

Urban conservation and revalorisation of dilapidated historic quarters: The case of Nanluoguxiang in Beijing

Hyun Bang Shin *

Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Property-led urban redevelopment in contemporary Chinese cities often results in the demolition of many historical buildings and neighbourhoods, invoking criticisms from conservationists. In the case of Beijing, the municipal government produced a series of documents in the early 2000s to implement detailed plans to conserve 25 designated historic areas in the Old City of Beijing. This paper aims to examine the recent socio-economic and spatial changes that took place within government-designated conservation areas, and scrutinise the role of the local state and real estate capital that brought about these changes. Based on recent field visits and semi-structured interviews with local residents and business premises in a case study area, this paper puts forward two main arguments. First, Beijing's urban conservation policies enabled the intervention of the local state to facilitate revalorisation of dilapidated historic quarters and to release dilapidated courtyard houses on the real estate market. The revalorisation was possible with the participation of a particular type of real estate capital that had interests in the aesthetic value that historic quarters and traditional courtyard houses provided. Second, the paper also argues that economic benefits generated by urban conservation, if any, were shared disproportionately among local residents, and that local residents' lack of opportunities to 'voice out' further consolidated the property-led characteristic of urban conservation, which failed to pay attention to social lives.

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Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the expansion of the real estate sector as well as the entrepreneurial re-orientation of urban governance in Chinese cities has led to the prevalence of property-led urban redevelopment (He and Wu, 2005; Shin, 2009; Wu, 2002). In Beijing, this was signalled by the introduction of an urban renewal programme called the Old and Dilapidated Housing Redevelopment Programme in 1990 (Leaf, 1995; Zhang and Fang, 2003). Many low-rise, densely populated inner city neighbourhoods in Beijing have been transformed into high-rise residential, commercial or business districts. The property-led urban redevelopment, however, accompanied demolition of many historical buildings, invoking criticisms from conservationists. In the early 2000s, the Beijing municipal government produced a series of documents to finalise and implement detailed plans to conserve 25 designated historic areas in the Old City of Beijing, the traditional imperial core enclosed by the second ring road (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002). These 25 conservation areas occupy 1038 hectares, accounting for 17% of the total surface area of Beijing's Old City (ibid, p. 9).

What is the role of urban conservation in Beijing where property-led urban redevelopment has been widely practiced for years? Some of the most recent works that analysed Beijing's urban conservation policies is from Zhang (2008) and Broudehoux (2004). Zhang argues that the implementation of Beijing's urban conservation policies is part of city-wide growth strategies, aimed at enabling more intense development outside conservation areas and promoting tourist economy in conservation areas by converting selective cultural heritage into urban amenities. The latter strategy is aimed to "placate those who object to demolition" (Zhang, 2008, p. 188). Broudehoux (2004), on the other hand, focuses on the role of historic preservation to promote national and place identities in relation to tourism industry. She argues that the commodification of a national heritage site in Beijing was effectively combined with the rise of nationalism to produce a selectively reconstructed image and identity of post-reform China. These present an interesting perspective, but fall short of addressing recent socio-economic and spatial changes that took place within conservation areas, and of scrutinising the role of the local state and real estate capital that brought about these changes. The current paper aims to fill this gap. The main arguments of this paper are twofold. First, the paper argues that Beijing's urban conservation policies enabled the intervention of the local state to facilitate revalorisation of dilapidated historic quarters and release dilapidated courtyard houses on the

* Tel.: +44 20 7955 6383; fax: +44 20 7955 7412.

E-mail address: H.B.SHIN@LSE.AC.UK

real estate market. Second, the paper also argues that economic benefits generated by urban conservation, if any, were shared disproportionately among local residents, and that local residents' lack of opportunities to 'voice out' further consolidated the property-led characteristic of urban conservation, which failed to pay attention to social lives.

The specific historic quarter under discussion in this paper is called the Nanluoguxiang conservation area (hereafter referred to as Nanluoguxiang), which is one of 25 conservation areas that the Beijing municipal government earmarked in 2002 (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002). Nanluoguxiang is famous for its concentration of traditional dwellings known as courtyard houses (or *Siheyuan* in Chinese). Sharon Zukin (1982) argues in her discussion of loft building in New York that certain types of architectural style can be utilised as part of revalorisation strategies. Beijing's distinctive architectural heritage has been courtyard housing. It is this architectural style together with the street layout that the cluster of courtyard houses produces, which has become popular among corporate and affluent individual investors. Recently, Nanluoguxiang has experienced incremental upgrading and courtyard house restoration instead of wholesale demolition and reconstruction, becoming one of sought-after cultural districts and popular tourist destinations. For this reason, the Nanluoguxiang model of urban conservation has received national attention, being a showcase with frequent visits by party leaders, government officials and journalists. In this respect, Nanluoguxiang provides an interesting case study to examine the role of the local state and real estate capital, and investigate what opportunities there exist for local residents.

The rest of this paper consists of four sections. First, it reviews contemporary literature on the theory and practice of how urban conservation is related to the revitalisation of historic centres in contemporary cities. It also examines the progress of Beijing's urban conservation since the early 1990s. Second, the paper reviews the physical and social conditions of the case study site, Nanluoguxiang, and briefly explains how data have been collected. Third, main findings are discussed, which include five main issues as follows: (a) Nanluoguxiang's commercialisation; (b) local state intervention; (c) real estate investment; (d) differentiated benefits among local residents; (e) limited degree of participation by residents in decision-making processes. The final section provides a concluding discussion.

Urban conservation and revitalisation of historic centres

With the rise of local entrepreneurialism, cities have come to employ various strategies in order to compete for increasingly footloose capital and people. With the rise of city marketing as a policy tool to reverse economic decline in post-industrial cities, various cities attempt to reconstruct its image to raise its domestic/international profile and reputation (Paddison, 1993). Building a 'tourist city' is noted as one of major urban growth strategies, leading to the creation of "cities as places to play" (Judd and Fainstein, 1999). Against these backdrops, urban historic centres, where an abundance of historic landmarks and architectural heritage can be found, have received renewed interests in recent decades for its socio-economic value (Tiesdell et al., 1996). Proponents of urban conservation emphasise direct benefits such as area rehabilitation and increased spending on heritage tourism by visitors as well as other multiplier effects (Listokin et al., 1998). Conservation of historic urban quarters may also appeal, for different reasons, to local communities (usually middle-class residents), who wish to keep the *status quo* of their neighbourhoods. For them, preservation of heritage sites as well as conservation of historic character of long-standing neighbourhoods is received as a way of keeping

communities intact, a bulwark that help resist the advancement of profit-seeking developers (Larkham, 1996).

