

# ISUS NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF URBAN SCIENCES – UNIVERSITY OF SEOUL



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## 102<sup>nd</sup> ISUS Urban Infra Forum: Global AI Governance

Our '102nd Urban Infra Forum', held on 27 March 2026, featured a lecture by Prof. Wonki Min, former Vice Minister of the Korean Ministry of Science and ICT and former President of the State University of New York Korea. Attended by 127 participants and chaired by Prof. Hyeon Park, the forum highlighted how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant concept from science fiction, but an integral part of everyday systems. Prof. Min emphasized that AI is rapidly evolving from a mere tool into an "agent" capable of making autonomous decisions. This shift is significant: AI is no longer simply following instructions, but is beginning to act, decide, and learn in ways that increasingly resemble human cognition.

One of the most striking points he raised was the unprecedented speed of AI development. Often referred to as "Hyper Moore's Law," this concept suggests that AI is advancing far more rapidly than traditional technologies have in the past.

In fact, AI is already reaching human-level performance in several areas. It can recognize images, read complex text, and even solve high-level math problems at or above human benchmarks. What once took years of human training can now be done in seconds by machines. Because of this rapid progress, some predictions suggest that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) AI with human-level intelligence could appear by 2029. Even more striking, some forecasts suggest a "Singularity" moment by 2045, when machines may become far more intelligent than humans.

Beyond predictions, the scale of AI growth is already visible today. By 2040, experts estimate there could be around 10 billion humanoid robots in the world. This means robots could become part of daily life in homes, workplaces, and public spaces. At the same time, AI has also become one of the most powerful forces in the global economy. Among the world's top 10 companies, nine are now connected to AI development or infrastructure.

Companies like Nvidia, valued at around \$4.3 trillion, and Apple, at around \$3.7 trillion, show how central AI has become to global markets.

Even in more sensitive areas, AI is already being used. In military operations, AI systems have been reported to help identify thousands of targets in a single day, showing how quickly decision-making power is shifting toward machines. However, this rapid growth also brings serious challenges that cannot be ignored.

One major concern is job displacement, as AI begins to replace tasks once done by humans. Another issue is the rise of deepfakes and privacy risks, where it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish real from artificial content.

There is also a growing global debate about Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), where AI could be used in military weapons without human control. The United Nations is currently pushing for international rules, with discussions aiming toward regulation by 2026. Different regions are taking different approaches to AI development.

The United States is focusing on innovation first, aiming to lead the global AI race. The European Union is prioritizing regulation, with the EU AI Act designed to protect human rights and safety. Meanwhile, China is focusing on state-led development, with the goal of becoming the global AI leader by 2030. These different strategies show that AI is not just a technological issue it is also a matter of global competition and governance.

Despite different approaches, countries are also trying to find common ground. One example is the Seoul Declaration, where 27 nations agreed to pause the deployment of highly risky AI models if necessary. However, cooperation remains difficult. AI is closely linked to national security, economic growth, and global influence. This makes it hard for countries to fully agree on shared rules.



AI is what experts call a “dual-use” technology. This means it can bring both great benefits and serious risks at the same time. On one hand, AI may help solve major global problems, from healthcare to climate science, and even contribute to discoveries worthy of Nobel Prizes. On the other hand, if it is not managed carefully, it could also reshape society in unpredictable and potentially dangerous ways. The future of AI is not only about technology. It is about how humans choose to guide it.

Prof. Min has held numerous senior positions across government, academia, and international organizations, including the OECD, the World Bank, and the ITU (International Telecommunication Union). He served as Chair of the 2014 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference and the ITU Council, and also chaired the OECD AI Expert Group and the Committee on Digital Economy Policy, which developed the OECD AI Principles.



During his tenure as Vice Minister of the Ministry of Science and ICT, he led the 5G+ Strategy and the National Strategy for AI. He later served as Ambassador for Science, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Korea.

