

# Urban Regeneration of China's Historical District in a Transitional Economy

## Case Study of the Drum Tower Muslim District, Xi'an city, P.R.China

Zhai Binqing

Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Urban Planning and Design, University of Hong Kong

Email: [zhaibinqing@hkusua.hku.hk](mailto:zhaibinqing@hkusua.hku.hk)

### Abstract

With the transformation of Chinese economy from previous socialist or planned to market-oriented development after 1978, tremendous changes have taken place in many respects of the urban development in China. In order to cater for this market-oriented economy, many Chinese cities are endeavouring to restructure its urban space formed in previous socialist time. The kind of government-led top-down market-oriented regeneration process is well reflected in the practices of the Muslim district of Xi'an.

Ostensibly, two regeneration approaches are adopted in two areas of the Muslim district: one is conservation-biased revitalization and the other is market-biased redevelopment. However, a closer examination shows actually they share the similarity in terms of the government-led top-down proposed and implemented plans.

The paper concludes by underlining that community-based revitalization plan might fit this particular district better than any current plans by local government, given the particular district context e.g. massive self-constructions, constraints from the city conservation regulations and market considerations. Nevertheless, a more fundamental way out for the comprehensive regeneration of this Muslim district still lies in the institutionalized participatory regeneration mechanism.

---

### Keywords:

Urban regeneration; Conservation-biased; Market-biased; Xi'an Muslim district

---

Since the open door policy was adopted in 1978, many tremendous changes have taken place in urban China. One salient characteristic of urban development and construction was the nationwide effort to restore urban master plans to guide their urban constructions and city growth (Buck, 1984). In the meantime, urban revitalization and redevelopment in old urban areas took place, especially with the emergence of development industries in the 1990s (EBUCCC, 1990). Nevertheless, with the massive property-led redevelopment in many cities, a large number of historical districts have been damaged and demolished (Ruan & Sun, 2001). Such property-led redevelopment activities in some historical cities have already resulted in many dreadful consequences. For instance, in order to maximize the economic returns, many historical buildings have been removed and generic architecture and districts have flourished in the original historical areas (Wu, 1998).

Even though there are quite a few studies exploring the impacts of rapid urban development to historical areas, most of them focus much on the changing physical historical environment (Fang, 2000; Li, 2005; Ruan & Sun, 2001; Shan, 2006). Some studies focus on the role of governments (Lin & Wang, 2002; Qi, 2001; Zhang, 1998) or on economic development (Geng, 1998; Shi, 2005; Wang, 2005). A number of researchers tend to theoretically stress on the significance of neighborhoods in urban renewal of China (He & Liu, 2005; He, Yu, & Fang, 2001). Nevertheless, very few studies are exploring the situation of indigenous communities in local revitalization process empirically. And the gap between theoretical models and empirical practices still largely remains. Especially, given the context of a Chinese historical urban area, there are many dynamics affecting the practices of local regeneration.

Based on a Chinese historical district, Xi'an Drum Tower Muslim District, this paper discusses the role and contribution of indigenous communities to local regeneration. Firstly this paper reviews the urban planning and development policies in Xi'an. Secondly, concrete urban regeneration policies in Xi'an Muslim district are introduced. Thirdly, focusing on two particular projects in the Muslim district, the paper discusses the government-led regeneration plans. Finally, the paper concludes by underlining that a community-based revitalization plan might serve local district regeneration better than any current proposed redevelopment plans.

The following diagram (a) illustrates the analytical framework towards the urban regeneration in Xi'an DTMD.

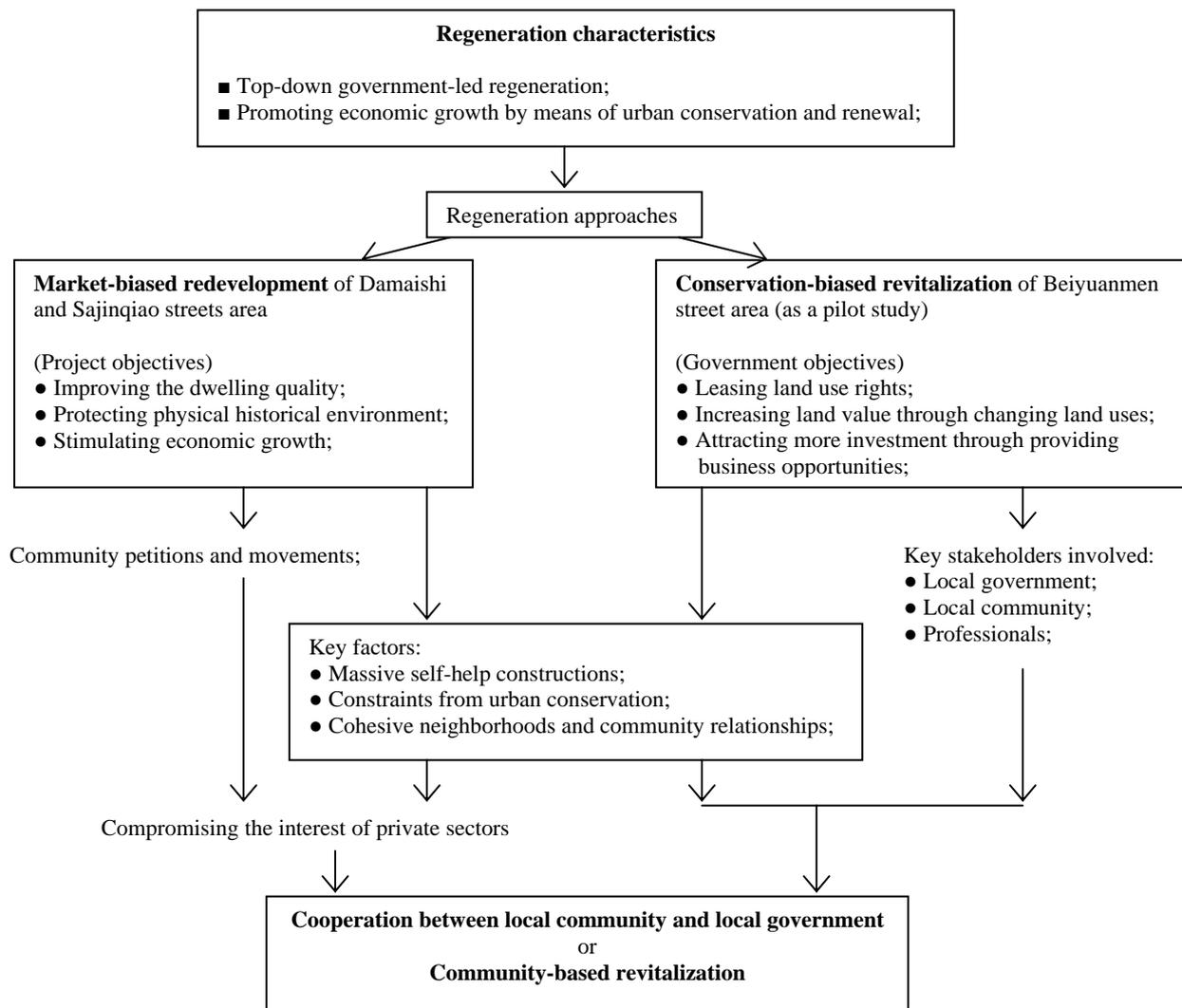
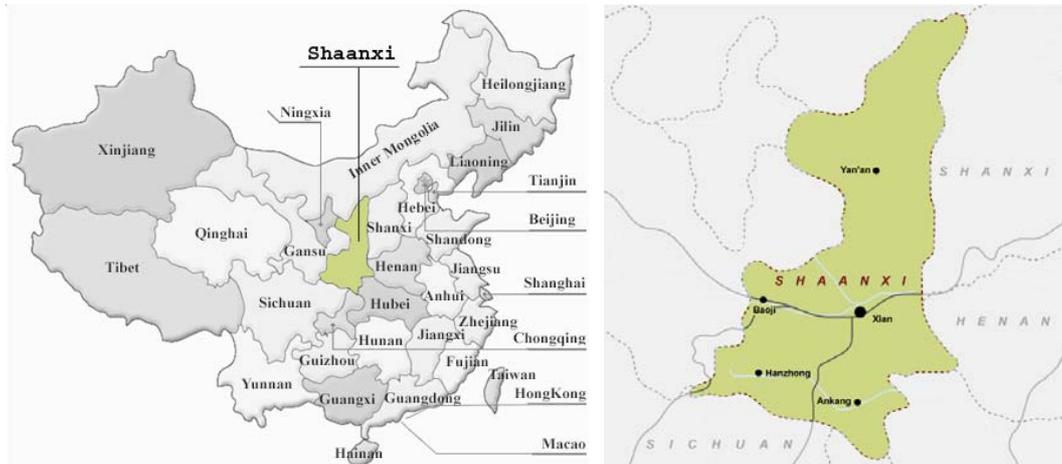


