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Dwelling in a "living museum of old Beijing": a study of the cultural heritage discourse in residential everyday life

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Title of the thesis: Dwelling in a "living museum of old Beijing": a study of the cultural heritage discourse in residential everyday life

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between cultural heritage discourse and the people who inhabit heritage spaces, through research conducted in an urban residential neighbourhood of conservation importance in Beijing, China. With the aim of improving the implementation of heritage conservation, which has been an established discourse of preserving community culture and history and gets popular based on values attached to old buildings, the study departs from the conventional heritage-centred perspective and foregrounds an everyday perspective, to demonstrate the way that heritage conservation is integrated into the inhabitants' social lives and personal histories. The thesis is organised into two empirical parts: Firstly, it examines how heritage is discursively constituted and how heritage conservation has become the mainstream approach to preserving and representing local culture in Beijing. Secondly, it describes and examines inhabitants' attitudes, understandings of heritage discourse, and their practices of everyday life in these spaces based on data collected from ethnographic fieldwork. Drawing on these two aspects, the study argues that the cultural heritage discourse and corresponding framings of local culture in urban China form a type of social knowledge that is constantly reproduced in social practices and has been legitimized and popularized among citizens. As a result, the urban space is defined by the hegemonic social knowledge with limited public doubts, while other spatial practices are marginalized. Inhabitants of conservation spaces navigate this situation by using the knowledge in various ways to their everyday lives according to their individual needs for a better life. However, this common yet individualized approach does not change their marginalized positions in defining and using the urban space that was their home before the heritage discourse arrived. By identifying the practical issues arising from the implementation of heritage conservation, this study offers an alternative perspective for understanding the social impacts of cultural heritage conservation and inspires further ideas for possible solutions.

Dwelling in a "living museum of old Beijing":

a study of the cultural heritage discourse in residential everyday life

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AHD: the Authorised Heritage Discourse

APP: (Smartphone-installed) Application

BMICPD: Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design

CPC: the Communist Party of China

ICCROMS: International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites

PRC: the People's Republic of China

SOE: state-owned enterprise

UNESCO: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

List of Terms in Chinese *pinyin*

bu wenming: uncivilised 不文明

caishichang: wet market 菜市场

danwei: work-unit 单位

datong: the Great Unity 大同

dazayuan: big messy yards 大杂院

dongsinan lishiwenhua jiequ: the Dongsinan Historic Conservation Area 东四南历史文化街区

gong: public 公

gongshengyuan: Co-living Courtyard 共生院

guojia: state/nation/country 国家

han: the *han* nationality 汉

heiwulei: the Black Five Classes 黑五类

hukou: the housing registration system 户口

hutong: narrow alleys 胡同

jiedao banshichu (*jiedao):* the Subdistrict Office 街道办事处(街道)

jumin weiyuanhui (juweihui): the Residential Committee 居民委员会(居委会)

laobaixing or *xiao laobaixing:* very ordinary people 老百姓，小老百姓

lao Beijing cheng: the old Beijing city 老北京城

lao Beijing: old Beijing 老北京

lao jumin: long-term dwelling residents 老居民

li ji: the Book of Rites 礼记

li: ritual 礼

liubai zenglv: leave blank and add green 留白增绿

liumang: hooligans 流氓

mangliu: blind population flows 盲流

Pinduoduo: a smartphone shopping APP 拼多多

polaner: junks and rags 破烂儿

qianchu langzi houchu sha: a porch in the front and an attached room at the back 前出廊子后出厦

sanmin zhuyi: the Three Principles of the People (brought by Sun Yat-sen as tenets of the

Republican government) 三民主义

shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan: the socialist core values 社会主义核心价值观

shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming: The socialist spiritual civilisation 社会主义精神文明

shehui zhuyi wuzhi wenming: the socialist material civilisation 社会主义物质文明

shequ: community, specifically referring to the officially set urban social administrative unit 社区

Shijia *Hutong:* 史家胡同

shujie zhengzhi cutisheng: removing non-capital functions and improving urban management 疏解整治促提升

si jiu: the Four Olds 四旧, including old ideas (旧思想 *jiu sixiang*), old customs (旧风俗 *jiu fengsu*), old culture (旧文化 *jiu wenhua*), and old habits (旧习惯 *jiu xiguan*)

siheyuan: courtyards 四合院

sijiucheng: the Four-Nine City 四九城

suzhi: personal quality 素质

wenming: civilised 文明

xiaokang shehui: moderately prosperous society 小康社会

yanda: severe strike against criminal elements on those seriously jeopardise social peace 严打

yong xianjin sixiangwenhua zhanling jicengzhendi: occupying a front of the masses by advanced ideologies and cultures 用先进思想文化占领基层阵地

youqian buzhu dongnanfang, dong bunuan lai xia buliang: If you have enough money, do not choose west-facing or north-facing houses. They are neither warm in winter nor cool in summer. 有钱不住东南房，冬不暖来夏不凉

yuanqin buru jinlin: A good neighbour is better than a brother far off 远亲不如近邻

zhonghua minzu weida fuxing: a Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese People 中华民族伟大复兴

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Acknowledgements

PART I

The prologue

Chapter 1.   Introduction

1.1.   Impressions and encounters with *"lao Beijing"*: the research aim and questions

When images of Beijing get circulated in the mass media, a phenomenon that has been pervasive in urban everyday life in China, it is its old parts with traditional appearances that are always on display, seemingly an essential component of the city, as the capital of China being both old and modern. In addition to the famous places of interests like the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, etc. that were exclusively owned by the royal family, the landscape of traditional residential areas also contributes to make up cultural images of the city in mass circulation. In the latter, a local traditional living scene composed of long and quiet narrow alleys (*hutong* 胡同) with residential courtyards (*siheyuan* 四合院) hidden behind red gates and grey walls being arranged on both sides, is portrayed to convey a tranquil and historic atmosphere distinguished from that of the modern city which citizens experience day to day (see Figure 1-1, 1-2).

Figure 1-1 A poetic *hutong* view in the autumn
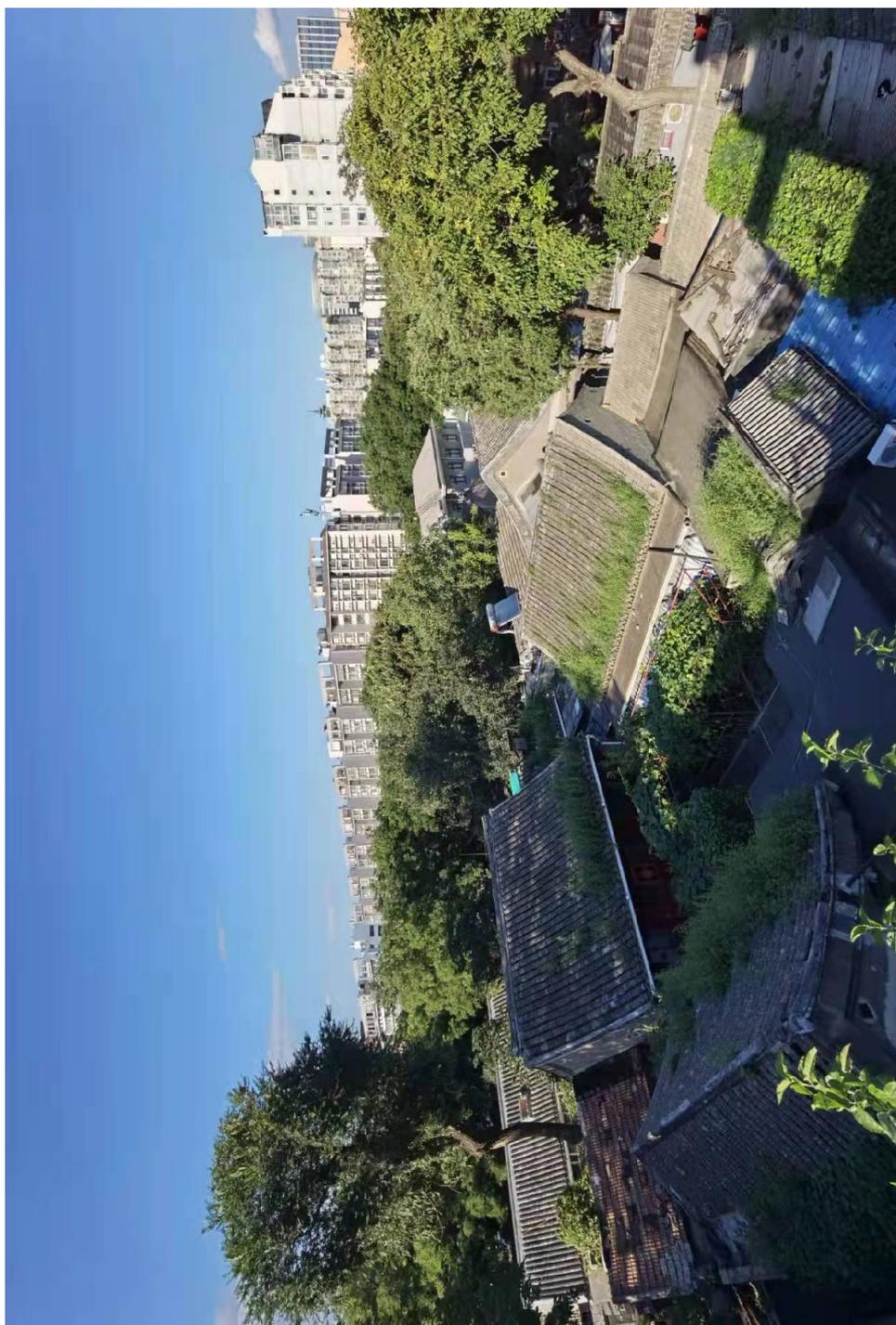
Figure 1-2 A *siheyuan* with relative clear building pattern in 2021, copyright owned by Miss Guo (a local conservation practitioner)

This is the old city of Beijing, or in Chinese, *lao Beijing cheng*（老北京城）which can be traced back to the thirteenth century, occupying the very central urban area of current metropolitan Beijing, that has been designated as a historic city under the national cultural heritage catalogue and subject to conservation efforts since the 1990s (see Figure 1-3). Currently the built-up area that was once capital city for the Chinese Empire takes up just 3.8% of the whole municipal area[1], with the previous city wall replaced by the 2nd Ring Road, a circular city highway surrounding which successive outer ones were constructed as backbones supporting the growth of the now sprawling metropolis. Occupying the urban geometric centre and appearing different from modernist urban landscapes, this historic core is regarded as an unparalleled treasure bearing local history and culture, and deserves elaborate protection. In addition to the old city, anything that is related to it, for instance artefacts, stories, sounds, figures, etc., can be valued as the embodiment of the local traditional culture known as the *lao Beijing* culture (老北京文化). Under the legal conservation, the old city is retained with all signs of aging, and is made accessible to the public as a culturally featured destination to visit. The situation makes the old city and the inside residential spaces exposed to the public views, and leads to official place-making efforts to highlight the traditional cityscape there for more enjoyable and memorable spatial experiences[2]. As an outstanding place that conveys affluent historic and cultural information about Beijing, the old city is undergoing an overall process of aestheticization, with semiotic representations of the local culture booming, translating the culture to recognisable signs, and attracting public attentions.

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[1] According to the *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*, the whole region of Beijing takes up 16410 km^2 and the old city occupies 62.5 km^2.

[2] In the *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*, the old city is planned to get integral protection, with itself a component of the "urban landscape pattern". With the physical morphology conserved, the old city is planned to exhibit cultural landscapes consisting of more than heritage sites, including both ongoing social lives and a good natural environment.
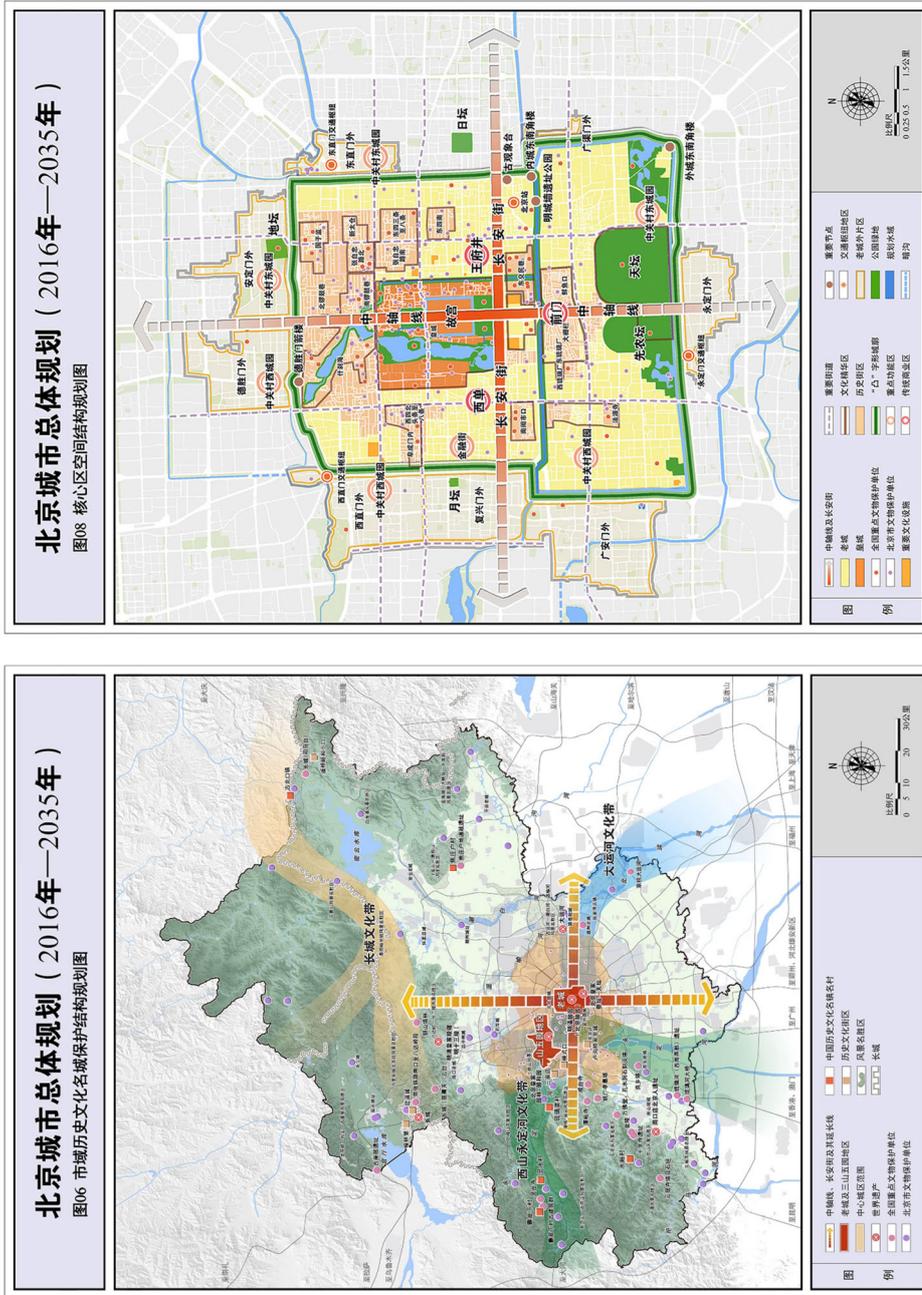
Figure 1-3 Left: position of the old city (marked by red) in the territory of Beijing (shown as bounded and coloured); right: the latest conservation plan for the old city of Beijing (with the old city coloured by yellow and historic neighbourhood coloured by light orange), from *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*

In addition to the symbolised *lao Beijing* culture, dwelling practices in the old city always continue, and are not so fascinating as the landscapes always present. My first contact with those practices of dwelling was during fieldwork in my bachelor's urban planning course in 2013. When I, with my classmate, looked back and forth between old buildings and layout maps that we have got in our hands, a grandpa[3] sitting along the alley commented: "This is *lao Beijing*! This is the most core area of the city! Look at how dilapidated it is and no one to take charge of it!"[4]

The old man's interjection dragged my attention away from the physical old city as a culturally valuable building group to the residents who are still living there. In contrast to the public image of the old city where dwelling is imagined to be tranquil and poetic, the elder man, a real inhabitant of the place, revealed another facet of both the city and the culture. Living in the old city also means dwelling a dilapidated and unattended physical environment, and close neighbouring with several households crowding in one courtyard (see Figure 1-4).

However, this impoverished facet of the old city is always hidden behind the well-maintained street facades, or walls and gates along *hutong* under the official heritage conservation. The legislation of cultural heritage conservation was a product from the state modernisation by the Republican China in the early 20th century (Lai et al., 2004; Zhu, 2020). Introduced by a group of architects from "the West" (the popular Chinese geographical reference to the developed world to the west of China, including the US, the UK and Europe) in the 1930s, the philosophy and practices of conservation took root in the modern China by evaluating and maintaining historic materials (Qian, 2007; Zhu, 2017). The legitimacy of heritage conservation was continued by the People's Republic of China (PRC), which gradually expanded the range of evaluation and protection to include historic cities and villages, from tangible cultural relics to intangible cultural heritages. Currently, there are around 767,000 registered cultural heritage sites, among which 5058 at the national-level, and 3610 registered national-level intangible cultural heritages. Heritage conservation has been very popular in China with large numbers of local practices. Simultaneously, the social context for the prosperous development is featured by a surging nationalism and space capitalisation. For the country which is ruled by the Communist Party of China (CPC), the leader's ideology, its keywords and language are significant to set the tone of the time, which is the essential principle to follow to live

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[3] In Beijing and the general northern China, it is customary to use 大爷 (*daye*: grandpa) or 叔叔 (*shushu*: uncle) to refer to elderly men irrespective of kinship or their actual status. Similarly elder women are often referred to as 阿姨/大妈 (*ayi/dama*: aunt).

[4] In the thesis, all quotes from the local people have been translated from Mandarin (as their native language) to English unless otherwise stated.

and work there. For the contemporary Xi Jinping's era, bringing out the "China Dream", the leader defined it as "a dream of the people", and the way of fulfilling it by "link[ing] it with our people's yearning for a better life"[5]. He continues developmentalism for mass material abundance, and meanwhile emphasises "spiritual civilisation", a mass project to nurture a home-grown value that is distinct from any others of the globe (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018). In the discursive context, cultural heritages, by virtue of the embedded historic and cultural information, as well as the potential to make profits in cultural and tourism industries, get expanded and popularised to serve the "China Dream", the nationalist meanwhile developmentalist utopia designated by the powerful will.

In the realm of cultural heritage, the *lao Beijing culture* is also a source of the heritage value recognised from the old city. As one of the most well-known historic Chinese cities, Beijing got the title early and started the municipal heritage conservation in 1990 by designating 25 historic areas. Historic conservation is not uncommon there. With the heritage name, the dilapidation is translated to be an authentic feature of the residential buildings that can be aesthetically appreciated. Time leaves its mark on the old buildings, which, in many viewers' eyes like mine, are appreciable as carriers of history and culture, especially with ongoing residential activities that make the specimens of culture vibrant under continuous use. From this perspective, dilapidation could be read as evidence of the "oldness" of this old city.

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[5] National Committee on U.S. China Relations (2015). *Chinese President Xi Jinping Addresses the American Public*. Available at: https://www.ncuscr.org/content/full-text-president-xi-jinpings-speech (Accessed: 6 December 2022)
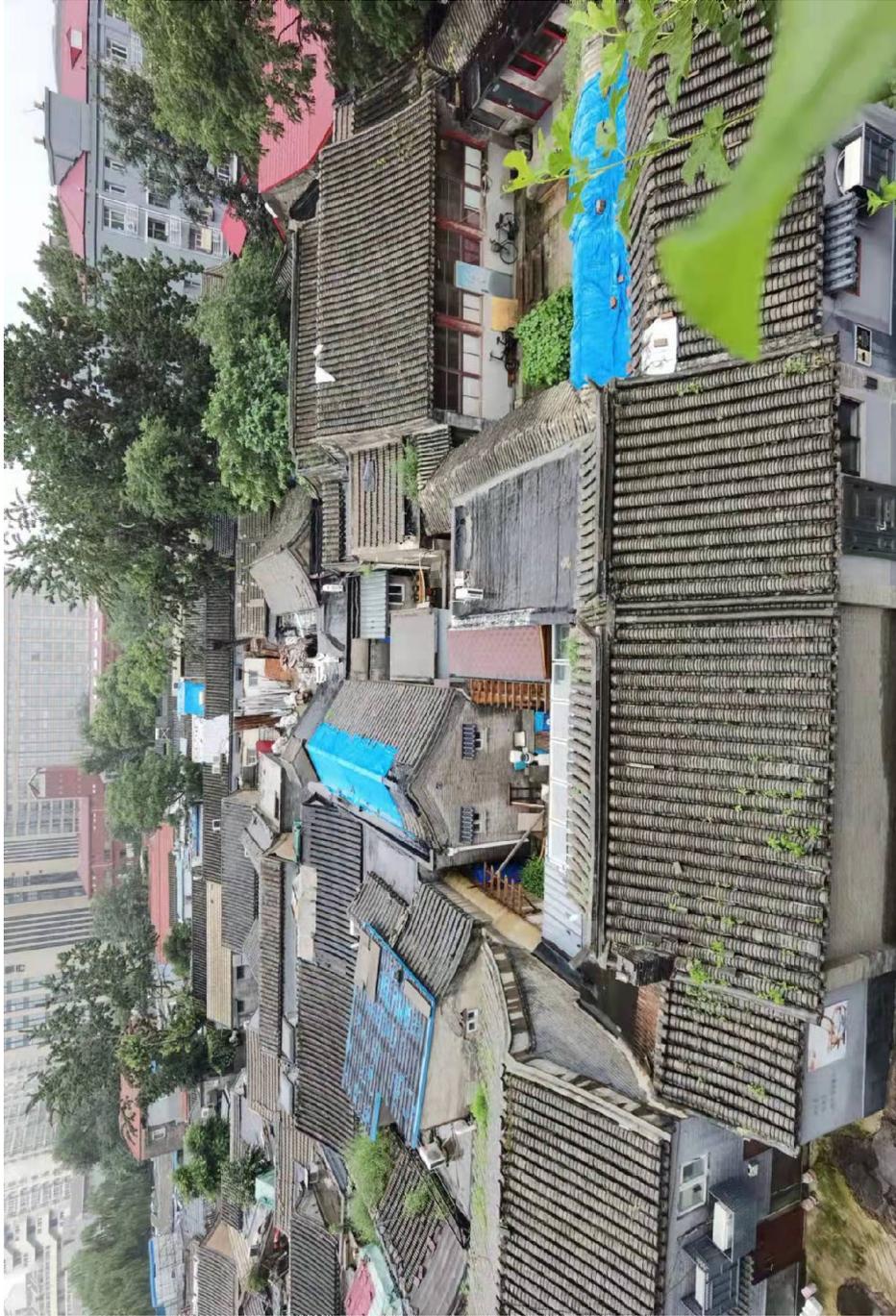
Figure 1-4 A group of dilapidating *siheyuan* occupied by self-built constructions with the building pattern obscured, copyright owned by Miss Guo

However, unlike visitors who can appreciate everything old there in temporary stays, local residents, like the grandpa who accosted me, have to live everyday with the dual-facets of the old city, as simultaneously a pleasant place containing local history and culture, and an annoying accommodation with unsatisfactory quality of life. This duality could bring a contradictory experience for inhabitants when sensing the place: on the one hand, the *lao Beijing* culture label has been recognised and applied to refer one's social identity that is confirmed based on a connection with the place established by embodied practices of dwelling; on the other hand, the dilapidated *status quo* is taken as problematic and risky to dwelling, but is hard to tackle by themselves, and nor can they demand that someone else is or should be responsible for improvement and renovation. This contradiction for an individual, between a strong self-identity attached to the locality and a sense of helplessness in changing the precarious situation in that locality, made a powerful impression on me, and prompted me to **ask the questions underlying this thesis**:

- How to explain the pervasive recognition of *lao Beijing* and its tight connection with the city?

- How to explain residents' contradictory attitudes towards the old city neighbourhood consequently subject to heritage conservation?

Bringing the two questions together, I conduct the doctoral study aiming to provide a possible way of analysing social impacts of heritage conservation *from the perspective of inhabitants*. As Smith & Waterton (2012) criticise a particular idea of heritage – the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) – as a set of language that creates "a dominant and legitimized way of thinking, writing, and talking about heritage management practices" but overshadows other possibilities (p. 2), actions are necessary to change the power relations. Agreeing with the claim, the thesis chooses the perspective in order to enrich knowledge about heritage by foregrounding inhabitants' views and practices. In fact, special concerns have been made from the World Heritage Convention (WHC), the most influential international convention for heritage conservation, towards indigenous people and local communities that inhabit heritage sites. In *Proposal for a 'Fifth C' to be added to the Strategic Objectives* of the 31st WHC (UNESCO, 2007), roles of communities, referring to "all forms of non-State actors" that "possess a direct connection, with relevant interests, to individual sites and often they have a connection that has endured over time", should get enhanced in local implementations. However, it is criticised that due to the persistent stress of materiality when evaluating heritages, despite of the public rising consciousness of the communities, the AHD still dominates and is able to translate local residential groups as living representations of the authorised values (Ran, 2021). In this way, inhabitants and their on-site living practices are objectified as components of the

AHD, which is not challenged by this concern. It leaves complex identities for inhabitants when conservation is applied to residential neighbourhoods: as a part of the general public receiving transmissions of heritage messages, and simultaneously users and dwellers of cultural heritages with pragmatic needs to live. Specifically, for the old city of Beijing, conservation of the historic areas has already framed the spaces to be nostalgic places, though still with ongoing residential activities remained. Residents, like the grandpa, are positioned in a paradoxical situation where the living environment is culturally valuable but simultaneously dilapidating, and with the dual identities as both appreciators and practitioners of the local culture. This complexity is created by the thriving local practices of the AHD, while in which few reflections have been made by the authorities on the discourse itself, not to mention the consequential material bias when recognising heritages.

Specifically, the perspective shift is made by putting the AHD in the social context, and examining it as a socio-political outcome and a significant component in local residential life, in order to study how such intervention impacts individuals as an inevitable part in their lives in a designated neighbourhood. An everyday perspective is taken in order to know inhabitants' understandings of the *lao Beijing culture*, attitudes towards the heritage conservation, and practices of their social lives when dwelling in the space that is specially cared and culturally defined. According to Highmore (2002),

> everyday life signifies ambivalently. On the one hand it points (without judging) to those most repeated actions, those most travelled journeys, those most inhabited spaces that make up, literally, the day to day. This is the landscape closest to us, the world most immediately met. But with this quantifiable meaning creeps another, never far behind: the everyday as value and quality – everydayness. Here the most travelled journey can become the dead weight of boredom, the most inhabited space a prison, the most repeated action an oppressive routine. (p.1)

> This ambivalence vividly registers the effects of modernity. ……In modernity the everyday becomes the setting for a dynamic process: for making the unfamiliar familiar; for getting accustomed to the disruption of custom; for struggling to incorporate the new; for adjusting to different ways of living. The everyday marks the success and failure of this process. It witnesses the absorption of the most revolutionary of inventions into the landscape of the mundane. Radical transformations in all walks of life become 'second nature'. The new becomes traditional and the residues of the past become outmoded and available for fashionable renewal. But signs of failure can be noticed everywhere: the language of the everyday is not an upbeat endorsement of the new; it echoes with frustrations, with the disappointment of broken promises. (p.2)

The description shows that everyday life is pliable yet inertial. On the one hand, it can accept the new and obsolete the old easily. On the other hand, repeats of daily routines can form patterns that bring senses of boredom but hard to unfetter. *Everydayness*, as the quality and value of everyday life, is criticised as "enforced routinisation in the service of the reproduction of global capital" (Gardiner, 2004, p.244), fettering the everyday life and transforming it to be a boredom in the context of the late modern society. It further propels individuals to mark everyday life with differences for social distinctions from others. Such conscious activities for making and exploring differences are critiqued by Lefebvre (1991) as a "simplified notion of reflection" only appearing beyond everyday life, actually an ideology making that involves "a measure of illusions" (p.94). Facing the difficulties to disenchant the illusionary everydayness, he appeals to rebuild everyday life thus to let people know their lives better, instead of relying on the distinctions. Here, de Certeau (1984) offers a solution to apply "the apparatus of our ordinary language" to get rid of the everydayness. The linguistic pattern could be learnt by applying practices of everyday life, as "the morphology of use", to recognise "different modes of everyday functioning" thus to outline "forms of life" (p.12-13).

In a neighbourhood under historic conservation, the everyday perspective is chosen in order to deconstruct a crystalised everydayness, and to look for possibilities from inhabitants' everyday life *per se*. Due to a populist feature of the *lao Beijing* culture, an everydayness is emphasised in the narratives about the heritage values attached to the old city, hence to become a presupposed ideal pattern imagined for the ongoing social lives there. In this condition, some everyday fragments are translated as objects under aesthetic gazes from those who desire exotic experiences different from their everyday ordinariness. As a result, the daily routines can be crystallised and packed to be a component of the heritage site, which, under the AHD, is popularly used for appreciation and visual consumption. Everyday lives there are appropriated to compose cultural messages ready for public transmission. Receivers are not only the general public, as visitors living outside the neighbourhood, but also residents themselves as practitioners of the valued everydayness, which yet has been tidied after being embraced as a component of the heritage value. Hence, under heritage conservation, this everydayness that implies a proper living status worth pursuing for, is set up as an exemplar to residents as something similar but different from what they have been practicing day by day. Since the everydayness there has been entangled with the heritage value, and is possibly to rearrange local living patterns depending on the popularity of the AHD among the commons, the everyday perspective provides an entry to observe and make sense of the *everyday life* which is practiced by inhabitants of the space, rather than a mere imagination subject to the cultural narratives. Empirical knowledge about the practiced everyday life can help

understand how the heritage conservation influences local social lives, figure out possibilities of changing from the pliable everyday life itself, and further to suggest alternative methods to make and keep *everydayness* for such cultural heritages that feature the unique ordinariness.

In this study, in addition to residents' accustomed behaviours, I expand the range of *practice* to include their self-narratives about life in *hutong* and *courtyard*, and physical manifestations of their living habits. This adjustment of "morphology of use" is made in consideration for the spatial context: Here physical space is frozen at, or even restored to some specific status, with corresponding historical and cultural narratives emphasised, and together to define and represent the locality. Although this stationary status is kept for representing a historic urban landscape that is recognised to convey the authorised heritage value, there also remain physical traces that manifest residents' practices of everyday life, and their memories about the local pasts. Taking advantage of this situation, in which more than the authorised local past has been retained in physical constructions and personal narratives, the thesis includes them into the range of practice, illustrating residents' respective ways of practicing the present, and corresponding explanations from their living experiences from the past. This helps to portray the everydayness by referring to inhabitants' practices of long-term local dwelling, as a comparison to that being constructed within the AHD, thus to form a critique of the discourse which has been developed to be embracive but still powerfully frames spaces by marginalising other possibilities.

By holding the everyday perspective, the thesis appeals for more attentions to the practical aspect of heritage conservation, which is socially impactive more than just a discursive system evaluating maintaining specific objects. Theoretically, it is an interdisciplinary study that tries to create dialogues between heritage studies and human geographies. By describing and analysing social practices that take place with heritage conservation on the spot, the study would like to arrange a set of materials that are realistically meaningful when theorising heritage, and when refining and enriching the heritage valuation system.

1.2. Methodologies

The research is carried out by a case study, locating at a neighbourhood under conservation. Referring to **the extended case method,** I would like to realise dialogues between the generalised theories and the local realities. Burawoy (1998) theorises the method as depending on the reflexive mode of science premised upon researchers' participation in the world being studied. Both the participation experiences and the studied world are unique but could be referential when talking about the general conditions.

Therefore, by focusing on a case but with multiple dialogues kept with the established theories, researchers are able to "extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory" (p.5). For this study, due to the aim to make heritage practices referable in theorisation works, I refer to this method and choose one case study site to collect specific meanwhile affluent empirical data about practices of the local social lives. Being described and analysed, the data can be organised, and become a resource to reflect on the preexisting heritage theories and the evaluation system.

The site for case study is the Dongsinan Historic Conservation Area (东四南历史文化街区 *dongsinan lishiwenhua jiequ*) located in the Dongcheng District, the east part of the old city (See Figure 1-5). Occupying 44.4 hectares, the area includes six urban Residential Communities that are allocated to two Subdistricts (five in Chaoyangmen Subdistrict and one in Jianguomen Subdistrict)[6], and fewer than 12,895 permanent residents as statistics show in 2013. Residential density there (290 people per hectare) is higher than the average of the district (234 people per hectare), and much higher than some other urban modern districts (for example Chaoyang 76 people per hectare, Haidian 67 people per hectare)[7]. The neighbourhood was added to the municipal historic area conservation list in 2013, with *Dongsinan Historical Area Conservation Plan* taking effect, setting the historic urban morphology and landscape under legal protection. At the present, collaborations between the Chaoyangmen Subdistrict Office and several professional teams from different social sectors go on for heritage conservation, presenting the neighbourhood as a "spiritual home and living museum of *lao Beijing* culture" (老北京文化的精神家园和活态博物馆). The project team is led by the local officers and the urban planning team from the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design (BMICPD)[8], the department which formulated the conservation planning. It shows openness to participants, including individual architects and designers, professional

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[6] District, Subdistrict, and Residential Community are urban units hierarchically set for urban governance in the institution of PRC. Details will be discussed in Chapter 3 below.

[7] The statistical numbers are cited from *Dongsinan Historical Area Conservation Plan (2013)*, *Dongcheng Statistical Yearbook* (Dongcheng District, People's Government of Beijing Municipality, 2021) and *Beijing Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Since specific data for the historic area has not been updated by recording separately, I can just use numbers from the conservation plan and make comparisons with the updated numbers in statistical yearbooks. What need to clarify is that due to the municipal policy to reduce population density of the old city, currently the population should have decreased in the conservation area, but is still a highly dense residential neighbourhood comparing to other urban districts of Beijing.

[8] Currently the name is Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Natural Resources 北京市规划和自然资源委员会. In the past it has been named as Beijing Municipal Planning Committee 北京市城乡规划委员会 that took in charge of completing the conservation planning for historic areas of the old city.

cultural and art teams, local NGOs and shopkeepers, etc. To highlight vividity of the culture, conservation practitioners referred to community-led and participatory design methods, engaging local residents in relevant events, and presenting the conservation project to be inclusive. Places of participation are also well-designed to function as both exhibiting halls of the local culture, and venues conveying relevant activities. Among them, the Shijia *Hutong* Museum is the most well-known site among the public, with a series of exhibitions introducing history and culture of the *lao Beijing* city, and of the *Shijia hutong* where it is located (See Figure 1-6). Titled as "the exhibition hall for local culture, the living room for residents, and the committee room for the community" (BMICPD, 2016, p. 57), the museum is the starting point of heritage conservation there, and currently a significant example when presenting the local conservation works.
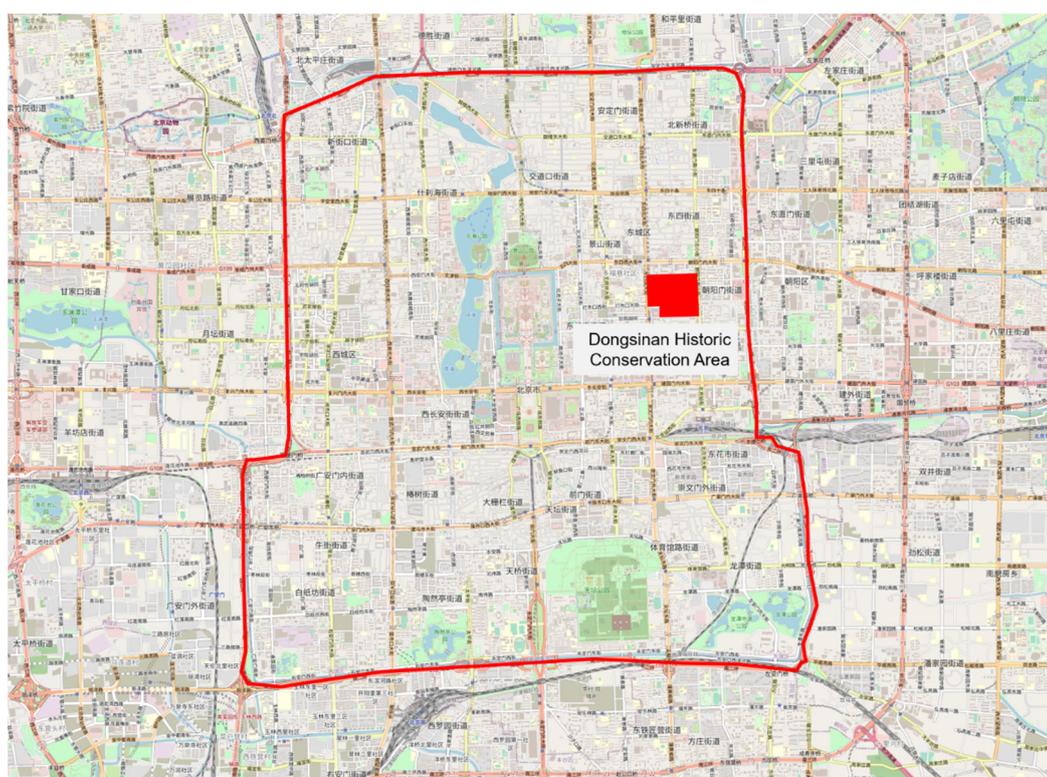
Figure 1-5 Location of the Dongsinan Historic Conservation Area (marked as the red block) in the old city (outlined by red); www.openstreetmap.org owning copyright of the base map
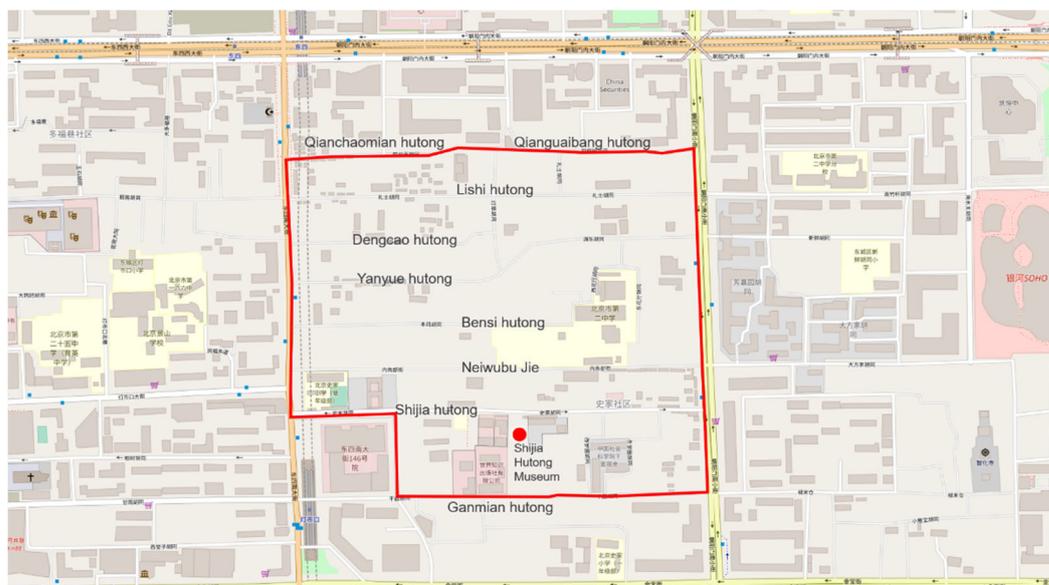
Figure 1-6 The specific area under conservation (outlined by red), with hutong names there and location of the Shijia Hutong Museum (shown by the red spot); www.openstreetmap.org owning copyright of the base map

The site was determined with the following concerns. Firstly, instead of representativeness, the site is chosen in order to promote dialogues between the generalised theories and a specific local practice. As Burawoy (1998) indicates, the extended case study method makes a critical transcendence of the positive science, where a scientific template is always predefined in research, leading to reduction of the cases and losing information during research. Here the practice of heritage conservation – as a trial of the participatory conservation method in Chinese urban historic areas – is conducted by following the legal planning texts and referring to international theories and best practices. In light of this situational practice, it is meaningful to critically examine differences and specificity when being compared with the generalised knowledge, and get the both sides improved. This point of view also leads to the second reason: the site was chosen due to an official tendency to expand participatory heritage conservation, despite of insufficient research into feasibility, methods, ethical concerns, etc. As the Central Government and the State Council declared in *Suggestions on improving protection and inheritance of history and culture in urban and rural development* in 2021, public participation is encouraged in heritage conservation, with institutional design to be developed as soon as possible. Therefore, the site was chosen with a practical concern, showing a present practice hence to provide reflexive suggestions for the urgent works. And thirdly, practically the site is accessible, since the internship was publicly available at that time, and myself kept connection with the team which drew up the planning text for the area.

Based on the site determined for the case study, methods are chosen to answer the research questions. Firstly, **critical discourse analysis** is applied to explain a process in

which the old city of Beijing is valued as a site of cultural heritage deserving well protection, and gets spatially realised by following the AHD in China. Secondly, **ethnographical methods** are used to collect data about residents' practices of social lives in the case study site that is discursively framed. On the basis, qualitative analysis is conducted to interpret how they interact with the AHD in spatial practices, and explain reasons for specific attitudes, practices, and social identities.

As Waterton and Smith elaborate on the Authorised Heritage Discourse, a set of linguistic rules to define "heritage" can dominate public ways of seeing it, and is possible to change, as power relations among multiple heritage discourses can be modified (see Smith, 2006; Smith & Waterton, 2012; Waterton, 2010; Waterton et al., 2006). Since the relevant texts are used in communications all the time, it is necessary to conduct discourse analysis when it comes to social impacts of heritage conservation. In Michel Foucault's thinking, "a discourse is a set of statements that are correlated with each other, among which certain regularities (or rules of appearance, formation, transformation, etc.) obtain" (Lynch, 2015, p.120). Discourses delimit and define what constitutes knowledge, and are carried into effect in the field of exercise of power (p.123-124). To interpret discourses, *discourse analysis* is applied. Furthermore, *critical discourse analysis* is developed in order to understand how specific discourses act to (re)produce social dominance and inequality in the real world, and inspires changes to happen (van Dijk, 1993). Moreover, along with a post-structuralist turn in social sciences paying attentions to performativity of social practices, discourse can no longer be understood within the linguistic range, being *a priori* when discussing society, but is broaden to include language, social practices, and institutions within its domain (Dittmer, 2010). In this way, discourse analysis is applied to understand patterns of social practices where the culturally-specific linguistic rules are embodied. Being used in this case study, discourse analysis is essentially applied to interpret formation of the most popular reading of *lao Beijing,* as a nostalgic narrative for the past lives and landscapes in the old city. Moreover, recognising interactions to happen between the texts and the society, the study involves spatial realisations and residents' social practices of *lao Beijing* into the range of *discourse* for analysis. By inspecting the socially situated discourse, the study can reveal more possibilities of *lao Beijing* than that being approved by the AHD, hence demonstrating a critical position when considering about heritage.

Therefore, to analyse the socially expanded discourse about *lao Beijing*, the study connects the textual discourses to geographical practices by collecting data from on-site social lives. Ethnographic methods were used to record and understand the social process in which the textual forms interact with social patterns of thinking and behaving. According to Crang & Cook (1995), the aim of doing ethnographies is to "understand

parts of the world as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who actually 'live them out'" (p.4). It can uncover the processes and meanings that undergird social spatial life (Herbert, 2000). For the study, ethnographic methods are used to collect social lives in the historic area as data, and let *culture*, as a particular way of the inhabitants' lives (Williams, 2002), emerging there so as to be capable of discourse analysis. It is significant to the study especially when considering about being critical, since alternatives to the AHD of *lao Beijing* are kept in the social lives, but they need to be translated for higher public accessibility and the subsequent reflexive discussions on such basis. Ethnographic methods act effectively in such works of translation. Therefore, overall, the study applies critical discourse analysis, but *discourse* there is embracive in view of active agents' performative social practices that can modify textual discourses. In this way, ethnography is applied to translate the practices as textually expressive, hence to make the comprehensive discourse analysis feasible.

In practice, discourse analysis is conducted in two aspects. Firstly, textual materials and corresponding physical representations are examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context where the AHD of *lao Beijing* dominates[9]. Secondly, inhabitants' social practices that employ the AHD are collected as data by using ethnographic methods, and are transcribed for analysis together with the textual outcomes. Critically, more narratives about *lao Beijing* than those in the AHD, with inhabitants' embodied practices within the themed context, is to be uncovered by the analyses. For the materials to collect, textual materials refer to official documents and public medias that frame the *lao Beijing* city, including 1) policy papers in different government levels showing a general socio-political context, and specific about historic conservation, with criteria of value identification and ways of implementation; 2) reports from the mass media and multi-media publications related to the *lao Beijing* cultural icon and the local ways of presentation, including both traditional and new types of medias collaborating to construct a discursive environment for the culture to get established locally. In addition, since building materials are prioritised in the AHD as objects for appreciation and conservation (Smith & Waterton, 2012), physical representations of the textual discourses are involved in the analysis of the case study site, including 1) building patterns that are valued and conserved, with multiple ways of emphasising the attached heritage value; 2) public activities that are supported to be held in the conserved spaces, and ways of presenting to the public. Based on the analyses, the context in which the AHD of *lao Beijing* becomes dominant in place framing, and gets embodied practiced, is clarified.

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[9] List of the materials is attached as the Appendix I after the thesis.

As argued above, in addition to the textual and architectural languages, discourse also involves social practices that embody and enact them. For this aspect, ethnographic methods including participatory observation and interview are applied to record and interpret inhabitants' practices of dwelling and neighbouring, and their attitudes towards the discursively constructed space where they live. Here, I narrow down to focus on those long-term residents, being regarded as "*lao Beijingers*" in accord with the cultural label on the old city. For them, a cultural uniqueness is valued and often constituted with elder appearances, the local accent, long-term dwelling experiences, and a neighbouring status in proximity with close relations with neighbours. However, meanwhile they are also ordinary citizens of the modern state in pursuit of modernisation and development. Being situated in the social context, *lao Beijingers* inevitably live modern features with desires for a modern lifestyle, which are common but entangle with the cultural features. Using the ethnographic methods for data collection and analysis, the study reveals such complexity and dynamic of the social group from their embodied practices, which represent the *lao Beijing* culture more than those being recorded within the AHD.

Concretely, **participatory observation** and **interview** were taken to collect the data through fieldwork. The former, as a method entailing descriptions and reflections upon embodied experiences and intersubjective interactions (Watson & Till, 2010), was conducted to collect data about *status quo* of the local social lives, including residents' practices of neighbouring, public space using, activity participating, etc., and their attitudes towards everyday life in such historic conservation area. Fieldwork was undertaken mainly between September 2018 and March 2019, with myself situated in the society and participating everyday social lives, in order to understand what has been observed. By renting a room in a courtyard, and doing internship in the Shijia Hutong Museum, I took multiple roles that are situated in the site during the fieldwork – as a researcher, an inhabitant, and a conservation practitioner – in order to form situated knowledges, and to avoid biased or generalised understandings that might reduce the case. As a tenant, I experienced living and neighbouring inside the conservation area. As a conservation practitioner, I interned in a community museum and participated in the organisation of activities and daily opening management, and discovered how local culture was understood and applied in the culturally defined public venue by the practitioner team, with participants' corresponding responses and practices. The experiences, observations, and thoughts collected from the fieldwork were transcribed and arranged by myself, as a socially situated researcher, to enable constant dialogues with pre-existing theories. In this way, I could keep reflexive when collecting and organising data during the fieldwork, as well as when referring to the pre-existing theories that were made elsewhere. This method allows reflections on both theories and practices by creating

dialogues in between. On this basis, the thesis could contribute to the both sides, and become a reference for conservation practitioners when thinking about heritage socially.

Furthermore, to understand what has been observed, I made interviews with local people, inviting them to the research and co-producing narratives about lives in the conservation area. As scholars argue, interview is an interpretive method delivering collaborative processes between interviewers and interviewees to construct ideas about specific issues in the corresponding social contexts (Collins, 1998; Corbin & Morse, 2003; McDowell, 2010). During the fieldwork, in addition to traditional interviews for the facts that were required to answer my pre-supposed questions, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were taken to create situations where interviewees could have control over the contents and structures of their narratives about local social living. Specifically, short interviews were made along with the participatory observation to get residents' immediate and brief comments to some practices or phenomena. They could start from random talks with residents whom I encountered in the local public spaces, and were repeated later for making general senses about the observed issues. On the basis, long interviews were arranged with some individuals who showed interests in the given themes, in order to get comprehensive information that could help explain reasons for the general attitudes and practices as were observed. Specifically, long interviews were taken towards 35 residents, 4 local officers (including one officer from the Subdistrict Office and three Directors of the Residential Committees), 7 conservation practitioners (including 3 urban planners from the municipal planning team and 4 practitioners working on site), and 5 shop runners or vendors[10]. Comparing to more than 12,000 residents, the number of interviewees looks inadequate of representativeness. However, as Small (2009) reveals that biases always exist in sampling, it is problematic to validate representativeness by increasing the sample numbers. Instead, the alternative approaches calling for "logical rather than statistical inference, for case rather than sample-based logic, for saturation rather than representation as the stated aims of research" (p. 28), are taken in the study, trying to explain the AHD dominance formation by situating it in personal social lives inside. The works were completed by regarding the interviewees as cases rather than samples, and modifying my questions in the sequential interviews, in accord with my gradually updated knowledge about the neighbourhood from the process. In this way, the research questions get answered based on deep and comprehensive understandings about the cases, rather than in a generalised way.

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[10] Appendix II provides brief information about some of the interviewees whom are repetitively mentioned in the thesis for convenience of reading.

For the specific context, life history interview was taken in order to reveal memories and narratives attached to the living circumstances, as critical alternatives to the dominant ones supported by the AHD. Regarding the life history interviewing as an interpretive process (Jackson & Russell, 2010), I took the method in order to diversify narratives about local culture and history which are emphasised but meanwhile are partially represented by the AHD, and to elicit narrators' consciousnesses of subjectivity when constructing personal versions of the local past. What needs to be mentioned here is that life history interviewing had not been a significant part in my fieldwork design. However, the theme was reiterated by different interviewees to support their opinions about the ongoing social lives. Respecting residents' retrospective ways when thinking about the present, I took it as an important method for data collection and analysis. To complete the long interviews, I repeatedly interviewed 12 residents about their personal life histories, in order to understand the personal processes and reasons to form the common living patterns and attitudes as observed. The method contributes to the way of writing the empirical chapters about everyday life (Chapters 6, 7, 8). In each chapter, general descriptions of common living patterns are provided ahead, and are followed by individual practices and attitudes in everyday lives. In this way of argumentation, elucidation of personal dwelling in the conservation area can contribute to understand the local common living patterns, which are regarded as culturally unique and deserve appreciation in the realm of the AHD.

In general, by doing critical discourse analysis, especially by expanding the "discourse" to include material and social manifestations, the thesis provides a method to understand social impacts of heritage conservation from a perspective that challenges the AHD in China, which still prioritises historic landscapes with visual aesthetic practices. By doing the ethnographic fieldwork, I set the narratives and spatial realisations of the AHD in residents' everyday lives, collected data on interactive practices happening in between, in order to figure out the alternative discourses by which the residents embodied their cultural features in everyday lives inside the officially designated "living museum of the *lao Beijing* culture". In this way, social impacts from conservation implementation can be elucidated from an everyday perspective, in which heritage conservation is a significant component, instead of a superior discourse that can dominate everyday life.

Ethical issues are considered in several aspects. Firstly, concerning for the ethnographic methods taken there, I kept reflexive for my roles during the fieldwork. As a doctoral student in the U.K, meanwhile a female Chinese growing up in Beijing though outside the old city, I could access the local groups in an innocent look and get their trusts. Nonetheless, this facility also reminded me to be self-reflexive when considering about translating and presenting the data to the public. With the concern, during the fieldwork, self-introduction was a routine for me when encountering unfamiliar residents, officers,

and conservation practitioners, with my academic role and researching aims repeated. By this way, I would like to show my sincerity and respects for the ongoing works and social lives there, meanwhile to remind myself to keep professional when doing the research, instead of getting immersed into empathetic moments due to my similar cultural background with the locals. Furthermore, such international academic background, with a critical tone in my thesis, might cause the interviewees' defensiveness in the current Chinese political-cultural context where civil nationalism is intensified by the increasingly popular and clear distinction between China and the rest of the world (will be discussed in Chapter 3). Being situated in the current globalised world where international power relations can influence intersubjective judgements happening in a neighbourhood, I tried to change such prejudice by performing sincerity and building up friendship with residents in everyday interactions, in order to gain trusts from them.

Secondly, I required consents from the interviewees gently in consideration of their few experiences to be interviewed, and the local power relations between residents and officers. For the residents as ordinary urban citizens, most of them have never participated in public discussions, neither have they been interviewees. When being requested for written consents to get the information used in the thesis, some of them appeared to be confused. For the situation, I tried to orally explain the research in a plain way, and clarify possible consequences if the information was translated in the thesis and got accessible to the public when it was published. Furthermore, as I tried to ask for residents' written consents, some seemed reluctant to leave signatures although they still allowed me to use the data. In this situation, on the premise that I clarified my role as a researcher, my purposes and ways of using the information relevant to them, and possible consequences after the thesis publication, consents were requested orally. Moreover, for individuals who were not willing to be interviewed, considering that unfamiliarity of such research works might become an obstacle, I tried to persuade them with respects for individual choices in priority. Finally, two interviewees agreed to participate after communication and did not make refusals during the interviews.

The third concern is to protect residents' privacy, and to keep their everyday life as usual after they showed up in the thesis. As *lao Beijingers*, they are long-term dwellers in the neighbourhood thus would be easily recognised by acquaintances, including neighbours, local officers and conservation practitioners when appearing in the thesis with identity information mentioned. Behaviours and words from them are taken to serve my arguments in the thesis, which is sometimes in a critical tone on the ongoing conservation works, therefore may not sound so pleasant to someone relevant if being seen. Besides, in this condition where public attentions are mostly paid to historic buildings and landscapes, residents' voices about their everyday life are rarely visible in public sphere, thus higher

visibility for them, like to reveal what has always been overlooked in the thesis, might bring trouble to their local lives. Facing the situation, I asked participants if they need to be anonymous when being mentioned in the thesis. Similar to their unfamiliarity to the consent request process, this inquiry was also strange for them with some replying with ambiguity and hesitation. For this situation, except for the residents who agreed with certainty, in the thesis the rest of interviewees were mentioned by using pseudonymous names, with identity information exposed as little as possible in order to reduce possible troubles brought to their ongoing social lives. In addition, some residents' faces are exposed in the photos which I posted here to serve argumentation, leaving a risk of being recognised if someone's critiques or complaints are referred in the thesis. To protect the critical individuals, I just posted the photos from those who agreed to keep their identities overt, after asking them for using permissions in the thesis.

In addition to the concerns taken from the individual perspectives, I regarded residents' public practices as commonly accessible, as what they have approved to be proper and visible when performing public roles, therefore to make records and translate them in the thesis without consent requests. Practically, it was also impossible to ask for permissions from everyone appearing in public venues. To minimise possible impacts, I made the relevant descriptions by treating them as indistinguishable public individuals without any personal features mentioned, and to avoid implying their personal identities. In addition, several photos recording the public scenes, with some residents inevitably captured, are posted in the thesis. I put mosaics on their faces to anonymise them with the consideration of privacy protection.

1.3.   The map of the thesis

Adopting the everyday perspective to critically examine impacts from heritage conservation in a residential neighbourhood, the thesis arranges empirical findings and corresponding analyses in two main parts, and answer the research questions respectively. Firstly, the research question inquiring formation of the AHD of *lao Beijing* is responded by doing critical discourse analysis on the popular narratives about the *lao Beijing* culture, ways of spatial realisation in heritage conservation, and institutional mechanisms that guarantee local implementation. Secondly, the other question about residents' relationship with the old city is answered by the analyses on their practices of the local social lives, as empirical data collected from the ethnographic fieldwork, including their public behaviours, their narratives about the past and present local lives, and physical manifestations of the dwelling history. An introduction part including a theoretical foundation establishment, and an ending part are set in the front and behind respectively.

The thesis is organised in nine Chapters. Following the first Chapter as where we are,

introduces, Chapter 2 builds up a theoretical foundation. By reviewing theories in placemaking studies, critical heritage studies, and everyday studies, I set up an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation, based on which impacts from a coalition between placemaking and heritage conservation on the neighbourhood social lives can be articulated, by referring to the subjects who practice the lives and are potentially constructive in heritage conservation. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 constitute the first main part. Chapter 3 introduces a general background in which the cultural heritage concept is widely recognised among the public, and the conservation practices get implemented across the country. Historically, Chinese traditions and pasts have been mobilised in cultural governing strategies in plural periods, and contemporarily are praised for boosting national cohesion and confidence, raising popular enthusiasm for the national past. Meanwhile, in the contemporary urban China, a consumer society is burgeoning with the consciousness to pursue for and present individuality raised among the masses. They both contribute a context where the AHD is popular and welcomed. Chapter 4 narrows down to Beijing, and analyses the process in which *lao Beijing* is made and gets popular, and is tightly linked to the old city. It causes the place image, as a chronotope of the local past, to be established, therefore legitimating the AHD to dominate the old city. Chapter 5 illustrates the realisation of the discourse in the case study site. By explaining the specific conservation strategies to represent the neighbourhood as "a living museum of the old Beijing", this chapter shows how ideological links between the past and the present, between the state and individuals are created and delivered to the public. Meanwhile, variety of residents' personal impressions on "*lao Beijing*" is put forward. Though sharing a similar nostalgic tone, residents cherish the *lao Beijing* more than what is emphasised in the conservation works.

This discrepancy opens the next main part focusing on residents' practices of social lives in the neighbourhood. Chapter 6 offers an overview on social networks and intersubjective relations there, laying a foundation for the following analyses of residents' practices. In this study, organisational legacies from social institutions in the early socialist period[11] and social mobility that has been increased after the economic reforms intertwine in local social life. It results in subtle and defensive intersubjective relationships that leave room for power from the state to intervene. Here heritage conservation is implemented by following the local power relations, hence contributing to reinforce the current social

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[11] In this thesis, I use "the early socialist period" to refer to the era after the PRC establishment in 1949 and before the economic reforms in 1978, when the state was carrying out the planned economy based on the state and public ownership institution. The period before the PRC establishment under the rule of the Republican government (1912-1949) is called "the Republican era" in the thesis, and the period after the economic reforms until now (1978-) is called "the post-reform era".

networks and the ways to maintain them. On the social basis, Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrate how the residents practice local lives by referring to two aspects of social living. Chapter 7 explores how they build up sense of being home by "neighbouring in courtyards". In this process, personal spatial practices for making home are met with a standard spatial pattern being set for courtyards, with corresponding behavioural rules to help maintain the culturally meaningful pattern. As a result, senses of home and host identities are always being established in dynamic relations with such spatial restrictions, as well as with neighbours who practice differently in the same pursuits. Chapter 8 investigates residents' practices in public spaces outside the courtyards, including *hutong* spaces and local cultural venues. They are bio-politically effective to the public, since the goal of cultural message transmission in heritage conservation, along with a state project for the mass civilisation, can be achieved there by delivering civilised and cultural implications in spatial arrangements. For residents, some of their practices there continue what they have been used to in the long-term local residence, but become unwelcomed elements and are excluded by the present spatial discourses. Nonetheless, they are still able to keep their living habits, resulting in resistance to the changes that are supposed to happen following the spatial arrangements. Finally, an epilogue provides summaries of the thesis and directs possible discussions and works. Based on the empirical writings and analyses coming along from the everyday perspective, reflections are made onto nature of the *lao Beijing* culture and its connection with the old city, with discussions on difficulties as well as possibilities to make improvements in the residential neighbourhood conservation, where an established residential society is much more complex than what is hypothesised in the heritage theoretical system.

By setting the AHD in a specific social context, and examining it as a component of everyday life in reality, the thesis provides residents' perspectives other than that from the AHD to learn about its social impacts. It is accomplished by exploring how such conceptual construction, as having been spatially realised and widely recognised among the public, is understood and applied by the space users. The shift is made to challenge a common uncritical appreciation of such living heritage sites: For a residential neighbourhood undergoing heritage conservation, it is hard to make clear dichotomies between the new things that are introduced and the old things that are remained, between what has been preserved and what has been erased, and between what is exhibited and what is hidden behind. Appreciation of such sites has been popularised to embrace the mundane beauty, with the potential audience enlarged to include local residents. Such popularisation of cultural heritage blurs the boundary between the extraordinariness and the ordinariness. This situation sets the residents to a precarious status by emphasising that their place-based identities are culturally unique, yet interpreting the culture in

another way, which dominate how the spaces and cultural narratives are framed. By critically examining the relationship between the AHD and the residents, the study explains the dilemmas that residents are faced with, and provides a reference for readers when thinking about solutions to the conflicts between heritage conservation and people's practices of lives therein.

In the next Chapter, the study will be unfolded by reviews on relevant literature, providing a general overview on the pre-existing studies and the *status quo* of cultural heritage conservation in a Chinese context. Whereafter, an argumentation of applying the everyday approach to examine relation between the heritage discourse and inhabitants of the conserved space is made, with possible theoretical contribution of the thesis clarified, hence to establish a theoretical foundation for the study.

Chapter 2.   Theoretical discussions and literature review

The Chapter will review literature about place making, critical heritage studies, and everyday life studies to build up the theoretical foundation for the thesis. Firstly, critical studies about AHD are reviewed to support the general standpoint of the thesis when thinking about the officially designated heritage and local conservation practices, and inspire possible perspectives to conduct the thesis. Secondly, since heritage conservation is popularly implemented to frame *places* that represent localities by emphasising specific cultural meanings, studies about the term "place making" are examined. By this term, the thesis connects critical heritage studies with urban geographies for better understanding how heritage conservation affects ongoing urban social lives in the real world. Thirdly, an everyday perspective is defended to theoretically build up the thesis, with the theories from several key scholars reviewed. In each part, I also examine the pre-existing studies in urban China, and think about applicability when localising them in this specific context. Based on the literature review, the research gaps and hence the meaning of the research are clarified.

2.1. The Authorised Heritage Discourse and critical heritage studies

2.1.1.   International literature

L. Smith & Waterton (2012) apply critical discourse analysis to examine heritage as a concept which has become common sense and an authority. The discourse formation is traced back to the 19th-century architectural conservation debates in Europe, the utility and significant of which got underlined in the social changes after the rise of nationalism and industrial revolution. In the context, public heritages started to get commonly appreciated to comfort people's sense of disconnection with the national past, and were appealed for preservation in order to save the collective memories by maintaining the storages. Afterwards, the discourse got officially authorised by legislation, which made the legitimacy of the discourse self-referential, since the dominant class, which were able to meld specific values into narratives about heritages, held the power to remake and reassert them. As a result, the Authorised Heritage Discourse referring to the continuous social construction, becomes "a dominant way of thinking about, writing and talking about, and defining heritage", as well as "constitutive of the practices of heritage" (L. Smith & Waterton, 2012, p.4). On this self-referential basis, the discourse is hegemonic to embrace anything old and produce representations by following its narrative structure, therefore resulting in homogeneous cultural representations in different geographical scales. Ranging from the UNESCO heritage value to cultural uniqueness of some locality, the AHD plays a significant role to link these value systems with physical entities, thus to

transform old constructions to be expressive, narrating corresponding history and culture in specific orders, while simultaneously excludes cultural multiplicity and conflicts happening along with the AHD representation (D'Eramo, 2014). Especially, with expansion of this discursive system, heritage sites can be established by involving residential settlements, therefore being influential to local social lives, with possibilities to cause unequal power distribution among stakeholders to define and use the space. Being faced with the condition, scholars apply the concept *community* to explain or help solve such issues in the heritage spatial realisation, and eventually to reach an ideal that the spatial interventions are beneficial for both heritage fans and local communities. However, using community as a perfect solution without discussing its feasibility in specific contexts would lead to misrecognitions of communities that are socially practiced out, misrepresentations of local identities, and consequently barriers to recognising the social impacts of doing heritage conservation (Waterton & Smith, 2010). The critical examinations of the AHD explain its mechanism to powerfully represent localities. As a result, other spatial practices are marginalised, or to be involved into the discursive system and get gradually modified. This homogenising power lays a foundation for understanding and using local histories and cultures via symbols, and the massive communication and transmission contribute to heritage industrialisation, as what is happening globally, but in need of critical examinations due to the hegemonic power detected within the discourse.

To conduct heritage studies *critically* means continuing to advance the approach that "is bringing a critical perspective to bear upon the socio-political complexities that enmesh heritage; tackling the thorny issues those in the conservation profession are often reluctant to acknowledge", and "recognising there are critical challenges and benefits related to the safeguarding of culture and the preservation of heritage itself" (T. Winter, 2013, p.533). Waterton & Watson (2013) appeal for a *critical imagination* for heritage studies, as "an approach that pays due respect to – and draws from – a number of disciplinary sources of theory" (p.547). This critical standpoint in heritage studies encourages to regard heritage as a cultural process rather than an objective physical artifact or record (Harvey, 2001), therein multiple groups of people are involved to make and keep it. Taking a critical perspective, I would like to situate the AHD in a collaborative context, and refer to theories that help explain the legitimacy that is commonly established among the public, in order to build up a foundation for analysing the popularity of AHD in China.

Studies that explain the legitimacy of old materials as embodiments of history are conducted from different perspectives. Nora's (1996) "lieux de mémoire" (realm of memory) theory provides a pattern to explain formation of nationality with individuals' significant participation by memory making. This is put forward due to Nora's awareness

of the shrinking "milieux de mémoire" where memory is still a real part of everyday experience. In "lieux de mémoire", memory, which has experienced remanufacturing in complex social transformations, becomes a personal belonging after conscious practices of owning, and could be applied in self-identity confirmation. This practice of "rememoration" of history (p.XXIV) that remoulds the past in the present socio-political context is captured by Nora in the postwar France where "the universalistic principles underlying republican memory and the humanism associated with it had come undone". The synthesis of the state and the nation was broken down and replaced by the new state-society pair in 1930s France (p.5). Social memory formed in the context where centralised national narratives were doubted. Instead, further reflections on historiographical writing were not only made by historians, but also practiced by government and the masses, leading to further intertwining and permeation between history and memory. As a result, "memory would now take shape in divided and competing spheres of political influence; it would make the republican values of cohesion associated with the universal principles of Enlightenment thought no longer capable of creating true consensus". The "lieux de mémoire" becomes a new constellation where collective memory has been divided into smaller configurations or identities that contribute to embody "Frenchness", a commonly recognised symbol that has been available of personalised understandings and representations. In this way, the centralised narrative is deconstructed, resulting in self-evidence of memories that are personally possessed hence could be personally modified and explained. It leads to obsessions of the past within the "lieux de mémoire" even harder to be broken.

