

Shanghai lilong:

an intertwined relationship between the dwellers & the architecture

by

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Author's Declaration

'I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The thesis investigates the lilong neighbourhoods of Shanghai, known for their high-density housing organized around narrow longtangs (alleyways), during the 1970s and 1980s. It unfolds the intertwining relationship between the dwellers and their living environment through analyzing the spatial transformations in relation to the residents' everyday life. It asks how the architecture was integrated into people's lives, and how the people both consciously and unconsciously influenced their spatial and material environment over time.

Lilong, as one of the most common low-rise residential typologies of old Shanghai, was placed under extreme pressure from the rapid population densification and the city's lack of housing availability during the 1970s and 1980s. Units that were designed for one family began to accommodate multiple families at the same time. As a consequence of the crowded interior, residents extended their everyday activities into the shared spaces of lilong, unconsciously blurring the separation between private and public. They also started to make architectural modifications on the interior and the exterior. These informal structures were essential gestures to overcome the lack of interior space, which became inseparable from the everyday activities of the residents. Each adaptation also added layers of visual and programmatic complexity to the neighbourhood. Together, the traces of these modifications embodied the process of a lilong's growth over decades.

Since the 1990s, large swaths of lilong neighbourhoods have vanished due to the rapid urban regeneration of Shanghai. As more people started to live in towers, the memory of these highly social, diverse, and active neighbourhoods gradually faded away. This thesis acts as a form of record of the collective memory of lilong dwellings during the 1970s and 1980s. Currently, there are many studies that focus either on the architectural typology or the social aspects of lilong. Nevertheless, not enough resources explore the intricacy of lilong that lies within the synergy

between the dwellers and the architecture. This study offers a documentation that begins to fill in this gap of knowledge, by arguing in contrast to these existing studies, that social patterns of dwellings and the built environment are inseparable. It borrows an approach from anthropology and ethnography in order to study this synergy as a dynamic living system.

This thesis explores the transformations by categorizing them into three major topics: “movements and activities”, “objects and transformations”, and “the spatial boundaries.” The methodology it used to retrieve primary resource was to carry out interviews with residents who have lived in a lilong during the 1970s and 1980s so that the thesis material drew directly upon first-hand experiences. The information collected formed the basis for the drawings in this thesis. In order to reconstruct the architectural and urban spatial characteristics of the lilong, I also cross-referenced archival photographs, literature, street views, and documentaries. These drawings are imaginative reconstructions of the life of lilong expressed as a set of visual representations, each paired with anecdotes and quotes collected from the interviews.

The thesis uses lilong as a case study to understand how architecture set up people to live together, what blurring the private and public realms looks like, and how a neighbourhood develops into a highly diverse and social environment. Rather than seeing architecture as formal artifacts, the study begins to reveal dwellings as a process, as a way of life. This research values and substantiates the importance of traces, the adaptations and transformations that are accumulated through time, which marked the history of the neighbourhood’s growth. Finally, reflecting on the knowledge outcomes, the thesis material suggests possible ways to translate the lessons of the 1970s and 1980s lilong forward into the future. ■

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“The essential purpose of architecture is to organize and shape space for use, to consign it to individual and collective experience, to expose it to the effects of time: so that it ages, becomes stratified, continues to be enriched with meanings until at a certain point, it begins to design and re-design itself, seemingly by its own volition, to endure and hand down the most eloquent records of human events.”

-- Giancarlo de Carlo

CHAPTER 1: Background Information

Lilong is a type of old residential neighbourhood in Shanghai, China. And the longtangs are the long, narrow, intricate alleyways located between the rows of lilong houses. They are important fragments of the old city fabric that still exists in modern Shanghai.

The terms, 'lilong' and 'longtang', can both refer to the alleyways or lanes. However, the latter is often used to describe the physical lanes and 'lilong' is rather a more academic term, referring to the housing typology.

Chapter 1 builds up the background knowledge about Shanghai lilong neighbourhoods. It introduces readers to a brief history of Shanghai, the architectural typologies, the time frame that the research focuses on, and the vanishing lilong today. ■



Fig.2.1. Street Scene in Shanghai in 1982



Fig.2.2. Small lilong in Nanshi, Shanghai in 1982

Background

Lilong means alleyway in Mandarin Chinese. A lilong neighbourhood consists of multiple rows of two to three-story rowhouses. Between these rows are narrow interconnecting alleyways, called *longtang*s. Each lilong unit originally only accommodated a single family. However, as historical events, such as the second Sino-Japanese war, resulted in waves of population influx, straining Shanghai's housing supply¹, each lilong unit started to accommodate multiple families at the same time. As a consequence, the interior was crowded, and the residents started to extend their daily life into the public longtang, unintentionally animating the lilong neighbourhood and mixing the private and the public. Residents started to architecturally modify the interior and the exterior of the houses. These transformations were not aesthetic decorations but essential solutions to the lack of space in lilong. As a result, the lilong architecture began to evolve and change naturally and organically as a response to the residents' programmatic needs.

Since the 1990s, market-oriented developments were rapidly replacing the old lilong fabric. By 2018, the city lost approximately two-thirds of the old shikumen lilong.² As more people start to live in isolation in high-rises, the intricate and diverse lilong life tends to fade away from people's memories. It is difficult for younger generations, like myself, who grew up in towers, to picture the intricate relationship between the lilong dwellings and the residents. As the 70s and 80s lilong life vanish, this thesis also partly becomes a record for this fading memory of the lilong.

¹ Wu Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, Second Edition ed. (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2008) 174.

² Referencing data that I've collected from Shanghai Statistical Yearbooks (2010-2019) on Shanghai Municipal People's Government Website.

The thesis references important sources, such as Jiang Wu's *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949* and Sheng Hua's *Shanghai Lilong Mingju*, which both document the typology and the history of lilong in great detail. Gregory Bracken's *the Shanghai Alleyway House* is also an excellent source that touches on the topics of history, design, and some social aspects of lilong. Throughout the research, there is another genre of readings. They focus less on the technical, architectural aspect of lilong, but more on the emotional, personal, or social perspective. Well-known literature like *the Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, by Anyi Wang, is a novel that indirectly reveals the societal aspect of Shanghai throughout the plot. It unveils the nostalgic human relationship between the residents and depicts the trivial things of an ordinary Shanghainese. However, I realized that the architecture of lilong becomes a faint backdrop in these narratives. Yujie Huang's book, *Laochengxiang: My Old Home, My New Home*, is a great book that is heavily interview-based, showing readers the past and current days lilong through the stories of the people. It highlights stories between the neighbours: their conflicts, interactions, connectedness, and their community. This thesis takes up a critical position quite different from these existing sources, finding it essential to go beyond purely typological or social research. It borrows an ethnographic approach, including oral and graphic storytelling, to understand the mutually transformative activity of inhabitation. The architecture and the residents are so entangled with each other that is impossible to study in isolation from each other. ■

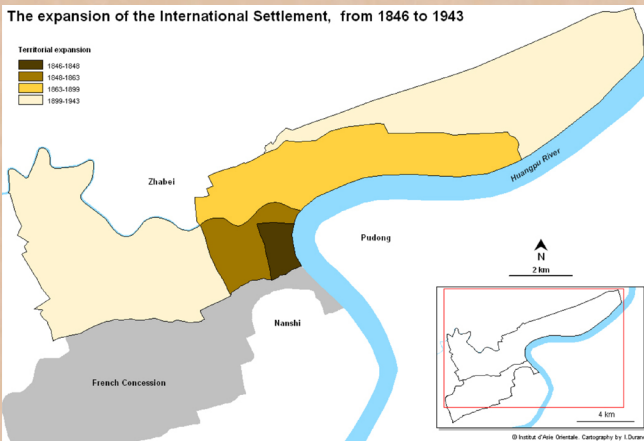


Fig.2.3. Expansion of the International Settlement, 1846-1943. Dark and Light brown zone is where the British Settlement started. Bright yellow outlines the area where the American Settlement started, and soon merged with the British Settlement to become the International Settlement.

Brief History of Shanghai

Shanghai used to be an obscure fishing village, sitting on the East coast of China, where the Yangtze River joined the East China Sea. Benefitting from its convenient location to the waterways, by the 1800s, it was already one of the major harbors in the country. Local shops sold a great variety of goods, so prosperous that they even sold European merchandise.¹ During the First Opium War (1839-1842), the Qing army lost to Britain. As a result, the country signed the Treaty of Nanjing, agreeing to open five cities, including Shanghai, as “open ports” for international trades. As part of the treaty, Britain also established their first settlement, the British Settlement, in close vicinity to the city wall of Shanghai. The Americans and French soon followed Britain’s footsteps, establishing their settlements in 1848 and 1849. Later in 1864, the American and the British settlements merged to become the International Settlement.

At the beginning of Shanghai’s opening, the majority of the earliest settlers were consulate officials, and some were merchants and missionaries. Many rented houses outside the wall of Shanghai, while constructing housing in the outskirts, in the region of what we now call, the Bund.² Since most merchants planned to leave the city as soon as they made a fortune, many of these houses were constructed as ramshackle rectangular buildings. It was quite common that the earliest Western architecture in Shanghai, such as churches, were drawn by non-architect settlers and constructed by local Chinese workers. Thus, the buildings adopted the traditional Chinese construction methods as well as the local material. Through building the foreigners’ houses, churches, and trade buildings, it was inevitable that the construction workers, the craftsmen of buildings, gained knowledge in western design and decorative techniques.³

1 Wu Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, Second Edition ed. (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2008) 3.

2 Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 15.

3 Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 15-23.

However, whether the British row houses influenced Shanghai lilong typologies still remained controversial. Gregory Bracken, a researcher and author on Shanghai lilongs, stated that “the fact that the alleyway houses were laid out in rows, had more than one storey and spotted with Western architectural detail, has led some to speculate that they were a hybrid of the traditional Chinese courtyard house and the Western style terraced one... [However,] no historical record indicates any conscious copying of the Western model was made in Shanghai.”⁴

Layout

Looking at the urban layout of Shanghai, we can observe that large arterial roads divide the land into large parcels. Within each parcel, clusters of developments form smaller streets and alleyways. By the end of 1940s, more than three-quarters of the dwellings in Shanghai were lilong houses.⁵ Typically rows of lilong houses face the same direction. Just as described in the Feng Shui term, “sitting on the North, and facing the South,”⁶ the main entrance into each rowhouse unit typically faces South. Thus, the front doors of a row of houses face another row’s back doors. In between these rows are alleyways, called longtangs. Main and side longtangs intersect with each other, creating an interconnected circulation network within the neighbourhood. The borders of the developments are generally along streets or major roads. The houses at the borders are shophouses, with storefronts at the ground-level and residential at the top. They face the road, inducing commercial activities. These shophouses form a border that surrounds and embraces the rows of residential dwellings inside the development. ■



Fig.2.4. Chongqing Road, 1939. Screenshot of Virtual Shanghai Live Map.



Fig.2.5. Datong Road, 1939. Screenshot of Virtual Shanghai Live Map.

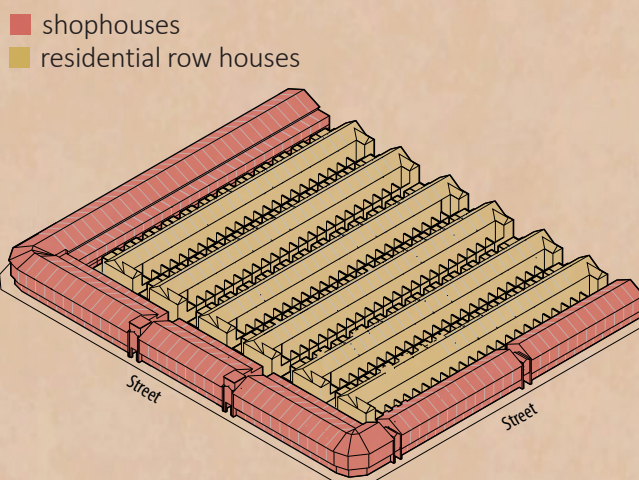


Fig.2.6. Lilong development program diagram

⁴ Gregory Byrne Bracken, *The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013) 77.

⁵ Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)142.

⁶ Original Chinese character: Zuobeichaonan, 坐北朝南.

Lilong Housing Typologies

The Becoming of Lilong Housing

In 1845, Shanghai and the British consul signed the first Land Regulations for the settlements. This document designated areas for foreigners to reside in, which were outside the city walls, in the settlements. At the same time, it prohibited the Chinese from renting properties within the settlement. The historian and author, Hanchao Lu, commented that “this system of segregation was not entirely imposed by the West. Rather, in the beginning, it was a mechanism that the Qing authorities adopted to limit foreign influence and minimize disputes between local people and the ‘barbarians.’”¹ Nevertheless, an uprising in 1853 soon broke this segregation. A group of rebels, called the Small Swords, conquered the walled city of Shanghai. Large tides of refugees fled into the settlement that was located in close proximity to the city wall. The foreign merchants saw the event as an opportunity in real estate investments. They started constructing single-storey low-quality wooden row houses for the Chinese tenants. These housing complexes were named with the suffix “li,”² which meant neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the municipality soon banned these constructions in 1870s as they were seen as fire hazards. By then, the earliest type of lilong, the old Shikumen, replaced these cheap rental housings.³

In 1854, after the segregation in the settlement broke, the British enclave laid down the second Land Regulation which removed the restriction on Chinese people. At the same time, it outlined the self-governing principles of the settlement, which made the settlement officially a British concession. Later in 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War started as the Japanese

¹ Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights : Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 29.

² Wu Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, Second Edition ed. (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2008).

³ Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 33.

troops advanced into China. Amongst the panicking city, the concession area was the only safe haven. Jiang Wu called this the “lonely island prosperity,” where the concession became even more prosperous than before the war.⁴ He explained that during wartime, people rushed into the concession area with their assets and money. From 1938 to 1940, the hot money⁵ in Shanghai rose from 500 million to 5 billion.⁶

This economic and population growth accelerated the development of real estate and rental units. Thus, lilong neighbourhood became the most common residential development in Shanghai at the time. Hanchao Lu commented, “By the end of the 1940s, seven decades after the emergence of alleyway houses, more than 72 percent of the city's dwellings were alleyway [lilong] houses...”⁷

Old Shikumen

During the 1870s, the old Shikumen was the most popular lilong housing development. Each development consisted of rows of two-storey tall multi-bay Shikumen compounds. Each bay was about 3.6 to 4.2 meters wide, 16 meters deep. A three-bay compound could be up to 200 square meters.⁸ These buildings were quite architecturally similar to the traditional Chinese courtyard houses. (Fig. 2.13) Each had a large centralized entrance courtyard with buildings surrounding the courtyard's three sides. The entrance into the compound was decorated with a stone door frame and black wooden door panels. Near the back end of the house, another long courtyard horizontally

⁴ Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 174.

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary Definition: that is moved, for example, from one bank or country to another, to make a profit from high interest or exchange rates. "Hot Money," accessed Jun 10, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hot-money>.

⁶ Jiang 伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 176.

⁷ Hanchao Lu, "Away from Nanking Road: Small Stores and Neighborhood Life in Modern Shanghai," *The Journal of Asian Studies; J of Asian Stud* 54, no. 1 (1995) 142. doi:10.2307/2058952.

⁸ Sheng Hua 沈华, *Shanghai Lilong Mingju 上海里弄民居* (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe 中国建筑工业出版社, 1993) 33.



Fig.2.9. Old Shikumen Lilong, 2014

split the main residential building from the service building, where the kitchen, servant, and spare rooms were located. The following is an excerpt of how Jiang Wu, an architecture professor at Tongji University, described the elements of the architecture:

“[Shikumen’s] structure generally followed the traditional brick noggin technique, [which used masonry as an infill between the wood framings.] The exterior façade was often finished in limewash. Architecturally, the appearance was heavily influenced by the vernacular from the Jiangnan area, [the area south of the Yangtze river]... such as the use of Matou Qiang as firewalls.”⁹ (Fig. 2.8)

Wu said that the success of the old Shikumen demonstrated great profitability in real estate during the time. It attracted many people into developing lilong, including important foreign trade companies like Gibb, Livingston & Co.¹⁰ Even though these constructions were much more expensive than the wooden buildings that the municipality banned, the profitability allowed it to become the main housing developments in the foreign settlements, and later spread into the Chinese territory.¹¹

Late Shikumen

Approximately half a century later, a new type, named the late Shikumen, emerged as even larger housing developments. These buildings were mostly built as single or double-bay units, and could rise up to three storeys high. The width of the main longtang was wider than the old Shikumen’s longtangs. This was how Wu summarized the new design of the late Shikumen:

“...Load bearing brick walls replaced the traditional brick noggin technique. Stylistically, traditional decorations, such as the



Fig.2.8. Matou Qiang of Lilong

⁹ Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 78. Translation is my own.

¹⁰ Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 76.

¹¹ Darshini Mahadevia, *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2008) 33.

Matou Qiang, were not used anymore. In place of real stones, the stone door frames used artificial stones. Instead of limewash, late shikumen's wall finishes were mostly exposed brick. The door head decorations were usually triangular or semi-circular stone forms, framing the sculpted western floral patterns and architraves."¹²

New Style Lilong

As the lilong typologies continued to evolve, the new style lilong came into life. This type of architecture came in various sizes, from single-bay to three-bay units. The width of each bay was between 3.6 to 4.8 meters wide and 10 to 14 meters deep.¹³ This typology started to replaced stone doors with metal gates. Some versions of the new style lilong also eliminated the open interior lightwell located near the back end of the units.

Wu described, "Walls of the courtyards were lowered, replaced by low fences, or even simply replaced by vegetations... Structural components other than load-bearing walls, which were kept as brick walls, were mostly reinforced concrete. These houses were completed with water, electricity, and plumbing systems, some even had gas and hot water."¹⁴

Garden Lilong

In the 1930s, the Garden Lilong became popular. This typology emphasized the gardens around the houses, occupying a larger lot. The interior floor plans and aesthetics were close to what we now understand as the single-detached houses.¹⁵ The neighbourhood was low in density, and the layout of was more or less similar to neighbourhoods with single and semi-detached houses. ■



Fig.2.10. Late shikumen, Simingcun, 2014



Fig.2.11. New Style Lilong, Jinan Bie Shu, Shanghai, 2013.



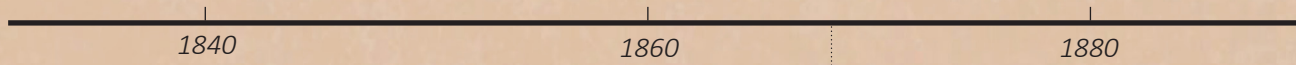
Fig.2.12. Garden Lilong, Fulei former residence, 2018

12 Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 79.

13 Hua沈华, *Shanghai Lilong Mingju上海里弄民居*, 37.

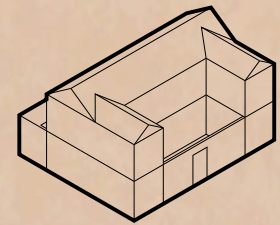
14 Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 113.

15 Jiang伍江, *A History of Shanghai Architecture 1840-1949*, 113.



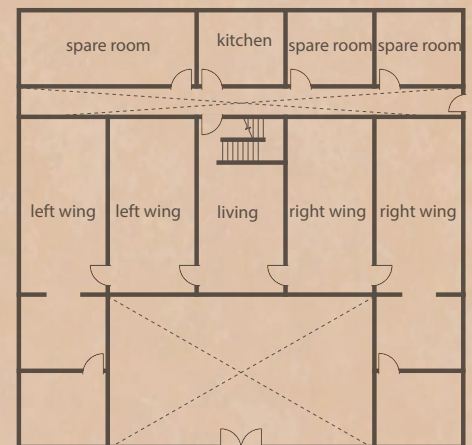
LILONG HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

This diagram shows the time period when different lilong typologies started to emerge in Shanghai. It compares the unit floor plans to show the differences. For example, each unit of the old Shikumen are multi-bay units, whereas late Shikumen units are only single or double-bay units. The layout of the new style lilongs and garden lilongs started to include gardens around the houses.

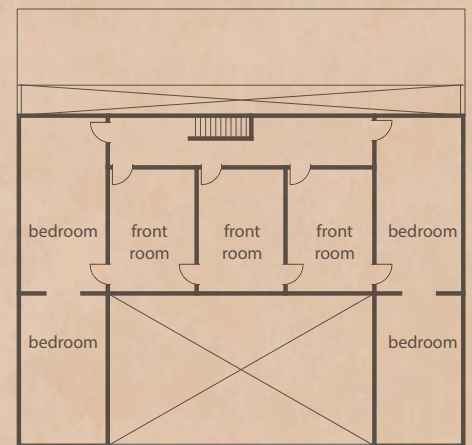


Old Shikumen Lilong

- Ground floor plan -



- Second floor plan -



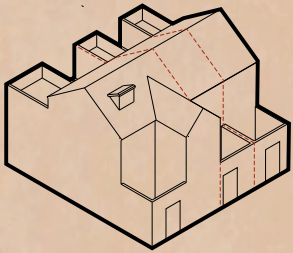
5-bay unit

Fig.2.13. Lilong Housing Typologies

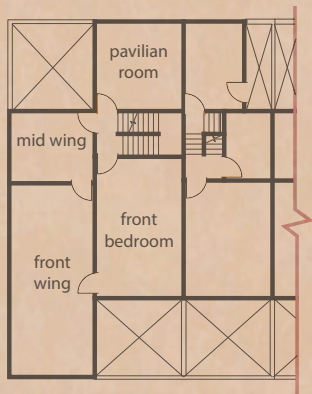
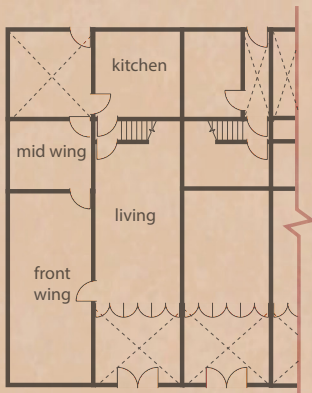
1900

1920

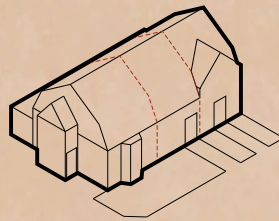
1940



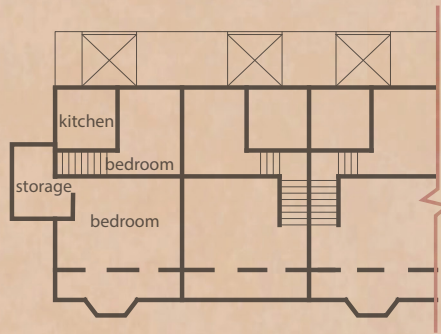
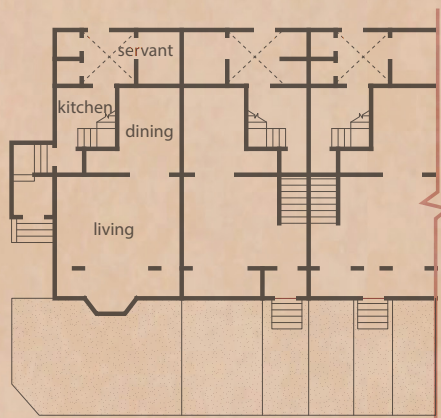
Late Shikumen Lilong



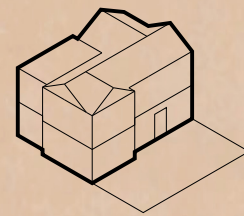
2-bay unit 1-bay unit



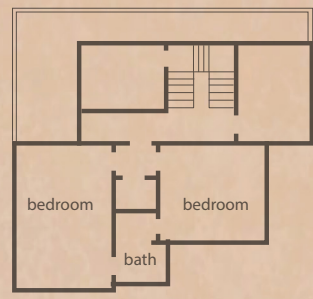
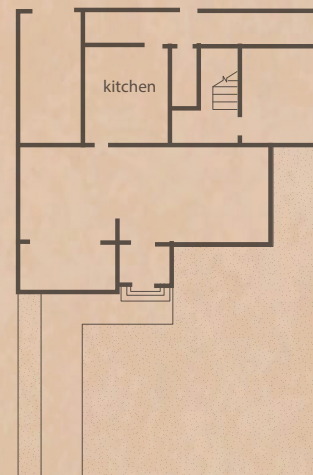
New Style Lilong



1 unit



Garden Lilong



1 unit

A Family per House to A Family per Room

Initially, each lilong unit only accommodated one family. However, by the 70s and 80s, it was common to find seven to even nine families sharing a single unit. There were two phenomena that facilitated the overcrowded lilong living. One was the emergence of second landlords who subleased rooms to separate tenants. The other was the change in property ownership after the Communist Revolution in 1949.

Second landlords were sublessors who rented a lilong house and subleased rooms separately to other tenants. Often, they also lived in the same house. Hanchao Lu commented that “by the 1920s, second landlords had gradually become the major players in leasing dwellings in the city.”¹ One key catalyst that stimulated this phenomenon was the “take-over fee” that occurred as part of the rental process.² This fee was initially an optional payment from the new tenants to the old tenants to compensate them for leaving furniture behind in the house. Gradually, this fee became a part of the standard process of renting, which by the 1930s, became as high as double or even triple the rent.³ Because of the high cost, many tenants started subletting the rooms to relieve some of their financial burdens. Political upheavals, such as the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1930s, brought influxes of refugees into Shanghai. Consequently, as Handchao Lu explained, “[the number of] the new alleyway houses... were far from sufficient to meet the demand for housing... Very few old-type alleyway houses were built after 1940, which meant that the majority of the population-which by 1949 was close to 5.5 million-had to jam into the shikumen houses built before 1935.

¹ Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights : Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 162.

² Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights : Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, 162.

³ Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights : Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, 162.