He currently serves as an Invited Professor at the KAIST Kim Jaechul Graduate School of AI, Chair of the Board of the Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), Chair of the Advisory Council for the Korea 6G Forum, and Chair of the Advisory Council for the National AI Research Lab. (N.J.Nash)



# Global Urban Leaders Program Spring 2026

This spring 2026, the Global Urban Leadership Program (GULP) welcomed a new group of participants, marking the beginning of an engaging journey in urban learning and cross-cultural exchange. The program combines lectures and site visits, introducing participants to key topics such as smart city development, infrastructure systems, and sustainable urban planning in South Korea. The program officially commenced with an opening ceremony that warmly welcomed a new group of participants to the program. The session introduced the objectives and structure of GULP, highlighting its focus on bridging academic knowledge with real-world urban practices. Participants were having the opportunity to meet one another and begin building connections in an international learning environment.



As part of the program, participants joined a field trip to Busan from April 3 until 5, 2026, where they gained firsthand insight into coastal urban development and city infrastructure. The itinerary included technical visits to Gwangandaegyo Exhibition Hall and the Busan International Finance Center, alongside cultural experiences at Huinnyeoul Culture Village and Gukje Market. This combination of academic exploration and cultural immersion created a meaningful and memorable experience for all participants.



Gilang Pramadya, Civil Infrastructure Department Head at PT MRT Jakarta (Persero) from Indonesia, shared that the GULP programme provided public sector officials with valuable insight into Seoul's success story in policy making and urban management. He noted that the four-month program combined lectures with hands-on site visits, allowing participants to deepen their understanding and gain practical knowledge applicable to their respective cities. He also reflected that the recent trip to Busan offered a new perspective, demonstrating how the development of another major city can contribute to and complement the growth of Seoul. (R.R)



## UNESCO i-WSSM Capacity Building on Urban Water Management Program

The UNESCO i-WSSM Urban Water Management Program (UWMP) is a flagship initiative under the UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme. It is hosted at the International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management in South Korea and focuses on promoting sustainable, integrated urban water management. The program develops practical tools, guidelines, and frameworks to help cities manage the full urban water cycle more effectively. It also supports global efforts toward Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), with an emphasis on preventing urban “water bankruptcy.”

Over three days, participants engaged in an intensive learning experience on integrated Urban Water Management (UWM). The sessions combined classroom learning with field visits, offering both theoretical understanding and real-world exposure. Participants explored South Korea’s urban water systems and also learned from international best practices in countries such as Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These comparisons helped broaden perspectives on different policy and technology approaches.

Participants came from different backgrounds, including professionals with prior experience in UWM and others with limited exposure. This diversity created an open environment for discussion and knowledge sharing. Through a question and answer session together with dialogue, participants exchanged real-world challenges and practical solutions from their home countries. This interaction strengthened learning and encouraged cross-country understanding.

Invited experts shared insights on current challenges in urban water management and highlighted the need to rethink traditional approaches. They introduced a range of alternative solutions, including Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure (GI). A key highlight was South Korea's advanced integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) in water management systems, showing how digital technologies can improve efficiency and sustainability.



The program also gathered participant feedback to support the development of standardized and scalable training materials for future use. In addition, participants shared water-related challenges from their own countries. These discussions created opportunities for future benchmarking and collaboration, particularly in relation to South Korea's integrated approach.

Overall, feedback from participants in the reflection session was very positive. As a participant, I also found that the combination of theory and hands-on experience, along with the opportunity to engage with international experts and peers, was particularly valuable. The program was especially appreciated by participants from developing countries, who highlighted the importance of practical exposure to advanced urban water management systems. (N.J.Nash)





## Cultural Exchange in Motion

### Experiencing Korean Traditions Beyond Borders

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to walk like a princess in a royal palace? Or ever imagine yourself stepping into a real-life K-drama scene? Students brought that dream to life by wearing hanbok and exploring Korea's historic palaces. MGLEP Cohort 12 and MUAP Cohort 18 visited Gyeongbokgung Palace, while MUDSIP Cohort 8 explored Changdeokgung Palace, each immersing themselves in the rich history and architectural beauty of Korea's royal heritage. Walking through palace grounds dressed in traditional attire allowed students to connect more deeply with the cultural significance of these landmarks, transforming the visits into more than just sightseeing.