With regard to cities in the Global South, urban conservation or historic preservation has also emerged as an urban agenda since the 1990s (Dix, 1990; Hardoy and Gutman, 1991; Logan, 2003). It is often discussed that conservation of historic quarters or preservation of cultural heritage is a luxury that many governments in the developing world could ill afford, as the mounting pressure of rapid urbanisation under limited administrative and fiscal capacity provides little room to spare public resources even to cope with basic demands of increasing urban population. It is argued that political dilemmas and resulting constraints on urban planning often hamper the production of any tangible conservation achievements (Bromley and Jones, 1995). When it comes to the question of why urban conservation as a policy takes place, if any, critics point fingers at its role to promote national and place identities in emerging cities, as was the case of Singapore from the 1980s (Yeoh and Huang, 1996; Yeoh and Kong, 1994). Recently, there is growing recognition that historic preservation has an essential role to play in the promotion of urban tourism industry to facilitate economic development in developing countries (Mowforth and Munt, 2009).

However, critics are cautious about the role of historic preservation and its impact on local residents in particular. For instance, in his response to Listokin et al. (1998), Neil Smith argues that historic preservation largely results in gentrification that drives away low-income residents due to rising rents and unaffordable housing prices as conservation areas are targeted by profit-seeking capital investment (Smith, 1998). The real estate investment in historic quarters may also produce what Kevin Gotham has termed as 'tourist gentrification' when the inward investment of capital in the real estate sector is combined with the rise of corporate entertainment and tourism industry (Gotham, 2005). This was also the case of tourist-driven conservation in the Stone Town of Zanzibar where the preservation of individual architectural heritage led to the destruction of fragile social and cultural networks and much of the urban fabric. The poor had to bear the costs disproportionately (Marks, 1996). Critics also argue that benefits hardly accrue to local communities who have little control of the processes and experience a lack of financial resources and channels to deliver their views (Mowforth and Munt, 2009).

In 'property states' such as Singapore and Hong Kong where land resources are scarce and the real estate sector has played a significant role in economic development (Haila, 2000), urban conservation policies are often adopted by pro-growth interests as a means to facilitate more intense development. For instance, Yeoh and Huang (1996) examine the experience of urban conservation policies in Singapore, and argue that a zoning approach to urban conservation may result in more intense development outside the designated conservation zone by giving a wrong signal to market forces. This phenomenon is referred to as 'the politics of selection'. It is suggested that a greater degree of destruction would take place in non-conservation zones that are much less restrained by regulations. In this way, an original conservation area is isolated, eventually becoming an island in itself surrounded by modern buildings of less historical significance. This means that the 'excluded landscape' outside conservation zones is 'threatened with excision' (ibid). This mechanism seems to be in operation particularly in East Asian cities that have experienced rapid economic growth, urban spatial restructuring and the expansion of the real estate sector in a relatively short time-frame. Urban redevelopment and historic preservation are often carried out in order to promote what is deemed more desirable by local or national elites (Broudehoux, 2004). This means that traditional urban forms are often given little consideration or subject to exploitation by growth-oriented interests.

The criticism of New York's experience of historic preservation by Sharon Zukin (1982) suggests that 'the politics of selection' explained above may come hand-in-hand with revalorisation of historic quarters as a 'historic compromise'. Her study examines the emergence of loft buildings, 19th-century factory buildings that provide large and unobstructed multi-storey flexible space, as a 'marketable' residential style in Lower Manhattan. Zukin argues that the emerging life style through the conversion of loft buildings to new residential and commercial uses represented "deindustrialisation and gentrification of the urban core" (ibid, p. 256) by means of what she refers to as "revalorization by preservation, rather than by new construction" (ibid, p. 262). Middle-class property-owners joined in a historic preservation movement to protect the existing social amenities against large-scale redevelopment. However, this conservation movement ironically further contributed to the proliferation of gentrification in the urban core. In short, historic preservation has been used as a revalorisation strategy by a particular faction of the capital, spearheaded by small professional developers in the case of loft refurbishment in New York.

Progress of Beijing's urban conservation and property-led redevelopment

In mainland China, the State Council, which is the supreme administrative authority, announced the designation of historic and cultural landmarks for protection in 1982. During the next two decades of urban spatial restructuring, it was this monument-based approach that characterised Beijing's urban conservation. There was an acknowledgment, at least on paper, of the importance of an area-based approach. As early as in 1983, the State Council approved a master plan for Beijing's urban construction, which included clauses regarding the preservation of historical buildings and conservation of surrounding environment. In 1990, the Beijing municipal government also recognised the need of protecting 25 historic and cultural conservation areas, and its 1993 master plan confirmed the municipal re-orientation towards a more area-based approach. For many years, however, there had been no comprehensive, detailed plans to put this into action (see Abramson (2007) for a more detailed account).

It was only in 1999 that the municipality called for more detailed plans by issuing the 'Plan for Conservation and Control Scope for the Historic and Cultural Conservation Areas in the Old City of Beijing'. In response to this call, the Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission worked with a number of universities and institutes to produce the 'Conservation Planning for the 25 Historic Areas in Beijing Old City' (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002). This included key planning guidelines, which were as follows: (1) preservation of the overall style and features of conservation areas; (2) preservation of authentic historical features and heritage; (3) incremental renovation; (4) improvement of environmental quality and infrastructure as well as residents' living standard; (5) encouragement of public participation in conservation works (ibid, p. 10). In terms of land use, 47.2% of the total conservation area were of residential use, and the Conservation Planning aimed at reducing this to 39.4%, therefore releasing lands for widening roads, green space and upgraded public infrastructure (ibid, pp. 10–11). There were 285,000 people in the 25 conservation areas resulting in the population density of 275 people per hectare. The Conservation Planning aimed to decrease the number of population to 167,000 people in order to secure enough living space for remaining residents (ibid, p. 11). All these meant that a substantial number of residents were to face displacement. After the announcement of the Conservation Planning, more official documents were issued by the State Council and the municipal government, all acknowledging the need of protecting Beijing's historical authenticity. Large-scale demolition and reconstruction were to be

avoided in the Old City and especially in designated conservation areas.

