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SOCIAL TOPOCHRONOS AS A MECHANISM FOR ORGANIZING SOCIAL LIFE: THE MAHALLA INSTITUTION IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

Qahhorova Nilufar Maxammadali qizi
Phd student of Fergana State University
ORCID: 0009-0006-0010-3749
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22816762

Abstract

The organization of social life is inseparable from the spatial and temporal conditions in which individuals and communities interact, develop social relations, reproduce cultural values, and respond to collective problems. From a social-philosophical perspective, space cannot be regarded merely as a physical territory, while time cannot be reduced to a chronological sequence of events. Socially meaningful space and time constitute an integrated environment in which patterns of interaction, social practices, collective identities, and mechanisms of social organization are formed. This article examines the concept of social topochronos as a category for analysing the spatial and temporal organization of social life and applies this theoretical approach to the mahalla institution in contemporary Uzbekistan. The study argues that the mahalla can be interpreted as a concrete manifestation of social topochronos because it combines a defined territorial environment with historically formed social practices, everyday interactions, cultural continuity, and mechanisms for responding to the changing needs of the population. The mahalla is therefore considered not simply as a geographical locality or an administrative unit, but as a socially organized space in which individuals participate in family, neighbourhood, cultural, educational, economic, and civic relations. Its significance becomes particularly visible in the context of New Uzbekistan, where the mahalla is increasingly positioned as a primary level for identifying and addressing social problems, strengthening social cooperation, supporting vulnerable groups, promoting employment, improving local infrastructure, and developing civic participation.

The article demonstrates that the social topochronos approach makes it possible to examine the mahalla simultaneously as a spatial structure, a temporal process, and a mechanism of social organization. In this perspective, changes in the institutional functions of the mahalla reflect broader transformations in Uzbek society, while the continuity of neighbourhood traditions demonstrates the persistence of historical forms of social solidarity. The study concludes that the concept of social topochronos can provide a productive methodological framework for analysing how local social environments organize everyday life, mediate relations between individuals and institutions, and contribute to the transformation of society.

Keywords: social topochronos, social space, social time, mahalla, social organization, community, social relations, New Uzbekistan, social solidarity, self-governance.

1.Introduction

Contemporary social philosophy increasingly requires approaches capable of explaining how social processes are connected with the spatial and temporal conditions in which they occur. Human beings do not exist outside space and time: individual experience, collective interaction, social institutions, cultural practices, and mechanisms of social regulation are always situated within particular environments and historical periods. Consequently, the analysis of social reality requires

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attention not only to social structures and institutions but also to the spatial and temporal contexts through which these structures acquire practical meaning.
The concept of social topochronos is proposed as a theoretical framework for understanding this relationship. The term combines two dimensions that are inseparable in the organization of social life: topos as socially meaningful space and chronos as socially experienced time. However, social topochronos should not be understood as a mechanical combination of space and time. It represents a socially constituted unity in which a particular place, the people inhabiting it, their relationships, historical experience, everyday practices, cultural memory, and temporal transformations interact with one another.

From this perspective, social space is not simply an external environment surrounding society. It is produced, experienced, interpreted, and transformed through human activity. Similarly, social time is not merely chronological duration. Different social groups and communities experience time through historical memory, traditions, institutional changes, generational continuity, and transformations in everyday life. The unity of these dimensions creates specific forms of social organization.The mahalla provides a particularly relevant example for examining this theoretical proposition. Historically, the mahalla has functioned as a neighbourhood-based form of community organization in Uzbek society. Its social significance has been associated with mutual assistance, interpersonal relations, cultural traditions, family and community interaction, and collective participation in solving local issues. At the same time, the contemporary mahalla is undergoing institutional transformation in response to changing social, economic, technological, and administrative conditions.

The contemporary development of the mahalla is particularly important within the framework of New Uzbekistan. Current reforms increasingly emphasize the mahalla as a primary level for identifying and addressing the problems of the population. In this context, the mahalla becomes a point where social needs are identified, local initiatives are coordinated, citizens interact with social institutions, and various forms of social support are organized. Therefore, the mahalla can be interpreted as a socially structured space whose functions develop over time. Its territorial boundaries provide the spatial dimension, while its historical traditions, institutional transformations, generational continuity, and changing social functions provide the temporal dimension. Their interaction forms a specific social topochronos.

2.Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The theoretical foundation of the study is based on the philosophical understanding of space and time as fundamental dimensions of human and social existence. Classical and modern philosophical approaches demonstrate that space and time cannot be considered independently from the forms of human existence and social activity.The study employs a social-philosophical approach that distinguishes social space from purely physical space. Social space is understood as an environment structured by relationships, institutions, practices, values, norms, and forms of interaction. Within such an environment, physical places acquire social meanings.

