

Preservation in the Old City of Beijing: The “hutong-courtyard housing” system

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Introduction

For a half century, since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the history of Beijing has been marked by great changes and the protection of the Old City has also gone through a difficult road (fig. 1).

Liang Sicheng once pointed out: “Beijing is a well-planned city and its construction is based on careful plans. Its main feature and superiority lies in the integrity of its planning layout. The grand and strict pattern demonstrates the outstanding style in the distribution of space and in the arrangement of focal points.



Fig. 1: Lansat ETM image of Beijing Region, May 2003.



Fig. 2: Beijing city planning in 1949.



Fig. 3: Beijing in the Qing Dynasty. (Source: Xu Yang).

There is a reasonably and orderly planned street system, which also shows rich historic significance and artistic style apart from individual buildings in the city. Therefore, we must first of all recognize the excellent and inherent superiority of its key structure. The integrated architectural system of Beijing is the best preserved in the world, and is a masterpiece with traditional vitality and special value. This should be our basic understanding for Beijing city¹ (fig. 2).

From the research effort launched in 2003 on the Beijing Spatial Development Strategy, the concept of the integrated protection of the Old City of Beijing has been recognized as a common understanding. The Old City has an 8-km central axis, along which the city wall is arranged in the shape of the Chinese character “〇” and includes the imperial city of both the Ming and the Qing Dynasty, the Old City water system consisting of rivers and lakes, the road system resembling a chessboard and supplemented with a bystreet-hutong pattern, and the hutong-courtyard housing system creating an even and open space configuration. These, together with the townscape lines, views across the streets, traditional architectural colors and forms, ancient and rare trees, as well as special urban plantings and ecological environment, become the main objectives for the preservation of the Old City (figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8).

In comparison with all other items subject to protection of the Old City of Beijing city, the hutong-courtyard housing system – composed of the hutong pattern and the architecture type of hutong-courtyard housing – has always been the most difficult part



Fig. 4: Beijing – Qianmen shopping street at the end of the Qing Dynasty, 1900-1910.



Fig. 7: 1940s Beijing Xisi.



Fig. 5: Beijing Drum Tower in 1919, by Donald Meiny, US.



Fig. 8: 1940s Beijing Jingshan Park.



Fig. 6: Bird's eye view of the central axis of old Beijing, 1936. (Source: Wulf Diether Graf, 1936).

of the overall preservation effort. The reason behind this is that there are problems in terms of ideology, policies and organization system, and difficulties in financing the actual handling. However, the problems also reflect the dilemma faced by the

academic community in producing appropriate theories on protecting famous historical and cultural cities, and mirrors the current situation concerning available protection techniques.

As a contribution to the editing and revising of the Beijing Urban Master Plan (2004-2020), a study on the protection and development of the space configuration of the hutong system in the Old City of Beijing was launched in March 2004. In order to provide detailed reference information in planning the protection of the Old City as well as to emphasize the importance of the hutong system. The project – which proceeds to the revision of the Beijing Urban Master Plan parallel with the participation of the School of Architecture, Tsinghua University – focuses on the quantitative scientific analysis based on real data, on the architectural forms of the hutong system and the basic traditional housing units in the Old City through

- analysis of historical maps and other documents, and
- on-site investigations

with the adoption of advanced information retrieval technology such as the geographical information system (GIS) and remote sensing (RS) so as to identify the main elements of historical and cultural importance. In addition, the project also probes the basic living pattern of the hutong-courtyard housing system in the Old City, aiming at proposing suggestions for the protection of the hutong-courtyard system.

The present paper aims at briefing the reader on this overall effort focusing on the following:

- Understanding the hutong-courtyard housing system in the Old City;
- Assuming changes in the quantity of hutong in the old city;
- Analyzing the spatial configuration of the Old City and the current status of historical and cultural preservation areas;
- Evaluating the existing problems in the preservation of the hutong-courtyard system in the Old City; and,
- Presenting suggestions for the preservation and development of the hutong-courtyard system.

Understanding the hutong-courtyard housing system in the Old City of Beijing

The hutong is a basic space unit in ancient Chinese cities and its history can be traced back to “li”, “lv” or “lv-li” (a community of 25 families), the basic housing unit in the West Zhou Dynasty (about the 10th century BC), as well as to “li-fang” which appeared after the North Wei (AD 386-534).

The “li-fang” is a special form of space arrangement in ancient China and its formation is closely related with the agricultural production unit. Along with the separation of town and country, the li-fang system has been transplanted to towns and has become a basic urban housing and working unit.

During the North Song Dynasty (AD 960-1127), the city grew

quickly and its spatial layout became more open. The li-fang system was then gradually replaced by the newly emerging fang-xiang (lane) system.

It is generally accepted that the hutong in Beijing originates from the bystreet lane system in the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1280-1368). Through many years of evolution, the hutong changed from the original rectangle li-fang space into a narrow street path (figs. 9 and 10).

At present, when speaking about the hutong in the Old City of Beijing, one refers mainly to a street block surrounded by single-storey courtyard houses and their bounding walls on both sides. It serves as the road and as part of the public area in the community of bungalows and courtyard houses in the Old City (fig. 11). But, along with the strengthening of the area in terms of a variety of functions and transport, as well as with the evolution of the inhabitants' lifestyle, other space elements that used to emerge along with the traditional hutong, such as memorial archways (fencing), wells, small-scale temples and plants, have all disappeared. In addition, the meaning of the term “hutong” has also changed in modern Beijing dialect: it can be used to refer to the lanes and alleys of the traditional areas with bungalows and courtyard houses; it can also be used to indicate small lanes and narrow alleys in other built-up areas. According to the study of historical documents, three main features characterize the hutong in the Old City of Beijing:

- originally the hutong referred to a specific area in the planning

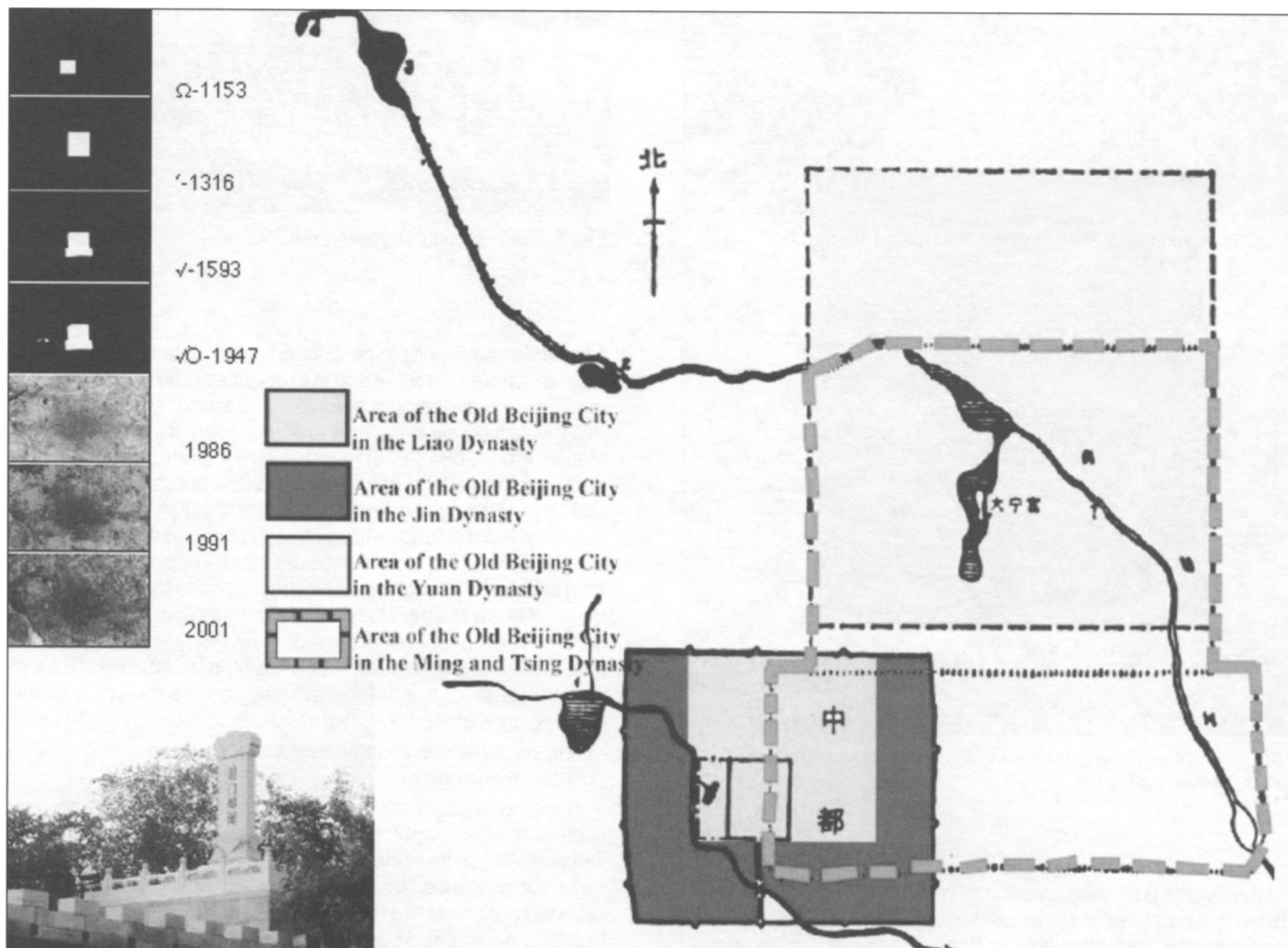


Fig. 9: Beijing – City in an evolution process.

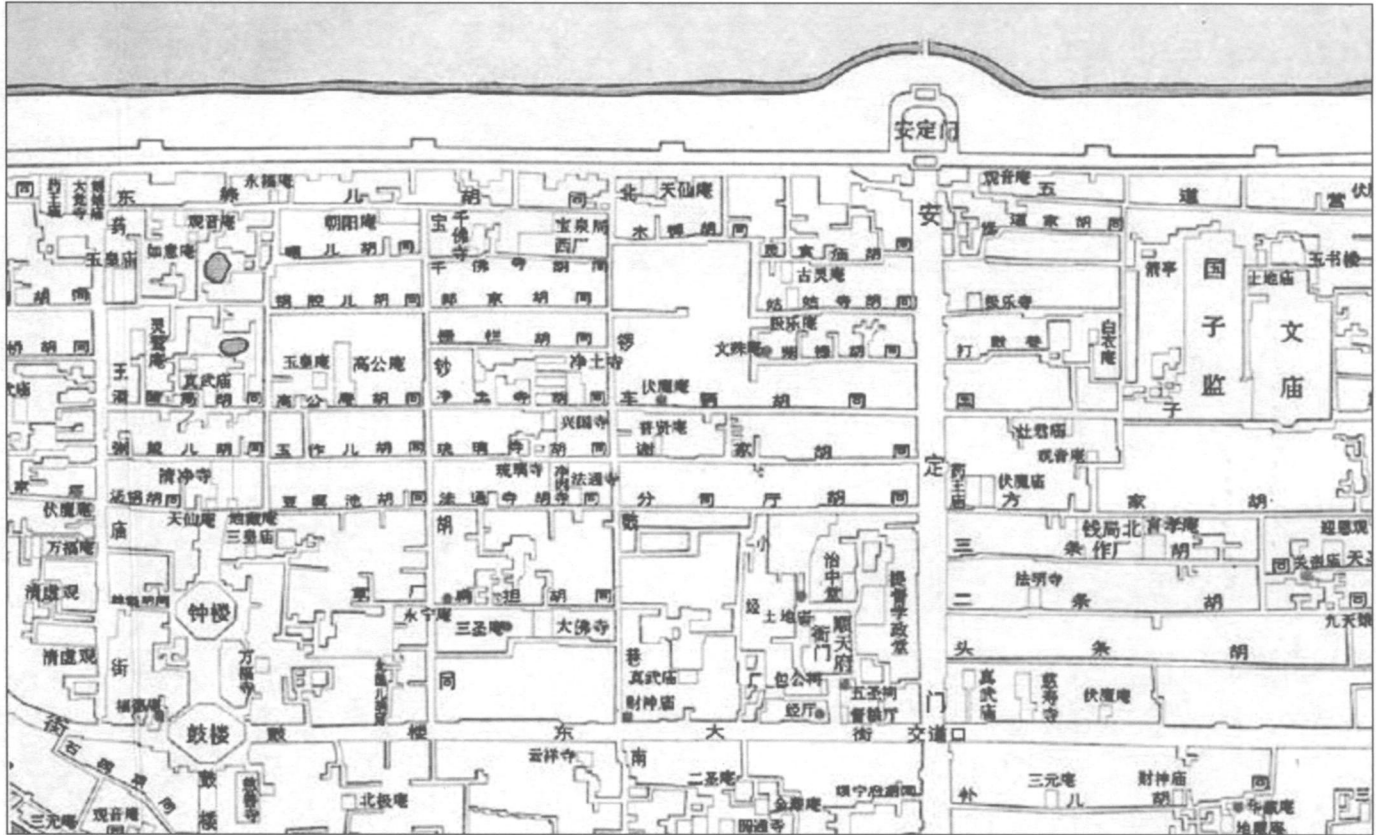


Fig. 10: Beijing inner city orderly planned street system.



