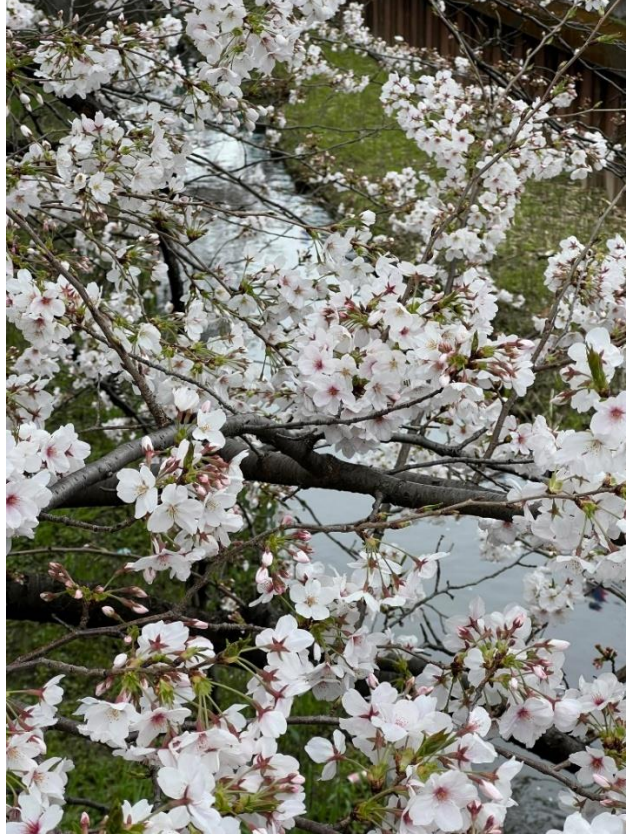


Guillaume Nicolas. MEXT 2023 Research scholar at Kyoto University.



As we embrace the cherry blossom, (Sakura) Season in Japan, it is a great opportunity to remember the meaning behind the Sakura flowers. More than the arrival of Spring, they represent a fresh start in a new season full of opportunities. By doing so they echo the Japanese tradition of the Daruma dolls, symbol of the new year, to continue a virtuous circle of personal development. By this small article on my MEXT experience, I hope to inspire to whoever is reading 1) the **willingness to apply** to the MEXT scholarship 2) the **perseverance to pass** the different exams and 3) the **passion to work towards bridging Japan and Belgium**. In the Japanese tradition; Daruma dolls require drawing a first eye once the wish is made and the second one once the wish has been realized. As the long lasting daruma doll tradition, I would like to inspire you to take the first step and draw the first eye by applying to the prestigious *Monbukagakusho* (MEXT) scholarship. One of the best ways to inspire you is to share you the story of my second year in Japan, I hope that you will find some answers through my own experience.

Hence, I will start by presenting my research, I am now in the second half of my complementary master's program at Kyoto University focusing on hydrogen transition research. The core of my research is focused on establishing diffusion strategies for hydrogen technology in the transport sector, particularly in the heavy-duty truck industry. Based on social sciences theories of transition and technical engineering literature, it aims to provide practical actions for companies active in the whole hydrogen supply chain. My research objective is to provide companies with concrete keys to develop their network, reduce their cost, increase technology awareness and diffusion. In the context of my research at Kyoto University, I was also selected to apply my research in a prestigious Japanese company of *Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corporation*. I am now part of the team who developed the vision F-cell light duty truck, the first commercial hydrogen truck ever developed. Further than establishing business strategies, I also have the chance to be at the core of the R & D process of disruptive technologies.

Secondly, because bridging Belgium and Japan is at the core mission of the MEXT Scholarship Program, I organized and participated in several networking events with the objective to help Japanese, Belgian and Luxembourgish individuals and organizations to connect with each other. The pinnacle of those initiatives was my nomination as one of the 13 board members of the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BLCCJ). In the context of this volunteering, I am also in the committee of the starters, with the objective to help young Belgian and Luxemburgish nationals connect and enrich their experience in Japan. Whether you are willing to connect with the local Belux community or get insights on the MEXT scholarship, I invite you to reach out to me by email.

Living in Japan, it also means vibrating daily throughout the culture of a 2000 year old nation. By receiving the MEXT scholarship, you will experience the various Matsuri (festivals) throughout the years and you may be adventurous enough to experience the onsen culture. From the boiling onsen of Kusatsu to the vibrating metropolis of Tokyo or the refreshing forest surroundings Kyoto, you will for sure find your own Japanese comfort zone.

Finally, I would like to leave the reader on one last thought to reflect on. While you are applying for the MEXT scholarship, differentiate yourself by actively participating in Japanese cultural, educational and economic events organized in Belgium by various organizations including the Japanese Embassy in Brussels. It is a great opportunity to connect with the Japanese community in Belgium and bridge our two countries.