On Conservation

Historic District Conservation in China: Assessment and Prospects

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This study examines policies and practices related to the conservation of historic districts in China, where urban conservation has become a significant concern and pressing issue in the present era of economic reform and urban redevelopment. In addition to illustrating the evolution of approaches to historic district conservation, the study reveals some of the social and political problems that have arisen as a result of the weakness of current state-led urban conservation practice. It concludes by proposing a collaborative approach to urban conservation among state and nonstate actors, facilitated by changes to current institutional and funding frameworks. Such an approach might help meet the challenge posed by conflicts between the country’s urban conservation and redevelopment agendas.

Tremendous changes have emerged in Chinese cities since 1980 as a result of the incorporation of market forces into the economy and the revival of land and property development. At the same time, the transition from a command to a market economy has provided an excellent opportunity to examine the Chinese urban built environment under conditions of profound institutional and administrative change.

Among the major shifts brought by this transition has been a desire to maximize the economic potential of scarce inner-city land. In the past two decades this has resulted in the demolition of old buildings, the clearance of slums, the resettlement of populations from central-city areas, and the erection of new buildings at a furious pace. This push for change has also greatly threatened urban heritage, one of the main embodiments and expressions of local identity. For instance, urban redevelopment in Beijing is now blamed for the wholesale demolition of hutong, the traditional lanes and quadrangle houses of the city, without heed for heritage controls or the social consequences for displaced residents.
Driven by an ideology of globalization, capital flows into urban redevelopment in China present a major threat to the nation’s cultural heritage; and recently, contentious issues related to conservation vis-à-vis redevelopment have gained prominence on the urban planning agenda. On the one hand, this climate of conflict reflects the pressures of the present real estate boom and the issuance of much stricter rural land expropriation policies in the mid-1990s. But it also reflects recognition of the detrimental impacts on urban heritage of redevelopment-dominant urbanization.

The term “historic district conservation” (lishi jiequ baohu) first appeared in Chinese conservation contexts when the State Council recognized a second group of 38 Famous Historic Cultural Cities in 1986. The policy embodied an attempt to address the limitations of the conservation approach employed with regard to the first group of 24 such cities identified in 1982, and the need to respond to threats posed by a new surge of urban redevelopment nationwide. Since then, historic district conservation efforts have aimed to reclaim urban heritage as a means of promoting and solidifying evidence of a collective past. Since these activities began, however, the search for consensus in resolving conservation/redevelopment conflicts has been complicated by the plurality of interests in historic districts, and by the uneven impact of state-led conservation programs on different socioeconomic classes.

In China, culturally, economically and politically elite conservation activities have increasingly raised concerns that cannot be resolved by the state alone. For example, powerful, state-determined conservation practices have often been based on arbitrary determinations of what is (and what is not) worthy of preservation, and have tended to sacrifice the interests of more socially and economically marginal groups. Evidence indicates that the weakness and ineffectiveness of current conservation efforts can only be overcome through collaborative action involving the multiple stakeholders typical in historic districts.

This study provides an empirical investigation of how China has conducted historic district conservation, with a particular focus at the municipal level. Its purpose is to understand some of the reasons behind the choice of legal, institutional and funding mechanisms — and ultimately to propose policy recommendations. It argues that the localization of China’s urban planning structures and the regional diversity of its urban heritage make it important to decentralize urban heritage conservation activities. However, local state-led historic district conservation activities within a market economy are presently limited by a lack of public resources as well as by conflicts between state and nonstate interests. In addition, such efforts are hampered by weak conventional institutional and funding mechanisms and gaps in relevant legal frameworks. These problems have become increasingly noticeable at a time of rapid urbanization and redevelopment, when every attempt is being made to define a new modern image for Chinese cities. A collaborative conservation approach addressing the various interests together through a series of legal, institutional and funding changes would seem to be the most effective response to this situation.

THE EVOLUTION OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

Contemporary policies on heritage conservation in China can be traced back as far as 1922, when the Archeology Research Institute, the country’s first heritage conservation agency, was established at Peking University. In the years that followed, the promulgation of the Cultural Relics Preservation Act (1930), the Cultural Relics Preservation Bylaw (1931), and the Organization Regulations of Central Cultural Relics Preservation Committee (1932) established a legal framework for heritage conservation and management. World War II and the ensuing Civil War eventually rendered enforcement of these statutes impossible. Nevertheless, they provided a foundation for China’s post-1949 heritage conservation measures.

Such early conservation activities were primarily led by professional architects and historians trained in Japan or the West. However, between 1949 and 1966 the introduction of a series of heritage ordinances and regulations, the establishment of central and local administrative agencies, and the development of heritage research institutes all contributed to an incipient new heritage conservation system in China. Tragically, as if conservation statutes did not exist, the “Demolishing Four Olds” (po si jiu) movement of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1967–1976) caused the destruction of much of the country’s built heritage. Moreover, the spiritual “revolution” against history and traditional culture did not cease with the end of the Cultural Revolution. The slogan “to destroy old and create new” (po jiu li xin) had a lingering influence and continued to create barriers to heritage conservation. Indeed, it was only in the latter half of the 1970s that the state began to restore heritage conservation work through the reenactment of legislation and the adjustment of administrative systems. The milestone of a fully established ancient-monument-oriented heritage conservation program was only reached in November 1982 through enactment of a new PRC Cultural Relics Preservation Act.

Also in late 1982, the publication of the first 24 national Famous Historic Cultural Cities by the State Council marked the beginning of a new era of historic city conservation. It extended China’s heritage conservation movement beyond a first stage, which, in most cases, had covered only cultural relics and ancient monuments. And it was followed in 1983 by the Announcement on Strengthening Famous Historic Cultural City Planning, issued by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environment Protection (later the Ministry of Construction). Among important changes, this
new policy distinguished between the administrative responsibilities of the National Cultural Relics Bureau, which would deal with ancient monuments, and the Ministry of Construction, which would oversee the Famous Historic Cultural Cities program. Ever since, historic city conservation has been an issue of urban planning, supervised by the Ministry of Construction, the same administrative unit responsible for urban redevelopment.

As already mentioned, the term "historic district conservation" was first articulated in 1986 when the State Council publicized a second list of Famous Historic Cultural Cities. The concept was intended to lessen conflicts between historic city conservation and urban development, provide a basis for historic city conservation, and articulate the integral components and key issues involved in historic city conservation. The second designation of Famous Historic Cultural Cities also established standards for historic cities, requirements for conservation and planning, and specific recognition of "historic conservation areas."

