



# eVISION

**WINTER**  
**2020-21**



**e3 English Engineering Education Program**

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# Meet the Editors



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# Announcement

## From the Editors

We want our magazine to be a fun and interesting mean of communication between students, staff and alumni, and hope that we can exchange different experiences as part of the e3 community. For this, we would like to invite you to participate in our next issue by submitting a short article about a topic of your choice. Following are some suggestions, but any new idea is welcome:

### Experiences :

(share your experience in Japan, in Hokkaido University, tell us about your research, work experience, seminars, etc.)

### Food :

(tell us about your favorite Japanese food, share recipes from your country, tell us about special food only found during festivals, etc.)

### Social activities :

(what are your hobbies? Tell us what kind of activities you like to engage in, give us an insight in your favorite activities in Japan, etc.)

### Travel :

(share pictures and experiences you've had while visiting Hokkaido or Japan, recommend places from your country, etc.)

### Leisure :

(share jokes, fun facts, crosswords, etc.)

Finally, show your talent with the camera by submitting your favorite picture to be published in our magazine. No writing is required, just a title and the date and place of shooting.

## Share your story

### Guidelines:

Note: Please try to keep your article about one A4 page long, and include pictures where possible (if they are not your own, please provide the source).

Contact the e3 SO via the facebook page to submit your article:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ecube.hokudai>





# Words from the Editors

By Sonia Longjam



Welcome to the winter 2020-21 issue of the English Engineering Education (e3) program's e-VISION.

After a gap of four years, we are pleased to present our twentieth edition of the e-VISION.

In this issue, we have some great contributions from our friends currently studying/studied under the e3 program. This edition is packed with knowledge about life in Japan, life during COVID-19, journey in Hokkaido University, the Hult Prize journey, and many more, highlighting students' success and achievement stories.

All of us are at a different phase in the planning for our future; and regardless of which stage you are currently at, this issue will give you valuable insight. Through our e-VISION, we hope you get inspired and motivated to join some of our international students in engaging with the e3 community. There is something for everyone in the e3 community.

The immense support, guidance, and contribution to make our priceless slice of work successful are vividly shown in this edition. The editorial team is grateful to everyone for their contributions and would like to thank the e3 members, students, and staff, without whom this edition would have been just a dream.

We wish all the readers a happy reading!



# Words from the Coordinator



**OTA Tomomi**  
**e3 coordinator**

Dear e3 students, what has it been like to live and conduct your research at Hokkaido University over the past year? I am sure you have faced difficulties beyond your imagination: not being able to see your friends and family comfortably, being forced to make difficult decisions, and the foundation of your life here in Sapporo and in your hometown being damaged . Even under such circumstances (due to Covid-19), I know that many e3 students do their best to overcome these difficulties by being self-disciplined, asking for help and offering support when needed (AND with a warm sense of humor.)

In the future, you will be proud of how you have coped with this challenge in a different culture. As an e3 coordinator, I have been here for less than a year and I feel very privileged to be involved in the work that supports you, who are full of creativity and can act flexibly.

I really learn a lot from you for the past year and am very grateful to all of you. I hope that the e3 program will be a very fulfilling and rewarding period in your lives.



Amagu Clement Amagu

# MY RESEARCH LIFE



I grew up wanting to explore the sustainability of natural resources, my passion being to maximize the preservation of our planet. In the world today, there are a lot of resources ranging from abundant oil and gas to vast mineral resources, which if harnessed rightly, can provide huge opportunities for development, a high standard of living, and economic stability. However, there are a lot of technological and environmental challenges when it comes to the development and utilization of these vast amounts of resources to provide our world with a cleaner and environmentally friendly society. These issues have spurred many research projects in engineering and resource management that range from rock mechanics and rock engineering to theories on engineering practices, emphasizing the future direction of rock engineering technologies. My interest in rock mechanics is because a large part of energy resources, disposal of highly radioactive nuclear waste, underground storage, exploration of petroleum and natural gas, development of geothermal resources, the safety of drainage and uses of coal seam gas, construction activity, reconstruction of damaged underground rock engineering is largely dependent on the strength and deformation characteristics of rocks.

So, I chose to study as a Master student at Rock Mechanics Laboratory, Hokkaido University, based on the close relationship that exists between students and professors, Japanese manners and customs, and security, which I experienced when I participated in short-term exchange program (HUSTEP) between Hokkaido University and my home University (Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria). Recently, I started my PhD program, employing both field displacement measurements and numerical analysis in assessing rock slope stability of an open-pit Limestone quarry in Japan. In this research, I am investigating the influence of geological formation, excavation, variation in weather conditions, and water infiltration on the continuous rock slope deformation and effects of the support system in order to ensure safe and productive operations in open-pit mines.

So far, I have gotten good exposure in my research area, Japanese customs and her rich-oriented culture, hoping to have even more of it. I plan to learn a bit more about my research with the idea of at least contributing to practical applications of rock engineering in order to safeguard the future and provide more clear basis for deformation, stability and safety of the engineering projects such as open-pit mining, human resources exchange and build good international relations among others.



***I'm from Tibet, also called "the roof of the world," with an average altitude of about 3,000 meters surrounded by magnificent nature. I studied mechanical design for my Bachelor's degree and worked as a service engineer for heavy machinery for one year after graduating. At that time, as an admirer of Japanese heavy machinery technology, I came to study abroad in Japan. I love machines, and it's been three years since I started working part-time at a motorcycle shop. From an amateur who didn't know how to inflate at first, I am now doing vehicle inspection maintenance and customization. In addition, I have now been able to accumulate experience in vehicle failure diagnosis. In August 2020, I went around Hokkaido for a 2,000 kilometers ride along the coastline. I enjoyed swimming in the sea of Shakotan, and I stayed at a campsite that was abandoned at night. When I went to the bathroom, I was terrified that I hit a beehive, so I'm glad I returned safely at the end.***

# Danda Tudan



The best thing about coming to Hokkaido University was not that I could graduate and get a job, but that I made friends with many students from various countries. By interacting with them, I experienced completely different cultures and ways of thinking. This has empowered me to work positively. It's my hobby to visit the unknown world rather than the results I can see in front of me. So, I want to attach my dream wings to the engine and fly all over the world.



