

# An Analysis of the Causes of the Lagging Development of Underprivileged Communities in Cities and the Renewal Design of Space

—Take Beijing Zuojiashuang Community as an Example

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## Abstract

**In the process of urban development and spatial expansion, the development speed of different urban spatial units differs, which has formed relatively backward urban spaces. Communities are one of the basic units of urban space. In the course of urbanization in China, the development of some urban communities is lagging behind, and there is a big difference from the surrounding environment of the community. Beijing Zuojiashuang community is a typical representative of this matter. This paper carries out an on-the-spot investigation on the Zuojiashuang community. On the basis of the survey results, the reasons for the lagging development of Zuojiashuang community are analyzed. This paper also puts forward some reasonable suggestions for the spatial renewal and improvement of the Zuojiashuang community, which can mobilize the community's space vitality and provide viable directions for older communities in the city.**

The practice of community renewal in Beijing, China began in the 1950s, when a large number of the immigrants rushed into Beijing. In order to deal with the housing problem of the immigrants, the Beijing government encouraged the residents to expand their houses without permission. A large number of private expansions became a building safety issue, and municipal facilities couldn't meet the needs of densely populated residents. Thus, since the 1970s, Beijing has begun to demolish shanty towns and build multi-story residential buildings to expand the community's living capacity. In 1994, China officially launched the commercialization reform of main houses. With the development of the real estate industry, the cost of demolishing and rebuilding old communities has increased remarkably. To explore a suitable method for the renewal of Beijing's old communities, this paper conducts an investigation on the representative of the Zuojiashuang community to find out the reasons for the lagging development of the old communities.

Zuojiashuang Community was established in January 1977, which is located near Sanyuanqiao Metro Station in Chaoyang District, Beijing. It was originally a town of

## Section Header 01 *Introduction*

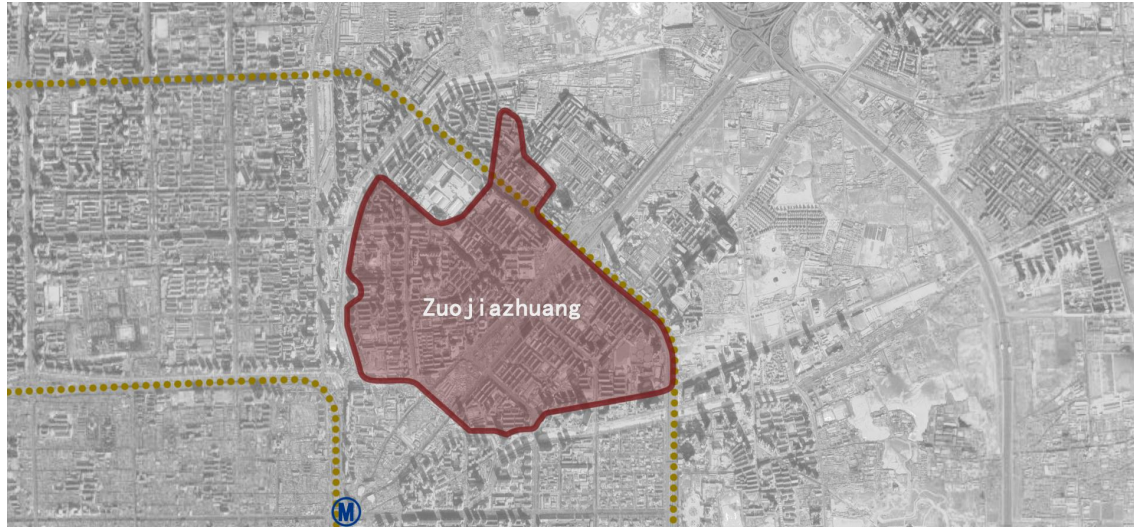


Figure 1. Location Analysis of Zuojiazhuang in 2001. Author.

