

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PRESERVATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN  
HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD:  
A CASE OF DONGSI, BEIJING, CHINA

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This project is an interdisciplinary, qualitative study of historic preservation policies and practices in an 800-year-old hutong and courtyard house neighborhood that is designated as a historical and cultural conservation area in the inner city of Beijing. Utilizing the people-centered approach in heritage conservation, this project joins the ongoing international conversation and efforts to expand the scope, relevance, and significance of historic preservation as a field, by bringing intangible aspects, such as living heritage traditions and practices, into the discussion. Interviews and analysis of policy background are used to access the long-term residents' perceptions of preservation policies and practices in the context of their lived experience and their relationship with other neighborhood stakeholders. Topics of discussion include neighborhood values, conservation issues related to life quality concerns in the neighborhood, as well as involvement and engagement initiatives led by the government and their effectiveness. The goal of this project is to use a local case study to examine how preservation can benefit people's wellbeing in general, in addition to protecting the built environment of a historic neighborhood. This project situates global conservation issues into the framework of social and urban development in contemporary China, and provides recommendations for more effective community engagement strategies for future policy makers and professionals.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the city and people of Beijing.

“要落泪了，真想念北平呀！”

——老舍《想北平》

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## NOMENCLATURE

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
CCP/CPC	Chinese Communist Party/Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	viii
NOMENCLATURE.....	x
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Research Problem.....	1
1.2. Research Purpose .....	2
1.3. Rationale for the Study.....	4
1.4. Research Questions .....	7
1.5. Significance of the Study .....	9
2. PEOPLE-CENTERED HISTORIC PRESERVATION.....	11
3. METHODOLOGY .....	16
3.1. Rationale for Qualitative Research .....	16
3.2. Research Strategy.....	19
3.3. Research Setting.....	21
3.4. Data Generation .....	28
3.5. Data Analysis .....	34
3.6. Trustworthiness .....	36
3.7. Language Issues .....	37
3.8. Ethical Considerations .....	39
4. DISCUSSION .....	42
4.1. Values of Dongsu as a Historic Neighborhood.....	42
4.2. Opinions on Issues .....	63

4.2.1. Historic Characteristics and Façade Change .....	65
4.2.2. Public Space .....	85
4.2.3. Infrastructure and Amenities .....	118
4.3. Engagement and Involvement .....	154
4.3.1. Stakeholders in Neighborhood Preservation .....	157
4.3.2. Government-Led Efforts .....	162
4.3.3. Involvement with other Public and Private Sector Stakeholders .....	172
4.3.4. Self-Organizing Efforts .....	190
4.3.5. Motivations behind Participation .....	195
5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	202
5.1. Residents’ Perceptions of Preservation Policies and Practices .....	202
5.2. Implications for Preservation Research and Practice .....	204
5.3. Limitations and Future Directions .....	208
6. EPILOGUE .....	213
REFERENCES .....	220
APPENDIX A LIST OF KEY TERMS .....	246
APPENDIX B LIST OF LEGAL AND POLICY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED .....	248
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	249
APPENDIX D FUNDING SOURCE .....	251

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. From material and value-based approach to a people-centered approach in historic preservation. Diagram and photo by the author.....	14
Figure 2. Layout of a simple one-courtyard house in Beijing. Reprinted from Jia, J. (2009). <i>Beijing quadrangle</i> . Beijing, China: Tsinghua University Press.....	23
Figure 3. Exterior facade of single-story courtyard houses along both sides of Dongsì Wutiao (the Fifth Alleyway). Photo by the author. ....	24
Figure 4. Alleyways and courtyard houses in Dongsì as they appeared in the 1750 Complete Map of Peking, Qianlong Period. Reprinted from National Institute of Informatics Digital Silk Road Project and Digital Archive of Toyo Bunko Rare Books, <a href="https://doi.org/10.20676/00000211">https://doi.org/10.20676/00000211</a> .....	25
Figure 5. Contemporary street layout of Dongsì Subdistrict, August 7, 2020. Reprinted from Google Maps, <a href="https://www.google.com/maps/place/中国北京市东城区东四街道/@39.9291141,116.4130571,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x35f1acd30ce8aba7:0x2fb3528d9e4f18da!8m2!3d39.92899h">https://www.google.com/maps/place/中国北京市东城区东四街道/@39.9291141,116.4130571,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x35f1acd30ce8aba7:0x2fb3528d9e4f18da!8m2!3d39.92899h</a> .....	26
Figure 6. Street layout and quality of buildings in Dongsì Santiao to Batiao conservation area. Reprinted from Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning. (2002). <i>Conservation planning of 25 historic areas in Beijing old city</i> . Beijing, China: Beijing Yanshan Chubanshe.....	27
Figure 7. The organization of my narrative style, using waste/trash management as an example. Diagram by the author.....	35
Figure 8. Chess table and chairs, a common scene in hutongs where residents' leisure activities and social interactions are integral parts of the public space and hutong life-style. Photo by the author.....	51
Figure 9. No. 79 Dongsì Qitiao, a registered heritage site on Dongcheng District's census on immovable cultural relics, with sophisticated entrance gate, a large screen wall, original floor surface, and plenty of courtyard space. This courtyard house complex was a former residence of Zaican's family, descendants of Qing imperial family, and Yan Xishan, a famous Republican era warlord. Post-1949, this complex was used as workers' dormitory of the August First Film Studio, the first and only production studio established by Chinese military in the 1950s. A "duty room" sign can still be seen on the wooden door attached to the side of the entrance gate, which signifies that	

this entire courtyard house complex was once a work unit dormitory in the early People’s Republic era. Photo by the author.....56

Figure 10. Red brick roof tiles used by one household. This practice (often cheaper than using grey brick roof tiles) is identified by residents as not in harmony with the traditional characteristics of hutongs, as grey brick roof tiles are the conventional material used for courtyard house roofing. Photo by the author. ....72

Figure 11. Residents identify constructions with non-traditional materials and appearance (such as this structure using stainless steel windows and glass ceiling) as not in harmony with the traditional characteristics of hutongs, particularly because these parts are visible on the exterior façade. Such covering structure are often built and used by the residents as climate controlled green house, shower, or storage space. Photo by the author. ....73

Figure 12. Re-arranged and covered electronic wires on the side wall of a courtyard house in Dongsì Liutiao. Photo by the author. ....84

Figure 13. A covered construction site in Dongsì Qitiao with a “excuse our mess” banner. Construction or renovation plan needed to be reported to the neighborhood committee and the residents are responsible to arrange labor or service to remove any construction waste from the site. Photo by the author. ....92

Figure 14. Typical “unlicensed and illegal” additions built inside of courtyard houses. The additions with blue flat roof are attached to, not part of, the original single-story building. Photo by the author.....96

Figure 15. Typical stand alone “unlicensed and illegal” structures built inside of courtyard houses. This kind of structures are usually used as kitchen or storage room. Photo by the author.....97

Figure 16. A typical narrow entrance way from the backdoor of a courtyard house complex. Due to the limitation of living space, “unlicensed and illegal” additions were built by many households sharing the same in-courtyard semi-public space, resulting in narrow entrance ways, which only allow one person to walk through at the same time. Photo by the author.....98

Figure 17. A Weekend Clean-up event in Dongsì Santiao. Photo by the author. ....109

Figure 18. Notification for the residents to voluntarily dismantle illegal constructions and clean up waste inside of the courtyard house semi-public space. This notification was put up about a month before of the day of the actual Weekend Clean-up event. Photo by the author. ....114

Figure 19. Agreement to proceed with the Weekend Clean-up event, signed by residents living in the courtyard house complex. Photo by the author.....	115
Figure 20. A public restroom in Dongsi Liutiao, with traditional building material and roof design that are aligned with the overall characteristics of the neighborhood. Photo by the author.....	120
Figure 21. East end of Dongsi Liutiao. Because this hutong is designated as West to East one-way street, cars are not permitted to enter from the east end, with the exception of emergency vehicles. The property management company personnel is on duty throughout the day. Photo by the author. ....	124
Figure 22. Parking spaces along Dongsi Liutiao. On the south side of the hutong are automobile parking spaces, and the north side has marked area for bicycle and electronic tricycle parking. Photo by the author. ....	129
Figure 23. Trash pick-up timetable in Dongsi Ertiao (the Second Alleyway). The announcement was pasted on the wall of the courtyard house’s entrance hallway. Photo by the author. ....	133
Figure 24. Senior care center at No. 19 Dongsi Qitiao (the Seventh Alleyway). The sign of the building indicates that the site was previously a community grocery store. Photo by the author. ....	153
Figure 25. Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation. Reprinted from Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. <i>Journal of the American Institute of Planners</i> 35(4), 216-224.....	156
Figure 26. Participating entities and funding sources of Beijing Siming Historical Town Preservation Cooperation Program (名城、名业、名人、名景 —— “四名”汇智计划). Logos reprinted with permission. ....	251

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Research Problem

Cultural heritage has been created by people and it has been created for people (ICCROM, 2015). Historic residential neighborhoods, as a type of living heritage, have dual identities. On one hand, they are heritage places, with significant artistic, historical, social, and cultural values. On the other hand, they still function as everyday living spaces for their residents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, historic neighborhoods are not dead monuments or isolated islands. Instead, these heritage places are living parts of the contemporary society. Their transformation are closely related to the overall urban and social development of the country.

However, this living heritage aspect is still not adequately addressed in historic preservation research, policy-making, and implementation. Although there is an increasing participation of stakeholders within the heritage management system, the assessment of heritage values and effectiveness of policies and practices still focuses heavily on physical remains, instead of addressing people a core component of preservation and heritage management. In addition to that, the studies of theories and empirical evidence-based practices of people-centered historic preservation are still at an early stage. There is a lack of bottom-up research on how residents perceived preservation policies and practices in a living heritage setting.

With this background, this project joins the interdisciplinary conversation of people-centered approach in historic preservation – the idea that people’s wellbeing should be at



the forefront of effective and sustainable preservation policy-making and practices – using Dongsì, Beijing, China, an inner city historic residential neighborhood in a developing country, as a case study.

## **1.2. Research Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation is to conduct an empirically informed study of long-term residents' perceptions of preservation-related policies and practices, and the effectiveness of such policies and practices in a historic neighborhood preservation context. The area chosen for this study is Dongsì, a residential neighborhood in Dongcheng District, Beijing, China. This neighborhood is located in the old town belonging to both the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) Dynasties, the historical core of Beijing. This area has a high concentration of hutongs (胡同, narrow alleyways) and siheyuans (四合院, traditional courtyard houses along both sides of an alleyway), which embody architectural merit and rich urban cultural traditions. Dongsì was selected for this study based on several factors. First, historic neighborhoods located in the city center are the focus of government-led historic preservation and infrastructure improvement efforts, and Dongsì was one of the twenty five designated Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas in the Chinese capital city (People's Government of Beijing Municipality, 2002). This designation provides legal protection for these neighborhoods against mass demolition and alternation. Second, rapid urban changes have impacted Chinese cities since the nationwide housing reform in 1988 (Man, 2011), which marked the start of the private housing market in China, and made historic neighborhoods more

vulnerable to demolition in the process of urban development. By the early 2000s, more than half of the total number of hutongs that existed in 1949 had been demolished (Fu, 2010) to make space for private real estate development. The total number of hutongs went from 3250 down to 1571. Among those that remained, only about six hundred hutongs have municipal-level designated conservation area status. A 2010 report issued by the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) showed that although the old city center only occupies 5% of the entire land area of Beijing Municipality, it accommodated more than 50% of the total traffic and business activities of the city. It is against this background that historic neighborhood preservation attracted public attention in Beijing. Although Dongsì hutongs were among the six hundred hutongs that were designated within conservation areas, in reality, they were not immune to demolition and encroachment as long as urban development was still a driving economic force in the Chinese capital city. The third reason to select Dongsì is because, on a municipal scale, it is a less-studied area. Among the twenty five designated conservation areas in Beijing, research has focused primarily on neighborhoods where commercial development is concentrated. For example, the tourist and bar district developed around Houhai Lake in the early 2000s, and the intensified tourism activities in Nanluoguxiang after the 2008 Olympic Games (Wu, 1999; Zhang & Fang, 2003; Shin, 2010; Dai, 2014; Zhou & Zhang, 2015; Hu & Morales, 2016; Martinez, 2016; Dai et al., 2017). Compared to other neighborhoods, Dongsì has largely remained a residential area until today. Few studies have been done to examine the impacts of government-led preservation practices in Dongsì and the residents' perceptions of preservation. The fourth

and final reason to study this area is feasibility. I have established connections with the local governmental officials, community leaders, and some current residents in Dongsi. The availability of newsletters published by the community is also an important factor, because they allow me to have access to text and visual records of daily lives in the neighborhood.

### **1.3. Rationale for the Study**

This study belongs to the overall body of scholarly research concerning historic neighborhood preservation in Chinese cities. Early works focused on the artistic values of courtyard houses as a vernacular architectural style, and hutongs as a typical urban settlement pattern of Beijing (Steinhardt, 1990; Xu, 1998; Fu et al., 2002). Because of hutong neighborhoods' central location in the historic city center, they are often the witness of important events in Chinese history, and bear the characteristics and changing dynamics of Chinese urban societies. In this sense, urban history studies (Strand, 1989; Dong, 2003) have shown the historical values of preserving hutong neighborhoods, because in order to understand Chinese society in a certain period of time, we need to first examine how urban neighborhoods and the residents' use of their living environment changed. Studies have also been done to assess the ecological values of hutong life-style and how hutong environment benefits modern living (Yang, 2007; Zhang, 2013). However, little research has been done on how these values are made apparent to the residents who actually live in hutong neighborhoods (Shepherd, 2014).

Another group of studies focused on economic and housing reform, and urban development issues in modern and contemporary Chinese cities. These works suggested reasons of why historic neighborhoods became targets of demolition during the periods of urban transformation and real estate development, and how these processes led to or affected historic preservation concerns today. First, Zhang (1997), Wu (2005), and Gu et al (2015) discussed urban transformation policies and practices in the early People's Republic of China era, between 1949 and 1978. In Chinese history, this era from the establishment of the People's Republic of China to the start of Reform and Opening-up is often characterized as the period of socialist construction. These authors described a historical background to understand the motivations behind rapid urban development in later periods. Second, a large number of studies were done on the era starting from the Reform and Opening-up with economic decentralization in 1978, to the housing market reform, commercialization, and privatization of housing in 1988, and the intense demolition and transformation of urban neighborhoods in the 1990s. These studies explained the political background and economic policies that generated crisis in the existence and preservation of historic neighborhoods (Lv, 1997; Zhang, 1997; Wang, 2002; Whitehand and Gu, 2007; Shin, 2009; Wang, 2011). Finally, since the early 2000s, especially after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, an increasing number of Chinese and international scholars have turned their attention to historic neighborhood preservation as a lens to examine the process of China's national image building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the Chinese government is trying to address the problem of "a thousand cities with the same appearance," urban planning, sociology, tourism studies, and political science

scholars such as Heath & Tang (2010), Zhang (2013), Johnston (2014), Martinez (2016), and Yan (2018) have argued, through their own disciplinary lenses, that changes happening in urban historic neighborhoods should be understood as part of the larger process of China's rising role on the global cultural and economic stage. These studies suggested ways to understand the concepts of heritage, preservation policies and practices in the context of Chinese society and culture as it evolves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their approach has expanded the study of historic preservation beyond architecture and urban studies to include many other disciplines such political science, sociology, and tourism studies.

However, most of the previous scholarly writings on historic neighborhood preservation in China were done in a top-down manner, studying preservation from mainly a policy-making perspective, and failed to give the residents agency in neighborhood change and urban development processes. In recent years, little research has been done in a bottom-up manner, using questionnaires and interviews to describe how residents view policies and participate in practices that transformed their living environment. Wang et al. (2012) studied the conflict between the needs for economic development and a human-friendly environment in Beijing's historic residential neighborhoods through children's experience with accessible and safe public space. Zhang and Lu (2016) discussed residents' different levels of satisfaction with traditional and redeveloped inner city neighborhoods. They argued that residents are more concerned about the facilities and social environment improvements in the neighborhood, whereas a "façade style approach" (a cosmetic improvement to building exteriors) in preservation was far less satisfying to

residents. Zhang and de Roo (2016) studied urban transformation at the neighborhood level, looking at how changes in spatial planning influenced residents' self-organization processes, including constraining and enabling factors, such as government-supplied housing programs in the 1960s and various government-led preservation campaigns since the 1990s. More recently, a qualitative analysis of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts was done in Nanluoguxiang. Dai et al. (2017) concluded that those residents who were directly or indirectly involved in tourism-related activities were more likely to agree on positive impacts of tourism in historic neighborhoods; and those who had little to do with tourism-related industries and businesses were more likely to perceive negative impacts of tourism. This study also showed that residents demanded more protection of intangible aspects such as culture, traditions, and life-style, as compared to the appearance of the historic neighborhood. These recent studies demonstrated the necessity to engage residents as key stakeholders in our discussion of historic preservation, because the top-down analysis of preservation policies and implementation processes often risks a disconnection and disengagement with residents' views and needs. My study aims to contribute to the bottom-up approach in studying historic preservation in Beijing's inner-city residential neighborhoods, by conducting an analysis of residents' perceptions of past and present preservation efforts.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

Previous studies have demonstrated that there are many benefits to heritage and the community when taking an inclusive approach, bringing politics, socio-cultural

background, policies and practices, as well as communities and stakeholders together. As Abramson (2001, 2007) argues, a purely visual conceptualization of Beijing's historic character is removed from the living spaces of the city. The socio-cultural and political dimensions of Beijing's urban spaces are vital to understand people's perceptions of current preservation policies and implementation. Bernardo et al (2016) suggested that an actor-oriented approach is important to understand different peoples' views of the characters of historic urban areas. Such an understanding can produce valuable knowledge for informed actions. Ryberg-Webster (2017) argues that historic preservation used to place a heavy emphasis on architectural merit, instead of the communities' perceptions and engagement. Professionals working in urban planning may have very different definitions of how an urban neighborhood functions and what it looks like, compared to how residents see and experience the physical space in their daily lives. This created all kinds of problems, including a misunderstanding or a lack of understanding of heritage values in communities, and symbolic preservation efforts that provided little to no benefit to the residents. As Zhang (2008) explained, symbolic urban preservation is the tendency to only preserve the appearance of certain neighborhoods and leave other unprotected areas open to mass demolition and real estate or commercial development. Therefore, the government, the professionals, and the community stakeholders should work together to determine heritage values and preservation needs in the neighborhood, because this strategic engagement can help make sure that preservation policies and practices are inclusive and effective. With this background, I ask the following research questions:

- How have previous heritage discourse and management practices succeed or failed to benefit the residents of living heritage communities?
- What factors impacted living heritage communities' engagement in preservation practices?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study provides an empirical examination of residents' perceptions of preservation policies and practices in Beijing's historic neighborhoods. First, it contributes to the on-going, global shift in focus in historic preservation studies, which puts people and their lived experience at the center of preservation thinking and actions. The results of this study add a human dimension to our understanding of built heritage and historic neighborhoods, helping to inform future decision-making and policy implementation processes. Second, this study reveals some universal and site-specific factors that influence government-led and community-based preservation work. On a global scale, results of this study demonstrate the importance of understanding country- and place-specific factors and constraints in historic preservation. This is of special importance for researchers and practitioners working in developing countries, where economic development and preservation concerns often need to be taken into consideration at the same time. Third, this study contributes to the field of Chinese urban history and culture, as it explains how contemporary preservation efforts and concerns reflect the overall social changes and urban development in Chinese cities in the past four decades. Evidence examined through the bottom-up approach will effectively supplement the existing



literature on Chinese urban development and community building, especially for an international audience.

## 2. PEOPLE-CENTERED HISTORIC PRESERVATION

This project takes a people-centered approach to demonstrate its value as a tool for urban planners and preservationists working in living heritage communities and historic preservation. As described in the *Venice Charter* of 1964, historic built environments that survive to the present day are living witnesses to human civilization and our common heritage (ICOMOS, 1964). Although architecture and urban environment as physical evidence of heritage can never exist without interactions with human society and culture, historic preservation in the Western tradition has always been heavily focused on the tangible form (Weeks & Grimmer, 2017). In 1994, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* pointed out the need to address cultural diversity in heritage discourse and historic preservation, recognizing the importance of both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage and its management (ICOMOS, 1994). This speaks to the East Asian tradition of preserving building techniques and community culture other than focusing solely on the brick and mortar. A good example to demonstrate this diverse understanding of authenticity would be one of Japan's World Heritage Sites, the Ise Shrine. The most sacred part of the structure went through complete reconstruction every twenty years, but the building materials and techniques, master-apprentice relationship, as well as the rituals of worshiping have a history of almost thirteen hundred years (Adams, 1998).

Many international organizations have advocated for the people-centered approach to understand cultural heritage and historic preservation. Both the United States Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 (United Nations, 2012) and the United

Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) indicated that people are at the center of sustainable development. A just and inclusive involvement of people is the key to achieving sustainable economic growth, social development, cultural heritage conservation, and environmental protection. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted this approach regarding culture and development, demonstrating that people's cultural diversity is important, and all cultures and civilizations can contribute to the world's sustainable development. Different approaches, visions, models, and tools regarding cultural heritage conservation should be recognized and be made available to all. UNESCO promotes a human-centered city as a culture-centered space, as urban culture is not only a trait of human civilization, but also a source of empowerment for the future (UNESCO, 2016). As an advisory body to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) also advocates for this people-centered approach. In response to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, ICOMOS Action Plan (2017) calls for the localization of such goals' implementation and monitoring processes. This localization includes heritage conservation policies and practices that align with a country's sustainable social and economic development, and respond to local situations and specific needs. The management and assessment systems also need to be socially appropriate, taking diverse cultural traditions into consideration. Such guidelines demonstrate the importance of studying people's values and lived experience in historic preservation.

The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) considers a people-centered approach, or living heritage, as one of

their major theme areas. As ICCROM suggests, communities contain capacities and assets that outlast political or professional structures, and complement specialists' knowledge and skills. A people-centered approach can offer long-term conservation and co-management for the good of heritage and the community. This approach also puts heritage at the center of our discussion on sustainable development, because it recognizes heritage's contributions to community dignity, cultural inclusion, capacity building, and poverty alleviation (ICCROM, 2015). Examples of preservation practices that utilize this approach include: mapping cultural assets with the community to give a voice to local heritage interpretation; training local expertise and incorporating their experience and strategies into preservation efforts; as well as creating community-based management plans to ensure that preservation actually benefits the local community. This people-centered approach suggests that preservation as a field needs to move beyond simply involving or engaging the residents, and realize that the communities' wellbeing should be the motivation and ultimate goal of historic preservation (Figure 1).

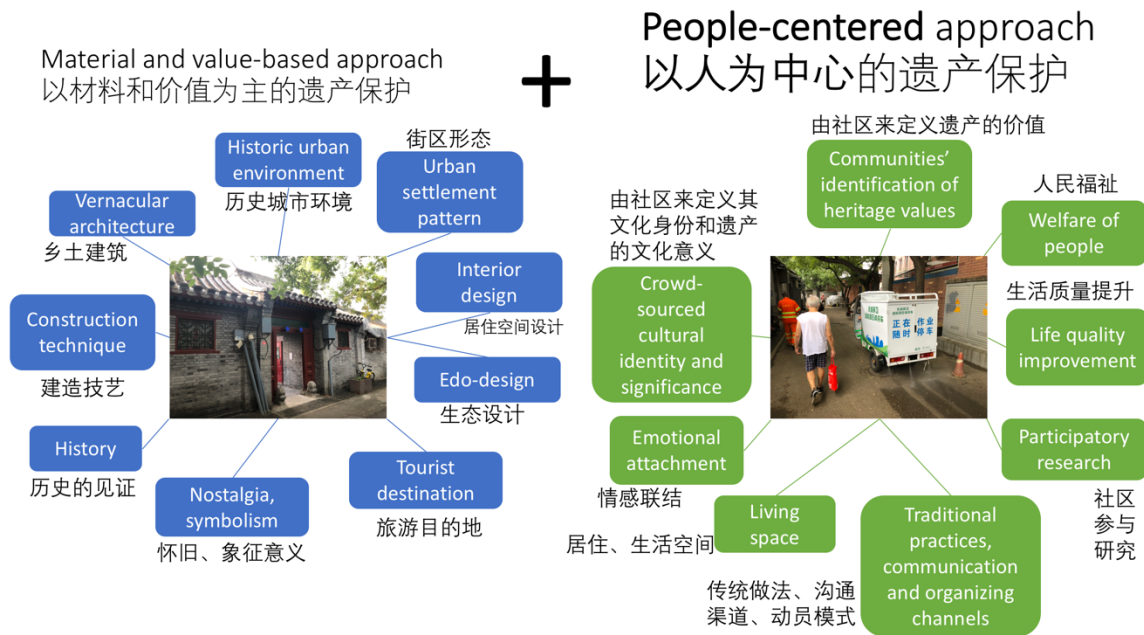


Figure 1. From material and value-based approach to a people-centered approach in historic preservation. Diagram and photo by the author.

More recently, Wells and Stiefel, in their 2019 book *Human-Centered Built Environment Heritage Preservation: Theory and Evidence-Based Practice*, argued that built heritage preservation should rethink the conventional practice that focused on laws, rules, regulations, and doctrine as basis for operation. The use of evidence obtained through social science and participatory research methods can disarm the authority of expert rule, and help achieve a more democratic and grass-roots-driven conservation practice (Wells & Stiefel, 2019). This approach to the study of heritage and conservation aligns with the people-centered approach that is advocated by various international organizations. It suggests that the significance and values of built heritage should not be based primarily on historical factors or simply “how old the buildings are,” but on the contemporary meanings and values defined by everyday people. It also means that

conservation practices should be driven not only by archival research and a factual past, but rather by consulting with members of the community on the proper uses of heritage. The goal of this approach is to challenge standardized operating procedures in historic preservation and demonstrate the value of residents' participation. The approach is especially meaningful for residents in Chinese urban societies, who may not believe that their voice will be heard.

This project uses the people-centered approach to study the residents' perceptions on historic preservation policies and practices, because community members are creators and bearers of urban culture, and their knowledge, opinions, and actions are important for us to understand the development of Chinese urban society through the lens of cultural heritage and historic preservation. Taking this people-centered approach doesn't mean that a value system based on architectural merits and scientific treatments of physical structures don't matter. This study aims to explain the human dimensions of preservation, based on empirical evidence taken from the field. The study will help dismantle cultural stereotypes on the definition of heritage values and practices of historic preservation in non-Western societies, so future researchers and practitioners in historic preservation can be better informed.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess whether and to what extent the past and present historic preservation policies and practices are perceived, from the residents' perspectives, to benefit people's wellbeing in Dongsì Historic and Cultural Conservation Area, Beijing, China. Specifically, I seek to understand: how do residents' perceptions of preservation differ from the established heritage conservation discourse in China? How has previous discourse and existing practices succeeded or failed to engage residents of living heritage communities? And how can residents' perceptions contribute to informed actions and practices in preservation that will center on people's wellbeing in the future? In this chapter, I describe the research design and methods used to answer these questions. I explain the methodological approach chosen to conduct this research, including my recruitment strategies, and data collection and analysis methods. I also address the credibility and trustworthiness, ethnical, and language issues that occurred during fieldwork and data analysis.

#### **3.1. Rationale for Qualitative Research**

Since the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of people's lived experience, perceptions, and opinions on historic preservation policies and practices, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate way to conduct this research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explained that in qualitative research, researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the

meaning people bring to them.” There are several reasons this approach is appropriate for my study. First, this research method places an equal emphasis on the process of knowing and the importance of knowing the results or facts. Second, this method suggests that reality is socially constructed. It is a reflection of how different people create experiences and give meanings to their experiences. Last, this method allows researchers to reflect on their relationships with those being studied, and how such relationships shape their inquiries and interpretations.

In the discussion of people-centered historic preservation, Wells (2014) emphasized the importance of conducting empirical research that is based on, concerned with or can be verified by observation or experience, rather than theory or pure logic. This emphasis is also a move away from the preservation doctrine in *the Venice Charter* (1964), which viewed the materiality of an object as an absolute truth rather than multiple, relative truths, each with their own cultural meanings and values. In other words, objects or heritage sites were once seen as tangible assets that only communicate one, single reality in which they exist; and their values can be measured by numbers, which then lead to actions based on these numbers. However, since *the Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), the judgment of heritage values gradually changed into an evaluative process within the context of individual cultures and communities (Wells, 2007). In order to understand the pluralism of truth rooted in cultural, instead of purely material contexts, social science research methods such as a qualitative approach should be undertaken.

Based on different belief systems and worldviews, there are four competing paradigms in qualitative research: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and



constructivism. Each paradigm poses different questions through ontology (what is the reality perceived through people's experience), epistemology (how people create knowledge based on their experience), and methodology (how researchers are going to find out what they want to know, which are people's experience). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the constructivism paradigm brings out relativism, or locally-constructed realities, a subjectivist creation of realities, and hermeneutical interpretations. Unlike positivism or post-positivism, constructivist inquiries do not engage in proposing a hypothesis or conducting an experimental falsification of hypothesis. Unlike critical theory, constructivist inquires also do not center on debunking historical realities shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values. Constructivist inquires do not place an emphasize on the correlations between values and findings.

I approach my study from a constructivist paradigm for the following reasons. First, people's perceptions of historic preservation policies and practices in real life indicate that there are individual or collaboratively constructed realities perceived by different stakeholders (relativist ontology). Second, experience and knowledge are co-created by interactions between participants and their physical living environment, interactions among participants in naturalist settings, and interactions between the researcher and those that are being studied (subjectivist epistemology). Last, in the process of assessing experience, perceptions, and opinions, the researcher is attempting to understand the complex world of experience from the point of view of those who lived it. In order words, the researcher is getting into the subjects' minds and trying to explain on their behalf (phenomenological methodology) (Schwandt, 2003).

### **3.2. Research Strategy**

A naturalist researcher draws on observations, interviews, and other sources of descriptive data, as well as their own subjective experiences, to create rich, evocative descriptions and interpretations of social phenomenon. There are different qualitative research strategies originally developed in anthropology and sociology to collect and analyze data: ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, and action/participatory research. Among these, I chose phenomenology as the most appropriate strategy to study residents' perceptions on historic preservation policies and practices because, as Wells (2011) argues, phenomenology should form a core methodology for understanding both how people are attached, in general, to older built environment; and more specifically, how an individual or community is attached to their own neighborhood. Worldwide, there has been a long history of neglecting people's lived experience in historic preservation planning and heritage value assessment. In the process of making preservation relevant and sustainable in the 21st century, discoveries through phenomenological investigation can be used to identify, preservation-wise, what is and is not urgent or significant for the people of living heritage communities. In addition, a phenomenological approach will allow preservationists to engage in future interventions that aim to preserve people's attachment to historic environments.

Apart from material, historical, and artistic values, which rest on a scientific basis and are often defined by experts such as historians, architects, and planners, there is another set of values that are directly related to people's emotions and experience (Pearce,

2000). This difference in values is phenomenologically significant, because it distinguishes heritage and preservation values grounded in real life experience (people-centered) from those values grounded in experts' judgments (an authorized heritage discourse). In the United States, studies by Hayden (1995) and Wells (2009) in Los Angeles, California and Charleston, South Carolina, respectively, have shown that residents define the authenticity of historic places based on how such places invoke feelings and allow certain behaviors. Each individual's perception of "the sense of space" and "the power of place" determines how the past is materialized in these individuals' eyes, and therefore, leads to judgment or value determinations regarding built heritage and historic preservation. A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to gain access to these lived experience, and thus addresses the research questions of how effective preservation was in the past and present, and how it can work better in the future.

In China, the research of Li (2010) and Bideau & Yan (2018) on various historic neighborhoods in Beijing and other Chinese historic cities demonstrated the importance of utilizing a phenomenological strategy to explain contested values related to preserving collective memories and the historic urban landscape. The gap between the official vision of the past, often defined by the government or knowledge authorities, and the lived experience of the community woven with local memories, is the key to understand why some existing preservation practices are disconnected from people's everyday life. Collective memories, or values derived from experience, generated by residents of living heritage communities, often include a spatial dimension. This observation echoes the ideas of "the sense of space" and "the power of place", as both memories and environments are

arguably socially constructed and interconnected. In a word, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to explain the issues related to historic preservation, using the lens of the residents who live in a historic built environment, whose values and opinions are shaped by their interactive experience with the environment.

### **3.3. Research Setting**

Dongsi is a residential neighborhood in Dongcheng District, Beijing, China. It is situated within the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) Dynasties' old town, the historical core of the Chinese capital city. It is made up of various hutongs (alleyways) that have siheyuans (courtyard houses that are single-story, wooden-framed, brick-wall constructions) on both sides (Figures 2 & 3). As defined in *Xijinshi (History of Beijing)*, a Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) urban history manuscript, avenues were 24 steps' wide; streets were 12 steps' wide; and hutongs were 6 steps' (approx. 9.24 m) wide (Xiong, 1983). According to a 1965 survey conducted by the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, the average width of hutongs in Dongsi neighborhood is 9.3 m. Comparing the results of this survey and a contemporary Google Map of Dongsi (Figure 5), to different Ming and Qing Dynasties' maps of Beijing (Figure 4), it can be seen that the basic layout of hutongs in Dongsi neighborhood remained largely unchanged since Yuan Dynasty.

The geographical boundary of the study area is defined in the *Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (People's Government of Beijing Municipality, 2002). The official name of this designated area is

Dongsi Santiao zhi Batiao (Dongsi Third Alleyway to Eighth Alleyway). The study area (Figure 6) is of a rectangular shape. The northern boundary of the study area is the south side of Dongsi Batiao (Dongsi Eighth Alleyway); the southern boundary is the north side of Dongsi Santiao (Dongsi Third Alleyway); the western boundary is Dongsi Beidajie (Dongsi North Avenue); and the eastern boundary is Chaoyangmennei Beixiaojie (Chaoyangmennei North Street).

The total area of Dongsi is approximately 0.254 sq mi (0.657 sq km, or 65.7 ha). The total number of permanent residents in this designated protected neighborhood, as surveyed in 2016, is approximately 15,000. Among them, 60% are long-term residents who had lived in Dongsi for more than twenty years<sup>1</sup>. Note that this number of permanent residents is only a reflection of the number of people who use this neighborhood as their actual living space on a daily basis. This number does not reflect the population of this neighborhood under China's Hukou<sup>2</sup> household registration system. In inner-city neighborhoods, such as Dongsi, the number of people registered with Hukou in a particular neighborhood is usually lower than the number of people who actually live there. Those who are not officially registered as permanent residents in this neighborhood, do not enjoy the same rights as compared to those who are officially registered. These rights often include healthcare at public hospitals, children's education at public schools, and other social welfare benefits provided for the locals.

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<sup>1</sup> *Beijing Daily*, March 8, 2017. [http://m.xinhuanet.com/2017-03/08/c\\_1120588167.htm](http://m.xinhuanet.com/2017-03/08/c_1120588167.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Hukou (户口) is China's household registration system that is used to officially identify a person as a permanent resident of an area or a city.