# Natalya Shmakova

## e3 coordinator

**Did you have any experience working overseas? How does that compare with your current job?**

Yes, I worked as a part-time lecturer as well as a civil servant in Russia. Work for the government is in some ways similar to work for Hokkaido University, since it's a public institution. However, one peculiar thing to Japan that I can mention is a process called kessai (決裁). In Japan, staff members usually rotate emails or document drafts between several offices for approval or for sharing the information. Everyone puts his "hanko" (personal stamp) on the document. In Russia, we just needed a stamp from our boss, and in some cases, approval was not required. Kessai can make the decision-making process more prolonged, but it is quite useful for collective decisions and reduces human error.

**Can you share the story of how you first came to e3?**

My journey to e3 was quite interesting. I joined Hokkaido University in 2008 as a student at the Faculty of Law. At the time, I didn't know about e3, although I had many friends from the Engineering Faculty. The only thing I knew was that there were many cool students there and they could study in English, while my study was primarily in Japanese. I even had the chance to join some e3 events like parties and trips. I was very excited to get an opportunity to work for the e3. I thought that was the perfect job for me, and here I am.

**Did you have any concerns regarding Japan's work-life balance when you were looking for a job?**

You know that Japan is famous for zangyo, overtime work. It was my big concern and I even asked in the job interview whether I would have to do the overtime (by the way, I don't recommend asking that). The interviewer told me that I didn't need to do as the Japanese since I would be in charge of my own office. In the first two or three weeks things seemed normal and I left at 5 pm, but as time went by, it started to change. Work started to accumulate, and I also noticed that people around me were staying working until late. In no time I found myself among them. In a way, that was the cost of learning and doing a good job, but I also can admit that got carried away with the overall working culture. As the number of e3 students increased, not only the volume of work increased, but I also felt a need to create new activities to address a larger community. Sometimes students would come to the office at around 5 pm after their classes or experiments, so I would talk with them after the working hours. Well, that is fine because I enjoy talking to students. It's fun.

**One major concern that people have when they transition from student life to getting a Job is the work-life balance. Could you tell us about your personal experience?**

When holding responsibilities at the workplace, situations when overwork is necessary are likely to come up, but something is wrong if overwork is systematic. In Japan you may come across a job announcement which says something like "40 hours of overwork per month is expected" (that is the real job ad I have recently seen). That basically means that you are hired for 10 hours working day. However, from my encounters with alumni, I think that the work-life balance in Japan is improving. Many former students report that their companies do not encourage overtime work anymore. I wonder if that is related to the fact that from 2019 the legislation strictly imposes the cap of 45 hours a month/ 360 hours per month for overwork. Still there are some exceptional cases when longer overtime can be accepted.

I myself used to have my work-life balance on the side of work. Now I have a family and different priorities, so my target is to do my job as quickly and as efficient as possible. That is not easy since I don't want to sacrifice the quality and keep looking for new ideas to improve the e3, but some data management initiatives I have introduced earlier, such as an on-line application database, really help.

**What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about working in Japan?**

The most important advice is to plan early and study Japanese. Yes, you hear it again and again, but it's still true that companies value language and communication skills more than anything. Besides, Japan has a unique job-hunting style. Have you seen Japanese job-hunting brochures? There is the whole industry surrounding this process and you are expected to learn when to do what and even how to bow and how to enter the room. It all feels very impersonal, as if you must cut yourself to match some very restricted shape. If you decide to follow the Japanese style job hunting - take the whole process as a role play, don't take it personally. I know the challenges of job hunting from my personal experience as well as from our student's, but I believe it's worth fighting for the job we want.

**We know that you had a Baby recently. How did you reconcile such responsibility with your work at e3?**

I was still coming to the office until very close to delivery time. Yet, after that, I took maternity leave and prioritized myself and my baby. One positive side of it is that, after returning to work, the University allowed me to work short hours. Now I'm working 2 hours less than usual.

**Could you tell us about maternity leave in Japan?**

I think Japan has a relatively good maternity leave policy. Women expecting babies can get up to six week-long holidays before the due-date (pre-delivery leave) and eight weeks after the delivery (post-delivery leave) at full pay. Then you can have "parental leave" during which 67% of the salary is guaranteed for the first six months after the birth and then, 50% for up to 12 months. It can be extended if you can't secure a nursery by that time. And men can also enjoy these privileges (although they usually don't). One thing to notice though is that foreign nationals can't invite their relatives just to help them with the baby, unless they hold a high skilled professional visa. Even permanent residents do not qualify. In case both parents work, nurseries are available from the age of a few months. Cost of the public nursery is means-tested, so students can make use of them at a very low cost.

**Any last words for our readers?**

I would say that we can enjoy different things in different phases of our lives. We don't need to do the same thing for our entire lives. We can enjoy being a student, single, working in a company, being a working parent or a household parent. Life is a series of projects, and having a baby is one of them. It gives you a sense of fulfillment and meaningfulness.