Beyond taking photos, the hanbok experience became a meaningful way to understand Korean identity, tradition, and history. As students explored courtyards, gates, and gardens, they gained a deeper appreciation of how culture is preserved and expressed through architecture, clothing, and daily life in the past. These shared moments not only enriched their cultural knowledge but also created memorable experiences that strengthened their connection to Korea and to one another. (R.R)



*"Wearing a hanbok at Gyeongbokgung Palace was a deeply moving experience that made me feel as if I had stepped back in time and truly lived a piece of Korean history. Surrounded by the beauty of the palace and sharing the moment with friends, I felt an overwhelming sense of connection, joy, and cultural appreciation. I sincerely hope future field trips can offer experiences that are meaningful, where learning goes beyond the classroom and becomes something we can truly feel and remember." - Ovi Nurbalqis (MUAP 18)*



*"I have always enjoyed watching Korean historical dramas, and I have long been interested in trying on a hanbok. After coming to Korea for my master's studies, I finally had the chance to experience it, and I have tried it twice so far, with plans to do it again. It was an incredibly exciting and unforgettable experience. I felt like a queen wearing the hanbok, and every detail fascinated me, from the unique hairstyle to the elegant design; the chima (hanbok skirt) especially gave me a unique sense of excitement. Its beauty and grace truly amazed me, and it has become one of my most memorable experiences in Korea. I even felt a little envious of Koreans." - Shakhzoda Abdurakhmanova (MUDSIP 8).*



*"The hanbok experience was wonderful and memorable. Actually, I think wearing hanbok is a really good way for international students to have a better understanding of traditional Korean culture, and it made me feel closer to Korean history. Besides, it also was a fun and meaningful campus activity to make us students closer to each other." - Yujie Yuan (MGLEP 12)*



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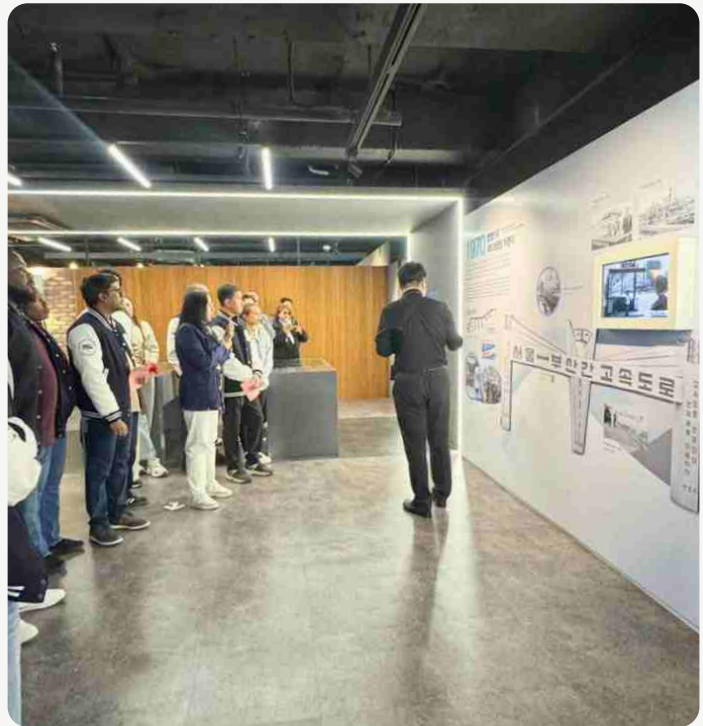
## Field Trip Spotlight: Korea's Territorial Planning and Seoul's Urban History



ISUS graduate students, through their subject of the Korean Urban Development Studies once again experienced Korean culture through a field trip to two destinations: the Korea Territorial Development Museum and the Seoul Museum of History. The half-day field trip was held on 25 March 2026. These two different museums provide different lessons on how Korea has developed into what it is today. At the same time, they offer a broader perspective for international graduate students who come from different backgrounds.