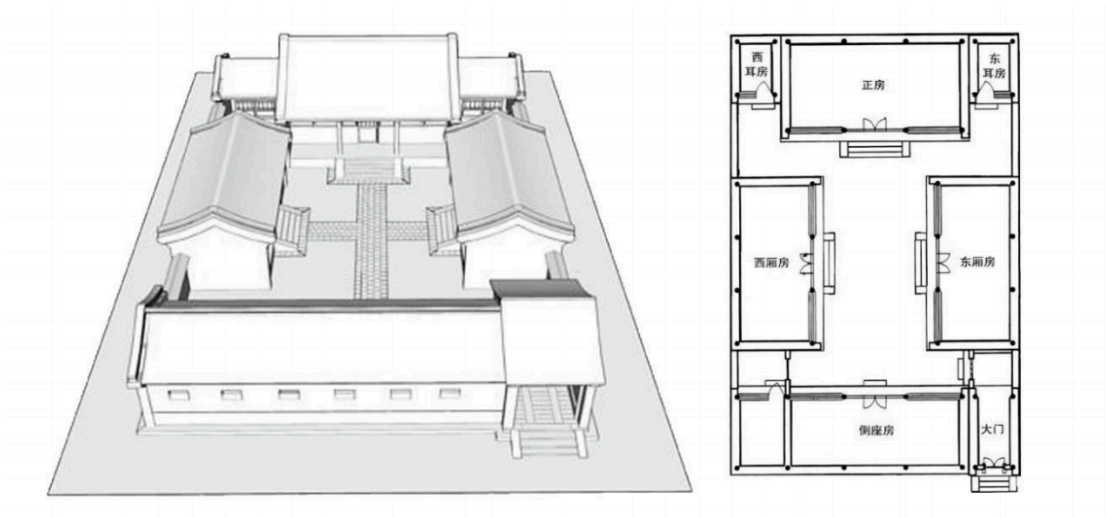


Figure 2. Layout of a simple one-courtyard house in Beijing. Reprinted from Jia, J. (2009). *Beijing quadrangle*. Beijing, China: Tsinghua University Press.



Figure 3. Exterior facade of single-story courtyard houses along both sides of Dongsi Wutiao (the Fifth Alleyway). Photo by the author.

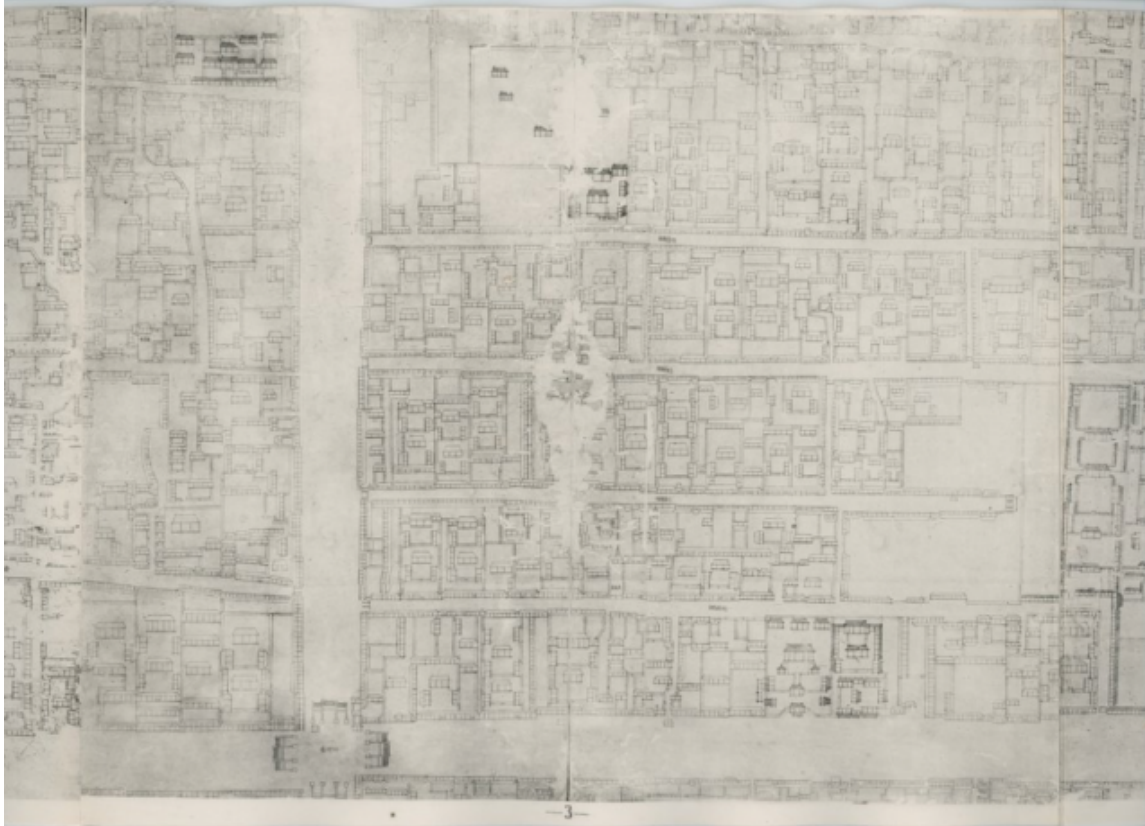


Figure 4. Alleyways and courtyard houses in Dongsì as they appeared in the 1750 Complete Map of Peking, Qianlong Period. Reprinted from National Institute of Informatics Digital Silk Road Project and Digital Archive of Toyo Bunko Rare Books, <https://doi.org/10.20676/00000211>.





Figure 5. Contemporary street layout of Dongsì Subdistrict, August 7, 2020. Reprinted from Google Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/中国北京市东城区东四街道/@39.9291141,116.4130571,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x35f1acd30ce8aba7:0x2fb3528d9e4f18da!8m2!3d39.92899h>



Figure 6. Street layout and quality of buildings in Dongsì Santiao to Batiao conservation area. Reprinted from Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning. (2002). *Conservation planning of 25 historic areas in Beijing old city*. Beijing, China: Beijing Yanshan Chubanshe.

### **3.4. Data Generation**

Data were generated during four fieldwork periods: summer 2008, winter 2018/2019, summer 2019, and winter 2019/2020, through different methods: informal conversations/informational interviews, screening survey and semi-constructed interviews, direct observation, and secondary data gathered during and after fieldwork.

#### **Informal conversations/informational interviews**

In order to establish personal connections and working relationships with community residents, and also to identify potential interviewees, several informational interviews were conducted in Spring and Summer 2018. I talked to several governmental officials working for Dongsì Subdistrict Office, who have day-to-day experience of implementing preservation-related policies and working directly with residents. After they gave oral consent to the topic, scope, and content of my human-subject research, I was in contact with the chief editor of *Dongsì Weekly*, a bi-weekly newsletter produced by an editorial team affiliated with the Subdistrict Office. The editor signed the documents required by Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), regarding ethical and cultural considerations of carrying out human-subject research in an international setting. I also conducted informational interviews with this editor to get familiar with the nature and content of several community events, active participants who could potentially be my interviewees, and some cultural norms and privacy considerations of doing interviews and direct observations. In my conversations with the Subdistrict officials, I obtained their permission to access the community newsletter in printed and electronic forms.

### **Screening survey and semi-constructed interviews**

I used a mixed purposive and snowball sampling method (Patton, 2002) to reach out to twenty Dongsí residents. To recruit participants, I sat in community club meetings (poetry, gardening) and the community museum's public education events. I distributed survey questionnaires at these occasions, announced my research objectives, format, and requirements, and collected individual written responses on these surveys to identify those who would be willing to be interviewed. These surveys were only used as a screening tool, instead of a formal assessment to collect data or variables. Although recruitment were done in public settings, individual responses on the survey questionnaires were kept confidential to protect the privacy of potential participants and prevent others from identifying whether an individual agreed to participate or not. This measure was established to protect interviewees from potential repercussions or unintended consequences associated with voicing their personal opinions about government-led preservation campaigns and property ownership issues.

In-depth, face-to-face interviews with semi-constructed, sometimes open-ended questions were used to generate data on the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of Dongsí residents regarding issues related to historic preservation. This method allowed me to understand the participants' views while respecting the ways in which they framed and phrased their responses (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). With written consent and contact information collected through survey questionnaires, residents were called and invited to do face-to-face interviews with the me at one of the two locations: residents'

homes, upon agreement, or my studio in Dongsì neighborhood. Interviews lasted from half an hour to two hours, including sufficient time that allowed the interviewees to read through and sign informed consent materials. An audio recording was made when residents gave their consent. These interviews were done in Mandarin Chinese, the local language, with me taking notes in Chinese at the same time.

For confidentiality purposes, no identifiable personal information was recorded in the interview scripts. In some cases, the interviewee voluntarily disclosed information such as age, profession, income level, property ownership status, and household composition. Such information were not actively sought, because they were not variables in this study. For this dissertation, I did not intend to study any correlations between demographic data and residents' perceptions. That being said, in reality, there was a relative balance among different genders and age groups among interview participants.

There was one screening factor. The interviewee needed to have been physically residing in Dongsì for at least ten years (in 2018, this means that they should have been living in Dongsì since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games), regardless of property ownership status (meaning, they can be house owners, co-owners, renters of public housing or work unit dormitory, or renters of private housing). This screening factor was put in place because it limited participation to residents who can reflect on neighborhood changes throughout the past decade due to previous and existing preservation policies and practices. Their length of residency also means that it is more possible that they had interests invested in the quality of life in Dongsì neighborhood.

My interview protocol included open-ended questions that generated discussions of the participants' experience, perceptions, and opinions (see Appendix C). The design of these interview questions drew inspiration and references from previous scholarly research on historic neighborhood preservation and cultural heritage conservation. I also used local news coverage as a secondary source to identify potential topics in neighborhood changes and preservation practices. My interview questions were centered on three overarching themes: how do the residents see heritage values of their neighborhood; how did they come to their opinions, and how do their opinions differ from the official heritage discourse, as they themselves explained; what are their opinions on preservation policies, the implementation processes, and various government-led campaigns happened in the neighborhood; how did they participate in preservation efforts, and what do they think can be done to better engage the residents in historic preservation.

After all interviews were done in Mandarin Chinese, I transcribed the audio recording (when recording was allowed), and kept both the notes and transcriptions in Chinese. To follow up with the participants and ensure the clarification of their interviews, I sent the actual notes and transcriptions in Chinese back to the residents. They could then verify or eliminate some content in the actual texts that they did not want to share. After the Chinese version of the texts were verified, I translated these primary materials into English. As approved in the IRB protocol, a certified Mandarin Chinese-English translator proofread my translations and suggested alternative wording for some terms that had cultural differences or potential personal biases. Then I had another round of follow-up reviews of their perceptions with the residents, once data analysis and discussions were done, so their

original quotes were put into proper contexts. Identifiable information was not shown in any of the discussions to ensure confidentiality among participants.

### **Direct observation**

Direct observation is a method often used in qualitative research to study people's behaviors that are not commonly discussed in formal settings or are considered inappropriate or taboo to discuss. Direct observation is different from participant observation. A researcher in direct observation operates as a bystander, instead of an active participant, who engages in group activities or is a part of the phenomenon being studied. During fieldwork, I used direct observation to understand the nature of certain community events and daily routines residents discussed in their interviews or shown in local news coverage. This method helped me to better comprehend their narrative descriptions of behaviors or experience, and I kept field notes, photos, and videos from my direct observation. Events and phenomena I observed include a weekend clean-up in the neighborhood, educational programs at the community museum, and daily usage of neighborhood infrastructure, amenities, and services that occurred in hutong public space. On these occasions, I avoided contact or interactions with neighborhood residents, in order to minimize the impact of my presence and the fact that I was taking notes on these activities. Because all direct observations were carried out in a public space, there was no privacy encroachment associated with this method.

## **Secondary data**

To understand the historical background, policy changes, and previous studies on preservation, I analyzed the following types of secondary sources. The first ones were policy documents, including cultural heritage conservation laws, national- and municipal-level conservation plans, and other preservation-related guidelines issued by the Chinese Communist Party, the central and municipal governments, and various government-affiliated entities (see Appendix B). The second set of documents I analyzed were published by non-governmental entities, including charters and guidelines from international organizations, scholarly writings, and project reports put together by research institutions, non-profits, and think tanks. The third type of documents were media reporting, including articles and posts from mass media, independent and social media, and community publications. All of these secondary data were available to the public through municipal and institutional archives, formal publications, and various online channels. To examine the purposes and impacts of these documents regarding preservation policies and trajectories, I focused not only on contents, but also the identity of the authors and publishers, as well as their relationships with residents and actual preservation efforts in historic neighborhoods. During my interviews with Dongsì residents, I brought up and discussed topics from these secondary materials, to crosscheck the accuracy of information and clarify any confusions.



### **3.5. Data Analysis**

Following Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological research methods, I conducted data analysis in the following steps:

1) Listing and preliminary groups:

Identify quotes from transcript relevant to the experience.

2) Reduction and elimination:

Does it contain a moment of the experience that is sufficient for understanding it?

Is it possible to abstract and label it?

If not, the expression is eliminated. If yes, it is listed as a horizontal grouping.

3) Cluster and thematize:

Create thematic labels of invariant constituents, core themes of the experience.

4) Identify core themes:

Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcript?

Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?

5) Develop individual textural description:

Created using invariant constituents and themes for each participant in the study.

Meaning given to phenomenon.

Description of essence of phenomenon.

6) Combine individual textural descriptions to create composite description:

Identify meaning and essence of experiences for sample as a whole.

Instead of coding by keywords and frequency, the nature of my qualitative analysis led me to conduct thematic coding. After interviews were transcribed and translated, I

rearranged and regrouped the answers from individual interviews, according to my research questions as much as possible, so I could identify the most significant themes coming out of a large amount of texts. This process allowed me to compare answers across interviewees, discover connections and gaps in their responses, and see common perceptions that emerged from their narratives. This process also helped me to interpret phenomena and explain opinions in a logical manner. My analysis resulted in an organized, narrative style, including a large number of direct quotes from the interviews (Figure 7).

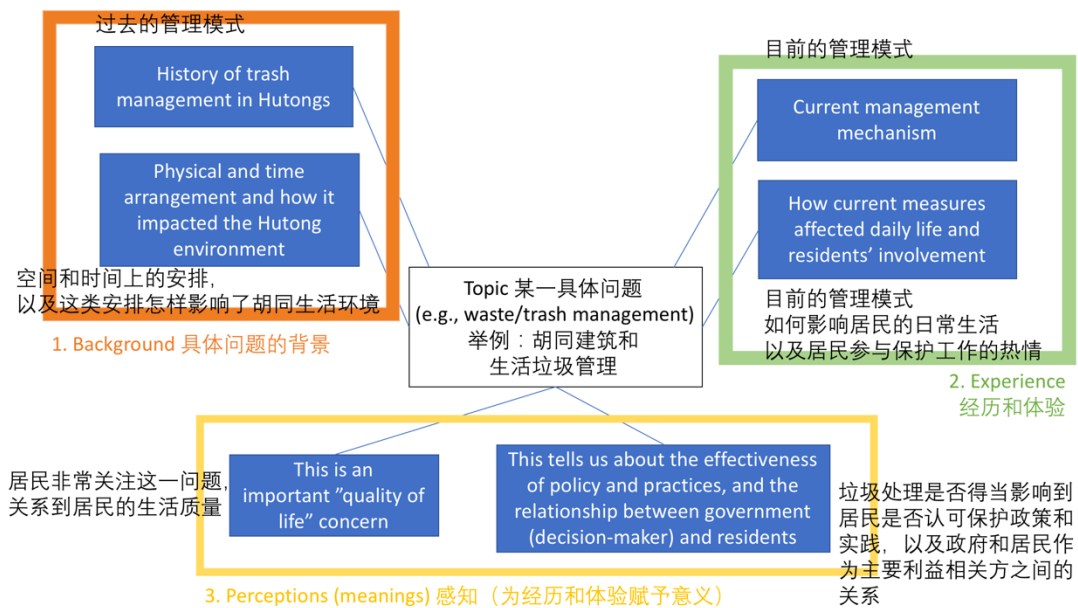


Figure 7. The organization of my narrative style, using waste/trash management as an example. Diagram by the author.

### **3.6. Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed four categories to assess the trustworthiness of a naturalistic inquiry: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. In phenomenological research, credibility means that the study needs to be approved by those who constructed the multiple realities being studied. Transferability refers to the amount of information and descriptions provided, and whether they could be applied to other circumstances. Dependability means that the study design needs to be flexible, in order to reflect the changing natures of the phenomenon being studied, and should adapt to changes and consequences as the research goes forward. Conformability means the results of the study should be possible to be confirmed or verified by another study. Because this phenomenological study takes a constructivist approach, there is no positivist criteria of truth, validity, and reliability that can be used to test these categories of trustworthiness (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001). However, certain strategies can be taken to make the data collection and analysis processes more trustworthy.

The first one is to pursue sustained engagement and persistent observation over a certain period of time, so the research design can better adapt to changes in the target environment. I stayed in my study area for three months each summer in 2018 and 2019, and one month each winter in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. The total time spent living in the neighborhood and carrying out direct observation allowed me to gain a sufficient amount of experience to give accurate descriptions and interpretations. Before I started conducting interviews with neighborhood residents, I did several informational interviews with

different neighborhood stakeholders. Those informational interviews gave me a big-picture view of the phenomenon being studied.

The second strategy is to conduct a triangulation of data, peer reviews, and member checks to improve credibility. I achieved this by interviewing people with multiple points of views, different social experiences, and a diverse knowledge base. I had multiple sources of data, and was able to crosscheck primary sources with secondary sources to describe the credibility of certain claims and arguments. I conducted multiple rounds of member checks on the accuracy of information presented in narrative descriptions. I also used peer reviews, having educated, outsiders' lenses to read through my translations and analysis to ensure the logical rigor.

The third strategy is to provide a more detailed descriptions of the research setting, as well as data collection and analysis processes, so the results of this study are trustworthy and confirmable by other studies. I achieved this by describing the historical background and social environment of the neighborhood and preservation policies being studied. When possible, I clarify phenomenon and cultural norms in my study area as different from those commonly occur in the United States. This is important because part of the significance of my study is to explain how preservation works and contributes to the social development in China to an international audience.

### **3.7. Language Issues**

Language, as an integral aspect of a community's intangible heritage, is essential in the discussion of people-centered historic preservation. Here, language not only refers to

a certain people group who share a common language, but also includes the usage of terms and phrases that are closely related to the community's cultural settings in the past and present. Dongsì, as part of Beijing's historic city center, is a Mandarin Chinese-speaking neighborhood. However, certain colloquial words, idioms, and proverbs can only be understood in a local context, whether it's due to the neighborhood's historical and cultural background, or it's related to the neighborhood's spatial arrangement and physical environment. This situation is further complicated by a barrier between the informal, layman's terms used by the residents, and the formal, academic language used by urban planning and historic preservation professionals in policy documents and heritage discourse.

This reality leads to my presentation of interview quotes in dual languages. There are several reasons. First of all, during and after fieldwork, I conducted and transcribed the recorded interviews and informal conversations in Mandarin Chinese. However, all my analysis and interpretations in this dissertation are presented in English. Research showed that in cross-cultural studies, even when an account was originally spoken in a particular language, the final version of the study usually ended up written in a language used by the majority of the population or audience (Temple, 2006). Translating an interviewee's account into another language may change how the interviewee is perceived. By including the original quotes in Chinese along with English translations, I intend to present the meanings and context of the original responses, because no matter how accurate the linguistic translation may be, the implicit attitudes and underlying meanings in one language can still get lost while being translated into another language.

The second reason is that a presentation of bilingual data can serve as an effective way to decolonize humanities and social sciences research. Gonzalez y Gonzalez & Lincoln (2006, 2008) argued that traditionally, academic research was characterized by the polished, objective, neutral, and “scientific” presentation of results that in most cases, served Western interests and agendas. Presenting the original language in which data was generated could help to foster social justice and locally desired changes, and could also be beneficial for research collaboration. Even though this results in the actual text being longer, the purpose here is to keep the richness and accuracy of data in its original language. In my case, it also helps to preserve and amplify the voices of the residents.

Last but not least, by including quotes in Chinese, I am acknowledging the fact that my English translation of the original texts was influenced by my own linguistic and cultural filter. Even speakers of the same language can have different interpretations while translating materials into a foreign language. Through peer reviews and debriefing with other dual-language speakers, I took their suggestions to revise in order to minimize the confusion and loss of meanings during my translation process. The presentation of dual-language texts also provides an opportunity for my Chinese-speaking audience to have their own interpretations and understanding of the narratives, attitudes, and phenomena my interviewees described.

### **3.8. Ethical Considerations**

As my research engages human subjects in their actual living environment, the confidentiality of their identities and opinions, as well as mental health considerations of

the interviewees are crucial to this study. I used several strategies to protect the participants. All interviews were done in a one-on-one setting at a preferred private location by the interviewee, in order to minimize interruptions and potential problems by having conversations in a public space. There is still the possibility that some people can identify others' participation in my study, because some interviewees were introduced to me by mutual contact or previous participants. I avoided talking about the content of the interviews with residents while walking or taking pictures in the neighborhood. During interviews, when it was necessary to refer to another participant's response, I ensured no identifiable information was disclosed to other participants. As I do not establish or assess the correlations between residents' demographic background and their responses, information such as age, gender, ethnicity, and income level were not purposefully obtained. Some interviewees voluntarily shared their information, but demographic data of individual interviewees are not presented in my dissertation.

Following the human subject research protocol and research design, written or verbal consent were given at each step. Audio recording was done only when the interviewee granted me their permission. In most cases, I kept written notes on the content of these interviews in Chinese while talking to the residents. To protect their safety and mental health, participants were also informed that they could stop the interview, step out of the conversation and the room, and had the right to quit the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable or that their safety was being threatened.

To record my direct observations and the visual appearance of the neighborhood, I took photos and videos in hutong public areas. Permission of such photographing and

recording was verbally given by the local authorities that approved and signed off my research protocol, and photography is culturally appropriate in this historic residential neighborhood. On several occasions, I was confronted by neighborhood residents who questioned my presence and recording, and I stopped taking photos when residents resisted. I did have the advantage of coming from the same ethnic group as most Dongsi residents, and I had an actual place to live in the neighborhood during field trips. It was understandable that I might look less “suspicious” due to these facts. As discussed in previous sections, the everyday living experience in the neighborhood helped me tremendously to develop trustworthy relationships and mutual understanding with the residents.



## 4. DISCUSSION<sup>3</sup>

### 4.1. Values of Dongsì as a Historic Neighborhood

The concept of heritage values started with a heavy emphasis on artistic and historical values, and was originally determined by a small group of experts, namely archaeologists and architectural historians. When assessing the values of built heritage and historic environment for conservation planning purposes, the experts' points of view often led to the emphasis on and prioritization of technical treatments on building materials and appearance. The experts' points of view were then validated, through policy proposal and approval processes, by authorities such as the local government and affiliated agencies that had planning and administrative power over a certain urban area or living heritage neighborhood. As the concepts of heritage and historic preservation as a field evolved in recent decades, the number of stakeholders who have the knowledge and right to determine heritage values and demand how to protect heritage that are valuable also expanded (Avrami et al., 2017).

As Critical Heritage Studies scholars warned (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013), the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), which usually appears in government-issued conservation planning documents and is used as a starting point for government-led preservation decision-making, has a series of shortcomings when it comes to today's

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<sup>3</sup> Part of the data in Chapter 4 are reprinted from "Public perceptions of preservation policies and practices in historic residential neighborhood: A case of Dongsì, Beijing, China," by M. Liu, 2020, *Sequitur*, 6, Special Issue. Reprinted with permission.

heritage studies and management. First, when applying AHD to a historic neighborhood setting, the official narrative often frames the neighborhood (a set of buildings and cityscape) in a historical moment in the past, implying that the best way to preserve it is to seal the whole thing as it was and pass it down to future generations. This is against the very nature of an urban neighborhood which has residents constantly renovating their living spaces to reflect their needs. Second, the authorized, official narrative sees the values of a historic neighborhood in its physical remains, not the community it serves. Contemporary residents are seen as occupants and users of heritage, instead of the owners and creators of heritage. However, local residents have been the stewards of their historic living environment for generations. Finally, an authorized discourse portrays historic buildings and cityscape as fragile, unchanging, and unable to adapt; therefore, only the experts such as archaeologists, architectural historians, and museum curators have the historical knowledge and practical skills to take care of and manage this type of heritage. Such authorized discourse fails to acknowledge the customs and wisdom in historic neighborhood management developed and practiced by the local community over a long period of time. In contrast to the heritage value assessment within an authorized discourse, Critical Heritage Studies scholars suggest that we should understand heritage as a performance, or a never-ending process, in which the meaning of the past is continuously negotiated in the context of the needs of the present (Gentry and Smith, 2019). In other words, the values of heritage are constantly being contested, re-identified, and negotiated among stakeholders, including the governmental and non-governmental sides, with each stakeholder's changing needs and perspectives.

Indigenous communities and living heritage communities in non-Western countries are often the best examples to critique the material-based approach as the official discourse to assess values and manage heritage, as these communities see the intangible and human aspects of the heritage environment inseparable from the material remains. However, conservation planning in developing countries, as a government-led effort to set regulations and implement policies, still relies heavily on material-based value assessment as a primary tool. Conservation planning process still faces the similar problems, including a lack of diversity in heritage values and a lack of awareness of how values change over time and are shaped by contextual factors (Getty Conservation Institute, 2002). According to *the Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002), “the areas.... From Dongsì Santiao to Batiao.... were built during the Yuan Dynasty and constitute Beijing’s best-preserved traditional residential area and hutong system”. This value assessment has a clear emphasis on urban history, including the age of this neighborhood, this specific urban settlement pattern known as hutong, and the core function of Dongsì as a residential area. The residents’ perceptions of such value assessment showed that they agreed with expert-defined historical values, but at the same time, identified more strongly with the socio-cultural values. The way they described their ideas of Dongsì shifted the focus from the tangible built environment to the intangible elements associated with this neighborhood, such as cultural identity, life-style, and interpersonal relationships.

Because China has a centuries-long tradition of imperial city planning (Steinhardt, 1990), capital cities were always built with a sophisticated plan, and residential neighborhoods were undoubtedly an important component of a lively and prosperous city. When asked the question, “what do you think is the value of Dongsi neighborhood?”, almost all residents started by identifying Dongsi as part of the historic capital city. This historical value of Dongsi as evidence of Chinese imperial city planning principles was a shared consensus.

整个北京市历史文化就非常厚重，北京是中国封建历史上最后一座都城，因为北京的建筑、文化、园林、皇宫都是结合了中国传统文化之大成，是最终的艺术和文化成果。北京的街区规划本身就是相当完善、艺术价值很高的。

The entire city of Beijing has rich history and culture, as Beijing was the last capital city in China's feudal history. Because Beijing's architecture, culture, landscape gardens, and imperial palaces epitomized Chinese traditions, they are the final products of art and culture. The city and neighborhood planning of Beijing is quite complete and of high artistic values.

东四是一个元代形成的历史街区，那会儿北京还叫元大都。我们看很多历史学家的研究就知道，东四这片的胡同的位置和宽窄这些，都完整保留下来了。北京很多胡同都经历过拆大建，有的整个社区都从胡同变成高层

住宅了，像宣南那样儿。我们东四还能保留这么一大片胡同，确实很不容易。

Dongsì is a neighborhood that was formed in Yuan Dynasty, when Beijing was called Dadu (grand capital city). If we look at the research done by many historians, we know that the location and width of hutongs in Dongsì were preserved from that time. Many hutong neighborhoods in Beijing went through large-scale demolition and rebuilding. Some of them (previous hutong neighborhoods) turned into high-rise apartment buildings, just like Xuannan. Here in Dongsì, we still have this large hutong area being preserved. It really is not easy.

Such awareness was often followed by the idea that Dongsì is a unique symbol of “Old Beijing”<sup>4</sup> urban culture. Residents tended to describe Dongsì as a hutong residential neighborhood that is different from other types of heritage. In a city full of historic places, and many of them World Heritage Sites, people saw hutongs as special. For outsiders, these neighborhoods provided an authentic space to experience local culture. For the locals themselves, hutong was the type of heritage that residents could easily identify with, and as a result, cared more about.

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion on “Old Beijing” architecture and culture, see *Beijing Lishi Wenhua* (2004) by the renowned Chinese architectural historian Zhewen Luo, and *Laobeijing de Shenghuo* (1989) by Shoushen Jin, a Manchu Chinese expert on customs and folklore in Beijing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For an experience-based discussion on the tensions between traditions and modernity in Beijing’s historic neighborhood from a foreigner’s perspective, see Michael Meyer’s memoir *The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed* (2008).

东四是一个平民的社区。现在很多游客来北京就去看故宫，故宫是皇家住的地方，不是老百姓住的地方。我们东四才是老百姓住的地方，你只有来这儿才能看到老北京人生活的状态。

Dongsi is a common people's neighborhood. Nowadays, many tourists come to Beijing and they go see the Forbidden City. The Forbidden City is for the imperial families, not for the common people. Our Dongsi is where common people live. You can only see how Old Beijingers live if you come here.

习总书记讲四个自信，里面有一个“文化自信”，老北京的胡同就是我们的文化自信。胡同四合院是北京的符号，是北京文化的一大特色，是民风民俗的土壤，是我们的根。像故宫颐和园之类的，当然重要，但是那些游客更关心，作为我们居民来说，我们更关心的是胡同里的这种生活。

President Xi talked about the Four Confidences<sup>5</sup>, and one of them is “confidence in our culture”. Old Beijing hutongs is indeed our “confidence in our culture”. Hutong and Siheyuan is the symbol of Beijing, one of the distinguishing features of Beijing culture, the soil of folklores and customs, and our roots. Places like the Forbidden City and the Summer Palaces are of course very important, but the

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<sup>5</sup> Originally proposed by then CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao in November 2012 during the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, and added by Xi Jinping in December 2014, the Four Confidences include “firm confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of Socialism with Chinese characteristic”. This phrase, later added to the party's constitution during the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2017, has become a signature political doctrine of the CCP.

tourists care more about those places. From us residents' perspective, we care more about our life in hutongs.

Some residents described the value of Dongsi hutongs as a traditional residential environment, compared to other residential neighborhoods nearby or in the suburbs that were entirely made of apartment buildings, in intangible, rather than tangible, terms. They talked about the social relationships and mutual aid networks that were developed in the traditional hutong environment, instead of describing how hutongs, which are mainly consist of single-story buildings, look differently than a neighborhood of multi-story or high-rise apartment buildings. One could argue, however, that behaviors and life-style are definitely a result of the physical environment. Because hutong residents shared more public spaces with their neighbors, there were obviously more frequent and unavoidable interactions of people on a daily basis (Figure 8). These relationships and networks led to shared manpower and resources in the neighborhood. They also allowed older generations, especially those who live without their children, to be able to live relatively autonomously, having easier access to things they needed, and building emotional connections with people beyond their immediate families.

胡同的价值就在于住着方便。住这里跟住楼房不一样，我女儿儿子都住楼房，同样是住在一个楼里面，邻居老死不相往来。像我们隔壁豆瓣社区那样的，好多楼上楼下就不知道是什么人。胡同里就不一样了，几百年来人们祖祖辈辈都住在这里，抬头不见低头见，人与人之间总有往来，形成人

和人之间的社会关系。邻里之间互相照应，协作互助，和谐相处。孩子上学要接送，父母都年轻要上班，老头儿老太太轮流帮着接孩子。七条小学、五条幼儿园，经常发生的事儿。谁家做好吃的了，街坊互相送着吃，分享。楼房里见不着这个的。这是祖祖辈辈形成的习惯，现在还是如此。

The value of hutong neighborhood is that it's convenient to live in. It's different to live here than to live in apartment buildings. My daughter and son's families all live in apartment buildings. Although they live with their neighbors in the same building, they never talk to each other, ever. It's just like our neighboring Douban Community (to the east of Dongsu hutongs across Chaoyangmennei North Street, a comparable sized community but of multi-story apartment buildings), you don't even know the people who live above you and below you in the same building. It's different in hutongs. People have been living here for centuries and generations. Even if you don't see people when you look up, you will see them when you bow down (proverb to describe the inevitable meeting between people). There were always interactions between people, and a type of social relationship was formed through such interactions. Neighbors take care of each other, help each other, live together harmoniously. When kids need someone to take them to and from school, and their parents need to go to work, the seniors in the neighborhood would take turn walking with the kids. It happens every day for students in Qitiao Elementary School and Wutiao Kindergarten. If someone cooked something delicious, they would bring the food to neighbors to share. You won't see this in an apartment



building. This is a custom passed down by older generations. It's still the ways things are done in this neighborhood.

我们也有好多老邻居，家里孩子让搬出去跟他们一块儿住楼房了，还有把这儿的房子卖了，去郊区住大房子了，但是他们后来都后悔了。我们过年过节聚会的时候聊天儿，他们就说还是以前在胡同里面住着好，邻居白天坐一起聊聊天儿，干重活儿能搭把手，帮忙买个菜、借点儿工具修个什么东西、接送小孩儿之类的。而且去哪儿都近，不用求人。离开胡同这些就都没有了，白天孩子一上班儿、上学，就剩老两口，有时候就自己一人儿了。“远亲不如近邻”——非常直观，用在胡同里是最合适的，这种邻里关系就不适用于楼房。要是胡同没有了，我们邻里之间也不会有这种精神上的关系了。

We do have neighbors who moved out of Dongsì, because their children wanted them to move into the same apartment building and live with the rest of the family. Some even sold their home in the courtyard houses, and moved into larger houses in the suburbs. But they all regretted (selling and moving) afterwards. When we got together with our old neighbors during new year's and holidays, they always told us that they preferred living in their old hutongs. Neighbors can sit together and chat in the day; someone can always lend a hand when moving heavy items; neighbors can help you get grocery, share tools to fix something that's broken, and help walk the kids to and from school. Not to mention Dongsì is closer to

everything. You don't need to beg people to take you out of the house. When you leave hutongs, all of these perks disappear. During the day, when kids are at school and your children are at their workplace, you are at home only with your spouse, in some cases, alone. "Relatives that are far away are not as good as neighbors that are nearby" – pretty straightforward. It's the best way to describe life in hutongs. Neighbors living in apartment buildings will not develop this kind of relationship. If the hutongs disappear, we as neighbors will not have this kind of spiritual relationship.



Figure 8. Chess table and chairs, a common scene in hutongs where residents' leisure activities and social interactions are integral parts of the public space and hutong lifestyle. Photo by the author.

Some residents expressed concern about the official value statement of Dongsi. They pointed out that it overemphasized the age of the neighborhood, but downplayed the process of neighborhood transformation, in terms of both decline and improvement. In other words, how did Dongsi become the neighborhood we see today, especially changes that happened since the Reform and Opening-up era (Abramson, 2001). Residents saw the importance of telling a more complete and honest version of Beijing's urban history, including how hutong neighborhoods in general went through demographic change, real estate development, and large-scale demolition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and how Dongsi ended up as one of the few survivors of traditional residential neighborhoods in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Beijing. They brought up the value of Dongsi historic neighborhood as an educational tool to remind people of the positive and negative effects of decision-making in urban planning and preservation history.

