



JSPS Stockholm Newsletter

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Importance of the Multiple Research Funding Systems

Tadaharu Tsumoto, Director, JSPS Stockholm Office

I have already enjoyed four seasons in Sweden since I arrived at Stockholm in June last year; sunny and delightful summer, defoliating and a little bit melancholic autumn, dark but not so terribly cold winter and blooming but still chilly spring. During these days I visited a couple of research funding agencies in Sweden and learned some aspects of the Swedish research funding system, although it is still at the surface level. One of the aspects that I have learned so far is some similarity to the Japanese research funding system in the following point, i.e., there are multiple Governmental or semi-Governmental research funding agencies. Among them are the Swedish Research Council, the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA), the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF) and the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT). In Japan there are at least three semi-Governmental funding agencies; the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) to which our office belongs, the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) that was established just two years ago.

Generally speaking there is a clear segregation of missions among these agencies, although the boundary is a little bit blurred. The purpose of JSPS is described as contributing to the advancement of science in all fields of the natural and social sciences and the humanities (<https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/aboutus/index2.html>). Here “science in all fields” implicates basic science although it does not exclude applied science and technology. On the other hand, JST is aimed to contribute to the creation of innovation in science and technology and to establish an infrastructure for the entire process from the creation of knowledge to the return to the society (<http://www.jst.go.jp/EN/about/index.html>). Here an emphasis is put on “creation of innovation” and “return to the society”. AMED is specified for medical research. Although the goal of AMED is stated to promote integrated research and development in the field of medicine, from basic research to clinical trials (<http://www.amed.go.jp/en>), an emphasis is placed on the concept of “practical application” of medical and pharmaceutical research. In Sweden also the main goal and mission of each agency seem to be well differentiated.

Why multiple?

Regarding this situation the following questions might arise from lay people or even leading people in society outside of science: Why are the multiple research funding agencies necessary? Isn't a single or unified agency enough?

Although the necessity of the multiple funding systems is self-evident to scientists, a persuasive answer to these questions may be necessary to avoid such a possible misunderstanding of those people. On this occasion I would like to express my view on the necessity of the multiple funding systems: Scientific research is based primarily on curiosity of scientists, and such curiosity is a driving force of their various efforts. This type of research is often called curiosity-driven or bottom-up research. Because research projects are based on researchers' proposals, there is usually no top-down priority of fields in this type of research funding. In modern times, on the other hand, it is well recognized that the results of science and technology have a strong impact on society and a new (or sometimes called innovative) development of science and technology is necessary for making the industry and business of a country competitive in the world. Therefore, a government provides financial supports to the kind of science and technology that are believed to be necessary for prosperity and welfare of society. Thus a priority is given to a particular area of science and technology to attain such a goal. This type of research is called top-down projects. The evaluation and review systems of the two types of research are quite different. In the bottom-up research, research proposals are evaluated primarily by peers or specialists of the field, based on the academic point of view. On the other hand, the target field of the top-down project is determined often by non-specialists, politicians or bureaucrats who tend to pay attention to demands or needs of society. Thus at least two different types of funding systems are necessary. As a matter of course the top-down system has an advantage to get financial supports from the government. However, I would like to emphasize that the new development of the top-down project is dependent on results obtained from the bottom-up research. In other words, the innovative progress of the top-down project will not take place without findings and new results of the bottom-up basic research.

Balanced distribution of research grants is critical for science

When the establishment of AMED was planned in 2014 by the Japanese Government, the committee in charge of this plan suggested that the budget necessary for the establishment and maintenance of the AMED activity could be transferred at least partly from the budget for Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI in Japanese). Some members of the committee put forward an idea that a budget should be sliced from the KAKENHI and transferred

to the budget of the AMED. Many scientists in Japan thought that this idea was terribly harmful to the development of Japanese science because the AMED is focused mainly on applied medical and pharmaceutical science and the KAKENHI is the most important grant for basic science in Japan. At that time, many representative scientists of the Japanese academic societies expressed strong concerns about that idea. Fortunately the Japanese Government understood such an opinion and consequently the KAKENHI remains almost undamaged. The background of the argument by scientists is that basic science is critically important for development of science in general and also for application of science and technology to society. Naturally demands of society for science and technology are changing from time to time

and an innovative idea and technology are required for prosperity and welfare of society. In the medical field, for example, the new development of drugs and techniques for curing and preventing diseases are important. Therefore, the top-down funding system for innovative research and applied research is necessary. In my opinion, nevertheless, the financial support for basic research should be wider in the scope and larger in the size than that for top-down research because the development of the latter is based primarily on the development of the former. This concept seems to be shared by Japan and Sweden. This is, I think, why the multiple funding systems are operating in both countries.

News – Activities

JSPS Overseas Office Directors' Meeting

On May 12, Director Tsumoto attended the JSPS Overseas Office Directors' Meeting which was held at the JSPS Headquarters Office in Tokyo. First, the directors presented the ten overseas offices' activities from the last fiscal year. Then, JSPS Headquarters Office explained the budget, plans and main activities of the fiscal year 2017, which was followed by a discussion regarding the centers' mission and operation management.