The second landlord business boomed. It was in the 1940s that the takeover fee was... close to the purchase price.”⁴ Since the culture of second landlord started, sharing a house with multiple families became the norm of lilong living.

Since 1949, the communist period of Shanghai, the government confiscated private lilong housings and redistributed them to different families.⁵ Jie Li, the author of *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life*, explained that “the new government did not seize alleyway housing from residents who stayed on, but declining capitalist or comprador families soon had to share their single-family homes...”⁶ Families were assigned to occupy individual rooms in the house, overcrowding the interior space.

“Residents who moved here under socialism were mostly nuclear families occupying single rooms with three or four children on average... This meant turning the kitchen, faucet room, staircase, terrace, as well as the back alleyway itself into communal spaces shared between several families – not to mention the sharing of many walls, windows, and doors.”⁷

On top of the redistribution of housing after 1949, Jie’s family experienced political and social pressure, which led to the surrendering of their living space to more families. It all started with the Hundred Flowers Campaign during the late 1950s when the country encouraged citizens to express criticism towards the

4 Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights : Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, 166.

5 Non Arkaraprasertkul and Matthew Williams, "The Death and Life of Shanghai's Alleyway Houses: Re-Thinking Community and Historic Preservation," (January 1, 2016) 138.

6 Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) 49.

7 Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life*, 57.

government. However, soon after her grandfather submitted his opinion, he was named an anti-communist. Quickly, his neighbours and friends started to see his family differently. Jie explained that her grandfather “in a display of how well his thoughts had been reformed, yielded his living room on the ground floor to... other needy families.”⁸ Later on, the occupancy of the house rose as her grandfather’s parents came to stay with the family. The family, who used to occupy an entire two-storey house before time, became crowded with “the elderly couple liv[ing] in the back bedroom, while Yeye (grandfather), Nainai (grandmother), and their five children lived in the front bedroom.”⁹ Despite how tight the space was, her grandfather further gave out their dining room to the downstairs neighbour as their neighbours demanded. ■

⁸ Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life*, 68.

⁹ Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life*, 69.



Fig.2.14. Residents washing laundry at the shared sink



Fig.2.15. Multiple families sharing one kitchen



Fig.2.16. Image of Siwenli. Photograph by 郑宪章 Xianzhang, Zheng, 2013.04.02

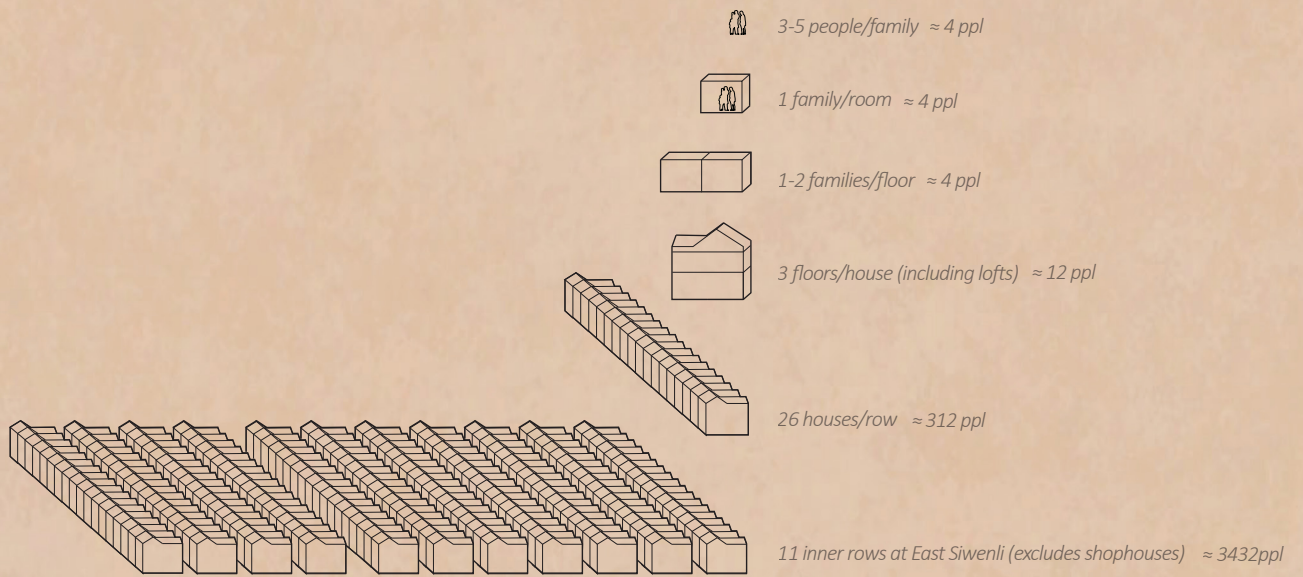


Fig.2.17. Speculated Population Density of East Siwenli

Density

Figure 2.16 highlights the East portion of the largest lilong developments in Shanghai, called Siwenli. This portion consists of approximately 380 units, including 90 shophouse units and a food market. Figure 2.17 is a speculation of how dense the development could be based on a few assumptions. The interviewees of this thesis generally had three to five-person families. Taking an average, four people per family, each family occupying a room. Making a conservative assumption that only one family occupied each floor, three levels in each unit, 26 units per row of houses, and accounting for the 11 inner rows of lilong houses, the total population in East Siwenli would be about 3432 people. Such densified neighbourhood might, in fact, be one of the most efficient ways to maximize housing units on a site during the time while still maintaining a good ground-level connection through the design of courtyards.¹

A lilong resident, YuJun, revealed that during the 70s and 80s, the number of people living in each house was one of the major concerns for marriage. She said that before marriage, girls would pay close attention to the available living space in their partner's houses since getting married and having children would create additional strain on the already crowded interior space.

Liveliness

The intricacy of lilong lay within the interaction between the dwellers and their lilong houses. The lack of interior space pushed the residents to take advantage of every square inch of the space available. Private domestic daily life not only spilled out into the houses' hallways, terraces, but also into the exterior longtangs, mixing their private lives with the public space. In the longtangs, the adults were washing clothes, the elderlies were people-watching, the children were playing games... For them, longtangs were a part of their home. The daily life of the people activated the ground level, tying the relationship between neighbours, creating a highly social community. The architecture and the dwellers, together, nourished a tight, loving, and harmonious neighbourhood. ■

¹ This insight came up during my conversation with Howard Rideout, an architect who has extensive experience in the architecture field in China.



Fig.2.18. Moving boxes through a window, 1985



Fig.2.19. Laundry in longtang

Time Frame

The 1970s & 1980s

The influx of internal migration in addition to the division of housing resulted in incredibly crowded living spaces in the lilong neighbourhoods. During the 1970s and 80s, the living space per capita only reached 4.4 square meters.¹ However, during the 90s, this number suddenly rose to 6.6 square meters per capita² as a consequence of the booming urban regeneration. The introduction of land leasing in 1988 encouraged the selling of land leases to developers, resulting in a rapid demolition of lilong.³ This thesis selected the period right before this drastic erasure of the lilong neighbourhood. The lilong of the 70s and 80s not only marked how the dwellers inhabited and transformed the architecture but also embodied a rich culture that was built up throughout time.

The Transition Period

1978 was the year of the economic reform and the opening up of the country. It seemed inevitable that politics would have greatly influenced citizen's everyday life. However, when I asked the interviewees whether 1978 made a big difference to their life, they all replied that there was not any significant change to the everyday. Changes were rather gentle and gradual to the residents. As author Jie Li commented, "...the private space of the longtang, daily life runs its normal course, seemingly untouched by the political upheaval surrounding it."⁴ Even so, my interviews

1 Darshini Mahadevia, *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2008) 524.

2 Mahadevia, *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions*, 524.

3 Xiaohua Zhong and Xiangming Chen, "Demolition, Rehabilitation, and Conservation: Heritage in Shanghai's Urban Regeneration, 1990-2015," *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 41, no. 2 (2017) 84.

4 Lena Scheen, "Sensual, but no Clue of Politics: Shanghai's Longtang Houses," in *Aspects of Urbanization in China*, ed. Gregory Bracken (Amsterdam University Press, 2012) 131.

with the lilong residents still captured a temporal dimension as all the interviewees unconsciously used the phrases, “at the beginning” and “later on,” to distinguish the gentle transition between the 70s and the late 80s. They repeatedly brought up two topics that marked this transition: one was the increased personal belongings, especially the introduction of electronics into lilong, and the other was the spatial modifications to their living spaces.

Before 1978, the living area per capita was extremely low. Luckily people did not have a lot of personal items at the time to occupy too much interior space. For many families, placing furniture inside a room was tight, but still somewhat manageable. Many families with larger rooms had a similar collection of basic furniture. “A double bed, a reading table, a single couch, a closet, a dresser, and a square dining table,” said Ao, one of the interviewees. This combination of furniture was named “the 36 legs.” Jie Li recalled, “when my parents and grandparents took me to visit their friends and neighbours in Shanghai in the 1980s, every home had virtually the same set of furniture as well as the same basins, thermoses, towels, lights, clocks, and blankets, all mass-produced by the state-owned factories in the area.”⁵ Of course, there were also many families who lived in unprecedentedly small rooms. It was impossible to have the full collection of the 36 legs. The interviewees revealed that, generally, the interior was so limited in space, feng shui⁶ was not considered as a part of the interior layout of each room. As China opened up in 1978, the period of the “later on,” more and more objects were introduced into people’s lives. The most iconic



Fig.2.21. “It’s small right. It’s only 11 square meters.”



Fig.2.20. Loft room of a lilong house

⁵ Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) 134.

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary Definition: an ancient Chinese belief that the way your house is built or the way that you arrange objects affects your success, health, and happiness. “feng shui,” accessed Jun 10, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feng-shui>.

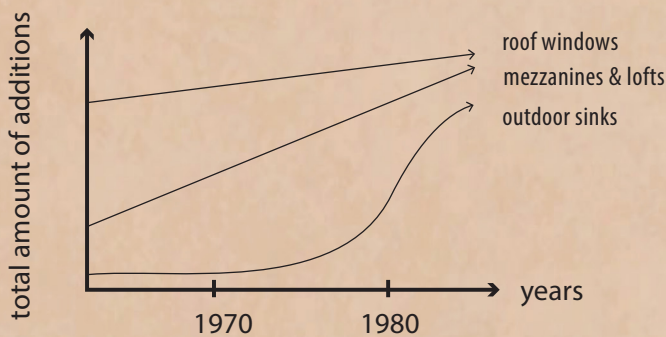


Fig.2.22. My mother's recollection of how frequent were the additions built around her neighbourhood

ones were the electronics, such as televisions. Oversea workers often brought these products back to their families when they returned. Radios, records, washing machines, stereos, and even window air conditioners slowly became more common as years passed. Thus, as the interior started to accommodate these objects, especially the electric wires, the scenery of the longtang started to change. Families who obtained televisions first, brought them outdoors to watch shows with the neighbours. Families with washing machines had slight challenges due to the lack of drainage inside the houses. They temporarily brought the machines out into the side longtangs, extending the electric cords from the interior. Women with washing machines became a refreshing scenery of the longtangs. The temporal presence of such objects in the longtang reflected how the dwellers' everyday was perpetually altering the lilong environment.

*Practicing Daoist rituals in a snail shell*⁷, is a Chinese saying that I often heard during the interviews. The phrase describes how people used their intelligence to utilize as much space as possible within the limited amount of area available. The 70s and 80s time frame captured a period where one can simultaneously observe traces of completed modifications and in-progress appropriations. My mother recalled that the roof windows existed long before the 70s and 80s. She said, "Many were there before I was born. Some were even a part of the original design of some developments. But I have seen people still building those openings to their roofs. Oh, like your cousin Jane! Her family asked builders to construct a roof window in the 80s. Also, loft additions were happening all the time. I always see my neighbours or classmate's families building an extra level on the roof. Sometimes they would also add an extra floor inside their rooms." What left her the greatest impression was the sudden

⁷ Original Chinese character: Luoshike li zuo daochang, 螺蛳壳里做道场.

trend of sink-building outdoors in the 80s. Exterior sinks were not common at all in her neighbourhood until then. Yet, people suddenly started this trend in and around her neighbourhood.

This thesis frames a section of this transition period and observes this phenomenon through the architectural perspective as a way of understanding dwellings. ■

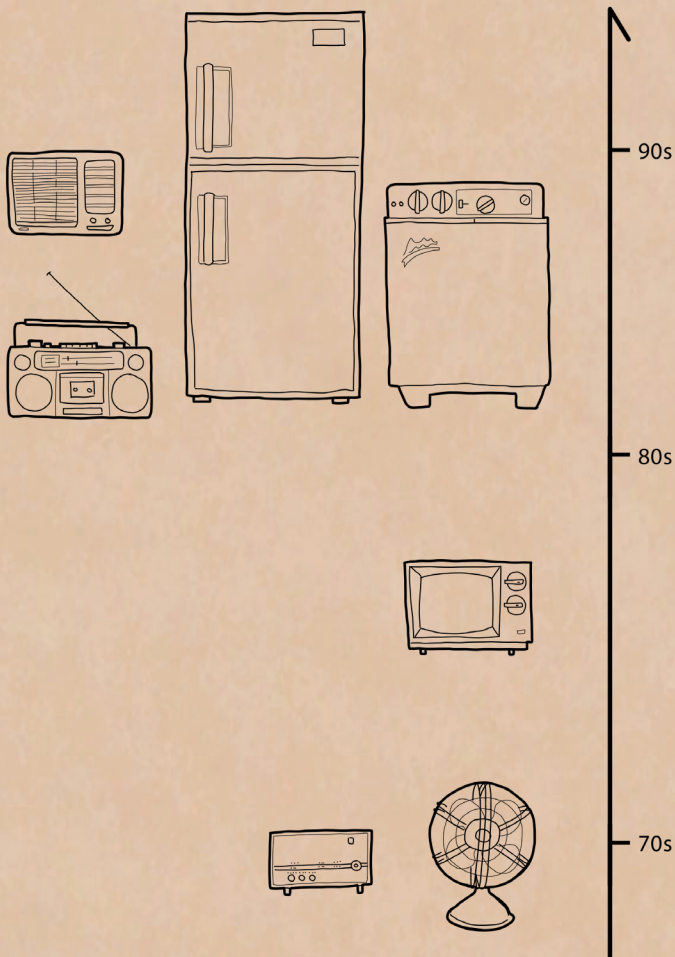


Fig.2.23. Timeline of when home appliances entered the dwellers' lives

The Vanishing Lilong Architecture - Demolition

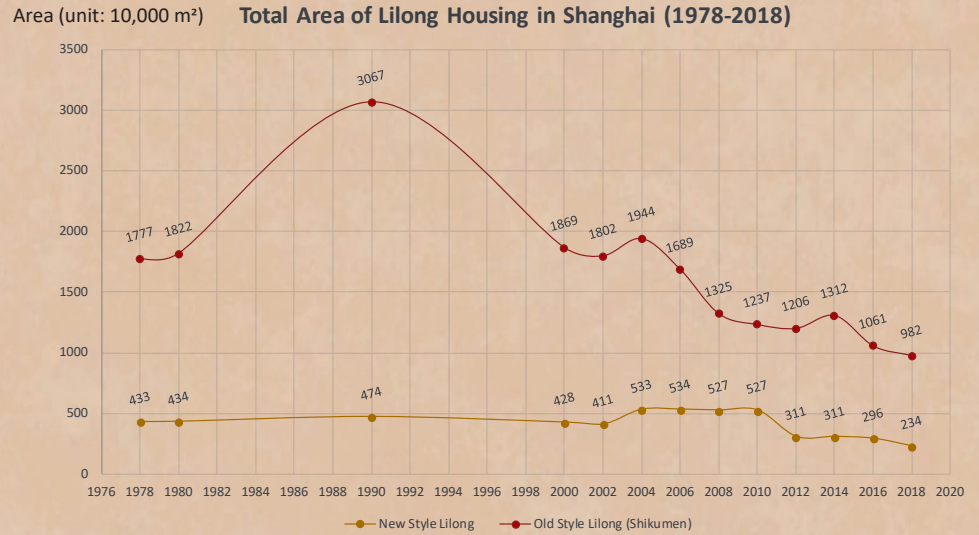


Fig.2.24. Total area of new style lilong and old style lilong in Shanghai. Data collected from上海市统计局 Shanghai Shi Tongji Ju

As mentioned before, the sudden rise of living space per capita during the 1990s was a result of the rapid developments in Shanghai. The economic value of the urban land rose as the core densified. To match the pace of the city’s rapid evolution, Shanghai surrendered the vernacular to give space for the market-oriented developments. According to Shanghai Statistical Yearbooks, in the early 1990s, the total area of Old Style Lilongs was at its highest, with around thirty million square meters of floor area.¹ However, between 1990 and 2000, Shanghai was in a phase of “Old District Redevelopment,”² massively replacing old parts of the town to support mass urban regeneration.³

1 "2008 Nian Shanghai Tongji Nianjian 2008年上海统计年鉴", accessed May 08, 2020, <http://tj.sh.gov.cn/tjnj/20170629/0014-1000194.html>.

2 Chinese character: 旧区改造, jiuqu gaizao

3 Shiling Zheng 郑时龄, "Urban Regeneration and Conservation of Historic Architecture in Shanghai," *Zhongguo Kexueyuan Yuankan* 中国科学院院刊 32, no. 7 (2017) 691. translation is my own.

The newspaper, Shanghai Star, quoted in 1993, "Shanghai of the future must be a metropolis equal to New York or London, said Mayor Huang Ju as he outlined revisions to the city's development plan designed to create an 'oriental Manhattan'... He was addressing the City Planning Meeting, the third since 1949..."⁴ This wave of tall building construction provided the city a relief for the insufficient housing supply, increasing the living area by 2.2 square meters per capita.⁵ Nevertheless, it surrendered large areas of lilong housings. Gradually, in the 2000s, Shanghai started preservation in vernacular architecture⁶. Shiling Zheng, an architecture professor at Shanghai Tongji University, commented that "[Shanghai's] recognition of the importance in Architectural Heritage Protection was a very slow process."⁷

Patrick Cranley, a Shanghai Historian, explained that "in many western countries, it is the private organizations that spearhead historic preservation efforts. There are no such organizations in China. So the decisions are made primarily by government offices. And in Shanghai, that's the construction bureau, the planning bureau, and the cultural affairs bureau. And you can imagine that it's usually the former two that have the influence."⁸ Economically, the complete removal of the vernacular is inevitably the most efficient use of the urban land. Nevertheless, this is a menace to lilong's rich culture that took years to accumulate.

4 "City of Future," *Shanghai Star*, 2 July, 1993, quoted in Jos Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition : Changing Perspectives and Social Contours of a Chinese Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2002) 10. doi:10.4324/9780203989029. <https://www.taylorfrancis-com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/books/shanghai-transition-jos-gamble/10.4324/9780203989029>.

5 Darshini Mahadevia, *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2008) 524.

6 Xiaohua Zhong and Xiangming Chen, "Demolition, Rehabilitation, and Conservation: Heritage in Shanghai's Urban Regeneration, 1990-2015," *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 41, no. 2 (2017)84.

7 Zheng 郑时龄, "Urban Regeneration and Conservation of Historic Architecture in Shanghai," 693, translation is my own.

8 "A Brief History of Shanghai: In Conversation with Patrick Cranley," last modified May 07, accessed Sep 25, 2020, <https://wildchina.com/2020/05/shanghai-history-patrick-cranley/>.

In order to evict residents from lilongs for demolition, the municipality offers the option of either cash compensation or property exchange to relocate them. No matter which option they choose, the result is unpredictably the same: all residents move out, emptying the neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, the residents from the not-yet redeveloped lilongs face the dilemma of whether to leave or to stay. To leave, one must abandon the community and the architecture that they have grown a deep emotional connection with. To stay means facing the ever-worsening condition of the old buildings and the changing social-relationship in the neighbourhood. As more people move out of the community, the social network is not the same for the ones who stay behind. In the end, even though some complain that the compensations were uneven, unfair, many are already preparing to move out. ■

The Vanishing 70s & 80s Lilong Quality

The lilong quality today is not the same as the lilong from half a century ago. The change in the lilong quality reflects the dwellers' response to this dynamic world. Technological advancement and the shift in social structure can greatly influence the traditional lilong way of living.

Technology

Products as simple as toilets and gas stoves can affect the worldliness of lilong. Fewer and fewer families carry their chamber pots (portable toilets) out to empty out and to clean in the morning. Less and less residents light up coal stoves in the longtangs. Naturally, and gradually, these iconic lilong phenomena diminish as time pass. Another factor that alters

the physical quality of lilong is the rising number of private automobiles. With the overflow of cars, every possible space in the city becomes ground-level parking. Many lilong lane committees even started to implement boom gates at the entrances of lilongs to collect parking fees from visitors.

Social Structure

Likewise, the social structure of lilong neighbourhoods today greatly differs from a century ago. In the past, once families settled in a lilong, they stayed for decades. Unspoken rules accumulated over time. These rules allowed families to accommodate each other in a crowded house. Gradually, short-term tenants replace these long-term tenants as more migrants, referred to as the "mobile population," move into Shanghai. As a result, neighbours hardly have any time to get to know each other. The conflicts between the two groups of tenants are mostly related to differences in personal habits, and especially with the use and responsibility of shared spaces.¹ Often, by the time they finally familiarized themselves with each other and established the unwritten rules of lilong living, it is time for the short-term tenants to move away.² New tenants move in again. Endless bonding and re-bonding between neighbours signify endless days of resolving conflicts. With the lack of time, it is difficult to develop a deep relationship between people. Thus, even lilong can be indefinitely preserved in the urban core, the social quality of the neighbourhood would greatly differ from the 70s and 80s lilong. ■

1 Yujie Hunag黄玉捷 and Xiaoping Zhou周小萍, *Laochengxiang: Wo De Laojia, Wo De Xinjia* 老城厢: 我的老家,我的新家 (Shanghai: 上海社会科学院出版社 Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2015).

2 Yujie Hunag黄玉捷 and Xiaoping Zhou周小萍, *Laochengxiang: Wo De Laojia, Wo De Xinjia* 老城厢: 我的老家,我的新家 (Shanghai: 上海社会科学院出版社 Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2015).

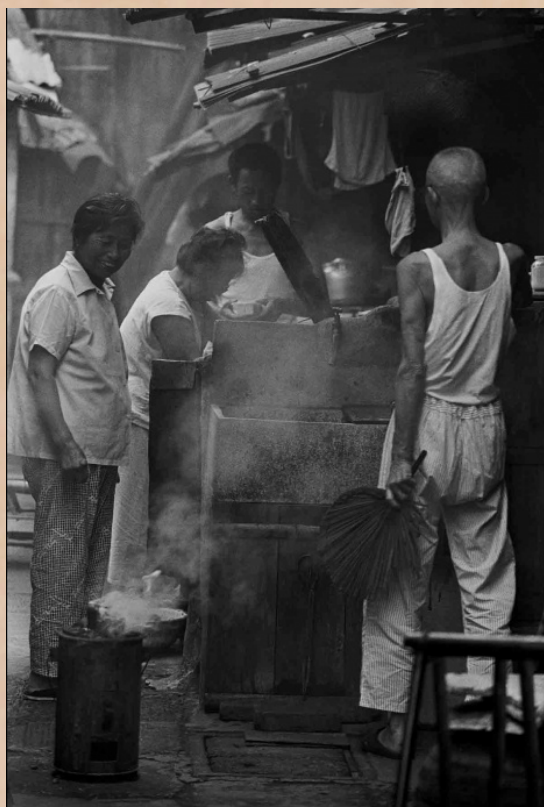


Fig.2.25. Images of llong living



小孩大了结婚了也都在这儿



九十年代初老城厢上海居民烧煤炉



门锁着吗



资料

Press Esc to exit full screen mode.

然而使他们烦恼的是住房太困难



上海音像资料馆

年三十晚他妈妈在烧鱼时

上海故事



Fig.3.26. Residents in the longtang

“To dwell means to leave traces.”

--- Walter Benjamin

CHAPTER 2: Dwelling Transformations

The rising population density on top of the insufficient housing stock resulted in extremely dense lilong neighbourhoods. However, what was fascinating was that under such conditions, the people and the built environment started to develop a reciprocating influence on each other, similar to the core of the Chinese martial art, Taichi: neutralizing the opponent's force through accepting and redirecting the force. The creator of Taichi, Zhang Sanfen, once said that "the secret of the art lies in responding to what life throws at you in a natural, yielding and simple manner."¹ Lilong

dwellers accepted the difficulties created by the lack of private space and high-density living. They responded to the inconvenience through adjusting their lifestyle, and modifying the architecture. Thus, when one examines the lilong of the 1970s and 80s, one can find layers of interventions telling this story between the dwellers and their architecture. ■

¹ Stuart Alve Olson, *Tai Ji Quan Treatise: Attributed to the Song Dynasty Daoist Priest Zhang Sanfeng* (Phoenix: Valley Spirit Arts, 2014).

Research Methodology

At the beginning of the thesis, the research originally planned to conduct on-site documentations and interviews in Shanghai. However, due to COVID-19, the thesis became a remote research of the lilong. There were four phases involved in the research process: mass information browsing, scholarly resource collection, in-person interviews, and documentation through drawing. The first phase occurred at the start of the thesis to obtain a general knowledge of lilong. The process included watching clips of documentaries and videos, studying old photographs and paintings from blogs, reading posts where people shared their personal lilong experience... The second phase quickly followed to start retrieving information specifically from scholarly resources. This included archival photographs from sources like Virtual Shanghai, documentaries from Shanghai Audio Visual Archives, published writings, researches, and official posts and documents released from various departments of the Shanghai Municipality. Accessing both English and Chinese resources was important as it allowed me to understand the perspective on lilong from both cultures. During the most important phase, the third phase, I conducted twelve interviews to retrieve first-hand information from Shanghainese who have lived in the 1970s and 80s lilong. These interviews were the core information that built up the drawings of lilong in phase four. These drawings are imaginative reconstructions based on the participants' stories while cross-referencing sources collected from the first two phases.