While visiting the Korea Territorial Development Museum, an ISUS graduate student was introduced to how Korea has historically developed and improved its land use, cities, transportation, and infrastructure over time. This development is closely related to systematic urban planning and national development policies. The museum shows Korea's transformation from the Korean War period, when cities were heavily damaged, to the rapid expansion of modern cities. It also explains how rural areas were transformed into industrial zones and later into smart cities that support economic growth and improve quality of life. Korea's transportation system is also widely recognized, with its integrated network of roads, railways, airports, and high-speed trains. This visit clearly presents Korea's urban development timeline, showing the country before and after rapid urbanization. It also helps students connect theory with real national development cases, which is valuable for future urban planning professionals.

While visiting the Seoul Museum of History, an ISUS graduate student learned about the history of Seoul from its origins in the Joseon Dynasty to its development into a modern megacity. This visit became more insightful with explanations from the professor about how Seoul, once called Hanyang as the capital of Joseon, has changed over time. The museum presents daily life in historical Seoul, the impact of the Japanese colonial period, post-war reconstruction, and the process of modernization that led to today's global city identity.



This visit also helps graduate students understand how history can shape and influence modern urban identity. Seoul's development reflects changes in culture, politics, society, and the physical city structure over time. It shows how historical events continue to influence the way the city is planned and experienced today.

These two museums complement each other well. Together, they connect historical and cultural evolution with modern urban development. They show how Korea built its modern cities through policy, planning, and systematic development, creating a more efficient and prosperous society. (N.J.Nash).

*"The museum visit offered a vivid look at Korea's transformation through side-by-side comparisons of the 1960s and today, making its rapid development easy to grasp and appreciate. It also highlighted how modernization has been balanced with cultural continuity, seen in planning decisions and the evolution of Korean homes from traditional designs to modern apartments shaped by urbanization and technology. A key takeaway was that sustainable development must reflect cultural identity and be guided by strong documentation and institutional memory. As a Rwandan student, I found parallels with Africa's urban challenges and was inspired by how thoughtful policy can shape inclusive, resilient cities, making the visit a true highlight of the semester." - Gilbert Sindikubwabo (MUDSIP 8)*

# The Colors of Eid



## Different Traditions, One Shared Spirit



“Eid Mubarak” is an Arabic greeting meaning Blessed Eid or Happy Eid. It marks the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting, patience, and self-reflection. After a month of controlling desires and focusing on gratitude, Eid arrives quietly but fills hearts with relief and joy.

For many Muslims, Eid is not just a celebration. It is a return to warmth.

It is waking up to a different kind of morning, one filled with prayer, peace, and connection. Families gather, friends meet again, and homes are filled with food, laughter, and forgiveness. People wear their best traditional clothes, not to show difference, but to share identity. Every culture adds its own color to the same moment of gratitude.

This year, Eid in South Korea falls on Saturday, 21 March 2026. For many ISUS students, the day will pass in a simple way, shaped by distance from home and the normal flow of the semester. But even in this ordinary setting, there is still meaning in coming together. A few students may gather after prayer, perhaps at the Itaewon Mosque or another nearby mosque depending on their community. There is no need for anything grand. Sometimes, even a small meeting is enough.



Sharing food brought from different countries, speaking in mixed languages, and sitting together after prayer creates a quiet comfort. It does not replace home, but it softens the distance.

There is something special in these simple gatherings. Someone brings a familiar dish from their country. Someone else shared a story about Eid mornings back home. Laughter comes easily, even when languages mix and pause. People take photos, not for perfection, but to remember the moment. Traditional clothes, shared meals, and small conversations become memories that stay longer than expected.

