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# HISTORY URBANISM RESILIENCE

VOLUME 02

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## The Urban Fabric

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# RESILIENCE OF DWELLINGS AND THE CREATION OF LIVEABLE HISTORICAL RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN CHINA

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There are numerous traditional residential buildings in China, but only in the last sixty years have academics studied historic dwellings. Currently, there are four metropolises, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen in mainland China, and with a number of unique traditional residential areas, such as Hutong, Linong, and Qilou. In 1928, due to Liang Sicheng's contribution, the first Department of Architecture in China was established and Western theories of conservation were introduced as well. However, due to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, preservation activities were interrupted in the 1950s. Also, beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, because of their ambition to develop the economy, Chinese elites attempted to expand their cities and transformed these places in response to the demands of urbanization. Despite learning from the experiences of other countries, an effective and harmonious development situation has not yet been established in China. The application of preservation concepts began again in the 1980s by the government; however, most contemporary architectural scholars have no clear knowledge about modern conservation theories. Even the researchers who have roots in this field might not appropriately explain and apply these theories in practice. From 1997 to 2008, some residential areas were preserved and listed as World Heritage Sites, such as the Ancient City of Pingyao and the Old Town of Lijiang. All of these sites are located in rural or suburban areas. Comparatively, in urban areas, some inhabitants are suffering from poor living conditions in high-density neighbourhoods. Indeed, this has become a common phenomenon in China's cities. Development of modern cities is a process of capital operation. If residents who live in these historic dwellings or inhabitants who are affected by the circumstances and sites of those old buildings do not pay attention to protection issues of the traditional dwellings, then our common culture and history will eventually be eroded. The significance of protection lies not simply in displaying these historic residences, but in continually using sustainable renovation methods, and maintaining their own characteristics. Moreover, in the developing process, because of shortage of issues of funding, housing property and ambitions from governments and capitalists, attention to inhabitants' real lives in the remaining residences will not be seriously concerned. Accordingly, in this research, answering how to support the sustainable development of traditional residential areas will include an overview of the history of heritage, dwellings, and neighbourhood preservation, its shifting values, goals, tools, and techniques, and their influence on preservation activities over the last sixty years in China. First, this study will make an argument about the specific implications of the theories, principles and values of preservation and their changes. It will also analyze case studies— mainly in Shanghai, Pingyao and Yangzhou — to record and classify different obstacles in preserving processes and the sustainable development of historical dwellings. With these steps, this study aims to strike a balance between the preservation of historic dwelling structures and recreating approaches for continuous use in order to benefit both the economic growth in cities and inhabitants' lives in historical dwellings.

## **Keywords**

Historic residences, Western heritage theories, Restoration and conservation theories, Interpretation problems, Sustainable development, Regulations, Local authority, Capital, Preservation activities, Liveable areas, Living balance