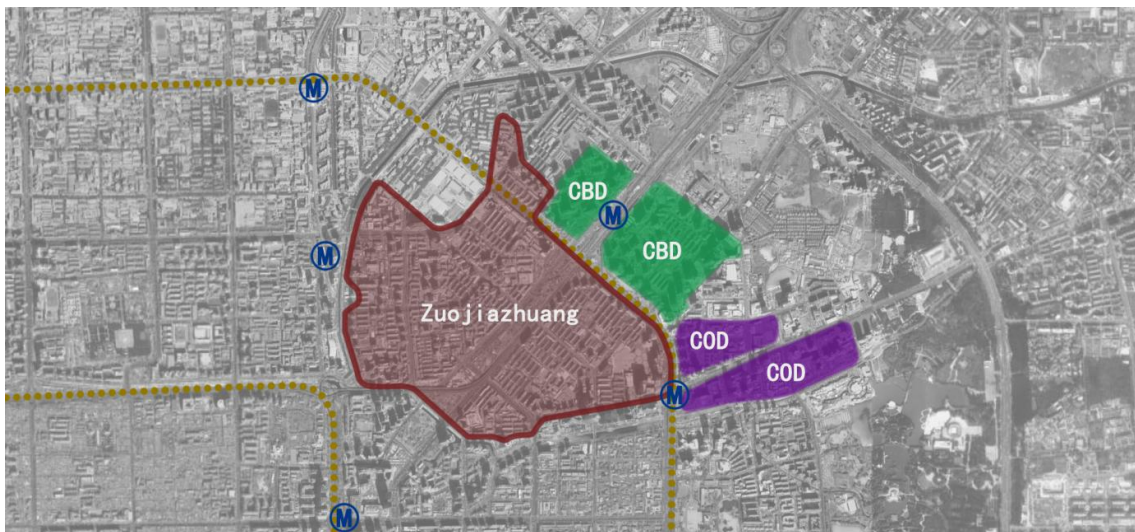


Figure 2. Location Analysis of Zuojiazhuang in 2019. Author.

Taiyanggong, which consists of 9 residential areas with similar historical evolution, industrial structure, and building types. The area is 4.17 square kilometers with a population of about 80,000 people (2010).

In the process of urban space expansion, the Zuojiazhuang community has changed from the urban fringe to the city center. Both commercial areas and modern office areas have been established around the community, which has brought rapid development to the surrounding cities and which forms a prominent contrast to the interior of the Zuojiazhuang community. In 2000, the surrounding area of Zuojiazhuang in Beijing was not developed, the CBD of Sanyua PAPERS: VOLUME II of III

was not completed, and the development of Zuojiazhuang community was ahead of the environment. In 2019, the development of surrounding cities was completed, but there was no change in the Zuojiazhuang community. So, the community's development has lagged behind. The development of the surrounding urban environment, the community space vitality declines, and the community development is sluggish, which has become a vulnerable community in the city.

## Section Header 02

### Methodology

In order to explore the reason of the lagging development of the Zuojiazhuang community, the author of this paper conducted an on-the-

spot investigation on the Zuojiazhuang community.

The Zuojiazhuang community is representative of the period of concentrated housing construction in China, which has many of the same spatial characteristics as the community born during the same period. Most of the residents in the community are local people, and there are many elderly people. Some office workers in nearby office areas rent houses in the community. The residential buildings are all multi-level unit-type residential buildings. The blocks are all gated communities, but the management is not strict. Visitors can enter at will. The blocks on the ground floor facing the street are shops. There are no underground parking lots in the community. When the community was built, the open space between residential buildings was used to build bicycle sheds. Some sheds are still left so far. There are no large squares or green spaces in the community for civic activities, but the open space between residential buildings has landscape planting.

At the beginning of the Zuojiazhuang community, the community space could meet the demands of residents' production and life.

As the times changed, the urban environment around the community changed and the lifestyle of residents changed, there have been many contradictions between the form and function of community space and the lives of residents. Firstly, the residents' lifestyles have changed, and the number of private cars has also increased. The lack of large parking lots for residents in the community has forced them to park on both sides of the road, which seriously occupy the road and cause congestion; after some roads were occupied, their width can't meet the requirements of fire engine access, which causes potential safety hazards. Secondly, during the community construction process, the purpose is to accommodate as many residents as possible. The building density is relatively large, and the open space in the house is occupied by bicycle sheds as well as other facilities. As a result, the overall greening rate in the community is low and there is a lack of large venues. Some public facilities, such as boiler rooms and bicycle sheds, are mostly in semi-abandoned state and have been transformed into small convenience stores, doorman's lounges, etc. However, this type of negative space has led to a lot of safety



Figure 3. Current Situation of Zuojiazhuang Community. Harbin institute of Technology.



Figure 4. Current Situation of Zuojiazhuang Community. Harbin institute of Technology.

Research direction		Status quo of the community
Crowd characteristics	Native inhabitants	The elder people are in the majority.
	Migrant population	Large number of tenants.
Traffic conditions	Internal traffic	People and cars travel together, without the parking plot.
	Outside traffic	Convenient transportation.
Service facilities	Condition of equipment	Complete infrastructure construction.
	Service condition	Abandoned facilities.
Community management	Internal management	Management confusion.
	External management	Open community.
Community landscape	Landscape form	Single form and low utilization ratio.
	Greening situation	Low greening rate and poor perception.
Environmental atmosphere	Internal environment	Lack of energy.
	External environment	Rapid development.

issues. Finally, the community lacks effective Public facilities, such as property management and unit access control, are poorly maintained. Semi-public spaces, such as stairwells and green spaces in front of the balcony on the ground floor, are occupied privately.

