Strategies of the built-heritage stewardship movement in urban redevelopment in the Internet Age: The case of the Bell-Drum Towers controversy in Beijing, China

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ABSTRACT

The built-heritage stewardship movement has become visible in China's urban redevelopment, but theoretical and empirical research on the movement's strategies in an authoritarian context is lacking. To systematically understand these strategies in the Internet Age, this article first develops a theoretical framework, then analyzes the context in which the movement operates, and thereafter examines the movement's strategies in the Bell-Drum Towers controversy in Beijing. Castells contends that the construction of meaning is a decisive source of both power and counter-power and that symbolic construction depends on the frames created and diffused in multimedia communication. The theoretical framework therefore consists of a detailed conceptualization of framing processes. The context analysis shows that the built-heritage stewardship movement can benefit from official policies and plans and from the proliferation of new media, despite the censorship of the Internet, the limitations in the judicial system, the repressive practice of law enforcement, and the annual inspections of civil society organizations by civil affairs authorities. The empirical study shows that the preservationists managed to effectively influence decision-makers through combining online and offline efforts, such as mobilizing the general public online to shape public debates, mobilizing higher-level governments to employ political pressure, and directly disempowering local decision-makers online. Framing analysis not only uncovers the strategies of social movements but also identifies which elements determine the success of socialized communication as a counter-power of urban redevelopment in China. The Internet provides channels for frames diffusion, and thus offers preservationists a space to counter power in an authoritarian context where real-world activities and traditional media are tightly controlled by the government.

1. Introduction

An increasing number of Chinese citizens have begun to protest against unwanted planning projects in recent years (Shen et al., 2019; Sun, 2015). Among these movements, the built-heritage stewardship movement is increasingly prominent due to citizens' growing awareness of built-heritage preservation (Verdini, 2015). In developing countries, tensions between heritage preservation and urban development are especially critical because large-scale new construction threatens historic urban areas (Najd et al., 2015). In China, the ongoing gentrification process also accompanies demolition of many historical buildings, invoking criticisms from preservationists. But just stopping demolition is not enough. Shin (2010) found that urban preservation policies enable the local government to release dilapidated historical buildings on the real estate market, and that the property-led urban preservation has

been further consolidated by the voicelessness of local residents who fail to proportionately share economic benefits generated by urban preservation. In evaluating the integration of contemporary commercial architecture into the historical areas from the standpoint of authenticity, Martínez (2016) concluded that the commercial exploitation of built heritage resources in the gentrification process has driven away a substantial number of local residents, which distorted the authenticity of urban heritage. Consequently, the strategies of the built-heritage stewardship movement in urban redevelopment should be wider than just the preservation of historical buildings.

Nevertheless, it is difficult for civil society to emerge and grow under authoritarian regimes since this type of state often stifles the development of civil society (Odora, 2007). In authoritarian China, civil society organizations (CSOs) can exist only under a constant threat of suppression as they are a potential threat to official decision-makers

(Spires, 2011). Therefore, several scholars question the existence of civil society in China. For example, Friedmann (2005) claims that China has no civil society in the sense of social organizations that actively participate in the debates of public issues. Recent studies, however, show that citizens have strategically influenced decision-makers in China's urban redevelopment with the help of Internet platforms (Cheng, 2013; Deng et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). New digital technologies, such as personal memory devices and social media, are giving rise to a new Internet Age, characterized by participatory and grassroots activities, and significantly influencing heritage discourse and practice since these technologies change a complex set of social practices (Giaccardi, 2012). In China, the network society is gradually taking shape due to the development of social network sites (i.e., new media) (Deng et al., 2015), and the network society has changed the traditional urban planning system. The Internet platform has been used by the public to give its voice in citizen-led participatory process. Among these activities, heritage stewardship movements are increasingly active. For example, experts used microblogs to build an online community to oppose the Dafo Temple project which would damage Guangzhou's arcade heritage. Through analyzing this case, Deng et al. (2015) suggest that new media have facilitated the development of new types of collaborative planning in China which promote social interaction, public participation, and the collaboration between various actors. CSOs utilized new media to criticize the Enning Road regeneration project in Guangzhou proposed by the local government; their activities partly preserved historic buildings in Guangzhou (Tan and Altrock, 2016). Preservationists appealed to preserve Jinglingtai & Miaogaotai (two adjacent buildings) on a microblog post for they were under urgent threat of demolition; the two buildings were preserved at the efforts of preservationists and local residents (Feng and Wang, 2014). Overall, the existing research provides numerous examples of more or less successful preservation of buildings as part of urban governance, but does not address the wider strategy of the heritage stewardship movement in safeguarding the authenticity of a place, including its residents, in an authoritarian context with common repression, either theoretically or empirically.