The strong emphasis on historic preservation and area-based urban conservation seems rather out of tune if recent experiences of property-led redevelopment in most Chinese cities are considered. Scholars studying China's urban renewal highlight the proliferation of property-led redevelopment at the expense of social improvement (He and Wu, 2005; Shin, 2009). It is argued that this is inevitable, resulting from the rise of urban entrepreneurialism in Chinese cities where local governments increasingly work in partnership with business interests for raising revenues and profits (Wu, 2002). Securing land-related revenues is thought to be at the centre of this partnership formation (Zhu, 1999). Recent studies suggest that Beijing's conservation policies are closely related to the promotion of urban growth (Broudehoux, 2004; Zhang, 2008). For instance, Zhang (2008) suggests that Beijing's urban conservation policies are part of growth machine strategies, which aim at placating urban conservationists by selectively converting cultural heritage into urban amenities and facilitating more intense property-led redevelopment outside conservation areas. To some extent, it seems as if the 'politics of selection' put forward by Yeoh and Huang (1996) is again in operation in contemporary Beijing, facilitating the isolation of historic quarters to maximise profits elsewhere.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, this paper is in response to the recent proposition that Beijing's urban conservation is a way of promoting more intense property-led redevelopment outside designated conservation areas. The focus of this paper is introvert: what happens to the historic quarters (and local residents therein) under protection against the external pressure of capital investment and property development? Due to the history of confiscation, welfare housing allocation and housing reform during the last few decades, Beijing's courtyard houses tend to experience fragmented property rights, and the public rental tenure has been the dominant tenure form in historic quarters while private homeownership is marginal. This suggests that the role of the state as the owner and manager of real estate properties in historic quarters would play an important role. This aspect will be given attention throughout the discussions in this paper.

Study area description and data collection

The historic quarter subject to case study in this paper is Nanluoguxiang, located north of the Forbidden City (see Figs. 1 and 2). It lies below the northern section of the second ring road that goes around the Old City. Nanluoguxiang has a history of more than 700 years and displays one of the longest surviving imperial street layouts. Nanluoguxiang is divided into two areas by a central lane, Nanluoguxiang Street, which extends about 800 m. Sixteen other narrow lanes known as *hutong* emanate from the central lane, showing "a classic fishbone pattern" (Wu, 1999, p. 157). The area is rich with examples of classic courtyard residences, thus justifying the area's conservation. Currently, Nanluoguxiang has more than 1200 courtyard houses, with the total construction space reaching 39.54 hectares.¹

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a number of administrative institutions set up their offices in Nanluoguxiang, leading to the demolition of some traditional courtyard houses, temples and so on. Nevertheless, it remains to be an area with the highest concentration of courtyard houses in Beijing. Many of these courtyards were expropriated by major

¹ See the web page of the Cultural Committee of the Dongcheng district government, last accessed on 30 April 2009. <http://www.bjdch.gov.cn/n5687274/n5723477/n5741734/n5742274/6633149.html>.

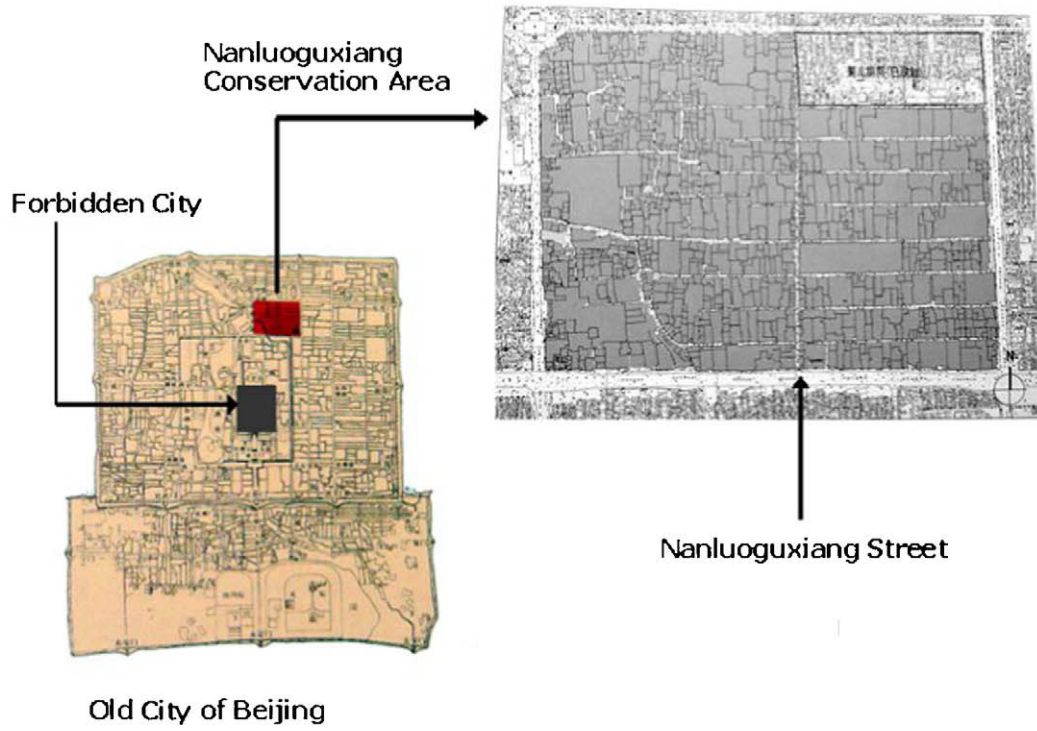


Fig. 1. Location of Nanluoguxiang conservation area in Beijing.



Fig. 2. North end of Nanluoguxiang street. © Hyun Bang Shin, March 2009.

government institutions in order to be used as residential quarters for their key officials and their family members, and more houses were confiscated during the Cultural Revolution to be transformed

into public rental dwellings. Over the years, they had gone through informal extension to existing structures and subdivision to provide additional dwelling space, destroying most of their original

characteristics (Zhang, 1997). In this regard, the key issue in the Nanluoguxiang conservation was to restore courtyard houses to their original architectural form.

Nanluoguxiang is administered by the Jiadaokou Street Office, which in turn belongs to the Dongcheng district government.² By the time the conservation plan of Nanluoguxiang was announced, its land coverage reached 83.8 hectare, accommodating around 22,000 registered residents with the resulting population density of 262 people per hectare (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002, p. 158). The conservation plan aimed at reducing the total number of registered residents to less than 14,000 people, suggesting that at least 8000 people were to be permanently displaced (ibid, p. 159).

According to the Conservation Planning published in 2002, 54.6% of the area was of residential use, while 5.61% was for all types of business and commerce (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002, p. 158). The general conditions of residential dwellings were in bad, if not worst, conditions. Local sources suggest that more than half of dwellings in Nanluoguxiang required some sort of urgent maintenance by 1993, and another one-fifth were in severe dilapidation, calling for major attention (Fang, 2000, p. 76). A sample survey carried out by the Jiadaokou Street Office in January 2006 indicated that the per capita housing space in hutong areas reached only 6.9 square metres (Jiadaokou Street Office, 2007), which would be about one-quarter of the Beijing average.