## Nassim Florian SAHBOUN

Once upon a time, there was a little guy from the North of France that wished from all his heart to come to the country of the Rising Sun, Japan. His few friends often asked him why he wanted to leave the country of Molière, Napoléon, and President Chirac for the country of Natsume Soseki, Oda Nobunaga, and Prime Minister Abe. He would often answer that he fell in love with the country in his childhood and wanted to see it with his own eyes. Through hard work, preparation (including Japanese lessons), and a lot of paperwork, he managed to secure a first trip as an intern at Kyoto University for a 6 months' internship. Finally, he would be able to see and experience life in the country he loves so dearly. Alas, this first experience, as much as it was a wonderful one, was not enough for our French adventurer. He wanted to visit Japan again and worked hard for this new goal. After graduating with a Master in Nuclear Engineering and again a lot of paperwork, he managed to get into a Ph.D. program at Hokkaido University. From there, our intrepid adventurer from the North of France embarked on a new and 3 years long quest in the North of Japan but this, my dear readers, is a tale for another time...

Not worry, this other time is now. As you may have guessed after this lengthy introduction, the French guy in question is none other than me, Nassim Florian Sahboun, your humble narrator, and researcher who graduated from the Faculty of Engineering, Division of Energy and Environmental System, Laboratory of Nuclear Safety System of Hokkaido University under the wonderful tutelage of Prof. Sawa and Assistant Prof. Miwa. I must congratulate you for reaching so far after my long yet necessary introduction. As of now, you may ask yourself why it was necessary and more precisely, why I am writing this text at all. True, in my haste of setting the background, I forgot to present the reason behind all of this. Worry not, it is coming right now. You see, dear readers, I was asked to share the experience of my time at Hokkaido University with you. You may say that the long preliminary narration is therefore a little bit pointless and that I should be more direct. It is important to understand that, as the narration showed, coming to Hokkaido University was not for me the first time in Japan. Moreover, it is not through luck or on a whim that I came to Japan. I came of my own will and as I said in the intro, on a quest but let me tell you all about it now.

As I set foot on Japanese soil for the second time in my life, I felt that the region of Hokkaido was different from what I expected but at the same time, familiar. Indeed, Hokkaido is not in mainland Japan as much as in its environment and its people but the familiarity I felt came from the fact that it was so similar to the North I was born and raised. So, sadly or luckily for me, no shock, either spatial or cultural for me. Yet, do not assume that it preserved me from surprises or troubles, dear readers, it just made it easier to start. I still had a lot to do as I came to get my Ph.D. Like most of the Faculty of Engineering and e3 program's students, I was warmly welcomed by both my laboratory members and e3 staff members. Though I was busy in my quest to properly graduate from my Ph.D., I managed to find the time to participate in international events, either Hokkaido University or e3 program's ones. I even managed to join Hokkaido University Rugby Club and meet some dear friends there. Overall, I succeeded in achieving the objectives of my so-called quest: get a Ph.D. and a lovely little wife to share my life with, as you can see in the picture provided. This is what I wanted to tell you about my time at Hokkaido University.

A little extra for you dear readers. I do not know in which state of mind you will read this article, but do not think I wrote it just to gloat and be arrogant. I wrote it to give you a little bit of wisdom. I will summarize now: efforts and hard work always pay. If not now, with a little bit of time, you will see the results come. So, my dear readers, push forward and, as Professor Clark said, be ambitious.

Take care,  
Nassim Florian SAHBOUN



eVISION

10 Ph.D Story



# Locked in While Locked Out: A Common Story

Needless to say, 2020 will be in everyone's memory forever because of what may have been the first really global historical event ever happened. My name is Ivan. I am an e3 third-year doctoral student at Hokkaido University. The story of my 2020 is not new because I believe it is common to many people in the world, and I would never dare to put it close to the really horrible stories that many others had to experience last year. In January, I had planned to visit my country, Italy, for a few weeks from the end of February until mid-March. I also wanted to carry with me some work to do there, so I fed my laptop with some experimental data to keep my research up while I could spend some time with my family and enjoy some home-tasting food. 2020 had just started, but it was all sparkles in my mind looking into the near future: the Olympic games, my research experiments beginning to take off, my family probably coming to Japan for their first time in summer, a lot of stuff that makes you really look forward to what comes next. Long story short: Italy becomes the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in Europe, borders shut down overnight, any chances to go back to Japan in time vanishes. Now what? You start hearing people around you saying: "it will go away as fast as it's come," "no reason to worry," "the real problem is far from here, it doesn't have anything to do with us." You almost believe it yourself. Almost, though. Days go by, you are told to shut yourself in, not going anywhere except for primary necessities, and you feel locked out while you are locked in. Locked out of your life, of your plans, of the chances you once thought you had, and now you are no longer sure you may still have once everything is over.



## Ivan Ferrandino

Last August, I could finally come back to Japan 5 months later than expected with an unbelievable plot twist. There is nothing special about this story because it has been the same story of uncountable people in the world this year. What has been extraordinarily crystal clear, was many people's attitude to what happened in such a special time. An attitude that actually says a lot about past history too. From what I saw while I was back home in my locked in/locked out state, is that many kept their distance from the problem, pretending it could not even possibly touch them, believing that since it was something coming from so far away, even when it shows up in front of your door, you can still consider it as nothing but a merely weak and insignificant copy of the real problem. What happened next proved everyone wrong, although it was not the first time. What happened next finally showed everyone how small our world has become. Despite believing the Earth did not shrink at all in the past 50 years, it has been us, humans, who made it smaller. We made it smaller with our new brilliant and sometimes terrible technologies, we made it smaller simply with us becoming more numerous. No matter how it happened, this is our present time now, and not any present time, I would dare to say. I believe what happened in the past 50 years has no counterpart in any other 50 years of this planet. And this is exactly why now we are at a turning point. Whatever will be our next move, I think we are aware, now more than ever, that we have become so close to each other that any single move may have an enormous impact on everybody. I am sure many of us did not need this experience to realize that, as I think it was already clear way before 2020. Still, I hope this time everybody has realized that once for all. And this is also why, more than ever before, I am glad of my choice of coming to study abroad, meeting so many people from so many different places in this small world, sharing so much knowledge of any kind. I sincerely believe that the key to a prosperous future for us all, standing at the very bottom of anything else, is only one: mutual knowledge. How am I supposed to realize that the world has become so small if I do not even dare to look at my "neighbors" and finally get to know them?

