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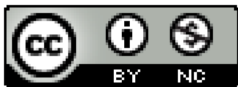

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Introduction

In October 2016, I returned to Qingdao, an eastern Chinese coastal city with a colonial past located on the southern side of the Shandong peninsula. A little more than two years had passed since I finished an 18-month period of fieldwork in the historical center. In January 2014, I had left behind a bustling two-story courtyard inhabited by over 60 families. Upon my return, just two people remained. The courtyard entrance had been fitted with a locked iron gate. My former neighbor, whom I call Brother Dragon, had to come down and open it up for me. The interior resembled a messy rubbish dump. Cardboard boxes, chests of drawers, mattresses, shoes, crockery, and other clutter lay scattered, bearing witness to the lives of the people who had once called this courtyard home. This state of affairs had been years in the making: years of negotiations, of drawn up and discarded redevelopment plans, and of promised but failed attempts to refurbish and upgrade this part of the city. Brother Dragon was one of the very last remnants of this long and unpredictable process. This time around, he seemed quite cheerful, happily announcing, "Now they [former residents] are gone. This is amazing. Now the whole place is mine!"

Brother Dragon had not always sounded so optimistic about living in the small courtyard room where he had grown up during the Cultural Revolution, crammed together with four siblings and his parents. A few years earlier, he had voiced a strong wish to move as soon as possible and hoped that "the government would simply knock everything down." Now, in contrast, he explained to me that shortly, all the illegal building extensions that people had added over the years would be cleared and that he planned to give the whole courtyard a makeover, grow some plants, and raise chickens.

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He did not fear forced eviction, as he had good connections with the local police bureau, for whom he worked every now and then as a security guard for the area. "They will not do anything to this courtyard within the next five years," he told me firmly.

Rewinding back to October 2012, a newly announced redevelopment project sought to transform and upgrade parts of the historical center under the umbrella of what the local government called "old-town renovation" (*jiucheng gaizao*) and "preservation-oriented development" (*baohuxing kaifa*). I had just started long-term ethnographic fieldwork and aimed to closely follow the implementation of the project and the social and spatial transformations it would bring about. It did not, however, take me long to realize that change was not the key issue. Local residents, but also government officials, scholars, and other concerned people with whom I had initial conversations, all told me that the envisioned project would *not* go ahead. From their accounts, I also understood that this was not the first time that the city government had announced but failed to refurbish the area, and, as it turned out, it would not be the last. "The government has been talking about redevelopment for many years, but it has all been empty words—nothing has happened. Why is the government not doing anything?!" lamented Old Zhao, a resident of the area. A sarcastic comment by a netizen in an online forum further captured the general feeling that accompanied the redevelopment project: "The once youthful officials at the redevelopment office have become old, the older ones have already retired and are looking after their grandchildren, some have perhaps already passed away, and yet the redevelopment project is still an infant that has just taken its first step" (Apache11111 2014).

Back then, Brother Dragon was still hopeful that after the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year), he would be able to move out. "If they don't redevelop the area this time, they will never do it. And if they do not, I will spend some time and money to renovate my room, make it a bit nicer," he reflected. Yet, just over a year later at the end of 2013, as I was preparing to leave the city for a while, the redevelopment project had still not been launched. I was sitting in Brother Dragon's courtyard room, which he had not yet started renovating. But his comment sounded very familiar: "Next time, when you come back, they will have already demolished this area. I will then invite you to my new place." When I did return to Qingdao for another short visit in October 2014, Brother Dragon was still there. The place still looked exactly the same. In 2016, more than four years after I had started fieldwork, the local

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government finally started to relocate residents by offering them compensation payments. More comprehensive refurbishment work did not begin until 2020, as China began to emerge from almost two months of near complete lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In December 2021, Brother Dragon was still living in his courtyard room, but he no longer spoke of demolition. "This is now an official historical area," he told me with some pride, though he remained uncertain as to whether and when he could or would move out.

Books about contemporary urban China often begin with observations about the unprecedented speed and scale of urbanization the country has experienced over the past several decades. Much has been said about the forceful local entrepreneurial state and infamous Chinese "pro-growth coalitions" that foster demolition and human displacement in the name of profit and development, resulting in the swift destruction of old urban neighborhoods to make way for larger-than-life architecture or other impressive physical manifestations of China's modernity project. Against the backdrop of these narratives of loss, destruction, and fast-paced change, the situation I encountered in Qingdao seemed counterintuitive. But at the same time, it raised several fruitful questions that I sought to answer through my fieldwork and that inform the discussions in this book. What explains the multiple episodes of developmental stagnation in Qingdao? What are the sociopolitical consequences of an urban developmental impasse? How do local residents deal with such inertia in a country where rapid spatial change has been the norm? As Old Zhao and many other interlocutors wondered, why has the typically powerful local state, along with private developers, struggled to effectively implement redevelopment projects? Discussions on the speed and scale of urban change in China are illuminating, not least because they reveal the importance of spatial transformation both as a driver for and as a symbol of China's "rise" (Hsing 2010). In exploring the above queries, this book provides a different perspective. It offers a window onto the ordinary instead of the spectacular, slowness rather than speed, and deadlocks instead of swift change. It focuses an ethnographic lens onto the fragmented, contested, and haphazard side of the urban redevelopment process in China.

In unpacking what lies behind stagnant redevelopment and in examining the consequences of the inability to swiftly transform an urban area, this book has several aims: on the most fundamental level, it is an ethnographic study about what the built urban environment of an old inner-city neigh-

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borhood means culturally, socially, politically, and economically to different urban groups. It closely follows residents who used and depended upon the spatial setup of the inner city in their often-precarious daily life and work routines, but who were eventually thrown out (migrants) or compensated and evicted (locals). It explores the many disputes over compensation, unresolved property rights issues, and complex ownership structures. It further follows a diverse group of local history and heritage enthusiasts who called for the "authentic" preservation of the inner city as a uniquely local architectural heritage. It also follows officials, planners, and developers who were expected to implement redevelopment projects but were simultaneously constrained by a new heritage-sensitive urbanization agenda and public demands for preservation. I carefully illustrate and analyze the divergent interests, actions, and ideologies of each of these groups in their practical and discursive engagements with the built urban environment of the inner city and in their negotiations over its historical narrative, its present meaning, and its future appearance. In analyzing multiple actors and activities, this book crucially contributes to understanding structural impediments to the implementation of inner-city renewal programs.

