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Dilmira Matyakubova is a young professional specializing in Higher Education, Public Policy, and Political Economy. Dilmira is an Associate Lecturer at Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT). She worked as a Senior Academic Policy Officer at WIUT from 2015 to 2017, providing expertise in the area of developing academic policies and regulations in higher education. Dilmira is a graduate of OSCE Academy’s Politics and Security (Central Asia) program (2013-2014). She also graduated from a Postgraduate Course on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education at WIUT (2016). Dilmira’s research interests include political economy, nation-building and national identity, ethnic relations/state policies on ethnic minorities, and transnational education.

“If they give me a proper place somewhere nearby, I will move. Otherwise, I will not go anywhere!” – Muhabbat Umarova, a woman in her 70s who is a resident of an old neighborhood under demolition in Tashkent

The image and reputation of a nation play an important role in international relations. Nations strive to enhance their image by promoting their ideas and institutions or rebranding their major cities. For countries which have recently arrived on the international scene, such as the post-Soviet states, the process of constructing a national identity is a challenging one, due to their desire to simultaneously preserve cultural traditions and display their competitiveness by taking on board modern (often Western-inspired) cultural values.

In the post-Soviet space, the nation-branding process began shortly after independence in the early 1990s. The process has been particularly notable in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, each of which has its own strategies for promoting its “national brand.” These include transforming their capital cities into contemporary business capitals and pressing state-run agencies, corporate groups, and embassies to embrace the new urban spaces. Ashgabat was transformed into a material symbol of the personality cult of Turkmenbashi (the first president of independent Turkmenistan), while Astana, “City of the Future,” is promoted as an emblem of the young Kazakh state’s progress, modernity, and burgeoning entrepreneurial identity.

Uzbekistan is no exception to this trend, and has likewise sought to reposition itself in the international realm by rebranding its capital city. In July 2017, soon after the country welcomed a new president following decades of being governed by Islam Karimov, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a Decree “On measures to improve the architectural appearance and improvement of the central part of Tashkent, as well as creation of appropriate conditions for the population and visitors to the capital.” The decree aims to redesign the center of Tashkent through the so-called “Tashkent City” project, with the goal of re-branding the coun-
try as one open to political reforms, economic investment, and friendly relations with the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{5}

However, projects designed to present a country’s new image to foreign audiences rarely take into consideration local citizens’ interests and concerns, sparking criticism at home. Looking at the Tashkent City project, this paper seeks to understand how Uzbekistan’s nation-branding process can accommodate the needs, desires, and input of the local population by asking: To what extent does the nation-branding process address Uzbek citizens’ needs? I argue here that the government’s vision of securing the population’s welfare through a national brand actually jeopardizes societal wellbeing. State and society have divergent perceptions of wellbeing and the state’s strategy may not be in what citizens consider their best interests.

This study builds on qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data. The primary data is comprised of semi-structured interviews with three government officials involved in the Tashkent City project, which illuminate the government’s aims and expectations. Two individuals from foreign diplomatic and educational institutions were asked to provide an outsider’s perspective on the project. Furthermore, the study also includes interviews with 17 residents of mahallas that are being demolished as part of the Tashkent City project. The individual case studies discuss the problems and discourses around buildings and territories slated for demolition. The names of individuals have been altered in order to protect respondents’ confidentiality. The secondary data includes peer-reviewed articles, books, and media discussions of the project.

The background section provides an overview of urban transformation in the region in general and Tashkent in particular. It also describes the Tashkent City project in more detail. The section on conceptual framework reflects on the nation-branding process and government and society’s conflicting perceptions of wellbeing. Subsequent sections focus on case studies related to the project and examine residents’ responses to the government’s construction initiatives. The discussion section pulls together key theoretical considerations and data points to shed some light on what the Tashkent City project can tell us about local citizens’ participation (or lack thereof) in nation-branding. Finally, the recommendations section offers a number of policy proposals to the central government, local governments, and communities.