Local residents in Nanluoguxiang tend to be long-term residents living in public rental dwellings. Nearly half of the registered permanent residents in Nanluoguxiang have been living in the area for 15 years or longer, according to the data from the Jiadaokou police station (Jiadaokou Street Office, 2007). In a study that examined the living conditions and architectural heritage in Chaodou hutong in Nanluoguxiang, it was found that the majority of residents lived in their residences since the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s (Yutaka et al., 2004, p. 33). About one-quarter (26%) of all dwellings in Chaodou hutong were in private ownership, and the rest owned and managed by either work-units or the government (ibid, p. 36). In the case of Jiadaokou Street as a whole, about 16% of all buildings were in private hands as of March 2003, while 77% were in public ownership (Jiadaokou Street Office, 2007).³

Data collection

The arguments of this paper are based on findings from the author's recent field study that took place mainly between December 2008 and March 2009. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve local residents and eleven business premises. They were recruited randomly from various locations in Nanluoguxiang. The business premises interviewed were largely from the central main lane (that is, Nanluoguxiang Street), which accommodated the majority of business activities. The local residents were recruited from adjacent lanes that emanated from Nanluoguxiang Street. It should be noted that the selection of interviewees was not meant to achieve statistical representativeness but aimed at obtaining indicative and qualitative understanding of changes taking place within the neighbourhood. In this regard, the author took care to guarantee diversity (in terms of location, housing tenure and business type) so as to maximise learning opportunities.⁴ Interview questions were largely about

their socio-economic conditions, housing conditions, experiences of living/working in Nanluoguxiang and their views on conservation policies and neighbourhood changes. Finally, a number of local policy documents, government publications (e.g. yearbooks) and media reports were also reviewed to supplement and triangulate the interview findings.

Nanluoguxiang conservation area and its revalorisation

Commercialisation and the rise of new consumption space

Upon finalising the Conservation Planning for the 25 Historic Areas in Beijing Old City (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002), major government investments to bring about significant changes in Nanluoguxiang did not arrive immediately. Instead, some of the individual pioneering entrepreneurs began to open trendy shops or café, targeting newly rising middle-class and overseas visitors. One best-known place to date is called Pass-by Bar (in Chinese, Guo Ke) near the southern end of Nanluoguxiang Street. According to a restaurateur in an interview (S11),⁵ it soon made its fame as a gathering place not only for foreign tourists and expats but also for local Chinese, where they could exchange travel information and socialise (Li, 2009). Another resident (Public housing tenant, NLGX-05) also confirmed that the changes during the earlier period were incremental, emphasising that “the development [of Nanluoguxiang Street] has all been self-generated, premises appearing one after another”. Indeed, interviewed residents and businesses were all quick to highlight initiatives by a number of entrepreneurs who initially saw the neighbourhood's cultural and business potential and were quick to grab the opportunity.

As a result, Nanluoguxiang witnessed an increasing number of trendy shops including small bars, café, tailor-made boutiques and so on over the last few years. By early 2009, there were reportedly about 115 shops operating in the area (Li, 2009). A new culture-led consumption space emerged as a result, attracting largely post-reform generations and domestic/international tourists (see Figs. 3 and 4). While the main central lane accommodates the majority of business activities, gradual diffusion into adjacent hutong seems to have started already. When compared with other conservation areas such as Shi Cha Hai and Qianmen,⁶ local businesses interviewed were quick to point out that Nanluoguxiang's historic and tranquil atmosphere was far superior. As one of the shop-owners states, Nanluoguxiang attracts people who “cannot bear the kind of development that Qianmen has displayed. Shi Cha Hai is chaotic, and people are complaining, but Nanluoguxiang is tranquil, with courtyard houses and culture” (Real estate agent, S9). With increasing popularity, Nanluoguxiang appears to be on course for a greater degree of commercialisation. The level of rents for leasing shop spaces has gone up rapidly in recent years, leading to frequent turnover of businesses.

“The rents have increased a lot here. That has unfortunately forced quite a significant number of businesses out of this street, because the landlords see that Nanluoguxiang is becoming quite popular and people are willing to pay a much higher market price... [It has increased] anything from double to triple... When we signed

² In Beijing, the administrative hierarchy is as follows: Municipal (shi) Government – Local District (qu) or County (xian) Government – Street (jiedao) Office. Each jiedao consists of neighbourhood committees (juweihui), and neighbourhood committee leaders (zhuren), appointed by the district government, undertake daily administrative tasks.

³ The ownership for the remaining 7% of buildings was not defined.

⁴ These details are summarised in Table 2 that appears later in this paper.

⁵ Each interviewee in this paper is identified by the use of prefix. ‘S’ denotes business premises, while NLGX denotes local residents. Their identification numbers correspond to those listed in Tables 1 and 2.

⁶ Shi Cha Hai and Qianmen are both part of 25 historic areas designated for conservation by the Beijing municipal government. Shi Cha Hai is a lakeside conservation area in Xicheng district, which became an entertainment zone, popular among bar-goers. Qianmen, located south of Tiananmen Square, was traditionally a commercial district. It has been recently demolished and reconstructed to be converted into a pedestrianised upmarket shopping street.



Fig. 3. View of Nanluoguxiang street. © Hyun Bang Shin, September 2009.



Fig. 4. A new shop under refurbishment. © Hyun Bang Shin, March 2009.

our contract at the end of 2005, according to the market going rate, [the rent] was 10,000 yuan a month [for the whole place]. That was

the market rate back then, and now it would probably be more than three times" (Restaurateur, S11).

Table 1

Details of business premises interviewed and the status of their lease.

Business premises	Business type	Store space (in square metres)	First opening in	Annual rents	Landlord	Landlord's tenure status
S1	Trendy restaurant	70	2005	Not available	Individual resident	Private ownership
S2	Clothing shop	10	n.a.	Not required	Store owner herself	Public rental
S3	Trendy café	30	Late 2007	Not required	Store owner himself	Private ownership
S4	Grocery store	25	1989	Not required	Store owner himself	Private ownership
S5	Bookshop	40	1998	Not required	Individual resident (previously co-investor)	Public rental
S6	Trendy restaurant	60	2005	70,000 yuan	n.a.	Not available
S7	Pottery	8	Late 2007	Not required	Individual resident (previously co-investor)	Private ownership
S8	Tailor-made clothing	75	Early 2009	Not available	Individual resident (friend to the store owner)	n.a.
S9	Real estate agency	25	Mid-2008	12,000 yuan	Individual resident (friend to the store owner)	n.a.
S10	Souvenir shop	50	Mid-2008	Not required	Shop owner herself	n.a.
S11	Trendy restaurant	80	Mid-2006	160,000 yuan	Individual resident	Private ownership

Nanluoguxiang also displays the growth of entrepreneurial activities especially by those local residents whose residences face hutong. As shown in Table 1, many business premises recruited for semi-structured interviews were actually run by local residents who turned themselves into petite entrepreneurs. Instead of seeking rent income, the growth of Nanluoguxiang's reputation led these residents to join the rank of entrepreneurs.