This book is, however, more than a microstudy of a particular neighborhood in a specific city. It addresses bigger questions related to social marginalization, heritagization, local state power, and the political economy of urbanization in contemporary China. More specifically, the book sheds light on the difficulties of incorporating heritage preservation into redevelopment in the post-Mao context, where fast-paced and visible urban spatial transformations have been and continue to be a crucial political-economic resource for the local entrepreneurial state. It furthermore offers insights into China's volatile urban planning and implementation process, exposing its highly improvisational nature and the difficulty of predicting which factors will push contingent and provisional situations to decisive and final outcomes. Moreover, as an ethnography that focuses on urban planning and spatial transformation in contemporary China, the book necessarily also discusses expressions and manifestations of (state) power. However, rather than taking state power as a given, it reflects on *how* and *when* the latter is expressed within the urban redevelopment process. Likewise, it considers how and when actions by other actors, such as residents or preservationists, become decisive, that is, how and when they have a direct impact on how the implementation of redevelopment unfolds. In doing so, the book provides a nuanced perspective on political practice and urban governance in today's China.

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I certainly do not seek to relativize the formidable power of the authoritarian regime and the structural inequalities underlying urban redevelopment. Violent evictions continue to occur, especially in rural and periurban areas (D. Lü 2020). My intent is to carefully paint a local picture of authoritarian state power, moving beyond the state as a supposedly coherent whole, and showing how the uncertainties of the redevelopment process and the frustration due to stagnation had an impact not only on residents, but also on local officials. More broadly, the book presents the human saga of the urban redevelopment process. While this includes attention to the structural features reproducing and exacerbating the marginal status of the urban poor, the book also moves beyond commonly applied dichotomies of local residents as victims versus pro-growth coalitions as culprits, identifying common narratives *across* different urban groups, including frustrations and uncertainty experienced by those being governed as much as those governing or, as in the case of Qingdao, those designing and implementing the redevelopment projects.

THE PLACE

The inner-city neighborhood whose story is told here was historically called "Dabaodao." It was planned and built over a century ago as a segregated "Chinese town" when Qingdao was under German colonial rule.[1] Today, Qingdao is an economically flourishing seaport, naval base, and industrial center (Kunzmann and Zhan 2019). Its advantageous location on the east coast, about 600 kilometers southeast of Beijing (Map 1), has made it a major tourist destination in China, famous for its eponymous beer and particularly its "European-style architecture." Qingdao is often referred to as a "world expo of architecture" (C. Xie 2014) and a city with an international, exotic, and worldly flair. "Dwell in Qingdao, experience the world," reads the official English slogan of a local urban construction company.

Dabaodao is nestled at the heart of Qingdao's old town center, surrounded by an eclectic mix of colonial monuments and modern high-rises. It covers an area of around 2.5 square kilometers and is home to courtyard-style houses of various sizes, situated along narrow alleys and lanes arranged in a grid-like pattern. These courtyards are known as *liyuan* and first appeared during colonial times (see Chapter 1). The architectural and spatial features of Dabaodao have largely survived the past century of sociopolitical turmoil. However, as is common in many inner-city neighborhoods across China,

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Map. 1. The location of Qingdao in China (© Qian Rongrong)

they have endured in a state of serious disrepair. When I began fieldwork in 2011, most of the courtyards were severely run down and lacked private kitchens, access to individual washroom facilities, or indoor tap water. Similar to old Beijing (Evans 2020), residents typically belonged to the urban underclass: unemployed and laid-off workers, the retired and disabled, landless suburban farmers, and struggling students. Beginning in the late 1990s, they were joined by a steadily increasing number of migrant workers, so-called *waidiren* (outsiders). Like other ethnographic monographs that focus on marginalized urban neighborhoods elsewhere in China (Evans 2020 in Beijing; Shao 2013; and J. Li 2015 in Shanghai), this book is thus also a study of urban poverty and precarity (Millar 2017).

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Over the decade during which I conducted fieldwork, Dabaodao gradually shifted from being "old," meaning in need of upgrading, to being "historical," meaning in need of preservation. Once a place of common homes and everyday life, it is now an old-looking, yet modernized, district for tourism and "cultural" consumption, offering coffee shops, hostels, and spaces for the creative economy. Dabaodao and its *liyuan* are regarded as a uniquely local example of architectural heritage, both among the wider public and in official discourse. However, as the introductory vignette hints, the path to its present state of historical importance has been anything but swift and spectacular, rather happening in a piecemeal fashion and achieved only after several drawn-up, partially implemented, and ultimately discarded redevelopment projects. This book is less concerned with the redevelopment outcome. It explicitly makes the uncertainties and contingencies of the planning and attempted implementation *process* the focal point of analysis, hereby shedding light on the seemingly contradictory yet coexisting processes of developmental stagnation and urban destruction.

Stagnant redevelopment is not unusual in China (Nguyen 2017). Urban renewal projects often run into difficulties as funds dry up, political priorities shift, or local leadership changes (Zhou 2015; Audin 2017). Sometimes so-called nail households (*dingzi hu*)[2] defy eviction by refusing to move (C. Ho 2013b, 2015), or groups of residents take collective action (e.g., petitioning) against government plans (Shao 2013). A detailed study of developmental stagnation in Qingdao thus helps to explain recurring problems and conflicts in many other urban centers, especially lower-tier cities.[3] Indeed, while urban redevelopment projects in the capital city or in the economic hubs of Shanghai or Shenzhen are often of national or international significance and frequently spectacular, they are arguably less typical. Notwithstanding local variations, in many ways the case of Qingdao resembles that of other similar-sized cities across China,[4] notably in the desire to "catch up" with the pioneers and trendsetters of urban development (Ren 2008; Shao 2013).[5] Zhang Li (2006), for instance, discusses how urban development discourses in Kunming are informed by a general feeling of "lagging behind." A similar phenomenon was observable in Qingdao's various inner-city redevelopment undertakings, where Shanghai was a common point of reference to which local officials and planners aspired. Yet it was often precisely the attempt to emulate the "success" of bigger cities that ended up contributing to a failure to locally implement urban redevelopment projects (Chapter 2).

Finally, Qingdao is one of many Chinese (coastal) cities that were par-

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tially or fully colonized by foreign powers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Goodman and Goodman 2012). Yet Qingdao has generally been underrepresented in the English-language literature on former (semi)colonial cities. Shanghai (Pan 2005; Ren 2008; Shao 2013; Scheen 2020), Guangzhou (Ikels 1996; Guo and Liu 2012), Tianjin (Marinelli 2010; Hess 2011; H. Zhang 2018), Harbin (Clausen and Thøgersen 1995; Koga 2016), Xiamen (J. Liu 2017; Wei and Wang 2022), and Hong Kong (S. Cheung 2003; T. Lu 2009) have been most widely discussed. This book fills this gap, including Qingdao among these other urban centers, focusing on its urbanization and redevelopment strategies, particularly with regards to urban colonial heritage.