A street, neighbourhood, educational institution, public square, family home, or community centre can become a socially significant space because particular forms of interaction take place there.Social time is approached in a similar manner. It includes not only chronological succession but also historical experience, collective memory, social rhythms, generational changes, institutional transformations, and expectations concerning the future. Social time therefore demonstrates how communities preserve continuity while simultaneously adapting to new conditions.

The concept of social topochronos allows these dimensions to be considered in their interaction. Its methodological value lies in the possibility of analysing a social environment through three interconnected characteristics:

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Spatial localization - the existence of a socially identifiable territory in which interaction occurs;

Temporal continuity and transformation - the coexistence of historical memory, established traditions, contemporary institutional changes, and future-oriented development;

Social organization - the formation and regulation of relationships, responsibilities, practices, values, and mechanisms of collective interaction within this spatial-temporal environment.

The research uses conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, institutional analysis, and interpretation of contemporary social processes. The mahalla is examined as a social institution and as a spatial-temporal environment rather than solely as an administrative structure.

3. The Mahalla as a Social Topochronos

The concept of social topochronos becomes particularly productive when applied to the mahalla. The mahalla possesses a clearly identifiable spatial dimension: it is associated with a particular territory, neighbourhood, residential environment, infrastructure, and population. Yet its social meaning cannot be reduced to territorial boundaries. Within the mahalla, individuals encounter one another in everyday situations and participate in multiple forms of social interaction. Neighbours communicate, families cooperate, young people participate in community activities, elderly residents transmit cultural experience, and citizens collectively respond to local problems. Consequently, the territory of the mahalla becomes a socially meaningful environment. Its temporal dimension is equally significant. The mahalla preserves elements of historical continuity while adapting to contemporary transformations. Traditional forms of mutual assistance and neighbourhood solidarity coexist with new mechanisms of social administration, digital communication, employment support, social services, and institutional cooperation.

This coexistence of continuity and transformation is one of the essential characteristics of social topochronos. The mahalla is simultaneously connected with the past, organized in the present, and oriented toward the future. For this reason, the mahalla can be interpreted as a living social environment in which historical experience is reproduced through contemporary practices. Social memory is not preserved only in abstract cultural narratives; it is embodied in everyday relations, neighbourhood customs, collective activities, forms of mutual assistance, and intergenerational communication. The mahalla therefore demonstrates that social space is dynamic. It changes together with the people who inhabit it and with the social institutions operating within it.

4. The Mahalla in the Context of New Uzbekistan

The contemporary transformation of the mahalla demonstrates the relationship between social topochronos and broader processes of social modernization. In New Uzbekistan, the mahalla is increasingly approached as a primary level at which social problems can be identified and addressed. The institutional development of the mahalla has expanded the range of social processes connected with the local community. These include employment, poverty reduction, social protection, support for families and women, youth development, prevention of social problems, improvement of local infrastructure, community safety, and the development of entrepreneurship.

This transformation is significant from the perspective of social philosophy because it demonstrates how a historically established social space can acquire new institutional functions without losing its connection with cultural continuity.
The legal framework of citizens' self-government in Uzbekistan recognizes mahallas as territorial units of self-government and emphasizes principles including social justice, mutual assistance, social partnership, and consideration of local customs and traditions. Thus, the mahalla is institutionally connected with both local self-government and the social relations of the community. The reforms of recent years have further strengthened this role. In December 2023, the role of the mahalla as a primary level for solving population problems was institutionally strengthened, including through the

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formation of the so-called “mahalla seven,” bringing together representatives responsible for different dimensions of local social life.

The process continued in 2026. Presidential Decree No. UP-116 of June 24, 2026 established additional measures for the effective organization of mahalla governance. The document emphasizes strengthening the role of the mahalla, improving mechanisms for addressing population problems, ensuring interaction between the mahalla and state and public organizations, and introducing further digitalization of mahalla activities. These developments demonstrate an important transformation of the social function of the mahalla: the mahalla increasingly operates as an environment in which different social problems are identified, coordinated, and addressed at the local level. From the perspective of social topochronos, this transformation means that the same social space acquires new functions as society changes historically. The territory remains localized, but the forms of interaction, institutional mechanisms, social expectations, and available resources develop over time.

5. Mahalla as a Mechanism for Organizing Social Life

The concept of social topochronos allows the mahalla to be understood not merely as a place where social life occurs but as a mechanism that actively contributes to its organization. First, the mahalla contributes to the organization of **social interaction**. Neighbourhood proximity creates opportunities for regular communication and the development of interpersonal relations. Such interaction can strengthen trust and create informal mechanisms of social cooperation. Second, the mahalla contributes to **social support**. Local identification of families and individuals experiencing difficulties makes it possible to connect social needs with appropriate forms of assistance. In this sense, the spatial proximity of the community becomes an important condition for recognizing social problems.

