

# Report on the 2026 Summer School on Smart Cities

## Event Overview

The 2026 Summer School on Smart Cities was held at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture (BUCEA), Beijing, China, in July 2026. The academic and practical program ran for nine days, with the official opening ceremony held on 11 July and the closing ceremony held on 18 July 2026.

The Summer School was jointly organized by the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Student and Early Professionals (ISPRS STEP, formerly the ISPRS Student Consortium), ISPRS Technical Commission V (TC V), Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture (BUCEA), and the Belt and Road Architectural University International Consortium (BRAUIC), and was hosted and supported by BUCEA. The event focused on methods and technologies for Smart Cities and aimed to promote education, capacity building, international cooperation, and intercultural communication among students and young scholars.

The 2026 edition brought together more than 180 experts, scholars, teachers, and students from 14 countries, including China, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Canada. The scale and diversity of participation demonstrated the continuing international reach of the Summer School and its value as a platform connecting young people from different academic, professional, and cultural backgrounds.

This year marked the 10-*th* edition of this Summer School series. Since its establishment in 2016, the program has attracted more than 2,000 students from over 100 universities worldwide.



## Academic Program

The academic program combined keynote lectures, technical training, interdisciplinary seminars, and practice-oriented learning modules, covering the technological, governance, cultural, and sustainability dimensions of Smart Cities. Experts from government agencies, international organizations, and leading universities in China and

abroad were invited to share both theoretical perspectives and applied experience. The principal lectures and academic sessions included:

- ✓ International Language Environment and Smart City Development, examining how intelligent technologies and multilingual public services can support inclusive and internationally oriented cities;
- ✓ BeiDou Navigation and Smart Tracking: Empowering the Campus “Fun Run” with Satellite Navigation, which introduced participants to location-based services and practical applications of satellite navigation;
- ✓ Innovative ICH Experience: Xuanzi Polychrome Decorations on Ancient Buildings, integrating intangible cultural heritage knowledge with hands-on learning;
- ✓ Puzzles of Contemporary Chinese City, offering an architectural and urban perspective on the development and transformation of Chinese cities;
- ✓ Hybrid Deep Learning and Econometric Models for Travel Demand Modelling in Smart Cities, presenting advanced data-driven methods for transportation analysis and urban mobility planning; and
- ✓ UNESCO Science Cooperation for Global Sustainability, introducing international scientific cooperation mechanisms and their contribution to sustainable development and disaster-risk reduction.





The lecture-based curriculum was complemented by place-based academic modules on rural revitalization and cultural heritage conservation at the Mutianyu Great Wall and Beigou Village, heritage revitalization at the Summer Palace, and the digital interpretation of living industrial heritage at Shougang Park. These modules enabled participants to connect Smart City concepts with real-world questions concerning heritage preservation, community development, urban regeneration, and sustainable planning.

Overall, the academic program presented Smart Cities as an interdisciplinary field connecting digital technology, artificial intelligence, spatial navigation, transportation, urban governance, cultural heritage, and global sustainability. The combination of lectures and applied learning encouraged participants to move beyond individual technologies and develop a more integrated understanding of contemporary urban challenges.

## Practical Teaching Activities

In addition to academic lectures, the Summer School adopted an integrated teaching-and-practice approach. Field investigations, cultural visits, hands-on activities, and collaborative assignments enabled participants to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world urban and regional contexts.

Participants visited the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall, Beigou Village, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, and Shougang Park. They also took part in intangible cultural heritage activities and rural field investigations. These activities provided first-hand insights into cultural heritage conservation, rural development, urban regeneration, ecological protection, and the integration of technology and culture in future-city development.

The practical program encouraged participants to observe urban issues from multidisciplinary perspectives and to consider how Smart City methods could respond to locally grounded social, environmental, and cultural needs.



## Historical and Cultural Exchange Activities

Historical and cultural exchange constituted an important component of the Summer School. Visits to Beijing's historical sites and urban regeneration areas allowed participants to explore the relationship between traditional architectural culture, heritage conservation, and contemporary urban development. The program also provided opportunities for participants to share their own cultural traditions. During the closing ceremony, a participant from Azerbaijan performed the traditional dance *White Flower*, contributing to a warm and inclusive atmosphere of intercultural appreciation.