Diagram a: An Analytical Framework towards the Urban Regeneration in Xi'an DTMD

# 1 The City of Xi'an: an introduction to its urban development

## 1.1 Xi'an: an important inland city in North-Western China



Map a: Locations of Shaanxi province in China and Xi'an in Shaanxi province  
(Source: <http://map.cncitymap.com/>; <http://www.maps-of-china.com/shaanxi-s-ow.shtml>)

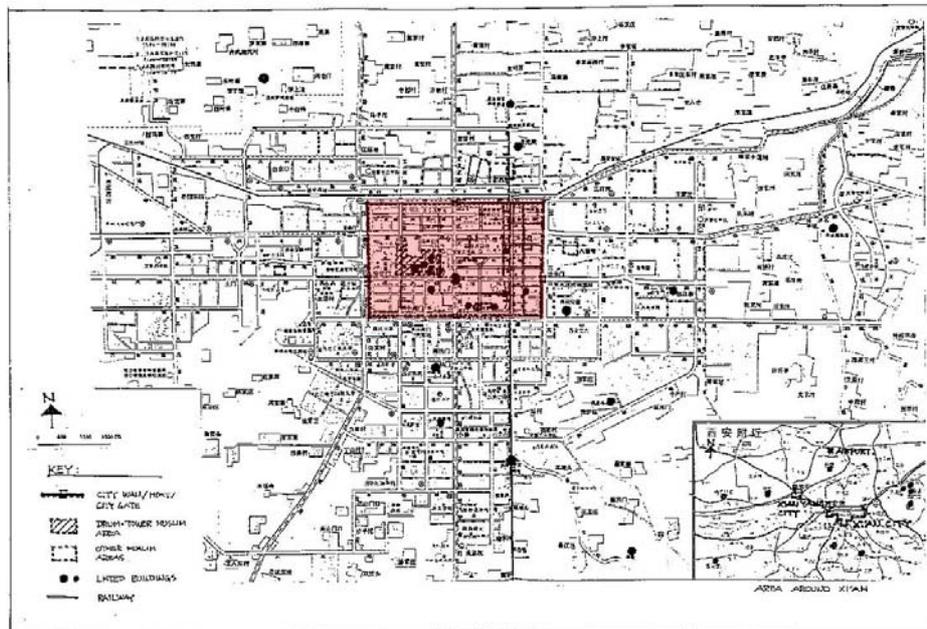
Xi'an is located at the center of Guanzhong Plain (Wei River Valley) (map a), and owes its development to the large area of fertile soil. As one of China's six great historic capitals, the name of Xi'an came into use during the Ming dynasty (Wu, 1979), even though the city had grown and prospered well before that period. The prosperous cities in China's history, such as Fengjing and Gaojing of Western Zhou dynasty, Xianyang of Qin dynasty and Chang'an of Western Han, Sui and Tang dynasties, were all forerunners of Xi'an. Although all these cities occupy different sites, they are all within the present Xi'an Shi (municipality). The rise and fall of each of these cities reflect the vicissitudes in the development of Xi'an (Ma, 1985). In China's history, Xi'an had been the capital city from Western Zhou to Tang dynasties, altogether about 16 dynasties around 1133 years. This means Xi'an had been the political and commercial and cultural center for more than one third period in China's 3000 years of history since the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Zhu & Wu, 2003).

It is Tang (A.D. 618-907) and Ming (A.D. 1368-1644) dynasties that contributed and expanded most of Xi'an urban pattern and areas (XCUCRC, 2000). Especially during the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Hong Wu period (A.D. 1378), based on the Tang City Wall scope, extensive urban constructions had been carried out, e.g. the City Wall, the Bell-tower and the Drum-Tower, which formed the foundation stones for current Xi'an's urban fabric and historical cityscapes (He, 2006). Subsequent massive urban constructions and development have taken place mainly on the basis of the Ming city.

Today, Xi'an is the capital of Shaanxi province, the biggest industrial base, the commercial center and the political and educational core of Northwest China. Xi'an municipality (including nearby administrative counties) has an area of 10,108 km<sup>2</sup>, which ranges 204 km from east to west and 116 km from south to north, with a total population about 8,068,100 (SSB, 2006). Among this, the urban area is about 3,582 km<sup>2</sup>, with the population about 5,409,686 (XSB, 2007).

The following map (b) shows today Xi'an central urban area and the red part indicates the historical urban center --- the City Wall area (thereafter CWA). As the historical core, the CWA is about 12 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population about 420,000 (XMPG, 2005). Today, many historical monuments and sites still remain within Xi'an central urban area. In addition to

some historical monuments e.g. the Bell-tower, the Drum-tower, and the Great Mosque, there are also the historical districts, such as the Sanxuejie, Defuxiang, and Beiyuanmen historical districts (also known as the Drum Tower Muslim District) (SCXPC, 2002).



Map b: Xi'an central urban area (Note: the red part indicating Xi'an CWA)

(Source: <http://www.tobunken.go.jp/~kokusen/ENGLISH/MEETING/SEMINAR/7SEMINAR/dong11.gif>)

## 1.2 Evolution of Xi'an master plans and current urban regeneration focus

Since 1950, Xi'an municipal government has put forth four master plans, and they have been implemented respectively in the following periods: 1953-1972; 1980-2000; 1995-2010; and 2008-2020 (Chen, Wang, & Wen, 2003). The latest master plan was approved by the State Council in May 2008. The emphasis and ideologies in the four master plans have been transformed greatly, accompanying local socio-economic development.