北京的保护工作我总的认为是被动的，是不得已而为之。理清价值、划定保护区是因为很多之前都已经破坏了。北京市有规划院，设计北京哪些地方不能拆建改建、要限高的，可是它定的这些东西往往实现不了。北京市里面很多是中央的单位，北京市管不了中央单位。很多中央单位盖房的时候就超过限高、突破限制。为什么后来要定保护区？因为以前认为价值低的、已经破坏了，就不能定为保护区了。因为交通问题，城门城墙都拆了，这就是人为的破坏。像东四这样定为保护区，就意味着不能再拆了，

但现在也只是亡羊补牢。反应过去北京市城建发展的实物，拆了就没了，光有文字，没有实在的东西了，这是非常可惜的。我们讲北京老城的历史和价值的时候，不能光讲过去什么样儿，怎么拆成现在这样儿的，也得讲清楚，要不然人家不明白你保护区是怎么划的。

Historic preservation in Beijing, I think, is overall reactive. It's carried out as a last resort. (The government was) clarifying the values and delineating protected areas, because many places were already destroyed (before 1990). Beijing Municipality has a city planning institute. Its job is to designate those areas that cannot be demolished, altered, and rebuild, and to put height limit on buildings and neighborhoods. However, many of these regulations cannot be enforced. There are many governmental agencies and institutions at the national level that are located in Beijing. The municipal government cannot rule over the national government. Many of these agencies and institutions broke beyond the regulations and limits, when renovating their work space. Why there needed to be designated protection areas? Because those that were deemed of low value, and those were already demolished, would not become designated protection areas anyway. Because of transportation needs (starting with the building of expressway and subway lines in the 1950s and 60s), the historic city wall and gates were all taken down. This is man-made destruction. Neighborhoods like Dongsì were designated as protected areas. It means that there shouldn't be demolition any more. But that's just the remedy. Physical remains that can reflect Beijing's urban construction history, if you take those down, they're gone. Only texts left, no physical evidence, and that's

a pity. When we talk about the history and value of the historic core of Beijing, we can't only talk about what it used to look like. We also need to explain clearly how, after mass demolition, it looks like it is now. Otherwise, people don't understand on what basis we designate this conservation areas.

北京是和平解放的，没有用炮轰，围城的八路军当时还派人来了解重点地区、保护文物、降低损失，说明共产党对于历史文化、民族文化、城市的保护还是非常认真的。所以我们的胡同四合院很多保留的是民国时期的样子。但是解放以后，由于很多原因，很多人跑了，房子空下来了，中央、北京市、区级的一些机关单位，就把空房给占了，这些房子基本上都是质量比较好的。同时也盖了一些小楼，有的是办公室有的是单位宿舍。比如二条中段，盖楼房就占了一部分古建筑，明朝时候是道教的庙。后来改革开放，好多外地人搬进来了，在胡同里面做生意，也允许买卖房子了，所以好多老住户都搬走了。现在一说胡同历史街区，老想着恢复成明清时期的样子，那就得把后来的建筑全都扒了重新改成假古建？花那么多钱是为了什么？与其花心思在仿古那上面，不如多考虑考虑怎么改善现在的居民生活条件。历史街区也在不断适应、不断变化，不能只讲历史，不讲现在。

Beijing was liberated peacefully (in 1949), with no armed conflict at the time. The Eight Route Army that besieged Beijing sent people here to study important areas, relics that needed to be protected, and how to lower the risk (of harming the historic environment). This shows that the Communist Party seriously care about history,

culture, and preservation of the city. So many of the hutongs and siheyuans today are preserved from that Republican period. However, after 1949, due to a lot of reasons, many people left Beijing, leaving their home vacant. Many governmental agencies and institutions at the national, municipal, and district levels, occupied these empty courtyard houses. These were actually of relatively good quality and conditions (Figure 9). Meanwhile, they built some multi-story buildings (in hutongs), used them as office space or residence halls for employees. For example, at the middle section of Ertiao, those buildings were built after demolishing historic buildings. That place used to be a Daoist temple back in Ming Dynasty. Then came Reform and Opening-up, and many people from outside of Beijing moved into the neighborhood to open their small businesses. Also private housing market opened up, so many previous neighbors moved away. Now when we talk about hutong historic neighborhoods, people always think about going back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties. So we need to take down those (post-1949) buildings and rebuild some fake historic courtyard houses? What's the point of spending all that money? Instead of spending time and energy on creating fake historic environment, why don't (the government) think more about how to improve the life quality of today's residents. Historic neighborhoods go through nonstop adjustments and changes. We can't talk just talk about history, we need to talk about now.



Figure 9. No. 79 Dongsi Qitiao, a registered heritage site on Dongcheng District's census on immovable cultural relics, with sophisticated entrance gate, a large screen wall, original floor surface, and plenty of courtyard space. This courtyard house complex was a former residence of Zaican's family, descendants of Qing imperial family, and Yan Xishan, a famous Republican era warlord. Post-1949, this complex was used as workers' dormitory of the August First Film Studio, the first and only production studio established by Chinese military in the 1950s. A "duty room" sign can still be seen on the wooden door attached to the side of the entrance gate, which signifies that this entire courtyard house complex was once a work unit dormitory in the early People's Republic era. Photo by the author.

In residents' perceptions, this narrative focusing on age and tradition also created a sense of stagnation, a disconnect between Dongsi the historic place and Dongsi the living space. They were worried that official value assessment will not help with the urgent needs of today's residents. Namely, their demand for the government to take care of the work to

improve infrastructure, amenity, and neighborhood environment. Residents talked about how confusing it was for many people to have a contradicting perception of Dongsì and even hutong neighborhoods in general: yes they're historical. These homes have high market value because they are in the inner city. And hutongs are full of traditions and a beautiful place. But many hutong neighborhoods were also seen as urban slums, with overcrowded courtyard houses and a lack of proper care. In reality, both these points are true. The residents suggested that by telling the process of urban transformation and neighborhood change, historic neighborhoods like Dongsì would be portrayed as both historical and contemporary, so the residents' everyday needs would be seen.

我对胡同历史街区价值的评判和政府官方对于胡同历史街区价值的定义，有一致的地方也有不一致的地方。我先说一致的：胡同本身的价值在于民俗民风，是民间的一种“乡愁”，是北京特有的东西，这个居住传统当然是值得我们保护的。不一致的地方在于，政府要逐步意识到胡同作为城市的一部分，也在经历现代化改造，如何平衡保护和发展，如何平衡保护历史文化和改善民生，这一点强调得完全不够。怎么疏解人口的同时保留原住民？怎么把以前脏乱差的环境改善成大家都满意的干净整洁的样儿？这些才是应该重点强调的，光说传统啊历史啊，没法儿直接引起大家的重视和共鸣。

Between my judgment of the value of hutong historic neighborhood and the government's official definition of hutong historic neighborhood's value, there are



some similarities, and also some differences. First this is what I agree with: the value of hutongs lies in the folklore and customs; it's a "sense of home" among common people; and it's unique to Beijing. Of course this residential tradition is worthy of our protection. What I disagree is that the government needs to realize that hutongs are part of the city, therefore going through modernization transformations at the same time. How to balance between preservation and development? How to balance between protecting history and culture, and improving people's lives? These points are not emphasized enough. How to reduce population density and at the same time maintain the original residents? How to transform the previously disgusting, disordered, and bad environment into something clean and neat that can satisfy all of us? These should be the emphasized points (when talking about Dongsisi and historic neighborhoods alike). If they only talk about traditions and history, people won't pay attention and resonate with (the cause of preservation).

有人说东四价值高，有人说东四价值低，我觉得他们都有道理。首先东四毕竟在城里，教育资源好，交通也方便，老人住在这里不愿意走了，现在有挺多年轻人也来东四租房住了，因为历史街区变成特别新潮的一个地方了，而且年轻人上班不用早晚赶路。听卖房中介说我们东四的房子一平米值 14 万块钱！当然了，作为居民来说，自己住，不卖，或者好多人是住的是单位的公房，本来也卖不了，房价多贵对我们来讲都没意义。但是也有

一些居民就等着搬迁呢，想赶紧离开东四，觉得这儿是一个贫民窟，地方小、人挤人，什么都老化了，动不动就得修水电。好多人家里还是几十年前那状态，没厨房没厕所，得用公用的，而且也没钱改造装修。所以就等着政府补贴他们腾退，一说有腾退的消息这些人可积极了。有时候政府啊、开发商啊，也拿着个压价，说你们是危房，腾退给的钱就少。但是城里的房子质量其实都还不错，我们跟南城那些后来盖的破四合院不一样。

Some people say Dongsì is highly value, and some people say there is not much value here. I think they both have their points. First of all, by any means, Dongsì is located in the inner city, with high quality schools and easy transportation. Those who have been here long don't want to leave. Nowadays, many young people come here to rent places to live in Dongsì, because historic neighborhood becomes a cool place to live in, and they also don't need to wake up early to commute. I heard some housing market agents said that courtyard house homes in Dongsì were sold for ¥140,000 per square meter (approx. \$2,000/ft<sup>2</sup>)! Well of course, as residents, we live here, and we will not sell our home. Or some residents live in public housing that belong to their workplace, so they can't sell their courtyard house home anyway. The market value of these homes doesn't mean anything to us. But there are some other residents who are waiting to move out. They just want to leave Dongsì. They think this place is a slum, narrow and crowded. Everything is outdated. Water and electricity needed to be fixed constantly. Many people's home looked like they were several decades ago, with no private kitchen and restroom,

so they had to use the public ones. And also they don't have money to renovate or refurbish. So they're waiting on the government's stipend to move out of Dongsi (voluntary relocation). Every time there was word about stipend, they became pretty active. Sometimes the government and the developers would use this (dilapidated housing conditions) to lower the incentivized price. They would say your home is collapsing anyway, so we can't pay you that much to move out. But actually, courtyard houses in the inner city are of pretty good conditions. Our courtyard houses (in Dongsi) are different from those dilapidated ones in Southern Beijing, which were built later.

The monetary value of courtyard homes in the real estate market were rarely brought up in residents' discussion on the value of Dongsi as a historic neighborhood. Like the previous resident said, many of them did not have the plan or could not afford to sell their current home (government stipend was not enough for them to buy another residence elsewhere); and for those living in public housing, they were not allowed to sell their homes anyway. Some did bring up the economic value of Dongsi from small business and tourism perspectives. Again, they identified Dongsi as opposed to other historic neighborhoods that went through intense commercial and tourism development (Chen & Zhang, 2010; Shin, 2010). In these conversations, they also emphasized the residential function that was at the core of Dongsi's identity as a historic neighborhood.

保护区就意味着不能搞房地产开发了，这一点东城区政府也是很明确的，东四就是住宅区，不能大拆大建。奥运会那会儿也有人想来胡同里搞旅游的，可能因为我们这儿没什么景点可看的，后来就没人来了。偶尔有居民带着外地来的亲戚朋友，在胡同里转转，我觉得挺好，学习学习老北京文化，但是又不打扰居民生活。我们不是南锣鼓巷和后海，弄成那样儿就完了，就没人敢住了。

Being a designated conservation area means that there shouldn't be any real estate development. The Dongcheng District government is very clear on this. Dongsì is a residential neighborhood, so there shouldn't be any large-scale demolition and rebuilding. During the Olympics Games (2008), there were people coming here trying to do tourism, but it was probably because we don't have any tourist attraction here, those thoughts died down. Occasionally, there are residents who bring their non-local relatives and friends to walk around hutongs. I think this is great. People can learn old Beijing culture, and still will not disturb local residents' lives. We (Dongsì) are not Nanluoguxiang or Houhai (two of the heavily commercialized historic neighborhoods in Beijing). If we were made into those neighborhoods, we are over. Nobody would dare to live here anymore.

我们家是盖房、装修的，在东四做了十几年生意了，就是吃这碗饭的。我这顾客都是老邻居、老街坊，互相跟别人一说，就来找我了。因为现在好

多家都想装修房子，改善生活，我们有点儿工程经验，所以我们就有生意了。我们也不接大的客户，我们也接不了，就在东四干活足够了。

My family is in the construction and remodeling business. We've been doing this here in Dongsì for more than a decade. We live on this (business). All my customers are old neighbors. They told each other (about us), so people came to me. Because right now many families want to remodel their homes and improve their lives. We have some project experience, that's how we got their business. We don't do large projects, we can't do that anyway. The projects in Dongsì are enough (for us to make a living).

There are some common themes that came out of residents' perceptions on values:

- The consensus among residents is that Dongsì is historically important. Hutong residential neighborhoods are the embodiment of local culture. This aligns with the official value assessment stated in the municipal-level conservation planning document;
- There is an awareness that Dongsì is among the few surviving examples of the hutong system in Beijing, which aligns with the “best-preserved” description. Residents recognize the definition of being a designated protection area, and understand that this designation should shield their neighborhood from undesirable changes, such as large-scale demolition, which previously happened very often in many other historic residential neighborhoods;

- Many residents describe the values of Dongsì through the lens of how it is different from other types of heritage sites in Beijing and also other types of residential neighborhoods. Such differences are not about physical appearance. They are about identity, life-style, and relationships among neighbors;
- Residents perceive that urban transformation and neighborhood changes are part of the hutongs' identity. The disconnection between a historic place and a contemporary living space bothers people. They want to be seen as a people of the present, not of the past. They also want to see the changes being communicated, their positive and negative experience being validated;
- Residents being interviewed generally reject the idea of real estate market value, although they tend to agree with small business and small scale tourist activities. People see Dongsì's values in its traditional life-style, not its potential to be turned in to a commercialized space. They have clear ideas of how other historic neighborhoods look and feel like, and that the values of Dongsì are quite different;
- Residents expect the government to take care of life quality improvement measures, as they believe that will shift the focus of preservation work to the people, further boost the sociocultural values of Dongsì, and make it a desirable place to live.

#### **4.2. Opinions on Issues**

This section focuses on the residents' perceptions on specific policies and practices that were put in place to achieve officially defined preservation goals in Dongsì Santiao to Batiao Historical and Cultural Conservation Area. The aim is not to provide an in-depth

analysis of law and policy documents; rather, to use preservation policies and practices, written in these documents and implemented by the local government, to introduce issues and concerns residents discussed in their narratives; and also to explain, from their perspectives and experience, how these policies and practices succeed or failed to benefit them.

In the *Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002), four of the five principles for conserving the core areas of Beijing Old City are related to the historical quality of built structures and the overall environmental and infrastructure improvement (the fifth one concerns public participation, which will be discussed in later sections):

- The overall features of these neighborhoods shall be protected in accordance with their nature and characteristics;
- The historical authenticity of the neighborhoods shall be protected and their historic sites and ancient vestiges shall be preserved. The historic sites include cultural heritage buildings, traditional courtyard residences, and other valuable historic buildings and architectural structures;
- The reconstruction mode of “micro-cycling” with phased progress and gradual improvements shall be adopted;
- Environmental quality and infrastructure conditions shall be proactively ameliorated, and the quality of life for residents shall be improved.

Applying these principles, the subdistrict government implemented a series of campaigns in the past several decades. This section presents residents' perceptions of these policies and practices in three areas: measures to maintain the historical characteristics of the hutongs in general and the façade changes; measures to improve the quality and usage of public spaces both in the hutongs and inside the courtyard houses; as well as measures that aimed to improve the infrastructure and amenities in the neighborhood.

#### 4.2.1. Historic Characteristics and Façade Change

Preservation theories and practices in China evolved during the last seventy years. The discussion of built environment preservation in China started with a focus on individual buildings as “cultural relics”<sup>6</sup>. In the 1961 *Provisional Regulations on Cultural Relics Protection and Management* issued by the State Council, and the 1982 *Law on Protection of Cultural Relics* adopted at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress, the core principle of preservation has always been “keeping the cultural relics in their original state.” Much like the long-lasting global conversations around the term “authenticity,” the preservation field in China has gone through various stages in interpreting what is “the original state”<sup>7</sup> and how to preserve “the

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<sup>6</sup> “Cultural relics” (文物) was used as the technical term to describe archaeological objects and cultural heritage sites. The term has an underlining focus on a single object, instead of a building, landscape, or area. In recent decades, new and more inclusive terms have been adapted, such as cultural relics building (文物建筑), immovable cultural relics (不可移动文物), and historical and cultural famous city (历史文化名城).

<sup>7</sup> The term “the original state” (原状) generates some questions and debates: in what era was it (a building/neighborhood) original? If the original state is not the current state as we find it, to what extent should we alter the current state to make it looks like it was during a historical time period?



original state” of a historic building or heritage site. One of the interpretations of “the original state” includes “the spirit of the original place,” which puts human beings, memories, emotions, characteristics, connections, orientation, identification, phenomenon, spirit, and meanings together as part of a historic building or heritage site.

In the 1980s, state-led preservation in China expanded to include historic cities, in addition to individual buildings of importance. In 1982, the State Council designated a series of National Historical and Cultural Famous Cities<sup>8</sup>, among which Beijing was the first one. In 1985, in order to address those buildings that formed historic neighborhoods but are not listed as historical and cultural sites protected at the national-, provincial/municipal-, and city/district-levels, the State Council raised the concept of Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas<sup>9</sup>. In the 1990s, the Ministry of Construction issued a series of administrative measures and provided specific funding to support preservation goals in different historic neighborhoods in China, which provided examples for municipalities to follow. These governmental designations and financial support signaled the recognition of historic neighborhood preservation, which includes protection of the buildings and overall landscape of the buildings, instead of only individual sites of importance (Ruan and Sun, 2001).

The expanded recognition, to include historic neighborhoods as well as individual buildings, was further shown in the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in*

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<sup>8</sup> Beijing was one of the 24 National Historical and Cultural Famous City (国家历史文化名城) designated by the State Council in 1982. By March 2021, there are 137 designated cities nationwide.

<sup>9</sup> Historical and Cultural Conservation Area (历史文化保护区)

*China* (2002, revised 2015), put together by China ICOMOS and approved by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The Principles confirmed that conservation plans of historical and cultural neighborhoods “should be integrated with municipal and town development plans.” This reinforced the responsibility for historic neighborhood preservation by the municipal and local planning commissions, and stated that “what is permitted in terms of scope and requirements” needed to be clarified in planning documents. This dual hierarchy management system of historic neighborhoods, where the municipal and local planning commission and state cultural heritage bureau both have administrative power over specific urban areas, has been criticized by political scientists who studied the politics around heritage management in China as a source of “functional fragmentation” (Zhang, 2013). However, it can still be argued that the administrative power of the planning department helped broaden the scope of preservation from individual sites to entire urban areas such as historic neighborhoods.

In *the Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002), data showed that only 7% of the entire land area of these historic neighborhoods was occupied by designated Historical and Cultural Sites protected at national-, municipal-, and district-levels (Category I). Another 9% were “traditional, modern, and contemporary buildings of some historical and cultural values” (Category II). Other than these, the vast majority (84%) of currently standing buildings in these historic neighborhoods are “common traditional architecture that are in harmony with the traditional characteristics” (Category III), for example, courtyard houses, architecture from the modern or Republic of China

era; “modern structures that are in harmony with the traditional characteristics” (Category IV), such as reconstructed courtyard houses; and “structures that are not in harmony with the traditional characteristics” (Category V), including temporary additional structures built by residents or institutions using the courtyard houses, and multi-story buildings in the middle of hutong neighborhoods. Note that among the last three categories, the standard to differentiate between building categories is whether or not the appearance of a building is “in harmony with the traditional characteristics.”<sup>10</sup> Traditional, or sometimes described as historic characteristics in planning documents, are not objectively measurable qualities of the environment, but rather a series of general terms to describe the subjective perceptions of an environment as traditional or historic.

This is especially vivid in the residents’ perceptions of preservation policies and practices that aimed to protect the historic characteristics of Dongsì neighborhood through façade treatment and appearance regulation. Most residents don’t live in buildings of significant historic or artistic values (see previous discussion on value judgement from an expert point of view) but which do represent where the “common people” live. The way residents described the changing appearance of the neighborhood is often in a sense of “how I feel about this environment” and “how this change in regulations affected me.” These two residents thought that single-story buildings were the trademark of hutong neighborhoods. As long as the overall environment felt historical, construction details of

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<sup>10</sup> In harmony with the traditional characteristics (与传统风貌相协调) is a vague, and some could argue, subjective standard to judge the appearance of buildings or a specific design. Commonly agreed scope of this standard include same or similar color, style, and constructional materials. However, in reality, such standard is not strictly enforced.

courtyard house buildings should not matter, because these structures were “common people’s place” nonetheless.

这些年政府整治的结果，把胡同里平房的外墙都重新刷过了，好多超高的违建也给拆了，人一进来，青砖灰瓦绿树成荫，感觉特别有历史的感觉了。

The government led the renovation work in recent years. Exterior walls of the single-story buildings in hutongs were repainted. Many illegal construction that went above the height limit were taken down. When people come in (to the hutongs), you see grey brick, grey roof tiles, and so much greenery, you can feel the history here.

以前有一个提法叫修旧如旧，问题是谁知道以前什么样儿啊，要说恢复，恢复到什么时候的样儿啊？现在一说清代建筑就是故宫颐和园，一说民国时期就是东交民巷，问题是那些都不是老百姓住的地方。到底胡同该修成什么样儿？其实谁也拿不准，只能说保持平房的整体效果，大体上修成传统的样子，就行了。

There was an idea to “repair the old as the old”, but the problem is who knows how “the old” looked like? If we want to go back, go back to what time period? Nowadays, when talking about Qing Dynasty architecture, we talk about the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace. When talking about the Republic of China

period architecture, we talk about Dongjiao Minxiang<sup>11</sup>. The problem is that those are not the place for common people to live. So how should we renovate hutongs? In fact, nobody knows exactly. The only thing we know is to keep the overall environment with single-story buildings. Just renovate it to have a general traditional appearance, and that's it.

Other residents pointed out that the purpose of façade and roof treatment work was not well communicated between the subdistrict government and the residents ahead of time, resulting in complaints. They were not sure what was the end goal of this kind of practices in term of the hutong's visual appearance, and who should financially be responsible for the manual labor related to renovation work.

去年夏天我们院子这外墙政府给重新刷了，整个胡同临街的平房说都要重新刷，重新贴砖，旧的瓦也得重新换了什么的。有的街坊不同意，觉得这是瞎折腾，今天一个样儿、明天一个样儿，动不动就装修，弄得胡同里面闹哄哄、乱糟糟的。

Last summer (2018), the government repainted the exterior wall of our courtyard house. They said the exterior walls of single-story buildings in the entire hutong needed to be repainted and retiled, and the old roof tiles needed to be replaced as

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<sup>11</sup> Dongjiao Minxiang is a street in Dongcheng District that has a high concentration of foreign embassies dated back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

well. Some neighbors did not agree with (these requirements), thought it was extra hassle for nothing. One look today, another look tomorrow. The non-stop remodeling work made it noisy and messy in the hutongs.

没有一个规定说到底谁出钱，有的是住户自己出钱弄的，有的有政府补贴，有的完全就是政府强制花钱弄的，就是为了整齐划一，恢复传统风貌。我觉得整条胡同整齐划一挺好的，都是青砖灰瓦，看着美观。但是这个过程不能一刀切。别今天整修了墙面明天说不行又要求改，那就该有意见了。

There was no regulation on who should pay for it (repaint and remodeling). Some residents paid themselves. Some received partial governmental stipend. In some cases, the work were entirely mandated and paid by the subdistrict government. The goal was to unify the appearance of the exterior walls, and to recreate the traditional characteristics (Figures 10 & 11). I think it's good to unify the look, with all grey bricks and roof tiles. It looks beautiful. But this (remodeling) process should not be done in a one-size-fits-all manner. I worry that maybe we have our walls repainted today and there would be another requirement on the appearance tomorrow, and we would be asked to change (the exterior appearance) all over. If that's the case, there will be complaints.



Figure 10. Red brick roof tiles used by one household. This practice (often cheaper than using grey brick roof tiles) is identified by residents as not in harmony with the traditional characteristics of hutongs, as grey brick roof tiles are the conventional material used for courtyard house roofing. Photo by the author.



Figure 11. Residents identify constructions with non-traditional materials and appearance (such as this structure using stainless steel windows and glass ceiling) as not in harmony with the traditional characteristics of hutongs, particularly because these parts are visible on the exterior façade. Such covering structure are often built and used by the residents as climate controlled green house, shower, or storage space. Photo by the author.

In April 2017, Dongcheng District government launched a three-year campaign called “alleviate, renovate, and hasten the improvement.”<sup>12</sup> The goal of this campaign is to lower population density in Beijing’s historic city center, reduce the city’s “non-capital

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<sup>12</sup> The alleviate, renovate, and hasten the improvement (疏解整治促提升) campaign is the result of Beijing’s new Urban Master Plan (2016-2035), and the Coordinated Development Strategy of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region (京津冀协同发展战略), one of China’s current national development strategies.



functions”<sup>13</sup>, renovate the urban environment, and accelerate the life quality improvement measures in the district. Repainting exterior walls of courtyard houses was one of the practices in this campaign. Another façade treatment measure, known as “eliminating the holes in the walls”<sup>14</sup>, sparked far more controversy. Most residents described that the biggest change brought by this campaign was the disappearance of street shops and services.

胡同外观上的变化最明显的肯定就是最近政府这个“治理拆墙打洞”，当然初衷是好的，很多老旧的房子，变成商业之后结构都给改变了，变成危房了，所以确实得立个规矩整修一下了。但是问题是这么一搞，把很多小商贩的生意都搞没了，原本人家开个店是冲着胡同的，咱们大家一看就知道是什么，这样儿才能卖得出去。结果现在给人家临街的门儿都给堵了，就剩一面白墙，只能走后门儿了，生意自然受影响。有的店在窗户上放一个小招牌，有的店经营不下去直接关门了。

The most obvious change of hutong appearance was certainly the recent government-led campaign “to eliminate holes in the wall.” Of course the initial intention was good. There were many old, dilapidated houses. When they were

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<sup>13</sup> Reduce non-capital functions (疏解非首都功能) was a policy concept first raised by President Xi Jinping in February 2015 during a CPC Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission (中央财经领导小组) meeting. Beijing as the capital city was seen as serving too many functions, and the industries and population related to non-capital functions should be relocated outside of the capital city.

<sup>14</sup> The eliminating the holes in the walls (治理开墙打洞) campaign led to the most visible appearance changes in hutong neighborhoods in recent years.

turned into commercial establishments, the structure (of those buildings) were changed, and the courtyard houses turned into decrepit buildings. So it was indeed necessary to have them regulated and renovated. However, the problem was that this campaign forced a lot of small businesses out. Originally those people opened the shops facing the hutong, and we immediately knew what that (business) is about. That's the way they sell (goods and services). The result now is that their street-side entrances were blocked, and there are only these plain walls left. People can only go through the back door. Their businesses are clearly impacted. Some shops placed a small plaque on their windows, some just couldn't continue to operate and permanently closed afterwards.

“整治拆墙打洞”之后这个街道看着很不自然，以前虽然是不统一的，但是看着很有人气儿，现在看着就一溜儿白墙，可能有人觉得这个美观吧！但是造成了很多不便。

After this “eliminating holes in the walls” campaign, the street (hutongs) looked pretty unnatural. Before that, the building façade (of courtyard houses along both sides of the hutongs) was not unified (visually), but they looked lively. Now there is this endless plain walls in sight. Maybe some people thought this is beautiful! But it did cause much inconvenience (for residents).

大家关心更多的是，因为最近这个政策，好多卖菜、副食和粮油的小店都给清理了，上哪儿买东西去？很多店主我们以前都认识，人家也都住胡同

里很久了。现在我们东四这片有一些便民商店之类的设施，但都比较集中，包括食品和用品的种类等等，只能说还有很多可以提高的地方。

The thing we care more about is that many small grocery stores were closed and cleared out due to this recent policy. Where do we go to get groceries? We knew many of the store owners. They've been living in this hutong for a long time. Nowadays our Dongsì neighborhood has some convenience stores and facilities like that, but those are pretty concentrated in one place. The food and household items they offered, things like that, I can only say that there is a lot to improve.

我们家临街的这个店面不让弄了，但是生意没有受太大影响，毕竟都是老街坊，基本都是介绍来的。

Our storefront that faced the hutong was not allowed anymore, but my business was not heavily impacted. Nevertheless my customers are all old neighbors. Basically they got introduced to my business (in a word-of-mouth fashion).

To follow up on how the disappearance of many small businesses, caused by this campaign, negatively impacted their life, one resident gave me a very specific example.

前两天我老伴儿想买这个棉线做点儿手工活儿，以前胡同里就是日杂这类的小店很多，什么扣子、拉锁、线，这种，咱们现在叫“小商品”，这些都能买着，很方便。但是“整治拆墙打洞”清走了很多这种小店，我为了给她

买这个线，专门坐了俩小时车到大红门那边儿农贸市场去买的，回来又做了俩小时车。这个对我们老人来说真的很不方便。年轻人你说买个汽水儿，买个冰棍儿，以前都家门口就有小店卖，现在都得专门去地铁站边儿上那个大超市了。

Just recently, my spouse wanted to buy some cotton thread for her crafts. In the past, there were many small shops in hutongs that sold household items, such as buttons, zippers, and threads. Things like that. We call it “small goods” nowadays. We could easily buy these things. It was quite convenient. But after “eliminating holes in the walls”, many of this kind of small shops were gone. To buy her this thread, I took a two-hour bus ride to a Farmer Market in Dahongmen, and took another two hours back. This is really inconvenient for us older generations. For the younger generations, say you want to buy a soda, or an ice cream, in the past, there were many small shops right around the corner. Now you need to go to the large supermarket next to the subway station to buy them.

One long-term resident went deep into the historical roots of this campaign and talked about the socio-economic reasons behind the original “holes in the walls” phenomenon, which started in the 1990s. This resident also pointed out that the current campaign to eliminate these “holes” was not about changing the façade of courtyard houses or beautifying the overall hutong environment, but more about getting rid of the migrant workers population which was seen as one of the easiest ways to reduce population density in Beijing’s historic neighborhoods.

我小时候胡同里面没有这么多商业，买东西经常是小商贩来走街串巷叫卖，包括日用品和吃的，但是他们都没有门脸儿，都是临时流动性质的。后来改革开放，鼓励私营经济、市场经济，很多外地人进城做买卖，还有本地人也开始做买卖，那时候胡同里才开始有这么多小商铺。这几十年大家都已经习惯了。现在政府说北京市要“纾解非首都功能”，首先就是要清理一些“低端人口”，其中就包括改革开放以来进京的这些小商业主。人家当初开店的时候执照、手续都是齐全的，都是合法经营，现在大政策变了，也没办法把这些人赶走，怎么办呢？就只能说你这个影响首都风貌了，你这个店面“跟胡同历史街区的传统风貌不相协调”。其实本质上不是外观的问题，本质上是为了规范商业、降低胡同里面的人员密度。这个目的确实达到了，现在胡同里外地人是比以前少了。

When I grew up there was not these many businesses in hutongs. Usually there were street peddlers went around the neighborhood and we bought from them, including household items, produce, and food items. But they had no store front. It was all temporary (street peddling). Then came the Reform and Opening-up policy, when private businesses and market economy was encouraged. There was a large number of outsiders coming into Beijing to start small businesses, and local people did that, too. That was when small store fronts started to pop up in hutongs. People got used to (these stores) in recent decades. Now that the government is saying, Beijing needs to “reduce non-capital functions”, and first and foremost, get

rid of these “low-end population”. This include the small business owners who came in since the Reform and Opening-up. When they first opened these stores, they received business licenses and all other required documents. Those were completely legal businesses. Now that the overarching policy is changed, and there is no clear way to get rid of these people. What do they (the government) do? They can only accuse you (the businesses) for (visually) negatively impacting the characteristics of the capital city, and your storefronts are “not in harmony with the traditional characteristics of the hutong historic neighborhood”. The essential problem is not about appearance. It’s to regulate the businesses, and lower the population density of hutongs. This goal is actually accomplished. Nowadays there are fewer outsiders in hutongs.

This narrative puts the current policy campaign and residents’ perceptions in a longer historical perspective. Many policies, regulations, and campaigns that were publicly advertised as façade treatment or maintaining the historic characteristics of urban space, were not about “how these neighborhoods should look”, but were put in place to target deep-rooted social problems. Although residents tended to see and feel the direct effects (disappearance of small businesses, reduced population, and recent inconvenience), this resident’s oral account did bring up some larger socio-economic concerns as reflected by visual and spatial changes happened in urban neighborhoods like Dongsi.

Multiple studies and news reports confirmed these concerns. In a 2015 *Urban Studies* article (Huang & Yi, 2015) on migrant workers’ often-time “invisible” living space in

Beijing, Huang and Yi argued that controlling urban spaces has become an institution and legitimization of exclusion and marginalization. Migrants were defined as an inferior social class and their businesses were “non-capital functions” in the city. Due to the Hukou system, many of their rights were infringed or denied, including housing, education, and businesses. The study by Huang and Yi used the elimination of dangerous basement living space as an example of a regulation that focused on living and commercial spaces in the city that were actually used to target a certain group of people, but the practice was widely used. A July 2017 *New York Times* report (Myers, 2017) on Beijing’s “eliminating holes in the walls” campaign and its effects also pointed out that small businesses in historic neighborhoods contributed to the uniqueness of Beijing’s local culture. Maybe the way businesses owners altered their houses did need further regulations, but to get rid of them all, was clearly a move to force migrant population out, instead of a measure solely targeted at improving the historic characteristics of the hutong environment. Four Tsinghua University scholars from architecture, social sciences, life sciences, and public administration schools published a mixed method study (Huang et al., 2018) on this campaign and its effects in *The Paper* in May 2018. In their survey of residents and pedestrian, they also identified migrant population settlement and job loss as one of the negative impacts caused by this campaign. The other three areas were the decreased level of convenience for residents’ daily life; lack of attention to the quality of dilapidated houses beyond their exterior façade; and the lack of a step-by-step approach to manage or regulate building appearance, which resulted in many overnight demolitions that caught everybody off guard.

The overall campaign to “alleviate, renovate, and hasten the improvement” that started in 2017 was extensively covered in *Dongsi Weekly* later that year. In the November 21<sup>st</sup> issue, two pages were devoted to the results of this campaign. Since Spring 2017, 256 former “holes in the walls” situations got fixed. New exterior wall were built, retiled or painted. A total of 7761.5 m<sup>2</sup> façade and surface area was affected. That was 128% of the originally intended work. Some of the keywords the reporting mentioned were renovation, management, and preservation. In the “goals accomplished” section, the community newsletter did mention that the actions taken that year helped lower the local population density, but did not go further to explain what that meant for the local residents.

In our conversations, some residents agreed that regulations on hutong appearance and building façade, as well as the “eliminating holes in the walls” campaign, did bring in some positive changes in their hutongs, such as eliminating fire hazards, improving courtyard houses’ structural safety, and reducing nighttime noise from some certain types of commercial establishments.