**Section Header 03**  
*Results and discussion*

From the survey results, it can be found that the following problems exist in the community space of Zuojiashuang, which result in the lagging development of the community.

(1) The community space function lags behind the development of the times. With the advancement of urbanization, the life of urban residents has undergone rapid changes, and underprivileged communities have been unable to meet the fast-paced urban living demands. In underprivileged communities, there are a large number of outdated infrastructure facilities, such as bicycle sheds and boiler rooms. Because of the changes in residents’ lifestyles, bicycles can no longer meet the transportation needs of urban residents. Individual bicycles are gradually falling into disuse. Bicycle sheds that were originally used to store bicycles are also discarded, which are gradually carved up and occupied by other community spaces. At

the same time, there is also a lack of parking in the community space, causing inconvenient transportation for residents. After the central heating is popularized in northern cities, the boiler room also has no practical function, which is idle in the community and occupies a lot of community public space. The lifestyle changes of community residents, while the community space remains unchanged, which result in conflicts between community space and lifestyle of residents.

(2) The community space atmosphere is disconnected from the urban environment. During decades of development, the cities surrounding the Zuojiashuang community have formed a modern urban environment which centers on the CBD and shopping malls. The scale of the building space is large, the plot ratio is high, and the relevant facilities are convenient. However, Zuojiashuang community space still maintains the form of multi-storey residential buildings. the relevant facilities can’t meet the demands of fast-paced urban living, leading to a large difference between the community and surrounding cities, and the development of surrounding cities can’t drive community development.

(3) The lack of cohesion and belonging of community spatial characteristics. The formation of local culture in the community often stems from the common living experience of the native residents of the community, such as work units, characteristic industries, etc. With the transformation of the social industrial structure, the carrier of local culture has gradually disappeared, resulting in the community lacking a culture of universal identity sign, which in turn causes a decline in the sense of community belonging of the native residents. It is difficult for the new residents to form a sense of community belonging.

(4) The efficiency of community space management is low. Such communities often do not lack public space, but the form of the space is relatively single, which separates itself from the behavior of residents and can't fully exert value. It has a low utilization rate and high maintenance costs. For instance, the flower beds built on both sides of the road can't serve as shade and can't keep from rain. The residents will not stay nearby to rest. The flower beds have no other role than viewing. Because of the shortage of community space, once the public space is not maintained in time, it will be occupied by parking spaces and debris, resulting in the lack of green landscape.

The main existing contradiction in Zuojiashuang community space stems from the different development processes of different elements in the community. In order to activate the community space, it is necessary to update the design from the aspects as follows:

(1) Enhance the practicality of community space. Adjust space features in updated designs. Functional space such as boiler rooms, which has been separated from the needs of residents, can be transformed into other functions. For the management of chaotic function spaces, space maintenance can be

enhanced.

(2) Balance the fairness of community space. When certain groups of people occupy the community space excessively, the rights and interests of other residents will be violated. In the updated design, the use rights of each type of population are guaranteed to be equal, and the interactive behavior of residents is encouraged. Residents' interactive behavior can enhance the cohesion of the residents.

(3) Add fun to the community space. Through spatial design, it is possible to endow the space a variety of innovative uses or environmental landscapes so as to attract residents of all ages to enter the space and activate the fatigued space in the community.

(4) Enhance the appreciation of community space. Improve the aesthetics of the space and shape the environment in the design update. The aesthetically pleasing space can meet the growing spiritual demands of residents and increase the residents' pride in the community, which in turn enhance the sense of community belonging.

## **Section Header 04**

### *Conclusions*

In a survey of Zuojiashuang community in Beijing, it is found that the root cause of the lagging development of the community of Zuojiashuang lies in the uneven development of various elements of the community. The surrounding environment of the community and the lifestyle of the residents have changed, while the form and function of the community space have remained unchanged. At the same time, the cultural cohesion and belonging of the community have been developed backwards, which breaks the balance between the elements of the community and leads to the lagging development of the community.

In order to resolve the problem of lagging development of Zuojiashuang community, it is necessary to carry out community space renewal design from the following aspects: adjust the function of the space to enhance the practicability of the space; encourage the interactive behavior of the residents so as to ensure the fairness of the space; attract more applicable people and increase the funny function of the space; shape the beautiful environment as well as atmosphere and enhance the viewing of the space.

## **Endnotes**