

## The Concept of Old Town Neighborhoods and Their Historical Formation

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article, the structure and objects of the neighborhoods, as well as the fact that the neighborhood is a small administrative area, are associated with a common way of life, values, traditions and customs. It is said that the functions of the mahalla have changed at different stages of history due to political and social changes.

**KEYWORD:** Uzbek mahalla, old city, traditions, guzar, urban planning, courtyard, upstairs, residential, neighborhood, workshop, market, swimming pool, degreasing, beautification.

**Introduction.** Urban planning in Uzbekistan has its own historical values. Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Samarkand, Shahrisabz, Termez, Margilan, Kokand, which are rich in many large buildings and complexes, are attracting the attention of the peoples of the world.

The old Uzbek mahalla is also formed in accordance with its own traditions and way of life, and is included in the lexicon of the peoples of the world under the name "Mahalla Institute". In fact, the neighborhood is such an urban planning device that its analogue is rare in the world. Before coming to a general conclusion about the neighborhood, let's take a look at the information about it in some sources.

"The word 'neighborhood' is an Arabic word meaning 'place.' It is called mahallot (place), guzar, community, elat, elod in different regions. The literature suggests that neighborhoods have a history of many thousands of years [1, 2]. For example, in his History of Bukhara, Narshahi mentions that there were several mahallas in Bukhara 1,100 years ago. Alisher Navoi, in his Hayrat ul-abror, describes the "neighborhood as a town within a city" and says that the city of Herat is made up of hundreds of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods flourished, especially during the reign of Amir Temur. Neighborhoods are formed on the basis of the occupation of citizens and are named accordingly. For example, jewelry, coppersmithing, tannery, knife-making, spoon-making, blacksmith, saddler, shoemaker, etc."

**The main part.** Today, several neighborhoods come together to form a district or residential district. The term "neighborhood" can be found in different names, depending on the region and dialect. Professor H.Sh.Pulatov in his textbook "History of Urban Planning" he gave the following information:

"Territorial division of the population has been very important. Cities are usually divided into large and small, and villages are divided into small urban units. These townships are called by different names. Bukhara was divided into 12 subdivisions or mahallas, Samarkand into 4 continents, Kokand,

Margilan, and Tashkent into 4 more subdivisions. Large divisions, in turn, are divided into smaller ones. These are also named differently in different places. In Bukhara, Samarkand, and Karshi, small units are called guzars, in cities such as Kokand, Margilan, and Tashkent - mahallas, and in Khorezm - mosques (masjidqavm). This means that the word "mahalla" has two meanings, depending on the place of use: in Bukhara it means a large subdivision, and in other cases a small subdivision" [1, 3, and 4].

The neighborhood has long functioned as a form of local government. The neighborhood has its own unwritten rules and is governed by the community. These unwritten rules are equally legal for everyone.

Although the neighborhood is a small administrative area, it is a community of people connected by common lifestyles, values, traditions and customs. At different stages of history, the functions of the mahalla have changed due to political and social changes.

“The main tasks of the mahalla are to hold ceremonies together, to preserve and beautify its territory, to educate the younger generation in the social spirit, to maintain order in society, to control the observance of all traditional norms, to observe and violate traditions. , which consisted of punishing those who disobeyed their public obligations. The neighborhood administration has organized the cleaning of canals, the construction of streets, roads and other public works related to the improvement of the neighborhood. All of this was done through hashar. ”

The 1981 Uzbek Explanatory Dictionary defines a "neighborhood as a part of a city with several streets and its inhabitants." As we study the structure of historically formed neighborhoods, we need to focus on their location and formation. In the past, when a neighborhood was named, it used the same name as the existing street. Because the people living around this street only had access to that main street. We can compare this to the structure of a leaf (Figure 1). Today, our urban planning is undergoing a lot of changes in terms of neighborhood structure. Many of the neighborhoods in the old city have been demolished for some reason, and the process continues, unfortunately. New neighborhoods are being formed in the form of a grid based on new regulations.

The reason why our research work is in the field of architecture and urban planning is that we do not consider the political and managerial functions of mahallas, but their role in urban planning, architectural-planning and compositional solutions, street and landscaping systems. think about the objects in which they are located. Our study also provides information on housing facilities based on local natural and climatic, socio-economic, and lifestyle factors. Our research shows us what to look for when preserving Old Town neighborhoods.