The Interviews

On June 7, 2020, I sent out a message to various Vancouver-Shanghainese WeChat groups inviting volunteers to participate in a virtual face-to-face interview for the thesis. The interview consisted of a sixty-minute audio-recorded conversation about

<i>Participant's Nickname</i>	<i>Years of Lilong Living</i>	<i>Lilong Typology</i>	<i># of Families sharing the House</i>
<i>Lin (my mother)</i>	8	late shikumen	5
<i>Ao</i>	16	garden lilong (?)	9
<i>Mr. Jing</i>	18	garden lilong	10
<i>YuJun</i>	20	late shikumen (?)	3
<i>Jamie</i>	20-21	old shikumen	8-10
<i>Ms. Liu</i>	18	old shikumen & new style lilong	6-8
<i>Nini</i>	21	old shikumen	13
<i>Jin Fu</i>	15-20	old shikumen	8-10
<i>Yin</i>	10	late shikumen & new style lilong	3 generations
<i>Nan</i>	4-5	late shikumen	4-5
<i>Jenny</i>	2	late shikumen	5-6
<i>Grace</i>	15	shikumen	3 generations + housemaid

Fig.3.27. List of Interviewees

their childhood lilong memories. Twelve Shanghainese contacted me to volunteer. All participants spent their childhood in lilong neighbourhoods during the 70s and 80s, and later on, moved to Vancouver at different stages of their lives.

Each participant received a copy of a question guideline, which they could choose to read through before the interview. The document was made up of 19 example questions to allow them to start recollecting their past lilong experience. Some questions were casual topics to begin the conversation, such as "What was a most memorable moment of lilong living?" However, there were also many questions directed to the transformations of the spatial environment, such as "Where did you store items in/outside the house? (staircases, outdoors, kitchen...)" "What was something that its location or uses had been changing all the time (ex. dining tables being moved in and out, floor mattresses...)" Although the list was long, the conversation was not confined to these questions. Instead, it was an engaging and free-flowing chat. The participants were invited to speak in the language they felt comfortable with, Mandarin, English, or Shanghainese. Some started the interview in Mandarin, but soon switched into Shanghainese within a few minutes. Thus, the majority of the conversations were in the native Shanghai dialect, then selectively transcribed and translated into English by myself. To protect the interviewees' privacy, the transcribed documents used pseudonyms for all participants. After each interview, I dived into the voice recordings of the conversations to highlight quotes and stories that revealed the intertwining relationship between the residents and their built environments.

Piecing Together the Memories

Fifty years ago, the interviewees themselves were the participants that unconsciously created the intricacy of lilong. Now they became the story-tellers of the lilong living. Through piecing the fragments of their memories together, this thesis reveals a shared memory of the 70s and 80s lilong.

Drawing as Documentation

Jan Gehl once suggested that the study of public life can be practiced through counting, mapping, tracking, looking for traces...¹ This thesis used methods of “looking for traces” in photographs, “mapping” the types of activities, and “tracking” people’s movements through their narratives from interviews. This thesis collects first-person narratives, discovers the repeated stories to find the commonly shared memories, and highlights the ones that have a direct relationship to the topic of the thesis: how the lilong architecture influenced the dwellers, and reciprocally, how the dwellers shaped their environment.

This chapter transposes the typical lilong stories onto a single site – East Siwenli – to provide the readers a physical context for the stories to take place in. Each drawing is an imaginative reconstruction of the life in East Siwenli. To regenerate the site, the drawings referenced maps, such as the 1946 International Settlement Commercial Guide maps from Virtual Shanghai, videos and images of the site posted by bloggers and pedestrians in Shanghai, street views from Baidu maps... To recreate the lilong living, the drawings not only relied on the interview but also cross-referenced videos, such as documentaries and archival photographs that captured the everyday living of lilong. Each drawing is a combination of illustrations and quotations from the interviews to regenerate the narrative of lilong. Each drawing becomes a lens, observing this interplay between the architectural transformations and the dweller’s everyday life. ■

¹ Jan Gehl, *Public Spaces, Public Life, Copenhagen 1996*, 2nd ed. ed. (Copenhagen: Danish Architectural Press : Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, 1999) 24.



Fig.3.28. Boundary around the evening bath in the longtang

Introduction

The Spatial Triad of Lilong

In *the Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre suggests that there are three elements that formulate the production of space. These elements are the spatial triad: “the representation of space”, “the representational space”, and “the social practice.” It was interesting to find how these elements aligned with the lilong phenomenon.

He describes the representation of space as “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists... all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.”¹ In the context of lilong, this pointed to the unmodified lilong housing that the builders had pre-imagined and constructed.

The representational space is the lived-space. It is the space that is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users.'"² This term particularly describes spaces that are redefined through appropriations.³ During the 70s and 80s, lilong dwellers continuously shaped their environment through everyday activities, movements, objects... The modifications could occur both on the interior and the exterior. The layering of these transformations then generate richness and complexity to the neighbourhood.

Lefebvre’s spatial practice defines the perceived space, which is present in “the cohesive patterns and places of social activity.”⁴ They are the routines that constitute a space, the participation through the everyday life. They are the mundane everyday

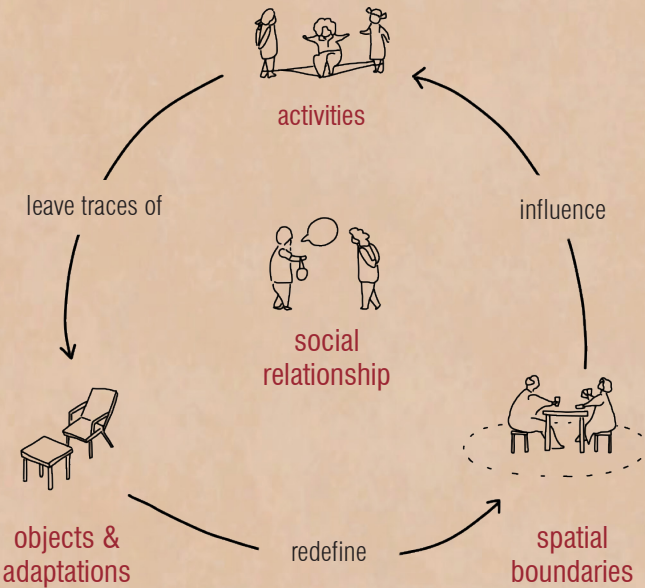


Fig.3.29. Activities, objects, and spatial boundaries diagram

1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991) 38.

2 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39.

3 Setha Low et al., *The People, Place, and Space Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014)285.

4 Setha Low et al., *The People, Place, and Space Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

activity that constitute the lilong living. The repeated lighting of the coal stoves, the ordinary children's longtang games, the endless washing and drying of laundry, each and every act was one of the spices that produced the flavor of life in longtangs.

Through understanding the spatial triad of lilong, I found that the transformations in lilong are in fact inseparable from the dwellers' everyday life. Thus, chapter two begins to explore the interplay between the dwellers and their architecture through categorizing the architectural transformations into three topics: *the movements and activities, the objects and adaptations, and the perceived spatial boundaries.*

The overcrowded condition of lilong houses encouraged the dwellers to use the shared outdoor spaces. Traces of objects being left in the longtangs, such as washing machines, became hints of the everyday lilong activities. At the same time, these objects also became a part of the architectural elements that refined the function and boundaries of a longtang.

Site: Siwenli

This thesis chose Siwenli as the site for the collection of interview stories to take place. (Fig 3.31) Siwenli is the largest lilong development in Shanghai, and is recently vacated for redevelopment. It was built in the 1910s in the international settlements, which is now also part of the urban core of Shanghai. DaTong road (now called Datian road) runs through the center of the development, splitting it into the East and West sections. The shophouses along the outskirts of the development face the major roads surrounding the residential area. Slightly different from common residential lilong typologies, Siwenli also has shops scattered within the inner residential area, facing the branched longtangs too. ■

Jing'an District

Shanghai



Aerial View of Shanghai, 2020

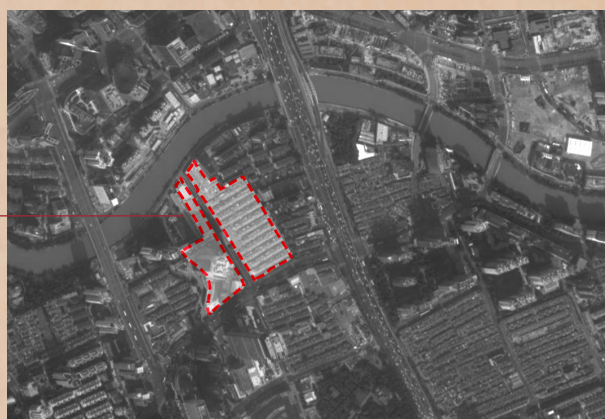
Siwenli Neighbourhood

Jing'an District Outline



Aerial View of Jing'an District, 2020

East & West Siwenli



Aerial View of Siwenli, 2020

Fig.3.30. Aerial views of Siwenli Site, screenshots from map.baidu.com

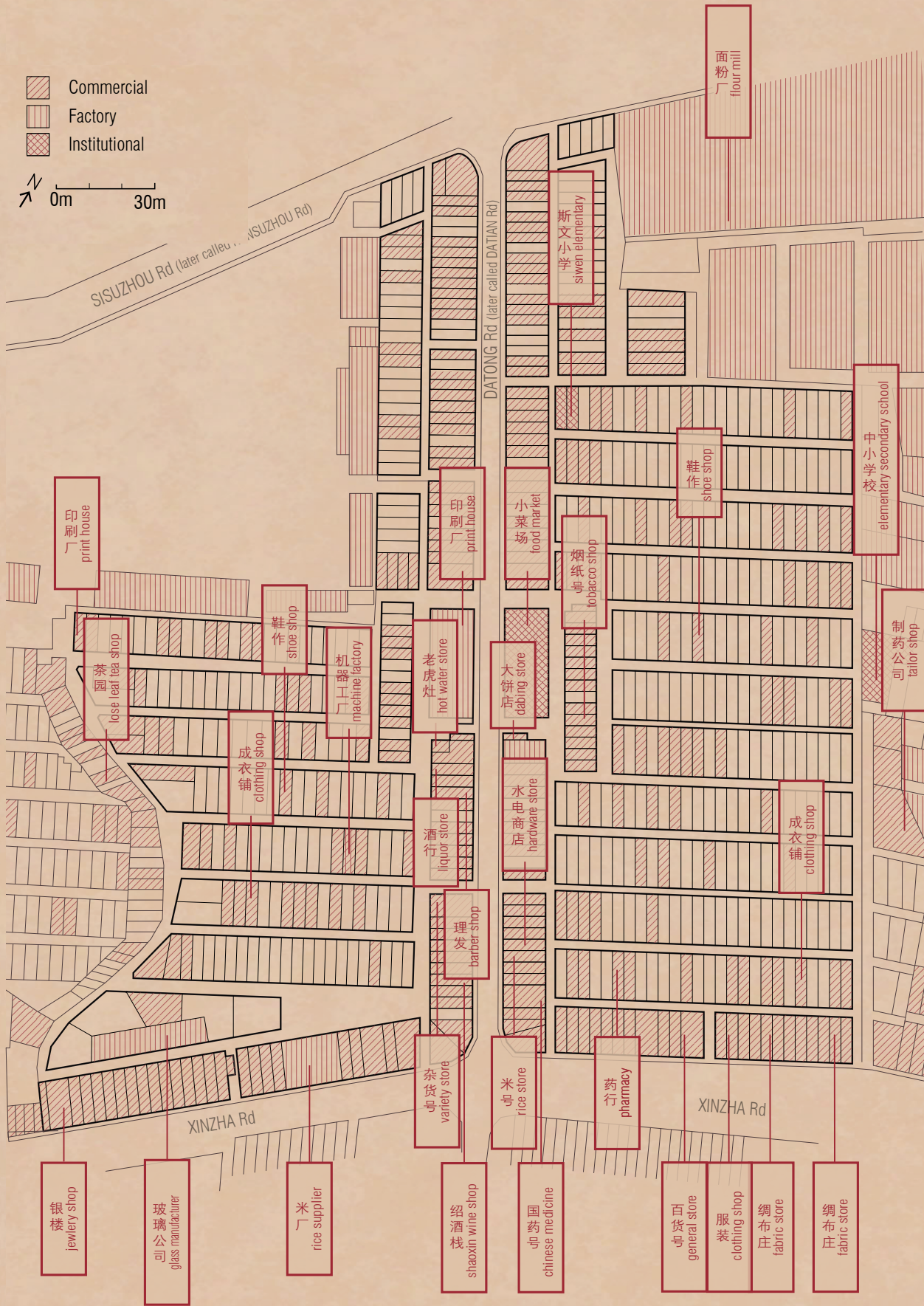


Fig.3.31. East and West Siwenli Plan & Commercial, referencing 1946-International Settlement Commercial Guide map from Virtual Shanghai



Fig.3.32. East and west Siwenli pedestrian circulation plan, referencing 1946-International Settlement Commercial Guide map from Virtual Shanghai

Movements & Activities

Longtangs are both the paths for circulation and the public living room for families. They are filled with exciting stories and culture.

The image on the left (Fig. 3.32) is a speculated circulation diagram, showing the longtang network gradating from public to semi-public, then to private within in a lilong neighborhood. The three major roads surrounding Siwenli connect the neighborhood to the rest of the city. A tram runs East-West along XinZha road. Ground floor retails faced towards the large roads. The food market also brought visitors from neighboring communities to Siwenli. The main longtang, which ran north-south, required to accommodate circulation not only for the residents and trespassers but also for shoppers. Thus, the lanes around the food market also had to take on extra loads of circulation from the shoppers. Nevertheless, there was less public circulation as the concentration of shops decreased. In typical lilong typologies, since shops were only on the outer border of the neighbourhood, the inner roads were distinctively more semi-private, only used by the residents. If a stranger intruded on a branch-longtang, there would be stares from the grandmothers sitting outdoors, sometimes even questioning which unit the “intruder” was looking for.

Longtangs are not only circulations but also places for daily chores. To make up for the insufficient space and program inside houses, people extended their living outdoors. The space that was defined as circulation became moments for pauses. Cooking... chatting... eating... resting... This was where people clash, stories were made, the news was passed. Activities were like splashes of color from an artist’s paintbrush, decorating the leftover space between the buildings, giving it life, and renaming it “home.”

Yin, an interviewee of this thesis, spent most of her childhood sick in bed. However, it made her an excellent observer. She said, “I could see the longtang that most people don’t usually see.” In her neighborhood, one of the side longtangs ended right in front of their courtyard. Thus, through her bedroom window, she could see the entire longtang from its busiest time to its most tranquil moment of the day.



Key Diagram, East Siwenli

“Our unit faced the end of a branch longtang. So from my window, if our courtyard door was open, I could see all the way down that longtang. The 8am longtang was the busiest. I saw people going to work, buying breakfast, bringing their chamber pots out, lighting up coal stoves with fans... So there’s always plumes of smoke rising between the houses in the morning. I saw people walking home with pots of soy milk in their hands, five pieces of youtiao (Chinese fried dough, traditional Shanghainese breakfast) on a chopstick...”

When everyone went to work, went to school, that was the most tranquil time frame. I still vividly remember this rainy scene from my bedroom window. The raindrops followed the roof tiles, down the roof overhang, and formed a rain curtain along the edge of the building. There, I saw three kinds of people: people, without an umbrella, walking along the building face, people, with an umbrella, walking in the rain, and children, running right under the rain curtain, in and out, enjoying the drops of water kissing their faces.

After the rain, around 3 or 4pm, children all came back from school. Because there were bikes in the main longtang, they played in the side longtangs. Girls would be skipping jump ropes, boys flipping cigarette cards, and groups of children playing hide and seek. In the summer, later in the evening, people brought their small chairs, small table out. There was dinner... cool watermelon... small chats... cards... chess...” -- Yin

morning longtang

people heading to work, hanging laundry on terraces and in the longtang, lighting up coal stoves



afternoon longtang

people taking down dried laundry, children playing games, adults washing vegetables and chatting outdoors

evening longtang

families moving furniture outdoors, having dinner in the longtang, adults playing cards, watching television together



Fig.3.34. South-west corner of East Siwenli

Movements & Activities (... continued)

If one were to track the movement of dwellers in the longtang, the traces would flow in and out of the buildings, through the main and side longtangs as if the walls of the buildings were porous rather than solids. The movements would look like threads, weaving different parts of the neighbourhood together.

The following set of diagrams zoom into the various moments that lilong dwellers experience during their daily life. The diagram on the right is an overall map that shows the routes for four types of activities: Cooking, Domesticity, Recreation, and Games to highlight how the dwellers might travel in the lilong neighbourhood. In the following pages, the diagrams illustrate routes and activities. The zoom-in bubbles highlight pauses along the route for typical activities. ■

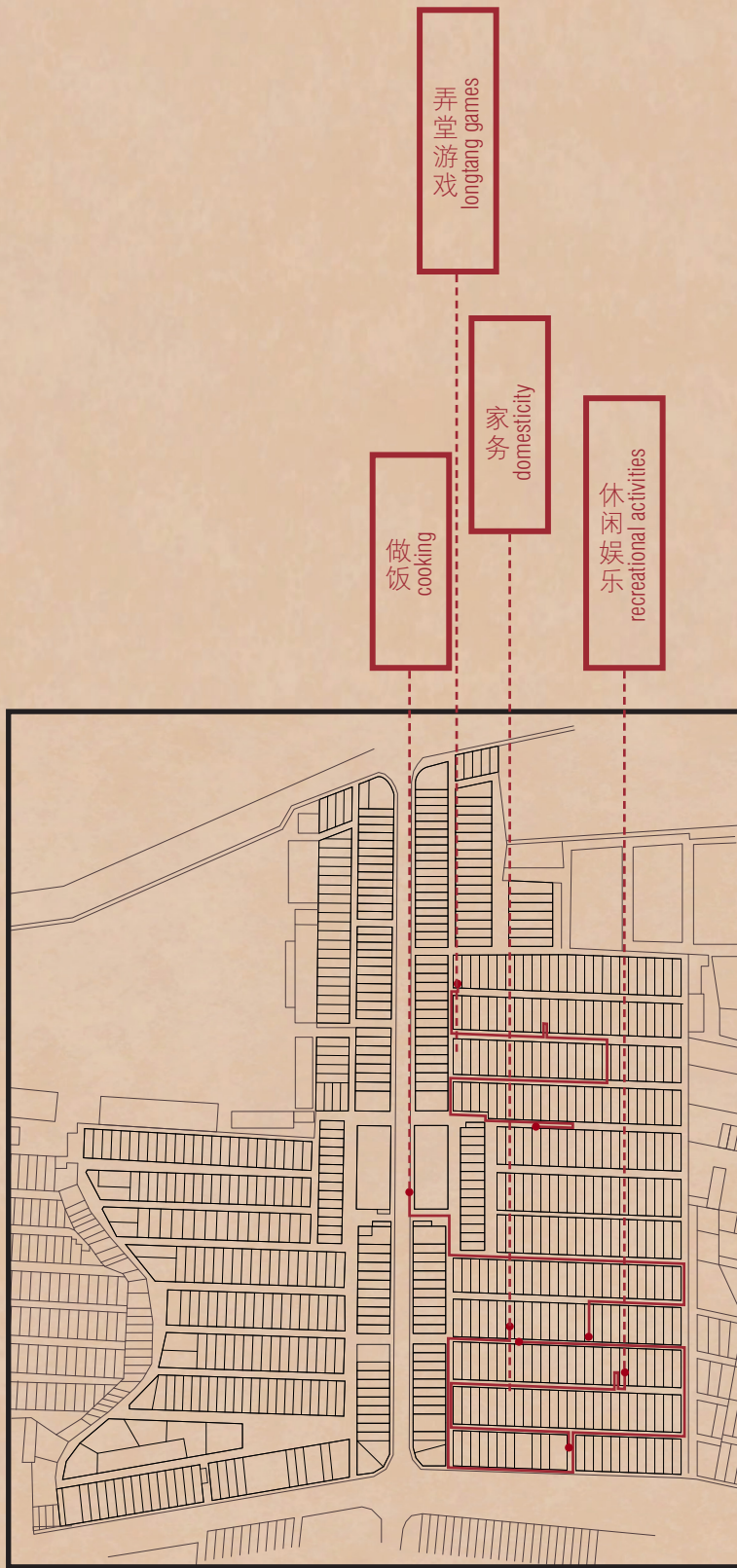


Fig.3.35. Four types of activities, Four routes in Siwenli

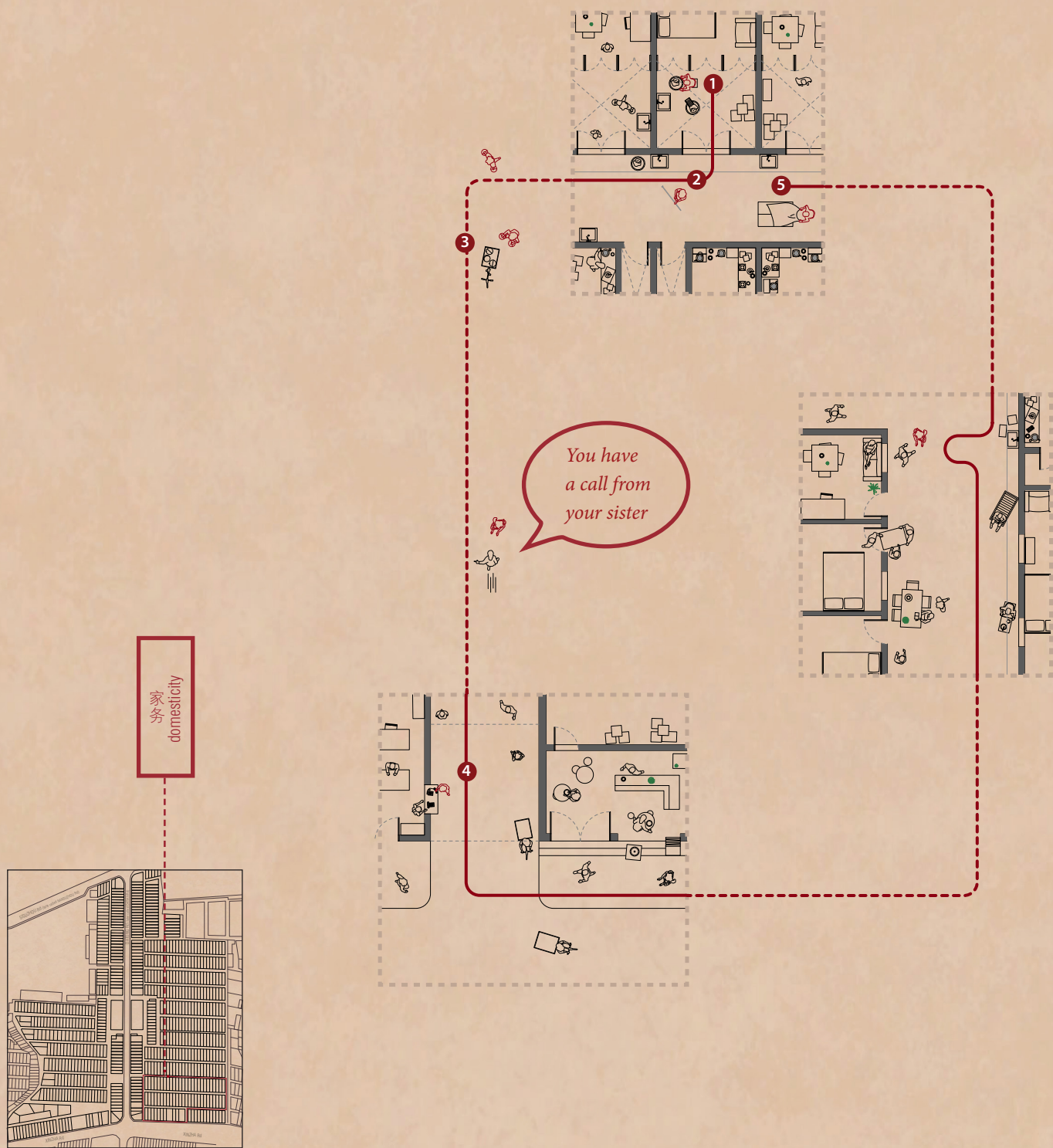


Fig.3.36. Longtang Porous Walls_domestic spill out

0m 2m 4m



“You know?... at the beginning, our clothes were all hand-washed, there weren’t any washing machines before the 80s...” -- Mr. Jing

“People washed clothes in the longtang with those washboards. Have you seen those before? But sometimes for smaller pieces of clothes, we just washed them in the concrete sinks that we’ve built ourselves.” -- Ms. Jay



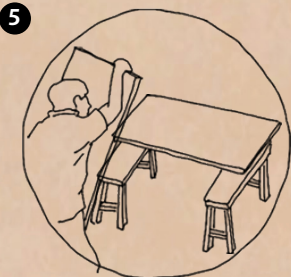
“Did you know clothes hangers weren’t a thing at the time? You put the bamboo stakes through the clothes instead. Through the sleeves or through the trousers’ legs. That took a lot of space. So each bamboo stake could only hold... like... three or four pieces of clothings. If you had a large family, then you would probably need three to four bamboos.” -- Ms. Liu



“In general, people didn’t have toilets in the houses. We used Matong [chamber pots] instead. People brought them out every morning to dump them at specified locations. Well, our longtang was a bit different. We had a grandma who offered this service. We called her, “the matong grandma.” She came at 5 or 6am, before the sunrise. And families who hired her would leave the matongs beside the doors. She would collect and clean them, then dry them in front of each families’ doors around nine.” -- Ms. Liu