Importantly, formal recognition of historic district conservation as an independent activity opened up opportunities for all districts deserving preservation — whether in urban or rural areas. There are now 103 listed Famous Historic Cultural Cities in China. However, there are many more historic districts deemed worthy of preservation than those located within Famous Historic Cultural Cities as defined by State Council criteria.

Following these initial steps, the State Council enacted several additional statutes in the 1990s that also included articles on historic district conservation. Among these were the PRC Urban Planning Act (1990) and the PRC Environment Protection Act (1990). The Regulations on Plan Making for Famous Historic Cultural Cities (1994), promulgated by the Ministry of Construction and the National Cultural Relics Bureau, further facilitated the integration of historic conservation into urban planning. In the years since, some of the listed Famous Historic Cultural Cities have made use of these rules to implement conservation plans, explore conservation approaches, and promote conservation education programs.

One of the earliest critical historic district conservation efforts was the Liulichang Street rehabilitation in Beijing in 1986. This 400-meter-long street is famous as a center for traditional Chinese stationery, painting, calligraphy and antiques. Implementation of the rehabilitation plan for the street has provided lessons for many other historic district conservation efforts in Beijing and elsewhere (Fig. 1).

Such achievements would not have been possible without support from the relevant academies. The Chinese Society of Urban Planning founded the Academic Committee of Famous Historic Cultural Cities Conservation Planning in 1984; two years later the Chinese Research Society of Urban Sciences set up the Research Society of Famous Historic Cultural Cities. The State Council also approved establishment of the National Committee of Famous Historic Cultural Cities Specialists in 1994. The committee helps enforce historic city conservation statutes and provides technical consultation. The municipal governments of Famous Historic Cultural Cities have been eager to seek advice from the committee on scientific aspects of historic conservation.

**Figure 1.** Liulichang Historic District is a cultural-tourism-oriented conservation effort in Beijing. The rehabilitation project was conducted in the mid-1980s, one of the earliest historic district conservation practices in China. This image shows its current situation.
A third stage of China's heritage conservation effort arrived in June 1956 when the International Historic District Conservation Symposium was held at Tunxi, Huangshan City, Anhui Province. The Tunxi Symposium clearly articulated the importance of historic district conservation, stating that it "has been a critical link in heritage conservation, and an integral part of the entire conservation system."

Concurrent work on a pilot project for Tunxi Old Street also raised such important issues as designation criteria, conservation plan making and implementation, legal frameworks for historic districts, and conservation funding. The Tunxi Symposium contributed greatly to the Provisional Regulations of Tunxi Old Street Historic District Conservation and Management, enacted by the Ministry of Construction in 1997. These were intended to articulate characteristics, principles and methods for conservation, and give specific guidance to the historic district administration.

As a legal framework — even if only a municipal-level one — the effort marked the beginning of China's historic district conservation system. The year 1997 also saw the establishment of the National Famous Historic Cultural City Foundation to provide financial support to major projects, mainly applied historic district conservation projects. And in 1998 the first state standing agency for historic city conservation, the National Research Center for Famous Historic Cultural Cities, was established at Tongji University in Shanghai. The agency provides technical consultation on historic city conservation, executes theoretical and practical heritage conservation planning research, and assists the government in conservation policy-making.

HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION THEORIES IN CHINA

There is a great deal of literature on the practice of conservation in the West, and recently there has been a rapidly growing body of theoretical work as well. For Asian countries, however, there is neither a strong empirical nor theoretical base. This dearth of academic attention fails to reflect the great number of urban historic districts in Asian countries.

Cultural heritage in Asian cities is shaped by philosophies and religious systems that emphasize the intangible rather than the tangible. Thus, the preservation of the built environment is often not as important as in the West, where it is a more significant container for cultural memory. This leads to several key differences in the conservation approaches of Western and Eastern cultures. For example, the replacement of fabric is often acceptable in Asian cities because of the continued spiritual meaning and symbolic value related to everyday use.

Recognition of such differences led to the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity and the draft Hoi An Protocols promulgated in 2003 by UNESCO Bangkok. An effort to promote cultural pluralism and social inclusion led both documents to take a fresh approach that acknowledged local traditions and intangible values that did not correspond with Western notions of intact fabric. Nara and Hoi An both encouraged cultures to develop analytical processes and tools specific to their natures and needs.

While conservation policy initiatives have been mentioned from time to time in Chinese literature, often with a traditional focus on built environment, detailed theoretical investigations are very limited. Those that exist can be categorized under three headings: organic renewal, small-scale self-help rehabilitation, and community cooperative renovation.

Of the three approaches, Wu's theory on organic renewal is arguably the most influential for urban area conservation in China. Developed through a series of studies and projects in Beijing since the 1950s, it recognizes that certain aspects of historic urban structure have lasting value. In an effort to preserve these, it stresses the establishment of a new organic order based on adaptation to modern life rather than complete replacement. The concept owes much to the work of Jane Jacobs in response to the drastic slum-clearance and urban-renewal programs in American cities in the mid-twentieth century.

The organic renewal theory was originally presented in the late 1980s to frame the specific case of Hu'er Hutong [Chrysanthemum Lane], a traditional housing area in Beijing. Its theoretical premise was that the city is a living organism whose parts and tissue undergo a metabolic process. If solutions could be uniquely tailored for each building quality and historic value type, a highly complex problem might be broken down into simpler parts. Each of these could then be pursued with an appropriate strategy, even with limited available funds.

The primary weakness of the theory is that it mainly focuses on physical aspects. Wu's work touches only very briefly on the social, economic and cultural facets of urban conservation such as the return of original residents or joint funding by the state, work units, and individuals.

Derived from the theory of organic renewal, the second approach to urban historic district conservation, small-scale self-help rehabilitation, is less a theory than a practical approach. It was initiated in 1995 through a pilot project in Beijing — the Guozijian Historic District Conservation Project. As a strategy, it attempts to resolve issues concerning historic district use by encouraging small-scale socioeconomic and construction activities, including housing renovation, maintenance and restoration. Additionally, it involves a limited amount of government-resident cooperative neighborhood environmental enhancement. Interestingly, small-scale self-help rehabilitation was widely practiced in China before policies after the 1949 Liberation put strict restraints on it. For hundreds of years, most residences were erected and rehabilitated by residents themselves according to their own preferences. Recognizing this metabolic process has now been proposed as a way to leverage spontaneous public participation toward the larger goal of urban conservation.
Small-scale self-help is often not permissible under present planning regulations. Nevertheless, it exists in urban centers, and in a few cases on the urban fringe, mostly with illegal status, where it plays an important role in daily life. Frequently, those who either have no other housing options or cannot afford housing in the open market employ it to accommodate an increase in family size without losing the convenience and advantage of living in the urban core. Pragmatic academics and consultants have thus suggested that municipal governments consider policies to support it both financially and technically.