Fig. 11a: Zhuan-ta Hutong (and the brick pagoda lane, in Yuan Dynasty), one of the oldest hutong in Beijing.

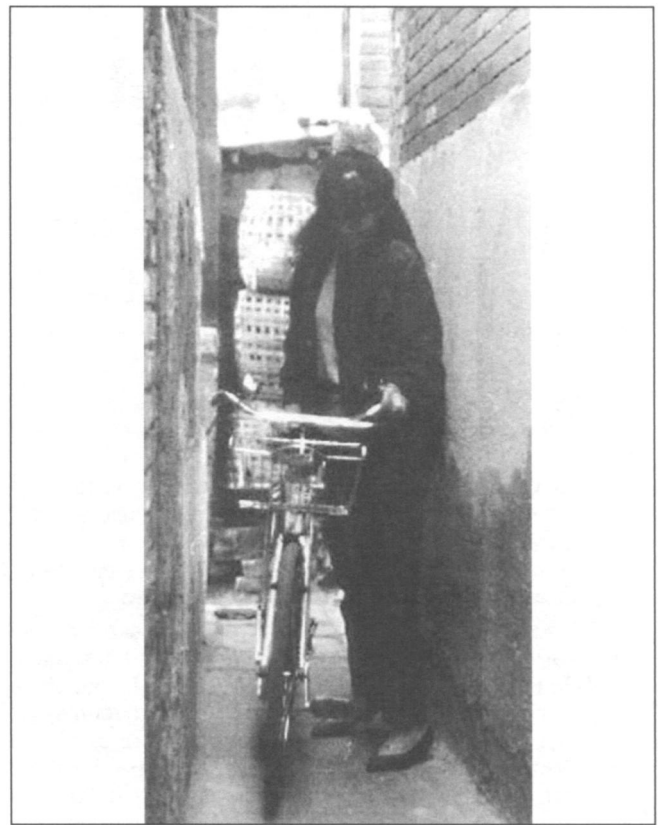


Fig. 11b: Xiao-la-ba Hutong, one of the narrowest – less than 0.6 m wide – hutong in Beijing.

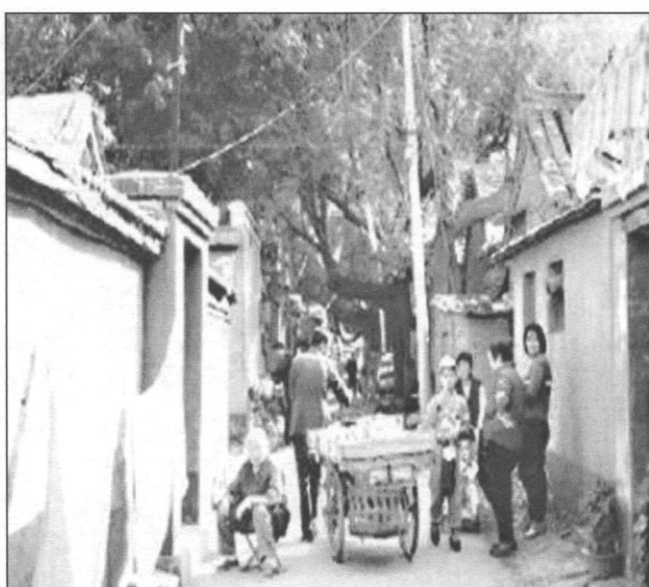


Fig. 12: Siheyuan – Black and white reproduction of a color painting and photographs of typical hutong-courtyard housing in the Old City of Beijing. (Source: The author).

of urban construction and it gradually turned to mean a lane or alley;

- depending on its location and position, the term indicates an area with inhabitants of an ethnic, professional, cultural background and social status; and,
- apart from its main function of transport, the term indicates an area with another important function: i.e. fire control.²

The Beijing-style courtyard house is a typical representative of residential units in North China. On the basis of the feudal patriarchal clan system and feudal ethical codes, the layout of the courtyard house is designed symmetrically, and its rooms and courtyard are arranged along the south-north center axis. In most cases, the main gate is located at the southeast corner and there is a screen wall facing the gate. The rooms, south of the front courtyard, are variably used to function as guest rooms, old-style private school, storeroom or dwelling places for men-servants. Through the second gate along the central axis from the front

courtyard, one enters the backyard which is bigger than the front one. The main house in the courtyard facing south is for the elder members of the family, while the wing-rooms in the east and west are for the younger generations. The rooms are connected by corridors and the main courtyard is also the center of the entire house. To the left and right of the main room, there are side rooms and small courtyards for the kitchen, storeroom and toilet. The house is surrounded by the back wall of rooms and the bounding wall; there is usually no window constructed to the outside. Instead, there are flowers, plants or potted trees and rockery arranged in the courtyard to create a quiet, comfortable living environment³ (fig. 12).

The single-storey courtyard unit, a fundamental element of the traditional Beijing-style hutong system, extends over a large area, and constitutes the main historical feature and one of the key composition elements of the traditional space configuration in the Old City. Therefore its function for composing the space is in-

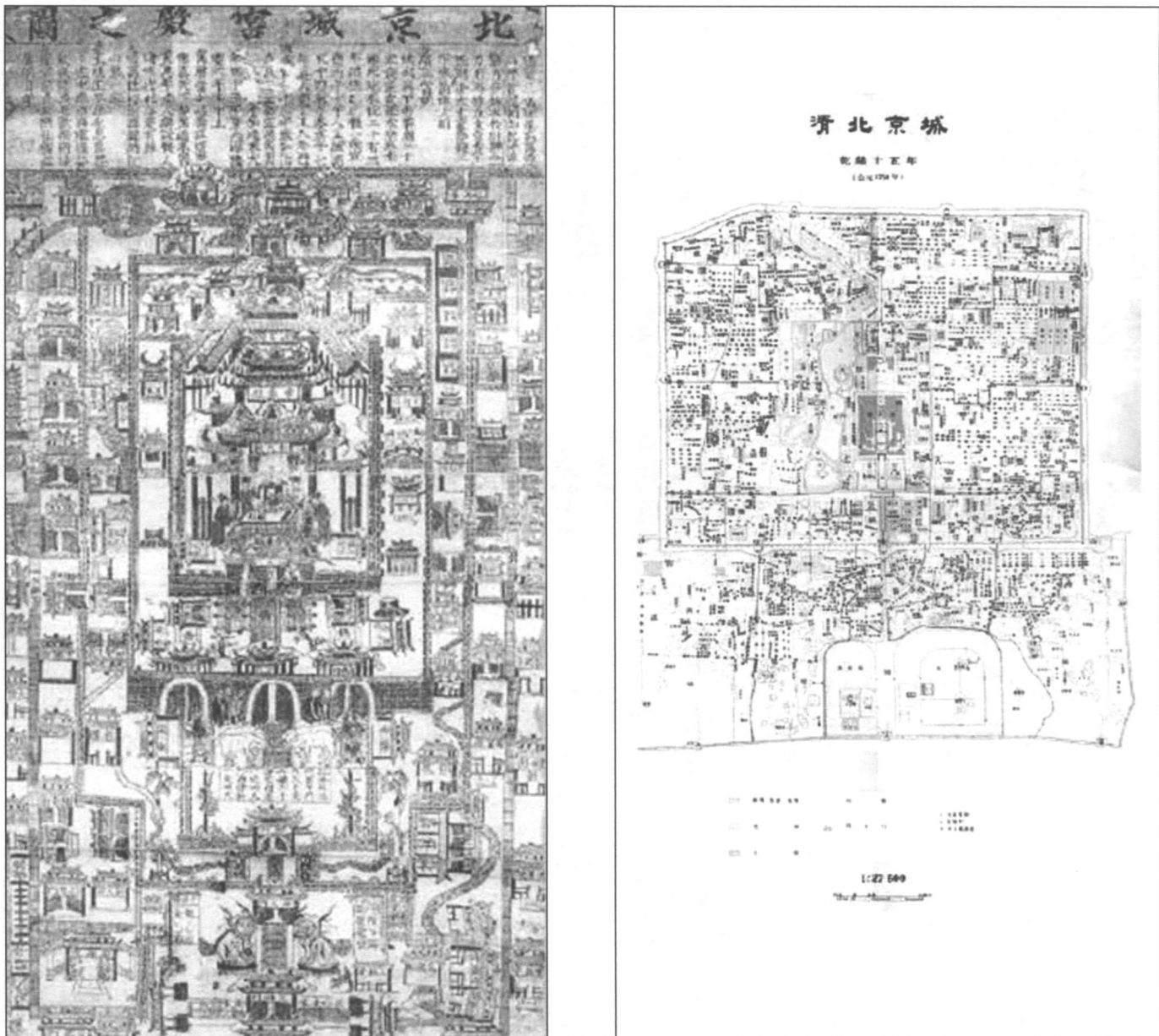


Fig. 13: The oldest Beijing city map.

dispensable and its preservation and development is an important part in the integral protection of the Old City.

Changes in size and extent of the hutong in the Old City

According to Xijin Zhi written by Xiong Mengxiang at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the main streets of Dadu, the capital city of the Yuan Dynasty, are 24 paces wide (about 37.2 meters), the small streets are 12 paces wide (18.6 meters), the huo-xiang (fire lanes) are 9 paces wide (13.95 meters), and the hutong are 6 paces wide (9.24 meters). There is no specific record on the extent of both main street and small street; the author merely mentions that there were 384 huo-xiang (fire lanes) and 29 hutong. Some scholars believe that the Han people lived in huo-xiang, while the Mongolians lived in the hutong.

At that time, streets, lanes and hutong in Beijing are relatively wide – the distance is basically a large courtyard house with a three-gates pattern.

During the Ming Dynasty, due to the development of cities and the influx of a large number of incomers, the open ground between streets, lanes and hutong was used to construct more house-units and a small lane which was necessary for access. Therefore, a large number of anonymous small hutong emerged within the area of originally large hutong-courtyards. According to the local people, there are 3,600 famous hutong in Beijing, yet those with no name are countless as ox hair (fig. 13):

- Up to the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there were 459 hutong, and 711 streets and lanes, totaling 1,170.
- According to statistics at the end of the Qing Dynasty, there were 992 hutong and the total number of streets, lanes and hutong was 2,190.



Fig. 14: Beijing street map in 1949.

- In 1949, there were 1,330 hutong with names in the urban area of Beijing (fig. 14).

In 2004, the Beijing Institute of Surveying and Mapping carried out an investigation on the changes of the hutong in the Old City of Beijing by defining the hutong as the road or lane, the width of which is 20 meters (inclusive) or less. According to the survey, the number of hutong in the Old City decreased from 3,050 in 1949 to 1,571 at the end of 2003, among which 606 are located in the historical and cultural preservation area in the Old City. From 1949 to 2003, there were 40 newly constructed hutong and 839 hutong were demolished, most of which were removed due to large-scale reconstruction projects from 1990 to 2003. The main reason for removing hutong-courtyard houses in the Old

City was to reconstruct dangerous buildings and relocate the inhabitants (figs. 15 and 16).

At present, part of the original single-storey courtyard housing in the Old City has been replaced by modern buildings, resulting in the loss of any foundation regarding the existence of the hutong system. In order to protect the style and features of the ancient capital, the Beijing municipal government has chosen 30 areas having for their main construction form a "hutong courtyard" as "historical and cultural preservation areas." This policy contributes to the reservation of a large amount of unique or rare information, and guarantees the continuous and further development of the historical and cultural tradition in the arrangement of urban space in Beijing.

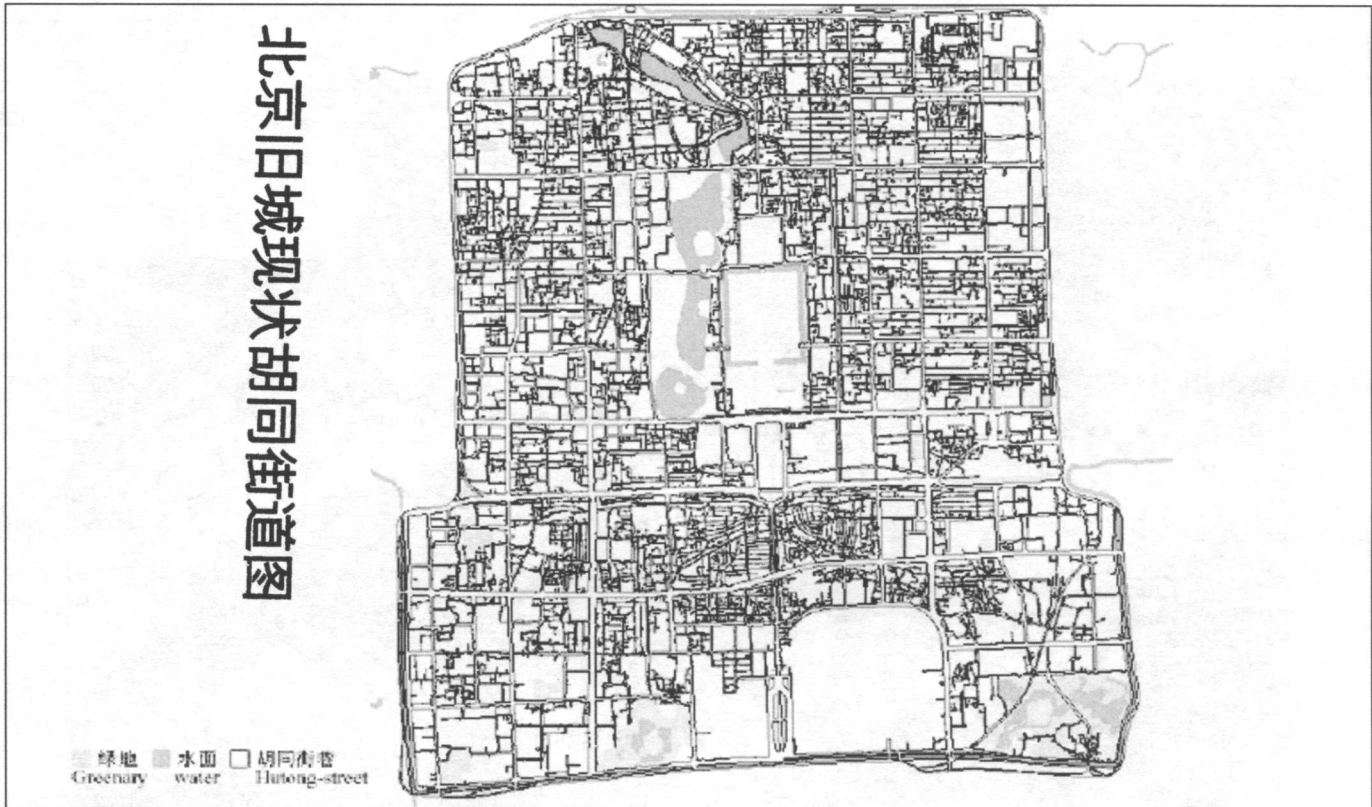


Fig. 15: Beijing Old City street map in 2000.