In these moments, differences feel less distant. Instead, they become part of the same table, the same laughter, the same shared day. Eid, even far from home, is not about the size of the celebration. It is about presence. It is about showing up, sharing what you have, and recognizing each other as

part of the same human story. There may be no grand celebration this year for many students. But there is still something quietly meaningful being together, even briefly, and letting that be enough. Because sometimes, Eid is not about where you are. It is about who you share it with, even in the simplest way. (N.J.Nash)

*"This year's Idul Fitri feels different in Korea, far from family and the familiar atmosphere of home, yet still meaningful in its simplicity through Eid prayers with the community, sharing meals with Muslim friends from various countries in the dorm, and supporting one another abroad. Though the usual festivity of Indonesia is absent, these moments foster solidarity and gratitude, reminding us that Idul Fitri is about strengthening relationships, forgiving, and appreciating the present. Even with distance, Indonesian students in Korea celebrate warmly, discovering that "home" can be found in friendship and togetherness wherever we are."* - Reksy Indra Rakasiwie (MUD 9)





## Let Your Heart Bloom Like Cherry Blossom

*"Have you ever stood beneath falling cherry blossoms,  
knowing the moment would not last?"*

As spring arrived, cherry blossoms began to bloom across Seoul, marking one of the most anticipated seasons for students. This year, however, the blossoms arrived earlier than expected and faded quickly, making their beauty feel even more fleeting and precious. Many students made the most of the short season by visiting popular spots such as Yeouido Hangang Park, Seokchon Lake, and Namsan Park to admire the flowers and capture memorable photos. Even around the University of Seoul campus, rows of cherry blossom trees created peaceful corners where students could pause and take in the view.

In Korea, cherry blossoms are more than just a seasonal attraction, they symbolize the beauty and fragility of life, reminding people to appreciate moments while they last. Their brief bloom, often lasting only a week or two, draws people outdoors to gather with friends, reflect, and celebrate the arrival of spring. For many students, this season came at a time when academic responsibilities began to intensify, with thesis work starting and assignments piling up. Yet, these short moments under the blossoms offered a gentle pause, a chance to step away from busy schedules, recharge, and find balance. In between deadlines and research, the fleeting beauty of spring became a quiet reminder to slow down, reflect, and cherish both the journey of study and the memories created along the way. (R.R)



# Cherry Blossom Season



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## Alum of The Month: Andhika Ajie (MUAP 6)

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**Andhika Ajie (MUAP 6)** is Head of the Center for Research and Innovation at BAPPEDA Jakarta, leading efforts to strengthen evidence-based urban policy and planning. Building on his ISUS experience, he continues to promote data-driven governance and international collaboration in addressing urban challenges.

**Could you briefly introduce your current role at BAPPEDA Jakarta and what you are mainly working on these days?**

I currently serve as the Head of the Center for Research and Innovation at BAPPEDA Jakarta. In many ways, my role sits at the intersection between knowledge, policy, and action. My responsibility is not only to produce or manage research, but to ensure that knowledge actually informs decision-making and leads to tangible improvements in how Jakarta plans and develops itself.

These days, much of my focus is on strengthening what I would call the “knowledge infrastructure” of the government. One of the key initiatives I am leading is the development of a research repository system, a platform designed to bring together studies, policy analyses, and academic research that are often scattered across institutions. The problem we face is not the lack of research, but the fragmentation of it. Valuable insights exist, but they are not always accessible or utilized effectively.

Through this initiative, we aim to create a system where policymakers can easily access credible evidence when designing programs or evaluating policies. At the same time, we are working to build stronger partnerships with universities, think tanks, and innovation communities. I see this as a long-term effort to transform Jakarta into a city where policy is consistently informed by evidence, and where innovation is not incidental, but institutionalized.



**Looking back, how has your experience at ISUS influenced your career over the past decade and your approach to urban policy and planning?**

Looking back, my time at ISUS was a turning point, not just academically, but intellectually and professionally. It reshaped how I see cities and how I approach my work.

Before ISUS, my understanding of urban planning was largely grounded in technical and administrative perspectives. However, the experience, especially exposure to cities like Seoul, opened my eyes to how cities can function as dynamic systems where governance, technology, culture, and citizen engagement interact in very sophisticated ways.

One of the most important lessons I took away was the importance of systems thinking. Cities are not just collections of sectors, transportation, housing, environment, but interconnected ecosystems. A decision in one area inevitably affects others. This perspective has stayed with me and continues to shape how I design and evaluate policies in Jakarta.

Another lasting influence is the emphasis on data and evidence in governance. In Seoul, data is not just collected, it is actively used to guide decisions, improve services, and anticipate future challenges. This has inspired my efforts to promote evidence-based planning within Jakarta's government institutions.