**Background**

Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, experienced significant transformations both during and after the Soviet period. According to Paul Stronski, the author of a book on early Tashkent, the city had to become a contemporary capital of the “liberated” Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and the political and symbolic center of a Socialist East. Tashkent, in a sense, had to grow into a “shining star” of Moscow in the East; “Soviet Tashkent” became a model of socialism.\textsuperscript{6}

During the Soviet period, the city’s landscape was redesigned. The Architects’ Union wanted to follow Moscow’s lead in building tall structures that reflected contemporary urban style and the industrial progress of the 20th century. As such, they designed multi-storey apartment blocks to be put up across the city. This was meant to facilitate a “fundamental break” with traditional, multi-family housing practices in the city, which were considered outdated, and to reshape Tashkent residents’ lifestyle along Soviet lines. With the earthquake of 1966, residents of several mahallas (traditional neighborhoods) found themselves relocated from their damaged homes to these new apartment buildings.\textsuperscript{7}

After independence, there was an effort to rewrite the story of Tashkent, essentially erasing the Soviet past. Emblematic of this reimagining of national identity, a monument to Amir Timur, the Turkic conqueror, came to replace the bust of Karl Marx, while the city’s streets were renamed in honor of pre-Communist figures. The Soviet cityscape likewise changed: as part of a government effort to “modernize” the city, buildings were hidden beneath shiny glass facades and Soviet-era apartment blocks were interspersed with skyscrapers.\textsuperscript{8}

In another nod to Uzbekistan’s pre-Soviet history, some of these modern constructions feature architectural elements that hark back to the Timurid Empire.\textsuperscript{9}
President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took office in late 2016 after the death of authoritarian leader Islam Karimov, is determined to spearhead reforms in various areas. Officially committed to listening to people’s concerns, he pronounced 2017 the “Year of Dialogue with People and Human Interests.” As part of this initiative, he established a Complaints Portal for public appeals to the president’s administration and ministries, which has allowed citizens to approach government bodies directly.

Mirziyoyev also intends to attract more foreign investment to the country by undertaking economic and political reforms. Part of creating a favorable business climate, he felt, was to redesign the center of Tashkent (see Figure 1). His predecessor’s government had damaged Uzbekistan’s international reputation by demonstrating a lack of willingness to cooperate with other countries or international organizations, as well as compiling a poor record on human rights. A “new” Tashkent would be a concrete symbol of the current administration’s openness to the international community. According to Mirziyoyev, “through the Tashkent City project, we should make a statement about ourselves.” Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, a senior official involved in the project, stresses that the international community has long held a negative view of the business climate in Uzbekistan, and the government hopes that the project will improve the national image.

The Decree on the “Tashkent City” project sets out the timeframe for construction: four phases over a ten-year period. The first phase began in late 2017 and is currently being carried out. Although the project was initially scheduled to take ten years, the government’s goal is to complete it in four years to demonstrate the efficacy of the current administration and its commitment to progress in advance of the next presidential elections. Ultimately, Tashkent City will occupy 80 hectares (3.1 square miles) along Navoi and Islam Karimov Avenues (former Uzbekistanskaya), which link Olmazor and Furkat Streets (see Figure 2). The area is in the center of the city and surrounded by metro lines.

The project relies on foreign investment, grants, technical assistance, donations, loans, and other sources of funding. It involves the construction of an industrial park, eight business centers, a shopping mall, a congress hall, hotels, restaurants, and a cultural center, as well as high-rise residential apartments. Many of the new structures in Tashkent are merely monumental and event-led constructions with limited functionality. Whether designed to look like a “tin can” or hewn from snow-white marble, these buildings are neither attractive to tourists nor meaningful for the local population.

Key Theoretical Insights: Nation-Branding vs. Wellbeing

Nation-branding is an attempt by a country to create a favorable and positive image of itself in order to improve its international reputation. According to Kolesnichenko and White, nation-branding is something a nation does, whereas national identity and national image are something a nation has. According to Simon Anholt, a scholar and policy ad-
visor, a single symbolic action on the part of a country can have a lasting effect on its international image. Examples include Spain’s commitment to permitting same-sex marriage in order to exhibit the nation’s values after Franco, the Irish government’s decision to exempt artists, writers, and poets from income tax to demonstrate the state’s appreciation for creative talent, and Estonia’s announcement of Internet as a human right. Even large-scale celebrations of public holidays can illustrate the aspirations of cultural producers to be part of the international community. Notably, although these nation-branding efforts target external audiences, the process also affects the local population.

