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Communal Space and Degree of Sharing The Legacy and Inspiration of Juer Hutong Neighborhood Project

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

TITLE

Communal Space and Degree of Sharing: The Legacy and Inspiration of Juer Hutong Neighborhood Project

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KEYWORDS

Chinese dwelling design; communal space; courtyard housing; new quadrangle; public-private gradient; urban regeneration design

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the regeneration project of Juer Hutong led by Chinese architect Liangyong Wu from 1987 to 1994, a dwelling research and practice for an old neighborhood with traditional courtyard houses in Beijing's historical city. It is an early experiment of mediating historical conservation and the soaring housing demand in the late 1980s since the housing reform in Beijing. The whole research, design and implementation process of Juer Hutong project is documented in Wu's 1994 book *The Old City of Beijing and its Juer Hutong Neighborhood*. Past studies of this epic housing project have been focusing on its theoretical value for conservation planning of historical cities as the biggest achievement. This paper wants to excavate another dimension of the project: how it employed the architectural design mechanisms and cultural idea of public-private relationship enclosed in traditional Chinese dwelling and created a new architectural typology, the new quadrangle, which can enable both community life and individual privacy. This paper argues that rather than being a traditional courtyard housing replica, as commonly misunderstood and criticised due to its un-traditional form, the new quadrangle stands as an interesting example of how to achieve communal living patterns in modern dwelling design, meeting nowadays requirements in terms of density and degree of collectivity.