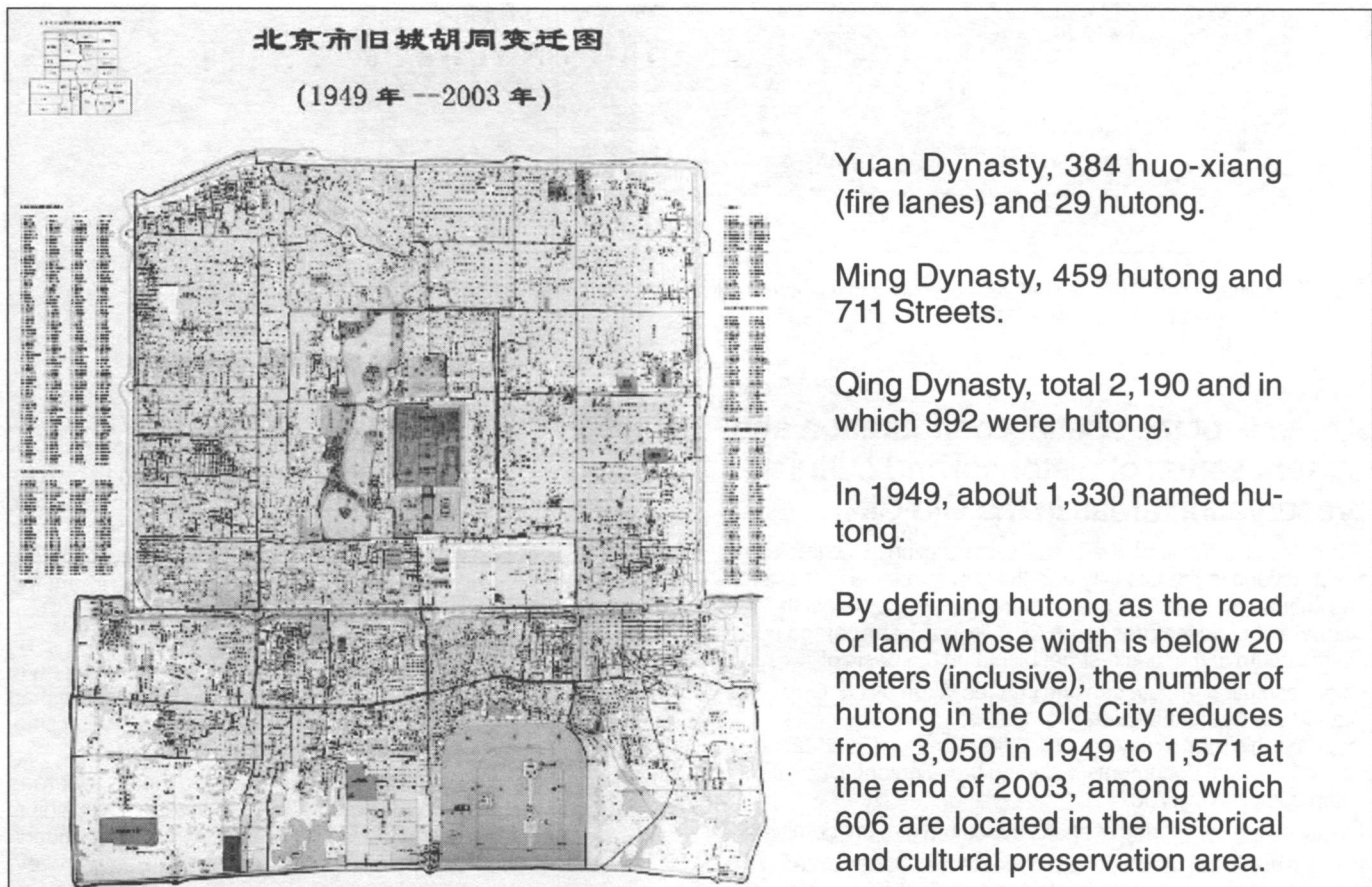


Fig. 16: Beijing hutong changes between 1949 and 2003.

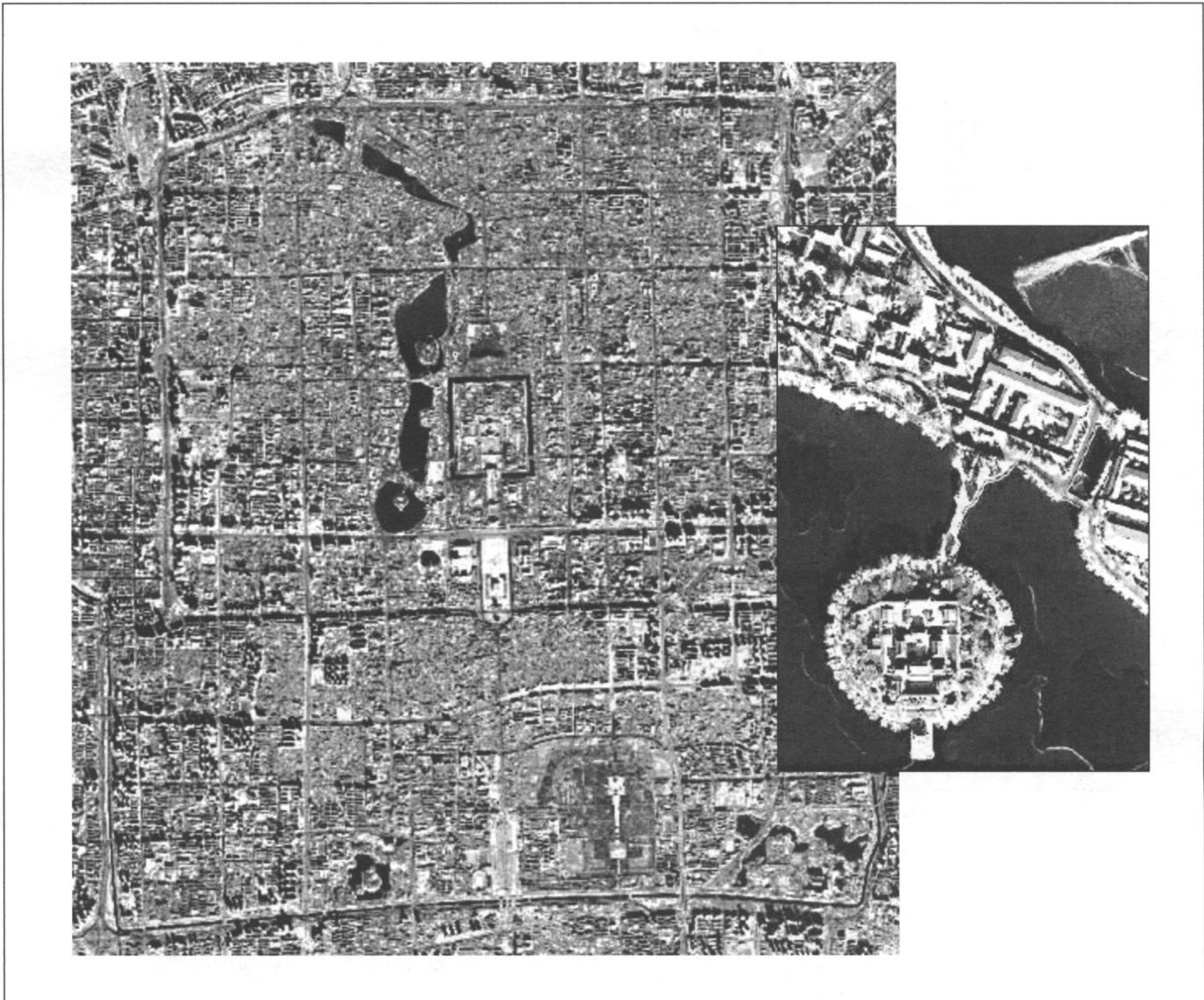


Fig. 17: Beijing – High resolution remote sensing images taken by US QuickBird satellite on December 12, 2003.

Analysis of the spatial configuration and current status of historical and cultural preservation areas in the Old City

In order to understand the spatial configuration of the traditional constructions in the Old City and the current status of historical and cultural preservation areas, a grading and review of the traditional style and features of the Old City has been carried out in the minimum unit of block (street block) on the basis of

- high resolution remote sensing images taken by US QuickBird satellite in December 2003 (fig. 17);
- topographic map to a scale of 1:2,000 compiled in 2002; and,
- other historical documents including the Qianlong Capital City Map compiled in 1750.

The following categories of spatial types have been identified:

- **The traditional block street** which refers to those areas within which the size and modes retain the original style of the capital city during the Ming and the Qing Dynasty and where the main

construction body consists of the traditional courtyard house. This category may also refer to those areas where the renovated part is less than one third of the original construction. The category also includes traditional historical and geographical scenic spots such as Shichahai, Beihai, Zhongnanhai, Taoranting Park, and Longtan Lake, as well as block streets with a cultural relic protection unit, such as the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen, the Temple of Heaven and royal mansion, official residence, temples and former residences of famous persons (fig. 18).

- **The block street with traditional and modern mixing style** which refers to the areas where the renovated part is more than one third yet less than two thirds of the original construction (fig. 19).

- **The modern block street** which refers to the street areas where the renovated part is more than two thirds of the original construction in size and modes. This category may be further divided into modern and contemporary historical buildings or revolutionary historical buildings that are listed as cultural relic protection units such as the block street of Dongjiao Minxiang, the

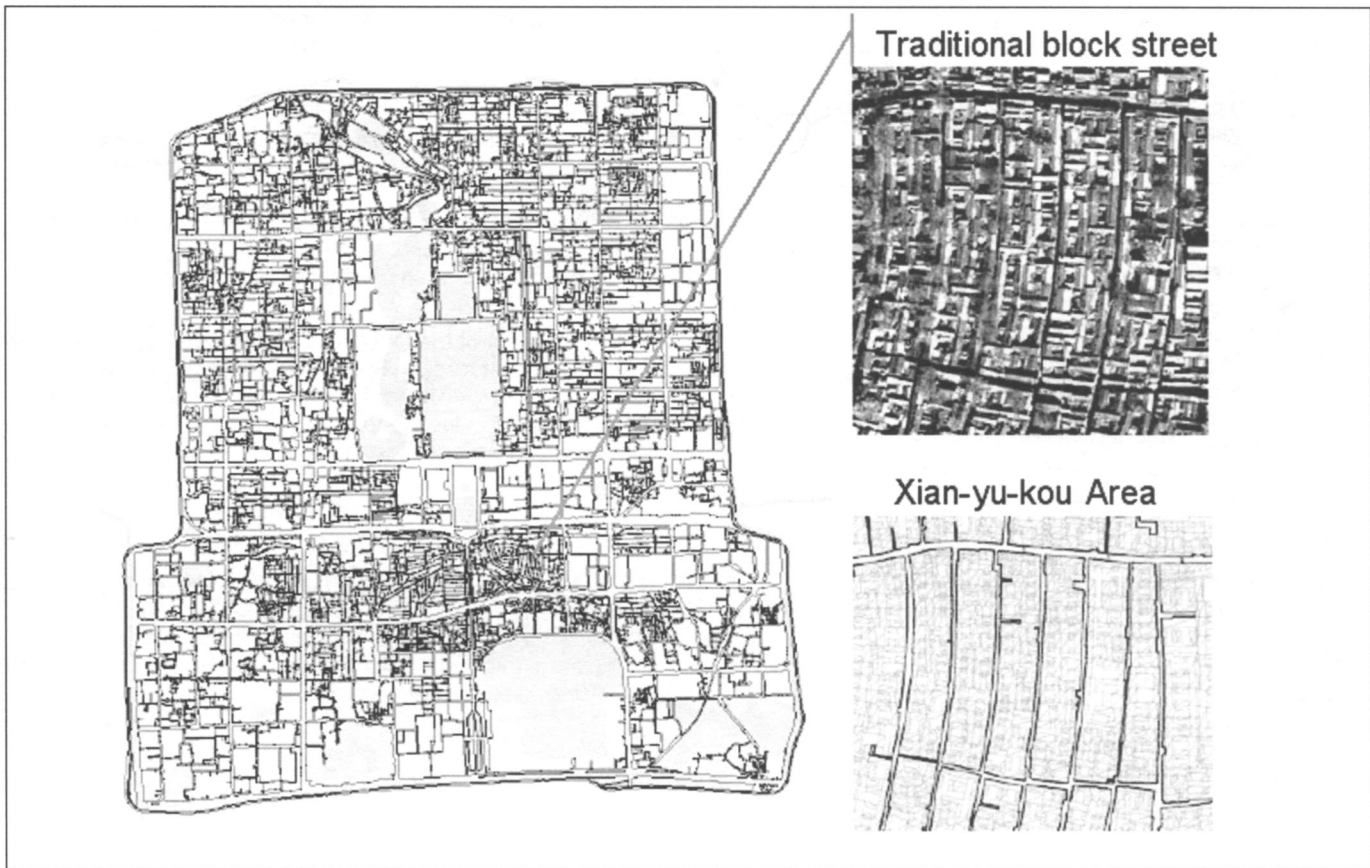


Fig. 18: Beijing – Traditional block street in Xian-yu-kou area.