Crafoord Prize Award Ceremony

On May 18, the Crafoord Prize Award Ceremony was held at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA). The Crafoord Prize is given to researchers within the disciplines of astronomy and mathematics, biosciences, geosciences and polyarthritis. These disciplines have been chosen in order to complement those for which the Nobel Prizes are awarded. This year, the Crafoord Prize in Polyarthritis was awarded to the three researchers: Distinguished Prof. Shimon Sakaguchi, Osaka University, Dr. Fred Ramsdell, Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy, and Prof. Alexander Rudensky, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Director Tsumoto and Deputy Director Yoshihara attended the award ceremony where the laureates received a medal and a diploma from Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden.



H.M. Crown Princess Victoria and the three laureates
(The Crafoord Prize/Press Photos)

JSPS Japan-Norway Symposium 2017

On June 6-8, the JSPS Japan-Norway Symposium 2017, titled “Past, Present, and Future of the Arctic and Antarctic – What’s done, What’s being done, What’s to be done after ASIW 2016 –” was held at the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research (BCCR) in Bergen, Norway. The symposium was jointly organized by JSPS Stockholm Office, the Japanese National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR), Partnership between Norway and Japan for Excellent Education and Research in Weather and Climate Dynamics (NORPAN) and BCCR. This symposium in Bergen was a follow up to the Japan-Norway ASIW Symposium, which was organized by the Embassy of Norway in Tokyo in 2016. The symposium attracted almost 80 participants.

The first day was opened by Director of BCCR Tore Furevik, Director Tsumoto of JSPS Stockholm Office and RCN Division for Society and Health’s Senior Adviser Julie Christensen. On the first day there was a general introduction of Japan-Norway Collaboration on Polar Science, which was followed by overview presentations on key polar issues and updates on polar science from the different institutes present at the event.

During the two remaining days, presentations were held by researchers from the two countries on the following themes: “Ocean, Climate and Meteorology”, “Data Management, Data Science” and “Cryosphere”.

This symposium greatly contributed to the promotion of the academic research conducted within this field in Japan and Norway, and hopefully this symposium will lead to further collaborative research on polar science.



Group photo with all the participants

News – Alumni

ACD Board Meeting

On May 31, JSPS Alumni Club in Denmark (ACD) held a board meeting online. The board members and JSPS Stockholm Office discussed the tentative Activity Plan of FY2017 which was proposed during the General Assembly and made a formal decision on the plan, which among other things set some of the dates for applications for the Activity Seminar of FY2018. Then, this year’s BRIDGE Fellowship awardee was presented to the board.

Dr. Sam Steffensen decided to resign from the chair post, and Prof. Carl Winsløw was selected to become the new ACD Board Chair. The ACD Board and JSPS Stockholm Office thank Dr. Steffensen for his work during his term as chair of the board.

Finally, the board set the date for the planned General Assembly and Japan Alumni and Researcher Assembly to be held on February 23, 2018.



Prof. Winsløw
(Photo: University of Copenhagen)

ACF Board Meeting

JSPS Alumni Club in Finland (ACF) held a board meeting through e-mail on June 9-16. The board members approved new alumni club member applications as well as followed up on the applications that were received earlier this year. They presented the BRIDGE Fellowship result and talked about the upcoming Pan Nordic Alumni Club Chair Meeting that will be held at JSPS Stockholm Office on August 25, and planned the Activity Seminar and General Assembly of FY2017 which are scheduled to be held this autumn.

Seminar on Mission Incomplete: Reflating Japan's Economy

Sayuri Shirai, Professor, Faculty of Policy Management,
Graduate School of Media Governance, Keio University

On May 3, I gave a lecture at the Stockholm School of Economics about the *Abenomics* launched in December 2012 after new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office and the subsequent the Bank of Japan's (BOJ's) massive unprecedented monetary easing (called *Quantitative and Qualitative Monetary Easing (QQE)*) began since April 2013. The *Abenomics* is a set of economic policies based on "three arrows" covering massive monetary easing to achieve the 2% price stability target, fiscal stimulus, and structural reforms. To achieve the objectives of the first arrow, the BOJ began QQE from April 2013 under the newly appointed Governor Haruhiko Kuroda who expressed his confidence about achieving the 2% price stability target within 2 years. The seminar was based on my English book published in February 2017 with regards to the BOJ's monetary easing history from 1999 to the current, reflecting my experience as one of policy makers in 2011-2016.

The seminar highlighted the negative interest rate policy announced in January 2016 and the yield curve control in September 2016. A negative interest rate was adopted by the BOJ and Sweden and lowered the entire yield curve and resulted in reducing longer-term yields to a significant degree. The negative interest rate policy raised concerns in Japan and produced side effects including (1) promotion of cash substitution and (2) a decline in the profitability of the financial sector.