我觉得这个胡同整成什么样儿都无所谓，我们也不懂这个，但是之前因为重新装修，工人把墙上走的线都给重新整理了，还新安了盒子把电线都给包起来了，这个就挺好的，一是人一进来不会看见一堆电线乱七八糟的在墙上了，再一个也帮我们解除了一个重大的安全隐患。好多线可能都几十年都没动过了，谁知道那线是接哪儿的、干什么的。



My opinion is that it doesn't matter how hutong looked like after renovation. We don't understand this (how hutongs should look like) anyway. But because many façades were remodeled previously, the workers sorted out all the (electricity, cable, Internet, etc.) wires on the exterior wall. They also put up new box coverings to wrap around the wires (Figure 12). This was pretty good. On one hand, when people come in (to the hutongs), they won't see these chaotic wires on the walls. On the other hand, this (campaign) helped us to eliminate a huge safety hazard. Many of these wires were left untouched for multiple decades. Who knows what they are there for and where they are connected to.

我完全理解。有一些餐馆和酒吧夜间噪音扰民。尤其以前有一些小酒吧，咱们本地人也不去。有些居民反应这个问题很久了，现在一治理“拆墙打洞”，这个问题顺便也解决了。

I totally understand (this campaign). Some restaurants and bars were pretty loud at night. Especially there were previously some small bars. We locals don't go there anyway. Some residents have been complaining about this noise problem for a long time. Now that the “holes in the walls” were targeted, this (noise) problem was solved along the way.

胡同的整治也不可能规定得太具体、太严格，做不到。像空调、电线、门窗、墙体这种，各家各户改得都很杂乱，有的确实有安全隐患，需要详细

规范一下。但是也不能全都不让弄。还是得以我们实际生活需求为准。如果大家生活都不方便了，风貌提升也只是纸上谈兵。

Regulations on hutong renovation should not be too detailed and too strict. Won't achieve anything. For things like air conditioning, electricity wires, doors and windows, and exterior walls, different households made changes differently. Some indeed were safety hazards and needed detailed regulation. But you can't get rid of everything. It all has to come down to our lives' practical needs. If we (residents) can't live our lives conveniently, improving the (hutongs' historic) characteristics is just an empty talk.



Figure 12. Re-arranged and covered electronic wires on the side wall of a courtyard house in Dongsi Liutiao. Photo by the author.

Residents' perceptions on policies and practices that aimed at maintaining the historic characteristics of Dongsi, as well as regulations and campaigns that led to façade and appearance changes can be summarized as:

- Dongsi residents agree that the most recognizable visual characteristic of hutong neighborhood are the single-story courtyard house buildings lining both sides of the hutong;
- The way residents describe the historic environment is more in an intangible sense, focusing on feelings and perceptions associated the overall visual effect. This aligns

with the renovation goal identified in planning documents, which is to achieve “harmony with the traditional characteristics”;

- Residents believe that for those visual elements that were not “in harmony with the traditional characteristics”, changes should happen gradually instead of in an overnight fashion. Because the end goal of renovation work was not effectively communicated with them, they do not have an exact idea about how to carry out these changes, who should pay for it, why it has to happen now;
- The “eliminating holes in the walls” campaign in recent years received mixed feedback. Residents appreciate the positive changes (e.g., façade remodeling work that improved infrastructure safety, decreased population density, and reduced noise level). However, they are more likely to discuss the negative impacts, especially the disappearance of local small businesses, and the obvious inconveniences for residents caused by this change;
- With local media coverage and municipal-wide campaigns like this, residents did realize the effects of changing regulations on building façade include changes in local demographic, but only a few were comfortable with discussing the socio-economic reasons behind these policies. Many took an observer’s view, unless their lives were directly impacted.

#### **4.2.2. Public Space**

The usage of public space is a widely discussed topic in urban studies. Public space theorists Anthony Orum and Zachary Neal argued that “the public space is a basic and

authentic reflection of circumstances in the larger social order” (Orum and Neal, 2009). Jane Jacobs (1961) and William Whyte (1980) saw urban public space as the site where community is formed and community relationships are built. Lee (2009) spoke to the function of public space in Chinese cities as a staging ground, where cultural activities were performed and collective identity were expressed.

As historic preservation as a field is making a people-centered turn, and also starts “spatializing” historical memories (Mason, 2009), scholars draw attention to other elements in a heritage environment, in addition to buildings and physical structures, such as space between buildings, landscape, and human activities in situ (Low et al., 2009; Gehl, 2011). Compared to public spaces in modern and contemporary residential neighborhoods, such as apartment building complexes and gated single-family house communities, those in historic neighborhoods have more complicated functions and are used by residents more frequently. Beijing’s Hutongs are a good example. A hutong is not simply a narrower version of a street, but is used by multiple people and parties at the same time for multiple purposes. Hutongs are the pedestrian route, the space for occasional automobile through-traffic, the space between residential buildings to build infrastructure and facilities, and the shared space for outdoor activities and human interactions. Building constructions and human activities are happening at the same time in these narrow alleyways. There is no separation between through-traffic and sidewalk. Some spaces are designed with a specific purpose, but in a hutong neighborhood, almost any spot can be used as a public space for various purposes without intentional design or arrangement.

#### 4.2.2.1. Hutong Public Space

Previous empirical research (Akers, 2015; Li, 2018; Yang, 2016) on residents' experience of hutong living in Beijing all pointed to the uniqueness of hutong neighborhoods' spatial arrangement, and the social interactions attached to this particular setting. When residents talked about Dongsi's overall historic characteristics and façade change, conversations on courtyard house buildings are often blended with comments on the hutong public space. As stated in the *Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002), improvement of environmental quality is one of the five major principles to guide historic neighborhood preservation. Many residents described the effects of preservation practices not by “how courtyard house buildings' appearance changed,” but by “how the environment of hutong public space changed.” Cleanliness and tidiness are the most frequently mentioned terms.

就像很多人一提起四合院平房就觉得是老房、危房，脏、乱——成了胡同的特写。汽车、自行车，堆的破烂，旧家具，破沙发、破衣柜，都特别占地儿。垃圾是一个大问题，尤其是三条西口，饭馆多，垃圾成堆，好多苍蝇蚊子，非常不卫生。有的居民家里没有厕所，就在下水道口倒排泄物，不去公厕。收破烂的垃圾车一直停在胡同里，影响环境和交通。“纾解整治促提升”以来，最明显的变化肯定是胡同这个环境变整洁了，不光是看着好看，人也更愿意在胡同里呆了。

Many people, when they mentioned courtyard house and single-story buildings, thought those were old and dilapidated houses. Just like that, dirt and chaos – became features of the hutongs. Cars, bikes, garbage dump, old furniture, broken sofa and closets, they all occupied spaces (in hutongs). Trash (management) was a big problem. Especially for the western entrance of Santiao. There were many restaurants that produced much garbage. Flies and mosquitos around. It was very unsanitary. Some residents' homes had no toilet, so they dumped their excrement at the rainwater gully, instead of going to the public restroom. The recycling service truck parked in the hutong all the time, which impacted our environment and jammed the through-traffic. Ever since “alleviate, renovate, and hasten the improvement” campaign, the most obvious change is certainly the overall environment of the hutongs, which became cleaner and tidier. It is not only good looking, but people are also more willing to spend time in the hutongs.

俗话说旧的不去，新的不来。街道里这个环境整治工作，现在第一步是清理胡同里的垃圾，让整个环境变得更整洁。清理干净了才能有空间和心思去设计那些新的东西。现在农村里都能做到环境整洁，自觉维护了，怎么可能我们城市里做不到呢？

There is a slang “out with the old, in with the new”. For this renovation work to improve the environment in the subdistrict, the first step now is to clean out the garbage in the hutongs, in order to make the overall environment cleaner and tidier. Only by cleaning up (the hutongs), can you have the space and idea to design those

new things. Nowadays, even the villages can achieve cleanliness and tidiness in their environment, and people are willing to maintain it, how is it possible that we cannot achieve it in our cities?

Following up with this “most obvious change”, I asked residents what were the most visible examples of solid waste that they saw disappear from the hutongs in recent years, and they mentioned construction waste and bulky items. Some residents threw these materials out of the courtyard because they either didn’t have space inside their courtyard to put the items, or had no transportation means to move them to the major waste transfer station in the neighborhood. Some put the bulky items near the entrance of their courtyard houses as a place holder, so that nobody else’s trash would occupy that ground area. Either way, it was a tacit practice for decades. In response to my question about solid waste in hutong public areas, residents talked about the new regulations and management mechanism that were put in place as part of the preservation campaigns to get the unhealthy waste and unpleasant things out of sight.

刚清理租户那阵子，各家盖房的特别多，用的木材、水泥、砖什么的好多都堆在外面，盖完了剩下的建筑垃圾也不运走就堆在胡同里，爆土攘烟的。后来盖房就让去居委会和街道申报了，说好了大概什么规模，多长时间弄完，都批了就可以盖了，盖完还得负责把垃圾运走，谁家的垃圾谁运。居委会时不常地来人看看，就起一个监督的作用。做不到的会罚钱。



During the early days of eliminating renters<sup>15</sup>, many households had their courtyard houses rebuilt or renovated. The timber, cement, and bricks they used were piled up outside. They did not have those construction waste removed from the hutongs after their works were done. The hutongs were full of dirty dust. After (figuring out) that (problem), the neighborhood committee and subdistrict government started to require application and permit for rebuilding and renovation. You need to specify the estimated scale (of construction) and how long it would take. After your application is approved, you can start. When finished, you the property owners are also responsible for cleaning up the construction waste you generated (Figure 13). The neighborhood committee occasionally sent in people to look at the site. They were there to inspect (the construction and cleaning up process). If you are not responsible, you will be fined.

各家各户盖房装修产生了很多大件垃圾，以前胡同里最大的问题就是这个大件垃圾的堆放。主要就是一些家具和废旧电器，还有装修剩下的一些旧的窗框、遮阳板，还有水池子。这些我都见过，也搬不动，就都堆在门口，

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<sup>15</sup> During the Cultural Revolution (1960s), many Dongsis households that owned more than one residences or had extra rooms in their courtyard houses were discriminated against for their property owner status. New workers were forcibly put in their homes as renters, with extremely lower-than-market rental rates that remained unchanged till the 1990s. The 1982 Constitution, as a major change during the Reform and Opening-up era, recognized, for the first time, the legally protected private ownership of these families who owned courtyard houses in hutongs dating back to pre-1949 days. Starting in the 1990s, many private owners successfully petitioned to the local government and the work units where the renters originally worked at, to pay and assist to have these residents moving out of their homes. This is the “eliminating renters” campaign this resident referred to.

等着人收。时间长了就没人要了。现在的做法是你要扔大件垃圾，得提前去跟居委会说，约好了时间，会有物业的上门来收。咱们居民自己也不用去搬了。但就是不能堆在门口。

People were renovating their courtyard houses, and that generated many bulky items that they wanted to get rid of. In the past, the biggest problem in the hutongs was the piling of these bulky items. They were mainly old furniture and home appliances, as well as broken window frames, sunshades, and ceramic water sinks that were leftovers from rebuilding and remodeling projects. I've seen all of these. People can't move them, so they piled them near the entrance (of courtyard houses), waiting for (recycling service) people to pick them up. After a long period of time, nobody wants them anymore. The solution now is that if you want to throw away bulky items, you need to talk to the neighborhood committee ahead of time, reserve a time, and property management people will come to your house to pick them up. (In this way) we residents don't need to move those items by ourselves. But the things is, you can't pile them up (taking up space in the hutong public area).



Figure 13. A covered construction site in Dongsì Qítiao with a “excuse our mess” banner. Construction or renovation plan needed to be reported to the neighborhood committee and the residents are responsible to arrange labor or service to remove any construction waste from the site. Photo by the author.

In our conversations, improved environmental quality was the most discussed and welcomed positive effect of preservation campaigns on hutong public space. In addition to these visible changes, such as the elimination of solid waste and bulky garbage items, the residents were also well aware of the regulations and management mechanisms that were set up behind these changes. One resident commented on the necessity of these regulations and management mechanisms, and the feeling of fairness brought by these measures, which contributed to a sustainable way to solve similar problems in the future.

大家都希望胡同是非常整洁美观的，但是这个公共区域的整洁，肯定不能光靠居民自觉，政府也要主动来规范管理。以前有的租户经常在门口堆垃圾，邻居都有意见了，但是碍于房主面子也不好意思说。现在有了规定之后，大家都得遵守，有意见也可以跟街道提，大家都来监督，这样才能长久。

We all for sure want our hutongs to be clean, tidy, and beautiful. However, the cleanliness and tidiness of public areas cannot solely rely on residents' conscious behaviors. The government has to actively regulate and manage (the hutong environment). In the past, some renters left their garbage near the entrance. The neighbors had so much to complain, but they were hesitant (to say anything) because of the owner. Now we have regulations everybody needs to comply with. If you want to complain (about noncompliance), talk to the subdistrict. Everybody (residents and the government) comes to monitor (the maintenance of the environment). This is how it (the positive effect) lasts.

A clean and tidy environment in the hutongs also prompted behavior change, namely, more frequent and comfortable outdoor activities and social interactions. The senior residents described increasing time and facilities available for them to enjoy the environment outside of their homes. Parents of young children also commented on the

improved safety and cleanliness of hutong public space as a result of preservation campaigns.

这个环境如果是脏乱差，老人们也不愿意在胡同里呆着了。现在整治完了之后一个非常好的事儿就是很多休息、锻炼、聊天、下棋之类的，大家都充分利用起来了。以前呀周围有垃圾堆，特别味儿，或者堆得乱七八糟的东西，就算有那些设施也没人用。

If the environment is dirty, chaotic, and bad, the seniors would not spend time outside in the hutongs. Now that after the environment improvement campaigns, one very good thing is that people can fully utilize the hutongs (public space and facilities) for taking a rest, working out, having conversations, and playing chess. Previously, there were garbage dumps around and very bad smells, or some random waste piling up around you. Even though we had those facilities, nobody was using them.

我们很多带孩子的居民都深有体会，就是现在敢让孩子在外面玩儿了，其实我们小时候都是在胡同里玩儿大的，但是后来吧，有好多乱七八糟的东西，怕孩子磕着碰着，或者弄得脏兮兮的，就不敢让他们在外面玩儿。现在放学经常家长带着孩子在胡同里玩儿。有的是那种“口袋公园”，有的有绿荫的地方，还有一些是健身设施。

Many of us who have kids can certainly speak to this matter. The most impressive thing is that now we dare to allow the kids to play outside. In fact, when we were young, we grew up playing in the hutongs. But as time went by, there was random stuff (left in the hutongs), we were afraid that kids would be hurt or get themselves dirty all over, so we didn't allow them to play outside. Nowadays, it is common that after school, parents (and grandparents) play with the children in the hutongs. Sometimes there are “pocket parks”; sometimes a shaded area; and sometimes at the workout facilities.

#### **4.2.2.2. Courtyard House Semi-Public Space**

The micro spaces of all sizes and shapes inside of courtyard houses are another type of public space that residents talked about. Some courtyard houses have one or more secured entrances, while most of them in Dongsì are accessible by the public all the time. However, the social consensus is that these spaces inside of the compounds are semi-public, thus only used by families who reside in that particular compound. These families were also the primary decision-makers when building new additions or renovating smaller parts in their courtyard house. A 2016 study done by scholars at the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and School of Urban Planning and Design at Peking University (Wang et al., 2016) detailed the spatial transformation inside several Dongsì Santiao courtyard houses according to the residents' needs. According to the interview results of this study, shortage of space, changing family structures, and changing neighborhood relationships were the main reasons people altered these semi-public

spaces. These physical, spatial changes also corresponded to major social events, policy changes, and practices happening at the national and municipal level. Due to limited materials and professional knowledge, many of the additions and modifications were built of low quality materials. Many of them were meant to be temporary but remained anyway (Figures 14, 15 & 16). My interviews with Dongsi residents largely confirmed these findings.



Figure 14. Typical “unlicensed and illegal” additions built inside of courtyard houses. The additions with blue flat roof are attached to, not part of, the original single-story building. Photo by the author.



Figure 15. Typical stand alone “unlicensed and illegal” structures built inside of courtyard houses. This kind of structures are usually used as kitchen or storage room. Photo by the author.





Figure 16. A typical narrow entrance way from the backdoor of a courtyard house complex. Due to the limitation of living space, “unlicensed and illegal” additions were built by many households sharing the same in-courtyard semi-public space, resulting in narrow entrance ways, which only allow one person to walk through at the same time. Photo by the author.

院子里的“私搭乱建”其实一开始也是不得已，唐山大地震北京受到了很大影响，很多平房成了危房，所以大家都在院子里面搭了“地震棚”。人家楼房的小区可以在空地上盖，临时的用完了，过一段时间就都拆掉了。但是我们胡同里很多地震棚都留下了。还有一些是各家盖的煤棚子，煤改电之后就堆破烂儿了，用现在的话说叫储藏间。

Residents were compelled to build these “unlicensed and illegal” buildings inside of their courtyard house compound. During the Tangshan Earthquake (1976), Beijing was heavily impacted. Many single-story buildings became dilapidated houses. So many residents built “earthquake shelters” inside their courtyards. In those high-rise apartment complexes, they could build (earthquake shelters) on the empty space. Those (shelters) were temporary. They got dismantled after a while. But in our hutongs, many of the earthquake shelters remained. Also, some families built structures to store beehive coal briquettes. After the “coal to electricity” campaign (concluded in 2009), these structures were used for keeping random household stuff. In today’s words, they are storage rooms.

像我们这样儿，真正一家一户、私有产权的四合院，现在很少了，可能整个东四都不到五六家吧。至少我就听说这么多。绝大多数人家没办法，大杂院儿，各家都想自己有厕所、浴室、厨房，又不能往外扩张，怎么办啊

？只能往院子里盖。有的一个院子里有几十个厨房。这些后来都算违建。现在想拆没那么容易了，拆了你让人家没地儿做饭了。

Courtyard houses that are legitimately privately owned by a single family, like ours, are quite few nowadays. Probably there are only five to six in the entire Dongsì. At least those were the only ones I knew of. Most of the families had no choice. In their dazayuan<sup>16</sup>, every family wanted their own toilets, shower, and kitchen. They could not expand outwards. What's the solution? They could only build on the inside. In some compounds, there were several dozen kitchens. These (additions) were all categorized as “unlicensed and illegal constructions”. Now it's not easy to take these down. If they (the government) tear down these buildings, those families will have no place to cook.

The previous section of this study discussed the building façade change and residents' perceptions of socio-economic reasons behind those policies and campaigns. There are many similarities here with the measures to free up and improve the semi-public space in courtyard houses. In the 1990s, urban transformation and large-scale demolition of historic neighborhoods was often carried out under the name of “renovating dilapidated housing”. Those wholesale demolitions did not aim to improve living conditions of the existing

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<sup>16</sup> Dazayuan (大杂院), translated as “large mixed courtyard”, is the term used for courtyard houses that are occupied by multiple, sometimes several dozen families. Some households in the same compounds were not blood relatives or not even working for the same work unit. Tensions between long-term residents and renters were common news headlines. Dazayuan is currently the most common status of courtyard house in Beijing's hutong neighborhoods.

hutong neighborhood; instead, made it easier for the local government and real estate developers to lower population density, clear out and re-develop an urban area, and generate more land leasing revenue. According to the principles identified in the conservation planning documents that came out in the early 2000s, micro-update and small-scale renovation measures became the preferred treatment of dilapidated courtyard houses in hutong neighborhoods. A series of city wide “combating illegal construction” campaigns came out around the same time. One resident commented on the effects of these campaigns by describing lower population density and improved living conditions for the families that stayed.

实际上整治私搭乱建也是为了摸清到底什么人住在我们胡同里。有很多老的住户和租户，盖的各种各样的违建在院子里。人口密度太大，完全超过了这个胡同本身能承受的密度，这个本身也是安全隐患。你要清理这些人，先得清理这些人住的地方。租户就是跟房主协调，按规定把违建拆掉了。如果是老住户，基本就是自愿补贴腾退。以前好多胡同是强制给拆了，现在要保留胡同，但是不能住这么多人。人口密度降下来了，才有更多的空间和灵活性，说去改善这些现有住户的生活条件。

In fact, (the reason the government implemented) this “combating illegal construction” campaign was to figure out who actually lived in our hutongs. There were many long-term residents and renters, who built all kinds of illegal structures inside of their courtyard. The population density was too high, completely

exceeded the hutongs' reasonable population density. This (situation in and out of itself) is a potential safety hazard. If you want to get rid of these people, you need to first clean up their living space. For the renters, the government negotiated with the property owners or original residents, and the illegal structures were taken down according to regulations. For the long-term residents, basically they moved out voluntarily with governmental subsidies. Previously, many hutongs were forcibly demolished entirely. Now the hutongs are protected, but they cannot house these many people. Once population density is brought down, there is more space and flexibility to improve these current residents' living conditions.

According to Dongsì residents, illegal construction was not only a concern about public space, but also a trigger of changing neighborhood relationships, for better or worse. One resident complained to me about an illegal attic-like addition, and how the property owner holding on to that structure and rental payment has become a neighborhood headline. Another resident told a story where multiple families sharing the same courtyard house got to know each other better over a fight to tear down illegal buildings. Many similar stories were also documented in *Dongsì Weekly* in recent years. These stories reaffirmed the theories discussed at the beginning of this section and the results from the last section on façade change – the public spaces are important place to understand social life; and spatial changes, just like building appearance changes in hutong neighborhoods, have profound social implications.

这个我跟你反映一下。五条 89 号院的违建很严重，就是一个加高二层的一个阁楼。这个应该引起重视，应该想想怎么拆掉并恢复。现在整治还没到这一步呢，以后胡同更美观整齐了，就剩这么一个明显的，那肯定早晚都要拆。实际这户的面积够住，她盖二层是为了出租。这不像人家有人是真不够住，才盖的二层。据我所知，随意加高超高的不止这一户，别处也有。多数时候街道体谅他们是低收入群体，怕强拆断了人家的额外收入然后闹矛盾，但是这个应该有规定了就施行。现在这样儿搞特殊，院儿里和周边的邻居都有意见。

I will tell you this. No. 89 Dongsi Wutiao has a serious illegal construction problem, which is a second-floor and attic-like addition (to the original single-story building). This should raise serious attention. They (the subdistrict government) should think about how to take it down and repair (the first floor). Right now the renovation campaign hasn't reached this step. In the future, when hutong appearance is more beautified and unified, with only this part so obvious (being an illegal addition and exceeding the height limit), it certainly will be taken down sooner or later. In fact, this family has enough space to live in. She built the second floor as rental space (to make extra income). This (situation) is unlike some other families that built a second floor, because they really didn't have enough space to live in. As far as I know, there are other cases elsewhere, too, where residents just casually built additions beyond height limit. Most of the time, the subdistrict understood that those were low-income families, and was afraid to

cause troubles if their extra income got cut off due to forced demolition (of the illegal addition). But since we have these regulations (regarding illegal constructions and height limit), we should enforce it. Now that some families received special treatment, their neighbors in the same courtyard house and around all had complaints.

我们院子里之前拆违建大家都互相盯着，谁也不愿意动，谁也不想自家面积小了，毕竟都有困难，有的孩子多，没办法才挤在一起，多出一间是一间。但是大家各自都盖完了厨房厕所之后，过道特别窄了，有时候堆个东西，放个自行车，就过不去了。为了这个老吵架，但是住得又特别近，抬头不见低头见，整个这个邻里关系就搞得特别紧张。后来街道来做工作，一户一户地问。有一些确实有困难的家庭，可能就不会说一下都给拆了，会想想别的办法。但是绝大多数居民是理解的，拆完了违建之后，院子里面环境好了，大家都合适。邻里关系也有改善。毕竟谁也不想整天躲着邻居走，对吧？像这种拆违建拆除感情来的，还挺多的。

When illegal constructions in our courtyard house were about to be taken down, we were watching each other. Nobody wanted to be the first one. No one wanted their living space to shrink. After all, we all had difficulties. Some (families) had many kids. They had no choice but to live together. One more room is one more room (of extra living space). However, after every family built kitchens and restrooms (inside of the courtyard house), the hallways became very narrow.

Sometimes people put stuff in the hallway, like a bike, and all of a sudden nobody could go through there anymore. There were a lot of quarrels going on because of this. But we still live so close to each other. Even if you don't see people when you look up, you will see them when you bow down. The whole neighborhood relationship became so intense. Then the subdistrict sent people to have a conversation with every household (in this compound). Some families indeed have difficulties, so probably their illegal constructions weren't taken down so soon. The government tried to help them with other solutions. But most of the residents understood (this campaign). After the illegal buildings were taken down, the environment of the courtyard was improved, and that satisfied everybody. Relations between neighbors were improved as well. After all, nobody wants to live a life having to hide away from your close neighbors, right? Situations like this, where relationships improved through illegal structure demolition, are pretty common.

Besides the “combating illegal construction” campaign, many residents recalled another more recent “weekend clean-up” campaign, which contributed to the environmental quality of semi-public space inside of courtyard houses. According to news reports<sup>17</sup> in *Dongsi Weekly*, weekend clean-up started in Spring 2016. At first, it was a one-time, weekend activity at one courtyard house, facilitated and supervised by the

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<sup>17</sup> *Dongsi Weekly*, June 15, 2016. Pages 4-5.



subdistrict and neighborhood committee. Then it grew into a year-round, weekend event at multiple sites. One resident commented on the origin of this campaign and how it was carried out:

周末大扫除从 16 年春天开始的，周六上午两三个小时。我们很多院子里杂物和垃圾都比较多，大扫除是从比较杂乱的院开始的，后来变成每周都做一次。最开始院子里居民自己协调不好，因为扔东西这个问题还是有矛盾，所以社区居委会就介入了。现在的流程是居委会事先走访好，选定一个院子，跟院里这些住家做工作。因为有的愿意让清，有的不愿意，院儿里所有人都同意了才能清。要签一个协议，贴在那儿公示几天。然后按照约好的时间，大伙儿就可以上这个院儿清了。清理好了之后，谁家的地方还是谁家的，公共区域也可以做个花坛，美化一下，空气也好了。到今年基本特别杂乱的院儿清得差不多了，基本就是小范围的了，所以现在是一个月一次吧。

The “weekend clean-up” campaign started in Spring 2016, and the event was on Saturday for two to three hours in the morning. (At the beginning) there was a large amount of waste in many of our courtyard houses, and the clean-up started from the relatively messier courtyards. Then it turned into a repeating event every weekend. At the beginning, residents living in the same courtyard house could not agree (on doing this clean-up), because there was still conflict and disagreement regarding throwing things out. So the neighborhood committee in the community

stepped in. Now the process is: the neighborhood committee would go to have conversations with people ahead of time, choose a courtyard house, and convince residents to do this. Because some residents were willing to allow people to clean up their courtyard house, and some weren't. The clean-up could only happen when all residents in that courtyard house agreed. All needed to sign an agreement, and they will paste the agreement paper on the wall for several days. Then, according to the agreed date and time, people can come clean that place up. After the clean-up, people still own their space (inside the courtyard house). They could put up flowerpots in the public area to beautify the space, and the air become fresher. (After these years of weekend clean-up) the cleaning of the messiest courtyard houses was done up till this year. Now the clean-ups are of smaller scales. So it is about once a month now.

On July 19, 2018, *Beijing Daily* reported a news story<sup>18</sup> regarding one of “the messiest courtyard houses” in Dongsì and how severe the situation was before the clean-up. One resident reminded me of this headline, and talked about the shared feelings many older generation residents had:

一说大扫除，之前那个新闻你看了吧，四条 58 号院，清理出十大车垃圾，那得有五六十吨吧！说是堆了二十多年了，都是居民自己往家捡的，后

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<sup>18</sup> *Beijing Daily*, July 19, 2018. <https://new.qq.com/omn/20180719/20180719A0C6IT.html>

来院儿里堆不下了就往房顶上堆，墙都快压塌了。要不是老爷子给儿子接出去了，还守着破烂儿不放呢，邻居意见大着呢！有几户说是直接搬走了。你要藏破烂儿藏自己家就行了，你占别人地儿了，也是安全隐患。不过说实话，我挺能理解这些老人家的，好多长辈都这样儿。毕竟从小长大穷惯了，堆家里一堆有用没用的，以前那都是物质匮乏，什么都不想浪费，谁知道什么时候就能用上？

Talking about clean-ups, did you see that recent news? From No. 58 Dongsitiao, they cleaned out ten full trucks of garbage. That was about 50 to 60 tons! They said it's been there for more than two decades. One of the residents took home random pieces of junk over the years. Once the courtyard was full, he started to put them on top of the roof. The walls were falling down. If the old man (the resident who collected the items) didn't eventually move out with his son (due to his poor health), he would still have held on to all of them. The neighbors had so much to complain! Some households (in the same courtyard) just moved out entirely. If you are going to collect random stuff, hide it inside of your room, instead of taking up other people's space. They (the garbage) are safety hazards, too. However, honestly speaking, I can certainly understand these older generations. Many seniors are like this. After all they grew up poor, and they kept everything in their home, regardless of whether it's useful or not. In the past, material goods were scarce. They wanted to waste nothing. Who know when you could make use of them (random stuff)?



Figure 17. A Weekend Clean-up event in Dongsì Santiao. Photo by the author.

In August 2019, I went to observe a weekend clean-up event in Dongsì Santiao, in which several of my interviewees participated (Figure 17). I followed up with them with some questions on the neighborhood dynamics I witnessed at the event. I was particularly interested in knowing who usually participated in this, what were the reactions from the residents, and was this all carried out smoothly or if there was any push back. Residents emphasized the importance of pre-event communication, and how the clean-ups not only changed the living space, but changed the neighborhood relationships.

我是党员，所以街道里这种活动我几乎都会参加。当然，事先居委会都摸清情况了，住户也都同意了，才会去。主要就是旧家具、剩下的建材，还有僵尸自行车。但是几乎每次都有人当场不干了，不想让搬了。有的人之前商量的时候不在，一要清理了跑出来了。这时候邻居和居委会的就会出来继续做工作。最后基本都挺顺利的。有一个主要原因就是好多都是公租房，业主单位得同意，像你上次去看的那个院儿，他们是军产房，所以军队的人来看着弄。要整个一个院儿的都是一个单位的就比较好办，街道会直接去找人家单位。麻烦的是那种有公房、有私房的院儿，就得一个一个协调。当天家里最好有人，有确实不想让扔的东西，提前挪屋里。

I am a Party Member, so I participated in almost all the subdistrict-organized events. Of course, the neighborhood committee went to assess the situation ahead of time. All the residents agreed, before people could go there and do the actual clean-up (Figures 18 & 19). Mainly there was old furniture, leftover constructions materials, and broken bikes. However, almost every time, there was someone who showed up and disagreed, and wanted the clean-up to stop. They didn't show up when the negotiation happened ahead of time, and they all of a sudden show up at the clean-up event. Whenever this was the case, the neighbors and the neighborhood committee people would come talk it out (with the ones who disagreed). At the end, things usually worked out smoothly. One of the main reasons (why agreement could be hard to reach sometimes) is that many houses

were public owned rental houses. The work units (that owned the houses) needed to agree first. Like the one (clean-up event) you went to see last time, that courtyard was owned by the military, so the military sent people to monitor (the event). If the whole courtyard house belonged to one single work unit, things were easy. The subdistrict went to (talk to) the work unit directly. The difficult ones were those courtyard houses with mixed public-owned and private-owned housing. (If that was the case) negotiation needed to be done one by one. It's better to have people at home (when clean-up happens). Some residents have stuff they didn't want to be thrown away, then they need to move this stuff inside of their rooms.

街道组织的，街道提供清洁工具，还有出钱负责雇车。有时候大车进不来，就请物业的小三轮儿来拉。参加清理的主要是党员，还有退休党员、积极分子，都是志愿性质的。18年五月份，北京市有一个“双报到”的通知，就是在职党员不仅要在单位报到，还要到社区报到。参加社区劳动和活动，比如周末大扫除，就属于这个。大扫除是东四地区开始的，后来东城区政府有一个推介会，把东四好的做法推广到其他街道了。一是环境清洁了，二是促进党员联系群众、服务群众。

The subdistrict organized this (clean-up event). They provided cleaning tools (gloves, wipes, aprons, trash bags, carts, etc.) and paid for waste transportation. Sometimes the truck could not come in. They hired tricycles from the property management company. Participants in these clean-ups were mainly Party

Members, retired Party Members and active applicants. The work was on a voluntary basis. In May 2018, Beijing Municipality issued a “double check-in” requirement (for all Party Members). It means all working Party Members needed to check-in not only at their work units, but also at the communities they lived in. They need to participate in neighborhood activities and events, such as the Weekend Clean-ups. This is one example of “double check-in”. The clean-up started in Dongsì Subdistrict. Then Dongcheng District government put together a promotion event for this campaign, introducing the good experience in Dongsì to other subdistricts. One thing is that the environment was cleaned; the other things is that these events accelerated the Party Members to connect to and serve the public.

大扫除其实是风貌治理的第二步。因为街道很清楚，胡同里的事儿他们还可以出钱解决，好多院儿里的事儿太复杂。借着扫除的机会摸清了到底都是什么人住在这院儿里，然后有一些产权关系不清的情况，政府也了解了。The clean-up campaign, in fact, is the second step in the treatment of (hutong) historic characteristics. Because the subdistrict was very aware of this: things in the hutongs can be easily fixed with their money, but things inside of the courtyard houses were most of the times too complicated. Taking advantage of these clean-up events, the subdistrict could get to know who exactly lived in these courtyard houses. Then there were some cases where property ownership status was not figured out clearly, and now the government knows about this as well.

基本上是一个挺受欢迎的活动，因为有的住户确实是自己也想清理，但是弄不动，正好现在有人来，直接站那儿指挥给搬走了。所以之前有一些是住户自己上居委会申请的。关键就在于一个院子里这些人是不是能说明白，要都同意就好办。

Basically this is a pretty welcome event. Because some residents indeed wanted to clean the courtyard themselves, but did not have the manpower to do it. It's great that now they have people coming and helping. The residents can just stand there and supervise the actually moving and cleaning. So previously there were some residents who went to the neighborhood committee to apply (for their courtyard houses to be cleaned). The key is that whether these people in the same courtyard house could agree (on doing this clean-up). If they all agree, it's easy.