“There were public telephones at the longtang entrances... It cost-ed... I think... three... yeah, three cents per call. If you had a great relationship with the auntie who picks up the phone, she would run to your unit without hanging up the phone call to let you know that your grandma’s calling. Or else you would need to pay to call back... Telephone aunties ran from the front of the longtang to the back. She took care of the calls for our entire longtang” -- Mr. Jing



“How we washed the those large bed sheets? Let’s see... we aligned two pieces of wood panels onto two long benches, so that made a large surface... like an A0 size surface. Do you know how big that is? A0 paper size? And we would scrub the bed sheets on the wood surface with some soap water. In the end, we would just rinse them in the sink.” -- Jamie

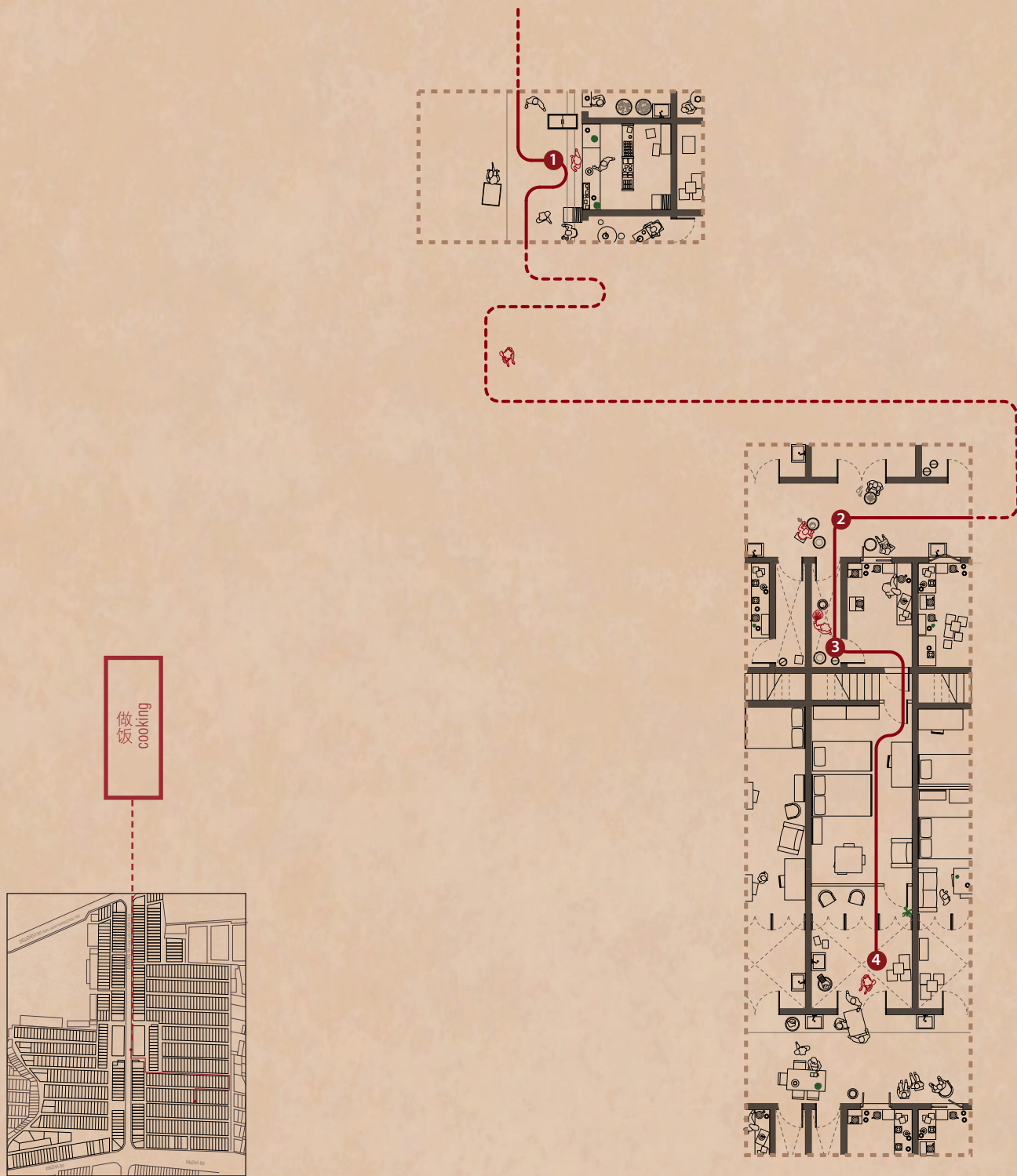


Fig.3.37. Longtang's Porous Walls_preparation for cooking

0m 2m 4m

1



“When I was little, I used to help my father with our Tobacco shop in the shophouses. We sold all kinds of things... like ice cream, matches, candles, tobacco, soap. Mmm, small things like threads, toothbrushes, candies, and snacks.” -- Lin

2



“For families who didn’t have enough space in the kitchen, they washed and trimmed vegetables outdoors in the longtang.” -- YuJun

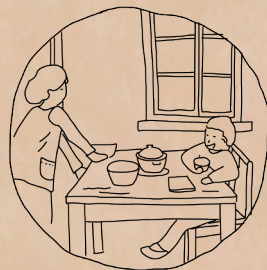
“When I was little, I did my homework in the longtang. And my neighbours, old ladies, would be chatting beside me while trimming their vegetables.” -- Ms. Liu

3



“One of the most typical morning scenes of Shikumen was seeing people starting the the coal ball stoves in the longtang. Standing or bending over, fanning their cattail leaf fans at the stove to light up the fire. Those coal stoves created tons of smoke everytime. So we always start the stoves outdoors.” -- Ms. Liu

4



“On summer evenings, we bring our own tables out into the longtangs and had dinner in the cool breeze.” -- YuJun

“Oh, this family is having some fancy dishes tonight... Ah that family’s having porridge today.’ Well you see, if you walked in the longtang during dinner time, people basically had no privacy, you can see what every family’s eating today.” -- Ao

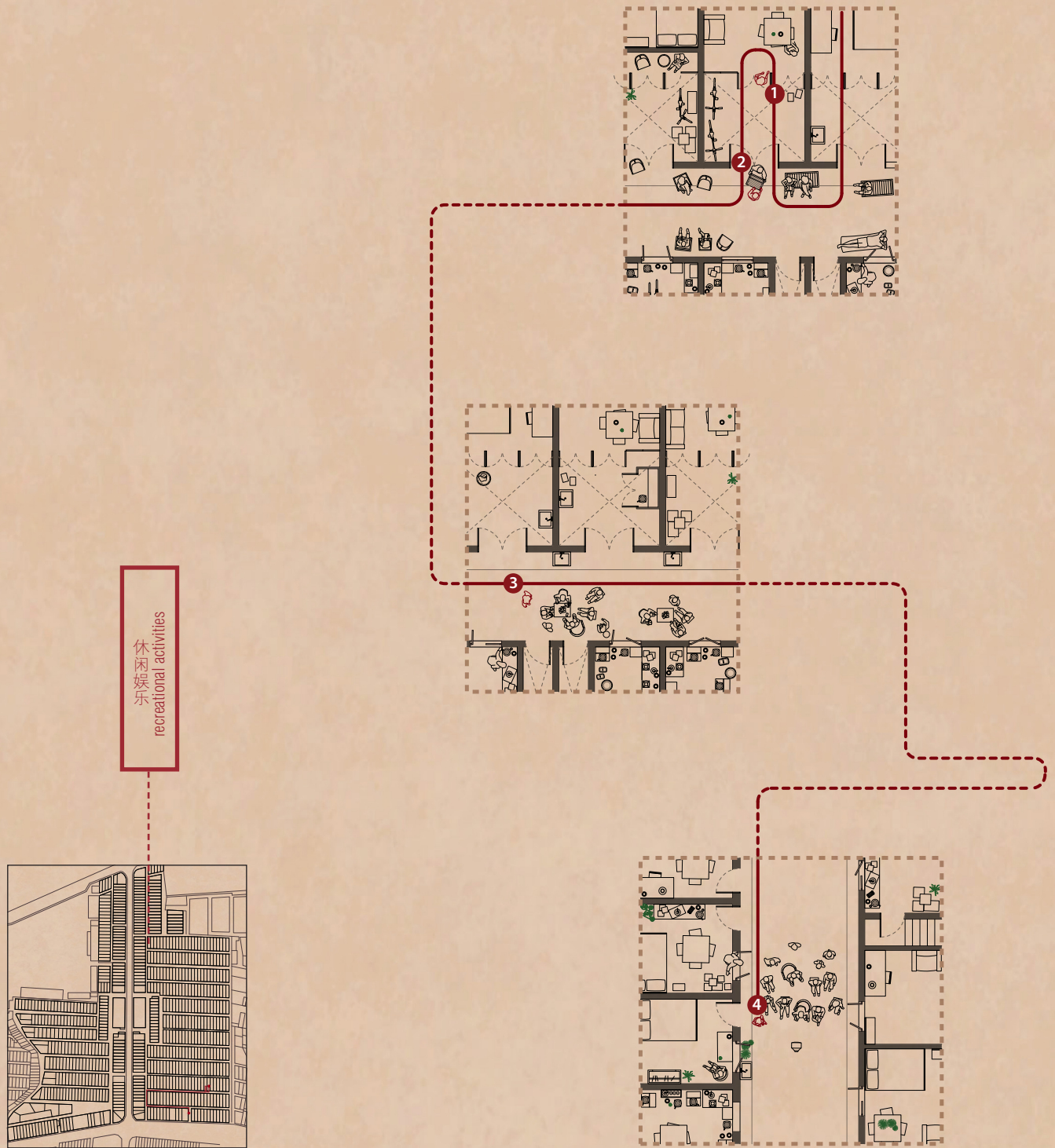


Fig.3.38. Longtang's Porous Walls_recreational activities

0m 2m 4m

1



“We all left our doors open, there were no thieves at the time. Or, I mean, everyone was poor so there was nothing to be stolen.”

-- Jin Fu

“Time to time, we would stop by our neighbours’ doors and chat with them a little. ‘Auntie Lin, you eating right now? What are you eating? Oh that’s nice! Come by our place after you finish your meal.’” -- Jamie

2



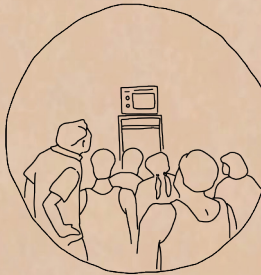
“When it got very hot in the summer, we brought out rattan arm chairs, bamboo recliner chairs, bamboo benches, small chairs, and small tables out. Because the longtang’s long and narrow, so the breeze through the longtang was very cool. You would see many people eating meals, eating watermelons, chatting, and playing chess down the longtang.” -- Yin

3



“People played cards under the street light in the longtang. There was this time, a person was watching the game while leaning against the light pole. And! At the end of the game, everybody went home except for him. He fell asleep standing!! Can you believe that!? Hahahaha, so many interesting things happened in the longtang.” -- Jin Fu

4



“Televisions came into our lives during the 80s, I think. At the very beginning, there was only one television, from the neighbourhood committee, playing in the longtang. They would make a tall TV stand so that everyone would watch together. Some people would bring their chairs out, some even would even watch TV while standing.” -- Yin Fu

“They were only 9-inch tvs. And we would place four beer bottles in front of the screen, and place a TV magnifier between the bottles so that it increases the screen size to 14-inches. Actor’s face in the TV got quite distorted. Hahahahaha.” -- Mr. Jing

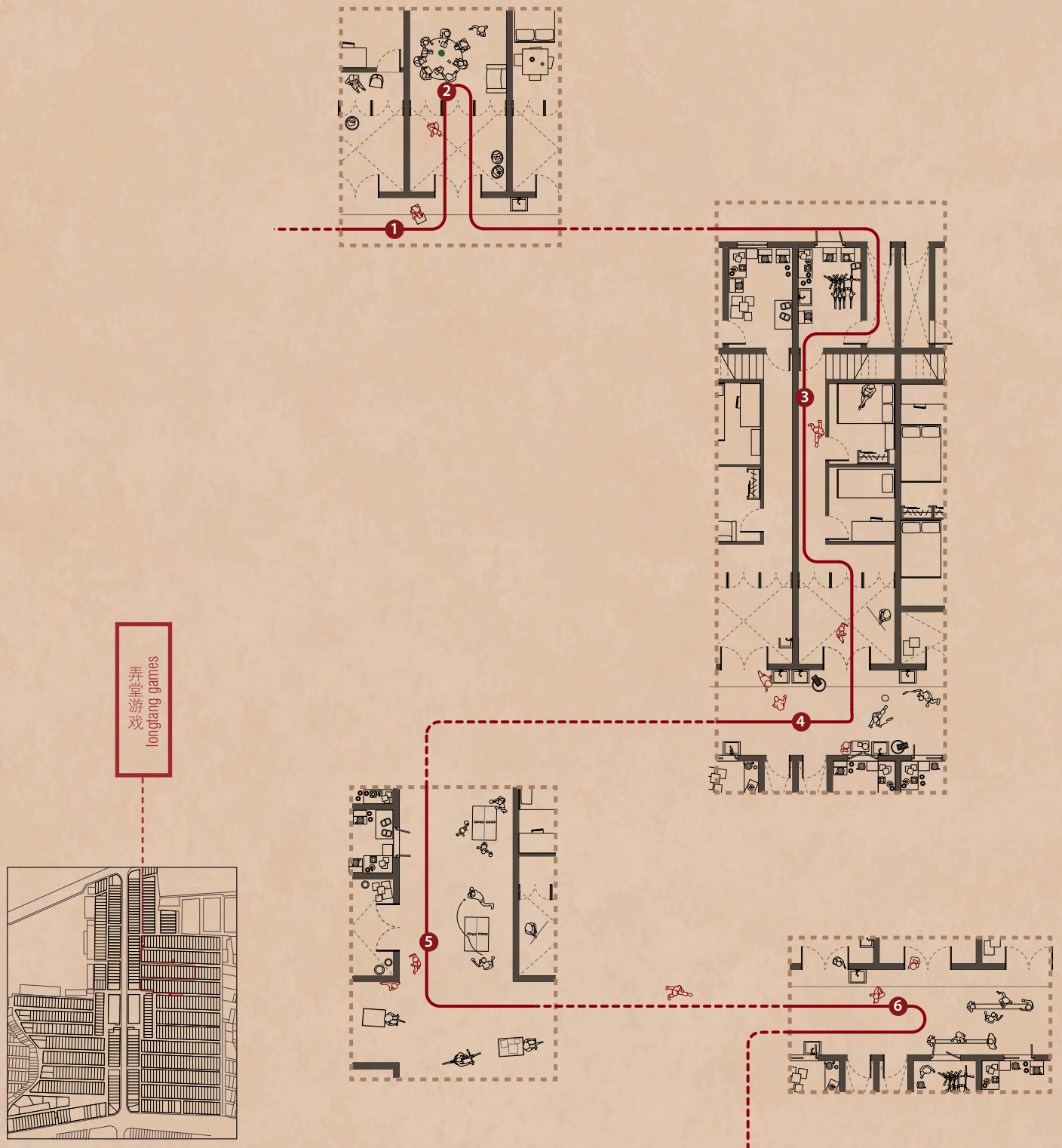
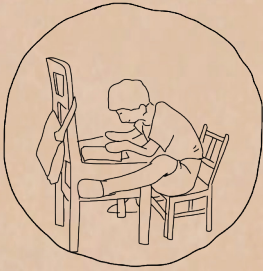


Fig.3.39. Longtang's Porous Walls_longtang games

0m 2m 4m

1



“After school, I did my homework in the longtang. I just needed two things: a regular square seat, and a small, low chair. I would sit on the low chair and use the square seat as my working table.”
-- Ms. Liu

2



“Our teachers required us to do our homework together in a classmate’s house. About 4-5 children as a group. But, you know, there wasn’t really much homework. We could finish it within just an hour. After that was just play time!” -- Jamie

3



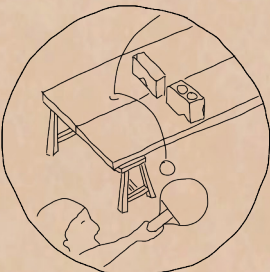
“Some houses had really narrow hallways on the ground floor. That’s when they tried to split up more rooms on the ground floor room, the hallways were used to access these rooms. So when I was little, I’ve taken shortcuts through neighbour’s narrow hallways before. Of course, some neighbours who knew you well wouldn’t scold you for doing that. But some others would.”
-- Lin

4



“You’ve probably never played this before, but in the 70s we had a game called Rolling hoop. It was basically rolling a metal ring vertically on the ground with a metal hook. So the long hooks were the hooks that was used to reach coals in the stoves. And the hoop was actually the ring around the matong, chamber pots, you just take them apart and make your own toy.” -- Mr. Jing

5



“People made their own pingpong table! The wood panels that we used for washing bed sheets were about 5-foot long. When I was little, we pieced two of them together as ping pong tables. Because the middle, where the two panels connected, was uneven, the balls would fly in random directions. It was a super challenging game! You would need pretty good techniques to hit those balls.” -- Jin Fu

6



“Girls liked skipping jump ropes the most. We’d make the ropes ourselves, tying rubber bands together to make a really long band. Two children would wrap the band around their ankle, and stand on two ends. The child in the middle would be skipping and singing along. For more skilled people, the band’s neck height, or even above the heads. So you had to stretch your legs high up to hook those bands.” -- Ms. Liu



Fig.3.40. Playing pingpong in a longtang, 1995

Objects & Adaptations

1 | Objects in Longtang

Many lilong activities involved in moving furniture outdoors. These objects, some temporary, some permanent, altered the public space into a semi-public realm. They were one of the factors that made a longtang “*longtang*.”

This section documents these privately owned possessions placed in the public longtang. The plan drawing on the next page introduces the complexity of the space, highlighting objects that may be placed in a busy longtang in a late afternoon. Red texts introduce the names of these objects. Grey boxes call out activities that result in such placement of objects. This section also contains a set of diagrams that analyzes objects in photographs of the 70s and 80s Shanghai. There are three images, the main longtang, the side longtang, and the interior, each depicting a different moment of lilong living. ■

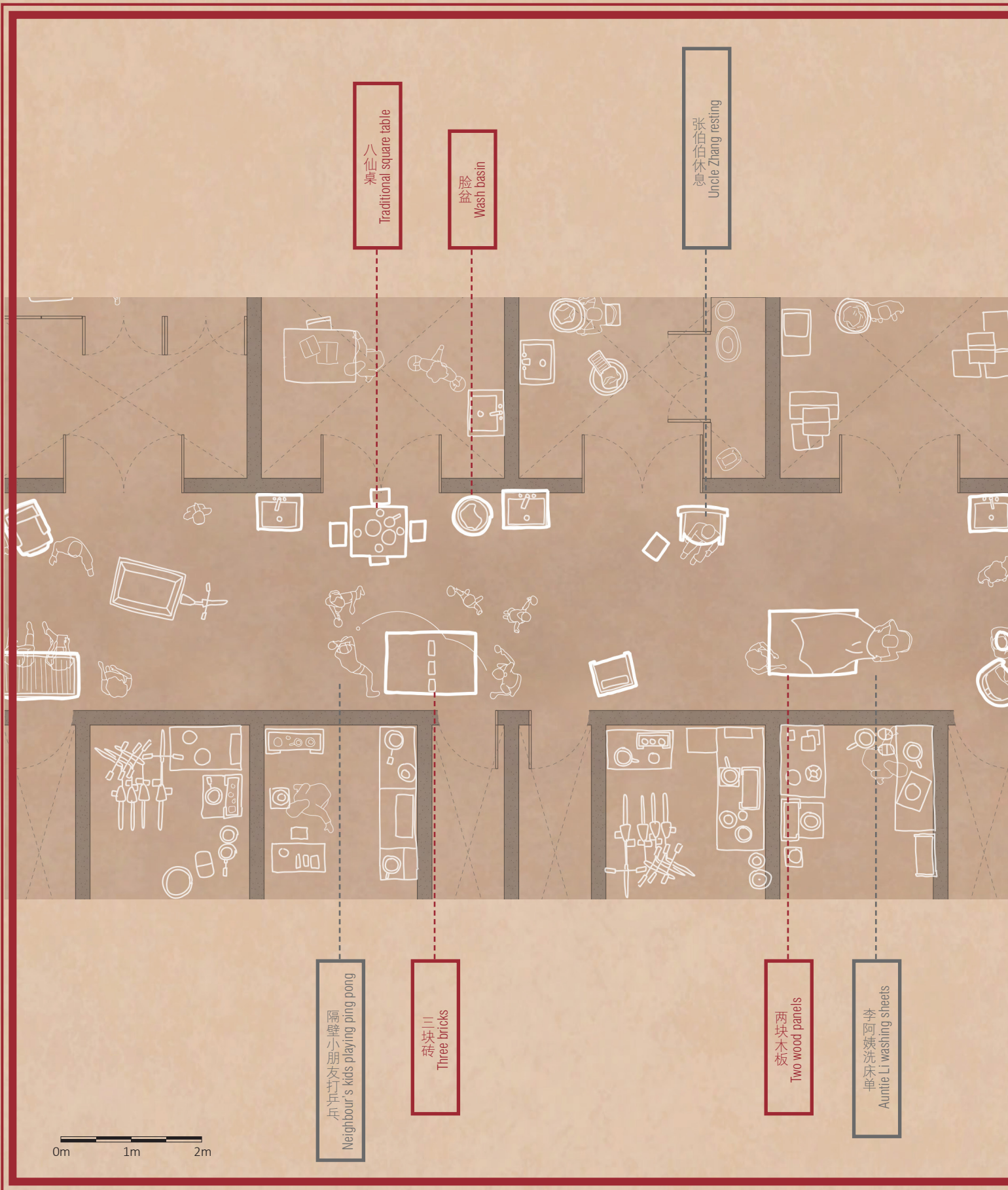
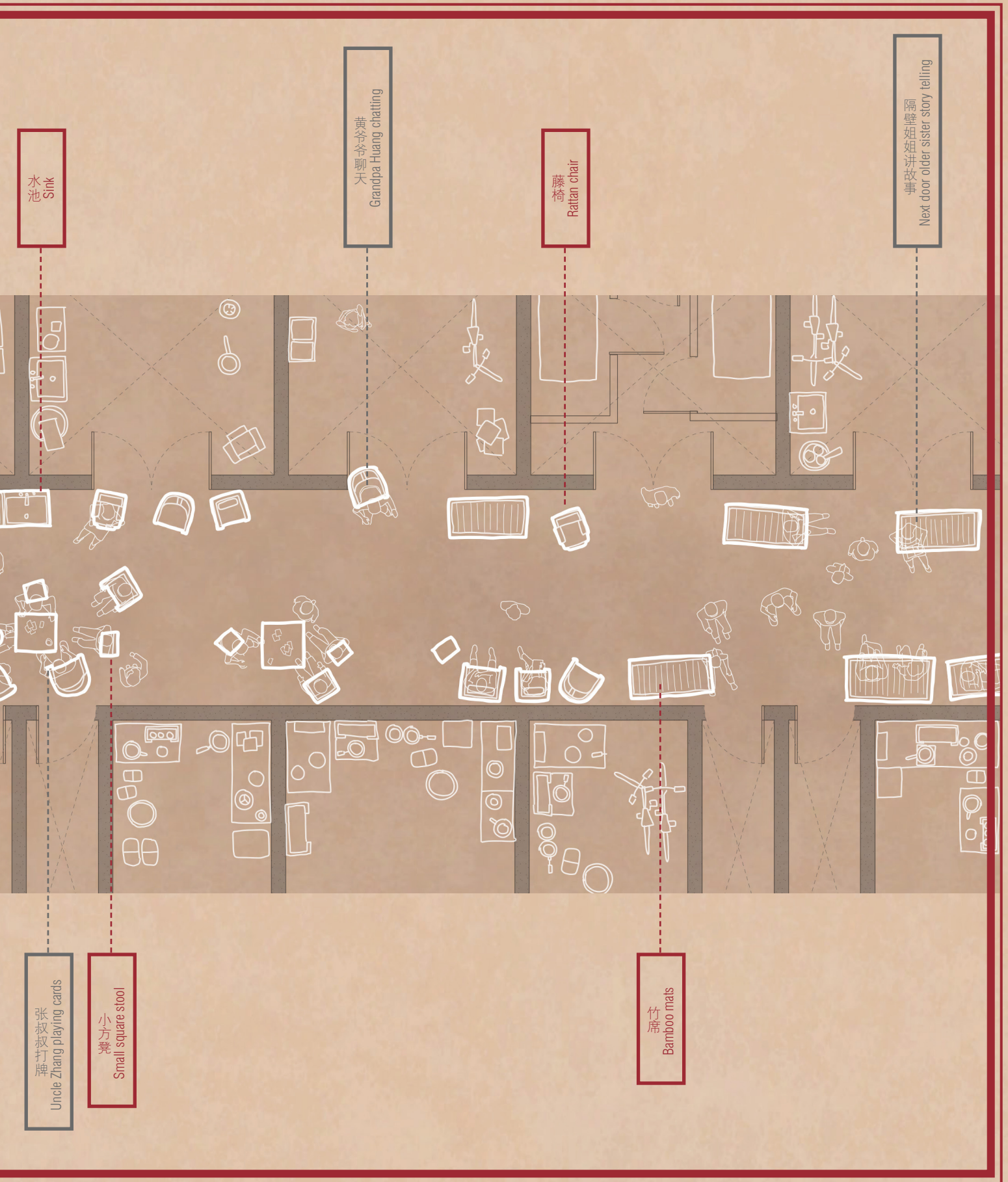


Fig.3.41. Objects and Activities - late afternoon longtang as semi-public space



水池
Sink

黄爷爷聊天
Grandpa Huang chatting

藤椅
Rattan chair

隔壁姐姐讲故事
Next door older sister story telling

张叔叔打牌
Uncle Zhang playing cards

小方凳
Small square stool

竹席
Bamboo mats



CHAIR & PEOPLE WATCHING

During summers, longtangs were the oasis for lilong residents. Narrow longtangs naturally directed cool breeze down the neighbourhood. It was typical to see people sitting outdoors in their rattan chairs, people watching, and sometimes gossiping with neighbours passing by.