Third, the mahalla performs an important function in **socialization**. Children and young people encounter social norms and cultural practices not only through formal educational institutions but also through their neighbourhood environment. Intergenerational interaction enables the transmission of values, traditions, behavioural expectations, and collective memory. Fourth, the mahalla creates conditions for **civic participation**. Citizens may participate in discussions and activities related to local development, public infrastructure, social initiatives, and community problems. Thus, the local spatial environment can become an arena for developing practical forms of civic engagement. Fifth, the mahalla can facilitate **social coordination**. Contemporary institutional arrangements connect local representatives with different sectors and organizations responsible for employment, social protection, youth affairs, family issues, public safety, and other areas.

This makes the mahalla a point of intersection between everyday social needs and broader institutional mechanisms. Finally, the mahalla contributes to the **production of social belonging**. Individuals do not merely occupy a territory; they develop a sense of belonging to a particular social environment. This belonging is reinforced through shared practices, collective events, mutual assistance, and common responsibility for the condition of the local environment.These functions demonstrate why the mahalla can be interpreted as a mechanism of organizing social life rather than merely a geographical locality.

6. Spatiality, Temporality, and Social Transformation

The social topochronos of the mahalla is characterized by the interaction between continuity and transformation. The spatial dimension provides stability. The mahalla has a recognizable territory in which people establish long-term relationships. This spatial stability creates the conditions for repeated interaction and the development of social trust. The temporal dimension introduces change. Economic transformations, demographic processes, technological development, migration, urbanization, institutional reforms, and changing expectations of citizens modify the way people interact within the mahalla. The resulting social topochronos is therefore neither completely static nor entirely discontinuous. It represents a dynamic relationship between inherited social practices and new forms

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of social organization.This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding New Uzbekistan. Modernization does not necessarily eliminate historically developed forms of community organization. Instead, traditional institutions can be reinterpreted and incorporated into contemporary systems of social governance.

The mahalla illustrates this process. Its historical foundations are associated with neighbourhood solidarity and mutual assistance, while its contemporary institutional functions increasingly involve social protection, employment, youth policy, infrastructure development, digitalization, and coordination with public institutions. Thus, the transformation of the mahalla demonstrates how a social institution can preserve cultural continuity while adapting to new historical circumstances.

7. Discussion

The application of the social topochronos concept to the mahalla makes it possible to move beyond a purely institutional or administrative interpretation of the neighbourhood community. If the mahalla is considered only as an administrative unit, its social-philosophical significance remains incomplete. If it is viewed only as a traditional community, its contemporary transformation is overlooked. The concept of social topochronos provides an opportunity to integrate both dimensions. The mahalla represents a spatial environment because social interactions are localized within a specific territory. It represents a temporal process because its functions, relationships, and institutional forms change over historical periods. Finally, it represents a mechanism of social organization because it structures interactions between individuals, families, community groups, and institutions. This approach also makes it possible to distinguish between the physical and social dimensions of place. Two geographically similar residential areas may possess different forms of social organization because their histories, patterns of interaction, institutional capacities, and collective identities differ. Therefore, the social meaning of the mahalla emerges not simply from where it is located, but from what forms of social life are produced and reproduced within it. The mahalla can consequently be understood as a form of socially organized spatiality in which time is embodied through historical memory, institutional development, generational continuity, and changing social practices.

8. Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that social topochronos can be used as a methodological concept for examining the organization of social life through the interaction of spatial and temporal dimensions. The mahalla of contemporary Uzbekistan provides a significant empirical example of this theoretical proposition. It combines a localized social space with historical continuity, everyday interaction, cultural memory, institutional transformation, and future-oriented development. In the context of New Uzbekistan, the mahalla increasingly functions as a local environment in which social problems are identified, social support is coordinated, citizens interact with institutions, and community initiatives are organized. Its functions extend across several dimensions of social life, including family relations, youth development, employment, social protection, public safety, civic participation, and local infrastructure. From the perspective of social topochronos, these functions should not be understood as isolated activities. They constitute interconnected forms of social organization embedded within a particular spatial and temporal environment. The theoretical significance of the concept lies in its ability to demonstrate that social organization is always situated. Social relations require space, while social institutions develop through time. A community becomes socially meaningful when spatial localization, temporal continuity, and collective interaction intersect. The mahalla therefore represents more than a territorial or administrative unit. It can be understood as a socially meaningful topochronos in which historical experience, contemporary institutional mechanisms, and future-oriented social development interact. Consequently, the study of mahalla through the concept of social topochronos may contribute to a broader social-philosophical

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understanding of how local communities participate in the organization and transformation of society. It also provides a conceptual basis for further comparative research into neighbourhood communities, local self-governance, social solidarity, and the spatial-temporal organization of social life in different societies.

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