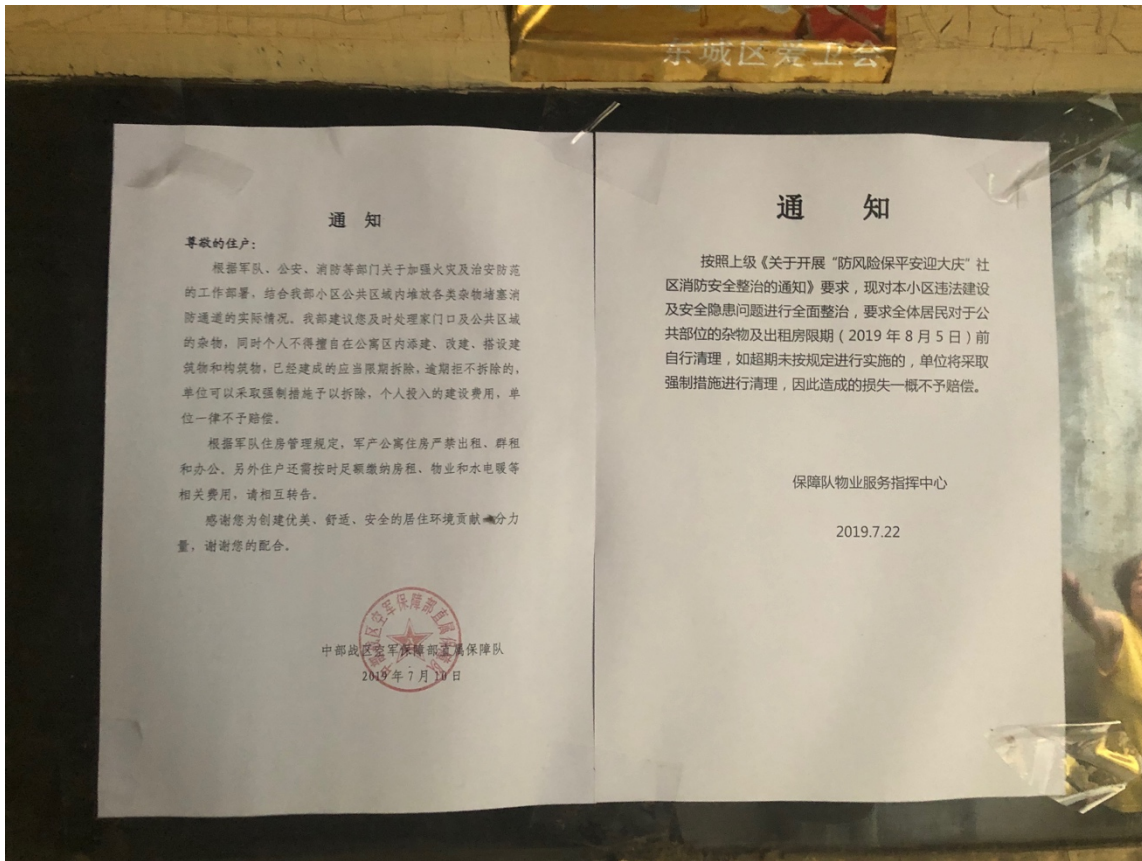


Figure 18. Notification for the residents to voluntarily dismantle illegal constructions and clean up waste inside of the courtyard house semi-public space. This notification was put up about a month before of the day of the actual Weekend Clean-up event. Photo by the author.

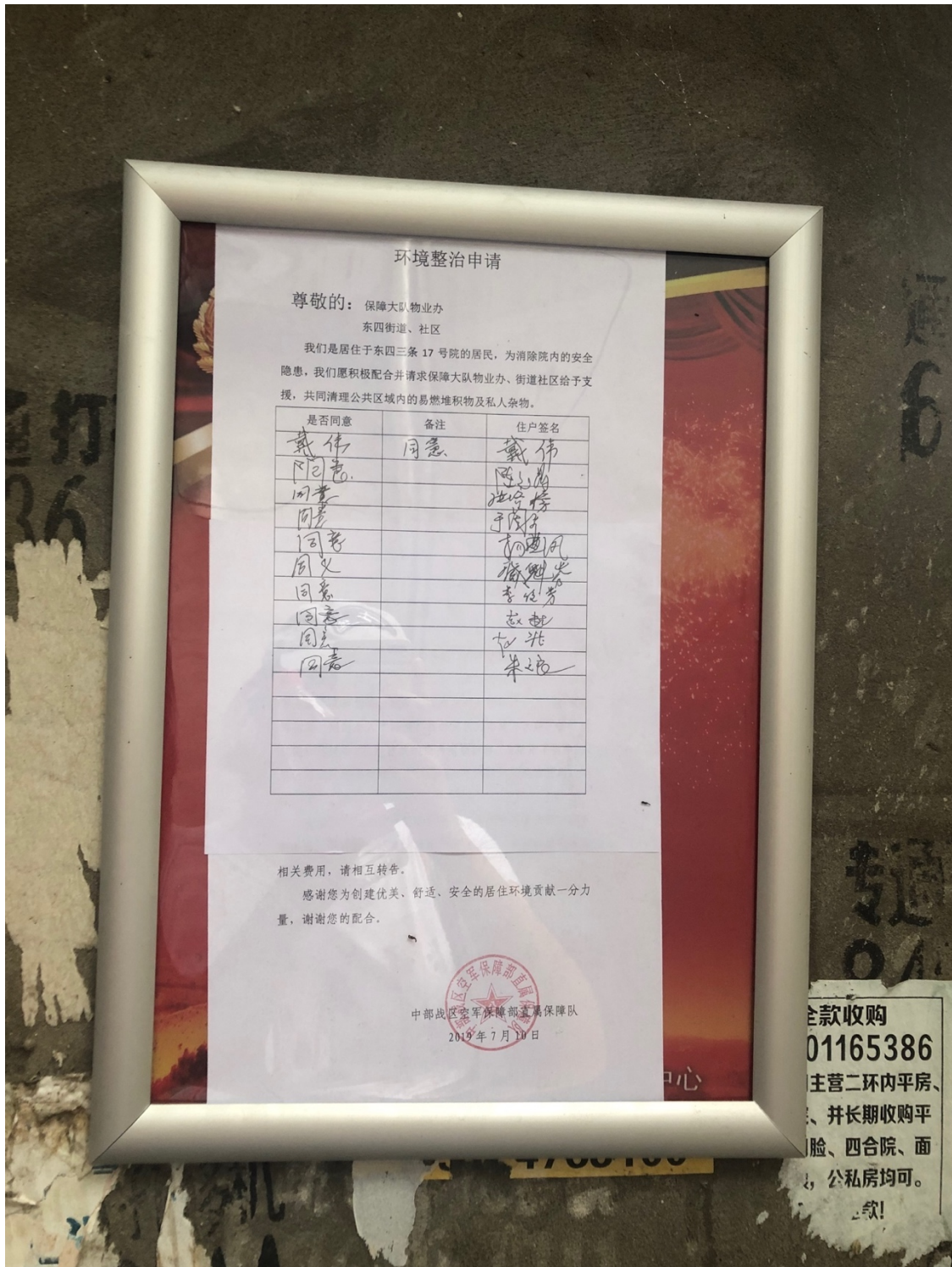


Figure 19. Agreement to proceed with the Weekend Clean-up event, signed by residents living in the courtyard house complex. Photo by the author.

Dongsi Subdistrict had their 100<sup>th</sup> “Weekend Clean-up” events at multiple sites on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, and were steadily drawing several hundred participants every time since. News coverage of this campaign appeared a lot in *Dongsi Weekly*, the subdistrict government’s official WeChat account articles, and local newspapers and television programs such as *Beijing Daily*, *Beijing Morning News*, *Beijing Evening News*, and BTV’s prime time *Beijing News*. Coverage usually started with a description on the type of garbage and waste being taken out, and the amount of space freed up, post-event, in each courtyard house. The news also included how neighbors communicated with each other and worked together through this process, and how relationships were strengthened between residents and the neighborhood committee and subdistrict officials.

This relationship aspect also echoes the residents’ perceptions on measures taken in the hutong public space – the positive effects of preservation campaign are not only a cleaner and better environment, but an improved inter-personal relationship and better understanding among neighbors and between residents and the subdistrict. Based on the difficulties residents described while these campaigns were taking place, the benefits of a successful campaign were also relationship-building, including acquaintance, negotiation, and communication, among neighbors, between residents and the government, and between the government and the work units that owned properties in the neighborhood.

Residents’ perceptions of policies and practices that aimed at improving the environmental quality of hutong public space and in-courtyard house semi-public space can be summarized as:

- Dongsu residents see public spaces as important parts of the hutong environment. The visual effects and feelings about cleanliness and tidiness of their living environment are their primary concern;
- Illegal constructions and solid waste are two major concerns for the residents, due to the fact that the existence of these structures and objects took up already limited space in the public area. Therefore, campaigns to combat illegal constructions, clean out garbage and waste, and free up public space are the most discussed and well-received measures;
- Intentionally built facilities and greenery for social and public health purposes in the neighborhood can only be fully utilized by the residents if the whole environment of the hutong public space is perceived as safe, clean, and desirable;
- Residents agree that the successful maintenance of these spaces cannot solely rely on conscious behaviors, but requires regulations and active enforcement by the local government to achieve fair and sustainable management;
- Encroachment on in-courtyard house semi-public space has historical and socio-economic reasons. Depending on individual circumstances, it is not realistic to eliminate illegal constructions all together. The desirable way is to take each family's demographic and financial situations into consideration, and plan actions on these illegal structures through communication and cooperation among neighbors and between residents and the subdistrict;
- Residents are aware of the relationship-building process that happened at the same with the implementation of preservation policies and various campaigns. On one hand,

neighborhood relationships can impact whether a campaign can be carried out successfully or not. On the other hand, through environment improvement measures in hutong public space, the local government gains opportunity and trust to build better relationships with the residents and other stakeholders.

#### **4.2.3. Infrastructure and Amenities**

The improvement of infrastructure conditions and accessibility to amenities is one of the five principles to improve the life quality of historic neighborhood residents, as stated in the *Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002). The plan stated that infrastructure construction was a weak spot in the Beijing's Old City, because of spatial limitation and the overall aging civic facilities. To avoid damaging historic neighborhoods in the process of infrastructure improvement, future construction should be carried out in harmony with the historic neighborhoods' traditional characteristics, utilizing new materials, new technologies, and a comprehensive approach.

In the 1990s and 2000s, efforts included municipal-wide “coal to electricity” campaigns to reduce and eventually eliminate coal burning as home heating, with a transition to the use of electric heaters in all hutong neighborhoods<sup>19</sup>; and various stages

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<sup>19</sup> Beijing's “coal to electricity” campaign (2001-2009) was financed by the municipal budget (discounted electricity price and governmental stipend for hutong residents to purchase electronic heater) and supervised by the Municipal Ecology and Environment Bureau. Retrieved at: <http://sthjj.beijing.gov.cn/bjhrb/index/xxgk69/sthjlyzgw/wrygl/505556/index.html>

of public restroom renovations<sup>20</sup>. These infrastructure improvement campaigns financed by the municipal government directly benefited tens of thousands of households. They were perceived by residents as beneficial policies and effective implementation practices that raised the living standards of hutong residents, and at the same time, adapted to the historic fabric of hutong neighborhoods (Figure 20).

This section covers some recent preservation-related policies and infrastructure and amenities-related implementation campaigns that sparked much discussion among hutong residents, including transportation and parking, waste management mechanism, green space maintenance, commercialization and small businesses, as well as senior cares facilities and services in Dongsì.

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<sup>20</sup> Restroom renovation (starting in hutongs in 1994) was seen as an important aspect of ecologic civilization building in China. Infrastructure work to improve rural areas and urban neighborhoods' hygiene and residents' accessibility to high quality restrooms received direct instructions from President Xi Jinping in November 2017. See "Restroom Revolution" in *Implementing Xi Jinping New Era Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, Overcoming Difficulties in Reform, Development, and Stability: Cases in Ecological Civilization Building* (2019).



Figure 20. A public restroom in Dongsi Liutiao, with traditional building material and roof design that are aligned with the overall characteristics of the neighborhood. Photo by the author.

#### 4.2.3.1. Traffic, Parking, and Transportation

The latest version of *Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016-2035)*, approved in September 2017, identified the quality and accessibility of transportation as one of Beijing residents' greatest concerns. Due to the growing scale of automobile ownership and usage in Beijing in the post-Reform and Opening-up era, traffic congestion and the difficulty of finding parking spaces became a daily struggle. Policy proposals and changing regulations on transportation and parking became a common topic on cable news. It has been more

than a decade since Beijing Municipality imposed a lottery system for qualified private residents to obtain a new car license plate. At first this lottery system only applied to non-electronic cars, and now electronic car license plate applications are under this lottery system as well.

The percentage of green transportation (non-single user automobile transportation, including pedestrian, cycling, bus, subway, commuter rail, and ride-share, etc.) in Beijing was 70.7% in 2017, and the *Master Plan* made it a goal to reach no less than 80% in 2035. The building of a public transportation network, especially subway construction, accelerated tremendously in the past decade. Thirty subway lines for a total of 1177 km are currently in operation. Almost all historic neighborhoods in the city center are now served by multiple subway stations. There are three in Dongsì; two of them are located at the Northwest (Zhangzìzhong Road on Line 5) and Southwest (Dongsì on Lines 5 and 6) corners of the designated protection area. More than ten bus lines and bus stops serve Dongsì neighborhood via Chaoyangmennei North Street to the East, Dongsì North Avenue to the West, Chaoyangmennei Avenue to the South, Ping'an Avenue to the North. Although there is no public transportation within Dongsì hutongs, the close proximity to most amenities and a largely flat landscape of Beijing's historic city center has fostered a walking and biking culture, as these are the most common means for residents to move around in the neighborhood.

In our conversations about infrastructure improvement as part of historic preservation policies and practices, many Dongsì residents offered their opinions about transportation in hutongs, especially the management of automobile traffic. First of all, residents



welcomed regulations that tackled the safety and noise pollution problems. Other aspects many discussed are the parking management and accessibility to different means of transportation. Although most of them did not solely rely on private cars to get around, they emphasized that local residents needed to be given priority when allocating the limited parking space in hutongs.

我们这一代好多都是在胡同里玩儿大的，以前没有这么多车，现在也是没办法，有车的人家越来越多了。好多家长也不敢让孩子在胡同里玩儿了，因为老有车来，怕撞着。以前还经常有施工的、抽废品的大卡车进来，现在管得比较严了。

Most people of our generation grew up playing in the hutongs. In the past, there weren't that many cars. Now that (the government) has no choice (to allow cars in hutongs). More and more households own cars. Many parents did not dare to allow their children to play in the hutongs, because they were worried that cars came frequently and their kids might be hit. In the past, construction and recycling trucks came into hutongs frequently as well. Now the management and regulations (on automobile traffic) are stricter.

东四是典型的闹中取静，你看大街上热闹吧，一进来胡同里，马上就安静了。所以胡同里走车确实是一个问题，也不能不让人家走，但是现在明显

的车多了。会车的时候谁也过不去，就在那嘀嘀，居民意见很大。现在改单行道，我们有物业管理之后，好多了。

Dongsi is a typical “peace in the noise” place. It’s pretty noisy in the streets (streets and avenues around Dongsi). But once you are in the hutongs, it immediately quiet up. So allowing automobile traffic to go through hutongs is indeed a problem. (The government) can’t ban cars, but it is obvious that we have more cars nowadays. When cars (coming from opposite directions) met, nobody could go through, and they honk. Neighbors complained a lot. Now that the hutongs are designated as one-way streets, and we have a property management company here, things are much better (Figure 21).

我不开车，但是我儿子开车，有时候他来看我，接送我，那肯定是要开车进胡同。我们这儿很多老人都有这个需求。对机动车的管理，包括谁让进谁不让进，还有停车位的管理，肯定应该是居民优先，其次才是外来的人的需求。胡同里停车位非常有限，日常还有很多市政的车要进来作业，还有消防安全的问题，所以治理乱停车这个事儿我们是非常理解的。

I don’t drive, but my son drives. Sometimes he comes to visit me, pick me up and drop me off, so he definitely needs to drive in the hutongs. Many of our senior residents here have a similar need. The management of automobiles, including who is allowed to come in (to hutongs) or not, as well as the management of parking spots, should for sure prioritize residents. Outsiders’ needs come second

after our needs. The parking spots in hutongs are very limited. There are many municipal service vehicles coming in on a daily basis, and there's fire safety concerns. So we totally understand the measures to regulate parking.



Figure 21. East end of Dongsì Liutiao. Because this hutong is designated as West to East one-way street, cars are not permitted to enter from the east end, with the exception of emergency vehicles. The property management company personnel is on duty throughout the day. Photo by the author.

In June 2016, a property management company called Dongxu Jaiye, affiliated with Beijing Capital Group Co., Ltd., one of the largest state-owned enterprises in Beijing, was introduced into Dongsì to assist the Subdistrict government with daily operation on the

ground<sup>21</sup>. One of their daily management tasks, as publicized in the community newsletter, is to deal with traffic and parking difficulties. Up until 2018, the Subdistrict has marked certain spots in the hutongs as designated parking spaces, thus making the rest of the hutong public space as restricted area. Multiple neighborhood committees under the Subdistrict have conducted surveys with Dongsi residents to figure out their families' private car usage and parking needs. Residents with the most pressing needs, such as households with seniors that required long-term care, have been prioritized to be guaranteed parking spaces in their hutongs, as closed to their courtyard houses as possible. However, this process of surveying and re-allocating parking spaces was not carried out without questions, uncertainties, and push backs. The intention of some management procedures were understood, but the core problem, which is the lack of parking space in hutongs, still remains. These residents recalled frustrations in the implementation process:

以前胡同里根本没有“停车收费”这个概念，那时候车也少，大家都停自家门口，没听说过停自家门口还要钱的。现在停车管理更严格了，开始收费了，还有的人家不符合规定，主要是不怎么住这儿，基本就不让停了。居委会做了好多工作，一开始大家不理解，有人给安排的停车位不在家门口，离家有一段距离，不如以前方便了。

In the past, there was no such concept as “paid parking” in hutongs. There weren't that many cars. We all parked in front of our courtyard house along the hutong.

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<sup>21</sup> *Dongsi Weekly*, June 15, 2016. Pages 4-5.

We have never heard of having to pay for parking space in front of our own house. Now that parking management is stricter, we were asked to pay (for parking). There were also some households that didn't meet the requirement, mainly because they did not live here all the time, so basically, they were not allowed to park (in hutongs) anymore. The neighborhood committees did a lot of work. At first, we did not understand. Some families received their designated parking spots that were not immediately in front of their house, with a certain distance. It wasn't as convenient as before.

临时停车有时候是一个问题，不是自家的车，比如说亲戚来了，有老人，按街道和物业的要求，也只能停外面，或者进来临时下个人，还得再出去找车位。根本问题是整个东四没有集中停车的地方。现在胡同里清理了，大街上还跟停车场似的，有时候都停两三排了，本来就堵车现在更堵了。这个问题不知道怎么解决。

Sometimes, temporary parking is a problem. If the car is not my family's, for example, my relatives come, and they have elderly people. According to the Subdistrict and property management company's requirement, they can only park outside (of hutongs). Or they can come in temporarily, let the elderly person off, and go back outside again to find a parking spot (elsewhere). The root of this (parking) problem is that Dongsì doesn't have any concentrated parking area. Now that hutongs are cleared, the streets (avenues and streets around Dongsì hutongs)

still look like parking grounds. Sometimes there are two or even three rows of cars parking there (along the streets), which added to the already crowded traffic jam. I don't know how to solve this problem.

As many residents use non-automobile transportation on a daily basis, they also mentioned the management of bicycles and electronic tricycles, and related safety concerns. Many of these concerns were still related to the “lack of space” reality of hutongs, as demonstrated previously in the discussion of public and semi-public space. Because residents were well aware of this problem, and still saw the use of these transportation means necessary, they were prepared to actively engage in negotiations among neighbors and with the local government to face this reality.

我们这儿骑车的人很多，骑车上下班上下学的，还有早晚骑车往返地铁站的。以前自行车还有共享单车乱停放的问题也相当严重，现在跟机动车一样划线管理了，居民也都能理解，可能得多走几步，但是胡同整体看着整齐多了。

Many of us here bike. People bike to work, to school, and ride their bikes every day to commute to and from the subway station. Previously, the parking problem of bikes and shared bikes was quite serious. Nowadays, they are regulated just like the cars with clearly marked areas for parking (Figure 22). Residents understood this as well. People might need to walk a few more steps (in case they need to park

their bikes away from their courtyard houses in the designated parking area), but the hutongs overall looked much tidier.

之前电动车出过几个事故，有一个是电动三轮充电的时候爆炸了，街道对这个电动车的火灾隐患很重视，然后还有几个是电动车在胡同里把人撞了，因为太快了！还有就是电动车在院子儿里停放，特别占地儿，没办法，邻居之间就只能大家商量着来。现在北京市也在整治电动三轮，以前到处都卖，现在不让卖了。很多居民还是有这个需求，平时搬个东西，上下班、接孩子骑电动车的人很多，而且以前不是鼓励骑电动车吗？所以这个现在不好管理。

There were some incidents involving electric vehicles. One electric tricycle exploded during recharging. The Subdistrict paid serious attention to the potential fire hazard of electric vehicles. Then there were some incidents where people were hit by electric vehicles in hutongs, because those were fast! And then people also park their electric vehicles in their courtyard house, taking so much space. There is no way to solve this, neighbors can only talk it out among themselves. Nowadays, the municipal government is trying to regulate electric tricycles. They used to be sold everywhere, now those stores are not allowed anymore. Many residents still have this need. Many of them (use electric tricycles to) move stuff, go to work, or pick up kids. Also (I thought) riding electric vehicles were encouraged before? So it is hard to regulate now.



Figure 22. Parking spaces along Dongsì Liutiao. On the south side of the hutong are automobile parking spaces, and the north side has marked area for bicycle and electronic tricycle parking. Photo by the author.

#### **4.2.3.2. Waste Management**

Urban management scholars in China have been writing extensively on the waste treatment problems and solutions in the past two decades. As a result of rapid urbanization, the amount of solid waste skyrocketed in major metropolitan areas, prompting questions about collection, transportation, and sustainable treatment. According to Min et al. (2002), waste management was seen as part of the public welfare, therefore, service in urban neighborhoods was almost entirely funded by the local government. Proposals to



outsource this service and charge a sanitation fee needed time to gradually gain understanding and acceptance from the residents. One of the ways to achieve a sustainable management of trash in urban neighborhoods was to establish the consensus and awareness that sanitation needed not only efforts from the government, but also cooperation from the residents.

As discussed in the previous section, Dongsì residents saw waste management as an important measure to improve overall quality of their living environment in hutongs and inside of their courtyard houses. In addition to various government-led campaigns to renovate building appearances and taking out bulky items to free up public spaces, waste management is also perceived as an operating mechanism that directly impacts every household and individual on a daily basis. The “trash off the ground” policy<sup>22</sup> that was started by Dongsì Subdistrict in 2017 was implemented with the goal to permanently solve the trash disposal difficulties. Interestingly enough, by referring to “how things used to be done”, residents saw waste management measures in hutong neighborhoods as coming to a full circle<sup>23</sup>. They recalled various solutions in the past decades and how those solutions succeeded and failed.

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<sup>22</sup> *Dongsì Weekly*, December 19, 2017. Pages 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> Retired professional editor and Beijing native Ji Liping published an article “How Old Beijing handled trash” in *Beijing Daily* on June 11, 2020. The author tells the evolution of sanitation service and waste management in hutongs in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Providing essential service to local residents, sanitation workers used to be one of the highly visible professions in the daily life of historic neighborhoods. Retrieved at: <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2020/06-11/9209279.shtml>

我们以前倒土都是环卫的三轮车，环卫工人喇叭一喊，大家出去扔就行了。大家上下班时间相对固定，家里也都有老人，所以基本没有什么问题。胡同里没有垃圾箱。垃圾箱是后来才有的，因为有些租户在雨篦子那儿倒垃圾，有人垃圾袋扔街上，所以才开始定点放垃圾箱。但是垃圾箱也有一个问题，夏天味儿太大，有苍蝇，有的还漏，谁也不愿意垃圾箱搁自己家门口。有的人那垃圾箱在墙根儿底下，平时都不敢开窗户！这几年才开始的这个“垃圾不落地”政策，就是又回到以前那种“环卫主动收、运垃圾”的模式了。

The way we threw away trash before was through sanitation service' tricycles. They had loud-speakers to announce that they were here, and we just went out to throw (trash). Everybody had a relatively fixed schedule being on and off work. Every household had elder family members. So there wasn't much problem. We didn't have trash cans in hutongs. Trash cans existed later. Because some renters left trash at the rain drain, and some threw trash bags in the streets, the subdistrict government started to put trash cans at certain places. But trash cans had a big problem, too. They smelt so bad in the summer; there were flies, and some trash cans leaked. Nobody wanted trash cans (to be placed) in front of their house. Some had trash cans by their wall, they couldn't even open their windows! In recent years, this "trash off the ground" policy, was returning to the original "trash collection and transportation done by the sanitation department" kind of mode.

每天早晚定时的，你看外面都贴着呢，你要没扔，就放家了，等下回环卫的车来了再扔。垃圾箱没了一开始不理解，老有乱扔的，后来逐渐每天的日程安排习惯了，就不觉得麻烦了。有些家里上班的早出晚归也能照顾到，实在不行还可以给邻居一块儿扔。

Trash collection has daily set times in the morning and at night<sup>24</sup>. You see the announcement outside on the wall? If you didn't throw trash bags (during the set time period), your trash stayed at home, and you waited for the next time sanitation carts come. Some people didn't understand the situation that trash cans were gone. There were always cases where people put trash bags at random places. Gradually after, people got used to the daily timetable, and don't see it as extra hassle. Some households have people who go to work early and get off work late. Those people were taken into consideration (regarding trash collection time), too. If none of that works, you can still leave the bags to your neighbors for them to throw together.

像楼房那样一个小区设置几个集中的垃圾站是不现实的，居民不可能提着垃圾袋每天走到那儿去扔。所以现在环卫和物业有人主动来收运，这是比较合理的。以前没有垃圾桶的时候也是专门有人来收的。

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<sup>24</sup> This interviewee resided in Ertiao Community in Dongsì Subdistrict. Ertiao Community consist of five hutongs from Dongsì Toutiao to Wutiao, and a total number of approx. 8000 residents with household registration. Ertiao Community was one of Dongcheng District's test sites for the "trash off the ground" management mechanism. All trash cans were removed by 2018. Sanitation workers came in every day at 6-8 AM and 6-8 PM to collect trash from residents (Figure 23).

It is impractical to set up concentrated trash collection and sanitation stations in this neighborhood, like that in high-rise apartment building complexes. There is no way that residents would walk there every day with their trash bags. So nowadays, sanitation service and property management had designated personnel to come collect and transport. This is pretty reasonable. In the past, when there was no trash cans, there were designated trash collectors as well.

垃圾分类，我做起 美丽东四共建共享

### 生活垃圾分类投放指南

生活垃圾分类实施四类：厨余垃圾 可回收垃圾 其他垃圾 有害垃圾

**厨余垃圾**

剩菜剩饭、水果皮(核)、蛋糕饼干、番茄酱、蛋壳、西瓜皮、马铃薯、鱼骨、甘蔗、树叶、中药药渣、骨头(鸡鸭鹅)、虾壳(蟹壳)、动物内脏、花卉、宠物饲料、干果仁

生化处理厂

**可回收垃圾**

泡沫塑料、衣架、油桶、玩具、保鲜盒、乳液管、玻璃(碎玻璃)、螺丝刀、刀片、指甲钳、皮鞋/衣服/床单/毛绒玩具、电路板(电线/插座)、木质积木

再生资源回收企业

**其他垃圾**

烟蒂、胶布、纸尿裤、橡皮泥、笔、头发、眼镜、灰土、内衣裤(旧毛巾)、污染纸张、破碎陶瓷、污染塑料袋、防排气泡膜、海绵

焚烧处理厂  
卫生填埋场

**有害垃圾**

纽扣电池、荧光灯、节能灯(卤素灯)、过期药物、废油漆桶、洗甲水(过期指甲油)、水银血压计(体温计)、消毒剂、老鼠药(杀虫剂)、X光片、相机底片、发胶、过期化妆品、医用纱布、水彩笔

安全处置

### 二条社区厨余垃圾收运点位及时间明细

地点	收运时间			收运人员
头条48号	7:00-9:00	11:00-13:00	19:00-21:00	丁会
二条32号	7:00-9:00	11:00-13:00	19:00-21:00	李现强
三条11号	7:00-7:15	11:00-11:15	19:00-19:15	艾提磊
三条43号	7:15-7:30	11:15-11:30	19:15-19:30	
三条77号	7:30-7:45	11:30-11:45	19:30-19:45	
四条79号	7:45-8:00	11:45-12:00	19:45-20:00	
四条39号	8:00-8:15	12:00-12:15	20:00-20:15	
四条24号	8:15-8:30	12:15-12:30	20:15-20:30	
五条14号	8:30-8:45	12:30-12:45	20:30-20:45	
五条40号	8:45-9:00	12:45-13:00	20:45-21:00	
五条111号	9:00-9:15	13:00-13:15	21:00-21:15	

其他垃圾定时收运时间：  
上午：6:00—8:00； 下午：18:00—20:00  
大件废弃物清运电话：15512397625  
有毒、有害垃圾集中投放至各社区居委会  
如您对垃圾分类有疑问，可拨打电话：010-84072040  
15512397625(24小时)

Figure 23. Trash pick-up timetable in Dongsì Ertiao (the Second Alleyway). The announcement was pasted on the wall of the courtyard house's entrance hallway. Photo by the author.

#### **4.2.3.3. Greenery and Landscaping**

A greening plan for historic neighborhoods is one of the major areas in the *Conservation Plan* (2002). 9.4% of the total land area of these 25 historic and cultural conservation areas was occupied by public green space. The principles here stated that the total amount of urban green space should increase, but the scale of these spaces should remain small. Instead of demolishing large areas of existing buildings to create new green spaces, traditional practices of landscaping should be preserved at neighborhood and street level. This means that residents would have more accessibility to greenery, but could still enjoy them in the traditional settings, such as shaded hutong public areas, and micro-scale gardening inside and outside of their courtyard houses.

Greenery contributes to the life quality of urban residents (Takano et al. 2002), and provides a public meeting place for neighborhood residents (Germann-Chiari and Seeland, 2004; Martin et al., 2004). A previous study (Qin et al., 2021) on green space with empirical evidence from Beijing hutong residents also showed that access to greenery benefited residents' mental health, and effective urban planning and design could promote public health in this regard. In my conversation with Dongsu residents, they identified two types of green space: one is the trees and shaded areas in hutong public space; the other is micro gardens, located in all different kinds of tiny spaces throughout the neighborhood, and often taken care off by the residents themselves. For the first type of green space, they perceived the treatment of them as part of the renovation of hutong's overall historic characteristics and appearance, and commented from the perspectives of "how trees affected public space usage" and "how we can use these green spaces."

这些树都是我们历史街区的一部分，我们东四好就好在这个环境优美。具体的有园林局的人管维护，因为东四很多都是“古树名木”，平时他们固定地安排人来修剪，当然居民也不能随意动这些树，包括胡同里的和院儿里的，这个我们都知道，动树是违法的。

These trees are part of our historic neighborhood. The best thing about Dongsì is our beautiful environment. In term of details, the Gardening and Greening Bureau people are responsible for maintenance, because many of these trees in Dongsì are protected “ancient and famous trees and species”. They sent people in to trim the trees on a regular basis. Of course us residents cannot do random things about these trees, including those in the hutongs and inside of the courtyard houses. We all know about this. It’s illegal to harm these trees.

街道整治胡同里这些“死角”之后，很多都重新做了绿化了，新种上树，重新布置一下，这样有个小景观，居民也爱在那儿呆着，还可以防止占道、乱停车和堆垃圾这种事儿。

After the Subdistrict’s renovation campaigns to fix these “dead corners” in hutongs (previously blind spots that required specific treatment), many of them were made into greenery: newly planted trees, and re-arranged public spaces. So there are these little landscape spots. Residents love to spend time there. (This solution) also prevented things like roadblocks, illegal parking, and garbage piles.

以前好多树都是做个水泥墩子给围起来，人可以坐边儿上。后来居民提意见了，比如有人老在我家窗户下面这儿坐着聊天儿，在屋里都能听见。后来有些灌木就改成花坛了，边儿上不能坐。

In the past, many trees had cement fences built around them, and people could sit on those edges. Then some residents complained. For example, there were always people sitting right underneath my windows and chatting. We could hear them from inside of our rooms. After that, some of the bushes were changed into flowerpots, so people cannot sit on the edges.

Micro gardens are the other type of greenery that received much attention from the residents, the local government, and other stakeholders. Because the spatial design of hutongs and courtyard houses left a large number of tiny corners and micro spaces at all kinds of unexpected locations, micro gardening has been a traditional practice in hutong neighborhoods. Architectural historians and folklore scholars (Ye, 2009; Jia, 2009; Deng, 2015) discussed the vital functions of these green spaces, as they help to improve the micro-climate and air circulation, reduce the impact of harsh weather in summer and winter, and prevent fire hazards in hutong neighborhoods.

As the *Conservation Plan* supported the development of these small-scale green spaces, Dongsì Subdistrict and other historic neighborhoods in Beijing all encouraged this traditional practice and provided services to support residents' design and maintenance of micro gardens. In recent years, the Subdistrict organized many lectures and workshops,

during which landscaping professionals were invited to speak and lead hands-on activities, providing advice to residents on how to improve the quality and variety of their plants. Local companies also donated fertilizers to residents via the Subdistrict, to support the maintenance of micro gardens. Residents welcomed these events organized by the local government, and attendance remained high<sup>25</sup>.

Xiaolei Hou, landscape architect and professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, is a leading figure in researching and advocating for micro gardens in Beijing's hutongs and courtyard houses. She has published various studies on the improvement and regeneration of public green spaces in Beijing's historic city center, using participatory studies from Jingshan, Dashilanr, and Shijia Hutong neighborhoods (Hou and Guo, 2017; Guo and Hou, 2018). According to Hou, benefits of hutong micro gardens are not limited to an improved and visually pleasant environment. The reason why this traditional practice is very well alive among hutong residents is because it has many practical benefits. First, these micro green spaces help preserve rainwater, therefore, lowering the impact of urban flooding. Secondly, residents use all kinds of ready-made objects and containers to grow plants, so micro garden design encourages the reuse and recycling of household items, and reduces the amount of waste urban neighborhoods generate. Last but not least, garden design and maintenance is often times an activity that requires labor and care from multiple residents and families, so this practice is a relationship building tool to foster

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<sup>25</sup> *Dongsi Weekly*, April 6, 2016, page 4; July 18, 2017, page 3.



closer community ties and strengthen the trust between residents and local service providers, including the government.

Dongsi residents confirmed many of Hou's findings on the benefits of micro gardens. In particular, they talked about the relationship-building aspect, emphasized that green spaces required collaborative care, and appreciated the Subdistrict's support in creating and maintaining these small-scale green spaces.

街道和社区举办的园艺活动我们经常去参加，都是他们请来的园艺师还有学生，教我们居民怎么养护这些花草。好多都是他们来了之后才发现，浇水浇的不对，或者花盆尺寸不对之类的。还有街道现在鼓励大家在院儿里和家门口种老北京的植物，恢复咱们胡同的传统风貌。

We participated a lot in these gardening and landscaping events organized by the Subdistrict and neighborhood. They invited gardeners and landscape students to teach us residents how to care for these plants. Many times, we didn't realize we made mistakes in watering or had flowerpots of the wrong size, until they came and told us about it. Also the Subdistrict now encourages people to plant Old Beijing plant species in the courtyard houses or in front of the entrances in the streets, to recreate hutongs' traditional look.

好多院儿里垃圾清理之后就搞成小花园了，大家看着舒心，所以也愿意花心思去维护。当然这个主要还是看邻居之间关系怎么样，关系好的当然就

会帮你一起照顾，关系不好的那一看花儿都死了，肯定是人好久不在家了，  
也没人帮你管。

In many courtyards, people built micro gardens after they cleaned out trash. The gardens looked pleasing, so people were willing to spend time and energy to take care of them. Of course, it mainly depends on your relationship with your neighbors. If you have good relationships, neighbors certainly help you take care of the plants. If you don't have good relationships, your flowers die, and we know that you were not home for a while, and nobody took care of them for you.

