

Photo Journal

Campus Asia+ Social Innovation Forum in Beijing

Day 1: Friday 4th July

I arrived in Beijing the night before the forum and stayed overnight at a hotel. Although I had been to Hong Kong before, this was my first time visiting Beijing. Since I traveled from Korea—which is not my home country—to yet another country, China, I didn't immediately feel like I had arrived in China. It was only when I saw the large number of meat buns in the convenience store that I started to feel a sense of being in China.



After gathering at the hotel, we headed to Peking University. There, I met students from Waseda University, Korea University, Peking University, and the National University of Singapore. There were many more participants than I had expected, so I felt a little nervous at first. However, I quickly felt at ease because I already knew several people from Korea University.

After the orientation, we went on a campus tour. The campus was much larger than I had imagined, and I was especially surprised to see a pond within the university grounds. Since the weather was extremely hot that day, just walking around the campus made me quite tired.



One thing that surprised me about the streets of Beijing during the daytime was the heavy traffic. In particular, there were a large number of motorbikes. According to a friend from Peking University, people can ride motorbikes as long as they register them, even without a license. I was shocked to hear that, since it's something unthinkable in Japan. However, if you set aside the safety concerns, I thought it was a very convenient and high-tech system.

That evening, a small group of students from Waseda, Korea, and Peking Universities went out for dinner at a restaurant specializing in lamb skewers. We didn't just have lamb—there were many other kinds of meat, and everything was delicious. I was able to enjoy the meal while talking with many people, which helped me deepen my relationships with them.



Day 2: Saturday 5th July

We visited the Beijing Olympic Tower. Its shape was quite different from other towers—it looked like a giant nail, which left a strong impression on me. At the top of the tower, there was an open-air viewing area where we could look down over the city of Beijing. There was also a section with a glass floor, and seeing how high up we were made it a bit scary.



Later, I attended a lecture by Professor Koyama from Waseda University. The class was about diversity and disability, and it changed the way I think about disabilities. Until then, I had thought of disabilities only as something visible, but I learned that even things like stress and seemingly small mental issues can also be considered disabilities.

What I found especially interesting was the idea of identifying things or places that people with disabilities cannot do or access, and then thinking of ways to address those barriers. It was a challenging concept, but it made me think deeply and sparked my interest in the topic.

For dinner, we had a buffet at a restaurant on the Peking University campus. There was a wide variety of dishes, and they were all delicious.

After dinner, we went to Shichahai with many other students. There were many street stalls and lots of traditional Chinese foods. Along the pond, there were lively bars with live music, where people were singing and dancing on stage. The atmosphere was very energetic.



Day 3: Sunday 6th July

We went to the Syokoro (Drum and Bell Towers), where there were two large towers—one for drums and the other for a bell. Both towers were located high up, so we had to climb many stairs. The steps were so steep that they actually made us tired. In the Drum Tower, there were many drums, and watching people play them was incredibly powerful and impressive.



During the group work session, we discussed ideas for a presentation on **Inclusive Development in Asia**, even though we didn't have much time. We focused on addressing the issue of mental health challenges among students, a problem close to our own lives. As we brainstormed ideas, I realized that solving real social problems often requires a certain amount of funding, making it difficult to address them with only the efforts of students. However, at the same time, I also realized that we can take steps toward solving such problems, even as students.



Later, I went to try Beijing duck because the Japanese students were the only ones who hadn't had it yet. I went with a few Japanese friends, but the restaurant only had Nanjing duck, so we ordered that instead— and it turned out to be really good.



Conclusion

This Beijing Forum not only gave me an opportunity to reflect more deeply on social issues in Asia, but also allowed me to meet students from many different universities. Through sightseeing and shared meals, we were able to bond and build friendships. Even though we live in different countries, I hope to stay connected with them and continue to learn from one another across borders.