AUDIENCE

A good game would always attract a large crowd. Many people enjoyed watching others competing their skills on the game table. Some audience sat among the players, some stood, some leaned against light poles. Some praising the players' skills, some disappointed at the moves, some suggesting strategies to the players.



ROLLED-UP SHIRT

On a hot summer day, some men would roll up their shirts up, and sometimes rolling their high-waist pants down to the waist, allowing the bellies to enjoy some cool breeze.

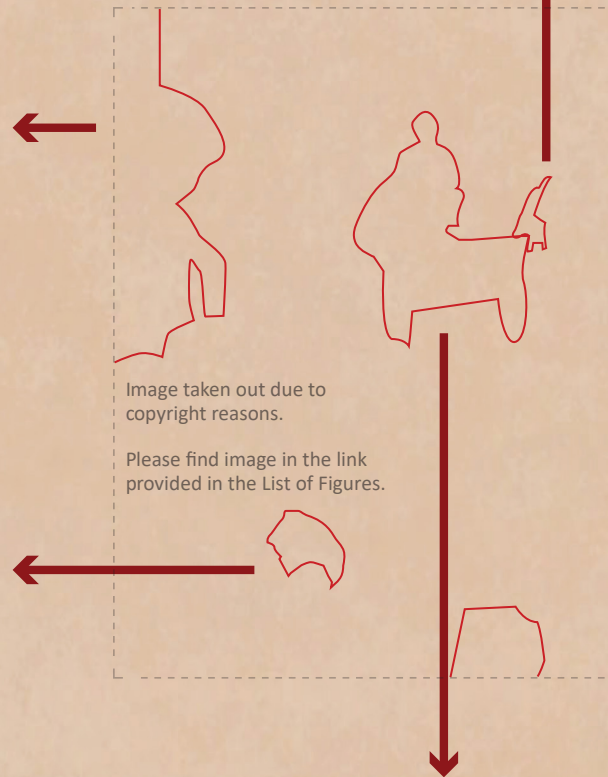
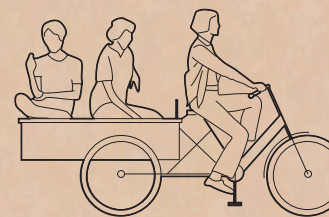


Image taken out due to copyright reasons.

Please find image in the link provided in the List of Figures.

CARGO TRICYCLE

Cargo Tricycles were one of the most common transportation vehicles that one could see in Shanghai. Many used them for carrying large items. In this photograph, the dwellers creatively transformed the tricycle into a seating area for socializing.



| OBJECTS & ACTIVITIES - leisure in the main longtang |

Fig.3.42. Card players on a hot and humid Shanghai summer, 1979, photograph by Hiroji Kubota

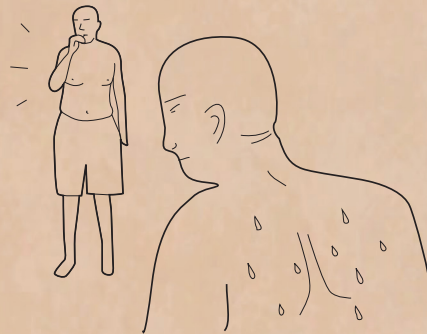
SHOE REPAIR

The man walked with a pair of shoes in his right hand. In Shanghai longtangs, there were usually repair “shops” for shoes, umbrellas... The “shop” merely consisted of two stools and several tools, operated by an old man along the sidewalk of the longtang. Although this was not a properly registered shop, it provided great convenience for the residents in the neighbourhood.



SHIRTLESS MAN

During hot humid summers, the temperature could easily get above 30 degrees celsius. The skin could feel moist and sticky. People try to dress as light as possible. Thus, shirtless men walking in the longtang was a common lifelong phenomenon.



OUTDOOR FURNITURE

In the summer, people would bring their tables and chairs out to hang out in the longtangs while enjoying some breeze in the open space.



TABLETOP GAMES

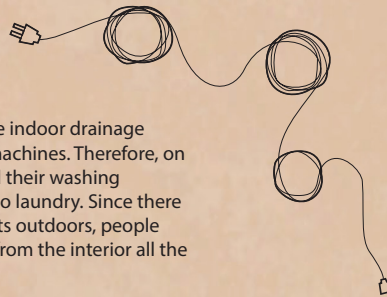
Tabletop games were one of the recreational activities in longtangs. The most common ones were card games, Chinese chess games, Go, Mahjong, etc. Many children would be playing Army chess against the adults in their neighbourhood.





LAUNDRY ACROSS THE ALLEY

Without dryers, residents hung their clothes outdoors using bamboos or ropes tied across the longtang. Because the hanging clothes, towels, and bed sheets looked like millions of country flags blowing in the wind, Shanghainese called this scenery, *Wanguoqi*, "flags of millions of countries."



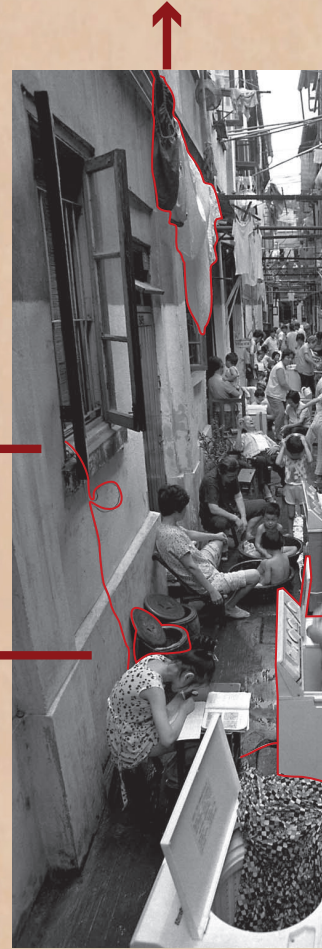
ELECTRIC WIRE

The houses did not have indoor drainage designed for washing machines. Therefore, on this day, families moved their washing machines outdoors to do laundry. Since there were no electrical outlets outdoors, people extended power cords from the interior all the way into the longtang.



MATONG (CHAMBER POTS)

Many lilong houses did not have a proper sewage system. Therefore, people lived a life without toilets in the house. Each family owned designated chamber pots (toilet buckets), called MaTong. Every morning, residents brought their chamber pots out into the longtang for sewage collection service.



WASHING MACHINE

Washing machines did not come into people's lives until the late 80s. Thus, many residents were still used to handwashing. Some only used the machines for spinning out the extra water.

| OBJECTS & ACTIVITIES - domesticity in the side longtang |

Fig.3.43. Laundry in the longtang, 1990, photograph by Jianhua Gong

WASH BOWLS

Wash bowls or wash basins were and are still essential household items. Each family would own different sizes of wash basins, some designated to wash vegetable, some for laundry, some for face washing.



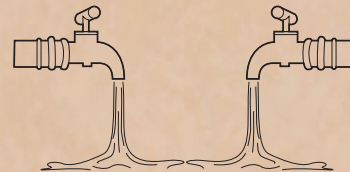
BAMBOO BASKETS

Bamboo baskets were another essential item in a household. Each family had multiple bamboo baskets. To save counter space, families hung the baskets from bamboo stakes above.



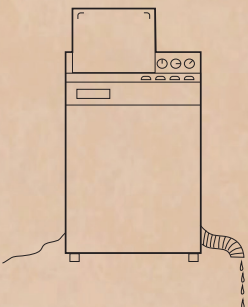
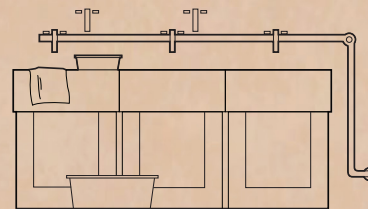
MULTIPLE FAUCETS

In this image, each family had their own faucet, with separate water meters connected to each. This was how residents from the same house split the water bills. Sometimes, people even locked up their faucets to prevent their neighbours from accidentally using the wrong faucet.



SELF-BUILT EXTERIOR SINKS

Most old lilong houses did not have proper plumbing indoors. Instead, there were designated longtang wells and hot water stores. Nevertheless, for convenience, residents built their own sinks and provided their own pipes for running water. Some built them in the courtyard, some built them in the longtangs if there was not enough space.

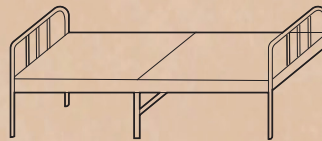


MEZZANINE ADDITION

Lilong houses' floor to ceiling heights were about 3.5 to 4 meters tall. Thus, for families who did not have enough space to accommodate all of the family members, they built mezzanines in the rooms, splitting the room into the top and the bottom halves. Although mezzanines were low in height, they were only used for sleeping.

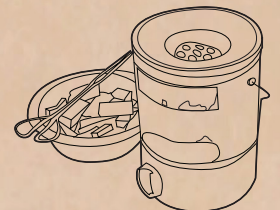
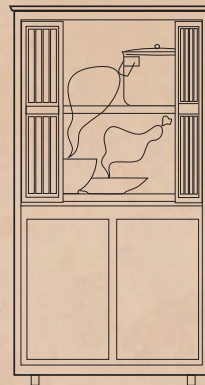
FOLDABLE BED

Foldable beds were one of the most common methods to maximize the usable interior space. It could be folded and stored under a permanent bed. When Ao, one of the interviewees, was 10, she slept on a foldable bed every night. And every morning, her parents stored it in the corner of a narrow hall inside their room.



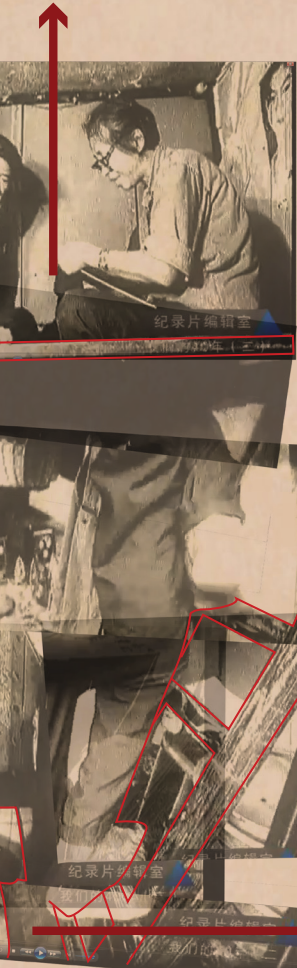
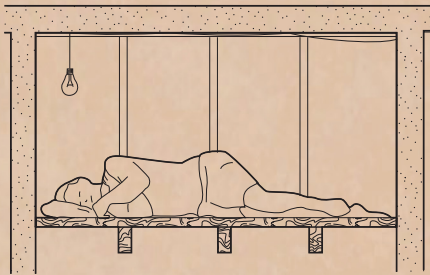
FOOD CABINET

Refrigerators did not enter ordinary families' lives until the late 80s. Before that, people used food cabinets to store unfinished dishes. The cabinets were made out of wood with screens to allow for air flow, but prevent insects. If meals were not finished, people would leave them in the cabinets and reheat them the second day.



| OBJECTS & ACTIVITIES - personal items inside a lilong house |

Fig.3.44. Interior of a room in a lilong house, collages of frames from Jilupian Bianjishi's documentary



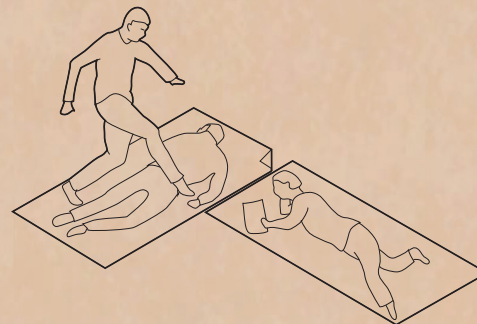
WOODEN LADDER

To access the mezzanine, this family added a wooden ladder -- the cheapest, easiest, and the most space efficient method. However, there was no smooth and safe transition from the ladder to the level. Going upstairs required stopping at the top of the ladder, and stepping sideways across the air to get onto mezzanine floor.



FLOOR MATS

The phrase, Dadipu, meant making bed on the floor. To solve space insufficiency, people came up with various solutions. Sleeping on floor mats was one of them.



COAL STOVE

Before gas stoves existed, families used coal stoves. In the morning, dwellers would bring them outdoors to start the fire. People continuously fanned the stoves to control the airflow for the fire. At night, many would extinguish the fire to save coal balls. However, some families would close the stove door to keep the fire on, but low, at night. This method eliminated the need to restart the fire the next morning.



Fig.3.45. semi-protected kitchen on a terrace of a lilong house

2 | Architectural Adaptations

The adaptations that the residents made to the houses were powerful and effective gestures that overcame the constraints of lilong living. Each of these informal structures embodied a story behind, uncovering the push and pull between the dwellers and their environment.

Economically, one of the most important forces that supported such informal structures was the DaDaFangFang policy¹ about half a century ago. In order to offset the insufficient housing stock, the policy supported families to build more levels on top of the existing structures. Families who lived on the top floor could apply to build an extra level above their rooms. The city provided help with the construction.

Introduction to the Drawings

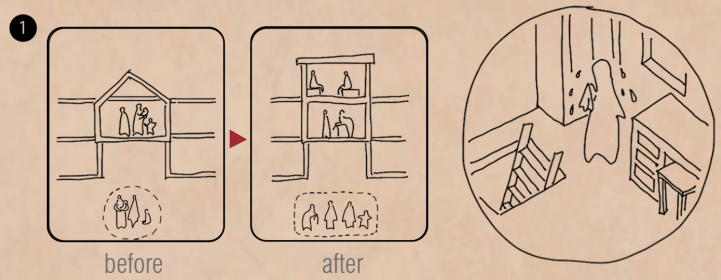
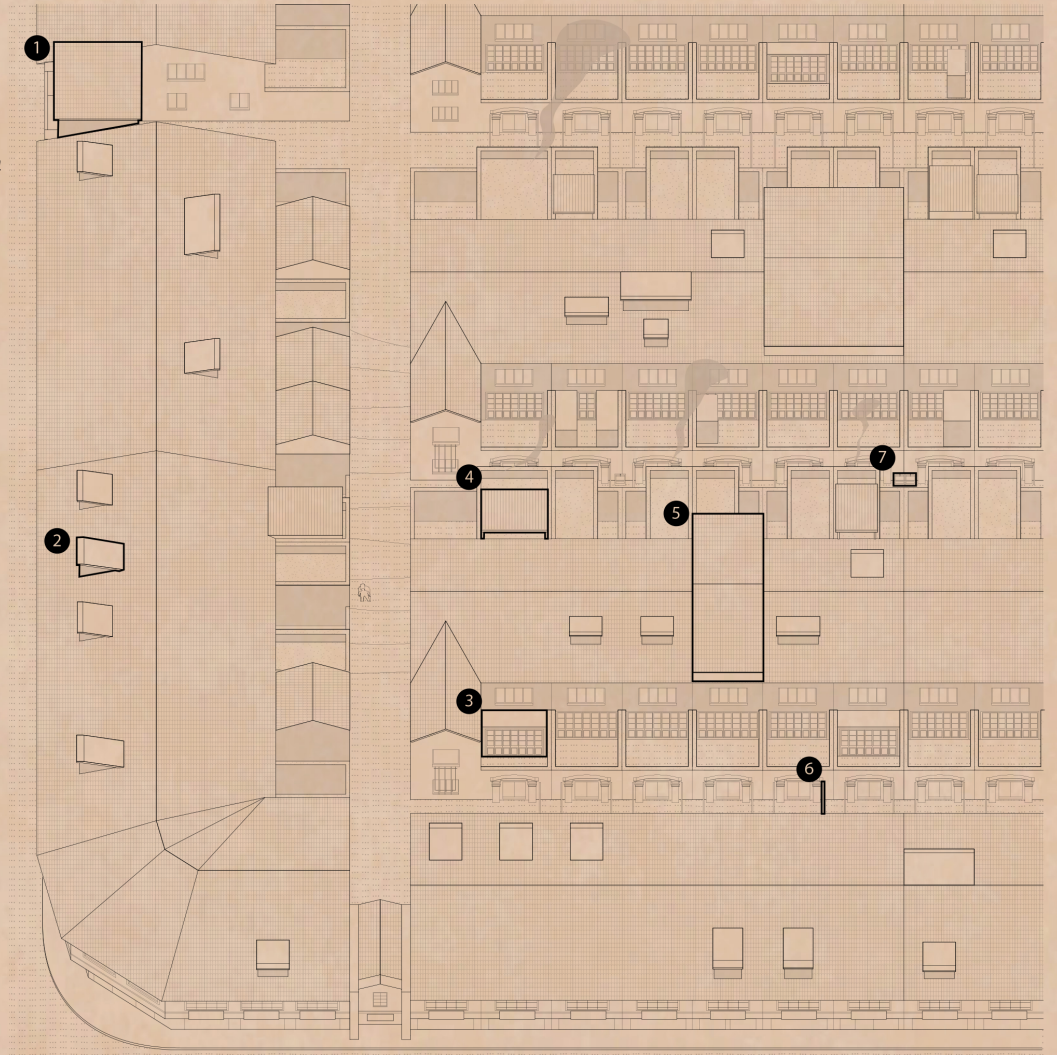
The following two sets of drawings are based on true narratives of how the interviewees used to live in their lilong houses. The drawings highlight how people were influencing the architectural form to through informal constructions and adaptations.

Illustration, "*Exterior Adaptations*," calls out the extension of the lived-spaces that was visible from the exterior of the buildings: extensions above the rooflines, extensions into the courtyards, extensions outside the houses as detached elements...

Illustration set, "*Interior Adaptations*," portrays the living spaces in a more intimate scale. The set of diagrams zoom into a single unit to highlight areas where the residents re-organized, re-defined, and re-interpreted the interior. ■

¹ Chinese character: 搭搭放放政策, direct translated to "build-build place-place policy," translated by myself

- ① Guojielou
- ② Roof Window
- ③ Living Room Extension
- ④ Terrace Kitchen
- ⑤ Loft
- ⑥ Bamboo Stakes
- ⑦ Sink



Guojielou – room that bridges over the longtang

“We lived in a Guojielou. The room was only one level high, with a pitched roof. As my little brother and myself grew older, our parents removed the roof to add an extra floor on top. That room was very hot in the summer, so we had to keep the windows open while having the fans on all the time.” -- Jamie

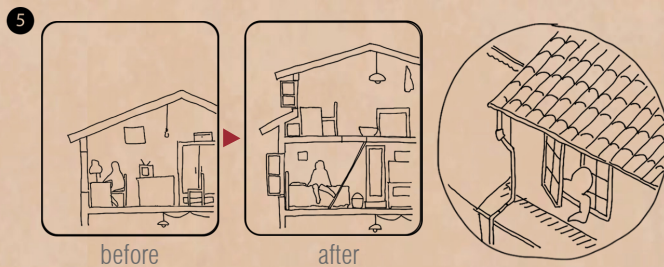
| EXTERIOR ADAPTATIONS - additions |

Fig.3.46. Exterior adaptations - additions



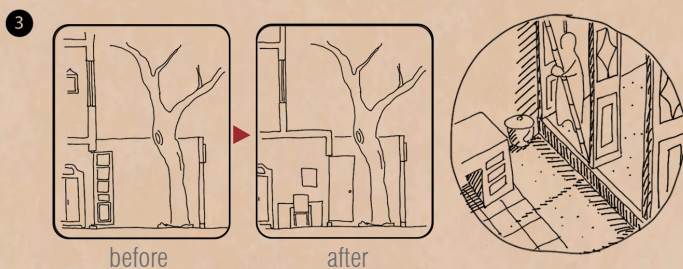
Roof Window

“Lofts were super stuffy because they were originally the insulation layer of the house. Adding a roof window could bring some ventilation, natural light, and even extra head height. The height of those windows were very low! Sometimes you would see children climbing out of the window to sit on the roof.” -- Lin



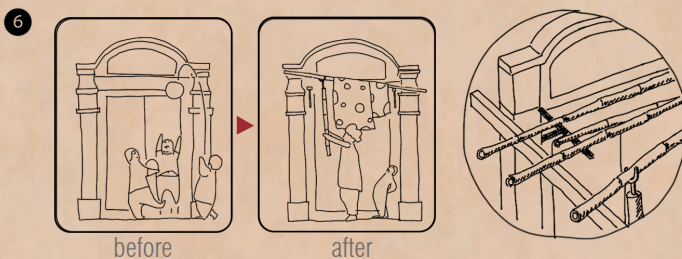
Gelou - Loft

“I lived on the top floor. We removed all of the roof tiles to build a third floor. The “Dadafangfang” policy encouraged people to modify their houses, and even provided construction workers to support. I remember... people with a living area per capita of 3 square meters and under were qualified to apply. So we were able to get help building.” -- Nini



Living Room Extension

“I had a neighbour who lived on the ground floor. They’ve moved their courtyard-facing wall a meter into the courtyard to increase their room size. That gave them extra three to four square meters of space!” -- Nini



Bamboo Stakes Outdoors

“We dried our laundry on bamboo stakes. Each pole was about 3-4m, and you could only dry 3-4 pieces of clothes on it. Usually we would need 3-4 poles, but if you had a larger family, you probably need 5-6 poles. We also dried bed sheets by spanning across two bamboo stakes.” -- Ms. Liu



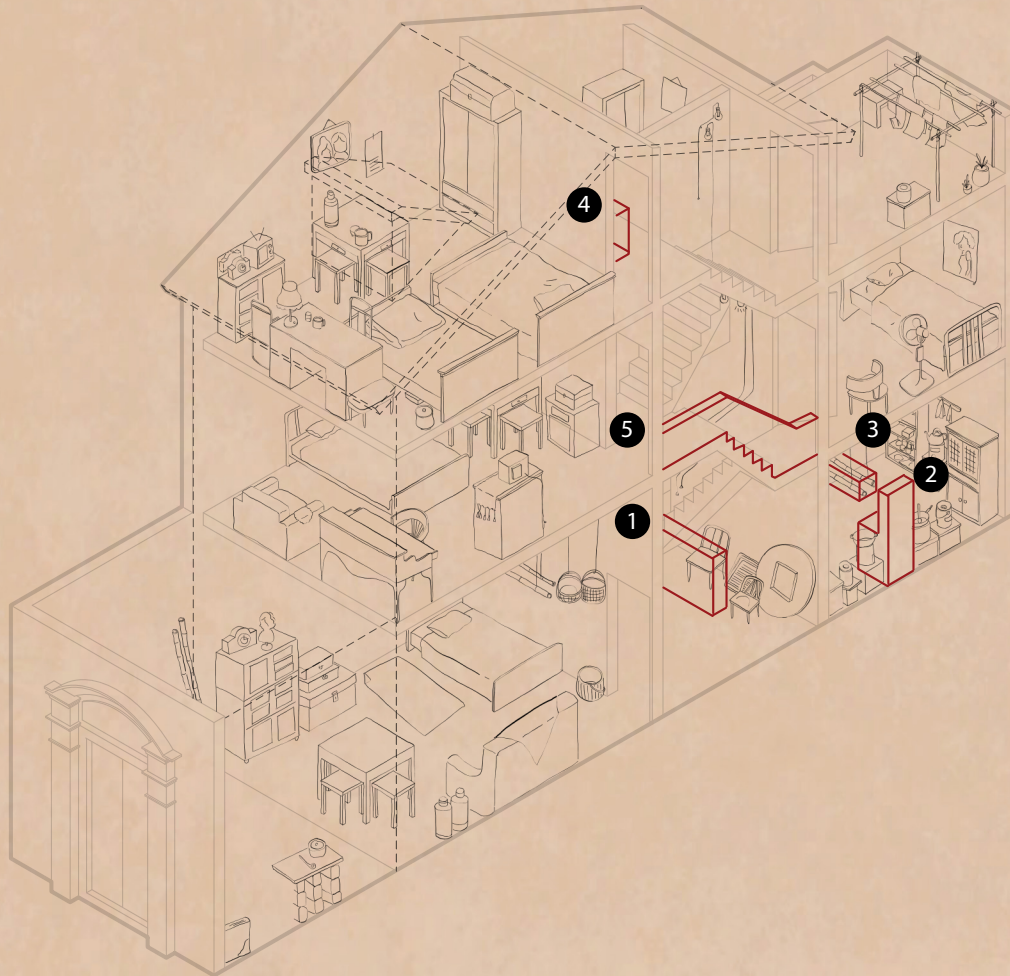
Terrace Kitchen

“Depending what the families could afford, some people who had a bit of money would build an enclosed kitchen, some would build just a canopy. It’s very interesting, I shared a kitchen with one other neighbour. We each had our own doors into the kitchen, located side by side with a bit of distance in between. And we shared a table, which was placed between the kitchen doors.” -- YuJun



Sink

“If people’s houses were too small to build sinks indoors, they would build them outside in the longtang.” -- YuJun

