

Preface

During the twentieth century, and especially during its last decades, Beijing underwent a number of profound changes. The aim of this book was to study these changes as they apply to Beijing's urban structure, in general, and to its housing in particular.

This book consists of four parts. Part I presents a historical review of Beijing's urban development in the twentieth century and a review of the relevant literature concerning urban structure theories and studies. Both of these provide a historical and theoretical background for the analysis conducted in Part II and Part III, which make up of the main body of the book. Part II identifies the reasons which underlie the disappearance of the traditional courtyard house in Beijing's Old City during the urban redevelopment which has taken place since the 1990s. This section also suggests ways of protecting the courtyard houses and thus reducing the damages to the Old City. While Part II mainly focuses on the changes in Beijing's urban spatial structure, Part III concentrates mainly on the transformation of its urban social structure. In particular, Part III focuses on the transformation of Beijing's residential structure from an originally homogeneous type during the period of the planned economy to a segregated type emerged during the period of the market economy. This section also suggests ways of reducing residential segregation. Part IV states the study's conclusions.

This study concludes that ever since China changed from a planned economy to a market economy, economic growth has become the overwhelming driving force of reshaping Beijing's urban structure. The underlying economic interest gave critical impetus for the redevelopment of Beijing's Old City which has caused extensive damage to Beijing's historic cityscape. Meanwhile, the gradually widening gap between household incomes was the main factor generating a noticeable trend toward residential segregation between rich and poor. The research suggests that the fundamental solution which could adequately protect the courtyard houses and Beijing's Old City would be to establish a polycentric urban structure

for the city with the purpose of reducing the pressure of demand for the land in the old city proper. In order to reduce residential segregation, it would also be necessary for Beijing's municipal government to create and perfect its housing security system which would help the low-income families with their housing difficulties.

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A Century of Change

Beijing's Urban Structure in the 20th Century

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