Since 1949, as one of the major inland cities promoting industrial development, Xi'an urban planning and development was very industrial development oriented. During political struggling Cultural Revolution period, like in many other Chinese cities, the first master plan of Xi'an has been disbanded, and urban construction and development had been carried out mainly meeting the needs of individual functional departments. This period corresponded and contributed to the cellular economy in China after the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, considering Xi'an already had its master plan since 1953, many practices during the Cultural Revolution was still within the framework of its set Plan. Therefore, Xi'an was still a very good example of how city planning was practiced in China in the early years of Communist rule.

After 1978, Xi'an revised and proposed its second master plan, which featured by the somewhat continuity of the first master plan. Industrial development was still very much stressed. Nevertheless, the conservation of historical capital city features was underlined and tourism industry was promoted. During the 1990s, with more and more visitors coming to Xi'an to see its historical heritages, the tourist industry biased urban construction compromised its established conservation policies. The third master plan of the 1990s emphasized the dominating high-tech industry in local development. In addition, with the

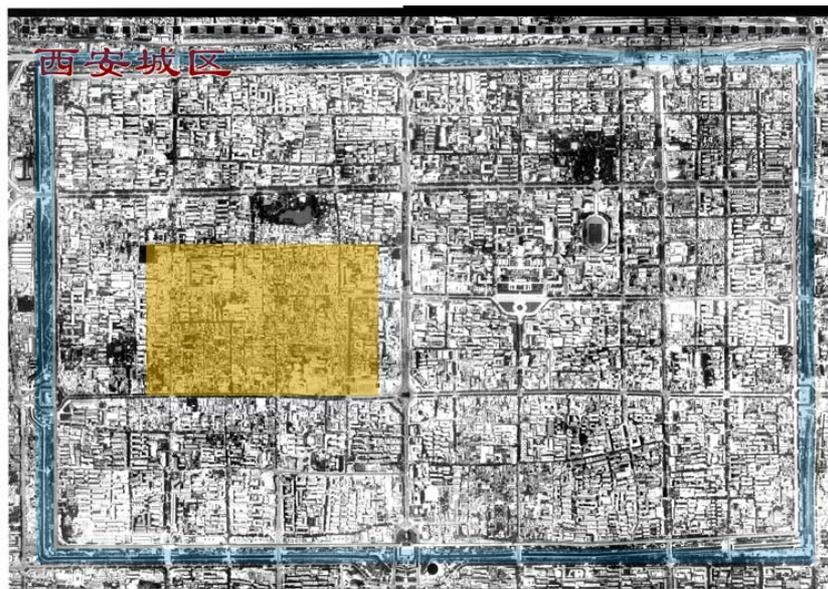
introduction of paid land use right, real estate industries contribute much in Xi'an urban constructions and it is also the dominant strategy for local municipal government to generate its revenues. With the Western China Development and rapid urbanization since 2000, previous old urban area centred planning could not meet the market-oriented development. In addition, too many functions in the old urban area aroused many urban problems. Considering this, the fourth master plan was approved by the State Council in 2008. This Plan attempts to restructure Xi'an urban space and its industrial layout to cater for an economic market. In order to attract more investment, local physical environment will be improved with the effort to regenerate its excellent culture and cityscapes. Nevertheless, the conservation efforts work very hard to satisfy the tourist industry, and many practices even deviate from the comprehensive regeneration principles. For example, the issue of living heritage stresses much the involvement of original residents and indigenous residential lives of historical environments. Nevertheless, these issues are often compromised or even totally ignored in an economy-growth-biased urban process.

The following will explore how these policies and strategies are implemented and what factors are affecting them in a Xi'an historical district.

## 2 Case Study: Xi'an Drum Tower Muslim District

### 2.1 Location

Located at the very centre of Xi'an CWA, Drum Tower Muslim District (thereafter DTMD) is one of the few areas that have been entirely declared as a historical area (SCXPC, 2002; XCPB, XACH, & XUPDI, 2005). It ranges from Shehui Road in the east to Zaoci Lane in the west, and from the West Avenue in the south to Hongfu Street in the north. The whole area is about 54 hectares, occupying the population of almost 60,000, and among them 30,000 are Muslim residents (SCXPC, 2002; XMHDPPPO, 2003). This area is also the largest Muslim residential area in Xi'an city, and its boundary is illustrated in the yellow square of the following map (c), while the blue ring indicates the city wall and the moat, which delineates the scope of Xi'an CWA.



Map c: Location of DTMD within Xi'an CWA

## 2.2 Challenges facing the historical district

By and large, the many urban problems in Xi'an DTMD since the 1990s mainly incorporate the following:

### <1> chaotic self-construction activities

With the rapid increasing urban population in Xi'an city, the Muslim population is also increasing very fast. With the increasing urban population, there is an urgent need for local residents to increase their living space, and many local residents randomly add more stories on the top of their own houses or build new houses even in public areas. Such activities often ignore existing urban planning and conservation regulations. As a result, many traditional courtyards have been destructed and replaced with three to four stories brick-made simple houses. Generally, these constructions were characterized by crude structures, poor quality and simple decoration (Cao, 2005). These tentative buildings form a sharp contrast with the overall historical district fabric (Li, 2002, p. 39). The kind of self-construction activities have been especially elevated and worsened with local renewal policy of "demolishing one and returning one" in 1991. The simple reason behind it is that many residents wish to get more compensation (Dong, 1995, p. 94).

These self-construction activities have caused many problems such as the infringement on public space, waste of space, poor lighting and ventilation (XMHDPPPO, 2003, p. 11). In addition, with gradual nibbling activities on public space by local residents, there is less and less greenery area. Original spacious courtyards eventually become the transportation space. Actually, these issues account for most of the disharmony among local communities.

### <2> environmental disruption accompanying flourishing business activities

One of local Muslim residents' conspicuous characteristics is to conduct local businesses. Actually, almost every family is doing businesses here, such as the catering trade, butchery, antiques and curios and etc (Li, 2004, pp. 172-174). Normally such business activities take place in the shop fronts along the narrow streets, and the areas behind the shop fronts serve as the place of butchery and preparation, e.g. slaughtering animals and boiling meat. Nevertheless, sometimes retailers and vendors even set up their stalls in public space or on the streets. Especially when some retailers find their shops' positions hidden from public views or relatively remote, they would set up some stalls in more popular areas of local streets, like Beiyuanmen street and Xiyangshi street. As one of the busiest marketplaces within Xi'an CWA, when it brings great fortune to local businessmen, it also generates many traffic and environmental problems since the 1990s (Zhu, 1998).

### <3> lagging infrastructure construction and rundown district environment

With the lagging district environment management system, there are many problems such as traffic jams and exhaust fumes in the narrow district roads. Besides, some residents and private property owners used to discharge the used or contaminated water directly into the public sewage system, which often results in the block of sewage pipes and the flowing contaminated water above ground (Cao, 2005, p. 16).

