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ISUS UOS NEWSLETTER

International School of Urban Sciences
University of Seoul

01 MUDSIP: Field Trip to Busan

02 MUAP-17: Winter Break Learning Sessions

03 MUD-8: Field trip to Samcheong-dong

04 93rd ISUS Urban Infra Forum

05 Alum of The Month | Peter GITAU (MUAP 10)

06 ISUS Students' Holiday Celebration

01. **MUDSIP:** Field Trip to Busan

From 27th to 29th December 2024, the MUDSIP 7 embarked on a dynamic field trip to Busan, South Korea. This visit aimed to deepen their understanding of the city's historical evolution, urban redevelopment initiatives and innovative practices that define its contemporary landscape. As one of South Korea's most dynamic cities, Busan serves as an intriguing case study for students pursuing urban development and sustainability.

The itinerary included visits to key projects that highlight Busan's commitment to innovation and revitalization, particularly the City Center's Creative Industry Project. This redevelopment highlighted how Busan uses art, technology, and community engagement, including the film and media sectors, to drive urban growth. The insights gained offered valuable lessons on how creativity can drive urban transformation.

Additionally, the group studied the North Port's mixed-use redevelopment project, an ambitious initiative which combines commercial spaces, recreational zones, and innovation hubs. This development demonstrates the city's strategic approach toward balancing economic progress with sustainable practices, turning former industrial areas into vibrant, multi-functional districts.

Another highlight of the trip was an exploration of Busan's advanced transport system, which features the pioneering use of wheeled railway lines. The innovative technology, where trains operate on rubber wheels similar to buses, represents a forward-thinking approach to urban mobility. It enhances efficiency, reduces noise, and provides a sustainable solution for managing the city's growing transportation needs.

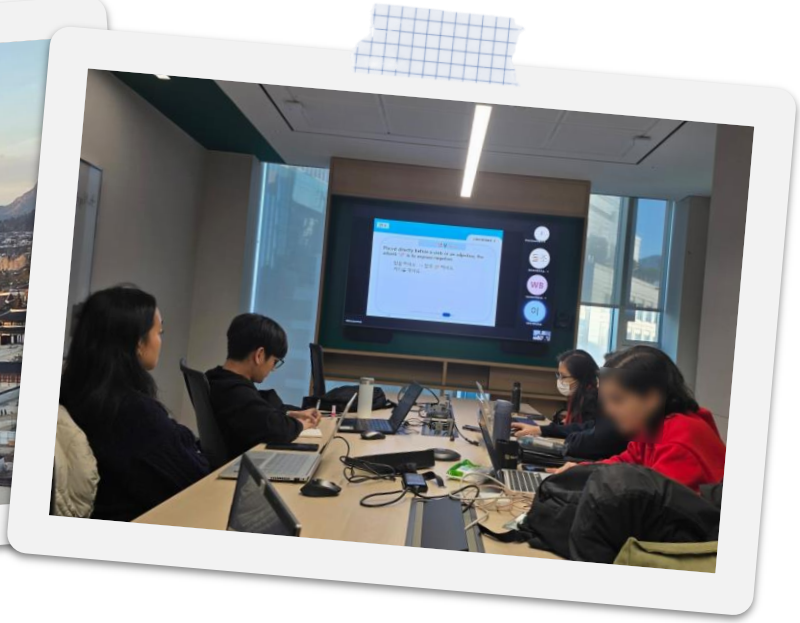
In essence, the field trip to Busan offered hands-on learning about the city's redevelopment strategies and infrastructure innovations, highlighting its balance of modernization and sustainability. Participants gained valuable insights into urban planning, green growth, and creative industries' role in development. (J.T.)

02. **MUAP-17:** Winter Break Learning Sessions

As the winter break kicked off, the MUAP-17 students embraced an exciting opportunity to make their holiday both productive and enriching. From December 30 to January 10, a dynamic series of online and offline lectures were offered, covering Basic Korean, English, and Microsoft Office. Designed to equip students with essential skills, these sessions aimed to elevate both their academic performance and professional skills.