What's more, practices of maintaining local traditions could further help strengthen credibility of memories, albeit with memories and histories being made and modified constantly in this process. Tradition, as "the memory that has become historically aware of itself", is a specific way of maintaining the past in the present practices, and is commonly applied by communities for maintaining collective histories (Nora & Kritzman, 1997, p. i). By putting "permanent metamorphosis onto perpetual sedimentation of new meanings" (p. xi), tradition is practiced in infinite regressions with narratives and entities being constructed continuously to prove previous representations of itself.

Due to this creational feature, it has been radically criticised as "invention" "of a novel type" for "quite novel purposes" by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983, p.6). In this critique, old materials are applied for new purposes since the old ways of using the things "are deliberately not used or adapted" in social reforms, but are replaced with newly invented practices (p.8). Comparing to customs which are open to innovations that are compatible with social precedents, tradition is a consciously established order in which fragments from the past and customs in everyday use are collected and rearranged. As a

result, tradition effectively connects suitable pasts with the present. From a critical concern, at a moment of the modern society that is dominated by the consuming logic and is globally connected, this rearrangement of local history could be applied as a label by modern people for some social groups whose communal practices are regarded as distinguished from those in the modern world (Bestor, 1989; Rajah, 1999), and creates an "aura" which often hovers around community activities (Bestor, 1989, p.126). Furthermore, neo-traditional practices in the contemporary society being associated with "the public life of the citizen" could also work in recognising individual's membership of states, therefore to link practices at local levels with grand narratives and to make tradition politically meaningful (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p.11).

In spite of the critical views, it is also argued that tradition is a source for forming and keeping community identities, which are desired in the current highly fluid society. Despite of the fact that tradition is invented, in following practices tradition could be constantly assumed, purified, with contents being selected (Talib, 1999). It implies a self-revision mechanism in long-term practices, wherein tradition could always be a resource for community self-ensuring with effective social ties to be built up and collective memories to be re-impregnated, hence to provide a sense of stability when facing a transformative and fluid society (Redepenning, 2012). In this process, memory is both a representation of what is told and representational at producing new things based on personal experiences. Materiality is intertwined with memory, which gets different representations based on material features, and they mutually renew and get renewed in people's practices situated in diverse social contexts with a high social fluidity (Schlunke, 2013).

Based on the mechanisms that enable the past to be captured and presented at the present, tradition and modernisation are no more irreconcilable oppositions, but can be united, with a dialectic relation established in heritage conservation. To be specific, remains from the past are attached with orderly arranged narrations that orient to specific history and culture, with relative human activities being culturally valued, and get integrally maintained. In addition, new relations between the old things and the present society are in need to satisfy people's updated needs in modern life, especially to confirm modern social identities, like citizenship (Crang & Tolia-Kelly, 2010; Tolia-Kelly, 2004). As a result, *adaptive reuse* is taken as a moderate approach to implement heritage conservation by transforming usage of heritage buildings to fit modern needs, and situating the historical and cultural narratives in the modern world properly (Plevoets & van Cleempoel, 2019, p.23). Here the mainstream technique of protecting and representing heritages, as well as the most popular way of getting socially connected, determines how people get linked with the heritages. Respectively, the visual-centric

material restoration still dominates ways of historic conservation, and consumer is the most popular and convenient role to practice when facing heritages in the capitalised modern society. However, from a critical perspective, the consumable unification between tradition and modernisation can be problematic, since it is able to produce hegemonic narratives about the past meanwhile gets public endorsement. For conservation practitioners, the artificial works of old building renovation incarnate the *past* that is remade, altered, and invented by and to fit the present (Lowenthal, 1998). For people as consumers, such given past, which has been fabricated to fit their needs, is important to legitimise their roles as heirs to it. Via consumption, the self-identity gets proved by the collective sense of possession, along with individual freedom to "decide for themselves what they are going to do with the past, what it means for them now and what it may mean for them in the future" (Lowenthal, 1998 p.19). Therefore, it is not enough to just unify tradition and modernisation in the present representation of the past. A mechanism that proves heritages as certificates of authenticity has been established based on the conspiracy, regardless of the practices that *de facto* reiterate and reinforce some communal identity. It may create hegemony of identity, which needs reflection and examination.

In this process of self-definition, aesthetic interests in the heritages dominate people's ways of seeing them, thus contributing to legitimise hegemony of the AHD when defining geographical space. Dovey & King (2012) study about aestheticization of specific urban living scenes (here as slums) from photographers' perspective. Framed by the aesthetics of beauty and the sublime, they turn the lens at scenes of urban poverty by taking them picturesque with elements of nostalgia, and meanwhile urban spectacles revealing the shocking reals. The aesthetic appreciation is practiced in quest of authenticity, which, from a critical perspective, "is most often used as an elitist category of aesthetic judgment" (Zukin, 2009, p.544). Duncan & Duncan (2001) explain it as popularisation of elites' rules of seeing. In this process, aesthetic judgement is "lawfulness without a law", following a hegemonic value system that was established catering to the dominant class's interests, and has been "naturalised and universalised to the point of being seen as coincident with the interests of all classes" (p. 392). The dominant aesthetic codes contribute to obscure the class relations when people appreciate urban landscapes. What's more, the materiality of landscapes makes them appear neutral, "as mere traces of history" therefore objectifying what they represent (Mills, 2011, p.190). As we observers normally take the narratives embedded in landscapes for granted, we rarely interrogate how they are produced, hence obscuring the formation process loaded with politics of visibility. As a result, by aesthetically viewing urban landscapes, one may ignore the existence of inequality among social groups when defining the embedded narratives and ways of use. Especially, in an individualist era when the grand national narration can be individually

interpreted, cherished, and appreciated, this inequality is not challenged, and even to be left behind, thus possible to get enlarged in constant social reproduction of the discourse. Therefore, being faced with this condition, it should be pointed out that when being situated in the places designed to deliver the cultural goods for consumption, one's fascination in the aesthetic consumptions can deviate the attention from other spatial practices, which get further marginalised by the mass neglect.

2.1.2. Critical heritage studies in urban China

In urban China, a "heritage turn" that can be dated to the 1980s started local conservation practices, with both types and numbers of the officially designated heritage sites expanding in the following decades. The efforts paid to protect and interpret the cultural relics by the state are argued to rebuild moral values and to cultivate shared national identity after the 1980s economic reforms, which brought challenges to the Communist ideology and legitimacy of the CPC's leading role in state governance (Ludwig & Waltori, 2020, p.25). The supports from the state legitimate and stimulate local heritage practices, which are combined with local needs for development. As a result, heritage sites can be selected, and partially represented as consumable tourist sites for economic and political purposes. In the process, rights of decision making could be unequally distributed among stakeholders, requiring critical studies to examine the issues for improvements.

Svensson & Maags (2018) have argued that "the critical heritage studies approach is well suited and attuned to China studies since scholars have long engaged in critical studies of [CPC] ideology, cultural policies, and the fragmented nature of the Chinese political system" (p. 14). In other words, there has formed a foundation of the critical heritage studies by the analyses from the political perspective. For example, Perry (2013) criticises a mode of cultural governance in China. Cultural multiplicity, which manifests the cultural differentiation among regions and ethnic groups, is recognised and used by the Party-state to legitimate the national revival project, with its supreme leading position. In this mode, citizens' national identities are integrated into the unified cultural discourse of "Chineseness". The question about "who we are" can be answered by this discourse that is able to be locally incarnated. Here heritage can be used to reach the aim. In this way, the answers are made by the narratives about local histories and cultures, which are physically represented as authentic, while all point to the unified cultural discourse about "Chineseness" (Currier, 2008; Sofield et al., 2017; J. Zhang, 2015).

Based on the applicability, some studies have explored the AHD in the Chinese context, and applied the critical approach to examine it. Some studies explore the Chinese AHD – the specific discourses that can represent the heritage authenticity. For example,

Su (2021) illustrates difficulties to integrate authenticity and Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritages by reviewing the historical complicated relations in between, and discusses possibilities and difficulties to reconceptualise authenticity in this context. Z. Wu & Qin (2016) defend for an intangible "sense of place" as an alternative form of heritage when evaluating the Cemetery of Confucius from the descendants' perspective. Yan (2015) takes a critical tone to examine the Chinese harmony discourse in local heritage conservation, and concludes that although it distinguishes from the western AHD, it empowers government by providing a single narrative for the site's value, while it ignores local voices and capability. In addition, some take the Western AHD as an intervention to local societies, and keeps a critical tone by revealing alternative cultural discourses to the AHD. For instance, M. Zhang & Lenzer (2020) point out limitation of the existing hegemonic conservation approaches, which are highly framed by the AHD, to bring out the unique values of the Grand Canal. Hou & Wu (2017) apply multi-discursive ethnography to challenge the AHD from the West and "simultaneously promote pertinent local voices and deep- rooted cultural language for multi-discursive dialogue" (p. 73). What persists among the studies is a division between the West and China, with an implication that China should own a set of AHD that distinguishes from the West version. However, as Ludwig & Waltori (2020) argue, the application of the AHD in China is complex due to the cultural differentiation among regions and ethnic groups. The over-emphasis of the "Chineseness" when localising the AHD may lead to a dangerous trend in heritage practices by creating an even more hegemonic discourse (Yan, 2015). Tensions in local social relations, and inequality in power distribution among stakeholders when making decisions in local heritage practices, deserve sustained attentions.

In general, by the reviewed literature, I explain the AHD as a modern way of representing the past based on material maintenance, and the mechanisms by which it gets legitimacy among the public in the contemporary world. The dominance of AHD in conservation practices directs specific knowledge production, which powerfully arranges the way of seeing and understanding heritage sites. However, meanwhile other social knowledge can be reproduced as long as the corresponding social practices can survive despite of precarity. The unequal visibility is hard to solve by modifying the AHD *per se* without changes happening in power relations when practicing heritage conservation. When applying the AHD in the urban China context, such trouble persists, since the nationalist trials to define a Chinese AHD still fall shorts of improving heritage practices for justice. Hence, there is still a need for critical heritage studies in the context, reflecting on the AHD meanwhile the social practices which enact its hegemony in the real world.

2.2. Urban place and placemaking

2.2.1. Multiple perspectives to understand place and placemaking

As implied above, heritage conservation is embedded in social processes, among which placemaking gets internationally popular and frames local space. It is argued that the global interests in place rise in the face of "placelessness" – a kind of rootless sense when one dwells in the world (Friedmann, 2010). From the perspective of experience, places are centres of felt value. "When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place." (Tuan, 1979, p.73) Features of the two concepts get constructed and emphasised in the prevailing dichotomy, in which the meaningful and stable place is recognised in opposite to the meaningless and abstract space (Massey, 2005). Massey (1994) challenges it by arguing that place is an imagination "constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations" (p.154). In other words, places are argued to be open, fluid, and multiple as well. However, in the present world where inter-city competitions continue in both global and domestic scales with the support of globalised capital flows, the conventional place images can be used in top-down planned placemaking, to brand cities for more attentions and investments, therefore to form better conditions for urban development (Friedmann, 2010). This place spatialisation may obliterate possibilities for other places, by which individuals and social groups imprint the felt values on the urban space. Examining the concept place and the social process of placemaking helps understand the context where heritage conservation can be legitimised and get commonly recognised.

There has been a world-wide practice to understand space in a cultural mode, discovering space both from historical and geographical perspectives for a full view of what's happened and what's happening, and to transform *space* to be *place* with discourses and meanings attached, as a recognisable object available of making subjective connections. This trend has been explained as a result from modernisation and globalisation in which the world is inevitably connected and standardised. From the perspective of tourist study, tourists' practices of discovering places are contextualised in the widely connected and time-space compressed world, where specific time for leisure is fixed, and sensitivity of geographical difference gets enhanced. For tourists, the way of sensing places is by sightseeing at different destinations in leisure time. Here tourism consumption is also productive, with personal experiences and memories created and kept in photos and videos as "mental souvenirs" in the help of technology (Urry, 1995, p. 20-23, 190). From a sociological perspective, such consuming practices on places that are certainly narrated and depicted illustrates a common requirement for psychological security among modern people, whose social relations are disembedded from local contexts and get rearticulated with new social trust mechanism established in the present widely connected world (Giddens, 1991). For individuals, place is taken as a ruse to face

the uncertainties. By transforming space to place with personal readings attached, one can get the sense of certainty, as a way of getting socially re-embedded but with extra initiatives to do that.

When the personal place making is popular and becomes a common request among the masses, a place can be a resource for a group of people to make communal identities based on features that are commonly recognised. As a result, locality, as a place or region of sub-national spatial scale (Painter, 2009), could be portrayed more than a geographical location, being attached with cultural distinctions by which communal identities could be made and get constantly confirmed. From an ethnographical perspective, locality is embodied in community practices of existence which could be tied with geographical features emotionally (Appadurai, 1995; Reily & Brucher, 2018). However, in the contemporary capitalised world where such desire for settling down could be temporarily satisfied by consuming practices, locality could be an industrial product that is accessible by the wide public via visual consumption rather than embedded practices (Urry, 1995, p.20). Moreover, depiction of localities as stable and bounded places is a response to the desire for safety and home when facing the higher openness and connectivity of the localities (Massey, 1995). The desires can be achieved by setting up boundaries to separate "us" from "others" with self-identities established, although the communal sense and link could be temporary, fluid, and multiple (Hincrichs, 2003; M. Winter, 2003; Yin & Qian, 2020).

When such need is placed in a society where a consuming logic is guaranteed by affluent commodities and a high degree of social labour division in everyday social lives, the sense of home can be owned by consuming places. Catering to the needs, places can be produced in cultural industries, in which a large number of cultures get symbolically used, commodified and propagated in the same production cycle (Kong, 2014). The industrial production of places can reinforce the home and stable features by theming, which programmes consumers' ways of seeing and using space while contributes to marginalising other spatial practices. In consumers' repetitive practices of consuming the places, the features can be naturalised, especially by comparing with the everyday circumstances which are meaningless but full of uncertainty (Dovey, 2010, p.4). However, as Massey (2005) ruminates about the division between space and place, the latter is a specific spatial identity rather than an opposite to the former. Space is "the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality" (p. 31). The sense of place derives from negotiations of relations within the multiplicities, and practices of placemaking can meanwhile influence the process. This view implies heterogeneity existing in the themed places regardless of the onefold features as represented, and possibilities to change the static place image by challenging domination

of the consuming logic in spatial relations.

As a result, ways of making place also vary, since the agents who enact the "contemporaneous plurality" can imprint their respective worldviews in different ways. Lew (2017) broadly summarises the studies as two ends on a continuum of place making ideas, theories, methods, and practices, including bottom-up, organic *place-making* and top-down, planned *placemaking*. He appeals for combination of the two ends in urban design to allow the organic place-making survive, and even to be influential in the planned placemaking projects. This meta level approach also applies to Friedmann's (2010) argument that place making is everyone's job. It is encouraged to make the both ends meet in urban planning process, by thinking about urban space as embedded in the built environment, but capable of coming into being through "reiterative social practices" (p. 154).

However, such ideal is not always easy to realise in practices, in which power is always unequally distributed when determining how to frame a space. Zukin (1995) criticises city branding which was conducted to revive the post-industrial American cities. In the top-down mode, placemaking was taken to involve urban space into a general capital production cycle for keeping economic growth. A corollary of the project was that urban public space underwent privatisation and militarisation in public-private cooperation (p. 29), creating cultural and financial thresholds to some disadvantaged social groups, which cannot access the spaces due to the financial unaffordability, or even to be excluded by the ordered and meaningful narratives about public space. As a result, top-down placemaking can act to marginalise the multiplicities of space meanings and uses, and relocate some social groups elsewhere. In big cities, it may result in scenes of "non-hierarchical juxtaposition" among cultural groups, which could be taken advantage of as a strategy to govern social diversity by avoiding disputes happening in between, despite that the issues about social injustice and segregation were always suspended (p.271-274). In addition to the top-down placemaking, the dominant place image, with the supposed spatial practices, can involve local residential communities in the "place taming" projects. By accepting the top-down planned place meanings and practicing to serve them to earn a living, residents yield to the given cultural identities which actually reduce the community culture (Chang, 2000). One way to achieve it is museumification, by transforming urban space to be open-space museum exclusively for exhibition. Being contextualised in the museumified space, material objects are themed, with cultural narratives subtly arranged and embedded. They compose an assemblage that is expected to deliver a specific place impression to visitors (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), yet reduces geographical space by prioritising a surreal representation. Furthermore, a postmodern omnivorous aesthetic attitude may facilitate to museumify the ordinariness,

therefore to make anywhere a culturally meaningful place deserving aesthetic appreciation. In a postmodern lifestyle, "existing symbolic hierarchies are deconstructed and a more playful, popular democratic impulse becomes manifest", directing to personal de-control of emotions and plays and transforming them as fully aestheticised (Featherstone, 2007, p.108). In this way, ordinary culture can be encompassed as aesthetically appreciable, with corresponding urban spaces discovered and made to be places for aesthetic appreciations.

2.2.2. Place making in China

The literature reviewed above illustrates multiplicity of meanings and practices in places and place-making processes, and critically reflects on the conventional but distinct features of place, as well as the dichotomy between place and space in modern societies. For China, the historical features and the contemporary socio-political factors are considered when discussing place and place making. In his study, Friedmann (2007) surveys the concepts in urban China from the imperial period to the contemporary post-reform era. Respecting place as lived space which we people can claim meaningful, he summarises seven propositions to understand it in the Chinese context, based on an ideological division between state and civil society composing of citizens. Generally speaking, from people's perspective, places are shaped by being lived in. Meanwhile the state acts effectively in the construction and patterning of cities where people live to form. In China, framed by the both sides, urban places are featured by small spaces with physical boundaries, in which territories of order are kept in ritual practices of cultural or religious social lives. Nonetheless, citizens always float between the urban places but keep tightly connected with their native cultures in spatial practices. Such features persist, however, in constant erasure and rebuilding of places in the political upheavals of the modern China. This overview of place in urban China provides a pattern of understanding: Firstly, agents in placemaking include the state and the civil society. Secondly, spatial and social orders, with the formation processes, can be analysed to understand how a place is made by the agents, with the specific meanings claimed in citizens' social practices.

In the contemporary China, in addition to the perspective focusing on place *per se*, multiple geographical scales beyond places need to be considered due to the accelerating inter-regional exchange of capital, information, and population. Respectively, the pre-existing studies illustrate the following observations:

Firstly, the state and the civil society are not agents distinctly in opposite to each other. Instead, they can conspire to make places for common purposes. Mostly, it is the entrepreneurial government that collaborates with social groups to make urban places for production. For example, Clark (1997) argues that the placemaking of Shenzhen, as a special economic zone for the post-reform PRC, relied on layers of local, regional and

global relations, but downplayed national borders. In addition to the municipal government which is powerful to facilitate construction of Shenzhen as a financial and service hub for southern China, international investments and migrant labours came there for capital accumulation, and contributed to make the place, which was in fact full of differences. Dai & de Vries (2018) takes an institutional perspective to understand place making in Shanghai Hongqiao Business District, showing that a varied set of actors participated to achieve a top-down planned project, wherein horizontal relations between local government agencies, public-private relations, regional cooperation (inter-city relation), and the public participation system work in open knowledge management. Chan (2011) studied the mechanism of the Chinese cultural policies in the invention of a spectacular traditional Jiangnan Tea village where nostalgia is available via consumption. Based on the improved infrastructure provided by the government, it is villagers who create and run this themed village with common initiatives to advance their economic interests.

Secondly, with more agents involved in placemaking process, and the technological interventions, multiple places are happening, with possibly higher visibilities among the public. Interconnections between places may create more possibilities to challenge temporary dominant place images. Kolås' study (2004) about Shangri-La reveals different place-making processes and the interactions in between, from which representations of the region have been created, kept, and changed. Here tourism development settles the region into wider social networks, attracting more actors to come and prompting diverse activities to happen locally. This place-making practice results in new place images, and meanwhile allows the historically formed places to come out in the increased intercommunications. Grant (2018) explains how Tibetans construct their places for social and religious lives in a city undergoing the nationwide urbanisation project. By "channelling", as marginal place-makers tread to find their way through territorial regulations and commercialism in the city, the study shows the dynamic and complex relations between places and place-makers, and inspiring possibilities of change in the hegemonic urbanism.

Despite of the multiplicity that has been observed, some studies reveal inequality in power relations between actors in place making, and explain representational effects of the social values that are embedded in the places. Echoing to Friedmann's (2007) pattern of understanding, they make the critiques based on the division between the state and the civil society, and elucidate the effects by explaining the spatial and social orders of the places. In L. Zhang's (2012) study about the burgeoning new middle-class groups in Chinese big cities, places are needed and applied for demonstrating a "suitably modern" lifestyle to match their newly-established economic social strata in urban life, with

consumption as a shortcut to achieve identity making based on their economic capital (p.9). This embodiment of social distinction also meets with municipal government's needs for city branding, leading to a consensus achieved in between, with more public spaces templated to be consumable and culturally meaningful, yet marginalising worldviews and practices of other social classes. This consensus allows the state to intervene in urban everyday life and regulate social order for its political aims. Under the hegemonic power of developmentalism, the state assigns values to the population, encouraging personal capital accumulation that can be transformed to improve the state development. It is implemented by "quality" (*suzhi*) which attaches the values to individual bodies, and facilitates the discursive production of middle classness in judging ways of living (Anagnost, 2004). Based on the public visibility, the *suzhi* discourse has representational effects, creating desires for the middle classness and the corresponding social practices for realisation. The politicocognitive power of the value system further legitimates the spatialisation of the middle-class tastes, as well as the spatial and social orders implied in relative urban places.

As a result, in urban China there are exemplar ways of place making that both contribute to city branding and facilitate high-*suzhi* body making via practices of consumption. By practicing the pre-set cultural and moral codes, spatial consumers can internalise them, and are disciplined to be civilised bodies as expected by the state (Brownell, 2001; Currier, 2008; Swider, 2015). Hence, for individuals, urban places can be taken as classrooms where urbane figures can be realised by self-cultivation (J. Chen & Chen, 2018; Qian & Lu, 2019; W. Sun, 2008). Among the places, public space is the venue where the process can happen but in various ways. Individuals can practice compliantly as cultural consumers (C. Huang, 2016), or practice resistance to the pre-set codes by embodying other cultures (C. Chen, 2010; Qian, 2014). Here for individuals affected by the *suzhi* discourse, urban culture can be appropriated in one's performance of a public man to either affirm or deny the dominant place meanings of the public space, and the exemplar public figures that are supposed to be performed there. However, the supremacy of government and the middle-class taste in place making gets hardly challenged.

Generally speaking, the existing studies reveal multiplicity in the place-making process in urban China, including various actors, ways, and consequently different places that co-exist in respective relations according to specific contexts. Despite of the subsistent multiplicity, power relations between actors may affect visibility of the places, leading explorations to reveal the production of inequalities existing in place making in the specific context. Here the role of the state, with its super power to intervene and order the civil society, gets intensively discussed. Specific ways to keep the heterogeneous

places in urban space, then let more places to emerge and be visible, need to study further.

2.2.3.   Connecting place-making and critical heritage studies in urban China

Heritage sites are good materials to make places. In both realms, the pre-existing studies reveal that power relations between the involved actors are significant in the production of cultural meanings and behavioural patterns when one practices on spot, and even difference of visibility for the meaningful practices to the public, hence to produce hegemony of some specific discourses to see them. The commonality makes it possible to examine heritage sites from a spatial perspective. By interpreting spatialisation of specific heritage discourses in some delimited urban space, there are studies revealing the multiplicity of ongoing place-making processes, where disputes and conspirations between actors can dynamically emerge and transform mutually.

For urban China, heritage site making which occupies and dominates spaces by following the AHD, can serve the state-leading aims for economic development and social governance. From the perspective of urban economic geography, heritage site making can be taken to concurrently boost local economic development. In this mode, local culture is transformed to be cultural symbols available for exchanging in capital productive circulation (F. Chen, 2011; Ren, 2008; Y. Zhang, 2008). Conflicts over rights to use and define the space can be avoided by the governing strategies that transform the rights to be profits being distributed to stakeholders. For instance, in urban or village tourism, win-win businesses can be reached between the locals and visitors by representing localities to be culturally symbolic and welcome aesthetic consumption (Oakes, 2006b, 2006a; Park, 2014; X. Wu, 2014). Another strategy is to deal with demands from different social groups by spatial juxtaposition. For example, public heritage park space can be divided between the locals and visitors, both of whom avoid disturbing each other (Ryan et al., 2009). Spatial intervention in the name of heritage conservation might not be recognised by the local community, while the locals can still keep their traditional rituals by insisting on using their community public spaces (Y. Zhang & Wu, 2016). In this mode, heritage sites are made to be places that effectively serve the mentioned goals, with spatial and social orders rearranged for directed productions.

What's more, some studies explore the impacts from the AHD spatialisation to urban everyday life in China. Oakes (2017) studies a Chinese "happy town", which has been constructed by following an ethnic and cultural line by spatialising the local ethnic cultures as spectacular symbols in newly-built public parks. For some citizens there, happiness can be felt by consuming the cultural symbols and cleared urban environment, while practices of the ethnic heritages are marginalised. Ning & Chang (2021) explore the leading role of gentrification aesthetics when a regenerated inner-city neighbourhood is

generally transformed to be a cultural consumption site. Led by aesthetic consumption of the urban artistic landscape, multiple actors collaborate to produce the gentrification aesthetics, which dominates meanings and practices of the place. With the narratives of heritage value spatialised in urban spaces, which are cleared and ordered to meet the mass aesthetic consumption, users of the space may also change their way of spatial practices, showing passive acceptance of the good contents given by the arranged spaces.

As reviewed in Chapter 2.2.2, the present Chinese urban place making has been dominated by the logic of social capital accumulation, with citizens disciplined as consumers to passively digest the given spatial meanings, or as pursuers of the consuming lifestyle as the place representationally implies. As Osborne & Rose (1999) have criticised, the city is a diagram in which imminent rules of formation regulate and distribute the visibility of things, making them seeable, sayable, and doable in specific ways. By embedding in the contemporary Chinese urban diagram, cultural heritages are spatialised to meet the politico-economic aims, with the historic and cultural narratives represented cultural symbols for consumption. Old buildings there as the "things" are interpreted to fit the urban diagram, effectively reproducing the developmentalist discourses to fulfil citizens' urban lives. Regardless of the prospect that the interplay among memory, place, and tradition can be revolutionarily creative (Said, 2002), in this Chinese urban diagram, with few concerns taken to multiply the ways that the factors get interplayed, neither with tolerance to liberate possibilities of interpreting the old things, currently the dominance of the AHD in understanding urban heritages has got hardly challenged.

2.3. Everyday life studies and the logic of practice: the perspective to study heritage conservation

2.3.1. The rationale to choose the perspective

As Chapter 1.1 has argued, for a *lao Beijing* conservation neighbourhood, local everyday life needs to be examined and revealed, due to the complexity interconnection between the residential culture there and the AHD that is decided by the experts and the municipal government. As a result, the ordinary living trivialities may be selected to compose the physical manifestations of the AHD, yet meanwhile marginalise, or even stigmatise others. Everyday life *per se* is a realm in which power relations between the actors can be articulated, with solutions to change the problematic *status quo* possibly coming up with.

Moreover, the everyday perspective also contributes to the field of heritage studies, and is a good reference for understanding both top-down and bottom-up place making in urban China. As what has been reviewed in Chapter 2.1, the critical studies examining the

AHD concept are heritage-centric – focusing on what heritage is, or the specific mechanisms that frame the AHD and persuade people to trust it. In this field, the continual everyday life is a backdrop. In addition, critical heritage studies in China always hover over the China-West division. Consequently, the AHD in China gets most of the attentions, and the studies contribute by diversifying the discourses. However, to what extent and how the AHD can impact the local community life still need to be clarified in addition to making the critiques.

In the studies reviewed by Chapter 2.2, research objects include place(s) and place-making processes. Multiplicity of the creators are revealed, and power relations in between are examined by setting the places and place-making processes in historical, institutional, social and cultural contexts. The studies critically create the political meaning by explaining how the power relations work to produce unequal domination over urban space. For heritage conservation, it is a technique to make places, hence the political relations in heritage site making can be revealed by this perspective, including participants' roles and positions in the process. It is an insightful perspective to examine heritage as a social process, hence to understand social relations by inspecting how the making process works.

In this thesis, I put forward the research questions with a perspective shift to learn the local residents' cognitions about the AHD of *lao Beijing* and their ways of dwelling inside. The critical perspective about the AHD, and political meanings by altering the perspective, lay a foundation for the thesis to bring about possibilities of changes. To answer the questions, I take residents' everyday life as the research object, and regard their attitudes and practices as agency in the interactive processes of heritage site making. They live the ways as they are used to, but the living habits, as well as their impressions about the neighbourhood, are also being framed by the AHD. By articulating the ordinary living culture there, the study contributes to the critical imagination, as Waterton & Watson (2013) appeal for heritage studies by backgrounding the AHD. In addition, this study also helps understand how the sense of *lao Beijing* is created and kept in the present spatialisations, as a reference to understand placemaking in urban China.

Before reviewing the literature, whether the theories can be applied in the urban China context needs be discussed. In the following reviews, theories from Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Pierre Bourdieu are referred to. Respectively, Lefebvre's critiques of everyday life, and his studies of city were made in the post-war French urban society, where the impact of new technology and the consumer society catalysed a world of prosperous goods, yet with the disappearance of the rural world (Trebitsch, 1991, xxvi). Lefebvre (1991a) argues that the modern technologies have penetrated everyday life, thus "introduced into this backward sector the uneven development which characteri[s]es

56

every aspect of our era" (p.8). The modern techniques replaced criticism of life by the myth of life quality upgrades, which can be achieved by updating ordinary objects in one's living environment. His critiques of everyday life were made from within by human as consumers. Later, de Certeau studied the practice of everyday life in more international contexts than urban France. Affected by the Situationist Movement, he did the research to fill the gap between everyday realities which were lived out, and sociological patterns which were criticised to get constantly constructed and self-revised (Luce, 2009, p.2). By theorising the practice of everyday life, which is ordinary but significant for one to make the everyday realities though being situated in the world shape by scientific models, he explained how the human as consumers in fact enabled and kept production of political possibilities. Last but not the least, Bourdieu's theorisation about practice (1992) was made to develop a means of socio-analysis based on practical understanding of facts. By reflecting on discourses, which have been produced to interpret the social world by the academia and have got constantly used within the theoretical schemes, he pointed out that the theoretically constructed social relations were distant from those being kept and updated in practices. Conducting works to theorise practice aimed at understanding people's *practical understandings* about the facts they produced, based on the empirical data collected from Algeria of the late 1950s and early 1960s struggling for its independence. As Bourdieu (1992) mentioned in the writing, by the research, he criticised primitivism and racial contempt which have been embedded in some social schemes of perception and appreciation, hence to emancipate human from the ethnocentric ideology to understand the world (p.3).

For the contemporary Chinese urban society, everyday life is a field in need of exploration along with the critical thinking, and the theories to review provide theoretical methods to critically understand the everyday realm. Li (2005) and Lu (2008) defend for the necessity to examine everyday life in China, not only to critically analyse it in big cities, where modern technologies and consumerism, as having been revealed by Lefebvre, effectively frame everyday life, for possible alternatives that can lead to human emancipation. Moreover, the studies are argued necessary in order to guide the Chinese modern everyday lives in the making, which vary across the country due to regional differences in economic development, institutional tradition, and socio-cultural condition. With the concern, relations between the Chinese tradition and the Western modernisation get much attention when Chinese scholars discuss the topic, and nationalism is inevitable influential when claiming the uniqueness of Chinese everyday life (Ai, 2005; Liu & Lu, 2018; Yi, 2005). Recognising the researching necessity meanwhile the nationalist bias, I defend for critical thinking when doing Chinese everyday life studies. It is a significant realm where social inequalities and discriminations can be changed by receiving reflexive

analyses, instead of romanticised portraits for reinforcing the Chinese national identity. For the theories to review, Lefebvre and de Certeau critically examined the already established urban everyday lives in order to discover possibilities to change the world dominated by modernity, capitalism and scientism. Bourdieu kept the critical attitude towards theories when trying to explain the everyday facts foreign to his national experiences. All of the authors set the premise that the lived everyday life contains dynamics and possibilities more than that in static modelling. This concern for multiplicity and the initiative to motivate political possibilities of changing are also significant when thinking about everyday life in the contemporary China, which is always in the struggles between the factual social diversity and the national projects for unification and homogenisation.

For the thesis, I argue that it is possible to refer to the theories in my study when talking about everyday life. Firstly, social background of the *Lao Beijing* city shares similar characters with those in the critical theories of Lefebvre and de Certeau, who criticised the everyday life in urban societies where modern technologies, scientism and consumerism dominate living rhythms. In the *Lao Beijing* city, heritage conservation directly brings the modern impacts to the inhabitants, by spatialising the professional conservation plan in the residential space, transforming it to be an object of visual and aesthetic consumption. A critical examination is needed in order to reveal more than the aetheticised everyday life on stage. Secondly, when doing the everyday study, an anti-primitivist concern, which has been raised in Bourdieu's theorisation, should be kept to avoid the nationalist use of everyday life of the officially praised historic district. It is the era of fervent nationalism that raises the necessity to keep critical about ethnocentric and localist appropriations of everyday life. Especially for designated heritage sites, nationalism has been embedded and naturalised. It contributes to highlighting the heritage value and bringing public attentions, while it cannot help solve local social issues that are caused by the unequal power relations in determining and using space. The reflexive features and the concerns for practical understanding of the classical theories inspire me a means to do the critical heritage study, for an alternative way of conservation to simply reproducing the AHD.

To summarise, I argue for the necessity to critically examine everyday life in the case study site due to the observed tensions between the lived spatial diversity and the planned spatial orders, and the rationality to refer to the mentioned theories based on the similar premise that practices are politically meaningful to change theoretical patterns, and the physical world being constructed based on them. In the remainder of the Chapter, the theories from Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Pierre Bourdieu are reviewed, and studies that referred to the theories in the Chinese context are inspected. Based on the

knowledge, a theoretical framework for explaining influences from the heritage discourse in practical social life can be established.

2.3.2. Everyday life: where the physical world is embodied and is potentially to be changed

The general context, also a motivation for Henri Lefebvre to discover and develop critiques on everyday life is the social status within the practice of urbanisation and its ideological version, *urbanism* in his time with all-round and rapid modernisation. Lefebvre (1996) criticises urbanism by analysing its suppression on the pre-industrial *city*, which is "a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and architectural fact" (p. 103). On the contrary, modern city making is based on scientific views, which are fragmentary and highly systemised, but have become globally universal social practices thus to become "a sort of catechism for technocrats" (p. 22), and gradually a social discourse with public acknowledgment. Under this universal scientific ideology, morphologies of the pre-industrial cities can be maintained and applied in modern city making, but as functional urban components based on modern knowledge and depictions of such oeuvres. Therefore, although efforts are paid to resurge urban centres in the modern urbanistic blueprint of cities, they are "dull and mutilated" versions of the old cities with consumption logic dominating the space (p. 73). However, this paradigm shift of city is hard to be perceived by citizens since their ways of life have been changed and dominated by urbanism, with their consciousness of the city and of urban reality to be dulled (p. 80). Facing the situation, Lefebvre launched calls for urban revolution from concerns of everyday life, which was disassembled into urban spaces that were functionally depicted and designed, thus became fragmented, and hardly able to support efforts for restitution of the city. He appealed to focus on everyday life, in order to remind everyone of their potential abilities for the restitution.

Therefore, as a perspective to resist the excessive rationalisation of urban space and ways of life, everyday life has been taken as a research approach more than a research object. For Lefebvre, everyday life is "residuum of all the possible specific and specialized activities outside social experience and the product of society in general" (Lefebvre, 1971, p.38), and is where possibilities of approaching the human totality lurk. Facing a social reality of that time in which lifestyle has been dissembled as fragments of living culture that has been discretely used in the system of symbols, as means of distribution to direct the flow of production, he called for recreating a style of life as an integration, in order to liberate the possibilities that are contained in everyday life. Here the style of life was understood as an entrance of the urban revolution. Being a form deriving from differences of content in everyday life, it in turn can codify practices with which a particular content

operates (Lefebvre, 1996, p.10). Therefore, by capturing the style of life and studying it, possibilities of urban revolution could be figured out and taken to make the changes happen.

To realise the changes, Lefebvre calls for rights to *cities* among the masses, including both rights of using urban space, and opportunities of rhythms permitting "full usage of moments and places" (Lefebvre, 1996, p.19), thus to activate the lurking possibilities which are suppressed and excluded by the over-rationalised urban practices in everyday life. Through this claim of right, revolutionary changes to the modern "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption", which is designed with systemised thoughts and structuralised actions to reach a foreseen demand after rational calculation for social growth, could be achieved (Lefebvre, 1971, p.72, 1996, p.20). Everyday life in his theories was conceived as a realm where urban revolutions could happen, and finally could help seize back totality of human by returning city centrality to practice-based social constructions.

Instead of the call for revolutionary changes to urban everyday life, de Certeau, Mayol, and Luce's studies (1998) illustrated that the changes lurked and were taking place there, via the mass practices of everyday life. It is the practice that keeps everyday life politically productive in appropriations of the space that is powerfully defined and framed. This view of everyday life differs from Lefebvre's understanding, in which forms of everyday life are oriented by the urban context, having been involved into the capitalist production cycle and serving economic growth, therefore revolutions are needed in order to change the *status quo*. In de Certeau's theory, ongoing everyday life allows room for unproductive appropriation, which is immediately maintained and manifested via practice. Encountering with Michel Foucault's idea of the grid of "discipline", which reorganises the functioning of power in "miniscule" technical procedures in discursive spaces, de Certeau (1984) argues that modern societies are not passively reduced to the models where the discipline can perfectly take effect, with individuals as consumers practicing the well-designed procedures, as a passive component of the established social orders (p.xiv). On the contrary, the most quotidian part of life that is conveyed by mass practices enables "arts of making" something more than the designed outcomes from consumption (xv). Meanwhile, it presents to be unoffensive to keep "symbolic balances, contracts of compatibility and compromises", and avoids causing conflicts with the established social orders and power agents (xvii). In this way, the weak could make use of the strong constantly in innumerable tactical manipulations of the dominated materials, but the practices could not get organised, and are hard to create a considerable challenge to the power in domain. Here politics of everyday life is "heuristic and experimental", "putting its faith in the everyday as a means for its own transformation" (Highmore, 2002, p.173).

In other words, although a revolutionary potential might be reserved in everyday life, it is not manifested as a revolutionary solution. Instead, for individuals, everyday life could be tapped into, and energy of which could be appropriated and transformed, thus get the life itself changed (p. 173), and keeps orientation towards liberation in repetitive practices of everyday life (p. 29).

Despite the theories that put expectations on everyday life from which changes can be brought out by the masses and affect urbanisation, whether such changes can happen needs to be discussed. Foucault's conception of *power-knowledge* and *governmentality* provides a reference to understand the limitation of political possibilities contained in everyday life. According to Foucault,

> First, by governmentality I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technological instrument (Foucault, 1978, cited from May, 2014, p.175).

> Second, by "governmentality" I understand the tendency, line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the preeminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call "government" and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (*savoirs*) (Foucault, 1978, cited from May, 2014, p.176).

In the definition, governmentality is an ensemble of practices that come to occur through the institutions of the state. With the population as the object, it lets governmental apparatuses and knowledges to develop, and together constitute power to the population, in order to accomplish the state aims. In the theorisation, everyday life inevitably becomes a realm where the power acts on individuals in the interactions with the apparatuses and knowledges. The situation restricts the possibilities of change to emancipate from everyday life, because governmentality is predicated on the naturalness of market mechanisms and particular types of freedoms (May, 2014), so it allows people to practice liberty but in some specific ways. The apparatuses and knowledges contribute to constructing the system for the governmentality to deploy the power relations, which support the governing rules to establish. According to Foucault, the knowledge "is attuned to relations of power, and to both the subjection and transformation of individuals" (Scott, 2014, p. 165). Formation of knowledge is also formation of power relations. Individuals, as Foucault theorises to be subjugated in the relations of power, consider the system and

changes as normal (Scott, 2014, p.169). The series of argument put people, with their everyday life as the realm of practice, in a dilemma where liberal practices are weak at making changes.

The classical theories leave us to think about political possibilities of everyday life, and ask: how does it lead to changes happening in the real world, on the strength of our attentions paid to the concept which comes from our lived experience? In other words, how can everyday life studies own political possibilities to make changes on the lived everyday life? Felski (2000) answers the question by examining the term from a feminist perspective. The commonsensical, taken-for-granted, and mundane features of everyday life, as well as emotional and social values attached to it, are supposed to get critical examination. It is the reflexive and open-minded academic tradition that can keep the political meanings of the concept everyday life. What's more, it is argued that the nature of everyday life, as a counter-tradition that "evinces a pronounced hostility towards abstract social theorizing……, and a concomitant stress on the quotidian or non-formalized aspects of social interaction", keeps the political possibilities (Gardiner, 2000, p.3). Holding the critical view about everyday life, researchers can "overcome the pervasive dichotomy in social science between the objectivism of structuralist approaches and the subjectivistic tendencies of more conventional interpretive theories" (p.3), therefore to provide a pathway where one's lived experiences can get critically examined and echo to practices of theorisation. This exploration of everyday life defends for the possibility to change the lived experiences. Some empirical studies argue for the political meaning by case studies. For example, Burkitt (2004) argues that everyday life includes more than what is officially codified and available for surveillance, therefore forms political possibilities. Informal everyday life based on different ways of combining time and space is playful, fluid, and dynamic, as the hotbed from which alternative social relations and values are possible to get manifested. Besides, revolutionary possibilities also remain in long-term practices of ordinary life, in which specific knowledge and inclination can form and be kept with dynamic changes, resulting in social circumstances with heterogeneity, as a safe situation to support the springing-up possibilities in the process (J. Chen & Chen, 2018).

When it comes to individuals as practitioners of everyday life, different aspects are taken to study their positions and roles. Some studies develop Henri Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]), a method to analyse the rhythms embodied by human in urban space, and to understand how the rhythms can affect human and spatial practices. Here bodies are not passive in the process of embodiment, but are active at appropriation, transformation, and adaptation in given environments with specific rhythms that have not been erased by modern routines (Highmore, 2004; Özer Özgür,

62

2018; Simpson, 2008). This grafted relationship between modern and habitual routines is applied in urban studies to reflect on "right to the city", the appeal shouted out by Lefebvre as a utopian but thorough change on the urban life, in which human should be agents to change the relation with their living urban circumstance in the era of modernity (Lefebvre, 1996, p.158). Therefore, detailed rhythmanalysis focusing on time-space practices which are regarded creative and productive of multiplicity in urban life is conducted in studies that call for the right (Kärrholm, 2009, 2017; Osman & Mulíček, 2017; R. J. Smith & Hetherington, 2013; Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006). Meanwhile, barriers to the right are also analysed due to the overwhelming productivity of narratives, social relation and institutional framework backed up by dominant power (Qian & He, 2012; Watson, 2006). Urban space here is a productive medium operable of symbol making and popularising, and meanwhile individuals' spatial practices are also possible to become visible, and then construct social relations and identities for accessing the right.

2.3.3. Logics of practice: mechanisms to realise the change

As mentioned in the studies reviewed above, practice is a means by which possibilities lurking in everyday life could be inspire and lead to changes. This concept that is theorised from the real world, is the way by which everyday life keeps ongoing and remains politically meaningful, though in many cases it is unreadable and unproductive. In Bourdieu's (1992) explanation, practice, as one's immediate action being made by following the practical principle without rational calculations, plays an important role to make one's previous experiences and knowledge direct actions in the future. In this theoretical model, practitioners are "docta ignorantia" (knowledgeable without knowing) (p. 102) as their practices are oriented within specific contexts where the past and the future are on the scene to mould their orientation; while such inclination does not result from consciousness and rationality. It is "informed by a kind of objective finality without being consciously organized in relation to an explicitly constituted end; intelligible and coherent without springing from an intention of coherence and a deliberate decision; adjusted to the future without being the product of a project or a plan" (p. 50-51). The mechanism to realise the "docta ignorantia" is explained by *habitus* within *field. Habitus* is a structured system directing one's knowledge construction about the world. It is constituted in practices meanwhile produces them, holding the structuring dispositions that affect both practices and itself (p.52-55). *Field* is a playground where such processes happen, in which practices and *habitus* are in a dynamic mutual relation: practices are shaped and produced by *habitus* while they are materials to build up this system of structured; *habitus*, although setting up structuralising dispositions, is transformative in the continuous connection with practices. As Bourdieu developed this theory of practice

by his ethnographical studies of Algerian ritual practices, which were regarded being "marginalised by the Western form of rationality", the interest was initiated by the cultural uniqueness, which made the practices different from those within the Western rational scheme. However, it is criticised as a "false departure" by setting up a disparate in opposite to rationality on order to decentralise it. The theorisation of practice within the circumscribed places actually imprisoned it "behind the bars of the unconscious" (de Certeau, 1984, p.50-60).

Within a modern social context, Lefebvre talked about practice along with his reflections on urbanisation. Facing the modern urban life which has been argued as problematic, Lefebvre took practice as a source of revolutionary possibilities to make changes. His critiques began with labour conditions in the modern industrial era where direct and unmediated contacts between operators and tools are diminishing. Instead, one's direct making becomes only one part and one aspect in a totalised system that is built up by the modern society following the capitalist logic for endless production (Lefebvre, 2002, p.233). Practice, or *praxis*, an "extreme complexity", is a mechanism via which individuals are involved in the capitalist productive totality, while one cannot be reduced to a labour unit just for economic production. In everyday repetitive praxis, material accumulation is accompanied by spiritual production, hence it is argued that personal cognitive changes can happen, leading to praxis mode differentiation among individuals. Consequently, the variety of practice prompts confrontations to happen interpersonally, resulting in multiple *social relations* and ways of *appropriating* social goods, though some of them do not get sufficient public visibility (p.237-238). In spite of its invisibility, creativity of praxis leads to the potential of human emancipation from supporting, maintaining, and reproducing within the production cycle for growth (p. 239), thus is taken as a possible solution towards the urban life that is contextualised in modernisation, especially sometimes speeding up and constantly bringing new and unpredictable situations to human, hence to orienting conservative practices of maintaining the *status quo* (Highmore, 2002, p.139).

Lefebvre also discussed spatial practice by contextualising it in urban settings to demonstrate its role in urban revolutions. In the context, modern urban planning organises spaces for programmed consumptions (Bertuzzo, 2009) thus deviates the spaces from the natural outcomes of social practice (Lefebvre, 1991, p.14). Despite of this marginalised situation, social practice is irreducible and even necessity in modern urban space production, acting to associate "between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)" (p. 38). This effectivity is kept in the character of practice, which is lived directly and constructs the real world based on perceptions; it is flexible and open, embracing

"production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (p. 33). Simultaneously, products from practices are available for reflexive conceptualisation that transforms personal experience to constitute urban space. Therefore, since social practices are irreducible and necessary in life that is ongoing in modern urban space, revolutionary possibilities are maintained there, and could be consciously motivated on the basis of careful and critical inspections of both life itself and the corresponding space.

Similarly, being contextualised in a circumstance with power inequalities, de Certeau takes practice as a weapon of the weak to keep living in domains that are defined by powerful discourses. This relation is explained by *strategy* and *tactic*: A *strategy* is the calculation (manipulation) of power relationships located in a postulated delimited place. The subject here is a typical rational agent that formulates the *strategy* based on the place with a preconditioned certain power, and tries to keep manageable relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats within the place serving as a base. On the other hand, a *tactic* is "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (de Certeau, 1984, p.37), as a reaction towards exteriority being set along with a place delimitation. Without domination or clear views over the place of inhabitancy, one conducts *tactic* relying on its holding of time, seizing opportunities at any given moment, therefore to realise the purpose of long-term dwelling and appropriations of any available resources. "Behaving properly" is the most practical aim attached to tactics, and could be achieved in repetition of practicing the signs of recognition. Within some delimited place with social activities, practice of ongoing ordinary life, as what is repeated all the time unconsciously and invisibly, can incubate tactics that are stably and amorphously kept by complying with strategies (de Certeau, 1984, p. 34-39). This steady status based on mutual recognition and acquiescence allows the political meaning of practices to maintain in durability and mutability, thus the weaks' personal representations of the society can survive, and even able to be potential of making changes (de Certeau et al., 1998, p.22).

Practice was also argued to be energetic and effective to make changes to "the city" conceptualised for a rational, univocal, and proper spatial mode in urbanistic discourses. Practices of urban life make the conceptualised city function as a place of transformations and appropriations, allowing those elements which have been excluded by urbanistic projects to re-emerge (de Certeau, 1984, p.92-96). The heroic effect of practice comes from its ability of *translation*:

> One can now better grasp the concept of a 'cultural practice': it is the more or less coherent and fluid assemblage of elements that are concrete and everyday (a gourmet menu) or ideological (religious, political), at once coming from a

tradition (that of a family or social group) and reactualised from day to day across behaviours translating fragments of this cultural device into social visibility, in the same way that the utterance translates fragments of discourse in speech. (de Certeau et al., 1998, p.9)

In the theory, practice is a mechanism by which vulnerable elements from the past ordinary life could be translated and maintain in the present with social visibilities. They become resources for personal or group identities, guaranteeing "positions in the network of social relations inscribed in the environment" (de Certeau et al., 1998, p.9), offering a sense of security, as well as practical mutual supports based on the recognition of social networking. Therefore, although in the conceptualised city, people are inclined to understand things in a rational way, space, as "the practiced place" (de Certeau, 1984, p.118), could not be thoroughly rationalised, thus leaving room for tactics by which one could maintain and form the everyday life in practice, and further to concrete "culture" that is possible to get social visibility in repeats of practices.

2.3.4. Studies and discussions in the Chinese context

The field of everyday life also attracts attentions from scholars who ruminate on it in the Chinese context. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 2.3, it was argued that everyday life in China deserved critical examination after the economic reforms, in order to explore ideal social living patterns in the new epoch, when the society underwent big changes following the reforms in the institutional and economic systems. Especially, it was initiated by intellectuals who inhabited big cities, witnessing and experiencing the rapid changes of urban social lives, therefore making ruminations on the impacts from modernisation, and conceiving ideal patterns for urban everyday life. Beginning in the field of literature studies in the late 1980s, everyday life studies sprouted in China from introducing Western classical theories, and the Marxist ones, including the theories from Lefebvre and de Certeau, were prioritised in the epochal social and political ideologies. In following decades, since everyday life is mundane but ubiquitous, it has been taken as a research object in multiple fields, with the theories getting widely referenced and developed. For instance, Bao (2001) was one of the first in China to launch the study by focusing on Shanghai citizens' consuming practices in pubs. He situated the "Shanghai spirit" in the rapid urban social and spatial changes in the globalised context, and explored meanings, statuses, and changes of it from the everyday perspective. Specifically, the research referred to Lefebvre's spatial theories to understand the local consuming culture, the historical sources for it and the present manifestations in urban space and social practices. Afterwards, the theories from Lefebvre and de Certeau are used in local contexts in order to understand how spaces are produced in case study sites with multiple actors'

participation, and by what ways their practices of inhabiting the space contribute to the production. For example, some tourism studies refer to Lefebvre's theory of space production, exploring formation of ethnic-culture-themed tourist destinations by involving all stakeholders as producers, and analysing power relations in between (Su & Sun, 2020; J. Sun et al., 2020), or depicting formation and changes of socially-produced community boundaries between two villages, with one of them designated as a World Heritage site (X. Huang et al., 2022). Lefebvre's concern for revolutionary possibilities from the urban everyday life is also referred to in studies of migrants and urban vendors, who always stay in precarity and at marginalised positions in urbanisation. For example, Qian (2022) analyses the alienation of the migrants' everyday life in the present Chinese big cities, where capitalist relations have constituted every aspect of life. Meanwhile, he emphasises that by manoeuvring makeshift practices, they can develop reflections on the living conditions, hence to enact alternative values and ethics to replenish life. Z. Sun (2022) uses the rhythmanalysis approach to study urban street vendors' tempo of urban living, and their contributions to creating transient walkable spaces, though the ongoing urbanisation continues spatial reconstruction that disconnects their productive rhythms of urban living, leading their modified practices for readaptation.

In addition, from the everyday perspective, studies that refer to de Certeau's theory reveal how individuals appropriate their living environments and corresponding social rules to realise their aims of living. W. Sun (2008) studies how migrant females create personal spaces in Beijing, a big city performing exclusion and discrimination to them by established social and spatial rules. The tactical consumption practices are analysed to challenge the urban-rural division in China which has been taken when judging individuals, and emphasis personal agency therein. Wang et al., (2016) discuss how *hutong* residents participate to form spatial morphology of the neighbourhoods in the old city of Beijing, and illustrate the approach to describe the spatial practice modality via physical constructions. In addition, there is literature focusing on "urban square dancing", as group dancing practices occupying urban public spaces in specific time and place. It is argued that the practices synchronously embody different ideologies of Chinese urbanism, which changed over the decades in institutional and economic reforms (Jayne & Leung, 2014). Meanwhile, the practices can regenerate and redefine the space (C. Chen, 2010), and create opportunities for communication and urban learning, prompting social education (Qian & Lu, 2019).

The China-based research contributes to the realm by proving empirical studies, and demonstrating the practical meaning of the theories. For China, they are politically meaningful by revealing the actually multiple actors and ways of space production in one case, and differentiation among cases, hence to bring them out for further communications.

It initiates possibilities of change, as well as ways of knowing and guiding them. As Lu (2014) reviewed, the French theories about everyday life were introduced to China with a cultural concern, and the Chinese application also underwent the postmodern "space turn" that had happened in the "Americanisation" of French theories, thus to go beyond cultural critiques and later become socio-politically meaningful. The studies in the Chinese context show strong pragmatism, pursuing for ways to solve the observed inequalities among stakeholders in space production, while there are fewer efforts made for theoretical development. However, as Qian & He (2012) rethink about the right to the city in a Chinese urban context, institutional power is so strong that practices are weak at making changes. Instead, they are often channelled into established social frameworks, and to embrace conservative means of everyday maintenance. Therefore, it is not surprising that some individuals will finally make do with their disadvantaged social conditions, and are satisfied with peaceful status instead of practicing protests, or claiming for their deserved rights.

In general, everyday life studies provide methods to enable communications between theoretical frameworks and social facts, from which the frameworks are fabricated but can never make full representations. Practice makes social facts, as well as the gap that theoretical modelling can never cross to create an authentic projection. By studying the practice of everyday life, one can discover the gap in between, and understand how it formed, how it is being maintained, and predict what it will be in the future. This process contributes to enabling works of theoretical framework revision for further approaching the facts. For the thesis as a critical heritage study, it is a significant theoretical foundation to challenge the AHD of *lao Beijing* by means of residential practices, which are representational and always in creation. Taking the methods here is to transcribe such creative actions into publicly communicable language, and to support my argument for the multiplicity and dynamics existing in the local cultural narratives, hence the view that changes should be made to the present mode of heritage conservation.

2.4. Theoretical foundation and contributions

2.4.1. Theoretical foundation

The research is conducted based on my practical aim to make changes to the ongoing heritage conservation in the *lao Beijing* city, which, from my point of view, needs elaborative and reflexive examinations, since the popularised hence fascinating narratives of the *lao Beijing* culture can contribute to reproducing unequal power relations between the stakeholders, when they become a part of the AHD instead of a critical challenge to it. As mentioned in Chapter 1.1, as an embracive signifier, *lao Beijing* can be used to signify

anything from the past about Beijing. In *lao Beijing* neighbourhoods under conservation, the culture is expected to get realised *in situ*, making the living circumstance a complex chronotope in which an official narration of the local past, individuals' interpretations of the pasts, and the modernised present are intertwined. Consequently, with the embracive signifier commonly recognised and used, the local everyday life at present is regarded as culturally meaningful, but meanwhile to marginalise other readings and makings of the same urban space forming in individuals' respective practices of living. This official appreciation and use of the ordinary beauties have reduced the critical effect from everyday life.

Hence, the thesis would like to retrieve it, with the support of the three fields of literature as reviewed. The critical heritage studies set up the standpoint of the thesis, and the approach of critical discourse analysis can be used to reveal how the inclusive and authoritative *lao Beijing* discourse get established and commonly acknowledged. In addition, the perspective of place making indicates multiplicity and dynamic of actors and their practices in constructing and maintaining the culturally meaningful place. Everyday life is the ordinary but critical perspective, from which the AHD of *lao Beijing* and the spatialisation can get examined, in consideration of the observed contradictory emotions and the sense of helplessness in the current residential conditions.

As the chapter shows, the theories that I would like to refer to in the thesis are constructed by the scholars from the West. The contexts of the conception are different from the contemporary urban China. As a result, there is a risk of theory appropriation, in which the theories are borrowed from the West and used mechanically, making the study noneffective to explain causes of the local problems, and hence helpless to solve them in practice. On the matter, I argue that a critical attitude can help me to keep alert to the enchantment with theories. As I defended for my choice of the theories about everyday life in Chapter 2.3.1, I have made the careful consideration by comparing the contexts and confirming the feasibility. Furthermore, for the theories from heritage studies and cultural geographies about place, it is even necessary to depend on the theories, because the Western conception of cultural heritage and the geographical place have been significant in works of subject development in higher education of China. By critically referring to the concepts which have been common knowledge among the Chinese scholars, the thesis can enact dialogues with them. Moreover, with the considerations made, the thesis may contribute a prudent attitude to do research in China. When it is necessary to refer to the Western theories, critical considerations have to be made to use them in the local context effectively.

2.4.2. Theoretical contributions

Based on the theoretical foundation, the thesis self-defines as a critical heritage study, challenging the popular impression of *lao Beijing* by foregrounding and describing its everyday background, which is dimmed by the dazzling cultural signifier, but needs to be explored for better understanding the existing tensions between heritage conservation and spatial practices of everyday life therein. By the thesis, I hope the outcomes can make the following meaningful contributions:

By making an interdisciplinary trial, I would like to explore a method by which the everyday life within the officially designated domain of heritage conservation can be a critical agent to challenge and modify the AHD. To be clear, the backdropped everyday life and its practitioners are not just vulnerable contrasts to the dominant discourse in place making. As reviewed above, the critical perspective that is reflexive on powerfully established institutions might achieve its critical positioning by creating an innocent otherness, which is vulnerable in the critical logic following a dichotomic ideologic paradigm. This also applies to culture studies in which culture can be appropriated to be cultural infrastructure, with audiences left as vulnerable, with disproportionate understandings of them (Tretter, 2009; Zukin, 2009). Gardiner (2000) explains it as a result from one's form of existence under modernity, in which one finds it hard to realise a fulfilled condition, with concrete and dialogical "others" disappearing (p.21). As a result, alternative otherness is set up by extracting something from ordinariness itself and fixing with aesthetic discourse. However, it can limitedly change the ordinary life by only establishing a nominal otherness. In this way, everyday life is still kept as a relatively "homogeneous and undifferentiated set of attitudes, practices and cognitive structures" in opposite to the extraordinariness having been extracted and established, thus keeping as a source of "ontological security", a shelter although undiscovered (Gardiner, 2000, p.5).

This issue is possibly to get tackled with the assistance from everyday life itself. As Lefebvre (1991a) dialectically analyses modern urban everyday life as alienated yet revolutions are still possible by regenerating the political strength of practice, conflicts and changes can happen in the programmed everyday life, which is in fact full of diversity and discrete practices. This dynamic of everyday life can be consciously used to resist routinisation within the capitalist socioeconomic processes, when it becomes an "obligation or an external imposition" rather than a "self-creation" (Gardiner, 2004). This is exactly the condition of neighbourhoods under heritage conservation, in which an aestheticised local lifestyle is constructed by extracting minutiae in ordinary life and transforming it to be exhibits in showcases, but not the ordinary beauty discovered by those who practice the local everyday life. Therefore, the everyday perspective and theories are taken to discover possibilities from everyday life itself, as alternatives to the particular cultural narration that transforms local everyday life as structuralised and

70

homogenised. Here the possibilities can be figured out since the ordinary beauty is able to get legibility through practice. As Benjamin argues, practices of everyday life in the conserved neighbourhood are moments from a "constellation" when "the Then and the Now come together", the collage of which enters into legibility as "a flash of lightening" (Benjamin, 1989, cited in Highmore, 2002, p.71). By discovering and recording these visible moments, a researcher can also help the already designated historic urban area embrace and respect more than what has been authorised within the heritage discourse.

Therefore, in addition to the critical studies, the thesis argues that everyday life as the backdrop is also creative, enabling various practices more than those which are criticised as reproduced and anticipated by the cultural discursive system. It provides a way of empowering everyday life and practice in heritage studies by explaining agency of them.

PART II

Realising a living museum in the present world

Chapter 3. Transformations and continuities in state discourse and social life: a political and institutional background

In Part II, Chapters 3,4, and 5 critically analyse the AHD of *lao Beijing* and its spatialisation at the case study site, in order to elucidate formation of the *modus operandi* to the old city neighbourhoods, and the social acknowledgement of it. The AHDs from the national, municipal, and local levels are analysed to show how an urban neighbourhood can be used to represent the specific version of local history, which positively contributes to the authorised historical narratives about the city and the country. Furthermore, temporal concerns are also taken, by considering about historical influences when explaining the contemporary social acknowledgement of the AHDs and ways of spatialisation. Materials under examination include official documents, news from the mass media, key figures' claims or literature, and the neighbourhood spatial changes which represent the discourses.

This chapter delineates a historical process, in which the respect for the national culture and the nationalist enthusiasm are popularised among the Chinese masses, constructing the political-institutional circumstance for the AHD to settle down. It is organised in three parts: Firstly, a historical review is made to explain formation of the Chinese nation concept and its continuous popularity. The historical analyses are used to critically examine the present official uses of the national past and reveal the political aims. Secondly, the institutional designs by which the state can keep influential in citizens' everyday life are introduced as another aspect contributing to the common approval among the public. And thirdly, based on the political and institutional factors that collaborate to construct the present circumstance, a concern from individual perspective is raised, leading to a discussion about the complex relation between the sense of collectivity and the consciousness of individuality when one tries to position him/herself in the contemporary society. By clarifying the historical origin and changes of the political and institutional backgrounds, the chapter lays a foundation to understand the present fanatic nationalism and the common recognition of the Chinese nation, both of which effect to allow the AHD to dominate over urban space.

3.1. The national past in the present use: on the way to a utopia

3.1.1. Changing fortunes of the Chinese traditions

A national past could be presented via materiality, with specific narratives attached to, thus become meaningful as a readable objective. Official attitudes to the materials, with the authorised ways of use, construct a discursive circumstance for citizens' personal views on the materials to form, and get linked with nationalist narratives as

sources to make and keep sense of belongings. Specifically for the study, currently urban spaces under heritage conservation are attached with historic and cultural values and under official maintenance, becoming objects for viewing, reading, and appreciating. Although the Chinese way of maintaining and appreciating the past is argued to continue in constant human reinterpretations of culture, spirits, and philosophies rather than by relying on static things as carriers (Ryckmans, 2008; Sofield et al., 2017), to arouse the unified national affections among the masses, the authorities can rely on modern ways of commemorating the national past by taking advantage of materiality. After the 20th century when modernisation has become the theme of the state for self-strengthening development, the evaluation system based on materiality of human constructions in the past was also imported and localised. As a result, materials, including but not limited to buildings, were officially taken as carriers and symbols of the national pasts, and have been treated in different ways following contextual political changes. By reviewing the changing official attitudes towards the Chinese traditional materials, the discursive circumstance for the national past to be commonly recognised and become a backdrop for the mass ordinary lives is portrayed, as a political-cultural foundation to explain the current popularisation of the AHD and its social impacts.

The popular consciousness of the *Chinese nation* is the significant social foundation for the AHD to work effectively among Chinese citizens. A homogenising power internalised in the notion, which has been formed in historical usage, facilitates the adaptation. According to Zheng (2019), the proposition and initial usage of "the Chinese nation" was accompanied by the formation of modern Chinese nationalism, in the period of late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China (from the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century), which witnessed waves of foreign invasions that threatened the national sovereignty, and the revolutions and social campaigns by which a modern nation-state replaced the Qing Dynasty. Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Xinhai Revolution, once defined the Chinese nation exclusively as the Han ethnicity, appealing that China should be governed by Chinese people, and the other races which occupied their land should be expelled[12]. This initial claim to found a modern nation-state by Han people was put forward based on their long-term conscious self-separation from the Manchu ethnic group, which ruled the Qing Empire but was despised as barbaric comparing to the civilised Han ethnicity. In this way, although the Chinese nation was ethnically defined, in fact it is a cultural title that underlines the Han civilisation,

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[12] Sun, Yat-sen (1905) *Declaration for a Military Government*. Translated by Heselton, Christopher C. Available at: https://confuciusinstitute.unl.edu/Week%204.2%20-%20Sun%20Yat-sen%20-%20Declaration%20for%20a%20Military%20Government%20%281905%29.pdf (Accessed: 2 December 2022)

meanwhile relegates the others by barbarising them. K. Wang (2020) criticises that it is problematic to borrow the nation-state form from the West to found the modern China. The European nation-states were established by setting up territories, and all inhabitants therein can form a nation as long as the collective identity and culture can be created within a set of law and institution. However, the equation of the Han ethnicity and the Chinese nation created a *de facto* different state, which incurred tensions between the unified national discourse and existing ethnic differences. Although the official interpretation of the notion changed to embrace multiple ethnic groups, involving them into the Chinese nation after the Republic of China was founded (Zheng, 2019), superiority of the Han ethnicity, as well as the cultural superiority (Fairbank, 1987, p. 15), has been always effective in the Chinese nation discourse.

Furthermore, modernisation contributed to reinforcing the superiority of the Han culture in the Chinese nation by refining the notion of "people", *min* 民. From the perspective of the state, *min* was respected to clarify its nature that was totally different from the thousand years of monarchy. Referring to the Western history of civilisation, Sun Yet-sen attributed it to "the Three Principles of the People" (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主义) [13], respectively the Principles of Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood, regarding them as the common values which geminated from people and contributed to strengthening and modernising the Western states. For the new modern China, Sun expected the principles to become common sense of a minority of people who could lead the majority to progress, therefore civilising the popular foundation for the state. Here people were taken a significant component of the state revolution, deserving modern self-consciousness and knowledge hence to participate in the modern state construction. In other words, the extent of being modernised was taken as the main criteria to evaluate individuals. After the state founding, the *Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China* reiterated the importance of people for the state. Article 1 and 2 defines the state as being composed of the Chinese people, and its sovereignty was vested in people. Article 5 claims that citizens of the Chinese Republic are all equal. Articles 6 to 12 list the people's rights of freedom, and legal ways of political participation. The Constitution defined modern Chinese citizen by delimiting civil rights and claiming equality among all Chinese ethnic groups. Though to demonstrate modern features of the new state, the citizen definition did not challenge the superiority of civilisation that was rooted in the concept of Chinese nation. Instead, exemplifying the modern citizen image further contributed to the homogenising power of the Chinese nation discourse.