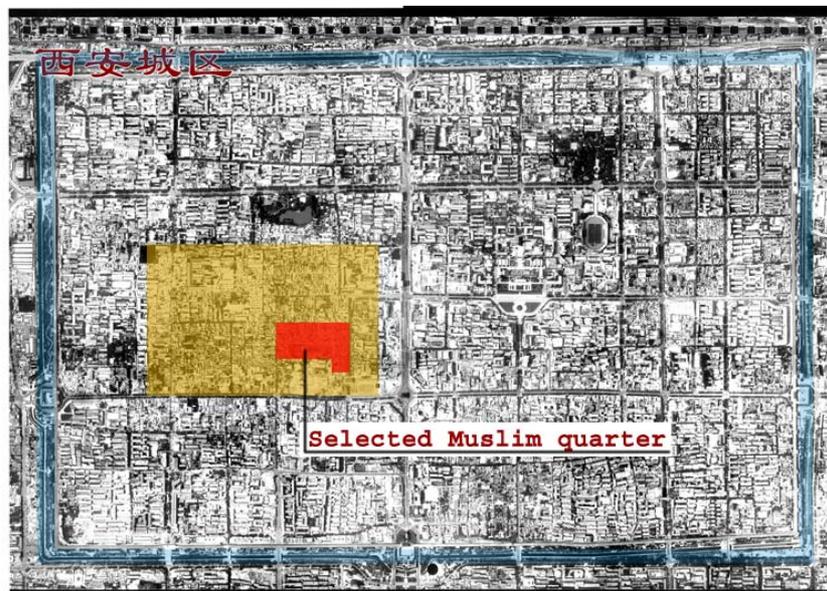
These urban problems seriously affect the reputation of this area as a historical district as well as local living environment. Most residents wish local renewal plan taking place to improve their current living situations. Nevertheless, they also express conspicuously that the prerequisite is that they will not be relocated to other places mainly because of their religious beliefs and group living traditions. With all these urban problems in mind, local government

proposed to redevelop this historical district following its comprehensive urban regeneration plans, since the beginning of the 1990s.

The redevelopment project of Xi'an DTMD turns to be one of the research projects of Xi'an Municipal Construction Bureau in 1993. Since then, various units cooperated to carry out a pilot project in this district, and these units include Xi'an City Planning Bureau, Xi'an Urban Planning and Design Institute, The Great Mosque, as well as two institutes i.e. Xi'an Jiaotong University and Norwegian Institute of Technology. Especially in 1997, as one of the officially signed nine cooperation contracts between the National Science Committee of China and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), more extensive work has been done in a selected quarter of DTMD.

### **2.3 Conservation-biased revitalization in a selected quarter --- Beiyuanmen street project**

The selected quarter is totally about 4 hectares with the boundaries of the following streets: to the south: Huajuexiang; to the west: Guangji Street; to the north: Xiyangshi Street; and to the east: Beiyuanmen Street, as shown in the map (d).



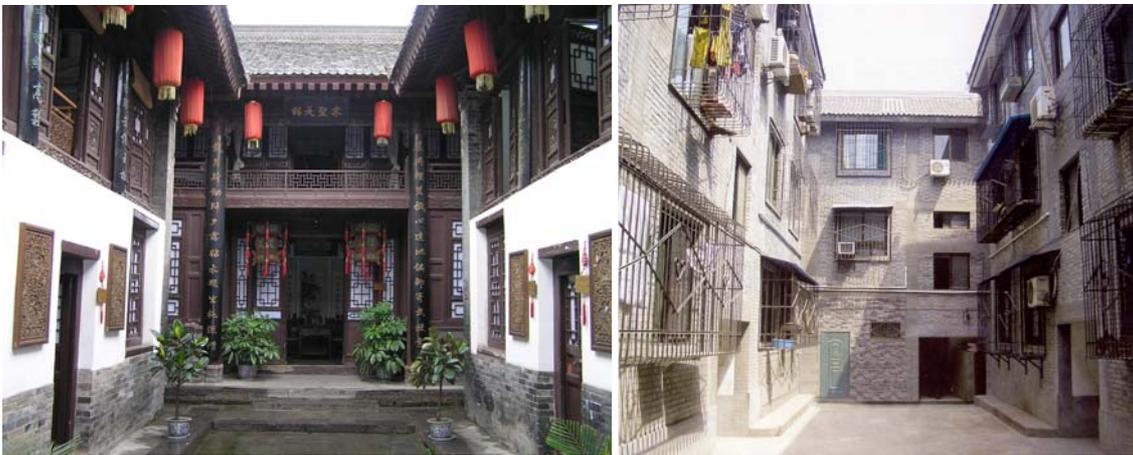
Map d: Location of the selected quarter within DTMD

The objectives of the project concern three aspects: <1> to improve the dwelling quality of the tenants; <2> to safeguard the environmental fabric of the Great Mosque (Hoyem, 1989, p. 4); <3> to stimulate local economic growth and to restore well-preserved courtyards and buildings (Li, 2002, p. 40).

In conducting this co-operative work, the roles of three types of stakeholders stand out in getting the necessary funds. They include Xi'an Municipal Government, NORAD, and local residents. According to the agreement: during the projects implementation, Xi'an municipal government provides the fund for infrastructure construction and salaries for the staff working in a temporarily established working office --- Muslim District Project Office, etc; NORAD provides fund for the traditional building restoration; and local original residents need to pay for the renewal costs of their own houses (Li, 2002).

As proposed in the plan, with the original streets widened, the building facades flanking the streets were reconstructed in traditional styles of Qing and Ming dynasties. Behind the traditional facades, modern houses were built. Normally, these modern buildings in two to three stories were used for the residents who were relocated in the streets widening project. The policies to these relocated residents were: they were compensated according to the market price when their properties were reclaimed during the project, and the new apartments were offered at the cost price after the project completion (resources provided by local residents). With these policies, many original residents were willing and able to afford the new apartments after local renewal plans.

By the end of 2002, as an experimental project, the revitalization work in the selected quarter came to an end. After this project, several courtyards have been restored and preserved, including Family Gao Courtyard, Family An Courtyard, and etc. The conditions of the restored courtyards as well as the experimental model housing are shown in the following pictures (a) (XMHDPPPO, 2003).



