

Beijings Hutongs – a synergy between the old and the new

MARK Human Shelter and Urban Space

Lea Nussbaumer

The problem of rapid urban growth is omnipresent in today's society. This does put great pressure on the existing urban fabric and built structure. The historical Hutong neighborhoods in Beijing's city center are therefore under constant pressure of adapting to the new city scape without compromising their original character. The unique village like atmosphere in the Hutongs and its small scale courtyard houses offer a great contrast to the anonymous skyscraper areas of the mega-city. However the Hutong areas are also facing difficulties with overcrowded courtyards as well as dilapidated structures and illegal extensions. As a result the majority of the Siheyuan houses was demolished and only 1/3 of the original structure has been preserved.

With the disappearance of the historic structures the city does not only lose a distinctive part of its character and identity but also a very unique way of living. This thesis therefore focuses on finding a coherent design solutions for the traditional Beijing Siheyuan in order to preserve and integrate them into the new urban fabric. It also puts great emphasis on the street and its ability to connect the different in-between spaces as well as removing the threshold between private and public life in order to maintain the Hutong lifestyle.