In what follows, I elaborate on the key themes of the book as they relate to this specific case of inner-city redevelopment, as well as situate them within the broader fields of anthropology and contemporary China studies.

INNER-CITY REDEVELOPMENT AND THE SEARCH FOR A "BETTER" URBAN FUTURE

Since the start of China's "reform and opening up" (*gaige kaifang*) period, inner-city redevelopment has largely passed through three broad phases: a "demolish and rebuild" (*da chai da jian*) approach in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by preservation for tourism and commercialization in the 2000s, and most recently, the preservation of heritage as part of a broader discourse on "good" urban planning, beginning around 2010.

The term "historic district conservation" (*lishi jiequ baohu*) first appeared in the Chinese preservation context in 1986 (Q. Zhu 2007), though, until the late 1990s, most municipal governments favored growth and development over preservation, resulting in the destruction of lots of old urban areas. Change ensued around the turn of the millennium, when many Chinese inner cities were transformed following what sociologist Ren Xuefei (2008, 2018) terms the "Shanghai model" of urban redevelopment. The latter initially consisted of the economically successful refurbishment of Shanghai's old *linong* houses into a high-end consumer district called Xintiandi. More so than due to any specific policies, this shift occurred with the realization that "culture" could be profitable, and led countless smaller, less prominent cities to follow suit and attempt to create their very own *Tiandi* (Iossifova 2014, 9). This "Xintiandization" of Chinese inner cities was no less apparent in Qingdao's redevelopment process (Chapter 2).

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Around 2010, China began to propagate the need to improve urban development practices. Concepts such as people-centered (*yirenweiben*) urbanization, the creation of livable cities (*yiju chengshi*), sustainable development (*kechixu fazhan*), and the rule of law (*fazhi*) have since entered China's planning regime (Gipouloux 2015; Ye 2018; Y. Huang 2020). These changes have primarily sought to counter the negative effects of two decades of uncontrolled urban growth and create more environmentally friendly, clean, orderly, and livable spaces of global consumption.[6] In this regard, Dan Abramson (2019, 11) provides a succinct summary, observing the move from a tabula rasa approach to one emphasizing "betterment" and incremental change, together with an increasing focus on small-scale urban sociospatial organization, a less rigid separation of urban and rural development, and a pronounced attention to environmental protection and ecological civilization.[7] Preserving rather than demolishing old urban structures and places has become a key ingredient in this cocktail of solutions believed to improve urbanization. Since the transfer of leadership from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping in 2012, the central government has passed a series of legislations and opinions that have fostered change in national (and local) urbanization strategy, particularly emphasizing the need to preserve urban heritage (State Council 2016).

Change in the sociopolitical logic of redevelopment is a further manifestation of this shift (Naughton 2020). For example, China's 2011 Regulations on the Expropriation of and Compensation for Houses on State-Owned Land prohibits violent methods to evict residents and replaces the term "housing demolition" (*chai*) with "housing expropriation" (*zheng*).[8] Moreover, expropriation can only be carried out if the project is of public interest (J. Yan and H. Chen 2011).[9] Noteworthy as well is the emphasis on transparency and fairness in housing expropriation and the need to solicit public opinion before drawing up compensation schemes. Moreover, compensation amounts must now be based on the overall market price of a given property. China's "new urbanization" strategy has also sought to facilitate migrants' access to an urban *hukou* (household registration)[10] and welfare benefits, with the aim of increasing domestic consumption and the demand for urban services (Gallagher 2017).

All this has not necessarily made urban renewal fairer or better. Short-term economic gains continue to inform redevelopment projects. Particularly when it comes to the development of periurban land, the above-described regulations are often undermined (D. Lü 2020). A similar dynamic

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has characterized development projects backed by high-ranking officials (X. Sun 2015). Furthermore, in the absence of a clear-cut definition of preservation, the latter still sometimes consists of partial or even complete demolition and rebuilding. Migrants continue to be marginalized, especially in the context of redevelopment (Ling 2021). That said, this general shift in urbanization strategy has crucially changed the priorities and sociopolitical undercurrents of inner-city redevelopment (Ren 2018). This book explores how these changes have played out at the micro level of urban society and in concrete negotiations over redevelopment in Qingdao. Observations in the field revealed the multiple challenges inherent in this transitional period, where a preservation mandate had come into existence, though developmentalist and Xintiandi approaches to inner-city renewal lingered on, and local officials continued to depend on visible and rapid urban transformation for various political-economic ends.

More broadly, in examining the attempts to improve the urbanization process, this book also lends itself to an ethnographic engagement with urban planning.[11] Planning entails a wide range of actors, technologies, and institutions whose main concern is "to control the passage into the future" (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013b, 2). As a discipline and profession, planning largely rests on an idea that purposeful spatial design and infrastructural arrangement can make people's lives better, if not also alter their behavior for the better (Healey 2012, 199). Indeed, this belief loomed large among local planners in Qingdao, who regarded their practices as mainly technocratic interventions and who eagerly sought to adopt a model that would do justice to the political mandate to produce "quality" redevelopment and that would, ultimately, be the key to a "better" urban future.

In this book, following a burgeoning anthropological concern (Abram 2011; Abram and Weszkalnys 2013a; Mack and Herzfeld 2020), I am particularly interested in the discrepancy that frequently arises between planning as an abstraction and planning as it actually happens. This incongruity exists, in part, because of the inherently utopian nature of planning itself (Friedmann 2011, chap. 8). Whatever optimistic future is promised in plans tends to appear elusive and slightly out of reach (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013b, 3). Moreover, a discrepancy appears because planning is fundamentally a normative endeavor—it draws on preconceived conceptual and practical scripts (Holston 2020, 236). In Qingdao, as elsewhere, this resulted in the failure to account for the contingencies and conflicts of everyday life and led to plans being largely removed from the sociospatial reality inside the

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inner city. That said, it is not my intention to dismiss the substantial body of planning literature on the importance of informal and insurgent planning (Roy 2009; Hou 2010) as well as on process-oriented "collaborative planning" that takes into account local lives and needs and accepts conflict rather than trying to solve or order it (Healey 2003; Innes and Booher 2015; Mattila 2016). On the technical end of the spectrum, however, many have contended that in complex sociospatial settings such as the city, the provision of certain infrastructures must be scaled from the whole to the part and cannot (only) be solved at the community level (Sennett 2018, 86). In fact, it is often precisely when infrastructures fail at the local level that they become visible and tangible to those who depend on them (Graham 2010; Larkin 2013; Chu 2014). It is, moreover, often then that people turn to the state to demand a solution.