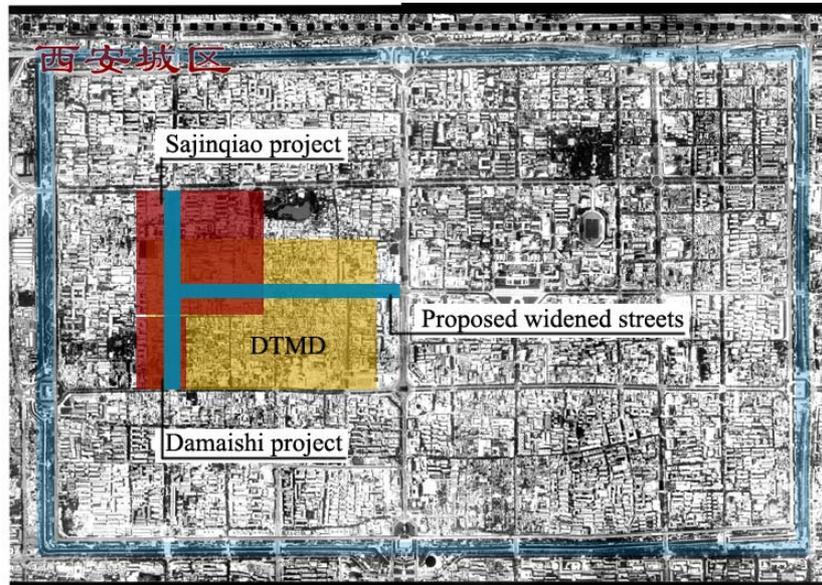
Picture a: Family Gao Courtyard & Experimental Model Housing

After the renewal projects, previously dilapidated housing area today becomes one of the most attractive and typical residential places both to local residents and to tourists. In addition to improving local living conditions, ameliorated historical districts have also contributed much to local tourism industry. According to local government report, in its tenth five-year plan (2001~2005), the annual economic growth rate in the renewed area remained as high as more than 20% (BSOLD, 2006). During 2000 to 2004, the average annual economic growth rate in Xi'an was 13.32% (XSB, 2005).

#### **2.4 Market-biased property redevelopment in Damaishi & Sajinqiao streets area**

Since local government set the agenda for the renewal of Xi'an DTMD in 1993, gradual changes took place in different parts of the area. In addition to the conservation-biased revitalization project in Beiyuanmen street area, other market-biased redevelopments also take place in the Muslim district, accompanying the massive property-led redevelopment in Xi'an since the 1990s. For instance, at the end of 1991, the first 49 renewal blocks in Xi'an run-down urban areas were proposed by Xi'an municipal government, and these projects were characterized by the simple exchange between monetary returns and land use rights (He, 2002). In the Muslim district, several blocks are among such renewal projects, e.g. Zaocixiang redevelopment project in 1993 and Damaishi street in 1998.

Damaishi and Sajinqiao streets locate at the western area of the Muslim district (shown in the map (e)). The two streets run in south-north direction. They connect with each other at Miaohou street, and local people name the intersection as “Sajinqiao crossroad”. The whole two streets are about 1,100 meters long. The history of Damaishi and Sajinqiao streets can date back to Tang dynasty, when Islam was introduced into Xi’an in A.D. 651. Today this area has been well known for Muslim living quarter and local Muslim flavor (SMDPI, XUAT, UTPRI, RERI, & RUDRI, 1997).



Map e: Damaishi & Sajinqiao areas

Facing the many district challenges mentioned above and also the economic development opportunities with the development of nearby West Street (see more elaboration in Zhu, 1998), local district government proposed to redevelopment this area since the end of the 1990s. According to the redevelopment plan, a traditional residential environment is expected (XCPB et al., 2005), which is seen as part of Xi’an municipal government’s blue print of the Imperial Urban Regeneration of the Tang Dynasty (XCPB, 2005; XCPB et al., 2005). Nevertheless, some academics argue this kind of process is generated by local politicians’ attitude towards modernization (Wang, 2000). In this plan, two streets in the DTMD area will be widened passing through Damaishi and Sajinqiao streets area to solve local traffic problems (shown in the map (e)). In addition, with the improved physical environment, it is expected to bring more business opportunities for local businessmen. Nevertheless, since local redevelopment strategies adopt housing removal and residential relocation, existing low level houses will be replaced by multi-level mixed-used modern complexes, and many concerned original residents will be relocated or displaced to the areas out side of CWA.

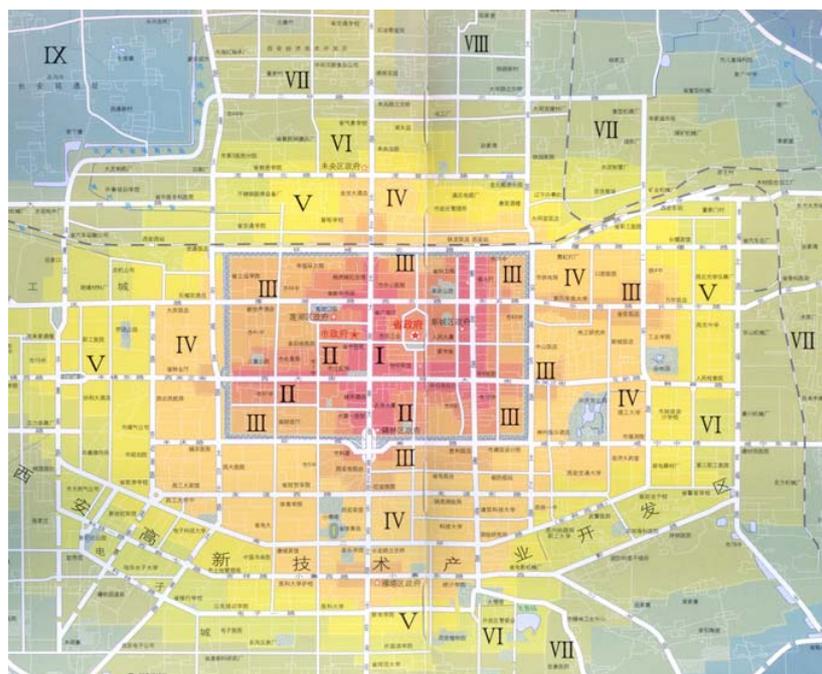
This is very difficult to be accepted by concerned residents. There are at least three reasons accounting for it. Firstly, it relates to the Muslim religion that many local residents have. Based on their daily praying tradition, these Muslim residents see mosques as indispensable components in their lives. Secondly, it relates to the close relationships among local residents. Due to Muslim marriage traditions, the relationships among local residents are not only neighborhoods but relatives. Many people cherish their close relationships and find it unacceptable to leave this area alone. Thirdly, it connects with local traditional business lives. Since there exist a close tie between their economic lives and the urban fabric. They see

“moving out from this area is unacceptable”, because “although they may get better living conditions, it can’t make up for their economic losses, since moving out means losing job[s]” (Wang, 2002, p. 93).

### 2.4.1 Market-force

In this project, market-force plays a significant role in local redevelopment plans making and implementation. On the one hand, by means of reclaiming property rights and displacing concerned residents, it is an important way for the district government to increase its revenues by leasing the land use right to private developers. On the other hand, it closely relates to various land uses, which have different land prices. According to the redevelopment plan, original low level of residential houses will be replaced by multi-level of mixed-use commercial-cum-residential complexes. With the changes of land uses, corresponding land prices will also increase, which means local government can get more revenues through leasing the land use right. In addition, as it is laid out in Xi’an latest master plan, the whole CWA is to be restructured into a centre of tourism and commerce. Therefore, the constructions of multi-level of mixed-use complexes will provide more business opportunities and attract more investment for the municipal economic development.

