

DAY 2 in Brief

31th October 2023

Songyang County, China



On 31st October 2023, the world joined UN-Habitat to celebrate and conclude Urban October, and more specifically, World Cities Day (WCD) at the Municipality of Üsküdar, Istanbul, Türkiye. Coinciding with the World Cities Day Celebrations, UN-Habitat, Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Zhejiang Province, the Department of Transportation of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People's Government, Songyang County people's government, China and the 180+ diverse participants expressed enthusiasm and delight as they concluded the 3rd International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL3). The theme of WCD, Financing sustainable urban future for all, was well relatable with one of the subthemes of IFURL3: Resource Distribution, which sought to explore how to balance resource distribution for a more equitable urban and rural development.

The second and final day of IFURL featured two thematic site visits, a closing ceremony, and a symbolic group activity.

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SITE VISIT 1: TRANSPORTATION



The first stop at the transportation site visit was the Songyang Rural Distribution Centre, located 10 minutes off the central business district. The center features a fully automated system of sorting and handling products. It was launched to address the challenge of inefficient delivery of rural products to its consumers. It has a multilevel model of county, town, and village

distribution system, which paints the picture of linking urban and rural within Songyang. Some of the big wins from this initiative is the enhanced efficiency in delivery of rural products. The centre has also significantly increased employment opportunities for many Songyang dwellers, which in turn secures livelihoods both in urban and rural spaces.



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The second stop was at Chenjiapu traditional village. The drive gave participants a meandering experience as they were taken uphill. On arrival, Chenjiapu village offered a bird's eye view of the scenic landscape, with the participants getting a more vivid experience of the hill ranges of Songyang.

With an elevation of more than 800m, Chenjiapu village has a history of more than 640 years. Veiling in cloud and fogs for the best part of the year, the village is a perfectly set for photography and scenery viewing. It has been awarded the titles of Traditional Chinese Village,

Zhejiang Provincial AAA Scenic Village and Key Provincial Historical and Cultural Village.

From the outside, the village buildings seemed quite rural but on entering the premises, the aspect of rural revitalization was apparent, as the buildings featured modern designs and renovations that blended well with the historical village designs. Participants were taken through the many amenities in the village, notable ones including a bookshop, a hotel, shops owned by local farmers, and thrilled food vendors welcoming the participants.



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After participants took in the incredible views, they converged at the village hotel to discuss the ways in which transportation could contribute to balanced development along the urban rural continuum.

A commonality with many speakers from China was their mentioning of the nationally agreed quote, *“if you want to be rich, build roads first”*. This gave a clearer contextual understanding in the first presentation by Zhang Jian, Southeast University. The presentation narrated the journey the country has taken to advance its road infrastructure, including using digital methods. Narrowing down to Songyang, the examples shared by the speaker also demonstrated a strong technological application in making the transportation efficient and accessible to urban and rural dwellers. From his presentation, it was clear that objectively understanding the patterns of development is key, acknowledging different contexts.

Abdul Husaini, Niger State Government, Nigeria, narrated the effect of mobility restrictions due to the recent COVID-19 health pandemic on rural communities. While concluding that community resilience is key, he also expressed his positive impression of the many examples of how Songyang is enhancing transportation, including how these initiatives could be applied in the Niger State context.

Jean-Marie Cishahayo, University of Ottawa brought in the perspective Building an integrated urban - rural green transportation and mobility networks in city in transition in Ottawa, Canada, a city which is 80% rural. He also presented Ottawa’s new strategic planning called “The 5 big moves” particularly on transport and mobility move and the concept of building 15 minutes neighborhoods as well their future impact on the way people, goods and vehicles move in the city.

Wang Fujian, Zhejiang University presented about Intelligent Maintenance of Highways, a Strong Assurance for the Road to Shared Prosperity. He demonstrated to participants the maintenance of roads using an intelligent approach, including use of sensors and mobile applications which have the ability to provide real-time and comprehensive information about the state of a road.

Referencing SDG 11 and SDG 14 and giving the context of Jordan, **Farah Ziad Abdelkarim Al-Atrash, German Jordanian University**, highlighted the importance of street design in enhancing safety, accessibility, and multimodal connectivity. The integration of green infrastructure was also emphasized as a vital component in the creation of environmentally sustainable and resilient street environments. **Wang Yiming, Dalezhixing (Zhejiang) Science and Technology Co.,Ltd** concluded the session with several examples of application of the Model of Songyang Intelligent Transportation Industry, with





SITE VISIT 2: RURAL DEVELOPMENT



The main aim of the session was to unpack and understand rural development in the different contexts and how this contributes to urban development and the relationship between urban and rural spaces.

Hengkeng Village, Yecun Township, a national traditional village, was founded in the Ming Dynasty and has a history of more than 400 years, with a total of 740 villagers. In recent years, Yecun Township, Songyang County has actively

engaged in artistic rural construction and supported rural rehabilitation efforts, in line with the goal of protecting and developing old villages. It employs artistic means to encourage the restoration and utilization of the nation's traditional villages and establish an “art hall” within the national traditional village park.

Participants were taken through the village to see the various elements of rural development.



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The discussion segment sought to explore rural development in the different contexts and how this contributes to urban development and the relationship between urban and rural spaces.