The argument for this approach is that rehabilitation practitioners know their own expectations best, and that to be effective, rehabilitation should meet these needs. In addition, small-scale self-help rehabilitation may reduce costs by skipping many intermediate steps, making housing more affordable. Furthermore, the type of adaptive change brought by the small-scale self-help approach reduces negative impacts on the surrounding area, helping to realize a significant goal of historic district conservation.

The third approach to historic district conservation in China, community cooperative renovation, was influenced by the community architecture movement that emerged in Great Britain in the 1960s. In China, housing cooperatives first appeared as a feature of historic district conservation and rehabilitation in Beijing in 1988. As nongovernment bodies, they were organized either by neighborhood committees or work units (danwei).

A key principle of this approach is that the state, work units, and individuals collaborate in the financing of housing conservation or rehabilitation. As such, housing cooperatives have changed longstanding attitudes among residents toward housing, which were frequently formed during the years of the planned economy when the government took full financial responsibility. They have also provided opportunities for negotiation and cooperation among residents, developers, architects and planners.

Based on the experience with housing cooperatives and small-scale self-help, Fang has proposed a concept of conservation and rehabilitation that emphasizes community cooperation and resident self-help. It involves internal community agents (such as community groups and local residents) as well as external agents (such as local government, developers and financiers). The approach emphasizes resident cooperation (not only among residents, but also among local authorities, residents, professionals and external investors), self-help, and small, flexible conservation and rehabilitation plans.

From an institutional perspective, Fang has suggested the establishment of housing cooperative associations, resident self-help and self-managed nonprofit grassroots organizations, and joint-stock housing companies combining investments by residents, a housing cooperative, and external agents.

## Socioeconomic Context of Historic District Conservation

China has experienced increasingly rapid urban development since the beginning of the 1990s. During this time, a number of major forces have been driving the demand for urban land. Among these, the promotion of the tertiary sector has triggered an enormous new demand for commercially zoned land. A market for high-quality residential property has also resulted from the Open and Reform policy and income diversification. And cities have been adding new functions — e.g., central business districts (CBDs) — to their urban centers. Although a number of new plans have introduced subcenters, or new centers, into urban areas, inner city districts remain the most important areas in most Chinese cities. Such centralization has caused problems. For instance, Beijing’s inner city, representing only 5 percent of its entire urban area, now sustains more than 50 percent of its traffic flow and commercial activity. The price of land and property in inner cities has also increased continuously in recent years due to a lack of appropriate planning.

As Chinese cities modernize, large-scale urban construction is unavoidable. Current urban function, physical structures, infrastructure, and human settlement quality all need substantial upgrading. However, these nationwide urbanization pressures have created special problems in historic districts. Historic urban districts are an integral part of urban economic dynamics; they are rarely autonomous functional zones, and they usually have a symbiotic relationship with the rest of city. Thus, in the larger context of urban transition, historic districts are faced with the need to both better their economic profile and satisfy conservation restrictions and controls designed to preserve their physical form. This may greatly increase the cost of their transformation.

Compared with living standards in newly developed districts, the living conditions in historic districts are also frequently very poor. Indeed, inner-city historic areas often contain many households living well below the minimum national standard. Because of chronic overcrowding, residents of these areas occupy houses originally designed for far fewer households. In the inner city of Beijing, for example, it is easy to find more than ten households occupying a 300-square-meter courtyard house.

Such overcrowding, along with insufficient maintenance and failure to execute necessary partial renewal, have led to the present dilapidated state of much of the housing in historic districts. Around 80 percent of the houses in the historic districts of Beijing urgently need either rehabilitation or renewal. The long-neglected infrastructure within historic districts is also frequently unable to meet the demands of modern life. Sewage systems constructed before 1949, or even in the Qing Dynasty, are still operational in some historic districts of Beijing. Such backward conditions have placed serious constraints on the improvement of life in historic districts, creating a sharp contrast with the rest of the city.
Since the 1970s residents of historic districts in China have been calling for the betterment of housing conditions. Proposals have been brought to city authorities almost every year; however, municipal officials have rarely sought to address the specifics of this long-existing political issue. Instead, they have resorted to large-scale redevelopment under the illusion that it can benefit both local residents and the municipality.

Such an approach is deeply influenced by a physical-design-oriented bias within the urban planning theories and methodologies in China. Thus, the architects and planners in charge of inner-city planning and management projects usually hold a negative attitude toward the “functional and spatial disorder” of the traditional city. Accordingly, they emphasize strict functional division and separation of land uses, and seek to impose “rational” urban spatial form and uniform visual spatial order. Under the guidance of these “modern” theories, inner-city planning practice is likely to take the form of large-scale redevelopment. The model is to a certain degree variable: relocate original residents, demolish houses, and build commercial towers and highrise apartments.

Large-scale redevelopment was introduced under China’s planned economy. But in those early years it did not pose a serious threat to historic districts because of financial limitations. However, driven by an urban real estate boom that began in the early 1990s, such a simplistic approach has now caused great damage to urban historic and cultural environments.

The problem is made worse because both faculty and students in Chinese architecture and planning schools must rely on actual projects to generate funding, while urban design and research institutes have been run in the style of professional firms. The result is that both planning practitioners and funding authorities now show little concern for the social objectives of research on historic urban areas, creating further barriers to conservation research and practice. This is highly problematic because the social dimension of urban conservation is arguably its most important component; physical conservation can only be achieved through a continuity of urban life.26

LOCAL TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Current historic district conservation practice in China operates within a fundamentally different physical context than in the West. Unlike downtown areas of Western cities, Chinese inner cities did not experience significant and widespread decline as a result of post-World War II urban spatial restructuring. Mao’s postwar policies meant that urban centers needed to become places of production as well as residence. During this time, many Chinese inner cities became the sites of major manufacturing complexes, such as 798 in Beijing, Moganshan Road and Shanghai Sculpture Space in Shanghai, and People’s Glass Factory and Hangzhou Steel and Iron Factory in Hangzhou.