The Microsoft Office class

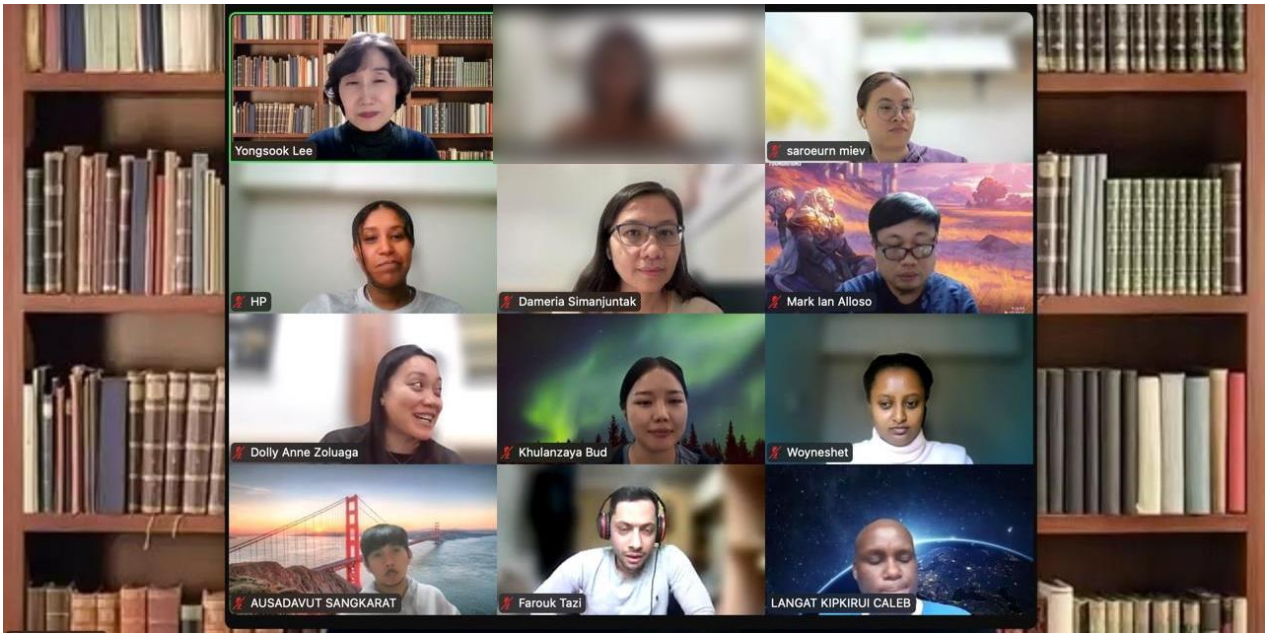
Diving beyond basic functions to explore efficient AI tools and advanced software functions, MS office class was a standout. A highlight of this experience was the students' second visit to the Microsoft Office in Korea since their initial visit in September, which offered an exclusive chance to experience the vibrant office environment.



Academic Writing

The MUAP-17 students also benefited from **one-on-one tutoring** with Professor Keith Woogerd. By reviewing their academic papers, students received tailored feedback that revealed subtle writing mistakes often overlooked. This guidance refined their writing skills and boosted their confidence in academic writing.

Basic Korean course expanded students' language skills through practical expressions and conversational phrases, which are particularly beneficial for those preparing to intern with Korean organizations, deepening both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding.



By combining language development, technological expertise and academic refinement, the MUAP-17 Winter Break Learning Sessions ensured students return from the break more prepared for the upcoming new semester of 2025! (K.B.)

03. **MUD-8:** Cultural and Culinary Delights in Samcheong-dong

On December 30, MUD-8 students embarked on a field trip to the Samcheong-dong area in Seoul, which is known for its blend of traditional Korean architecture and modern art.

The students began their exploration with a dining experience at a Michelin-starred vegan restaurant, where traditional Korean cuisine was artfully reinterpreted through modern, plant-based ingredients. This culturally enriching meal offered a fresh perspective on Korea's rich culinary heritage.

Following their meal, the MUD-8 students visited the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, which showcased predominantly artwork by women from countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Many pieces highlighted the struggles women face in society, offering powerful insights into gender and cultural issues. The thought-provoking exhibitions sparked dialogue on contemporary challenges, enriching the students' understanding of how art both reflects and shapes society.

Overall, the trip provided a unique blend of fine cuisine and cultural inspiration and offered students a deeper appreciation for Korea's rich culture and modern creativity. (K.B.)

04. 93rd ISUS Urban Infra Forum:
A Focus on Low-Carbon and Resilient Growth

On December 11, 2024, the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS) concluded its monthly series of Urban Infra Forum with an engaging session led by Dr. Kyung Nam Shin, Assistant Director-General and Head of the Investment and Policy Solutions Division at the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).

Held under the theme, *"A Low-Carbon and Resilient World of Strong, Inclusive, and Sustainable Growth,"* the forum highlighted the critical need for global collaboration in addressing climate change and fostering sustainable urban development.

Dr. Shin's lecture provided valuable insights into GGGI's mission and its pivotal role in helping member and partner countries achieve green growth and carbon neutrality goals. With a presence in nations such as Peru, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Vietnam, GGGI focuses on thematic strategies in key areas, including renewable energy, sustainable landscapes, green cities, and water and sanitation. Its global programs span diverse initiatives like green hydrogen projects in Indonesia, India, Nepal, and Morocco; methane flaring reduction in Nigeria, Kazakhstan, and Ecuador; floating solar and solar PV in the Philippines and Colombia; low-carbon transport solutions in Mexico and Sri Lanka; a plastics initiative in Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Cambodia; and biochar development in Vietnam.