As hinted briefly earlier, landlordism is also prevalent in Nanluoguxiang. One after another, courtyard houses undergo refurbishment and facelift in order to appear on the private rental market, eventually consumed by those who seek trendy living in historic quarters. Monthly rents for these dwellings may vary considerably depending on the size of each dwelling, its internal structure and the degree of refurbishment. It is not difficult to find a three-bedroom house at around 7000 yuan per month. A well-preserved and substantially refurbished courtyard house may be rented out at an astronomical figure of 20,000–30,000 yuan per month. Considering that the average annual per capita disposable income in Dongcheng District was 23,522 yuan in 2007 (Dongcheng District Government of Beijing, 2008, p. 319), these rental units are clearly for consumed by those clients with socio-economic characteristics that differ substantially from those of original residents.

Local state intervention

Experiences suggest that urban conservation is often implemented to promote culture and identity deemed more desirable by local or national elites (Jones and Varley, 1994; Yeoh and Kong, 1994). As Jones and Bromley (1996) have argued, "conservation represents an elitist 'way of seeing' a vernacular 'way of life'" (p. 375). Similarly, the conservation of Nanluoguxiang was very much guided by the vision of the local state and its pursuit of creating 'Nanluoguxiang Culture and Leisure Street'. This project was supervised by an office set up under the district government to ensure courtyard house preservation in Nanluoguxiang. The fact that culture and leisure were the two official keywords of Nanluoguxiang development shows that its commercialisation was envisaged as an integral component of the Nanluoguxiang conservation.

In order to transform Nanluoguxiang into a culture and leisure district, the local state made a concerted effort to create visitor-friendly environment. For instance, the Jiaodaokou Street Office implemented its own initiatives to renovate Nanluoguxiang in close collaboration with the district government. In particular, a series of reports were commissioned to guide local development, which included 'Nanluoguxiang Conservation and Development Plan (2006–2020)' and 'Jiaodaokou Street Community Development Planning (2006–2020)' (Dongcheng District Government of Beijing, 2007, p. 319; Jiaodaokou Street Office, 2007). In collaboration with the district government, the Street Office also formulated

the 'Views on the Implementation of the Works to Construct Nanluoguxiang Culture and Leisure Street', which guided the establishment of various support offices to facilitate businesses and investment in the area (Dongcheng District Government of Beijing, 2007, p. 321).

A wide range of public works were carried out, including the demolition of illegal structures, relocation of offices such as police station, pavement of the central lane and infrastructure upgrading. For instance, in 2005, the Street Office demolished 480 square metres of illegal structures at 62 locations. In 2006, more than 10 million yuan were invested to carry out road pavement, maintenance of drainage and sewage piping, and installation of underground electric cables (Cheng, 2008). Face-lifting was the key to neighbourhood beautification. Walls were repainted in grey to provide a uniform and pseudo-ancient look, and very often, an additional layer of brick was applied in order to hide dilapidated façade. Supported by intense public relations activities especially in times of preparing for the Olympic Games (Dongcheng District Government of Beijing, 2008, p. 285), these local state-led initiatives seem to have given a positive signal to the private sector, thus propelling more individual entrepreneurs to start small businesses catered for largely tourists and higher-income consumers searching for new cultural experience. These top-down official efforts were rewarded when the 'Nanluoguxiang Culture and Leisure Street' project was selected as one of the co-recipients of the Development and Achievement award at the 3rd Annual Awards of China's Creative Industry in December 2008.

The top-down efforts were also boosted, if not driven, by the city-wide preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. Nanluoguxiang conservation has become part of showcasing the Old City of Beijing to promote courtyard house tourism by the government, and was selected as one of the eight 'commercial districts with characteristics' in order to 'welcome the Olympic Games' (Dongcheng District Government of Beijing, 2008, p. 285). Most interviewees, both residents and businesses alike, were quick to point out this connection, as a café owner stated below:

"I feel that a lot of work had been carried out at the time of the Olympic Games, such as removing the electric poles, with electric cables now underground, mending the road and painting the walls and installing surveillance cameras, thus improving the security considerably" (Café owner, S3).

The role of real estate capital in urban conservation is essential due to the way in which courtyard house restoration is designed by the local state. In Nanluoguxiang, a house-by-house restoration approach has been implemented, which is often referred to as a 'micro-circulation' model (in Chinese, wei-xun-huan). This approach requires all registered residents in the courtyard to sign a collective application for courtyard restoration, and they would also have to agree on relocation plan, which usually involves their

permanent displacement upon receiving compensation (Dong and Liu, 2005).⁷ Local authorities are encouraged to apply the 'micro-circulation' model, which allows courtyard houses to be emptied and released for restoration by corporate and individual investors. In this way, the financial burden on local authorities is reduced. The whole process is led by the district government and the street office in particular. The street office would usually be in charge of administrative processes including the production of relocation plan together with the housing and land management centre in the district (Tang, 2006). Between 2004 and 2008, more than 80 courtyard houses are reported to have been restored by applying the 'micro-circulation' model (Tang and Cheng, 2008).

Real estate capital and courtyard house restoration

In recent years, Beijing's courtyard houses have become increasingly popular among corporate and individual investors. The latter largely consist of overseas Chinese. From the investors' perspective, courtyard houses in conservation areas in particular would be more attractive as they are less likely to face demolition in the midst of property-led redevelopment. In areas such as Nanluoguxiang, the investors are encouraged by the release of courtyard houses through the implementation of the 'micro-circulation' model as explained above. Recent changes in regulations on courtyard house transaction have also facilitated individual investment in courtyard houses. The municipal government organised its first courtyard house auction in 2006, though the event had to come to an abrupt end due to the unmet demand from the participating bidders who asked for the municipal guarantee that these houses would not be subject to demolition in future (Xinhua News Agency, 2006). Nevertheless, the event proved the growing popularity of these traditional houses. In 2007, there was a sensation when a renovated 3028-square-metre courtyard house in Shi Cha Hai conservation area was sold at a record price of 110 million yuan (Liu, 2007b).