In a nutshell, it is the raising land prices that dominate local redevelopment plans and policies. As it is stipulated in the article 28 of current Land Administration Act, the state-owned urban land in Chinese cities has been categorized into various levels according to certain criteria (SCXPC, 2004). Usually, the higher level of land grade the better price the land will have. In addition, given the same land grade, various sorts of land uses grant different prices to the land. Following map (f) illustrates that Xi’an DTMD mainly locates in the Grade I and Grade II area. The table (a) of Base Price for State-owned Land in Xi’an shows the prices disparity of different grades of land. Normally, in the same grade of land, the land for commercial and tourist uses has higher price than the land for residential uses. Naturally this has much attraction to local government to sell the land use right, while redeveloping this area into mixed-use purposes.



Map f: Graded state-owned land in Xi’an city  
Source: (MLRPRC, 2003)

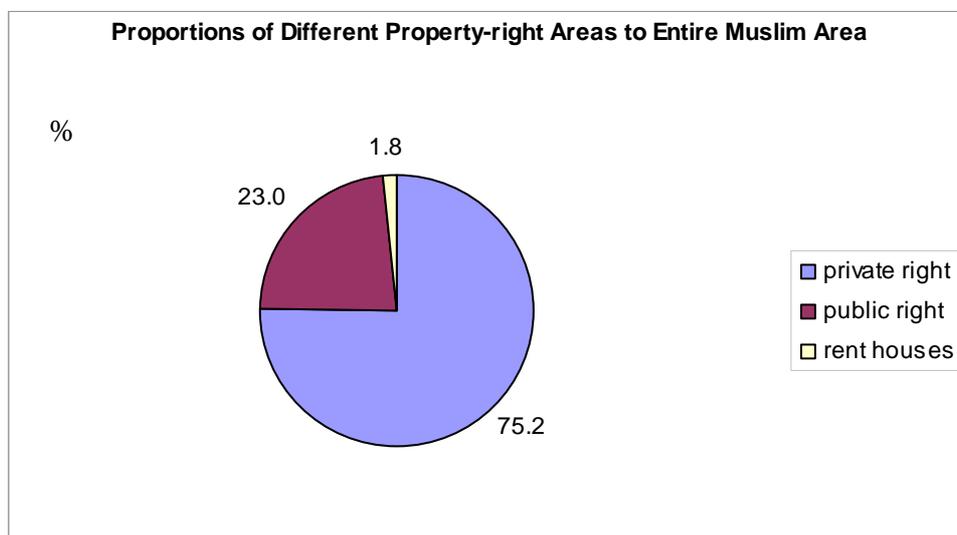
In the meantime, attracting businesses and private investment becomes one important objective for local economic development. Therefore, various governmental agencies make great efforts to provide opportunities through local redevelopment plans. For example, in the work-plan of the External Trade and Economy Cooperation Bureau, Lianhu District, local development concept was “Big attracting businesses producing big development; small attracting businesses producing small development; no attracting businesses producing no development” (---, 2005). All these policies and strategies prove that market force or economic development plays a dominant role in local regeneration plans.

Land use	Commercial, tourist and amusement area	Residential area	Industrial area	Scientific, educational, cultural and hygienic area	Comprehensive area
Price					
Land grade					
<b>I</b>	<b>3300</b>	<b>2610</b>	1950	2265	2955
<b>II</b>	<b>2535</b>	<b>2070</b>	1560	1755	2310
<b>III</b>	1965	1620	1230	1350	1800
<b>IV</b>	1470	1215	870	1020	1335
<b>V</b>	900	765	555	660	840
<b>VI</b>	570	495	375	420	540
<b>VII</b>	435	390	300	330	405
<b>VIII</b>	330	300	240	270	315
<b>IX</b>	270	240	210	225	255
<b>X</b>	158	147	135	142	150
<b>XI</b>	45	40	36	39	44
<b>XII</b>	28	26	22	24	27

Table a: The Base Price for State-owned Land in Xi'an (2007)  
Source: Xi'an National Land and Resources Bureau

#### 2.4.2 Social impacts of the redevelopment plan

Since local district government began to propagate the redevelopment plan in 2005, the issue of property compensation has been very contentious. Today, the property rights in DTMD mainly consist of three types: i> Private land use rights; ii> Public land use rights; and iii> Rent (three types: Rent public property for residential usage; Rent public property for company or governmental unit; Rent private house for business) (Li, 2002, p. 63). The proportions of these areas to entire Muslim district area are illustrated in the following chart: the private right occupying 75.2%, the public right 23.0%, and rent houses 1.8% (SMDPI et al., 1997, p. 65).



Therefore, in order to appropriate the land use right, a proper compensation plan by local district government is necessary, which is shown in the following table (b). Surrounding this compensation plan, there have been enormous discontents among local residents. They believe that the compensation is far less than the market price, and that local redevelopment project is for the associated benefit of local district government and private developers at the cost of their own.

Property Categories / Price Types	Removal compensation from government	Local second-hand apartment price	Market-price of local commercial housing
Private-owned residential housing	1,680-2,180 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>	3,000-3,500 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>	4,000-5,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>
Private-owned business housing	3,800-4,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>	10,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>	30,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup> (including 47% public apportion)
Public-owned residential housing	800-1,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>		
Public-owned business housing	About 2,000 RMB yuan/M <sup>2</sup>		

Table b: Prices comparison between removal compensation and market-price of local commercial housing in Sajinqiao Area, Xi'an, in Mar. 2005  
(Source: provided by local Muslim residents)

The total concerned households in this redevelopment project reach more than one thousand. There were several dialogues taking place between these residents and local district government, when the district government has been propagating the redevelopment plan. The original intentions of the district government were to convince the residents that the city's future will be better if the plan is conducted. Nevertheless, all these dialogues end in vain. This has much to do with the political distrust of the residents towards local political institutions. Seeing this, in March 2005, local district government began to take forceful removal actions in Damaishi and Sajinqiao area. In order to fight for their own rights, local residents began to petition to higher authorities for assistance and justice, respectively Xi'an Urban Planning Bureau, Xi'an Municipal Government, and even to the State Council (resources provided by local residents).

As a result, in September 2006, the Ministry of Construction in P.R.China decided to send out special investigators on urban planning implementation in six cities including Xi'an. According to the mechanism, the investigators mainly examine whether local development is following its master plan. And when there is any problem found, the investigators may report directly to the Ministry of Construction. Then, the Ministry of Construction will inform the corresponding governmental agencies to explain and validate their activities (---, 2006). Nevertheless, in May 2008, Xi'an latest master plan was approved by the State Council. Since such redevelopment projects as in Damaishi and Sajinqiao area are outlined in the master plan, it is difficult to comment on local redevelopment activities in the Muslim district under the rubrics of legitimacy. In this sense, to what direction the redevelopment project will head for really depends on the interactions between local governments and the residents. Nevertheless, at least two concrete challenges face local district government: one is the cohesive community movements and petitions where social capital plays a considerable role; the other is the astronomical compensation they might face as a result of local massive self-constructions in recent years.

Under such a situation, both previous empirical practices in Beiyuanmen street area and the realities in Damaishi and Sajinqiao area infer that local community-engaged redevelopment approach might fit the Muslim district better than any current proposed plans by local government.