First, households' sentiment appears to have been adversely affected by the negative interest rate policy. There was a rapid increase in notes in circulation due to a certain degree of conversion from deposits into cash holdings in home safety boxes. The ratio of notes in circulation was about 20% of GDP in 2016. There is a clear contrast with Sweden, where the ratio continues to drop even after adoption of a negative interest rate and is currently about 1%. Japan remains a relatively cash-based society compared with Sweden, an economy that is highly digitized and where cash is hardly used. Second, the negative interest rate policy squeezed the spreads between lending and deposit interest rates further and did not raise credit growth substantially in Japan, thereby contributing to a further decline in banking sector profitability. This adverse impact is severe in Japan, as the loan-to-deposit ratio has remained below 60% because deposit growth has consistently exceeded credit growth. Moreover, commercial banks in Japan suffered from limited profitability from maturity transformation since the yield curve flattened substantially. By contrast, commercial banks in Sweden maintained high profitability due to an increase in credit growth. Perhaps, the monetary easing is so effective that the monetary authorities now raised concerns over sharp increase in households' mortgage loans and potential financial instability risk. The return on equity (ROE) of the banking sector is close to 12% in Sweden while that in Japan is close to only 6%.

In September 2016, the BOJ adopted yield curve control to prevent longer-term yields from falling excessively low and thus mitigate adverse impacts on financial institutions. This framework helped to depreciate the exchange rate of the yen substantially and raise stock prices after the United States presidential election last November. How long the current performance in the foreign exchange and stock markets will continue is unknown and will also depend on the new policies to be implemented by the new Trump-led United States government. So far, credit demand and real consumption have not shown a strong pick up. The rate of change in the consumer price index (CPI) is likely to pick up until the fall of 2017, mainly due to a base effect (phasing out of the downward pressure on prices from an oil price drop). Upward pressure on prices from aggregate demand has been limited. Four inter-related structural factors contribute to the limited impact of unconventional monetary easing on aggregate demand and inflation: (1) limited demand for credit relative to ample liquidity, (2) low expectation of income growth, (3) unfavorable demographics and concerns about sustainability of social security system, and (4) households' upward bias in perceived inflation.

Prof. Lars E. O. Svensson, distinguished professor at Stockholm School of Economics and former advocate of massive monetary easing against the BOJ, pointed out that the timing of BOJ's massive monetary easing might have been too late or a (real) interest rate could have been reduced further. Active discussions with the audience were also performed. Next day, I visited Riksbank to give a lecture about BOJ's monetary policy experiences and had interesting exchanges of views. I would like to thank Prof. Marie Söderberg, Director of the European Institute of Japanese Studies (EJIS) at Stockholm School of Economics, as well as JSPS Stockholm Office for giving me a great opportunity to learn more about Swedish economy and its monetary policy.



Prof. Shirai during her lecture at
Stockholm School of Economics

JSPS Japan-Norway Symposium ‘Past, Present and Future of the Arctic and Antarctic’

Takuji Nakamura, Vice-Director General, National Institute of Polar Research

The Arctic and the Antarctic contain 99 % of the ice on the earth, and they are, hence, a huge cooling reservoir. The Arctic ice volume is decreasing rapidly, which attracts interest of general public. On the other hand, the huge Antarctic ice-sheet is also notable because it may result in the rise of global sea level by dozens of meters once it starts melting. In addition, the polar region is the place where high energy particles from the sun fall onto the atmosphere, which causes aurora emissions, and occasionally damages to infrastructures on the ground or on the satellites, in case of extremely large explosion on the solar surface.

Organized by the JSPS Stockholm Office and attended by Japanese and Norwegian scientists, the Japan-Norway Symposium 2017, titled "Past, Present, and Future of the Arctic and Antarctic -What's done, What's being done, What's to be done after ASIW 2016-" was held at the Bjerknes Center for Climate Research (BCCR) of University of Bergen, Bergen, Kingdom of Norway on 6-8 June 2017. This symposium was planned as a follow-up meeting of the "Japan Norway Arctic Science Innovation Week (ASIW 2016)" held in Tokyo in June 2016. This previous meeting was a great success, which was organized by the Embassy of Norway in Tokyo and attended by Japan's State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Tsutomu Tomioka and Norwegian State Secretary to the Minister of Education and Research Bjørn Haugstad with 100 participants from Norway and 160 participants from Japan. This year in the symposium at Bergen, some of the themes in ASIW 2016 were picked up and discussed more in detail with more updated information.

The symposium was held in parallel to the workshop of NORPAN (Partnership between Norway and Japan for excellent Education and Research in Weather and Climate Dynamics) cooperation program at BCCR being held from June 6 to 9, with which the joint session of opening, the plenary session and the science session on climate change were held in the morning of June 6.

The attendees of this symposium were: Director Tadaharu Tsumoto and 2 colleagues from JSPS Stockholm Office, Julie Christiansen, Senior Advisor at the Research Council of Norway, Atsuki Ito, First Secretary at the Embassy of Japan in Norway, 24 people from five Japanese organizations (National Institute of Polar Research, Hokkaido University, University of Tokyo, Japan Agency of Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC) and Tsukuba University) and 48 people from 6 Norwegian organizations. Totally 76 people were gathered for the symposium.