I believe that being an international student today will make us all more aware and careful humans tomorrow.



**Shiori Narumi**

**Hi. Can you please introduce yourself?**

Hi, I am Narumi. I used to work at the e3 office of Hokkaido University. After working at Hokudai for three years, I resigned from my position at the end of June last year. So, it has been ten months since I left Hokkaido University, and I already miss it.

**What were your biggest challenges as E3 staff at Hokkaido University?**

Working with paperwork was hard. For example, preparing the paperwork for the e3 scholarship application was tough. There were only ten positions available, but so many students would apply. Just imagine working with 200 applications of 20 pages each. Even after the document screening, we would conduct a skype interview. And a difficult part of it was that sometimes, students that I thought were capable wouldn't get the scholarship due to the limited number of positions.

**What was your official role in e3?**

My role in the e3 office was related to the student's academic and personal lives. I covered a wide range of students at the same time. From the moment they apply for the program, and even after they become alumni, I would contact them, whether by email or at the office. The alumni usually contacted the office to ask for certificates, transcripts, and other documents. Another important task that I used to perform was to calculate one's GPA. But there were so many students that I can't even remember their scores. They were good in general though.

**How would you relieve the stress?**

I appreciated talking with the students. That was fun and stress relieving. I remember going to the cafeteria never feeling alone because some students would join me for lunch. I enjoyed the interaction with them. I remember that some of them would come to the office and tell me that they saw me downtown and that in and of itself would create a de-stressing environment. In my personal life, as a Japanese, I enjoy hot springs and fruit picking a lot.

**What do you miss the most about Hokkaido?**

Definitely nature! Especially Hokkaido University's Campus. And that was something that I took for granted while I was in Sapporo. Now I realize how de-stressing it was to commute to the office while enjoying nature. Here in Tokyo, there isn't that kind of environment.

**Could you share some encouraging words to our new members and staff? Any message you want to convey?**

I know these are challenging times for all of you, and I wanted to be there and support you guys. Besides the difficulties with your classes and research, you are also away from home in a place where the language is a constant barrier. I am physically far, but with all my heart, I am there supporting you. I wish you all the best.

**Narumi san, now let's play a rapid-fire round. Please answer in 2 secs. Tell us about your hobbies**

**What is your favorite Movie?**

A theory of everything.

**Which fruit do you love most?**

Watermelon.

**What is your favorite Japanese food?**

Sushi.

**What is your favorite novel?**

Silent patience.

**Which Prefecture in Japan do you like most?**

Aomori.

**What is your favorite singer?**

Justin Bieber.

**Who is your favorite Japanese artist?**

Radwinps.

**What type of music do you like?**

J-pop, K-pop, anything pop.

**What is your favorite Actor?**

Matsuyama Kenichi.

**Who is your favorite International Actor?**

Jensen Ackles.

**Who is your favorite International actress?**

Kendall Jenner.

**What is your favorite Japanese Snack?**

Happy turn.

**What is your Hobby?**

Traveling overseas.



## The HULT Prize Journey!

By Ikogba Kelvin



I will always remember that fateful evening sometime in 2018 Fall. I had stepped out to simply cool it off and enjoy the evening. But my Sudan friend had other plans.

He raved about the HULT Prize competition and convinced me to participate, even if "just to give it a try". You see, we were still research students living in the university dormitory, so we did not set our sights too high. Our plan was to merely have fun while familiarizing ourselves with the competition in preparation for participating "seriously" the following year.

We formed a team. We did a pitch. And we lost woefully, but happily. After the event we went about congratulating those who did well. I even came across this Nigerian who had come 2nd place in the event, and we exchanged contacts.

Sometime later, my newfound Nigerian contact reached out to me. He had sent a message requesting if I would like to join his team in participating in the Tokyo regionals (of the HULT Prize competition). I admired his zeal and his belief in his business idea, so I consented.

Our team was made up of the Nigerian, Indian lady who had also happily lost in the on-campus program, and me.

We commenced preparation for the great event. Interestingly, all preparations were via zoom, and never met face to face until the day of the regional finals. Whew! What an experience!

We pitched our business idea in the morning and were selected amongst the best 6 pitches to move to the final rounds. But, when I saw other contestant's business ideas, I lost hope! Their slides were so amazing I already gave up in my heart. Well, we pitched and awaited for the results.

**To our greatest shock, we were announced the winners of the TOKYO HULT PRIZE REGIONAL FINALS! The first team ever from Japan to win it and the first from Hokkaido University!**

Then, the next big challenge came; how to raise funds for the accelerator program in the UK. A crowd funding campaign was initiated, and we raised \$14,000 dollars for our air fare, as well as a pilot project in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, I kept feeling like I was in a dream. I recalled the journey, and how my failure at the competition birthed a lifetime opportunity. Truly Opportunities can disguise in failure and hence people might miss them.

At this time, **AQUAMOU** (my teams name) was all over the Japanese news media. People kept calling for interviews and were giving us their maximum supports. Awards started hitting us from every side. Hokkaido University even did us a send forth to the UK as they gave us their goodwill messages!