These activities complemented the technical curriculum and reinforced the importance of cultural identity, historical continuity, and human experience in people-centred Smart City development.



## Learning Outcomes and Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony was held on 18 July 2026. A retrospective video reviewed the academic lectures, practical teaching activities, cultural experiences, and collaborative work completed during the nine-day program.

Student representatives from different classes presented their learning outcomes and reflections. Their reports covered smart-community design, cross-cultural collaboration,

observations of Beijing's urban regeneration, and approaches to cultural heritage conservation. Although the groups adopted different disciplinary perspectives, their presentations demonstrated critical thinking, teamwork, and the ability to connect academic learning with practical urban challenges.

Certificates of completion were presented to participant representatives, while outstanding volunteers were recognized for their professional and enthusiastic contributions to the organization of the Summer School.



## Young Scholars Forum

Following the closing ceremony, the 5-th Belt and Road Architectural University International Consortium Young Scholars Forum was held under the theme “*Young Minds and New Knowledge: Building the Silk Road Together.*”

The forum brought together scholars and youth representatives from Russia, Azerbaijan, and China. Presentations addressed architectural education at engineering universities, landscape architecture teaching and design practice, international educational cooperation, and the role of young professionals in developing international engineering and academic communities. The forum extended the impact of the Summer School beyond its formal courses by providing an additional platform for youth dialogue, academic exchange, and professional networking. It also encouraged young scholars to contribute actively to international education, sustainable development, and cross-cultural cooperation.



## Impact and Outcomes

The 2026 Summer School on Smart Cities successfully integrated international academic expertise, interdisciplinary education, field-based learning, and multicultural exchange.

The program enhanced participants’ understanding of Smart City technologies and methodologies while encouraging them to examine urban development from technological, environmental, social, and cultural perspectives. The combination of lectures and practical activities strengthened problem-oriented learning and helped participants relate theoretical knowledge to real-world urban challenges. The participation of more than 180 experts, teachers, and students from 14 countries strengthened international academic networking and provided participants with

opportunities to establish new professional and personal connections. Collaborative learning and cultural activities also promoted mutual understanding among participants from diverse backgrounds.

Overall, the Summer School achieved the objectives identified in the approved application by fostering multicultural, multidisciplinary, and multi-level interaction and contributing to the broader ISPRS goals of education, capacity building, and international cooperation.

## Overall Summary

The 2026 Summer School on Smart Cities successfully continued BUCEA's ten-year Summer School tradition and further strengthened cooperation among ISPRS SC, ISPRS TC V, BUCEA, and BRAUIC. Through a structured combination of academic lectures, practical teaching, historical and cultural exchange, student presentations, and youth dialogue, the Summer School enhanced participants' professional competencies and global perspectives on smart and sustainable urban development. The event demonstrated the continuing value of the ISPRS SC Summer School as a platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, youth engagement, and long-term international academic cooperation.





## **Appendix: feedbacks from participants**

*This summer school gave me brand-new understanding of smart cities and cultural heritage protection. I attended professional lectures and field trips to experience Beijing's urban digital construction. I communicated closely with Chinese peers and learned their ideas on combining digital technology with ancient architecture. Cross-cultural exchanges broadened my academic horizons. I also realized my insufficient knowledge of urban big data. In future study, I will learn from these practical cases and keep exchanging ideas with global young scholars to explore sustainable urban design.*

**Saint-Petersburg State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering**  
**Grinenko Alexandra**

*This summer school has been a valuable and inspiring experience for me. As a lecturer, I enjoyed learning about smart cities, AI and China's urban development from different perspectives. I especially appreciated the lectures on Xuanzi color painting and contemporary cities, as well as the visits to the Forbidden City and the Great Wall which helped me better understand Chinese history and culture. I also enjoyed meeting participants from different countries and exchanging ideas. This experience has broadened my perspective, and I look forward to applying what I have learned in my future academic and professional work. I sincerely appreciate BUCEA for organizing such a meaningful program and creating a friendly and welcoming learning environment.*