This paper aims to widen the understanding of the strategies of built-heritage stewardship movement in China through a detailed analysis of the framing by successive civil society initiatives in an urban redevelopment controversy in China. Section two develops a theoretical/analytical framework that addresses the tasks at hand, the strategies pursued and the effectiveness of these strategies. Section three introduces the case and data collection. Section four analyzes the Chinese context for built-heritage stewardship movement strategies in urban redevelopment. Section five explores the strategies through the empirical work of the Bell-Drum Towers controversy. Section six summarizes the outcomes and discusses their relevance.

2. Theoretical framework

Castells (2015), in his book on the "Social Movements in the Internet Age", claims that institutional systems based on coercion cannot last long and that the construction of meaning in people's minds is a more decisive and more stable source of power. A successful strategy of any social movement is therefore contingent on the ability to create new meaning. Yet he also points out: "There is, …, one feature common to all processes of symbolic construction: they are largely dependent on the messages and frames created, formatted and diffused in multimedia communication networks" (Castells, 2015). Snow and Benford (1992) define social movement frames as: action-oriented sets of ideological factors (beliefs and meanings) that inspire and legitimize social movement activities and campaigns. Framing refers to the process of "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution" (Castells, 2009). Analyzing the framing is therefore crucial in identifying the success of the strategies of social

Table 1
Theoretical framework.

Dimensions	Elements
Tasks of strategies	Diagnostic framing
	Prognostic framing
	Motivational framing
Movement strategies	Frame bridging
	Frame amplification
	Frame extension
	Frame transformation
Effectiveness of strategies	Frame resonance with antagonists (governments, land developers, etc.)
	Frame resonance with preservationists
	Frame resonance with local residents
	Frame resonance with bystanders

movements, particularly in cases where democratic deliberation is absent. In order to reconstruct built-heritage stewardship movement strategies in China, an analytical framework is developed which has three dimensions: tasks of strategies, movement strategies, and effectiveness of strategies (Table 1).

The tasks of strategies are measured by core framing tasks, which include diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings (Snow, 2007). The first two tasks foster agreement and the latter fosters action. Diagnostic framing involves identifying the problem(s) and whom/what to blame (Benford and Snow, 2000). In the case of built-heritage stewardship movements in urban redevelopment, diagnostic framing involves a multitude of problems: whether the redevelopment procedure is legal (Tan and Altrock, 2016), which stakeholders have agency in heritage stewardship and what for (Veldpaus, 2015), etc. Prognostic framing corresponds with diagnostic framing (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992) and involves articulating solutions to identified problem(s) (Benford & Snow, 2000). Regarding built-heritage stewardship movements, prognostic framing involves criticizing the government's plan and proposing new plans (Ng et al., 2010), petitions to higher governments to cancel or change the demolition projects (Zhai and Ng, 2013), launching online/offline campaigns to stop the demolition (Ku, 2012), etc. Finally, motives for participation in specific activities must be created (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). Motivational framing involves providing a "call to arms" or rationale for engaging in corrective activities (Benford, 1993). The generic vocabularies are "severity of the problem", "sense of urgency", "efficacy of taking action", "propriety of taking action" (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Movement strategies are measured by frame alignment, which refers to strategic efforts of individuals and/or CSOs to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of actual/potential members and resource providers (Benford and Snow, 2000). Snow et al. (1986) propose four types of frame alignment processes based on their research observations, i.e., frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Frame bridging occurs at the organizational level such as between two CSOs within the same movement, or at the individual level, as in the linkage of a CSO with public opinion preference clusters (Snow et al., 1986). While direct mail was once an important bridging mechanism (Snow et al., 1986), online and mobile-phone messages are now widely used in the mobilization activities in China (e.g., Cheng, 2013). Frame amplification refers to the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs (Benford and Snow, 2000). Beliefs that are especially relevant to movement mobilization are the severity of the problem, efficacy of taking action, propriety of taking action, the locus of causality or blame, and stereotypic beliefs about antagonists (Snow et al., 1986). Frame extension refers to expanding a movement's primary frame to include interests or values "that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents" (Snow et al., 1986). Regarding built-heritage stewardship movements, preservationists'

interests of preserving heritage can be extended to local residents' interests of better compensations (e.g., Tan and Altrock, 2016). Frame transformation refers to framing erroneous beliefs/values when beliefs/values that CSOs promote do not resonate with, or are even antithetical to, conventional ones (Snow et al., 1986).

The effectiveness of strategies is measured by frame resonance with targeted audiences, such as potential adherents, bystanders, and antagonists (Snow, 2007). In the case of built-heritage stewardship movements, potential adherents could be individual/organizational preservationists and local residents (e.g., Deng et al., 2015; Tan and Altrock, 2016); the so-called antagonists are usually the local governments, project developers (e.g., Feng and Wang, 2014), and the urban design firms; bystanders are people who participated by chance (e.g., Ku, 2012). The prospect of resonance is commonly undermined by four problems: the problem of misalignment, such as attention focused on identifying whom to blame without firmly identifying victims; the problem of scope, such as framing claims are general or specific, inclusive or exclusive; the problem of exhaustion, such as the overuse of a particular frame; and the problem of relevance, such as the frame being contradicted by the flow of events, or framing efforts being not strong enough to have resonance (Snow, 2007).