In an effort to create an attractive image, many nations attempt to rebuild and rebrand their major cities through urban transformation projects. The challenge here is for the government “to convince the public that the building of and investment in such a mega-project would be a meaningful exercise in the articulation of the city’s image, while serving the people at the same time.” City dwellers who are affected by the changes wish to have a voice in the process. For some inhabitants, a level of input into the events of their city is central to their sense of wellbeing. There is no universally accepted definition of this term, but for the purposes of this paper, I will follow Huppert et al. in considering wellbeing “a positive and sustainable state that allows individuals, groups, or nations to thrive and flourish,” physically, psychologically, and socially.

Russell Zanca, who has examined instances of the “good life” in rural Uzbekistan, argues that—post-socialist strains notwithstanding—the basis of the good life and wellbeing is in deep collectivist values and perseverance. For people in farming villages, wellbeing is rather situational and appears in shared experiences with social networks and kinship groups’ solidarity in difficult periods. He claims that ordinary people are not devastated by social conditions or practices over

**Figure 2. Map of “Tashkent City” and context zones**

which they think they have little control. People do not become overcome by misery or oppression; they have become reconciled to the system that threatens them and cannot imagine altering it. At the end of the day, wellbeing is about the spaces and moments of everyday life that make life worth living.

Andrey Petrov, a local media observer, argues that the attractiveness of the country does not depend on pompous buildings or big projects; instead, the government should focus on providing adequate currency exchange, securing judicial independence, and fighting corruption. Many argue that the government should invest more in small towns and rural areas, where electricity and gas shortages are daily challenges. Indeed, city dwellers question whether the project will have any real value for ordinary citizens, noting that numerous buildings have been constructed in Tashkent since independence without adding to people’s lives. As Timur Ahmedov, an observer, told Gaze- taUz:

A lot has been built since 2001, the [Central] Square is redesigned, new (tower) clocks have gone up, and a new palace. Yet nothing to be happy about. None of these things were made [designed] for people.

The new government in Uzbekistan, which is seeking to build a new brand image for the nation, needs to improve the country’s reputation by committing to broader reforms in the spheres of human rights, rule of law, and domestic civil society engagement. However, it cannot transform Uzbekistan’s image on its own: local citizens’ wellbeing and their perception of governance affect the country’s image too. Thus, the government’s nation-branding efforts must begin by establishing a substantive dialogue with the local population. From this baseline, government and people can work together to address the interests and concerns of each.

In the sections that follow, three case studies illustrate the challenges of public dialogue in various contexts affected by the government’s urban transformation projects. The first is that of traditional mahallas as a cultural-historical site, which illuminates the emotional and practical problems faced by residents. The second, the “modern mahalla,” demonstrates the success of public dialogue due to citizens’ active engagement. The third, about Dom Kino, explains the failure of public dialogue in the case of a cultural center.

The Mahalla Debate

One of the debates prompted by the Tashkent City project is the demolition of traditional mahallas in the Olmazor (Apple Orchard) and O’qchi (Fletcher) neighborhoods. The area has been a target for redevelopment since the earthquake in 1966, when some mahallas were ruined.

Mahalla is a local institution of self-governance that plays an important socio-economic role in Uzbek society. It also serves a cultural function: it is a place for social interactions between communities tied to a particular space. The sense of community and connectedness in mahallas is very strong. Civil society in Uzbekistan is largely associated with mahallas, since these community-driven organizations are responsible for assisting members of the community in resolving various matters.

Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, a government official, notes that the relocation of mahallas has always been a very sensitive issue that creates emotional distress as well as practical problems. According to him, since redevelopment and demolition have long been planned, residents have limited rights to their dwellings. He contends that the Tashkent City project will benefit everyone in the long run, describing the removal of mahallas as a short-term issue.

Saida, a daughter of the Tojiboev family in Olmazor mahalla, would also like to see the city develop, but is skeptical that the current plan will really make things better for her community:

If the city flourishes, it is better for us, but only if they provide us with decent houses as soon as possible. So far, what they offer as a replacement does not meet our needs. The conditions are no better.