### **3 Conclusion**

The latest master plan of Xi'an underlines the significance of urban conservation in city development, accompanying strong economic development concerns. In order to meet its set objectives, the general urban space in Xi'an is to be restructured, and the historical urban core ---CWA--- is planned as the commercial and tourist center. Nevertheless, the social development and community construction are just very vaguely mentioned in the master plan e.g. as a people-centered plan. Such situations are well reflected in the regeneration process of the Muslim district within the CWA.

Beiyuanmen street project was conducted in 1993 in order to improve local physical urban environments. As a pilot project for the whole DTMD and also to comply with the municipal conservation regulations within the historical core, this project was featured by conservation-biased revitalization. Especially, with the financial assistance from NORAD, the revitalization plan was proposed by various group members, during which the role of local residents are involved to contribute to local revitalization plan both financially and empirically. It's noteworthy that after the project completion, the original residents still remain on site, which actually infers the conservation of not only physical environment but also local indigenous lives. Therefore, it seems to be a regeneration process of physically, economically as well as socio-culturally.

Nevertheless, in the general context of Xi'an's market-oriented urban development, large areas have been redeveloped following a very market-biased policy. Usually, local redevelopment plans in these areas promote housing removal and residential relocation. Through leasing the land use rights and attracting more private investment, it is a way for local government to increase its revenues. This logic also dominates the redevelopment project in Damaishi and Sajinqiao streets area.

Even though the revitalization processes of these two projects seem very different from each other, a closer examination shows actually they share the similarity in terms of the government-led top-down proposed and implemented plans. Beiyuanmen street project was proposed by local government together with some professionals as a pilot project. Even though local residents were involved in the project somehow, e.g. the provision of necessary funds, this does not mean that they have a right to decide whether or not to accept what is happening on the site. Therefore, this whole process is more like something to showcase it as a pilot study. In other words, there is no institutionalized way to guarantee the role of local residents in local development plan. This has been blatantly reflected in the redevelopment project of Damaishi and Sajinqiao streets area, where the original residents have been excluded from the redevelopment plan when local government sees more economic returns. In fact, local economic-growth-biased tendency is so dominating that many earlier proposed plans might be changed or pushed aside and instead other options generating more monetary returns are opted for. Through experiencing the property-led redevelopment projects in the Muslim district, Xi'an City Planning and Design Institute, as local planning agency, comments that in order to conduct a comprehensive regeneration plan in Xi'an DTMD, "a strict management method should be obeyed to ensure the accordance with the original plan", and in addition "the interference of commercial motives should be avoided" (XCPDI, 2002,

p. 90). However, with the trend of globalization, market-force has been playing a more and more important role in Xi'an urban development. The suggestion of shunning from "commercial motives" is very difficult to follow in the context of pro-growth urban development.

Given the particular district context of this area as a Muslim enclave, several issues play a significant role in affecting the implementation of the redevelopment plan, such as the cohesive relationships among the Muslim neighborhoods, astronomical compensation facing local government due to recent community massive self-constructions, and the constraints of the building height control within the CWA which might compromise the economic interest of the associated state-private-sectors. In the meantime, many local residents show the financial ability and willingness to improve their houses by themselves. Therefore, to this particular district, the cooperation between local government and communities provides a feasible and practical way to conduct local regeneration. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that this kind of cooperation between local government and communities comes into being only with the interaction of above mentioned key issues. Especially, among them, the cohesive relationships among local residents play a significant role, which contribute to the organized community petition and involvement in local redevelopment plans. This indicates the considerable role of the community social capital in the regeneration of this Muslim district.

Nevertheless, the role of private developers as a means to provide necessary funds in local development should also be underlined. Especially, in some urban areas, their active role should also be integrated with the initiatives of local residents by the government through an institutionalized participatory regeneration mechanism. This largely depends on the alteration and improvement of local regeneration policies. Anyway, a legitimate guarantee for public participation and the expression of public interest comes to central, when current situation is to be changed fundamentally and the holistic regeneration process is to be conducted.

## Bibliography

- . (2005). 西安市莲湖区对外贸易经济合作局 2006 年工作计划(2006 Work-plan of the External Trade and Economy Cooperation Bureau, Lianhu District, Xi'an City). Retrieved at August 13th, 2008, from [http://www.lianhu.gov.cn/content.asp?leaf\\_id=2925](http://www.lianhu.gov.cn/content.asp?leaf_id=2925)
- . (2006). 建设部派驻专员督察城市规划 首期有六座城市(The Ministry of Construction Sending Out Urban Planning Investigators to Six Cities). Retrieved October 1st, 2008, from [http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2006-09/15/content\\_5093823.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2006-09/15/content_5093823.htm)
- BSOLD, B. S.-d. O. i. L. D. (2006). 莲湖区北院门街道办事处“十一五”期间经济发展思路 ( Economic Development Proposal During the 11th Five-year Plan in Beiyuanmen Sub-district Office, Lianhu District ) . Retrieved at July 20th, 2008, from <http://bymjdb.gov.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsID=541>
- Buck, D. D. (1984). Changes in Chinese urban planning since 1976. *Third World Planning Review*, 6(1), 5-26.
- Cao, W. (2005). *西安鼓楼历史街区更新建筑研究 ( Study on the Renewal Building in the Historic Drum-tower District of Xi'an )* Unpublished Master Thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology, Xi'an.
- Chen, D. L., Wang, S. M., & Wen, J. Q. (2003). 西安市明城区保护展望 (Conservation Prospectives on the Ming City Area in Xi'an). *Architectural Journal ( 建筑学报 )*, 2, 22-24.
- Dong, W. (1995). *An Ethnic Housing in Transition: Chinese Muslim Housing Architecture in the Framework of Resource Management and Identity of Place*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, The Norwegian Institute of Technology, Trondheim.
- EBUCCC, E. B. o. U. C. o. C. C. (1990). *当代中国的城市建设 (Urban Construction of Contemporary China)* (1st ed.). Beijing: Chinese Social Science Publisher.
- Fang, K. (2000). *当代北京旧城更新：调查、研究、探索 (Contemporary conservation in the inner city of Beijing: servey, analysis and investigation)*. Beijing: Chinese Architectural Industrial Press (中國建築工業出版社).
- Geng, H. Z. (1998). 历史街区保护的经济理念及策略 (Economic thoughts in cultural heritage areas). *City Planning Review ( 城市规划)*(03), 40-42.
- He, H. X. (2002). 古城西安整體環境的協調與分析 (Ancient capital Xi'an's integrative environment harmony and analysis). *Architectural Journal ( 建筑学报 )* (5), 49-51.
- He, H. X. (2006). *特色城市：古都西安 (The Special Capital City of Xi'an)* (1st ed.). Beijing: Chinese Architectural and Industrial Press.
- He, S. J., & Liu, Y. T. (2005). 邻里作为一种规划思想：其内涵及现实意义 (Neighborhood as A Planning Idea, It's Connotation and Realistic Significance). *Urban Planning Overseas ( 國外城市規劃)*, 20(3), 64-68.