According to a real estate agent interviewed, Nanluoguxiang's courtyard house transaction has been relatively active compared with other conservation areas in Beijing's Old City. It is claimed that the purchase price of a courtyard house in the area increased from 10,000 yuan per square metre in 2006 to 30,000 yuan by 2008 (Real estate agent, S9), demonstrating Nanluoguxiang's growing popularity for real estate investment. Courtyard houses in Nanluoguxiang have also seen their rents increased substantially in recent years. For instance, the interviews with restaurant-owners reveal that the rent level has been more than doubled since the first half of 2006, and that the current rent has reached about 10 yuan per square metre per day. This amounts to approximately 12,000 yuan per month for a 40-square-metre shop space. As a restaurateur (S1) pointed out, the rent increase seems to have benefited from both Nanluoguxiang's emergence as a cultural hot-spot and from the environmental improvement projects and intense public relations programmes by the local government.

It was indicated earlier in this paper that as many as one-quarter of all dwellings in Nanluoguxiang would be in private ownership. In recent years, some of the privately-owned courtyard houses have been restored to their original features after owner-occupiers gained full control of their properties. One courtyard house owner (NLGX-03), who received many foreign hutong tourists visiting her residence, explained that her property rights were

originally returned to her in 1985 after decades-long confiscation. It took, however, another 20 years to fully acquire complete control of her residence, as there were other public housing tenants who were earlier allocated to her residence.

After the property rights were returned to me in 1985, I had been demolishing one dwelling after another whenever a family moved out. By 2004, all families moved out, and then I could demolish all of them. Afterwards, the house was renovated (Owner-occupier, NLGX-03).

The restoration of private courtyard houses was not subject to the receipt of state subsidies, and therefore, the restoration of above interviewee's 16-room courtyard house was all carried out of her family's own expenses. As the previous interviewee states, "our place is privately owned. The government cannot intervene". However, not all the original courtyard house-owners were as lucky and affluent as this interviewee. Various news reports suggest that original house-owners are often rid of their property rights, engineered by profit-driven development projects (Liu, 2007a; O'Neill, 1998). For many other families who are fortunate to possess courtyard houses but without abilities to find funds for restoration, it would be challenging to carry out restoration of this scale on their own. It has been noted frequently by officials, media and residents alike that restoring courtyard houses is a costly business. For this financial reason, corporate investors tend to dominate the scene of courtyard housing restoration in Beijing.

Differentiated benefits among local residents

The commercialisation of Nanluoguxiang and increased opportunities for real estate gains aided by the local state intervention produced differentiated benefits among local residents. On the one hand, there were residents who made gains by exercising landlordism (seeking rent income) or entrepreneurialism (running businesses themselves). With the recent amendment to the Constitution in 2004 as well as the enactment of the Property Law in 2007, the right to security is fully acknowledged in post-reform China. It was evident from the interviews with local residents and businesses that the commercialisation of Nanluoguxiang was built upon this newly found opportunity. Those residents who had another house to live elsewhere or who could spare part of their existing dwellings for sub-letting were making use of this opportunity to become landlords. Although only private dwellings were qualified for sub-letting in order for shop owners to process business permits, some 'opportunistic' public housing tenants also participated in obtaining gains on their rental properties, thus evading existing regulations. As a consequence, landlordism prevailed in Nanluoguxiang regardless of residents' housing tenure, as demonstrated by some of the interviewees below:

"This establishment is actually a private establishment, a private property. The owner originated from Beijing, from this very hutong. . . If my memory is right, there was a deed of property that dated back to the 1980s, so probably they were given back this [formerly confiscated] property. . . Interestingly, they have another house just down the street there, and this place had always been a small factory for them. . . Actually, they've just moved out from their house. Nanluoguxiang has become rather famous now, and recently they rented out their own house as well to someone. . . and they moved out of Nanluoguxiang" (Restaurateur, S11).

"For instance, my friend who used to live here. When [area renovation] started, she rented her house out at a monthly rent of 4000–5000 yuan, and then she went to another area to rent her own house." (Public housing tenant, NLGX-08).

⁷ In Beijing's urban renewal, eligible tenants and property-owners are entitled to cash compensation when they are displaced, and its estimation is largely based on the land appraisal value and dwelling space (see Shin (2007) for more explanation on redevelopment compensation). This principle has also been applied to residents' displacement from conservation areas, and is reiterated in the municipal regulations on the protection and renovation of houses in conservation areas announced in November 2003.

Table 2

Local residents interviewed: housing conditions, perceived benefits and access to new amenities.

Interviewees	Gender	Age	Duration of stay in the area	Dwelling space (m ²)	Housing tenure	Monthly rents (in yuan)	Who are the beneficiaries?		Visit to new stores in Nanluoguxiang
							Main beneficiaries	Least beneficiaries	
NLGX-01	F	56	4 years	10	Renting, private	Symbolic amount	State	Local residents	No
NLGX-02	M	46	7 years	15	Owned, private	None	State and local residents	n.a.	n.a.
NLGX-03	F	74	c.70 years	n.a.	Owned, private	None	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
NLGX-04	M	44	4 years	14.8	Renting, private	800	State and businesses	Local residents	Yes, frequently
NLGX-05	M	49	c.40 years	50	Renting, public	c.120	State and businesses	n.a.	No
NLGX-06	M	49	49 years	50	Renting, public	60	Businesses	State	No
NLGX-07	M	53	c.30 years	c.40	Renting, public	c.40	Businesses	Local residents	No
NLGX-08	F	57	c.40 years	c.50	Renting, public	c.40	Businesses	Local residents	No
NLGX-09	F	24	24 years	75	Renting, public	c.27	State	Local residents	Yes, occasionally
NLGX-10	F	48	c.40 years	15	Renting, public	c.40	Businesses	Local residents	No
NLGX-11	M	54	c.50 years	19.7	Renting, public	c.27	State, businesses and local residents	n.a.	No
NLGX-12	M	26	2 years	c.50	Renting, public	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	No

While landlordism and entrepreneurialism were apparently more likely to be prevalent among those few residents whose house faced hutong, the development of Nanluoguxiang in recent years presented a different picture to other residents. The conservation efforts by the local state largely involved face-lifting and beautification, thus making Nanluoguxiang presentable (from the official's perspective) to visitors and attractive to businesses without accompanying any effective improvement of local residents' living conditions. Most interviewed residents were aware of this shortfall, as a local resident states:

"...the state has only been keeping the street in good conditions, making the façade look nice, but if you enter through each door and take a look at houses, they are in bad conditions. Of course, improvement works are carried out, but they are below standard" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-05).