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[13] Sun Yat-sen firstly published the Three Principles of the People in the first edition of Min Bao ("People's Report"), a revolutionary newspaper in 1905.

Such conspiracy is represented meanwhile realised by physical manifestations, among which the reconstruction of traditional urban spaces provides good evidence. Modern urban planning was introduced from the West and was used to transform the cities left from the imperial past. By demarcating and functionalising physical space, the urban planning works were also effective at modernising citizens' lifestyle (Dong, 2003; Ferlanti, 2013). In such spatial reconstitution, some material remains from the past were deliberately maintained but were used in modern ways. Historical and traditional features of the materials were emphasised by the authorities, which designated them as "antiquities" (*guwu* 古物) or "monuments" (*guji* 古迹) by legislation, putting them under state protection, and using them for modern aims, including academic research, social uses, and public education (Liu, 2014). Such eclectic representations of the imperial remains transformed them to be monuments maintaining and delivering nationalism by the cultural and historic narratives attached. For example, the previous royal palaces and gardens in Beijing were transformed to be public parks and museums open to citizens, and became places of interest that attracted tourists both from home and abroad. By the conversion, the Republican government transformed ownership of the buildings from the imperial absolute power to the new citizens who owned civil rights to use them as public facilities (Dong, 2003; Naquin, 2001). In Shanghai, there were private gardens open to the public by selling tickets. Public leisure there became a new modern urban routine, which yet was just restricted in the upper middle classes (Liu, 2014). In addition to the new uses of historic buildings, traditional public venues were also taken for nationalist education. For instance, teahouses in Chengdu were officially designated to cultivate modern citizens. The traditional practice of drinking tea was taken advantage of, but was regulated to keep public hygiene and politeness. In addition, scripts of the traditional popular drama, which had been performed routinely there, were rewritten for arousing patriotic enthusiasm during the wartime, transforming the audience to be nationalist citizens (D. Wang, 2010). The cases illustrate the conspiracy between modernisation and the Han cultural superiority in the authorities' scheme of the new China. The traditional forms were retained and used in nationalist ways, meanwhile civilised and modernised citizens were required and disciplined in the rearranged public spaces by coding the corresponding spatial practices. The intentionality was embedded there pointing to civilisation and modernisation, which was the paramount value of the state then, also the power to homogenising the others, which were regarded as comparatively backward.

In a nutshell, the concept of Chinese nation, as the significant foundation for the present mass acknowledgement of the AHD, formed along with the modern state construction during the Republican period. The context of its germination and

development leads to superiority of a civilised and modernised status implied in the concept, with an inclination to homogenising the others by its transcendency. Urban public spaces were venues where the power could be enacted to mould the Chinese citizens, whom were expected as civilised and modernised. Among them, places left from the imperial China were used for the aim by taking advantage of the traditional forms to nurturing the subjectivities of the age. The use left a complex and mutable relationship between the Chinese tradition and modernisation, both of which can be reinterpreted to serve the state's pursuit for civilisation.

After founding of the PRC, drastic transformations happened to the relationship, with official interpretations changed. The historical changes laid a foundation for the contemporary attitudes towards heritage conservation to form. Once the socialist state was established, the materials remaining from the past were once treated as an opposition to modernisation in the early socialist years. As a result, there has been a period during which the old stuffs were totally denied, and this political meaning got popularised among the public with iconoclasm widely practiced by the masses. Inheriting the CPC founders' revolutionary views on the past and the West, the authorities would like to establish the socialist China in new ways that were distinguished from the entire past including both the Chinese imperial and western capitalist modes. As a result, pursuing a communist utopia, the government conducted a revolution on the ownership system to "eliminate" private ownership, with all properties statutorily owned by the state or collectives instead of individuals. The revolution of property ownership pattern was conducted to lay a foundation for the state development in planned economy, and resulted in huge transformations of the society and people's everyday life. Among them, ideologically the changed pattern signified a substitution of the old society left from the past before 1949, a commencement of a social transformation in a socialist mode (Teiwes, 1987, p. 95). In this context, stuffs remaining from the old society, though having survived for several years during the property ownership revolution, finally suffered destruction when the construction of a new society went to a fanatic iconoclastic extreme.

During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all "the olds" were regarded as representations of native traditions and capitalist culture as opposites to what the new socialist China pursued for, therefore should be demolished. Named as *the Four Olds* (四旧 *si jiu*) including old ideas (旧思想 *jiu sixiang*), old customs (旧风俗 *jiu fengsu*), old culture (旧文化 *jiu wenhua*), and old habits (旧习惯 *jiu xiguan*), stuffs, as well as local customs and living habits, were supposed to be eliminated and give way to new things and spirits representing socialist industrial culture, as what to be recognised

advanced in the politically radical years[14]. As a result, the society was reconstructed to be in a new look following the zeitgeist. A proletarian hard-working and frugal-living spirit was officially appreciated, with corresponding aesthetics applied in examining and creating physical surroundings.

Beyond the objectified entities and behaviours, the "olds" were linked with individuals who were identified with the characters, therefore to be allocated to specific classes and treated differently. For example, individuals classified into "the Black Five Classes" (黑五类 *heiwulei*) were regarded as embodiment of the olds, thus should get remoulded thoroughly to qualify as a new man of the new state. On the contrary, those from the advanced "Red Classes" were endowed with power to eliminate the olds and conduct disciplinary measures to those deserving remoulding (A. Wang, 2011). This distinct social classification of people based on their family background, with supremacy of the communist values and state independency held by the government, led creation of new political subjects during the Revolution in their practices of political participation (Schram, 1991, p.81-95). Hence, practices of destroying the olds became politically meaningful. Meanwhile, the power of practicing iconoclasm was endowed to the masses, especially those who were identified as politically advanced. As a result, the decade of havoc resulted in a common sharp denial to the Chinese imperial traditions, which got reinterpreted as opposite to modern spirits and ways of living. Here modernisation became the only impetus and representation of civilisation. Based on the division, political struggles were commonly practiced by the masses, forming radical modernists, as well as rifts between individuals and between social classes that were hardly to make up.

Although the Chinese traditions got intensively derogated, the traditional idea for homogeneity of the national culture was inherited, and was acted out via the aggressive construction of a socialist modern state. Here the Chinese word *guojia* (国家), as the only translation of nation, state, and country in English, has been playing an important role to enact the homogenising power. It is argued that in Chinese tradition, *guo* (the state, the nation, the country) was ethically structured in the same way as *jia* (family), which were clans where members were connected by blood bonds and had to perform their domestic roles that were delimited by the patriarchal hierarchies (Shen, 2008; Shu, 2003; Zhao, 2009). In other words, the pre-modern ruling groups took the works of empire governance as domestic affairs. Bureaus and citizens were supposed to perform their roles as predetermined by the imperial social hierarchy. When the revolutions for

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[14] The four olds were indicated in *Renmin ribao* (the People's Daily) that has been supervised by the CPC, on 1st June 1966 in an editorial piece *hengsao yiqie jiuguisheshen* 横扫一切牛鬼蛇神.

modernisation started, the social hierarchy was overturned, yet the parallel understanding between *guo* and *jia* was continued, and a combined use of *guojia* to signify the modern China was popularised among public intellectuals appealing for founding a new modern nation-state, with the right of self-determination to demarcate the country borders. As D. Wang (2010, p.2-4) and Xiang (2010) argue, since the modern China was accomplished in the only action, *guojia* as a word for mass mobilisation was used to signify either the state, the nation, and the country. On this unified basis, during the early socialist period, though the Chinese traditions were derogated, the familyship which ideologically connected the state and individuals still effectively mobilised citizens to follow the social orders and participate in constructing the socialist modern *guojia*. Social administrative units were set across the country as "big families", the neo-traditionalist social institution accommodating citizens and organising them to join industrial production, meanwhile creating the social relations in which citizens had to depend on them (Wu, 2022, p.7-12). Such way of social governance in fact embedded the state in society via the family link between the state and citizens. In this context, the emotionally moving word *guojia* is still politically effective to mobilise the masses, though themes can be changed in different historical periods.

Despite the decades of derogations, PRC rebuilt the respect for Chinese traditions after the official launch of economic reforms and the opening-up policy in 1978. Meanwhile, the homogenising inclination has not been put away. When China was gradually involved into the world in the following decades, national characteristics were required, therefore resulting in resurrection of the Chinese traditional culture as available resources to make cultural distinctions. In the 1980s, after the state changed principles of development and embraced market, regulations on the public sphere were also loosen, allowing discussions on the relationship between Chinese tradition and modernisation to happen. Therefore, the old materials were no more treated only with denials as opposition to the new society. However, despite of divergences in arguments about attitudes and uses towards the Chinese traditional culture, it was acknowledged that all discussions contributed to better constructing the socialist *guojia* with Chinese characteristics (Zi, 1987). Here the olds were instrumentally applied for the unanimous state goal of development, with the Party still performing a leader with absolute supremacy in decisions makings. Since the economic reforms, the Party gradually changed the official attitude, as well as its role to be an inheritor of the national past, thus to get legitimacy of governing the grand country. Especially, after China was ratified with membership in the World Trade Organisation and was involved into the global capital network at the beginning of the 21st century, traditions and the national past could be taken as resources to be put in cultural industries, thus became replicable and communicable symbols

delivering specific cultural meanings beyond the geographical boundaries. The survival traditional cultural artifacts, which were detested as the *Four Olds* and were hard nurtured in some neglected corners, were appropriated by agents of modernisation, and became consumable products available via the international connected market (Crouch, 2010). Consequently, the Chinese traditional culture got resuscitated to serve a culturally distinctive national image, which could be possessed via consumption. In the globalised context, the image is expected to be read and viewed from the outside, and a resource of making national identities inside, ready to be used by citizens with itself being commercialised and popularised in every corner of ordinary life.

Among the remnants of traditional culture, specific artefacts got legally protected and were called "cultural heritages", the name that is internationally acknowledged and involves more types of treasures left from the past. In 1982, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics* was published and legitimated the official practices of protection. Here the protected cultural relics were still used for arousing and reinforcing the mass Chinese national identity, by narrating one of the heritage values as to "conduct education in patriotism and revolutionary tradition, and build the socialist spiritual civilization".[15] For the built cultural relics, in addition to the monumental and historic sites, 25 cities were designated as historically and culturally meaningful, deserving holistic conservation planning. Meanwhile, it was also the initial stage for the PRC to apply for World Heritage Nomination, as one of the steps to join the world. Six Chinese heritage sites was listed in 1987, which launched the following decades of "World Heritage craze" in China, featuring by popularity of application among various levels of government (Yan, 2011). In the 1990s, Ludwig & Waltori (2020) argue that a "heritage turn" happened in China when the CPC searching for a new form of legitimacy beyond communism. At that time, official practices to make and enact heritage preservation planning contributed to substantiating the Party's emphases of the long and glorious history of China, and its legitimacy of rule. After the 2000s, the cultural heritage system got constantly improved, with more types of heritages involved. In 2002, it was expanded to involve "the famous cities, streets, villages and towns of historical and cultural value". Specific conservation planning was required as legal protections on such areas. It is argued that international best practices of heritage conservation, with institutions like UNESCO and ICOMOS, were influential to the authoritative experts who facilitated the legislation to expand the range of heritage conservation to include the

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[15] In the legal text, it is written as: "with a view to strengthening the national protection of cultural relics, promoting the scientific research, inheriting the splendid historical and cultural legacy of the Chinese Nation, conducting education in patriotism and revolutionary tradition, and building the socialist spiritual civilization, this Law is formulated in accordance with the Constitution."

settlements (Xie, Gu and Zhang, 2020). Besides, in the 2002 revision, the general principles for protection also included "building the socialist material civilization" in addition to the spiritual civilisation. This revision also allowed local enactments of heritage conservation planning, and practices to experiment new methods of conservation, bringing possibilities to present cultural multiplicity. In this period, cultural heritages are situated in a more complex political context, where the Chinese national identities need to form with the state's open attitude towards the world.

Generally, old constructions have experienced distinct official evaluations in the historical periods of the last century, while the authorities, though changed, always pursue for establishing a civilised and nationally distinguished state. The historical process shows both the ideological persistence of civilisation, and the dynamic entanglement between the national past and the Western mode of modernisation. The historical explorations set a foundation for the contemporary "Chinese mode of modernisation", a self-appointed nationally distinctive way to a civilised society. Here the Han ethnic superiority has been essential to construct the progressive discourses, in which the inclination for civilisation always dominates in the historical uses of national pasts and the introductions of Western modernisation. Consequently, the Chinese nation discourse, which was initially invented based on the Han-centric ideology, has always reserved a homogenising power to the differences inside, implying that they should get transformed to be civilised. The exemplars of civilisation are officially set up, and both the national traditions and the Western modernisation are raw materials to produce them. Historically, the exemplars were differently portrayed by the authorities for respective political purposes of the eras, leading to the changing mainstream attitudes towards the ideological materials, as well as the social manifestations.

In this background, the cultural heritage designation of old constructions is a means to reach national propaganda by embedding specific political and cultural meanings in the materials, transforming them to be affective and educational to viewers by transmitting the pre-set messages. It is a way of making citizens, a project which has been affiliated to the works of making the modern China. Changes of the official attitudes towards the national pasts alter the embedded messages and the ways of transmission, hence resulting in different personal readings and attitudes when encountering the old objects. The variety can always exist despite the homogenising power for the overall civilisation, forming potentials for change in the present national project for traditional culture revival, as will be discussed below, that is led by the state for a sounding common happiness.

3.1.2. At the moment: consuming the national past as a part of happy life

3.1.2.1.   "The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" with a blueprint for a collectively prosperous life

When it comes to the present China during President Xi Jinping's era, Xi announced the ambitious "Chinese Dream" as a collective goal for living in abundance and happiness, fabricating a communist utopia and encouraging every citizen to pay efforts for realising it[16]. In this context, the nationalist fervour reaches a peak with market economy still effective in keeping rapid economic growth, further increasing the official praise for the Chinese traditional culture, which is, however, selectively represented to serve the state development.

Currently, the national past is officially interpreted to demonstrate the civilised and strong *status quo* of the present PRC. Accompanying the proposal of "Chinese Dream", Chinese tradition was promoted with an unprecedented respect by the Party, being raised as a significant part of the Socialist Core Values (社会主义核心价值观 *shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan*) which emphasise cultivating moral individuals[17], thus to contribute to achieve a final goal for a Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese People (中华民族伟大复兴 *zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*)[18]. In this grand narration, a good social order of the modern socialist state is expected to be realised with reference to traditional virtues as rhetoric describing a better future with the "socialist culture with Chinese characteristics". Taking itself as the only legitimate regime of the era, the Party attributes the present prosperous social spectacles to its inheritance and promotion of Chinese traditional culture. A "confidence in China's own culture", which could be traced from the present to 5,000 years ago as a start point of civilisation, is further to be nurtured among the masses as a necessity in the Great Rejuvenation. Perry (2013) comments on this "Cultural Nationalism" as an "authoritarian resilience" which justifies the Party's right to rule. In this way, the Chinese traditional culture has been raised as a source of national cohesion. In official expectations, it should get widely propagandised among the populace, and a source for training actors contributing to realising the Chinese Dream by inheriting and practicing the culture.

The national tradition could also be applied to orient a happy future that is achievable by collective efforts. A blueprint for an ideal life based on modernisation that has been

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[16] The Chinese Dream was put forward by Xi in 2012 as to "realise the greatest dreams of the Chinese nation in the modern era". Specifically, Xi set two deadlines for progressive achievements supposed to be realised: before the 100th anniversary of the Party establishment (2021), a "moderately prosperous society" should be realised; before the 100th anniversary of the PRC establishment (2049), a modernised socialist China could be realised. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2012-11-29/c_113852724.htm

[17] This was brought out during the 13th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in 2014.

[18] It was proposed on the 19th CPC National Congress.

continuing pushing for over a century, and currently is coated with the "moderately prosperous society" (小康社会 *xiaokang shehui*), a concept cited from Chinese traditional classics. This concept was officially established by Deng Xiaoping, the key person embarking on the economic reforms, to refer an ideal future for the whole people, that was approachable in progressive development relying on market vitality (CPC News, n.d.). In the following decades, *xiaokang shehui* has been reiterated by the Party, always orienting to the remote but accessible happy future of the *guojia*, but got adaptive interpretations in different periods by referring to specific social statuses. Currently, Xi's reiteration is combined with the project of traditional culture revival, creating an imagination of the utopia where the traditions can get well maintained by every citizen in rapid modernisation, and meanwhile they can be used for personal realisation of the *xiaokang* social status. As a result, modern and instrumental ways to represent and appropriate the traditions are popularised across the country. The traditional culture becomes a source of national identity, meanwhile an access to the utopia where the development is compatible with the national tradition. In this context, Chinese traditional culture has been politically appropriated and got pervasively influential in every aspect of life.

From the original source to the socio-economic context when Deng carried it out, *xiaokang shehui* referred to an intermediate social status on the way to a utopia. The term *xiaokang* applies a concept from a Confucian classics *the Book of Rites* (礼记 *li ji*), describing a society in which individuals' self-discipline contributes to a harmonious social status. It was put forward with the Great Unity (大同 *datong*), referring a sublime society in which all were sufficiently maintained and treated others with equal kindness, but it has "fallen into disuse and obscurity". As a result, *xiaokang* as a compromise, describes a society in which every family takes care of oneself and lives comfortably, practicing "*li*" (the ritual norms and propriety) to keep good social orders, thus everyone could achieve the self-sufficiency (Smith, 2019). In the 1980s, this idea was referred by Deng in a humble way, being set as an intermediate goal to guarantee every citizen "warm and sufficient" in the coming forty years. Accompanying the economic reforms by which the state started to embrace market, this portrait of a better society could well fit a neoliberal developing mode, in which self-improvement and personal efforts are prioritised to reach a *xiaokang* status, while this transition is coated with the official appropriation of concepts from the Chinese traditional classics. In this way, in the post-reform era, the national traditional culture was brought back, got authorised, and was appropriated to pursue for modern developmental goals in need of supports and participations from the masses. The official approval and use of the national tradition

strategically kept the national distinction, therefore to get acknowledged by the masses, thus to get legitimacy of the Party to conduct the developmental project for the nation. Physical remains, then, are inevitably involved into the uses and are attached with cultural narrations that are in fact politically meaningful.

3.1.2.2. Consumption as the dominant means of realisation: urban space under cultural representation

On the premise of the traditional culture return, contemporarily market that has been applied by the state for economic growth for four decades, offers a perfect means by which the culture, and the corresponding ideology that the state would like to propagandise, gets spread widely among the masses. As Callahan (2006) argues, the Chinese nation gets constantly reproduced in popular performances to commemorate the historic moments, in addition to the leaders' works of making. In the present social context, the performances can be achieved via consumption, with the Chinese traditions being symbolically appropriated and put into the industrial production cycle to assemble cultural products. From the authorities' perspective, encouraging and supporting the consuming logic can keep the popularity of nationalism. As a result, consuming nationalism is approved by both the authorities and the populace as a proper way of containing the popular patriotic affections and national identities. For heritage sites which have been interpreted to represent the national culture, they are good venues of practice. The consuming mode contributes to boosting the heritage industry and popularising the AHD. By encouraging citizens to perform consumers there, the authorities use the sites for the mass civilisation project, in which the ideal citizens are expected to be built by inculcating them with the Socialist Core Values. The use of cultural heritages, along with other cultural industries, contributes to realising the blueprint of the contemporary China.

A series of official documents demonstrate the authorities' adoption of the consuming logic. Generally, the cultural industries have been officially recognised as a perfect mechanism to simultaneously facilitate the state cultural development and economic growth. In *the 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development* (2022), the central government requires the cultural industries to get high-quality development. Cultural and tourism industries should be developed together and mutually promote each other. Heritage conservation, which gets emphasised in the document to "carry forward China's fine traditional and revolutionary culture", can be adaptively reused to achieve the developmental goals. For the realm, *the Guidelines for increasing public accessibility to heritage buildings* published by the National Cultural Heritage Administration (2020) specifies how it works. For the designated buildings, the permitted functions in use include community service, cultural exhibition, visiting and sightseeing, commercial service, and

non-profitable official use. Meanwhile, operators are supposed to present the unique heritage values, propagandise the Socialist Core Values, and insist the positive and healthy cultural representations. In such design, visitors are assumed as consumers who can only passively receive the given information. Furthermore, *the Suggestions on encouraging and supporting public participation in the protection and utilization of heritage buildings* (2022) encourage the social powers to participate in specific works, including building preservation, historic landscape maintenance, tourism and cultural industries, and cultural inheritance and development. In the social active participation, the modern functions of cultural heritage conservation can come into play, including "inheriting the China's fine traditional culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture", and "facilitating social and economic development". Here the consumers' productive potential for strengthening the consuming logic is discovered, though with limited changes made to their roles in the production cycle.

By the institutional design, heritage conservation is used to serve the Party's ambition for "the Chinese Dream", a utopia where both the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" and the *xiaokang shehui* can come true. It leads to the explosive growth of heritage sites and heritage tourism. In the past decade, numbers of cultural heritage sites at the national, provincial, and county level increased by 115%[19]. Simultaneously, heritage tourism is booming. Up to 2021, 15 exemplar cities and 115 pilot cities of cultural and tourism consumption have been set up, with more than 14,000 officially graded scenic spots. The number of medium and large cultural and tourism enterprises has increased from 36,000 to 65,000 in the past decade, and the annual operating revenue in total rises from 5.6 trillion yuan to 11.9 trillion yuan[20]. Heritage conservation has been continuously taken as the venue for the cultural and tourism industries to develop, meanwhile serving the presupposed political purposes.

However, domination of the consuming logic in heritage conservation marginalises the other spatial practices. For example, by studying a traditional commercial street in Zhongshan City, Guangdong, Ding (2017) criticises that the only material urban regeneration cannot reconstruct local people's place identity, which has been formed in long-term interactive spatial uses, but may trigger identity crisis. Y. Zhang & Wu (2016) illustrate coexistence of three different heritage discourses in one Chinese village under

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[19] Renmin Ribao 人民日报 (2022) *The number of National Cultural Relics increased by 115 percent over the past decade* 全国重点文物保护单位数量 10 年增长 115％. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-07/27/content_5702978.htm (Accessed: 6 December 2022)

[20] Guangming Wang 光明网 (2022) *Ministry of Culture and Tourism: Since the second half of this year, the cultural and tourism market has shown a positive recovery* 文旅部：今年下半年以来文化和旅游市场呈现出积极复苏态势. Available at: https://m.gmw.cn/baijia/2022-08/24/1303106532.html (Accessed: 6 December 2022)

official heritage conservation, and show a state of flux and struggle in different actors' practices of conservation. They contend that the assemblages of local meaningful heritages should be cherished though facing the powerful AHD. Harriet (2020) reveals a socially produced living space by practices of the subaltern residential groups in the old city of Beijing, as an alternative but real side of *lao Beijing*. They are all out of sight when the consuming logic dominates the place. Furthermore, the latter can become a trigger for more conflicts to happen between stakeholders in place-making and spatial practices. Without reflections made on the powerful AHD and its spatialisation which couples with the consuming logic, such issues are hard to get recognised, not to mention getting solved.

To summarise the moment, it is a nationalist peak which is led by the leader's will pursuing for the Chinese uniqueness on the way to the common happiness. Cultural heritages, as manifestations of the national pasts, are officially preferred and are encouraged to get foregrounded to present it. Meanwhile, the consuming logic which is supported by the rising consumer society is commonly taken to connect the heritages and the masses, transmitting the embedded messages to visitors with the aim of citizen making. It contributes to the consensus achievement between the state and the society about nationalism, with the former as the legitimate agent to protect the national representations, and the latter as supporters and beneficiaries based on the universal approval of the national uniqueness and cohesion. Based on this consensus, an expansion of cultural heritage types and values is possible. Anything about the national past, even local ordinary living scenes, can be evaluated and become extraordinariness, being put into the cultural and tourism industries and ready to be consumed. The mode of vernacular culture conservation has been officially legitimated and promoted countrywide. However, what still needs to be careful is the homogenising power embedded in the Chinese national discourse. Conspiring with the consuming logic, it may powerfully transform the cultures to be industrial products by changing local ways of social production. This threat to cultural diversity is further supported by the institutional design, which will be analysed below.

3.2.   From *danwei* to *shequ*: the state governance of the society

In addition to the socio-political context which has undergone historical changes, and contemporarily welcomes the AHD to settle down and represent physical remains from the past as historically and culturally valuable, the institutional structure, by which the state keeps control over the society, and the power to carry out heritage identification and conservation, also contribute to the legitimacy of the AHD and its spatialisation among the masses. This direct control has been kept by setting up urban administrative units which were substantialised as bounded spaces. Such social governance allows power

interventions to the local level, resulting in efficient conveys of the state will to the masses, and the corresponding urban spaces become venues for disciplining citizens that are qualified as the state desires for development. Furthermore, specifically for the case study site as an urban historic area, local bureaus are empowered to carry out the conservation project. As a result, the local institutional structure pre-sets power relations when implementing heritage conservation in residential neighbourhoods. Based on the historical transformations of the governing structure, both bureaucrats and citizens have presupposed positions in the system and perform corresponding roles though dealing with new things.

Generally speaking, forms and functions of the administrative units got changed accompanying the institutional reforms after 1978. In cities, it is a gradual transition from "work-units" (*danwei* 单位) to "communities" (*shequ* 社区). Consequently, official expectations on individuals, who have always been linked with such units, have been changed from hardworking comrades to self-disciplined citizens. Meanwhile, disciplinary contents that are delivered by the social units also change. The local state agencies, with the historical institutional transformations, affect citizens' sense of collectivity and individuality by directly settling down in everyday social lives and powerfully enacting spatial and social changes. They also hold the power to implement local heritage conservation, therefore are significant when discussing the social impacts of the AHD to urban historic areas.

In the early socialist period, *danwei* was an institutionally established social unit for urban governance in the context of planned economy. After the PRC was established with socialism being firmly trusted by the CPC coming in power, practices to reform the backward society were conducted with *danwei* as a functional medium by which the planned development could be carried on. In the pre-reform years, working positions were mostly provided by *danwei*, as state-owned or collective-owned enterprises or institutions, that got citizens' working and living organised into the unified socialist production system. In addition to the working place, it was also the social welfare distributor that was nearly the most important source of citizens' livelihood in that period when housing and everyday necessities were rationed instead of being traded as commodities. Spatially, this institutional system was located in cities normally as walled big compounds encompassing working place, accommodation, and all-round welfare facilities, like a microsociety where everyday life went on (Douglass et al., 2012). In addition to the material provision, being situated in such collective working and living system as the only agency which supported socialist individuals and families in highly organised modes, citizens' social identity and sense of belonging could also come from living practices in *danwei*. In this way, by

designating *danwei* as the main urban governing unit which was able to authorise employees' social identity by proving the relation in between, the state could keep influential among the masses in a huge number and get the society organised thus to keep the development plans going as expected. Citizens as *danwei* members, also acted as receivers of social welfare although the state, as the nominal provider, was far away from everyday life (Bray, 2005; Lu, 1993).

When the economic reforms introduced market to the socialist state, the planned economic institution was abandoned, with *danwei* declining as no more the main urban unit. In this new historical stage, *shequ* was designated as the new urban unit substituting *danwei* to meet a *status quo* of social mobility in the era of market economy (Boland & Zhu, 2012; Bray, 2006; Wu, 2005). Simultaneously, it is the social administrative unit by which the state can continue direct interventions in people's everyday life (Tomba, 2009). This continuity allows the presence of the state by positioning the agencies, which are endowed with power to continue the works for social cohesion and stability. In this situation, local heritages can be resources for the works.

In the direct translation, *shequ* means community. Although sharing the same word, the former refers to an officially designated urban residential unit, which, like *danwei*, is bounded while without physical walls. This term was introduced to China as an academic concept by the first generation of Chinese sociologists in the early 20th century and was applied to study the "rural China", focusing on some specific village communities with boundaries set as a lens to learn the society then (Jiang & Hu, 2002; Xiao, 2011). However, sociology study was officially forbidden by the socialist government since it was unproductive in the planned development in the pre-reform era, but got rehabilitated as a discipline after the reforms that were accompanied with the Party's open attitude towards social multiplicity. In this context, community was appropriated officially referring to the area under administration of Residential Committee (*jumin weuiyuanhui* 居民委员会, for short: *juweihui* 居委会), the non-governmental self-governing organisation at the basic level in cities, yet institutionally established with boundaries set and householders registered under the lowest level of urban government Subdistrict Office (*jiedao banshichu* 街道办事处, for short: *jiedao* 街道)[21] (Bray, 2006). From the 1980s, public service industry was encouraged to develop at a *shequ* level for public welfare delivery when *danwei* could not cover the whole range of urban citizens after the reforms. In 2000, significance of this social unit was endorsed by the central government. In *the Opinions*

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[21] It is not a newly established social unit. In the 1950s, Residential Committees and Subdistrict Offices started to be set paralleled to *danwei*, taking in charge of urban residents who were not in the *danwei* system, as a supplement to the urban administration at that time (He, 2003; Xia, 2008).

of the Ministry of Civil Affairs on promoting urban community construction nationwide (2000), *shequ* was designated as a constructive entity in which comprehensive purposes could be reached: as a "collective of social practices by people who reside in a specific territory", *shequ* is supposed to be an administrative unit where 1) public services could be delivered, 2) a cultural lifestyle with moral cultivation could be conducted among the masses, and 3) self-governance at a basic urban level could be realised. Similar to the practices to establish community by defining common values in the Western context (Crow & Allan, 1994; Martin, 2017), by constructing the *shequ*, the proposal would like to strengthen citizens' senses of identities towards the collective as a community, thus to keep the society as stable as it was before the reforms, and meanwhile to reduce burdens on the state of taking in charge of citizens by providing social welfares from all-round aspects. Such cohesive function was further strengthened in *Suggestions on the further step of harmonious community construction* (2009) published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. In the document, *shequ* was regarded as the institutional foundation for a harmonious society that is expected to be realised in every corner of the country. One of the ways to realise harmonious communities is to construct community culture, which is taken as a good source to construct community identity, as an alternative to the diluting *danwei*-based one. As a social administrative unit, *shequ* is politically meaningful to continue social cohesion and stability. The contemporary elaborate governmentality is implemented via *shequ* to normalise personal manners meanwhile nurture ideal citizens.

In this situation, cultural heritages are taken as resources to achieve the goal. Based on the power endowed to *jiedao* and *shequ*, local bureaucrats can use heritages to form residents' *shequ* identity, improve their *suzhi* and strengthen the social cohesion. For instance, in Beijing, *jiedao* was legislated as responsible for organising detailed works of local heritage conservation (The People's Government of Beijing Municipality, 2020). In practice, *jiedao* and *juweihui* lead relevant works by power assigned, and construct 'community' based on the existing *shequ* by allowing limited groups of residents to participate (Wei, 2022). Similarly, in conservation practices elsewhere, although the administrations have not been legalised as responsible bodies, in practice they hold power of decision in conservation works, leading marginalisation of local communities (Feuchtwang, 2021; Li et al., 2020, 2021). Here *shequ* acts as a *state apparatus* that has coded power relations and social identities within the established territory in day-to-day practice (DeLanda, 2016, p.22). It is the political role of *shequ* that enables the use of heritage conservation to serve social governance.

In general, based on the institutional setting at the neighbourhood level, cultural heritages therein are liable to serve political and administrative goals. In the *danwei-shequ*

transition, Chinese urban society gets structural changes, with the official governing strategies updated as well. Respecting the higher social fluidity for prompting economic development in the post reform era, the authorities also changed the exemplar of ideal citizen, expecting self-disciplined and civilised ones able to contribute to the development meanwhile keeping social stable. Still with the state agents' presence at the *shequ* level, the administrative unit is the venue of indoctrination, and culture there gets instrumentally applied for political purposes. Cultural heritages are no exception. Since the institutional reform did not change the state's neighbourhood-level regulation, the local spatialisation of the AHD can be realised authoritatively, while it can undermine cultural multiplicity, as well as different social groups' equal rights to the same urban space, as the studies criticise.

3.3.   As time goes by: contextual changes and individual's ways of self-positioning

The mentioned great historical changes were deposited to form the political-cultural context for individuals to position themselves in the society. Generally speaking, the constantly existing collectivity and the realisable individuality are resources by which the individuals can achieve self-positioning. Heritage conservation is a venue for the practice, and the state can intervene to direct the process. Specifically for historic conservation areas, the constantly present state agents keep the sense of collectivity in accordance with the mainstream political discourses. Meanwhile, the collectivity allows its counterpart, personal individuality, to get presented but keeps restrictions on it. It leads to the individualities with features in a specific orientation that is supervised by the state.

The collectivity has been kept in the Party's connection with the masses and "a mass line" as a governing strategy from its rise. Lu (1993) traced this connection back to the initial stage of the CPC, when the Party started to tie with the masses in some remote rural areas. A reciprocal relation with villagers during wartime became a foundation for the Party to strategically get connected with the masses after the PRC was established. In addition to this analysis, Bray (2005) added that the organisational structure of modern guilds and factories in Shanghai during the Republican period was also a smooth transition to *danwei* as a collective industrial unit. He argues that a collective subjectivity was built up and continued in Chinese culture. Whatever transitional forms, individuals kept practicing corresponding social roles orderly to keep the collectivity in a good and stable condition. So to speak, the socialist *danwei* fitted the Republican urban industrial organisational form by coincidence. If a collective culture is regarded as a tradition, such various forms of labour organisation were branches of the tradition, in which individuals' subjectivities were established in a sense of collectivity. After the PRC was established,

the collective culture was officially recognised by the state, which emphasised the mass line when setting up the polity. As a result, the collective culture was branded with the socialist spirit, and has been officially advocated by political propaganda.

This continuity offers a dependable path for those who were "within the *danwei* system" to rely on in the present urban life where *danwei* is no longer dominate. Besides, a self-identity based on collectivity can be kept by this continuity with *shequ* as a new agent of the state conveying the collective ideologies in everyday propagandas and governance. From *danwei* to *shequ*, the social units were established as mediums between the state and individuals, in which a collectivity is kept and practiced collaboratively by officers and residents. Discursively, the social units are analogised as "big families" in which individuals, as family members, are responsible for peace and harmony in a collective sense (Bray, 2005). This metaphor also matches that of *guojia*, as explained above blurredly referring to state, country, or nation in Chinese, therefore contributing to the uniformity between the state and people.

The physical entity where the collectivity could be realised and kept is public space of *danwei* and *shequ*, with the mediate public realm argued to have been existing for long. In some researches on the pre-modern Chinese society, the Chinese character 公 *gong* being translated as "public", allowed ambiguities between "official" and "collective". Hence, public sphere between the official and the private was made and kept in personal autonomous practices of established social orders (Rowe, 1990). It was vulnerable and temporary, as a result of social practice without a fixed spatial demarcation, while such happenings were always under a state surveillance (Naquin, 2001). This sphere of *gong* led individuals' self-discipline of public behaviours. When the Republican period started, public spaces were introduced as a specific type of modern urban space into cities, aiming at mass civilisation thus to save the state which was backward and stagnant in reformers' eyes (Dong, 2003; D. Wang, 2008). Afterwards, this civilisation project was prolonged in public spaces by the government of PRC, which aimed at "leading people to keep forward", and simultaneously announcing the supreme power of the Party-state. With the aims, public space was applied as a venue where "a front of the masses could be occupied by 'advanced ideologies and cultures'" (用先进思想文化占领基层阵地 *yong xianjin sixiangwenhua zhanling jicengzhendi*)[22], resulting in partial representation of cultures after being sifted and modified to fit what the powerful authorities required to realise by public spaces. Here the public spaces were used for the power wills in "anti-agoras of

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[22] From *Guidelines on deepening building activities of the mass spiritual civilisation*, by CPC Central Steering Committee for Spiritual Civilization (2017) 中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会《关于深化群众性精神文明创建活动的指导意见》

social cities" (Czepczyński, 2008, p.71). In a nutshell, following the historical transformations of the public realm, with changes of corresponding spaces, at a *danwei* or *shequ* level, *gong*, once as an ambiguous realm in between the official and the private ones, has got clearly demarcated by constructing physical entities in which both personal affective links to the party-state and mass practices of affirming the collectivity could be achieved (Steinmüller, 2015).

Simultaneous to the collectivity that has been kept by subtle institutional designs, a common consciousness of individualities featuring self-discipline also arises from the public realm. As argued, public spaces that seem innocent and have been pervasive in cities are applied as fronts where advanced cultures should occupy. Individuals, composing a part of the national goal for a common prosperity, are supposed to improve their personal qualities synchronously to fit the developing progress. Matched individuals are expected to be realised by implementing two "civilisation projects" covering physical and spiritual aspects: The socialist spiritual civilisation (社会主义精神文明 *shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming*) and the socialist material civilisation (社会主义物质文明 *shehui zhuyi wuzhi wenming*) were put forward at the beginning of the 1980s as two constructible aspects for the general goal for modernisation[23]. Respectively, the spiritual civilisation project was conducted aiming at forming citizens with virtues and corresponding behaviours in everyday life. *Suzhi*, as reviewed in Chapter 2.1 as an official discourse linking individual morality with proper public behaviours and in frequent public uses, is applied to judge practical effects of the civilisation project and prompts individuals to get self-improved. Generally, factors to measure *suzhi* include personal moral level, scientific and cultural knowledge level, and body fitness level[24]. It is assumed that by pursuing for reaching higher levels, people could externalise the improved *suzhi* to their social behaving rules, thus to reach a good social relationship with others (Anagnost, 2004). In addition, on the side of the material civilisation project, it is planned to aim at improving the material productivity and upgrading people's physical living habitat, hence to provide a physical foundation for approaching the utopian society. Both the projects are designed to support each other thus to guarantee "a right way of development", sketching a blueprint by defining exemplary individuals and physical habitats, and are realised via public space where the properness could be demonstrated to the masses. An ideal mode

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[23] The pair of concept was put forward by Deng Xiaoping during the central working conference in 1980 with the title *Guanche tiaozheng fangzhen, baozheng anding tuanjie* 贯彻调整方针，保证安定团结 (Implement the policy of adjustment and ensure stability and unity)

[24] From *Guidelines on deepening building activities of the mass spiritual civilisation*, by CPC Central Steering Committee for Spiritual Civilization (2017) 中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会《关于深化群众性精神文明创建活动的指导意见》

for this is that good social orders could be practiced by moral individuals in a well-equipped physical space, thus everyone could live satisfyingly by oneself, and keep good relationship with others. In this situation, a subjectivity is constructed by borrowing traditional ethical codes, and is featured by the self-disciplinary public behaviours and the conscious maintenance of public interests. The state there is exclusively powerful to define the characteristics of civilised and advanced exemplars, despite its loosened controls over the society.

As for heritage conservation, it is a venue where the collectivity of a civilised national group with affluent historical and cultural narratives is to be maintained. In addition, by enjoying happiness there, individuals are nurtured to have self-consciousness and confidence of the national culture. This is brought out by the central government's *Suggestions on improving protection and inheritance of history and culture in urban and rural development* (2021), the latest guidance on making heritage conservation socially influential. Specifying ways of tightly connecting heritage conservation and spatial development, the guidance facilitates the spiritual civilisation project based on the consuming logic, which has been established as argued in Chapter 3.1.2. One way is to enrich historical and cultural narratives about heritage site, and spatialise them to have "history and culture seen everywhere", "highlighting city spirits and rural civilisation in development". By this way, "the masses are edified in everyday spatial practices unconsciously". Another way highlighted is public participation. Comparing to the passively civilised masses, the mechanism encourages active individuals and groups to participate in heritage conservation with initiative and positivity. The approaches and intentions illustrate how heritage conservation is officially used to fit the general aim of keeping social stability and cohesion by providing resources to make the collectivity, and moulding corresponding individuals by social education. The collectivity is kept and represented by the AHD, which themes public spaces and emphasises the narratives serving nationalism construction. The circumstances are made in order to nurture the specific nationalist characteristics, and abilities to inherit the Chinese culture in everyday spatial practices for individuals.

In general, the political and institutional transition made impacts on the society, allowing citizens to perceive then present individualities meanwhile keeping the sense of collectivity that citizens can continue relying on. In this context, citizens participate in the ideal society construction by becoming high-quality individuals, which are propagandised expected in the mainstream political narratives portraying a collective utopian future. Therefore, individualities are formed by following a set of criteria that is officially formulated to serve a collective goal of development. Here the state plays a significant role by defining the advanced *suzhi*, and holds connections between individuals and the

collective interests in both discursive and administrative ways. As a result, it might lead to a society with a single dimension guiding rapid accumulation of material and fortune. Individuals, with consciousness of their individualities, make progress in a specific path by trusting what is officially encouraged. Their personal efforts contribute to the construction of a one-dimensional society, which is criticised by Marcuse (1991), as an advanced industrial society where technical progress has been "a whole system of domination and coordination", and "creates forms of life (and of power) which appear to reconcile the forces opposing the system and to defeat or refute all protest in the name of the historical prospects of freedom from toil and domination" (p. xii). In the advanced industrial society where industrialisation has developed with an increasing sector of automation, technology is not neutral as instruments for production and distribution, but has become a system of domination determining both social and individual needs by excluding the other historical alternatives, thus results in a universal system of thoughts and behaviours that are commonly practiced based on an affluency guaranteed by the advanced industrial productivity (p. xv).

In the contemporary China, in addition to the dominance of technology, the continuous pursuit for civilisation, accompanying the homogeneous power, contributes to making oneness of the society and citizens. The collective tone, which has been effective to arouse the civil patriotic enthusiasm, is applied to sugar up the hegemony. Chinese people's better life with both material and spiritual affluency is presupposed and involve every citizen into the path, in which development on individuals accompany with the *guojia*. Here a combination between nationalism and technology forms to be a dominant system directing discoveries of subjectivities that are officially preferred. Cultural heritages are used as resources for the civilisation project, providing venues where the officially specified utopia can be temporarily experienced, as well as a path via which the self-civilisation can be practiced. Unless the mainstream usage gets challenged, cultural heritages can only contribute to reproducing the hegemony.

3.4. Discussions

In this chapter, I make a critical discourse analysis about the AHD in China from the historical and contextual perspectives. By analysing the background where the AHD gets officially recognised and has been spatialised countrywide, the chapter sets up the contextual foundation for the following writings by answering to the questions: firstly, why can the AHD work there? Secondly, what is the role of the AHD in Chinese social governance? Thirdly, what impact can the discourse have on the society? Only by knowing the contextual conditions can we understand the contemporary popularity of heritage conservation, and then to problematise some details of the AHD and the corresponding

spatialisation that contribute to producing social inequality and cultural hegemony.

To answer the questions respectively, firstly, the AHD well fits the Chinese nationalism, which has been prevailing for over a century. Although the official interpretations of the cohesive term have been changing, the homogenising power and the superiority of civilisation continue. This cultural-political context welcomes the AHD to land and work to reproduce the hierarchical cognitive structure when discovering cultures. Secondly, being situated in the Chinese context, the AHD is used as a resource to achieve the civilisation projects. Respectively, the AHD spatialisation contributes to the physical achievement of the civilisation project. Meanwhile, spiritually, cultural heritage sites are educational venues where the historic and cultural narratives, as well as the implied doctrines are delivered to users of the space. Thirdly, in the name of maintaining history and culture, the AHD effectively defends for the legitimacy of the Party as the gatekeeper for the heritages and facilitator to transmit the historic and cultural messages. Moreover, it contributes to building the citizens which are officially expected for the contemporary China in the process of spiritual education. The critical analysis of the context and the contextual uses of the AHD reveal the political effect of the cultural apparatus – by conspiring with the mainstream national discourse, it works to reproduce the homogenising power but hardly challenging it.

The Chinese official use of the AHD shows that the latter, as a universal discursive system, can be embedded into a local regime by legislation. Consequently, it is used to serve specific political purposes, meanwhile directs the masses to see and read the designated heritages in specific ways. By figuring out the context for the discourse to take effect, the study shows how the AHD, as imported for domestic needs, is adjusted to fit the Chinese institutional system. Based on the pre-existing institution and the political tradition, in the Chinese context, uses of the AHD are generally top-down, and are embedded into the national politics and social governance. Contemporarily, along with the rapid growth of a commodity society, the discourse is used to accomplish the conspiracy between nationalism and consumerism, and its domination when the masses get connected with heritages, nurturing them as nationalist consumers. As the official heritage designation gets expanded countrywide, it becomes an effective way to nurture patriotic and informed citizens, who yet hardly develop abilities to reflect on the given narratives and their consumer roles. It leads to the fact that although individualities are allowed to be presented in such collectivist social atmosphere, one's creativity and reflexivity which can incubate politically meaningful change are still hardly developed. This examination of the context for AHD application provides a way of synthesising different aspects when making critical discursive analysis.

What's more, when thinking about the AHD spatialisation, it is a means of place

making. Within the field of urban studies, scholars criticised the top-down placemaking by revealing its active role in promoting consumerism and urban land speculation, and causing social injustice to define and use the urban space. In addition to critiques of capitalism, by regarding the AHD spatialisation as a place-making process, it is worth noting that the latter is politically meaningful by realising the conspiracy between nationalism and consumerism. Here the consuming logic contributes to reproducing the mass nationalist fervours, as well as to continuing the national political tradition though by modern techniques. It also prompts me to ask: for the cultural multiplicity that is present by the countrywide AHD spatialisation, can it be politically powerful to challenge the national political tradition, which prioritises homogeneity and unification? What role does top-down place making play in this process? In the next two Chapters, critical analyses of *lao Beijing* as the well-known locality are made to answer the questions.

Chapter 4.   Making *lao Beijing* culture: a review of the knowledge formation

In a background where the AHD gets approved and even respected, the old constructions can be culturally and politically meaningful, and individual practices of commemoration contribute to making the corresponding subjectivity that has a sense of belonging based on the national identity. For localities, in addition to the AHD, there are other ways where the local pasts are kept and used. Between the ways including heritage conservation, coalition and division can happen with conflicts and conciliation taking place. The present mainstream place image is a temporary outcome of the dynamic process. In the chapter, I examine the popular nostalgic image of Beijing, and explains its relationship with other facets of the old city: as a residence, and as an object under official heritage conservation. As a signifier able to refer anything relevant to the past of Beijing, this term has been commonly used by the public for memorising an ideal previous Beijing in a nostalgic mood, in opposite to the present one that is backdropped to emphasise the imagination. Definitely, the old city can be signified, and becomes a popular representative as the AHD borrows the *lao Beijing* discourse and legitimates the old city conservation. As a result, contemporarily the old city is dominated by this place image, which prioritises conservation works and cultural representations that can revive the *lao Beijing* which is accessible mainly by visual consumption. However, the old city is more than the *lao Beijing* just for sightseeing. It is also a residence to support social lives, which have continued for long but not perpetually stable, and various versions of *lao Beijing* can emerge from the dynamics. Despite the dominant place image that was established in the unity of the *lao Beijing* cultural discourse and the AHD, multiple facets of *lao Beijing* are practiced in the same bounded space simultaneously.

In this chapter, I will sequentially introduce three facets of the old city: as the location for the *lao Beijing* imagination, as a residence, and as an object of heritage conservation. In each section, I will try to show dynamics that historically happened in each function, and point out the key relations in between, therefore to illustrate the contemporary domination of the nostalgic image to the old city. This analysis constructs a knowledge foundation for later discussions. In the common uses and appreciations of the *lao Beijing* culture, the ongoing residential practices are objectified as a representation deserving cherishing and preserving, but it marginalises the practices *per se* by powerfully regulating the space to be monotonously representative.

4.1.   Imagining *lao Beijing*: the modern construction of the local culture

The old city of Beijing, as sketched out in the beginning of the thesis, is culturally

unique and fascinating due to the remaining architectural form and layout, with a co-existence between the historic landscape and vibrant dwelling activities. Nostalgia for the city's past always hovers, and legitimates heritage conservation that helps save the old buildings as information carriers. In fact, for the city, the nostalgic inclination is not an invention of the contemporary era. It appeared much earlier than the heritage conservation of the old city. For example, Lao She 老舍, a native writer famous for his works about the Republican Beijing, missed the hometown city when he was away in 1936 (Lao She, 2018):

> The Peiping[25] I love is not something in bits and pieces, but a phase of history and a vast tract of land completely bound up with my heart. Numerous scenic spots and historical sites from Shichahai Lake with its dragonflies after a rain to the Yuquanshan Mountain with the dream pagoda on top—all merge into a single whole. I associate myself with everything in Peiping no matter how trivial it is; Peiping is always in my mind. I can't tell why[26].

In his words, the memorable Beijing was still historic and related to his embodied experiences. Similar to this piece of work, writers have been portraying Beijing in the past since the Republican era, situating the city in their memories of the past and narrating in a nostalgic tone (Liu, 2013). The *lao Beijing* has always been about the past beyond the reach. From some scholars' views, it is a modern invention of reliable local pasts, by which people in the era of turmoil can feel peaceful and certain. Dong's study (2003) about the Republican Beijing shows that a *lao Beijing* was created by both citizens and Western tourists when the city was downgraded from a capital city and faced a future to be modernised. Their disappointment and uncertainty about the future contributed to the widespread nostalgia for the city in the past and their practices trying to retain it in the present lives. Dong (2003) uses the examples of historic landscape photographing, folklore performing and appropriating to illustrate how the nostalgic groups built "an active mechanism of self-protection and resistance" when being faced with a new but strange modern world (p. 304). Naquin (2001) takes the Old Peking (*lao Beijing*) as an overemphasis of the city's distinctiveness in the context of early modernisation in China, during which drastic self-identity transformations happened to civil individuals featuring strong nationalism and localism. Being exposed to a widely connected world thanks to

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[25] Peiping 北平 is the name of Beijing during the Republican Period.

[26] The English translation refers to an online work: dioenglish.com (no date). *Zhang Peiji's English Translation of Selected Chinese Modern Prose (I): Fond Memories of Peiping* 张培基英译中国现代散文选(一) 之《想北平》. Available at: http://www.dioenglish.com/wiki/index.php?doc-view-4931 (Accessed: 28 January 2023)

modernisation, different social groups, including but not limited to citizens, tourists, businessmen, photographers, literatus, etc., depicted the downfallen imperial capital as a distinctive city that is culturally and historically meaningful. For these nostalgia consumers meanwhile producers, they used the substantiated oldness, including the cityscape left from the imperial period, citizens' traditional lifestyle and appearance, personal embodied memories and practices, to produce literature, photographs, postcards, folklore performances, etc., as communicable and consumable entities that represented *lao Beiijing* (Dong, 2003). Among them, literature is a long-lasting way of maintaining and transmitting the city imagination. During the Republican era, there were literatures describing life, scenes, emotions attached to the city, which has become an object with memorable culture and history attached. In this situation, *lao Beijing* in books which has become transmissible both temporally and spatially is literati's depiction of a local civic life before the socialist revolution. In addition to Lao She as mentioned above, other famous writers, for instance Lin Yutang 林语堂 and Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, are still influential in the contemporary mass imagination of *lao Beijing*, rendering the city image as traditional, rural, and full of ordinary trivialities (Zeng, 2013; Wang and Peng, 2014). From the literary critics' eyes, the imagination was personally made to contrast with the writers' personal situations then, which were more depressing than the past ordinary lives in Beijing. Therefore, the *lao Beijing* imagination acted as comforts and shelters for both the writers and readers.

Based on the nostalgic tone, *lao Beijing* as an established signifier can be used when mentioning anything about the local past. For instance, Farquhar (2009) locates the "*old Beijing*" at the socialist period in her study about citizens' leisure activities in the public parks that were originally royal gardens in the imperial period. By holding passes to the parks, users, mostly the elders who were grown up in the early socialist era and get used to the socialist institution in their lifetime, have free access to the places and take the routine occupation normally. Here the old Beijing is a socialist culture which highlights spirits of commitment and collectivity. It is an identity and practice of "peopling", presented by these new citizens' permits to and occupation of the city which was feudal and imperial. Last but not the least, contemporarily in some local citizens' eyes, folklores of the Republican Beijing can be commodified and consumable at the present. Hsieh (2016) did ethnography in two Beijing folklore markets, showing how *lao Beijing* is substantiated by some shopkeepers in their businesses which commodify the cultural imagination to be consumable stuffs and services, and their complex states yearning for the local past meanwhile making a living by relying on the present commodity society. Though being continuously reinterpreted, *lao Beijing* is still taken as source from which

self-identities could be established in personal embodied practices of tradition. This symbolic term always accompanied with the anxiety about a risk of disappearance in urban modernisation has been continuously applied by people who share similar fears.

When the old city was faced urban redevelopment, its connection with *lao Beijing* got emphasised in the mass anxiety about the culture death, in addition to the intellectuals' nostalgic expressions. In the years around 2000, Beijing was continuously restructured from the modern industrial centre to the political, educational, and cultural centre, as well as the locus of international relations of the PRC by following the post-reform Five-Year Plans, experiencing the industrial transformation and pursuing for economic growth (Broudehoux, 2004, p.37). Meanwhile, by successfully applying for hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, it prepared for the self-presentation on the international stage and tourist reception (Ren, 2009). In such historical moment, Beijing experienced rapid spatial reconstruction, with the cityscape modernised for boosting capital accumulation, meanwhile for presenting a modern and culturally unique city to the world. For the old city, several streets were transformed to be cultural landmarks for symbolic consumption, and the most part was threatened by the urban redevelopment projects (Zhang, 2008). Some "dilapidating and old" neighbourhoods in the old city had been bulldozed and was redeveloped as modern residential buildings or shopping malls, causing some leading planners, architects and local literati calling for protection of *hutong* and *siheyuan*, since such building pattern was the only remain of the *lao Beijing* city as well as the corresponding dwelling culture (Wang, 2003, p. 5-36, 345-357). In this context, significance of the old city was emphasised as an active component of *lao Beijing* – the irreplaceable context where the memories, habits and folklores form in spatial practices *in situ* (Wang, 2003; Hsieh, 2016). Such concerns were expressed via literature, mass media, online media, themed forum, etc., by which the nostalgic imagination of *lao Beijing* were reproduced, strengthening the linkage between the term and the old city, as well as a romanticised depiction of social lives there. For example, collections of proses to memorise personal living experiences in Beijing, series of books that recorded the *lao Beijing* folklores, and the classical literature as mentioned, got published and became popular readings[27]. The old city and *lao Beijing* culture also became the theme of TV documentaries, or the context of TV series and movies, and got narrated and spread via

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[27] For example, Jiang Deming edited several books that compiled Republican literati's proses about lives in Peiping, including *Beijing hu* 北京乎 (a brief introduction of the book available at: https://book.douban.com/subject/1073378/, the URL are provided for the same purpose below)*, rumengling* 如梦令 (https://book.douban.com/subject/1050583/)，and *menghui Beijing* 梦回北京 (https://book.douban.com/subject/3914847/).Several famous writers, for instance Xiao Fuxing 肖复兴 and Xiao Qian 萧乾, also published their memories about the past lives in Beijing.

signal[28]. Even online discussions became possible in themed forums[29]. By the wide circulation among the masses, the significance of the old city and the *lao Beijing* culture, with the linkage in between, got popularised, prompting the masses to cherish and save the them voluntarily. Some news shows that citizens came to commemorate some sites before the official demolition, and expressed regrets for the forthcoming disappearance of *hutong* and traditional shops along[30]. In addition to the passive acceptance, there were several pioneers appealing for protecting *hutong* and *siheyuan*, and taking actions which attracted attentions from the mass media[31]. At this moment when modern technology helped broadcast the nostalgia, while the old city was faced with bulldozers, *lao Beijing* has become a collage of memory fragments embracing everything related to the local past, meanwhile transmitting a sense of precarity. Either tangible or intangible, the objects related to the city's past were labelled with this cultural name with worries of disappearance. This led to a depiction of the old city as an integration, with everything ongoing inside culturally meaningful and valuable but endangered.

In general, *lao Beijing* is a nostalgic notion that emerged and got continuously emphasised along with the modernisation process of the city. It is those who cannot adapt to the rapidly changing living circumstance that invent the notion. They, as consumers of the Beijing of the past, simultaneously produce the *lao Beijing* discourse and the corresponding substances. The group gets expanded in the development and popularity of modern technologies, as well as the *lao Beijing* notion, which has become a well-known

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[28] In the mainstream TV channels (China Central Television and Beijing Radio & Television Station), more and more documentaries about *lao Beijing* are on show. Some early series include *Beijing Memories* 北京记忆 (2012), *Impressions about lao Beijing* 老北京印象 (2010) introducing personal memories and narratives about lives in Beijing; *Hutong of Beijing* 北京的胡同 (2010) introducing stories and narratives about selected hutong; and *There is Beijing* 这里是北京, a TV program starting from 2009, introducing multiple cultural aspects of *lao Beijing* via short episodes. In addition, the TV series used the old city of Beijing as background, for instance *Happy Life of Talkative Zhang Damin* 贫嘴张大民的幸福生活 (2000) showed ordinary life of a family inside a siheyuan. The movie *Shower* 洗澡 (1999) showed family lives of a bathhouse host in the *lao Beijing* city. The movie *You and Me* 我们俩 (2005) depicted neighbouring life between a grandma and a girl who rent a house in a *siheyuan*.

[29] The old Beijing net http://www.obj.cc/ has been running from 2000. Other active platforms include Baidu Tieba https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=%E8%80%81%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC and Sina Blog https://blog.sina.com.cn/ where many personal articles about *lao Beijing* are posted.

[30] Cyol.net. (2006). *The old hutong has been demolished. Will the traditional brands die out?* 老胡同不断拆迁，老字号会不会消亡 Retrieved December 17, 2022, from http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2006-03/20/content_1338280.htm, and People.com.cn. (2013). *Remembering Old Beijing: The demolition of Bell and Drum Tower Square sparks a wave of nostalgia* 追忆老北京：钟鼓楼广场拆迁引发怀旧潮. Retrieved December 17, 2022, from http://culture.people.com.cn/n/2013/0125/c172318-20320511.html

[31] People: Nothing but Story Telling. (2004). *Wang Bin :the Defender of Beijing Hutong* 王彬-北京胡同的保卫者. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2004-07-19/12223752350.shtml, and Cyol.net. (2003). *The Defender of hutong* 胡同保卫者. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2003-06/25/content_686037.htm

local nostalgic symbol. Due to the traditional and ordinary features, and the present popularity, *lao Beijing* can be used to signify almost everything about the local ordinary past. It is a significant source of the heritage value narration when registering the old city in the official conservation list.

4.2. Dwelling in the old city of Beijing: the aging city and mobile residents in a transformative urban society

Accompanying the reproductions of *lao Beijing*, lives in the old city continue and are important resources to produce the cultural narratives. Although *lao Beijing* always presents tranquil and peaceful, dwelling in the old city is not as ideal as the discourse suggests. Rather than a realm of *lao Beijing* memory, taking the old city as a venue for dwelling, residential groups, as well as cultures, are always in change synchronous with social transformations.

Firstly, although with the pre-modern building patterns retained, making the old city a contrast with the other parts of Beijing in modern appearance, the old city experienced the state-wide modernisation as early as the establishment of the PRC, and has been constantly transformed along with the general social changes. When Beijing was the capital city of the imperial China, residential neighbourhoods composed the city with avenues crossing in between, and big public places interspersed, together to surround the Forbidden City that was exclusive to the royal family (see Figure 4-1, 4-2). After establishment of the PRC, when the state regime has experienced revolutionary changes, and finally got settled as a socialist state, the city, which had been designed for the royal family, was transformed to serve the new state. As a result, industrialisation of Beijing was conducted in all aspects, and transformed the urban spatial pattern and citizens' everyday life. This transformation threatened the old city by replacing the city wall and buildings with modern factories, but it survived due to a shortage of funds for urban renewal at that time[32] (Dong, 2006).

Despite the stable urban pattern, residential groups and dwelling modes changed by following the radical social transformations. Although the city texture still remained the

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[32] At the beginning of the 1950s, as the capital of a newly established state, Beijing was to experience the first master plan, which was also a 'socialist industrial transformation' on this old 'consumption city'. Whether to locate the political centre inside or outside the previous city centre became controversial. The *Liang-Chen Proposal*, as frequently mentioned today in public sphere with regrets to the disappeared city walls and neighbourhoods of the old city, planned to maintain the whole old city as a public park and constructed the new political centre outside. However, it was not accepted due to the unaffordable cost on the old city reconstruction and its mismatching with the state goal for making socialist transformations. However, although the idea of preserving an integration was denied in the first draft of the city master plan in 1953 (Zhang and Chen, 1993, p.19), a complete demolition never happened since urban land development, which was not open to the market, was unaffordable for the government (Zhang, 2011; Jia, 2016).

102

same, *siheyuan*, which always housed big families separately in the pre-modern period, were mostly confiscated and transferred to be state-owned or collective-owned properties when the CPC came to power and started a state-wide process of socialist modernisation (Shin, 2010; Evans, 2014; Yu, 2017; Rock, 2018). Here courtyards were distributed to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and official departments to accommodate staff and worker families, based on their places of housing registration, *hukou* 户口, that certificated the employment relationship. For the *hukou* system 户口制度, it was the state population registration system issued in 1958, certifying a holder as a legal resident of a specific locality. Before the economic reforms, the *hukou* system played a significant role in restricting population migrating between different localities, as certificate for individuals to get housing and daily necessities under the resource rationing system. Being redistributed, *siheyuan* were integrated into the *danwei* accommodation system without physical modifications of the neighbourhoods. As a result, courtyard households changed without physical *danwei* compounds built up. Instead, for most of courtyards that were confiscated and relocated to employees, they were occupied and shared, with several households collectively living in one courtyard.
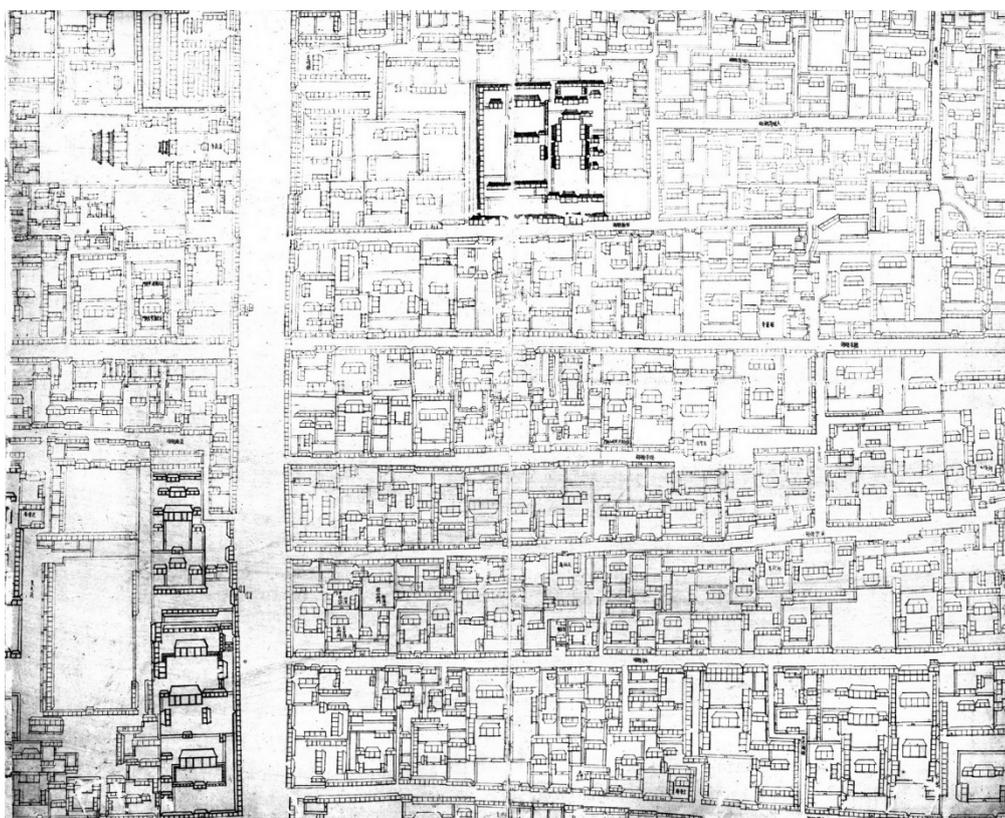
Figure 4-1 a glance at urban morphology of a neighbourhood in Beijing in the 18th century, showing courtyards, *hutong*, avenues, public spaces, and the way they were laid out; from *Copy of the Qianlong Map for the capital city* 乾隆京城全图 published by Beijing Historical Building Research and Design Institution (1996)
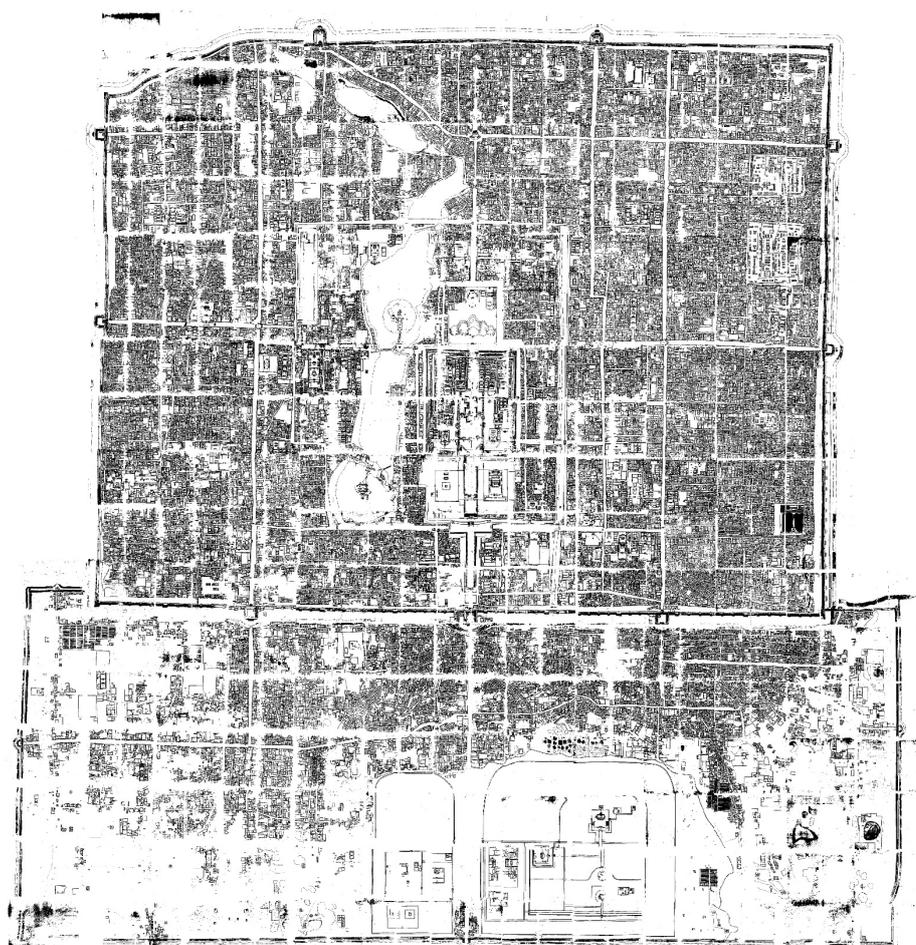
Figure 4-2 layout of Beijing as the capital city of the Qing Empire in the 18th century, showing neighbourhoods surrounding palaces belonging to the royal family; ; from *Copy of the Qianlong Map for the capital city* 乾隆京城全图 published by Beijing Historical Building Research and Design Institution (1996)

Furthermore, in decades of collective residential use, the courtyard spatial order got obscured with buildings gradually dilapidating. During the following decades of collective dwelling, population density got higher, leading to extra buildings that were privately constructed to accommodate family members by occupying the courtyard and *hutong* spaces. Especially in 1976 when a violent earthquake happened in a nearby city Tangshan and impacted Beijing, rough constructions were built in courtyards by households as temporary accommodations to keep safe, while the constructions were kept afterwards and concreted to be domestic components. It launched self-constructing practices in courtyards which continued encroaching yards inside, making more and more courtyards to become "big messy yards" (*dazayuan* 大杂院) (Wang, Liu and Zhang, 2016; Yu, 2017) with the original building pattern diminishing in serried houses. What's more, courtyard buildings have been dilapidating as well without willingness from any aspects

to repair. Due to the public housing ownership, building maintenance was commonly not regarded as a private duty but was assigned to SOEs and departments. However, this hand from *danwei* did not last for long with the economic reforms that introduced market to enter the Chinese society. In the reforming wave, the welfare housing allocation policy went to the end in the early 1990s with housing system reforms to allow housing commodification. This ownership reform changed the role of socialist housing, which became a burden for *danwei* in the new era, and was gradually marginalised with little funding distributed for maintenance. In addition, many small *danwei* closed down with impacts from the new economic system with housing left. As a result, although some of the ownerless properties were assigned to the municipal housing management department thus under official management, public housing as a burden was in shortage of funding for maintenance, as well as little from householders' care, thus appeared so dilapidated that has been once regarded as "slums" in some researches (Sit, 1999), as well as "dangerous and dilapidating" in need of renewal in official documents in the 1990s[33].