**Baku Engineering University**  
**Afsana Guliyeva (Teacher)**

*As an AI-focused lecturer, I found the sessions on Smart Cities and Artificial Intelligence especially valuable, offering concrete frameworks for urban data systems that I can apply in my teaching. The lectures explaining how ancient Chinese architecture harmonizes with modern architecture shaped new ideas in me about innovation. Walking through the Summer Palace and the Great Wall grounded these ideas in lived history rather than theory. Beyond the academic content, exchanging perspectives with colleagues reminded me how much richer AI research becomes through cross-cultural dialogue. My visit to the Blast Furnace No. 3 Digital Museum left a particularly strong impression, as it showcased, through carefully curated exhibits, how legacy industrial technologies can be preserved while being reimaged in new-generation formats, a compelling example of how technological heritage can be creatively passed on to future generations.*

**Baku Engineering University**  
**Aynura Alakbarova (Teacher)**

*This summer school has been a valuable experience for me. I learned about the BeiDou Navigation System and its practical applications through lectures and activities. I also had the opportunity to meet students from different countries, exchange ideas, and improve my communication skills. The program broadened my understanding of modern technology and inspired me to continue learning in information security and related fields. I am grateful to the organizers and teachers for their support and this unforgettable experience.*

**Baku Engineering University**  
**Davud Shafiyev**

*This summer school was a great experience for me. I had the chance to learn new things, improve my communication skills, and gain more confidence in using English. The lessons were interesting, and the teachers always encouraged us to participate in discussions and activities. I also enjoyed working with students from different backgrounds because it helped me understand other cultures and make new friends. Every day I learn something useful that I can apply in my future studies. I am very happy that I joined this program, and I will always remember this valuable experience. Thank you to all the teachers and organizers for their support and hard work.*

**Baku Engineering University**  
**Mansur Mammadov**

*My participation in this Summer School has been immensely rewarding, enriching my professional knowledge, way of thinking, and international perspective. It has been a truly invaluable and unforgettable experience. During the coursework, the instructors presented complex material in an accessible manner, combining solid theoretical frameworks with a wealth of cutting-edge case studies. This gave me a more systematic and clearer understanding of the latest research developments in my field. In class discussions and group collaborations, I had the opportunity to explore issues and*

*exchange views with faculty and students from different countries and institutions, which deeply impressed upon me the importance of an international outlook in research and learning. Daily interactions with international peers also gave me a more vivid and direct understanding of the customs and cultures of different countries and regions. Moreover, I was fortunate to make like-minded friends and forge cherished friendships. I sincerely thank our university for providing such a high-quality platform for international exchange and learning. I will carry forward the knowledge, experiences, and insights gained from this program into my future studies and research, striving continuously for greater progress.*

**Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture**  
**ZHAO Tianyang (Volunteer)**

*Participating in the volunteer work for this International Summer School, I provided full support in conference affairs and study tour logistics. I had the opportunity to listen to experts from both China and abroad share cutting-edge theories on smart cities, and joined the team on field visits to the Central Axis, the Great Wall, Shougang Park, and other sites, where I witnessed the integrated development of technology and ancient architectural heritage. Through serving participants from various countries, I honed my communication skills, broadened my international perspective, and came to deeply appreciate that smart cities embody both technological strength and humanistic depth. It has been an immensely rewarding experience.*

**Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture**  
**DING Daokuan (Volunteer)**

*This International Summer School on Smart Cities has been a highly rewarding learning experience for me. As the class monitor of Group 5 and a volunteer, I systematically studied cutting-edge theories on smart cities while also visiting multiple urban landmarks on site, gaining insights into the value of integrating digital technology with cultural heritage. At the same time, I coordinated class affairs and served international participants, which sharpened my communication and organizational skills. I have also become more aware of my own shortcomings in professional knowledge and multitasking coordination. Moving forward, I will delve deeper into relevant research, continue to engage in international exchange and practice, and strive to contribute my youthful energy to the intelligent development of urban culture.*

**Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture**  
**MA Wenyan (Volunteer)**

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