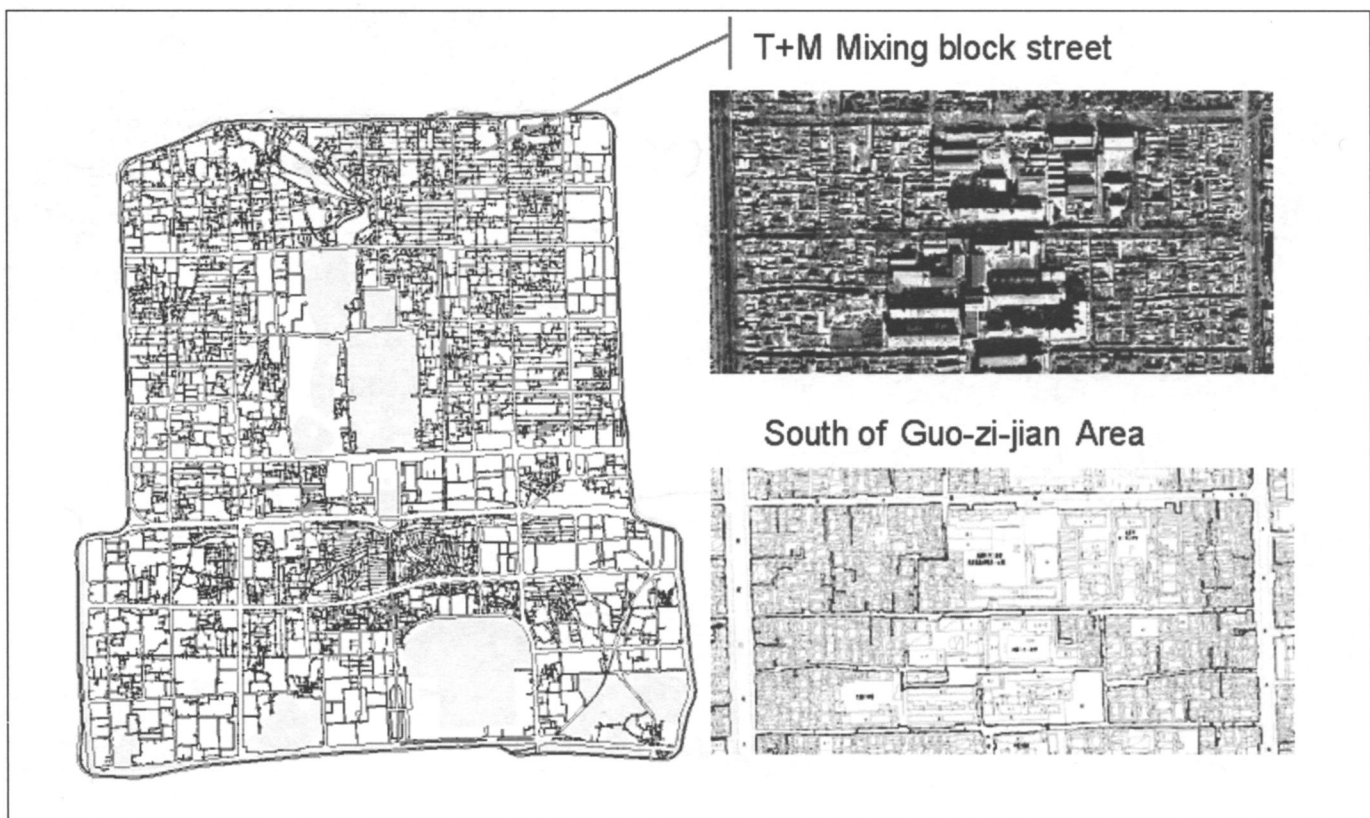


Fig. 19: Beijing – T+M Mixing block street, south of Guo-zi-jian area.

old Administration Building of Duan Qirui, the People's Congress Hall, the Monument to the People's Heroes and other modern block streets (fig. 20).

- **The green area and water area** which refer to public green spaces and lakes of a certain scale constructed after 1949. This category also includes isolated areas along the railway with public facilities.

- **Area for road and transport facilities** which includes hutong, streets, lanes, squares, and other transport facilities such as railway stations and railroads.

The principles for deciding on the boundaries of the minimum block street in the Old City are as follows:

- In the areas that have not been renovated, boundary is the edge of the buildings;
- The sidewalk is part of the road and is not calculated as part of a street block;
- In cases where new constructions are built behind existing original boundary lines,
 - if there is obvious and continuous fence or bonding wall clearly marking the interior using space, then the outside edge of the fence or bonding wall serves as the boundary line;
 - if there is no fence or bonding wall but there is semi-open space created by a flower bed or shop front, then the boundary line should be drawn by taking the flower bed or shop front as reference points.

- Roads within community or large-scale building groups are or can be ignored as they are neither part of the urban road system nor boundary lines of minimum blocks.

According to the satellite images taken in December 2003,

- the total area of the Old City is 62.5 sq.km, of which
- 19.83 percent maintains the traditional architectural style perfectly,
- 16.79 percent has mixed features of both traditional and modern characteristics, and
- 4.08 percent are urban green areas and water areas.

In other words,

- **40.70 percent of the Old City in Beijing maintains its traditional architectural style of the hutong-courtyard system;**
- 20.59 percent is given for the road system and squares: and,
- 38.60 percent is the modern area with accomplished modern constructions⁴ (fig. 21 and table 1).

Existing problems in the preservation of the hutong-courtyard system in the Old City

The current traditional hutong-courtyard system in the Old City are discussed in the following two categories:

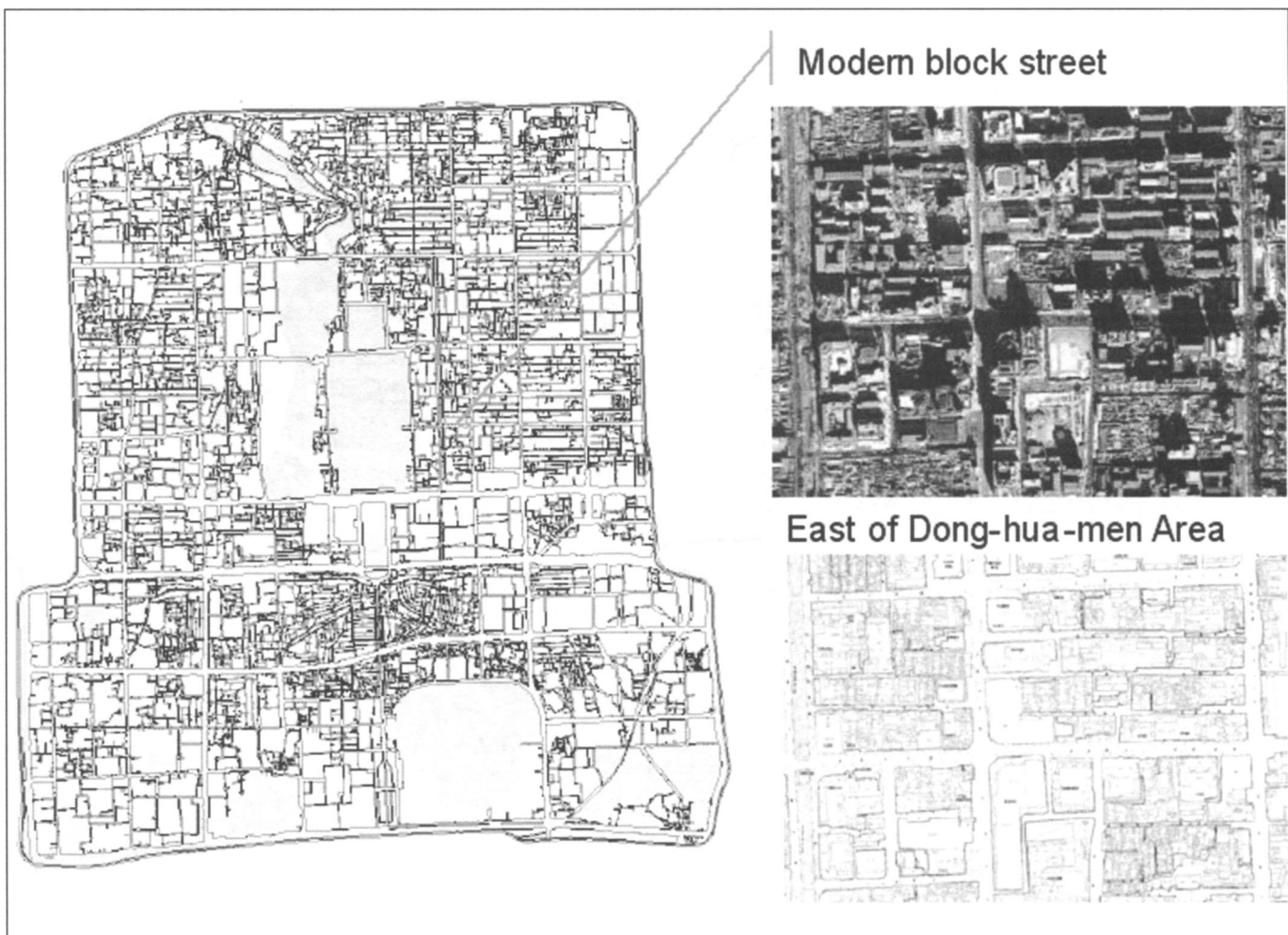


Fig. 20: Beijing – Modern block street, east of Dong-hua-men area.

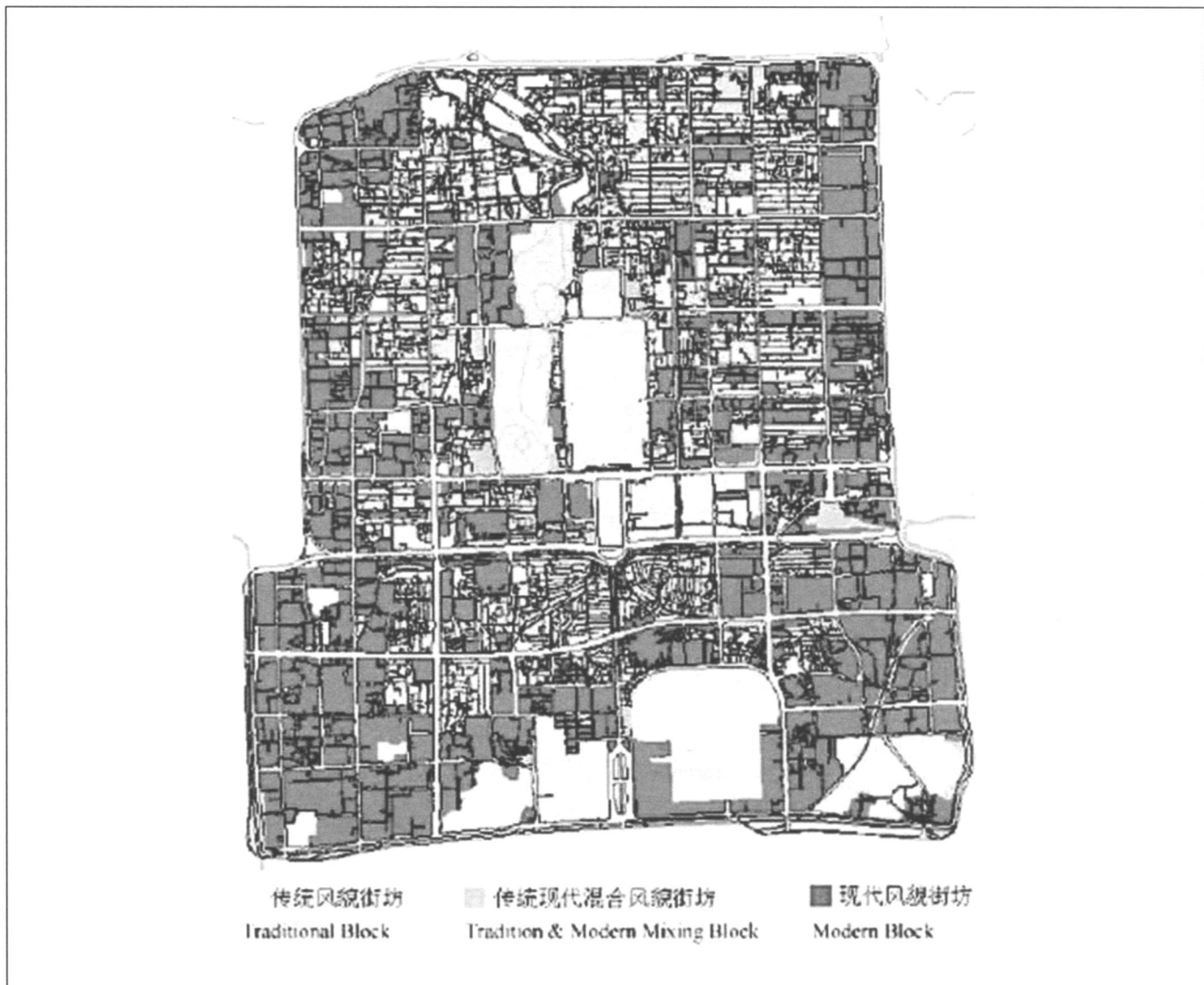


Fig. 21: Beijing Old City present spatial configuration form category map.

