



Spatial landscape transformation of Beijing compounds under residents' willingness



Fang Wang^{a,*}, Xiaoyu Liu^a, Yueyi Zhang^b

^a College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Peking University, Beijing, 100871, PR China

^b School of Urban Planning and Design, Peking University, Shenzhen, 518055, PR China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 January 2016

Received in revised form

20 March 2016

Accepted 22 March 2016

Available online 8 April 2016

Keywords:

Beijing compounds

Spatial landscape transformation in historic blocks

Spontaneous spatial landscape transformation

Theory of daily space practice

ABSTRACT

Compounds, the evolution of siheyuan, are residence-oriented courtyards in historic blocks, and are more often than not where the low-income people settle. Under the influence of different historical stages and major events, the continuous evolution of compound spatial landscape structures is the witness and representation of ancient time-honored Beijing culture. The authors take nine compounds in Dongsiantiao Hutong as the object of study, and divide spatial landscape transformation process into four stages after detailed surveys. Then, based on the study of Michel de Certeau on the practice of daily life and in connection with the special social structures in compounds, the authors summarize the modalities of spontaneous spatial landscape transformation practice in compounds. The study aims to provide reference for small-scale spatial landscape transformation in residence-oriented historic blocks and to probe into the relations between man and space landscape in similar historical space.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Along with the rapid development of urban construction, Beijing has built a huge number of modern buildings, leaving time-honored compounds, which are a token of ancient Beijing culture in old towns (Ji & Zhou, 2014). Connected by geographical relations, compounds are “neighboring courtyards gathering numerous families” (Yu, 2010: p.118), which were developed on the basis of *siheyuan*; these compounds have undergone overhauls in various historical stages and social events. Using nine compounds in Dongsiantiao Hutong as the object of study, this paper touches upon the ever-changing courtyard space landscape structure of compounds and connects them with relevant major social events to sum up four evolutionary stages. Next, this paper summarizes the modalities of the spontaneous spatial landscape transformation practice in compounds in connection with the special social structures.

Compounds, the residence-oriented courtyard space landscape in hutong in historic blocks, are normally known as the gathering place for the low-income class. Hutongs, the smaller lanes between

main roads in towns or villages, are Beijing's traditional streets that directly lead to the interior areas of residential neighborhoods (Zacharias, Sun, Chuang, & Lee, 2015). “A series of severe problems including decaying houses, crowded living space, scarce municipal infrastructure, etc., which bring the historic blocks down to decayed communities.” (Liu, Luo, & Xu, 2014: p.36). Therefore, the objective is to solve residents' housing problems and ameliorate their living conditions (Guo, 2006). In related studies regarding residence-oriented spatial landscape transformation in historic blocks, certain scholars have proposed such means as “micro-cycle transformation”, i.e., to transform original residences by means of “micro-cycle” and small-scale advances (Lv, 1997). For example, the Le Marais block in Paris has retained social diversity by virtue of a small-scale curettage of distinctive residence and buildings (Tiesdell, Oc, & Heath, 1996). Countries such as Australia (Vine, Buys, & Aird, 2012) and the Netherlands (Lager, Hoven, & Huigen, 2013) transform public amenity spaces in communities and surrounding service facility spaces in their city renewal efforts to meet the material and emotional needs of people. All the above mentioned transformations of residence-oriented block spaces have satisfied residents' material and spiritual needs from the perspectives of emotion, life and economy.

Considering that the compound is a unique spatial form in China, this study sorts similar overseas studies, including self-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: wfpd@pku.edu.cn (F. Wang), liuxiaoyu_90@126.com (X. Liu), 1056053073@qq.com (Y. Zhang).

transformation (Sakay, Sanoni, & DEng, 2011), the organic renewal (Aziz & Shawket, 2011) of urban villages, the recognition and influence of the value of urban villages (Song & Zenou, 2012), and the transformation and upgrading of shanty towns (Davison, 2015). Relevant studies also include the review of urban space and planning by examining the behavior of people living in slums (Jones & Sanyal, 2015), the exploration of the possibility of slum residents' livable space (Lemanski, 2009), low-income residents' transformation of informal living space (Oelofse & Dodson, 1997), and the exploration of sustainable value of urban space and social economy via the study of shanty towns (Pugh, 2000). Although those studies are not directly correlated to compounds, they unanimously focus on the practices of informal residence spaces and their values to the society and the culture, the perspectives and approaches of which can be drawn on in this study.

Regarding the research of the spatial transformation of residence-oriented historic blocks, the influence of resident activities is of equal importance to the study of the physical space landscape. In his treatise, *The Practice of Daily Life*, Michel de Certeau originates the idea “space is a practiced space” (Certeau, 2002: p.117), among which “space” is vivid and subjective, depending on men's movements or acts. The author also notes threefold “speech acts” of “Spatial Stories” and analyzes their modalities as follows: “alethic modalities”, i.e., a truth value in the movement or act of spatial stories (necessity, impossibility, possibility or contingency); “epistemic modalities”, i.e., an epistemological value (certainty, acceptability or controversy); “deontic modalities”, i.e., an ethical or legal value. “All the modalities sing a part in this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions. As a practiced space and an interaction-created space, its final status is closely inter-wined with its users” (Certeau, 2002: p.99).

