capacity. As Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki once said: "Society must realize that the laws of nature have priority over the forces of economics." Mr Kumar highlighted the necessity of joining together and acting as one species to solve the problems facing the world. Regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religion, we must use what we have inside us – our ideas, imagination and creativity – as well as what we find in the natural world around us to make the earth a better place. Mr Kumar called on us to "be

the change" and to spread the word by sharing our values with others.

This holistic view of soil, soul and society helped us understand the interdependence of all living beings, which is the key to living peacefully and sustainably. At this point, many of us could see how such a perspective brings a better appreciation of the biophysical world around us, as well as a stronger internal awareness of the most important things in life. But what should we do with this knowledge? When we put this question to Mr Kumar, his serene reply was that we should: "Live it! Then it will shine." We should do what we can and be satisfied with our actions; we must avoid being over-eager or anxious because society changes slowly – we cannot force our opinions on (or preach to) others. He concluded: "Don't be disappointed, disheartened or despondent if you don't see the change right now. Without desire, attachment, without that anxiety – just be the change you want to see in the world. The world will change, it is changing all the time and, if it doesn't change, what can you do? Nothing, so don't be too disappointed."

Mr Kumar's talk explored many of our deepest existential fears. His simple yet powerful words brought us comfort, put a spark in our eyes and warmth, hope and excitement in our hearts. We came away from his talk ready to "be the change", hopefully bringing others with us on our journey.



Editorial

Editor Tracey Gannon; **technical editor** Maria Ainley-Taylor; **editorial assistants** Meghan O'Connell, Melina Sakiyama; **design, layout and photography** Kenji Yamamoto (*pictures illustrating Jottings from the Field supplied by Jason Hon*)

We welcome your submissions to future newsletters.
To contribute, please email sansai-editors@ges.kyoto-u.ac.jp