It is apparent that property rights have played an important role in the way residents benefited from the area renovation. The increasing appreciation of housing value was considered as being of little relevance to tenants in the public rental sector (Public housing tenant, NLGX-12). Even if residents were eligible to lease their properties, if their dwellings were not facing hutong and were located "too deep" in courtyard houses, the area conservation "had little relevance" to their families (Public housing tenant, NLGX-06), as these dwellings experienced less demand for lease. As a result, local residents seem to have perceived that Nanluoguxiang conservation had been carried out to serve the interest of the state, and in particular, to benefit local businesses (see Table 2). Many interviewed residents were also quick to speak out that local residents were the least benefited.

Therefore, it was not surprising to hear local residents calling for more government attention to the improvement of residents' living conditions. The response was not satisfying. During the last 2 years, local authorities in Beijing's Old City had been carrying out selective demolition and reconstruction of dilapidated rental dwellings within courtyard houses, owned and managed by the housing bureau (see Fig. 5). Those dwellings that posed serious health and safety threats were the prime targets. Funds were provided by the municipal government, while district governments were responsible for organising and supervising the project. A typical project would assemble several adjacent dwellings within a courtyard. Existing tenants were required to find temporary residence during the project period on their own expenses, and were to return upon completion. The work did not incur any costs on residents. Nor did it

involve an increase in dwelling space for residents upon re-housing. Benefiting from this government contribution, however, was conceived as "winning a lottery" (Restaurateur, S11).

Due to the poor housing conditions that seem to have no immediate prospect of improvement, some local residents seem to long for displacement that would provide them with some compensation, which they would use to improve their housing conditions. For instance, a resident pointed out in an interview that they were "willing to move out, provided that they were given the money" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-06). The most preferred type of compensation upon demolition is absolutely not enough to buy a house" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-08). This argument might be a practical conclusion they would reach, given that depopulation had been explicitly promoted by the local state in the midst of implementing urban conservation policies. Furthermore, any government-led reconstruction of public rental dwellings as explained above would not involve space expansion in this area where residents suffered from crowded living conditions. This was not encouraging for those residents longing for a larger dwelling space. One of the residents interviewed states:

"Improving the physical condition of houses is of no use. If the housing space cannot be increased, it's not really improvement. Building flats [in lieu of courtyard houses] will also damage the feeling of old street... There is an inherent contradiction between residents' living and conservation. The best solution would be for the state to take out money, compensate residents for their displacement and reduce the population density" (Owner-occupier, NLGX-02).

Regarding their relationship with emerging businesses in Nanluoguxiang, most local residents seem to have stayed away from visiting them (see Table 2). Interviewed residents pointed out the inconvenience brought about by the increased commercial activities in Nanluoguxiang. This included the disappearance of local grocery shops, breakfast sellers and the noise/disorder created by 'drunken' visitors. Given the nature of local businesses, it would be difficult to imagine that their clienteles included long-term local residents. Unaffordable prices were one of the oft-cited reasons for residents not having been to these premises. Local residents were also not too familiar with the services and products in these premises, which aimed at different types of clienteles. As one of the interviewees explicitly claims, the place was fundamentally transformed to become "no ordinary people's place" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-07).



Fig. 5. Selective demolition and reconstruction of dwellings at Nanluoguxiang. © Hyun Bang Shin, March 2009.

Limited degree of residents' intervention

In developing countries, state-guided conservation projects tend to involve little consultation with the public. In an authoritarian political environment, listening to local people would often come in conflict with the ruling elite (Din, 1993; Timothy, 1999). In China's urban contexts, the limits of residents' participation in planning and decision-making processes make it difficult for residents to 'voice out' collectively. The absence of intermediate civic organisations aggravates this situation (Howell, 2003; Plummer and Taylor, 2004). This was also the case with the residents in Nanluoguxiang when the government-led initiatives started to take place from 2006. According to the interviews with local residents, there was no formal notification to, let alone consultation with, local residents about the Nanluoguxiang conservation. The lack of consultation with local residents was reflected in the ways in which they evaluated their relationship with the Nanluoguxiang development. A lack of motivation or confidence tends to dominate local residents' responses when they were asked to express their views about the area conservation. The statement that "we residents fundamentally have no right to speak out" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-07) indicates the degree of frustration. Another resident laments:

"Even if you envisage [what would be a desirable way of urban conservation], could it be realised? How to construct, how to plan, what is good... Who would listen to you?" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-11).

In particular, with regard to tenant households, their limited property rights, especially the absence of their right to disposal and security, partly explains the detachment of local residents from the area renovation, as was the case with a private tenant NLGX-01 ("I don't pay attention [to demolition], as this is not my

house"). The detachment might also have resulted from their tendency of non-intervention in state affairs as revealed by the comment of a public housing tenant NLGX-05 ("this is a state affair and has no relation to me") and of another public housing tenant NLGX-06 ("if it does not affect me, then it's fine to me"). The lack of prospect to influence the decision-making in on-going conservation processes seems to have significantly strengthened local residents' passive acceptance of the situation.

It is noteworthy to point out that local residents' views towards urban conservation itself were positive in general. They were, however, more critical about how it was to be put into action. For instance, a private tenant NLGX-04 states, "the idea is good, but the outcome is bad". Some were in favour of selective demolition in order to get rid of illegal structures and preserve courtyard houses in a relatively good shape, but many were concerned about the possibility of their permanent displacement the demolition would incur. As the original depopulation policy suggests, any restoration of courtyard houses would definitely involve the displacement of the majority of existing residents. With the inclination of the government towards relying on the private sector for courtyard renovation, it would be very unlikely for local residents to engage in a dialogue with the government to influence the direction of neighbourhood changes.

The government contributions to maintaining Nanluoguxiang's historic characteristics also did not receive strong support either. Those residents, having lived in Nanluoguxiang literally for decades, tended to disapprove the quality of reconstruction, stating that "since the government intervened, it went bad" (Private tenant, NLGX-04), and that "the old Beijing features were all demolished, and cannot be recognisable" (Public housing tenant, NLGX-07). Unlike local residents, local businesses interviewed displayed relatively more positive remarks towards area renovation as it improved the physical environment, thus inviting more visitors and facilitating the business growth. They agreed, however,

with local residents, arguing that although the government contributions produced greater diversity (in terms of the range of businesses), the local government contributed to the loss of Nanluoguxiang's original characteristics. The authenticity of the re-constructed courtyard houses was also questioned. This appears to be a frequently raised issue in other conservation areas in Beijing. The remark by one of the restaurant owners interviewed (Restaurateur, S11) demonstrates this:

“One of the few old houses remaining used to stand there, but they destroyed it about two weeks ago. They demolished the eastern and western bits of the courtyard house, and half of the southern bit, and the only one remaining intact now is the north section. They are rebuilding the eastern and the western bits, traditionally. They are not going to build anything new, but the soul is not there anymore. It's not the original building anymore. They are to build a new [courtyard house]. That's normally what people do here, but it's a pity. The government should set a severe restriction to monitor these activities, and...well, I cannot say. I am not sure if the government is aware of it, or probably the government is even behind these projects. For them, whether a Chinese house is authentic or not probably does not really matter. For us, we know it. We know that when you demolish and rebuild it 100% according to the original scale and original plan, it's not the same thing anymore. It does not have the same historical value”.