Finally, planners themselves may be "professionals," but they are also as much human beings or social subjects, who frequently reside in and may even be from the city that they plan (Kipnis 2016, 32). They are therefore not external to, but part of, the urban social fabric. As such, they are equally affected by the uncertainty and messiness that underpin the planning and implementation process (Hou and Chalana 2017). The fragmented redevelopment of Dabaodao serves as a particularly good example, illustrating how planning is not only subject to political contingencies but also an embedded part of the "messy" urban life that it ostensibly sets out to stabilize and control. Focusing an ethnographic lens on attempts to solve urban problems through "correct" planning practices in Qingdao therefore provides a window onto the broader reality of which the problems and proposed solutions are themselves part. Accordingly, this book also importantly contributes to an "anthropology of the urban," one that not only focuses on sociocultural life encapsulated within the *context* of the city, but also offers an engagement with what "the city" itself is about (Weszkalnys 2010, 19; Hannerz 1980; Brumann 2012; Mack 2017).

URBAN SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION, LEGITIMACY, AND MANIFESTATIONS OF (STATE) POWER

Legitimacy, governance, and (state) power are central themes in this book. In the literature on contemporary China, urban renewal has not only been described as violent and ruthless, but also as deeply intertwined with local

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entrepreneurial state power (Hsing 2010; F. Wu 2018). China's economic development and the performance legitimacy of the state (D. Zhao 2009) in the post-Mao era have indeed had a distinct spatial dimension (McGee et al. 2007; F. Wu 2007; X. Li and Tian 2017). The transformation of urban space—in inner cities often involving a drastic change from the old and dilapidated to the modern and new—has served as a powerful symbol, rendering visible and concretizing development, "betterment," and modernization. In fact, economic success, especially in the early reform years, directly manifested and has been evaluated vis-à-vis the degree of urbanization and urban space itself. The continuous ability of the state to transform urban land or create conditions for people to benefit from urban transformation has tacitly bound together the authoritarian state and the people (T. Wright 2010). The opening of the real estate market beginning in the 1990s has, for instance, allowed millions of Chinese citizens not only to lift themselves out of poverty, but also to accumulate wealth either through compensation *as a result* of redevelopment or through access to subsidized *danwei* (work unit) housing that could subsequently be sold in the emerging housing market (Unger and Chan 2004; B. Tang 2009). Urban space can thus be considered both a symbol and a driver of economic development as well as an important performance standard against which government legitimacy is measured and through which power is expressed.[12]

The urbanization-power nexus has not fundamentally changed. The rationale behind inner-city redevelopment continues to be informed by short-term economic gain and the "territorialization of (state) authority" (Tomba 2017, 512). Yet the narrative of strong growth coalitions versus weak citizens no longer holds true (Ren 2018, 96). The tools that local officials have at their disposal—the repertoire of potential forms of redevelopment—have been constrained by shifting policy priorities and the obligation to put into practice "softer" forms of urban redevelopment. This book explores a setting where the government was unable to effectively push through renewal, state power was compromised, and local residents repeatedly doubted the legitimacy of government action, especially when promises of redevelopment failed to materialize. The state's "infrastructural power" (Mann 1984)—the collective power to coordinate social life through state infrastructures—frequently broke down, and it was only events such as the unexpected visit of an inspection team charged with evaluating Qingdao's "hygienic situation" or pressure from a central mandate to remove all "slum housing" (*penghu qu*) by 2020 (J. Zheng 2016; Yao and Ma 2018) that pushed

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along redevelopment. Somewhat ironically, it was then that the government was perceived as "finally doing its job," as one local resident phrased it.

This book thus contributes to what anthropologist Xiang Biao (2016, 148; 2010) calls a "folk theory of the state," or common people's (*laobaixing*) "normative expectations about the state's role." For instance, local interlocutors in Dabaodao rarely perceived the idea of preservation or the emphasis on the rule of law and "fair compensation" as an improvement when it came to redevelopment endeavors or as increasing local government legitimacy. On the contrary, since urban renewal through much of the post-Mao era had made many people rich, residents saw prosperity through redevelopment as a basic right. It was, in their eyes, the government's responsibility to deliver this wealth, in whatever form. An analysis of various urban groups' expectations of the local government in the specific context of urban renewal offers important insights into state legitimacy, not as a legal or normative concept, but rather concerning the ways the latter is embedded in a dialectical relationship between government and society (Pardo and Prato 2011).[13] Like Luigi Tomba (2014, 11–12), I argue that legitimacy in China—based on a certain reward structure and government performance—is not a zero-sum game. Understanding what is and is not regarded as legitimate government action demands attention to everyday interactions and negotiations among citizens and what they perceive to be "the government."

As impressive as authoritarian power may appear from the outside, it does not preclude various forms of contingency and even provides regime-specific loci for alternative voices. In this book, rather than treating power as an abstract force that the state possesses, I explore power as a form of agency. Namely, instances in which certain actions within the redevelopment process—whether taken by residents, preservationists, or local officials and planners—produced specific results that become decisive in how redevelopment unfolded. I follow Sherry Ortner (2006, 151), who writes that power "is normally in the service of the pursuit of some project." Analyses of power struggles, as Andrew Kipnis (2008, 210) argues, should therefore "refer to dimensions of human social life other than power itself, so that power can be seen as a means to other ends rather than just an end in itself." Ethnographic observations revealed the agency of both residents and preservationists and their impact on redevelopment endeavors. In the case of residents, this largely consisted of ad hoc and mostly scattered, bottom-up actions based on particularistic interests (e.g., a better compensation deal) in response to top-down redevelopment implementation. In the case of

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preservationists, civil action also included cooperation and the inclusion of local officials and planners, a nurturing of horizontal ties that shaped decision-making and, to some degree, redevelopment outcomes (S. Chan 2008; Y. Cheng 2013; Verdini 2015).

I also consider power in a structural sense, that is, "the power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves" (Wolf 1999, 5). For instance, I contextualize structural failures within the broader historically conditioned forces that have affected the conduct of actors in the present. This broader structural context—that is, the economic and political reality of contemporary China—determined the nature of interactions, negotiations, and forms of agency and ultimately what kind of actions became decisive and had an enduring effect on redevelopment. For example, preservationists managed to influence renewal projects precisely because their narratives converged with the political mandate to focus on heritage preservation in urban redevelopment. Yet such convergence was particularistic and dialectical and formed part of the larger process in which negotiations over redevelopment unfolded.