During this time, some of the building stock in inner-city areas was not properly maintained — often because a work unit (danwei) would decide not to use it anymore, or simply for other of financial reasons. But this was never a widespread phenomenon, and, rather, posed an individual and case-by-case problem in only a few locations in certain cities. However, ever since a movement began to relocate many of these work units to suburbs and rural areas in the 1980s, the building stock in these inner-city areas has either been adaptively reused or wholly destroyed as a part of urban redevelopment efforts.

At the same time, even recent widespread suburbanization has not diminished the inner city’s status as the political, economic and social center of Chinese urban areas. Nevertheless, some historic districts have experienced obsolescence as a result of changes in local economic structure. In particular, traditional commercial activities have often been forced to leave places where they existed for decades, or even more than one hundred years. As a result, the agglomeration of traditional commercial and cultural activities is gradually disappearing in historic districts.

As part of this change, some old brand-name stores or restaurants (lao zhaoh) have experienced desperately low revenue, changes in ownership, or closure because of high rents. Others have declined as their traditional functions have moved to cheaper, more convenient locations — or even disappeared. And in many cases their old locations have been gradually occupied by high-revenue modern businesses (Fig. 2). Lao zhaoh are extremely vulnerable to these pressures because they usually do not have property rights (like state-owned enterprises), and have not been protected by any effective statute.27 But the larger problem is that redevelopment near historic districts has driven up rents, forcing traditional commercial activities to relocate. And in most cases, it is impossible to bring such businesses back because of strong competition from contemporary businesses and ongoing inner-city redevelopment.

Physical revitalization results in an attractive, well-maintained public realm. However, revitalization that is merely physical may be unsustainable and short-lived. As Rypkema has written: “a rehabilitated empty building does not particularly add to an economic revitalization strategy in those areas, in the way that a building filled with tenants does. People and economic activity ultimately add economic value.”28

A deeper traditional economic and cultural revitalization is required to promote activities within buildings and the spaces between them that will pay for maintaining historic character. However, the Chinese experience with efforts to boost investment in historic locations has been problematic. Generally, it overemphasizes tourism-oriented economic growth, while ignoring local community services. And it either excludes suitable modern uses of historic buildings or
CONFLICTS BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

The long history of Chinese cities, particularly ones that function as regional centers or provincial capitals (many of them now designated as Famous Historic Cultural Cities), has shaped their unique urban fabrics, social and cultural milieus, and characters. The inner areas of Chinese cities remain the cores of their surrounding metropolitan areas, even under new urban-district construction trends. However, new urban functions are today increasingly overloading these areas, which were originally designed decades, or even hundreds of years, ago.

At the same time, historic district residences, mostly of brick-and-timber construction, have recently come to seem dilapidated, especially in comparison to newly built residential buildings outside historic urban areas. As a result, many residents of historic districts today desire to leave, or at least to have their districts rehabilitated so they can attain better living conditions. At the same time, the successful development of new districts and the real estate boom ongoing since the early 1990s have accelerated the flow of urban construction capital, which has financially enabled many cities to transform historic districts — or more broadly, the inner city.

Unfortunately, early historic rehabilitation efforts largely proceeded according to the view that such districts were a liability rather than an asset. Such irrational behavior caused the destruction of their original social structure, cultural heritage, historic character, and vernacular built environment — which was replaced with monotonous, identical, modern highrises. In the process, Western architectural styles were replicated in the name of “modernization,” often with little respect for local cultural, climatic or building needs.

Other problems have surrounded decisions by municipalities to convert the primarily residential nature of historic districts to commercial or entertainment uses to take advantage of their location and increase lease prices. Contrary to its intention to improve the environment of a historic districts, the municipality then finds that it needs a new round of redevelopment in order to solve the problems brought by increasing population, traffic, and overburdened infrastructure.

Ironically, high-density housing areas outside historic districts are often as deserving of redevelopment as are relatively low-density historic districts. But where strong redevelopment interest exists for inner-city areas because of lower relocation expenditures and greater increases in floor-space ratios, high-density areas have largely been ignored because they have denser populations and less land area, and would present higher relocation costs. Inner-city redevelopment is necessary, and should be exercised in appropriate locations; but the principal criterion for assessing which areas deserve rehabilitation has too often been the potential commercial value of a district, not the degree of decay of its housing stock.

Several players have contributed to this unfortunate triumph of redevelopment economics over conservation.
Developers are attracted to city-center areas because of their high land value and potential profits. Municipal leaders regard rapid and dramatic changes in central-city areas as more appealing and more likely to be recognized as a political accomplishment. Meanwhile, some planners and architects have only superficial knowledge of historic conservation, cater to political leaders, or look forward only to benefiting financially from large-scale redevelopment.

Among these players, the attitude of municipal leaders is the most significant. Many conflicts between historic district conservation and redevelopment could be resolved if they would guide the other players toward a sustainable future by carefully weighing tradeoffs between short- and long-term benefits.

TOURISM- AND CULTURE-LED CONSERVATION

Tourism is now widely perceived as a growth industry in China, partly because of increased levels of income, leisure time, and mobility among the population. As a result, municipal officials have frequently sought to build tourism and cultural activity into the revitalization of cities. The officials recognize that tourism has an economic ripple effect. Although the image and attractiveness of an historic area is usually what induces tourists to visit a particular place, their spending includes transport, supporting facilities, and related services. Indeed, ancillary spending can have a greater local economic impact than spending on the historic attractions themselves.

Another benefit of tourism is that it generates heritage awareness. Appreciation of historic districts by visitors can increase local interest in the urban environment, potentially providing an important catalyst for safeguarding historic fabric and initiating conservation on a citywide scale. For example, after a decade of efforts to develop sustainable tourism in Tunxi Old Street in Anhui Province, a survey indicated that most local residents closely linked their own interests to the quality of the historic district conservation project. In addition, well-preserved buildings were being effectively used to encourage the realization of further conservation projects, and there was greater local involvement and demand for conservation. Local economic surveys of Tunxi Old Street also indicate that the commercial land use ratio rose from 34.4 percent in 1979, to 45.7 percent in 1985, to 77.6 percent in 1993.

More recently, the Tunxi achievement has been shadowed by a much more well known historic district conservation project — Xintiandi in Shanghai. The Xintiandi area is a two-hectare complex of restaurants, bars, and chic shops in an open, lowrise style. Xintiandi’s houses are traditional shikumen (literally “stone gate”) structures built along narrow alleys. Middle-class professionals once flocked to them for a sense of community and safety; indeed, shikumen made up 60 percent of the city’s residential housing between the 1880s and the 1940s.