The session in the afternoon of June 6 was devoted for the reports of polar observations and researches from selected research organizations/departments and projects. On June 7 and 8, topics on the fields of ocean, climate, weather/atmosphere, data management and data science, and cryosphere were presented. Through the total 52 presentations, discussed were the cooperation in several fields, such as, particularly, the cooperation on data in Svalbard Integrated Observation System (SIOS), the studies on Antarctic marine ecology, the polar earthquakes and infrasound observations and studies, the ice-core drilling in the Antarctic inland, the researches on glaciers, ice sheet and permafrost in the Arctic, and the development of educational programs on glacier and ice sheet. The symposium itself has been very fruitful, but also it is of great significance in a sense that Japan has taken a lead in holding a symposium in Norway, as a follow up of the meeting in Tokyo hosted by Norway a year ago.

We acknowledge the supports from Research Organization of Information and Systems/National Institute of Polar Research, NORPAN and BCCR. Special thanks are also due to Professor Thomas Spengler and Dr. Øyvind Paasche, both of BCCR, for their support in holding this symposium in Bergen.

Bergen is known as a town of an extremely high precipitation in Europe, and we learned from local people that last year only 20 days were without rain. I now understand why many famous scientists on meteorology have come out from Bergen, which is called "the Bergen School of Meteorology".



Vice-Director General Nakamura



The participants at the symposium

2017.06.07

Meeting with representatives from Bergen University

While attending the JSPS Japan-Norway Symposium 2017 (see page 4), held at the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, Director Tsumoto, Deputy Director Yoshihara and International Program Associate Okamoto met with Higher Executive Officer at the Division of Student Affairs Tonje Skaar and Senior Adviser at the Division of Research Administration Bjørn Einar Aas from the University of Bergen, and Senior Adviser at the Trade & Technology Office at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Tokyo Dr. Hiroshi Matsumoto. They had a meaningful exchange on opinions on what the University of Bergen and Japanese universities and research institutions should do in order to further enhance their student and researcher exchanges.



Dr. Matsumoto, Ms. Skaar and Mr. Aas

2017.06.07

Meeting with the Research Council of Norway (RCN)

While attending the JSPS Japan-Norway Symposium 2017 (see page 4), Director Tsumoto, Deputy Director Yoshihara and International Program Associate Okamoto held a meeting with Ms. Julie Christiansen, Senior Adviser of the Division for Society and Health at the Research Council of Norway (RCN), and discussed how to strengthen the collaboration between JSPS and RCN. They also discussed, in relation to the collaboration with JSPS, how to increase the number of applications for JSPS Fellowships from the Norwegian side and how to promote these activities.



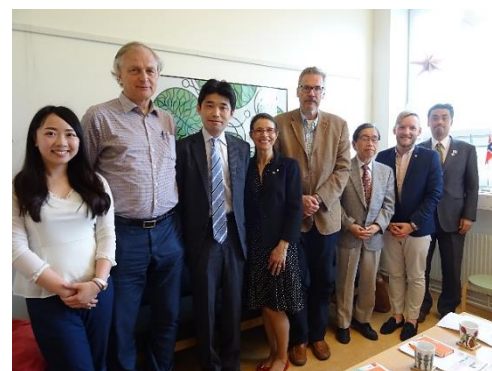
Ms. Christiansen

2017.06.15

Visit by representatives from the MIRAI Seminar

Mr. Leif Kirsebom, Professor and Vice-chancellor's adviser at Uppsala University, Mr. Edvard Fleetwood, Secretary General at Sweden-Japan Foundation, Ms. Sonia Coelho Sutton, Senior International Coordinator at Lund University and Mr. Fredrik Klintberg, International Coordinator at Lund University, visited JSPS Stockholm Office and met with Director Tsumoto and Deputy Director Yoshihara and International Program Associate Yamashita. They shared the current progress of the MIRAI Seminar which is planned to be held in October this year in Lund and they confirmed further collaboration for the success of this seminar. The MIRAI Seminar is a joint project between eight Japanese universities and seven Swedish universities.

For more information: <http://sacf.se>



Mr. Fleetwood, Ms. Coelho Sutton, Prof. Kirsebom and Mr. Klintberg

2017.07.04

Visit by Director Hiroki Takaya

Director Hiroki Takaya from the Advanced Medical and Radiological Science Division at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) visited JSPS Stockholm Office and met with Director Tsumoto and Deputy Director Yoshihara. Director Tsumoto presented JSPS activities and they exchanged information on their current jobs and how things have changed since Director Takaya worked at the Embassy of Japan in Sweden.