However, in 1999, the old city in a dilapidated physical condition, which resulted from long-term residential use and lack of elaborate maintenance, was considered as an endangered heritage deserving immediate preservation[34]. From then on, heritage value of the old city has been emphasised, legitimising the way of seeing and treating the place: the old city from the past, with corresponding traditional everyday life happened, can be imagined and represented at present. Following this designation, the current general public impression of the old city as the most outstanding representation of the *lao Beijing* culture also formed. It regards survival traces from the pre-modern period valuable, while it neglects the vicissitudes happening along with the socialist state development, as well as the citizens' transformative everyday life.

Secondly, residents, known as *lao Beijingers* in the *lao Beijing* city, are not a fixed and homogeneous local group, but fluid with neighbours continuously leaving and coming, and with differentiation in social identities. Along with transformations happening to the old city, there has always been social fluidity in everyday life. When new citizens were allocated with their respective public housings, differences of social identity were settled between neighbours: since the original sizes and qualities of courtyards and houses were different, the allocation was made based on householders' positions and working years at

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[33] The depiction on the old city was accompanied with the "dangerous and dilapidating" discourse that could be traced back to the 1990s in the *Beijing municipal regulations on a state-level document about management of dangerous housing in cities* (《北京市实施〈城市危险房屋管理规定〉的若干规定》) published in 1991. During the 1990s in municipal annual reports of public works, courtyards were included into dilapidating housing deserving urban redevelopment. At that time, they were not valued as heritage.

[34] Beijing Municipal Planning Committee (1999): *Conservation planning for historic and cultural areas of the Beijing old city* 北京旧城历史文化保护区保护和控制范围规划

their companies. Some large and good courtyards, previously as elites' residences, were distributed to high-level officials; mediocre others were divided as homes for employees with families, with differences existing between neighbours. Therefore, with social class as the mainstream criteria to identify and classify individuals at that time, neighbours living at the same *hutong*, or even sharing the same courtyard, might still hold consciousnesses and identities from their social class in everyday neighbouring, resulting in mutual recognition based on such political identities.

Later on, neighbours, as tenants of the public housing, could change when they got chances of moving to another property provided by the SOEs. However, the chances varied among neighbours depending on the housing owners' abilities of provision. As a result, neighbours living in a courtyard are not always the same, but with departures and arrivals. For instance, some were allocated with new accommodations by their strong companies in the early days, and the houses left were distributed to other families. After the allocation policy was ended, accompanied with urban housing commercialisation in the early 1990s, some leased their courtyard houses if they had alternative accommodations. In this situation, migrants, who were permitted to mobilise beyond the *hukou* location, occupied the houses as tenants. In the post-reform period, although the *hukou* system was no more used to directly restrict population mobility, *hukou* is still attached with exclusive rights and social welfares that can be only claimed by local holders. Especially for metropolises like Beijing that attract people to work and live, the local *hukou* is officially used to restrict non-local people to settle down, as a requirement by which one can acquire some important rights, including but not limited to buying housing properties. This valorisation of Beijing *hukou* can create the sense of difference between the locals and the non-locals. Accompanying the changing neighbouring status, the inhabitancy challenges the imagined *lao Beijing* everyday life as stable, tranquil, and close between neighbours. Instead, features of the modern urban life, such as dynamics, mobility, and uncertainty also pervade there.

In general, comparing to the imagined everyday life in the *lao Beijing* city, lives there have undergone more changes and have to meet urban mobility and uncertainty. From this perspective, it is not a distinct contrast to the modernised and urbanised parts of Beijing, but a component of it, undergoing the countrywide political and institutional changes and spatialising them in local social transformations. What accompanying the everlasting *lao Beijing* city is the changing and modernising city centre where practices of dwelling still continue. Comparing to the *lao Beijing* imagination, the factually historical social changes are less considered when talking about the old city. However, the old city as an inconstant residence is indispensable to understand the locality, as well as the *lao Beijing* imagination, which exactly emerges from such situation of uncertainty.

4.3. Gazing at the old city of Beijing: emergence of historic area conservation

The public acknowledgement of *lao Beijing* and its link with the old city legitimate the AHD to be attached, with conservation practices to save it, making the old city to simulate an ideal cultural totality that can keep alive at the moment. Techniques from heritage conservation help make it convincible by transforming the old city as an object for watching and appropriating. As a result, the ideally depicted *lao Beijing* culture can be validated in practices of viewing when being settled in an elaborately restored historic landscape, even can get reinforced with active residential groups as embodied culture practitioners.

The historical context for the conservation planning enactment was urban redevelopment that threated the old neighbourhoods to vanish. In the 1990s, when the old city was depicted as "old and dilapidating", neighbourhoods there were taken as objects for urban redevelopment with the urban land trading opening to the market. Both residential and commercial projects were taken and led by municipal and district governments. The projects were described as a "growth machine" bolstering development and increasing gains for the powerful government (Zhang, 2008). Besides, it was also a cure for those SOEs facing the new market economy, getting priorities in bidding state-owned lands and starting land development (Zhang and Fang, 2017). The collaboration between government and SOEs as a solution to the new economic system was conducted at the expense of tearing down old neighbourhoods. Although a conservation plan was published in 2002 and started to involve parts of the old city into the lawful protection, the number of *hutong* keeps decreasing and reached the highest speed in the beginning of the 21st century: it was recorded around 4,100 *hutong* in the 1950s, 3,067 at the end of the 1990s (Bai and Bai, 2006, p.19). In the 2000s, around 600 *hutong* disappeared a year[35], and currently only more than 1,000 are left[36].

Facing the survival crisis of the old city, professional architects and planners appealed for conservation of the old city as a whole due to its incomparable heritage value (Wu, 1995; Wang, 2003; Xie, 2008). The conservation planning was formulated by the municipal planning expert team accompanying the general public concerns for the old city. It was not until 1990 when a list of 25 conservation areas in the old city of Beijing was published unofficially on a local newspaper, and got a detailed conservation plan in 1999,

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[35] Beijing Evening News 北京晚报 (2001) *600 hutong disappear per year. Maps of Beijing need to get modified every two months* 每年消失 600 条胡同 北京地图俩月换一版 Available at: http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2001-10-19/381969.html (Accessed: 9 February 2022)
[36] The number is cited from *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035).*

which was regarded as a contribution to the subsequent national legalisation on the area conservation (Fan and Ye, 2016). Such official practice was also regarded to rescue the diminishing local culture by urban planners and experts, who shared similar concerns with the public during the same period when rapid urban renewal was sweeping the city. For example, when talking about the 8-year blank between the proposal and the legislation to protect the 25 areas, planners from the municipal planning department showed regrets for the disappeared *hutong* in urban development which flourished in the 2000s (Fan and Ye, 2016). Experts of heritage studies, who served as professional counsellors for the state and municipal governments, also appealed to stop urban redevelopment in the old city even after the conservation planning was legislated[37]. Zhang (2008) attributed the legal blank to the fragmented political structure which caused chaos in urban governance. For urban space other than the conservation areas in the old city, the state law for heritage protection cannot apply. Urban redevelopment could still continue and replace *hutong* with modernised urban landscapes, despite the enactment of the conservation plannings that could only protect limited numbers of areas. In this context, professional figures, including the experts and urban planners who serve the public sectors, showed regrets for the disappeared parts of the old city, and resonated with the public nostalgia for the *lao Beijing* culture. It results in an agreement between the local officials and the social groups that missed the *lao Beijing*, and facilitates a linkage between the old city and the *lao Beijing* culture: The former is an outstanding representation of the latter, but its situation is precarious being facing with the urban redevelopment. As a result, the integral protection of the old city was a consensus reached by the public sector and the citizens. The popular value identification of the old city was founded by the long-term nostalgic imagination.

Despite the legal conservation, the planning only covered less than one-fifth of the old city, and the legal validity was not so strong that buildings were still possible to be torn down. In the following decade, although the conservation scope has expanded with more areas added to the lists, urban redevelopment continued there, especially outside the conservation areas which, until 2019, could only take up about 33% of the old city[38].

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[37] The Beijing News. (2007). *The Dongsi Eighth Hutong will be partly demolished. The Bureau of the Cultural Relics wrote a letter appealing for protection.北京东四八条胡同将部分拆迁 文物局致函要保护*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from https://www.chinanews.com/cul/news/2007/05-14/933960.shtml, and The Beijing News. (2004). *Two elder professors of heritage studies analysed the dilemmas of the World Heritage conservation 文博界二老共析世遗困境*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from http://ent.sina.com.cn/2004-07-08/1031437586.html

[38] For the registered historic sites under preservation with barrier areas inside the old city, in total they take up around 21%. Therefore, in all around 54% of the old city is under protection. Numbers are taken from *Chengji* by Jun Wang and *Design Guide for the Preservation and Renewal of Beijing's Historic and Cultural Districts 北京历史文化街区风貌保护与更新设计导则* by

Interestingly, the finale was made by the central government in 2015, as mentioned above to stop any demolitions due to the politically significant meaning of the Beijing old city in the era for the Great Rejuvenation. Based on the situation that courtyards were no more possible to modify, local conservation practices were also open to more possibilities.

The emergence and development of the official historic conservation towards the old city shows a collaboration between experts from the local public sector and citizens who defend for the old city, based on the shared anxiety about the forthcoming disappearance of the old city and local culture. In this consensus, the old city was objectified as a consumable treasure carrying and delivering the local culture. This present making of a visible "old" world, like Hsieh's study (2016) on antique markets where nostalgia for the past becomes consumable by culture guardians' adaptation to and application of market rules in the post-reform society, defines an everlasting culture distinguished from the burgeoning modern urban landscape, for modern people to keep resisting mediocrity in modern life.

Moreover, the authorities' powerful interpretation and propaganda of the culture can serve the political aims. As a TV documentary series, *Me and my Dongcheng in 40 years*, which was produced and showed by the mainstream Beijing TV channel, describes *hutong* as

……blood vessels of the city……recording memories belonging to the city, and maintaining the culture code of the city……Generation after generation, people go back and forth through the alleys. Time engraves history and culture in the courtyards with black bricks and grey tiles.[39]

In this depiction, *hutong*, representing the old city, carries historical information meanwhile welcomes modern people to come and read. According to the official recommendation of the documentary, "40 years" is the time length of the state reform practices. The documentary focused on personal narratives about embodied experiences in the old city district during the period, to make changes of the old city "affluent and sensible". By positively presenting the selected interviewees in respective living and working circumstances, the documentary also argued that the old city got "reborn", as a success achieved by the collaboration between the government and people. The tone set there shows the political implications by launching and presenting heritage conservation of the *lao Beijing* city. Firstly, as argued in Chapter 3.1.1, the Party self-proves as legitimate to lead China's development and guard historic treasures of the country. The rebirth of *lao Beijing* city gives evidence for it. Secondly, based on the dual identities, the

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Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Land and Resources Management.

[39] This is Beijing: Me and my Dongcheng in 40 years, episode 4, Shijiahutong 这里是北京: 我和我的东城 40 年 第四集 史家胡同·古韵新辞.

authorities also legitimise the conservation mode, which allows competent individuals to define the heritage values of the old city, and make spatial modifications by following the rules. The reborn old city is an outcome beneficial to the participants and the masses. The political roles are further pointed out in the State Council's reply to *the detailed planning of the functional core area in Beijing (2018-2035)*, the central approval of the municipal urban planning scheme[40]. In the document, the old city deserves meticulous protection and avoids any possibilities of demolition due to its state-level significance:

> Beijing old city is a great witness of the continuous Chinese civilisation, with unparalleled historical, cultural and social values. It is the most important carrier and foundation for Beijing to build itself as a global famous cultural city, and the state culture centre. Strictly implement the requirement that the old city can no longer be demolished. Stick to the word "preservation", and carefully protect this golden card of Chinese civilization.

The position burdens the old city with political duties – to support the construction of Beijing as the state requires, and to well present the Chinese civilisation, which, according to the discussions in Chapter 3.1, has always been an influential discourse for the authorities to build up the modern China. As a result, bringing the duty to protect the "golden card" that is used to exhibit the national culture, heritage conservation of the *lao Beijing* city places emphasis on city image making, constructing the city to please aesthetic gazes. As the document imagines the old city via the planning scheme:

> Strengthen the urban spatial structure of "two axes, one city and one ring". Create a gentle and open, magnificent and orderly, ancient meanwhile modern, and solemn city image. The Chang' an Avenue mainly serves the functions of state administration, and culture and international communication, embodying the image and temperament of solemnness, and composure. The central axis serves the cultural functions. It is the representative area that embodies the cultural confidence of the great state capital. Promote the overall protection and rejuvenation of the old city, and make it a representative area reflecting the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Along the Second Ring Road, build a ring of parks to display both the historical and cultural landscapes and the modern capital

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[40] Xinhua News Agency 新华社 (2017) *The State Council's reply to the detailed planning of the functional core area in Beijing (2018-2035)* 中共中央国务院关于对《首都功能核心区控制性详细规划（街区层面）（2018 年－2035 年）》的批复. Available at:http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2020-08/27/content_5538010.htm?trs=1(Accessed: 4 February 2022)

views. Strengthen spatial order control and construct characteristic landscapes. Protect the traditional cultural gene. By elaborately guiding the form of public space and buildings, construct landscapes for overlooking that delivers the traditional cultural messages, urban colours and the fifth facade, to exhibit quintessence of the millennia-old city, and the Oriental exemplar of inhabitancy.

The authoritative words from the central government decide the way and purpose of protecting the old city: to exhibit it both to the superior officers and to the world. Citizens there are regarded as a component of the "Oriental exemplar of inhabitancy". This ideal also requires residents' living conditions to be pleasant in the old city. As a result, there are works for the seeable good inhabitancy in the heritage conservation. Specific ways of implementing conservation have always been explored with visual satisfaction prioritised all the time.

As mentioned above, The Olympic Games in 2008 was a key event for Beijing to accelerate works of urban beautification. In addition to the urban redevelopment, symbolic urban conservation was launched to keep and exhibit the traditional cityscape. With an ambition to show itself as a global city to the world, Beijing introduced globalised capital into urban land development, modifying the urban space to be highly exhibitive in a short preparation period. As a result, the traditional look of *hutong* and *siheyuan* was once raised over other cultural features to be the focus under meticulous maintenance. This visual-oriented conservation practice led to creations of some "fake antiques". A well-known also widely-criticised project is Qianmen Avenue Renewal Project, in which almost all of the historic buildings were rebuilt, and roads were widened (Ren, 2009), completed as a delicate traditional commercial street. In residential areas, a facelift project was executed, with dilapidated houses being reconstructed and *hutong* being beautified. The walls were repainted or were added with a new layer of bricks. The pavements were flattened, with potted plants allocated aside (Shin, 2010). This mode of improvement on style and feature is still ongoing today as one part of conservation practices. As Ghertner (2010) criticises aesthetic governmentality, the aesthetics of cityscape can be taken for governance, legitimising the official practices of cityscape beautification. Depending on the technique, government can gain the legitimacy to arbitrarily modify the urban space by popularising a way of seeing. For Beijing as the Chinese capital city that was to be in the international spotlight at the historical moment, the highlight of its visual beauty and the unique local culture was widely accepted. This historic moment made a foundation for the aesthetic governmentality which effectively controls the old city landscape now.

On the basis, the hybrid of modern technologies and local traditions appeared in heritage conservation and got official recognition. In the post-Olympic period, more

international attentions were paid to *hutong* and *siheyuan*, with competent designers and architects entering the residential spaces and modifying them to be visually modern and pleasant. The old city received global ideas, designs, as well as capitals and became a venue where trials for traditional and international cohesions were made. This new conservation mode was launched by the Beijing Design Week (BJDW), firstly being held in 2009, with *Dashilar* as the first historic area participating in 2011, showing a modern representation of the local culture by avant-garde design and renovation on old buildings and objects. As the organising committee self-introduces[41]:

> BJDW is positioned as an important platform for the state to promote the integrated development of the cultural creative industry, design services and other relevant industries. It is an important starting point for Beijing to promote the high-quality development, develop the advanced industries, and deepen the integrated development of culture and technology. It is an important engine to construct Beijing as a world-famous design city and an international consumption centre.

Following the state-level plan, BJDW was established for the municipal industrial development. Within its industrial ideology, the old city becomes a venue where the aforementioned improvements can be realised and exhibited. Despite the official intention that is not for improving heritage conservation, currently BJDW has transform *hutong* and *siheyuan* to be temporary exhibiting halls, displaying planners' and designers' projects and works annually. This representation of the old city, with its aim for industrial development embedded, well fits the official demand for pleasant landscapes. Especially after 2015, when the central government instructed Beijing to stop demolish the old city, alternative trials increased, and were conveyed by different teams in multiple historic areas. Until 2019, there have been 15 venues in 7 historic areas open for public visiting, showing respective conservation experiments[42]. The annual event provides an opportunity for the *hutong* and *siheyuan* to become scenic in the designers' hands, and experienceable temporarily by in-person sightseeing. Moreover, it offers designers and planners venues to experiment respective projects for the ideal inhabitancy. With the assistance of BJDW, the scenic heritage conservation gets widely approved, and it enters the residential spaces to modify meanwhile to exhibit the micro-scale landscapes where residents can live well with the newly coming social groups and businesses, with the

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[41] Beijing Design Week 北京国际设计周 (no date). *The introduction of Beijing Design Week.北京国际设计周简介*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from http://www.bjdw.org/channels/aboutus.html

[42] The numbers are cited from the official website of BJDW https://www.bjdw.org/.

assistance of urban planning and design.

These trials also influenced the authorities' idea about old city conservation. The municipal government appreciated the micro-level renovation and published a guidance to facilitate the works in 2020. In *the detailed planning of the functional core area in Beijing (2018-2035)*, an ideal mode called "Co-living Courtyard" (*gongshengyuan* 共生院) was put forward to achieve a harmonious co-existing status between old and new buildings, between long-tern inhabitants and newcomers, and between different habits and cultures inside *siheyuan*. This guidance shows the municipal authorities' approval of the projects that have been exhibited during BJDW, with the pleasant living scenes which can meet the positioning of the *lao Beijing* city. However, to reach the satisfying visual effect, the high residential density, which has been problematised since the 1990s to hinder realisation of the planned capital city functions[43], is required to further decrease, with residents persuaded to move out. Residents in *siheyuan* can apply to return their houses to government, and choose to get financial compensations, or to be reallocated to affordable housing that is usually at the remote suburbs. The returned houses will be used in new ways to meet the harmonious scene as required. As the latest guidance released, this mode might become the mainstream way of old city neighbourhood conservation for quite some time.

This review about the policies and practices of heritage conservation in the old city of Beijing demonstrates a coalition between the public nostalgia for the *lao Beijing* culture and the AHD, based on a common acknowledgment of the old city as an outstanding cultural representation. The public regrets for the disappeared parts of the *lao Beijing* city and the anxiety about future demolitions contributed to the coalition, permitting the AHD to dominate the old city. In this situation, the political use of heritage is also possible, representing the Beijing old city as a name card of the Chinese national culture, a cultural symbol for the state, and a tourism destination where the culture can be experienced. The visual priority plays a significant role when producing and consuming the cultural representation, and results in the series of visuality-centric policies and practices of heritage conservation. Currently, with the support of the annual design event which exhibits the old city by introducing cultural industries and avant-garde designs even into *siheyuan*, it is harder to separate the *lao Beijing* culture from the heritage conservation, as the coalition is perfectly represented by the pleasant co-living scenes in *siheyuan*.

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[43] From the 1990s, the municipal master plan (1991-2010) started to clarify aims to reduce population density of the city centre (which includes the old city), with satellite towns developed to become new population accommodations. This aim was further developed to be percentage numbers set up as stage goals in later master plans (2004-2020, 2016-2035), in order to realise political, economic, and cultural functions that have been successively added to the city centre in planning documents.

However, the old city is not just about the visualised harmonious *lao Beijing* scenes. Practical users of the space, with different personal dwelling experiences, exactly feel the old city in various ways. By the strong coalition between the *lao Beijing* notion and heritage conservation, other facets of the old city are marginalised in the AHD spatialisation.

4.4. Local bureaus as the mechanic of implementation

As Ghertner (2010) argues, as juridical mechanisms, the laws and rules cannot directly access "the mechanics of interest" that can arouse the popular initiative to appreciate the heritage values, and further to participate in conservation works (cited from Foucault, 2007, p. 352; p. 203). Other techniques are officially deployed to cultivate popular interests and engage the masses in the direction of the well-protected city manifesting the authentic *lao Beijing* culture. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2, establishment and implementation of *shequ* governance in neighbourhoods lead to a direct supervision and intervention from government to residents. In the local conservation practice, local offices are key intermediations via which the conservation planning is realised with the local culture to be spatially manifested. They complete the task of engaging and supervising citizens to participate in the works which just serve the authorised city image making. In this process, they play the decisive role, depending on the power in hand which is endowed by the state. As a result, culture is represented in the specific directions that are officially allowed. This local political context leads narratives of *lao Beijing* culture, which has been signifying the old city and gets popularised uses, further to be monotonous and getting represented in the mainstream for development, harmony, and domestic mass consumption.

Local offices seize power in several key aspects in practice. Firstly, Subdistrict Offices and Residential Committees are two important sources of financial supports in organising local cultural activities. In the *jiedao*-level and *shequ*-level annual financial budgets, funding for organising cultural activities and improving cultural infrastructures need to be specified, with annual expenditures listed in detail to illustrate ways of spending[44]. Therefore, in local practices there are no grey spaces for flexible funding use. Each penny needs to be recorded and ready to be examined by superior officials. This strict control leads to a conservative attitude towards culture, which gets represented in a quite limited scope that is safe and within the "advanced direction" defined by the leading CPC. Besides, for small social groups and individuals as participants in local culture activity organisation, since some rely much on the local official funding, they need to cater

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[44] Beijing Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau (1999) *Suggestions on facilitating community service system* 关于加快发展社区服务事业的意见

to the official preference in order to get sustainable supports, thus are weak in the process of culture theme selection. Secondly, for participatory groups and individuals, local bureaus perform as gatekeepers, holding power to select collaborators and residents as attendees in such organised activities. In municipal regulations[45], such power is written as a responsibility of the subdistrict office in urban governance. As a result, being conservative towards culture activities, local bureaus prefer elite professional teams and residents with authorities as participants. Such authority could be recognised in some ways, such as good public reputation or effective links with companies or institutions "in the system" for teams, and one's career in good *danwei*, or long-term good relationship with local offices or similar institutions for individuals. According to comments from *shequ* officers, those would like to perform as long-term participants are those who "have passions, loves, and spare time". Besides, from the perspective of organisers, they prefer to invite those who are "educated, in high *suzhi*, thus impossible to make trouble" which may impede activities. In this way, the duty burdened on local offices actually endows them with rights of selection, by which participants are compliant rather than demanding, thus could rarely influence how and what are taken to represent local culture during participation. And thirdly, local bureaus keep surveillance on themes and contents as a routine both in preparation meetings and during activities. Under the doctrine to "follow the leading role of the Party's self-improvement", all the ongoing organised activities are supposed to be meaningful within this political discourse, and to be themed "in the right direction of the advanced socialist culture"[46]. Therefore, in addition to preparation works where local offices hold absolute power in decision making, the next-door bureaus always show up in activities although frequently perform roles of service rather than leaders. This presence *per se* means surveillance for every participant, reminding them of the right way of public performance and cultural narratives.

As a result, culture representations in such public sphere, though being taken as the main way of practicing conservation on the grassroots level, are limited in the mainstream thus become products with standardised cultural narratives. Though with multiple forms and themes, here the local culture gets politically and monotonously represented. In this situation, the *lao Beijing* culture which formed in a shared nostalgia from the civic society, becomes a theme by which practical strategies for economic growth and social governance could happen. As a result, the culture is marginalised by its utility after being officially

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[45] Beijing Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau (1999) *Suggestions on facilitating community service system* 关于加快发展社区服务事业的意见; Beijing Municipal People's Congress (2019) *Regulations of Beijing Sub-district Offices* 北京市街道办事处条例
[46] Beijing Municipal People's Congress (2019) *Regulations of Beijing Sub-district Offices* 北京市街道办事处条例

acknowledged in this context. Moreover, for Beijing where flexibility in urban governance is hardly allowed, *lao Beijing* in conservation practices where the local offices are always on the scene, becomes a discourse that has been recognised in a fairly long-term process of formation by citizens, while it gets represented in limited dimensions and could be enjoyed by limited elites. The localised power works to filter the culture, which further becomes all-embracing but fragmented, becomes available for individual to interpret and possess, thus could result in differentiation in between, which could cause tensions and separations.

4.5. Discussions

By this chapter, I show different facets of the old Beijing city and the multiple ways of experiencing it. As a nostalgic object, the old city is taken as a realm of memory where the *lao Beijing* is personally or collectively kept, and is possible to get concretised by physical or embodied representations. In this situation, it is expected to be permanent and stable. However, in contrary to the nostalgic depiction, the old city is full of social mobility and uncertainty as a residence. In the past century of political upheavals and socio-economic modernisation, changes of the property ownership, residents, housing policies, official positioning and plannings, etc. happened there, leaving the memorised *hutong* and *siheyuan* out of recognition. Based on the contrasting ideal and reality, around the millennium, some citizens and some authoritative experts reached a consensus to revive the *lao Beijing* culture by protecting and renovating the old city. Moreover, it got officially approved but just visually emphasised when a culturally distinctive city name card was required by the municipality, which undertook the political task to make Beijing competent in presenting the national culture to the globe. As a result of the consensus, renovating the old city for pleasant façades with the technical support from historic preservation became the mainstream way of protecting the *lao Beijing* culture. Accompanied with the everlasting implication from historic preservation, the nostalgic imagination about the old city was foregrounded, leading to professional practices that aimed at preserving the old city at some specific historical moments, or maintaining it at some steady state by treating it as an organism. In such technologically intervened work to dig and present the city culture, the dynamic facet of the old Beijing city was marginalised, though it was an essential context for the invention and continuous reproduction of the *lao Beijing* discourse.

The multiple facets together play a significant role to support the present city image formation, and should get public visuality for citizens to better understand the plural cultures and histories of the city. Like Nora (1996) emphasises the social context in which the *lieux de mémoire* were created in France, it is essential to analyse specific memories

and the corresponding popular ways of framing and keeping them. For the notion of *lao Beijing* and the corresponding memories, currently the old Beijing city is the most outstanding *lieux de mémoire* where the personal or collective memories can be attached, represented, and circulated among the public. However, it is not the nature of the city, but was invented in the popular resistance to modernisation, and has been reinforced in the continuous urban development, as well as getting reproduced in the public circulation. Despite the social context different from France by which Nora developed the theory, social memories about *lao Beijing* have diversified as well, and become personal or communal belongings deliberately attached to the old Beijing city. As a result, the old city is treasured as the realm where the memories become perceptible and communicable, and are circulated and retained. By describing the multiple facets of the old Beijing city, we can reveal the superiority of the *lao Beijing* discourse when imagining the old city and keep reflexive to the notion: Since it is not innate to Beijing, it deserves elaborate examination before being used to either serve or resist the AHD in both the academia and in the public sphere. The historically dynamic relationship between the popular nostalgia for *lao Beijing* and the official planning for the old city shows that both the meaning and the social position of the cultural discourse are mutable. The critical discourse analysis helps understand the process, and invokes thoughts about future: As a researcher aware of the multiple facets of the old Beijing city, how to deal with them consciously for the cultural sustainability?

Acknowledging the current consensus between the local cultural discourse and the AHD, I narrow down the question to implementing sustainable heritage conservation there: how to keep it effective at maintaining the local culture? Fissures have appeared between the facadism conservation and citizens' aspirations to maintain the local culture. For instance, Ren (2009) mentioned the large public outcry urging the government to better supervise preservation, with their resistance to the facadism way of preserving the old city. Similar dissonance from citizens were also showed by Shin (2010) and Bideau and Yan (2018), denying the official presentation of *lao Beijing* as the only delicate landscapes for appreciation. Being practical, we can only accept and continue the historic consensus, but we are active to make feasible improvements. Taking an insight into the multiple facets of the old city can help reveal the different visibilities in the mainstream cultural narration, and provide a perspective to challenge the current monotonous way of *lao Beijing* cultural representation. In the next chapter, with the case study site being focused, a local practice of conservation to transform the place as "a living museum of *lao Beijing* culture" is described and analysed, in order to explain how the officially approved way of cultural representation becomes a convincible entity to the public.

Chapter 5.   The case study: preserving an invented "*lao Beijing* lifestyle"

After a brief overview about the multiplicity and dynamic of the *lao Beijing* culture, and its coalition with the old city conservation in the specific historical context, this chapter introduces the spatialisation of "a living museum of *lao Beijing* culture" in the old city. Narrowing down to a neighbourhood where *lao Beijing* is realised by local heritage conservation works, the chapter examines the AHD and the corresponding techniques, and the ways of renovating the neighbourhood to be a representative place for appreciating and experiencing the *lao Beijing* culture. Museumification and aesthetic governmentality are main methods to achieve the spatialisation of the specific facet of *lao Beijing*, which narrates the local history and culture in a linear and certain mode, and tightly binds the state with the locality and the residents. Such inventions are made in public spaces, as planning terms being used to define and frame some places for common use in the neighbourhood. By the authoritative conservation planning, the living museum of *lao Beijing* culture is spatialised. However, it is risky to marginalise other narratives and practices of the culture.

In the chapter, firstly I will make a critical discourse analysis of the historic area conservation planning, and explore the official vision for the neighbourhood and the schemes to realise it. Secondly, I will examine a community museum there, which is the most famous window to display the local culture and a significant hub to carry out the local conservation trials, and show how the local history and culture is narrated, as well as revealing its political implications. In the end, I will show the spatialisation of the narratives in the works of public space construction. This lays a contextual foundation for Part III about residents' everyday lives that are practiced inside.

5.1.   The Dongsinan Historic Conservation Area and an expansion of museum views

As introduced in Chapter 1, my case study site, the Dongsinan Historic Conservation Area, is currently under legal protection, with participatory methods experimented there. Planned to be the "spiritual home and living museum of *lao Beijing* culture" (Beijing Municipal Planning Committee Dongcheng Branch, Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design, 2013, p. 2), the area did not undergo any macro-scale commercial development as some conservation projects did and got criticised. Instead, it was retained as a residential neighbourhood, which was taken to represent the authentic *lao Beijing* culture. An officer from the local *jiedao*, Director Li, played a significant role to determinate this conservation planning scheme. Though not a Beijinger, Li loves the *lao*

Beijing culture and knows about the history and culture of the neighbourhood very well. In his prospect for the *lao Beijing* residential neighbourhood, he hopes that the local culture can be dug out and be presented to benefit the public. Being a fan of *lao Beijing*, Li took heritage conservation a good opportunity to explore and use the local culture. With his support and supervision, the local conservation project is implemented with the following features:

Firstly, the project shows openness to professional teams that are competent to interpret and exhibit the *lao Beijing* culture. Li mentioned that a consensus was reached between BMICPD and him about retaining *lao Beijing* in the project, and one feasible way is renovating public spaces, in order to keep the culture alive in local social lives, meanwhile to make the culture appreciable and experienceable to the public. Consequently, the project presents to be collaborative and welcomes professional design, planning, art, and cultural teams to participate.

Secondly, the project is featured by micro-scale renovations based on the collaborative mode. Public spaces are the main venue where the teams practice renovation and contribute to accomplishing the imagined *lao Beijing* cultural landscape. As a result, there are plots called *public spaces* in different sizes (ranging from a *hutong* corner to a whole courtyard), at multiple locations (from the main streets beside the neighbourhood to the yard spaces outside doors of households), and are managed by teams in their respective specialities.

Thirdly, public participation is used as a significant approach in the project. According to an urban planner from BMICPD, who joint the project when it was launched, this mode of participation was actually a top-down decision, instead of a bottom-up appeal for local heritage conservation. As she said, it is a consensus reached by the planning team and Director Li. For the former, public participation was appreciated as a planning method to explore and implement. For the latter, it is approved as a grassroots way of protecting the old city. The participatory mechanism was incubated in several seminars held in the newly-renovated Shijia Hutong Museum then, among discussants including the planners from BMICPD, the local officers including Director Li and the *juweihui* officers, and a council member of Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Centre (CHP), an NGO of the old city protection that participated to renovate the museum. No residents showed up in this period.

In addition to the pragmatic needs which led to the consensus about using the participatory mechanism, it is a result of learning from international best practices. For practices in the PRC, concerns from urban planning studies increased in the 2010s following a state emphasis on harmonious community building that was required to be implemented at the *shequ* level in urban context (Zhao, 2013; Cai and Xiong, 2019). To

meet the requirement in a short time, public participation was imported as an advanced theory from international best practices (especially from Japan and Taiwan), and was localised in the domestic urban planning practices. As a result, the participatory mechanism was embedded into the Chinese urban administrative structure, and was implemented by the *shequ* unit that was officially specified for realising the harmonious society. For Beijing, public participation is written into the *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*, as a governing mechanism to be established, in order to realise a governance pattern featuring "multiple forms of co-governance and sound interactions" (Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Land and Resources Management, 2017). For the goal, a participatory negotiating mechanism is required to be set up at the *shequ* level to enhance residents' sense of belonging. Following the guidance, the municipal urban planning department launched the participatory planning practices citywide, with historic areas as important experimental fields. In the situation, the historic buildings and narratives about local culture and history are used as resources to acquaint residents with a historically and culturally meaningful image of the corresponding *shequ,* in order to arouse their sense of community attached to the administrative unit (Yang and Huang, 2020). Mostly conducted by architectural or urban planning teams, the projects often focus on public buildings and facilities which are taken able to motivate collective identities and practices, thus to develop social bonds based on a common ideal for big-family-style communities (Lu and Qian, 2020).

As a result of the local implementation of participatory conservation planning, in the Dongsinan historic area, an association of neighbourhood conservation was established, and was developed to be a participatory platform engaging a wider range of public to join the work. The competent teams collaborate with the local offices and the municipal planning team, and spatialise the design schemes by implementing micro-scale projects there. As a foundation of the outcomes, Shijia *Hutong* Museum was built up before, and motivated the decision makers to experiment the participatory conservation there. Opened in 2013, the museum occupied a courtyard previously accommodating a couple of literati during the Republican era. As mentioned above, the council member of CHP played a significant role in the renovation project. According to his public speech, the museum renovation was "a beginning of renovating a *hutong*", since "lives in *hutong* are ordinary people's collective memories", which are "deeper meanings of the buildings"[47]. This humanistic understanding about the local culture and its relationship with the historical

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[47] According to an interview made to the director: China News Service (2019) 留住胡同的人 *The guy who preserved hutong.*
Available at: http://www.xhby.net/tuijian/201906/t20190611_6224315.shtml (Accessed: 27 February 2022)

remains also contributed to setting up the participatory mechanism in the local conservation project, with the museum as the hub of practices. In the conservation text, it was titled as "the exhibition hall for local culture, the living room for residents, and the committee room for the community" (BMICPD, 2016, p. 57). To realise the goal, Director Li and the BMICPD planning team supported to establish the Shijia Hutong Conservation Association by which the participatory conservation is practiced. Registered as a non-profit social organisation, the association was based at the museum, and was constituted by the director of Shijia *Shequ* Residential Committee, the urban planners from BMICPD, collaborative professional teams, and several resident representatives. Meetings are held in the museum when details of the conservation project need discussion. From this hub, several projects were conducted to renovate the historic landscape and meanwhile to upgrade the built environment for better living qualities from 2014 to 2018. According to a brochure that was distributed during BJDW 2019, by which the urban planning team makes a self-introduction about the conservation project, the team emphasised three projects of spatial renovation as exemplars, illustrating the achievement of participatory conservation practices. Respectively, they are exemplary courtyards renovation (re-designing and ordering the yard spaces in 7 residential courtyards), a grocery market renovation, and the "Micro Garden" project (making mini-landscapes in *hutong* and courtyard corners). In the projects, residents' and other stakeholders' participation was highlighted as an inevitable component of the planning practices. The professional teams took in charge of renovating or managing the selected public spaces, and invited residents to participate in the practices under the supervision of the local officers. Accompanying the practices, the progressive outcomes were published by the mass media and popular online social platforms, therefore to get public visibility, as well as the legitimacy of the participatory conservation approach. Based on the fame and accumulated experience, the local *jiedao* set up a collaborative platform in 2018, welcoming a larger number and types of social groups to participant in the local conservation project.

However, this mode of urban governance in China is problematic since it does not effectively change the local power relations as it did when being brought out. Wu and Zhang (2022) criticise the transplants of international best practices in Chinese urbanism. In the process, Chinese urban planners have been used to learning the planning notions and techniques that are regarded as advanced and feasible, and localise them in urban China but with few considerations made about the political meanings embedded in the revolutionary notions and practices. For participatory urban planning, trials in China have been criticised as a new part added to the urban planning sector for self-improvement, instead of an outcome of democratic negotiations between the official departments and voices from the bottom (Oers and Roders, 2013; Xu, Liu and Lei, 2019). This travel of

international experience is actually an instrumentalist appropriation, while it overlooks historical and social contexts where it was carried out and got institutionalised, with corresponding motivations ignored. For instance, public participation practices in Japan and Taiwan that Chinese urban planners and designers frequently refer to, were initiated by community movements respectively in the 1960s and 1980s. Led by local scholars' reflections on the rapid modernisation which caused changes on indigenous urban landscapes, it was proposed that civil voices should be considered in official developmental planning. In this process, indigenous culture, as well as historic landscape and buildings became meaningful and representative, thus were taken to arouse communal identities (Hu, 2013; Huang, 2013; Chen, 2014; Liu, 2014). Such community movements, as bottom-up democratic practices, got institutionalised to be a means of social governance and got popularised throughout the regions, and gradually become replicable techniques. When Chinese urban planners developed the participatory conservation mode domestically, the bottom-up impetus that can drive governing reforms is absent. The international best practices are conventionally referred to for improving the domestic planning techniques.

In the case study site that is officially propagandised for its participatory conservation trials, the problematic localisation of the planning technique also affects the practices. The instrumental use of the participatory approaches actually transforms it to be a means fitting the existing urban planning structure, while few political effects are left to change the local power relations. Here the participatory conservation is embedded in the local administrative system in which officers from *jiedao* and *shequ* are decisive to theme and organise the local activities. The participating teams must report their projects to the local officers who hold the power of permission, and specify their requirements for residents if their participation is desired. After reaching the agreements on the themes and forms of the projects, local officials take in charge of inviting the required quantity and types of residents as participants, and supervise the proceedings of the projects. As a result, residents can only choose whether to participate in participation or not, or perform as advisors without rights to decide whether given projects should be done in participation. The proportion of residents who have participated in the *shequ* activities works is also low – approximately 10% percent according to several *shequ* officers, not to mention those who routinely participate in the conservation works. For instance, though the Shijia Hutong Landscape Association was intentionally established for practicing public participation, the public has never been empowered. As mentioned above, there was no bottom-up appeal for getting organised to protect the local heritage communally when the association was established. To form the panel, the local officers invited three residents to be representatives and participate in the discussions about detailed conservation works. Once

there were issues to discuss, some of them were invited and acted as counsellors but not decision makers. Therefore, the local participatory practices are still outcomes of the top-down planning decisions without a mechanism designed to empower the public. The process of negotiation was actually a discussion about the details during the project implementation, based on the decisions having already been made. Residents are invited to present the participatory conservation of the historic constructions and culture, while they are hardly empowered to negotiate with the officers for making decisions about the conservation practices.

Generally speaking, in this case study, the residents' active participation is required in the conservation project to demonstrate the achievement of urban governance, as well as the progress of urban planning theory and practice. By presenting the participating residents in the scenes of heritage conservation, the bureaucrats can illustrate the vibrant status of *lao Beijing* culture, and its tight connection with the ongoing local everyday life. In the vision, the participatory scene is satisfactory to prove the effective urban governance, in which multiple goals, including building preservation, residential quality improvement, and culture rejuvenation beneficial for the whole society, are simultaneously achieved. Based on the purpose to serve the effectiveness of urban governance, the officers and planners promote the participatory conservation for its pleasant spectacle, as a piece of visual evidence excellent to get photographed and widely circulated among the public. The progresses can be acknowledged by consuming and reproducing the visually persuasive participatory scenes. In this mechanism, public participation is performed rather than practiced, and can be expanded though in the absence of the bottom-up participation when deciding ways of articulating the local culture, and presenting narratives that are collectively meaningful.

Based on the instrumental localisation, the pleasant outcomes, rather than the processes composed of both collaborations and conflicts, are emphasised by the officers and planners when introducing the project to the public. This priority of the good looks is supported by the facadism conservation, which has been influential in the municipal conservation works, as discussed in Chapter 4.5. Micro-renovation projects provide venues where the appreciated historic landscapes can be reproduced. Furthermore, with the appearance of residents as participants, the scenes can become the vivid evidence for the active state of the *lao Beijing* culture, as what was emphasised in the conservation project. As a result, the official use of the participatory approaches does not challenge the local power relations in urban governance, neither does it change the priority of seeing when people thinking about the purposes to protect cultural heritages.

From a spatial perspective, the project contributes to the expansion of public spaces in the neighbourhood, allowing the persistent practices of micro-scale renovations therein

and the museumification of the residential neighbourhood. Relying on the power of local spatial governance, the local officers and the urban planners are authoritative to demarcate public spaces so that the micro-scale renovations can be implemented. In the years of continuous conservation practices, increasing quantity and types of public spaces were defined and occupied the neighbourhood. For the mentioned spatial renovation projects, the spatial implementations demarcated the public spaces in the living circumstances and set up spatial orders there. For example, the courtyards renovation project was experimented in 7 courtyards by urban designers and architects, who invited the inhabitants therein to participate in the design process, and finally produced the refurbished and ordered courtyard looks in contrast to the original ones. Here the yard spaces outside every household were transformed to be public and deserve the ordered looks. Meanwhile, the Micro Garden project was implemented by occupying plots alongside *hutong* or in courtyards, transforming the mundane corners to be visually appreciative and creating interactions between the gardens and people. In this way, such plots are also gazed and used as public spaces. In addition to the small spaces, "cultural venues", as functional replications of the Shijia Hutong Museum to accommodate community and public activities, are opened in every *shequ* by occupying several public-owned courtyards and houses. As venues where the *lao-Beijing*-themed activities are held and open to public participation, they are also frequently photographed and are reported to illustrate the vivacity of the old city and the *lao Beijing* culture.

As the practical outcome of the institutional design and practices of the conservation project, the historic area is presented to the public as a museum of the vivid *lao Beijing* everyday life. Here the living circumstance is represented as historically and culturally meaningful, meanwhile still able to accommodate the ongoing residential lives. In addition, it is implied as a collaborative achievement between the government and different social groups in the everyday appearance of the personnel and residents who practice public participation in the demarcated public spaces. In this way, the relationship between people and the built environment gets tightened and is presented as interactive.

The facts there echo to "museumification" or "musealisation", the notions being put forward to analyse such phenomena where the spaces in practical uses are powerfully modified to meet the need of watching, exploring and experiencing from the wider public. According to some critical investigations, museumification refers to a process in which objects and sites are endowed with museum-like qualities, and the values associated with the museum (Adinolfi and van de Port, 2013). It transforms urban spaces to be expressive by curating, therefore to requalify streetscapes, reuse building stock and appropriate public spaces for fabricating specific narratives (Nelle, 2009). Here visitors are presupposed as interlocutors, who use the language as given when seeing and

understanding the space. For curators, normally they are led by government, which requires the museumified blocks for place making, and uses the image for tourism development (Rogelja, 2021; Jones, Bui and Ando, 2022), social identity construction (Debary, 2004), and society civilisation and moralisation (Adinolfi and van de Port, 2013). Social impacts from the spatial process are concerned, including marginalisation of inhabitants (Jones, Bui and Ando, 2022), problems of economic and social sustainability (Littlejohn, 2021), and the selective representation of local history that can make popular political impacts (Debary, 2004). In the Dongsinan area, the conservation project transforms the neighbourhood to be an exhibiting hall of local life in the old city. In addition to the ubiquitous public spaces, there are signposts set to show the historic and cultural narratives that are officially authorised, such as *hutong* introduction boards at entrances, indications for buildings under cultural relic designation, vintage-style decorations, and even the *hutong* landscape itself, directing viewers to know about the neighbourhood in specific ways (See Figure 5-1, 5-2, 5-3). In this discursive circumstance where the *lao Beijing* culture is alive *in situ*, opportunities of embodied experiences in the neighbourhood, like wandering around along *hutong*, visiting courtyards that are open to the public, having foods in local restaurants, chatting with passing-by residents, also prove the cultural authenticity. Museumification adds an expressive system in which local culture fragments are rearranged to convey specific information to viewers in the spatial representations. As a result, the conservation project can even transform the ordinary lives in the neighbourhood as extraordinary by the linguistic tricks, and distinguishes it from the modern urban parts of Beijing which citizens have been used to and feel bored with.

In the following section, I will make a critical discourse analysis about the officially delivered narratives of the local history and culture, to explain the image which is officially expected to deliver to the public. Here I refer to the contents on display in the Shijia Hutong Museum, the foremost window to exhibit the local culture of the neighbourhood. The information delivered, as well as the way of transmission, contributes to portraying the neighbourhood as a cultural landscape where the *lao Beijing* culture is alive, and embodied by inhabitants there. In addition, it also helps to legitimise the determinant roles of the offices and the urban planners in the conservation project, with the participatory approaches that announce to reinforce the bonds between the place and the inhabitants.
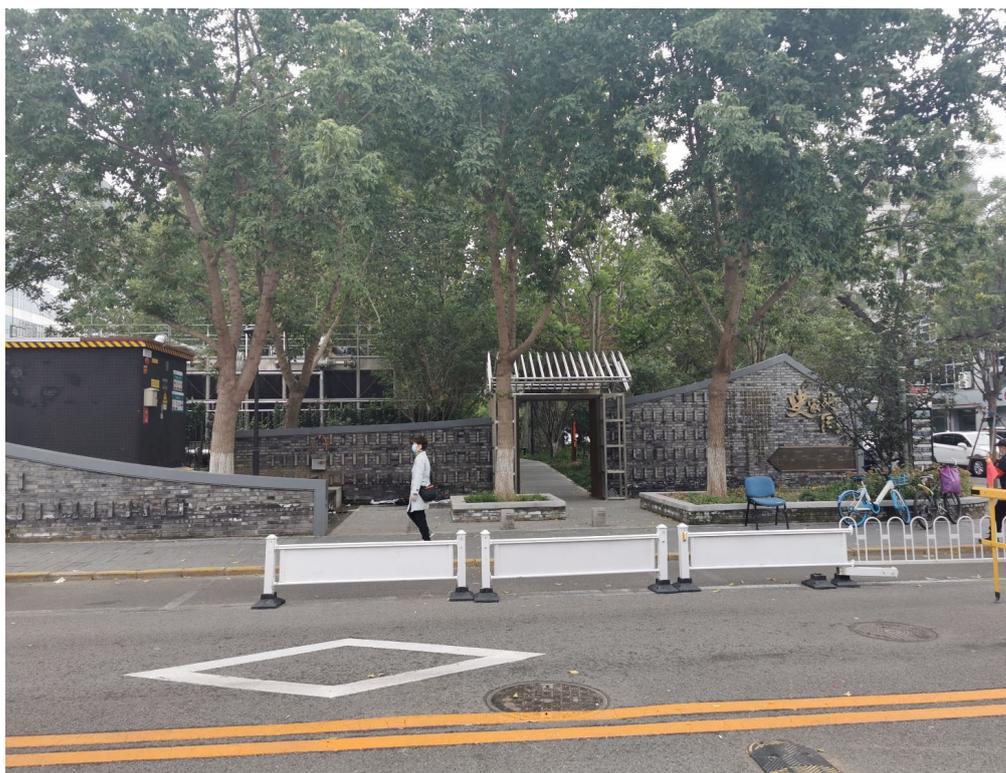
Figure 5-1 *hutong* nameplate at the entrance with brief introduction on its history and culture, mixed with updated notices that are posted by local officers (above)

Figure 5-2 a special landscape design at an entrance of a *hutong* (bottom)

Figure 5-3 a local cultural relic under protection with captions beside

5.2.   The Official narration about the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood

Known as "a *hutong* recording a half of China"[48], Shijia *Hutong* is the start point of local conservation with its fame able to attract affluent attentions and resources. Shijia *Hutong* Museum, as the first window made to exhibit local culture, conveys a set of well-designed narratives of the local culture and history. Based on the set of narratives that have depicted an integral image of the *hutong*, the museum depicts scenes beyond the time

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[48] This description is from the Shijia Hutong Museum tour guide words that were compiled by the museum founder and staffs.

and space limits, inspiring imaginations of local scenes in the past, and even those of the *lao Beijing*, therefore making the cultural narratives and objects as small sources to imagine a wide world. This leaves the term *lao Beijing* still blurred and embracive, thus to be operable and easy to use in the conservation context.

5.2.1.   *Lao Beijing* in the museum: imaginations of the neighbourhood

The museum is located at No.24 Shijia *Hutong*, occupying an integrated *siheyuan* which belonged to Ling Shuhua, a female literatus during the Republican period. Entering the museum that is open to the public for free, one could find an architectural layout matching an ideal depiction (see Figure 5-4): Going through a traditional-style gate, the first glance is a spatial front yard surrounded with houses in order and tidiness. Big trees are located in the yard with a caged bird singing. Stepping to the backyard, one could find a small garden where flowers bloom. The museum itself is decorated to be a specimen implying a traditional courtyard lifestyle, which gets detailed elucidations in 8 exhibition halls. Permanent exhibitions of the museum included seven parts, which are carefully organised to form a comprehensive set of narratives to link the *hutong* with the state, and the present with the past: *History of Shijia Hutong* offers an introduction to the old city, the *hutong*, and several courtyards there under preservation from urban morphological perspective; *Cradle of the Beijing People's Art Theatre* introduces the *danwei* which is related with the *hutong* by the public housing location. Dramas on show there feature the "*lao Beijing* taste" with many scenarios from famous literati writing about the city in transformation in the 20th century; *The Origin of Modern Education in China* and *Introductions to Local Celebrities* are two parts linking the *hutong* with the state to demonstrate why the Shijia is "a *hutong* recording a half of China". *Introduction to Ling Shuhua and Chen Xiying* makes an introduction to the hosts of the courtyard during the Republican era, with their literature exhibited to portray a living scene of the couple that is poetic and peaceful; *Hutong Memories* and *Exhibition of Past Living Scenarios* use various means to show ordinary life in different periods of the 20th century. In addition to the showcases where the articles of everyday use are displayed, a voice interactive installation is place there to play vendors' yells when they peddled groceries along *hutong* in the Republican period, before the socialist government incorporated them into the public sectors after the PRC was founded. Moreover, there are two living rooms restored to show mediocre but iconic domestic decorations during the 1950-60s and the 1970-80s in Beijing. Following the 7 permanent exhibitions, a room is designed for temporary exhibitions to display Shijia Hutong at the present. Displays there are usually curated to show achievements of the participatory conservation projects. For example, photos of the collaborative working processes from the micro-scale renovation projects can be

displayed to explain how the participatory conservation works. In addition, outcomes of the projects, such as pieces of artworks that were finished collectively, are also showed to prove its effectiveness.

Based on the adaptive reuse of the courtyard houses, the 8 exhibition halls are connected in a touring route, and narrate the history and culture about Shijia Hutong, the Dongsinan area, and the *lao Beijing* city in different facets, representing the *lao Beijing* as embracive to arouse the nostalgic emotions easily. Besides, briefings and segments of the exhibitions are cut out and circulated via online mass media, and contribute to mould the *hutong* figure that are influential to the wider public. In this way, the displayed narratives of the local history and culture, which is concentrated in the museum and available to the public beyond the neighbourhood, contribute to constructing the embracive knowledge about *lao Beijing* and facilitate its public circulation. The museum becomes a window through which fragmented but embracive images of the *hutong* are visible, and lives in the *hutong* are possible to imagine.

Figure 5-4 Layout of the museum with number 1-8 in green as exhibition halls, and other spaces for public use as marked on the picture (based on a layout map setting in the museum)

This vivid representation of a *hutong*'s past also implies availability of imagining *lao Beijing* by setting the narratives in a broader and general context. In the themed exhibitions, the term is used to refer a seemingly complete past world, including the old city, the specific traditional lifestyle, and people – *lao Beijing ren*, living inside and behaving as imagined. This anthology, however, not just traces back to one specific historical period. Instead, it is interpreted as multiple historical layers showing temporal living status. Covering a long term up to 100 years from the late Qing Dynasty to the end of the 20th century, *lao Beijing* could be applied to refer any imagined living scenery. In

the first exhibition *History of Shijia Hutong, lao Beijing* is linked with the old city called "the Four-Nine City" (四九城 *sijiucheng*) that was still with all city gates and the wall standing[49]. "*Lao Beijing* courtyards", which are represented by miniatures of courtyards under preservation along the *hutong*, refer to a tidy and ordered condition before the current mess with personal built-ups occupying the yard space (see Figure 5-5). In addition to the city textures, household items from all traceable historical periods are also regarded as representations of the *lao Beijing* culture. Here the display of the items from the early socialist period creates a contradiction here. Although the collective living status is regarded to damage the original *lao Beijing* courtyard landscape by the big messy yards (mentioned in Chapter 4.2), the articles of everyday use from the period are put into the showcase parallel to the others, representing the *lao Beijing* culture together. In this way, the collective inhabitancy which messed the historically valuable city texture is admitted as a piece of evidence of the sustainability and vividity of the *lao Beijing* culture, which is embodied by residents in their transforming everyday life *in situ*. This is achieved by *Hutong Memories* and *Exhibition of Past Living Scenarios* in the museum. In the two parts, *lao Beijing* was represented as a lifestyle ranging from the Republican period until now, and is able to be imagined with different types of materials on display. *Hutong Memories* applies objects, old photos and sounds to restore a dwelling status in the past. In addition to the photos and the sounds that were offered by experts, the outdated objects of domestic uses which are donated by local residents, become culturally meaningful to convey stories when being set in this comprehensively designed space for exhibition (see Figure 5-6). Such things were also used in *Exhibition of Past Living Scenarios* to compose mediocre but iconic living rooms which are marked to show domestic decorations in periods of the 1950-60s and the 1970-80s Beijing (see Figure 5-7, 5-8). By exhibiting the common ordinary objects and living scenes, the museum goes beyond the *hutong* where it is located, to be a cultural representation of the *lao Beijing* city. By viewing and interacting with the exhibits and facilities, one could imagine life that is not limited to the *hutong*, neither limited to the local celebrities, but the very ordinary life in the general past in any spot of the old city. In this way, the exhibitions narrate the *lao Beijing* culture as embracive to contain anything in the local pasts, and maintaining its extraordinariness in both historical

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[49] It is an old name referring to the old city of Beijing, generally the whole, including the Imperial city, the inner city (the north part surrounding the Imperial city), and the outer city (the south part). However, 'four' and 'nine' could only represent the Imperial and inner city as the numbers of city gates. This part was completed in the early Ming Dynasty, with the south part finished in the late Ming Dynasty. The whole old city was inherited by the Qing Empire with a residential separation between Manchus settled in the inner city and Han people in the outer city. A popular explanation on the name is that it comes from the Manchus for proving their domination in the capital city. With the time went by, currently the term has been widely used by ordinary people to refer the old city, as a distinction from the modern Beijing as the capital city of the PRC.

and present ordinary living trivialities. As the primary exhibiting window of the historic area to the public, as well as the first community museum opened in Beijing, the museum is influential among the public to construct the *lao Beijing* images, and contributes to popularising them in public visits which can even be made online. In this inclusive discourse about the *lao Beijing* culture, the historically dynamic relations between the cultural discourse, the city, the authorities, multiple social groups, as well as the contemporary contradiction between the appreciation of the lively heritage status and the conventional preference for the aesthetically pleasing historic landscapes, yet are blurred.

Figure 5-5 urban texture of the *hutong* represented by miniatures (above)

Figure 5-6 ordinary objects and photos on display (bottom); the objects were mostly donated by local residents, and the photos at the back were copied from historical archives, depicting everyday scenes in the general *lao Beijing* city

Figure 5-7 5-8 the past domestic furnishings and housewares on display in the museum (1950s-1960s on the above, 1970s-1980s at the bottom)

For 5-7, it is arranged to show the domestic scene where industrial products were not popularised in everyday use, with a portrait of Chairman Mao on the wall, delivering a political atmosphere of the life at that time. For 5-8, industrial products became common and various, and the portrait was no more posted. The exhibition shows social and ideological transformations during the decades by paralleling the contrasting scenes.

5.2.2.   The self-portrait: the state, the city, the neighbourhood, and individuals on the same thread

Based on the embracive cultural discourse that blurs power relations between the stakeholders, the presence of the state can be innocent, therefore the political propaganda can be embedded in the narratives imperceptibly. Consequently, the state, the city, and the neighbourhoods are put on the same thread, resulting in a self-portrait as a local representation of the national history. This is manifested in themed exhibitions and events, and becomes effective to both participants and organisers in embodied practices.

The state history can be localised and represented as ordinary histories. One means is old photo exhibition as a common while effective way to visualise histories (Crang, 1996). In the case study site, there were two exhibitions on historic street views aiming at embedding the state to the neighbourhood although with different emphasises. The west one, Dongsi Street, is currently propagandised as city-level commercial street of the old

city with its significance in urban morphology as one of the main north-south streets composing the general framework. The other one on the east, Chaoyangmen Narrow Street is local, narrow and a bustling place for everyday shopping. Though presenting different themes, the two exhibitions share the emphasis of the historical continuity, as what the state always propagandises in its present slogan for the Chinese cultural rejuvenation. The representations of the local history and culture are manifestations of the mainstream discourses from the authorities' wills.

For the Dongsi Street old photo exhibition, it delivered the sense of continuity by selected historic buildings and individuals' practices of remembering and narrating. The exhibition showed street views in the 1950s-60s via the photos from the BMICPD, which had completed the collection in order to survey and archive the cityscape of Beijing. As a result, for the photos, buildings occupied the focal points and the objects by which the narratives were made. To form the narratives within the *lao Beijing* cultural discourse, the museum curators invited several residents, who were respected for their affluent knowledge about the local history, to recall their personal experiences about the buildings on the photos. The personal memories were integrated with the official descriptions to produce a series of narratives which were both displayed in the temporary exhibition and were published online via the museum Wechat official account. For instance, in an article discussing a barbershop once existed along the street, the curator used the photo focusing on the building, but relied much on several old residents' memories about personal consuming experiences, to add historic and cultural values to the building as a realm of memory by which "the narrations continue up to now" (see Figure 5-9)[50]. In the personal memories, there were strong concerns for the historical contexts then, and the barbershop was taken as the realm where the personal lives got connected with the state's fortune. For example, in the article, an aunt said that she changed a fashionable hairstyle here once the reforms were launched in 1978. It is her personal ritual to "welcome the spring breeze of reform and opening up". In this structure of narration, the narratives are arranged centring on the buildings, as the representations to tell the historic information about the street. By presenting the continuous uses, or people's remembrance of the selected historic buildings, the exhibition contributes to fabricating a continuous narrative about the local history, yet marginalising the political upheavals once happening there. This echoes to the mainstream narrative about the Chinese culture as continuous and lively, and acts as a local

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[50] City Co-creation. (2018) *Memories about the Spring Breeze Barbershop on the Dongsinan Street: meeting the reform of the spring breeze* 京城回眸口述故事（二）东四南春风理发馆的记忆 迎接改革的春风 Available at:
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzUyNDQxOTE0NA==&mid=2247484240&idx=1&sn=c60199f9eb40b4ba1c4ec7356db42fbc&scene=19#wechat_redirect (Accessed: 6 January 2023)

manifestation to propagandise this cultural ideology. Paradoxically, big changes have happened after the photos were taken. For this condition, the exhibition, as well as the narrators' practices of memorising and speaking, becomes a new way of proving the continuation.

The other old photo exhibition focused on the east-side Chaoyangmen Narrow Street, and was held by the subdistrict office. Different from the building-centric presentation of Dongsi Street, the exhibition focused on street views composing of buildings, transportations and people in 2002 before a renewal project refurbished the street. Taken by a female photographer who was interested in recording the everyday scenes in the *lao Beijing* city (The Beijing News, 2019), the photos contained more mundane details, as the ordinary histories shared by the commons. Specifically, busy and crowded everyday atmosphere was emphasised in the photos instead of single historic buildings (see Figure 5-10). The objects like crowded buses, vendors selling steaming breakfast, and similar everyday details, can evoke memories of the mundane and essential everyday life in the past that is not far from the present. In addition to the visual presentation, a resident who had been photographed as a community security volunteer was invited to the exhibition to share her memories about the street. As she said: "At that time, the street was very narrow and there were many vehicles. After the renewal project, it became wider and the traffic condition got better. I was on duty with a red armband, and 18 years later I'm still on duty as a security volunteer (Chaoyangmen Subdistrict Office, 2019)." This positive comment on the renewal project, accompanying a personal experience of continuity, faded the authoritative state power that could make decisions arbitrarily to modify the living circumstance of many residents. In addition, similar to the selected personal narratives about the Dongsi Street, the volunteer's personal remembrance of the patrolling practice, which has been officially led to keep public security, invents a sense of connection between the individual and the state in the personal continuous role playing. By such exhibition of the common living history without a centre to arrange the narratives, the bonds between the state, the place, and individuals can also be built up.

Figure 5-9 an old photo displaying the barbershop on the Dongsi Street; copyright owned by the Wechat public media account *City Co-creation* **城市共创**

Figure 5-10 an old photo on display of the exhibition for Nanxiaojie Street, showing busy street view then without highlighting any specific buildings; copyright owned by the Wechat public media account **朝阳门党建四He院**

The two exhibitions respectively represent different periods of the local history with implications on a continuity in the present. For the Dongsi Street that was depicted by an aggregation of public buildings during the 1950s-60s, it reflected the early socialist period as harmonious with public services well delivered to the masses via such elite buildings.

Individuals' memories of their relative experiences were arranged to enrich building images, which could be found with some clues on the present street. On the other side, the Chaoyangmen Narrow Street exhibition put the close past on display and centred on everyday trivialities. By this decentralised narrating theme, continuity is easier to achieve with ordinary life in a close past accessible or even kept in the present.

In addition to the old photo exhibitions, another connection between individuals and the state is made by oral history workshops. For this situation, organisers, as professionals of the approach, prepared the topics and made the interviews with residents, who were selected and invited by the local officers, respectively by the one-to-one mode. After all the interviews were finished, a workshop for presentations and communications was held, as the way of ending the series of activities. The way of implementing the participatory project made it highly organised, and left little room for the residents to narrate anything else beyond the given topics. Two main themes of the workshop were personal histories and living experiences in their local residences. Interviews were made independently for every interviewee, with one's personal old photos as references when recalling the past. In this way, despite a group meeting at the end, the recorded oral histories were individual-centric and not constructive for enhancing mutual communications. The character is illustrated by two pocket books printed by the museum to archive the workshop. In the tables of contents, the articles are arranged by the interviewees, but the editing group did not make any connections in between (See Figure 5-11). In addition, in most of the narratives about personal experiences, they were highly connected with the transformative socio-political context, in which the personal life histories were embedded. The individualised mode of narration, as a result of the workshop arrangement and the interviewers' practices, contributed to reinforcing the connection but restricted it to be personal. In this way, personal histories were taken, as well as being presented, as manifestations of the national history, but do not effectively enact social and affective bonding between neighbours. For the selected interviewees, their narratives were positive, implying the similar image of the state. As a result, the parallel way of organising the interviews and recording the narratives from the selected residents reproduced the mainstream narratives about the national culture, and reinforced its status in personal life histories. It also contributes to marginalising disputes, conflicts, and divergences between individuals and the state in aspects of ideologies, views, practices, etc, and further to reduce the possibility of communicating with each other by making the interviews independently.

