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**HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests**

**January 21 – 22. 2016**

**Architecture\_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute**

**Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:**

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** *\_Within and Without Siheyuan: the Courtyard Experience during Revolution and Gentrification\_\_\_\_\_*

**2. Format:** *\_Written paper / verbal presentation\_\_\_\_\_*

*Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify*

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**5. University or Company Affiliation:** *\_Northeastern University\_\_\_\_\_*

**6. Abstract (300 words):** *\_In February 1950, shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Liang Sicheng, the most celebrated Chinese architectural historian of the twentieth century, proposed to locate the administration center for the newborn socialist central government in the western suburb of Beijing, in an effort to preserve the*

traditional culture and the imperial monuments within the centuries-old walled city. His proposal was rejected by the victorious communist party leadership. Since the 1950s, vast areas of traditional *hutong* neighborhoods were cleared, together with the city walls and many temples, palaces, shrines and gates, to make way for the construction of new socialist monuments. While the socialist work-residence unit *dayuan* replaced most of the traditional courtyard houses known as *siheyuan*, small patches of such *hutong* neighborhoods survived, either because of their insignificant locations or because their locations were too important – so close to the secret heart of the party leadership that a construction of tall modern buildings on the sites should be avoided to keep it away from the public vision. These leftover *siheyuan* houses had been dirty and crowded, mostly occupied by the lower class natives of Old Beijing, until recently, the rise of capitalism under the name of “socialism with Chinese character” rendered such neglected residences profitable. Wealthy real estate developers evicted the local population, often not without forced relocation and government cooperation, and refurbished these courtyard houses as “new *siheyuan*” for sale to an emerging Chinese business elites and intellectual celebrities. In either case, the choice for the majority was limited.

This paper explores the tragic experiences of the Beijing *siheyuan* against the turbulent history of China since the mid-twentieth century and argued that a harmonious and sustainable residential cityscape can only be achieved through a just social system and a comprehensive public participation in urban redevelopment. \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):** \_ Shuishan Yu is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the Northeastern University in Boston. He has a B.Arch. and an M.Arch. from the Tsinghua University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Washington. Before joining Northeastern, Yu has worked as an architect in the Ministry of Construction Architectural Design Institute in Beijing and taught in the Department of Art and Art History at the Oakland University in Michigan.

Yu has been teaching courses on global architectural history, traditional and modern Chinese architecture at Northeastern. He has taught Western Architectural History in Beijing, Chinese Architecture at the University of Washington, and Buddhist Art, Chinese Art, Japanese Art, Asian Art, and Applied Guqin Performance at Oakland.

Yu's research focuses on Chinese architecture, modern architecture and its theoretical discourse, literati arts, and Buddhist architecture in East Asia. He has published books, articles, book chapters, and exhibition catalogs and presented conference papers on the city and architecture of Beijing, Tibetan Buddhist architecture, Chinese literati art, and modern architectural historiography. Yu's research projects are mostly case studies aiming for the demystification of a specific historical site, issue, or phenomenon, and highlight the significance, nature, and problem of cross-cultural translation of architectural forms, practices, and theories. \_\_\_\_\_