Finally, I also offer insights into local state and political practice in today's China.[14] Along with sociologist Philip Abrams (1988, 79), I view the state as an idea, albeit a very powerful one, that symbolizes unity where there is often profound political disunity. China is in many ways exemplary of high-modernist social engineering (Scott 1998) and the state constitutes the most powerful entity around which everything and everyone orbits (Pieke 2009); it builds on a sophisticated synthesis of authoritarian statism and neoliberal self-reliance (L. Zhang and Ong 2008; Hoffman 2010; 2011), involving an array of governing practices that target various socioeconomic groups in distinctive ways.[15] While, however, the state might be viewed as a particular actor specializing in the exercise of power, ruling over a territory and population and adopting certain strategies to impose its will on "the people," it is, in fact, much more than what it does (Pieke 2009, 12–14). More importantly, the Chinese state is not a coherent whole. It works in a distinctly decentralized fashion, with competency distributed across a range of government departments and offices at the municipal and district levels. The same holds for policy implementation. It may seem, for instance, that urbanization in China has followed a homogeneous logic, producing strikingly similar spatial outcomes across the country. But the process that has created rather monotonous contemporary urban morphologies has by no means been

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unilinear or the simple outcome of volitional reforms. Contingencies have pervaded redevelopment in the post-Mao era, where reforms facilitated or kick-started various actions whose (often unforeseen) consequences have subsequently required new reforms and regulations (Abramson 2007).[16]

Moreover, throughout the entire redevelopment process in Qingdao, the "who" and "where" of the state or the government was blurry.[17] In the everyday lives of my interlocutors, "the government" was often nowhere to be found, even if simultaneously omnipresent in a discursive sense through public notices, glossy maps, announcements about redevelopment, or constant talk about "the government." Sometimes, "state power" concretely materialized through sudden overnight clearings of food markets located within Dabaodao. Most of the time, however, the state remained an abstract yet powerful entity perceived as being located elsewhere. Even local officials in Qingdao—normatively representatives of "the state"—would regularly construct "the government" as alien and beyond their own control. I call this the "absent presence" of the government. This concept captures the authoritative yet simultaneously abstract existence of "the state" in the lives of local residents and migrants, as well as officials who worked within the state apparatus but were themselves also urban subjects. Ethnographic observation of *when* and *how* different interlocutors evoked this idea of "the state" provides a nuanced perspective on local political practice in contemporary China.

HERITAGE AS CONTEXT

This book also intersects with heritage studies, in its focus on a timeworn inner-city neighborhood filled with old buildings that have survived past times but have become the subject of much debate over their future. Should they be demolished? Preserved? If so, how? Gregory Ashworth (2011, 11) sees heritage as the usage of the past in the present and suggests that "new presents will constantly imagine new pasts to satisfy changing needs." Importantly, different social and political actors in Qingdao evoked the past for diverse, often contesting reasons. As the title of this book—seeking a future for the past—foreshadows, throughout the monograph I reflect on the multiple ways in which *the past* became an important resource and informed *present* negotiations over the sociospatial *future* of the inner city.

Over the past two decades, the Chinese state has embraced cultural

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heritage (*wenhua yichan*) as an important resource. It has served various political and economic agendas at both the international and domestic levels.[18] In urban renewal projects, heritage preservation has become one important means of rendering visible "improved" urban development. In fact, it was in no small part due to this new outlook that Dabaodao and its *liyuan* houses were eventually spared from the bulldozers. Heritage has also become a popular discursive tool. Preservationists in Qingdao, for instance, invoked heritage to critique contemporary planning endeavors and develop their own vision of a "better" urban future. Heritage was no less an object of consumption within the context of tourism, a burgeoning culture of nostalgia,[19] and social stratification. In some cases, heritage was instead perceived as an annoyance, standing in the way of local residents promptly receiving compensation payments. From yet a different perspective, heritage was disruptive in that it was in the name of preservation that migrants living and working in Dabaodao were considered "unsuitable" inhabitants and eventually driven out.

There is little agreement among scholars within the loosely defined discipline of heritage studies as to what exactly heritage is and the purposes it serves. Some regard the idea and practice of heritage with suspicion, arguing that officially authorized heritage (L. Smith 2006) tends to erase cultural differences, ignores marginal narratives, and squeezes fragmented and subjective local histories into a coherent monumental narrative of (national) history.[20] Others, in contrast, are "tacitly or explicitly committed to cultural heritage in general or to specific heritage items of whose intrinsic value they are convinced and whose conservation they endorse" (Brumann 2014, 173–74). Still others, mainly scholars within the field of so-called critical heritage studies, have expressed skepticism of conventional understandings of heritage as "'old,' grand, monumental, and aesthetically pleasing sites, buildings, places and artefacts" (L. Smith 2006, 11). Rather than directly rejecting heritage, they have debated, redefined, and even reinvented definitions and ideas of it with the aim of making this concept more just, inclusive, and subjective, particularly calling for a communitarian approach to preservation (Blake 2009; Harrison 2013; Meskell 2018).

There are several problems with these different views of heritage. First, a constructivist approach to heritage tends to narrowly focus on power, hegemony, and discourse, or on deconstructing heritage. Doing so risks failing to see and appreciate the ways that even authorized heritage can serve as a meaningful social resource, something that became apparent in representa-

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tions of colonial heritage in Qingdao. Second, while it is indubitably important to account for and give expression to multiple identities, subjectivities, and subaltern heritages, the so-called local communities to be empowered are often also a social construction, sanctioned by the state or other external entities (Hampton 2005, 739). A "local community" may furthermore not be conscious of its identity as a bearer of cultural heritage or might even be suspicious of preservation, as was the case in Dabaodao. Third, scholars (especially within critical heritage studies) have tended to redefine heritage in such inclusive and all-encompassing terms that it becomes almost indistinguishable from the anthropological concept of culture in all its facets (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952; Clifford 1988; Brumann 1999; Ortner 2006).[21] This would raise the question as to why heritage should at all be considered a separate theoretical category, worthy of scholarly inquiry. I suggest that it is more productive to see heritage as *part of* culture, rather than *as* culture. This allows us, in the socioculturally specific context of Qingdao, to understand preservation as one locally defined possibility in the broader process of redevelopment, as well as to analyze social life in the inner city without necessarily relating it back to an idea of heritage.

Finally, my aim is not to argue against or to deny the positive and transformative potential that heritage may have. Unlike some scholarly works (cf. F. Chen and Thwaites 2013; S. Y. Liang 2014), however, this book does not start from the premise that China's urban development over the past decades has been destructive and that increased attention to heritage, however defined, is the solution. I also refrain from assuming that heritage preservation is an unconditional positive aspiration—as did many of my interlocutors who fought for the authentic preservation of Dabaodao. On the contrary, the redevelopment of Dabaodao exemplifies the drawbacks of heritage preservation becoming an ideology believed to serve as a panacea for inner-city problems whose causes far exceed the scope and capacities of the heritage concept.