The eleven elements in the framework provide a detailed instrument for analysis, but the actual strategies can only be understood within the specific geographic, political and cultural context in which the strategies take place. In section four we will describe the opportunities and constraints for the built-heritage stewardship movement in China, after introducing the case and data collection.

3. The case and data collection

3.1. The Bell-Drum Towers controversy

The Bell-Drum Towers controversy has been chosen for four reasons. First, this controversy involves two interesting phases: in the first phase, the movement was led by a registered CSO, and the activities went from real-world to cyberspace whereas in the second phase, the movement was led by an unregistered CSO and several individual preservationists were involved in both online and offline activities. "Registered" indicates that the CSO is governed by civil affairs authorities. Second, various audiences were involved in the efforts of preservationists through frame bridging, amplification, and extension. Third, the effectiveness of strategies can be examined since detailed information on public response is available. The Bell-Drum Towers were built for timekeeping in 1420, have been a component of the Beijing's central axis since the Ming and Qing Dynasties, are located in the "core protection area" of the "25 Historic-cultural Protection Zones of Beijing's Old City", and within the buffer zone of a UNESCO world heritage site (i.e., the Forbidden City) (Liu, 2015). The movement to preserve the Bell-Drum Towers area had two phases: 2010 and 2011–2013, based on the project process. The Dongcheng district government initiated the redevelopment project in January 2010, and the lead contractor was *Beijing Oriental Culture Assets Operation Corporation*. This corporation is affiliated with the Dongcheng district government and commissioned the urban design firm Boston International Design Group (BIDG) to make the "Beijing Time Cultural City" plan (Sexton and Ren, 2010). This project was widely criticized as it would explicitly destroy the built heritage of this area. The Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (BJCHP), a grassroots CSO that registered with the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs in 2003, played an important role in protesting against the project in its first phase. This project was suspended in June 2010 and was restarted under the name of "Bell-Drum Towers Square Restoration Project" in 2011. The project in the second phase encountered wider and stronger resistance than that in the first phase (Graezer Bideau and Yan, 2018). An unregistered CSO called the *Bell-Drum Towers Neighborhood Team* (BDTT) was founded to oppose this project and its members had

expertise in areas such as urban planning & design, landscape architecture, and sociology. In the end, the demolition continued, but at a much smaller scale than originally intended.

3.2. Data collection

The data collected include relevant official documents and the discourses of various actors. These data were divided into four groups. The first group focuses on preservationists and data on their discourses were collected from social networking websites (Douban, Weibo, and Blog), domestic and international digital news archives, and the BJCHP website. Key members of BJCHP and BDTT were interviewed to gather information on their motivations, discourses, and experience in the movement. The policy documents used by preservationists were collected online. The second group focuses on the governments for which the relevant official documents and policy statements were collected online. Special attention was given to the district government, whose discourses were collected directly from its official Weibo account and digital news archives, and indirectly from interviews with preservationists and local residents. The third group focuses on local residents whose discourses were collected from their comments online, through interviews, and digital news archives. The last group focuses on bystanders whose data mainly came from Weibo posts and digital news archives. All data collected were chronologically ordered and then analyzed according to the framework. Before discussing the empirical analysis, the Chinese context for the built-heritage stewardship movement is explored in the following section, as this article assumes that movement strategies are affected by contexts.

4. The context of the built-heritage stewardship movement in China's urban redevelopment

This section analyzes the Chinese context for the built-heritage stewardship movement in urban redevelopment. It first introduces different levels of polices and plans relevant to the movement. Next, the barriers for implementing these policies and plans are analyzed followed by a discussion of the rise of civil society in built-heritage preservation and feasible movement approaches. Lastly, opportunities and challenges for the movement in the Internet Age are highlighted. There are four levels of polices and plans directly relevant to the built-heritage stewardship movement in China's urban redevelopment. The national-level policies include the Law on Protection of Cultural Relics (issued in 1982 and last amended in 2017), the 2008 Law on Urban and Rural Planning, and the 2008 Regulation on the Preservation of Famous Historic-cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages. These laws have integrated built-heritage preservation into urban planning, and the 2008 Regulation has provided detailed articles for built-heritage preservation in urban redevelopment:

> *Article 3 … protecting and prolonging the traditional layouts and historical landscape, safeguarding the authenticity and integrity of the historical-cultural heritage… <u>correctly managing the relationship</u> between the economic-social development and the protection of the historical-cultural heritage.*
> *Article 21 … protect the traditional layout, historical landscape and spatial scales…*
> *Article 23 Construction activities … shall not … damage its traditional layout and historical landscape.*
> *Article 29 … the examination and approval authority shall … announce the matters under examination and approval, <u>solicit opinions from the public</u>, and inform the stakeholders of the right to demand a hearing…*

