

Institute for International Urban Development

News from the Field

May 2008

Report on a visit to the School of Urban Planning, Zhejiang University, China

In April, I visited the School of Architecture and Planning at Zhejiang University, in Hangzhou, China. Hangzhou is located two hours south from Shanghai. The city is listed as one of the Seven Ancient Capitals of China and has a population of about 4.5 million people. Zhejiang University is ranked by the Chinese Government as one of a handful of China's so-called "Elite" Universities. It is research-oriented with a competitive admission and is rapidly expanding and becoming internationalizing. Its current student population is 40,000 and has plans to expand and build new graduate schools.

While at Zhejiang, I had the opportunity to introduce the *Institute for International Urban Developments* activities and international scope to the Chair of the Planning School and various professors. I gave a lecture on informal settlements in Latin America and presented the case on *Favela Bairro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*. The Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, the Chair of the Department of Planning, together with faculty and graduate students attended the lecture.

For those that may not be familiar, the case on *Favela Bairro* is a landmark in public policy for informal settlements in Latin America. To some extent, it originated as a result of the City of Rio de Janeiro's Strategic Plan, when the city was looking to stop violence and increase the tourism it had scared away. The City of Rio de Janeiro, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), accomplished large-scale interventions in the public realm at strategic points of informal settlements and transformed unsafe and environmentally unhealthy areas into pleasant community buildings and useful *populated* public spaces. These actions led to the blurring of edges between the city and the informal settlements aiming to alleviate poverty of its people, providing social programs and integrating the informal settlements, as neighborhoods, into the fabric of the *City of Rio de Janeiro*.

The Chinese audience showed great interest in the presentation, including an active exchange of ideas and comments - drawing comparison between *the Favela Bairro case* and the Chinese *Villages Inside Cities*.

Briefly summarizing a complex issue, *Villages Inside Cities* are farmer-controlled villages that have a different governing body than that of the city. Some of them present housing and crime problems. *Villages inside the Cities* resulted from land that was originally situated in the outskirts of the city, to provide for that city. The property rights are owned by Chinese farmers who have the right to work their farmland and construct

housing. Unlike the farmers, urban dwellers only had the right to rent housing from the State. With an unprecedented fast-growing economy and a Chinese floating migrant population of about 150 million people coming from rural to urban settings, the Chinese cities have sprawled, devouring the farmlands in the outskirts of the cities. In some areas, the State bought the farmland property rights back from the farmers in order to provide land for growing cities; some farmers kept the land zoned for housing. Farmers, some now developers, shifted their business from working farmland to constructing cheaper substandard housing for rent to rural migrants. The farmer-controlled *Villages Inside Cities* have their own rules for house construction, which are laxer than those of the city and present crime and environmental problems.

Doors are open for future collaboration.

For more detail information please see:

http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9302841
<http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/case-examples/ce-BL-fav.html>

Alejandra Mortarini

Irish Diaspora

As a follow-up to the meeting on Irish Diaspora at the Institute for International Development on April 14, 2008, we thought you might be interested in the paper subsequently written by Mark Boyle and Rob Kitchin "Towards an Irish Diaspora Strategy: A Position Paper". The link takes you directly to the pdf on the NIRSA web site in Maynooth.

http://www.nuim.ie/nirsa/research/documents/WP37_BoyleandKitchin.pdf

John Driscoll

Sida Study on African Remittances.

The Institute has been working on a Sida-sponsored study on migration, remittances and housing in sub-Saharan Africa since last summer. Post election violence in Kenya has shifted some of the study's focus toward working with migrants living in South Africa. In recent weeks, however, xenophobic violence and rioting have led to the murder of dozens and the displacement of tens of thousands of migrants working in South Africa.

We have learned that some migrants involved in our study have fled South Africa to escape the violence. Although the study is continuing, the unfortunate events in South Africa have been a strong reminder of the precarious situation and vulnerability of many migrant groups. Richard Kruger, an Institute affiliate in South Africa, is following events

closely. The policy response to the violence will have a strong impact on recommendations for developing programs to help migrant workers and their families secure assets and improve living conditions

Erick Guerra

Visit to Kars

The Institute's regional development project on Strategies for Sustainable Development of Kars Province, Turkey, is finishing its third year in September. The Christensen Fund (TCF), the project's California-based funder, visited Kars at the end of May to meet and review the work of all of their grantees in Kars and to introduce their new regional program officer, Ms. Erjen Khamaghanova. From the Institute, Mona Serageldin and Christa Lee-Chuvala traveled to Kars the week of May 25th to participate in meetings with TCF and other grantees and to give TCF representatives a first-hand account of the project's progress, joined by IIUD's Turkish team members Ali Kural, Ceren Özgen and Berhan Ipek. The Institute organized a meeting with the TCF team and the Governor of Kars Province to discuss regional development and TCF's primary objectives. The IIUD team also took the TCF representatives to visit Bulanik, one of the villages in which IIUD is developing a pilot project to increase residents' income.

The results of the visit were very positive. The TCF representatives were quite pleased with IIUD's work and indicated to the Governor that the Foundation would continue to provide funding to our project for the upcoming year.

Christa Lee-Chuvale