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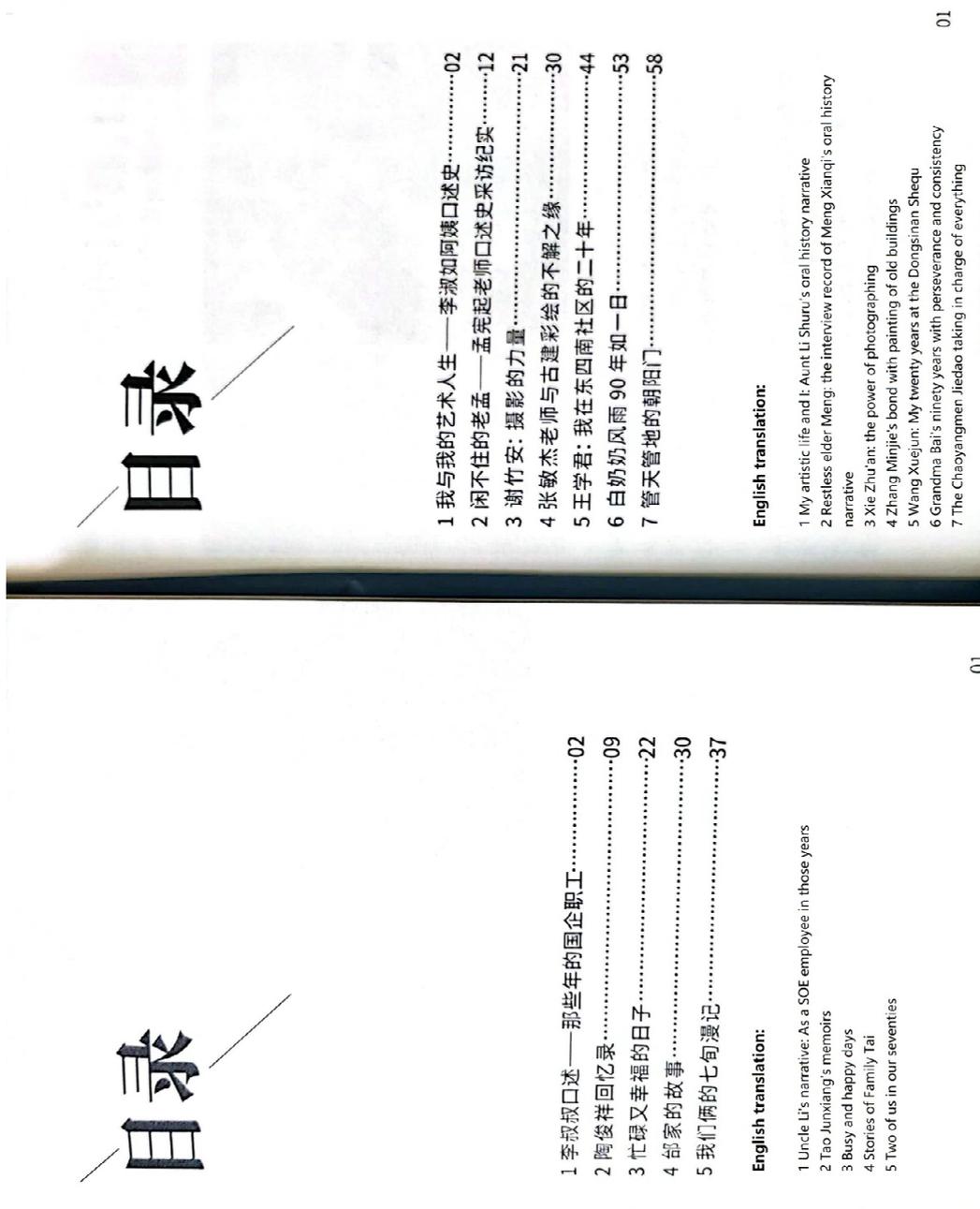
Figure 5-11 The tables of contents of the two pocket books, with English translations provided below. They illustrate that the oral history workshop was carried out by focusing on individuals or families, but with fewer attentions paid to create the sense of community by this intervention.

(Copyright owned by the Shijia Hutong Museum)

From the organisers' perspective, a main reason to choose the mundane cultural themes is to implement their professional works smoothly. The museum curator, a retired officer of BMICPD, expressed an expectation to get connected with residents from an urban planner's perspective. In order to explore a mode for public participation in urban planning, the museum and the platform were set as a hub to connect people, finding out potential residents with valuable lifelong history related to the local history and making friends with them. Based on these residents and their exemplary effects, the museum team would like to gradually convey the historic conservation ideology to more residents, thus evoking their initiatives to participate in and contribute to the local conservation planning practices. However, in this initial stage, it was hard to get in touch with those "residents with stories" but a group of participants with intermediation of local residential committees who contact and invite them to participate. Therefore, a makeshift to keep activities ongoing was made to keep attendees as many as possible, but without specific practices to make sure that the given themes could match residents' interests. In addition, this aim from the professional teams also caters to local bureaus' expectation to achieve a conservation mode alternative to commercialisation with a spotlight on the ordinary history, as Director Li emphasised. In this common pursuit for an aesthetic representation of the local past with geographical and temporal boundaries blurred, a set of narration could be successfully visualised with individual residents participating as a living component of the ordinary history, making it energetic and convincible. In such conspiracy for better project implementation, residents' needs, as well as their practices of everyday life, are selectively seen and get represented to legitimise the projects. This mode of management can translate the local living culture to the version that serves national identity construction and reinforcement, with the local officers and the professional teams still playing the determinant roles in the heritage management, and holding the power to decide how the local living culture is narrated and represented. Despite the efforts paid for building up linkage between communities in different geographical scales, concrete individuals are marginalised by this tidied-up cultural narrative. Specifically, with few concerns taken to inspire residents' initiative of deciding what they would like to talk about the local history, the actual various facets of the ordinary history that is full of trivialities and messes were not, and may be impossible to get represented and to be put at the centre of the exhibition hall. As will explain in detail in the next chapter about local social networking, many participating opportunities are distributed by the local bureaucrats based on their selections on residents instead of personal interests. In this situation, culture is taken as a resource by which local governance can be improved, including political propaganda to be achieved among residents.

Furthermore, some facets of the living culture other than the mainstream representation can be denied by the dominant evaluation criteria. From the conservation practitioners' perspective, traces of current everyday uses of courtyards that parallel with historic building patterns as evidence of local culture are potential negative impacts supposed to be cleaned up. For example, residents' everyday uses of the space make messy looks, which are regarded as damage to the preserved urban landscape and morphology. The commercial use of courtyard houses, similarly, is taken as discordant with the *hutong* landscape as tidy and tranquil. Such stigmatisation of the everyday messy further complicates the relationship between the ordinary living practice and the conservation aesthetics. On the one hand, the conserved heritage is valuable for its vivid mundane beauty. On the other hand, the practices of everyday life there are sources to make damage to the valued landscape. As a solution to the contradiction, public spaces are demarcated as legitimate showcases of the local culture. This provides an explanation of the conservation feature there as mentioned in Chapter 5.1. By public space making, the spaces are transformed to be meaningful and disciplinary with invisible thresholds, and become new domains that result in excluding messy everyday trivial uses.

5.3.   Public space making for projects realisation

As mentioned in Chapter 3.3, "publicness" in Chinese background refers to a vulnerable venue in between the official and the private, where government can make direct interventions with individuals self-disciplined to keep a good social order. This functioning of public space allows the process of aesthetic govermentality, as Ghertner (2010) theorises as a set of governmental techniques to organise urban space by aesthetic norms, which effectively train citizens to see the spaces through the lenses provided by government. In this case study site, more and more local spaces are designated as public, with specific codes of behaviour set to regulate actions from users of the spaces. In addition to the courtyards that are renovated to be cultural venues, yards spaces just outside households are named to be public in the renovation project. In the design schemes, the public spaces are modified to be suitable for viewing, with cultural meanings and regulations on behaviour embedded to keep such visually-oriented order, and meanwhile to erase the traces of everyday uses that are regarded to discord with the ideal picture imagined by conservation practitioners. The publicness is used by heritage conservation for involving pieces of space as many as possible in the AHD, where an order for aesthetic appropriation is officially established to dominate both the heritage narratives and the spatial structures. The combination still allows the state intervention to form the space and set up the codes of behaviour. Consequently, the conservation project represents the local civic culture by following the official discourse, with the state agents on the scene, holding

power to decide the renovation projects and supervise the implementation. It leaves the chaotic and trivial facets of the everyday life underrepresented or even erased. The discourse spatialisation in fact contradicts the ongoing daily life where the unique local culture is extracted. Space clean-up and redefinition are effective ways by which a heritage-centred place representation is reproduced both in narratives and in spatial orders.

Based on my fieldtrip, I classified the public spaces into three categories:

Firstly, the museum and other similar venues are named as "*shequ* cultural venues" in the *Dongsinan Historical Area Conservation Plan*, and are used as both attractions to the public and venues for local activities. Starting from 2013, when the Shijia *Hutong* Museum as the first local cultural venue came into play, trials to authorise professional teams to run such venues were taken by local offices, and have been continued until now. Currently, each *shequ* is allocated with at least one venue, which usually takes up a courtyard or a single house along *hutong* after integral renovation. Commonly, a venue is organised by a timetable in which different types of activities are arranged. The activities are quite various with different organisers and participants. Here I apply the museum as an example to show a general look of the venue running, which cannot include all possibilities but an example that helps to have a general picture (see Table 5-1). By making timetable in advance, different venues in the museum are used in sequence in specific ways. Different rhythms are realised simultaneously by such arrangements, with temporary boundaries created for paralleled activities. For example, for the museum, although it is open to the public with free entrance, participating in specific activities requires limited passes that are available from local offices and online registration. As a result, museum as an open venue is actually divided into several sections with thresholds set, leading to actually unequal space accessibilities and uses. With thresholds setting becoming a routine of the venues in use, many residents are marginalised from *shequ* participation. In this way, the visibility of residents' practices of participation in such venues is actually an outcome of the entries that are restricted by the unequally distributed accessibility.

In addition to the temporary thresholds, regulations on behaviour, as well as some proprieties that are formed in long-term spatial practices, also regulate individual practices and are influential in place image formation. There are regulations on behaviour set for visitors to cultural venues since most of them are located in courtyards thus under legal protection. The regulations include prohibitions on smoking, shouting, running and other "uncivilised" (in Chinese as "not civilised", *bu wenming* 不文明) behaviours. Taking the museum as an example, when such behaviour is observed by staffs, they will stop it immediately. This strict order maintenance could even be applied to pupils who come to

the museum after school for fun. Due to the general shortage of open spaces in the neighbourhood, the museum yard is quite popular among pupils, many of whom may come and spend some time there, running, shouting, and playing around with friends. Such situation is not welcomed by the museum and is taken as disturbing and rude. What's more, in events that are regularly held by local offices, the place image of culture venues are expected to present as "civilised" (*wenming* 文明), with everything appearing ordered and urbane, hence to fit the mainstream narration that praises distinction and durability of the local culture. In this condition, residents as attendees are fixed as a group of frequenters whom could practice the role of participants to fit the ideal place image as expected to be realised in the routine events. The thresholds being set invisibly guarantee feasibility of this selective representation of the place in the cultural venues.

Table 5-1 regular activities being held inside the Shijia *Hutong* Museum

Activities	Organisers	Participants	Frequencies	Space and boundaries	Examples
Shequ activities	*Juweihui*, key figures or teams in conservation	Residents invited by local officers, and the public audience accessing via online registration	Once per week/ two weeks, long-term effective	The meeting room, or the yard	Community photographing class; A local NGO traditional craftwork class
Themed activities	The museum, key figures or teams in conservation	Residents invited by local officers, and the public audience accessing via online registration	Once per week/two weeks, once per month, in a specific period	The meeting room, or the yard	Oral history workshop; community construction family activity series
Events held on traditional festivals	The subdistrict office, the museum, other key figures or teams in conservation	Residents invited by local officers, and the public audience accessing via online registration	Once per year	The whole museum with visiting restrictions	The Chinese New Year Celebration; The Lantern Festival Celebration
Exhibitions	The museum, volunteer tour guides	the public audience	The museum opening hour	The exhibition hall	-
Local official meetings	Local offices	Local officers, conservation practitioners, resident representatives	Held as needed	The meeting room	Meetings on event planning; meetings on feedbacks from residents
Events by venue rental	Venue renters	Venue renters	Based on the rental contract	The exhibition hall and the meeting room	Small corporation's annual meeting or training course

Secondly, spaces of the narrow alleys are involved in conservation planning thus undergoing beatification and landscape renovation that is officially financed, with multiple authorities that are endowed with power to modify the space. As a result, *hutong* space undergoes continuous changes that are led by different municipal departments as well as the local *jiedao,* and appears fragmented with the always partial modifications. In detail, there are four main power holders which have made spatial modifications in *hutong*, while they have done the works respectively without coordination:

The first one of the powerful actors is the planning team from the municipal planning department, with scholars in urban planning and design taking *hutong* as a part of the historical built environment, where urban morphology and historic landscape deserve preservation. Relying on the *Dongsinan Historical Area Conservation Plan*, the planning team expects to meet the needs of historic landscape maintenance, and local living environment improvement simultaneously. However, since the legal planning document only specifies width and public spaces along *hutong* without a detailed guidance on landscape conservation, it allows flexibilities in local conservation implementation. This legal situation, with limited power distributed to the planners when talking about constructions in such neighbourhoods, results in some "wrong practices" implemented by *jiedao* and damages the landscape, as the planners criticise (will be illustrated in the next paragraph). As a result, in order to guide local practices in right ways as planners expect, a *Beijing municipal responsible urban planner system* came into force in 2019 with specific planners allocated to subdistricts, participating in decision making and offering suggestions. Besides, a guidebook for conservation works *Design Guide for the Preservation and Renewal of Beijing's Historic and Cultural Districts* that was drawn up by a university professional team as a long-term collaborator with BMICPD was published in 2020 for better demonstrating the right ways of landscape maintenance, as a supplementary for responsible planners to direct conservation implementations. Therefore, with legal regulations on appearance, and specific figures in charge of implementation, the *hutong* landscape can be maintained by keeping the historic looks of the facades.

The second power holder, the local *jiedao*, leads local conservation practices and simultaneously takes in charge of daily governance. From this perspective, historic landscape maintenance is only one part of governing works without priority. Therefore, in lack of professional knowledge but with annual budgets for conservation, in many years the office has applied a facelifting way to keep an "old Beijing look" by painting walls, hiding family or public facilities with archaistic metal boxes, and erasing "illegal constructions" built by residents. Besides, multiple projects conducted in *hutong* space create a redundancy of facilities. According to Director Li, the facelifting works have been continued based on long-term contracts made with professional teams thus are hard to

cancel. In addition, *hutong* space as an object under urban governance receives functions and images that are always changing. This results in continuous space occupation with officially settled facilities, which keep reducing room for space for practical use. For example, currently the local *hutong* are not easy to traverse with decorations and residents' vehicles filling the limited space. Before a local rule for one-side *hutong* parking coming into force, a means to avoid disordered parking is adding pedestrian lanes on both sides. Later, with a municipal urban beautification project launched in 2017 that was aimed at an ordered urban appearance, following a guidance to "leave blank and add green" (留白增绿 *liubai zenglv*)[51], *hutong* greening has been conducted by setting flower pots on the lane, with maintaining service purchased from the municipal department in a long-term contract. Currently, with the permanent construction and the contract kept, *hutong*, which has been narrow alleys left from the pre-industrial world fitting practical needs at that time, is extremely crowded and just leaves a channel in the middle for passing through (see Figure 5-9, 5-10). Within local governance, *hutong* is taken to meet both aesthetic and practical needs, without an effective mechanism to coordinate respective consequent constructions. The construction results in a redundant and elaborately ornamented public space which is not friendly or meaningful to space users.

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[51] This is one part of the citywide project aiming at "removing the functions that do not belong to the capital city and improving urban management" (疏解整治促提升 *shujie zhengzhi cutisheng*) that will be elaborated later.

Figure 5-12 The narrow alley with piled up redundant ornamentations (above)

Figure 5-13 Details of flower pots on a pedestrian lane (bottom)

In addition, professional urban design teams, as collaborators participating in local conservation practices, did the micro-renovation projects by modifying the small pieces of space along *hutong*. Following the principle of public participation, the practitioners invited residents to attend the design workshops and take in charge of everyday maintenance after finishing the construction. In these trials, small pieces of *hutong* space, like corners, areas in front of courtyard gates and windows, surfaces of walls and grounds, etc. are regarded as potential objects where renovation was conducted (see Figure 5-14, 5-15, 5-16 as examples). Such experimental practices are taken as progressive achievements for both local offices and collaborating teams and are recorded and exhibited to the public via mass media. However, though positively reported, such spatial modifications are quite vulnerable with waves of projects continuously landing at *hutong*. Moreover, participants in charge of daily maintenance may change their mind to give up due to personal reasons or complaints from their neighbours. This experimental mode results in transitory achievements in spatial renovation, some of which are not sustainable and gradually get obsoleted and replaced.

Figure 5-14 An installation that ornaments a *hutong* entrance

Figure 5-15 A spot of the Micro Garden project

Figure 5-16 An ornament that portrays a *lao Beijing* scene on the wall

Lastly, above the subdistrict level, urban beautification campaigns can modify *hutong* space without room for negotiation. Normally it is decided by at least the municipal

government to solve some urban issues and is practiced locally. Such campaigns modify living environment rapidly and thoroughly, leaving refurbished public spaces with fewer meanings and recognisable signs. In this neighbourhood, a citywide project aiming at "removing the functions which do not belong to the capital city and improving urban management" (疏解整治促提升 *shujie zhengzhi cutisheng*) that was launched in 2017 was significantly effective, and promoted campaigns to be done rapidly, resulting in an ordered look of *hutong*. In the official document, the municipal government specifies the aims when the project is implemented in the old city. As the document stipulates:

> We will sweep away all illegal constructions, illegal business operations, and illegal rental activities in the central urban areas, and speed up the project that removes the low-end businesses, in order to prevent disorderly population gathering. We will investigate and eliminate safety risks to ensure normal order of the city. We will carry out environmental improvement projects and eliminate the "dirty, messy and bad" phenomena. Speed up to improve the road microcirculation system and improve the transportation environment. We will do a good job in the protection and utilization of cultural relics, realize the overall protection of the old city, and restore the historic landscape of the historic city (Beijing Municipal Government, 2017).

From the government's perspective, the project that targets at eliminating the illegal businesses is helpful to restore the historic landscape of the old city by clearing the "low-end" elements from the historic facades. During the project, the *hutong* façade was further tidied by correcting illegal constructions. If the current building condition did not match the registered one, it would be identified illegal and was forced to be restored to the original status for the sake of construction safety. This action caused many shops and restaurants along *hutong* shut down, with gates replaced by the same security doors. Take one *hutong* there as an example, according to a piece of news, only 11 out of 73 shops survived after the sweeping action[52]. New look of the *hutong* is composed of rows of closed security doors, with walls in different greys, and with few shop boards visible (See Figure 5-17, 5-18). The *hutong* has been quieted by excluding most of business activities, leaving the cleaned-up historic landscape ordered but dull. In this way, an exuberant local atmosphere which has been narrated and exhibited as a *lao Beijing* feature, is eliminated by such public sphere emphasising order and sublime.

In general, for *hutong,* it has been burdened with multiple roles from different

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[52] Beijing Daily 北京日报 (2017) *Lishi Hutong: A cultural venue was added instead of a food street* 北京东城区礼士胡同：清退美食街 胡同添了文化传习馆 Available at: http://beijing.qianlong.com/2017/1219/2261527.shtml (Accessed: 28 February 2022)

authorities, and becomes a venue where the multiple functions are expected to realise by public space making. The constant construction and demolition show that a consensus has been hard to realise without a mechanism for negotiation and coordination among the multiple power holders, not to mention paying attentions to residents and allowing them to participate in negotiation and determination. As a result, *hutong* are fulfilled with the redundant ornaments which were sequentially set there in the conservation practices. Although aiming at visually representing the ordinary culture as extraordinary and distinctive, without an ordered and clear expression of the cultural distinction, the constant works make the *hutong* landscape mutable, and can hardly be the meaningful medium for residents to participate sustainably.

Figure 5-17 the clearance movement in progress (the above photo offered by aunt Shao)

Figure 5-18 current status of the blocked-off storefronts (the bottom photo)

Thirdly, in addition to the types of spaces mentioned above that are accessible by the general public, the yard spaces shared by several households inside courtyard walls are classified as public in the renovation projects. Due to a dilapidating and messy condition in long-term everyday use, courtyards are supposed to get renovation since the current status "is demolition to the authentic courtyard landscape" (Committee of Taking root and germinating: Practice of responsible planner in Dongsinan Historic and Cultural Conservation Area Beijing, 2020). Following a standard courtyard building pattern that is presupposed by the AHD, conservation practitioners understand the overcrowded residential courtyards in the neighbourhood as problematic. From the building-centric perspective, self-built constructions and household stuffs are regarded as troublesome to occupy the yard spaces and blur the historic spatial pattern, hence supposed to be cleaned up. In this discursive context, renovation trials were taken to seven courtyards that were selected and recommended by local officers in 2015. Six urban design teams introduced by the planning team from BMICPD took over local implementation, aiming at restoring an original building pattern and simultaneously improving living conditions for current residents. After the construction works were finished, similar to the *hutong* micro-renovation projects, the seven renovated courtyards are used as exemplars to illustrate the rationality and legitimacy of the conservation practices. In the municipal planning team's self-presentation, it is achieved by sets of comparisons between the previous messy looks and the renovated ones where the historic building patterns are visible (see Figure 5-19). The tidy look of the living circumstance, and the clarity of the historic building texture after the renovation works are presented to distinguish from the previous dilapidated and cramped conditions. Furthermore, the powerful narrative can be circulated among the public via the mass media. For example, a piece of news from ifeng.com (2019) reported the project. In addition to the technique of contrast, several residents' practices of participation in the projects were photographed and reported there to illustrate their approvals of the projects, as well as their initiatives to maintain the renovated living environment. The plebian faces were used there to illustrate the popular approval of the works, and to engage more public attentions by the positive image.

By the works which rearranged the yard spaces and defined them as public, the conservation project expands the aesthetic appreciation of the authorised heritage value to cover the spaces where the everyday practices of residing create practical needs that require spatialisation. This mode has been taken as successful and was expected to get further application locally, but was conducted slowly due to the fairly high cost. As a result, although with limited practices that have been finished towards the yards just outside home doors, the exemplary works have defined the yards as public, which, as a piece of

knowledge, is available to both officers and residents.
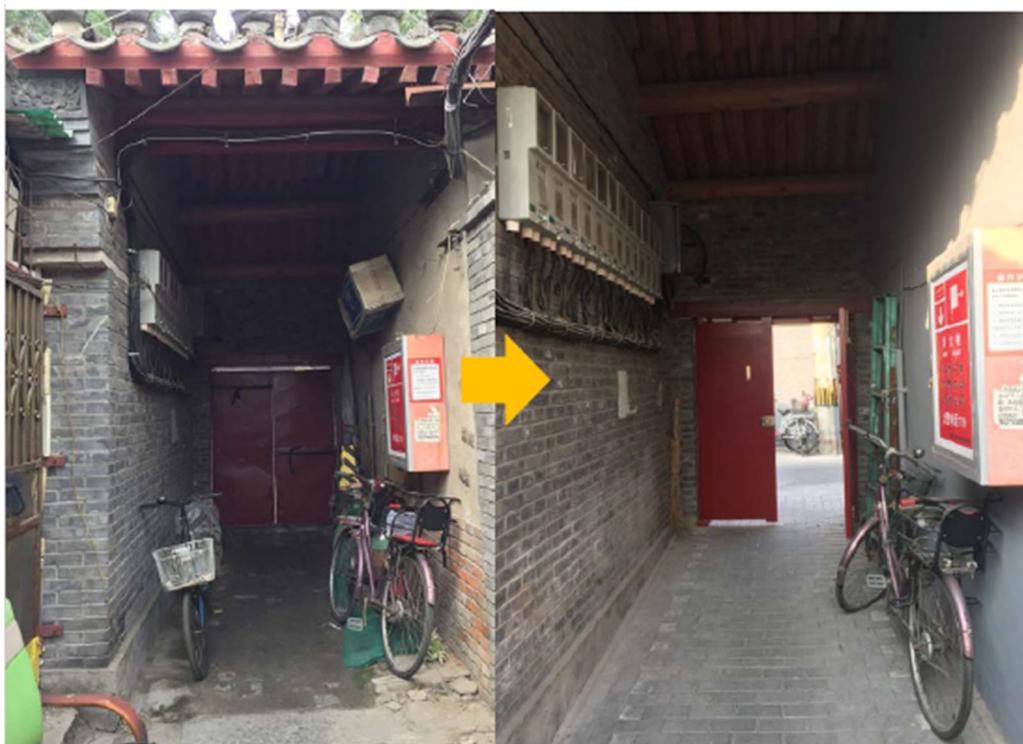
Figure 5-19 The planning team's way of presenting the achievement of the courtyard renovation project (copyright owned by the BMICPD)

In general, invading even into the courtyards with a discourse to restore public spaces necessary for neighbours' daily use and communication, the conservation practice is making the neighbourhood a "living museum of *lao Beijing* culture", being viewed by both visitors and residents with their heritage-contextualised eyes. Being immersed in a set of museum value, officers and professionals cooperate to maintain a historic moment in which materials and people fit each other as a coalescence inherited from an old cultural society. However, this historic consciousness shows a de-historicising process conducted to the local everyday routine, setting the past opposite to the present thus cutting off the continuity conveyed by modern technologies (Bausinger, 1990, p.61). In this case, different historical slices of *lao Beijing* are bound and are represented via public spaces, creating a sense of continuation by converting a timing sequence to a spatial juxtaposition. This cultural representation of urban space also caters to the state political need. From a political perspective, *lao Beijing* is applied for an "advanced culture occupation" in community construction, demonstrating that a *suzhi*-oriented development is truly happening, benefiting residents by improving their spiritual quality in such culture-oriented activities. It evokes with the current political ideology of the CPC's domination that a new China is developing as well as inheriting the past.

As a result, it is legitimate to transform non-private spaces to be public, based on the

knowledge about public space in the historic area produced and circulated by the powerful actors. The public spaces can be attached with meanings and the regulations of behaviour, and get ornamented for aesthetically pleasant views. However, this spatial intervention results in marginalising everyday uses that are taken as disorders to the spatial realisation of the heritage value. For visitors, it might be an enjoyable experience to have a heritage glance for a moment, or a regretful journey when seeing some ridiculous conservation practices. However, comparing to visitors' temporary stays, it is a confusing and chaotic condition for residents viewing and dwelling in such space under multiple definitions and constant modifications, which are piled up and mixed with their everyday uses of the space. In this situation, carrying their long-term living experiences and continuing everyday life *in situ*, the locals need to fit themselves into the changeable living environment which they are powerless to decide. As a result, tracing back memories of the local past, which may not be archived into authorised narrations of the locality, is taken as a means when being faced with the uncontrollable reality.

5.4.   Discussions

In this Chapter, I elaborate how the AHD is realised to dominantly represent the *lao Beijing* culture in a neighbourhood. The technique is neighbourhood museumification, include fabricating the narratives about local history and culture, presenting them via spatialisation, and arranging the ways of reading them for viewers. In the specific socio-political context of the case study site, the powerful actors contribute to maintaining and reproducing the AHD by connecting the historical and cultural narratives of the state, the neighbourhood, and the selected individuals together, and prioritising the historic landscape for pleasant visual consumption when spatialising the discourse. However, the consistency of narratives in different geographical levels covers up the dissonant nature of heritage, as Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) argue in consideration of the selective practices in the assembling process of heritage production, and marginalises potential sources for reflexive improvements. Moreover, by the practice of seeing, it is hard for viewers to discover the dissonant yet diverse cultures existing in the same space. The techniques together act to restrain reflexive improvements in the AHD.

Specifically, the neighbourhood-level findings reflect the dissonance in *lao Beijing* city conservation: Though there has been a coalition between the AHD and the *lao Beijing* culture forming in the preservation of the old city, the contradiction has been there between the authoritative mode of protection and the multiple facets of the commemorative local culture. It sets up a starting point for researchers to think about constructive works after critically deconstructing the AHD, and to ask: Is there a possible way to modify the AHD so that a consonant can be reached among the inherent diversity

of heritage? The source of solution should come from careful inspection of the diversity, in which different ways of thinking about the heritage and using the space are significant when considering about reaching the consonance. Being inclusive to the multiple cultures can the AHD transforms its role in framing narratives about local history and culture.

Furthermore, the case illustrate how cultural heritage conservation conspires with urban planning and both get legitimacy to dominate urban space. Spatialisation is a significant way for the AHD to achieve the domination. In the case study site which is located in a modernised big city, public space, with the corresponding codes of behaviour, has become widely known among citizens. The piece of knowledge supports the AHD by spatialising it, and meanwhile legitimising the restrictions on construction and human behaviour by its disciplinary implication. In turn, heritage conservation also acts as a pleasant reason for space to be modified as public. In this coalition, the mainstream way for citizens to connect with heritages contributes to framing the urban publicness. However, by viewing and reproducing the given historic landscapes, citizens make the publicness passively as consumption-based commemoration. It is not an ideal way when thinking of constructing sustainable collective identity, since the way of connecting with some specific locality is fragile and mutable. Moreover, from a political perspective, the publicness here can hardly enable changes of the power relations between the stakeholders in the conservation works, and even in neighbourhood governance. The interdisciplinary exploration reveals that the coalition is seamed by the aesthetic governmentality but just reproduces the existing codes of behaviours and spatial structures in both theoretical fields.

The findings also prompt me to ask if participatory conservation is a good way that can help reform the coalition. For the case, the planners and officers claimed that the public participation was respected as the core method to implement the conservation project, which was also emphasised in mass media propaganda. In practice, it is carried out by consulting a limited number of residents about suggestions of specific renovation projects, and inviting them and the wider public to coproduce the established AHD by embodied practices. Despite the appearance of public participation, the participants are not endowed with rights to make decisions. In Arnstein's (1969) mode of ladder of citizen participation, the practices are classified as tokenism, which allows residents to hear and to have a voice, while it is unable to ensure that their views can affect decision making. The critical examination there reveals the limitation when applying the internationally recognised concept in the specific context. Without evaluating the localisation of an international best practice by discussing its feasibility in the socio-political context, it can be appropriated to reproduce the existing local power relations instead of reforming them.

Based on the critical discourse analysis about the local realisation of the AHD that protects the *lao Beijing* city, in the following three chapters, I will show local residents'

perceptions about the conserved space where they live, and their practices of everyday life there. This is a perspective shift which is made to understand the role of the AHD in community lives, by interpreting the cherished *lao Beijing* cultural landscape *per se* instead of the attached values. This trial helps legitimate the necessity to critically examine the AHD by providing a portrait of residents' life-world that is intervened by the discourse and is forced to change, despite the unwillingness, confusion, or even indifference emerging among the residents, though the heritage conservation is usually expected to make positive effects.

PART III Practicing Beijing dwelling

Chapter 6.   Social relations in the neighbourhood under historic conservation

Based on the detailed interpretation of the "living museum of *lao Beijing* culture", the conservation project that spatialised the local culture in the neighbourhood, Part III is developed from an everyday perspective to examine residents' social life with the AHD as a component, and their practices in specific types of public spaces that have been made culturally meaningful. In this way, the relationship between the AHD and people's dwelling practices is elucidated from the latter's perspective, a realistic narration alternative to the conventional descriptions about heritage value. By making the shift, I continue the critical imagination about heritage by situating it in the context of everyday life, and explores whether the *local cultures*, as residents' ways of living, can accept the discursive system well or not.

As a beginning of this part, I would like to offer an overview of the current local social relations, as a foundation for the following two analytical chapters. In this chapter, firstly, the local social networks are introduced and explained within a state reforming context where urban administrative unit is transferred from *danwei* to *shequ*. Here legacies from social relations and political identities in the early socialist period are still influential in the present local social networking and neighbouring, causing differentiated relations with local offices, and diverse attitudes and practices towards neighbouring. Secondly, new population changes happening to the neighbourhood in the post-reform period are introduced, with explanation of reasons to cause sense of insecurity and corresponding practices. Then, based on the already differentiated social relations as an inheritance from the early socialist society, and the population changes happening at the present, a current neighbouring status with both mutual distances and proximities is illustrated, with room left in between that allows power to intervene. By describing the condition of local social networking, I would like to set up an empirical foundation for better understanding residents' practices of everyday life in the public-defined spaces of the conservation works.

6.1.   Social networking with the social and political legacies

6.1.1.   From *danwei* to *shequ*: social relations in a transitional period

As discussed in Chapter 3.2, although *shequ* was officially promoted to be an alternative urban social governing unit to the dissolving *danwei* system after the economic reforms, *danwei*-style social relations which were formed with hierarchy have not faded away. As a result, for individuals, social identity transition between the two system could happen, while connections with *danwei* and *shequ* could vary among individuals. This variety causes differentiations in *shequ* meeting and activity participation, thus leading to

unequal distribution of opportunities to express personal opinions on official works, and to receive public welfares that are provided by the local officers. The difference in participating experience can further lead to various readings on local offices and respective *shequ* works, and result in dissents in the residential group. To illustrate the situation, I would like to show this differentiation by several individuals, with participatory details and their attitudes toward conservation works. As clarified in Chapter 1.2, the thesis is based on the extended case method, with the neighbourhood as a case of AHD spatialisation, and my interviewees as cases showing their lives inside the neighbourhood. It is hard to well defend for the representativeness of the cases when considering all of the residents. The alternative method I take there is trying to interpret the relationship between the AHD and their personal everyday lives case by case, and figuring out the common key factors that can be linked with the generalised discussions.

Firstly, residents' original *danwei* social relations can be maintained by enterprises which are still able to cover employees' welfare distribution. This only applies to enterprises affiliated to the central government and some big SOEs which are still able to keep to paying pensions and holding routine activities for retired employees. As a result, for one in no need of anything from *shequ*, it is meaningless to maintain a social connection and care about ongoing works. Such indifference was presented by Grandpa Liu, during an interview arranged for collecting opinions about the courtyard renovation project which had been conducted in the courtyard where he lived. In his 70s, Liu lived in the courtyard house since the Cultural Revolution happened in the 1960s after the former courtyard dwellers were driven out in the class struggles. Though dwelling there for decades, Liu said that he never participated in local activities, nor did he keep connected with local officers because "it was unnecessary". Supports for living were still offered by his *danwei*, a state-level scientific research institution, including monthly paid pensions and the right of dwelling in the current courtyard house. As a technical cadre previously serving a big *danwei*, he was distributed with a big house in a quite spacious courtyard, with extra rooms built up by occupying the original porch. Including a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a toilet, the house has no difference from a high-rise apartment, thus is quite comfortable for living with no need for extra public facilities. In this dwelling condition, Liu expressed reluctance when mentioning the courtyard renovation project since "it brought more trouble than convenience" due to limited physical improvement realised after construction as designed. In addition to the dissatisfaction on the implementations among which only yard paving was completed, he was also unwilling to participate in group discussions over construction details, since discussions were "useless in design realisation but took time". He felt that it was hard to communicate with neighbours over the issues, because everyone had one's respective request for benefits.

160

In fact, based on Liu's words, he rarely contacts with neighbours in the courtyard, neither *jiedao* or *shequ*. Courtyard living for him is "not worse than apartment dwelling". In addition, the courtyard renovation project which was aimed at building connections between neighbours was not effective in this case according to Liu. From his perspective, his relationship with neighbours kept as distant as before, and he preferred to keep the status without similar interventions anymore. In general, for Liu who has been dwelling without needs to get embedded in the local social network, local interventions could be trouble instead of helps in need of his extra efforts to coordinate. The participation practice as required by the renovation project brings inevitable interactions with neighbours and representatives from local bureaus, and is regarded as a burden by him who does not need a position in the local social networks.

However, such tight connection with *danwei* was not universally kept. Instead, for some residents, it has been transferred to *shequ* as the new dominant social administrative unit. Accompanied with economic reforms, employees' linkages to *danwei* were no more permanent like possessing "iron rice bowls", but were changed to be based on labour contracts in the 1980s. In addition, with the introduction of market-oriented economy, the *danwei* system was downsized with small ones disappearing, or being integrated into big SOEs in the 1990s (Bray, 2005). As a result, state-wide laid-off waves happened with reduction of several-million *danwei* employees per year, with solid links to *danwei* impacted or broken[53]. Simultaneously, with *shequ* being designated as a substitute social unit to *danwei* to deliver public service and social welfare, connections between employees and *danwei* got weaker, with partly transferred to *shequ*, especially for those retired.

Along with the systematic reform, the links between the neighbourhood-level offices and residents were officially encouraged to construct and maintain. As Chapter 4.4 illustrates, the links are kept in unequal social relations – the officers play a patriarchal role to supervise any community activities and strictly regulate the themes and contents. Such links can be strengthened by residents' routine practices of participation. Here participation chances are offered in different types: The most positions offered are *shequ* volunteers to do security patrolling at designated spots in the neighbourhood, or home visiting to the vulnerable families. The labour is rewarded with pittances (calculated by hours of service) or material benefits (daily essentials or groceries that usually getting distributed routinely). Some, with specialities or social positions, are invited in themed activities to take key positions like teaching and demonstrating. For the latter group,

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[53] Statistical data could help understand it: According to *China Statistical Yearbook (2001)* published by National Bureau of Statistics, from 1996-2000, numbers of SOE employee decreased from around 112,440,000 to 81,020,000.

connections with the local officers are kept tightly in repetitive practices of performing the roles that are set and supported by the local officers, who are responsible for the community construction works at the neighbourhood level.

The heritage conservation takes advantage of the social relations to implement the participatory conservation projects. The regular attenders of the *shequ* activities are involved as core members participating in conservation. For example, a couple sharing the same courtyard with Grandpa Liu performs quite positive roles in conservation works. Uncle Li and Aunt Zhu, as frequent *shequ* activity participants, show supportive attitudes towards conservation with practices contributed both in everyday uses and in conservation works. Being connected with *shequ* in 2007 when *shequ* English groups were promoted by the municipality to welcome the Olympic Games, Li keeps teaching English and has become acquainted with local officers. This relationship let Zhu to be invited as a volunteer to introduce their home courtyard, which got registered on a municipal courtyard preservation list, to official visitors since 2010 when such cultural landscapes started to be valued. In 2014, when the Shijia Hutong Landscape Association was established, Zhu was invited to be a resident representative participating in panel meetings and performing a supportive resident role in public events. According to her, it is such experience of occupying the position that made her know more about history and culture of the *hutong* and the *courtyard* where she has been living. By recognising the heritage values, she started to maintain her house in daily uses consciously. Based on the connection getting more and more solid in continuous participation practices, Li and Zhu also extended their public roles in conservation practices, with Li being invited to an oral history workshop to recall his family dwelling history, and Zhu self-trained to be a community artist, portraying historic scenes of the neighbourhood on painting with her brushes. Both the works were taken as exemplary outcomes and have been applied in different types of cultural products.

For the couple, conservation that has influenced their living environment is felt as an encouraging program worth their supports. This is quite different from Liu's dwelling attitude for self-sufficiency. For the couple, a long-term connection with local bureaus, with continuous conservation participation, facilitates the preservation consciousness to form. It helps raise appreciative attitudes towards their living houses and the whole neighbourhood, and such transformation is what the conservation practitioners would like to see, and further to popularise among a wider range of residents. However, this connection is maintained in the couple's advantaged social positions, and the recognised heritage value attached to their home courtyard. Both contribute to creating a priority by which the couple was invited by the local officers to be core participants.

However, such condition can not apply to the general masses; nor did the community

role promote others to participate in the conservation project. For the couple and Grandpa Liu, they cannot accept some neighbouring practices from each other. The couple criticised Liu's "selfish" occupation of a porch in the shared yard for extra domestic spaces, while Liu was unsatisfied about Zhu's welcoming attitude towards any visitors coming to appreciate the courtyard like a tour site open to the public. Difference in their social connections has manifested as dissimilar attitudes and practices in neighbouring practices, but has not been negotiable yet.

In addition to the personal or household features by which one can qualify as a participator in the conservation project, one's CPC membership is officially appreciated, and makes up the qualification to get involved in the *shequ* participators' group. The membership is recorded with a place of registration. When someone is retired, the place of registration can be transferred from the previous workplace to *jiedao*, which keeps a list of Party members, and takes responsibility to organise activities and offer opportunities for them, who are required to fulfil a certain number of compulsory service and study hours from the Party. As a result, a Party member have to keep connected with the local bureaus in this way, in which local offices provide opportunities for Party members to complete the task, and Party members reciprocate with supportive participatory practices as what local bureaus need to show their work achievements.

For individuals, this inevitable connection can be actively developed based on the existing social networks. Aunt Chang started her service and study at *shequ* after retiring from a central department and got her Party membership registration transferred. Her previous "big *danwei*" was appreciated by local officers, contributing to her appointment as a party branch secretary of the *shequ* where she has been residing. Being a group leader in party member activities, she was also persuaded by a participant to engaged in *shequ* activities, and started volunteering with her husband several years ago. By regular participation, the couple developed social relations beyond the neighbourhood, including personal connections with activity sponsors, experts, and other participants both in and outside the community. As they said, such connections were made during activity organisation, and were kept personally by offering mutual helps with warm hearts. The working experience, with extended social network, became a solid support for them to keep some initiatives in *shequ* activities. According to them, the present head of the local *juweihui* is not satisfactory since she communicated with them in "an arrogant style". As a result, based on the established social links, they changed venues to continue volunteering. The new venues included the museum which they have been volunteered in *shequ* activities organised there, and routine activities held in another *shequ* by an acquaintance's recommendation. The initiative and ability to keep kindred spirits helps them continue volunteering beyond the *shequ* social network.

For the couple, the socialist legacy effectively contributes to expanding their social networks. The identity for Chang as a previous Party member in a big *danwei* becomes an advantageous foundation for them to get a position in local social network, and further to deviate from a local bureau to expand connections elsewhere. In this process, a Party creed to serve people also gets practiced and insisted, and becomes an ethic of caring in interpersonal communications. The expanded social network offers the couple chances of getting connected with people beyond the scope of neighbours. They still keep in touch with an agent of the previous community activity sponsor, a young woman who came to Beijing for work. They said that they were happy to offer her a sense of home by keeping a personal contact. Such in-person contacts kept beyond the neighbourhood also makes them open-minded in neighbouring. For example, they would like to take care of tenants by regularly sharing homemade foods with those young singles, and keeping eyes on several elder people who live alone in case of urgent needs. Such initiatives of taking care of others are attributed to the spirit of devotion, as one of the Party's slogans, by the couple based on their strong sense of Party member identities in the community practices.

However, not all the locals are so well set in the *shequ*-centred network with advantaged social positions left from the past. There are residents out of the participation circle that is gatekept by local officers. For some, they do not have advanced social positions that are transformed from the past. Their previous *danwei* are similarly not advantaged thus were the most vulnerable to shut down facing the all-round social reforms. Hence, there was not a smooth identity transfer from *danwei* to *shequ* without any social position that could get recognised by local offices. This disconnected situation might lead to a constant sense of loss when being faced with the transitional surroundings, as one feels alienated from the ongoing happenings. As a result, estrangement could form between residents and local officers and becomes a routine in which the formers have been used to this disadvantaged situation.

Taking an uncle that impressed me as an example: when I traversed a *hutong* in the morning, he always sat in front of a courtyard gate with bottles of beer, drinking and glancing at pedestrians passing by. I was curious about the morning drink and had several talks with him. His words, with such morning drink, showed a passive living attitude after being laid off when his small *danwei* was shut down in the 1990s. His topics were always grand about the society and the state, with a passive attitude to "following social changes" while a sense of incapability to catch up with the social transformations, with regrets for his lack of degrees and skills that could help make life better in the present. As a contrast to his morning drinks, he always repeated that one needed to self-improve by hardworking thus to get recognised by the superiors. Such positive words, which, though, were spoken in a desolate tone, were struggles that he could make in the current society that "is still to

have economic reforms with poor people" as he taunted. In addition to his heartbroken career experience, he was worried about his son, a guy in his thirties unemployed at home, and asked me if I knew possible positions for him to take for a living. I wondered if he had required for some help from local bureaus. He replied with an evasive attitude, saying: "I don't know anyone and don't have any personal connections with them".

This living situation with reluctance to ask for official helps shows an obvious absence in the bureau-centred social network. In fact, the random talks as I captured during the fieldwork also showed residents' similar passive attitudes towards the contemporary social prosperity, accompanied with the distance from, or even hostility towards local offices. Such attitudes have been recognised by local officers, while they think the situation is hard to change. A Residential Committee head, Director Du, thinks that such distance is caused by residents' prejudices on the current administrative group that has been composed of full-time professional social workers as strangers to them[54]. Besides, they are not satisfied with their living conditions as dilapidating and highly dense, when comparing to the public spaces which get frequently refurbished. For the local officers, the problems are hard to solve due to the limits of authority. The local governments only own a fraction of the rights to use the houses. Although they are the most accessible state agents showing up next door, they cannot help change the situation. Meanwhile, since participants in *shequ* and *jiedao* only compose a small part of local residents (about 10% as mentioned in Chapter 5.1), it is impossible to have all the residents to understand the officers' roles and limitations without in-person communications. As Director Du described the work:

> Although it is the duty for *juweihui* to get connected with residents and help organise activities to realise the goal of basic-level self-governance, only those who need your help will come to you, with many dealing with their own housework, some having their own entertaining ways, and some disliking *juweihui* thus impossible to come all the more.

In fact, there has been a social foundation for the officers to involve residents into the participatory conservation. For the majority, both have already developed their social roles as beneficiaries and benefactors, but a new type of social relationship is rapidly introduced. As a solution, officers rely on those who have acted the role as participators of *shequ* activities to complete the new duty, which is to make participatory conservation *seem*

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[54] Such change was led by the series of institutional reforms conducted to *jiedao* and *shequ* (as roughly mentioned in Chapter 3.2), with both functions and personnel refined. Instead of part-time local elders who could only deliver limited public services in the past, currently employees are social workers being hired by passing qualification examinations. As a result, local officers are very likely strangers to residents.

popular among the residential group.

In general, as shown by the several residents' social positions and their respective practices of social networking in the neighbourhood, the transition of one's social position from *danwei* to *shequ* was not always smooth, thus resulting in different distances from the local offices, and leading to different impressions of the bureaus as well as the ongoing changes brought by the conservation projects. For those who keep close relations with the local offices, the officially supervised changes bring direct benefits to them as participators, while for those who are outside the office-centric groups, there are few ways to understand how the changes happen. This differentiation in local social connections is significant when talking about various individual attitudes towards the transformations happening in the same built environment.

6.1.2.   Political identities and the lasting influence

In addition to the different social positions in the *shequ* social network, individual political identity, as another legacy left from the early socialist upheavals, is also significant to form intersubjective relations. During interviews and chats, individual political identities during the early socialist period were always mentioned by the residents, who took them decisive to form the present dwelling and neighbouring conditions. In Harriet's (2020) study on "the capital's subalterns" at Dashilar Beijing, a more disadvantaged old city neighbourhood in a traditionally poor area, social and political discrimination could become burdensome legacy for an individual, leading to a long-term sense of precarity, as well as a disadvantaged social position in the new era without any relieves after the social upheavals ended. In addition to leaving scars on individuals, the political upheaval also leads to abnormal social relationships between neighbours for decades with hostilities. Similarly, in this neighbourhood, political upheavals have left miserable memories to individuals, as well as a society in which individuals have been identified and treated based on hierarchical political labels after years of class struggles. Besides, the social upheavals are also taken as ultimate explanations by residents for their dwelling status and passive attitudes to "make do with" the present. Following the mainstream critiques on the political campaigns, many attributed their current embarrassed living status, others' evil, and unpleasant things to the upheaval, connecting their current living circumstances with the socialist legacy.

I noticed the presence of scars left from the past political upheaval in residents' current life due to a high frequency of identifying others with political labels in conversations. Once I went for an interview about the courtyard renovation project, when I showed up in the destination courtyard and asked an elder couple about feedbacks, they showed strong hostility. The woman said: "Please go for others. I have a stupid mouth…

If I say something wrong, you will not let me off." After being told by a local officer that the couple, as called "the household holding a corner", was not cooperative during the project implementation, I had a second trial and got a short interview with the husband. From his view, the project did worsen their already bad neighbouring relationship by bringing potential conflicts to the table. According to him, such bad social foundation is a result from "class struggles happening every day in the past, and one sentence could define you as the opposition to the masses." As a result, "there is no need to communicate. Everyone would like to occupy more yard space for private use (during the courtyard renovation project) thus it was impossible to reach an agreement," thus "no one would like to praise for the project since it was just a must-do thing with everyone's concession." By maintaining a political perspective to understand neighbouring and spatial interventions, the man presented a strong defensive attitude towards such changes and relevant figures from the institution coming to him.

This identification via a political lens was not limited to the elder couple, but was practiced by their neighbours. In the other two neighbours' views, the conflicts happening during the renovation project were attributed to his evil, which was rooted in his political role as "insurrectionists" during the Cultural Revolution [55]. As a result, although renovation of this courtyard was completed and was taken as an exemplar, with photos and narratives reprinted and spread by the mass media, it did not help make neighbouring relationship better as was expected for the participatory intervention. Political labels on individuals from the past upheavals still matter in the present mutual identification of one's personalities.

What's more, for those who have been suppressed in the political upheavals, they practice neighbouring in defensive ways, resulting in bad neighbour relations. One family in the courtyard where I dwelled keeps a highly defensive status every day by closing the courtyard gate and locking an iron grated gate outside their house every time entering and leaving. For me as a tenant, they did not offer me a chance to chat by always behaving defensively. From several talks with a local officer and my neighbour, Uncle Wang, a retired worker in his 50s, I collected some information about the family, which was a descendant of the Qing Empire elites known as "bannermen" and owned the whole courtyard during the Republican period. After the Cultural Revolution, only one house was left for the family with others confiscated and distributed to citizens of the new state. In the following decades, the courtyard also experienced transitions of housing ownership, and currently with two houses for rent, resulting in tenants coming and dwelling. This

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[55] It refers a group of radical people during the Revolution who shouted "It is right to rebel". They resisted and criticised the institutional structure and officers with practices.

disassembly of the courtyard, with tenants as strangers coming and going, caused the defensive practices of the family who refused communications with tenants, as well as keeping alert to other neighbours. According to Uncle Wang, a granny of the family still regards the courtyard as theirs, "as she still has so big power", telling neighbours about proper rules of behaviour. Especially, she is alert to newcomers and would like to interrogate their personal identities. Wang said that he helped to explain my occupancy to the granny thus she "did not come to bother" me.

This hand from Uncle Wang shows a different way of neighbouring. Having been belonged to the once honourable working class of the socialist society, he kept this political identity as one of the masses, who support the utopian discourses created by the state while try to realise them by hands instead of following the Party blindly. During talks, this identity was repeated and was deliberately differentiated from his wife's as a Party member. By blaming her identity performance as "always finding excuses for the Party", Wang keeps a critical attitude towards the authorities and his own ways contributing to social improvement. Specifically in neighbouring, it is realised in mediations in between neighbours to ease conflicts and offer mutual helps. Just then, this topic was raised during a home visit with a television on, reporting news about harmonious society construction. The word "harmony" was caught by him and applied to argue his philosophy of neighbouring. According to him, "harmony", as "a traditional Chinese cultural treasure", got constantly repeated but was not taken serious by government. From his understanding, harmony in neighbouring is a general peace with the least trouble, with mutual helps that "in case of diseases and dangers happened to us, neighbours could offer a hand". However, the post-reform society where "all people prioritise personal interests" is not what he expects for the ideal social pattern, and is taken for a key reason leading to conflicts between neighbours that are not unusual as they have heard in the neighbourhood. Keeping a mediator role in conflicts happening nearby, even sometimes outside the courtyard at *hutong* between strangers in quarrel, is a practical way that Wang continues his ordinary efforts for harmony that he always trusts.

For the neighbouring dissonance, painful memories and corresponding political labels that were left from the turbulent years are still influential at present, with corresponding class identities recognised during encounters. For Uncle Wang who initiatively distinguished himself from Party members, the official propaganda for a harmonious society is always trusted, while he is dissatisfied with the official practices to realise it. As a result, He pays efforts to pursue what he firmly believes in everyday life. However, for those who had miserable experiences during the political struggles, neighbouring is practiced based on identity judgement, transforming neighbours and newcomers to be enemies or potential danger that need to watch out. Different identities

168

and experiences in the same political upheaval are not absent in forming present standpoints from which neighbouring are practiced.

In addition to the obvious dissonance, dwelling with the scars in mind can be kept in decent ways. Another elder woman, Aunt Shao, gets herself connected in the local social network always with a proper distance. She described her ways of social networking as:

> I keep a connection with those officers neither warmly nor coldly, neither distantly nor closely. I have my principles to keep good reputation for my family locally. By keeping such relationship, I can hear more than I do.

The granny in her seventies is well-known among conservation practitioners due to her affluent knowledge on the neighbourhood, and is always invited by local officers in community activities as a key figure telling local histories and stories. However, though keeping connected and always showing a friendly attitude, she is actually very critical on politics and local government administration, which is tightly related to her family's miserable experiences during the early socialist period. Her father, a factory owner who had offered a hand to a CPC soldier during the civil war, was still identified as a "capitalist" and was blamed in political campaigns in the 1950s. As a result, the factory properties, as several courtyards in this neighbourhood, were mostly sold by the man to the official housing department in order to lay workers off with severance pays. During the Cultural Revolution, the family was almost homeless in a threat of housing confiscation. They finally kept a part of a courtyard for dwelling though losing the housing ownership. At present, they share the courtyard with other neighbours as tenants. With such miserable experiences during childhood, as well as the political identity that keep influential to her – even impeding her to get educated in the 1980s, she keeps a distance from the local offices and avoids becoming a member of the frequenter group. Instead, when she needs a ticket to activities held in the museum, especially for her grandson to join cultural activities specially for the youth, she acts as one of the general publics to get tickets from the online platform. For Shao, the trauma left from the past cannot be cured and keeps herself a distant attitude towards the official. At the present when the political identities are no longer mainstream criteria to judge each other, Shao's affluent experiences and knowledge about the neighbourhood makes her respected by officers and conservation practitioners. This new social position, with her adaptation to the smartphone use, allows her to keep some distance in between, and to make choices based on her personal willingness while not to be burdened by a reciprocal responsibility when facing local affairs.

In all, a socialist political legacy is still influential in courtyard neighbouring although invisible in the current mainstream culture-oriented narratives on such old city

neighbourhoods. A shadow from the early socialist China is still *in situ,* making the socialist ideology, trauma from previous political struggles, and individual political identities still influential in the present practices of dwelling and neighbouring. In the practices, distance is always kept between subjects cautiously, and mutual trusts are hard to establish. The distanced neighbouring status contributes to a peaceful landscape of living, though it cannot last for long, as long as the lurking conflicts and prejudices are provoked.

6.2. Social networking in the post-reform social changes

In addition to the socialist legacies that produced the barriers between neighbours, the increasing population mobility, as well as an accelerating urban land development in the post-reform urbanisation process, contributes to the intersubjective distance. Comparing to the early socialist period when the residents seldom changed the home address under the *hukou* restriction, in the post-reform years when the restriction gets lifted, neighbours change more frequently, bringing the sense of insecurity to the long-term residents. Some studies explore how the sense of security is produced and kept in neighbouring. Henriksen & Tjora (2014) support interaction pretexts. Vaiou & Lykogianni (2006) defend for the practices of everyday interactions that are necessary in encounters. Bissell (2013) emphasises proximity as an active requirement "in order to get something done, to maintain relations with significant near-dwellers" (p.351). However, for the case study site, usually it is hard for such contexts and practices to form between the long-term residents and the changing neighbours. From the former group's perspective, the increasing social mobility brings uncertainty to them, making it hard for the contexts to develop based on practices of interaction.

Concretely, the increasing social mobility gets new neighbours settled there but has not change the residents' views about them. The mobility of migrants, with a social stigma attached to them, causes sense of insecurity in the long-term residents' everyday life. Here "migrants" refer to migrant workers and their families from the rural part of China. Due to the rural-urban development difference, they come to big cities including Beijing, as a metropolis offering more positions and higher income, to earn a living. Called as the "floating population", they are regarded to make temporary residence in city so are relatively uncertain comparing to the urban population (Wu & Logan, 2016). What's more, their bodies are commonly sensed to be potentially dangerous and dirty in the emergent neoliberal biopolitics, which problematise the *suzhi* of the migrant workers as "out of sync with the new demands of the global economy and the urban(e) middle-class lifestyle" in the developmentalist narratives of the state (Pow, 2017, p.266). One's life is not simply a biological concept, but "as both an object and effect of political strategies and technologies"

(Laurence, 2016). Consequently, the migrant workers' appearances are sometimes looked down by city-*hukou* holders due to the metaphor of backwardness, which is invented and popularised by the developmentalist in the socio-political background.

In the neighbourhood under examination here, the prejudice contributes to keeping the social distance between the locals and migrants. It is obvious that many migrant tenants have not become acquaintances to the locals. Several times when I made home visits during my fieldwork and was led by some interviewee into his/her home deep inside a courtyard, I had to pass by houses and sometimes came across with other residents. It is not rare to meet migrants as neighbours, and the interviewee may just make a brief greeting or even without any communications. Besides, during talks when the courtyard living status is mentioned, in most cases interviewees refer their neighbours as "the nonlocals", and this way is different from a local custom to call acquaintances by surnames. In the locals' words about them, mostly the nonlocals are depicted as a group other from the locals, with negative impressions established due to their fluidity and vulgar appearances and behaviours. A clear division has been made in between by residents, with migrant tenants as unwelcomed strangers.

With long-term neighbours gradually moving out and new tenants coming in, proximity, as argued as an inclination to keep relations, loses the efficacy without interactions developed between long-term residents and newcomers. As a result, on the premise of the already distanced neighbouring status, a sense of uncertainty is brought by this population mobility, which further strengthens residents' inclination for self-protection.

Furthermore, the mainstream negative portraits of them also contribute to the alienation. The stigma was established before the economic reforms, but has been influential until now. During the early socialist period, when population mobility was highly restricted by the *hukou* system, migrants were regarded to be out of the mainstream society that was well organised. They were named as "blind population flows" (*mangliu* 盲流) as uncivilised individuals from villages to cities, or even hooligans (*liumang* 流氓) labelled with a negative moral impression (Chen, 1998). In the 1980s there was a national campaign called "severe strike" (*yanda* 严打) against "criminal elements on those seriously jeopardise social peace" facing the post-reform rising population mobility. Accused of "the crime of hooliganism", criminals got severe punishments and were set as a distinct opposition to common people. Currently, with urban revanchism prevailing in Chinese cities where dominate classes reclaim prime spaces by marginalising deviant social groups (Huang et al., 2014), migrants are excluded from urban citizens with the name "floating population" tagged, implying their high mobility as well as uncertainty,

and is connected with the "lower-end industry" that is not welcomed by city governors. Locally, in Beijing where the old city is included into the "functional core area" as "the core carrier of the state political, cultural and international communication centre, the key area of heritage conservation, and the important window to show image of the capital city", urban industrial sections not matching the anticipated functions with corresponding population are planned to be cleaned out[56]. Such long-term stigmatisation has set migrants as opposite to urban values, with a general negative group image established and popularised among citizens.

In addition, local occurrences and the corresponding memories are taken as evidence to the negative impressions. For example, the severe strikes on "criminal elements" did not always happen next door at that time, but were more likely from news reporting elsewhere which helped establish such impressions on strangers, especially those in different social identities. A genial elder female, Aunt Song said that she was living there always in safety, but had taken precautions to keep away from possible dangers. She never witnessed severe strike happening locally to her neighbours and colleagues since they "are just workers and quite simple. No one would do that", neither has she suffered from thievery with surrounding neighbours acquainted. With mutual cared paid for household safety, everyday life in the 1980s was thought to be extremely safe even without necessities to have home door locked. However, currently with increasing number of migrants coming and dwelling in the neighbourhood, "it seems that the situation becomes complex", as Song commented, with herself witnessing increasing number of security doors and windows on others' homes, and hearing of thieveries happening locally. This comparison between a safe past in memory and the unsecure reality in the present, with a pre-existing negative image of the migrants, created a causality between migrants and insecurity, and made Aunt Song concern for the possible occurrence despite of her always safe dwelling status. As a result, once a neighbour proposed to have a security door being installed at the courtyard gate, she agreed and supported financially "just for safety". For Song, the long-term stigma attached to migrants, though she has not verified it, is credible and facilitates her to have the anti-theft devices set up. In this condition, home security becomes a key component of the sense of safety although it has not been before. The devices act to imply the stigma attached to the migrant neighbours, thus to keep the distance between the locals and the nonlocals.

Furthermore, one's own experience of being stolen can directly motivate to keep alert all the time. Aunt Zhou, a participant in both courtyard renovation and the Micro Garden,

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[56] According to *the Detailed planning of the functional core area in Beijing (2018-2035)* 首都功能核心区控制性详细规划(街区层面)(2018 年—2035 年)

equipped her south-facing house with security facilities like a steel cage. She attributed this anti-theft device to her own experience of being stolen happening in 2010 when her family left home for travelling. Though there was no evidence, she believed that the thief must be a migrant tenant in the courtyard, because during that period only they lived there. This experience was a key point from which she started to be cautious about home security and new neighbours. Bringing the concern, the present courtyard life is felt in contrast to the past:

> It's just due to the migrants that we have to experience theft. If the courtyard was still occupied by danwei staffs, nothing would happen…… What you mentioned as an ideal courtyard life before the Cultural Revolution has gone early! Long-term neighbours have moved out since the 1980s, and the current indifferent neighbouring started from that time. Especially after every family built up their own kitchen and toilet, we had even few communications. Currently I'm only acquainted with the household living over there…Houses in the front are all rented by migrants. We cannot share topics and seldom come across. There's an elder woman moving in last year. No one knows how she gets the settling right! She behaves badly, indulging her cats and plugging my kitchen extractor fan. I never speak to her.

Besides, later comers with houses allocated can be identified as outsiders as well. Aunt Chen, who was distributed with a house in the courtyard shared with "the couple holding a corner", and moved there quite late in the 1990s, felt that she was taken as somebody else in need of vigilance and was unwelcomed by long-term neighbours. When I was doing an interview with her about the courtyard renovation project, and asked her if neighbours were willing to collaborate and negotiate, she denied it with certainty, and highlighted her feeling of being excluded by describing long-term neighbours' practices of defending. Since she lives in the front yard, a lock on the middle gate becomes a metaphor of defence taken by the long-term neighbours in the backyard. Also observing security doors on other courtyard gates, Chen also wanted one for the courtyard but failed to get others' agreements and funds for it. According to her, it was due to the backyard neighbours' selfish reliance on the middle gate with a lock:

> Every time they go in and out, they will lock the gate with big noise. Don't they feel tired? My son-in-law helped print a notice to ask for keeping quiet, but after some time they started to be noisy again. They just care about themselves but not others…… I suggested a security door at the courtyard gate, but they disagree. Who do they keep a lookout? It's me!

This sense of being excluded by long-term neighbours is sharpened in conflicts that constantly happen in everyday neighbouring. Besides, it can intensify the antagonism based on the mutual political identity judgements between neighbours. For Chen and the "couple holding a corner", a hostile interrelationship was initiated by the gate-locking issue, and got deteriorated in some minor clashes happening in between. She attributed the issue to the couple's once political identities by emphasising that they acted as "insurrectionists" in the political upheavals, therefore were evil enough to bully her in her complaints. For Chen, the neighbouring experience set up a negative impression of the neighbours. The neighbouring relations got worse when she adopted the political labels on the couple. The socialist legacies were added to the contemporary intersubjective distance in neighbouring, reinforcing the stereotyped mutual impressions, and keeping the distant and hostile relations between neighbours despite of the proximity of neighbouring.

In general, the individual experiences of guarding against others, or feeling to be excluded, illustrate a popular sense of insecurity in dwelling. For the long-term residents, the changes happening around brought the sense of uncertainty. Migrants, who have been undergoing public prejudices for long due to their mobility, are blamed for bringing the changes to the local social lives. Such stigma attached to the mobile group has been pervasively spread in the urban developmental discourses, and got verified via the local occurrences. Residents built up the security facilities to safeguard their households or courtyards as a response to the recognised threats. Moreover, such uncertainty from the increasing urban mobility can be intertwined with the already complex neighbouring status and keep the neighbouring distances.

6.3.   The state intervention via the neighbouring distances

Based on the socialist legacy and population fluidity brought by the post-reform urban development, a current neighbouring status, as what I can describe, is both far and close. It is far due to the current defensive attitude between neighbours with both political legacies and contemporary population fluidity influential in everyday neighbouring, leading to division forming between selves and others. On the other hand, it is close due to the neighbouring proximity bringing inevitable contacts and mutual interactions. It shows a coexisting dwelling status with estrangements that hinder mutual communication and understanding. In courtyard neighbouring, the status can be kept in a seemingly peaceful style by everyone tolerating the others' unpleasant behaviours meanwhile bearing the grudges in mind. Like my interviewing experience in the courtyard where Aunt Song live, when a group talk was made firstly in the yard common space, neighbours tried to present the neighbouring life as harmonious by saying that "everything is good, and we don't have anything unsatisfactory". After the venue was transferred into Aunt

Song's home, she started to disclose minor conflicts that constantly happened among neighbours. Moving there in the 1970s by marriage, Song recalled that the relationship between neighbours has already been tepid since she came there, and was quite different from a close neighbouring relationship in her home courtyard occupied by working-class families in the south part of the old city. As she remembered:

My neighbours are fine, we seldom quarrel. But we are distant from each other as well. We never make home visits… In summer mornings several men always chat and smoke at the only empty yard space in front of my window. Noise and smoke can wake me up. I never blame them but just close the window, and they will turn down volume as well……Neighbouring is just like this. Peace is mostly valued.

By choosing to overlook the annoying behaviours, or hinting others at the impoliteness, Song keeps the subtle neighbouring relationship in the courtyard. In fact, there have been conflicts happening between neighbours in the courtyard. For example, Song told me that sisters of the west house often quarrelled over heirship of the house using right from their parents. However, since she was just an "outsider", it would be better to keep away from the domestic issue thus "not to cause extra trouble". What's more, there has been a conflict over a housing renovation chance between Song and another neighbour, leading to indifference between the two families with no more greetings made when encounter each other. Although with such unpleasant neighbouring experiences, Song said that she would not like to treat the neighbour based on this friction but more valued the courtyard life there as "safe and convenient", with the current neighbouring relationship that is "not bad" with polite greeting and collective concerns for safety, regardless of actual distances always in between neighbours.