Contrary to common perceptions of China as a highly centralized state, urban redevelopment is a highly decentralized policy field and the various levels of local government[1] are responsible for implementing laws and executive orders from the national level. Provincial policies and/or plans on the preservation of historic-cultural

heritage have been made by most of the 31 provinces. Municipal policies and/or plans on the preservation of historic-cultural heritage have been made by several cities. Of the 675 Chinese cities, 134 have been labeled as "Famous Historical-cultural Cities" by the State Council. These cities have to compile municipal protection plans according to the 2008 national Regulation on the Preservation of Famous Historic-cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages. Policies and/or plans for specific historic-cultural heritage are made by municipal governments as well, such as the Beijing 2004 Statement to Delimit the Buffer Zone of the Forbidden City. The district-level policies and/or plans on the preservation of historic-cultural heritage have been made by some district governments, especially when there is a Historic-cultural Protection Zone within its jurisdiction.

On top of this, there are policies indirectly relevant to the built-heritage stewardship movement: first, the Constitution of China (2004 version). Participating in urban redevelopment is a constitutional right since the Constitution stipulates that "all state agencies and state employees must … hear opinions and suggestions of the public, accept its supervision". Second, the 2011 national Regulation on Expropriation and Compensation for Houses on State-owned Land. This policy can be used by preservationists to question local governments regarding just compensation. Third, charters and recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These charters and recommendations are used by preservationists to preserve UNESCO World Heritage Sites in China.

Although various policies and plans have been made, their implementation is usually in the hands of district governments. After fiscal and administrative decentralization in the 1980s, district governments have emerged as the main decision-makers of urban redevelopment and have taken the primary responsibility for raising local revenues to finance local services (Logan, 2011). Local revenues are highly dependent on land finance (i.e., revenues from land appropriation, development, and transfer) (Sun and Zhou, 2014). In addition, the two most important performance criteria for Chinese cadres are economic development and social order (Teets, 2013), therefore district governments have sufficient incentives to suppress protests which challenge urban redevelopment projects.

The preference of the district governments in urban redevelopment has drawn growing criticism from Chinese citizens. CSOs that focus on preserving cultural heritage have emerged recently, and these organizations can be divided into two kinds according to whether they are registered with civil affairs authorities or not. According to the national Regulation for Registration and Management of Social Organizations (last amended in 2016), registered CSOs have the right to seek funding but also have to pass annual inspections by civil affairs authorities. Previous studies show that preservationists tend to give their voice through new media (e.g., Deng et al., 2015), which sees a large number of users in China; e.g., the number of Weibo[2] users reached 316 million in 2018 (CNNIC, 2018). The Internet is controlled by the National Internet Information Office of China, thus local governments cannot completely silence citizens online without the support of central government. Yet, the online movement faces challenges as well. Chinese governments implement effective control of what information travels over the Internet by barring nearly all foreign new media from circulating in China, by blocking keywords, by requiring new media providers to promptly remove unfavorable posts, and by having unfavorable posts removed by Internet police (King et al., 2013). King et al. (2013) have compared the content of millions of posts originating from 1382 social media services before and after these posts were censored and found that posts representing, reinforcing, or spurring social

mobilization were deleted. In the case of real-world movements, they are negatively affected by the judicial system. Specifically, the Administrative Procedure Law of China (last amended in 2017) requires that a plaintiff must be a stakeholder, but judges normally do not consider preservationists as stakeholders of cultural heritage (Qi and Zhou, 2005). Real-world movements are also severely restricted by the 1989 Law on Assembly, Procession and Demonstration. Among others, this law stipulates that an assembly in China requires permission from the police and must have a principal who has to provide his/her real name, occupation, and address to the police.

To summarize, the context analysis shows that the official policies and plans enable the built-heritage stewardship movement to operate within institutional channels, namely, through petitioning the central, provincial, and municipal governments. Although the Internet provides a platform for the built-heritage stewardship movement, preservationists might be negatively affected by the censorship of the Internet, the judicial system, the practice of law enforcement, and annual inspections by civil affairs authorities. The remainder of this article will examine built-heritage stewardship movement strategies within such a context through the case of the Bell-Drum Towers controversy.

5. Built-heritage stewardship movement strategies in the Bell-Drum Towers controversy

5.1. The first phase

During the "Two Meetings"[3] of the Dongcheng district in January 2010, official media reported that the district government planned to spend RMB 5 billion (about $725 million) to redevelop the 12.5-hectare area around the Bell-Drum Towers. News reports show that the "Beijing Time Cultural City" plan included enlarging the Bell-Drum Towers square by widening the streets, redeveloping the square to celebrate the past timekeeping role of the Bell-Drum Towers, and building both a conference center and an underground complex with parking lots, shops, and a timekeeping museum (Jiang, 2010). The then Dongcheng district mayor explicitly told journalists that this project was initiated to attract international company headquarters and conferences in January 2010 (Sexton and Ren, 2010). The "Beijing Time Cultural City" plan, however, was firmly opposed by preservationists, especially the registered CSO, BJCHP.