Among Chinese visitors, the $170 million Xintiandi project has now made this area Shanghai’s number one tourist attraction. One of the most important historic sites in the area is the Chinese Communist Party’s first meeting site (1921). And Shui On, the Hong Kong developer of the project, has spent years preserving original materials there, like Shanghai’s unique gray bricks and Art Deco features, and following original drawings to replicate structures that had decayed beyond repair (Fig. 3). The preservation has also revitalized the surrounding area and pushed nearby property prices to among the highest in Shanghai (Fig. 4). The strategy in Xintiandi has been so successful that efforts are now being made to replicate it in cities throughout China, such as in the West Lake Waterfront (Xihuandi) project in Hangzhou.

Considering all these potential merits, many municipalities in China have attempted to adopt tourism as a strategy

Figures 3 and 4. These images illustrate the historical and architectural significance of Xintiandi and Tunxiward, respectively.
for the conservation of their historic districts. Yet while most historic districts have unique milieux and characteristics deserving careful conservation and rehabilitation for tourism purposes, municipalities have often attempted to create fake historic scenes. Among these are such newly built historic streets as Jinli Old Street, Wuyi Mountain Old Street, and Nanping Old Street in Fujian Province; Xiangyang Old Street in Hubei Province; and Puyang Paper Making Old Street in Zhejiang Province.

Traditional markets and even theme parks have also been created, such as Wolong theme park in Sichuan Province; Liuhuang theme park in Yantai, Shandong Province; Tang Dynasty theme park in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province; and Song Dynasty theme park in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. These developments have not only directed limited funding to unnecessary projects, but they have had a negative influence on authentic historic environments. For example, tourism development in historic districts requires careful and informed historical background research. Instead, under one ill-informed program, a Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) commercial street was developed in one Famous Historic Cultural City without knowing that such streets did not appear until the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1126 AD).9

As Stille has pointed out, Chinese museums frequently tend to favor reconstruction over conservation.8 Reconstruction affords them the freedom to reinterpret the original over its accurate replication, a decision often driven by economic benefit and/or national pride. Some historic district tourism plans are influenced by the same attitude. They relocate the original residents elsewhere, renovate the historic buildings, convert them to tourist facilities, and then fill them by invited tender.

In Lijiang Old City, a listed World Heritage Site in Yunnan Province, for example, about 80 percent of the residences have been occupied by various businesses from other parts of the country, while the original residents have been relocated to a "new city" development nearby. Among 200,000 native Naxi people, only 10,000 still live in the Old City. Meanwhile, businesses from other regions threaten local cultural identity (fig. 5).

History is continuous, and the people are the masters of history. Original residents are an integral component of any historic district. Without them, a historic district is left to be only a vacant stage (fig. 6).

RELOCATION OF RESIDENTS

Because of limitations on policy, funding and conception, the problems of historic districts—such as overcrowding, an aging population, a declining local economy, decayed buildings, and overburdened infrastructure—are being solved only partially, and not without negative results.7

Historic district residents increasingly see a disparity between the living standards in their districts and newly built areas. Yet there are major issues involved with relocation that result in antagonism between residents and developers, and even local authorities.

One major problem is that property ownership in historic districts raises complicated and tricky problems that are difficult to clarify in the rehabilitation process. Nevertheless, the comparative stability of property boundaries is an important means of maintaining a diverse streetscape and community structure in an historic area.8

**Figure 5.** A restaurant in Lijiang Old City run by an owner from Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province, clearly indicates their Wenzhou-style food (the letters on the right in Chinese are "Wenzhou").

**Figure 6.** In Lijiang Old City, the original residences have been converted to restaurants, tea houses, bars, shops and hotels. This is a hotel converted from native local residence in the Old City.
Another problem involves the need to relocate a certain proportion of historic district residents to suburban areas to lower the costs of rehabilitation for developers and/or local authorities. Some suburban areas simply lack the facilities to support such resettlement. Additionally, relocated residents must then spend much more time commuting between work and home.

For relocated residents, compensation plans submitted to local authorities are also too general. Their details are then worked out through closed-door negotiations between individual households and developers, without adequate oversight by local authorities. Furthermore, some historic district residents who are temporarily housed in apartments arranged by developers or local authorities spend several years longer there than they are supposed to because of extensions of the rehabilitation process.

Finally, the original populations of historic districts tend to be diverse in terms of income level, status and lifestyle. But the rehabilitation and relocation process often sifts out low-income or even middle-income households, effectively destroying an organically formed social milieu.

This last point illustrates how conservation of historic districts generally involves gentrification, as higher-income residents and economic activities supplant poorer ones. In other words, successful rehabilitation benefits municipalities and developers, while it tends to expel low-income families and less profitable economic activities. Mitigation of this social inequity often requires interventions involving significant local government subsidy, a price few municipalities can afford. Moreover, because of the enormous profit from rehabilitation and redevelopment, local authorities, under the slogan of national economic construction, sometimes side with developers, instead of seeking to maintain social equity and siding with the local population.

While it is possible to reinvent a desired physical landscape, the cultural mosaic of an area is dependent on the people who patronize and interact with it. Social and cultural continuity within the groups that make up a place is one of the most important elements in heritage conservation (figs. 7, 8).

HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION FUNDING

Inadequate funding for conservation can be another problem. Such projects frequently have a low priority within budgets when there are pressing demands for accelerated industrialization and urbanization. Further problems arise as a result of insufficient funding for training and educating professionals or specialists to undertake and organize conservation work. Thus, even where municipal conservation legislation exists, historic district conservation may suffer from inadequate professional oversight or lack of financial assistance.
Generally, municipalities play a lead role in historic district conservation funding. They may contribute to or influence such funding in several ways. One is to provide state-owned land to relocate inappropriate enterprises from historic districts. Recently, market-oriented land use and real estate laws have, however, made this approach more problematic (as, for instance, in Suzhou and Chengde). A second way is to require that a developer strictly implement conservation plans within a historic district in exchange for a relatively free hand in projects outside it (as in the Tongfang Xiang Project in Suzhou). A third way is for the municipality to appropriate a portion of local tourism revenue for conservation. And a fourth is for it to allocate a percentage of annual industrial and commercial revenue to conservation work (as in Yangzhou, Shaoxing and Jingdezhen). Finally, a municipality, particularly one with a history of commerce, may encourage government agencies and state-owned enterprises to withdraw from its historic districts. This creates additional space for profitable commercial uses, such as banks, hotels and clubs. Rent revenue may then be used for conservation, as the historic business district restores its original function interrupted during the planned economy era (the Bund of Shanghai).