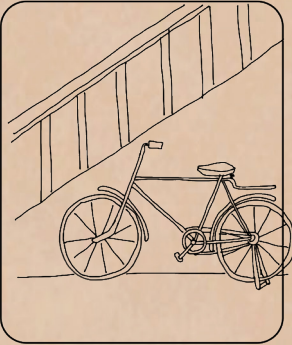


Inside the houses, the residents would utilize the leftover space for storage use. While most of these appropriated spaces were permanent as storages, some were temporary such as the bike storage beside the staircase.

| INTERIOR ADAPTATIONS - storage space |

Fig.3.47. Interior adaptations - storage space

1



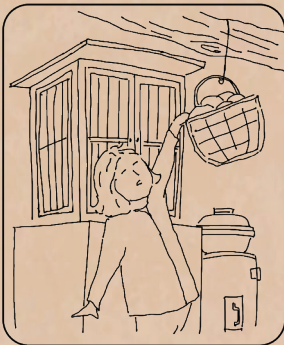
“At night, some people would bring their bikes indoors to leave them by the staircase or in the kitchen. But in the morning, some people might accidentally bump into it. That’s usually the start of a big argument.” -- Lin

3



“We didn’t have fridges back then. So there was a lot of home-made marinated products, like cured pork or salted ducks. We dried them inside the house, hanging them off the bamboo stakes in the living room.” -- Mr. Jing

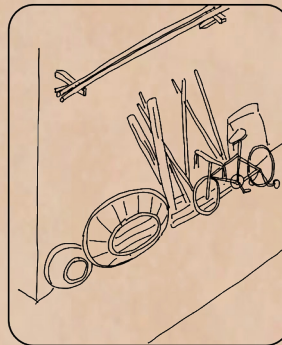
2



“Every family had at least two to three baskets. We used to hang ours in the kitchen, off a wooden beam right above our sink. We sometimes left fruits like bananas and tomatoes inside the baskets. Because you could see through the gaps between the bamboo material of the basket, my brothers and I often sneaked tomatoes from our own baskets.” -- Lin

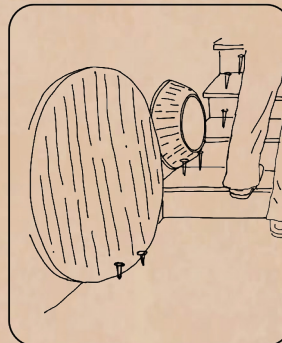
“There were no refrigerators at the beginning, but each family had their own cupboards for leftover food. These were open on four sides, covered with screens, so that we could leave the food in there overnight.” -- Jin Fu

4

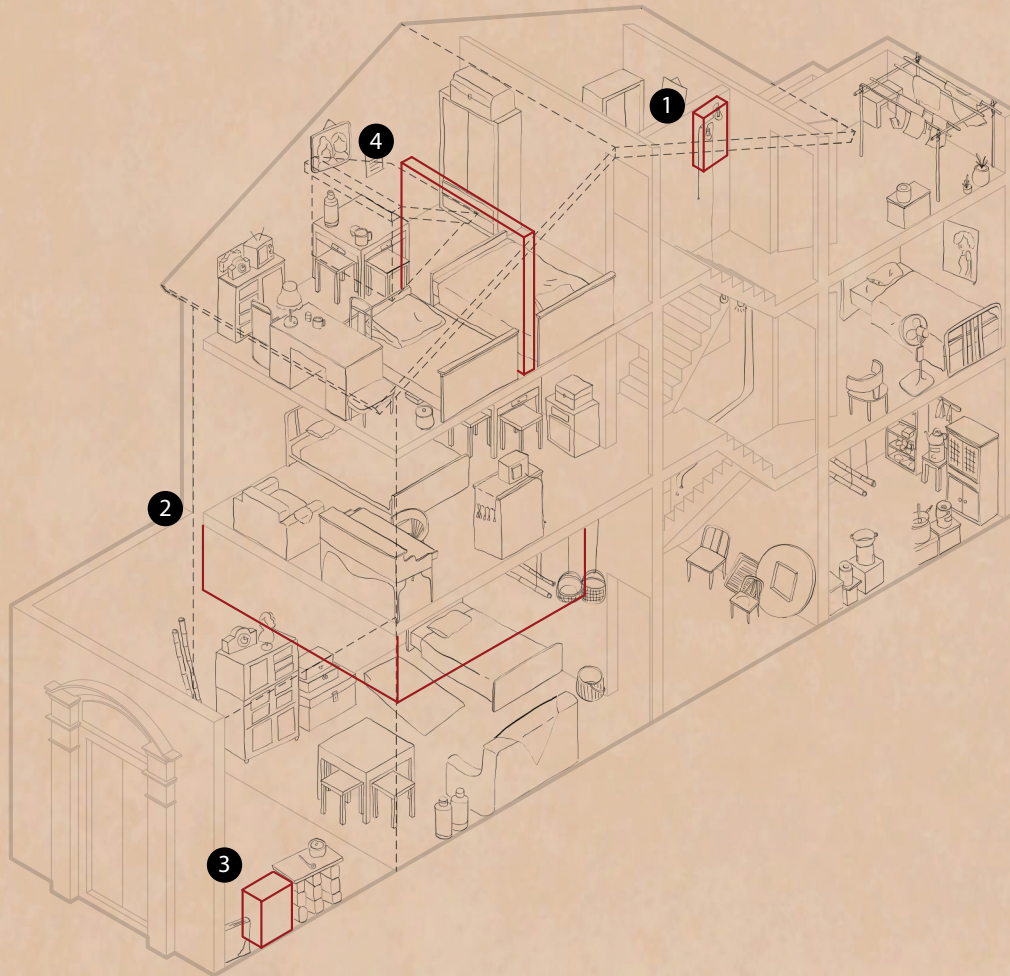


“Oh, right, also, we stored things in the hallways. Bamboo stakes, concrete, wood, kids’ bikes... and also wooden tubs... washboards... Of course, it wasn’t necessary to leave them out there. But if you occupied a space, throughout time that specific area would become like... like yours... you know?” -- Ms. Liu

5



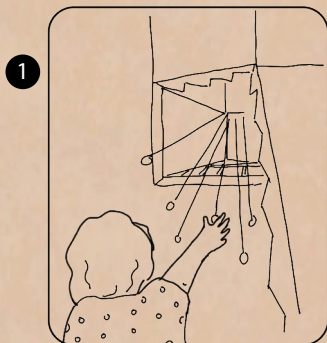
“We stored wooden tubs along the left edge of the house staircases. Every family had a tub, all lined up nicely. Hmm? Roll down the staircase? No, they wouldn’t. We hammered in long nails into the staircase to keep them vertical against the wall.” -- Mrs. Ni



This diagram illustrates traces of permanent additions that residents made to their houses. These additions were part of the dwellers' everyday necessities.

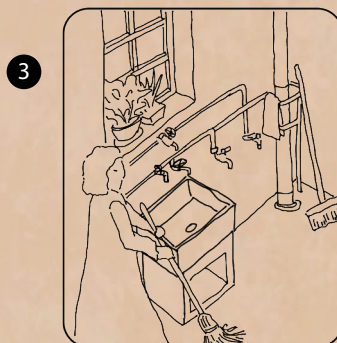
| INTERIOR ADAPTATIONS - additions |

Fig.3.48. Interior adaptations - additions



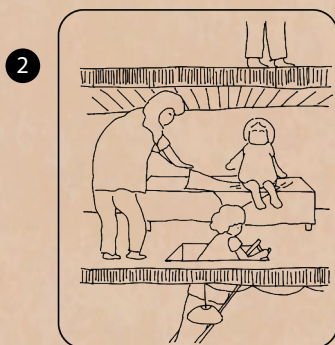
“I was very scared of taking the staircase at night. Every family attached their own lightbulb at the top of the stairs. Everyone only turned on their own lightbulbs, so it was dark most of the time.” -- Ao

“There were 13 lightbulbs above our staircase, one from each family... and they were really tiny bulbs, so dim... like... like candle lights.” -- Nini



“Water taps! Our family’s tap was located in the front courtyard. For people who could afford it, they connected the taps all the way to the upper floors for convenience. But for people who did not have enough space to build sinks and install water taps, they would have to use the public water station in the longtang.”

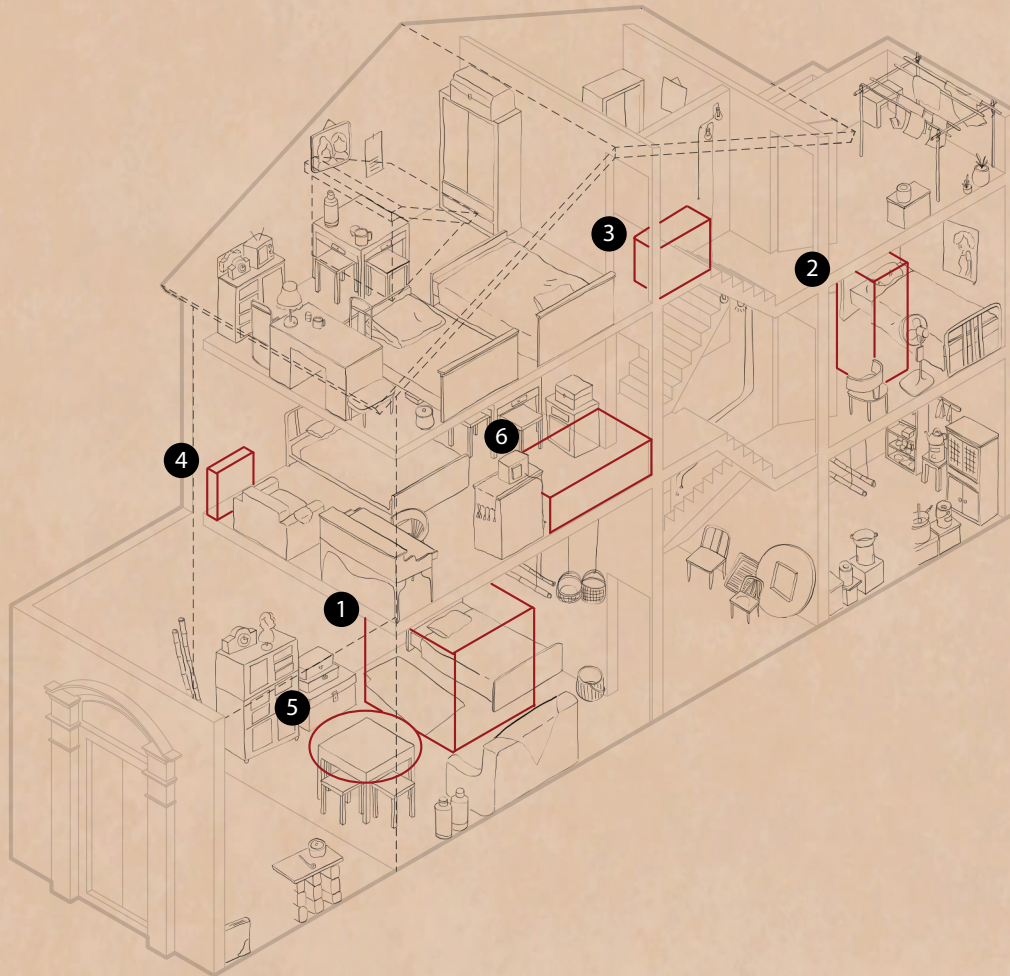
-- Mr. Jing



“When my parents got married, they got a twelve square meter room. But when my sister and I were born, there wasn’t enough space. Our ceiling height was quite high, about 4-5m high. So we built our own mezzanine in our room. That room ended up only 1.2m high. Well... tall enough for us when we were little... plus, it was only for sleeping. And there were still more than 2m of ceiling-height under the mezzanine, in our main room.” -- Nini



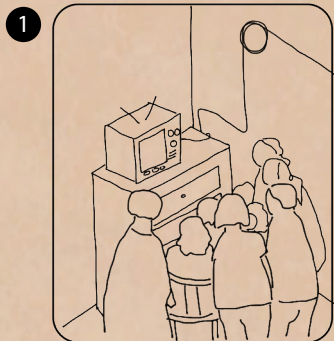
“One of my next door neighbours had five children. They lived in the loft of the house, which was only a bit more than 10 square meters. One of the sons got married which meant that their daughter-in-law also moved in. To give privacy for the couple, they’ve just added a piece of fabric in the middle of the room to split it into two rooms.” -- Jamie



This diagram highlights the two types of temporary transformations of the interior. One is the redefinition of spatial program when the dwellers bring in new activities into the space. The other occurs when residents use transformable objects to maximize space usability for a short period of time.

| INTERIOR ADAPTATIONS - redefining spatial program & transformable objects |

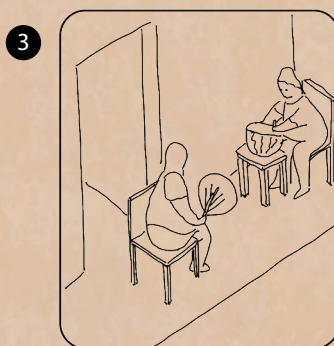
Fig.3.49. Interior adaptations - redefining spatial program & transformable objects



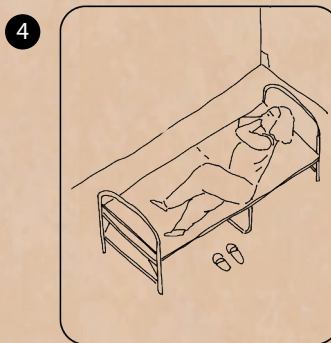
“Our house was the first family in our longtang who owned a color television. Your uncle brought it back from a work trip in Japan. Every day... every day... my neighbours come to our house to watch TV.” -- Lin



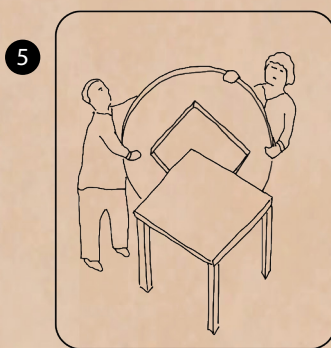
“The boys showered outside in the longtangs. Us girls bathed in our own rooms, in a wooden tub... about a meter in diameter? In the winter, we hung a large plastic curtain around the tub. You only have 5 minutes before the heat all escapes. After that, the curtain would start moving inwards, and touch our body as you shower...That’s the worst! Freezing cold!” -- Ms. Liu



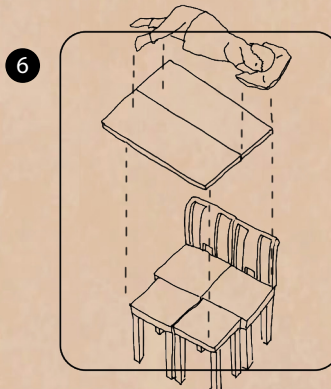
“I lived on the third floor, so we didn’t move our furnitures out to the longtang as often as others did. Instead, we brought our chairs out into the hallway to chat with the neighbours from the same house, and ate watermelons together.” -- Ao



“When I was 10, I slept on a foldable bed, quite similar to army beds. In the morning, we folded and stored it in the corner of the room.” -- Ao



“We made these large circular table tops for big gatherings. They fit really nicely with the traditional square tables. Usually, we stored these large circular table tops against the wall on the staircase. Since not every family owned one of those, we shared ours with our neighbours.” -- Nini



“When my relatives from Ningbo came to stay overnight, we would set a temporary bed for them. Two wide planks, two chairs with backrest, and two square chairs. After they left, we just left the planks under our bed.” -- Ms. Jay

Shifting Spatial Boundaries

“Whenever we construct a barrier, we have to equally make the barrier porous; the distinction between inside and outside has to be breachable, if not ambiguous.” -- Richard Sennett ¹

Two Boundaries, Three Locations

The magic of lilong activities was that they induced a myriad of changes to the perception of lilong’s spatial boundaries. Such re-imagination of boundaries could be categorized into two types: the porous boundary and the temporary boundary.

The walls of the 70s and 80s lilong houses did not represent clear physical barriers. Rather, they were porous. Every movement and every activity trespassed these physical barriers.

The temporary boundary described the perceived boundaries. They automatically formed as activities took place, and vanish as the activity ends. These boundaries could be static or in motion. Static, if the activity took place in only one location; in motion, if the activity was moved from place to place.

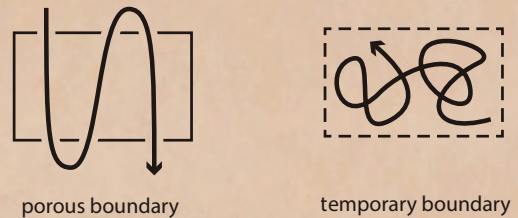


Fig.3.50. Boundary types

These boundaries allowed the dwellers to connect with their environment, intertwining their everyday lives with the architecture of what they called home. The two types

¹ "The Open City," last modified Nov., accessed Aug 6, 2020, <http://urbanage.lsecities.net/essays/the-open-city>.

of boundaries occurred throughout the lilong typology. To categorize, they could be observed at three locations: the interior, the exterior, and the in-between.

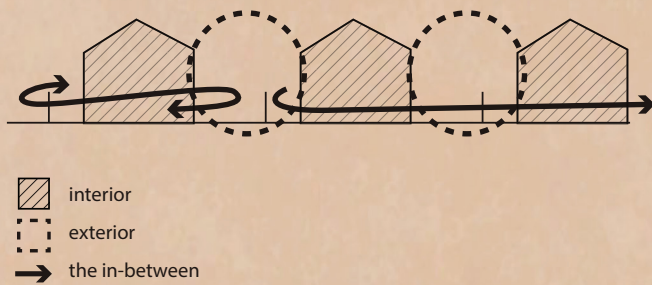


Fig.3.51. Locations where the two types of boundaries occur

The Interior

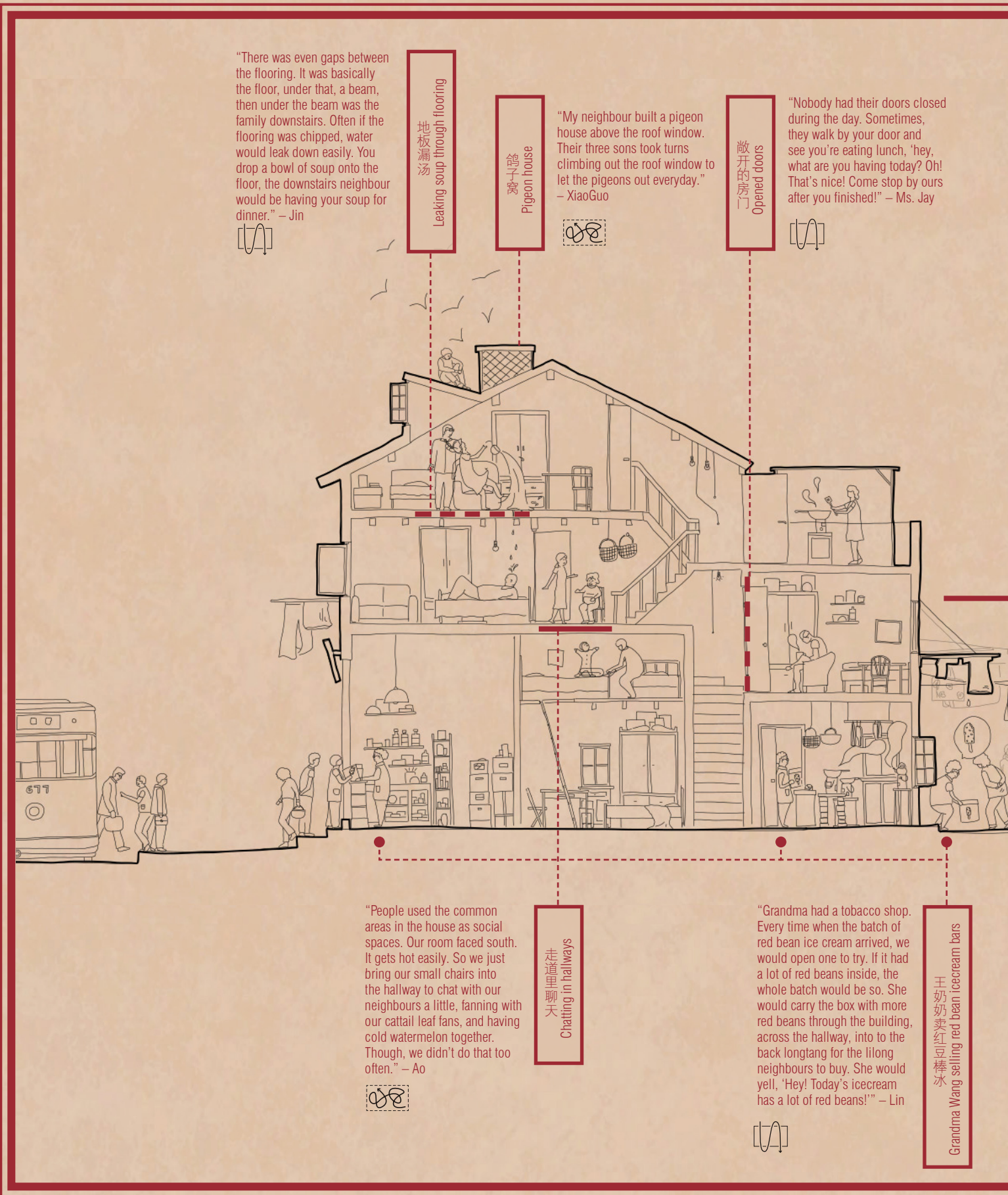
Visual, audio, and physical connections overcame physical barriers that separated the people. Openings like doors and audio transmissions between thin walls were opportunities to blur the separation between rooms. A few pieces of furniture could instantly apply the magic of transforming one space into various functions. Such transformations, although simple, were necessary to resident's everyday life.

The Exterior

Even the smallest gestures could create temporary boundaries: children drawing out the court for hopscotching, street hawkers placing down their mobile workstations, adults lining up chairs in front of the longtang television...

The In-Between

The term "in-between" signifies this flow of motion between the inside and the outside. The walls, though were designed as barriers, became boundary that was permeable, porous, as dwellers constantly moved programs in and out. ■



"There was even gaps between the flooring. It was basically the floor, under that, a beam, then under the beam was the family downstairs. Often if the flooring was chipped, water would leak down easily. You drop a bowl of soup onto the floor, the downstairs neighbour would be having your soup for dinner." – Jin



地板漏汤
Leaking soup through flooring

鸽子窝
Pigeon house

"My neighbour built a pigeon house above the roof window. Their three sons took turns climbing out the roof window to let the pigeons out everyday." – XiaoGuo



敞开的房门
Opened doors

"Nobody had their doors closed during the day. Sometimes, they walk by your door and see you're eating lunch, 'hey, what are you having today? Oh! That's nice! Come stop by our after you finished!' – Ms. Jay



"People used the common areas in the house as social spaces. Our room faced south. It gets hot easily. So we just bring our small chairs into the hallway to chat with our neighbours a little, fanning with our cattail leaf fans, and having cold watermelon together. Though, we didn't do that too often." – Ao



走廊里聊天
Chatting in hallways

"Grandma had a tobacco shop. Every time when the batch of red bean ice cream arrived, we would open one to try. If it had a lot of red beans inside, the whole batch would be so. She would carry the box with more red beans through the building, across the hallway, into to the back longtang for the lilong neighbours to buy. She would yell, 'Hey! Today's icecream has a lot of red beans!'" – Lin



王奶奶卖红豆棒冰
Grandma Wang selling red bean icecream bars

Fig.3.52. Section of two rows of lilong houses

万国旗
Flags of 10,000 countries

"During Shanghai's rainy season, whenever the sun came out, everyone put out their quilts to dry the moisture out. Looking down the longtang, millions of colorful canopies of blankets and quilts swayed in the air." – Nini



不隔音的牆
Wall, not soundproofed

"Longtang living had really influenced my music taste. I could hear my neighbour's radio through the wall all the time, and I ended up falling in love with Huju (Shanghai opera), which he played quite often" – Ms. Jay



叫卖的走街串巷
Street hawkers wandering about every longtang

"They would be going through each longtang, chanting songs about their business, like Chinese medicine, knife sharpening, hair cuts, bamboo stakes... through every longtang. If you needed their service, just stop them when they pass by your house. You never need to worry if your bed was broken, a bed-fixer would pass by in a day or two." – Mr. Jing



"Here's one of the big arguments we had with one of our neighbours. Because her room was too small, she always had to bathe in the shared kitchen. Well then, except the first floor residents, who could exit the front door, all the rest had to go through the kitchen to use the backdoor. Everytime when she showered, nobody could leave nor enter the house." – Ms. Liu



临时浴室
Temporary shower room

***“You could say a longtang is a certain type of
architecture, but what it actually is, is a way of life.”***

--- Wang Anyi

CHAPTER 3: Value of Lilong

Chapter 3 is a reflection on the documentation and research of lilong. It looks at the different roles lilong played in the city during the 70s and 80s.

The chapter starts at the scale of the individuals, looking at the value of lilong to the dwellers. Then, it zooms out to larger scales, observing the value of lilong in the context of urban design, and Shanghai's local culture and history. ■

Value of Lilong to the Dwellers

The interviewees often brought up two Chinese phrases while describing their lilongs: “yan huo qi xi”¹ and “ren qing wei.”² The former meant worldliness. The phrase could be directly translated into the atmosphere and smell of the rising smoke and fire, which perfectly depicted the iconic lilong scenery of the residents lighting up stoves at dawn. “Ren qing wei” which meant human touch, described the kindness between the lilong neighbours. Both phrases emphasized the presence of dwellers in lilong as they were the most essential factor of the precious lilong social relationship. The value of lilong to the dwellers relied on this relationship.

Adults

"Lilong was a so-called acquaintance society," said the interviewee, Lin, as she recalled her lilong neighbourhood. The community functioned on the basis of interpersonal trust. This trust helped to relieve the burdens of domestic responsibilities from the lilong adults, such as taking care of children and helping with laundry. With about 90% of married women working during the 1970s and 80s,³ lilong was especially significant for dual-income families.