5.1.1. Tasks of strategies

The *diagnostic framing* of the preservationists included two major issues. The first was that the project plan violated city scale plans. A preservationist declared that the demolition of this area would violate the "Beijing's Urban Master Plan" and the "Protection Plan for the Famous Historical-cultural City of Beijing" (Wang, 2010). The second issue was that the project plan was poorly conceived. BJCHP (2010) asserted that building a new museum was excessive, as improving the quality of the museum exhibitions inside the towers would be enough. According to movements discourses and our interview with BJCHP, the primary goal of the preservationists was to stop the project, and the secondary goal was to raise preservation awareness. The corresponding *prognostic framing* was mobilizing support from citizens and providing an alternative plan to the district government. The *motivational framing* was about providing rationales. BJCHP (2010) specifically showed the "severity of the problem" by claiming that the National Cultural Heritage Administration began to take an interest in the project by emphasizing scientific decision-making and a strict approval process. BJCHP created "a sense of urgency" by stressing the 2010 news coverage of the Bell-Drum Towers area by an American news magazine, which recognized it as the "Best Place to See Before It's Gone", and

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[1] Local governments in urban China usually contain five levels (from high to low): the provincial government, the municipal government, the district government, the street office, and the residential committee.

[2] Chinese microblogs, like twitter.

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[3] The "District People's Congress" and the "District Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference".

called upon the Dongcheng district government to work with others to protect this "Best Place to See". BJCHP (2010) provided the "propriety of taking actions" by saying that an international design firm made a plan that undermined the landscape of old Beijing, but putting the blame on the Chinese side, proclaiming that "if Chinese people don't cherish their own cultural heritage, why would they require foreign designers to do so".

5.1.2. Movement strategies

BJCHP made full use of the Internet to mobilize adherents and disempower decision-makers. BJCHP originally planned to have a real-world public seminar on this project in March 2010 and invited citizens through posting a notice on the BJCHP website and the Douban social network. However, because the seminar was cancelled by the police, the activities went from real world to cyberspace. BJCHP posted articles and news reports to broadcast the voices of dissent regarding the project, as well as its alternative plan on its website. Generally, the strategies of BJCHP were rather prudent, since "it is a challenge for BJCHP to pass the annual inspection (by the municipal civil affairs authority)" (personal interview with the founder of BJCHP, 2016). In these strategies, engaging people who are interested in cultural heritage preservation is *frame bridging* and engaging people with other interests, such as the local residents who were interested in better compensation, is *frame extension*. *Frame amplification* was employed as well; for one thing, BJCHP (2010) amplified the value of the Bell-Drum Towers area by stating that this area was of high cultural value since it was "Beijing's last remaining traditional neighborhoods". In fact, there are other traditional neighborhoods in the old city of Beijing, such as the Dongsinan neighborhood. For another, BJCHP amplified "*the stereotypic beliefs about antagonists*". BJCHP implicitly blamed the urban design firm by saying that "the BIDG claimed that it had seriously studied the preservation regulations and plans of old Beijing, (just as) another famous international design firm who made similar claims but designed a plan that undermined the landscape of old Beijing" (BJCHP, 2010). BJCHP (2010) also said that the area might suffer the fate of "Qianmen street" which was replaced with a spiritless Qing-dynasty pastiche and thus lost its cultural and commercial value.

5.1.3. Effectiveness of strategies

BJCHP successfully influenced decision-makers through online activities after the real-world activity was blocked by the police. The frames of preservationists *resonated with the district government* as the government suspended the project and claimed that the "Beijing Time Cultural City" plan was just a "preliminary conceptual idea". In actuality, the website of BIDG showed that the commissioned work of designing the "Beijing Time Cultural City" plan was already finished. The alternative plan proposed by BJCHP *resonated with the district government*. While the original goal of the project claimed to support commercial redevelopment, as indicated by the undisguised statement of the then Dongcheng district mayor in January 2010, the district government changed the goals in May 2010 to improving the residents' quality of life and restoring the landscape of the Bell-Drum Towers area (Xiao, 2010); this echoed the stated goal in the alternative plan by BJCHP. The public seminar activity posted on Douban *resonated with other preservationists and bystanders* as 647 Douban users indicated that they were interested and 210 indicated that they would attend. Lastly, the frames *resonated with bystanders* as seen with the media coverage in American news magazine TIME in May 2010, which recognized the Bell-Drum Towers area as the "Best Place to See Before It's Gone" because "…while the old towers will stay, local preservationists fear the neighborhood will lose its shops, bars, old courtyard homes and atmosphere…" (Ramzy, 2010).

However, not all strategies succeeded as the frame extension to *the local residents* partially failed. On Douban, several users commented that they were local residents who opposed preservationists' participation since the local conditions were too poor to live. The failure of this strategy might be caused by "*the problem of misalignment*", i.e., several local residents did not see themselves as victims of the project and rather considered the project as an opportunity for them to move to better houses.