鸟笼、鱼缸、花盆儿，这些都是老北京的传统物件。以前家家户户都有，  
会弄这些的人说明会生活，花儿长得好，邻居来了之后互相显摆。

Bird cages, fishbowls, and flowerpots. These are all traditional items in Old Beijing. In the past, every family and household had these. If you can take care of these, it means you know how to live a good life. If your flowers look nice, you show them off to your neighbors when they come visit.

搞绿化关键在于管理，不可能什么都指着园林局的。尤其是胡同里那些，  
不能花箱放那儿了没人管，破烂的花盆儿和死花儿得清理出去。咱们现在  
社区里有“花友会”，就是大家志愿性质的把这些花花草草管起来。没人管，  
这个景观维持不了的。

The key of creating greenery is management. You can't solely depend on the Gardening Bureau. Especially those in the hutongs. You can't leave flower boxes there unattended. Broken pots and dead plants needed to be thrown out. Now that we have "friends of the flowers" in our community. We volunteer to manage these plants. If nobody take care of them, the landscape will not thrive.

#### **4.2.3.4. Commercial Development and Small Businesses**

In September 2016, a group of Tsinghua University School of Architecture undergraduate students, supervised by urban planning professor and Beijing City Lab founder, Ying Long, conducted a mixed method assessment on Dongsì historic neighborhood's streetscape change and commercial development<sup>26</sup>. Their residents' survey suggested that small-scale business establishments with storefronts built of traditional architectural style are perceived as the best type of business in Dongsì. Their findings can be confirmed by residents' perceptions of historic characteristics and façade change, as discussed above in 4.2.1., as residents had an overall impression about the traditional characteristics of hutong environment, and agreed that renovation should happen in harmony with these traditional characteristics. In addition to appearance preferences, findings in this 2016 study also showed that convenience and grocery stores, as well as commercial establishments that offer everyday services were the most welcomed and needed types of small business in Dongsì.

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<sup>26</sup> *Study on Dongsì Historic Neighborhood Street Interface and Commercialization Development* (2016).

I followed up with the residents about this preference, asking for their perceptions on the changes and regulations on small businesses in recent years. Many residents brought up again their value judgement of Dongsì as a main residential neighborhood, therefore not the place for large-scale commercial development. Small-scale commercial establishments housed in single-story courtyard houses along the hutongs should be prioritized. They also agreed that residents' preference and needs should be the primary consideration in proposing and deciding on regulations on different types of businesses. Those that were not frequently used by local residents and caused frequent environmental-related complaints should be strictly regulated. At the same time, establishments that were essential to residents' everyday life, such as grocery stores, restaurants, barber shops, and bike shops, should be made widely available throughout the hutongs.

“整治拆墙打洞”之后，很多小的菜站买菜和副食店都关门了，街道在七条设置了一个便民菜站。最开始大家不愿意去，一个是不熟悉，再一个嫌远，而且总觉得食品种类也不够多。后来街道征求居民意见，看看大家具体需要什么，增加了主食厨房，菜、肉、副食的种类也增加了。现在有时候下班儿去买东西都要排队了。

After the “eliminating holes in the walls” campaign, many small grocery stores were closed. The Subdistrict introduced a convenience grocery store in Qitiao (a private business set up in partnership with the government). At first, we didn't want to go. We weren't familiar with the store, also we felt like it's too far away.

Plus the variety of food items weren't enough. After that, the Subdistrict surveyed residents' opinions, looking for what we actually needed, and added a staple food section. The number of vegetables, meat, and non-staple food types were increased as well. Nowadays if you go shopping there after work, there is usually a line at check out.

胡同里这些商业肯定不能一刀切，有些早餐的饭馆儿，居民已经去习惯了，忽然关门了，也不方便。但是还有一些烧烤摊儿，平时做生意油烟和噪声都很大，还有喝醉酒的半夜扰民，整治之后关门了，就挺好。

Obviously there should not be a one-size-fits-all solution to businesses in hutongs. In the case of some breakfast restaurants, residents were so used to going there. All of a sudden, they were closed. It's quite inconvenient. However, there were also barbeque stands, which made huge smoke and noise during their business hours, plus drunk people disturbing residents at night. After the campaign, these businesses were closed. That's pretty good.

之前有一些餐馆商店把摊儿都支到街上了，挡路了，所以后来给他们规范了，必须在店里。我认为这些必须的生活服务，胡同里还是要搞的，比如理发店、修车铺，不能让大家走得老远了甚至出了这片儿了才有一个。

Previously there were some restaurants and shops that put their stuff in the streets, and blocked the road. Then they were regulated (by the Subdistrict). They had to

operate behind their storefronts. I think for these essential life services, we have to have them in hutongs, such as barber shops and bike shops. We can't be walking for a long time, or even have to go out of the neighborhood to get these services.

A frequently drawn comparison by the residents was how commercial development in Dongsi should be different from some other designated historic neighborhoods in Beijing. Residents were well aware of the negative effects of over-commercialization that was going on elsewhere in the city, which prioritized the preferences and needs of non-local residents and customers. Examples residents mentioned include Shichahai, Nanluoguxiang, Qianmen, and Xisi. Among these neighborhoods, both Shichahai and Nanluoguxiang were traditional commercial districts in Beijing, but the scale of tourism and non-locally essential commercial activities went out of control in the past decade and alienated many local residents (Shin, 2010; Chen & Zhang, 2010; Dai et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). Qianmen, with large-scale demolition and removal of original residents, was considered by many as a negative example of historic neighborhood preservation and revitalization that did not benefit local residents (Heath and Tang, 2010; Zhu et al., 2019). Xisi (Baitasi, in some studies), much like Dongsi, is a residential area. Residents in these two neighborhoods shared similar concerns with housing conditions, neighborhood environment, and infrastructure improvement (Li et al., 2004; Cheng et al., 2018). Residents' perceptions regarding commercial development reflected their idea that businesses in Dongsi should, first and foremost, serve the residents.

作为居住区东四决不能搞成像南锣那样，特别多旅游团，现在交通、环境、治安都有问题，对历史街区的破坏很大。那边的商业都是给游客准备的，不是服务居民的。

As a residential area, Dongsì should never be made into a place like Nanluoguxiang. (In Nanluoguxiang) there are so many tourist groups. Now they have problems with traffic, environment, and security. (Commercial and tourist) activities damaged the historic neighborhood a lot. The businesses there were set up for tourists, not for serving the residents.

前二十年，什刹海发展成酒吧街了，南锣最近十年变成旅游景点了，这些我们都去过，都知道，新闻里也天天报，那边儿居民意见可大了！

In the past two decades, Shichahai was developed into a bar district. In the past decade, Nanluoguxiang turned into a tourist spot. We've been to all of them. We knew about them. They were in the news every day. Those residents had so much to complain about!

我知道的就是东四和西四在商业这块儿控制得很好，大街上有一些商业，然后胡同里主要是小规模，生活服务的一些设施。这些主要是便民的，大家比较乐意看到这些。

As far as I know, Dongsì and Xisì had commercial development under very good control. There are commercial establishments along major streets, and then there are small-scale businesses in the hutongs, such as life service amenities. These serve the needs of the residents. We are very glad to see these.

发展商业和旅游都得慎重，之前有公司想来咱们这儿搞旅游开发，让街道给否了。实际别的历史文化保护区弄成什么样儿，我们都听说了，而且有一些也经常去。我们是希望保持现在这样的，安静的生活环境，商业要满足大家生活就行了，不需要那些叮叮咣咣的。

Commercial development and tourism needed to be done with caution. Previously there were private developers wanting to come here and do some tourism development, and the Subdistrict said no. In fact, we all have heard of how other Historic and Cultural Conservation Areas looked like. We also went to some of those frequently. Our hope (for Dongsì) is to remain the current condition. Quiet living environment. Businesses that can meet the needs of our lives. We don't need those noisy ones.

#### **4.2.3.5. Senior Care**

By the end of 2015, more than two million residents, which was more than 10% of the total population in Beijing were aged 65 and above. By the end of 2017, 24.5% of the total population (about 3.33 million) with Beijing household registration were aged 60 and



above<sup>27</sup>. This put Beijing second only to Shanghai, among cities with a significant percentage of citizens 65 and above. As historically the majority of work units and their residential housing were located in the inner city, hutong neighborhoods accommodated a large number of the city's senior residents, who are retirees previously working for these work units. As discussed in previous sections, senior residents appreciate the hutong lifestyle because of the close proximity to daily services, and the sense of a close-knit community. Social scientists, urban planners, geographers, and public health policy researchers have studied the aging population living in hutong neighborhoods (Kwei, 2009; Yu & Rosenberg, 2017; Gan et al., 2020; Yu & Rosenberg, 2020), in terms of their needs in domestic function and spatial change, and the urgency of providing adequate community-based senior care facilities and services to this population group.

This pressing need for senior care was not part of the policy trajectory reflected in the *Conservation Plan* (2002), but in the most recent version of the *Master Plan* (2016-2035), the aging population and their accessibility to care were identified as an issue the municipal government should actively seek to address in the coming decades. Facilities and services that can provide senior care right here in Dongsì neighborhood were also a particular type of amenity Dongsì residents singled out in our conversations. Residents approached this issue of senior care in hutongs from the perspective of their own practical needs and their preference for the usage of hutong space, especially those spaces that

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<sup>27</sup> *White Paper on the Development of Beijing's Aging Affairs and the Construction of Senior Care and Pension System*, written and edited by the Office of the Municipal Committee for Aging Affairs and China Philanthropy Research Institute at Beijing Normal University. Published by the Social Sciences Academic Press in October 2018.

became available due to the various campaigns to combat illegal constructions, including the “eliminating holes in the walls” cases since 2017.

我们老旧小区，本来空间就非常有限，居民又有这个需求，需要养老设施和服务。政府现在出钱租用了一些空间，引进外面的服务，提供给大家。还有就是胡同有一些违建拆除了之后，腾出来的空间，我们也希望能改造成养老设施。

In our old, historic neighborhood, space is very limited. But residents still have this need. We need senior care facility and services. Now that the government rented some space, and brought in outside service providers, to serve us. Also there are some illegal constructions being demolished. The spaces they freed up, we also hope that those can be used for senior care facilities.

之前八条拆了一个小旅馆，把地下室和超高的部分都给拿掉了，不知道街道准备做什么，我们是希望这些改造以后的空间，都能做成便民设施，比如养老驿站，或者停车处。

A small hotel recently got demolished in Batiao<sup>28</sup>. They took away the basement and the part that was over the height limit. We don't know what that space will be

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<sup>28</sup> The story this resident discussed was also covered in *The Beijing News* on April 11, 2017. The hotel used to be the largest stand-alone illegal construction in Dongsì conservation area, with four stories above ground and a one-story basement, built in 2009. Citing that the original house was dilapidated, the owner of the original courtyard house built this building, without construction permit from the local planning department, and rent the space out for hotel operation and various small businesses.

used for. Our hope is that after hutong renovation, these spaces can be used for service facilities, such as senior care center, or parking spaces.

Residents also stressed the fact that hutong neighborhoods, compared to other residential areas with multi-story or high-rise apartment buildings, are easier for senior residents to move around and be social with neighbors. Taking advantage of the available space, amenities, and community ties, their preference was to receive community-based senior care, with facilities and services inside of the neighborhood, instead of having the senior members of the households living in long-term care facilities elsewhere.

The first senior care center opened its door in October 2017 in No. 19 Dongsì Qítiao. It was created via a public-private partnership between the Subdistrict and a senior care service provider company. According to *Dongsì Weekly*, the center provided services such as medical assistance, emotional support, daytime dining, recreational activities, household maintenance and repair, as well as on-demand personal care. The center was also the hub for multiple volunteer groups that served the senior and disabled population in Dongsì, including teams that help deliver food and provide haircuts for residents who had difficulties leaving their houses. Lìjuan Wu, a sociology professor from Beijing Normal University who consulted the Subdistrict on the creation of this center, pointed out that senior care is a problem that many historical communities in Chinese cities face nowadays, and the key is to build capacity inside of the neighborhood, instead of changing the existing life-style of current residents. In this way, the creative solutions to provide senior care in Dongsì can play an important role in strengthening courtyard and

community ties, preserving local culture, and fostering better neighborhood relationships<sup>29</sup>.

In our conversations, residents spoke highly of this senior care center in Qitiao and its community-based services, although some of them expressed concerns about the scale of participation. Many admitted that people were hesitant at first because it was a new thing, and doubted the sustainable operation of such facility. The publicity effort by the Subdistrict helped to gain trust and effectively introduced this center to more senior residents and their families.

我们传统观念里养老问题都是家庭解决，但是现在大家都明白，子女全天都在工作，还有很多根本不住在东四，养老这个问题确实很复杂，有一些老人搬出去跟子女住之后也不习惯，还是喜欢胡同里这种生活状态。这就是为什么七条这个养老驿站挺受欢迎的。一开始是一个新鲜事物，后来大家逐渐使用的人多了，就接受了。有老年餐桌，上门服务，还举办各种活动，丰富大家的生活。最重要的是解决了很多家庭实际生活中的照料老人的难处。

In our traditional concept, senior care is mainly provided by family members. But we all understand (that this is no longer the case) now. Children (of elder generations) are working all day, and many of them don't even live in Dongsi.

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<sup>29</sup> *Dongsi Weekly*, July 22, 2017. Pages 4-5.

Senior care is indeed a complicated issue. Some elders moved out to live with their children, but they couldn't get used to it, and still liked the way they lived in hutongs. This is why the senior care center in Qitiao was well received (Figure 24). At first, it was a new thing, but then more and more people were using it, so people welcomed it. It has senior dining, door-to-door service, and all kinds of activities, to enrich people's lives. The most important thing is that it solved the practical difficulties many families had in taking care of the seniors.

以前胡同里有很多理发摊儿，后来整治了之后这些没有了，有居民很不习惯，后来社区组织了志愿者服务队，专门上门给行动不便的老人们理发，这类的服务大家夸很有必要。还有就是有的院儿里空间有限，有的老人平时洗澡不方便，养老驿站有专门的浴室，护工也可以上门服务，这些都帮助我们解决了我们社区里的实际问题。

In the past, there were many barber stalls in hutongs. After the "alleviate, renovate, and hasten the improvement" campaign, these stalls were gone. Some residents were not used to this. Then the neighborhood organized volunteer groups to offer door-to-door haircuts for seniors who had mobility issues. People praised this kind of service. Also because some courtyard houses have very limited space, and the seniors have difficulties taking showers. The senior care center has designated shower rooms, and the caregivers can also go to their houses to help them take

showers. These (services) all helped us to meet the practical needs we had in our neighborhood.

北京市有养老助残券，社区里的老人可以在这个政策去养老驿站还有跟街道有合作的一些服务点去消费，包括日常吃饭，还有一些护理服务，价格很合理，而且为了保证老人能用上这些服务，居委会还一直按季度提醒大家去消费。

Beijing has a senior and disability care voucher system<sup>30</sup>. Seniors in our neighborhood can use their vouchers to buy service at this center and other service providers that have a partnership with the Subdistrict, including daytime meal services, and some personal care services. The price (of these facilities and services) is quite reasonable. Also to encourage seniors to utilize these services, the neighborhood committee has been sending out quarterly reminders to senior residents to use their vouchers.

养老驿站有很多活动，有时间我们都会带着父母去参加，让他们多出来户外透透气，跟其他的老年人交流，那儿还有社区的工作人员陪他们聊天。

有时候我们白天工作也可以把家里老人送去，请他们代为照料。但是这个

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<sup>30</sup> Scholars and policy consultants from Renmin University of China and United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) published a policy brief on *Long-term Care of Older Persons in China* in December 2015. Beijing's senior care voucher system for meal and personal care services, as part of the city's integrated community-based senior care development, was listed as one of the best practices.

中心毕竟是一个新的东西，能不能持续地办下去，主要还是靠街道的宣传，更多街坊支持、更多老人使用，这个服务才能越办越好。

The senior care center organized many activities. Sometimes when we are available, we take our parents there to participate. Let them go outdoors and breathe more often, and interact with other seniors. There they also have social workers from the community to chat with them. Sometimes when we work during the day, we send our seniors there, and let them take care of the seniors on our behalf. But this center is nonetheless a new thing. Whether it can continue to operate, will mainly rely on the Subdistrict's publicity efforts. Their services can become better, only if more neighbors support them, and more seniors use them.



Figure 24. Senior care center at No. 19 Dongsi Qitiao (the Seventh Alleyway). The sign of the building indicates that the site was previously a community grocery store. Photo by the author.

Residents' perceptions of policies and practices that aimed at improving the quality of infrastructure and amenities in this hutong neighborhood can be summarized as:

- Preservation-related policy and implementation campaigns that aimed at improving infrastructure and amenities in the neighborhood received much attention from the residents, because they perceive these changes having direct impacted on residents' lives on a daily basis;



- Residents are well aware of the limitation of infrastructure and amenities improvement in the context of historic neighborhood. In particular, they understand the reality of extremely limited space in hutongs and inside of individual courtyard houses. They also recognize the necessary of constant negotiation, both among neighbors and between residents and the local government, in order to utilize available space, improve the quality of services, and meet their different demands of infrastructure and amenities;
- By bringing up “how things used to be done”, residents find wisdom in some traditional practices to manage the neighborhood environment, including trash collection mechanism and micro gardening. In their ideas, changing regulations on building appearance and public space usage should support these time-honored traditions and practices;
- Residents demand commercial development and social services that meet their practical needs. They emphasized on two types of amenities: small-scale life service businesses and senior care facilities.

### **4.3. Engagement and Involvement**

Sherry Arnstein’s “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” (Arnstein, 1969) has been used by the urban planning and social work fields in the United States as a classic concept to access the level of participation in a community environment (Figure 25). The “ladder” explains the level of power dynamic and relationships between the most powerful stakeholder, usually the government or the developer, and the public or residents, most

likely the least powerful stakeholder. Due to differences in the overall political system, traditions and consciousness in civic society, and neighborhood background, public participation in historic preservation policy-making and implementation practices are understandably different from country to country, locale to locale. Nevertheless, urban planning and legal scholars in China have been researching the various levels of and obstacles to public participation in administrative procedures related to planning and preservation in historic neighborhoods. The second rung of the ladder, tokenism, which includes the government placating, consulting, and informing the public, was used to describe the current public participation situation in China. In order to gradually advance to the third rung and eventually make public participation beneficial to all stakeholders, a higher degree of the rule of law, more acceptance from the government, encourage mechanism throughout the process, and better quality<sup>31</sup> of the citizens are required.

Stated as the fifth overarching principle (the first four were discussed at the beginning of 4.2.) in the *Conservation Plan for Twenty-Five Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, 2002), “public participation should be actively encouraged in preservation work.” This section discusses residents’ perceptions of their experience being involved in historic preservation, their relationships with the local government and other neighborhood stakeholders, different engagement and involvement mechanisms, as well as obstacles they perceived that

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<sup>31</sup> Quality (素质) is a term widely used by residents and the broader Chinese society to describe the education, awareness, and consciousness of a person or a population to live and behave with high moral standards. A citizen of high quality should be well aware of their civic duties and should actively participate in civic processes.

negatively impacted their ability or willingness to participate. By accessing public participation in the hutong preservation process, this section explains neighborhood residents' opinions on how to advance involvement and engagement from merely placating, consulting, and informing, to the higher degrees of partnership and citizen power.

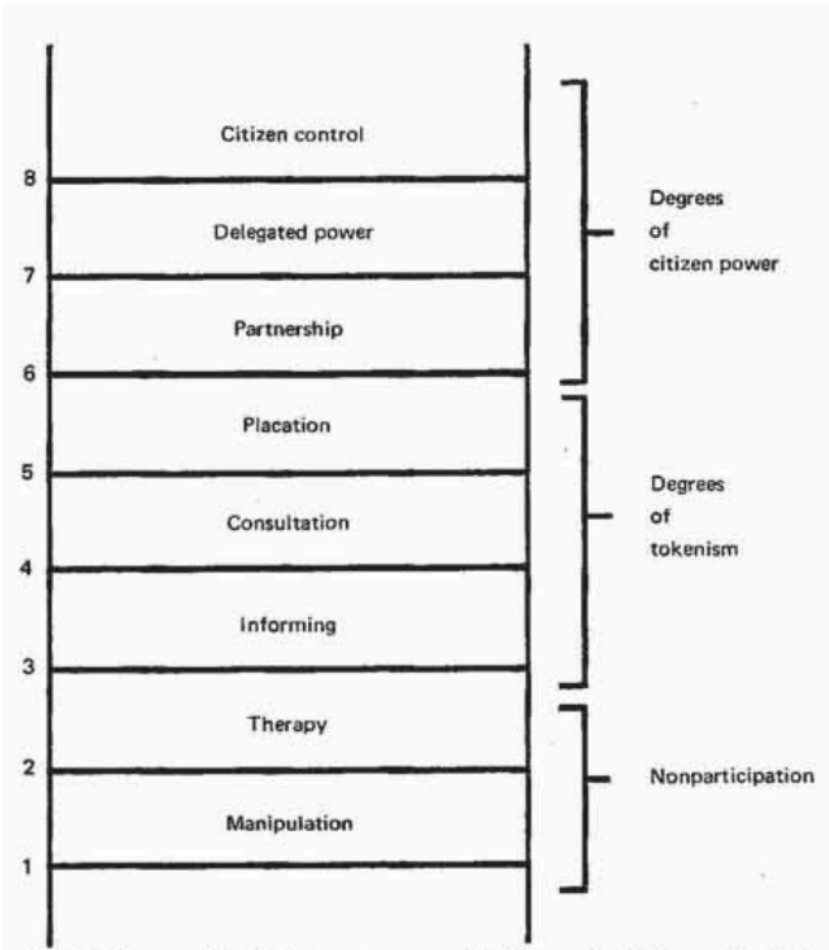


Figure 25. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Reprinted from Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35(4), 216-224.

#### **4.3.1. Stakeholders in Neighborhood Preservation**

In the Chinese preservation planning and policy implementation process, there are four types of stakeholders. The first one is the public sector, including different administrative levels of government (in this case, the Central Government, Beijing Municipality, Dongcheng District, and Dongsu Subdistrict), the cultural heritage and urban planning bureaus, and public institutions affiliated with the government. As all urban lands in China are owned by the government, the government has sole power to make policies regarding land use and urban redevelopment, and decides which stakeholders they engage in the policy-making and implementation process. The government-affiliated, public institutions at national and municipal levels, including the cultural heritage research institutions and urban planning and design institutions, propose specific preservation plans and design guidelines to the government bureaus. The governmental bureaus then present these policy documents to the People's Congress at all levels of the government for approval. The public institutions, although not part of the administrative system, offer professional and technical support to assist different levels of government to implement preservation-related policies and campaigns. In Beijing, the Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design (BICP) is a major player in the preservation efforts in many historic neighborhoods, and is also the current operator of Shijia Hutong Museum, the first hutong community museum in Beijing opened in 2013. It can be argued that the public sector is the most powerful group of stakeholders in the preservation of historic neighborhoods in Chinese cities.

The second type of stakeholders are the private sector, which in Beijing include real estate developers, and more recently, private service providers. Because in this case, Dongsì is a designated protected neighborhood, it is legally protected from large-scale demolition and reconstruction, mass relocation of residents, and the severe threat of gentrification due to real estate development. Therefore, real estate developers have very limited power in this neighborhood, other than occasionally working with small-scale, individual courtyard house renovation projects. The existence of private service providers in Beijing's hutong neighborhoods is a relatively recent phenomenon. Property management companies have been serving residents in multi-story and high-rise commercial apartment complexes since the private housing market became available in late 1990s. They provided personnel and resources in maintenance, security, mail and package collection and distribution, as well as trash management services within the apartment buildings and neighborhood boundary. However, Beijing's hutong neighborhoods only started to adopt their services more recently. In 2014, Chaoyangmen Subdistrict in Dongcheng District became the testing site for this public-private partnership between the local government and a property management company to provide more professionalized services. In the following years, other hutong neighborhoods in Dongsì, Jiao Daokou, Beixinqiao, and Jianguomen Subdistricts in Dongcheng District all adopted property management companies. The subdistricts purchased their services and used their personnel to assist with the neighborhood environment and life quality improvement work. In Dongsì, the property management company Dongxu Jiaye, is affiliated with a local state-owned enterprise called Beijing

Capital Group (BCG) Co., Ltd. BCG is also the current operator of Dongsì Hutong Museum in Sitiao. Other than property management companies, there are many other types of private businesses and service providers operating in hutong neighborhoods, including senior care providers, recycling services, and the restaurant and hospitality industry. Despite being part of the private sector, their operations are still highly regulated by the various policies and guidelines made by and administrated through the public sector. Many private businesses also rent public-owned spaces for their operation.

The third type of stakeholders include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations working in the cultural heritage and preservation field, media outlets, preservation advocates such as scholars and professionals working in cultural heritage and urban planning. Unlike American NGOs, which have long histories and traditions in community-based advocacy related to urban built heritage conservation, NGOs in China have much weaker power and a smaller organizational scale. On the national level, currently there is no Chinese equivalence to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States. On the local level, the most active and recognizable NGO in Beijing's historic neighborhoods is the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center, which has been working in various hutong neighborhoods on preservation projects since 2003 (Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center, 2007). The most notable project was their advocacy and organizing efforts for public participation in the Bell and Drum Towers neighborhood. International organizations usually work in preservation via some forms of governmental partnership at the national level. For example, China ICOMOS is housed under the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage, the research institution affiliated

with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage; the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has its International Training Center housed inside of the Palace Museum; and UNESCO's Chinese National Committee is housed within the Ministry of Education. Various national, municipal, and local media outlets play an important role in publicizing preservation policies and implementation campaigns to historic neighborhood residents and the general public. Due to strong governmental control, media outlets in China are often seen as the voice of the government. For example, *Dongsi Weekly*, branded as the Dongsi Olympic Community's bi-weekly newsletter, has its editorial office housed under Dongsi Subdistrict, which means its topics and contents are completely sanctioned by the local government. However, there have been occasions when media outlets reported preservation-related issues, such as complaints about housing conditions, illegal real estate development and constructions, violations of conservation planning, as well as lack of management effort from the local government, in order to publicize and criticize the situation and to generate support from the wider preservation profession to urge the government to act. The level of tolerance for media outlets reporting on historic preservation varies depends on how these issues affect the different levels of government.

The final group of stakeholders are the local residents who physically reside in the boundary of Dongsi Subdistrict's designated historic and cultural conservation area, and are the main users of the courtyard houses and hutongs. In this study, the focus is the lived experience of this group of stakeholders. The people I interviewed were all long-term residents, who have been living in Dongsi for at least a decade, regardless of their property

ownership status and whether or not they are small business owners in the neighborhood. Scholars in various disciplines and geographical regions in China have been studying the public engagement and involvement aspects in preservation and planning for decades (Ruan and Liu, 1999; Zheng and Yang, 2005; Li, 2009; Feng and Li, 2013; Xie and Zhu, 2014; Zhong and Kou, 2015; Wang, 2018). Many of their points are worth emphasizing here. First, local residents are currently seen as the weakest group of stakeholder in historic preservation, and their involvement and empowerment need the most attention, education, guidance, and collaborative efforts from all the other stakeholders, especially the government and the public sector. Second, the government engages residents via direct communications and actions, as well as management mechanisms that involve a third-party, such as other public entities and the private sector, is a proven way to reduce the local government's workload and achieve more sustainable results in public service. This approach is also deeply rooted in the larger efforts in building a service-oriented government, and the innovations in governmental management mechanism, promoted by the CCP and the Central Government in the past two decades<sup>32</sup>. Finally, involving residents in preservation and planning activities can help foster a clear sense of shared cultural identity, promote social fairness in urban development, and contribute to the building of a strong civic society. In a word, public engagement and involvement is not only seen as an important aspect in heritage conservation and planning that needs urgent

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<sup>32</sup> *Opinions on Further Reforming the Government Administration System*, adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on February 27, 2008, issued by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council. *Opinions on Strengthening the Reform of Cultural Relics Protection and Utilization*, issued by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council on October 8, 2018.



attention, but is also an essential part of the on-going governmental and social reform trends in China.

#### 4.3.2. Government-Led Efforts

Engaging the public during the drafting process of planning documents is required by urban planning law<sup>33</sup>. In term of engagement strategy, public forums were the opportunity for residents to learn about preservation planning and decision-making. Set up by Dongsu Subdistrict, these meetings aimed to engage residents in the drafting process of conservation planning. In practice, the Subdistrict, being the most local level of government, serves as the organizer for engagement activities. Urban planning and design institutions, who are responsible for drafting these documents for the planning bureau, do not have direct access to neighborhood residents. Therefore, the Subdistrict becomes the mediator in this process to organize events and solicit public opinions.

我参加过街道的、区里、市里的研讨会，就是征求意见的会，从 2000 年开始就陆续有了。这类会很多都是这样的：大学或者规划院要做一个课题，拿着他们起草的规划文本征求意见，由街道来组织居民座谈。基本上就是

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<sup>33</sup> Replacing the previous 1989 *Urban Planning Law*, the new *Law on Urban and Rural Planning* was adopted by the National People's Congress on October 28, 2007, and went into effect on January 1, 2008. Article 26 states that before planning documents can be sent to People's Congress for approval, governmental offices and institutions that are responsible for drafting plans should publicize the document and host forums to solicit opinions from experts and the public, and the period for publicity should not be less than 30 days.

他们代表制定保护规划的部门。我退休前在文物系统工作，还有一些是关心保护工作的老住户，我感觉街道比较重视我们这种人的意见。

I have participated in forums held by the Subdistrict, District, and Municipal (planning bureaus). Those were meetings to solicit (residents') opinions, which started in the 2000s. These meetings were usually like this: a university or planning institution wanted to do a project; they brought the planning documents they drafted to the meetings to talk to us. The Subdistrict organized residents to participate and give our opinions. Basically they (planning institutions) represented the planning bureau who made those conservation plans. I worked in the cultural heritage sector before retirement. Others were long-term residents that cared about preservation. I felt like the Subdistrict took the opinions of people like us relatively seriously.

17 年我参与过三次街道开的座谈会，就是向社区居民征求意见的活动，主要是问大家对规划实施的具体措施的意见。我们去的人之间大概都认识，你可能现在也认识了。在那之前的好像没有，不记得了。因为这两年胡同里变化比较大。

In 2017 I participated in three forums organized by the Subdistrict. Those were events to solicit opinions from neighborhood residents. They mainly asked for our opinions on the actual measures of planning implementation. Among the people who went to those meetings, we almost all knew each other. You probably know

them as well by now. There was probably nothing before that; I couldn't remember. Because the hutongs changed a lot in the past two years.

Residents that had first-hand experience described several aspects regarding these public forums that could be changed and improved. The first is similar to what Arnstein identified as “placation”, which privileges one voice among many others. The residents were aware that the Subdistrict was identifying certain participants to represent the public, and the lack of a wider participant pool was a clear concern. They perceived this less as an intentional denial of participation access to certain residents, but rather a lack of motivation by the government to actively engage residents who might “have something negative to say” about the current situation and past policy implementation practices. Residents saw this as a sweeping-the-problem-under-the-rug approach by the Subdistrict, and needed to be changed. They also identified these additional types of residents that they thought should be engaged in the future: the younger generations, the migrant workers, who are often times short-term renters, and the illiterate<sup>34</sup>. They understood that these residents had different life-styles, values, and needs related to changes in the neighborhood environment. If the local government, planning bureau, and planning institutions do not purposefully engage these people, many issues on the ground will not be exposed and discussed.

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<sup>34</sup> The 2010 Census showed that the illiterate rate (percentage of the total population aged above 15 that can't read) in Beijing Municipality was 1.86. Here the resident might not refer to the people who cannot read at all. Because China has a 9-year compulsory education policy (6 years of elementary school and 3 years of middle school), the culturally accepted concept of “the illiterate” are the people who did not finish middle school, which also implies that they are more likely to have unskilled or lower-skilled jobs.

Secondly, residents agreed that the Subdistrict could have done a better job publicizing these forums ahead of time, which could have resulted in a wider participation. Arnstein identified late stage participation as “informing”, although here the residents didn’t focus only on being informed late (often after the meetings), but also a lack of publicity efforts on the contents and relevancy of these meetings. They talked about the publicity of conservation planning documents being “not closely related to the residents’ daily lives,” which led to many residents not interested in participating. There wasn’t much effort from the Subdistrict to create opportunities to educate and inform residents on how the proposed regulations and changes would impact their individual hutongs and courtyard houses, different types of businesses, and the overall appearance of the conservation area. The Party branches had regular study groups where the local Party Members were obligated to read and discuss the latest Party and governmental policies. However, the vast majority of neighborhood residents were not well informed of the importance to learn and get involved. The Subdistrict’s community newsletter and social media platforms<sup>35</sup> could also be better utilized to publicize the proposed policies, public forums, and the implementation plans, before events were held and decisions were made.

Third, residents had a clear sense of the differences and potential conflicts between “individual property rights and benefits” versus “the public good”. The illegal construction phenomenon was a frequently discussed topic. For those whose neighbors built additional rooms that encroached on their space in the courtyard houses, they were interested in

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<sup>35</sup> Wei et al. (2015) summarized the successful mechanism and measures in China that utilized new media channels to engage the public in historic neighborhood preservation.

having the government finding out a way to enforce regulations on illegal constructions. For those who cared more about the public space in the hutongs, they focused more on some “big picture problems” regarding beautification of the environment and infrastructure improvement. Residents pointed out that these differences in priorities and practical needs contributed to a government-led engagement process that was not ideal, because everyone could not be satisfied and participants complained a lot. Residents also pointed out that one of the reasons behind a lack of motivation by the Subdistrict to engage a wider participant pool was because some residents “only cared about their own household”, and did not offer constructive criticism and suggestions at those public forums.

街道对一些特定的居民比较熟悉，总是找这些人谈，因为对他们的意见心里比较有底，知道这些人大概的想法。街道不愿意找他们不太熟悉的人，觉得找那些人容易征求意见的效果不好，到时候全是负面的，造成影响不好。确实有的人一说反映意见马上就开始骂骂咧咧的，都是个人想法，全是他家里那点事儿，一点儿都不客观。所以街道才愿意找积极分子，能给街道提出建设性意见。但是这种方式也有问题，因为街道不接触那些“落后”的人，所以有时候接触不到社区里的具体问题。

The Subdistrict officials were familiar with certain residents, and often asked these people for opinions. Because the Subdistrict officials were relatively prepared and had a general sense of their opinions. The Subdistrict didn't want to approach the

residents they were not familiar with. They thought the result of soliciting those residents' opinions would not be good, and would be all negative, which would bring negative effects. Indeed, there were people if you asked them to voice their opinion they immediately started cursing. All personal opinions. Everything was about their own household. They were not objective at all. That's why the Subdistrict preferred to approach those active applicants; they raised constructive opinions for the Subdistrict. But this way also had problems. Because the Subdistrict did not want to engage those who "lagged behind", sometimes the Subdistrict could not get access to detailed problems in the community.