Finally, ISUS instilled in me a strong appreciation for institutional innovation. Good ideas alone are not enough; what matters is whether institutions are capable of adopting, adapting, and scaling those ideas. Over the past decade, I have tried to contribute, within my capacity, to building such adaptive institutions in Jakarta.

**Based on your experience working with Seoul and Jakarta, how do you see future cooperation between Korea and Indonesia, especially at the city level?**

I believe the potential for cooperation between Korean and Indonesian cities is both significant and still largely untapped. What makes this partnership particularly valuable is the complementarity between the two contexts.

Cities like Seoul have developed strong capabilities in areas such as digital governance, smart city infrastructure, and integrated urban systems. On the other hand, cities like Jakarta offer a different kind of learning environment, one that involves managing rapid urbanization, socio-economic diversity, and complex governance dynamics.



Looking ahead, I see several areas where cooperation can be deepened:

- **Digital and Smart City Development:** Jakarta is moving toward more integrated digital governance, and there is much to learn from Seoul's experience in building citizen-centered digital services.
- **Urban Mobility and TOD:** With Jakarta's ongoing efforts to improve public transportation, knowledge exchange on transit-oriented development can be highly beneficial.
- **Climate Resilience:** Both cities face environmental challenges, albeit in different forms. Collaboration on flood management, coastal resilience, and sustainable urban systems would be highly relevant.
- **Innovation Ecosystems:** Strengthening partnerships between research institutions, startups, and public sector innovation units can create shared value.

However, I think the next step in this cooperation should go beyond short-term projects. What we need are long-term institutional partnerships, where knowledge exchange becomes continuous, and both sides learn from each other in a more structured way.

**It was great to have you join the MUAP Alumni Night in 2024. How was your experience, and is there any message you would like to share with the ISUS community, including current students and fellow alumni?**

The MUAP Alumni Night 2024 was a meaningful experience, not just a reunion, but a moment to reflect. Meeting fellow alumni from diverse countries, all addressing similar urban challenges, reaffirmed the value of the ISUS network. What stood out most was the strong sense of continuity. Despite the years, we remain connected by a shared understanding of cities and a collective commitment to improving them.