This priority of a peaceful neighbouring status can be understood from a macro socio-political perspective. Wang (2007) argues that a depoliticised polity dominates China in the post-reform period, during which a homogeneous developmental ideology has been pervasive in all social sectors of the state to restore the social order after the political turbulences before the reforms, therefore to refrain political reflections and discussions in public spheres. As a result, an ordered environment for development is valued, and is achieved by collective avoidance of disputes. Here in the neighbourhood, neighbours try to keep neighbouring peaceful to make everyday life comfortable. Besides, the neighbouring status meets with local officers' requirements for residents to keep peaceful, as what they are responsible in local governance. In this way, such intersubjective relation is kept and even becomes a philosophy of neighbouring, with everyone acquiescing in the distance with proximity.

In this condition, the distance between neighbours can be taken advantage of, and be occupied by power interventions, by which local offices can strengthen its patriarchal role

in the *shequ*-level governance. From the side of government, mechanisms are designed for pervasively delivering the public service on which one could rely to solve conflicts happening between neighbours. As a result, face-to-face negotiation between neighbours is replaced by the official mediation, which has to be done if the authorities receive appeals from the masses. In practice, the appeals are often made to solve conflicts among neighbours in one courtyard about spatial distribution and mutual disturbance. From what I know, such issues could hardly be solved by reaching compromises through discussions between neighbours. Instead, responsible authorities are often invited into courtyards to help make judgements. Dialling a government service hotline 12345 was repeated in different talks as a straightforward way of solving trouble. However, the convenience that is officially provided contributes to keep the indifferent status between neighbours. Although conflicts in between are reduced, agreements are not reached in the lack of negotiation. Besides, the hotline is also taken as an important means of promoting effective local governance, with meetings held every noon at *jiedao* to check if all of phone calls have been accepted, thus to further conventionalise the way for everyday trouble shooting. By this power intervention in the realm of neighbouring, everyday life is supposed to be rational under judgements from the authorities, which have strengthened their reliability by solving problems directly, but this way of appeasing leaves aside the complexity in neighbouring, where conflicts still exist and are even potential to get severe.

Keeping the reliance on the powerful mediation, residents take advantage of mainstream discourses to benefit themselves in everyday life. For example, the public character, which has been objectified as an attribution of the yard space in the conservation project, can be appropriated by neighbours for personal purposes. There are reminders of the public character, including courtyard conventions (see Figure 6-1, 6-2), messages conveyed and sent by specific courtyard contact persons, and slogans on banners and posts that are commonly seen along *hutong*[57], making up a discursive realm in which residents are supposed to practice properly to maintain the feature. Together, they inform residents of the rules of behaviour in neighbouring, and correlate them with individual morality, to keep the neighbourhood peaceful and safe. In this way, the publicness is produced as a disciplinary and marginated character attached the yard space, which should be kept clear

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[57] For the convention, according to residents, it is said that there were conventions established during the early socialist period in some courtyards, while due to my limitation on data collection, it is not clear when and how they were established. Currently such conventions have been obsoleted, but a new wave of drawing-up has been carried out accompanied with environment improvement brought by conservation works. Led by local officers and conservation practitioners, conventions are made for the purpose of yard space maintenance that is expected to be realised by neighbours' collective efforts. Secondly, the contact person that has been set for each courtyard for long, is a key joint by which local offices could convey updated policies and collect complaints and requirements. And thirdly, for slogans on banners and posters, they are set up by local officers with reminders written on, and always on the scene although contents keep updated.

and cannot be encroached. For the residents, the character can be appropriated to demonstrate the others' impropriety in neighbouring, such as occupying the yard space for private use, by reporting to the local officers who are legitimate to intervene and stop the behaviours. As what Aunt Chen complaint by questioning "why could his family occupy more" when recalling quarrels with her neighbours over yard space occupation, the feature is practically applied for benefiting individuals and households. In this situation, publicness is just appropriated by the residents for keeping private interests, instead of a common interest deserving neighbours' efforts to take good care of it. Moreover, as government keeps offering a hand to maintain it, the official administration of the public peace is normalised in no need of personal efforts paid to keep or improve it. An egoist neighbouring style is encouraged in this context.
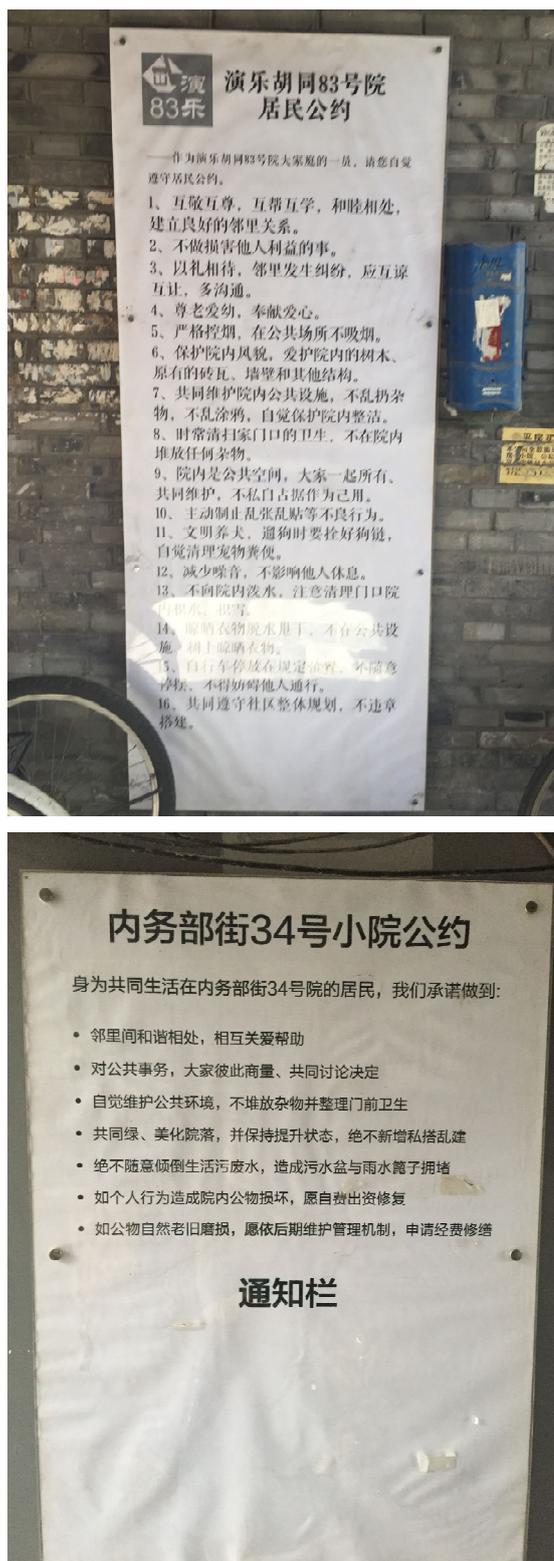
Figure 6-1 6-2 Two courtyard conventions hanging at courtyard entrances that could be glimpsed when coming out and in. The contents remind neighbours to behave politely and friendly to others, and to keep the public space (the shared yard) tidy by prohibiting some behaviours there, for instance littering, making graffiti, making noises, smoking, damaging public properties (like walls, buildings and trees), etc.

Relying on the official powerful intervention, the residents hope that the public sector

can take over the duty of improving their living conditions. Some household issues about personal living situation, including financial difficulties, bad physical condition, and bad housing condition due to a long-term neglect from corresponding owning enterprises, are hard to get solved by themselves. However, the hands from the government are not panaceas as well. As a result, making complaints is a tactic by which residents can feel better despite the still unpleasant conditions. Listeners include neighbours who are willing to sit and listen, and the local officers though they are not able to help solve the issues. In this scene, officers act as neighbours with their official role practiced in a way different from direct powerful intervention. A *juweihui* Director Ms. Shi told me that she had been used to be a receiver of residents' complaints. As she said:

> We are all clear that some issues, like those related to residents' houses and courtyard space distribution that has always been a trouble, could not be solved by our committees. What we can do is to help deliver messages to specific departments or enterprises, while we have no power of making decisions. But I know that residents need someone to complain, and they coming here (*juweihui*) to speak annoyedly is not to blame us but just for a relief. Sometimes they come and talk for hours. What I can do is to stay and hear. It takes time but I'm responsible as an officer.

By acting as a listener and a message communicator, the role as a powerful officer is replaced temporarily. Instead of making powerful interventions, Shi uses her affluent experiences that were collected from the career, to give suggestions and provide helps to the interlocutor as many as she can. In the intersubjective communications, the practices of complaining, as well as the empathies from listeners, comfort residents' pessimistic emotions. Here the use of community construction does not effectively empower the residents to collaboratively improve their living conditions, as what the method has been used in the international best practices. Instead, it is appropriated in the project which is isolated from the issues of the local everyday life, with few efforts paid for empowering residents to make them responsible for their lives.

In all, such distant but dependent relations between neighbours, with state power intervening in between, create a dilemma for the residents to develop close neighbouring relations, and the consensus to maintain and improve their common living environment. According to the cases analysed in the chapter, there are two causes. First, the pre-existing prejudices against others that formed in long-term immersion in the mainstream discourses of social division contribute to retain the distance, impeding communications happening between individuals. Secondly, bonds between neighbours, as Blokland (2017, p.52) theorised as personal ties built up with specific person, are not tight enough. The

situation leaves room for the power to intervene and set up the institution by which the distant neighbouring relations can be kept. As a result, residents do not have much initiative to get closer relations with neighbours, but pay more attention to equal distribution of private interests. Nonetheless, with the state prosperity being set up as a big contrast to their stagnant living condition, self-improvement in this transformative society that has been totally different from what they have been used to, is also hard, leading them to feel as being stuck in the disadvantaged situation. Facing the complex social condition, as well as the passive tones which are not uncommon to see among residents, I would like to ask: can participatory conservation help solve the issue by taking residents out, and building up mutual connections by applying historic and cultural resources? It depends on how it enters the neighbourhood society and to what extent it could change.

6.4.   Role of conservation to reproduce the social relations

As explained in Chapter 5.1, public participation and community building are two strategies taken in local conservation implementation, aiming at improving cohesion between neighbours in *shequ* with the help of heritage spaces and narratives as resources for identity making in themed activities. However, the implementation there relies much on a top-down indoctrination, in which identities are expected to build up based on a local version of the homogeneous national narratives. Without firstly bringing residents out of their defensive shields, this practice cannot work effectively to build up intersubjective connections. Instead, it helps reproduce the pre-existing social relations which centre around the local bureaus. Specifically, the renovation projects provide opportunities for the public to participate in the works. However, the practitioners do not invite residents directly. Instead, local officers take in charge of distributing the entry tickets to those who have been keeping connected, therefore reinforcing the pre-existing social and power relations between the officials and the citizens, meanwhile setting up thresholds of entry. For many outside this group, it is hard to access the works that represent their living space as a "living museum of *lao Beijing*". In contrast, since the works take up the already scarce space there, sometimes they are not welcomed locally.

Another neighbour in the courtyard where I lived, Aunt Tian, dislikes everything related to local offices. A bit luckier than the uncle with bottled beer, Tian successfully changed her job as an insurance salesperson when she felt that her enterprise "was to be finished" in the 1990s. Without an effective connection kept with local offices, she did not participate in *shequ* activities, and further to develop a bad impression on them, with her requirement for a bed for her mother in the *shequ* clinic not being met before the elder woman passed away. As a result, everything related to official works could incur her

dislike. Especially for culture venues that occupy courtyards, she regards them as "useless" since they are "not beneficial to people". Especially, still regretting for her mother, Tian preferred such venues to be clinics that could offer more beds for the local elders, and always repeated the point when mentioning conservation works. This case illustrates that a barrier has been made by Tian between herself and the cultural life based on her persistent enmity towards the officials. Based on the impression, conservation works have not effectively helped alleviate the hostility. Instead, they are taken as evidence to reiterate the bad image of local offices, thus further to push her away from understanding and enjoying the cultural benefits, as what the conservation project was expected to achieve.

What's more, renovation works, although aiming at preserving historic building patterns, still imply changes to residents as what they have always experienced in the post-reform period. Based on this awareness, residents understand conservation differently by following their customary understanding of official interventions. This spatial modification follows their common experiences of changes in ways of linking with the state. Since their roles as beneficiaries from the state has changed from the economic reform, residents still hold this perspective to understand the conservation works. First, it can be another type of benefits if one could get access to via the local social connections. Secondly, it can be benefits for others at the cost of depriving one's rights of using the space as what was distributed previously. In this way, being regarded as beneficial projects, conservation implies a continuity of citizen identity for residents. However, chances and abilities to achieve it vary among individuals, leading to different readings towards this new way of spatial intervention.

Furthermore, by participating the conservation project, residents accumulate social capitals which make oneself distinct from the others. This is achieved by repetitively attending the themed activities that are organised under the supervision of local offices. Those able to contribute valuable cultural narratives, or able to play the roles that are required in the activities, can get more chances of participation from the local officers, and gradually become the frequent participants repeating the same roles. In this way, the frequent participants reinforce the social connections with the local bureaus, and collaborate to continue the activities by repeating their respective roles. This mode of initiating and managing the conservation project in fact restricts participants to a small group. Even the officers themselves know the limited participation. As a *shequ* officer commented: "those who have their own interests don't play with *shequ*. Activities we offer are not attractive to them." This shows that from the official perspective, chances of participation are still provided as welfare to citizens though not endowing them with rights of decision making. What they can do is to receive the welfare distribution and choose whether to attend the activities or not. The participatory conservation there is still

embedded into the local power structure, without changes made as the method was theoretically constructed.

Therefore, in fact the participatory conservation mode fortifies the current stratified social structure, and is able to convey the mainstream ethos, which has been expected to get spread by this technique in Chinese uses of the heritage discourse, within limited groups of residents. For those who are invited to participate in organised activities or conservation projects, a sense of duty is kept in long-term performance as participants. As the Association representative Aunt Zhu's words about the position taking: "There's no 'why' question about the Association establishment, so as to receive the representative appointment. It's a responsibility given to me due to their (local officers') trust on me." The sense of duty comes from her recognition of the conservation practices which she, as one of the two resident representatives in the Association, has been deeply immersed in for a long time. In addition, as a Party member, Zhu practices the Party creed to serve people, as well as to help keep the Party's leading role in the neighbourhood life, getting the mainstream oath for the national culture rejuvenation propagandised by the conservation works. Based on her life experience, Zhu is an ardent supporter for the conservation project, in which her professional knowledge well fits the political ideology. The loyalty and responsibility are embodied and get reinforced by her frequent practices of participation. However, such perfect matching between one's self-identity and the role being taken is limited to the small group of people who have access to the regular participation.

In general, the participatory conservation in this neighbourhood does not impact the social foundation, but helps consolidate it, letting distinctions to form between the residents. Those who have more chances to participate in the conservation activities may gradually learn the principles and knowledge about the works, and acquire proficiency in the practices of participation, which is expected to achieve in the projects. In contrast, those who do not have access to the opportunities regard the spatialisation as an invasion to their living environment. The situation lets residents to develop different opinions about the conservation, and read the projects and the narratives in respective ways, by which dissonance may emerge among the different views. As a result, based on the already stratified social relations, the diverse opportunities of participation in the conservation project further reproduce the inequality in the power relations. Regarding the right of participation as a symbol to show one's position in the local social network, the practice of participation can be used to assess the others in neighbouring, reinforcing the existing impressions of the others. Without changing the social relations, the conservation featured by public participation there actually strengthened the existing social structure there, distributing the opportunities of participation as welfare to the recipients who have been

advantaged in the benefit-distribution system. As cultural heritages are attached with social values in the Chinese institutional background, being expected to general social benefits and enhance social coherence (China ICOMOS, 2015), the implementation there can produce limited effects from the perspective.

6.5. Discussions

This chapter offers an overview of the local social relations, which compose a significant foundation to explain the tensions between residents' practices of everyday life and the spatialisation of the AHD, as will be developed later. By referring to several residents' living and socialising status, I illustrate the stratification, alienation, and separation happening between neighbours in the background where the socialist legacies and the country-wide urbanisation are both effective in shaping intersubjective relations. This is a significant piece of knowledge for the conservation practitioners to know before carrying out the participatory conservation, since the existing local social networks decide who the participants are, and what they contribute to the conservation project by participation. However, by revealing the residents' present ways of socialising and neighbouring, the thesis illustrates that the intervention brought by the project did not achieve improvements of the problematic intersubjective relations. Instead, relying on the existing social network centring at the local officers, the project is running to reproduce the unequal power relations between the government and the residents, as well as the social relations that produce the prejudices and hostilities.

By examining the case, I bring out two topics for discussion. Firstly, when localising international best planning practices, it is necessary to investigate the locality before spatialising the concepts and methods, and understand the concepts and methods borrowed from other contexts. The conservation project is implemented by referring to the community construction concept and the participatory methods, both of which are internationally popular and are experimented in local planning projects. Planners digest the knowledge based on their experiences forming in the Chinese context, in which 'community' reads as *shequ* but is no more just a sociological term. For this case, two significant questions are: what is the community to be constructed? What is the relationship between the community, the *shequ*, and the existing communities in residents' practices? The locally-made inquiries contribute to making the AHD a helpful intervention in local sustainable development, as what the critical heritage studies make the critiques for.

Secondly, the current spatialisation of the AHD manifests the tension between the everydayness and the representation of the everyday *lao Beijing* culture in the conservation project. Here the everydayness, which is maintained in residents'

practices of everyday life, is respected by the conservation project, but gets partly chosen to get the heritage value attached. In the case, the part gets represented to fit the dominant way of transmitting the cultural information, and to meet the needs of aesthetic gazes, which dominate the way of seeing the heritage in the authorised heritage discursive structure. However, the everyday life there is more than the exhibitions. Conflicts, collaborations, hostilities, sympathies etc. emerge from residents' practices of everyday life, and the totality of it supports the valuable cultural landscape to emerge and to be integrated into the AHD. To conserve the living heritage, it is necessary to make the everydayness sustainable. However, the project does not deal with the relationship between the everydayness and the AHD well. The spatialisation of the AHD, with the practices that take advantage of and further reproduce the current social relations, limits residents' everydayness by arbitrarily defining the spaces and setting up rules of behaviour. In this way, the conservation practices suppress the possibilities of being otherwise hidden in the everyday life, though such creativity still exists and can manifest in some moments.

In the next two chapters, I will describe and analyse residents' practices of everyday life by the types of public spaces, including the yard space, *hutong*, daily shopping space and the cultural venues. As the way of spatialising the AHD, making the commonly used spaces public introduces the discourse to residents' everyday life. Tensions in between develop in spatial representations of different cultures, and get changed in people's practices. Taking the perspective from the residents, the thesis provides a way of learning and presenting the locality, though it has been changed by the AHD, as a foundation for further actions taken to make the relationship between the discourse and the everydayness better.

Chapter 7. Courtyard dwelling: Making homes in the conservation area

Based on the neighbouring status as the previous chapter analysed, in this chapter, I would like to describe the current relationship between residents and courtyards, and analyse how it is maintained. Beyond an organic organisation as what is depicted by the heritage discourse, I argue that the relationship is contradictory and dynamic: more than a component of the cultural package arranged by the AHD, residents are creators of the tight connections with the courtyards. Making and maintaining the connections are complex processes which have not been well represented by the discourse. Here I take "home" as a keyword by which self-identities are established, and constantly refined in courtyard dwelling and neighbouring practices. To approach an ideal depiction of "home", one can actively modify physical environment and keep proper neighbouring relationship, in order to get the dream coming true. However, the ideal homes vary among neighbours in a courtyard. Since the different practices of homemaking have to be realised in limited spaces, conflicts can happen between neighbours when respective spatial requirements encounter.

The dissonance is manifested by the shrinking yard space which is encroached by the constructions built up for household private use. For the Dongsinan Historic District, 37% of the courtyards still keep the building pattern, while for the rest, new constructions were added or replaced the old buildings, damaging the pattern (Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design Beijing Municipal Planning Commission Dongcheng Suboffice, 2013). However, the situation is diagnosed as problematic by the planners. According to the *Design Guide for the Preservation and Renewal of Beijing's Historic and Cultural Districts* (Beijing Municipal Commission of Planning and Land and Resources Management,2020), the spatial pattern is one of the significant elements constituting the historic landscape, so should be well preserved or restored in conservation projects. It includes the historic building pattern of courtyards, so anything disturbing it should be cleared up for the sake of preserving the old city integrally. Since the knowledge about the historic significance of the neighbourhood is superior to the others for the space, the work of restoring the spatial pattern to the historic status is the primary task when thinking about improving the built environment.

Being faced with the generally problematic situation of courtyards, but meanwhile aiming at restoring them, the planners implemented a courtyard renovation project. In 2015, six urban design teams took in charge of the renovation works of seven courtyards, aiming at restoring the historic courtyard landscape and improving living conditions for the current residents (for more details, see Chapter 5.3). However, although the

practitioners would like to achieve positive social effects by the renovation works, the ideal is not perfectly realised. Instead, some latent conflicts in neighbouring are intensified.

This chapter would like to explain the failure by referring to the residents' ideas and practices of homemaking. In the following writings, firstly, diverse means of homemaking in the collective dwelling status are described and explained by referring to residents' respective social identities and physical dwelling conditions. Secondly, by illustrating the disappearance of yard spaces in neighbours' partition and occupation, I show a privatisation trend in homemaking that has been popular locally, and argue it as a means to pursue equal rights of modern living. Thirdly, proprieties in neighbouring, with processes of formation and practices in everyday life are illustrated. By recognising and obeying the behaviour codes, neighbours could continue respective pursuits for home with minimal conflicts. However, the conventional practices might lead to unequal duty distribution among neighbours and exclusion to newcomers that are hard to solve in the local neighbouring culture. Based on the current courtyard neighbouring status, I finally analyse the impacts of conservation on neighbouring when self-built constructions are identified as "illegal" under an aesthetic gaze on courtyards. The consciousness of preserving tidying their living circumstance has been introduced by the heritage discourse and parallels to residents' practical relations with the courtyard space, while attitudes and countermeasures towards the knowledge vary among neighbours, leading to limitations in the practical implementations of the conservation project.

7.1. Making homes: constructing identities in courtyard houses

7.1.1. Theoretical discussions about homemaking

Firstly, I take "home" as a theme to start the part, as residents repeated it in a high frequency during talks about courtyard, houses, as well as the *lao Beijing* city. "Home" has been widely discussed in different contexts, and is recognised as a concept comprehensively constructed beyond physical roofs overhead (Blunt, 2005; Mallett, 2004; Rivlin & Moore, 2001). The relationship developed between residents and buildings is mostly in the process of dwelling as a lived experience. In the continuing pursuits for an ideal dwelling status in which human and things could be spiritually united, people construct home by repeated everyday practices (Tester & Wingfield, 2013). Globalisation leads to "thinning-out spaces" in which the unity between human and things cannot be unconsciously kept, thus a sense of home is always in a process of making and maintaining (J. Yu & Rosenberg, 2017). Therefore, home is grounded in activities occurring in place constructed with a romanticised expectation. People keep a dialectic relationship between being home and homeless to keep an inclination to this dwelling status (Zhang, 2012, p.

1) .

For the case, residents' strong sense of home gets developed when facing the rapid social transitions, which influentially change the courtyards physically and socially. As reviewed in Chapter 4.1, most of the residents live there by renting courtyard houses that are owned by the government or SOEs. As tenants, residents' identities as the host are aroused and strengthened in their everyday practices in courtyard collective dwelling, with adaptations to fit the existing building pattern and modifications gradually made based on their everyday living needs. Meanwhile, the established connections also face the threats to be cut off when the status of living becomes uncertain in the general social transitions. As reviewed in Chapter 4, the *lao Beijing* city experienced a period of rapid urban renewal, and suddenly became a living museum getting integrally conserved. The changes also brought impacts to the courtyard life, threating residents' established connections with the place by bringing the possibilities of changing the courtyard spatial patterns and relocating the residents to decrease the residential density. It is in such long-term practices of dwelling while facing the threats of losing the connections that the residents hold the strong sense of home.

Specifically, by the courtyard renovation project, the AHD is spatialised in the yard space, adding a set of value system to assess the *status quo* and powerfully rearranging the spatial pattern. This spatial intervention which aims at restoring the courtyard to approach a standard historic landscape that was professionally identified, brings out the diverse ideas about home among neighbours and make them encounter. Although in some cases, shared housing could be a precondition of settling down, a "ready-to-use" accommodation requiring little homemaking (Druta & Ronald, 2020), in this neighbourhood, based on subjective needs for home, the shared courtyard could be taken as an object for modification, with respective wills varying thus further becoming a centre of everyday conflicts and reproducing distinctions and dissents over residents. It is in a dynamic process with various opinions of demarcation between private and public domains encountering in a courtyard. Here home, having been officially used for the propaganda of the discourse for happy life, is also applied by citizens who follow the dream and would like to realise it in respective forms.

Scholars have discussed about home practices in collective residential conditions, where home is made in the contexts in which private and public domains are able to be, and becoming clearly defined via individual practices. In such dwelling status with blurred division between public and private domains, home practices are not limited domestically but are socially connected. Hardy (2014) studies the meaning of "home" among public housing residents in Georgia, and gets a dialectic relationship between community and home: the home is constructed as a safe and private domain in opposite to the

neighbourhood public life; while social connections happening by neighbouring also contribute to positive senses that help make home. This tension between private and public domains is also discussed in a Chinese post-socialist context by Bray (2005) and S. Yu (2017), where privatism, as a vengeance practiced by citizens on the failure of public realm, guiding homemaking by setting up gates and walls that physically dividing home and the disappointing public. Besides, a study focusing on the aged people in Beijing points out a gap between the elders' socialist dwelling habitus and the current living status, and their different ways of home-making based on diverse social conditions (J. Yu & Rosenberg, 2017). For the elders as tenants in courtyard public housing, their living status was described as an "inertia" after decades of settling though with vague place identity after the economic reforms. Here the inclination to stay *in situ* is explained as a habit forming in long-term residing without conscious making of host identities. The studies illustrate the indispensable connection between personal needs for homeness and public circumstances, as the consciousness for private domain is germinated in public life.

In my case study, a sense of home is formed in collective courtyard dwelling where division between public and private is blurred and dynamic. Besides, it is entangled with the nostalgia for *lao Beijing* culture, which can be a source for identity making, thus to direct conscious practices to get linked with the place. As discussed in Chapter 5.3, here a publicness is intentionally constructed in conservation practices to transform spaces as venues for commemorating the city's past. Being settled inside, residents' dwelling is more than just an "inertia" of staying. Instead, during practices of staying, emotional attachments to the *lao Beijing* city that has been meaningful in the municipal placemaking projects have been developed. Meanwhile, a realistic context for residents is that the state gradually fades out in direct governance on individuals, while it still keeps influential in social life by specifying spatial functions and narratives. This transformation, however, does not happen as smoothly as expected with the state supervision still partially on the scene. The situation leaves governing blanks that no one feels responsible for. The situation that new discursive space is expected to realise based on a transforming state-local relation leads to a patchwork of power concentration and power absence: on the one hand, public spaces that are newly delimited attract efforts and gazes, and become stages for a vibrant historic neighbourhood. On the other hand, some sections of everyday life that have been under the state care are gradually abandoned and become what people should manage by themselves.

Physically, the yard shared by neighbours in one courtyard is an interesting venue where both happen. Firstly, space privatisation, as not peculiar in other cases in post-socialist societies (Hirt, 2012), happens and encroaches the very limited square yard in the middle. Secondly, when the AHD attaches the heritage value to the courtyards, the

constructions are assessed as illegal and need to be dismantled for restoring the historic landscape. For residents, it is a component of home, a both discursive construction and practical accommodation where they can settle down. This multiplicity in space definitions and uses, with corresponding narratives and spatial manifestations, is demonstrated via "home", which is imagined, realised, and practiced in residents' everyday life.

7.1.2. Local ways of homemaking

7.1.2.1. Homemaking in conflicts

A sense of home was made differently among residents who started to dwell there in different ways. As mentioned in the previous chapter about their different positions in the local social networks, with respective social capitals accumulated and recognised by local offices, this social foundation is also significant for individuals to keep or develop senses of home, as well as host identities. Moreover, courtyard is the venue where homes are concreted. Some had living experience before 1949 and suffered from upheavals, with family houses being confiscated and living environment being socialised. Some moved there as beneficiaries of the socialist revolution, occupying old houses and gradually taking them as home. Some were born locally as the second generation of the socialist housing tenants. The variety has to be realised in courtyards where they live collectively with respective views on the public-private divisions. It results in juxtaposition of differences, leading to various practices of home making and defending.

Those who had living memory there before 1949 are quite old today – at least over 70, or some in the 80s and 90s who can rarely be come across on street. Luckily, Aunt Shao is still able to communicate about her home identities, with her corresponding ways of building in practices. Born and living in the same *hutong* until now, Shao has experienced the state-wide revolution led by the CPC, and social upheavals in the following years after the PRC was established. For her, home means an ideal past and her existence in the present that she regards to be "good for nothing". Based on her family's miserable experiences over the turbulent decades of revolutions, Shao shows no favourable attitude toward the authorities in almost every aspect. Nonetheless, she loves her home *hutong* very much as "the root" of her life. As a result, Shao shows support to ongoing conservation works due to the preservation of the old city where her home, being depicted as the courtyard, *hutong*, neighbourhood, and the whole city in the past, could be traced in physical remains. She practices this support by telling memories and knowledge about the local past as an invited guest in organised activities, during which affluent stories, memories, literature about *lao Beijing* are shared and complied in her own home depiction (see Figure 7-1). Although Shao did not finish her middle school due to the political

upheavals, she has been immersed in *lao Beijing* literature for some time, and brought some favourite pieces to the activities to share.

On the contrary to the pasts in mind, the present life is unsatisfactory. To keep dwelling in her memories, she keeps critical and distant from the present. In addition to her practices of keeping distance from the local officers subtly, she holds a sharply critical attitude towards the present social status as well as the authorities. For example, the critical talks can last for hours at her home. Concentrating on the theme, the granny presents to dedicated, and loves to share her miserable experiences and anxieties about the present to support her views. The anxieties, which she described as "just like neck being grabbed and getting tightened gradually", come from concerns for possible financial burdens in the future with the always increasing commodity prices, and the local interpersonal relationships that need to keep careful. Based on this disappointment towards the present, Shao chooses to be a "bystander", as what she called, to observe and remember issues happening nearby with judgments on individuals' moral characters. A key support for this role is her accommodation, which though has been owned by the state, but still an independent part in a courtyard with a security door set to separate from the rest. This square of space allows her family to live without neighbouring issues, thus it becomes easy for her to get out of the neighbour group, turn around, and to keep reflexive on what's happening every day nearby.

Therefore, by keeping a family-style courtyard dwelling status, and recording ordinary lives happening in the home *hutong* by observing and memorising, Shao also takes her bodily dwelling as a means of resistance to the social development that she dislikes, and to demonstrate that the local culture has not been diminished. Similar to many residents, Shao is sensitive to the relocation policies by capturing and developing the topic during talks. Taking the houses as home, she plans to stay as long as possible and refuses to be moved to other courtyards. According to her understanding of the *lao Beijing* culture, *lao Beijing* people is the soul. Therefore, the relocation is ridiculous since "it makes *lao Beijing* die without people there". She regards the insistence of staying *in situ* as a way of protecting the local culture. Moreover, although Shao's family life has been inevitably modernised, she tries to keep the local culture by her embodied practices of traditions. For example, she insists seasonal local foods preparation and cooking, with relative knowledge remembered, narrated, or written down as a record has been thought as culturally meaningful. In winter, she spends time and energy to make pickled Chinese cabbage, a traditional food, puts them in big bottles and set them in the courtyard. She regards the tradition related to the local climate and the way of dwelling. As she said: "only when you have a yard could you place such bottles in a stable low temperature". By the practice of food preparation, she keeps valuing the local habit, and translates it to

190

personalised narratives in which the cultural value is attached to the food. Moreover, she brought them to the *shequ* cultural activities and shared with participants, contributing to the narratives about *lao Beijing* culture.

For Aunt Shao, home is realised in constant tracebacks to the past and a distance being kept from the present. Here a contrast is made between an ideal past and the present where she has to live in with efforts to keep distant and critical, and is unbridgeable with herself continuously immersed into pleasant memories of the local past, which reflects the present society to be obnoxious. In addition to her own practices of constructing the past, the conservation project offers opportunities for her to share the narratives, but this practice does not change her attitude towards the present. Home is kept in practices of looking back.

Figure 7-1 Aunt Shao shared local stories with museum staffs at her home in an independent yard
(copyright owned by the BMICPD)

Unlike Shao and her family who can still live in a tranquil square of space thus being bystanders to criticise the social conditions and public moralities, many residents still need to share courtyards with neighbours, thus cannot stand by and critically examine the issues happening in the neighbouring lives. Instead, their senses of home are made in the present neighbouring interactions, where dissonance can emerge and produce conflicts between neighbours. The antithesis is the source for one to keep firm sense as a host. Still taking a look the courtyard where I lived, the sense of home is kept respectively by the neighbours

in their individual autobiographies related to the courtyard, and are spatially realised in both household and collective practices. Collectively, home is kept as a secure realm by surveillances from neighbours. Usually, it is always quiet in the courtyard where I live, with quite few communications happening between neighbours in the yard. However, when there are strangers stepping in, neighbours would pop up together and ask visitors' intentions. In fact, according to Uncle Wang, the retired worker willing to mediate between neighbours, the current tranquillity and safety is a collective achievement:

> Our courtyard is relatively quiet and safe with many retired and staying home all day. Although we seldom coming out, if someone comes, we can hear, and there's always one checking who is being looked for.

In addition to this collective suvillience for safety, neighbours' mutual care and friendship are valued by Wang and are subjectively connected with the culturally meaningful residence. As he valued, when there was package, mail, or utility bills coming to a household, some of the neighbours without enmities in between could help receive and pass it to recipients, and such mutual care was thought to be exclusive in such courtyard neighbourhoods. For Wang who has not lost passion for a harmonious society, this ideal social status is linked with courtyard, which was described by him as a superior building pattern full of culture and humane cares, thus is more possible to achieve by keeping dwelling and mediating at this culturally distinctive circumstance. In fact, such claim was made by comparing to the relationship between neighbours in apartments. By emphasising the family affection between neighbours, Wang made a personal resistance to the modern neighbouring style, and linked the traditional features with the building patterns:

> If the state conducts renewal on *hutong* neighbourhoods in the future, actually it is to drive residents away and transfer *siheyuan* to the riches who can afford integrate courtyards. So where is family affection? Rich families live individually so would not greet each other. Where is family affection? I cannot understand. This concept is widely propagandised, while I suggest to stop using it…… For our neighbours, actually the relationship is okay and we the couple always mediates between them in conflicts. We try to help based on rationality. For us, one day lived, one day less. I feel it is unnecessary to quarrel with neighbours over minor issues. A good neighbour is better than a brother far off（*yuanqin buru jinlin* 远亲不如近邻）. Can they come up immediately when you meet trouble or illness? Neighbours are there so they can help. Relatives are unreliable!

For Wang who recognises himself as one of the masses contributing to collective

dreams by practice, mediating disputes between neighbours and offering helps constitute the ways by which he fulfils the dreams. The neighbouring proximity, as emphasised by Wang, is related to the building pattern that has become culturally meaningful in years of conservation. In his conception, his practices originate from the proximity, therefore are also related with the cultural value attached to courtyards. The inhabited courtyards are valuable due to the family affections between the neighbours. Here family is read in a collective sense as formed in harmonious neighbouring, which is thought to be only possible in courtyards. However, in fact, Wang's initiatives of building up bonds between neighbours were not started from a zero point. Being settled in the courtyard with public housing distributed by the municipal department based on the proximity to his working place, he happened to know a member of the bannermen family (with an iron grated gate outside their house and keeping it closed as mentioned). On the basis, he started to construct intersubjective bonds between neighbours much easier. In general, a social networking foundation, personal faith for a collective harmony as being formed in his career, years of mediating practices are entangled with the cultural discourse for courtyards, resulting in his persistence in believing and practicing to realise the harmonious neighbouring.

Different from Wang's maintenance of family affection, another neighbour confirms her host identity in neighbouring conflicts. Aunt Tian, as mentioned above who did not enter the *shequ* participatory groups, has been keeping sharp hostility towards the bannerman family for decades. Born and grown up in the courtyard, she inherited her parent's right of using the house and has been spending more than five decades there. A host identity is also spontaneous for her who takes for granted that she has rights to modify her house. However, more than a decade ago a reconstruction project was interfered by members from the bannermen family, whom, according to her, "was ridiculous to intervene in the private issues". Since Tian rarely appears in the courtyard, direct conflicts did not happen during my dwelling. Instead, indoor complaints towards the family become the way that she keeps a host identity attached to the courtyard housing. During my several home visits, complaints about the family sometimes popped up and could be traced back to the series of quarrels, which has become an indelible wound that was sharpened in remembering:

> My house roof was too low, so I would like to make it higher. It has been agreed by the construction team. When it was finished, the roof was broken by them. I called the police at that time for a solution, and since then I never contact with them…… This courtyard had been owned by the family, while it was confiscated during the Cultural Revolution. They are never the owner and should

not intervene in my house reconstruction!

As a result, her identity as a local host was further strengthened by this contestation of the right over house modifications:

> I was born in this courtyard and spent over 50 years there! I'm one of the seniors of the courtyard so should be respected. That granny had tried to stop my house reconstruction, refusing any buildings higher than hers. My houses were no more hers so she had no power to ask me to stop. It was too low indoor to live. She is bad! Never speak to her!

For Tian, a host identity is spontaneous based on her local living experience, and her legal right to live in the house. However, this host identity depending on the socialist welfare distributing institution, in which a beneficiary got the right of use from the state, is in conflict with that of the bannermen family, as the previous owner of the courtyard. Although the quarrel happened more than a decade, a terrible neighbouring relation has been kept, with sharp opposition remained by holding respective host identities. In fact, in this courtyard with tranquillity as normalcy (see Figure 7-2), actually different personal senses of home are kept and strengthened in neighbouring conflicts – even Uncle Wang maintains his pursuit for family affections by mediation in between. The building pattern with proximity between neighbours makes it inevitable that households proclaim respective host identities that vary but need to be realised in the same courtyard, thus resulting in conflicts. Living under the same roof of the "collective family" that was built up by the socialist state, residents create and maintain the host identities in the encounters between different ideals and practices of homes, and between the small families and the collective family that has been established. Homes there are realised in conflicts happening between the different ideas and practices.

Figure 7-2 The courtyard where I lived: the daily tranquillity and the disappearing yard space where conflicts between neighbours lurk

In general, for the residents, one's host identity forms in the dynamic status of being, between owning the sense of being at home and feeling homeless. Both senses emerge from one's connection with the place. In the background of rapid social transition, it is evitable that the connection is impacted by the changes happening around, and itself gets constantly adjusted from both perceptual and practical aspects. Currently, home can be realised in both private and collective families. In residents' practices of pursing for their respective ideal homes, conflicts can happen due to the variety that has to coexist in limited courtyard space, and become a source for the identity formation.

7.1.2.2. Impacts from the conservation project

The conservation project brings new changes to the neighbourhood, and influences the personal practices of homemaking. The intervention could link individual happiness with a collective prosperity by involving specific households directly into the heritage discourse as *shequ* exemplary works. However, to be involved is based on a prior position in the local social network, and opportunities to become exemplars are limited to the small group of people. Aunt Zhu, enjoying her multiple titles that are designated by the *shequ*, as a resident representative of the local conservation association, a community artist, a resident volunteer to show and guide guests around the courtyard where she lives, has a faith of protecting the *hutong* which she regards as a common home for residents. Always speaking the professional term "historic conservation", Zhu has been immersed in this realm from her career to the retired public life. Marrying Uncle Li and moving to the present courtyard in the 1970s, she has been living in a house already outstanding among others in the neighbourhood. Facing south and spacious, the house is recognised as the best one inside a three-yard courtyard which originally belonged to a dignitary of Qing Dynasty, and currently has been registered in a district-level courtyard preservation list. After the couple inherited the housing tenancy from Li's father who got the right of use from the official distribution, they have been continuing making the old building as home by adaptive modifications.

A heritage consciousness has been significant in defining the limitation since Zhu's career experience at an official cultural heritage department. According to her, before the official designation of the neighbourhood as a historic area, she has recognised that the courtyard was old based on the consciousness that she was trained in work. When a relative advised them to add a second floor thus to have more domestic spaces, Zhu rejected him and kept the building pattern until the courtyard was registered in 2013 under preservation. This official designation was an encouragement for the couple who regarded the house as both accommodation and cultural relics, with Li describing their role as "responsible for maintaining the public-owned old houses" to "taking care of them when we use it as accommodation". After the neighbourhood was designated, Zhu gradually made clear about the courtyard history and referred to the narratives in her guiding words for the courtyard to guests led by local officers. Later, based on her affluent experiences, she was invited to act as a resident representative in the local conservation association, and had chances of meeting attendance, discussing on local conservation works. By the deep participation in conservation works, Zhu's knowledge about the heritage value attached to the courtyard and the neighbourhood, as well as ongoing conservation practices, has been comprehensive and updated. As she narrated history of the home

courtyard fluently, with her understanding on such cultural relics as resources by which "innovative and attractive cultural activities could be held and involve residents to participate", she has been nearly a local expert on conservation.

This professional perspective has been brought to the couple's everyday courtyard life, with the residential buildings valued as treasures for the wider public, and ethical consciousness developed to restrain themselves and form views on others. As Li said:

> A nation, a state, if to continue, inheritance is necessary. Unfortunately, we have lost a lot before. Like the *lao Beijing* city, all city wall gates are gone. The memorial gateways nearby are gone. Now we have something left, so we can do our best to save them.

In the couple's mind, the registered courtyard is a component of the remains worth saving and inheriting. Although the courtyard has been recorded on a preservation list, there have never been professional repairs on the old buildings. As a result, it is inevitable that dilapidation happens in years of standing. For the couple who occupies a grand south-facing house, they have continued to pay bills for building maintenance once every two to three years for decades. However, based on their ability, it is impossible to have professional teams to convey elaborate repairment that might cost a lot. What they can do is to keep it as much as possible relying on ordinary crafts and materials. For instance, columns of the house are also maintained by regular repainting, which is paid by themselves. However, they cannot find professional painters for traditional buildings to maintain it in specific ways. As a result, by the ordinary skill, colours always fade quickly and need repainting in a higher frequency (see Figure 7-3).

In addition to this voluntary practice of building maintenance, they also made some adaptive modifications for their use of the house as home. A balance between private homemaking and concerns for building preservation has been kept there based on some justifiable reasons. For example, as they mentioned initiatively, they have replaced wood-framed windows that have been out of shape with metal ones for keeping life quality (see Figure 7-3). Li said that the wood frames should have got long-lasting maintenance to avoid the problem, which has troubled their everyday life. Besides, the traditional windows were covered with paper, which were unavailable in markets at present. Therefore, keeping using such type of windows was out of their ability, and they replaced them with ordinary ones that are common, affordable and durable, with no need of regular maintenance. Another case is space occupation for private use, as they keep a mini garden in front of the house by occupying a piece of the yard space. As Zhu merges this privatisation with the heritage discourse, the gardening works are kept as a part of conservation in order to make the courtyard beautiful and enjoyable for the coming guests.

For the couple, the uniformity between living in a comfortable private home and protecting a collective home has been achieved in adaptive uses of the old buildings with clear preservation consciousness that constrains the extent of building modification. Such clear consciousness is formed in Zhu's specific life experience and the participatory opportunities where practices of conservation can be done.

However, since different practices of homemaking co-exist in neighbouring, the couple have to deal with the variety. Their views about home also get more clearly in the process. For Zhu, the ideal home is kept in a balanced relationship between her private homemaking and the collective home maintenance. This view was expressed when she criticised some neighbours' practices of occupying the yard space excessively. Once I attended an appointment with the couple, Zhu was watering flowers in the garden. In the meantime, she showed me domains of other neighbours in the yard by pointing out clear boundaries, which could those of gardens, storages, or even shadows under rain sheds that are described to be "deliberate extensions for more room" (see Figure 7-4). During indoor talks, the couple blamed neighbours' practices of yard space occupation which they regarded as damage to the historic building pattern. Considering the practical need to live there beside the neighbours, they hold the view but do not complain directly to them. As a result, Li welcomes power to intervene and take in charge of works of clearance and surveillance, thus to achieve landscape restoration and building repairment in time. This attitude echoes to the subtle neighbouring relation that has been discussed in Chapter 6.3. For the couple who keeps a reciprocal relation with local officers, and internalises the consciousness of preservation in everyday life, this reliance works more naturally based on frequent communications in between.
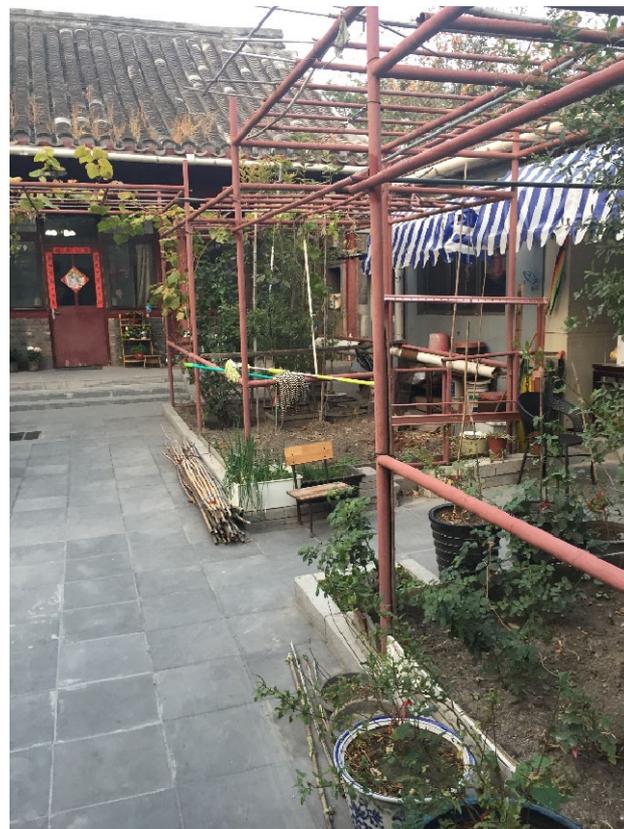
Figure 7-3 the column under unprofessional maintenance and windows in use (above);

Figure 7-4 gardens with clear boundaries between different households (below)

Generally, for Aunt Zhu and Uncle Li, their consciousness of building conservation and the balance made between conservation and space privatisation for family needs are actually based on a comparatively superior living condition in this neighbourhood, with their spacious house and significant position in the local social networks. In this condition, both the private and collective senses of home can be integrated in their practices of homemaking, which is realised in cares on the old house and simultaneously adaptive modifications made for modern needs. With themselves cognising and accepting the heritage discourse that makes where they live culturally meaningful for the public and even for the *guojia*, they, as residents with prior chances to participate in conservation deeply, practice the works that are politically meaningful in their everyday use. Anderson (2006) defines nation, that has been highlighted by Uncle Li as a reason to preserve something in this case, as an "imagined political community" as "both inherently limited and sovereign" (p.6). Like Li who never meets all fellow-members, everyone with the imagination lives the image of communion in mind with *replicable series*, as replicable logos from codified cultural relics or artworks, getting popular and contributing to creating a discursive environment in the age of mechanical reproduction (p. 185). The AHD by which the old buildings become communicable symbols by following a set of linguistic rules, dominantly defines *hutong* and *siheyuan* based on the powerful supporters. Heritagisation is a process where the buildings are decontextualised from the local living culture, and then are embedded into a discursive system in which they become visually fascinating and memorable.

For Zhu and Li, a balance has been made between their needs for living quality and the official requests for building maintenance in their practices of participatory conservation. However, their superior social positions support the situation, but cannot apply to all the residents. For the majority, including the couple's neighbours who keep the constructions for private use, the clear pattern of the courtyard that is valued in the AHD cannot overtake their practical needs for cosier and more convenient private homes. With this premise, nostalgia for *lao Beijing*, a culture symbol having been locally pervasive, is not commonly attached to courtyards and houses. As some described their houses as "shabby", courtyards in the current condition were not regarded able to represent *lao Beijing* culture, which, as mentioned, was always associated with what has been disappeared, such as the city wall, gates, and living sceneries in the past. Therefore, by showing contrasts between households in different living conditions, even inside one courtyard, I argue that a community identity based on collective recognition of the historic value attached to courtyard buildings has not been widely established with conservation interventions in the neighbourhood.

This failure of community construction comes from the social base in which complex

understandings and practices of home co-exist. The families' experiences and their current dwelling status in the three courtyards illustrate tensions existing between private and collective homes as what they perceive and build up. Their current courtyard living status shows a common intense concern for private homes, with domestic living quality to be improved and modernised. In contrast, neighbouring in one courtyard that is always occupied by several households is not in a big family style with collective efforts paid for better lives. Instead, it is like neighbouring with inevitable proximity by which homes are made in different ways which yet have to be realised in the same space. As discussed above, after the economic reforms when the *hukou* restriction was loosen, with higher urban mobilities and gradual disintegration of collectivist institutions, "the socialist big family" works like an ideological framework by which practices of homemaking have been individualised. Meanwhile, private home owning (as purchasable long-term housing using right in China) is also admitted and is portrayed as a part of ideal urban life (Zhang, 2012, p. 1). This transitional social context settles long-term courtyard dwellers in a situation where attachments to the big families have not diminished at all, while simultaneously improvement on private home becomes an alternative to achieve homemaking. It results in encroachments of courtyard spaces by self-built constructions, yet with conflicts and mediations, leading to temporary freeze of boundaries that are potential to change.

Being implemented based on this social foundation, the participatory conservation project was aimed at constructing new communities depending on collective recognitions of the local culture, with old buildings as carriers, as well as mutual affective bonding and dependence that is formed in participatory practices. Specifically, for courtyard renovation it is to restore some original building pattern that is interpreted to be a carrier of a harmonious dwelling status in the heritage discourse, which has been popularised and recognised among the masses. However, the rollback is hard to accomplish the corresponding harmonious neighbouring, since it opposes residents' pursuits for better domestic living quality that requires more spaces to be privatised. On the contrary, courtyard renovation could be taken as a chance by which household domains of the yard space could be redistributed in the process of physical space modification.

Therefore, home as a collective concept could only be realised in limited ways to avoid of infringing others. One means is to recall *lao Beijing* as a pleasant past with practices of narrating, writing and sharing as what Shao always does. It is like an antidote to the distressing present although is just temporarily efficient, which is a practice of *hysteresis*, as Pierre Bourdieu describes when a disruption appears between one's *habitus*, as what has been used to, and *field*, as a living situation being settled in (Hardy, 2014). Home here is attached to *lao Beijing*, a nostalgic image able to arouse empathies from

others who are also inclined to retreat. Another way is to personally perform a public role, paying efforts to realise some ideal collective homes during practices, as Wang's acting as a mediator between neighbours, or Zhu and Li's efforts paid for old building maintenance and exhibition. However, such personal realisations are not able to construct an alternative to the big family in collective practices, as what the elder residents have been used to before the drastic social transitions. As a result, currently respective versions of home could be kept in long-term opposition between neighbours as always existing in the seeming courtyard harmony and serenity.

7.2.   Partitioning yards: homes in public and private senses

Yard space is the manifestation of the different practices of homemaking. Without clear ownership claimed, it becomes a battlefield where struggles for homemaking are incessant. Residents' division between public and private domains in the yard, as well as corresponding spatial practices, represents how home is realised dynamically in the collective dwelling condition. In detail, safe and cosy homes for private use are commonly pursued by the collectively living neighbours with inevitable comparisons with others. Keeping the pursuits for equally cosy homes, neighbours enlarge domestic room and make it multi-functional to meet modern living needs. They build extra facilities as supplemental modules to the houses, and such building practices have been common in every courtyard based on mutual comparison and reference. As a result, the yard space has been encroached and even has disappeared in the common practices of pursuing for the ideal home.

In fact, the ideal home mode that is privately cosy and equal among neighbours is always hard to realise. Upon arrival, residents were settled with an already existing spatial hierarchy carried by the building pattern. This leads to housing difference at the very beginning of collective dwelling, and becomes a foundation for residents to form views on homemaking by taking neighbours' dwelling conditions as contrasts. As some studies on Chinese traditional architecture show, from royal to plebeian residences, a Confucian domestic ethical hierarchy is embodied in courtyard construction, which rules family members' everyday behaviours, thus to achieve a moral education by ritual (*li*) practices (Bray, 2005; S. Yu, 2017). Specifically, the south-facing house in a courtyard accommodated master of a family, and is the most respected. The others were allocated to house descendants and servants inferior to the master house. Such spatial order still affects residents in judging single houses in one courtyard, and corresponding hosts' dwelling status.

For example, the traditional spatial order was influential when the houses were distributed. The traditional domestic hierarchy is transformed to become class divisions,

and different living experiences were connected with householders' social classes. During my fieldwork, a proverb was mentioned several times when I asked interviewees about general courtyard dwelling patterns: "If you have enough money, do not choose west-facing or north-facing houses. They are neither warm in winter nor cool in summer (*youqian buzhu dongnanfang, dong bunuan lai xia buliang* 有钱不住东南房，冬不暖来夏不凉)." It is a saying popular before the housing ownership revolution brought by the PRC, showing disadvantages of the two types of housing as long-term accommodations. In contrast, south-facing houses, which have been the main buildings in courtyards in the traditional building hierarchy, are the best when talking about dwelling experience. During talks they were referred as an exemplar to judge one's own house. As contrast to a narrow and poor living condition, main building that is spacious based on its appearance, and sometimes with "a porch in the front and an attached room at the back" (前出廊子后出厦 *qianchu langzi houchu sha*), is regarded as the best accommodation for courtyard living. According to residents, the master houses which were still in good quality were always allocated to cadres who were in the superior social class. In contrast, the secondary houses are where most people live. Pre-defined by the preverbs, they are always related with disadvantaged living conditions, such as narrowness, short-term sunshine in daytime, etc.

It is such inheritance of the social stratification that has set up a foundation for residents to practice neighbouring. The common impressions and descriptions of the hierarchical types of courtyard houses show how comparison becomes common between neighbours about the dwelling condition. The series of evaluations based on the spatial order that has been presupposed in the old buildings is an important premise for private homemaking, which could be practiced in a relativist way in constant comparisons with others', and even with the ideal patterns as being highlighted in the heritage discourse (see Figure 7-5). As a result from this constant practice of comparison and pursuit, self-built houses are commonly used as ways of improving domestic spaces, leading to practices of dividing the yard space by which private homemaking can be achieved.

Figure 7-5 A model for an exemplar courtyard of the neighbourhood in a clear and integrated building pattern on display in the Shijia Hutong Museum, showing the ordered dwelling space and an ideal courtyard home in imagination

Based on the hierarchical building patterns, domestic spaces vary among neighbours, leading to differences in ways of homemaking, and sometimes conflicts between neighbours. Being settled in the distributed houses, residents faced different building conditions where they had to start living. Some might take over well-furnished big houses (mostly the main buildings) with partitions already made, and even to include some modern indoor modules, like kitchens and restrooms that had been added by some previous households. By contrast, some were allocated with secondary houses that were once empty rooms, with everything to be built up by hands. Within this situation where starting points for dwelling vary, residents' common pursuits for a modern lifestyle which resembles that of modern apartments involving all functional modules indoor, are realised by building extra facilities in different extents. For those living in spacious houses with everything ready for use, domestic space extension is not necessary; while for some living in limited space, they built extra constructions to improve the living condition by including all functional modules that meets basic human living needs indoor.

As a result, yard space is occupied by the self-built constructions in this common pursuit for well-furnished domestic living space, therefore can get hardly recognised. From my own observation and the information provided by the interviewees, the phenomenon is common in the neighbourhood. As mentioned in Chapter 4.1, practices of building such privately-owned constructions were acknowledged to begin after Tangshan

Earthquake in 1976 with considerations for safety, while the buildings were kept afterwards by households for private uses. After the reforms, with building materials and services available in the market, as well as technical developments leading domestic facilities upgrading, practices of self-building were accelerated and popularised among courtyards, leading to yard diminishing, with some even becoming narrow corridors just allowing passing (see Figure 7-6).
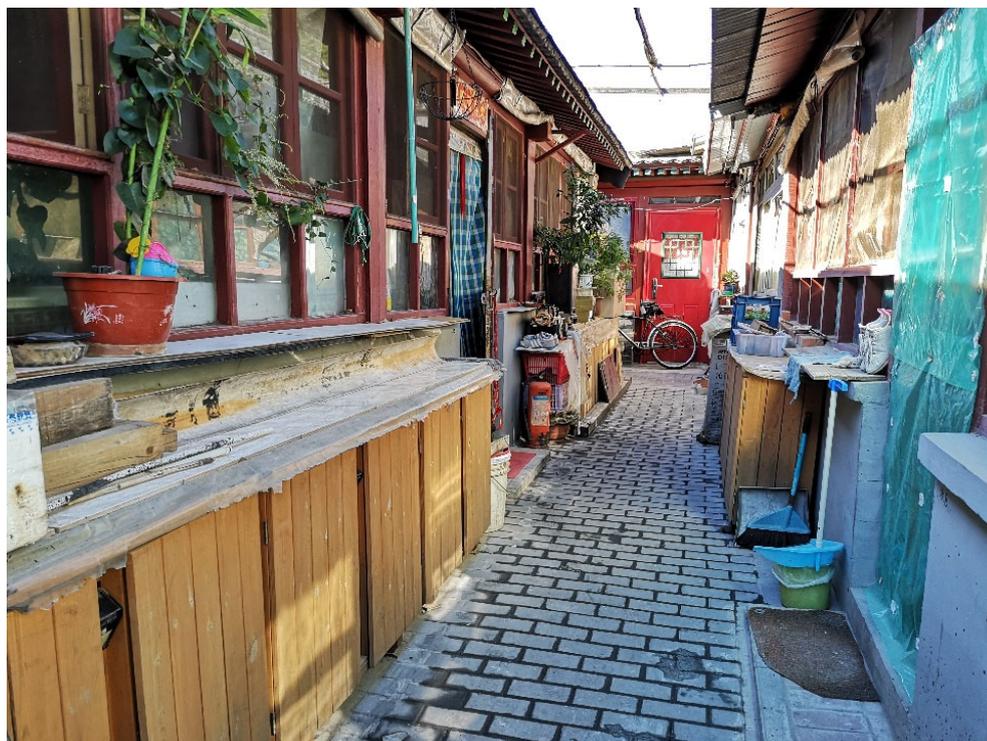
Figure 7-6 courtyard with a corridor left in the middle for commuting

According to interviewees' narratives and furnishings of their homes, by occupying the yard space, a household can have necessary modules to make up a modern home. The modules include indoor basics (kitchen, toilet, and other room divisions between different functions, including dining, bedding, reading, etc., see Figure 7-7 and Figure 7-8) and outdoor expansions (extra houses, storage and garden). For the indoor modules, they are clearly divided with specific room allocated mainly for two reasons: Firstly, technical progress leads upgrades of household equipment in need of more room to install; and secondly, common needs for privacy are required to be met by setting necessary modules indoor. For example, indoor kitchens that have been popularised among local households are understood as new necessary parts to contain modern appliances for cooking. Before a municipal coal-burning prohibition that was conducted in the old city in the 2000s, residents used portable core stoves for cooking and heating, without needs for specific room to install it with cooking venue available both indoor and outside. After the prohibition, Residents used fuel gas containers with fixed stoves to cook, thus needed an

indoor kitchen to place these facilities, thus resulting in extra room construction.

In addition to this domestic module added due to the technique progress, toilet is another indoor module that has been popularised among households for privacy and convenience. When residents were settled there in the early socialist period, indoor restroom was not popular among households. Instead, commonly there was an independent restroom inside one courtyard to meet family use in the past. Later, public toilets were complemented along *hutong* for shared uses to meet the basic everyday needs. However, although public toilet has been a necessary everyday part for the locals in many decades, currently with a concern for privacy, indoor toilet is popular among residents. As an aunt joked during interview, since "life is different from the past", "no one would like to let asses seen by acquaintances everyday today". Privacy of such intimate practices has become a concern among residents. Besides, indoor toilets are preferred for convenience and sanitation, especially for the elders who would like to mitigate risks of falling on the way to public toilets that are distant from homes. By having indoor toilets, residents said that they did not need to go outside frequently, especially during severe weathers and at night. In general, necessity of the modules forms in residents' depiction of home that has been updated following the developing society. Common needs of privacy and convenience in everyday living result in more functions, as well as more spaces required indoor.

In addition to toilets and kitchens, partitions between rooms are also needed and sometimes require extra space. There are mainly two reasons for the partition and extension. Firstly, with time going by, several generations might dwell together causing crowded situations. As a solution, extensions of indoor space, or even new houses could be built up by occupying yard space. Secondly, domestic space division based on functions has been practiced due to individual needs for specific indoor activities in need of independent space. Commonly, the series of rooms in modern apartment style are preferred by local households if indoor situation allows. Especially for households that were once crowded but currently become spacious with members moving out, extra buildings are always kept and modified to fit updated needs for living.

Figure 7-7, Figure 7-8 Some indoor modules that are added by occupying yard space

Stepping out of home doors, one could also find that the yard is occupied by outdoor storages in different forms: small shacks, wardrobes, or even stuffs piled up directly in the open air (see Figure 7-9, Figure 7-10). According to residents, some, especially the elders, prefer to store idle items and make the yard narrow and messy. Mostly, the items, as joked by residents to be "junks and rags" (*polaner* 破烂儿), are regarded as valueless. However, for those who store them, the items are potentially useful in the future thus should not be thrown away. For the items, residents use outdated furniture to store them. Usually, old wardrobes and cabinets are reused for storage and placed in the yard. Some also use the self-built coal storage shacks that were out of use after coal burning was prohibited. The storages in different look together make the yard crowded and messy.

Figure 7-9 a storage house in courtyard space

Figure 7-10 stuff piled up in courtyard space

However, in the conservation planners' eyes, such looks of the ordinary courtyard life are problematic since the physical manifestations of the ordinary living habits blur the historic building pattern. By powerfully modifying the yard space, the courtyard renovation project denies residents' means of homemaking. According to the AHD, yard space is a component of the historic building pattern, so it should be clearly presented. Therefore, self-built constructions and outdoor household storages are regarded as impediments in original courtyard landscape restoration, and should be cleaned up. In addition, a stigmatised name called "illegal construction" is attached to the buildings and furniture, further setting them in the opposite to the authorised works that will achieve the historic and tidy landscape there.

Despite the intervention, residents hardly gave in to the official requirements by highlighting their rights to the houses and that they deserve dwelling comfortably. In their arguments, some official narratives from the project are picked up and used, in order to justify the practices of privatising the yard space, and defend for their pursuits for a better living condition. For example, Aunt Chen read the courtyard renovation project as improvements to meet residents' basic living needs, so the planners should respect their views:

> For the renovation project, if you want to improve residents' living quality, at least the ground should be flattened. The others are not important, since there are few public constructions in courtyards with people using respective domestic spaces. Every household has extra buildings and makes courtyards like *hutong*. It is impossible to tear them down since the houses are in use.

Besides, though in bad relationship with Chen, the elder man "holding a corner" similarly prioritised comfortable living environment to the historic landscapes:

> If you would like to change, please let everyone live conveniently. We build our own kitchens and restrooms for convenience. Currently it (the renovation practices) just makes it good-look but not satisfactory. Do you conduct renovation to show the courtyard to foreigners, or to make the ordinary masses live more comfortably?

For Chen and the elder man, they are hostile to each other but have similar views about their rights to the yard space. From the side of conservation practitioners, as they have been aware of the appeals, they tried to make compromises, but cannot always succeed in making sustainable solutions. During the renovation project, in several courtyards, some household storages were replaced with uniform ones for a general tidy look, meanwhile with respective room for keeping things remained in the yards. Despite the elaborative design, the tidy look of courtyards is hard to maintain because residents still have functional needs when using the yard space. Although the new storages look tidy, they are in less volume and cannot meet residents' needs to store the idled items. As a result, it was common to see extra items piled up outside the storages, taking up extra yard space again (see Figure 7-11). Through an aesthetic lens, it is messy and problematic.

Figure 7-11 stuffs piling up on the uniformly distributed storages

In the above writing, I explain how homes, in a modern sense as independent, private and cosy, are realised in courtyards by dividing yard space in the middle. Although there were differences among houses when they were distributed to the present residents, the efforts of homemaking help households realise homes in a modern apartment style with functional modules indoor. This shows a similar revolutionary trend of private life in the post-reform era with Yan's study (2003) on a village in China though in different context: In his case study, villagers turn private space and concerns for privacy that were exclusively belonged to the elite class to be necessities in ordinary people's everyday life, and replace hierarchical space pattern with new types of privatised spaces in their house remodelling efforts (p.134-139). Here in the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood, residents pursue the domestic living with privacy by remodelling their houses with reference to apartments, adding new modules by encroaching yard space, thus to complete an ideal home that could not be realised by only relying on what was distributed. However, proximity of courtyard neighbouring, as well as the limitation of yard space, makes it hard to satisfy every household with respective dream for home. This leads to competitions over space occupation, with conflicts happening between neighbours. What's more, the AHD spatialisation denies the residents' efforts for better homes, yet in turn the discourse can be used by residents as a weapon to compete for the yard space. This situation introduces government to intervene and mediate between neighbours, as another factor that contributes to keeping the official power influential in neighbouring. In this condition,

home is not only kept in harmonious dwelling and neighbouring, but also can be conceived in comparisons and conflicts. Yard space as where the dynamics happen, manifests the changes as a representation of residents' practices of homemaking.

7.3.   Behaving properly: homes in peaceful neighbouring relations

Following a depiction of yard space as "public" from conservation practitioners, residents' daily activities happening there are also taken as components of "public life", and scenes of which get reinterpreted to fit into the mainstream harmonious community discourse. However, this valued lifestyle actually results from the limited domestic space which is not enough to practice everyday life. As a result, some activities are practice in the yards. Similar to Watson's (2015) description of the launderettes in New York where guests have to deal with the intimates publicly, here the practices of public life also come from residents' basic needs for living. Based on the necessity, such sharing practices are not as pleasant as aesthetically imagined. What's more, in the limited shared space where demands from multiple households have to be met, *proprieties*, as de Certeau et al. (1998) conceptualised as local acquiescent codes of behaviour that are recognised as "proper" among the locals (p.8-9), are significant to keep the seeming harmony in respective practices of neighbouring. By behaving properly, the locals establish criteria which the local identities can be attached to, and differentiate from the nonlocal people by distinguishing the mannered behaviours from those which do not meet the local proprieties.