Liliana Núñez Velis, *Presidency, Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation of Nature and Man*, presented the process of supporting the extension of traditional knowledge and examples of facilitation of inclusive processes including farmers, youth, women, NGOs, for the impact on public policies and their application, through environmental dialogues.

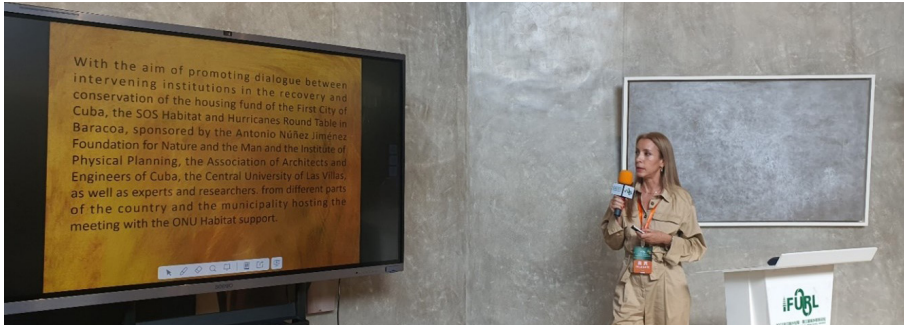
Lu Yuanzheng, *Zhejiang Province Institute of Architectural Design* and Research emphasized that villages are fruitful since they are frequently surrounded by mountains and rivers, and we must use them more. He proposed strategies, such as: 1) identifying key village areas for development 2) Concurrently build significant demonstration sites in a dynamic manner, thoroughly examine their value, utilize them effectively, and bring the cultural artefacts to life. **Muhammad Gambo**, *Shelter Afrique*, also angled his presentation on climate change effects on rural communities introducing Shelter Afrique IDP/Refugees Housing initiative. This initiative is critical to enabling rural communities recover from the effects of climate induced disasters in a sustainable and resilient manner.

Tan Gangyi, *Huazhong University of Science and Technology*, deeply inspired by “The Barefoot Architect” by Johan van Lengen, suggested that barefoot architecture can revitalize locality and integrate rural communities into environment. He also highlighted the importance of working with local people and youth to add value and technic of vernacular architecture.

He Yong, *Zhejiang University*, presented that the Architecture Design Competition could serve as a vehicle for promoting local acupuncture projects to a global audience, increasing public participation—particularly among young people—and placing people at the centre of the project’s conception, building restructuring, reformulating design based on a practice-oriented methodology, and implementation.

Li Linxue, *Tongji University*, expressed that his team thinks the built environment serves the public interest and is an excellent place to share information with the public. In addition, it helps to promote both urban and rural areas by creating a fresh blend of media and architecture and spreading new, creative pictures of rural growth. Moreover, for instance, the 5G network can create “hybrid space,” which combines media and physical space.





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"MY SHARE FOR THE REPAIR OF OLD HOUSES" INITIATIVE

Towards the end of the forum, a final trip was organized at Jieshou Village. This is one of the over 100 traditional villages in Songyang currently being preserved and revitalized. Participants were able to see many aspects of the village, including centuries-old streets, cultural items and traditional house designs to address issues such as flooding. The exhibition area of the village displayed a 3-D map

of where the 100 traditional villages are located within Songyang. Participants also interacted with images of the revitalized villages. In addition, attendees went through a ten-minute crash course on brick making using a mix of traditional and modern methods. This insightful training also included how to place the bricks on the wall to ensure accuracy, compactness, and durability of the wall.



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CLOSING CEREMONY



After the various enlightening opening ceremony speeches, keynote speech, insightful field visits and concurrent sessions, it was time to conclude the forum.

Taking a similar approach to the opening plenary, the closing ceremony began with remarks by **Raf Tuts, UN-Habitat**. In sharing UN-Habitat's closing position, Raf Tuts first expressed sincere gratitude to the hosts of the forum, Songyang County and to the participants for their attendance throughout the forum.

He also summarized how the main theme had been explored through the lenses of the four subthemes, not forgetting the illuminating field trips which clearly demonstrated the many efforts by Songyang County to elevate urban and rural areas in an equitable way. He also reiterated that, "let us also continue to bridge the divide, build stronger linkages, and enhance livelihoods. UN-Habitat continues to be your close partner in enhancing sustainable development while ensuring NO ONE AND NO PLACE is left behind"



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In his remarks, **Ye Bojun, Songyang County**, expressed gratitude to UN-Habitat, Songyang County, Lishui City and Zhejiang province for organizing the forum. He reiterated that the forum's theme is crucial and highlighted the success of the informative site visits and side events attended by the wide array of local and international guests.

He was keen to underscore how the three days have forged a deep friendship of mutual benefit. In his conclusion, he underlined that the closing ceremony is not the end but beginning of a journey of strengthening exchanges, deepening friendship and discussing cooperation and development.



Mo Liang, Songyang County, then officially concluded the forum by sincerely appreciating all forum actors

who played a role in the planning and running the forum, including volunteers and the media.

For many, the third International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages was an eye opener on the urgent need to increase concerted efforts to narrow the urban-rural divide, even as the world works towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The engaging site visits in Songyang, coupled with corresponding discussions gave examples of what shared prosperity between urban and rural spaces means. Participants left with a goal to not only forge partnerships but also to transform the partnerships into friendships. The forum also injected more energy and determination in the participants to advance urban-rural linkages in their contexts.