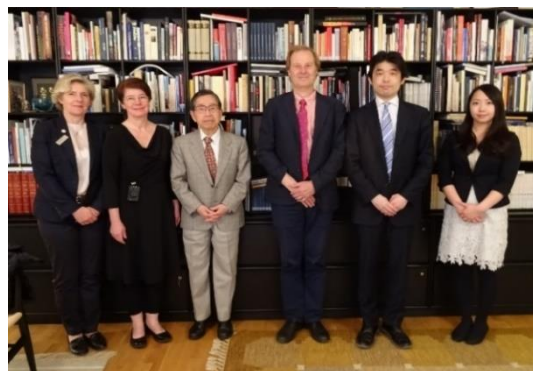


Director Takaya

2017.05.23

Courtesy Visit to the Nobel Museum

Director Tsumoto, Deputy Director Yoshihara, International Program Associates Okamoto and Yamashita (hereafter “staff from JSPS Stockholm Office”) visited the Nobel Museum and met with Museum Director Olov Amelin, Administrative Director Eva Windrup and Director of Research Department Katarina Nordqvist. Museum Director Amelin praised the success of the Nobel Prize Dialogue Tokyo which was held in February, 2017, and expressed his anticipation for the planned event next year. With 2018 marking the 150th Anniversary of Japan-Sweden Diplomatic Relations, Director Tsumoto expressed his wish for further collaboration with the Nobel Museum in order to further promote the two countries’ collaborations.



Ms. Windrup, Ms. Nordqvist and Director Amelin

2017.05.26

Courtesy Visit to the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research and met with Dr. Mattias Jennerholm, Deputy Director of the Division for Research Policy. He explained the Ministry’s organization, areas of responsibility and how the budget is planned. They exchanged opinions on the research collaboration within the academic field between Japan and Sweden and talked about how to further the collaboration based on Japan’s efforts in globalization and new fields of research.



Dr. Jennerholm

2017.05.31

Courtesy Visit to the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF)

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF) and met with CEO Lars Hultman and Research Programmes Manager Joakim Amorim. The representatives from the SSF presented an overview of the foundation and its programs. They exchanged opinions on what the two organizations can do to further enhance academic and research collaboration between the two countries.



CEO Hultman and Mr. Amorim

2017.06.02

Courtesy Visit to Stockholm University

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited Stockholm University and met with Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Science Prof. Anders Karlhede, Head of International Affairs Dr. Maria Wikse and Senior Advisor International Relations Ms. Elisabet Idermark. They exchanged opinions on the Stockholm-Tokyo Workshop “Living longer and healthier in an ageing world”, which is a workshop jointly organized by Stockholm University, Karolinska Institutet, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and the University of Tokyo. They also discussed the academic and research collaboration between Japan and Sweden.

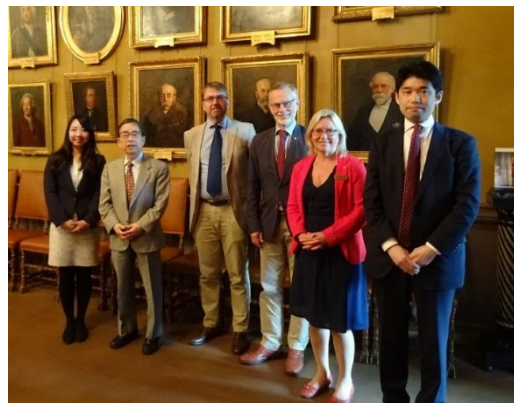


Dr. Wikse, Ms. Idermark and Prof. Karlhede

2017.06.12

Courtesy Visit to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA)

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA) and met with Secretary General Prof. Göran K. Hansson, Executive Director Dr. Per Hedenqvist, Programme Coordinator Dr. Magnus Lundgren, Scientific Secretary Dr. Heléne Sundström and Scholarship Administrator Mr. Peter Brandén. They discussed the upcoming planned events such as the KVA-JSPS Seminars, Sweden-Japan Academic Network and JSPS fellowships, of which KVA is one of the nominating authorities. They also reconfirmed the value of collaboration between the two organizations in order to keep promoting Swedish and Japanese academic exchange.

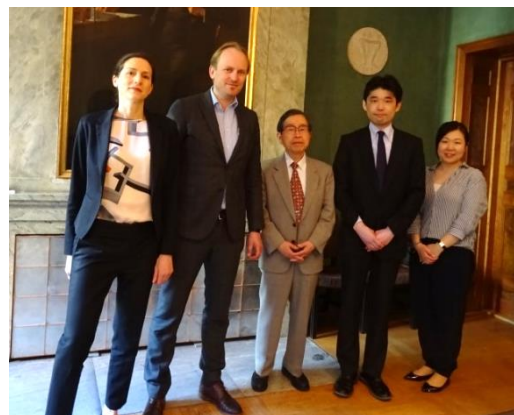


Dr. Hedenqvist, Prof. Hansson and Dr. Sundström

2017.06.14

Courtesy Visit to Nobel Media

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited Nobel Media and met with CEO Mattias Fyrenius and Deputy CEO and Director of Partner Relations Laura Sprechmann. Director Tsumoto expressed his gratitude for their continued support for the success of the Nobel Prize Dialogue Tokyo that was held in February 2017, and following this they discussed the next Nobel Prize Dialogue that is planned to be held in Yokohama next year.



Deputy CEO Sprechmann and CEO Fyrenius

2017.06.27

Courtesy Visit to the Swedish Research Council (VR)

Staff from JSPS Stockholm Office visited the Swedish Research Council (VR) and met with Senior Adviser of International Matters Annette Moth Wiklund. They introduced each funding agency's activities and exchanged opinions on how to further cooperate in the future.



