

Discovering the Keys to Social Innovation: A Seoul Field Study

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful for the invaluable opportunity to participate in *Campus Asia 2025 Social Innovation Field Study in Seoul*. I would like to share my experiences and reflections gained throughout the field study.

Before departure, I set my goal for the field study: to gain deeper insight into the key factor driving “social innovation”. After finishing the field study, I could understand the importance of recognizing myself as an active stakeholder in addressing social issues. Moreover, the endeavors of the agency and institution where we visited were very impressive and inspired me to pursue meaningful contributions in the future.

[February 3rd]

The field study started at Korea University, and we took the lecture from the professor together with the students in the college of political science and economy. The lecture focused on the generational and gender gap in voter turnout in South Korea, revealing distinct political ideologies shaped by these factors. This phenomenon is also observable in Japan. When the professor asked us “why should this gap be eliminated?” and “what kinds of disadvantages do we suffer because of this gap?”, I found myself struggling to articulate a clear response. I couldn’t help but admit my shallow awareness of the problem. It underscored the necessity of cultivating the ability to analyze current social trends and anticipate their future impact.



Following the lecture, students from Korea University gave us a campus tour. The buildings look like magnificent castles, with a completely different atmosphere from the busy city center around the university, making me feel as if I was in another universe. Inside the buildings, I noticed an abundance of open study spaces, fostering an environment conducive to learning. Even though our visit coincided with the winter vacation, I came across a lot of students studying in these spaces. Their high passion for learning stimulated me a lot.

That day ended with “Seoul Sky Observatory” at the top of Lotte World Tower. Surprisingly, this tower, which is 555 meters high, was built for not only commercial facilities but also includes offices and residences. It looks like there is a town in the tower. While looking out over the entire city surrounded by Hangang River, it could be seen inventive city design. Despite its narrow land, the city efficiently utilizes skyscrapers to maximize green spaces and maintain safe, well-organized roads. This strategic approach to urban development was truly impressive.

[February 4th]

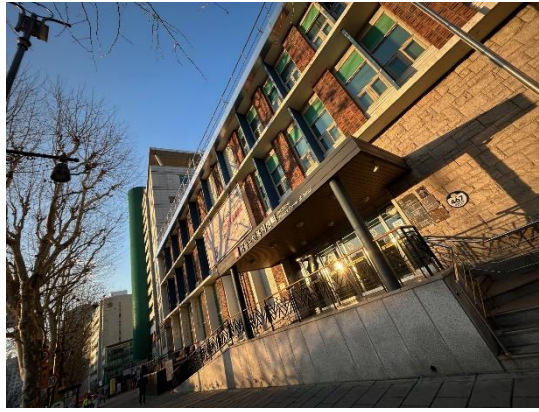
The following day, our first visit was to "Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency (KoSEA)" in Seongnam-si. As a public institution dedicated to advancing and supporting social enterprises, KoSEA aims to foster social integration and improve quality of life through the promotion of a sustainable social economy. Among its many initiatives, I was particularly intrigued by its projects aimed at securing stable employment for individuals with disabilities. KoSEA plays a vital role in connecting disabled people with companies so that they can build good relationship by offering companies marketing and consulting support, ensuring mutually beneficial relationships. My future dream is to support foreign workers working in Japan —many of whom also face vulnerabilities due to labor law violations and human rights abuses by employers. I learned that KoSEA associates with the ILO and local governments, who are the key actors in supporting foreign workers, to establish a solid system to tackle the problem. I was pleased to know that a variety of actors are approaching this issue. The visit to KoSEA broadened my perspective and reinforced my determination to contribute to this field.



Our field study concluded with a visit to the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS), an international organization to promote the development of society, economy and cultural exchange among China, Korea and Japan. TCS staff member explained that among various meetings and events from national and local government level meetings to youth summits and children exchange programs organized by TCS, the interaction between the younger generation is likely to be more active and deeper, and they can easily build good relationships regardless of the differences in nationality. As a member of this younger generation, I aspire to serve as a bridge between the three countries and contribute to fostering constructive international relations.



We stayed at the hotel in Insadong for a few days. Although those days were the coldest days in Seoul, with the temperatures of over minus ten degrees, the city was energetic and vibrant. People rushed to work with the cup of coffee in their hands in the morning, food stalls along with the streets made people attracted in the evening. In Insadong, a popular tourism destination, there are plenty of public facilities, such as educational institutions, welfare centers for the elderly and disabled and churches as well as historical landmarks, providing a comfortable life for its residents.



My finding through the field study is that people's ideas and wisdom arisen from desire to make a better society and to help someone can create "social innovation". Furthermore, I realized that even if what each one of us can do is limited, cooperation between various actors is the key to success! I will continue to seek social innovation in daily life, and I would like to contribute to building a better society.