My message to all E3 members, and to all who will come across this article, is to never give up, but embrace failure when it comes. I'll leave you with Henry Ford's saying;

**"Failure is an opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently".**

Truly this statement of Oliver Holmes holds firm; "A mind once stretched by a new experience can never return to its old dimensions". I recommend the HULT Prize competition for every E3 member, it is worth giving a try.

Cheers!



HULT Prize



Have you've ever been standing on a "line or lines" in your life where you look back and forward and you realize you are not the same person? Deep, right?

Hello strangers, My name is Thalía. I am a former PhD student at the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico, and after a few attempts to avoid traveling to Japan, I arrived in Sapporo in order to perform a 6 six months internship at Hokudai. Maybe to some of you the word "avoid" trembles in your mind, but yes, I did not want to travel to Japan, that's why I had no expectations, no knowledge about it, just a few words learned on a basic Japanese course, but, when I was there I realized: you know nothing Thalía, just as Jon Snow.

My first close encounter with real Japanese food was the **onigiri** until now I love it and I miss it (Well, it will never beat Spicy ramen). Onigiri is perfect as fast breakfast, a snack, a power-up during hiking or a trip, it's everything! Don't you love it?

Then, my second love (here, I must say I fell in love several times in Japan with food, beer, persons, places, etc.) I met "**The Sapporo Beer Garden**" it was love at first sight, I mean you feel in paradise when you get to a place where you can drink Asahi beer from eleven in the morning, even at the school.

Ok, enough. Let's move to formal stuff and to the purpose of my internship, the welcome of my lab partners was noble, you know a quiet really quiet Japanese research lab.

I think the hard part was "fitting" there because of the cultural differences. I consider myself a person with a... I'd say "strong" personality, loud voice, talkative, cozy, warm, lovely, social, as any normal Latin American person (I guess) all the opposite to Japanese, so you can imagine the difference, nevertheless, it was not a restriction to get to know my lab mates. I went to several seminars or conferences even though I never understood because I did not know Japanese. We had several barbecues, trips, we share knowledge about different cultures like African, European, Asian, Latin, well, from all around the globe. It was a motivating, exciting, amusing, and knowledgeable experience.

One of my biggest wishes is that most people could be able to have the opportunity to live this kind of experience. So, we could tear apart those imaginary and physical barriers that make us think we are very different from each other and realize we are not, we are equal, living under different conditions, resources, lifestyles, but in the end just humans. I love Japan, my life in Sapporo is one of my "lines" at this point in my life. It refreshed my capacity for wonder, discovery, love, and learning. Thanks to you all who were part of this amazing experience, and wait for you in this part of the world, Mexico.

With Love,

Thalía Turrén-Cruz



# Ayaka Ito

**Please tell us about your time working at Hokkaido University. What did you do?**

So, I, Ayaka Ito, started working at the engineering’s international office in February 2015. At that time, I was mainly in charge of the internship program for incoming students. Especially, May-July is the busiest time of the year, and we had a pick-up service at the Sapporo station. I was the one who went to Sapporo station holding the nameplate, waiting for the students. I usually attended the meetings as an assistant. My job was to take pictures, write minutes, and prepare meeting material. So, those were my first 2-3 years in Hokudai, and for the last two years and a half, I was a part of the exchange program.

I took care of incoming and outgoing students’ applications for the exchange program. I saw some internship and exchange students coming back as full-time students. So, my contract period was renewable until the 5th year, and after that, I had to leave in January 2020.

**How and why did you join e3 events even though you were not e3 staff?**

My first big e3 event was a welcome trip in 2015. At that time, an e3 staff (Kaneda-san) called me because of a sudden cancelation. They had free space on the bus, so they invited me to join the trip, and I thought: why not? We went to Lake Shikotsu and enjoyed fruit picking, which is very typical for a welcome trip. We had a game that required someone to guess a word held above his/her head with the help of others’ descriptions. The word was “Ayaka,” and the player said, “Is it big or small?” and the whole bus came with their own opinion of how “Ayaka” is. Another question was: “Is it expensive?”. And I remember someone said: “Priceless!”. It was very, very funny.

One other time, Natalya-san also asked me to participate in e3 end-of-the-year party as part of the Japanese team with Kudo-san. But after a year, it felt like I was already counted as a participant in every event.

**You seem to be very close with the students; was it only after joining e3 events or long before that?**

For the first half-year, I was responsible for the internship students. But I remember slowly memorizing students’ names—especially MEXT students’ since they come to the office every month. Students seem to like and remember me as well. I think I have better than average memory to remember names and faces; therefore, helped me get closer to the students faster.

**As a dosanko (born and raised in Hokkaido), what do you miss the most after leaving Hokudai or Sapporo in general?**

Sapporo has nice weather. The summer is not crazy humid and hot. I wouldn’t say I like snow and cold weather, but I miss the quiet winter night because snow absorbs sound, so it is really quiet in winter. But here, we have no snow, so the noise is the same as how it is in the summertime. There are no spacious streets where you can see the open starry skies on your way back home.

**Is this your first time living on your own?**

In Japan, yes! But I lived abroad in Iowa, USA, to study international relations. Then I moved to Chicago to work for a year and a half before returning home.



**Is there any funny stories/experience you had working in Hokudai?**

Many new students think that I am not part of the staff. For the first few years, I used to pick up internship students at the station. Some thought that I was just a student supporter and not the “Ayaka” staff they have been communicating with all that time. When I took them to their dorm, the dorm manager looked at me with doubtful eyes and said, “No, girls!” because he thought I was the student’s girlfriend. I needed to show my ID and explained the whole situation before he allowed me to enter the dorm’s meeting room.

During the BBQ parties, I tricked new students by talking to them, pretending that I am not the staff. I said I am a student from Taiwan or Korea or a newly joined Japanese student, and some seniors just played along with it for a while.