Ms. Moth Wiklund

So many countries, so many summers

Oskar Nielsen, JSPS Stockholm Office Assistant

Have you ever considered how people on the other side of the planet spend the summer? In Japan, the days are hot and humid, while in Sweden they are warm and long with short nights. It is not only the summer climate that is different in these countries, but also the traditions. How do the Japanese summer traditions differ from the Swedish?

Swedish summers are marked by long sunny nights and spending time on the country side and by the sea. Some of the traditional events during the summer months are the midsummer festivities, enjoying crayfish during a *kräftskiva* (a crayfish party), and watching concerts and other performances outside. In Japan, on the other hand, the summers are filled with different festivals and big events during the summer holiday season.

One event that is equivalent to summer in Japan is the fireworks festival at the Sumida River in Tokyo. This festival started already back in 1733 and is one of the biggest events in Tokyo with many participants and spectators. While enjoying the fireworks the spectators can eat a lot of different food in the *yatai* food stands. One red thread in the Japanese festivals are these food stands. The fireworks seasons in Japan and Sweden probably differ because of natural reasons – the midnight sun in Sweden makes it hard to see fireworks while you are still awake, which makes fireworks here a thing for the autumn and winter, especially new year's eve.

One of the popular summer festivals in Japan is the Tanabata festival, which consists of events during all of July. One of the tanabata traditions is to write wishes on small pieces of papers, and then hang them in bamboo in hope they come true. This can be seen all over Japan.

The Obon festival, which is held in order to honor the spirits of one's ancestors, is another popular festival in the Japanese society. Traditionally, it was believed that the spirits of one's ancestors returned to visit their relatives during the Obon season, which is celebrated every year between August 13-16. Therefore, people hang colourful lanterns outside their houses, perform traditional Obon dances and offer food at the altars in the temples. At the end of the Obon festivities, lanterns that float are put into rivers to guide the spirits back home. One feature of the Obon festival is the Awa Odori Dance Festival that is held every August in Tokushima on the island Shikoku. This is one of the biggest dance festivals in Japan and it attracts over one million tourists every year.

Another popular festival is the Gion Matsuri, which is held in Kyoto in July every year. This festival dates back to the 9th century and in 2009 it was designated as a "UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage" by itself. However, in 2016 it was redesignated under the name of "Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan" together with other festivals. The Gion Matsuri is characterized by its huge floats that can be over 25 meters high and has wheels of the size of an adult. The main procession starts from Yasaka Shrine in the Gion district of Kyoto and is an opportunity to see around 30 floats going through the streets accompanied by songs and dancers.

That being said, there are several different ways to enjoy the summer in different countries. How have you enjoyed this summer?

Sources and further information:

<https://www.japan-experience.com/news/tips/best-summer-festivals-in-japan>

<https://digjapan.travel/en/blog/id=10643>



Awa Odori dancers in Tokushima

Picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Awa-odori_2008_Tokushima.jpg



Swedish crayfish with dill

Picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cooked_crayfish_with_dill.jpg

New Vice-Chancellor at Karolinska Institutet

On August 1, Prof. Ole Petter Ottersen took office at Karolinska Institutet (KI) as the new Vice-Chancellor succeeding Prof. Karin Dahlman-Wright. Prof. Ottersen is professor in medicine and has most recently been working as the rector at the University of Oslo. His term in office will be from 2017.08.01-2022.02.28.

Source:

<http://ki.se/nyheter/intervju-ole-petter-ottersen-om-att-bli-ny-rektor-for-karolinska-institutet>

Swedish Universities in Top 100

Two Swedish universities have placed within the top 100 of the world's best universities according to the 2017-2018 QS World University Rankings which were released in early June 2017. The highest placed Swedish university is Lund University at rank 78. This is, however, a small step down from last year's 73rd place. Lund University has a "very high" standard of research according to QS, and its strongest subject is geography, where it is ranked 26th in the world. Lund University is also the first choice for international students in Sweden.

The second Swedish university in top 100 is KTH Royal Institute of Technology, ranked 98. The highest rank for subject at KTH is architecture, which is ranked 23rd in the world.

Uppsala University actually dropped out of the top 100 this year, by dropping from 98 to 112. Its highest rated subject is pharmacy and pharmacology.

Sources:

<https://www.thelocal.se/20170608/swedish-universities-among-top-100-in-the-world>

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2018>



Lund University. Photo by Mikael Risedal

Three Top International Universities in Sweden

The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) launched its STINT Internationalization Index in 2016. The first year, there was only one university in the top category: Stockholm School of Economics. When the index was presented this year, two more universities had taken a spot in the top. Stockholm School of Economics was accompanied with Chalmers University of Technology and KTH Royal Institute of Technology in the top in this year's index.

STINT has developed the Internationalization Index as a means to measure the degree of internationalization at the universities in Sweden. The index evaluates aspects within internationalization of research, education, faculty and management. The index's aim is to work as support for the universities in their internationalization work.