Accordingly, in my approach to heritage, I mostly follow anthropologist Christoph Brumann's (2014, 173) notion of "heritage agnosticism," which "leaves the effects of heritage and their valuation as an open question for empirical investigation." Questions of what heritage is and how it should be preserved concern me insofar as they have concerned my interlocutors in Qingdao, and what I am interested in is not normative definitions, but the question of who wants to preserve Dabaodao and *liyuan* houses and for what reasons. At the same time, I also offer a critique of the hegemonic ten-

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dency of a heritage discourse that establishes preservation as the only viable option to solve inner-city problems, but thereby actually obscures and mystifies the more structural political-economic deficiencies responsible for many of the inner-city issues discussed throughout this book.

STUDYING "MY COUNTRY" IN CHINA

The fieldwork for this book was carried out over a period of 10 years, beginning with two short preliminary trips in 2011, and followed by an extended 18-month stay between September 2012 and January 2014. Since then, I have visited Qingdao at least twice per year and kept in close contact with interlocutors via instant messaging applications. During fieldwork, I also worked as a part-time teacher in the Department for Foreign Languages at the Ocean University of China, which meant I was granted a temporary residence permit and working visa and enjoyed the legal status of foreign resident. From the outset, I structured the data collection process according to different groups—local residents, migrants, preservationists, officials, and planners—each with its own specificities requiring specific methods and particular reflections.

I lived, for the most part, in a *liyuan* room on Huangdao Road, one of the best-known streets of Dabaodao, intentionally chosen because of its importance as a daily food market and its vibrant mix of local residents and migrant workers. The physical setup of the courtyard made it quite easy to meet and build initial rapport with potential interlocutors. At the outset, many residents were careful and somewhat skeptical about my presence. Not many foreigners (I know of only one) had ever lived in this part of town, and I was the first to have rented a room in this particular courtyard. The landlord was quite surprised that I wanted to lease his family's former home. "It's not a place to live; you can rest here sometimes, but it's too dirty to sleep overnight," he told me. Nevertheless, he patiently accompanied me to the local police office for registration purposes (*dengji*), a requirement for anyone renting a room in China. An officer then escorted me back to the courtyard to check whether I was *really* renting the room there, evidently in disbelief that a foreigner would be willing to live in the area. As I entered the courtyard with a uniformed policeman, my future neighbors looked at us with suspicion, clearly worried about "trouble." I did eventually manage to explain the situation, and the initial tension quickly dissipated.

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For the first few weeks, I spent as much time as possible in the *liyuan*. I washed myself, brushed my teeth downstairs at the communal water tap, used the courtyard toilet (Chapter 3), and simply hung out. I got to know my neighbors when asking to borrow tools to change the lock on my door and, more generally, answered the question "What are you doing here?" countless times. My double identity, as "foreign teacher" and as "ethnographer," was both a blessing and a curse. Most knew nothing about anthropology, although one resident had read Chinese social anthropologist Fei Xiaotong and was familiar with Claude Lévi-Strauss. My efforts to explain that I was an anthropologist, researching urban redevelopment and heritage in this part of Qingdao, were usually met with looks of confusion, though, when I mentioned my interest in the city's history and architecture, the puzzlement ebbed a little. When I eventually told them that I was also teaching at one of Qingdao's universities, any bewilderment entirely disappeared. Gaining acceptance was facilitated by my "teacher identity," as it provided a familiar category in which to place me. Certainly, the latter was much more tangible and easier to make sense of than my identity as an "ethnographer." Yet this also meant that some people were confused when I kept asking what they considered to be strange questions. They clearly wondered why a foreign teacher would need to know so much about their lives. That said, the longer I lived in the *liyuan*, the less suspicious they were; ultimately, local residents accepted my presence and "peculiar" queries, regardless of my identity.

Throughout fieldwork, I took countless strolls through Dabaodao and its courtyard houses, observing and recording daily happenings. Sometimes, inspired by Ingold and Lee (2006), I walked with my interlocutors, asking them to take me to places that were important to them. This proved useful in that "the journey people make also makes their places" (Ingold and Lee 2006, 68). To gain a better sense of how residents utilized the physical environment of the inner city, I also often spent time in one and the same place (e.g., sitting at the entrance to a courtyard, at a market stall, or in a courtyard interior), noting how people behaved, moved, what they did, and so on. The data thus gathered complemented that from interviews and conversations with people about their perceptions of their immediate physical environment. I spent many hours with my interlocutors, directly experiencing and learning about life in Dabaodao. At times, I would ask specific questions; at others, conversations would unfold naturally. After about seven or eight months of fieldwork, I carried out 66 structured interviews with randomly selected residents living in Dabaodao. These took the form of a short ques-

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tionnaire comprising 26 closed and open-ended questions and were administered through personal face-to-face interviews with the help of a local research assistant.[22]

One key challenge when conducting fieldwork among residents in Dabaodao was male bias. In his remarkable ethnography on crack dealers in East Harlem, Philippe Bourgois (2003, 215) reflects on "the inescapable problem of how—as a male—I could develop the kinds of deep, personal relationships that would allow me to tape-record conversations with women at the same intimate level on which I accessed the worlds of men." I faced a similar issue. As a male researcher, it was relatively easy to interact with other male residents, particularly migrant workers. I spent many nights with a group of men at one of the street market stalls, eating, drinking, and chatting. Early on in the evening, their wives might also be present, slowly sipping a beer, while the men, myself included, quickly downed glass after glass.[23] The women would usually leave after an hour or two, especially when, as frequently happened, more men from the area would join and the gathering would begin to occupy all the available space around the table. It was always the women who would get up immediately to make room. Patriarchal norms, particularly strong in Shandong province (Bell and Wang 2020), prevailed and dictated the spaces and places open to me. Indeed, in order to "fit in" and be accepted, I necessarily had to adhere to certain gendered expectations, even if this, to some degree, compromised the possibility of interacting with female residents. That said, I did have many conversations with women (elderly and mostly widowed locals were particularly eager to share their thoughts), though these were perhaps less profound and intimate than certain moments I shared with some of the male residents.