Despite this array of options, direct funding by municipalities of historic district conservation is very limited, and often inadequate. The transition from a planned to a market economy, however, has made multichannel and multilevel funding initiatives possible. And, realistically, from an economic perspective, neither local authorities nor any single nongovernment entity can expect to complete a conservation project on its own. Indeed, recent successful initiatives indicate that full participation by national, local and social entities is needed.

In comparison to new district construction, however, historic district rehabilitation faces many construction obstacles and socioeconomic conflicts that require oversight or guidance by local authorities. Every historic district is unique, and any sustainable conservation plan will require in-depth and careful field study. By contrast, most developers prefer the simplified approach of large-scale redevelopment. But this not only impairs the original character and milieu of a historic district, but creates unsolvable problems and conflicts.

When the power of rehabilitation implementation is in a developer's hands other issues may also arise. For instance, conservation requests from the cultural relics administration may be ignored, and destruction of heritage may happen periodically when construction units disregard the cultural relics administration in order to save time and money. Meanwhile, planners and designers usually do not have enough time to reflect on a historic area's unique urban design qualities because developers want to see a return on their investment as soon as possible. Generally speaking, there is only long-term return on investment for rehabilitation when it is properly done.

Finally, major investors in old city rehabilitation processes create strong pressures to transgress planning guidelines. This means that under the current legal system, planning administrations are frequently forced to compromise with developers because of the huge fiscal burden of urban redevelopment.

The long-term nature of old city rehabilitation also means that it is greatly influenced by the real estate market and government macroeconomic policies. When government urban construction budgets become tight, the process has to be slowed down and even stopped, bringing complaints from residents who are supposed to be able to return on certain dates, but cannot. Meanwhile, overdependence on profits from real estate sales creates imbalances in investment composition and supply/demand relationships, as well as turbulence in real estate and financial markets.

Redevelopment in historic districts often leaves a legacy of a few large, unoccupied, newly developed real estate properties in place of a larger number of lively, small—and medium-size enterprises owned or operated by local residents. Unreasonable historic district rehabilitation may also waste the built environment. Some 50 percent of the old houses in Beijing's historic districts can safely accommodate residents after a basic renovation, and there are a certain number of other houses in fairly good shape already. These houses could provide residences not only to middle- and low-income households but to high-income ones as well. Demolishing almost all of them during a rehabilitation process is wasteful, given the serious shortage of housing within old cities.

HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION IN CHENG NAN, QUANZHOU

Quanzhou is a prefectural-level city located on the north bank of the lower reaches of the Jinjiang River in Fujian Province. The Quanzhou municipality, which administratively includes the surrounding six-county region, encompasses 10,865 square kilometers and has a total population of 6.5 million, among whom 850,000 residents were registered as being in nonagricultural resident status (urban hukou). The historic and administrative core is comprised of the Old City district and adjacent areas. Although it is now only a medium-sized urban center, Quanzhou was historically one of China's most important windows on the world, leading the State Council in 1982 to designate it one of the nation's first 24 Famous Historic and Cultural Cities. Quanzhou was the starting point for the "Maritime Silk Road" in the Middle Ages, and when its commercial fortunes decreased, it became a departure place for people leaving China. The number of overseas Chinese originally from Quanzhou totals about six million, and more than eight million Taiwan compatriots have their ancestral homes in Quanzhou.

In 1979, the Fujian coast was opened to foreign trade and given more autonomy in national economic develop-
ment policy. As a result, Quanzhou attracted much direct foreign investment, especially from overseas Chinese communities. Continuous, strong ties with relatives abroad influenced not only its economic development, but also its architecture, culture and society.

In the post-Mao era, early efforts to conserve historic Quanzhou included the establishment of the Quanzhou History and Culture Center in 1983. The center played a significant role in the renovation and rehabilitation of many of the city’s important ancient buildings throughout the later 1980s. The Old City also remained well preserved through the 1980s because of three interlinked factors related to the city’s particular history and geography. One was a relative lack of state investment during the period of the centralized command economy due to what was seen to be its vulnerable position on the Taiwan Straits. A second was the maintenance of a high degree of private control of property in the city. A third was that almost all houses and properties of good quality belonged to (or were connected to) overseas Chinese, and the local government almost always tried to avoid damaging these connections.

The situation in the Old City started to change fundamentally as a result of rapid urbanization after the 1980s, however; and in the 1990s there were two urban redevelopment trends at work in the Old City. On the one hand, residents have tried to improve their housing conditions through small-scale, but widespread, self-building. The other more destructive force has been large-scale urban redevelopment initiated by the local government (Fig. 9). Many unique and historically valuable buildings and historic areas have been lost in the process, even though traditional materials, styles and motifs have been proudly adopted and used in new buildings. Furthermore, without assurance that their own neighborhoods would not be razed for redevelopment, many residents deliberately let their houses deteriorate through a failure to perform necessary maintenance.

A common belief in Quanzhou in the 1990s was that redevelopment was an inevitable road to modernization. Some considered preservation of one-story housing in the urban core technically impractical or economically unfeasible. Others thought that too much of the city had already been redeveloped to leave room for “preserving the historic core as a whole.” However, redevelopment projects eventually changed the historic urban center so much that even the local authorities became uncertain about what future large-scale redevelopment would bring. As a result, they began to seek alternative development models. Municipal leaders and planning authorities attended a series of international seminars and entertained study visits with scholars from Canadian, Chinese, French and Norwegian universities. They also worked with designers from prestigious universities and planning institutes in China, who had a great appreciation for local architectural elements. These experiences gradually shifted local leaders toward a preservationist attitude.

At least two current strategies indicate a shift of official attitude toward conservation and development. First, in its master plan for 1995–2020, the municipal government included tourism as a strategy for taking advantage of comparatively well-preserved-heritage sites. This document was the first that considered historic sites to be tourism resources and an integral part of the Old City. Second, Quanzhou’s planners ceased using the term “old [i.e., obsolete] city redevelopment” (jiucheng guizao), and instead spoke of “old [i.e., historic] city preservation and construction” (gucheng baohu jianshe). New planning processes and ideas for the historic districts of Quanzhou have since adopted the small-scale, house-based conservation and rehabilitation practices first introduced to the Old City of Beijing.

The officially designated Cheng Nan conservation area consists of approximately 40 hectares in the south part of Quanzhou (Cheng Nan literally means “South City”). It has a population of 8,000, including 1,200 migrants, and is home to 22 heritage sites or cultural relics of varied importance. In the past, Cheng Nan was a retail and residential area, largely for local people. But the high rate of housing production in the eastern part of the city and on the urban fringe has pushed the urban boundary outward and encouraged rapid abandonment of older homes in areas like Cheng Nan. These trends have also damaged the vitality of the traditional small business community.