Acquired and kept by neighbours, the proprieties form in the long-term neighbouring. The behaviour just mentioned – keeping boundaries between household domains of the yard space – is one example showing residents' ways of maintaining the yard partition. In addition, some public facilities are used based on rotas and rules. For example, one should not pour sewage with solids into public sinkhole to avoid blocking which is a trouble for all households in one courtyard. One needs to obey a schedule of hanging clothes out by using the only rope of the courtyard (due to spatial limitation), and to avoid hanging trousers at the very middle of corridor which is thought to be super impolite to let others pass through. The schedule, according to neighbours, is not written on paper but as a result of long-term adherence to the rules – when there is no one to use, the other could occupy. In repetitions of taking the same time slots, the schedule has been fixed without discussions at the beginning.

Neighbouring by maintaining the tacitly-agreed rules, residents develop mannered personalities with self-awareness and discipline. One consequence is the unequal labour division between neighbours of the duty to keep the yard space clean. Since the rules are usually established tacitly, those who have paid more labour are automatically burdened

with more duties to complete. For example, there is always a specific person in one courtyard who does a regular trivial duty, like sweeping the ground, or taking care of plants in yard space. Some duty takers took the practices as spontaneous in their life, with reasons like "because I am the first to wake up", "because I am the only one in the courtyard loving planting". On the contrary to the positive attitudes, some felt that the labour burdening them has become compulsory. Like courtyard ground sweeping, especially in the autumn when leaves fall, or in snowy winter days, it is necessary to do cleaning to prevent someone from falling. Mostly the duties are shared by neighbours, with households self-consciously obeying the cleaning schedule and responsible for their respective domains. However, there were two courtyards that I encountered with specific person in charge of cleaning respectively. One elder lady explained the role in a complaining tone: "It would be too messy if no one sweeps the ground. No one else in this courtyard does it, so it's my turn". From this personal practice to take charge of a public order, although in the same practicing pattern, reasons to do could vary. Rotas could be fixed either due to cares for neighbours or with a demand for tidy environment from personal perspective, resulting in different moods when doing the works, but it is hard to break with the common compliance to the proprieties.

For the practices, the socialist legacy is influential in the way that neighbours divide the labour. At that time, public facilities were not improved enough to deliver service by households. For example, water and electricity was calculated by courtyards thus bill collection was needed with specific persons to ask for money from neighbours. From some residents' experiences, such necessary communications between neighbours were not pleasant. Aunt Song, in the courtyard with polite neighbours, mentioned that they took turns to calculate and collect water and electricity fees in order not to burden someone too much. Such works were also accompanied with conflicts since sometimes complaints might be made due to rising costs, or residents' witnesses of someone's resource overuse. She said that she never haggled over the number to avoid worsening neighbouring relationship. Besides, since it was based on a rota, one could get future convenience by reducing the temporary collector's burden. Another way was practiced in Aunt Zhou's courtyard at the time when her long-term neighbours have not moved out. A resident was designated as the contact person for the courtyard, and the collecting work was totally burdened on him[58]. According to Aunt Zhou, after utility bills were notified by households in the 1990s, the guy never visited others, and even seldom appeared in courtyard without

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[58] According to some residents, during the socialist period, a contact person was designated by local officers in every courtyard as the direct way to keep in touch. New policies and temporary campaigns could be conveyed by the person to neighbours if coordination was needed. The person could also help pass courtyard issues over to the local officers for a timely solution.

participation in the courtyard renovation project. On that day I also made a trial to visit the guy but was rejected by the door. The guy was at home, but expressed unwillingness to participate in, neither to comment on any public affairs. Zhou explained this evasion: "Trivial things between neighbours are so annoyed and he would not like to come across them anymore. When he did the duty, sometimes neighbours might query the number or some specific neighbour's use, and denied to hand in money. He did not want to suffer from it anymore."

The residents' reluctance to perform the public role demonstrates that the neighbouring life is different from what is always depicted. In fact, practicing everyday propriety is to keep the tepid but acceptable neighbouring relationship in tacit approvals of the established codes of behaviour. According to residents, obeying the codes is "for a collective convenience", and "to avoid disturbing others". In fact, similar to neighbours' collective concerns for safety with cooperative practices of defence (as discussed in Chapter 6.2), the interdependence is established based on common requests for private benefits, which require a safe and peaceful environment. Therefore, due to the dwelling situation that several households share one courtyard, neighbouring as a social practice is inevitable and pragmatic. The codes of behaviour are established based on the silent consensuses that have been achieved in repetitive duty practicing instead of negotiations. As consequences, burdens can be assigned unequally to neighbours without effective ways of readjustment.

In addition to such obligatory duties that burden the long-term residents, the codes of behaviour are used by the locals as criteria to judge newcomers, and create distinctions in between. Unfamiliar with the local proprieties, the newcomers' public behaviours can be judged unproper, but they may not be informed by the locals who hold the prejudice against them (explained in Chapter 6.2). As a result, they have difficulties to get involved in the local communities. Specifically in neighbouring practices, migrant tenants' behaviours that break the codes are taken as evidence to prove their negative public image, which forms in the decades of social transition. Behaviours like open space storage, lack of participation in yard space maintenance, and even going in and out without closing the gate, can be sources of complaints during chats. However, neighbours prefer not to negotiate over the issues by direct talks. Instead, some indirect ways, like pasting up posters with brief words for notice, or asking for hands from the authorities either as direct interventions or by appropriating words from regulations, are practiced in order to solve the issues. As a result, without effective ways of communication, mutual understandings between the locals and newcomers about proper neighbouring can be hardly achieved. Whether a migrant tenant behave properly becomes another criterion by which the locals confirm the already influential social distinction in between.

214

In addition to the intersubjective relationship, individuals' rhythm of working, which has been regulated by the state labour system, also contributes to maintaining the subtle neighbouring patterns. Before 1995, employees had to work six days a week. An urban family, under the one-child policy and the dominant *danwei* employing system, were mainly composed of a couple and a child with parents both employed, thus spare time for housework and leisure was limited. As a result, communication was quite limited among neighbours, who needed to deal with housework and enjoy family time in the precious rest day of a week. In addition to the rhythm of working, when the elders retired after the reforms, the increasing social mobility arouses their sense of uncertainty, impeding further social contacts and continuing the subtle neighbouring relationship. An interviewee said: "There is not much to discuss between neighbours. Families live their own lives. Neighbours are not bad. I think it is not necessary to design specific space for communication in courtyards. We sometimes talk for a while but could not be long. Everyone has their own things to do!"

It also raises a question whether residents care about the yard space, which is ideally imagined in the conservation project as a venue for public activities to happen between neighbours. During the courtyard renovation interviews, when I asked residents about their expectations on the space, they commonly expressed satisfactions on the very basic aspects of improvements, such as replacement of sewers, flattening grounds with new tiles, and repairments on some dilapidating constructions that are convenient for commuting. Based on this mundane perception, residents did not regard yards as extraordinary for promoting communication. Instead, it was regarded as a venue where the private needs could be met with encounters happening between neighbours. As a result, public practices are actually secondary to personal living requests in need of fulfilling, and some that are realised in the shared space may cause disagreements among neighbours. For example, during the courtyard renovation projects, some flowerpots with seeds were gifted to neighbours, encouraging them to grow flowers so there were more opportunities of meeting and communicating. However, this expectation did not get realised perfectly. The plant growing practice sometimes causes conflicts between neighbours who hold different views about it. Some prefer to do it for beautifying the living environment, while others disagree, since the plants attract more mosquitos in summer and disturb their lives. Such dissonance over the yard planting makes it hard to continue the plan, or leads to privatisation of the joy – some gardening fans bring the pots indoor to avoid bothering others. Here the intervention did not achieve the expected effect without understanding the existing neighbouring relationship and how it works.

Despite the subtle neighbouring relationship, children's after-school home visits were exceptions where communications were facilitated, though currently the visits happen

rarely. During the interviews, the topic was frequently mentioned by some elders, who were responsible to take their grandchildren back home from school on weekdays. The memories from the past were used to compare with the present situation. Before the elders retired, no more helped them to take their children back. Instead, the children commuted between school and home by themselves, and stayed together in someone's home. In addition, some neighbour who could look after them before the others went back home took the responsibility. In this way, children's temporal home stay created opportunities for neighbours to have home visits and make reciprocities, contributing to building and keeping relations between households. Among residents, such memories were actually heart-warming, especially when being compared to the current condition, in which their grandchildren can no longer create the opportunities of communication. The burden of completing daily assignments and attending extracurricular classes prevents them to have the after-class leisure time. In addition, the elders are responsible for the children's safety thus dare not to allow them to play around out of sight. As a result, such exceptional chances able to create opportunities of communication have almost disappeared, with the past meetings remembered in contrast to the present.

In general, I briefly describe some codes of behaviour in courtyard neighbouring and residents' subtle ways of keeping them. They form in tacit consensuses but cannot satisfy everyone. The residents can pursue for their respective prosperity in the post-reform period, but the question about how to distribute the collective interests still concern them. The general social situation is manifested by the codes in courtyard neighbouring. To pursue personal better lives, neighbours obey the codes to maintain the collective living environment despite dissatisfactions, since there is no way of negotiating about modifying the codes. What's more, familiarity and obedience to the proprieties are taken as criteria to judge whether one can behave properly as a neighbour, with newcomers to be identified as the others due to their ignorance of local rules. This exclusion of the non-locals further fixes the identity attached to the place that has formed in a status of long-term dwelling. Here the common obedience to the courtyard rules to maintain collective interests is a source of identity that is kept in taciturnity.

The practices of neighbouring also makes me to ask whether proximity can promote intimate relationship between neighbours. In this neighbourhood, neighbouring closely is a consequence from housing distribution in this specific building pattern, instead of an initiative for more public space where social activities could happen. When settling down, residents' class identities were used to distinguish selves and others (as discussed in Chapter 6). Later, the close neighbouring relationship got limitedly developed between the neighbours as busy employees owning limited leisure time. After the economic reforms, the neighbouring pattern encountered a new ideal for home as a private cosy

216

place. As a result, the shared space between neighbours is not taken as a necessary component where public life can happen, but an already existing condition of proximity that the introverted households need to deal with and can appropriate for the sake of respective interests. Although from the perspective of conservation practitioners, courtyard is a culturally significant pattern able to bring neighbours together, the imagined close relationship can hardly survive today, with borders clearly set between neighbours, who would like to defend for their private homes. Such idealisation of courtyard neighbouring, and the association with the building pattern which is under conservation, is a partial read of the local life.

7.4.   Discussions

By referring to the concept "home", this chapter shows how the *lao Beijingers*, most of whom once have been newcomers to the neighbourhood, yet currently are regarded as indigenous in long-term dwelling, set up connections with the courtyards and transform them as home. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the sense of home is produced from the practices of homemaking. From a humanistic perspective, it is not enough to define home as the physical entities, or some places that have been objectified. The inclination to make something home is significant to complete the definition, and is produced in the interactions between individuals and the objectified homes via embodied practices. Moreover, in the contemporary society, the high mobility of information and population makes the practices of home no more unconscious and stable. In contrast, home is intentionally made as a way of finding one's sense of certainty in the living environment where differences from the others are common. The production mechanism of home, both conceptually and physically, should be carefully examined and taken as a significant reference when the relevant social policies are to be made.

In the historic neighbourhood, the residents' practices of homemaking represent the living cultures from multiple historical periods, and the overlapping relations between the cultures. Most of them are modern instead of traditional. In this process of homemaking, residents' individual consciousness that has been burgeoning in the post-reform period is entangled with a collectivist discourse that is both a social legacy left from the early socialist period, and is continued in propaganda at the present. This entangled identity is manifested in residents' depiction and realisation of ideal homes, which are made as patchworks by personal appropriation of available resources from the living circumstance. Furthermore, diversity exists among households about the home details regardless of a common pursuit for the modern-apartment-style domestic space. In the courtyards where living space is scarce and limited, yard space in the middle becomes a resource, by occupying which the ideal homes can be realised. In the scrambles for the space, the right

to use it becomes a source of conflicts between neighbours. It is in such dynamic and conflictual homemaking processes, personal understandings of home got established and maintained, although sometimes in spite of misunderstandings from neighbours.

Towards the different and eclectic cultures in household practices of homemaking, the government and conservation experts would like to wipe them out, and then revive the specific urban morphology of *lao Beijing* that has been legitimated by the legal planning text as the only right pattern for the historic neighbourhood. The way of achieving the purposes is to stigmatise the self-built constructions as illegal and hazardous. In this mode of conservation, a paradox has been made between the authorised heritage value narratives and the implementation. For the former, the living character is highlighted for the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood, where the existence of the long-term residents illustrates the lively local culture. However, in practice their embodied practices of homemaking are stigmatised and erased. The paradox shows a situation where the officers and experts have been aware of the heritage values in addition to those that are narrated surrounding historic buildings. However, the implementation of the conservation planning, which was still made to preserve the physical constructions, is not friendly to the living cultures.

The case study shows that in this practice of historic conservation, the respect for living heritage is added to the conventional building-centric evaluation system, while it has not challenged it. In other words, the living characters are constructed in a static way by attaching them to the historic buildings, as contents that can be understood by carefully reading the physical constructions. Here the AHD still effectively marginalises the humanistic practices of the local culture, which is impossible to be an orderly and static representation that can be clearly interpreted. Such limitation of the reflexive improvement in the AHD is common in Chinese historic conservation practices. For example, Verdini et al. (2017) tested the civic engagement tools of the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape approach in a historic rural village of China. Although the use of the tools provided the village with a platform to involve local stakeholders into the preservation works, they observed that the participatory activities also contributed to reinforcing the pre-existing socially exclusionary processes and the predominant economic discourse. It is similar to the situation of the case study, in which the participatory method mostly contributed to reinforcing the pre-existing social orders and the AHD. If government and experts would like to realise the theoretic changes by historic conservation that is implemented at some real place, they need to know about the local social context in advance, and use the universal tools reflexively by thinking about the practical aims and possible outcomes. By this way, the involvement of multiple voices is not a purpose to reach or a scene to exhibit, but a tool by which more context-specific and practical aims can be achieved.

Chapter 8.   Practicing everyday life in public spaces: creating and continuing subjectivities

In this Chapter, I would like to step outside the courtyard gates and move to the spaces that have been designated as "public", and investigate the locals' practices of the *publicness*, which is the operable object of the conservation project, showing liveliness of the historic landscape. By powerfully delimiting the public space and the criteria for its appearance, the conservation practitioners make them the exhibition window of the authorised heritage value, and the disciplinary field where codes of behaviour are embedded. As analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, public space making is a technique by which the authorised cultural narratives, here as a coalition between the old city and the *lao Beijing* culture, is maintained and represented by deliberate urban design and planning. A sense of urgency to protect the only physical remains of *lao Beijing* shared by both architectural experts and citizens helped justify this technique and established rightness of public space making, which transforms the culture able to be accessed and experienced by the general public. In such process, public space in which cultural narratives are inscribed can be taken to serve a biopolitical form of urbanism, reinforcing social order under state power in urban life (Oakes, 2017). Or in another case, cultural and political identities are expected to be articulated in landscape making with places gentrified to be accessible to the elite publics (Mills, 2005). Such public spaces which are delimited by powerful stakeholders may be in conflict with local practical needs for spaces, if there is no mechanism to get the mass views involved into the decision-making process. However, the conflicts do not always happen overtly, with residents sometimes acting passively towards the changes which influence their lives. The passive practices include resistances, adaptations and appropriations of the given living environment, which has been constantly modified and delimited, in the name of maintaining the old.

In the following writings, I will investigate the passive practices and reveal the conflicts which have not manifested themselves in interactions between the residents and the conservation practitioners. The works are done in three types of the public spaces that are designated in the conservation project, including linear space in *hutong*, shopping destinations, and the cultural venues. Respectively, *hutong* and shopping destinations, including small stores along *hutong* and grocery markets, are spots where residents' practices based on their basic everyday needs are happening while under inspection for aesthetic and tidy effects. Cultural venues, which were specially designed for local culture exhibition and routine cultural activities, are introduced as a new part to the local public life with invitations to a small part of residents to take cultural experiences. In each type

of public venues, personal practical needs for the spaces, and ways of utility they have got used to, are intertwined with the cultural-political discourses that are established with public space making. By describing some residents' behaviours as observed and analysing reasons for specific tactical practices with some individuals' narratives as references, I would like to show a situation in which a mainstream narrative coexists with residential culture that is changing and continuous, while it is not a win-win collaboration with unequal power distributed to space makers and users.

8.1. Residents' ways of using and imaging the *hutong*

8.1.1. Joking and remembering: residents' self-positioning in *hutong*

Comparing to the neighbouring space inside yard gates, *hutong* gets more intensive renovation due to its high public exposure and accessibility. From the municipal perspective, it is a part of the city culture museum attractive for visitors. Meanwhile, for the local residents, it is a functional and experiential place which they bond with in their daily uses. In the neighbourhood of which the heritage value is emphasised and prioritised to get presented, scenes like residents encountering with grey walls and courtyard gates as backgrounds are taken as selling points to promote the neighbourhood as old but energetic, with ordinary but affluent public lives ongoing. In this way of spatialising the AHD, publicness is expected to be a watchable quality of the place which is meaningful for the authorised heritage value. Correspondingly, public space, as the spatial manifestation of the publicness, is supposed to be the realm where the publicness can be seen and appreciated. As a result, the conservation practitioners delimit and modify public spaces to meet the ideal expectations, in which the spaces are orderly designed to convey specific cultural meanings. However, this way of making public spaces reduces room for practical use by occupying the already limited *hutong* space. With few considerations taken from the residents' perspective about using the *hutong* space, the continuous renovation projects which target at conveying the authorised heritage value via *hutong* crowd out the local everyday life to limited spaces. The arbitrary construction works set up the precondition for the residents to maintain the place bonds. Although the works were designed to exhibit the living landscape of *lao Beijing culture*, the residents whose embodied practices of everyday life compose the active state, are not powerful in the decision-making processes. Being situated in the local social relations, the residents use some feasible ways to explore their positionalities in relation to the place, which was familiar to them but has been changed by the powerful actors strange to them.

Among the ways, *speaking* is an important practice. According to Foucault (1978, cited from Van Vleet, 2003, p.499), speaking integrates individuals into the states and civil

societies. Through the practice of speaking, people can "clarify, reinforce, or revise what they believe and value" (Ochs & Capps, 2009, p. 46), establishing a sense of themselves via the beliefs and values projected to the things. Idle talks, as a communicative type of the practices of speaking, can realise the self-identity in everyday lives informally, and act as a type of tactic for people to cope with social changes happening around. For instance, van Vleet (2003) approaches gossip in community life as "a social activity and as a type of 'personal' narrative through which people make sense of relationships creating order and coherence from the complicated and contingent occurrences of everyday experience" (p.492). Based on the logic that is established in the communicative process, gossipers produce their ways of understanding social changes and events happening around, mediating between local ideals and national ideologies by blurring the assumed boundaries in between. Farrer (2002) takes the local gossip network in a residential community of Shanghai mediates the effects of the market transition on social life. Moreover, informal everyday political talks in community life are argued to be a fundamental underpinning of deliberative democracy, because the practices make a forum where citizens construct their identities, achieve mutual understanding and produce public reasons (Kim & Kim, 2008). Such studies illustrate the political potential of everyday life lurking in the informal and purposeless practices, which have been stereotyped as meaningless and conventional.

For the residents who use the *hutong* every day, *joking* and *remembering* are two ways of clarifying what they think about the present *hutong*, and show how they cope with their situations when facing the surrounding changes. According to some pre-existing studies, joking is a situated practice, encompassing a heterogeneous range of practices and interpersonal functions that are effective in specific contexts (Haugh, 2014). By joking, one can make attacks to some objects but in an indirect way, leaving room for the excuse that one did not mean to attack seriously (Kotthoff, 2006). In addition, remembering is a social and material process as "a continuum running between more discursive and more embodied forms of memory" (Morton, 2007, p.161). It is a practice about "reconnecting and reassembling parts of the wider social group …… distributed over space and time" (Morton, 2007, p.164). Collective remembering provides a framework for categorising participants according to their past and present social status delivered by the practices, and supports a sense of familiarity between those who share similar views and memories about segments of local history (Blokland, 2001). Both the practices provide feasible ways for the ordinary people to cope with the effects of the macro-level social changes on their everyday lives. Relying on their experiences accumulated in the long-term practices of living, they express their views about the present living conditions in the practices of speaking tactically. The practices actively create and reproduce self-identities,

intersubjective familiarities, and new social structures, reserving the political possibilities to make changes.

In the case study site, by joking and remembering, residents express their views about the shifting landscape of *hutong* in idle talks, by which sympathies and the collective sense can be built up. As elaborated in Chapter 5.3, due to the continuous official practice of public facility placement without an overall spatial planning, limited room is left for practical uses by redundant ornaments. With pedestrian lane fixed and flower pots set, as well as parking spots delimited on one side of *hutong* beside the pedestrian lane, the only room left for walking is at the middle, where pedestrians have to share the lane with vehicles. The condition makes it necessary to keep cautious about the traffic condition to avoid accidents and traffic jams. Besides, as a significant background for a vibrant but historic *hutong* landscape, courtyard walls attract a continuous municipal funding, with brushing works at least once a year, and facilities in front of or on walls getting uniformly embellished for beautiful façades. This makes all of them larger and become barriers that impede pedestrians, causing annoyance and complaints. For example, external units of household air-conditioners on walls and electricity boxes that stand beside walls are wrapped but occupy more spaces, thus become bothersome, and even dangerous with sharp corners exposed to pedestrians. Electricity boxes as public facilities for local power supply were put into some houses along *hutong* for a general tidy look of the heritage landscape, but the installation occupies the houses, and resulted in exclusion of the previous dwellers.

For the obstructive ornaments and facilities, residents cope with them by giving nicknames to them and making jokes. During interviews taken in situations that are not completely public (at home, inside courtyard, in office, in meeting room), towards the redundant ornaments, residents commonly show negative attitudes, and think that renovation attracts too much funding, leaving rare for maintaining facilities related to their living quality. Being unsatisfied, they created nicknames for some facilities, like "big coffins" for the flower pots blocking pedestrians, "shabby iron boxes" for wrappings of air-conditioner external units that are dangerous for pedestrians to hurt heads due to exposed sharp angles, and "electricity tigers" for state-owned power supply authority with electricity boxes set to occupy houses (see Figure 8-1, 8-2, 8-3). Such nicknames are commonly recognisable among some interviewees, who shared similar negative attitudes towards the position of the facilities. Moreover, even some local officers know the nicknames and residents' complaints, but they said they were not powerful to intervene in such municipal-level projects, so could not help to change the situation. In addition to making jokes of the facilities, residents make immediate complaints about the annoying experiences openly, and bring the experiences to chats with neighbours. Once I witnessed

222

a granny complaining loudly to a grandpa sitting at the *hutong* entrance, about the over-dense situation in *hutong* where she could not walk pleasantly due to barriers. In addition, such complaints compose a frequent topic during accompanied walking, temporary gathering and stopping, with someone noticing physical details or immediate happenings in eyesight. Interestingly, such brave practices of complaining, which should be a source of improving the designs of *hutong* space, have become a routine acknowledged by the local officers, while they do not enact reflexive actions. The *jiedao* officer Director Li attributed the failure to the low-quality governance. As he said: The redundant ornaments in *hutong*

> is a cumulative problem. Since *jiedao* is distributed with funding for local constructions annually, *jiedao* has to spend the money but officers cannot make good plans. They don't know the aims of implementing the projects and don't make long-term plans. For *shequ*, it is an association without power endowed to make constructions.

In addition to the ornaments, Li said that he was not endowed with the right to decide the placement of the "electricity tigers", "big coffins" and the "shabby iron boxes". Even in the *jiedao*, local governance is featured by fragmented authoritarianism, the model theorised to understand politics in post-Mao China. The model explains how decisions are made among bureaucrats after the economic reforms. As Lieberthal (1992) describes:

> Structurally, China's bureaucratic ranking system combines with the functional division of authority among various bureaucracies to produce a situation in which it is often necessary to achieve agreement among an array of bodies, where no single body has authority over the others (p.8).

In addition to this functional division, by retaining a sense of mission and purpose, the bureaucracies still keep some elements of coherence that make bureaucrats to collaborate (Lieberthal, 1992, p.9). In such system, one officer should focus on his/her allocated duties and take responsible for them, but should not intervene in others' works. For Director Li, he does not like the ornaments and facilities in *hutong*, but he did not have solutions to the issue. As a result, such complaining and blaming tone has taken for granted by both residents and officers. Despite a common awareness of the annoying spatial condition, they can limitedly make immediate changes within this fragmented meanwhile authoritarian governing framework.

In the meantime, residents are tamed by the overly ornamented space, establishing a set of codes of behaviour based on the approval of the current spatial conditions. For example, due to the ornaments added to *hutong* time after time, and the parking space

delimited to occupy the road space, the room left for walking is limited. The condition makes walking in *hutong* is not a relaxing practice. When walking in the middle of alley, one still needs attentions to vehicles coming and going through, giving precedence to the faster objects on wheels with constant stops taken in plots in between parked cars. Behaving well during the walks for the sake of smooth traffic becomes a propriety of neighbouring that one need to obey. For example, once I was chatting with a friend from the museum when walking through, and did not notice a coming car following us. It caused a transitory traffic jam with a bicycle, a motorcycle, and several pedestrians getting stuck. We were blamed by a waiting granny who attributed the glitch to our negligence, and were told that we were not supposed to walking in the middle without attentions paid since it brought trouble to others. This experience shows how the residents adjust themselves to continue the normal order of *hutong* traffic. If one does not behave to keep the order, he/she is to be blame. The *hutong* traffic is kept in the way where the residents' critical positionality has not effectively enacted practical changes.

As a result, the complainers, whether joking about the issues in private or public occasions, choose passivity when reacting to the physical changes. Although their practices of speaking cannot change the physical patterns, they are the effective ways for the speakers to confirm the host identity, especially when talking about the nicknames with those who know the usage well and share the same attitude towards the installations.

Figure 8-1, 8-2, 8-3 public facilities being set along hutong with nicknames ("big coffin, electricity tiger, shabby iron box")

In addition to the practices of joking and complaining, remembering and talking about one's experiences in relation to *hutong* are other ways for residents to keep bonding with the place when facing the transformations. Interestingly, there is an inclination for the long-term residents to take the memories as references when commenting on the present *hutong*, and to make the past *hutong* scenes opposite to the present ones which gradually become strange to them. For example, once I had a talk with Aunt Shao during a home visit at night, she recalled the *hutong* scenes in her childhood with emotional descriptions, in contrast to the current status that was dominated by facadism:

> For the *hutong* over there, a guy from Shanxi sold nuts at the entrance, and his descendants are still here although with shop door being shut. On the other side it was a typewriter shop doing selling and repairing. Back to the Dongsi Street, there was a shop repairing clocks, and there was a woven sweater shop run by my primary school mate. We still keep in touch now. And beside to it, there was a wedding shop, and currently it is a bookshop. I remembered that when there was a ceremony, children held a bridal veil, stepping in on a red carpet. It was so convenient, while currently these folk things have gone. Oh, there is still a Chinese traditional medicine shop, but is not the original one. Next to it there was a grocery store…so convenient it was! Everything you needed in everyday life was available on the street! Li (Shao's husband) might not remember, there was a shoe making shop across to the hutong entrance. The family was quite poor and depended on the business. In the past some *lao Beijingers* made shoes by themselves, and such craftsmen helped combine the upper and bottom shoe parts. They could not profit much but take a lot of time and work. If they charged much then no one would visit. So poor they were!

In the memory of the surroundings in final years of the Republican period, a plain but romantic local life was narrated by remembering the people instead of the buildings. It was used by Shao to criticise the current *hutong* scenes and the facadism conservation project. Although much effort was paid to restore the historic landscape, it did not effectively rejuvenate the *lao Beijing* culture because people and their embodied practices have disappeared. In addition to the panorama, some remembered specific scenes in their living experiences. For example, the disappeared businesses along *hutong* are likely to be talked about, in contrast to the present tranquil but boring scenes. The remembered objects include the supply and market cooperatives which provided residents with everyday necessities in the early socialist period, dealers who sold coal, soil, water, etc., which are no longer needed to purchase today. In addition, some also remembered the previous scenes where people's practices of relaxing and communicating overtook the buildings as

the remembered objects. For instance, an aunt recalled her mother's relaxing moment before the Cultural Revolution:

> At that time, my mother sometimes sat at the *hutong* entrance and drank tea. In summer, she carried a cattail-leaf fan, sitting on a small stool, and chatted with the people coming and going. It was amusing! …… What I'm talking about is before the Cultural Revolution. Everything has changed afterwards.

Such practices of remembering happened automatically when the interviewees were asked how they felt about *hutong* at the present. Comparing to the authorised narratives about the local culture, residents' versions are structureless and excursive. They picked up memory fragments and connected the parts about *hutong* to those about somewhere else to complete the narratives that were organised based on personal experiences. Here the physical remains were not the core element to value, but were taken as backdrops where the living experiences changed. Referring to Bourdieu's conception of practice (Bourdieu, 1992), I argue that the residents rely on their habitus of living that forms in the long-term dwelling state, to cope with the changes continuously happening around. The nicknames of the newly set installations, and the reiterated personal memories about the *hutong*, show how the residents use what they are familiar with, to construct their knowledge about the present strange environment, and the positionality to face it. The practice echoes to Dong's studies (2003) about the *lao Beijingers* of the Republican period, who recycled the local folklores to survive in the wave of modernisation, and got their social identities attached to the *lao Beijing* city as they were familiar with. For the practices of joking and remembering, the practices construct a shelter where the residents can stay and cope with the changes based on their living experiences. Moreover, by the personal practices, the residents construct the social groups in which members can understand the nicknames and the narratives. The mastery of the knowledge is used to distinct *us* from *them*, so the collective identity is built up and maintained once they are mentioned in idle talks.

In addition to the agency that keeps the bond between the group of residents and the place, the collective identity contributes to reinforcing their social class identities that are prioritised in the political propaganda, but in fact are disadvantaged in the power relations to other stakeholders in such projects of urban space modification. In residents' common self-definitions, they are the "very ordinary people" (*xiao laobaixing* or *laobaixing* 小老百姓,老百姓) with weak power to participate in decision making process. The identity can be echoed by other residents, all of whom are members of the masses, so the empathy for the commonly disadvantaged position in decision making can be built up. However, similar to the elders' long talks with the local officers, as mentioned in Chapter 6.3 as the temporary relief of their moods but weak at changing the anxious reality, it seems that the

complaints just confirm their identities as *baixing,* as a collectivist political title for Chinese ordinary people, but it cannot help change their disadvantaged positions in the power relations. This situation also echoes to Keane's (2001) definition of Chinese citizenship, as a benefit granted by the State to persons born in the PRC, instead of the political identity which endows people with individual rights in the Western conception, which was introduced to the imperial China for launching the democratic revolutions. The political identity itself is problematic to ask for more rights of decision in local governance, hence the broad empathy can only make limited political effects.

Furthermore, the political institution is manifested by the local underdeveloped mechanism to respond to residents' opinions and treat them seriously. During the talks, though making jokes, some interviewees said that they had complaint to or petitioned local bureaus about such obstructive facilities in everyday use, while there have never been replies nor modifications made to solve such issues. As a result, complaining or joking to those who understand each other but without power to make changes is the only way which residents practice to prove their identity, and rights of using the neighbourhood space which has been put into a municipal-level planning for exhibiting historic resources. Such stable condition of the local power relations echoes to Giddens' structuration theory, which argues that "social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (Giddens, 1979, p.121). The social class division there acts to constitute the residents' agency and their practices of just speaking, both of which contributes to reproducing and reinforcing the social structures.

Considering the process in the context of historic conservation, one consequence of the residents' constructive production of the local political structure is the stylisation of their practices to stay in the past. The characteristic is regarded as a cultural feature of the *lao Beijingers*. Regarding them as intrinsically nostalgic, the conservation practitioners usually choose relevant topic when holding participatory activities in order to satisfy the participators. However, this seemingly antiquarianism is in fact a result from a fear of being deprived based on their sense of weaker control of the place. A common nostalgic attitude, in this case, is an ideal depiction made up of romanticised memory fragments when facing the present that has become strange and out of control. However, the older things exposed to them, the more they will be immersed in the world composed of trivial memories in the past. In this situation, *lao Beijing* as a discourse has been embodied by the locals who are surrounded by spatial representations of the cultural symbol. This co-existing status of *lao Beijingers* and the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood has been appreciated as a heritage package, in which human and buildings are organically connected. However, the critical analysis of residents' social practices in relation to the *hutong* shows that rights to make decisions of the space are unequally distributed to different stakeholders, among

228

which residents are disadvantaged, and their agency is constituted to direct passive resistance towards the social position. The nostalgic phenomenon is in fact a result from passive compromises and retreats.

8.1.2. Residents' roles to play

8.1.2.1. Indifferent beneficiaries

Being situated in the social structures, residents play some specific roles, by which their agency is enacted to maintain the structures and their positions therein. One obvious role is the beneficiary of the renovation projects, because the constructions improve the built environment that they inhabit. However, since the residents are endowed with few rights to participate in the decision-making processes of the projects, they can just accept the benefits passively, and show indifference to the improvements without bonds developed with them.

In addition to the redundant ornaments impeding residents' practices of passing through, another type of public facilities was officially set up. Though not causing dissatisfactions among residents, they have not become appealing and useful installations as imagined in the design schemes. Such facilities are conveyed by the Micro Renovation project, in which designers utilise some tiny spare spaces, such as corners, front-gate grounds, obsolete tree grates to add either ornaments or utilities, to make the general look of *hutong* beautiful and tidy, in order to match the imagined historic scenes formed in heritage discourses. According to official descriptions, the type of spatial renovations is featured by a balance reached between landscape improvement and everyday utility, which are realised in professional urban design (Committee of Taking root and germinating: Practice of responsible planner in Dongsinan Historic and Cultural Conservation Area Beijing, 2020). Taking the facilities as medium by which cultural interventions could be made to influence the residential group, designers focused on the "mundane beauty" that was extracted from local ordinary life, and tried to realise it aesthetically in the public facilities that were set up long *hutong*. However, residents' usages, as well as attitudes towards these changes, are not completely as was expected. Taking *hutong* sitting, a frequently observed practice from residents as an example, instead of using elaborately designed benches, many residents still bring and use their portable seats, and choose spots based on their customs: They like sunshine in winter but need shades in summer. Within a season, some gather at specific locations and times with respective portable seats. Spots including spaces outside courtyard gates (including both home courtyards and some big ones with wide gates but always closed), foots of walls where chairs could stand, and some tiny areas scattered in *hutong*. Such space occupation is temporary and flexible without necessities of demarcating and ornamenting spaces. In

addition to portable chairs, some seats, like obsoleted sofas and chairs from residents, are placed by themselves at somewhere not bothering traffic, and are frequently used by nearby neighbours. For these seats, they have become publicly accessible but no more personal belongings, thus could be occupied by any neighbours (see Figure 8-4, 8-5, 8-6).

Such practice of temporary sitting along *hutong* was captured by designers, who appreciated such scenes as portraits of close neighbouring in *hutong* life. As a result, some existing gathering spots were selected and underwent micro renovation, while new facilities are still used based on residents' practical needs for the space. For example, a bench with pergola was set in a *hutong* in 2016 as a work under a general project to improve quality of local public space. Based on the designer's observation of residents' ways of using the *hutong* space, and their praise for the living landscape, they designed the bench with comprehensive functions in order to meet residents' multiple needs when using the *hutong* space, and meanwhile to make the *hutong* tidy and beautiful to meet the aesthetic criteria. Despite the elaborate design, the bench is not used as expected. Residents still gather there to chat but the other designs are overlooked. Furthermore, one design which had been expected to hang up clothes was modified as a canopy. The designer's intention was not understood by the users. In addition, another same facility was set in a small piece of space along the *hutong*, and currently is mainly occupied by vehicles. Temporary gatherings are still held there by using portable seats (see Figure 8-7, 8-8). Although the elaborate designs were not effectively used, residents still showed approval to the facilities, and took them as benefits. As an uncle sitting there told me:

> I feel it's a good thing (to put the decorative benches). It's not bad. At least the benches stop those placing domestic stuffs outside courtyards and making *hutong* messy. This is a progress from the past.

Such expression of "good but not my decision" is quite common among residents that I came across and asked about their feelings about *hutong* renovations during wanders. This shows a common attitude to take public space making as social welfares distributed locally, with individuals as welfare receivers. As Oakes (2017) argues, government-led themed spatial modifications are conducted to transform Chinese city as a "laboratory of conduct", where civilised individuals with "the right kinds of habits" are expected to be on show to adapt to a utopian imagination of city of "good government and civilized social order" (p. 15). For the case study site, the public facilities were also designed and placed with an aim of disciplining residents with order, aesthetic, and public awareness. However, the aim was hardly realised because residents did not practice the orderly publicness as expected.
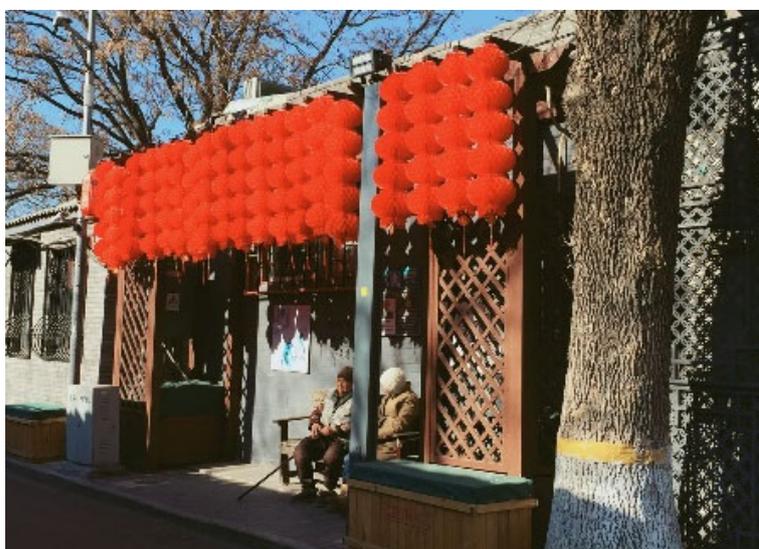
Figure 8-4 8-5 8-6 several scenes of *hutong* sitting

Figure 8-7, 8-8 two facilities for comprehensive use, with the above one still as an encounter spot, while the bottom one mostly for parking and storage

In a nutshell, this disciplinary spatial intervention is not as effective as was expected in design schemes, The welfare nature of public space making here makes the physical realisation as one-off designs but without following adjustments, and results in various ways of using. In this condition, the designs for *hutong* renovation have not been

influential in residents' everyday use with weakness in changing their views to, and behaviours in the modified space. Being placed with limited references to local voices and few attentions paid to follow-up changes, although the designs were conducted to illustrate beauty in local ordinary culture thus to arouse local recognition of the neighbourhood culture in conservation implementation, they were not acknowledged as trials for community making, but as non-of-my-business projects which residents accepted passively.

Residents' common indifferent attitudes towards the changes of the living environment illustrates a citizen identity that is featured by compliance and passive attitude of welfare reception. A continuous delivery of free public service that always keep *hutong* environment in order and tidiness may contribute to this civil culture. For a quite long time, tidy and ordered looks for streets have become disciplinary discourses, and to be effective for residents by spatial realisation nearby. Such modernised urban views have always been pursued since the early modernisation in the early 20th century when the declining empire pursued for modern reforms with a specific municipal bureau set in charge of city sanitation, and such modern requirement for urban public environment was continued by the Republican government. After the PRC was established, in addition to municipal services, a state-wide patriotic sanitary campaign was conducted in 1952 in which the masses were invigorated to participate in cleaning practices in both private and public spaces (Committee of Beijing Annals, 2007). As Perry (2013) argues, a linkage was made between healthy bodies and a strong Chinese nation in this campaign, with a global context of ideological opposition. And since 1990s, with introduction and practices of market-oriented reforms, the state preference for sanitation and order was realised in the National Sanitary City campaign, in which local governments could get the title by eradicating the undesirable from public space, thus to keep attractive to business and people with good city image, and prompt local development (Huang et al., 2014). Historically, though with changing impetus, the modern governments have always been pursuing city sanitation by both spatial and embodied realisation. As a result, relative ethics have been internalised by citizens in long-term practices.

Specifically, in practice, order and tidiness have been prioritised by residents in this neighbourhood. A consensus with government has been achieved by free public service delivery, resulting in passive citizen roles with compliant attitudes towards spatial changes happening around. Here the services that keep the local environment clean are freely delivered by a professional property management company to residents. Different from Chinese middle-class urban residents who live in gated communities, pay for such services, and build up their citizen identities by the consuming practices (L. Zhang, 2012), residents here receive the services as public welfare, and their citizen identities are kept in the long-

term social relations in which they keep performing the role as beneficiaries. In other words, they do not need to build up the identity by motivating their initiative to do something, but just by keeping the established social connections. As a result, keeping the *hutong* clean and orderly is not taken as their responsibilities though they feel like hosts of the place.

In detail, the free public services are delivered in the following aspects. Currently in order to keep *hutong* a good look all the time, cleaning services are delivered routinely. Since there are no bins for collecting residential garbage along *hutong*, residents throw out garbage by following the timetable of collection. Especially after 2020 when the rule for garbage sorting was implemented in Beijing, kitchen garbage was collected in specific time slots, and the others being collected with trucks going back and forth through *hutong* fifteen to thirty minutes a time. The cleaners, all of whom are migrant workers hired by the company, take responsibility for collection, and keeping grounds clean all the time (see Figure 8-9). Another group of employees take in charge of *hutong* traffic, keeping the one-way driving and legal parking by patrolling along *hutong*, and staying at *hutong* entrances which are installed with gatekeeping devices. Besides, some cleaners take in charge of public toilets that have been deliberated located along *hutong* to meet the locals' everyday needs. Similar to those in charge of *hutong* grounds, cleaners there work frequently to keep them clean thus satisfying for users. By the all-round public service delivery for free, government keeps the orderly look of *hutong* but does not need any efforts or payments from the residents.

In this mode, just by using the public facilities that have been well set, and following the rules that have been officially established (for example putting garbage at specific points, parking vehicles at assigned spots, etc.), residents can contribute to keeping the ordered *hutong* landscape. Moreover, they accept the value of keeping hygiene and apply it in their private domains. In their active practices of the value, dirtiness is transferred to the public domain where government will clean it up. For example, it is not rare to see garbage, especially kitchen garbage, thrown at corners, some of which contaminate ground and smell badly (see Figure 8-10). For residents, a straightforward reason to do this is that they cannot bear keeping it indoor or in courtyards since it may annoy families and neighbours until collection starts. It shows that keeping clean and order, as what the state has propagandised for decades, has become a custom and a measurement of individual morality among neighbours. Sometime it gets a cultural explanation to be a "*lao Beijinger*'s principle". Nonetheless, within the mode of environment maintenance in no need of residents' initiatives, the custom is limited in a private domain, with a general supportive but indifferent attitude towards conditions of the public space.

Figure 8-9, 8-10 *hutong* cleaners (in orange clothes in the above photo) and residential garbage

8.1.2.2. Volunteer guardians of the spatial order

In addition to the passive and indifferent acceptances of the public services, some residents actively take public roles of order maintenance. The role is realised in everyday

patrolling. Uniformed with red armbands and clothes with "volunteer" characters, residents become patrolling volunteers to secure the neighbourhood (see Figure 8-11). Mostly of the participants are the elders who have been retired. Their duties include showing up at the appointed time and place, stopping conflicts, and reporting accidents which they encounter. According to their comments on the position, their appearances *per se*, as uniformed local figures practicing patrolling for public safety, make the work meaningful, even if, as they thought, it did not make practical effects. Some volunteers teased their roles as "paper tigers", which might be effective at terrifying those who intended to make conflicts and accidents. Such deterrent force did not come from themselves as a group of elder people. Instead, it was from their red armbands which suggested presence of the powerful government. Based on the cognition, the volunteers take the duty as an opportunity by which ones can realise personal purposes. For instance, when they are on duty along the *hutong*, they also chat with neighbours and walk around. Their needs of social networking are met at the same time. Furthermore, volunteering is a way by which an ordinary resident, who does not own outstanding social capitals, keeps a reciprocal relation with the local office. They act as the government need. In turn, the government is a source of benefits for them to improve the household lives. For example, some volunteers told me about their purposes to take the role. An uncle did it to get the rewards – two sets of free uniforms per year and seasonal gifts from local offices. Another man said that he got chances to tell the officers about some household troubles and could get some help. Simply, some volunteers took the duty to have someone to chat with, since the elders could not find such interlocutors by just staying home.

The volunteers' mass participation also meets the local officers' needs to propagandise the effectivity of governance. The red armbanders' practices of patrolling are taken to symbolise the mass participation in governing the *shequ*, portraying a harmonious living status and tight social relationship between the offices and residents. By presenting such participatory scenes, the volunteers and local officers have reached a consensus in their respective pursuits of the aims. As a result, the embodied presentations of the red armbands that imply the social and spatial orders to obey contribute to implanting the disciplinary metaphors in *hutong* space. Moreover, such orders have been historically embedded in the local social lives in the long-term government-led movement to keep the public space sanitary, so they are not strange to the residents. They act as the patrolling volunteers based on their personal preferences for the orderly and peaceful living environment. Based on the consensus among the residents and the local officers, the disciplinary metaphors become a nature of *hutong*. Although various purposes are achieved in the practices of volunteer patrolling, the priority of order in *hutong* space has not been changed, and is still powerful to marginalise the others that offend the order and

peace.
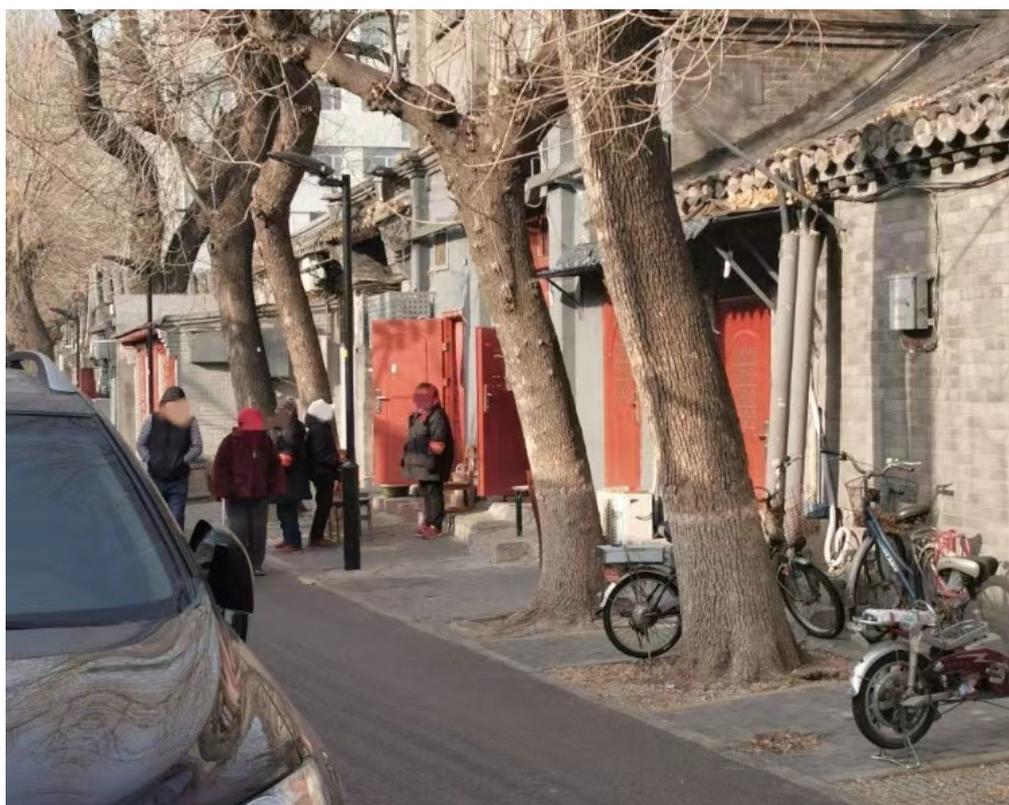
Figure 8-11 red armbanders on duty

In all, the *hutong* space is the venue where residents are disciplined to behave by following some rules and meanwhile practice resistances. Speaking in everyday life is the main way of resisting to behave as was expected. It is politically meaningful due to its reflexive feature and the potential of creating cohesion among neighbours. However, the politics of speaking have not effectively led changes to happen, since the residents have not taken the next steps after the practices of speaking. From my understanding, there are two main reasons. Firstly, there is no way between residents and the authorities to negotiate design schemes of the *hutong* space. Although residents, and some officers like Director Li, feel that the current condition is not satisfactory, they cannot find a way to improve it without authority endowed to participate in the decision-making process. Secondly, residents are disciplined by the discourse of publicness, which is embedded in the *hutong* space implying the spatial and temporal orders to obey. This embedment is realised in the historical urbanisation movements, which designated the *hutong* space as public and stipulated it to be orderly and clean. Having experienced the movements, residents have internalised the values, and agree with the projects of urban beautification. Consequently, residents hold the actually paradoxical views about the projects in their day-after-day uses of the *hutong* space. They depend on their civil identities, and perform

the reciprocal roles that are provided by the local officers to continue lives there, but the practices are hardly helpful to activate the political possibilities lurking there.

8.2. The marginalised everyday consuming practices and residents' corresponding tactics

In addition to *hutong* as the space to meet basic living needs, shopping venues are also important for the locals to buy daily essentials, thus are indispensable in local public life. However, the scenes of everyday shopping can also be placed under the conservation practitioners' aesthetic inspections, and are taken to exhibit the local culture. Using their professional skills, urban planners and designers modify the physical spaces where the consuming practices happen, in order to improve the exhibition of local culture as orderly and expressive. Frequently, the authorities rely on the aesthetic governmentality, as elaborated in Chapter 5, to set up the criteria to meet the visual needs for urban space. Such facelifting works always cause gentrification to happen in such historic areas, where the local businesses are replaced by those meeting the middle-class taste. As a result, the shops, restaurants, art studios, etc. will finally dominate in defining the locality, which is represented by consumable commodities (He & Wu, 2007; Kubeš & Kovács, 2020; Ning & Chang, 2021; Zukin, 1995). Here in the neighbourhood, the large-scale replacement has not happened, though the dominant pursuit for an aesthetic and ordered view has caused the urban beautification project (mentioned in Chapter 5.3), in which most of the local businesses were shut down, leaving *hutong* tranquil but boring. Meanwhile, the conservation project converts the everyday living scenes to be the objects on display under the appreciative gazes. Such way of reviving the local culture can only present the vitality temporarily, but is incapable of maintaining it in a sustainable mode. For residents, they act conservatively when facing the changes, though still practice the shopping culture in the more and more shrinking space. As a result, a paradox is produced in the mode of conservation. On the one hand, the vibrant living culture is incorporated into the heritage value narratives and gets represented, comprising a significant part of the historic landscape. On the other hand, the facelifting works reduce the room where the culture keeps the vitality.

The subchapter refers to the *revanchist city*, the concept put forward by Smith (1996) to describe the New York City in the 1990s, when the ruling class launched a vicious reaction against minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants, who were supposed as "public enemies" of the city (Slater, 2010). The revenge was made "in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security" (Smith, 1996, p.207), the values describing the ruling- and middle-class imaginations of the ideal city, which was thought to be disturbed by the

aforementioned social groups, that were supported by the social policies in the post-1960s period, and played active roles in forming the public life and culture. Such concept has been used in the context of urban China, discussing the topic of municipal exclusion of migrant workers (Huang et al., 2014, 2019) and its social effects that reproduce the stigma attached to the social group in citizens' perceptions and practices (Pow, 2017). The studies show how the exclusive discourse of *civilised city* effectively marginalise those who are assumed to fail to meet the established criteria. The municipal ordinances directly exclude them by defining and managing urban public space. Moreover, citizens reproduce the criteria that judge whether one is civilised in their perceptions and practices of everyday life. Such biopolitical effect explains why the authoritarian beatification movement in this case was not opposed by the residents. Since the ideal of urban images has been shared by the municipal government and the citizens, the values attached to the public spaces have been commonly approved, and become subjective criteria. By practices, residents get used to the ways of living that simultaneously cater to the values and their practical needs for everyday life. However, the ways cannot win them the rights of decision making in such projects.

8.2.1. Vanishing small businesses as social hubs

As Chapter 5 shows, everyday shopping scenes and old household items were once on display in the themed exhibitions that were held by the conservation practitioners. The local consuming culture is official recognised as an element of the heritage value, which makes the neighbourhood historically and culturally meaningful. Correspondingly, the spots where the culture is embodied are significant and deserve exploration. Such local businesses have experienced several upheavals during the past century, and currently can offer quite limit service to local consumers. For the case study site[59], before the 1949, shops and restaurants were run on main streets but rare along *hutong*. Vendors stepped in *hutong* and peddled goods with rhythmic shouts. Beyond the neighbourhood, there were city- level central and temporal markets where residents could get more choices. After 1949 when private business has been fully included into the state and collective ownership system, the form of shops and markets was continued, but the vendors disappeared. Instead, state-owed groceries were located along *hutong* and served particular groups of residents based on *hukou* location. Residents were allocated to specific shops and could exchange for daily necessities with stamps, as vouchers released by the state and distributed to citizens within a planned-economy structure. After the economic reforms when market was introduced to the socialist state, from the 1980s to the 1990s when the

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[59] The historical changes of local shopping environment are transcribed from several local residents' memories about the past everyday life as they spoke to me.

distribution system was gradually abandoned with stamps successively out of use, *hutong* shops was gradually replaced by private-owned ones, which became various and not limited to selling daily necessities. This type of business got prosperous after the 2000s, with many shops opened to serve city-wide guests in addition to the locals. At that time, there were various types of shops and restaurants opened along *hutong*, contributing to the vibrant commercial culture there. Although some of the businesses did not serve the residents, but consumers from the city or even from farther places, the overall commercial prosperity brought convenience to the local residents, who also developed frequent communications during the practices. The rising market vitality, with the higher social mobility as a result of the loosened *hukou* restrictions, transformed the public housing there to be shops and restaurants, by which both the leasers and the renters could gain profits. This is also a way that Chinese citizens adjust to, meanwhile contribute to the rapid economic growth.

However, using the houses as shops also brought potential safety hazards, as well as noises and messy looks to such type of densely populated neighbourhoods. In 2017, the prosperous commercial environment was wiped out by the citywide movement to clear illegal constructions clearance (see Chapter 5.3). The prosperity that is constituted by the aggregation of small businesses, especially restaurants along *hutong*, was regarded as discordant with the historic landscape, and were mostly removed in the name of correcting illegal constructions. Afterwards, a neighbouring shopping circumstance was totally changed, with only a small part of shops surviving with original looks, and new central markets and supermarkets opening outside *hutong* on streets beside (an example that can illustrate how influential it was has been given in Chapter 5.3, with only 11 out of 73 shops surviving after the movement). This new commercial pattern led to changes in residents' shopping pattern. Everyday shopping becomes a laboursome and one-time practice for which they need to go out of *hutong* to the streets, and purchase what they need in one journey.

This everyday shopping pattern is different from that before the clearance movement, with social hubs being reduced for the locals to encounter with each other. According to memory fragments from several residents about such *hutong* shopping experiences, goods, including steamed buns, handmade noodles, alcohol (including bottled beer in bulk and liquor in retail), cigarettes, and stationery as well as ice cream in bulk for children, are what they bought from small shops that once were opened by occupying residential houses. In addition, there have been spots for purchasing barrelled drinking water, exchanging gas tanks (for cooking), and recycling wastes, while currently all have been cleaned out. Such neighbourhood small businesses where everyday trivial routines are practiced, are vibrant in enacting multiple social-spatial relations and assemblages in the city (Watson, 2015).

240

De Certeau et al. (1998) attribute such traditional neighbourhood business multiplicity to social porousness in which relations between patrons and shop runners are more than commodity supply and demand, with personal free choices with other social reasons (p. 73). However, imputations were made on them within the modern urban criteria pursuing for order and safety, and legitimated the power to close them down. As a result, opportunities of socialising that can happen in the small stores are reduced in the urban beautification movements.

Facing this cleaned-up space, local business runners try to survive by some tactical practices. Especially for those judged as illegal, although storefronts have been erased, businesses were restarted after some time and run without signs. According to my limited observation, in 2019 at least four stores that have been forced to close reopened secretly, including one Cantonese restaurant serving guests outside the neighbourhood, one snack bar that was locally known, and two tailor's shops. For the former two businesses in need of guests, both the hosts had to reopen the restaurants but keep running them in big uncertainties about future. For the tailor's shops, since the runners' main sources of income were clothing stores outside the neighbourhood, they can survive without local residents' patronage. Currently they use their houses as tailoring and laundry workshops without signboards hung out. In the following paragraphs I would like to explain such practices by two figures, the snack bar runner and one of the tailors. Both of them have been living there for decades and have developed social relations with neighbours. In other words, they have been practicing the process of settling down by developing local social networks, thus to become "residents" to some extent. However, without *hukou* and housing ownership, both were still regarded as migrants illegally running businesses, with their storefronts replaced by brick walls and red security doors in the 2017 clearance. In this way, publicness in the name of safety and order is in fact eliminating public life that is vibrantly practiced in such venues available of encounters and communications.

The snack bar runner, with her family working together, had run this small bar selling halal foods for over 30 years. Without seeing a sign outside the house when passing by, I did not recognise it until I was led there by a Muslim lady who has been working for a local professional team. During my first visit in a morning, the restaurant impressed me with its outdated indoor decoration, cheap local foods, and bustling status with guests coming and going. After several visits, the owner, a woman in the 50s, has remembered my regular choice and asked me if I was to order the same set. Guests there were also different groups in the morning and at noon, respectively local residents and migrant workers. Once I made an appointment with her for an interview, she told me that she was not local but used her relative's house to run the bar. Her hometown is in the rural part of Hebei Province surrounding Beijing, but has been doing business there for more than 30

years. Before being settled there, they made multiple moves due to urban redevelopment and policy changes. Based on the experiences and the current severe policy for small businesses, she still had a sense of insecurity:

> In the early 1990s it was easy to get a license since the state encouraged individuals to feed themselves after the wave of laid-offs. I came here and grabbed the opportunity to run the bar. However small business becomes harder and harder these years. Earlier it was housing demolition forcing us to move. Now it is the threats of being shut down.

Worrying about forced closure in the future, she said she was considering to apply for a franchise by which municipality-released senior cards could be used there, thus to get a protection in case of another wave of clearance.

The snack bar kept for over 30 years due to its local food and low price, but at the cost of meagre profits and hard works. Based on the long-term operation, the aunt has developed a local social network in encounters with frequent diners. In addition to the difficulty of getting licenced, the aunt complaint several times about the rising ingredient price, making it harder to gain profits. Despite of it, she still kept the menu price as low as possible: "I cannot make it too expensive. Comers are neighbours. They are ordinary people… Those migrants coming at noon are also for the low price." What's more, food serving makes it a work consuming both time and labour. Every day they started preparation in the very early morning (4am-5am) and closed at around 7pm, with the same schedule continued day by day. The woman said that the busy routine did not allow her to have other leisure time, but she could know about news from talking with guests, most of whom are frequenters. Some locals whom I met there said that the snack bar was the only halal restaurant in the neighbourhood offering traditional breakfast foods that they got used to and could afford. Therefore, it is said that when the clearance started, a local Muslim group appealed to the subdistrict office to save the bar, and was responded with an acquiescence of opening although without a sign. However, this hub for communication and affordable foods was closed when I came back to the neighbourhood in 2019, and the reason was said to be unaffordability of the cost of running.

The other one dwelling there for 27 years is my neighbour, Aunt Qian, a woman doing tailoring at home with equipment set domestically. Living with her husband who works at a luxury clothing shop, she works at home without a shop front thus does not worry about possible closures brought by urban beautification movements. This possibility of running business without a signboard comes from a stable home income by accepting commercial orders that are introduced by her husband, instead of relying on personal orders from residents. Actually, Qian told me that currently they seldom have

orders from neighbours, since few people still need tailoring:

> Now people can buy clothes easily with quite low price. It's also not profitable to accept personal orders. I just receive those acquaintances' if they come to my door. Most of the duties come from my husband's social relationship. We are all migrants doing business in Beijing!

Although speaking in a nonlocal accent and frequently self-joking as a migrant, Qian got locally connected by running a tailor's shop facing *hutong* for several years before 2017. According to her words, urban redevelopments drove her to make moves for several times, and the final move into the courtyard was made in 2017 when the tailor's shop facing *hutong* was shut down during the movement and was replaced by a storage for that "electricity tiger". Afterwards she started the current working status by using her home as a workshop and working without a signboard. However, although no longer standing along the *hutong*, she still had local friends coming to her with familiarity of the location. During their indoor chats, Qian is treated the same as the locals by neighbours who use the very local way to call her by surname, have chats with topics that are common among acquaintances, and sometimes do borrowing and lending in between. She also keeps connected with a professional team working in a culture venue after they acquainted each other in repeated passing by: "I was working in that house along the *hutong* for many years. After those young people came, I could see them every day. Some of my furnishings are from them, like this big fish tank." When I asked her why she still lived in this narrow and dark house since her family should be able to afford a higher rent, she said: "I have been used to living in such single-storey house. High-rise apartment may offer better living quality, but I will be left alone during the daytime without someone to chat." Currently she does not have plan to be back hometown although her daughter's family has settled down in a local city: "we can earn more money in Beijing and I don't need to follow factory working hours in my hometown. There's no chance to run business like we do here."

Experiences from the two migrants show a process of getting embedded in the neighbourhood by doing business for a long term. With their stores as tiny public venues scattered along *hutong*, they, as migrants who have become acquainted by neighbours, are important components of local public life by providing spaces for intersubjective communication during daily routines. Besides, the process of settling down, with social bonds developed with neighbours is not that much different from residents' process of homemaking in neighbouring practices, as discussed in Chapter 7. Both migrants develop the sense of place in everyday interactions with neighbours, and the comparisons with the others that they do not have sense of belonging to. For the snack bar host, the sense of

home is kept in the long-term practice of running the restaurant, and interacting with diners. Keeping low price and the traditional way of cooking are the means by which she differentiates from the other restaurants and self-identifies as local. Moreover, for Aunt Qian, the sense of home is established during the several moves that were forced by urban renewal projects. Despite the mobile experience, Qian is still able to keep the household business there and meanwhile develops social relations with neighbours and business partners. Similar to the old city neighbours, the sense of home is kept in the recognition of the courtyard dwelling mode that is thought to bring neighbours close.

However, with them identified as "floating population" based on the remote places of *hukou* registration and the livelihoods depending on self-sustained small businesses, they are still classified as another group, which is distinct from the locals as residents there, with potential risks to harm city landscape and security, thus to be stigmatised with uncivilization and immorality. This exclusion of migrants with negative names attached to, as studies on urban revanchism in China describe to eradicate undesirable groups from urban public space (Huang et al., 2014; Xue & Huang, 2015), also applies to this *lao Beijing* neighbourhood. Here it is conducted with a strong discourse for historic landscape restoration, with a sharper contrast created between the locals and the migrants, between urban practices allowed in "the capital city functional core area" and the others being excluded[60]. In the contemporary context in which Beijing has been planned as a window to show the state image, migrants as subsequently settled dwellers who could act as facilitators for local public life, were mostly excluded in the name of heritage conservation, with a long-term negative discourse still effective at excluding them from the mainstream image of the capital city.

From residents' perspective, the bothers brought by the small businesses to their everyday life fit into this negative impression of migrants and corresponding businesses, leading to hostilities towards the group thus accompanying passive acceptances of spatial clearance. During talks with mentions of *hutong* shops and the clearance movement, residents prioritised the public order maintenance to relative impacts on their lives. As Aunt Song comments:

> Yes, the movement made the environment clear and quiet again, but a bit too

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[60] In *Regulatory Detailed Planning for the Functional Core Area of the Capital City (Block Level) (2018-2035)*首都功能核心区控制性详细规划(街区层面)(2018 年—2035 年), the functional core area, including Dongcheng and Xicheng District that are a bit bigger than the old city, are defined to be "carriers of the national political, cultural and international communication centre, the important part under National Historic and Cultural City conservation, the important window to exhibit image of the state capital city".

much. Once I could buy steamed buns by just stepping out of the courtyard. It was just at my left hand. Currently it gets closed and there's no place to get such ready food immediately!

This agreement on the official undifferentiated clearance was facilitated by a common negative impression on small businesses, especially restaurants to be sensed as dirty, messy and disturbing. Pow (2017) explains the role of senses in visceral politics of urban exclusion. Senses could become class-based criteria by which others are judged, and aligned with the state-led biopolitics defining problematic migrant groups and their bodies thus to become a powerful discourse justifying urban exclusion. In this neighbourhood, residents' dislike to small businesses accords with a mainstream opinion to depict them as potential safety hazards and disturbance to local life[61]. As a result, personal senses of such dense retailing environment can be applied to justify the general clearance by powerful intervention, which is regarded to help retrieve safety and tidiness, regardless of the abuse of power that caused elimination of more than what had brought dirty and messy.

In general, the commercial prosperity is a result of the economic reforms, after which the socialist restrictions on capital and population mobility were quickly lifted. However, the consequence of the decades of socio-economic development is stigmatised by the present municipal governing policy as a potential safety hazard, since they do not meet the present criteria of public safety. As a revanchist result, most of the small businesses were wiped out rapidly by a municipal movement. Specifically for the old city, it gets further legitimised by conspiring with the AHD, as an effective measure to restore the historic landscape. The values embedded in the implementations, including the emphases on public safety and sanitation, as well as maintaining the historic landscape, has been internalised as personal values when thinking about public space there. As a result, although the movement wiped out most of the businesses there and made shopping experiences worse, usually residents support it because it effectively realised the ideal public space. The revanchist practices there have achieved to overturn the developing logic from the last period, as well as most of the traces of vital commercial activities. For residents including the migrant business runners, they accept the values and use tactical ways to continue the commercial culture there by practice.