Study of the group of preservationists required different approaches, in part because they did not reside in one specific area of the city. The internet provided a particularly valuable resource for acquiring information and making contact, as many preservationists frequently "met" to discuss the city's history in chat forums, on Weibo (China's version of Twitter), QQ (an instant messaging app), and, later, mainly on WeChat (China's version of WhatsApp). Before my first in-person meeting with several preservationists, I felt rather nervous. For one, I thought that they would be unfamiliar with anthropology and that solid historical knowledge of the city might be expected of me to gain their trust. I furthermore worried that my own nationality (German) and background could be an obstacle, in that they would regard me with suspicion, if not hostility, due to the fact that I am

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from the country that once colonized Qingdao. However, I was happily surprised to learn the exact opposite. None of the preservationists seemed to take issue with my presence or my interest in them and in Qingdao. On the contrary, being a German national and the city's past as a German colony seemed to be self-explanatory reasons for why I was interested in studying Qingdao. "We understand that you want to find out about the past of your country in China," would become a commonly heard remark. I was quickly accepted as a member of their circle. This allowed me to attend dinners, meetings, or other events on a regular basis, and thereby "study sideways," a term used by Ulf Hannerz (2006, 24) to describe anthropologists who "focus their ethnographic curiosity on people with practices not so unlike their own." This was, however, challenging in certain ways. Similar to the collaborative dilemmas often cited when ethnographers both work and conduct research in national or international institutions (Bortolotto 2017), I juggled my identity as a scholar contributing to the local history and heritage discourse and that as an anthropologist interested in studying that very discourse. In analyzing the data collected and writing up parts of this monograph, I made a conscious effort to "exoticize" the members of the epistemic community of which I myself form an integral part (Chapter 6).

More generally, my nationality (and fluency in German) was an advantage in gaining access to archives and many other resources. This was particularly facilitated by a request that I translate certain historical sources, though sometimes my presence biased people's responses, albeit in exactly the opposite way I had anticipated. "Do you feel at home here?" I was often asked. I did sometimes, when walking along a cobblestone road with red-tiled, brick rowhouses on either side and trees lining the street. Rather than being the one asking the questions, the roles were suddenly reversed, with me answering their queries about how similar Qingdao's old town was to Germany. Moreover, in my presence, people sometimes overly praised what the Germans had left behind, and it occasionally proved difficult to move a conversation beyond simple "German heritage is great" statements. I consequently changed my initial strategy, which had until then been to play up my interest in the history of the city when interviewing or talking to interlocutors. Instead, I emphasized my anthropological interest in contemporary issues revolving around urban redevelopment. Meanwhile, when I presented papers of preliminary findings at conferences, fellow scholars would sometimes suggest that by studying a former German colony, I was reviving anthropology's infamous past as a colonial science. Here, however, my inten-

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tion is rather to highlight the many "doors" that my background opened during fieldwork, rather than how this might evoke the unfortunate past of a discipline that has, after all, reinvented itself many times since its beginnings (Fabian 1983; Coleman and Collins 2006; Clifford and Marcus 2010).

In gathering information about the redevelopment projects and collecting the stories of officials and planners, my university affiliation, the network of preservationists, and, once again, my nationality proved valuable. I carried out a number of semistructured interviews with officials in the Bureau of Natural Resources and Planning (hereafter Urban Planning Bureau),[24] the Bureau of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (hereafter Housing Bureau), the Bureau of Culture and Tourism,[25] the Urban Planning and Design Research Institute (hereafter Urban Design Institute), the city archives, several redevelopment command offices (*gaizao zhihuibu*), as well as with local scholars closely cooperating with the government. After I began publishing parts of my research, I was also invited to attend meetings where redevelopment proposals were discussed and to act as a member of an expert committee tasked with evaluating a set of preservation principles to be applied in the refurbishment of Dabaodao. Through these activities, I gained firsthand insight into how redevelopment plans were devised and debated. I also reviewed and consulted planning documents, newspaper articles, tourist publications, promotional material, and popular culture artifacts from print media, TV broadcasting, film, and online sources dealing with the inner-city redevelopment projects. I collected over 200 newspaper articles (electronically and in print) specifically revolving around the renewal of Dabaodao (Chapter 2).

For the historical data, I consulted mainly secondary sources, including books published by some of my interlocutors as well as dissertations written by (mostly history or architecture) scholars in Chinese and in German. I also conducted research in Qingdao's city archives and paid a visit to the descendants of Alfred Siemssen, an entrepreneur during colonial times and allegedly one of the first to build a *liyuan* house in today's Dabaodao (Chapters 1 and 7). Alfred's grandson shared historical photographs and information about his grandfather's life in Qingdao in the early twentieth century. Moreover, I was involved in the translation of Alfred's memoirs (from German into Chinese), which were published locally in 2016. My contribution to this project further strengthened my standing among preservationists as an active contributor to the production of historical knowledge about Qingdao.

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Finally, studying different ideas, views, perceptions, and usages of one and the same city area and following diverse, often conflicting groups was at times difficult. During fieldwork, I oscillated between being a "voyeur," towering above and looking down, and a "walker," being in and strolling around the city. While the former gains a sense of the whole picture, the latter "follow(s) the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' . . . without being able to read it" (de Certeau 1984, 93). However, I would rather argue that "the walker" reads the city very *differently* from "the voyeur." Any urbanite can be both a "voyeur" and a "walker" in his or her own sociospatial context, but the types of knowledge of an urban space gained by these two views differ. A brief anecdote is illustrative in this regard. Relatively early on in my fieldwork, I was standing with my neighbor near the window of the room that I had just rented. "See how shabby this place looks," he said, pointing out toward the disintegrating building facade on the other side of our small lane. He continued angrily, "Historical value? These buildings have no value! Knock them down." A few weeks later, I was standing in exactly the same spot with one of the preservationists. "Look at that facade," he sighed, as he likewise pointed across the lane. "You can still see the original bricks and plaster used when these houses were first built. . . . What a shame that they are so neglected and have been painted over." Two different perceptions of one and the same space emerged: local experience on the one hand and expert knowledge on the other. The old map, the history book or historical document, the photograph, all served as "portholes" through which preservationists could look down from above, allowing them to view Dabaodao in its entirety, though without ever really engaging with the sociospatial reality on the ground. The people who resided in Dabaodao, however, experienced it quite differently. Their memories of growing up or moving into the area were not a distant history, but sociospatially significant as they formed the center of self-identification and embodied, personally experienced histories (see also Evans 2020).