Dr. Shin also highlighted GGGI's investment approach, including the Carbon Neutrality Blended Finance Facility, which leverages concessional capital and Official Development Assistance (ODA) alongside private and commercial capital to fund sustainable development projects and achieve carbon neutrality targets.

The session emphasized GGGI's ongoing efforts to mobilize investment, develop innovative policy solutions, and implement impactful projects that address the dual challenges of urbanization and climate resilience. Participants gained insights into practical strategies for advancing low-carbon, inclusive, and sustainable urban development on a global scale.

As the final forum of 2024, this event provided a meaningful conclusion to ISUS's efforts in promoting dialogue and innovation in sustainable urban infrastructure. Stay tuned for next year’s forums as we continue to explore solutions for a greener, more resilient future. (J.T.)

05. Alum of The Month
Peter GITAU (MUAP 10)

Gitau Thabanja, MUAP 10 in 2017, currently works as the City Manager of Nakuru City in the Nakuru County Government, Kenya, where he has been responsible for the city's administrative functions since 2019. In Africa, he serves as the UNESCO Creative Cities Network Coordinator under the Craft and Folk Arts category. In Kenya, he is the National Chair of all City and Municipal Managers.

1. Could you provide a brief description of your current workplace and explain your role there?

I currently serve as a City Manager in Nakuru City, which is in Nakuru County Government in Kenya. My work involves not only administrative tasks in charge of the city but also creating assignments in accordance with the general needs and services of the city, or as suggested by various committees, boards, and civic groups. I provide direction and guidance to department heads. I attend meetings with city board members, citizens, and other stakeholders to collaborate and engage. I review and edit reports and statements prepared for the attention of the City Board and various committees. I participate in city projects, review budgets, and ensure that laws are properly enforced.

2. Could you tell us about a memorable international cooperation project you were involved in?

I remember the '*Kenya Urban Support Program under the World Bank*' project. As a "Program-for-Results" financing instrument, the program uses performance grants to incentivize sub-national governments to implement climate-resilient and inclusive urban planning and service delivery. Its goals include strengthening institutional capacity to improve the resilience of urban infrastructure and service delivery, enhancing private sector engagement in resilient urban planning, and supporting the transition of refugee camps into integrated settlements in a climate-adaptive manner.

3. On December 13 and 14, you attended the MUAP Alumni Night. Could you share what activities took place that day and any memorable moments or enjoyable experiences you had?

First, I would like to once again thank ISUS for giving me the opportunity to participate in 2024 MUAP Alumni Night. The program was well organized, with the main event taking place at Songdo. The visit to IFEZ was very insightful, where we interacted with officials from the Investment Planning Division.

Later on, we retreated to do our presentations, where different alumni shared their views on how best we can harness our various experiences and learnings in ISUS and thereafter in our respective countries.

The presentations delved into the current status of alumni networks, proposed strategies to promote alumni network, implementation plans, and expected outcomes. Unanimously, all presenters agreed on the need to promote the ISUS alumni network and proposed ways to address the challenges that face this course, such as cultural diversity and different time zones. The need to form and promote regional alumni networks emerged as one of the greatest strategies, where the regional networks consolidate into one global ISUS alumni network. The benefits of the ISUS alumni network are enormous, including shared policies, experiences, project opportunities, partnerships among cities, and the benefit of technical expertise among others highlighted.

The visit to the Immigration Museum was also a great experience, emphasizing the need to preserve our respective city's history for tourism and the benefit of current and future generation. In summary, the Alumni meeting was a great experience and a reunion with former students while sharing our experiences after ISUS with current students.

4. Looking back, how has your experience at ISUS influenced you?

The greatest career decision so far in my life was applying for the MUAP program, and I remain grateful to Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) for the scholarship opportunity. Previously, I served in the urban department with only preliminary skills and knowhow about urban issues. Having done teaching in my undergraduate studies, it was hard to professionally cross over to the urban space despite my great passion and zeal to get a single paper in urban planning. When this application came, I gave it my all, and as luck would have it, I got accepted. I dedicated myself to the program and eventually received the ISUS Academic Excellence in recognition of excellent academic performance in the Master's program in Urban Administration and Planning on August 22, 2019.

Going back to my country after graduation, there was a change in the government I served following an election that took place while I was at ISUS. The MUAP papers helped me to secure another job easily as a municipal manager in the Nakuru Municipality. With the urban skills and exposure, I got having attended my internship in SMG, we were able to upgrade the Municipality to city status on December 1, 2021, being the first municipal-to-city transition in the history of our country. That is how I became a City Manager.