5.2. The second phase

The redevelopment project was restarted by the Dongcheng district government at the end of 2011. The early information disclosed indicated that the second phase of the project was named as the "Bell-Drum Towers Square Restoration Project", that it aimed to restore the landscape of Bell-Drum Towers Square as it had appeared in Ming and Qing dynasties and that the project would demolish 66 courtyards (covering 4700 m^2) since they were incongruous with the buildings on the 1750 "Complete Map of Peking" (Liu, 2015). The project began when the eviction notices were suddenly pasted on the walls of the project area in December 2012. The new plan was less ambitious than the previous one and was not published through official media, but new media enabled the information to be shared widely and several preservationists (e.g., the famous preservationist Ms. Zeng of BDTT, the architect Mr. Fang, and Mr. Jia) restarted the movement when the eviction notices were circulated online.

5.2.1. Tasks of strategies

The *diagnostic framing* of preservationists in the second phase included three major issues. The *first issue* was that the restoration plan violated several policies and plans regarding built-heritage preservation: (1) the Articles of the 2008 national "Regulation on the Preservation of Famous Historic-cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages" were violated (see section four of this paper). e.g., Article 3 had been violated in terms of "authenticity and integrity". (2) The project approval letter issued by the National Cultural Heritage Administration was violated. This letter involved 77 courtyards, but preservationists found that there were two kinds of eviction notices: one involved 66 courtyards and the other involved 136 courtyards. (3) The 2004 "Statement to Delimit the Buffer Zone of the Forbidden City" had not been followed. One of BDTT's (2013) Weibo posts revealed that this policy was violated as "stretches of courtyards were demolished, the main alleys were widened, and a real estate company was in charge of expropriating houses". The *second issue* was that the district government violated policies and plans regarding citizen participation in urban planning. For instance, the approval letter about the plan from the municipal urban planning department had not been published, which violated the national "Regulation on the Preservation of Famous Historic-cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages". The *third issue* was the violation of the national "Regulation on Expropriation and Compensation for Houses on State-owned Land", while it stipulates the standard compensation for expropriating houses on state-owned land must follow this policy, the eviction notice did not comply.

According to movement discourses and our interview with BDTT, the primary goal of preservationists was to stop the project, and the secondary goal was to defend the right to the city. The corresponding *prognostic framing* included multiple solutions. The *motivational framing* included both a "call to arms" and providing rationales. BDTT's "call to arms" on Weibo stated "hope you could record the changes of the Bell-Drum Towers area with us in the WebGIS". For a rationale, the "*sense of urgency*" was framed by Mr. Fang's blog post which stated the following: "urgent alarms from an architect: courtyards in the Bell and Drum Towers area will be demolished … it seems that the current work of Beijing focuses on large-scale demolition … is it the most dangerous moment for Beijingers?" Mr. Song created the "*efficacy of taking actions*" as his blog post remarked that "there are many things that need to be done (to preserve cultural heritage); doing something is not guaranteed to succeed, but doing nothing is doomed to fail".

5.2.2. Movement strategies

Preservationists employed various online and offline strategies to influence decision-makers. The most frequently used strategy was *frame bridging*. First, Ms. Zeng (2012) petitioned the National Cultural Heritage Administration for disclosing information about the "restoration" project and sent letters to Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage and Beijing Municipal Commission of City Planning. Second, Mr. Jia called citizens to sign an e-petition on Weibo titled "the Bell and Drum Towers in Beijing are in danger! collecting 10,000 signatures to safeguard the 66 courtyards". Third, BDTT reported the demolition process frequently on its Weibo account to mobilize citizens and to force the government to forego the illegal demolition. Fourth, BDTT accepted interview invitations from several trusted journalists to shape public debates.

Preservationists *amplified related values and beliefs* by first idealizing several of them. BDTT's first blog post states that they decided to do their duty based on the 2005 municipal "Protection Measures for the Famous Historical-cultural City of Beijing" and that they anticipated their supervision could get attention and responses according to the Constitution of China. Second, the values of the project area were amplified. A news report indicated that three local restaurants were time-honored businesses that did not want to leave. In fact, two of the three restaurants were just outside the project area. Third, the "*stereotypic beliefs about antagonists*" were amplified. For example, entertainment website "Sina Style" held a vote on Weibo asking people's opinion of the demolition of the Bell-Drum Towers courtyards. One answer option was: "Oppose, ancient architecture as cultural heritage should not disappear". This answer made use of stereotypic beliefs about decision-makers in urban redevelopment. Fourth, the "*beliefs about the seriousness of the problem*" were amplified. One Weibo post declared that if a World Heritage site was seriously threatened, then the World Heritage Committee would add it to the "List of World Heritage in Danger" or would even delete it from the World Heritage List. UNESCO (2018) states that while this provision is true, it has only been applied twice to date and that inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger should not be considered as sanction.