"On school days, all the children would go home for lunch. Some had grandparents or older siblings taking care of them. But, there were also many, like myself, who had no adults at home. So my mother would usually leave cooked rice at my neighbour's place, and tell me to have lunch at their house. The neighbour auntie would even fry an egg for me as a side dish..." – Jamie

"Sometimes, in the evenings, our parents weren't back from work yet. The elderlies who saw us still playing outside, would invite us to

1 Chinese character: 烟火气息, yan huo qi xi

2 Chinese character: 人情味, ren qing wei.

3 John Bauer et al., "Gender Inequality in Urban China: Education and Employment," *Modern China* 18, no. 3 (1992)350. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/stable/189336>.

have dinner with them." – Lin

"Our neighbours were really kind. The upstairs uncle worked everyday except for Tuesdays. So every Tuesday, they intentionally saved some space for him to dry his laundry. If he was at work on rainy days, they would also help bring his laundry back from the outside." – YuJun

Seniors

"The seniors really needed someone to accompany with. Living in lilong, you see, friends, families, and neighbours were always nearby. So living in the lilong was quite beneficial to the old generation," commented the interviewee, Jin Fu. As the everyday lilong living consisted of sharing space and interacting with neighbouring friends, it let the seniors felt at ease. As neighbours were always watching each other's back, lilong was a layer of security for them. Besides, the rich social culture of lilong also provided seniors a safe space emotionally.

*The book, *Old City: My Home, My New Home*, recorded a story of a lady offering to assist her ninety-year-old neighbour's daily living.⁴ The senior had no other family members. One day, the lady noticed that the senior never came downstairs to cook, so she went to check on her. That was when she realized that the senior was sick in bed with no help. Since then, the lady took the responsibility of taking care of her elderly neighbour's daily life, which lasted for more than ten years.*

Children

Longtang, although was the lilong children's playground, more importantly, it was also their school. The gossip among the adults in the longtang was a method for the children to gain an understanding of the outside world.⁵ It takes a village to raise a child. Lilong neighbours

⁴ Yujie Hunag 黄玉捷 and Xiaoping Zhou 周小萍, *Laochengxiang: Wo De Laojia, Wo De Xinjia* 老城厢: 我的老家, 我的新家 (Shanghai: 上海社会科学院出版社 Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2015).

⁵ Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life*, 416.

played the role "in raising each other's children... Neighbors watched out for their safety, mediated conflicts, and taught them moral lessons..."⁶

"Whenever my neighbours got into a conflict, my parents would always promptly tell me if this person's point was valid, or that person's response was not proper. I was able to understand what was good and bad right away." -- Jamie

"When my neighbours cook in the house, I would stand on the side and ask them to teach me. I learned all my cooking not from my parents but my upstairs and downstairs neighbours." -- Nini

"When I was little, I learned English from the upstairs uncle. And a teacher lived on the top floor of our house. I learned how to play chess from him. We would sometimes play in the room right beside the courtyard." -- Jenny ■

⁶ Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)152.

Value of Longtang in Urban Design

Longtang as both streets and gathering spaces

“For Chinese cities, the public life of pedestrian-oriented streets has significant values... For Chinese urban residents’ every day life, streets are more important than squares...” – Jing Huang

Longtang simultaneously plays the role of the city’s circulation and the role of the neighbourhood’s gathering space. Jing Huang is an associate professor at the Zhengzhou University who focuses her studies on urban renewal. She explains that one of the reasons why streets are more important than squares in Chinese cities is that within the crowded urban core, streets that start providing public life release stress from the limited urban land. To create such streets, there are two crucial elements: the "adhesive" and the "connection."² The former describes the design of street edges for multi-functional use and diversity, and the latter represents moments that result in large gatherings and activities. Layering this concept on the lilong neighbourhoods, the "adhesive" are the edges of the longtang where openings of doors and windows are present. These openings create visual and physical linkages between the interior and the exterior. The sides of the longtang are spaces that encourage ground-level activities to take place. The "connections" are then the overspill of these activities from the interior to the exterior. The combination of these two elements renders the longtang into an extension of home, resulting the people, collectively and voluntarily, take in the public responsibilities. Adults and seniors keep an eye on the street and the passer-by, which adds a layer of security for the longtang. Such action encourages even more overspill of activities, which leads to a highly social and lively neighbourhood.

1 Jing Huang黄晶 and Xinfeng Jia贾新锋, "Chengshi Jiedao Chongsu-Jifa Buxinghua Gongongshenghuo城市街道重塑--激发步行化公共生活," 城市交通, no. 1 (2015) 12.

2 Huang黄晶, "Chengshi Jiedao Chongsu-Jifa Buxinghua Gongongshenghuo城市街道重塑--激发步行化公共生活," 15.

Lilong: a hierarchy of public spaces

As noted in Chapter 2, the porosity of lilong, where residents move in and out of the buildings and through the longtangs, mix the private and the public realms. The porosity at different scales creates various levels of private and public space. Lilong demonstrates this hierarchy of shared spaces, in a gradation from the public main longtang, to the semi-private side longtang, and finally to the semi-private interior spaces.

The main longtangs are an indication of the porosity at a scale of the neighbourhood. These longtangs are the most public, consisting of dwellers from the neighbourhood and pedestrians who wish to cut through the block. Old shikumen main longtangs can be above four meters wide³, enough for bicycles and cars to pass through while still leaving empty space on the sides. Activities fill in the edges of the longtang: street hawkers strolling through, adults playing cards, elderlies gossiping in groups... In contrast, the side longtangs are much more private, sandwiched between the two rows of houses. An Old Shikumen side longtang is only about 2.5 meters wide as they only needed to be wide enough for a Rickshaw to pass through. It is rare to see strangers trespassing in these lanes. Instead, the porosity of the building walls allows the trickling of domestic activities into the longtangs, making it a semi-private space for the lilong residents to share. Inside each house, residents break through the barrier of interior walls, which enclose their private rooms. The courtyards, hallways, and kitchens become the semi-private spaces shared by the families in the same unit. These interior spaces induce conversations between the neighbours, bringing people close together.

The variety of public spaces animated the lilong neighbourhood and

³ Sheng Hua 沈华, *Shanghai Lilong Mingju* 上海里弄民居 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe 中国建筑工业出版社, 1993) 26.

fostered a lively community. Gregory Bracken, an author and researcher on Shanghai alleyways, comments that "...the fact that anything could happen is one of the key factors in defining the alleyway house as good public space... Their spatial connectedness helped to knit together the city's social connectedness and foster community identity, as well as the lively street life."⁴

Longtang as a system of street networks

The city's street network can be categorized into roads, streets, main longtangs, side (branch) longtangs, and sometimes even sub-branched longtangs. Like blood vessels of a body, they branch out to reach every piece of land in the city. Longtang is an important part of the street network that connects every lilong housing unit to the larger road network. In addition, longtangs allow pedestrians to cut through city blocks, bringing efficiency to the overall street circulation.

Once a new high-rise development replaces an old lilong neighbourhood, its vertical circulation from the elevators replaces the longtang's horizontal street network. The imposing appearance of towers intimidate pedestrians who wish to casually stroll through the neighbourhood. Many large-scale developments that consist of multiple residential towers enclose an enormous section of the city block as gated communities. They hire securities to stand at the community entrances to ensure community safety, which eliminates trespassers. This means that pedestrians would have to walk around the gated community instead of cutting across the block. Large high-rise residential developments not only diminish the longtang level of street network but also take away opportunities for people to stroll through this rich public life of lilong. ■



Fig.4.53. Comparison of satellite views of a neighbourhood in 1979 Shanghai (top) vs 2019 Shanghai (bottom)

⁴ Gregory Byrne Bracken, *The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013) 108.



Fig.4.54. Image of entrances of current developments around Zhonghuaxincun in Shanghai. Screenshots of streetviews from map.baidu.com

Value of Lilong to the Local History and Culture

Lilong adaptation – the informal structures

“The old city fabric experiences through a long period of change. As the society, economy, and people’s lifestyle change, they continuously transform their living environments, resulting in the creation of a pleasant living environment with the touch of the human warmth.”

-- Jianqiang Yang

Jianqiang Yang, the head of Urban Planning Department of Southeast University of China, focuses his research on urban heritage and preservation. He analyzes that the formation of a city today is an accumulation of changes that grew out of the old city’s structure. These changes are natural, organic, and are dependant on the old city fabric.² The adaptations of lilong architecture, the informal structures, are transformations that grew out of the lilong architecture. They are traces that record the stories of the lilong living over time. They are significant elements of the local culture, signifying the process of living and growth in the neighbourhood. Yang emphasizes that such elements are significant to the future of the city’s diversity and stability.³ Once they disappear from the everyday life of the people, the connection between the people and the land vanishes. As new developments carelessly raze the old lilong neighbourhoods to the ground, they destructively wipe out the local culture as well. However, it might be possible for new developments to accommodate such local quality by encouraging informal adaptations. Shu Wang, a Chinese architect who is known for his respect for vernacular architecture in his design, sees the importance of these informal structures. His residential additions for a small village, called Wencun, are greatly aware of the local culture,



文村老村口改造前
The old entrance of Wencun village before renovation



文村老村口改造后
The old entrance of Wencun village after renovation



文村老村口，生活在继续
The old entrance of Wencun village ,
life goes on

Fig.4.55. Wencun transformations - the before vs. after. Screenshots from Shu Wang’s presentation at TEDxShanghai

1 Jianqiang Yang 阳建强, "Chengshi Lishi Huanjing He Chuantong Fengmao De Baohu 城市历史环境和传统风貌的保护," *Shanghai Chengshi Guihua 上海城市规划*, no. 5 (2015)21.

2 Yang 阳建强, "Chengshi Lishi Huanjing He Chuantong Fengmao De Baohu 城市历史环境和传统风貌的保护," 20

3 Yang 阳建强, "Chengshi Lishi Huanjing He Chuantong Fengmao De Baohu 城市历史环境和传统风貌的保护," 20

providing extra space for the villagers to adapt and grow their tradition in the new buildings. At the same time, he convinced the municipality to preserve the illegal structures which are ultimately the expression of the residents' everyday and the village's tradition.

In alignment with Wang's perspective, Richard Sennett, the American sociologist, says that "growth... requires a dialogue between past and present, it is a matter of evolution rather than erasure."⁴ In his Open City concept, he encourages to create cities that break rules, "[encouraging] quirky... adaptations or additions to existing buildings; encouraging uses of public spaces which don't fit neatly together..."⁵ He says, "[this allows for the] urban culture to take root, then to foster, then to absorb chance and change."⁶ In the context of Lilong, as the residents transform the architecture, the neighbourhood obtains a characteristic of its own from these modifications. The characteristic takes root and grows, and eventually becomes a culture that is unique to Lilong.

A part of Shanghai history

Lilong is a part of Shanghai's history that embodies dense architectural, social, and cultural values. Yet, as new high-rise developments continuously replace the vernacular architecture, Shanghai gradually loses its connection with the past. Jiang Wu notes that this method of erasure in urban regeneration reveals the city's understanding of "new" as "change," and that "change" is the only way to advance the city. Nevertheless, this is a menace to the non-regenerable heritage of the city.⁷ During Shu Wang's TED talk in Shanghai, he presented

4 "The Open City," last modified Nov., accessed Aug 6, 2020, <http://urbanage.lsecities.net/essays/the-open-city>.

5 "The Open City,"

6 "The Open City,"

7 Jiang Wu 伍江, "Cong Lishi Fengmao Baohu Dao Chengshi Youjigengxin从历史风貌保护到城市有机更新," *Shanghai Chengshi Guihua* 上海城市规划, no. 6 (2018) 11.

a photograph of the dense urban core of the modern Shanghai. He commented that this was not a Chinese city anymore. In fact, cities with a population density above 500 thousand were all becoming different versions of this image.⁸ The vernacular, the history, the traditions are vanishing as we carelessly renew our cities. Yuan Song wrote an article on the Journal of ShaoXing Univeristy with respect to Wang's Nature Philosophy in architecture design. In the article, she revealed that "the current condition of traditional buildings, although seem decayed and broken, their bodies have fused with the vernacular culture with their physical body (form). And this is the most original culture of the region."⁹ Lilongs embody characteristics and values that are only specific to Shanghai. They are significant pieces that constitute Shanghai's culture, Shanghai's architecture, and Shanghai's people. ■

⁸ *Cities should Learn from Villages* Shu Wang 王澍, Video, *Cities should Learn from Villages* Shu Wang 王澍. TEDxTalks, 2016)

⁹ Yuan Song 宋源, "王澍建筑里的"自然之道", 绍兴文理学院学报 38, no. 1 (2018)117.

Conclusion - Reflection on the Research

The life of the lilong residents depends heavily on the characteristic architecture of their neighbourhoods. At the same time, the inhabitants' lifestyle greatly influences the appearance and programs of the architecture. The necessity to move through different longtangs for various daily activities builds the connection between the people and their neighbourhoods. The residents' personalization of space starts to transform the neighbourhood into a home. While each object acts as a catalyst for social moments, it also becomes a storyteller, hinting at how the residents inhabit the public space. Every single daily chore changes the appearance of longtang, redefining its programs. Elements like walls and floors, things that we usually understand as separations between people and space, are rather permeable, connecting the community together physically and emotionally. The 1970s and 80s lilong is a wonderful case study that demonstrates this unique and intertwined relationship between the residents and their lilong neighbourhood.

The thesis started with the thought to discuss how lilong is neither entirely about the architecture nor solely about the relationship between the neighbours. Rather, it is about the co-existence and synergy between the two, which is reflected in the layers of spatial transformations of lilong. Throughout my research, I could not find enough resources that pivot around the relationship between the lilong and its dwellers. Thus, this thesis acts as a documentation that begins to fill in this piece of missing knowledge. It observes and analyses the architecture through an anthropological approach, using anecdotes to understand space from the residents' perspectives. However, reflecting back on my documentation of the 1970s and 80s lilong, I realized that this is also a research that tries to understand dwellings as a process and as a place of belonging.

Lilong cannot be seen as a piece of static architecture. Instead, it is a process where the dwellings experience change throughout time.

Traces of architectural adaptations mark the natural growth of the community. They are hints of a lilong-way of life and the intertwined relationship between the people and the architecture. The physical presence of these adaptations records a process of time and growth. Such urban fabric is rich in culture and deeply rooted in the local history and tradition.

The extended sense of belonging is also a unique quality that lilong offers to the dwellers. Interviewee Mr. Jing commented, "I feel like I've arrived home as soon as I entered the entrance of our longtang number 39. But I would never feel the same if I were in longtang number 38." The extension of everyday activities into longtangs, the familiarity of the surrounding, and the community engagement provide residents a sense of comfort and safety. People refer to the lilong they live in as "our longtang." In their sense, longtang represents a part of their homes, a place where they belong to.

By the end of my research, I began to wonder about the future of lilong. Currently, developments of commercial and high-rise residential buildings are replacing many of the old lilong neighbourhoods. Lilong becomes a model that is in a complex situation, competing with the rising population density, increasing living standards, and the economic value of the urban land. Even if the lilong neighbourhoods escaped the fate of demolition, the technological advancement, the social structure, and the family structure of lilong are already resulting in changes to the lilong quality today. Thus, it is almost impossible to maintain the same community quality as the past.

Then, what are some other possibilities for lilong to be adapted by the modern world? How can we stimulate an environment that can offer a paradigmatic model for integrated community living as well as some of the social benefits of the 1970s and 80s lilong?

Spatially, some contemporary versions of lilong houses may be physically too constrained for most families today. Comparing to owning a spacious apartment, sharing a narrow lilong house with multiple families seems extremely inconvenient. Nevertheless, during

my conversation with architect Howard Rideout, who has extensive experience in the architectural field in China, he hinted that the typology could be a base for social or affordable housing design. For this reason, it is important to conserve this knowledge of the lilong living experience, as in my drawings, in order to offer a strong and tested foundation for the future of dwellings.

Lilong is a typology that demonstrates how architecture can create more space that is collective for people who cannot afford a large amount of private space. It is also excellent in knitting the community together both physically and emotionally. Through the dwellers' participation in modifying their own environment, every piece of adaptation fulfills the people's own programmatic needs. Thus, the architecture becomes tightly integrated into their everyday activities. This sense of belonging stems from their physical connections with the built environment and emotional connection with their neighbours. As a result, the lilong residents are able to call their longtangs "a home." To provide people a place called home, isn't this one of the most essential purposes of social and affordable housing? Then, what are some things that architects could initiate to encourage residents' involvement in building their own environment? One of the most important steps would be designing the architecture to anticipate modifications, leaving enough space and opportunities to invite residents to customize for their own purpose. Then, policies and rules, that prevent people from utilizing and personalizing their private and public space, should be lifted. These two steps would start encouraging liveliness to make its appearance on residents' doors, on the walls, in the hallways, outside the buildings... Then, the architecture can evolve organically with the growth of the community. Residents' emotional and physical connection with their living environment builds a strong community identity, which gradually would nurture their own culture and roots in the city. ■

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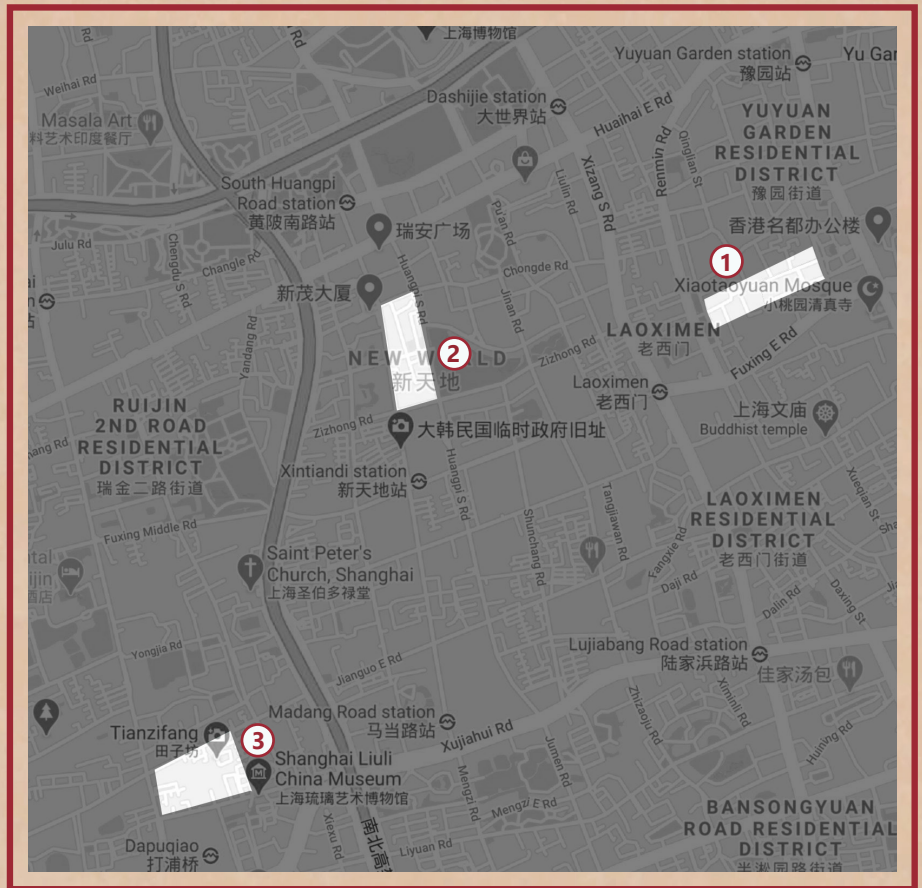
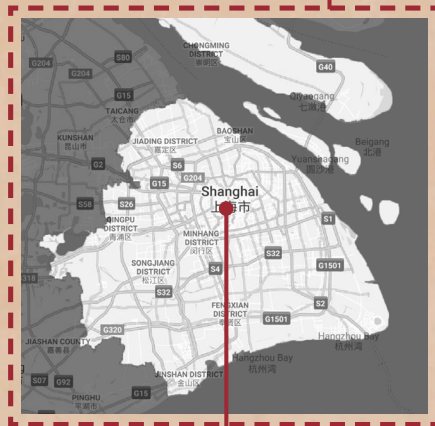
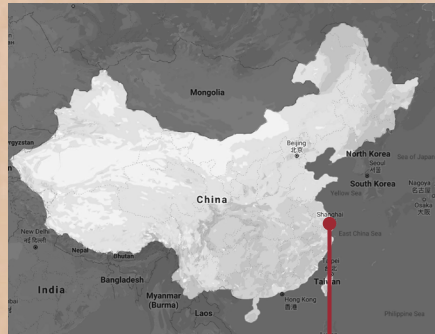
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Appendix A - three types of lilong today

Appendix A is a brief case study of three different types of lilongs that currently exist in Shanghai: Kongjialong, Tianzifang, and Xintiandi. These three sites have very different programmatic uses, from purely residential, mixed-use, to purely commercial districts. This study compares the programmatic uses of the buildings and the objects that are being left in the public longtangs to understand how the users inhabit the space. ■



Case number 1 -- KongJiaLong

Kongjialong is a lilong neighbourhood located within the old city wall of Shanghai. The lilong houses are entirely used for residential purposes.

Case number 2 -- TianZiFang

Tianzifang has a combination of residential and commercial programs. It is a famous tourist destination as a hub for creative and artists' studios. Here, visitors can both enjoy the shopping experience and also the visual experience of Shanghainese longtangs.

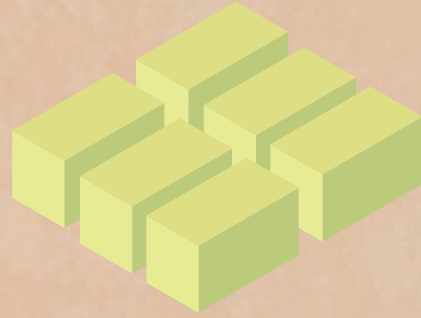
Case number 3 -- Xintiandi

Xintiandi is a high-end shopping district in Shanghai. Many young people enjoy coming here, especially the young professionals who work around the district.

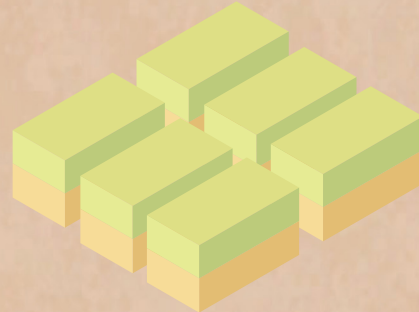
Fig.5.56. Three case studies of Shanghai lilong



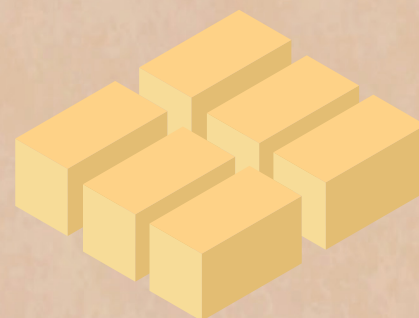
① KongJiaLong | residential



② TianZiFang | residential + commercial



③ Xintiandi | commercial

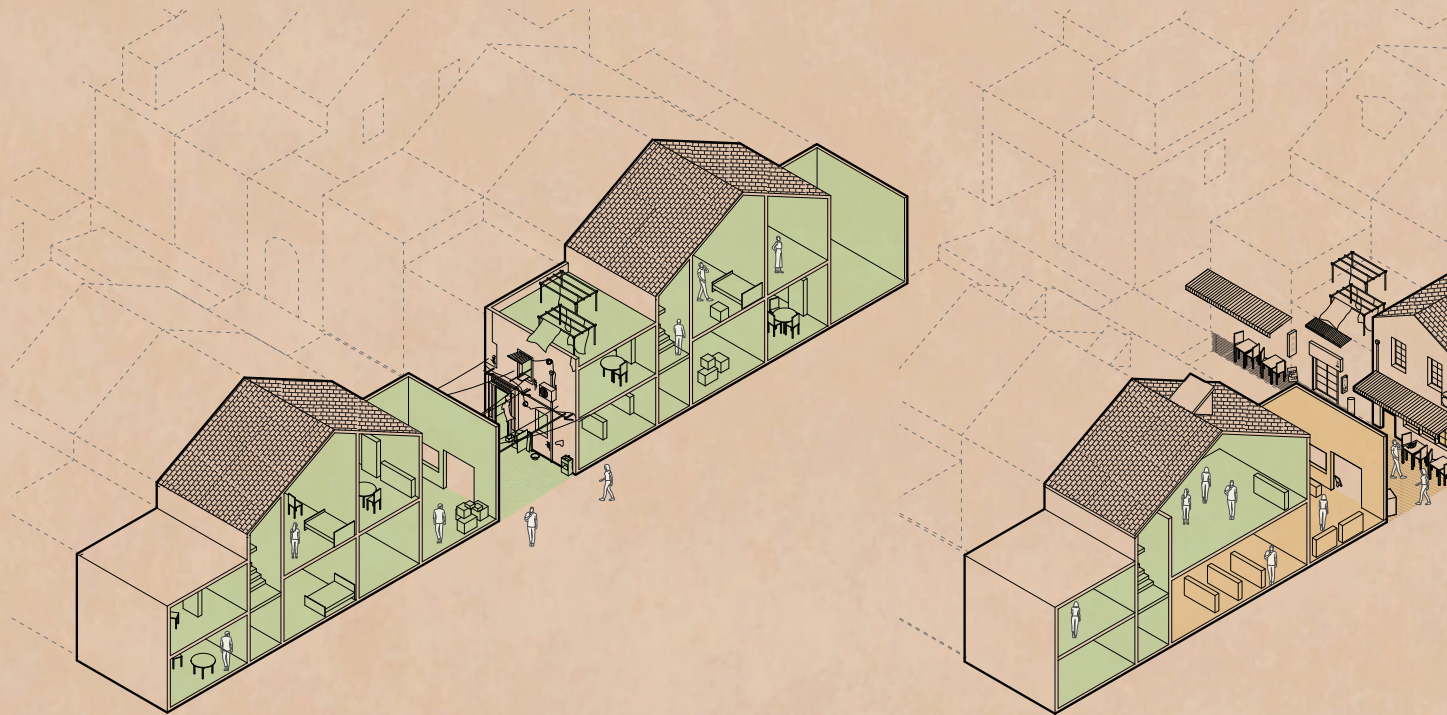


Residential Commercial

This diagram selects two units from each site and highlights the residential and commercial programs in each unit.