我认为就是年轻人都不关心，一说征求意见，都是中老年人来了，街道办事处没有真正听取到群众的呼声。现在的年轻人，打工的，还有胡同里的文盲的意见，跟我们这些人的想法都不一样。政府应该最广泛地听取大家的意见。尤其是问问这些人为什么对保护工作不关心？

I think the younger generations didn't care. Every time there were those forums, people who came were all middle-aged and the senior generation. The Office of the Subdistrict did not truly receive all peoples' voices. Now, the opinions of younger generations, migrant workers, and illiterate persons in the hutongs, are all different from the opinions of people like us. The government should listen to people's voice to the widest extent. Especially, the government should ask these people why they did not care about preservation?

现在反映意见，上访的效果反而比参加研讨会快得多。尤其是咱们街道里很多户都有违建，侵占公共面积。非法的盖房出租，各种电线和电器，有好多安全隐患。有时候开会，居民提过几次就不好意思再说了，因为人家觉得你怎么只关心自己？所以最后好多问题不了了之了，打击大家参与的积极性。还有人实在不行就捅到媒体那儿，媒体一来报道，把事情闹大了，街道不得不解决了。这些最后就让研讨会变成摆设了，因为作用不大。

Nowadays if you want to voice your opinion, making petitions (to the higher level of authorities) has better effects compared to participating in forums. Especially in our Subdistrict, many households had illegal construction that encroached on the public area. There were illegal constructions for rent. There were all kinds of wires and appliances, with tremendous safety hazards. Sometimes we sat in those forums, some residents talked about these for a couple of times, and they shut up, feeling embarrassed to continue. Because other people said, why did you only care about yourself? Therefore, many problems ended up with nothing being addressed. This (situation) discouraged people from participating. Some people had no choice but made their voice through the media. After the media came to report and draw so much attention, the Subdistrict had to address those problems. This (situation), at the end, turned the forums into merely a display, because they were not effective.

我的感觉是咱们历史街区保护这块儿，上面有政策来了，希望改善我们的生活环境，居民首先肯定希望配合。但是政府宣传得不够，有一些宣传也

不是很贴近居民的日常生活。结果就是很多人都是等到这个政策真正影响到自己了，才意识到具体是怎么回事儿。如果最后不满意，就到处抱怨，实际上也没解决什么问题。

My sense is that when talking about historic neighborhood preservation, there were policies coming from the top, hoping to improve our living environment. The residents, first and foremost, certainly would like to cooperate. However, there was not enough publicity from the government. Also some publicity was not closely related to residents' daily lives. As a result, many didn't realize what exactly those policies were about, until they were personally impacted. If residents were not satisfied, they went around and complained. In practice, that (complaining) didn't solve any problem.

平时看新闻了解这些保护政策比较多，再有就是街道有时会组织党员学习小组学习最新的政策，参加的人会读一下。要我说绝大多数人根本不知道怎么回事儿，宣传得肯定不够。咱们东四街道有一个微信公众号，有时候征求意见的会那个上面也会报，但都是开完了之后说的。

Usually I learned about these preservation policies by watching the news. Also, sometimes the Subdistrict would organize Party Members' study groups to learn the latest policies. Those who participated (in those study groups) read (about the latest policies). In my opinion, the vast majority of residents had absolutely no clue (about preservation policies). The publicity was certainly not enough. Our Dongs



Subdistrict has a WeChat public account. Sometimes their posts covered the forums to solicit public opinions, but (those reporting) all came out after the events.

No resident commented specifically on how they got involved in the policy implementation process or government-led preservation practices. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, residents believed that improving the quality of hutong living environment is an essential part of historic preservation. However, while being asked about participating in government-led practices, they conceptualize those as “the experts’ job”, and did not give credit to themselves. One resident, who was a retiree in the cultural heritage sector, was working on a neighborhood history manuscript project, sponsored by Dongsì Subdistrict. In this resident’s response, only the time working previously as a professional in the governmental system was considered “participating in preservation practices”. Another resident, whose family owned the courtyard house they were currently living in, responded that the caretaking of hutong public space outside of their own courtyard house was “the job of those experts”.

具体的保护实践，我现在参与的很少，基本都是现在在职的人在做。退休之前，我在钟鼓楼地区，因为负责文物、古建筑和社区的保护工作，参与的实际项目比较多。退休之后就没参与什么了。

I rarely participated in the actual practices of historic preservation nowadays. These are basically the job of those people who are still working (in cultural heritage and conservation planning fields). Before retirement, I worked in the Bell

and Drum Tower neighborhood. Because I was responsible for the preservation work of cultural relics, historic buildings and communities, I participated more often in actual projects. I haven't done much since retirement.

没参与过什么实践，主要就是我们家自己院子里整修一下，胡同里怎么弄有人家专家呢！我们操不了那个心。

I haven't participated much in preservation practices, mainly renovating our own courtyard house. What to do in the hutongs, that is the job of those experts! We are not in a position to worry about that.

In fact, almost all of the residents I interviewed actually participated in some forms of government-led preservation, including preservation campaigns and community events at different points in time. Every time they complied with the regulations on façade change and height limitation while renovating and remodeling their houses and storefronts; every time they participated in Weekend Clean-up events and cooperated with the waste management mechanism in the past few years; and every time they took part in any kind of landscaping work in the hutongs – it can be argued that those experiences should all be recognized as getting involved in historic preservation practices. If the level of participation would advance to the third rung as Arnstein identified in the ladder, which is to build a “partnership” between residents and the government and empower the residents in preservation decision-making and policy implementation, both sides need to realize that participation doesn't only come in the format of “informing” and “consultation”, in other

words, residents sitting in public forums. Participation should be recognized and encouraged in the residents' lived experience and everyday practices.

### **4.3.3. Involvement with other Public and Private Sector Stakeholders**

In addition to the discussion on government-led efforts, Dongsì residents also commented on their involvement with other stakeholders in the public and private sectors, including planning institutions, experts and professionals, the property management company, and the community museum. All of these other stakeholders were introduced into the neighborhood via the Subdistrict as supplemental channels to engage the residents and serve their needs. These institutions and entities' involvement in neighborhood preservation aligned with the trajectories identified in *Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016-2035)*, as well as a nationwide reform trajectory to transform government functions<sup>36</sup> and provide sufficient and better quality public service. The local government, instead of taking charge of every aspect in policy implementation, should serve as a partnership platform and play a facilitator's role to bring more professionalized service providers into the neighborhood. This transformation is supposed to help the local government offices that often struggled with a shortage of personnel and a lack of expertise in public service.

Residents had mixed feeling about interacting with the planning institutions and professionals. The relationship between residents and people from the public sector were not clearly perceived or understood, and often time stopped at the survey level. On one

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<sup>36</sup> Transforming government functions (转变政府职能) was one of the major governmental reform trajectories identified at the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (November 2012).

hand, residents knew that the professionals, who showed up at public forums and in the media, consulted the government and proposed plans and policies; therefore, they could help communicate residents' opinions and concerns to the governmental officials. On the other hand, residents were hesitant to trust experts coming to the neighborhood, because they were not sure how effective it would be to engage in these conversations. One resident mentioned that a considerable number of professors and their students came to talk to them in the past, but nobody really followed up. Arnstein identified this surveying-without-bringing-effects situation between residents and those in power as "consultation". Another resident said that they didn't want to get into trouble and have their words twisted, so they were reluctant to talk and work with the professionals they didn't trust. I, however, came in as an architecture student "referred by the Subdistrict", and this pre-existing relationship gave them confidence and trust to talk to me about their perceptions. Multiple residents complained that the professionals often "came with their own ideas", but those who made plans did not live in a hutong environment, and were not familiar with "the real problems here".

像你这样的来东四做课题的大学生和老师很多，我们都接触过，但是后来真正跟我们有持续交流的比较少。专家、老师们做课题是好事儿，说明重视我们这里，我们希望专家能帮助政府了解我们居民的意愿和需求。经常是一开始聊了很多，最后没信儿了。

Like you, there were many college students and professors coming to Dongsì to do projects. We interacted with them. However, few of them actually followed up

with pro-longed interactions with us. It is a good thing that experts and professors did projects (on Dongsì). It shows how much we were valued. We hope that the experts can help the government to get to know us residents' wills and needs. Usually we talked a lot (with the experts) at the beginning. At the end we heard nothing.

我们东四经常有人来问我们历史街区保护的事儿。但是我们跟这些人不熟的时候我们不愿意跟他们聊。我能跟你聊，因为你是街道办事处介绍来的。我知道你不会瞎说。别人估计就算了。谁知道他们聊完了之后往纸上写什么呀？我宁愿跟那些确实为了我们好的人聊，不是为了他们自己。

We have people come to Dongsì every once in a while and ask us about historic neighborhood preservation. We don't feel comfortable talking to them when we don't personally know them. I can talk to you because you are referred to us by the Subdistrict Office. I know that you won't twist my words. But others, maybe not. Who knows what they would put on paper after our conversation? I'd rather talk to people that really care about us, and not take our words for their own purposes.

这些专家帮街道、帮规划部门出主意，很好。但是这些人根本不住平房，都住楼房，就即便是北京人，好多也都是大院儿里长大的。那楼房小区跟我们这儿生活习惯差太多了。我们这儿确实有不方便的地方，你也不能指

望说专家和领导们都来住住，体验体验。反正不管怎么说，有时候我们跟他们说不清楚，人家来了都有自己一套想法。

These experts consulted the Subdistrict and the planning bureau. That's good. But these people had no experience living in single-story housing. They all lived in multi-story buildings. Even if they were Beijingers, many of them grew up in work unit compounds. Living habits in multi-story building complexes are far too different from the living habits we have here. Here we do have some inconveniences. You can't expect the experts and officials to come live here and experience these inconveniences. Nevertheless, sometimes I couldn't explain to them clearly. They (planning professionals) all came here with their own ideas.

我们经常看新闻说政府开专家咨询会了，但是这些专家没有足够地深入社区。平时我们直接接触最多的就是张主任，他非常重视风貌保护工作，经常在胡同里遛遛，跟大家聊。但是那些搞规划的，我们交流的不够，有时候去了咨询会了，我们也不敢问，人家都是专业的，但是不住在胡同里，很难理解我们这儿真正的问题。

We always saw the news that said the government had consulting meetings with the experts, but these experts did not step deep enough into the neighborhood. The most direct interaction we had every day was with Director Zhang (then head of Dongsu Subdistrict Office). He paid great attention to the preservation of hutong characteristics. He always took a walk in the hutongs, talking with people. But

those who work in planning, we didn't have enough interaction. Sometimes we went to the consultation meetings, we didn't dare to ask. Those were professionals, but they didn't live in hutongs. It was very hard (for them) to understand the real problems here.

In the United States, community building is an important concept in historic neighborhood preservation and revitalization. Planners engage the residents through public programming and crowd-sourcing of best practices. This concept did not appear much in our conversation. Professionals from the cultural heritage and urban planning fields, as well as public and private sector institutions and entities, did build collaborative networks with Beijing's hutong neighborhoods, but that kind of partnership was not well established in Dongsi, and not well perceived by Dongsi residents beyond the survey level. Tsinghua University School of Architecture was the only local institution that documented their mapping and data-driven research in Dongsi, through the urban planning department's initiative called Beijing City Lab<sup>37</sup>. However, residents did not describe their experience of long-term engagement with this research team.

Another one of the twenty five designated historic and cultural conservation areas in Beijing directly south to Dongsi called Dongsi South, under the administration of Chaoyangmen Subdistrict, received the most attention and coverage in recent years. Like Dongsi, Dongsi South is also a hutong residential neighborhood. Chaoyangmen

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<sup>37</sup> Founded in 2013 by Professor Ying Long.

Subdistrict started a partnership with Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design (BICP) and Beijing University of Technology (BUT) in 2014. This partnership provided a platform for research and community building teams with stable leadership to work with Dongsi South residents to address everyday needs in the neighborhood, making it easier to build trust and communicate among stakeholders (Zhao, 2018). In 2014, Tsinghua University School of Architecture and Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA)' Department of Landscape Architecture teams joined the historic preservation and community building efforts at Dongsi South. BICP currently has an on-site operation team at Shijia Hutong Museum, Beijing's first community museum, in this neighborhood. Hongguang Wang and her team, as urban planners employed by BICP, work at the museum in the neighborhood every day to interact with residents and visitors, and host public programs (Wang, 2018). The museum is also one of the venues for the annual Beijing International Design Week. Many of the events being promoted at this design week were related to people-centered historic preservation, public participation in planning, community building initiatives, public education, and curatorship (Zhao, 2016). BICP planners and BUT students conducted participatory and collaborative design projects to help residents re-arrange and re-design their courtyard house public spaces. These practices also allowed students to get into the hutong environment and gain first-hand experience of working with residents (Zhao, 2017). The CAFA team, led by Professor Xiaolei Hou, focused on micro garden design and sustainable greenery in hutongs. Their team has been surveying the neighborhood and hosting workshops with residents at the community museum since 2015. Their project, titled *Micro Garden Series*



*2015-2019: A Sustainable Regeneration for Shijia Hutong in Beijing Old City, China*, won the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)'s Africa, Asia Pacific, and Middle East (AAPME) Award in October 2020. BICP and CAFA teams also started the neighborhood vegetable market regeneration project, working with small business owners and residents to improve the environment and quality of these amenities (Hou et al., 2018). Chaoyangmen Subdistrict's efforts of building partnership platforms and incorporating public participation in historic neighborhood preservation and regeneration at Dongsi South won the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (former Ministry of Construction)'s China Habitat Environment Example Prize (modeled after the UN-Habitat Award) in 2017.

Compared to Dongsi residents' being uncertain and reluctant to work with public sector stakeholders due to a lack of familiarity and demonstrated effects and results, project reports and research done in the Dongsi South neighborhood told some similar stories of engagement and involvement. Especially at the beginning, both the residents and professionals working for planning and research institutions struggled to build a long-term effective partnership mechanism that would last beyond single projects and survey efforts. Throughout their years working in Dongsi South, planners also realized the importance of working with the government, the residents, and other stakeholders after conservation plans were drafted and approved. Unlike consultation at public forums, the processes of policy implementation and social governance were put in place to have a more significant and direct impact on residents' lives. Only such long-term engagement

could help foster community partnerships, strengthen community ties, and encourage residents to take part in stakeholder collaboration, and even self-governance.

When I brought Chaoyangmen District's successful initiatives into our conversations, I asked residents in Dongsì if they were aware of their neighboring community's engagement and involvement stories. One resident responded that they had participated in similar activities and events in Dongsì. However, those occasions were primarily organized by the government people. Rarely did the planning and research institutions' teams communicate directly with the residents or develop stable, long-term relationships with them. Another resident pointed out that residents were aware of other neighborhoods' successful initiatives all the time, through face-to-face storytelling and news reports in local media. They made suggestions to the Subdistrict and their neighborhood committees based on what they heard. They expected the Subdistrict to take charge in engagement efforts, and welcomed other public sector stakeholders to join in. The residents also realized that they, as important neighborhood stakeholders, also need to be better educated and be able to develop awareness among themselves to participate in preservation and community building more actively.

我们也有“花友会”，也有专家入户给我们这个院儿里的空间摆设提点儿建议，然后我们也有胡同博物馆。周末大扫除还是我们这儿开始的呢！从东四开始的！但是据我所知这些主要都是街道和居委会组织的，居民就配合一下就行了，并没有像你说的史家胡同那种居民跟规划师有长期的、固定

的合作关系。至少我不知道。我感觉史家胡同那边居民整体素质比较高，这点我们东四比不了。很多人还没有这个意识。

We also had a “Friends of Flowers” (gardening club). We also had experts coming into our courtyard houses to give us advice on spatial arrangement. And then we also had a hutong museum. We even started the Weekend Clean-up! It originated in Dongsì! But according to what I know, these (initiatives) were mainly organized by the Subdistrict and neighborhood committees. Us residents just need to cooperate. There is no long-term, stable partnership relationship with urban planners, like what you said (what happened) in Shijia Hutong (one of the major hutongs in Dongsì South and where Shijia Hutong Museum is located). At least I don't know. My sense is that residents over there in Shijia Hutong are overall of higher quality. Us Dongsì cannot compete in this regard. Many people still do not process this idea (of participation).

史家的事儿我们听说了，平时街坊也聊这些，媒体也报道得挺多的。我们听说了好的活动，就会给街道、居委会提建议。但是最后这类活动还有合作机制能不能持续，还是得看咱们居民参与的意愿如何，要是不关心这事儿的人，你给他办各种活动他永远也不会来，政府得加强教育，居民素质得提高，得意识到参与这件事儿对咱们有意义。

We had heard of what happened in Shijia Hutong. Neighbors usually talked about this. There were many media reports as well. Whenever we heard of great

activities, we brought suggestions to the Subdistrict and neighborhood committees. But at the end, whether these kinds of activities and cooperation mechanism are sustained or not, depends on us residents' willingness to participate. For those who don't care about these things, no matter how many events you host for them, they won't come anyway. The government needs to strengthen education (on public participation in preservation). Residents need to improve their quality. (We) need to recognize that participating in this (preservation) is meaningful for us.

Besides the public sector stakeholders, Dongsì residents also commented on their experience and relationships with the private sector, especially Dongxu Jiaye, the property management company operating in the neighborhood as a professional service provider, brought in by Dongsì Subdistrict in Summer 2016. The process was not smooth at all at the beginning. *Dongsì Weekly*<sup>38</sup> and *Beijing Daily*<sup>39</sup> reported in 2017 that in the first year of this company's operation in Dongsì, residents questioned its authority in managing hutong public space such as parking areas, especially the legal basis of this management mechanism. The Subdistrict had to step in to clarify and regulate the property management company's role in managing hutong public space. Through several rounds of discussions with residents, the property management company, work units in the neighborhood, and the local transportation authority, it was agreed that the property management company would serve as a facilitator in resolving conflicts in daily operation and regulation

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<sup>38</sup> *Dongsì Weekly*, December 19, 2017, Page 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Beijing Daily*, September 25, 2017.

enforcement. Once this tension was solved, residents started to appreciate the services this company provided.

In our conversations, residents who had experience interacting with this private service provider suggested that their staff were quite accessible on a daily basis. They were able to work with the residents immediately for on-demand tasks, and were very flexible in adapting to the residents' needs. This presence on the ground played a key role in building trust with the residents, and successfully served the original goal of providing more accessible and professionalized service for neighborhood residents, when the company was introduced into Dongsì by the Subdistrict. Residents' concerns about this private service provider were similar to their concerns regarding the long-term effects of working with planning institutions and professionals. They wondered how sustainable this fairly new management and service mechanism could last.

政府引入的这个物业管理，一开始我们不理解，觉得胡同空间是属于的大家的，这个私人的公司它没权利管。后来逐渐大家发现物业公司不是只负责管理停车位，还可以提供便民服务，包括上门修修水电，帮忙清理大件垃圾，还帮行动不便的一些老年人买菜送货。据我所知物业的服务态度是很大的，所以居民逐渐就能够信任他们了。

The (subdistrict) government brought in this property management company. At first, we didn't understand. We thought the hutong space belonged to all of us. This private company had no right to manage (the public space). Then we gradually

realized that this company was not only responsible for managing parking spots, but also could provide services for the residents, including providing on-demand utility services, helping us to clean out bulky waste, as well as helping some senior residents who were not mobile enough to buy and deliver groceries. As far as I know, their (staff's) attitude was very good, so residents were gradually able to trust them.

物业公司的人平常经常在胡同里面巡逻，而且他们都穿制服，我们一看就知道是物业的，有问题、有需求，也可以跟他们反映。肯定是一个新事物，就是最近两年的事儿，但是大家慢慢熟悉、接触了之后，就比较相信他们。我们所有的周末大扫除都有物业公司帮忙，这一点就相当实在，大家都看在眼里。

The property management company staff usually patrolled in the hutongs on a daily basis. Also they wore uniforms. By one look, we knew who they were. When we have problems and demands, we could also talk to them. (Having this company in Dongsi) was definitely a new thing. It has only been here for two years. But after we slowly got familiar and interacted with each other, we pretty much trusted them. All our Weekend Clean-ups used their help. This was quite practical. We all saw this with our own eyes.

我们之前院里停电就是物业的人来解决的，很快，他们有专业的师傅。有时候有问题他们解决不了了，也会马上帮我们联系街道或者其他专业的人来给我们弄。总的来讲，我支持胡同的物业化管理，但是今后效果如何，还要看他们宣传的这些服务是不是可持续？不能虎头蛇尾，不能说政府丢给物业公司，物业公司最后也管不好。

Recently when our courtyard house were out of electricity, the property management company people came and fixed it very quickly. They had professional maintenance workers. Sometimes when they could not solve the problem, they immediately helped us to contact the Subdistrict or bring in other professionals to come fix it for us. In general, I support property management service in hutongs. However, the effect in the future would depend on how sustainable these services they publicized could be sustained. (They) can't start with a tiger head and end with a snake tail (Chinese proverb for "a strong beginning with a weak ending"). It shouldn't be that the government tosses (these services) to the property management company; and in the end, the company does not manage well either.

The property management company's parent company, Beijing Capital Group (BCG) Co., Ltd., is also the principle operator of Dongsì Hutong Museum, a community museum opened at No. 77 Dongsì Sitiao in October 2018. It was the second community museum opened in hutong conservation areas in Beijing. In October 2015, Dongcheng District

government and BCG signed a strategic partnership agreement on the “Comprehensive Environmental Treatment Project on Dongsi Santiao to Batiao Historic and Cultural Conservation Area”. The community museum was the first major project carried out through this Public-Private Partnership (Zhang et al., 2019). The Subdistrict provided a public-owned two-courtyard compound, which was the former site of the local police station, to house this museum. Dongcheng District government also allocated specific funding to support community museum development. BCG provided additional financial resources and personnel support for the renovation of this courtyard house and the daily operation of the museum. The total area of the museum is 1023 m<sup>2</sup>. Permanent exhibits include historical objects and artifacts from Dongsi households, texts, images, and videos on neighborhood history, as well as the courtyard house buildings themselves.

At the time of its opening, the community museum was still a new phenomenon in the museum field in China. According to the data<sup>40</sup> published by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, in 2008, the total number of non-state-owned museums was only 319. By the end of 2019, there were 2,929 state-owned museums operated by the cultural heritage bureaus at different governmental levels, which was 52.92% of the total number of museums in the country. The rest of them were state-owned museums currently operated by other institutions in the public sector (896, 16.19%), and non-state-owned museums (1710, 30.89%). Despite the visible growth of non-state-owned museums in China, the most familiar members of this group were still

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<sup>40</sup> 2020 *Chinese Museum Industry Market Analysis*. August 17, 2020.  
<https://bg.qianzhan.com/report/detail/300/200817-248d3a10.html>



privately-owned and operated large-scale institutions. For example, Guanfu Museum in Beijing and Jianchuan Museum Cluster in Sichuan Province. Community museums, because of their small total numbers and unusual ownership and operation situations, were still not formally recognized as a part of the museum industry.

As previously mentioned, Shijia Hutong Museum in Dongsi South is currently operated by the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design. Chaoyangmen Subdistrict owns the courtyard house in which the community museum is located. In other words, Shijia Hutong Museum can be seen as part of the “state-owned museum currently operated by a public sector institution” category. Dongsi Hutong Museum, with similar ownership status, is operated by a property ownership company. From a legal identity standpoint, both museums did not apply for formal membership in the Chinese Museum Association. Therefore, the two hutong museums currently serve more as community centers than formal museums institutions. Financially, they also rely on the Subdistricts and their principle operators for expenses associated with daily management.

In our conversations, Dongsi residents welcomed the Subdistrict’s efforts in putting together this hutong museum, as a physical space for public events and a symbolic focal point to preserve and publicize hutong culture. They focused on the educational function of this place, demanding events and programming that are not only for the tourists and people from outside of the community, but also for the education and enjoyment of local residents. Although Dongsi Hutong Museum is currently operated by a property management company, the museum offers free admission to the public. Residents did not mention any business promotion element in their experience with the museum, nor did

they perceive any economic impact on the neighborhood. Residents still consider the museum largely as a government-led initiative as part of public service.

有了博物馆之后我觉得对于宣传我们胡同文化这块儿会起一个很好的作用。以前不是经常听说游客随便进人院儿里吗，现在街道直接给整修了一个四合院让大家看，你想知道我们这个建筑 and 空间是什么样儿的？去四条 77 号就行了。游客也满意了，居民也满意了。

I think having this museum would have very positive impact on publicizing our hutong culture. In the past, weren't there usually news stories about tourists randomly stepping into people's courtyard houses? Now the Subdistrict renovated a courtyard house for people to see. You want to know how our architecture and space look like? Just go to No. 77 Sitiao. The tourists are satisfied, and the residents are satisfied, too.

我在胡同博物馆当志愿者，基本都是退休的居民。这个博物馆等于是给大家提供了一个学习场所，外来的人呢可以来博物馆了解了解东四的历史文化，我们本地居民也有了一个活动场所。街道请过专家来这边儿讲课，还有过年过节有一些活动，都是免费的，都挺受欢迎的。

I am a volunteer at the Hutong Museum. (The volunteers) basically are all retired residents. This museum provides a learning place for people. People from outside can come to the museum to learn Dongsis's history and culture. We local residents

also are able to have an event space. The Subdistrict invited experts here for a guest lecture. We also had festival and holiday celebration events. (Those events) are all free and well received.

我知道的就是之前大扫除清理出来的几个清代的构建，正好现在博物馆开了，这些老物件儿放在博物馆里大家就可以参观。还有今年春节的时候，街道搞的“报春”，也在博物馆门口，当时好多人都去了，还挺热闹的。

What I know is that previously we discovered several Qing Dynasty structural elements (from courtyard houses) during Weekend Clean-ups. Now that the museum is open, people can see these old elements placed in the museum. Also during this year's Spring Festival, the Subdistrict hosted an "Announcing the Spring"<sup>41</sup> event at the front door of the museum. Many people went. It was pretty lively at the time.

你要不说我还不知道这个博物馆是物业公司管理的，我就知道四条 77 号以前是派出所，后来街道腾退，把这个空间利用起来，变成博物馆了。现在那个墙上还有 60 年代派出所的标语，都保留了。我知道它不收钱。这个博物馆的核心我认为应该是不只服务于游客，最后肯定还是要惠及我们这些

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<sup>41</sup> A Spring Festival custom in China. Traditionally, the announcement of spring season is also a signal for the start of a new year's agricultural production. The event is usually led by an announcer, accompanied by a band, and joined by community members walking around the neighborhood on the first day of Spring.

居民。多搞点群众活动，让大家意识到居民得多关心胡同文化，这样才能实现你刚刚说的那些保护的目标。

If you didn't tell me, I wouldn't know that the property management company operates the museum. All I know was that No. 77 Sitiao used to be the police station. Then the Subdistrict vacated (the police station which occupied the courtyard house) and utilized this space, turning it into a museum. Nowadays they still have the police station slogans printed on the wall from the 1960s. Those remained (after renovation). I know it offers free admission. The core of this museum, in my opinion, should not only serve the tourists. At the end of the day, it certainly should benefit us residents. (The museum should) host more public events, let people realize that residents should pay more attention to hutong culture. Only in this way, those preservation goals you just mentioned can be realized.

街道应该组织居民全都去参观我们这个博物馆，讲讲东四的历史，讲讲胡同保护和与我们生活的关系。要让大家看到好的例子，这个院子被我们东四保护好、而且利用起来了，成为一个社区文化的象征，这点非常重要，我们大家要意识到这点。

The Subdistrict should organize all residents to go visit this museum we have, to talk about Dongsì's history, and the relationship between hutong preservation and our lives. (The government) needs to show people the good examples. This courtyard house was well preserved and also utilized by our Dongsì neighborhood.

It became a symbol of our neighborhood culture. This is a very important point.

We all need to realize this.

#### **4.3.4. Self-Organizing Efforts**

In Arnstein's ladder, the third rung of participation, which is "citizen power", would first require self-built and self-regulating measures to empower the residents and start building capacity from within. This leads to a discussion of some self-organizing practices of preservation and community building that Dongsì residents perceived in their historic neighborhood. In 1987, the Ministry of Civil Affairs first raised the concept of "community service". Since the Reform and Opening-up era, as both population and workforce became increasingly mobile, local governance in China gradually transformed from a work unit-based model to a community-based model. Because the government continues to be the most powerful stakeholder in social governance at the neighborhood level, the public are still reluctant to participate in locally organized self-governance. On top of that are the increasingly diverse urban population and their different interests, as well as the weak personnel and resource foundation for community self-governance. Community based organizations, often loosely organized, are still not able to take responsibility for self-governance and meet the needs of community service. From the residents' perspective, self-governance efforts are still not clearly identified and well perceived (Zhao, 2019).

In March 2015, the first legal registered community-based organization in Beijing's historic neighborhoods was established in Dongsì South. The Shijia Hutong Historic

Preservation Society (SHHPS) was registered under Dongcheng District Bureau of Civil Affairs, and generated a written document of community self-governance agreed by resident representatives. The primary goal of SHHPS is to renovate hutong built environments and promote the neighborhood's intangible values by applying a bottom-up approach to supplement the conventional top-down decision-making process. Previous research on this community-based organization showed that self-organization and voluntary self-governance efforts in such historic neighborhood generated more effective and sustainable outcomes, as residents' interests and needs occupied the center stage of stakeholder collaborative and decision-making processes (Wang, 2016).

The new *Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016-2035)* required that “the public be relied upon and encouraged to participate” in urban governance, neighborhood management, and public service. This aligns with the reform trajectory to transform government functions. Local government should create public participation channels in order to build a collaborative and interactive governance mechanism. This will help reduce the uncertainty and distrust among residents to participate in community self-governance. The municipal wide plan also identified that nurturing a residents' self-governance mechanism is the overall trend in urban governance in the future, and an effective way to increase the residents' satisfaction rate on neighborhood life quality. As discussed in previous sections, the local government in Chinese cities nowadays tends to bring along partners and other stakeholders to work on preservation, revitalization, and community building projects. In the case of Dongsì South, Chaoyangmen Subdistrict and its primary public sector partner, Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design (BICP), both played essential role

in nurturing the culture and demonstrating the effectiveness of neighborhood residents self-organization and self-governance.

In Dongsì, however, the public has yet to see a formally registered community-based organization. In our conversations, residents mentioned several loosely self-organized efforts in coordinating among residents themselves and with other stakeholders. For example, Dongsì Liutiao community formed a self-governance committee on parking, through which residents successfully negotiated several measures to voluntarily self-regulate and resolve conflicts on parking issues within the existing policy framework. Other hutong communities in Dongsì also agreed on self-governance and volunteer monitoring protocols for waste management and recycling. These efforts were often inspired by specific issues. Residents perceived these efforts as a channel to collectively voice their concerns to other stakeholders, and at the time, to hold each other accountable in a formal manner. Similar to their responses in previous discussions about participating in government-led efforts, many residents pointed out that in order for these self-organizing and self-governance organizations or agreements to succeed and sustainably operate, an increased overall cultural quality and civic consciousness of the residents themselves is the key. In other words, the goal of self-organization and self-governing is not only about solving a specific problem or issue. These efforts should be part of the process to raise awareness among themselves and make more residents recognize the importance of collectively participating in preservation and community building.

胡同里日常的管理很多确实还是要靠居民自觉。像六条去年成立了停车自管会，制订了大家都能接受的一些准则，还有就是有矛盾怎么办，谁来解决，有什么依据。实际上要我说政府也不是非常清楚，街道和胡同里的单位都需要了解居民的具体难处和需求。所以自管会等于是大家一起反映意见的渠道，同时也起相互监督的作用。这种事儿最后要看能不能持续执行，不能三天打鱼两天晒网，否则那定完了规矩不跟没说一样吗。

The hutong daily management indeed mostly relies on the residents' self-regulation. Last year, Liutiao formed a Parking Self-governance Committee and established some rules that everybody could accept. Also rules on what to do in a conflict, who is supposed to solve the conflict, on what basis. Practically speaking, in my opinion, the government was not very clear either. The Subdistrict and work units in hutongs all needed to know residents' specific difficulties and needs. So the self-governance committee was literally a channel for people to voice their opinions together; and at the same time, serving the purpose of holding each other accountable. Things like this, at the end, you will need to see if they (agreements) can be enforced. You can't go fishing for three days and dry the nets for two days (Chinese proverb for "being inconsistent"). Otherwise, the previously agreed principles would mean nothing.



居民自治听起来很好，政府现在也鼓励，但是从根儿上来讲，还是得提高大家的文化素质。有些人不管事先说得多好，时间长了一不自觉，街坊邻居也没办法。就光倒垃圾这么一件小事儿就看出来了。

Resident self-governance sounds very good. The government nowadays also encourages it. But the root of this (mechanism) is to improve our cultural quality. For some people, no matter what they agreed to at the beginning, they lost the sense of responsibility as time went by, and the neighbors couldn't do anything (about violators). Just take this small thing, garbage collection, as an example.

咱们肯定都是想胡同环境更好的，一个解决方案，制订出来之后，大家都同意了，希望能保持。但是首先得有这个责任意识，无论你是公房还是私房，房主还是租户，都是咱们东四人，大家都有义务去遵守，有意见可以协调，但是得配合，否则你一开始搞得多全面具体，都不能长久。为什么违建的问题这么难解决？政府不查，大家都不自觉。

We certainly want a better hutong environment. After a solution was established and agreed upon, (we) hope to maintain (the efforts). But first, people have to have this recognition of responsibility. No matter if you live in public or private owned housing; no matter you are an owner or a renter, you are all Dongsis residents. We all have the responsibility to obey (the agreements or rules). If you have concerns, we can coordinate. But you have to cooperate. Otherwise, no matter how comprehensive and detailed you had it at the beginning, it is not going to last long.

Why is the illegal construction problem so hard to solve? (As long as) the government does not inspect, people are not self-regulating.

#### **4.3.5. Motivations behind Participation**

While commenting on stakeholder relationships, engagement efforts from both public and private sectors, as well as self-organized efforts to get involved, Dongsì residents also explained their perceived motivations and sometimes a lack of motivation behind participating in neighborhood preservation. Residents described their motivations as largely related to their perceptions about the values of this historic neighborhood. I then followed up with questions on what they perceive as obstacles toward participation, and in their opinions, how public participation in historic preservation could be improved through the efforts from all stakeholders. Residents emphasized the government's and the public sector's role in publicity, education, and leadership in raising awareness, creating platform for collaboration, and facilitating wider participation.

作为我们居民的初衷就是两个，一个是保住胡同这个传统居住环境，第二，提升居住条件。因为胡同的意义就在于它美观、宜居。我们对胡同历史街区保护这项工作关心，会去参与，也是因为这两个原因。我们每天住在这儿，我们是最了解胡同的人，胡同里的问题我们也最了解。

As residents we only have two original intentions. The first one is to preserve this traditional residential environment in hutongs. The second one is to improve living conditions. Because the meaning of hutongs lies in the fact that they are

aesthetically pleasing and suitable for living. These are also the two reasons why we care about hutong historic neighborhood preservation, and want to participate (in preservation work). We live here every day. We are the ones who know hutongs the best. We are also the ones who know best the problems in the hutongs.