Frame extension aims to enlarge the movement's adherent base by encompassing interests not directly associated with the movement. To reach out to residents' property rights activism, Ms. Zeng worked with BDTT to visit local residents individually and told them their house value and which policies could be used to protect their interests. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the project was located in the Buffer Zone of the Forbidden City, which involved the work of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS[4]), so BDTT sent a letter to ICOMOS claiming that "the project would undermine the historic landscape and the building fabric around the Forbidden City and the Beijing's central axis; the local intangible cultural heritage – folk culture – would be negatively affected with many residents moving out". Overall, compared to preservationists in the first phase, those in the second phase adopted more powerful and aggressive strategies, possibly due to the lack of worry about the annual inspections by civil affairs authorities.

5.2.3. Effectiveness of strategies

The real-world activities were easily inhibited by local governments, for example, the district government installed 12 closed-circuit television cameras in the project area, forbade local residents to talk with preservationists and banned local journalists' reports on preservationists (personal interview with the BDTT members, 2016). However, preservationists effectively influenced decision-makers through combining online and offline efforts. The frames of preservationists *resonated with the governments above the district-level*. The Beijing

Municipal Commission of City Planning contacted Ms. Zeng twice and the National Cultural Heritage Administration emailed Ms. Zeng its approval letter for the project in January 2013. The frames of preservationists *resonated with the Dongcheng district government*. The district government avoided communicating with preservationists in the project area, but new media enabled preservationists to push decision-makers to answer their criticisms. Facing social pressure online, the district government proactively vindicated itself on Weibo from December 2012 to January 2013. The Weibo posts created by the district government focused on three aspects. The first aspect was defending the rationality of the restoration plan. The second aspect was defending the legitimacy of the project procedures. The third aspect was defending the legitimacy of the compensation standard for house acquisition.

The frames *resonated with other preservationists* through online communication using the "@" account names and "share" functions of Weibo and Sina blog. Frames also *resonated with some local* residents; although preservationists were criticized by them, it would be misleading to suggest that all were in opposition. Our interview with one remaining resident who ran hutong tours indicated that he was willing to stay and had helped preservationists. Frames also *resonated with bystanders*. First, the e-vote had 423 voters of which 93.4% chose oppose, 3.5% chose support, and 3.1% chose neutral. Second, Weibo posts attracted citizens to comment on and repost them. Third, since preservationists questioned American planning institutes because of BIDG, the American Planning Association (2011) posted an announcement on its official website in December 2011, which hinted that members of BIDG were not certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners. Fourth, a scholar developed a WebGIS for BDTT to recruit more participants; our interview with this scholar revealed that his main goal was to publicize his developing techniques. Fifth, a graffiti artist sprayed "do not care" (in Chinese) on a broken wall within the project area as it was in the city center where many people could notice his work (Lu, 2016). Sixth, although reports of local media (e.g., Beijing Evening News) were neutral or in support of the project, reports of national media (e.g., China Culture) stated that local landscape might be undermined.

Not all strategies succeeded. First, frames of preservation did not *resonate* with UNESCO, as Liu (2015), one member of BDTT, stated, "UNESCO replied and said they would send somebody to investigate, but did not take any actions". This might be due to "the problem of exhaustion", i.e., UNESCO are tired of hearing about this kind of events. Second, after Mr. Jia held the e-vote, the police called him and asked him to not publish related information online. Third, the frame extension with local residents was impeded by the district government.

In summary, this section attempts to empirically understand built-heritage stewardship movement strategies in China's urban redevelopment through examining the Bell-Drum Towers controversy according to the framework. In this case, various citizens were involved in the efforts of the preservationists through frame bridging, amplification, and extension. The effectiveness of these strategies largely depends on the aforementioned context, especially with respect to the Internet. The following section synthesizes major conclusions from the perspective of a social movement in China's urban redevelopment in the Internet Age.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In China, the built-heritage stewardship movement can benefit from official policies and plans and from the proliferation of new media, despite the censorship of the Internet, the judicial system, the practice of law enforcement, and the annual inspections of CSOs by civil affairs authorities. However, a lot depends on the strategies of the movement, which become clear when looking at the two phases of resistance to the Bell-Drum Towers plans; the primary goal of the preservationists in both phases was to stop the project and preserve built-heritage, but different strategies were adopted in each phase. In the first phase,

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[4] A professional association that offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites.