When de Certeau's theory is put into practice in China, it is observed that residents are not totally obedient to the existing space landscape. Instead, residents can create corresponding autonomous spaces (Wu, 2009). As observed in this study, compounds' residents are changing the space landscape in their own manner. Residents' cultural background, customs, population flow and movement all make the spaces colorful and profound. In the fast-developing cities, residents' active involvement is a significant measure to protect their own interests to avoid over-commercialization in historic blocks (Shin, 2010). Historically, *Washington Charter* noted that residents play an irreplaceable role in city construction (ICOMOS, 1987). Residential space should be established and renewed by residents (Oelofse & Dodson, 1997). The protection and renewal of historic blocks is a participative planning process (Lin, 2003). In the Bay Area in San Francisco (Chapple, Jackson, & Martin, 2010), in New York (Zukin & Braslow, 2011) and in the Creative Art Block in Manhattan (Tiesdell et al., 1996), the autonomous block running and the transformation modality of artists and local residents have boosted and vitalized the economic and social development of blocks. The autonomous spatial transformation of residents speaks volumes for the interests, the will of block users and the subtle changes and revitalization of old blocks with residents' willingness as the main driver.

Scholars in the U.K. (Thompson-Fawcett, 2003) and Denmark (Holmgren & Svensson, 2001) also conduct city renewal studies using residents as subject samples. This paper, based on de Certeau's daily life practice theory, also uses the compounds' inhabitants as subject samples and conducts in-depth interviews to probe into the special social relations and the spontaneous compound spatial transformation practices, which are driven by residents' willingness. Although de Certeau's theory serves primarily to safeguard existing social order, it seldom touches upon space or specific “resisting” means and the process of the “disadvantaged” in the social system (Wu, 2009). However, for this study, his space

theory can provide the basis for understanding and categorizing spatial landscape practice modalities in historic blocks. Considering the influence of the behaviors on the spatial environment, this study innovatively applies the spatial part of the theory into the spatial landscape transformation of Beijing compounds.

2. Case study

The compounds in Dongsisiantiao Hutong are booming with time-honored Beijing culture, various space landscapes, rich commercial types and diversified residents. Situated in Dongcheng District in Beijing (Fig. 1), Dongsisiantiao Hutong is east to Chaoyangmen Beixiaojie Street, west to Dongsidajie Street, south to Dongsitiao, and north to Dongsisitiao. Streets ranging from Dongsisiantiao to Dongsibatiao are included in the first batch of 25 historic conservation areas in the old Beijing city. The hutong investigated, which dates to the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), began to be called Dongsisiantiao in 1949. Along with time changes, the spatial modality of this hutong has experienced tremendous changes in recent decades because most compounds are living space landscapes voluntarily built by local residents, and the government did not force its transformation and renovation in consideration of the special historic meaning of hutong in China. Dongsisiantiao Hutong is blended with residential and commercial functions; the east and west side are distinguished from each other. Because of its location in a historical conservation area, its travel attractiveness has been gaining prominence in recent years. Tenants, vendors and Beijing locals are the major resident types in the hutong.

3. Methods

During August, 2014 and April–June, 2015, the research team conducted in-depth visits to nine selected compounds, which are spatially well-distributed and cover all types of spatial forms commonly observed in hutongs (Fig. 2). At the same time, 17 local compound residents were selected (Table 1) to conduct in-depth interviews. The interviewees were all local compound residents who lived in compounds for more than 30 years and had a high school degree or above. They knew the spatial landscape transformation of Beijing compounds very well and could provide vital

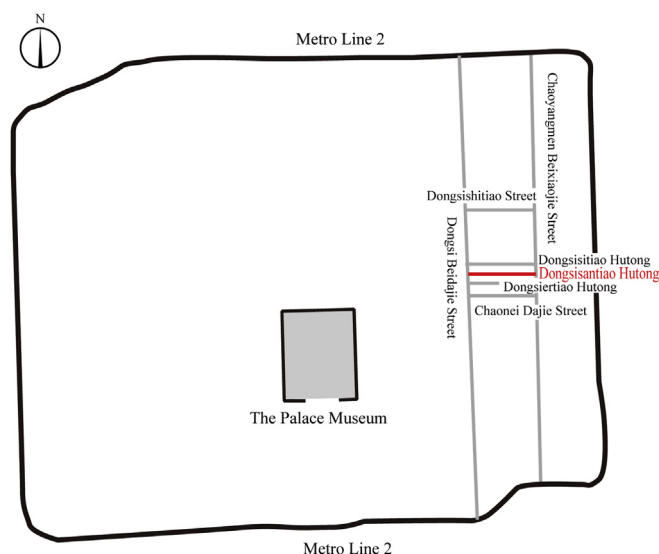


Fig. 1. Location of Dongsisiantiao Hutong. (Source: ©Authors).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7455474>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7455474>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)