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[61] In a piece of report, restaurants were described as incompatible with the *hutong* landscape and brought potential risks to residential life. See: Beijing Dongcheng 北京东城 (2017) *Lishi Hutong: Previous restaurants have been closed down to restore the hutong landscape 礼士胡同： 昔日美食街全面封堵，还原胡同风貌*

8.2.2.   Wet markets to meet fundamental everyday demands

In addition to *hutong* stores that have been closed down for a historic landscape, wet market (*caishichang* 菜市场) is another target under renovation for ordered and cultural expressions. As a type of shopping venue converging vendors to sell various types of goods, especially fresh foods, with stalls organized in rows, wet markets are the most ordinary destinations for residents to get groceries every day. Appearing earlier than supermarkets in urban China, wet markets are still significant destinations for everyday essentials, with features like fresh unpacked foods, warm attitudes from vendors, high walking accessibility, and competitive food price, etc. to keep attractive to Chinese citizens who desire everyday fresh food in a relatively low price (Si et al., 2019; Q. F. Zhang & Pan, 2013; Zhong et al., 2020). This commercial form, which has been a shopping destination since the planned-economy period, has been a part of local ordinary life for a long time. After the reforms, with entrepreneurial transitions of local state, both private capitals and state-owned companies are allowed in the food retailing sector and pursue profits, resulting in fluctuations of food price, and possibilities of price differentiations among markets (Si et al., 2019). Therefore, today wet markets, although keeping the same retailing pattern with fresh foods laid out for selection, could vary and become destinations for consumers to compare and head to.

In this neighbourhood, wet markets are still main destinations for everyday food shopping, although are not that much "wet" with government supervisions on sanitation. Besides, due to the need for a tidy look of the old city landscape, neither open-space temporary markets nor street vendors are allowed there. As a result, venues for everyday walkable shopping are limited, including 2 wet markets and 2 supermarkets to meet residents' everyday demands for groceries. Despite of the limited destinations under the commercial restriction that is exclusive there to preserve a historic landscape, variation among markets, as what commonly develops in urban context, also applies to the local ones, as different destinations for consumers to choose based on their preferences. Comparing to markets in the past that were constructed following a municipal plan, currently they are running in different sizes and opening times, and are operated by different commercial properties owners. In addition, unlike the past when stamps were needed to purchase commodities from salespeople who were "in the system" and were allocated with specific types of commodities to sell, currently markets were assemblages of vendors, who are mostly migrants taking seats by paying rentals. Hence, an updated everyday shopping circumstance has been developed there, with residents getting used to the role as consumers who could choose destinations based on personal preferences.

With diversity emerging in the shopping circumstance, consumers are able to make

selections and comparisons between goods from different destinations, thus spend extra time on multi-destination everyday shopping, and contribute to a busy and vibrant shopping scene. Taking fresh food as a necessary everyday expenditure, residents perform pragmatism during shopping, trying to get groceries with low price but good quality. In the morning when foods are just put on shelves, it is common to see many consumers, with their hand buggies or shopping bags, heading to markets in which bustling and crowded shopping scenes are always on show. It is not simply one-stop shopping. Instead, some shoppers may have bags half filled, stepping out of one market and heading for another. Several acquaintances told me that such multiple-stop practices are due to price differences among markets, and in the cost of consuming more time which is no more important for retired residents, they could try reducing expenditure as much as possible. Information about promotion or price reduction is shared among acquainted neighbours during encounters, especially during commuting along *hutong*, and is taken to orient shopping plans for the following journey. As a result, the plurality of market journeys contributes to the crowed shopping scenes, as what are appreciated as vibrant in aesthetic gazes.

In addition, practices of selection and bargain also make market a bustling venue. Despite of the frequent shopping practices, residents rarely develop personal connections with vendors, but keep pragmatic to make choices based on price and quality of foods depending on their eyes and fingers. During my several visits to local markets, I did not observe greetings as acquaintances between guests and vendors. Instead, there were some consumers making purchases after wandering around and making comparisons between different vendors. In the purchasing process, some need to pick pieces by their hands in order to get those in best qualities. I also asked several interviewees whether they knew some vendors and did shopping based on personal contacts, while none of them have considered about it. For example, one uncle on the spot said that he had positions of several vendors in mind due to the stable price and quality, but he would look around first to find something good for the day, then go to the vendors to purchase the rest of what he needs. On the side from vendors, since they understand this mystique of shopping, they also compete for attentions from shoppers by some tricks, like yelling and intentional greeting passing-by shoppers. As a result, the simultaneous stay of many residents in a bustling market space forms a busy and vibrant scene, which recurs day by day.

Interestingly, this scene based on the mass basic demands was valued by the planning team as a representation of the local mundane beauty, with a local market involved into the conservation range and undergoing renovation. In 2017, this project was decided by the planning team after surveying relative stakeholders, and to renovate the *Xiaojie Market*, which occupied a factory built up in the 1950s "with thirteen-year opening history". As

officially described, the market got "reborn" with dilapidating and messy environment upgraded to be clean and bright, and vendors placed in order for a general tidy and pleasant look (Committee of Taking root and germinating: Practice of responsible planner in Dongsinan Historic and Cultural Conservation Area Beijing, 2020). In addition to the improvements on physical environment, the planners tried to make it culturally meaningful by holding series of workshops and exhibitions, inviting vendors to tell their stories and decorate the market by their hands. In these depictions, the market was portrayed to be a community hub "full of human sentiments" with individuals' relative stories and thriving shopping scenes on display as evidence. Based on the practices, this renovation project is taken as a successful conservation practice, as an exemplar well presenting an old neighbourhood with vibrant everyday life ongoing, inheriting the local ordinary history, and representing it culturally as consumable and experienceable among the masses.

However, such spatial renovation made the market no more popular among residents due to rising food price. During my fieldwork, in the morning peak hours, there were few consumers in *Xiaojie Market* with the venue quiet and cheerless. An obvious contrast is another one, the *Dafangjia Market* just across the road and located in a building basement with flows of consumers entering. Inside it, it was always busy with consumers walking around in crowds, and vendors' loud hawking shouts infusing into ears (see Figure 8-12, 8-13). According to my neighbours, Aunt Shao, Aunt Song, and several consumers at an entrance of the *Dafangjia Market*, the current decline of *Xiaojie Market* was due to increased grocery prices caused by an increase of stall rental after renovation. Although *Xiaojie* was their first choice in the past, after the renovation when *Dafangjia* opened almost at the same time, they gradually switched their destination simply due to its relatively low price.

This destination change demonstrates the frugal consuming style as mentioned above among residents, and senses of uncertainty leading them to persist thrift. According to the consumers, the thrift was formed in decades of "bitter lives" before the economic reforms when limited substances were distributed to the masses following a state plan. This habit has been kept until now with residents' anxieties for future expenditures. According to some of them, in addition to bitter lives before the economic reforms as what they have been used to, currently the monthly received pension[62] is not a comfort for them with

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[62] According to the several residents who told me the amount, their monthly incomes ranged from 3,000-7,000, which are lower than the average income in Beijing (around 8,500 per month according to official data). However, potential big bills might reach several hundred thousand and are unaffordable to them.

needs to save money in case of possible big expenditures, like medical bills, or financial aids to next generations. As they always repeated, "everything needs money today". This view is taken by residents to distinguish the current social life from the past when it was not necessary to count the household properties and make financial plans for sustainable living. Facing the present society when money becomes necessary, they try to adapt to it by keeping the habit of shopping frugally. Cheap but multiple choices offered by the wet markets are what they rely on to continue the habit. Therefore, when the *Xiaojie Market* was renovated to be a culturally meaningful but expensive shopping place, frugal consumers changed their destination. The change made *Xiaojie Market* lose the bustling shopping scene, which was appreciated by the planners of the renovation project.

Figure 8-12 a morning scene in *Xiaojie Market* (above)

In addition to this persistence of thrift, being contextualised in this neighbourhood where memory arousing is frequently conducted with conservation interventions, residents could recall the past shopping experiences to defend for their place-based identities when facing the present shopping spaces that have been renovated. Especially, there were two city-level markets nearby, which have been popular shopping destinations in the past, frequently appearing in residents' recalls of the previous shopping experiences. Respectively, *Wangfujing* was upgraded to be a metropolitan tourist shopping destination, and *Longfusi* had been transformed to be office buildings after a big fire in 1993, and recently was reconstructed to be a cultural industry block. According to residents, before the changes, those two markets were not only destinations to purchase the essentials, but also places to relax with various commodities provided in proper price, thus are ideal destinations for leisure walks and purchases. On the contrary, the new businesses introduced after renovation are felt to be strange and expensive, thus no more places for them. As Aunt Song recalled her shopping experiences in the past:

> During the planned economy, in addition to the assigned grocery stores, we residents could go to *Wangfujing* and *Longfusi* to shop with money. They were sites in need by citizens before, while currently they are inaccessible expansive sites! I dare not enter when I saw the new gate! In the past, they were more interesting than supermarkets. Retail stores were paralleled along the street and you could spend a half day there, and could get anything you need. Nowadays there is nowhere to wander around. Just supermarkets for grocery, but that's for everyday necessities!

Here the past enjoyable experience was taken as a contrast to the present everyday routine, which is repetitive and is limited within the several choices. However, due to the commercial upgrades that have been made to the two destinations, currently they are regarded as strange spaces not for them. A similar feeling was share by Aunt Shao when she commented on the newly opened *Longfusi* Art Centre:

> I've been to the renovated *Longfusi* Market once. Generally speaking, it is a good step forward, but it is still distant from citizens' expectations. It imitates 798 (an art district in Beijing occupying a renovated industrial area), while the content matches those highbrows. Something popular among our mundane citizens might no longer appear here since those new Beijingers could not accept it.

From Shao's perspective, such art consumption is far from them as mundane citizens, who are clearly distinguished from "new Beijingers" that could fit the new era. For themselves as well as goods that have been popular and usual in everyday life, the

contemporary society is not so tolerant to continue providing the specific commercial environment.

In addition to the adaptive shifts and recalls, online shopping platform that has been popular among the Chinese masses becomes a new shopping venue for some residents to have affordable goods, with new communication opportunities created between friends. Among various platforms, *Pinduoduo* (拼多多), a smartphone shopping Application (APP) featured by super low price, has become popular among residents. Their comments on *Pinduoduo* are generally positive due to the low price, bearable commodity quality, and delivery service that reduces commuting through *hutong*. In addition, information sharing and APP game participation are new communication ways for *hutong* acquaintances to grab petty profits, and further expand the use of it among residents. In several times during my home visits, interviewees showed their acquisitions from *pinduoduo* with excitements. Some are quite attracted by built-in games designed to encourage sharing between friends and getting rewards, and were even distracted by push messages during talks. According to them, such invitation by games was a significant way of joining, while afterwards it became accepted and a shopping alternative. Besides, goods from *Pinduoduo* were not regarded to be of good quality, but still "not bad" especially with pleasant low prices. Small installed games which are designed for goods promotion also got complaint as "new pitfalls" tempting them to spend extra money, but they still kept to be online consumers with alerts set in heart. This supplementary online channel also contributes to residents' survival in the shrinking shopping environment by keeping paying little but still keeping pleasure.

Generally speaking, comparing to the small businesses sprang up after the economic reforms, wet market is a form of grocery supply that has existed continuously since the early socialist period, meeting residents' basic needs of living. In the post-reform period, groceries in wet markets keep affordable so they are continuously attractive to citizens. The bustling shopping scenes, which are appreciated by the planners as a manifestation of the local culture, emerge from the everyday consuming practices and the frugal consuming culture. However, the renovation project of *Xiaojie Market* interrupted the relationship by causing the prices to rise. Consequently, residents turned to other destinations in order to keep their frugal shopping habits, but the change led the bustling scene to disappear. This is unexpected by the planners who still keep the material-centric conservation mode. Here the revanchist renovation project cleaned up all the messy traces, but meanwhile set up thresholds of consumption for the public space, keeping many frugal residents out and resulting in reduced number of customers. Such planners' intra-group aesthetic desires for the consuming environment influence the form of wet markets, as a type of commercial

public space that is supposed to be clean, orderly, and culturally expressive. As Atkinson asks: "if we continue to produce policy responses to these symptoms of deeper problems, how can these responses be sustainable in the longer term?" (Pollard, 1998, cited by Atkinson, 2003, p.1841)? The problems in the planners' eyes, in this case the messy and dirty shopping environment, should get explored and the outcomes should become the pre-condition of drawing the renovation plan, instead of the object to be simply wiped out.

8.3.   Realising multiple subjectivities in the cultural venues

In addition to linear spaces in *hutong*, and shopping venues as somewhere local public life is marginalised by powerful space modifications, cultural venues, as public spaces newly marked off with elaborate designs, introduce a new type of public life that is culturally themed to fit the heritage designation. Such new modules, mostly collective activities themed at traditional culture, are organised to take place in the cultural venues hence to deliver a scene of harmonious coexistence between the old buildings and residents. However, in most conditions, only a part of residents based on their social connections with local offices could have opportunities to participate in the ordered activities, and become a component of official representation of local culture that has been highly visible to the public with a widely use of social media. In such partial display of life in the old city, residents are presented to be in good *suzhi*, fitting the ideal image of their living environment that has been interpreted as historically and culturally meaningful. This echoes to discussions in Chapter 3.3 about the relation between public space and moral social body making in the two *civilisation projects* of the state: since public spaces are disciplinary in making civilised individuals, improvements on the material living environment could help elevate personal *suzhi* level. Achievements of the projects can be illustrated in presentation of proper relations between the built environment and people's spatial practices. By this token, the local practice of heritage discourse can be bio-politically effective, but can lead different individuals more than the high-*suzhi* figures as always on display.

Specifically, the cultural venues as already advanced material cultural resources with elaborate designs and reads, are taken to be venues of cultivation with themed activities organised for participating residents. By repetitively performing specific public roles, residents are expected to become moral and civilised figures match the old city image, by which a picturesque dwelling status as imagined for the old city could be realised. However, based on the social connections that have been weaken with technological interventions, high-*suzhi* individuals, as discernible in public venues, can be performed by bodily attendances and supportive appearances. Therefore, multiple individualities are possible to realise in personal performances of public roles, despite of the seemingly all-

round discipline for ideal individuals as imagined to match the fabulous heritage discourse.

8.3.1. Getting connected via Wechat: exclusive roles and indirect participations

In activities held in the neighbourhood, popular uses of smartphone communication technology make organisation in a regular and homogenous mode, with participatory opportunities limited to different social groups. Led by *the Development Plan for Urban and Rural Shequ Service System (2016-2020)* in which communication technology is encouraged to apply at the most basic level of government to refine local governing practices, the local offices prioritise smartphone as the main tool to connect with residents and inform them of forthcoming activities. Along with popularisation of smartphones among Chinese citizens, contacting via Wechat, a dominant APP in the field of smartphone communication, is taken as the main way to organise activities conveniently and efficiently. Instead of making invitations offline in public space, relying on Wechat and built-in functions, activity organisers make invitations to and keep in touch with residents via personal and group contacts on smartphone. In some existing studies, this upstart in social networking actually has created a new public venue where social relations and groups could be created online (Peng, 2017, 2019), while it may lead to disembedment from realistic social relations, and create barriers both between online social groups, and between online and offline worlds (Fu & Cook, 2020). Similar obstructions have also been created in local activity participation, with Wechat contact groups under official management. The situation leaves little room for participants to get connected beyond the virtual boundary and develop creativity.

In local administration, Wechat group function is commonly used with communication groups established based on activities, in which residents are invited by organisers to participate in specified activities. For officers, invitations to residents could be made online without in-person visits, with communications and supervisions able to deliver in Wechat groups. For residents, one could be added into several groups, playing different roles in corresponding groups, which are separately established from each other. As a result, with assistance of Wechat in which activity participation is simplified to be registration links exclusively to group members, connection between residents and activity organisers is transformed as repetitively practices of informing and accepting, following with residents' performance as participants in themed groups.

However, this routinised mode may lead to deviation from the cultural themes in one's repetitive practices of embodied participation *per se*. Aunt Zong, an elder lady in her 70s, is one of the familiar faces getting invited to attend the organised activities, and has her everyday life timetable surrounding the practice of attending. In addition to being frequently invited to museum activities that are open to limited numbers of residents, she

also participates in those organised by her registered *shequ* and the subdistrict office. Every time when I encountered her in the *hutong*, even if she was hanging around, standing to enjoy sunshine or walking her dog, after several sentences of greeting, she would mention forthcoming activities which she needed to attend with specific time remembered. Once I asked her about attending frequency, she said:

> It depends on *jiedao* and *juweihui*. There are some busy periods during a year
> and you always need to go! Like today, in the afternoon there are two activities
> asking me to attend, but I can just make the visit to one of them.

With the frequency, activity attending has been a routine for her to practice what has been well scheduled by organisers. Being used to this routine, Zong's participation was not interest-oriented but passive receptions of the activities, with a general supportive attitude towards culturally themed ones since they "could present the beauty of *hutong* to the outsiders". On the other side for herself, she would like to be a supporter secondary to organisers and perform what is in need, but is reluctant to offer suggestions. Once the planning team invited her to a small meeting about forthcoming works, and would like to get some advice and feedbacks from her as a frequenter to activities. At that time, she showed an obvious hesitation and expressed unwillingness to attend, since she "did not know much about the museum affairs with visits made just once a week". In fact, this visiting frequency has been relatively high when comparing to other residents – at least some never visit the museum. However, for Zong, such frequent visits have not made herself a participant familiar with the museum affairs and to put forward suggestions. The practice of activity attending is kind of formalism, as attendees do not develop relevant knowledge that can help personal participation in making suggestions and decisions.

This supportive participation with rough overviews of given themes in one's swift moves between activities, shows how such participatory scenes are achieved. For other familiar faces in *shequ* activities like Aunt Zong, the embodied practice of participating the activities has become a routine whatever the topics are. It is the way by which Zong keeps connected with the local officers and plays her supportive role in this social network. In this mode of participation that is driven by the social intention external to the activities, active practices, such as making discussions, reflections, suggestions, etc., are not developed. Participants can perform participation while just leave ambiguous comment on the representation of local culture as "good", which is not effective at defining the local culture. The routine practices of participation, which illustrate one's priority over those who do not have access to the limited opportunities, are continued and contribute to reinforcing the present social structures in which reciprocal relations are kept between the local offices and the limited participators. The activities are appropriated as contexts

where the practices are repeated, and the conservation project, as well as relevant cultural themes as topics of the activities, is subordinated. Here Wechat is effective at making the process of reproducing the social relations more exclusively and fluently. The one-to-one and group communications exclude the others from getting messages about the opportunities of participation. In addition, the online operations make the practices of informing convenient for the officers, who only need to type notifications and press the sending button, instead of completing the works offline in several procedures. However, such swift way of completing the informing works restricts the communication in the cyberspace without any messages revealed to the others outside the social groups connected via the Wechat. Boundaries of the participant groups become more effectively at excluding outsiders from getting informed of the activities, and contribute to homogenising and routinising the intentions and practices of participation.

In addition to the repetitive practices of participation in which meanings of the given themes are no more important, a sense of getting connected can be realised by online reading without in-person visits to the cultural venues. Here I met two residents, Aunt Tang and Aunt Jiao as neighbours, whose courtyard was selected in the renovation project in 2015 and has been under construction for several months. According to them, they have paid efforts to help accomplish the project by taking in charge of organising the courtyard neighbours to participate in panel discussions over the construction scheme, collecting their suggestions and exchanging with the design team, and negotiating with the construction team during implementation. According to Jiao, this experience made her more initiative to help maintain public spaces clean and beautiful, with her interests inspired for green design which has been not realised in the courtyard. After the construction, they both said that they reduced such participations due to personal issues. For Tang, her leisure time was occupied by caring works on her husband sick in bed. And for Jiao, after the construction for some time she had alternative accommodation, thus just live in the courtyard house temporarily in summer. With few chances of in-person visits, they mentioned that they were updated with happenings in the museum by reading updates via Wechat, in which posts published by the museum official account are accessible by subscribing to the account, staying in Wechat groups, or from museum staff whom they keep in touch with. These updates, as posts that were organised with both words and photos, were satisfactory for them as "good and fast readers to learn about the community culture", and "fine actions to promote the neighbourhood to the public". As Jiao said, although she no more had free time to visit the museum, neither to attend *shequ* routine activities, she could get updates by phone, which is also an inspiration for her to discover beauties in everyday life. In this way, for both individuals, a connection with the dominant cultural discourse has been established during the earlier participation, and could be

continued with technological interventions in a way of eye consumption instead of in-person participation. As Jiao applies an aesthetic gaze in everyday gardening, the virtual connection has resulted in practical effects, with the participant practicing initiatives for making the ordinary beautiful.

In a nutshell, in the local conservation practices where social connections are expected to build up between residents and the practitioners, smartphone social platform is applied as a medium via which the connections are established efficiently and conveniently. With the technological intervention, connections are made as light touches, by which participants could perform temporary public roles and switch freely from one activity to another, or satisfy with a sense of getting connected by reading and communicating online. Influence of the popularity of the technology is double-edged. On the one hand, it contributes to making the opportunities of participation exclusive to a specific group of people, and homogenising the intentions and practices of participation. On the other hand, by exhibiting the local culture online, it expands ways of accessing, cognising, and enjoying the culture. Furthermore, since the offline participants just need to show up to support the community activities, they have room to fulfil personal aims in such practices. As a result, it further allows formation of diverse subjectivities in the practices of participation.

8.3.2. On-site participation: realisation of multiple subjectivities

For the participants who attend the activities supportively, the activities are taken as venues where their existing social identities are practiced and consolidated. As some studies argue, special events, like urban festivals, are stimulations catering to modern urban citizens' pursuits for meanings and memories that help to get re-embedded in specific places (Chang & Huang, 2005; Oakes, 2006a; Scarles, 2009). In this study, the venues, as newly designated as culturally meaningful, are also the places where events are held with people to attend and gather for enjoyment. Such type of events, usually following traditional festival calendar, is a component of the conservation project, and an excellent chance to exhibit achievements of the conservation project and transmit the authorised cultural narratives to the public, which is, however, limited to the participants who have access to the limited tickets of entry. However, for many residents, multiple purposes more than enjoying the given culture are to be reached by participation. For example, gathering in a delicately decorated historic space is taken as an opportunity for social networking. In this condition, greeting and chatting with acquaintances about everyday trivialities can be more attractive than appreciating culture. For example, during the 2019 Lantern Festival that was held inside the museum, when the event was started at 10am with a traditional acrobatic show on display, many still kept chatting without sparing

any attentions to the show. As a participant recalled the experience of participation afterwards:

> I was given a ticket from the Residential Committee, so I just attended. The speak at the beginning, with the following performance, was quite boring. I was chatting with someone so I didn't notice what they said.

For him, the participation was used as an opportunity for communicating with friends instead of enjoying a given cultural program. In addition to this purpose, many valued free gifts that are officially provided more than the program. When the traditional performance was ongoing, a long queue has already formed, with those who would like to claim the gifts as soon as possible, in order to finish being there and start their following works, like to "go back home for cooking lunch". Starting in advance to collect riddle notes[63] which have been prepared for an award-winning quiz in a traditional form, people in the queue paid few attentions to the ongoing performance (see Figure 8-14). In addition, this gathering was also taken as an opportunity by local officers to keep relations with residents. For instance, some officers helped residents to "cheat" by telling then the answers to the riddles, to help residents fetch the gifts and satisfy them. Chats also happen in between with several officers busy with greeting. In this way, local officers could strengthen the already established social bonds with those whom they prefer as participants, hence the reciprocal public practices of *shequ* participation could continue. As a result, with the opportunities of entry distributed to hands, residents just need to be on the scene as reciprocity with local offices, but are free to practice based on their own preferences and time plan.

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[63] It is a tradition to have quiz games during the Lantern Festival. Usually at night, the riddle notes are set together with some delicately ornamented lanterns, waiting for audiences to solve them and enjoy the sight.

Figure 8-14 different roles played by residents during a traditional festival: registered visitors queuing for gifts, copyright owned by the Shijia Hutong Museum

In addition to the claim of petty profits as rewards to one's bodily participation, other personal aims are expected to be realised. For example, Aunt Chang and her husband, Uncle Feng, a warmly-hearted couple as mentioned in Chapter 6, commented on the profit-driven behaviour with disdain:

> We have been volunteering at our Community Red Cross Station for a long term, helping organising lectures about keeping healthy. We saw many elders just came for gifts but not sincerely participating, since if there's no gift, they won't come.

For the couple and some residents as volunteers, self-realisation is further beyond getting rewards, but to sustain a volunteer spirit and a dedication for collective benefits (see Figure 8-15). With this aim, they do not care about the cultural narratives either, but take such activities as venues where the dedication could be realised. From the couple's experiences, within a *shequ* volunteer system which has been developed to realise local self-governance, they move between different community activities and do similar volunteer works to support organising, such as helping check-ins, distributing gifts, taking photos, keeping activity orders, etc. Comparing to participants who perfunctorily glance at the "good" cultural activities, they would like to present the "goodness" to the public in order to keep a positive image of the neighbourhood, as well as themselves who are the same excellent citizens:

> I feel that *shequ* volunteers should have good *suzhi*, to be responsible,

hardworking, and not to be selfish. If you would like to be a volunteer, please be sure to unify ideas, and to be dedicated on your duties. The museum is a quite good opportunity to show our *shequ* culture. What we should do is to offer better service thus visitors could enjoy it mostly.

Another volunteer doing home-visits to elder people comments on the work that has got reported by the mass media:

> There is good official organisation to make us go to chat with the elders. It's mutual help between neighbours. I was given the uniform to wear during the volunteering work, and I saw some others' photo printed on newspaper. Such propaganda should be more to encourage *shequ* works.

For them, volunteering is connected with collective benefits which could be realised by their dedications within the *shequ* volunteer system. Cultural activities are venues where the spirit could be realised in volunteer practices, with the themed culture and history left to be good contents that are supposed to get perfectly exhibited.

Despite of the spirit for collective benefits, it is solitary for individual volunteers with few communications encouraged among them. Still depending on Wechat, usually the museum releases requests for volunteers of specific activities in a Wechat group, and registration is made by signing up a rota in sequence. During activities, positions have been distributed and are assigned to individuals, who just need to complete specific works. This clear labour distribution for efficiency makes the group dispersive without tight social bonds built up in between volunteers. As Uncle Feng commented after being invited in to the Wechat group for several months:

> I feel I have had few contacts with these people. Maybe it's because the group has just been established for several months. Every time we met different people, and there were not many words between us.

This silence also happened based on my observations. Still taking the Lantern Festival as an example, small talks rarely happened when volunteers were on the job. When it was time to relax, there were still few communications between unfamiliar individuals, with them spending the time by their own ways. In general, a systematic way of volunteer management allows one to realise this identity by repeating the same supportive works in different activities, without social connections built up horizontally with others. In this way, volunteers are able to realise their dedication for collective benefits, but individually. Culture here is not the most important, but is enough to get acknowledged and to be regarded as worth transmission.

In addition to the appropriations of participation opportunities, a group of residents

called "community artists" do enjoy culture, and would pay efforts to be worthy of the name by self-trainings (see Figure 8-16). As a group of residents who have artistic skills, or have careers relative to traditional culture, they are always invited to such festivals to deliver live performances. From the curator's eyes, they are the "pioneer residents" who "could be exemplars for the others and attract them to participate". However, this group remains stable with familiar faces continuing participation repetitively. Within this group, an ideal expectation that residents could enjoy and get edified by the culture interventions is realised, with individuals self-trained in order to present better pieces for well representing the neighbourhood. For example, Aunt Zhu, a key resident who is a member of the Shijia *Hutong* Conservation Association, has been self-trained with painting by attending interest groups several times a week held at different locations, and is currently able to provide paintings as items on display, or practices painting skills as a performance during events. With this highly participatory experience which composes her everyday life, she said she started to enjoy understanding culture more than just viewing, and tried to use her brushes to paint scenes of the neighbourhood with cultural atmospheres. To achieve the goal, Aunt Zhu has learnt a lot about the local history, and is familiar with cultural narratives about the *hutong* and the courtyard where she resides. For community artists like Aunt Zhu, a connection between the self and the neighbourhood has been successfully made with one's artistic practices, by which the aesthetic gazes are realised with few conflicts with the reality as art making.

In all, the organised activities held in cultural venues are taken as opportunities by the residents to realise their various subjectivities. The diversity of personal aims, and the synchronicity of self-realisation, show an intertwinement in which personal dwelling traditions are impacted by the contemporary urban living attitudes, being manifested in the participants' respective practices. The multiplicity of personal purposes in the common practices of participation echoes to the literature which has revealed the dynamics and complexities of social processes at heritage places (for example, Lowenthal, 2015; Pettenati, 2023; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996), which yet are often represented to transmit the sense of eternity and stability in the narrative structure of AHD. The critical analysis about the practices of participation in the cultural venues there show the variety in the routinised performances of supportive participants, meanwhile appealing for more inclusive ways of distributing the opportunities, by which a wider range of possibilities can be involved in by new participants' active practices of the given roles. In addition, with an intervention from communication technology, efficiency has been achieved in activity organising but makes participation exclusive and routinised. Similar to the reflection made above, the way of using the technology should get ruminated to make the application meaningful when thinking about dealing with the practical multiplicity and

dynamics.

Figure 8-15, 8-16 different roles played by residents during a traditional festival: volunteers (above), community artists (bottom), copyright owned by the Shijia Hutong Museum

8.4. Discussions

The chapter examines the public spaces of the historic neighbourhood, including the public alleys, shopping spots and the community common venues, and patterns and aims

of residents who practice their everyday life there. As Atkinson (2003) argues, urban public spaces are not equally open to everyone, but are limitedly accessible to those who are preferred in urban developments. The way of excluding the others is to construct thresholds that reduce the place accessibility via policy making, ordinance enactment, capital investment, etc. Meanwhile, the public spaces also become realms of discipline by transmitting codes of behaviours to the users, who contribute to establishing the codes by their embodied practices of public life. In this analysis, public space is a realm to domesticate standard citizens, whose civilised behaviours are taken to illustrate good city images. However, on the other side of the pleasant scenes, those who are regarded as blemishes are excluded from the spaces. The delimitation and creation of public spaces are also the processes of reproducing inequalities between different social groups and the predominant social knowledge about urban space and public life.

For the case study site, public spaces also actively play the roles as mentioned. The public alleys and the shopping spots are open to democratic access, but the spatial forms and functions are decided by the government and experts. Furthermore, the community common venues are accessible to residents limitedly, with government determining participants of the activities held there. Heritage conservation contributes to the process of public space making by determining themes of the spaces, setting up criteria to identifying whether a building is legal, and stipulating codes of behaviours for users. Depending on the legal planning text which focuses on renovating the built environment to the specific historic status, and the implicit guidance that directs people to see and use the neighbourhood as a cultural relic, heritage conservation is self-referential (L. Smith & Waterton, 2012) and effectively legitimates the criteria and codes established for the publicised spaces. Such collaboration between the revanchist policy makers and the conservation practitioners sets up a premise that restricts the local implementation of participatory approaches. Since the purpose to renovate the neighbourhood as a showcase of the city always predominates over the others in local projects, participatory approaches are localised to serve it. As a result, the mass practices of participation fail to arouse the political possibilities, which, as observed, are still there in residents' everyday life.

The politics of everyday life is manifested by residents' passive resistances to the spatial changes and the implicit codes of behaviour to obey therein. The practices show how they understand and get connected with the public spaces, from which the sense of place emerges. By the practices of joking, remembering, flexibly moving between shopping destinations, etc., they navigate their familiar ways in the space where powerful interventions arbitrarily rearrange the spatial pattern. The sense of place is kept in their denials of the changes, and meanwhile in their continuous adaptations to the transformative physical space which they are still connected to in daily use. Residents'

senses of place are kept in such dynamic relationship between residents and the space. The emotional bonds are used to legitimate the conservation project that is positioned to revitalise the local history and culture.

However, in practice, historic conservation contributes to enacting the changes but ignores the connections between residents and the place. Still following the building-centric evaluation pattern, the planners and designers made the local culture readable via the physical space. By constructing a museumified space to exhibit the authorised heritage narratives, they would like to prioritise appreciation and preservation in all the stakeholders' ways of seeing and understanding the neighbourhood. In this organised spatial representation, most of the embodied practices of placemaking are not taken as a component of the local culture, but sometimes as problems damaging the general visual effect of the historic landscape. Such gap between the ideological appreciation of the living status of a heritage site and the practical priority of physical constructions makes the project a paradox. It leads to the failures in the renovation works, as a living heritage status is to be maintained, but the subjects who keep the liveliness by practices are not taken seriously.

Based on the discussion, I would like to ask if it is possible to make dialogues between the top-down creations of place, and the bottom-up senses of place and practices of retaining them. The revanchist mode rejects the possibilities by crudely excluding the elements that cannot match the criteria established along with the public space making. However, the erasure still leaves room for those who keep the rejected elements in practices, which are the reservoir of the political possibilities that are potential to change the present situation. If the ruthless mode of governance cannot reach the expected goals, we should think of alternatives, as more humanistic ways to make placemaking a dialogical process between the powerful decision makers and other stakeholders. I think this should be the meaning to use participatory approaches, by which the dialogues can be launched. However, currently the participatory activities of the conservation project has not effectively enacted the dialogues. The bureaucratic system running in different levels of government makes a democratic use of participatory approaches hard to realise.

Furthermore, public space should be the venue where the dialogues are enacted to happen. The international communications of the knowledge, as well as the local needs to present the locality to communities from the wider geographical spaces, makes public space a project to construct, instead of a social outcome which is investigated and defined. Here a reflection is necessary to made. When constructing public spaces, how to understand publicness and construct it? Is it the dominant discourse of public space powerfully domesticating the users of their ideas and behaviours, or a consensus reached among different users to maintain the venue for plural expressions and negotiations, as

what was discovered by the Western academia? In other words, is it a concept to describe visible scenes demonstrating civilisation, or to describe processes of negotiation between multiple subjects who hold different ideas and purposes being there? The empirical study supports the latter conception, and echoes to Flock & Breitung's (2016) argument that public spaces are open and fluid, with dynamics between urban governors and local dwellers. However, by the top-down urban planning, the government would like to skip the processes and transform the urban spaces as showcases of civilisation. Historic conservation, with the AHD still effectively emphasising the visual appreciation of the physical remains, contributes to the revanchist construction of the showcases. However, the resistances which they met from residents illustrate the need to respect for the publicness that is an outcome of people's embodied practices, instead of a planned target which is bound to achieve.

PART IV The epilogue

Chapter 9.   The epilogue

9.1.   Being back to where I initiated the study: a new perspective to understand the *lao Beijing* culture

One day after I finished the fieldwork, I went back to the neighbourhood to meet a friend by subway. When I reached the destination and came to the ground by riding an escalator, the courtyards in grey, as never to change, came to my eyes. However, after doing this study for some time, my impression on the neighbourhood has changed, from a fascinating historic area composed of *hutong* and *siheyuan* that were orderly arranged, to be vivid social scenes based on my memories of what has been observed, what has been talked about, and what has been discerned from literature and narrations. Being designated to the neighbourhood where dwelling and neighbouring are still ongoing, heritage is a component of, rather than the theme that dominates the place. Meanwhile, it is significant in local everyday life, shaping the physical space and transforming it to be expressive, therefore making the neighbourhood more than an accommodation, but an object towards which residents show complex attitudes: on the one hand, as members of *the general public* which is established in the conservation concept to whom the significant heritage message could be transmitted, residents accept this particularity of their living circumstance, and attach emotions and self-identities to it. On the other hand, both intentionally and unintentionally, residents resist the particularity, as well as the corresponding restrictions on the spatial pattern of their living circumstance, by practicing everyday life as ordinary and modern. Here residents apply mediocrity to resist particularity, which forms an interesting contrast to tourists, whose gazes on certain places are practiced during sightseeing for an extraordinariness that is distinguished from their everyday regularity (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p.3). For residents, it seems that simultaneously they need the meaningful *lao Beijing* label for self-identification, and a dwelling status that is mediocrely modern and comfortable but unnecessary to be culturally unique.

As the thesis showed, this paradoxical status led to a constraint on residents themselves when securing their host identities. The historic conservation of the *lao Beijing* city, which is commonly approved by the residents as a monument to the local culture, yet marginalises their means of placemaking that confirm their host identities and rights to dwelling in the space. This is a loss of "the right to the city", as Lefebvre argues as "opportunity for rhythms and use of time that would permit full usage of moments and places" that is left by "a renewed urban society, a renovated centrality" (Lefebvre, 1996, p.19). Here, the new centrality is established in the spatialisation of the AHD, embedding a set of meanings in the neighbourhood public spaces, and setting up codes of behaviours to maintain the spatial order, by which the AHD can effectively guide viewers to the

specific ways of understanding and seeing the neighbourhood, so that the embedded meanings can be successfully received. For the residents, although they accept the spatial expressions of the local culture, their embodied practices to keep bonded with the place, as well as the tangible facilities constructed to maintain the connections, is relatively peripheral to the centrality. Facing the marginalised situation, they use and invent the tactics that help them continue living in the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood in the accustomed ways, although the home neighbourhood has been involved in the city-scale master plan as a field to arrange the developmental strategy. In their practices of tactics, I see more facets of the *lao Beijing* culture, and the complex relationship between their everyday life and the conservation project. The findings constitute a challenge to the present understanding of the local culture and the corresponding ways of representing it in the conservation project.

The thesis explained the complexity from two aspects. Firstly, by critically analysing the AHD in the historic conservation of the *lao Beijing* city, I find that the *lao Beijing* culture, which is the object of protection, is inherently diverse and malleable as a local culture forming in the mass practices of nostalgia. The nature sets up a challenge for historic conservation which conventionally deals with tangible monuments that are certain and stable. Secondly, by observing and analysing residents' practices of everyday life in the delimited public spaces there, I explore how the diversity and malleability are manifested, and contribute to producing resistances to the conservation project, which is still designed and implemented in a conventional mode. Here the residents' practices of everyday life, and the public spaces that are delimited in the project as venues to make the AHD take effect, are the entrance for me to observe, record, and analyse the dynamics. Based on the everyday perspective, the study provides a critical reflection on the AHD and the localised implementation in the context of urban China.

9.2.   A summary on the road taken: key points and argumentation of the thesis

In detail, entering the issue by paying attentions to the space where both the authorised heritage value and embodied practices of the local culture are manifested, the thesis was arranged in two empirical aspects. Respectively, one made discourse analysis on the present spatial realisation of the *lao Beijing* culture via the technique of urban planning, and explained establishment of this dominant knowledge for the old city, and the other demonstrated how residents, as space inhabitants, tried to live as what they imagined in their respective ways within the normalcy of heritage conservation. By explaining how the heritage discourse has got established, and ways of residents – whom are both components and consumers of the heritage discourse – to dwell and neighbour

there, the thesis made a critical examination on the popular and hegemonic heritage image for the old city of Beijing. It provided a feasible way of understanding cultural heritage as a spatial practice, which always deviated from that in theoretical construction, therefore to facilitate further reflections and practices that might help towards issues in similar conditions.

Along with the two parts of empirical works, and to answer the queries being raised at the very beginning, here I conclude with two main arguments for this thesis. Firstly, the present popularisation of the *lao Beijing* culture and its tight connection with the old city comes from a cluster of social knowledge, which has been formed in the transformative social context and gradually gets popularised among the public. In the current social context, it has become a hegemonic image of the place, guaranteeing that a historic conservation area could be realised in a residential neighbourhood with widely recognised legitimacy. And secondly, within this discursive circumstance facilitating spatial representation of the authorised heritage values, space inhabitants' practical uses of the space and corresponding demands are marginalised, but still exist in ongoing everyday life by their practices. Meanwhile, a dilemma has been created for residents with the heritage conservation being a significant part of their everyday life, in which their status of dwelling inside this living museum are confirmed, meanwhile their individual practices to realise it get denied. This dilemma leads to the residents' common attitude to make do with their marginalised dwelling status. It is hard to change but still suggests political possibilities that is retained in their practices of everyday life.

To clarify the first argument, in Chapter 3, I made a historical review of the general political and institutional background. In the century of revolutions and fast modernisation, the consciousness of Chinese nation has become a common sense among the masses, and specific constructions have been officially approved as carriers of the traditional national culture. The political and institutional background is significant when considering about the knowledge formation and popularity, which are the premise for the AHD to get localised in China. Afterwards, I settled down to the contemporary Chinese society to decipher the present public approval of cultural heritage as well as its domination of corresponding urban spaces. In the present consumer society, individuals touch the national past via consumption. Heritage conservation is a proper technique to realise the connections by transforming the preserved sites as consumable, and increasing the accessibility of the sites for the masses. Practically, the process leads to powerful rearrangement of the relevant space and marginalisation of residents who depend on the space to meet their basic living needs.

Based on this analysis on the general socio-political context, in Chapter 4 and 5, I explained specifically about formation of the *lao Beijing* culture, its tight connection with

the old city, and heritage conservation as the authorised and publicly approved technique for maintenance, with a local conservation practice for realising "a living museum of *lao Beijing* culture" taken as a case to show practical strategies that contributed to get the discourse realised. The depiction of *lao Beijing*, which was made during the Republican period by foreign tourists and citizens when facing uncertainty that was caused by social upheavals, has always been reiterated in multiple forms in the following century and finally became a name brand for the metropolis when a culturally distinctive Beijing was in need as showcase for the state in the 21st century. Meanwhile, when this concern for the city's past came across urban renewal projects that were booming along with rapid urbanisation and destroyed the old city neighbourhoods, heritage conservation, which has been there, became a perfect way of remaining the city's past and creating landscapes to construct the name brand in need. As a result, physical entity of the old city, with corresponding scenes portraying vibrant residential activities at *hutong* and *siheyuan,* became the most outstanding representation of the *lao Beijing* culture. In turn, *lao Beijing* culture, with heritage conservation technically applied, also became the theme of urban space of the old city, therefore leading to romantic imaginations on the place where symbolic representations of the local history and culture can be accessed and experienced in urban life but are distinct from ordinary urban realities (Hsia, 2015). In this condition, the old city, with everything happening there, becomes culturally meaningful and available of gazing, reading, and consuming.

Hence, depending on an established priority when considering placemaking within the old city, heritage conservation has been pervasively conducted in designated areas experimentally, with professional teams cooperating with local offices and realising the works based on respective theoretical models that were constructed following different disciplinary paradigms. In Chapter 5, I settled down to one historic neighbourhood that was under trials of participatory conservation and was led by a municipal professional urban planning team, to examine means of realising a living cultural museum at the neighbourhood with residents' participatory practices. With the presence of the national consciousness that has been popularised among the public and the governing institutions that have been established on the neighbourhood level, local history and culture were easily correlated with the national ones, therefore to get legitimacy and supremacy in defining and modifying the space. On this basis, in this neighbourhood, conservation was implemented by demarcating public spaces and inviting specific residents to participate in projects that have been authorised to launch. This way of implementing participatory conservation achieved to continue controlling representations of the *lao Beijing* culture within an authorised range and meanwhile presented to be democratic with residents' appearance, while it was just limited to a small group of residents due to their social

identities that have been officially recognised and trusted.

In general, from a national consciousness that was formed one century ago, to this neighbourhood as a living museum exhibiting local history and culture, a nationalist theme has always been attached to these materials from the past, with people's practices towards them being depicted as politically meaningful. When the mainstream read of the old stuffs became containers of the national traditional culture, preserving and appreciating were practices supposed to be done, therefore legitimating conservation practices despite of details that might lead to inequality among concerned groups of people. This situation demonstrates that culture, despite a neutral tone especially when being applied to refer the local versions, could be politically meaningful as a hegemony, in Gramsci's theorisation, that leads people always supporting government and the corresponding social and political systems that continually work against their interests (Ives, 2004, p.18). In this case study, the hegemony got established after the century of social turbulence, during which an aesthetic, nostalgic, and cherishing attitude towards indigenous pasts was formed and popularised among the public. Under the hegemony, a discursive circumstance was achieved, in which preserving the old city got prioritised over other possible practices in the same urban space, as well as approvals towards such representation of the local past.

Within this discursive circumstance, the following empirical Chapter 6,7, and 8 made descriptions of residents' practices in several types of public spaces, showing different ways of dwelling and individuals' subjectivities that were formed in practicing, and analysed reasons for a common compliance to their current marginalised situation, regardless of the multiplicities as mentioned. In the Chapters, I provided empirical studies on residents' everyday life that was contextualised in this elaborately conserved neighbourhood, to explain how the confirmation and denial could be simultaneously received, therefore forming a dilemma that created confusion.

Specifically, in Chapter 6, I described the present local social network and a general intersubjective relation, showing a social status that was still under direct control from government, but with various individualities springing up from residents who started to pursuing better lives in different ways that were possible in the contemporary social context. The always presence of the state agents in social administrative units, regardless of the institutional transformations, kept a centrality of government in local social network and allowed power to intervene in residents' everyday life. By this way, individuals could keep reliance on power via the direct connection with offices that were locally retained. Besides, horizontal social relations were developed limitedly due to a distant intersubjective relation. Both political legacy from the early socialist society and the present urban mobility contributed to the distance in between, and further strengthened residents' reliance on local offices for helps in everyday life. Consequently, in the

contemporary social context, the local social relation is kept in intersubjective distances and meanwhile with government maintaining centrality, therefore leaving room for developing individualised ways of dwelling and resulting in differences among neighbours about their understandings and practices. With the diversity of living patterns coexisting in proximity, collisions constantly happen between neighbours, but they have paid few efforts to facilitate mutual understanding. Instead, a superficial peace is helped to maintain by government which could directly intervene such issues and solve it by power.

Based on this distanced but close intersubjective relation, and with centrality of the local social network still being kept by government, intervention from conservation practices results in maintaining and even enlarging the intersubjective distance and the differentiation among neighbours, and meanwhile establishes a new set of values and rules attached to the space. The simultaneous confirmation and denial happen there, and were illustrated by residents' practices of homemaking in courtyard dwelling, and practices of social individuals in local public life, as what Chapter 7 and 8 focused on. Here heritage became a significant component of everyday life in conservation practices, which imposed restrictions on the spatial pattern, led to aestheticization on fragments of everyday ordinariness, and organised themed activities routinely, to transform the everyday life culturally meaningful. It got integrated into the local everyday life by following the established social administrative structure, therefore contributing to reproduce the hierarchy in the social network and the distance in intersubjective relation, both of which have been formed in this social context with centrality being kept by the state agents. As a result, although the heritage discourse has been popularised among the locals with its pervasion in local social life, residents were distributed by the local offices with opportunities of participation, which were unequal but based relation between individuals and the offices. Therefore, with a differentiation in embodied experiences, residents applied various ways of treating and staying with the works that constantly modified their living environment. Here did the contradiction happen: despite of the common approval for official practices to retain *lao Beijing*, heritage conservation, as the specific operation, denied many of the ways by qualifying them as not proper, or even illegal within the conservation norms. This contraction put residents into a dilemma with both confirmation on their place-attached self-identities and denial of their practices of maintenance, therefore leading to an attitude to make do with the ongoing everyday life along with complaints and confusions. This condition illustrated their marginalised position and limited power in making decisions about the local culture and their living circumstance.

Nonetheless, residents' potential strength to seize their supposed rights of making decisions and expressions still remains in their practices of residential life. As Donald

272

(2011) describes contemporary Beijing as a city composed of asynchronous realities that are made in multiple agents' practices of their respective clock-time in multiple locales, a fact of this metropolis is that various living patterns are still ongoing, despite of the rapid urban development which promotes homogeneity in lifestyles and understandings of the happy life. What's more, inhabitants' practices of the various living patterns are able to participate in space production, hence resulting in heterogeneity of urban landscape as called asynchronous realities. In this neighbourhood, they are overlapped and stacked in the neighbourhood where residents live. This dense mosaic of historic and cultural fragments under conservation and various present social practices contributes to the dilemma, while it is also the context where residents could appropriate the given resources to achieve respective individualities and ideal dwelling status. It seems that "the right to the city" still lurks in their practices of everyday life. However, as the thesis argued, although the ongoing conservation practices applied participatory methods for constructing a new cultural-identity-based community in order to achieve the social harmony at this neighbourhood level, with few democratic concerns, the works would marginalise residents' practices, as well as possibilities and varieties of their ways of accessing "the right to the city".

9.3.   Contributions of the thesis and possibilities in future research

9.3.1.   Conceptual contributions

The thesis uses the theories from the field of cultural geographies to understand impacts from historic conservation to the residential neighbourhood. By examining *everyday life* as both the field where various structures of time and space collide (Lefebvre, 1991; Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006), and the objectified cultural landscape under aesthetic appreciations, the study shows how the geographical understanding of everyday life can critically challenge the self-reflexive efforts having been made within the realm of heritage studies. The latter, which focuses on heritage *per se* to develop theories of interpretation and protection, has been continuously making progress to decentralise the British-European evaluation system of cultural heritage, and expand the heritage value to include non-physical cultural characters which are comparably outstanding meanwhile universal. For example, the UNESCO published *the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003, and the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* in 2011. ICCROM initiated the Living Heritage Site Program in 2003. The newly recognised heritage values and the recommended approaches put forward by the internationally acknowledged organisations illustrated the reflexive modifications of the heritage evaluation system and the methodology of historic conservation. Such critical

transformations challenge the British-European version of AHD that is fascinated with materiality, the grand, the aesthetic, and monumental objects (Smith & Waterton, 2012). By recognising cultural differences when talking about local heritages, experts try to embrace the multiplicity by adding heritage types and expanding the range of heritage value. It is in such ideological background that everyday life in a historic neighbourhood can be appreciated as a component of the heritage authenticity by demonstrating a living heritage condition. Ideologically, there has been revolutionary changes to the globally prevalent AHD. However, despite the progress, in practice there are still conflicts happening between the conservation project and local communities, and gaps existing between the local ways of connecting with the place and experts' scientific modelling of the relations (for example, Su, 2011; Yan, 2015; Zhang & Lenzer, 2020). The studies show that although the local ways of living are respected and valued, it is still the experts who define and describe the culturally valuable lifestyle in academic language, and decide how to maintain it. However, when the authoritative views are adopted in conservation planning, the exclusive authorship to interpret the local culture is problematic, because the real world runs differently from experts' conceptual constructions. The gaps can lead to unexpected problems when the conservation planning is implemented locally.

The cultural geographical theories about everyday life help explain the problems. As the thesis shows, the local culture which makes the neighbourhood unique is supported by every participant's embodied practice of local social life, which are weaved by the local social networks where individuals have their social roles. As Lefebvre conceptualises, everyday life is an open totality which is pluralistic, because it is

> generated out of the ceaseless alterity of opposing forces and processes, consisting of multiple determinations and diverse elements that each retain 'a certain independence and relative autonomy' (Lefebvre 1996, p. 152, cited from Gardiner, 2004, p.241).

According to the argument, everyday life is an open system by which individuals are linked to social institutions and networks. Practice that is repeated in some rhythm supports the system. And since impromptu always happens in practice, it adds different elements and uncertainties to everyday life, and make it a reservoir of possibilities of change. Therefore, the everyday life is not simply a picturesque object to appreciate, but a complex and dynamic system that supports the phenomena. However, in heritage conservation, there is little room to elaborate the complex system. In heritage value narratives, the complexity is always appreciated for the cultural multiplicity, but the way to represent it still meets the needs of viewing from the public. Such mass needs to view the historic landscapes are socially constructed as one of the most popular ways of making

sense of places. According to Duncan and Duncan (2001), by people's practices of viewing, landscape, as the visible material surface of places, play an active role in the performance of elite social identities and the framing of social life and values within a community. Urry and Larsen (2011) also argue that the tourist industry popularises the practice of gazing at landscape to the masses. Tourist gazes, which are socio-culturally framed ways of seeing, may risk at transforming cultural heritages, as one type of tourist destinations, as objects delivering artefactual history but marginalising and trivialising various kinds of social experiences. In other words, the interventions to make the site visually expressive may undermine the supportive system of the visible cultural landscapes by excluding it. It is difficult to promise that when the AHD is introduced locally, this powerful discourse just makes little interference to the vernacular living culture system, because everyday life, as the theories and the empirical data from the thesis show, is malleable and open to the changes from the outside, instead of a closed and stable system. By simplifying the everyday life as a scene to appreciate, and isolating the local community life from the modern world, experts and practitioners of historic conservation overlook the complex social connections and dynamic interactions happening behind. The geographical perspective that pays attention to the temporospatial process of the social phenomena helps reveal them and inspires further reflections about feasible solutions.

In general, the thesis provides a theoretical pattern to critical heritage studies by embedding the AHD in the field of local community life, understanding its social impacts on the residential group from a humanistic perspective. By presenting individuals' attitudes towards the conservation project in the context of everyday life (including but not just limited to the occasions of heritage conservation), and their practices of the everyday life which is marginalised both spatially and discursively by the project, the thesis provides a means to explain some failures of heritage conservation, which has been constantly self-reflected to embrace multiple forms of culture. The interdisciplinary study uses a geographical perspective to explain the community everyday life in the historic neighbourhood as an assemblage of everyone's local living process, which is recorded and keeps vitality in the embodied practices. The assemblage supports the everyday scene which gets appreciated by the experts as an object to preserve, and should get carefully examined in order to maintain the liveliness.

Moreover, heritage conservation is a field full of multiple temporospatial processes for the geographical studies to explore, and develop studies about some core concepts. The thesis explores *place* from multiple perspectives in the context of historic conservation of the *lao Beijing* city. For this context, both the temporal and geographical dimensions are important to analyse the concept of place. From the temporal dimension, the historical information about the selected site is particularly significant to perceive,

describe and make places. In each historical period, information about the place, as what we can see today, was the partial representation of the local cultures then. Based on the historical representations, at the present, multiple stakeholders which are not limited by the geographical scales contribute to constructing the place in different ways, and encounters between the practices inevitably happen, resulting in coalitions or conflicts between practices of placemaking. Such condition makes place a complex research object to analyse. Synchronously, multiple subjects contribute to emphasising the historic significance of the neighbourhood in respective ways, and it is in the intersubjective interactions that the historic image of place gets established. Diachronically, the historic significance is a consequence of the historical partial representations time after time. Multiple subjects participated in the process, and their roles are represented as well to fit the present aims of placemaking. When considering heritage sites as places, the outstanding historical feature, as well as the active representations of the historic information at the present, makes critical analyses difficult duties. Meanwhile, it also provides challenging opportunities to study how the historical information affect people's senses and practices about place, and prompts progress in geographical theoretical studies.

For example, the thesis reveals multiple understandings about place, and respective practices of making it. The dominant one is carried out by heritage conservation via the lens of the AHD, transforming the neighbourhood as a living museum of the *lao Beijing* culture. Parallel to the officially authorised project of placemaking, residents get themselves connected with the neighbourhood, *hutong*, and courtyards by understanding them as big or small families, the realms of memory, the domains in which they are losing the power of control, etc. They are all sources for one to perceive and make the neighbourhood space as place. Here one's ability of experiencing and learning about local histories contribute to shaping his/her sense of place, and the attitude towards the dominant place-making practices. This historical consequence is a significant factor when analysing the present power relations between the stakeholders in placemaking. Furthermore, since there is a great possibility that individuals digest the same historical information, or have experienced some historical periods in similar ways, it is observed that usually, there is no sharp antagonism between different ideas about place. Different stakeholders share some views about place in the competitions for the limited space. As a result, there are some complex relations in between, as well as ambivalent views and emotions expressed when commenting on others. The multiplicity of temporospatial processes in heritage conservation provides complexities, and meanwhile opportunities to continue ruminating about the concept of place in the field of cultural geographies.

9.3.2. Practical contributions

In addition to the theoretical contributions, the thesis is practically meaningful by analysing causes of the problems in the participatory conservation project. By referring to the theories of everyday life study and the concept of practice, the study contributes to explaining the problems from a perspective out of the self-reflexive convention in the field of heritage studies. From the perspective, among different stakeholders, there are unreconciled differences in their respective ways of understanding the same space and working the diverse understandings out. For the government and the conservation experts, the neighbourhood is an object to plan and govern. They depend on the pre-existing professional knowledge and specific goals of governance and development when making the decisions and implementing the policies. However, residents take the space as home, as the place where everyday life goes on. Their knowledge about the space is not professional and organised as the scientific languages, which represent the space by rational narratives but simultaneously lost the information that cannot be generalised in this pattern. Currently, there are few effective ways to get both sides meeting and engage dialogues and negotiations happening in between, so the difference in perceiving and using the space is left unreconcilable. From the perspective of practice, the thesis offers an explanation to the causes of the problem in a practical way that may give rise to feasible actions. Although I have not published any papers in academic journals yet, I have shared the findings with some of the planners, local officers, and conservation practitioners in personal talks. During the talks, I saw that my expressions of the findings could arouse reflections about the current works. This reaction illustrates the potential to make changes with more efforts paid to enact actions that can bring views from more stakeholders into consideration when decisions are to be made about the space in the future.

In addition, as a case study located in Beijing, the research contributes to enriching the literature of heritage studies about urban China by emphasising commonalities between the historic neighbourhood and the general urbanised areas. I take it as a practical contribution, because by the study, I would like to appeal for more civil rights endowed to the local communities of such heritage sites. In addition to a component of the living heritage neighbourhood, and beneficiaries of the public welfare, local residents are also citizens who should have abilities and rights to decide whether they accept the roles given. They are regarded as culturally unique but share same desires with us. However, such modern facet of the local communities is attenuated by the emphasis of the historic features. My descriptions and analyses show that the cultural uniqueness of the *lao Beijing* neighbourhood emerges from the socio-political background which, yet, can be shared by multiple societies in different geographical scales. The uniqueness is a relational outcome produced in comparisons to others. In addition to the differences, there are commonalities among the stakeholders, and between the preserved sites and the general modern society,

but they are not emphasised in the AHD, which is an expressive structure designed to amplify the cultural uniqueness. The study critically examines the cultural uniqueness of an urban district of China, analysing how the uniqueness is constructed and actively marginalises the modern facets which are common in urban China. This can be an empirical reference to enable dialogues happening between the stakeholders in similar situations.

Furthermore, the clarification of the commonalities is a response to the present fervour for heritage conservation in China. Following the CPC's slogan for the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation, governments from different levels construct heritage sites as representations of the Chinese culture which makes the nation different from others. The sites have become venues where the political nationalism is delivered to visitors (Maags, 2021, Wang & Wang, 2018, Wei & Yuan, 2022). Moreover, the priority of the political purpose may also marginalise the other necessary works when treating such historic neighbourhoods. For me as a Chinese, it is necessary to criticise the excessive emphasis on the cultural uniqueness in the present political background. Furthermore, after the *Nara Document on Authenticity* was drafted in 1994 by the experts from UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS, as the internationally acknowledged organisations facilitating heritage conservation worldwide, non-Western ideals of heritage have been respected in the field of heritage studies, encouraging scholars to investigate heritages out of the West. This international recognition, which was achieved based on the dichotomy between the West and the non-West of the world, may lead to excessive attentions paid to interpret heritage values of the latter, but leave practical methods less discussed. When non-Western scholars examine their domestic heritages, their views are more possible to affect implementation of historic conservation. Therefore, it is necessary for them to have a pragmatic attitude to treat heritage conservation as a comprehensive project, more than a discursive system to represent the culture as unique to differentiate from others. The study that reveals the commonalities between the historic neighbourhood and the general urbanised spaces appeals for empathy for the social groups which we take as different. Such attitude may facilitate more negotiations and dialogues to happen in heritage conservation, making it a democratic rather than arbitrary spatial process.

9.3.3. Limitations of the thesis and possibilities for the future research

There are some limitations of the thesis, while they also indicate possible directions for future research. Firstly, although I appeal for comprehensive understanding of historic neighbourhoods, the thesis is a study focusing on the residents, but talks little from the perspectives of tourists, Beijingers from a broader geographical range, non-local consumers of *hutong* shops etc. Their practices of visiting *lao Beijing* neighbourhoods and

consuming the culture are important factors supporting the conservation project, but get few discussions in the thesis. To be sure, the neighbourhood as a part of the contemporary Beijing is not just belonged to the residential community. Ways to guarantee that everyday social group is endowed with their rights to the city should get further explored.

Secondly, since the study was launched to critically examine and analyse issues surrounding the heritage discourse and its spatial realisation, the research design and investigations were made surrounding the theme, so it confines residents' everyday life within the neighbourhood. However, in the present highly fluid society, everyday life is no more limited to any locality, and can be described beyond geographical boundaries. The conservation works only compose of a part of residents' everyday life, which consists of multiple topics, and in many cases is amorphous rather than clearly themed or targeted. Therefore, practically the ongoing everyday life is more than what has been described in this thesis. An overall examination on everyday life, with spatial extensions beyond the neighbourhood, might be able to contribute more insights than what have been observed there.

Thirdly, although I proclaimed the thesis to be meaningful by transforming the conventional perspective to examine a heritage neighbourhood, in fact the perspective from residents, as what I tried to describe, is still limitedly represented with myself as the only translator. It forms in my limited use of the participatory approaches just in observation during fieldwork. Mainly relying on ethnography when collecting data from fieldwork, and translating them when writing up the thesis, I defined myself as a resident, an intern at the community museum, and a researcher to record social life there. In the methodology design, the participatory approach was used to multiply my subjectivities, in order to make the research as the outcome of the residents' perspective. However, by the design, I failed to let the residents to make direct expressions. All the data were translated by me, as a researcher, and get presented in thesis. This is a resident's perspective that is represented by me. In the future studies, more participatory approaches can be used in order to multiply the authorship. Currently, participatory methods like videographic methods (Garrett, 2011), phonographic methods (Gallagher & Prior, 2014), the photo-survey research method or picturing practices (Crang, 1997; Moore et al., 2008), more-than representational methodologies (Dowling et al., 2018), etc., have been experimented for more democratic self-expression, with researchers' weakened centrality in presenting such phenomena as academic results. These concerns and respective practices may help the academic study become practically meaningful, as what I always intend to achieve.

At the very end, no matter to what extent could the thesis contribute to relevant fields of studies, I would like to value it as a record of the moment, when the residents are still

dwellers and hosts, as well as embodied practitioners of the local culture that is widely known and appreciated. During my fieldwork, when mentioning the ongoing conservation works onto the *lao Beijing* city, it seemed like an implication that reminded residents of their fortune to be moved out and relocated somewhere else someday, and always with uncertainty and confusion. For them, *lao Beijing* refers to the memories that have been formed in decades of dwelling and witnessing vicissitudes there, and the present everyday life located at the place and within the small society. Here *lao Beijing* is diversely understood among individuals, who also do not care about order and certainty in narratives and representations, thus could not be simply understood as an affiliated cultural package to an authorised heritage site. Therefore, although currently the old city is getting more attentions and conservation practices, domination of the heritage discourse marginalises residents' versions of *lao Beijing*, and causes feelings of exclusion by theming and occupying the limited space. Facing this regrettable future that has been anticipated by residents who are weak at recording what they value and what they remember, I hope that this thesis, from an academic perspective, could help retain some fragments of the *lao Beijing* that is alive in their memories and practices of life at the moment.

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Appendix I Referred policy papers and mass media reports

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Appendix II List of interviewees with multiple mentions[64]

Aunt Chang and Uncle Feng: a couple in around 60s participating in local cultural activities with enthusiasm for volunteering, and always ready to help others. Chang was involved into *shequ* works due to her Party membership, with Feng coming to help, and gradually develops personal social network by constantly participating to help organise activities. Currently they are frequent volunteers of the museum.

Aunt Chen: a woman in her 50s, sharing the same courtyard with the couple "holding a corner". Coming and settling down in the early 1990s, she was in the almost last group of *danwei* employees getting distributed with a house by renting. However, she feels to be excluded by the long-term dwellers from some everyday trivialities. Conflicts always happen between neighbours in the courtyard with hostility kept between them.

Aunt Qian: a neighbour doing tailoring at home without a signboard outside. Having been in Beijing for 27 years and being a resident there for a long term, though a migrant, Qian has got connected with local people with several coming to her home sometimes.

Aunt Shao: a granny in her 70s, well known among conservation practitioners due to her affluent knowledge about local history and culture, therefore getting respected by local officers and practitioners. However, the granny deliberately keeps distant with them without full reliance. Instead, she takes her embodied practices of dwelling inside her *siheyuan* home as the way of preserving the local culture.

Aunt Song: an amiable granny in her 60s living along in a courtyard with polite but distanced neighbours. She is a master of keeping peaceful neighbouring relations with others in everyday greeting and behaving (and so are many others well), following transformations in the neighbourhood and changing practices for keeping life comfortable as far as possible.

Aunt Tian: A neighbour in my courtyard in her 50s, dwelling by herself and making a living by insurance sales. She shows hostility to a bannerman family in the courtyard due to conflicts happening in the past, and also expressed unsatisfaction towards local cultural venues and activities that could not meet her needs.

Aunt Zhou: a retired woman in around 50s-60s, occupying a courtyard house but permanently residing in another place. She regularly comes to the house for cleaning and tidying, and taking care of the micro garden as she promised to the local officer. The house is set up with security facilities due to Zhou's suffering experience of thievery.

Aunt Zong: an elder woman in her 70s and a frequenter to local organised activities. Performing a participant has been a routine in her everyday life.

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[64] The list provides brief information for interviewees that are repetitively mentioned in the thesis as an index for reference. Interviewees are not limited to the list.

Director Du: A Residential Committee head in her 40s, engaging to have more residents participating in *shequ* activities by developing more types and themes.

Director Li: a male officer working at the local subdistrict office, taking in charge of local conservation works.

Director Shi: A Residential Committee head in her 40s, busying with regular *shequ* duties but still would like to spend time listening residents' complaints.

Grandpa Liu: a retired cadre in his 70s from a state-level institution; living in an apartment-like house of a spacious courtyard; still keeping a tight connection with his *danwei* and disliking communications with neighbours and local officers.

Owner of the Halal snack bar along *hutong*: a woman in her 50s and having run the snack bar for over 30 years. Having been serving the locals and migrants, she keeps relatively low price and could memorise frequenters' preferences. Threats from the 2017 municipal clearance project made her worried about the store and was planning to apply a franchise from the local office, but has not achieve it before the bar was closed in 2019.

The "uncle with beer bottles": a man at around 60s sitting in front of his home courtyard gate, getting drunk in the morning when I came across him. As an ordinary worker being laid off in the 1990s, the uncle showed disappointment and confusion towards the rapidly developing society though still spoke words in a socialist invigorative tone.

The couple "holding a corner": at around 60s to 70s, living in a house at a courtyard corner thus being referred with the name. They both present to be defensive to guests and changes that might disturb their everyday routine. In neighbours' words, they are bad and are labelled with "insurrectionists", and are regarded as negative factors in peaceful neighbouring.

The Shijia Hutong Museum curator: a retired officer from the BMICPD and currently taking the role to run the museum.

Uncle Li and Aunt Zhu: a couple in their 70s as core members in *shequ* activities, including local conservation works. Their home, a fabulous old house inside a courtyard that has been registered as a municipal district-level heritage, is always taken to display to officially invited guests, with Zhu playing a guiding role. Zhu and Li both take key positions in *shequ* activities, with strong consciousness of historic preservation, and pay efforts to take care of their house.

Uncle Wang: a neighbour in his 60s living beside my house. Having been a worker, Wang keeps the ethos belonging to the masses and would like to realise the officially propagated "harmony" by hand. He always acts as an intermediator to help solve conflicts between neighbours in order to maintain peace of everyday life.