She supports development and projects like Tashkent City, but she claims that families have been offered insufficient compensation for their properties. The law on property requires equal replacement of a residential property—that is, giving a family that has
had to move a new home of the same size and value.

In addition, timely notice of demolition is enshrined in Article 4 of “Regulations on the Procedure for Compensation of Damages to Citizens and Legal Entities due to Seizure of Land for State or Public Needs” (2006), which states that the khokimiyat (city administration) must notify property owners in writing no less than six months before demolition begins. In fact, the process of demolition and relocation of residents began earlier, as the Decree on Tashkent City (2017) required that residential and non-residential buildings be acquired within a month. The district administration visited the mahallas and informed residents that they had 10 days to vacate their homes. The residents were offered replacements from the secondary housing market, as the promised relocation area is under construction. Some people appealed to the district khokimiyat, but they have not received a response.

O’qchi mahalla residents Rifat Saburov, Ahmad Asimov, and Evgenii Gorbunov described their experience:

We were not given any written notice about demolition of the area. The BTI (Bureau on Technical Inventory) just came to inform us verbally. The news just killed us. The whole mahalla, neighbors, are dispersed around the city. We will not be able to see each other anymore. Of course, we would like to have houses in this area if only they could build them. However, as we see, there is no opportunity. We were offered some places, but we did not like the places we have seen. There is construction going on in those areas too, there will be the same mess...We would like to be heard by the khokimiyat. We are living in this dust, cut off from electricity and gas. We have written zayavlenie (an appeal), but no reaction...

The government seeks to create national wellbeing by reimagining the capital city as a financial center to draw more investment and business. However, the residents of traditional mahallas have a different view of wellbeing. Many wish to preserve the lifestyles they had in old traditional neighborhoods, as this extract from The Guardian’s coverage of the Tashkent City project shows:

“I don’t want to live in a box,” says an indignant Nilufar Aripova, who was sweeping the street outside her house, dusty after Uzbekistan’s long hot summer. “I’ve lived in Olmazor all my life, for 52 years. I was born a few streets away and moved here to my husband’s house as a kelinka [a young bride].”

“I don’t want to leave this mahalla, but
if I have to I want to be given another house big enough to keep us all together,” adds Aripova, who lives with her husband, three children and several grandchildren.”

Like Aripova’s, families in traditional settlements are larger than those in apartments. Extended families—parents, children, and later daughters-in-law and grandchildren—live together in a traditional house with a backyard.

As the stories of residents who remain at the demolition site show, relocation is complicated. Some residents have appealed to the khokimiyat, requesting that the process of providing appropriate alternative housing be accelerated, but they complain that the authorities have not addressed their concerns, even as conditions at the demolition site have worsened.

Residents’ stories reveal different levels of resistance and social engagement. From Evgenii Gorbunov’s perspective, residents have little agency. The deprivation in which they are currently living will force them to agree to move to houses worth less than their current homes if they are not offered better options soon. Some residents, however, continue to oppose moving to another area. Muhabbat Umarova, an elderly woman, asserted:

This is my home. My son died here. I live alone, on my own. I have been living here since I was born...I have not been informed about anything! Nobody gave me any kind of notice about moving. Now they ask me to move out. If they give me a proper place somewhere nearby (Qoratosh street), I will move. Otherwise, I will not go anywhere!

The lack of dialogue with the people leaves the vulnerable population—like Umarova, an elderly woman who lives alone—in a difficult position. Although Umarova is negotiating for replacement housing nearby, she is unable to oppose relocation through legal channels. A few dwellers have attempted to appeal to the relevant bodies, but the majority of the population remains unaware of how to make demands. Moreover, without a clear platform for public debate, the authorities can continue to ignore residents’ concerns.

At the end of the day, wellbeing for mahalla dwellers entails being able to live in the homes where they were born, raised their children, and celebrated life events. It is emotional attachment to the spaces that have meaning for them. It is ties to the community. It is the ability to communicate with neighbors and live side by side. Ordinary people in mahallas are not engaged in the authorities’ efforts to rebrand the city and draw global attention. Instead, they are focused on everyday issues: surviving without power and keeping the family together. To ensure mahalla dwellers’ wellbeing, the government must involve residents in decisions about urban planning and observe due process on eviction and the seizure of private property.