KongJiaLong
- residential -

TianZiFu
- residential + commercial

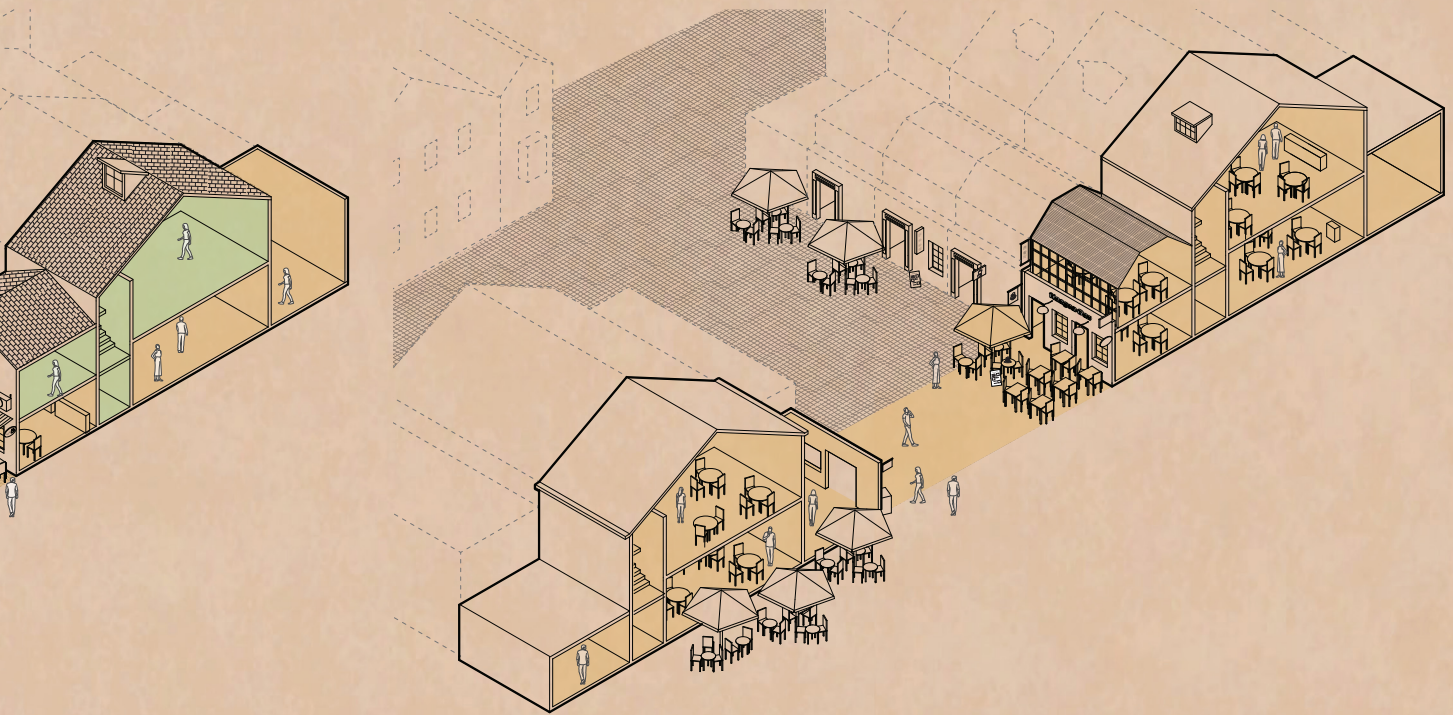


Residential Commercial

Fig.5.57. Residential vs. commercial space

ang
ommercial -

Xintiandi
- commercial -



KongJiaLong
- residential -

| objects for residential use |

TianZiFang
- residential + commercial -

| objects for residential use |



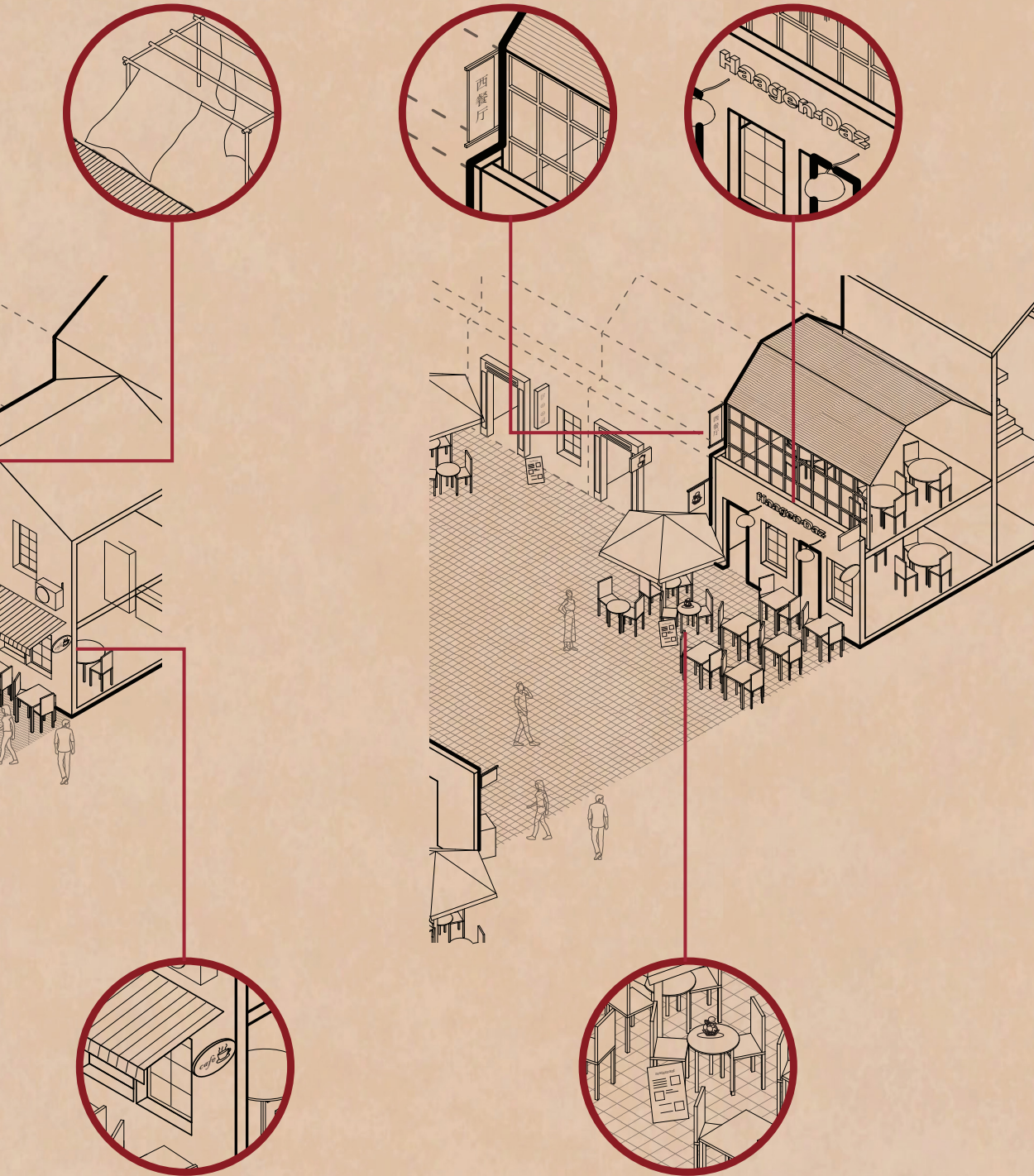
Fig.5.58. Three case studies of Shanghai lilong - the objects on the facade

Lang
commercial -

use & shop signage |

Xintiandi
- commercial -

| restaurant signage |



Commercial-Oriented Preservation Project

Xintiandi, constructed in 2002, is one of the most well-known redevelopment projects in Shanghai. It is a car-free high-end shopping district, where young professionals enjoy visiting. The development is an adaptive-reuse project, preserving some historical fabric of the site while replacing the residential functions with commercial programs inside the vernacular architecture. Nevertheless, the current street network of Xintiandi is not original. The design tore down historical buildings to create wider streets and plazas for an optimized shopping experience. Gregory Bracken, a scholar specialized in Asian Studies, criticizes,

“Xintiandi has become something of a showcase for the much vaunted ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics.’ A glamorously dressed-up version of the relatively humble housing typology, where one can find the world’s luxury brands for sale... The nostalgia we see here is nothing less than a purging of the past, a cleansing of any hint of dirt or grime or misery so that the newly scrubbed and polished version of the city’s history can be repackaged for the global elite.”¹

The architecture, the lilong culture, and the social quality have to co-exist. In fact, the life of the people in the lilong constitutes the soul of lilong architecture. Removing the community removes the soul of the space, leaving a lifeless shell, the buildings, behind. However, while agreeing with Gregory, I still appreciate how the project did an excellent job in promoting and protecting the building form itself. As the district becomes a tourist attraction, it introduces a part of Shanghai history to a wider range of audiences.

I do not plan on expanding on the preservation of lilong as it is not the main focus of this thesis. However, if the readers are interested, they can find current policies on lilong conservation and renovation from the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Planning and Natural Resources’ website (ghzyj.sh.gov.cn) and Shanghai Municipal Housing Administration’s website (fgj.sh.gov.cn). ■

¹ Gregory Byrne Bracken, *The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013)136.

Appendix B - study of Kongjialong

Appendix B is a collection of analytic drawings and reconstructions completed before the selection of East Siwenli as my site. They were made during the first term of Masters, documenting and analyzing the current condition of a neighbourhood, called Kongjialong. Kongjialong is located within the outline of the old city wall. The site was selected simply because it was one of the lilongs that was wide enough for a car to fit through to take street views. Because of the pandemic in 2020, I could not conduct an on-site documentation. Therefore, this entire set of drawings were done entirely through observing the street view images on map.baidu.com, and cross-referencing websites, blogs, posts, videos, drawings, paintings, and other media. ■

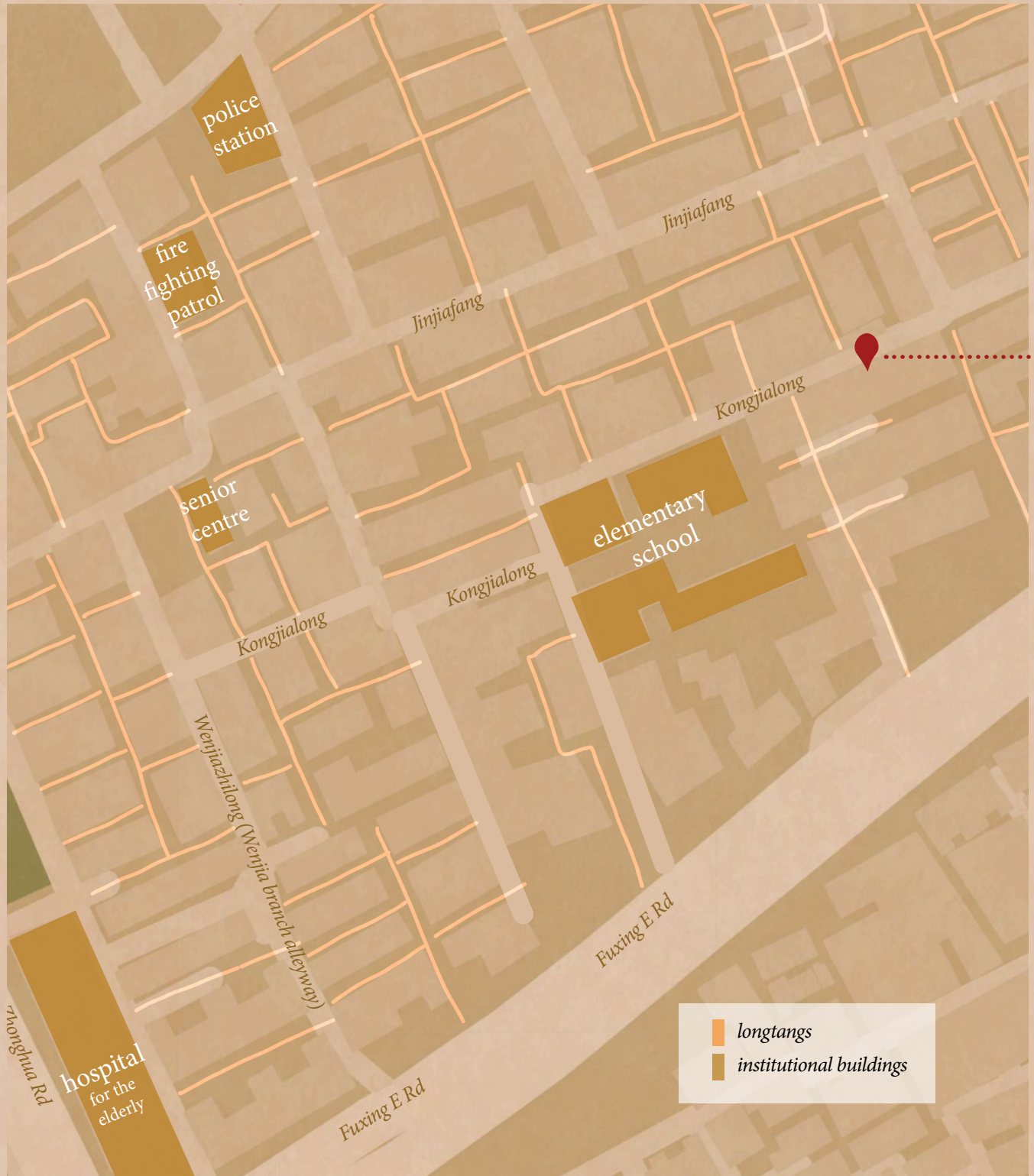


Fig.5.59. Left: speculated longtangs of Kongjialong, referencing maps, satellite views and streetviews from map.baidu and google maps
Right: Isometric of a storefront in Kongjialong



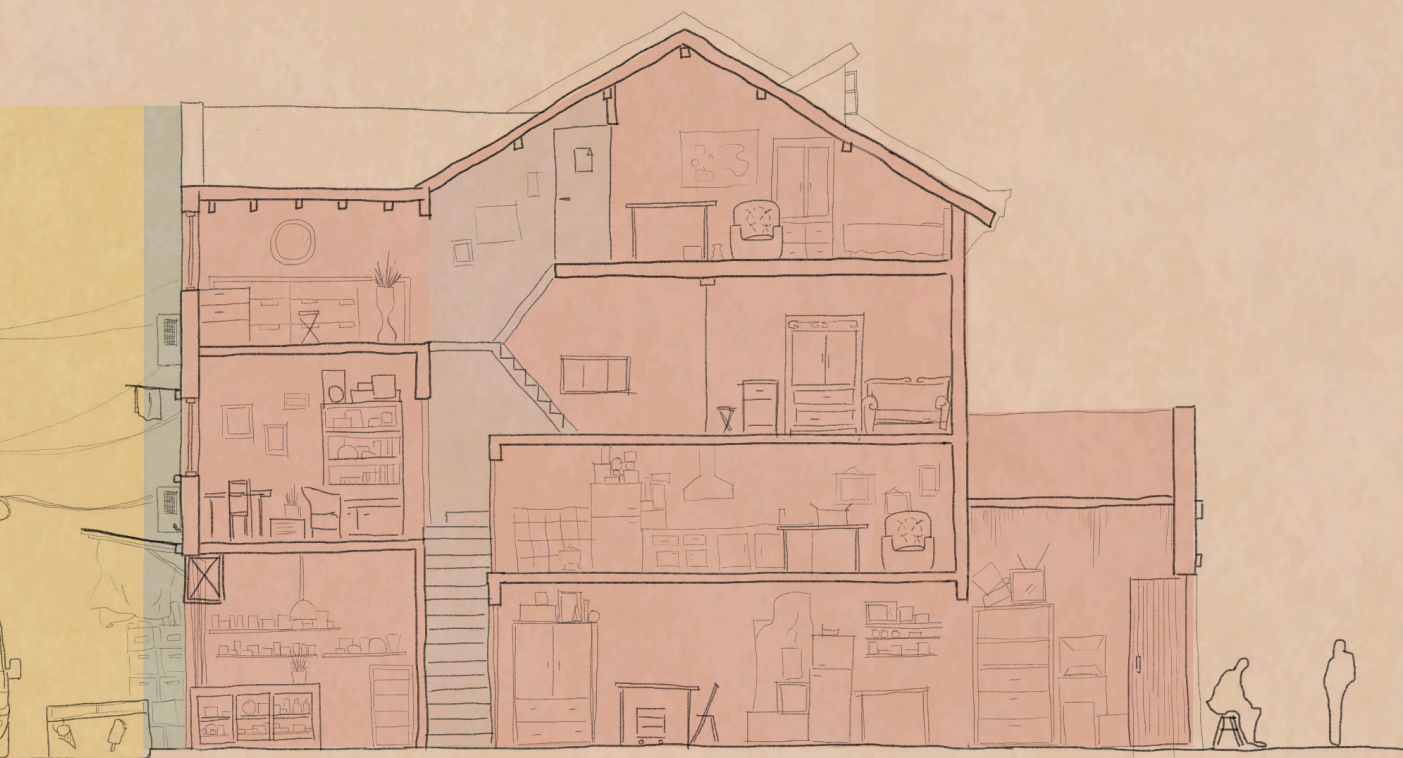


Fig.5.60. Section of along the Kongjialong





Fig.5.61. Section of across Kongjialong



■ extension of private life into the longtangs

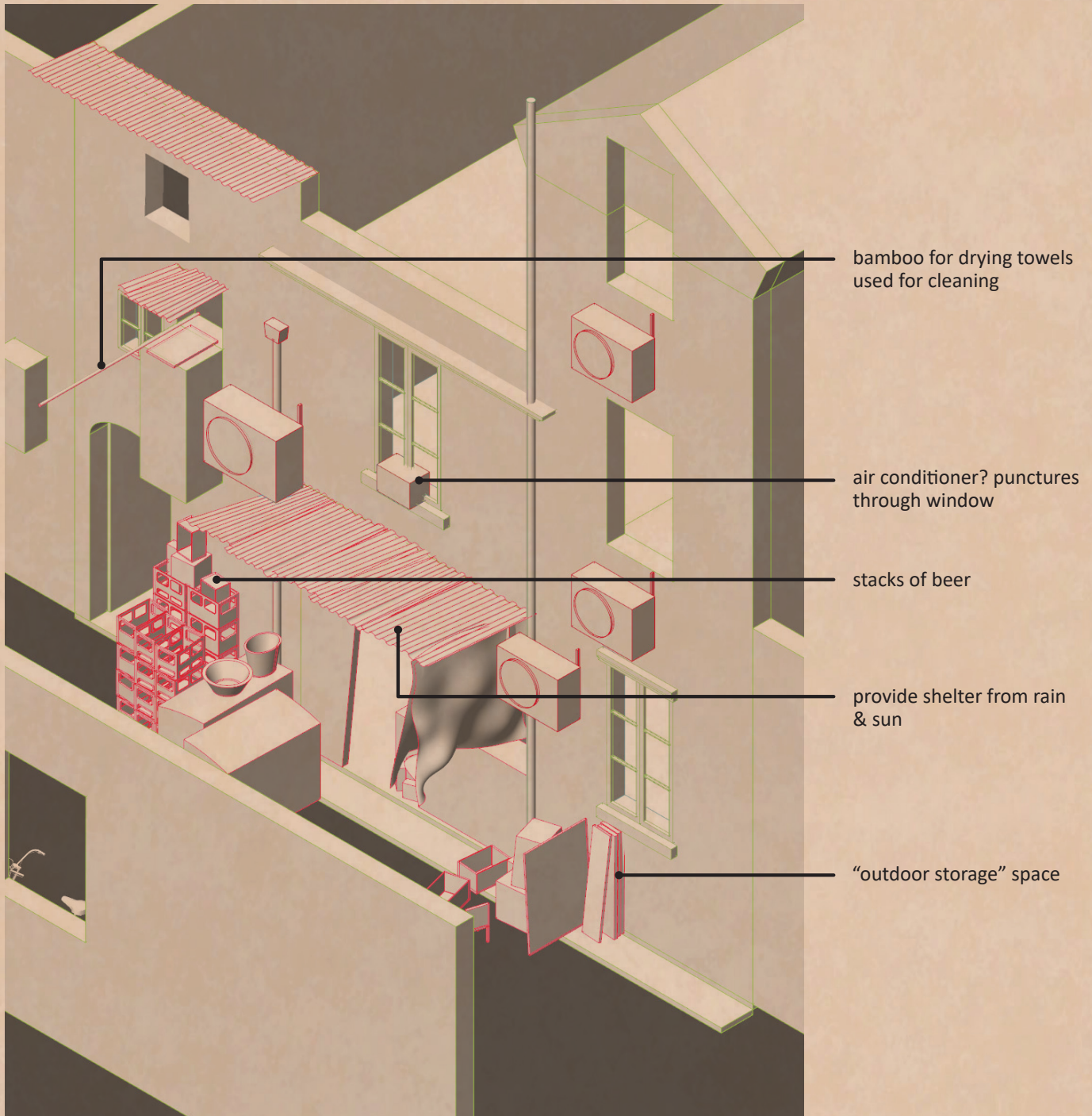
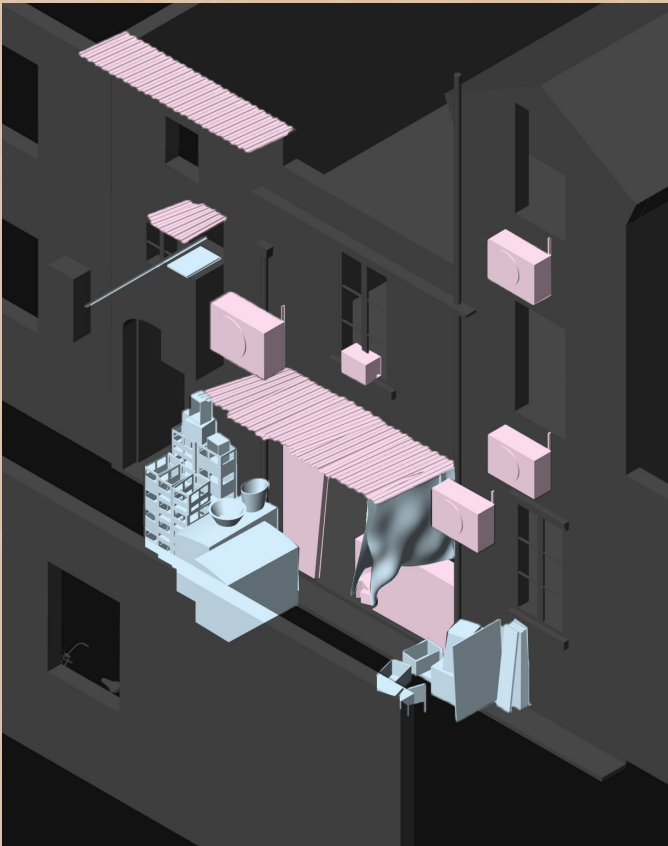
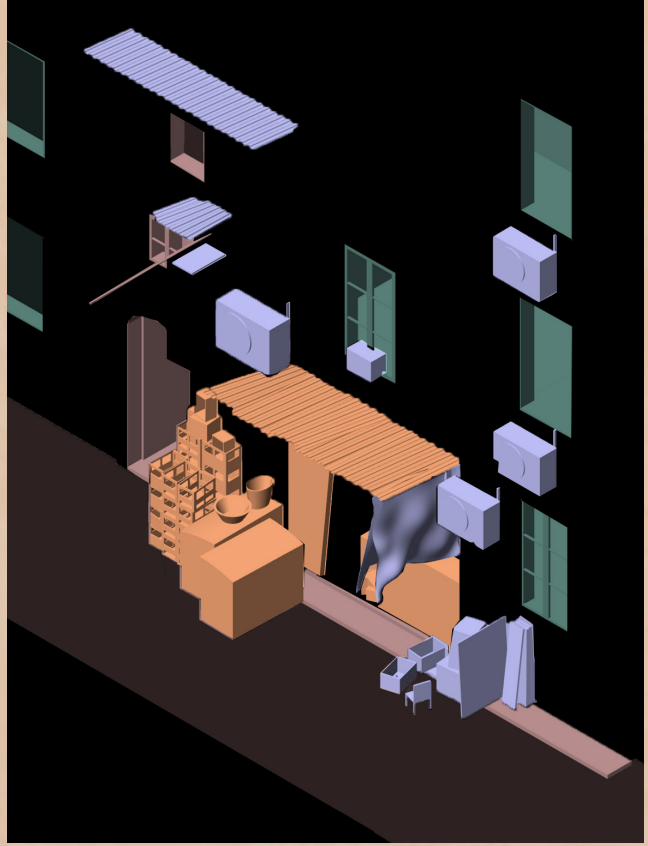


Fig.5.62. Analysis of the facade around the storefront inside the longtang of Kongjialong



- Temporary Objects
- Permanent Objects



- Shared - architectural elements
- Private - architectural elements
- Private - everyday use objects
- Commercial