Table 1
Spatial configuration form of Old City in Beijing

Categories of Spatial Types		Area (ha)	Percentage
Traditional Block Streets		1,239.67	19.83%
Traditional and Modern Mixing Block Streets		1,049.09	16.79%
Modern Block Streets	Modern Block Streets	2,110.60	33.77%
	Cultural relic protection unit in modern block streets	308.45	4.94%
	Subtotal	2,419.05	38.70%
Green Area and Water Area		255.03	4.08%
Area for Road and Transport Facilities		1,287.16	20.59%
Total Area of Old City		6,250.00	100.00%

北京旧城道路与历史文化保护区存在矛盾



---- Conflict of roads with protected units.

Fig. 22: Beijing – The deciding and management of historical and cultural preservation areas has to compromise with the demand of city development: ---- Conflict of roads with protected units.

北京旧城控道路与文保位冲突示意

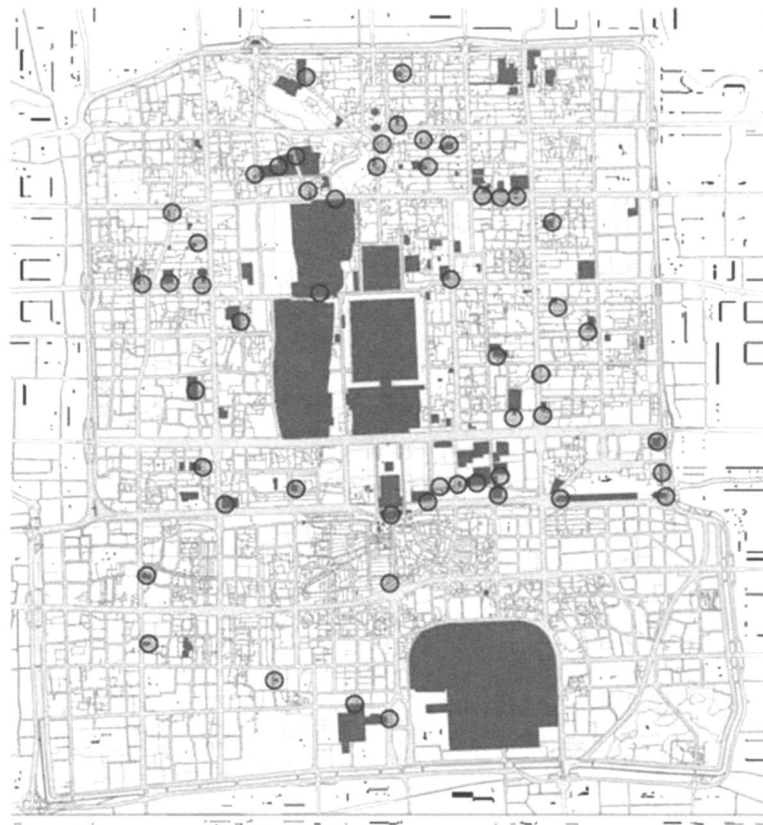


Fig. 23: Beijing – The deciding and management of historical and cultural preservation areas has to compromise with the demand of city development.

- those located within the historical and cultural reservation areas; and,
- those located in the areas that have not been renovated – i.e. in the “dangerous housing areas”.

The main problems for the preservation of the hutong-courtyard system in the Old City may be summarized in the following five:

- compromise between preservation and demand for development;
- disappearance of traditional features in historical and cultural preservation areas;
- disappearance of traditional spatial configuration in non-historical and non-cultural preservation areas;
- construction programs and technical specifications for urban infrastructure not applicable to the historical and cultural preservation areas; and,
- isolation between the administration of the preservation of cultural relics and the administration of historical and cultural preservation areas.

Let us be more specific on each of the above problems.

• **Problems faced by those deciding and managing historical and cultural preservation areas when having to compromise with the demand for development:** The current irrational development within the historical and cultural preservation

areas is due to the fact that decision and management of these areas had to compromise with development in the areas, resulting in their inadequate protection. Some preservation areas have failed to control, according to the demand for protection, new construction projects which follow the high intensity development pattern of the surrounding areas and focus on profit making, directly destroying the environment of the traditional hutong-courtyard space (figs. 22 and 23).

For example, the high building groups constructed to the south of the Second Ring Road within the Old City and their negative influence on the historical and cultural preservation area of North Luogu Xiang, Guo-zi-jian (the Imperial College) and Yonghe Gong Palace.

• **Problems that derive from the disappearance of traditional features in historical and cultural preservation areas:**

Decisions on the scope of historical and cultural preservation areas does not stop the destructive development of the areas. Construction without consent and small-scale demolishing projects continuously reduce the number of typical traditional hutong-courtyard blocks with distinct features of the Ming and the Qing Dynasties (fig. 24). Example, the large-scale construction project that we identified during a recent investigation, being carried out along the Xiao-qiao-bei-he-yan of the South Changjie to Xihuamen Street. The construction of governmental adminis-

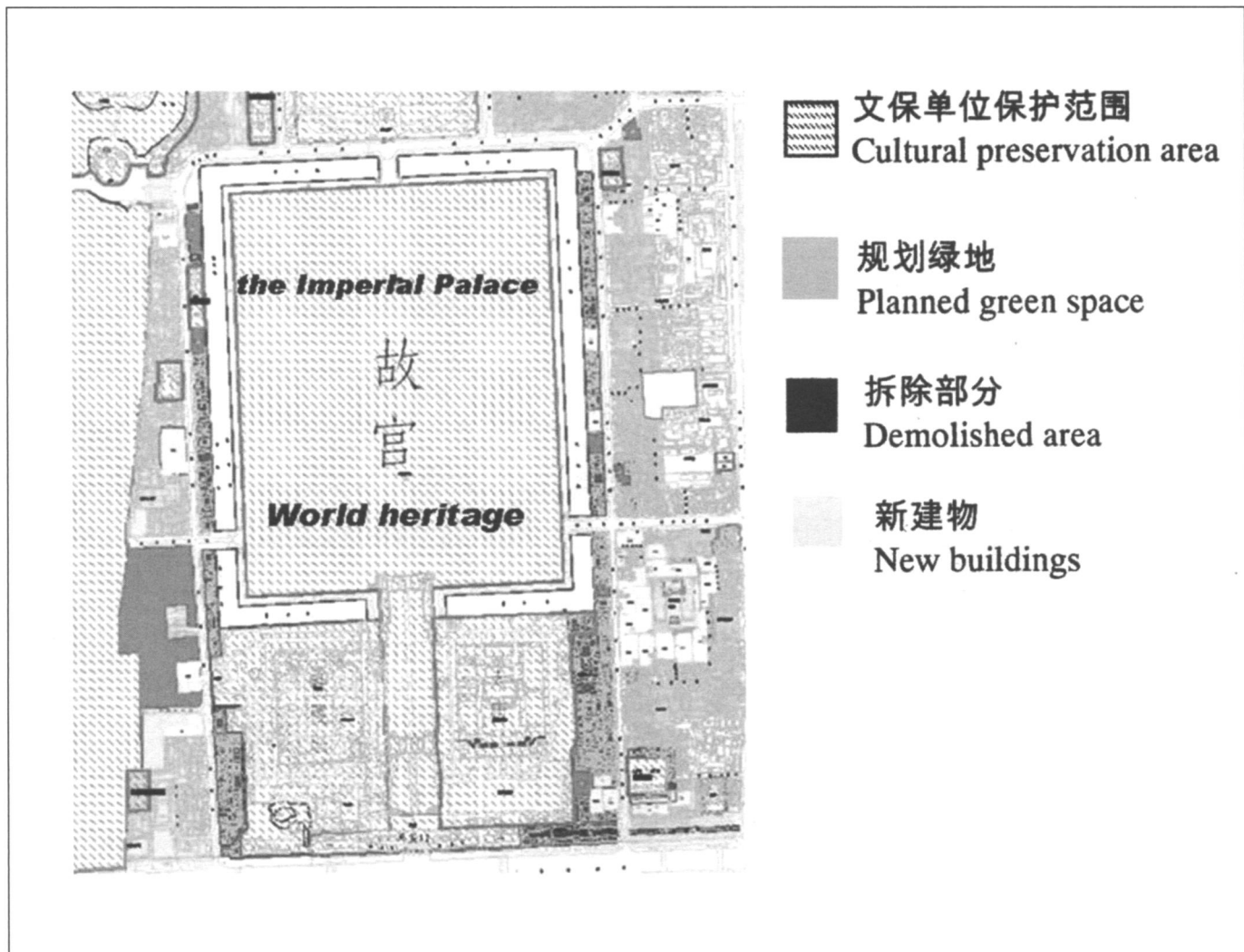


Fig. 24: Beijing – The traditional features of historical and cultural preservation areas are disappearing.



Fig. 25: Beijing – The traditional features of historical and cultural preservation areas are disappearing: Just in the World Heritage protect buffer zone.

tration buildings which, according to both on-site investigation and remote sensing pictures, has led to the demolition of 7-8 hutong (figs. 25 and 26).

Another example is the on-going expansion project of the Supreme People's Procuratorate main office building. The construction area includes Jiangan Hutong formed during the Qing Dynasty, the Chen Duxiu former residence, a cultural relic unit under municipal protection, and another one that has been listed as a unit under temporary protection. The new building project is to demolish all the old buildings and to replace them with modern constructions that do not match the traditional style of the area. The project destroys many historical buildings and, worse than that, it destroys the traditional hutong-courtyard space configuration with a continuous history starting from the Ming Dynasty (fig. 27).

● **Problems deriving from the quickly disappearing traditional spatial configuration in non-historical and cultural preservation areas:** Except for the courtyard houses with designated certificate plates, the traditional hutong-courtyard areas located outside the historical and cultural preservation areas are not protected by applicable measures or regulations and during the wave of the Old City reconstruction they are really vulnerable. According to the investigation made by the Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau in 2003, the main characteristics of the courtyard houses in the Old City include high population density, severe damage to the constructions, inadequacy of the modern facilities of gas and heating. The investigation also indicates that the annual damage rate of the courtyard houses in the Old City is 15 percent, and that of the courtyard houses with certificate plates is also as high as 10 percent.⁵

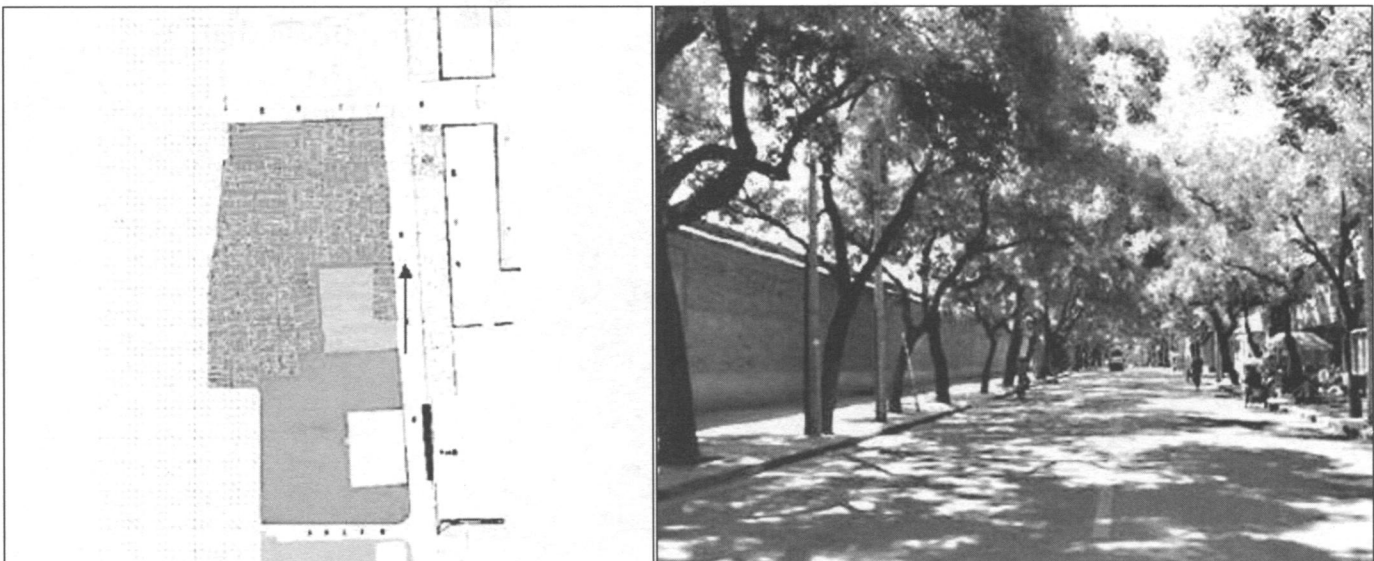


Fig. 26: Beijing – The traditional features of historical and cultural preservation areas are disappearing: In recent investigation, there is a large-scale construction project carried out along the Xiao-qiao-bei-he-yan of the Nan-changjie to Xihuamen Street. The construction of governmental administration buildings leads to the demolishing of 7-8 hutong.