Sources:

<http://www.stint.se/en/news/var/newsID/571>

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170516190330684&query=sweden>

New Findings about Alzheimer's Disease Thanks to Synchrotron Light

In the synchrotron light facilities at Lund University, Dr. Oxana Klementieva and her colleagues use synchrotron light to study Alzheimer's disease. This is a new method for examining the disease and it has led to completely new results and findings.

When Dr. Klementieva moved from Novosibirsk to Lund in 2013, she started working at Experimental Dementia Research at the Faculty of Medicine at Lund University. She was startled that they did not use the synchrotron light resources that existed at Max-lab, which has been a National Laboratory at Lund University for over 20 years. With the help from the synchrotron light, she found an unknown phase of the disease, that changes, which later causes the protein amyloid beta to lump and form plaque, may emerge decades before the symptoms are seen. Dr. Klementieva means that if we find a way to stabilize the protein, we might be able to prevent it from lumping and forming the plaque that leads to Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Klementieva is now waiting for infrared microscopy to be installed at Max IV, the newly opened synchrotron light facility in Lund. This would become a resource with stronger light and higher resolution than that of Max-lab. At Max IV, so far only two work stations are up and running, but they will increase. The facility's goal is to have 25-30 stations running in the future.

Sources:

<http://www.tidningencurie.se/nyheter/2017/05/30/nya-ron-om-alzheimers-tack-vare-skanskt-synkrotronljus/>
<https://www.maxlab.lu.se/about>



The Max IV Facility in Lund. Photo credit: © ABML4/Felix Gerlach

Bob Dylan Delivered Nobel Lecture

On June 4, Nobel Laureate in Literature Bob Dylan delivered his Nobel Lecture through the Nobel Prize's homepage: both as a text and as a sound file.

The Nobel Prize laureates have to hold a lecture in relation to their Nobel Prize within 6 months after they have been awarded in order to receive the prize money.

Nobel Laureate Dylan talked about how music and literary works such as *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Odyssey* had influenced him in his writing and career throughout his life.

Source:

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/dylan-lecture.html

Debate over Tuition Fees in Finland

In May a seminar was held in Helsinki that was organized by the Finnish Economic Association regarding the proposals to introduce tuition fees for all Finnish higher education students. The debate heated up and boiled over according to Helsinki Times.

Critics of the proposals mean that if the students become paying customers, they would expect something in exchange for their money – degrees – even if they haven't studied accordingly to the requirements. The critics also mean that the introduction of tuition fees might adventure the equal opportunity for higher education and that the fees would tempt the universities to lower the admission standards.

On the other hand, tuition fees have already been introduced for foreign students in Finland and will start to be applied from the autumn 2017. This has led to a big drop in applications students from outside the EU and the European Economic Area for whom the fees will be applied. Last autumn there was a 30% drop in applications from students from these areas. There has also been a decreasing number of students finding a job in Finland after graduation in time to retain a work visa. However, representatives from the student unions believe that the Finnish institutions will figure out what will attract foreign students in the future.

Sources:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2017052615592282&query=finland>

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170504230146651&query=finland>

Denmark's Youngest Medical Graduate

Three years ago, at the age of 23, Dr. Habib Frost became the youngest person in Denmark to graduate with a medical degree.

After graduating he started up his company Neurescue, through which he is preparing to conduct a large-scale clinical trial of a medical life-saving innovation. He has taken an international patent on this innovation.

Dr. Frost's innovation is a balloon catheter that is used to improve the blood flow that reaches the vital organs such as the brain and the heart in treatment of cardiac arrest and critical bleedings. The balloon catheter is super-thin and is controlled with just a computer. By redistributing the blood flow, the heart can be resuscitated earlier and the brain is protected from damage and gives time for doctors to treat the underlying cause of the cardiac arrest. Dr. Frost means that his innovation will increase the time for saving a person's life from around 30 minutes to 60-120 minutes. This will give doctors time to do more advanced procedures on patients in life threatening situations.

Dr. Frost has now 11 staff within his company and a board of experienced life science leaders. His computer-controlled catheter is being developed by biomedical engineers in Denmark, Sweden and Ireland.

Source:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170609065603735>



Dr. Habib Frost
(Photo from Neurescue.com)

RCN Urges Universities to Make Articles Openly Available

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) has since 2013 made it mandatory for RCN funded projects to make the research publications openly available in digital repositories. However, in a review of the publications that are the results of funding from RCN, they discovered that little is being done to fulfill this requirement. Therefore, RCN has set a six months deadline for universities and university colleges to upload research articles. RCN also realized that they need to make clear instructions and reminders to institutions about their requirements for open access to publications.

Source:

[https://www.forskningssradet.no/en/Newsarticle/Research articles must be openly available/1254026934347/p1177315753918](https://www.forskningssradet.no/en/Newsarticle/Research%20articles%20must%20be%20openly%20available/1254026934347/p1177315753918)



The RCN in Oslo (Photo by Kjetil Ree)

Government Initiative for Internationalization of Japanese Universities

In April 2016, the Japanese government introduced their “5th Science and Technology Basic Plan”, which is a five year plan for the fiscal years 2016-2020. It introduces policies that are designed to help Japan become more international, and Prime Minister Abe means that, along with this plan, Japan will become “the world’s most innovation-friendly country”.