Living, on the one hand, in a *liyuan* room and spending so much of my time with residents while, on the other, interviewing and researching officials, planners, and preservationists who appropriated or claimed the right to represent the neighborhood for themselves, constantly reminded me of this voyeur-walker dichotomy, both literally and metaphorically. On more than one occasion, I would have a long conversation with a resident in Dabaodao about life in the inner city and then rush to a dinner with preservationists. There I would sometimes be greeted with comments such as

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"Why do you live there? The residents don't really know much about the actual history of their own homes, and they don't care." Other times they would ask, "How do you think the problem of residents can be solved?"—the implication being that current ways of using the inner city were incompatible with attempts to preserve it. I always struggled as to how to respond. Yet, whenever I had a visitor whom I was showing around Qingdao's *liyuan* houses and my field site, I would catch myself taking my companion to some building from where one had a (voyeur) view of the entire area from above, as if to suggest that only by looking down at the entire neighborhood, seeing it in its entirety, could one truly grasp the significance and meaning of Dabaodao. That is, simply being inside it was not enough. From above, the clutter and disarray on the ground did suddenly turn into a neat display of differently shaped courtyards. From there, a feeling emerged that there was actually an order to this mess. Often the visitor would have an aha moment when seeing the "whole thing," suggesting an understanding (and perhaps appreciation) of the *liyuan* houses in the larger context of the cityscape. This was almost always accompanied by a sense of astonishment and a comment along the lines of "It would indeed be a shame if those were gone." At the time, I was not aware of my subconscious bias in representing the neighborhood this way; it only occurred to me much later, when I was away from Qingdao. Nonetheless, this realization strikes me as exemplifying, generally, the power of knowledge and, more specifically, the power of those producing the narrative of the area's historical importance. Broadly, such reflexivity and awareness of one's own involvement in a field site and with interlocutors, if not a solution to the problem of "objectivity," can help bring us one step closer to seeing what is really out there (Bernard 2006, 370).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This book comprises seven empirical chapters. The first historically contextualizes Dabaodao within the broader development of Qingdao. It begins with an account of how I personally experienced the sociospatial reality of the inner city during one of my first walks into the neighborhood. This provides the reader with an initial sense of the space through descriptions of its architecture, the state of (dis)repair of roads and buildings, and the way people acted and interacted. I then reflect on the multitude of histories that have produced the present state of Dabaodao, traveling back in time to show

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how Dabaodao first came into being as a segregated "Chinese town" under German colonial rule, how it flourished during the Republican period, but was then pushed to the sociospatial margins in the Maoist years. I highlight how Dabaodao has, since its very conception, had an ambiguous status, which has persistently conditioned its development—during the Republican and Maoist years, into the reform period, and equally so in the present.

Chapters 2 to 7 are predominantly ethnographic. I dedicate one chapter to each of the urban groups that engage with the inner city, though I also continually highlight interconnections between interests, ideologies, and actions in their involvement and relationship with its spatial structure and architecture. I use the "actor" first and foremost as a lens to expand on different activities. There was a degree of autonomy in these different activities—each is grounded in the group's particular way of being in and using the inner city, yet the activities also overlapped and informed each other. Discussing these activities through the eyes of the actors allows us to understand them as much in and of themselves as in relation to other activities (and actors).

Chapter 2 narrates the transformation of Dabaodao during the reform period against the backdrop of changes to China's inner-city redevelopment strategy. I revisit and analyze different projects that were drawn up, publicly announced, and then, for the most part, discarded. I present some of the institutional factors explaining their failure to materialize, including changes in municipal or district leadership, a lack of coordination among responsible government units, and a functional, territorial, and discursive fragmentation in the planning and implementation of refurbishment projects. Based on interviews and meetings with officials and planners, I furthermore introduce what I call the "preservation predicament," or the simultaneous need to implement redevelopment while also being expected to preserve rather than demolish the inner city.

Chapter 3 turns to the social fabric of Dabaodao as I encountered it before large-scale eviction in 2017. I tell the story of Dabaodao through the eyes of its local residents, a tale of precarity and marginalization, but also of ambivalence. Most local residents entertained complex emotions with regard to their physical surroundings, where feelings of having been left behind in an ever-changing urban society were intertwined with a strong sense of place attachment and fond memories of a "better past." A tendency to shut oneself off was one manifestation of this ambivalence, as were sentiments of anger and frustration. The latter were often directed at migrants, at redevelopment (or its absence), or at the physical environment, expressed

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in the use and abuse of communal facilities. I show how mistreatment of the physical environment was closely related to a failure to fulfill repeated promises of redevelopment.

Chapter 4 discusses in detail the intricate negotiations over compensation, including disputes over property rights, illegitimate self-built structures (not recognized by the government), property splitting (*fenhu*), administrative obstacles, and the general state of distrust. I highlight the structural nature of the repeated failures to redevelop Dabaodao, showing that residents' unwillingness to cooperate with the local government was not due to misconduct on the part of officials or to faulty compensation schemes. Rather, I argue that urban renewal announcements were like opening up a Pandora's box, in that they unleashed various unresolved problems and legacies of the past. These in turn had a direct impact on the implementation of housing expropriation and refurbishment.

Chapter 5 looks at migrants, the largest group of residents in Dabaodao. For them, the inner city was first and foremost a place of work. They used the courtyard environments and street markets for small-scale businesses, seeking to maximize economic output, earn a living, and thereby carve out a space for themselves in the city. Their outward-oriented "spatial practices" actively transformed the physical environment, molding it to their needs. Despite policy changes meant to improve migrants' existence in the city, they continued to be (perceived as) outsiders. In the debates revolving around redevelopment projects, migrants—some of whom had long lived in the neighborhood—were not regarded as part of the "local community." Largely invisible or considered inconsequential, migrants usually appeared in general discourse as scapegoats or culprits for various problems, such as the deterioration of architectural heritage. I argue that migrants' existence in the inner city and the attempts to preserve its architecture were mutually exclusive, which exemplifies the shortcomings of heritage as a strategy to solve urban problems.

Chapter 6 focuses on the rise of a popular heritage narrative and discusses, in particular, Qingdao's preservationists, a heterogeneous group of citizens passionate about history and the past of "their city." I first describe their agendas before turning to the kinds of activities they engaged in and how they managed to influence the direction of redevelopment projects. I show how social actions unfolded in a process of negotiations, where the question of how to act responsibly as citizens and the desire to effect change "for the good of the city" were more important than concrete outcomes.

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Nevertheless, preservationists did manage, in several ways, to significantly impact redevelopment. First, they disseminated their ideas among a general public that had become increasingly open to the idea of heritage preservation, and in so doing indirectly put pressure on the city government to deliver precisely that. Second, their activities were characterized by a distinct sense of pragmatism and cooperation rather than confrontation. They accommodated officials and planners, welcoming them into their circle, circuitously affecting redevelopment.

The final ethnographic chapter explores the ways the inner city has effectively changed over the last ten years. Some courtyards have been demolished and the refurbishment of several streets begun. Small cafés, souvenir shops, and even a Dabaodao museum have been opened. A few remaining residents still cling to their rooms. I follow several so-called nail houses and visit families who already moved out of the neighborhood. I focus in particular on the trajectory of a migrant family who used to run a stall at the local food market but was forced to leave Dabaodao and find a new means of making a living. The neighborhood has now been established as a place of historical importance, with *liyuan* regarded as uniquely local architectural heritage both among the wider public and in official discourse. Redevelopment is well underway, though many of the uncertainties and problems that characterized and contributed to the previous failures persist. What the future holds remains to be seen, but the monograph ends here—the inner city in continuous transformation.

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