Another interesting thing that might not be funny, but an exciting and unique experience, is that I often received very authentic gifts from new students or students returning from their hometowns. Even though I received the information on its tastes and ingredients, the first bite made me very excited!

**Do you have any messages for students/staff?**

No one is perfect, and no one can survive alone. Some people might not like opening up their feelings, but your friends and families are willing to help you more than you think. Also, don’t overthink; you have more supporters around you more than you think. Just relax, and enjoy the ride!

**Now let’s play a rapid-fire round. Please answer in 2 secs. Tell us about things you like.**

- **What is your favorite Movie?**  
Whisper of the Heart (耳をすませば).
- **Which fruit do you love most?**  
Cherries, but I am allergic to it.
- **What is your favorite Japanese food?**  
Chawanmushi!
- **What is your favorite novel/Book?**  
Yukio Mishima’s Life for Sale (命売ります)
- **Which Prefecture in Japan do you like most?**  
Tokyo.
- **What is your favorite musician?**  
BTS.
- **Who is your favorite Japanese artist?**  
Fujii Kaze.
- **What type of music do you like?**  
Depends on my mood.
- **What is your favorite Japanese actor and actress**  
Takeru Sato.
- **Who is your favorite International actor and actress?**  
Natalie Portman.
- **What is your favorite Japanesesnack?**  
Tabekko Doubutsu!
- **What is your Hobby?**  
Watching sports games.





# Hello!!!

This is **Thao Nguyen**, writing to you from **Tampere, Finland!**

Over a year ago, I had an opportunity to conduct my internship in Division of Environmental Engineering in Hokkaido University. To this day, I can confidently say that it was a life-changing experience that plays a significant role in my personal and professional development.

My internship was conducted based on the bilateral agreement between my home university, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, and Hokkaido University. Practical training placements are often hard to find, and going exchange abroad is a perfect opportunity to take a break from your usual routine. This was strongest reason why I chose Japan as my exchange destination. The second reason is because I've always been interested in Japan and its culture. I've always dreamt of it as a perfect place where traditions and technology unify and grow. Thus, I was determined to come and experience it myself. During my time in Japan, I worked in the Laboratory on Water Reclamation Engineering of Hokkaido University. When I first came, everyone was so welcoming and kind, they threw a welcome party for me and took me to restaurants around the city so I can get a taste of local food. At the end of my stay, my lab-mates surprised me with their gifts: and T-shirt and towel with Hokkaido University logo, exactly what I wanted to buy before coming back to Finland. During my internship, there were also some difficulties regarding the work, as well as culture shock. At some points, it was very stressful for me because things did not go according to plan. However, I slowly learn to embrace the differences. The important thing was to prepare for difficulties, and the outcome maybe even better than anticipated. When I returned to Finland, I felt more competence and became more independent. Regardless of the uncomfortable experiences and culture shocks, this internship had also offered me blessings that I could not have if I didn't go exchange abroad. During my stay, I felt like I was a part of the team. Everyone understands that it is difficult for me to adjust to the new environment, so my professor and lab-mates make sure that I feel welcomed.

I also participated in events held by e3 that promote activities between Japanese and international students which allowed me to meet more people and understand more about Japanese culture. But most importantly, I had the chance to conduct my own research and completed my bachelor's thesis which contributed to my master's degree application. None of these accomplishments would be possible if it was not for the generosity of my professors and colleagues.

It felt like a rollercoaster ride. At first you looked at it, 'hey that looks fun let's try'. Then when you hop on, you get that anxiety that something bad is going to happen. When it started, you were excited, but after the while you feel nausea and begging to come down. Then comes the adrenaline rush that makes it all exciting. Just when you were starting to enjoy the place, feel the wind on your hair and your heart beats for excitement instead of fear, they stopped the rollercoaster: 'That's the end of your ride'. Japan was like that kind of trip.

These four months in Japan had been very emotional for me, and probably influenced me the most in my academic journey. I have grown and became more matured in my thoughts; I learned to be prepared, to accept things the way they are but always try my best in all tasks. There were bad and good experiences, but regardless how they are, they will be remembered as valuable assets for my future.

## Thao Nguyen



Life in Japan

# Re-enter and Leave Japan within Six Months: A Timeline

based on a true story by Afif Faiq Muhammad



## 08/09/20 (Indonesia – Japan)

**20:15** - Airport checked in. They asked for my passport, residence card, letter of confirmation (from the embassy), and certificate of COVID-19 testing (official template from Japan's MOFA).

**21:55** - Boarded the flight. The flight attendant will give you a COVID-19 related questionnaire and customs declaration.

## 09/09/20

**06:45** - Landed in Narita Airport but must wait inside the plane.

**07:40** - Got off the plane. Had a seat and waited for my turn to be re-tested for COVID-19.

**08:30** - Stood in line to get my questionnaire checked. Confirmed my name, then got the test tube and green card. Got a funnel for the saliva test. Headed to my cubicle, and I needed to spit until the designated line on the test tube. Disposed of the funnel and handed over the test tube.

**08:45** - Had a seat and wait for my turn to be interviewed about my quarantine plan.

**09:10** - The interview. They asked where I will be quarantined and how they were supposed to contact me to check on my condition.

\*I'm in my friend's place, so they asked for the address (and contact number). I choose LINE for them to survey me on my condition.

They wrote a seat number on my green card and said I should sit accordingly.

**09:32** - Before the waiting hall, there were tables full of free snacks and drinks (mineral water, juice pack, dorayaki, and potato chips). They called the last four digits on the green card just above the barcode when the result is ready.

**10:36** - Got the result. I was negative, so I can proceed to Immigration. **"God knows what will happen otherwise."**

**10:44** - Immigration check (it was a long walk). They asked me to fill the form containing where I was coming from; and when was the last time I left Japan. They also asked for both the letter of confirmation and the certificate of testing.