The plan urges universities to take a more global outlook on their collaborations and to recruit more young and foreign academics. Another thing the plan takes up is the importance of strengthening the ties and collaborations between the industry and academia. This has led funding agencies and legal bodies in Japan to fund research with a concrete and visible impact. Another initiative is to introduce cross-appointments where researchers can work simultaneously within the academia and the industry without losing benefits from the social security system in Japan.

Along with these guidelines introduced by the Japanese government, experts mean that other big changes are needed to be done outside the academia in order to make Japan a front-line country with an economy driven by innovation and research.

Sources:

http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v543/n7646_suppl/full/543S23a.html

<http://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/sogosenryaku/2017/gaiyo2017.pdf>

Limits in Tokyo to Promote Regional Vitalization

Like in many parts of the world, many Japanese students move to the capital in order to pursue their academic careers. In order to prevent the inevitable depopulation of Japan’s countryside, the Japanese government is considering to establish a regulation that would prevent the universities in the Tokyo area from increasing the total number of students they can have.

People from the regional areas of Japan tend to move to Tokyo, and the metropolitan area accounted for 7.2% of the nationwide population in 2015, however, the percentage of university students in Tokyo is 18.3% nationwide, which means that the university students exceed the general population rate in the capital area.

Apart from the government considering these regulations, regional universities in Japan are rethinking and innovating themselves in order to become more attractive to students from all over the country.

Sources:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2017051207273215&query=japan>

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/27/national/japans-regional-universities-innovate-survive-amid-depopulation-tokyo-draw/#.WVlaDOlLeU>

Upcoming Seminars and Symposia

SAC Activity Seminar (1) in Linköping

“Andrology: Reproduction and health during a man’s lifetime”

Date: August 23-24, 2017

Venue: Linköping University

Lecturer: Prof. Noriko Osumi (Tohoku University School of Medicine)

The 1st KVA-JSPS Seminar 2017

Date and Venue: September 4, 2017, Uppsala University

September 6, 2017, Karolinska Institutet

September 7, 2017, University of Gothenburg

Lecturer: Prof. Shigehiro Kuraku (RIKEN Center for Life Science Technologies Unit Leader)

The 2nd KVA-JSPS Seminar 2017

Date and Venue: September 4, 2017, Lund University

September 6, 2017, Karolinska Institutet

September 7, 2017, Uppsala University

September 8, 2017, Karolinska Institutet

Lecturer: Prof. Yoshihiro Urade (University of Tsukuba International Institute for Integrative Sleep Medicine)

This seminar is authorized by the WPI Program (<http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-toplevel/index.html>)

The 3rd KVA-JSPS Seminar 2017

Date and Venue: September 18, 2017, Karolinska Institutet

September 19, 2017, Uppsala University Science for Life Laboratory

September 21, 2017, Stockholm University

Lecturer: Dr. Piero Carninci (RIKEN Center for Life Science Technologies Team Leader)

Stockholm-Tokyo Workshop

“Living longer and healthier in an ageing world”

Date: September 20-22, 2017

Venue: Nobel Forum, Karolinska Institutet Campus Solna, Stockholm

More information at www.stockholm-tokyo.org

MIRAI Seminar

Date: October 16-19, 2017

Venue: Lund University

More information at <http://sacf.se/>

SAC Activity Seminar (2) in Borås

“Smart Textiles – Technology for Medicine and Healthcare”

Date: October 19, 2017

Venue: Borås University

Lecturer: Prof. Atsushi Nishikawa (Shinshu University Faculty of Textile Science and Technology)

Upcoming Seminars and Symposia

IVA-JSPS Seminar

Date: October 25, 2017

Venue: The Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA), Stockholm, Sweden

Lecturer: Dr. Hiroaki Kitano (President and CEO, Director of Research at Sony Computer Science Laboratories Inc.)

ACD Activity Seminar in Copenhagen

“Collaboration and Community-Building in Contemporary Art in Japan and Denmark”

Date: November 4-5, 2017

Venue: University of Copenhagen

Lecturer: Prof. Yoshitaka Mouri (Tokyo University of the Arts Graduate School of Global Arts)

Please find more information on <http://www.jsps-sto.com/activities.aspx>

JSPS Stockholm Office Facebook Page

We have started a Facebook page for JSPS Stockholm Office. Please follow us (JSPS Stockholm Office) for the latest information and news.

https://www.facebook.com/JSPS-Stockholm-Office-1793731447305912/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

JSPS Stockholm Office Brochure

We have updated our JSPS Stockholm Office Brochure. If you are interested in our activities, please check it out online here:

http://www.jsps-sto.com/admin/UploadFile.aspx?path=/UserUploadFiles/brochure/JSPSstockholm_a.pdf

The next issue of JSPS Stockholm Office's newsletter is planned to be released in the end of November, 2017.

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