- He, S. J., Yu, T. F., & Fang, L. (2001). 城市更新中社会网络的保存和发展 (Protection and Development of Social Networks in Urban Renewal). *Human Geography (人文地理)*, 16(6), 36-39.
- Hoyem, H. (1989). *西安鼓楼回教区改造计划 ( Drum Tower Muslim District Project Report )*. Xi'an: Xi'an Jiaotong University, The Norwegian Institute of Technology.
- Li, H. Y. (2002). *Impact of Land Tenure Transformation on Physical Development of Drum-Tower Muslim District, Xi'an China*. Unpublished Master Thesis, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- Li, J. B. (2004). *三秦史話: 西安回族与清真寺 (A History on Sanqin: Xi'an Muslim and Mosques)* (1st ed.). Xi'an: Sanqin Press.
- Li, W. X. (2005). 城市化進程中的歷史文化街區的保護 (Conservation on Historical and Cultural Areas during Urban Transformation). *Journal of Chengdu Institute of Administration (成都行政學院學報)*, 13(3), 39-41.
- Lin, B., & Wang, H. S. (2002). *变迁中的城区政府與区街经济: 一个典型城区的社会学研究 ( Transitional Urban District and Its Economy: the sociological research of a typical urban district )* (1st ed.). Beijing: China Social Science Publication.
- Ma, Z. L. (1985). Xi'an: the Metropolis of North-West China. In F. S. V. Sit (Ed.), *Chinese cities: the growth of the metropolis since 1949* (pp. 148-166). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MLRPRC, T. M. o. L. a. R. P. R. C. (2003). *中國城市地價圖集 (A Pictorial Collection of Urban Land Prices in Chinese Cities)* (1st ed.). Beijing: China Maps Press.
- Qi, X. J. (2001). 论政府在旧城改造中的职能 ( Discuss the Government's Function in Reconstruction of the Old-city ) . *Journal of Wu Han University of Technology* 23 (11), 92-94.
- Ruan, Y. S., & Sun, M. (2001). 我国历史街区保护与规划的若干问题研究 ( Conservation and planning in historical streets areas ) . *City Planning Review (城市规划)*, 25(10), 25-32.
- SCXPC, S. C. o. N. P. s. C. (2004). 中华人民共和国土地管理法 (Land Administration Act in P.R.China). Retrieved at June 20th, 2007, from [http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-08/30/content\\_1925451.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-08/30/content_1925451.htm)
- SCXPC, S. C. o. X. a. P. s. C. (2002). 西安历史文化名城保护条例 (Conservation Regulations on Xi'an Historic City). Retrieved at June 20th, 2007, from <http://www.xafz.gov.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsID=533>
- Shan, J. X. (2006). *城市化发展与文化遗产保护 (Urbanization and the Protection of Cultural Heritage)* (880-03 Di 1 ban. ed.). Tianjin: Tianjin University Press.
- Shi, M. L. (2005). 探求北京古都風貌保護“死結”的經濟解 (Explore the Conservation of Cultural and Historical City of Bei Jing Economically). *Beijing City Planning & Construction Review (北京規劃建設)*(4), 81-82.

- SMDPI, S. M. D. a. P. I., XUAT, X. a. U. o. A. a. T., UTPRI, U. T. P. R. I., RERI, R. E. R. I., & RUDRI, R. a. U. D. R. I. (1997). *西安市回民区更新改造研究 (Research on Xi'an Muslim Historical Area's Renewal and Innovation)*.
- SSB, S. S. B. (2006). *陝西統計年鑑 (Statistical yearbook of Shaanxi)*. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Wang, A. J. (2005). 历史城镇保护中的经济理念与策略 (Economic views in the conservation of historic towns). *Journal of Town Construction (小城镇建设)*(3), 63-65.
- Wang, T. (2002). Research on the Renewal Method of Xi'an Muslim District. In B. Erring, H. Høyem & S. Vinsrygg (Eds.), *The horizontal skyscraper* (pp. 91-95). Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.
- Wang, Y. P. (2000). Planning and Conservation in Historic Chinese Cities: The case of Xi'an. *Town Planning Review*, 71(3), 311-331.
- Wu, B. L. (1979). *西安歷史述略 (A Brief Introduction to Xi'an History)*. Xi'an: Shanxi Renmin Press.
- Wu, L. Y. (1998). 關於北京市舊城區控制性詳細規劃的幾點意見(Perspectives on the controlled detailed planning in Beijing historic urban areas). *City Planning Review (城市規劃)*(2), 6-9.
- XCPB, X. a. C. P. B. (2005). *唐皇城復興規劃 (Concept Plan of Xi'an Imperial Urban Regeneration of the Tang Dynasty)*. Xi'an: Xi'an City Planning Bureau.
- XCPB, X. a. C. P. B., XACH, X. a. A. o. C. H., & XUPDI, X. a. U. P. a. D. I. (2005). *西安市历史文化名城保护规划 (Conservation Master Plan on Xi'an Historic City)*. Xi'an: Xi'an City Planning Bureau.
- XCPDI, X. a. C. P. a. D. I. (2002). The Preservation and Renewal of Beiyuanmen Historic District. In B. Erring, H. Høyem & S. Vinsrygg (Eds.), *The horizontal skyscraper* (pp. 86-90). Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.
- XCUCRC, X. a. C. o. U. C. R. C. (2000). *西安市城建系統志 (Xi'an Urban Construction Records Compilation)*. Xi'an: Xi'an Map Press.
- XMHDPPPO, X. a. M. H. D. P. P. O. (2003). 中挪合作西安回民历史街区保护项目研究成果汇编 (Report of Sino-Norwegian Cooperative Xi'an Muslim Historical District Protection Project).
- XMPG, X. a. M. P. s. G. (2005). *西安城市总体规划 (2004-2020) 文本 (Xi'an Master Layout Plan 2004-2020)*. Xi'an: Xi'an People's Municipality Government.
- XSB, X. a. S. B. (2005). *西安統計年鑑 (Xi'an Statistics Yearbook)*. Beijing: China Statistics.
- XSB, X. a. S. B. (2007). *西安統計年鑑 (Xi'an Statistics Yearbook)*. Beijing: China Statistics.
- Zhang, T. W. (1998). 政府、非政府組織以及社區在城市建設中的作用——“在全球化的世界中進行放權規劃管理的展望”國際討論會回顧 (Roles of Government, NGO and CBO in Urban Development——The 1997 UNRISD International Workshop in Shanghai). *urban Planning Review (城市規劃匯刊)*(3), 14-21.

- Zhu, C. L. (1998). 关于西安回坊改建的设想 (Assumptions on Xi'an Muslim District Renewal). In C. L. Zhu, L. S. Chen & Z. Bai (Eds.), *伊斯蘭文化研究: 第二屆西安市伊斯蘭文化研討會論文匯編* (*Research on Islamic Culture: proceedings of the second symposium on Xi'an Islamic culture*) (pp. 254-270). Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin Publication.
- Zhu, S. G., & Wu, H. Q. (2003). *西安的历史变迁与发展* (*Historical changes and development of Xi'an*) (880-02 Di 1 ban. ed.). Xi'an: Xi'an Press.