**11:08** - Got my luggage which has been check by the TSA dog, and it found something suspicious, so they put a tag and explanation on my luggage. Then I had to bring my bag to the staff and get checked. No one was checking on me whether I got picked up or not.

**11:21** - I'm out and got on my booked ride.

## 24/02/21 (Japan-Indonesia)

A negative test certificate in English for international travel of a maximum of 72 hours prior to departing was required, so I made a web-reservation which then got a confirmation email and phone call. The cheapest I found so far:

[bit.ly/evisiontest](https://bit.ly/evisiontest); [bit.ly/evisionloc](https://bit.ly/evisionloc); ¥12,100 test at 15:30 result at 12:03(+1); \*Saliva test.

## 26/02/21

**6:30** - Super early checked-in. Showed the negative PCR test certificate. Signed a form (prepared by the airline). I don't remember what the content was about because it was collected after.

**6:48** - Most of the shops were closed, so I went to the observation deck for a stroll.

**09:00** - Immigration. Showed the negative PCR test certificate. I was given a paper containing basic information about re-entry regulation which is quite different than the one I experience back in September.

**11:45** - Boarded the flight.

**19:30** - Landed. Long story short, the government provided a free quarantined facility.

**20:30** - Some people are SELLING pre-activated local sim card since there was no Wi-Fi in the facility while waiting for the bus. **"Uh-oh! Fishy!"**

**21:00** - Got on the bus with other 20 people. Some people are entering the bus offering sim card, snacks, toiletries. En route, the driver asked for a small tip by handing over a plastic bag that passed over throughout the bus. **"Welcome home."**

**22:00** - Reached the facility. Wait on the bus for 4 hours, since apparently more buses are upfront queueing, while more people are entering the bus offering, again, sim card, fried rice, meatballs, chicken rice, snacks, toiletries, plug converter, and anything you'd like to order, and of course it was okay to eat inside the bus. You may get off to puff a smoke or two or stretch or whatever you want if it's around the bus. **"No one ever said it would be this hard~ Oh, take me back to the start~."**

## 27/02/21

**02:00** - Get off the bus and got assigned to a room for quarantine. Not so surprisingly, it will be a 3 people room quarantine so I will be put up in a room together with two strangers.

**"SEEMS IT'S ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE, BABY!"**



# Meet the e3 Student Organization



## Baptiste Pelletier e3 SO President

Hi everyone! Bonjour !! My name is Baptiste, I'm from Bourgogne, in France! I study Mechanical and Space engineering here at Hokkaido University. I've been in Japan for a little more than a year now, and I can honestly say it's one of the best places to live! Whether it's the food, the people or the amazing scenery, you really can't make a mistake by coming in this country! Hokkaido will offer you the icing on the cake, with its perfect snow, and the cherry on top would be the extra warmth of its inhabitants!

As president of the e3 SO, I'm looking forward to connecting everyone regardless of their origins, to share our experiences, our knowledge, and simply, to share a good time! I hope you will join the e3 family of Hokkaido University and spend a wonderful time with us!

See you! A bientot !

## Amagu Clement Vice President of Academic Affairs

Hello Minna-san!!! I am Amagu, Amagu Clement from Nigeria. You can call me Amagu. I am D1 student in the Laboratory of Rock Mechanics, Division of Sustainable Resources Engineering. I started my study as a Masters student in October 2018, and then continued with my PhD program. I came to Hokudai in 2014 for a short-term exchange program (HUSTEP) between Hokkaido University and my home University (Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria). So far, I have gotten good exposure in my research area, Japanese customs, and her rich-oriented culture, and looking forward to enjoying more.

I have joined several E3 global talk, bonenkai festival and so on. I'm telling you, all the events were unforgettable. However, as e3 SO's vice president for academic affair, I will contribute my ideas, energy and time to sustain the goal of e3 SO.

To new e3 students, let's participate, organize and arrange unforgettable events for ourselves that we may enjoy and make beautiful memories together in e3!