The government envisions “modernizing” mahallas by developing their infrastructure and redesigning the cityscape. The following section discusses a project that caused public debate in a mahalla, prompting residents to put up a fight for their public space.

The “Modern Mahalla” Debate

In March 2017, the Tashkent municipality approved a new project, “Modern Mahalla,” which aims to redesign 505 neighborhoods in the city. The local authorities are implementing the project without public engagement, despite the fact that Article 10 of the City Planning Code gives citizens...
self-governing bodies, and public associations the right to receive reliable, timely information on the status of residential environment, proposed changes, general plans for settlements, and reconstruction of civil objects.

GazetaUz reported on the discontent among residents in Oqibat mahalla. The dwellers disputed the relevance of new construction that required the demolition of a playground and park, as well as the chopping-down of trees. They protested the process, resisting the delivery of construction equipment to the area. They then went to the mahalla committee, but did not receive a response. They even approached the president’s administration, receiving a response from the district khokimiyat, which claimed that the mahalla contained “unlawful” structures built by residents themselves and therefore did not meet sanitary norms. This was, however, merely an excuse for the khokimiyat’s decision to allocate the territory to a private construction company without securing the agreement of residents.

The media later reported that the municipality had asked that the process be temporarily halted in order to examine its compliance with the Planning Code and Decree on “Modern Mahalla.” After a few months of investigation by the Prosecutor’s Office, it was determined that the construction work had not followed due process, as local residents had not been notified. The district khokimiyat and the chair of the mahalla committee had permitted the construction without discussing it with residents and gaining popular support. Following the investigation by the district court, the project was terminated, and the mahalla dwellers celebrated their success.

Public debate on the project—including through the media—succeeded in influencing the actions of the authorities, which usually prefer to carry out plans without discussing them with the population. The story reveals the shortcomings of the local government, where communication is sidelined in favor of implementing decisions quickly without due process. The central government is making efforts to reform the governance structure and public services, but genuine dialogue with the people can only be achieved through local-level communication. Once again, we see that the government’s desire to foster wellbeing by “modernizing” mahallas contradicts residents’ perceptions of wellbeing, which are tied to the public spaces of their neighborhoods.

In other cases spurred by the Tashkent City project, residents have likewise attempted to engage in public dialogue, although with less success. The section that follows discusses the planned demolition of Dom Kino (Cinema House), which upset a certain segment of the population.

**The Dom Kino Debate**

The case of Dom Kino illustrates the reaction of Tashkent’s creative community to the planned demolition of a building of cultural significance. This is different from the mahalla case, as it involves the removal of a non-residential building, a decision that upset certain groups and communities. However, it is similar in that a public building was condemned to demolition without public discussion.

![Figure 6. Residents of Oqibat mahalla](https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/02/06/oqibat/).
The news that Dom Kino was going to be demolished caused real distress to the community of filmmakers, artists, and architects. It was particularly disappointing because the new decree on cinema development, signed by the president earlier in 2017, had given them hope that “favorable conditions” would be created for culture. This goes to show that governing bodies are not unanimous in their decisions, which are sometimes carried out in haste to impress the public or demonstrate the administration’s progress.

Dom Kino was built in the early 1980s. It hosted the Tashkent International Film Festival, which screened films from an array of Asian, African, and Latin American countries. The building, which stands out on the Tashkent landscape, is an iconic example of ‘80s modernism. Modernists constructed buildings from concrete with a minimum of decoration, considering that the concrete had an aesthetic of its own. The term béton brut, French for “raw concrete,” was coined by Le Corbusier, the world famous architect and urban planner. The cinema was built using the resources of Soviet cinematographers under the aegis of Sharaf Rashidov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR. In contemporary Uzbekistan, where many other Soviet buildings have been redesigned or replaced, Dom Kino, an example of socialist realism, seemed to be out of step with the government’s vision of a “post-modern” Tashkent. Accordingly, the decision was taken that it should be demolished.