**Figure 9.** Before (top) and after (bottom) urban redevelopment in Quanzhou. Source: Quanzhou Municipal Urban and Rural Planning Bureau.
Given its newfound focus on conservation, the municipal government's response to the situation of Cheng Nan has been a series of conservation and rehabilitation plans. Their ultimate goal is "to reillustrate the wealth of history and culture, the delicate vernacular architecture and prosperous commercial tradition in the area," and "to combine preservation and renovation with tertiary and tourism development of the city." As such, the Cheng Nan area is in need of strategies for conservation as well as economic revitalization.

In Cheng Nan, the Zhongshan Road Conservation and Renovation Project (March 1998 to November 1999) illustrates an effective collaboration among different interested parties. The seventy-year-old Zhongshan Road is the primary historical and cultural arterial of the Old City. During the project period, local government, the public, the private sector, planners, and a developer all cooperated closely and set up an implementation system to ensure the success of the project.

The total cost for the renovation of Zhongshan Road was more than 18 million RMB, of which 10.71 million was paid by homeowners and 7.6 million by the local government. The concept of "beneficiaries share the cost" was adopted; this meant that property owners paid to repair or rebuild their houses, while the government paid an allowance, and the balance was shared between relevant departments. The costs for conservation management, design and plant/building removal were the responsibility of the government, while the various departments shared the infrastructure costs. The municipal and district administrations divided the governmental part of the costs equally.

The Zhongshan Road project has afforded the municipal government a chance to see how collaboration among various interest groups is an essential component of a successful conservation and development policy. It has also given the government more confidence in further developing participatory neighborhood planning processes in the Old City (fig.10). To facilitate further horizontal collaboration between relevant local agencies, the municipal government established the Quanzhou Famous Historic and Civic City Conservation and Construction General Headquarters in 1996. This is an administrative unit designed to cut across boundaries between the planning bureau, the cultural relics bureau, the construction commission, and so on.

In Cheng Nan, self-initiated construction by nonstate actors has also come to be accepted by the local authority, instead of being condemned and triggering only stronger restrictions. The municipal planning bureau has even proposed guidelines and regulations for use by individual property owners in Cheng Nan, rather than an overall plan requiring sweeping property expropriation and resident relocation. The official recognition of legal self-help renovation means that property owners (most of whom indicated in a survey that they could afford to renovate or rehabilitate their own properties) have become a major contributor to conservation funding. The other primary sources of funding for conservation work in Cheng Nan are loans, government subsidies, contributions from businesses (especially developers), work unit donations, and sponsorship by overseas Chinese.

Interviews with Cheng Nan residents indicated that despite all the complaints about living conditions, most households preferred to remain in the area, whether or not it was renovated. Residents cited its better access to amenities, a strong personal attachment to the neighborhood, and affordability. Small private business is the typical and dominant type of enterprise along the commercial streets of the area. Property owners switch business types or leaseholders frequently, trying to maintain or maximize income from their properties (fig.11).

Neighborhood committees are the most active community organizations in the Cheng Nan area. The four neighborhood committees of Cheng Nan not only assist local
challenges as the country moves from a command to a market economy. Inadequate legal, institutional and administrative frameworks to regulate and guide conservation projects also remain a persistent problem. Clearly, China's historic district conservation agenda continues to search for an effective institutional and administrative framework, and for legislation that can reconcile the contradictory goals of rapid urban development and heritage conservation.

An important realization, however, is that the urban historic district does not have a single owner, but many owners, users and claimants, who are linked through a complex web of potentially conflicting relationships. As the main agency of the state in this process, local government should seek to break down boundaries between different interests and guide collaboration. However, the political ideology of state-socialist China continues to approach historic district conservation as a state-led activity. The weaknesses of such an elitist approach to heritage conservation is now becoming apparent in practice. It is especially apparent with regard to historic district conservation, where the scope of conservation activities must be extended from renowned ancient monuments to everyday neighborhoods of local importance. In such instances the state alone is unable to shoulder the conservation burden in all its various aspects.

Today, administrative and fiscal decentralization and urban planning localization have made the local municipality the lead actor in urban conservation. Local government is also gradually recognizing the obstacles to successful urban conservation programs, especially in terms of funding sources and processes of implementation. As a result, it is beginning to experiment with conservation initiatives involving multiple actors in pilot projects. Collaborations for historic district conservation between local governments and property owners/occupants are one example of this kind of initiative. Such arrangements may effectively resolve local government funding shortages while restricting the input of property owners/occupants to implementation.

Experience from the West suggests that local governments need to involve more nongovernment organizations (e.g., neighborhood committees, business associations, religious associations, etc.) in historic district conservation efforts. Comprehensive and mature legal, institutional and administrative frameworks are also needed to ensure citizen participation in conservation decision-making as well as implementation. Current historic district conservation practice in China is moving in this direction, but there is still a long way to go. A diversity of cultural traditions and levels of progress toward economic reform in different regions and provinces means that a spectrum of municipal efforts in historic district preservation in China will be required, and that no single solution can help all.

The introduction of new legal frameworks for historic district conservation may eventually give local authorities considerable freedom to develop policies toward designation...
and enhancement of conservation areas that reflect the regional political, economic, historic and cultural diversity of Chinese cities. However, historic district conservation administrative units at different levels, with clearly defined mandates capable of comprehensively planning and coordinating responsibilities, still do not exist. Moreover, a nonadministrative local conservation management agency is needed to help accumulate and arrange capital for historic district conservation. Nongovernment organizations such as conservation district advisory committees could also facilitate communication between state and nongovernment organizations, enabling deeper and more extensive involvement by the latter in conservation processes.

Municipal governments, the private sector, the general public, and professionals all can potentially play important roles in historic district conservation. However, careful analysis will be needed to understand what each interest group can best offer within a collaborative framework. Municipal governments, the key initiator and only purveyor of urban heritage conservation under the command economy, will need to adapt to this new system. Under the new market economy they will need to become more of a guide or coordinator of actions in a system where nonstate actors adopt increasing responsibility.

Recent evidence from Hangzhou, Quanzhou, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou has shown that issues of historic district conservation are gradually being bound up with private development interests. The extent to which municipalities are associated with these capital-driven interests is one of the most critical aspects for sustainable historic district conservation. Issues in urban historic district conservation around the intersection and collaboration of state and nongovernmental organizations embody broader cultural, historical, political, and social interactions.