preservationists tried to influence decision-makers (the district government) through mobilizing local and external citizens to shape debates. The specific activities included planning to organize a real-world public seminar, posting articles and news reports on its website to broadcast the voices of dissent, and raising objections and proposing an alternative plan on a private website. The real-world public seminar was cancelled by the police, probably because this activity would violate the 1989 Law on Assembly, Procession and Demonstration. Moreover, the CSO in the first phase avoided directly questioning the government because it was registered with a civil affairs authority and had to pass its annual inspection. Despite these limitations, the online activities of preservationists asserted enough social pressure to make the district government suspend the project. The second phase of the movement was born digital as a CSO was formed online. Preservationists tried to influence the district government through directly disempowering it online, mobilizing higher-level governments to assert political pressure, and mobilizing the general public online to shape debates. The specific activities included questioning the district government on social media about the legitimacy of the plan formulation and implementation, refuting the claims of the district government on social media, supervising the plan implementation process onsite and exposing it online, petitioning the related governments above the district-level according to law, visiting local residents to help them effectively claim for "just" compensation, and organizing e-petitions and e-votes. The CSO in the second phase adopted more powerful and aggressive strategies than those in the first phase possibly due to being unregistered and not needing to worry about the annual inspections by civil affairs authorities. These strategies show that the authoritarian centralized context of China (Wu, 2008) does not preclude strategic behavior of citizens who can use the divergence of interest between different levels of government. Preservationists in the second phase faced challenges as well: the real-world activities were inhibited by local governments, and the e-petitions were inhibited due to Internet censorship. However, preservationists effectively influenced decision-makers through combining online and offline efforts, as the large-scale demolition plan was replaced by a small-scale one whereby the district government gave up commercial redevelopment and provided a public square for citizens. The secondary goals were defending the right to the city – which includes the right of inhabitants to appropriation and the right of citizens to participation (Purcell, 2008) – and raising preservation awareness, this movement has contributed to these goals which need long-term efforts to achieve.

This detailed analyses of the framing processes give rise to more general conclusions on: how the position of the movement in China differs from other countries; the role of new media in an authoritarian context; the impact of counter-power on policies; and the added value of framing analysis in understanding social movements. Built-heritage stewardship movements were active in many places of the Western world during the post-World War II era, as a result of the large-scale demolition of the historic and "inefficient" areas in the rapid urban transformations (Nyseth and Sognnæs, 2013). The built-heritage stewardship movement strategies in countries such as Norway have moved from contestation to collaborative governance that anchors the goals and norms of citizens on preservation (Nyseth and Sognnæs, 2013). The institutional system has adapted to the rise of new meanings and encapsulated them. By comparison, preservationists in China still need to develop various strategies based on contestation to influence the decision-makers. In addition, the frame extension with local residents is harder to implement in China than in Western countries, as local residents can be forbidden to talk with preservationists by the district government. It implies that citizens' right to participate in decision-making about urban space in China is suppressed, yet this does not stop the process of socialized communication as a countervailing power.

Although real-world activities and traditional media were tightly controlled by the government, new media offered preservationists a space to mobilize citizens and to call for actions, enabled the

controversy to be relayed to the population at large and the information only presented in the project area to be shared widely, and enabled preservationists to push decision-makers to answer their criticisms. Because the Internet is ultimately controlled by the National Internet Information Office, local governments cannot completely silence citizens online without the support of central government. There is an international debate about the impact of the Internet on social movements. For instance, Castells (2015) emphasized the contribution of the Internet to activists actions based on empirical studies of social movements in Tunisia, Iceland, Egypt, Spain, and the USA. However, others question the importance of Internet platforms in social movements. Gladwell (2010) stated that social media cannot help activists to be more influential because strong social ties between activists are needed to handle pressure, but social media only builds weak social ties. Our study contributes to this debate by providing the underlying reasons for the impact of the Internet on built-heritage stewardship movement in the Chinese context. The empirical results demonstrate that the Internet platform helps citizens in China to be influential, a finding that supports the conclusions of Castells (2015) rather than the claims of Gladwell (2010). The empirical work also shows that the contributions of various new media to the movement differ and that the emergence of Weibo greatly facilitated shaping public debates in the second phase as the responses to Weibo posts were much higher than those to both the Douban event and BJCHP's website. Furthermore, this research argues that new media could complement, instead of replace, traditional media in social movements. Providing opinions to journalists is an important channel to reach the general public that does not use the Internet. Traditional media can also trigger citizens to notice urban redevelopment controversies without specifically searching for them online.

The counter-power of civil society in Chinese urban redevelopment is gradually recognized by local governments. As our our empirical work shows, the Dongcheng district government changed from underestimating the potential of the movement toward taking measures to stop or encapsulate the movement. First, the district government changed the official project goal from commercial redevelopment to a public service project improving local living conditions. Second, while the project was widely published in the first phase, it was silently restarted at the end of 2011. Third, the project was scaled down in the second phase in response to the frequent online questioning of the legitimacy by preservationists. This result supports the finding of Hu et al. (2013) that local governments are giving up the traditional method – relocating residents and rebuilding the area – of redeveloping historical areas in Beijing because they realized that the traditional method would cause serious social conflicts with preservationists and that the governments themselves can be criticized by the media, citizens and higher-level governments.

The added value of framing analyses is not only that it uncovers the strategies of social movements but also that it identifies which elements determine the success of socialized communication as a counter-power of urban redevelopment in an authoritarian context. Yet, these strategies and their effects can only be understood with profound knowledge of the context in which frames are developed, are aligned and resonate. Collaborative planning that includes the voice of preservationists is still a long way off in China, but the claim of Friedmann (2005) that China has no civil society in the sense of social organizations actively participating in the debates of public issues is clearly outdated.

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