Concluding discussion: urban conservation as a revalorisation strategy of historic quarters

Urban redevelopment in Beijing since the early 1990s has been very much property-led to the extent that physical upgrading has been given a priority over improving existing residents' social lives, and that property development has been the main momentum of urban transformation. The implementation of detailed plans for the 25 conservation areas since early 2000s indicates that there is a two-track strategy in operation with regard to the renewal of central Beijing. On the one hand, property-led urban redevelopment involving wholesale demolition and high-density reconstruction is widely practised especially outside the official conservation areas. This strategy corresponds to what could be referred to as 'politics of selection' (Yeoh and Huang, 1996). On the other hand, while the detailed urban conservation plans attempt to cater for the need of protecting historic quarters and cultural heritage, the experience of Nanluoguxiang indicates that urban conservation in practice facilitates the revalorisation of dilapidated historic quarters. In the case of Nanluoguxiang, this is achieved through the local state intervention (to create 'Nanluoguxiang Culture and Leisure Street') and without involving wholesale demolition and reconstruction at neighbourhood scale. The revalorisation process has also been possible due to the involvement of a particular type of real estate capital that has greater interests in the aesthetic value that historic quarters and courtyard houses provide. The local state intervention is carried out to facilitate this revalorisation process by improving infrastructure as well as the overall façade of the neighbourhood, and helping release dilapidated courtyard houses on the real estate market. The government tends to rely heavily on the private sector, reminiscent of China's market-oriented reform principle. The government's recent move to encourage foreigners to buy courtyard houses (Fang and Liu, 2004) can also be understood along this line. To this extent, the recent conservation policies are still very much in line with the dominant property-led urban redevelopment, providing property-based interests with opportunities to sustain revenue income within existing planning constraints.

As for the local residents in Nanluoguxiang, the benefits of their neighbourhood revalorisation are found to be disproportionately shared. The revalorisation by conservation has resulted in the steep increase in both private rents and property value, providing a small number of self-motivated residents (especially those whose houses line with hutong) with opportunities to claim rent income. Financially-stricken private owners of courtyard houses would also be given opportunities to acquire a substantial amount of cash revenues through sales on the second-hand housing market, as courtyard houses became popular destinations of real estate investment. Public housing tenants, although they are protected from the rent increase in the private rental sector for the moment, would eventually face displacement since the local state, as the owner of these public rental properties, is keen to make courtyard houses available for private investment. Overall, the transformation of Nanluoguxiang does not appear to have added any tangible benefits to the majority of original residents. Because the conservation of Nanluoguxiang and its transformation into a culture and leisure district have been carried out on a piecemeal basis, large-scale demolition and displacement typically experienced in redevelopment projects in contemporary Chinese cities are not witnessed. Instead, local residents are squeezed over time out of the neighbourhood as Sharon Zukin had seen in New York (1982, p. 257), but it is something that contemporary Chinese cities are learning to emulate only recently.

Property ownership plays a significant role in urban conservation. Critics argue that in cities in the Global South, due to the limited public finance, achieving full-scale renovation in conservation areas would require investment from the private sector including private property-owners. In this regard, it is pointed out that motivating private owners to make investment in conservation areas is an important factor for successful urban conservation (Jones and Bromley, 1996). Not all private owners would be inclined to make this investment, as some may fear that urban conservation might place constraints on asset accumulation through property development. In Taiwan, for instance, property-owners in small cities were keeping distance from conservation programmes that might militate against their property development opportunities in the midst of nation-wide increase in land value (Wang and Lee, 2008). In Nanluoguxiang, private owner-occupiers seem to play only a marginal role in the sense that the majority are incapable of making a huge amount of cash input required for restoring courtyard houses. It appears that it is mostly corporate and affluent individual investors from outside Nanluoguxiang who bring this investment.

The exclusion of the majority of local residents from sharing the benefits is exacerbated by the limited degree of their intervention in neighbourhood affairs, which make it difficult for residents to enjoy the ownership of changes taking place in the Nanluoguxiang conservation. As discussed in this paper, many local residents displayed a lack of interests in local affairs, but this should not be regarded as the cause of their lack of participation, but as a product of a lack of their integration into and continuing exclusion from planning and decision-making processes that determined the direction of neighbourhood changes. There is a need to listen to local communities and involve them in urban conservation from the very early stage so that they too feel the ownership of their area conservation as well as neighbourhood development. As Hampton (2005) and Marks (1996) acknowledge, it is necessary to include those outside the plans and find ways together to generate benefits for local communities and enhance their participation. It is also required for experts like planners and officials to acknowledge the historic quarters as a setting for local residents' everyday lives, and include their collective interests in conservation strategies (Hubbard, 1993).

Although the Nanluoguxiang conservation area seems to be en route to becoming a national symbol of successful conservation

projects, the future of Nanluoguxiang is yet uncertain. In Beijing's historic quarters, large-scale demolition and reconstruction is in principle to be avoided as part of urban conservation policies, but demolition is not unheard of. The worst example in recent years would be the wholesale demolition and reconstruction of the Qianmen conservation area, south of the Tiananmen Square, during the period of run-up to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games (Sanderson, 2008). Following their demolition, local historic buildings in Qianmen were re-built in pseudo-ancient style, and in official jargon, this approach was also a means to achieve successful conservation and revitalisation of historic heritage. The depopulation strategy was also re-affirmed recently when the Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission announced a blueprint to move 200,000 residents from central Beijing between 2006 and 2010 as part of its urban conservation efforts (Wu, 2007). In the immediate future, it seems inevitable that the process of Nanluoguxiang revalorisation supported by the local state and real estate capital would facilitate the displacement of as many local residents as possible to release courtyard houses for private investment. Under this circumstance, a more practical challenge is to engage with the local state to guarantee that not all public rental dwellings are privatised so that some local residents would be able to stay put with tenure security. The history of Beijing's property-led redevelopment since the early 1990s suggests that this is not an easy task to achieve. Urban conservation projects are often found to have made detrimental, irreversible impacts on the social fabric of local communities (Hardoy and Gutman, 1991). Beijing's urban conservation policies are yet to find a way to reconcile heritage conservation with the improvement of social lives of original residents before irreversible damages are inflicted in all conservation areas.

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