In the same year, Nakuru City, through a vigorous application process, was designated as a UNESCO Creative City under the Craft and Folk Arts category, making it the first creative city in East Africa to date. These achievements saw me elected as the Chair of Kenya Municipal and City Managers. Additionally, in July 2022, I was elected as the Africa Coordinator of UNESCO Creative Cities under Craft and Folk Arts category in Santos, Brazil.

The ISUS experience and teachings have been my magic bullet in conquering the urban space locally, regionally and globally. Thanks to MUAP, I will remain indebted. (D.K.)

06. **ISUS Students' Holiday Celebration** as One Family

As the semester ended and the New Year approached, ISUS students gathered for a heartwarming holiday celebration. With festive spirits high, they came together to cook and share delicious cuisines, exchange heartfelt gifts and enjoy lively games. The celebration was filled with laughter, warmth and a sense of unity, as students bonded over the last semesters and shared memories. It was a time of reflection, gratitude and joy, offering the perfect way to end the year on a high note and welcome 2025 with excitement! (K.B.)

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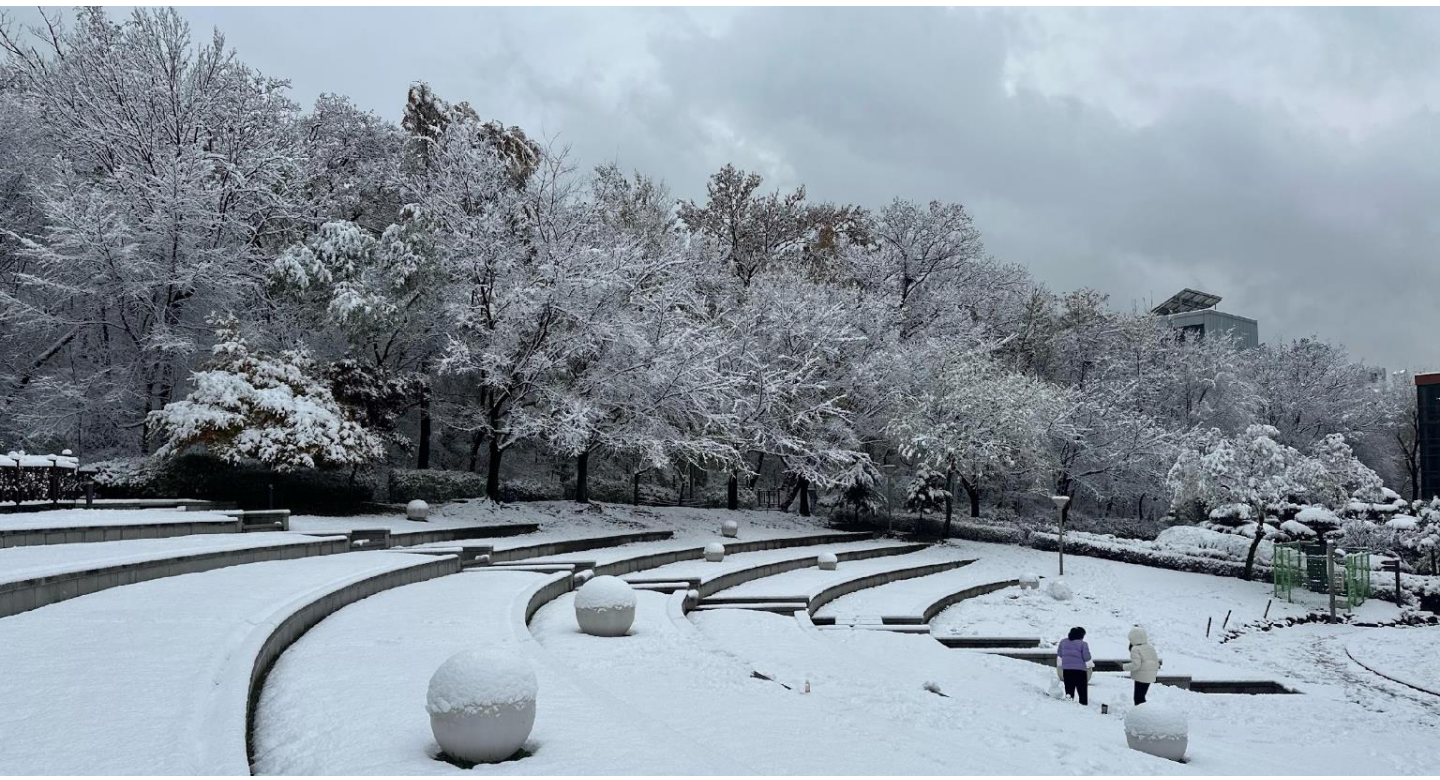

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