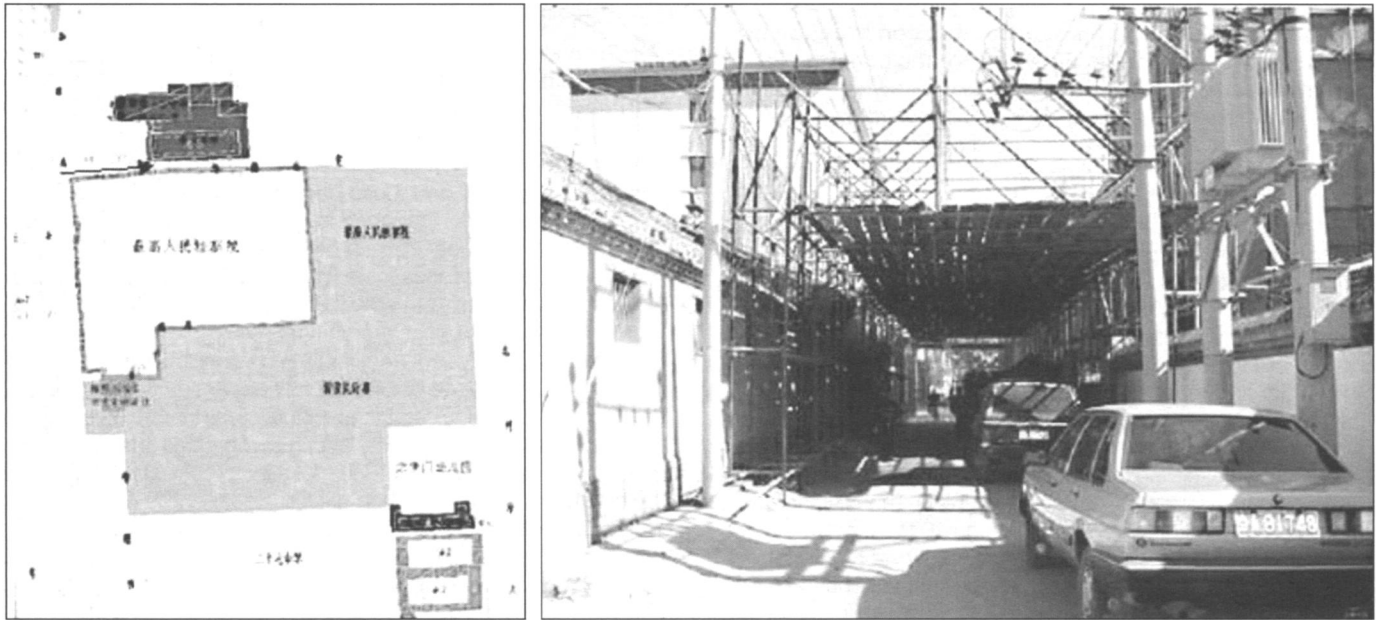


Fig. 27: Beijing – The traditional features of historical and cultural preservation areas are disappearing: The on-going expansion project of the Supreme People's Procuratorate main office building. The new building project demolished all the old buildings and replaced them with modern constructions that do not match the traditional style of the area. The project destroys the traditional hutong-courtyard space configuration with a continuous history starting from the Ming Dynasty.

During the reconstruction projects, more and more courtyard houses are being demolished and the hutong system in these areas actually no longer exists. For example, during the recon-

struction of the east area of Jiaodaokou in the Dongcheng District, large and high residential building groups are arranged at the center of the historical and cultural preservation area (fig. 28).

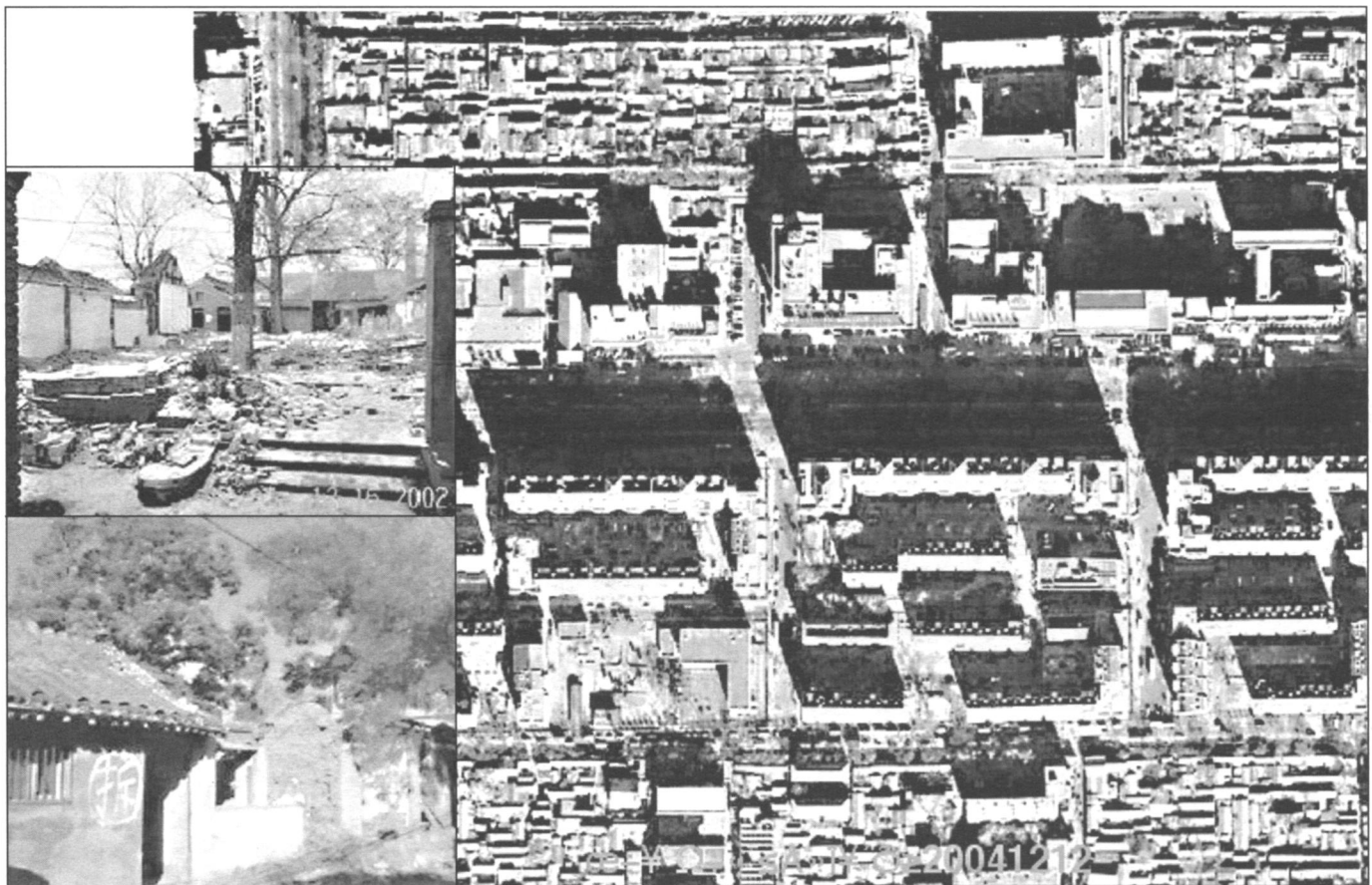


Fig. 28: Beijing – The traditional spatial configuration is quickly disappearing in non-historical and cultural preservation areas.

● **Problems deriving from the fact that construction programs and technical specifications for the construction of urban infrastructure are not applicable to the historical and cultural preservation areas:**

One of the most destructive current actions for the historical and cultural preservation areas in the Old City now is the construction of road systems. The original overall urban plan, the plan of the road system and the specifications of the construction control are compiled without considering the integral protection of the Old City of Beijing. Based on the uniform technical specifications for the construction of a new area, many preservation areas are split by new roads and streets. The proportion of the road surface within the preservation areas increases inappropriately, resulting in the shrinking of the actual area under protection, destroying the traditional architectural structure of the area and causing irremediable damage to the entire hutong-courtyard system in the Old City.

For example, during the recent project of expanding the road width of the old Gulou Street within the Shichahai historical and cultural preservation area, the buildings 10 to 15 meters away from both sides of the road were removed, and most of these buildings were traditional architecture and courtyard houses. The total area of demolishing is larger than 1.5 hectares and the ac-

tual impact area is beyond this shocking figure (fig. 29).

● **Problems deriving from the fact that cultural relic preservation administrations and historical and cultural preservation areas are isolated from each other:**

The preservation of the Old City is restricted within the historical and cultural preservation areas. This tends to lead to misunderstanding among people, who think that only those buildings or areas with the indication of "preservation" need to be protected, while the need for emphasis on the concept of protecting the integral Old City is ignored. What also tends to be ignored is the fact that the general texture and layout pattern of the Old City are indispensable elements of the historical and cultural heritage. When preservation areas and relevant administrations are isolated and the traditional buildings are displayed only as "antiquities" for visiting and not as buildings serving an actual community to live in, people will be cut off from history and the progress of the cultural development of the city, which will make the preservation work more difficult. How to initiate the public to treasure the historical and cultural tradition of a city, how to activate the historical and cultural protection areas under the strict control of preservation, are all key topics for research on historical and cultural preservation in the future (fig. 30).

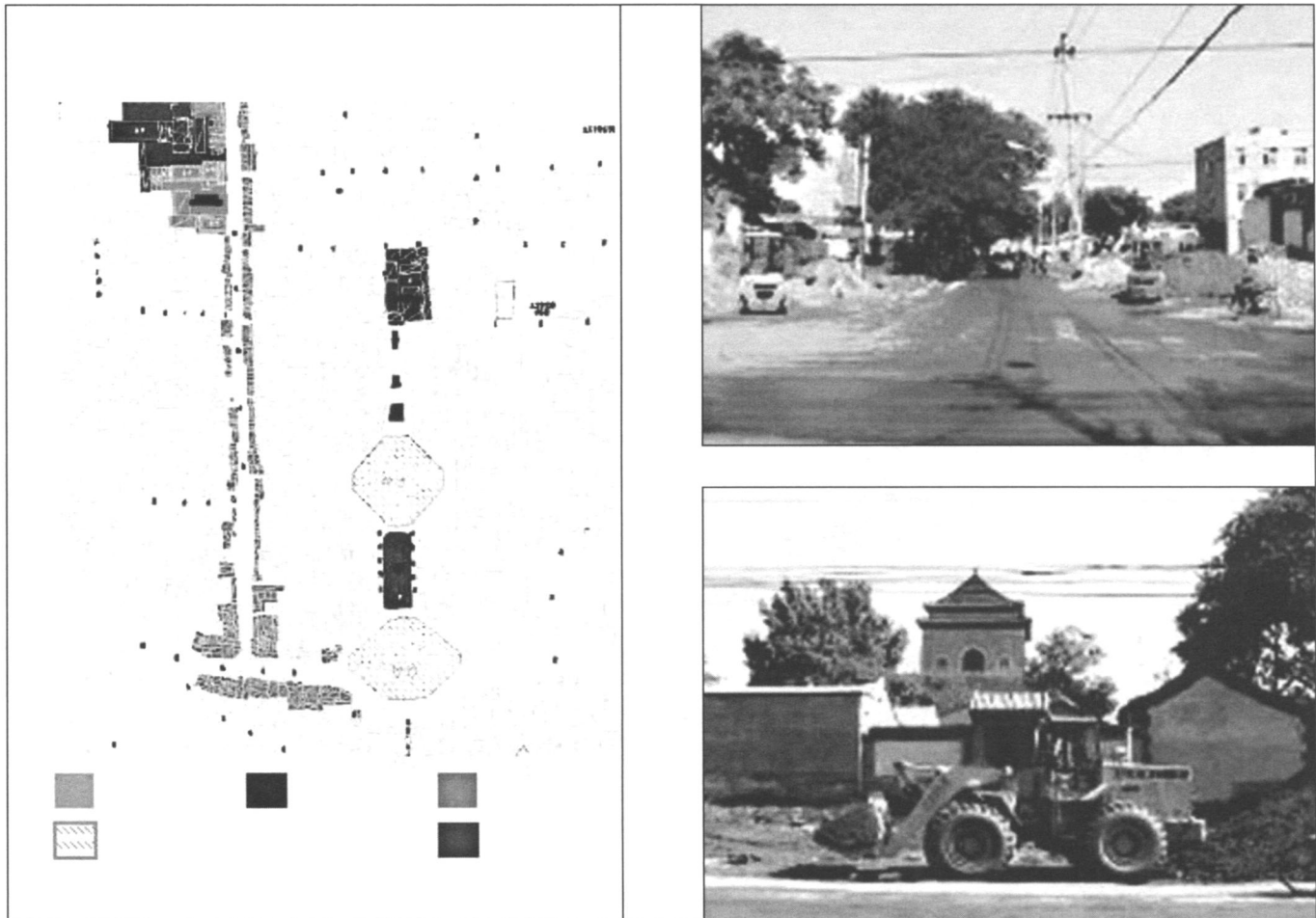


Fig. 29: Beijing – The construction program and technical specifications for the construction of urban infrastructure are not applicable to the historical and cultural preservation areas. During the recent project of expanding the road width of the old Gulou Street within the Shichahai historical and cultural preservation area, the existing buildings 10-15 meters away from both sides of the road were removed, and most of these buildings are traditional architecture and courtyard houses. The total area of demolition is more than 1.5 hectares and the actual impact area is beyond the shocking figure.