Legacies of the past, the pluralities of the present, cultural politics, and even democratic ideologies are all implicated. The search for an urban historic district conservation agenda in China therefore involves much more than urban design, and must reach far beyond the conventional physical perspective.

REFERENCE NOTES

Part of this study, including the Quanzhou fieldwork, is based on the author’s masters thesis at the University of British Columbia, advised by Michael Leaf, School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, and Daniel B. Abramson, Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington in Seattle. The author is indebted to them. The author is also grateful to three anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful comments, and to David Moffat for his helpful editorial support. However, any errors are the author’s own.


2. Heritage conservation is used to reflect dominant values and designed to serve the economic, social and political interests of cultural, economic and political elite. One of the latest books from the heritage management point of view is H. Du Cros and Y.S. Lee, Cultural Heritage Management in China (New York and London: Routledge, 2007). As Dan Abramson has also commented: “concern for architectural heritage, as elsewhere in the developing world, remains a predominantly elite concern in China. Its proponents often find themselves opposing both the political establishment’s profit-making visions for the city center, and also the aspirations of residents to improve their living conditions.” D. Abramson, “Beijing’s Preservation Policy and the Fate of the Siheyuan,” Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, Vol.13 No.1 (2001), p.9.


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7. Ye. "Zai lishi jiequ baohu (guo)jij i yantaohui shang de jianghua.

8. Initially a research project of Tsinghua University in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction, the Tunxi Old Street Preservation project started as early as 1985. With its more than eleven years of ongoing study, it is a rich case for further discussion.


10. The foundation provides only 30 million RMB per year to around ten projects. However, this symbolic financial aid has a greater political meaning. Under the fund, municipalities have to provide larger contributions (including monetary ones) to government-financed projects, which are also more likely to attract nongovernment investment.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.


23. Fang, Dangdai Beijing jiucheng gengxin: diaoisha, yanjiu, tansuo.

24. Zhang, "Tansuo chengshi lishi wenhua baohu qu de xiaoquismo gaiiao yu zhengshi."


27. The Regulations of Guangzhou Famous Historic Cultural City Conservation, for instance, only states in principle that efforts should be made to “maintain their status quo and traditional characters.” Guangzhou Municipality has established an office to manage such efforts, but there is no detailed regulation in this regard. Moreover, the office only has coordination rights, instead of enforcement rights.


30. Orbsahl, Tourists in Historic Towns.


32. Orbsahl, Tourists in Historic Towns.


The book includes essays that cover the socio-political, cultural and historic aspects of the city and offer topical analyses of urban design and preservation of the city. Two essays are particularly relevant to this topic: Jeff W. Cody, "Making History in Shanghai: Architectural Dialogues about Space, Place and Face"; and Seng Kuan, "Image of the Metropolis: Three Historical Views of Shanghai.

34. In 1999, after recognizing the detrimental effect of fake historic buildings to the authentic historic milieu, Luoyang, one of the Famous Historic Cultural Cities, spent more than 10 million RMB to demolish fake historic hotels recently built around the famous Dragon Gate Stone Kiln historic area. The costs of those buildings were more than 10 million RMB (see note 35).


37. The information is based on author’s interviews with the original Naxi people in Lijiang Old City on January 30, 2007. The rent for a typical quadrangle house is around US $1000 per month, far beyond what the ordinary Naxi residents can afford. The Lijiang Municipality tries to attract the relocated original Naxi residents back to the Old City with a small financial incentive, but the incentive has not been effective.


40. Municipalities are extraordinarily different in their financial capacities in heritage conservation and rehabilitation. In the year of 2000, Beijing appropriated 150 million RMB for heritage conservation and rehabilitation, while the sum of all other cities’ appropriation was only 120 million RMB. See J. Zhang, "Beijing chengshi baohu yu gaizao de xianzhuang yu wenti" ["The Historic Conservation and Refurbishment in Beijing"], Chengshi Guihua [City Planning Review], February 2002, pp.73–75.


47. J. Nilsson and Y. Tan "Advocacy Work on Conservation and Tourism Development in the Old City of Quanzhou, Fujian, China,


49. Quanzhou shi chengshi guihua sheji yanjiuyuan [Quanzhou Municipal Urban Planning and Design Institute (QMUPDI)] and Qinghua daxue jianzhu yu chengshi yanjiuyuan [Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies of Tsinghua University (IAUS)]. Quanzhou shi guichang baohu zhengzhiguihua [Quanzhou Old City Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan], 2000.

50. Quanzhou shi chengxiang guihua ju [Quanzhou Municipal Urban and Rural Planning Bureau]. Quanzhou shi chengnan pianqu jiubao jie, wanhou lu lishi jiexiang baohu yu zhengzhiguihua [Quanzhou Chengnan Nan Area Jubao Street and Wanhou Road Historic District Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan], 2000.

51. As an Award of Merit winner of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation in 2001, the Zhongshan Road Conservation and Renovation Project received very positive reviews from UNESCO. In particular, the judges’ citation highlighted "The initiative of the local government and active support from the private sector, which exemplify collective responsibility for heritage conservation." See http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/heritageswards/zhongshuan.htm.

52. Ibid.

53. For instance, these guidelines and regulations include that (1) the planning bureau simplifies the procedures for property ownership applications and renovation/maintenance applications, and waives some kinds of related fees; (2) the local government offers to assist financially strapped property owners with façade rehabilitation by helping them obtain loans and governmental subsidies; (3) the local government allows the deferment or (partial) waiver of construction matching fees for property owners with financial difficulties, and provides subsidies to them for the renovation of dilapidated housing.

54. It is helpful to learn how the property owners plan to use various resources to invest in self-help rehabilitation. Among 38 interviewees in the Qing Long Xiang neighborhood of Cheng Nan, fifteen believed they could pay for it through personal savings. 

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seven would resort to help from friends or family locally, five would consider help from family overseas, six would consider loans, and only four would ask for government subsidies. For more information regarding the statistical results, see D.B. Abramson, and M. Leaf, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in Quanzhou, Fujian, China: A Field Studio Report," Asian Urban Research Network Working Paper #26, Centre for Human Settlements, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2001.

55. July 2001 data from the Licheng District Industry and Commerce Bureau of Quanzhou indicate that 60 out of the 71 registered businesses and 49 out of the 52 registered businesses in Jubao Street and Wanshao Road respectively are private.

All photos are by the author, unless otherwise noted.