各家院儿里的事儿各家可以解决，但是胡同里的事儿大家怎么都得商量着解决。本来胡同就这么点儿地方，要动哪儿都会或多或少触及一些人的利益。你看比较积极参与的这些人，都是有大局意识的人。协调这么多人的意见，肯定是要花很多时间和精力，有时候居民参与了半天，费力不讨好。所以我觉得最重要的是有一个比较固定的协调机制，政府和规划单位要引导。

Each household can solve their own issues inside of their courtyard houses. But issues in the hutongs need all of us to negotiate and solve. Hutongs only have this limited amount of space. No matter where you want to renovate, it will inevitably touch some people's interests. You see, these people who are actively involved, are people with big-picture awareness. It certainly requires a lot of time and energy to coordinate so many peoples' opinions. Sometimes residents got involved for a lot of things, but no one was happy (about the end results). So I think the most important thing is to build a relatively stable coordination mechanism. The government and planning units need to guide (the coordination process).

有一些保护政策不能严格统一地落实和执行。比如违建的处理。这个也会降低大家参与的积极性。

Some preservation policies were not implemented and enforced in a strict and unified manner. For example, the handling of illegal constructions. This (lack of clarity and fairness in enforcement) will also lower people's activeness in participation.

别一说胡同平房就是条件脏乱差，我就不乐意了。我们东四有这么多好的东西，政府宣传得不够。大家参与的意愿不够，政府要负很大责任，必须要加强宣传，鼓励参与，让尽可能多的居民理解保护工作与我们的生活息息相关。确实有一些住户是等着政府补贴搬迁走的，就想着拿钱，但我们绝大多数人还是关心东四的，愿意参与。

Stop talking about dirty, chaotic, and dilapidated conditions every time hutong single-story buildings are brought up. I'm not happy (about this prejudice). We have so many good things in Dongsì that the government did not publicize enough. There is a lack of motivation for people to participate. The government needs to take large responsibility (in this lack of motivation to participate). (The government) must increase publicity efforts, encourage participation, and make the most possible residents understand that preservation work is closely related to our lives. Indeed, there are some residents who are only waiting for governmental

subsidies to move out. They only want money. But most of us still care about Dongsì, and are willing to get involved.

现在政策宣传的有问题，经常一说历史街区，就只讲文保单位。然后有些居民就说了，东四本来也没有多少真古建，都是小平房。很多保护政策宣传得过于笼统，不给居民讲具体的实施措施和影响。这让大家怎么参与啊？我们意识不到我们生活在这个历史街区的环境中，我们东四所有东西都是历史街区的一部分。很多人觉得文化啊历史啊，离我们很遥远，所以不关心。

There is a problem with publicizing (preservation) policies. Often times when historic neighborhoods are mentioned, only the protected units (designated built heritage sites) are talked about. Then some residents would say, Dongsì does not have many authentic historic buildings anyway. These are all small single-story buildings. Many preservation policies were publicized in an over generalized way. Residents were not informed about detailed implementation measures and their impacts. How can people participate (with this lack of understanding)? We don't realize that we live in this historic neighborhood environment. All the things in Dongsì are part of the historic neighborhood. Many people feel that culture and history are so far away from us, so they don't care.

街道应该多派人入户，制定规划的单位也得参与入户。要持续不断地听取意见，改进工作。因为政府听取意见的过程，也是提高居民保护意识的过程。不能指望大家一夜之间都开始关心这个事儿了，得通过参与和互动，才能逐步提高。否则政府把环境整治得再美好，大家仍然觉得跟自己没关系。

The Subdistrict should send staff to do home visits more often. Those work units that make (conservation) plans should also join the home visits. (The public sector) should continue to listen to residents' advice and improve their work. Because this process of the government listening to (residents') advice is also the process of improving the residents' awareness of preservation. (The government) cannot rely on everybody all of a sudden starting to care about preservation work. The work can only be gradually improved through participation and interaction. Otherwise, no matter how beautiful the government renovates the environment to be, people still think that it has nothing to do with us.

Residents' perceptions of policies and practices that engaged and involved them in preservation decision-making and policy implementation processes can be summarized as:

- Dongsì residents understand that in the current political structure and policy framework, the government remains the most powerful stakeholder in preservation. On a local level, the Subdistrict is expected by the residents to lead the efforts in

engaging a broader variety of residents, and building partnership platforms to bring in different stakeholders throughout these processes;

- Residents have experience working with preservation and planning professionals coming from the public sector, and understand these experts' roles in supporting government at different levels to conduct survey and propose conservation plans, which later will become policy documents and actual regulations. Therefore, residents understand that it is in their best interests to work with these professionals, since the planning institutions serve as a communication channel between residents and the Subdistrict;
- Residents perceive that an effective and sustainable government-led preservation effort will require long-term engagement with follow-ups, more trusted and stable relationships between residents and the public and private sectors, and a clearly defined coordination mechanism among different stakeholders. In Dongsi, all of these preferred actions are still early in development. Without an accountability framework currently in place, some policies and regulations were not strictly enforced; and as a result, the willingness of participation decreases;
- Residents identify a still-needs-to-be-improved cultural quality, in terms of civic engagement, and a lack of self-consciousness among the resident population as main factors in the lack of involvement. They suggest that the public sector should take charge in implementing public education and awareness raising efforts to help improve residents' quality and hold potential violators accountable. They also recognize that this will be a slow and gradual process;

- Publicity from the government side is a big issue, as perceived by many residents. This includes the publicity of history neighborhood's values, the importance of public participation in preservation, and the residents' existing roles in preservation and community building efforts. The last one is important because such recognition would help residents realize the ways in which they already participated in the processes, and understand how much power they already possessed and could develop by further getting involved.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This chapter will answer the research questions raised in Chapter One and, based on the responses of the Dongsi residents discussed in Chapter Four, will review their perceptions of preservation policies and practices in their historic residential neighborhood. My conclusions identify some universally applicable approaches to future research and practices in historic preservation, and some site-specific factors that could impact the effectiveness of preservation in similar neighborhood and cultural settings. The chapter will conclude by stating the limitations of the current project and pointing out some future directions to advance the conversation regarding the people-centered approach in historic preservation.

### **5.1. Residents' Perceptions of Preservation Policies and Practices**

From the residents' perspective, some aspects of earlier heritage discourse surrounding Dongsi hutongs benefited them as residents of this living heritage community, because the recognition of the artistic and historical values of courtyard houses as vernacular architecture and hutongs as an urban settlement pattern gave the neighborhood the status of a Historical and Cultural Conservation Area; this legal status protected their preferred living environment from large-scale demolition and/or real estate development activities. The earlier heritage discourse, as described in official planning and policy documents, failed to benefit the residents in other regards: first, it did not validate the practical benefits associated with hutongs' spatial arrangement and life-style, as compared

to the living experience in other vernacular housing types; second, earlier heritage discourse portrayed hutongs as a product of the past, disconnected from the contemporary, rather than a constantly evolving and changing organism as part of the city's overall urban development; third, previous heritage discourse overwhelmingly focused on the visual and tangible aspects of the preservation process and the ways in which building façades and architectural elements should be in harmony with the overall traditional neighborhood characteristics, and failed to acknowledge the residents' needs that were centered around their daily lives and community services rather than the neighborhood's visual appearance.

The benefits of preservation policy and heritage management of Dongsì as a living heritage community were clearly understood by the residents, who recognized that these policies and practices helped maintain clean and tidy public spaces that were utilized and enjoyed by all residents. In addition, infrastructure and amenities improvement measures resulted in better quality facilities, services, and neighborhood environment, which were well received by the residents. Finally, relationships among neighborhood stakeholders were established and became closer due to the policy implementation processes. In some cases, previous management policy and practices failed to benefit living heritage community residents because regulations were not strictly and fairly enforced, or the implementation measures took a one-size-fits-all approach that failed to take into consideration the unique characteristics and challenges of each household and courtyard house.

Dongsì residents perceived the following factors as having the most impact upon their living heritage community's engagement in preservation. First, whether or not the

local government took a strong leadership role in broadening the scope of public participation in preservation decision-making and practices, publicizing the cause and benefits of historic residential neighborhood preservation, and creating partnership platforms for different neighborhood stakeholders from the public and private sectors to contribute to and engage in the preservation process in the long run. Second, whether or not the preservation professionals and experts in the field worked with residents in a long-term, stable, and trust-worthy relationship, which validated neighborhood residents' traditional practices and aimed to build consensus on creating beneficial changes in the future. Last but not least, whether residents' involvement in historic preservation was broadly acknowledged and properly guided by the most powerful stakeholders (the government and the preservation profession that served the policy-making goals and assisted the implementation processes) in this historical residential neighborhood.

## **5.2. Implications for Preservation Research and Practice**

Although this case study is situated in the context of an urban residential neighborhood in the Chinese capital city, some universal implications can be extracted from the discussions of residents' perceptions. When being asked about preservation issues in their neighborhood, residents rarely talked about a single building, a specific conservation, renovation, an adaptive reuse project, or even a single policy and campaign. The local preservation news that reveals historic and artistic values of a built heritage site is not of particular interests to the neighborhood residents, unless people see clear connections between preservation efforts and positive changes in the quality of their living

environment. In other words, historic residential neighborhood residents tend to think of heritage as a big-picture concept connected to the identity of their overall living environment, instead of a single heritage site, visual element, or even a specific intangible tradition. Because residents' opinions on issues and their practical needs are so broadly defined, they do not speak to one single industry, profession, or discipline. The preservation and management of an urban, living heritage requires expertise from many different fields.

Although historic preservation has gradually grown into an interdisciplinary endeavor, careful consideration of residents' opinions and experience demonstrates the importance for us to continue having these interdisciplinary conversations, in order to frame historic preservation or heritage conservation as a people-centered collaboration to achieve social progress, and to make our efforts increasingly relevant in today's rapidly changing and developing society. As researchers and practitioners, we need to keep reminding ourselves that preservation is not any one field or profession's job; instead, it requires a number of research and professional fields working together towards a common goal, including architectural and urban history, urban and conservation planning, landscaping, construction industries, tangible and intangible cultural heritage protection, education, communication, sociology and social work, public health, political science, government and public administration, transportation and service industries, as well as neighborhood revitalization and tourism. Only by overcoming disciplinary barriers in terms of knowledge, theories, methodologies, and skills, can preservationists gain the largest amount of leverage and resources to deliver practical benefits to living heritage

communities in historic neighborhoods. This is the lesson we all can learn from Dongsi residents' perceptions and experience with preservation.

Besides these universal implications, there are also some aspects of this case study that are specifically applicable to today's Chinese urban society. First of all, in October 2017, President Xi Jinping's report at the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party expressly stated that "the wellbeing of people should be at the center of the country's development thinking"<sup>42</sup>. This mindset became an important part of the country's development roadmap, together with the development of a modernized economy and socialist democracy, and the building of stronger cultural confidence among Chinese people. By expanding the definition and scope of historic preservation, and putting people's wellbeing as the ultimate goal of preservation efforts we, as preservationists, can insert our causes and priorities into China's national political trajectory, making the preservation of cultural heritage an integral part of how the country moves forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At the municipal level, the latest *Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016-2035)* also stated that improving the life quality of people and preserving the hometown feeling of hutong residential neighborhoods are a top priority in planning policy and urban development trajectory. The important and urgent task at this moment in time for us preservation professionals working on living heritage in Chinese cities, is a change of perspective and a commitment to the publicity efforts to build strong consensus of this people-centered

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<sup>42</sup> Yang, Y (Ed.). "CPC opens 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress, declaring 'new era' of China's socialism." Xinhua News Agency, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/18/c\\_136688806.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/18/c_136688806.htm)

approach among all neighborhood stakeholders. When we look at all the previous discussions of residents' value judgement on built heritage, various issues and concerns in the historic residential neighborhood, and experience in participation in preservation, it is obvious that residents already cared about their built heritage environment, and knew very well the limitations of historic neighborhoods as heritage environment in contemporary life. They are willing to work with the local government and preservation professionals to improve the current situation and continue to make historic neighborhoods enjoyable and desirable places to live. Therefore, we should draw attention to the importance of collaborative efforts and people-centered preservation, and advocate for our efforts as part of the overall social development. We should also incorporate all the public engagement efforts into our narrative, as strong additions to our existing preservation projects that focus on the treatment of material and tangible remains.

Historically, because preservation was once seen as an endeavor that only focused on the tangible remains of the past, the whole field was perceived as going against the process of urbanization and economic development in Chinese cities. In the 1990s and early 2000s, local governments generated tax revenue by leasing land usage and development rights to private developers, which resulted in a large number of historic neighborhoods being demolished in a short period of time. The country and its largest cities have moved past that stage of urban development, and historic neighborhoods, with their designated protected status and on-going preservation efforts, have drawn much attention and recognition among the general public. As the people-center focus in historic preservation continues to gain momentum in China and around the world we, as

preservationists, should seize this moment to build partnerships and implement long-term working mechanisms to support our commitment to the wellbeing of people living in the heritage environment. In a heavily top-down political environment like China, policy trajectories are relatively consistent at different levels of government. As we align our priorities with the current national political trajectory, we are more likely to be successful in promoting our cause in various policy-making and implementation processes at all administrative levels. If we don't advocate for the wellbeing of people, we continue to alienate ourselves from the actual challenges and issues in urban historic neighborhoods. As individuals, we cannot be an expert on every practical aspect of neighborhood preservation. However, we practitioners in this interdisciplinary field and profession, should advocate to the government and decision-makers that a people-centered, collaborative, empirical-based, and bottom-up approach is a much needed approach to consider when it comes to historic residential neighborhood preservation.

### **5.3. Limitations and Future Directions**

The scope of my dissertation project was limited by time constraints and feasibility. It is worth pointing out that such phenomenological and empirical research requires a large amount of time spent in the field interacting with the residents and their living environment. Based on the research timeline set for this dissertation, I only spent two summers (2018 and 2019) and two winter breaks (2018/19 and 2019/20) interviewing people and gathering visual data. The number of interviewees was limited at 20, which means they were only a fraction of the total residential population in Dongsi, in terms of

number and percentage. However, due to the semi-constructed interviews, purposive and snowball sampling methods, and the richness of information presented in these interviews, the scope of the cohort was appropriate and the number of themes and issues that came out of these interviews were sufficient for me to do a qualitative analysis. The responses were by no means a comprehensive list that communicates every single problem and concern in the neighborhood. The residents also did not always agree with each other. The themes and issues I presented here were only those that received the most attention and were brought up frequently during multiple conversations. It was evident that some residents talked about visual and spatial change at face value, while the others were willing to voice their opinions on the deeper historical and social causes behind preservation concerns.

In terms of timeline, the cut-off point of this phenomenological inquiry was Summer 2019. In March 2019, the *Design Guide for the Preservation and Renewal of Beijing's Historic and Cultural Districts* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Natural Resources, 2019) was approved at the municipal level, and was seen as a document that provided important policy background for conservation planning and design. Due to my project timeline, contents of this guideline were not recognized and discussed by Dongsì residents. The municipal planning commission issued a Commonly Asked Questions Q&A<sup>43</sup> for this design guide. Many of the questions and answers are closely related to the

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<sup>43</sup> A publicity, implementation, and training material (宣贯培训材料) of this *Design Guide* is available on the municipal planning commission's website:  
[http://ghzrzyw.beijing.gov.cn/biaozhunganli/bzxcg/201912/t20191213\\_1166083.html](http://ghzrzyw.beijing.gov.cn/biaozhunganli/bzxcg/201912/t20191213_1166083.html)



themes and issues residents discussed in our conversations. According to the publicity material, one of the main purposes of this *Design Guide* is to address the problem of a one-size-fits-all approach in preservation, in terms of neighborhood façade change and treatment of architectural elements, by providing flexible solutions applicable to different types of buildings. Another purpose of the *Design Guide* is to re-interpret the previous regulations regarding renovation and remodeling, which could be too strict considering the residents' practical needs to re-design and improve their courtyard house living conditions, by providing a large amount of visual indexes and feasible micro-scale renovation solutions for neighborhood residents and construction professionals. The overall goal of this Design Guide is to help preserve the traditional characteristics of hutong environment without sacrificing hutong residents' life quality, which is exactly the goal of a people-centered historic preservation. This *Design Guide* is supposed to be the basis of future conservation planning in Beijing's historical and cultural conservation areas. Further qualitative and community-based participatory studies on residents perceptions on this guideline, especially the visual materials presented in this document, would be much beneficial additions to understand the practical needs and feasible design solutions for neighborhoods like Dongsì.

In addition to timeline, the scope of my project is also limited in terms of research methodologies. Operating within a constructivist paradigm, my project is an empirical study of phenomenon and perceptions. Each individual resident had their own experience. My project did not intend to establish correlations between a certain type of people, their values, and their perceptions, based on differences in social, political, cultural, economic,

ethnic, and gender terms. Also, my Human Subject Research (Institutional Review Board) approval required that no identifiable information should be collected and presented. However, during the process of writing and revising my dissertation, I have received numerous feedbacks and questions regarding demographic data, and the correlations between certain demographic or social groups and their perceptions of historic preservation. These are legitimate concerns. Further grounded theory studies to answer these questions would no doubt be helpful for us to gain an even deeper understanding of the effectiveness of a people-centered approach. More importantly, establishing and analyzing these correlations would help identify diverse target groups, especially those usually underserved and overlooked ones, to figure out ways to properly address their needs. One good example was a question about the generational gap; in other words, how do different generations and age groups see preservation policies and practices, and what are the differences in their involvement level and motivation? Such correlations should be further explored in future studies.

Another limitation in research methodology has to do with the community's role in the overall research design of this project. Ideally, a community-based, participatory model would make it possible for residents to get involved from the beginning to the end, by helping the researcher to craft research questions and interview questions; organizing public forums to supplement one-on-one conversations; analyzing and contextualizing data together; and in a collaborative manner, proposing informed actions and assessment methods that could facilitate long-term engagement. The 4.3. Involvement and Engagement part of my dissertation presented some concerns residents had about their

relationships with researchers and planning professionals. One of them was indeed a lack of trustworthy and long-term commitment that could possibly lead to concrete change. I think it is fair to say that I (at least currently) fall into the category of many “set and done” researchers, who came into the historic residential neighborhood with a set of pre-determined interview questions, talked to residents, finished writing and analysis, and didn’t have a long-term follow-up plan or wasn’t in a position to continuously engage and advocate for concrete change. On one hand, the goal of this dissertation project is to provide empirical evidence and analysis for both the academic and professional audience who are interested in people-centered historic preservation; on the other hand, this project is only a starting point of to inspire and support future research and practice in the field. Future community-based participatory research and preservation projects would require an interdisciplinary team to ground themselves in the residential environment and utilize the wisdom, capacity, and resources in the neighborhood to identify on-going concerns, then advocate for and implement sustainable solutions. Comparative studies could be done across different neighborhoods, cities, regions, and cultures, to further extract universal “lessons learned” and best practices to support people-centered preservation of various types of historic built environments and landscapes. Those who are and will be in the consulting and administrative positions to propose policy changes and future preservation practices, could build on the information, experience, perceptions, and perspectives presented by this project, and continue to foster relationships with residents and other neighborhood stakeholders.

## 6. EPILOGUE

### **Origins of the project**

My academic interest in the topic of Beijing's architectural and urban history was born after a conversation with my Art History professor, Professor John Beldon Scott, in my senior year. During my time at the University of Iowa, my Art History Minor's curriculum was filled with courses on European and American architecture and cities. I had two courses with Professor Scott, one on Paris and the other one on Rome. Returning from Europe for the first time in Fall 2010, I had numerous conversations with professors about how fascinated it was to finally see in person those monumental sites I learned in architectural history textbooks. Then, at the end of one of our conversations, Professor Scott asked me, "now that you've learned so much about European cities and architecture, tell me about the foundational myth of your city, your hometown?" I looked at him, trying to search in my head for the stories I knew about Beijing, and with so much embarrassment, I told him, I don't know.

I started college right after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. Almost everyone I got to know on campus asked me about the Olympics, and many wanted to know more about the host city and country. The sudden interest in my hometown was quite heartwarming, but I quickly had this feeling that even though I spent eighteen years living in Beijing, I didn't know enough about the city, not to mention having to explain everything I did know in a foreign language. The history, art and architecture, cultural traditions, people and places – all aspects of its urban life. Beijing is a city with more than

three thousand years of history, and has been the capital city of China for more than eight hundred years. There are so much to learn, to discover, to appreciate, and to talk about. I take so much pride in this city, and I should be able to study and explain it, even from afar.

Diving deeper into the topic, I took graduate seminars on East Asian vernacular architecture, Chinese arts and museums, as well as Chinese architecture and urbanism, while studying at Boston University and being a visiting student at Harvard University Graduate School of Design. I started to build up my bibliography on the history of the city, and grew even more interested in the topic of urban built heritage conservation. Around the same time, in 2012, the central axis of Beijing's Ming and Qing dynasty old town was designated by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage as one of China's tentative list sites for UNESCO's World Heritage List. I wrote my Master's paper on this tentative designation and application process, and the possibility of the central axis being eventually listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During that research and writing process, I also learned the controversies around Outstanding Universal Values and World Heritage designation and management; history of historic preservation movement in China and the West; and how international organizations' convention, charters, and standards were received and discussed in China, and in many other non-Western contexts.

A municipal-level leadership change put that application process on pause for a few years, before it was brought up again in 2017. As I transitioned into my doctoral program in the Department of Architecture at Texas A&M University, I looked back at how my research interests grew throughout the years, and realized that I was still on the surface. I was finally comfortable talking about and teaching architectural and urban history of

Beijing, and the many beautiful historic sites, but still struggled to understand and communicate the intangible and human aspects of the built environment. In other words, I felt disconnected between my dive into urban history and heritage, and the dynamic culture and urban life of 21<sup>st</sup> century Beijingers. So many writings in the English world, especially those that came out around and after the 2008 Olympics, portrayed the city in a bipolarized way. Beijing is either a place with rich history, tradition, and folklore; or a place that is rapidly changing and developing at an astronomical pace, just like many other large metropolitan areas in China. Trying to build connections between tradition and modernity, and explain those sometimes contractionary perceptions about the city's identity and culture, I decided to continue expanding my bibliography and vocabulary, by taking inspirations from many different disciplines and fields.

That was when I realized that everything I studied about the city came down to its people. The people are at the crossroads of almost all disciplinary discourses. The central axis, either as a philosophical and cultural concept, or as a series of built heritage sites and historic neighborhoods, was created, taken care of, reimagined, altered, and protected by the people. Spatial change, either large-scale, city-wide, or micro-scale in a particular neighborhood or housing complex, happened because of the changing needs of human society. I couldn't study, conduct research, and present findings on urban built heritage as if those buildings and neighborhoods existed in a vacuum. Historic preservation and heritage conservation must address people, and that was how I started to identify the scope, research questions, and methodologies of the current dissertation project.

## Notes on cross-cultural research and fieldwork

Utilizing a people-centered approach in historic preservation research was a very challenging task, especially when working with people and materials in another language, cultural, and political context that is so different from my formal academic trainings here in the U.S. I thought I would be fine because Chinese was my native language. I could read, understand, and communicate in both Mandarin Chinese and English. However, not having a language barrier definitely did not solve all my problems. Throughout this whole process, there were several things I wish I could be more prepared for. One of my committee members, Dr. Stephen Caffey, once talked about how people wrote their papers and only reported “things that worked”, without reflecting on the challenges, difficulties, and even failures in their research and writing process. So here I will offer some of my research notes in this aspect. Hopefully, my experience will help future students and scholars going into a similar situation.

The first thing is the intersection of foreign language and academic language (for example, discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, and applications of rhetorical conventions and devices that are typical for a content area<sup>44</sup>). One technical term in Chinese may have multiple translations in English. One technical term in English may need multiple sentences in Chinese to fully explain its meaning so that my interviewee could understand. For a million times, I had to question my word choice when translating

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<sup>44</sup> This definition is provided in *Making Good Choices: A Support Guide for the PACT Teaching Event* (2008) by the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) consortium.  
<https://www.sjsu.edu/teachered/docs/Making%20Good%20Choices.pdf>

and analyzing people's perceptions on values, experience, and issues. Even after that I questioned myself that I might not do enough justice to their words. I also had to question my cultural filter throughout the process, especially when making decisions to extract or drop certain lines from the transcribed conversations. Many professors and planners who worked with policy documents and had fieldwork experience in local historic neighborhoods helped me with this issue. The proofreader of my IRB protocol, who is a trained interpreter and translator, also gave me some advice. The best way to tackle this, I believe, is to read as much as possible reference materials and news coverage in your subject area in any language and cultural context you are working with. I found myself reading social media articles, watching local news, and listening to conversations in a mixture of academic phrases and layman's terms. This immersive experience helped me significantly, so I could communicate more smoothly with neighborhood residents, and bring it back to present to an academic audience.

The second thing I found very challenging was to build trust with the community. This is not unique to me. Everyone who has been working with a community, especially a community that they don't physically live in or culturally belong to, can talk about this similar experience from many different perspectives. In order to collect data and argue from a people-centered approach, my focus was to get people understand what I set out to do and be willing to share with me their perceptions and experiences. Here are some strategies I found useful. Because I was a graduate student from a foreign university, at first, people were reluctant in talking to me or trusting me to give any opinion. Then I emphasized on the point that my research design was read and approved by the Subdistrict,



and I was referred to by individuals who were well connected and respected in the neighborhood. I told the residents that I was just a student trying to do her homework, and I could really use some help from them, who obviously knew things around here better. I am here to learn. People were willing to help me as soon as they understood who I am and why I am here. I also made it very clear to them that there were things that I could not do (for example, I am not a decision-maker in any capacity and I am not responsible for things that some might expect me to do). Once the stage of confusion, hesitation, and uncertainty about expectation was passed, I started to build closer and trustworthy relationships with the community. Conversations I had with neighborhood residents humbled me all the time. There are so much intelligence and wisdom embedded in our communities. And that's beauty of a people-centered approach. Of course every culture, every community, every geographical region, and every language group – is all different. My experience may not work for everyone. But my point is, this is something we all need to think about and be prepared for, before proposing a human subject research protocol and going into fieldwork.

The last thing I need to stress upon is also the hardest thing for me to grabble with. Just like historic buildings don't exist in a vacuum, preservation of urban residential neighborhoods is connected to so many aspects of the study area's political system. This reality can never be emphasized enough. My feeling was that I was never trained enough to understand different legislative systems and political organizing mechanisms. I knew that these were vital knowledge to have, before looking into societal issues. Questions I wasn't sure about at the beginning include: how were previous cultural heritage

conservation and urban planning legislations passed? What types of preservation and planning guidelines were there? What were the relations between these preservation and planning documents and laws? Who were the decision makers and the people or entities to implement policies? This list went on and on. I was in numerous conversations with my parents and friends who had professional working experience within the governmental system or had been working in partnerships with different levels of legislative and administrative bodies. Without them explaining things to me with great patience, I would never be able to do this project. Due to many practical reasons (a lack of publicly available data, language barriers, global geopolitical climate, etc.), information and scholarly sources on this topic could be fragmented, misleading, or sometimes contradictory in our textbooks and reference materials. Assumptions, misunderstandings, and stereotypes, once they were established, were harder to break. This happened a lot in cross-cultural research settings. Finishing up with this dissertation, I am still not satisfied with my current understanding or my ability to communicate this topic in an academic setting. This is definitely something I will continue to work on in the future. Just like I stated in the conclusions: nobody is an expert on everything. What we can do is to keep engaging in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural conversations, so that we will be able to understand and respect different countries, people, and cultures.

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APPENDIX A  
LIST OF KEY TERMS

For the purpose of this study, several key terms are defined as:

- Historic residential neighborhood

“Historic district is a district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development” (National Park Service, 1995). To add an intangible, living aspect to this definition, historic residential neighborhoods is a section of a city which contains historic constructions and/or is known for a certain type of heritage or residential experience, thus considered valuable for architectural and/or cultural reasons. Designated protected neighborhoods often have regulations and/or restrictions on certain types of constructions and/or alternations.

- Residents

People who physically reside in a certain neighborhood. In this study, I focus on the experience of current residents who have been living in Dongsu neighborhood for at least ten years. The reason of selecting this target group of interviewees is explained in Chapter 3. Whenever it is necessary, I used different adjectives before “residents” to differentiate or clarify.

- Preservation

“Preservation is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property (Weeks &

Grimmer, 2017).” This term is often used interchangeably with conservation, although conservation is traditional more associated with the protection of natural resources. In Chinese legal and policy documents, baohu (保护) is the term for protection, preservation, and conservation. I mainly use “preservation” in my writing. Some of the officially translated, English version of urban planning documents in China use “conservation” in their titles.

- Stakeholders

People, institutions, or entities that have an interest and/or investment in something, and in turn are influenced by it. The study area in this dissertation is Dongsì historic neighborhood, so stakeholders include not only people who physically reside within the conservation area’s boundary, but also people who are related to this neighborhood through professional responsibilities and interests. Chapter 4 offers a discussion of key stakeholders in this case study.

- Public perception

Public perception is fundamentally different from the absolute truth based on facts (if that even exists). It is a social phenomenon that involves three continuous processes: the intake of information about the subject, the processing of such information based on one’s values and experience, and the expression of opinions regarding the subject. In Chinese, perception is ganzhi (感知), which is a combination of gan = to feel, and zhi = to know. In this study, perceptions are not only about what people know, but also about how people get to know it, how people explain their attitudes and feelings about it, along with their perceived impacts.

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF LEGAL AND POLICY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

These legal and policy documents were consulted for the purpose of this study:

Name and date of the document	Issuer	Purposes of the document	Questions I asked for the purpose of this study
<i>Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics</i> (1982, 4 <sup>th</sup> amendment in 2015) 中华人民共和国文物保护法	National People's Congress (national legislature)	Law that defines cultural heritage, and the government and citizens' responsibilities in protecting them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is considered heritage?</li> <li>• What is the management system for "immovable relics", which is most relevant to historic architecture and urban development?</li> <li>• What is the administrative system of historic cities and neighborhoods?</li> </ul>
<i>Law of the People's Republic of China on Urban and Rural Planning</i> (2008) 中华人民共和国城乡规划法	National People's Congress (national legislature)	Law that governs the making and implementation procedures of urban and rural planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the publicity period, as well as steps and scope of public participation, as required by the planning law?</li> </ul>
<i>Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China</i> (2000, revised 2015) 中国文物古迹保护准则	ICOMOS China (an office under the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage)	Industry guideline for conservation concept and treatment of cultural heritage with a focus specifically on built heritage and historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does ICOMOS China define the culture of heritage conservation in China?</li> <li>• What are the biggest challenges for heritage sites in China?</li> <li>• How is preservation in China different from other parts of the world?</li> </ul>
<i>Master Plan of the City of Beijing, 2016-2035</i> (2017) 北京城市总体规划	Beijing Municipal Government	Municipal-level urban master plan that sets the overall trajectory of the city's urban development pattern in the next 20 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will Beijing's inner city look like in 20 years?</li> <li>• How does this plan define the characteristics of Beijing's historic neighborhoods?</li> <li>• What aspects of historic neighborhoods are defined as worth protecting?</li> <li>• Who should implement preservation policies and planning?</li> </ul>
<i>Conservation Plan for 25 Beijing Old City Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas</i> (2002) 北京旧城25片历史文化保护区保护规划	Beijing Municipal Government	Municipal-level conservation plan that defines the boundary, values, functions, and land use of each designated protection area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the values of a particular neighborhood as defined in the conservation plan?</li> <li>• What are the main challenges in historic neighborhood preservation as explained in the plan?</li> </ul>
<i>Design Guide for the Preservation and Renewal of Beijing's Historic and Cultural Districts</i> (2019) 北京历史文化街区风貌保护与更新设计导则	Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Natural Resources	Municipal-level design guideline for preservation practices (mainly allowable changes to the physical environment) in historic neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are proper actions to take in preservation and renewal as defined by the government?</li> <li>• What are the residents' possible role in preservation?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### **Interview questions for residents (in English)**

1. Why do you care about historic preservation?

- What do you think are the values of historic hutong neighborhoods?
- Are your opinions on values different from the official values as defined by the government? In what ways?

2. What do you think about historic preservation in Beijing's Historical and Cultural Conservation Areas?

- Are you aware of the national- and municipal-level conservation planning schemes focused on historic neighborhoods since the 1990s?
- Are you aware of preservation policies, initiatives, and practices in other conservation areas in Beijing? If yes, what do you think of those cases?
- In your opinion, are the municipal-level conservation planning being implemented well in Dongsì? Are there any site-specific problems and concerns that you think are unique to this neighborhood?
- Overall, do you think the government-led policies and practices worked or not worked in Dongsì?

3. What are your involvement in historic preservation?

- Have you been involved in preservation decision-making or practices on your own courtyard house? If yes, in what ways?
- What do you think are the values of residents' interests and participation in historic preservation?
- What do you think are the constraints for residents to get involved in preservation in the past and nowadays?



## Interview questions for residents (in Chinese)

### 1. 您为什么关心历史保护？

- 您认为胡同历史街区的价值是什么？
- 您对于胡同历史街区价值的评判与政府官方对于胡同历史街区价值的定义一致吗？如果相同或不同，体现在什么方面？

### 2. 您如何看待北京历史文化保护区的保护？

- 您是否了解 1990 年以来针对历史街区制订的各项国家级和市级保护规划？
- 您是否了解北京其他保护区的保护政策、项目和实践？如果是，您对其他街区的保护怎么看？
- 您认为市级的保护规划在东四被很好地实施了吗？您认为在东四有什么独特的历史保护问题和不同于其他街区的担忧吗？
- 整体来讲，您认为政府主导的保护政策和实践是否促进了东四的历史保护？

### 3. 您是如何参与历史保护的？

- 在您自己的四合院中，您曾经参加过与历史保护相关的决策和实践吗？如果是，您是以什么方式参与的？
- 您认为居民参与历史保护的兴趣和价值是什么？
- 您认为过于和现在限制居民参与历史保护的因素是什么？

APPENDIX D  
FUNDING SOURCE



四名汇智计划

北京市西城区历史文化名城保护促进中心  
与名城委青年工作委员会等多家单位  
共同开展的名城保护行动支持计划  
旨在支持公众自发的名城保护活动  
培育公众力量、推动文化共识、助力名城保护



西城名城保护



四名汇智计划



资合规划设计审查委员会



青年工作委员会



北京市城市规划设计研究院  
Beijing Urban Planning Institute of the City of Beijing



北京内城规划设计研究院有限公司  
Beijing Inner City Planning Institute of Architecture & Design



北京市远郊城市规划设计院



北京市远郊城市规划设计院



广安控股



天圆地圆集团



白塔寺再生计划  
BAITASI REMADE



天稻集团



顺益兴四合院



筑益建筑



北京规划研究所



首都中式建筑文化研究院



北京市古代建筑设计研究所



宜裕大郡



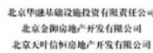
国际154家著名建筑设计事务所  
INTERNATIONAL 154 FAMOUS ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS



首都(北京)文化发展中心



西城西院



北京华建基础设施投资有限责任公司  
北京金御房地产开发有限公司  
北京天时信和房地产开发有限公司



北京首开开发控股(集团)有限公司

Figure 26. Participating entities and funding sources of Beijing Siming Historical Town Preservation Cooperation Program (名城、名业、名人、名景——“四名”汇智计划). Logos reprinted with permission.