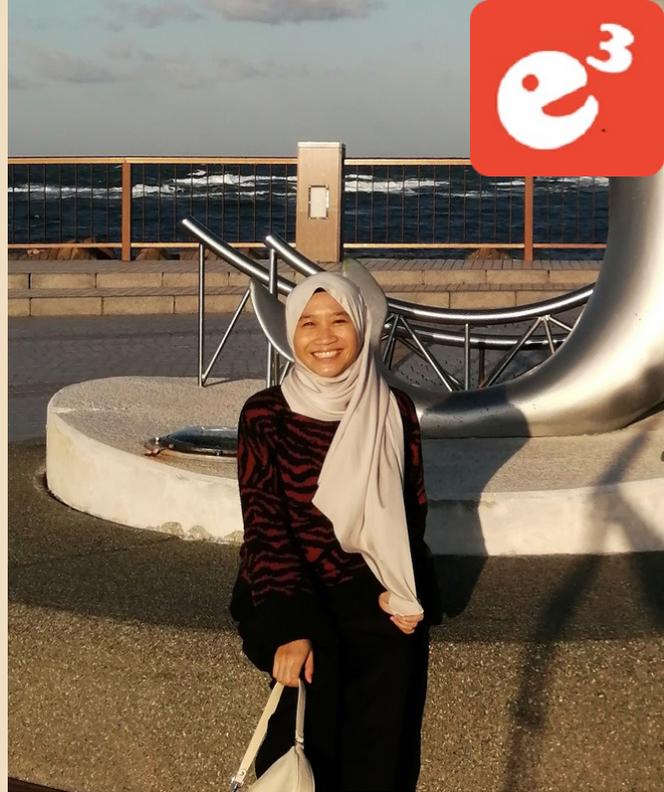


SO

# Nabilah Atiqah

## Vice President of Socail Affairs

Hello, everyone! I am Nabilah from “Land of the Hornbills” – Sarawak in Malaysia. I am a D2 student from the Laboratory of Space Utilization, Division of Mechanical and Space Engineering. I arrived Sapporo around one year ago and I have been enjoying living here since. My favourite part is the four seasons of Sapporo which I cannot experienced in my home country. I hope everyone is enjoying Sapporo climate as well. Not forgetting the main reason why I’m in Sapporo in the first place, of course I’m grateful to have the chance to pursue my graduate study at Hokkaido University under the e3 Program. Through this program, other than the academic opportunity, I’ve learnt to get to know different cultures of different countries from friends of different background. I am glad to join the e3 student organization as we can all together join fun activities held by e3 family, expand connections among e3 students and aim to promote exchanges of knowledge and experiences. Everyone, let’s get together and enjoy this journey!



# Gaurab Das Mahapatra

## Vice President of Public Relations

Namaste and Konnichiwa to all of you. This is Gaurab Das Mahapatra (or GDM) from India. I am a Doctoral Student (D1) associated with the Laboratory of Architectural Planning of the Division of Architectural & Structural Engineering, within the Graduate School of Engineering.

The major reason for joining the e-cube student body is my quest towards a mutual exchange of knowledge with global peers through interaction and connection. The motto of e3 is “the world is one family”, which has a close resemblance to the Japanese theory of “Tabunka Kyosei”; which in turn also has stark similarity to the Indian philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, or African concept of “Ubuntu”, or Chinese belief of “Xioakang”. Basically, all these principles remind us about a global truth that we are all connected to a common root – HUMANITY. Let us all come together and help in fostering a creative and humane environment by learning and “UN” learning as well . . .

Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu . . .



# Sourabh Jagrat:

## Vice President of Finace

Namaste Minna san! I am Sourabh Jagrat from India. I am an M2 student in the Division of Mechanical and Space Engineering. It's been almost over a year I came to Japan. I have always been a fan of Japanese anime and still, I am fascinated with Japan and its culture. But the best part about living in Hokkaido is its four seasons; cherry blossom in spring, the sea in summer, leaves in Autumn & mountains in winters. I am glad I am a part of e3 community, through which I got to meet so many different people around the globe and we shared so many fun moments together. For the newcomers, come and join us. We'll enjoy and create memories together as a big happy e3 family.





# Tips and tricks. Enjoy your University life

By Cynthia Waihenya



## Getting started

### a) Communication

Navigating Sapporo and Japan, in general, can get tricky without an internet connection and the language barrier for some. Getting a sim card is some tricky business but totally doable. The best options are probably a data sim which you can obtain without any documentation from shops like Yodobashi Camera or BicCamera \* located near or at Sapporo station

A voice and call sim card requires the use of a credit card. OCN mobile allows foreigners to get a sim card with a residence card and a credit card from another country. Line is another good option for a voice, and data sim card is line mobile, but this requires a sim card\* (see below)

### b) Making purchases

Well, as noticed, most places don't accept debit cards, so a credit card is needed. (Please note you can still get by without a credit card) Getting a credit card as a foreigner is a bit difficult due to the lack of a credit score. As a Hokudai student, it is possible to get a credit card through the University Co-op. You need to be a member of the Co-op for a fee. However, there are other benefits to this.

### c) Getting an apartment

There are several companies that can aid in apartment hunting that have English speakers. Apaman, Uni-life, and the University Co-op fit this bill. They provide English support and can help you find an apartment that fits your needs.

#### d) Fitting out your apartment

So, you have an apartment, and it's totally empty for some, partially empty or furnished, no matter the state, you still need a few basic things. No need to buy new items, which can cause a dent in your wallet.

Hokkaido Free and for sale, H.U.I.S.A. Facebook page and 2nd street (a second-hand shop, one of many) can help you get items for free or cheap. They are worth checking out. Daiso, Can Do, Seria are 100-yen shops that supply nearly everything you may need from household goods, kitchen equipment, stationery; these shops are definitely worth checking out

#### Sustenance

For those who like to test their skills in the kitchen, you will quickly realize shopping for groceries in convenience stores can be pretty inconvenient for your wallet.

To get the most of your yen for groceries, I recommend certain shops that cater to the budget shoppers:

a) Gyomu super- located in Tanukikoji Nishi 2. Good deals on frozen meats, frozen vegetables, condiments, and dairy products

b) Sapporo Marukyo Fruit and Vegetables (<http://sapporo-marukyou-seika.jp/shop/>) the closest is at Kita 25. Don't let the distance discourage you. There are deals to be had. They have a line account where they update on crazy discount prices

〒001-0025 北海道札幌市北区北25条西4丁目1-26 レジデンスオオミ25

c) JR FreshMart- normal prices may be a bit steep, but they constantly have discounts on meat and eggs (updated on their line account as well)

#### Fun, culture, and adventure

The apartment is all set up or maybe still in the dorm, but you have a tiny bit of free time to explore Hokkaido, just not too sure where to begin.

a) What's on in Sapporo- a Facebook page that is current on well What's on in Sapporo. The page always features activities open to the public like Language exchange programs, concerts, and other events

b) School noticeboards – During the school year, various groups organize events (e3, H.U.I.S.A) which may vary due to the Coronavirus period but may still go on. Other external parties also post notices for cultural exchange opportunities like the Sapporo Chamber of Commerce.

#### Extras

- Moving around in Sapporo is pretty convenient using a bicycle when it's not snowing.
- If you lose items on the train, you can try and get them at the Lost and Found in Odori station.

