

Photo Journal: Social Innovation Forum @ Peking University (July 3–7, 2025)

Introduction: About the Forum



The *Summer Forum on Inclusive Development in Asia, Social Innovation, and Intercultural Dialogue* is a collaborative program that brings together outstanding university students from China, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN countries. Rooted in the values of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the forum emphasizes **inclusive development**—ensuring that no one is left behind in the process of social and economic growth.

Held at Peking University, the forum provides a dynamic platform for young scholars to explore how **social innovation** and **intercultural dialogue** can address pressing challenges in Asia, such as demographic change, digital inclusion, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Through keynote lectures, field visits, panel discussions, and group projects, the program fosters intercultural understanding and collaborative problem-solving. It aims to cultivate a new generation of leaders committed to building a more equitable, sustainable, and human-centered future for the region. While the forum was grounded in these goals, for me personally, it became an opportunity to build on what I had previously learned and take a bold step forward.

Day 1 – July 3 | Departure & Arrival in Beijing

Although it was the day of my flight, I attended a class until just before departure and then rushed to the airport. After checking in, I met up with other participants from Japan—there were nine of us in total, and except for one person, it was our first time meeting each other. Some were from different faculties, people I normally wouldn't have a chance to encounter.



Thanks to Professor Koyama's thoughtful guidance on how to approach the forum and the ice-breaking activities that followed, I felt a mental barrier lift, making it easier to connect with others. With that warm and welcoming atmosphere, we left Tokyo behind. During the flight, I had a mix of emotions, but above all, I was thrilled to visit China for the very first time. Upon arrival, we gathered together and headed to the hotel by bus, where we were joined by two more participants currently studying abroad at Korea University. The heat and humidity upon exiting the airport were surprising—I had expected it to be cooler than Tokyo, but it was quite the opposite.

After checking in at the hotel, a few of us went out to explore the area nearby. We visited a local convenience store and bought four or five food items, all for about 360 yen in total. I was amazed by how affordable things were.



Day 2 – July 4 | Campus Tour & Lectures



The day began with a campus tour of Peking University. The campus was extraordinarily large—so big it hardly felt like a campus at all. There were ponds, towers, and green spaces throughout.

After the tour, we attended the first set of lectures. A professor from Peking University opened the academic portion of the forum, followed by a fascinating lecture titled "*Behavioral Economics for Social Innovation*" by a professor from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

In the evening, we split into groups to go out for dinner and decided on a hotpot. Since no one in our group was fluent in Chinese, ordering took some effort, but the kindness of the restaurant staff left a deep impression—they helped us not only with ordering but also with payment. Compared to the strict atmosphere at immigration, their warm hospitality was striking. Once again, I was surprised by how inexpensive everything was compared to Japan. We returned to the hotel early to rest up for the next day.



Day 3 – July 5 | Urban Heritage & Group Preparation

The morning began with a tour again. We visited a museum that showcased Beijing's urban planning, centered on the north-south central axis, and learned about its historical significance. Afterward, we went to the Olympic Tower located on the northern end of the axis. The view

from the observation deck was stunning. Though rain had been forecasted, the sky was completely clear.

In the afternoon, we had lectures from Professor Koyama of Waseda University and Professor



Kim from Korea University. Following that, we began preliminary group work for our final presentations. In the evening, we went sightseeing and explored a local night market. The slightly dimmer streetlights compared to Japan added to the unique atmosphere of the night market, enhancing the overall experience.

Day 4 – July 6 | Cultural Exploration & Group Presentation

In the morning, we visited the Forbidden City. Security was tight, and once again, the sheer scale of the architecture was overwhelming. The ornate decorations were breathtakingly grand.



The afternoon was dedicated to our group presentations. Despite limited preparation time, we worked up to the last moment. Our group, Group A, presented first. Our theme, based on Professor Koyama's suggestion, focused on inclusive education.

Reflecting on the process, I realized how much I appreciated my team members' initiative in leading discussions. Their proactive engagement allowed me to focus on my specific role. Looking back, it was remarkable that individuals from different countries and linguistic backgrounds were able to work together so effectively. This, I believe, truly embodied the forum's mission of inclusive development and intercultural dialogue.

I'd also like to highlight the role of language in this experience. Despite the diversity of the participants, I rarely felt a language barrier. This was thanks to everyone's multilingual abilities and openness—conversations and discussions took place not only in English, but also in

Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. This multilingual communication, which we often take for granted during the forum, is actually a rare and meaningful form of intercultural exchange that doesn't often happen in daily life, whether in Japan or during regular tourism in China.

Personally, I feel that my participation in this forum was a direct reflection of the year I spent studying abroad at Korea University in 2024. A year ago, I could barely speak English. But now, whether it was preparing presentations or speaking up in formal settings, I was able to express myself. That progress is something I'm proud of, and I'm also grateful for the motivation and inspiration I gained from my peers throughout the forum.



Day 5 – July 7 | Returning Home

On the final day, I returned to Japan with a mix of exhaustion and a strong sense of fulfillment. It felt like I was being pulled