The Tashkent encyclopedia provides the following information about the mahalla: “A mahalla is a small part of the city's population associated with common rules of residence and traditions of mutual solidarity. Neighborhoods have usually been formed over the centuries on the basis of professional or national characteristics. Therefore, some mahallas have specific names, such as Degrezlik (potters), Tojikkocho (where Tajiks live), and others [1, 5]. Many neighborhoods are named after canals, pools, bridges, mosques, reliefs, and so on, and vice versa. Previously, a centurion elected by the general assembly headed the neighborhood. Each neighborhood had a green community center, a mosque, a teahouse, and common property for weddings and funerals. Sometimes there was a common center for several neighborhoods, the guzar, which, in addition to the mosque, had handicraft workshops, a teahouse, a bakery, grocery stores, and a bazaar. Guzars are located on major streets or intersections.”



*Figure 1. 1 Leaf structure; 2-Tashkent, Farobi Street and surrounding mahallas (2004); 3-Samarkand, Suzangaron street and surrounding mahallas (2004).*

In our society, the term mahalla and the term guzar go hand in hand. Guzar has served as one or more community centers. In many cases, the word "guzar" is added to the name of the neighborhood. (For example, Eshonguzar, Choxinguzar, Goziguzar, Guzarboshi mahallas, etc.)

The Tashkent Encyclopedia also states: “From the point of view of urban planning, the mahalla is based on a part of a main street, a relatively small street or a number of branched streets. The neighborhood consisted of a foundation and adjoining apartments and public buildings. The boundaries of the neighborhood pass through the back walls of most homes[6, 7]. The mahalla is more administratively integrated. Strict adherence to the cleanliness of the neighborhood and water basins and canals was strictly observed. In general, the neighbors took an active part in the hashar”.

The guzars of the neighborhood usually had facilities such as a swimming pool, a mosque, a madrasa, a teahouse, a bakery, a barber shop, and a grocery store. People in positions such as elder, imam, waiter and guard carried out the activities and work of the mahalla. The common property of the mahalla for weddings and other public events: pots, dishes, coffins and other equipment are stored in a special room of the mahalla committee.

In the neighborhood, religion has played a major role in housing. Ownership of the apartment was based on inheritance. The sale of the apartment followed a religious tradition (traditionally, the apartment was sold to four close neighbors, then to neighbors, and sold to a stranger only if the buyer did not show up).

The people of the neighborhood are engaged in various trades, trade, farming and gardening. “In Tashkent, most of the residents of the neighborhood are engaged in farming and gardening. There is usually a small bazaar in the neighborhood. It served the daily needs of the population. Large markets have been built for several neighborhoods. Most of the residents were engaged in trade, handicrafts, shops, and workshops, so the courtyards were smaller than those on the outskirts of the city”.

If we look at the structure of the neighborhoods and the objects in them, we can see the same situation in several cities of Uzbekistan. Take, for example, the city of Bukhara. Even if you don't see a tree or an irrigation station on the narrow and winding streets, this or that part of the street is a shady area. In addition, the importance of the mahalla guzar, the beauty and grandeur of the buildings and structures located in it, does not go unnoticed when we walk through the narrow streets - from one to two-storey low-rise buildings to the area where the mahalla guzar is located. The mahalla guzars include a mahalla office, a teahouse, a barber shop, a grocery store, a bakery, and a mosque. In the conditions of Bukhara, most of the guzars of such neighborhoods have pools. This not only ensured that the area was relatively cool in hot climates, but also provided drinking water to the neighborhood residents in the past. The fact that the streets are closed to some extent also serves the safety of the residents of this street. Residential buildings are usually single-story, and in some cases appear as two-story at the expense of attics or corridors (Figure 2).

If we compare the mahalla of Bukhara with the old mahalla of Tashkent, we see a similar picture. But there are also some differences between them. The climate of Bukhara is characterized by heat and dryness. This, in turn, affects the history of the houses and the structure of the courtyards. In Tashkent, the yards are wider, while in Bukhara, on the contrary, in most cases the yards are relatively small.



Figure 2. View of the streets of the old town of Bukhara

**Conclusion.** We can clearly observe the transformation of housing in the residential buildings of the old urban neighborhoods. Previously, there were dwellings consisting of an indoor and outdoor courtyard, where one family lived, but later the children of this family expanded the living space in the same area without changing the area. They created additional living conditions by building new houses in the vacant parts of the yard or in place of dilapidated buildings. It also reflects the unique mentality and culture of our people. The fact that parents are accustomed to living side by side with their children for many years has helped to strengthen family ties. We can also see that the proximity of narrow streets and the houses located in them, the fact that the doors of the apartment are often located side by side or side by side, also served to establish good and strong neighborly relations.

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