

## Campus Asia Social Innovation Forum at Peking University

I am grateful for the meaningful opportunity to participate in the Social Innovation Forum 2025 as a Campus Asia student. Here, I would like to reflect on this memorable experience.

### Day 0

Waseda students currently studying in Tokyo gathered at Haneda Airport and had a brief introduction to the SIF. Prof. Koyama gave us an assignment to work on during the forum: to develop a growth mentality rather than a fixed mentality. I boarded the plane without a concrete vision of how I would achieve it.

### Day 1

I successfully got up in time to have my first Chinese breakfast. Arriving at Peking University, we received a warm welcome through Prof. Dong's introductory session. After that, we took group photos and went on a campus tour. The campus was incredibly large and looked like a national park. The whole campus was filled with a warm atmosphere, with celebrating students who had just graduated from the university. I took many photos of the historic buildings and statues. We had lunch and took a rest at the Faculty House after finishing our long journey around the campus. In the afternoon, Prof. He and Prof. Tan delivered insightful lectures on social innovation. I was interested in the object in front of the School of International Studies building that says '爱国关天下,' so Prof. He's lecture on '天下' gave



me a perfect introduction to the concept. Also, Prof. Tan's lecture on applying behavioral economics to social innovation provided me with a new perspective on how to relate my major to social innovation. The last lecture on the city of Beijing by Dr. Xia made us look forward to the field trips over the following two days.

## Day 2

Despite the weather forecast, it was sunny and perfect for a field trip. We all visited the Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall and the Olympic Tower in the morning. We learned about the history of how the city of Beijing developed. And the view of Beijing from the 246-meter tower was amazing. Returning from the field trip, we had a quick lunch break and an early tea break before the lectures by Prof. Koyama and Prof. Kim. Prof. Koyama encouraged us to think about barriers around our places and the ways to



overcome them with zero budget. The group work was challenging. Prof. Kim taught us

models explaining how wars and bargains occur between two nations, in response to the intriguing question: Why do states fight when war is costly? Inspired by the four lectures given by the professors from the four universities, we began working on our group project. We first identified a specific challenge faced by our society and discussed how it could be solved. Finally, we had dinner together on campus and ended the second day.



## Day 3

Our final day started with a field trip to the Beijing Central Axis. We walked along the way, just as the Emperor did in ancient times. We explored the majestic site and felt the depth of China's long history. We went back to the hotel to have lunch and recover from the long walk under the intense sunlight. After that, we moved to the PKU campus to have our final



group session to complete the presentation. This was the hardest part for me, but I managed to get through it. Six groups, in turn, gave presentations on building an inclusive society from their own perspectives. Although I am not good at making presentations in front of an audience and have usually avoided such situations in classes at my home university, I didn't give up this time, so I think I deserve a little bit of praise. And we all should be proud of ourselves for having completed the three days of intensive learning!

## End Note

This was my first visit to China. At Waseda, I am taking a course on an overview of China, taught by a professor from Taiwan. I kept the professor's words in mind during this trip: 'Most Japanese people do not see China as it is when they visit. Instead, they see a mental image of China that exists in their own minds.' Throughout my days in Beijing, I tried to find out how to see China as it is. However, every impression I got seemed somehow different from the real essence of China. I concluded that a three-day stay in Beijing is too short to understand the country, and any length of stay would not be enough to gain a full understanding of it. I came to hope that someday I can live in China for more than a year and understand even a small fragment of the country. Additionally, I realized that the professor's words also apply to interacting with each person. That is, we often fail to see an individual as they are, we end up seeing a mental image we've created based on their appearance, nationality, gender, etc. Holding on to those images only leads to a fixed mentality and confines the people we meet to labeled boxes. And in fact, it confines ourselves to cramped boxes as well. So, in aiming to develop a growth mentality, my tentative conclusion is that we must first admit we can never fully understand others. An 'understanding' might be just a misunderstanding or a misconception shaped by our own values and mental images, which have nothing to do with the individual. And what we need, at the very least, to build an inclusive society is to stop excluding people we don't understand.