Suggestions for the preservation and development of the hutong-courtyard system in the Old City

On the basis of many years of knowledge gleaned from both research and practice, the following recommendations for action acquire priority:

- deciding on the list of buildings within the preservation areas needing to be renovated;
- planning and designing the change of the land use function in the Old City;
- expanding the historical and cultural preservation area and further increasing the number of areas for specific work; and,
- adjusting the land division and size in the plans of historical and cultural preservation areas.

In more specific terms, the above recommendations imply the following action:

- **Deciding on the list of buildings within the preservation areas needing to be renovated, remodeled, removed or destroyed:** Taking into consideration the fact that a large number

of non-traditional, mixed style of traditional and modern, as well as modern style constructions already exist within the existing historical and cultural preservation areas, and many of them have a harmful impact and a negative influence on the preservation of the traditional hutong-courtyard spatial configuration within the preservation areas, there is an urgent need for the preparation of a plan of action with approved design standards for each category of architectural form. Furthermore, a list shall be compiled of a category of buildings to be demolished, or moved to other places or be reconstructed. This category of buildings and constructions should include:

- those having a destructive impact on the structure of the traditional hutong;
- those having a destructive impact on the traditional architectural structure; and,
- those destroying the historical sites and views of the city;

and improvement plans for special action must be undertaken for each case in different stages.

The Preservation Plan for the Imperial City of Beijing produced in 2002 by the Beijing Institute of City Planning and Designing is a good beginning for the general preservation effort and many



Fig. 30: Beijing – Cultural relic preservation administrations and historical and cultural preservation areas are isolated. The preservation of the Old City is restricted within the historical and cultural preservation areas and this tends to lead to misunderstanding among people, who think that only those buildings or areas with the title of "preservation" need to be protected and emphasized, while the concept of protecting the integral Old City is ignored.

specific methods included in the report shall be adopted and promoted in the overall protection of the Old City in the future (figs. 31 and 32).

● **Planning and designing the change of the land use function in the Old City:** According to the general protection plans, the action on buildings and areas that should be demolished, moved, or renovated will be undertaken in different stages. This also implies changes in the land use function of the original sites, and development of public areas, parks, green areas and other public facilities including travel service centers, but also the reconstruction of a small number of historical public buildings, new courtyard houses, and ordinary residential buildings with courtyards (fig. 33).

The renovation projects must be in harmony with the surrounding environment and all measures must be taken for damages for the second time to be avoided. The objective of changing the land use must be to promote modern blocks and streets without traditional features, and to improve the human settlement environment by restoring traditional features and the spatial con-

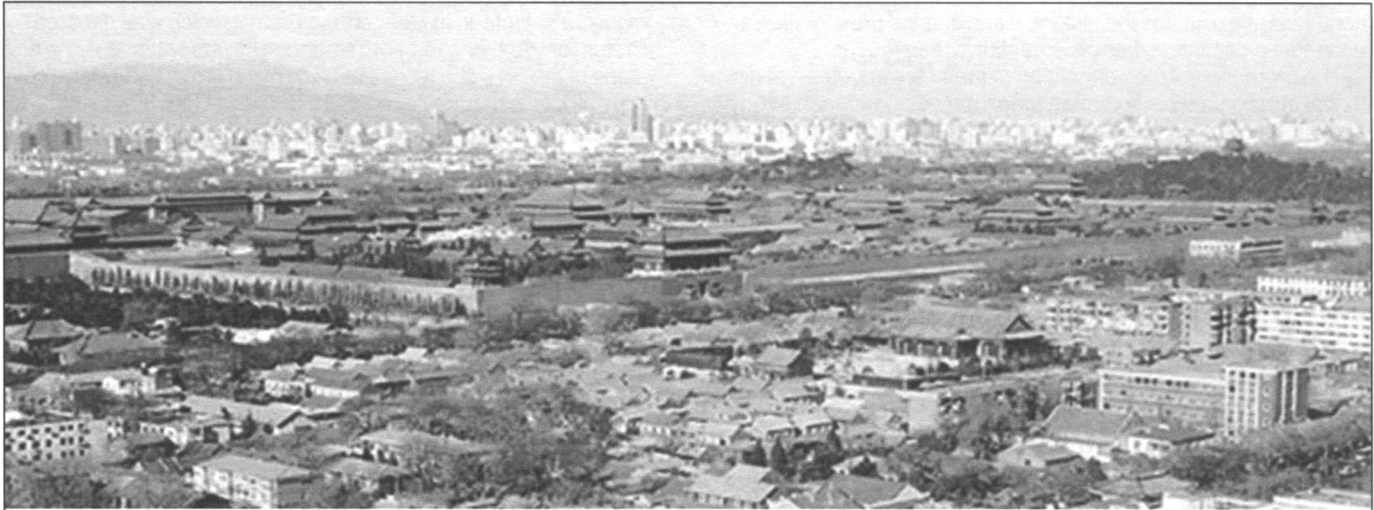
figuration of the hutong-courtyard system, and continuing the activation of historical and cultural heritage within the preservation areas, with the parallel development of the surrounding areas with traditional features so as to finally achieve integral preservation.

● **Expanding the historical and cultural preservation area and increasing their number:** In order to reach a better and integral preservation of the Old City, one needs to redefine the historical and cultural preservation, the key preservation areas and also the areas of various other kinds in which construction must be strictly supervised.

At present, the historical and cultural preservation areas cover a limited space and the connection between these areas is inadequate. To achieve integral preservation, now is the time to modestly increase the number of preservation areas and to further expand the total area, trying to establish a proper connection between the isolated preservation areas and the broader urban area, the way this has been done in the plan for the preservation of the Imperial City. In addition, the traditional hutong-



Fig. 31: Beijing – To decide on the list of buildings within the preservation areas needing to be renovated: Beijing Imperial City Protection Plan.



- (1) To decide the short term, middle term and long term preservation plans;
- (2) To decide the action plan of removed building, renewal area and renovations.

Fig. 32: Beijing – To decide on the list of buildings within the preservation areas needing to be renovated: "A black name list."

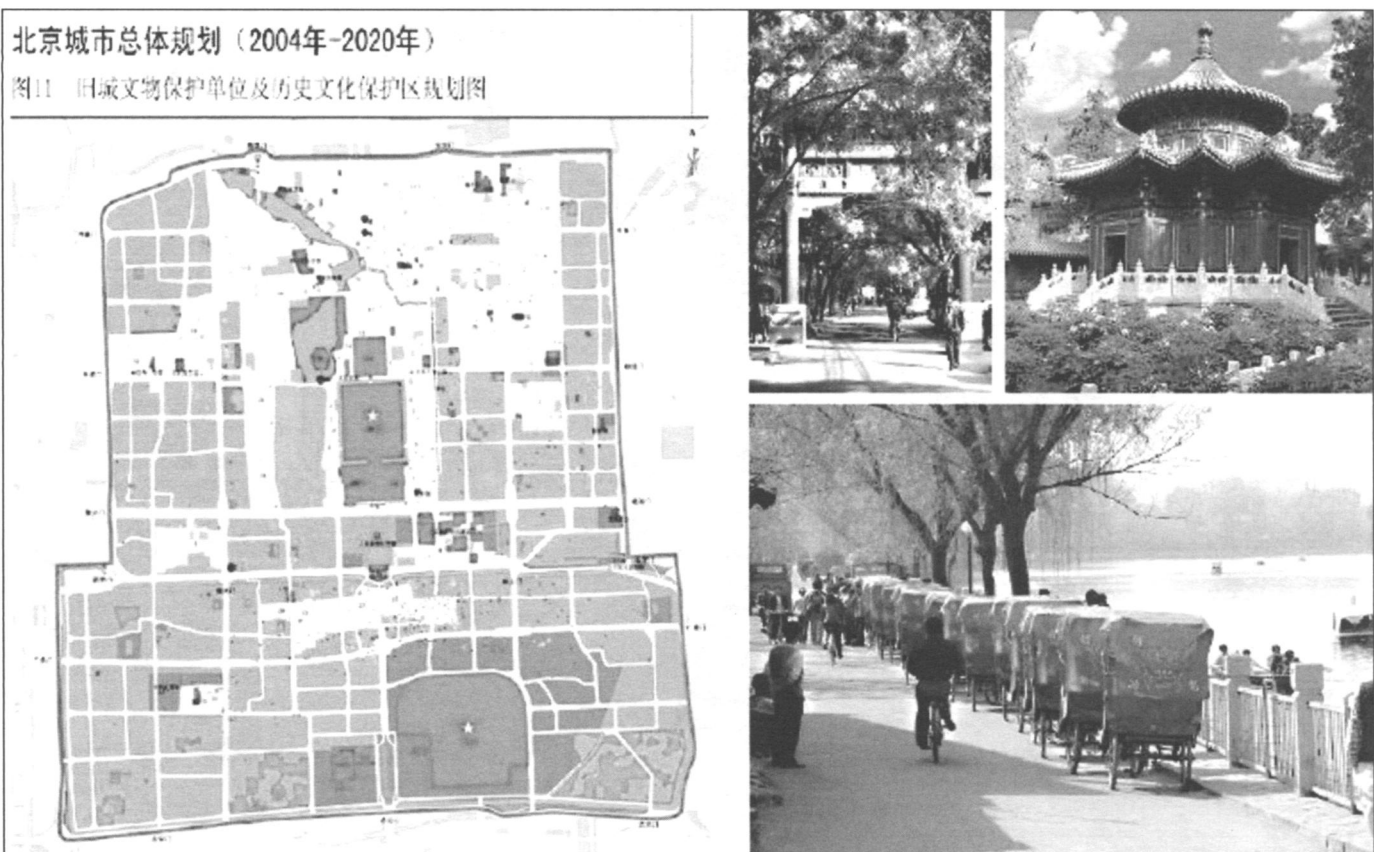


Fig. 33: Beijing – Planning and designing the change of the land use function in the Old City.

courtyard area outside the historical and cultural preservation areas must also be listed as preservation areas (fig. 34).

The promotion of the connection of the entire spectrum of historical and cultural preservation areas may be better achieved if authorities in charge of the cultural relic protection unit, the preservation administrations and the integral preservation of the Old City, join their initiatives in introducing a "historical and cultural travel route," promote a complete city travel and develop a general sightseeing program.

● **Adjusting the land division and size in the plans of historical and cultural preservation areas:** The present ordinary size of a piece of land with a detailed land use plan in the Old City is between 2 and 10 hectares. The current rough division is neither appropriate for taking advantage of the necessary preservation methods nor for the application of any repair work. When a piece of block is decided to be relocated, demolished or renovated, this may have a negative impact on the entire hutong and thousands of residents in the area might be affected. To prevent negative experiences such as the demolition of large areas, the moving of entire residential areas by destroying the hutong structure, the change of the original style in the area, through the construction of high-density residential communities or commercial areas to bring heavier pressure on the spatial configuration of preservation areas, we suggest the adoption of a detailed subdivision method during the process of planning. In the traditional hutong-courtyard areas, each planning lot shall be controlled within the size of 0.1-1.0 hectare (fig. 35).

For example, in the courtyard housing organic renewal project

of the Ju'er Hutong in Dongcheng District which was directed by Professor Wu Liangyong of Tsinghua University (fig. 36), the first stage of the project covers 2,050 sq.m and the second stage covers five lots with a total area of 10,500 sq.m (fig. 36).

Conclusion

Liang Sicheng said: "The overall arrangement and plan of Beijing displays both the wisdom and strength of the Chinese people in using traditional methods to plan a large city. The overall plan shows our respect for our ancestors, our pride in Chinese culture, and our love for our hometown. The city of Beijing proves to us that our nation has achieved great glories in accommodating ourselves to nature, in controlling nature and in finally altering nature. Such a city is a matchless and peerless masterpiece in the world."⁶ Now the preservation of the Old City in Beijing is in the spotlight in the world – the issue is not merely a task of preserving an ancient Chinese capital city; it is the protection of heritage wealth common to mankind in its entirety. The continuous destroying and demolishing of the historical capital city will end with the loss of Chinese culture and history; to the irremediable regret of all people in the world.