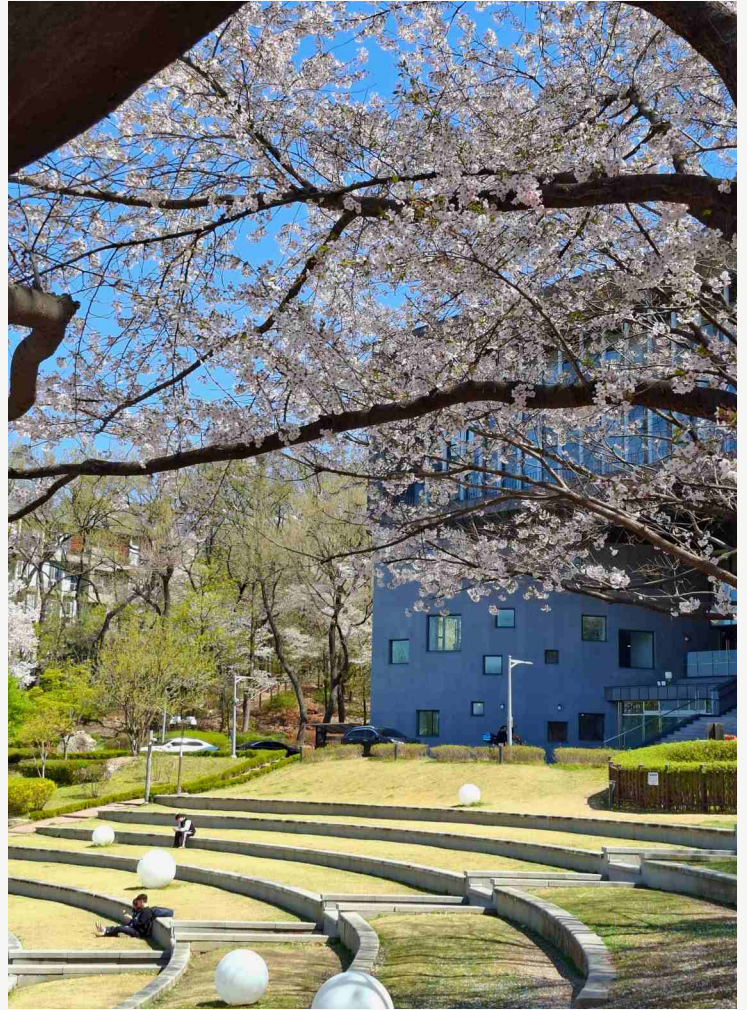
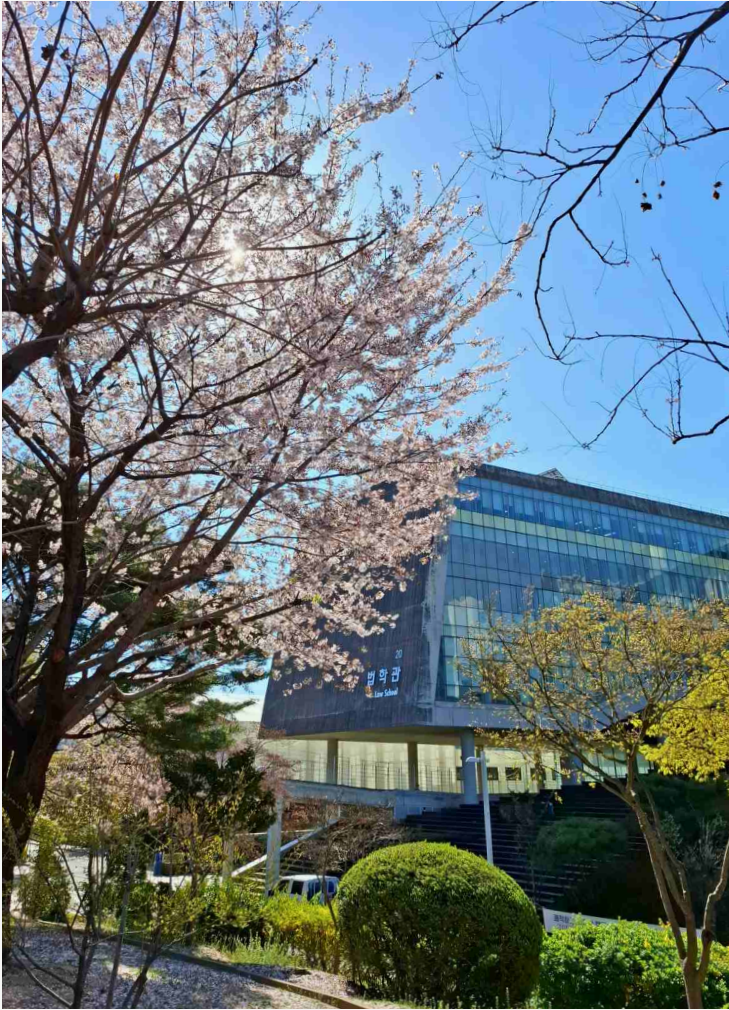
To the ISUS community, especially current students and younger alumni, I would say: stay grounded in real-world challenges, embrace cross-cultural collaboration, and never stop learning. Cities evolve rapidly, and so must we.



ISUS has been more than an academic experience, it is my second home and an important part of my journey in understanding cities and my role within them. I am grateful to be part of this community and hope we continue to strengthen this network as practitioners shaping better urban futures.

As cities face increasingly complex challenges, from climate risks to social inequality, the need for collaborative and evidence-based approaches becomes more critical. In this spirit, we have recently established the Urban Knowledge Hub at BAPPEDA Jakarta. Integrated with a research library, this hub serves as a collaborative space where research, policy, and innovation converge, and as a platform for dialogue among policymakers, researchers, and communities. It also stands as an open invitation for global partners, including the ISUS community, to engage with Jakarta in a more meaningful and sustained way.





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