In the last five decades, professors and students of Tsinghua University have worked hard to preserve the Old City of Beijing with projects which cover a wide area from Shichahai, Ju'er Hutong and Yandai Xiejie, to Xin Taicang, solving a large number of problems and focusing on the objective of preserving the hutong-courtyard system. With the continuous deepening in their

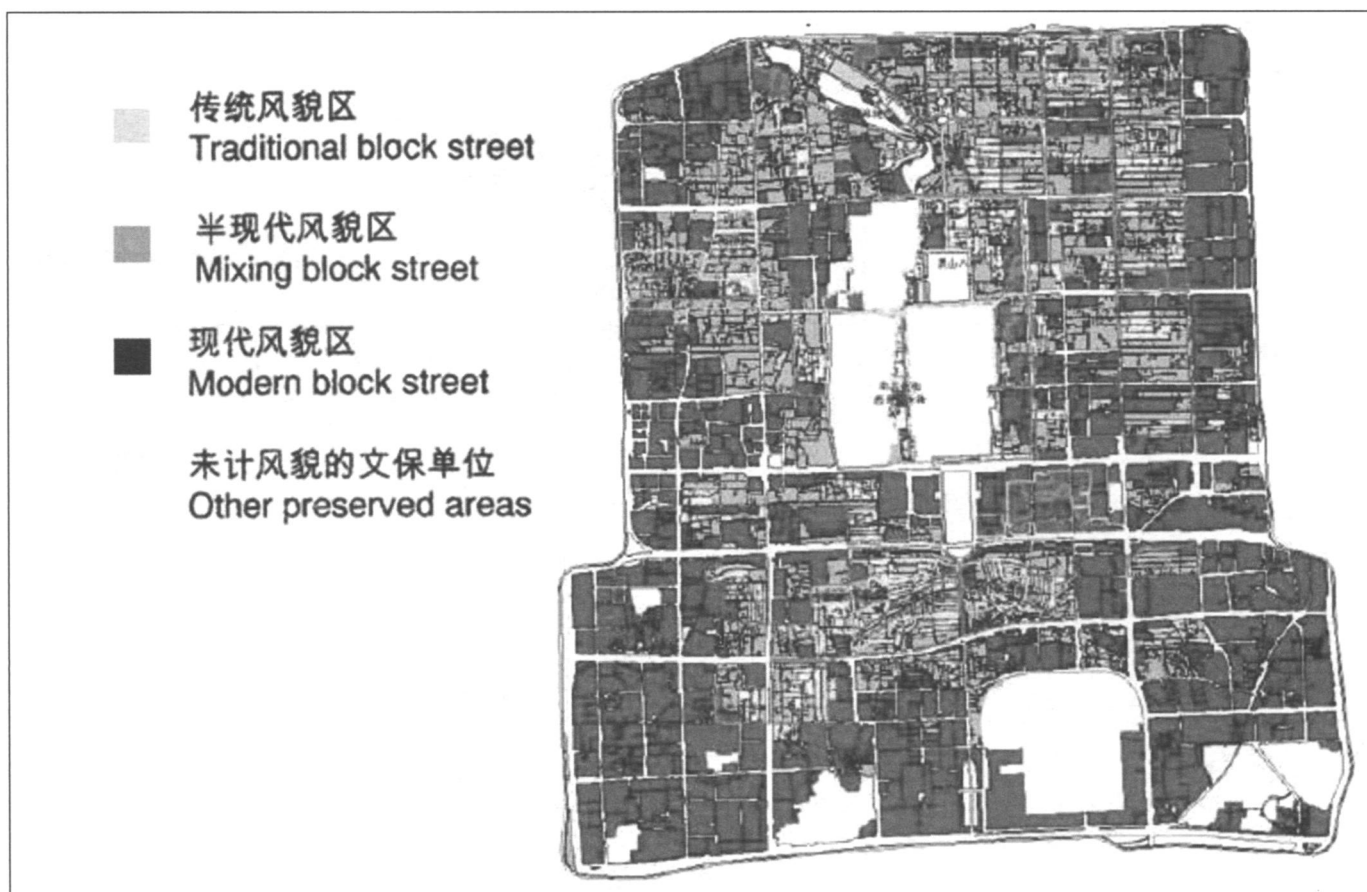


Fig. 34: Beijing – The expansion of historical and cultural preservation area and the increase of its amount.

The present ordinary planning land size in the Old City is 2-10 hectares. The rough division is not appropriate for taking corresponding preservation methods or for the preservation and repairing work. When a piece of block is decided to be relocated, to be demolished or to be renovated, the entire hutong might be affected and thousands of residents in the area might be affected. In order to prevent a large-area demolishing or moving of the residential areas from destroying hutong structure, we suggest that the detailed subdivision method shall be adopted during the process of planning. In the traditional hutong-courtyard areas, each planning lot shall be controlled within the size of 0.1-1.0 hectare.



Fig. 35: Beijing – To adjust the land division and size in the plans of historical and cultural preservation areas.

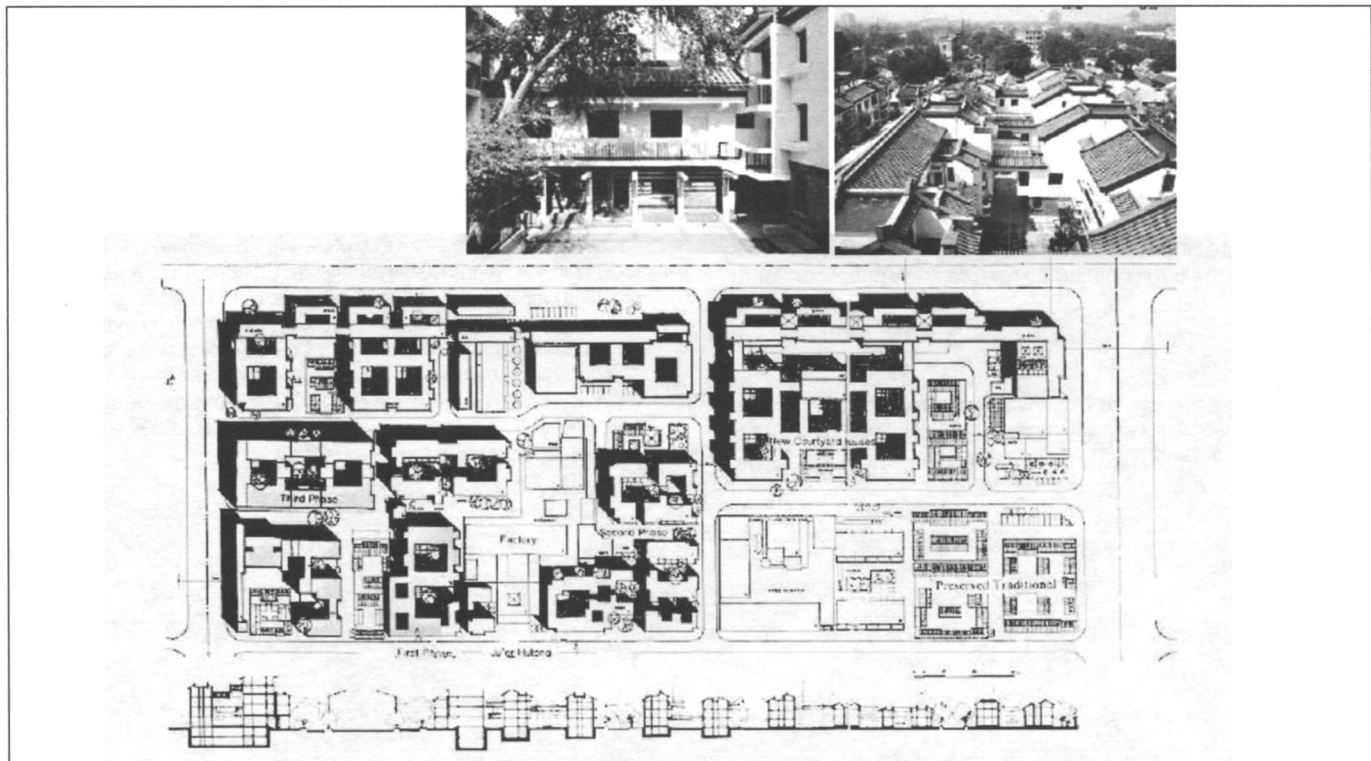


Fig. 36: Beijing Ju'er Hutong Housing Project (1987-1994) – The planned land lot size is only 0.2 ha each.

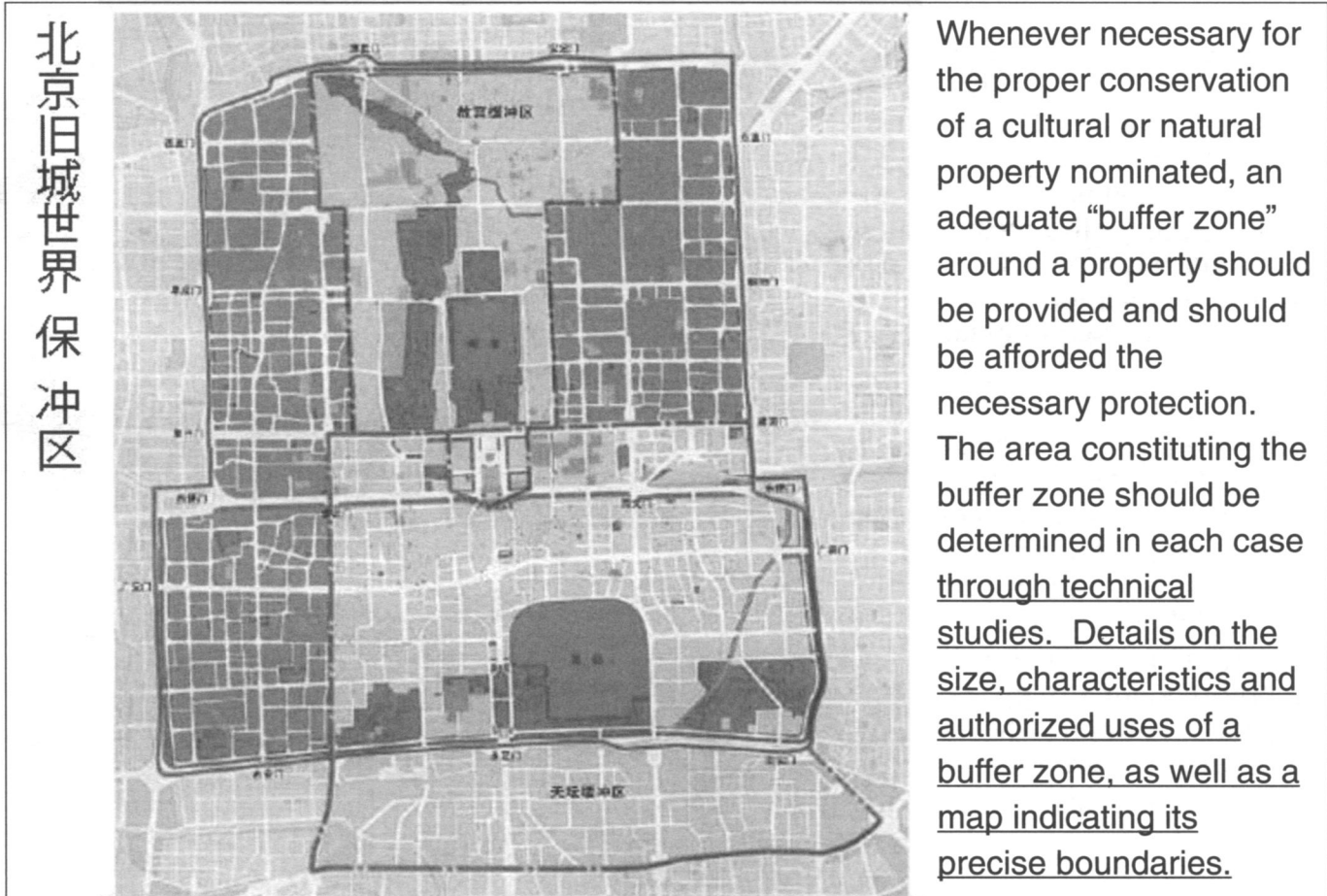


Fig. 37: Beijing Old City World Heritage buffer zone.

Whenever necessary for the proper conservation of a cultural or natural property nominated, an adequate “buffer zone” around a property should be provided and should be afforded the necessary protection. The area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through technical studies. Details on the size, characteristics and authorized uses of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating its precise boundaries.

research work, the accumulation of experience, the constant improving of concepts and the spirit of perseverance, they will surely find the correct approach of inheriting and promoting the history and culture of Beijing, while accommodating modern life in harmony with the traditional urban texture and spatial configuration (fig. 37).

Notes

1. Liang Sicheng, “Beijing: An incomparable masterpiece of urban planning,” *Collected Works of Liang Sicheng* (vol. IV), (China Construction Industry Press, 1986), p. 62.

2. Center for Science of Human Settlements (CSHS), Tsinghua University, Beijing City Science Research Society (BCSRS), project investigation report “Study on the preservation and development of hutong system in the Old City of Beijing” (December 2004).
3. Liu Dunzhen (ed.), *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture* (1st ed.), (China Construction Industry Press, October 1980), p. 313.
4. Same as Note 2, the specific figures are obtained by measuring the 1:2,000 topographic map and therefore the information is for reference only due to subjective measuring and calculation.
5. Qin Wen, “658 courtyards in old Down not allowed to be demolished,” *New Beijing Daily (Xin-Jing-Bao)*, (4 December, 2003).
6. Same as Note 1, p. 51.