This decision has sparked debate among city residents and the creative community. Some argue that the Dom Kino is part of Uzbekistan’s cultural heritage and it therefore deserves to be renovated rather than knocked down. The prominent film producer Jasur Ishakov sees Dom Kino as not merely a venue, but an essential symbol of the legacy of Uzbek cinema. He supports keeping Dom Kino and renovating it in such a way that the building would fit into the Tashkent City master plan. The proposed demolition of the cinema has also been a topic of concern among architects and urban planners. According to local experts, as long as old buildings serve a purpose, they should be allowed to remain, as they demonstrate that the city is alive, breathing, and developing. A local architect, Gennadii Korbovtsev, argues that decisions about what should be done with old buildings should be democratized; people should be able to discuss them publicly. Some suggest that preserving Tashkent’s cultural heritage may even attract tourists, who are more likely to be interested in historic mahallas than the shiny glass skyscrapers proposed in the Tashkent City project, which are derivative and hardly unique to Uzbekistan.

The decision to demolish Dom Kino also seems to have called the future of the arts in Uzbekistan into question. The cinema served as a distinct venue for the creation of films, providing facilities needed by the creative community. In deciding to get rid of it, the government may have suggested that it does not value the arts as part of Uzbekistan’s national image.

Filmmaker and screenwriter Gi-

Shermuhamedov is attempting to negotiate a replacement for Dom Kino. He supports the redevelopment of Tashkent, claiming that the creative community was so inspired by the decree on the Tashkent City project that it began to produce films expressly to increase Uzbek cinema’s global importance. To support these efforts, he would like to see the construction of a Palace of Cinema as part of the Tashkent City project.45

The community has made a formal attempt to prevent the demolition of Dom Kino. Firuz Hayrutdinova, the widow of the building’s architect, Rafael Hayrutdinov, wrote a letter to the president’s complaint portal that was signed by the architects’, cinematographers’, and artists’ union (see Appendix 1). An extract from the letter reads:

The Union of Architects, Cinematographers, and Artists would like to take an active role in the review of the final concept of “Tashkent City” and requests to organize an open discussion of the proposed options, with the aim of possibly preserving individual objects in the territory.46

However, the request remains unaddressed; there has been no response in any form.47 By ignoring this citizens’ appeal, the government has shown that it is not willing to discuss the Tashkent City project with the population. It is not going to give people a chance to comment on the project, nor is it going to address the issues raised. The government may be trying to be open and accountable by implementing such measures as a public appeals system, but it is evidently not ready for a real dialogue with the people.

Discussion

As the above cases illustrate, the government’s approach to nation-branding, which is being carried out through the Tashkent City project, has its shortcomings. The government is prioritizing the swift transformation of the urban space over the needs of locals. Despite President Mirziyoyev’s emphasis on the role of people and the presence of a complaints system, citizens’ concerns about the Tashkent City project remain unaddressed. The government’s focus—creating a business-friendly climate—may be central to constructing a positive international image of the country, but any nation-branding effort should first ensure the wellbeing of the local population by addressing their needs and concerns.

The district khokimiyats have the potential to make an important contribution to public participation in urban planning. They can significantly affect the wellbeing of all interest groups by bridging the dialogue gap between the government and the people and then helping resolve public complaints. The Public Council under Mirzo Ulugbek khokimiyat is an example of a civil society institution working to address urban development and other community issues. The Council has received 48 billion Uzbek soums (US$5,900) from the khokimiyat to improve infrastructure and public services in the district.48 It has established commissions on urban planning, ecology, social protection and public relations, education, etc. (see Figure 8). The other 11 administrative divisions in Tashkent lack such a platform for public discussions. District khokimiyats should therefore support the establishment of Public Councils and people should become actively engaged in them. An Information Exchange Platform should also be established.

Figure 8. Public Council structure

Source: Constructed by the author
for all urban projects initiated by the government.

Every citizen has a right to the city. The right to the city is “not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it.” It is a demand that all residents be part of creating the city and have the ability to participate in decisions about urban design. City residents attempt to influence the government’s decisions through an online portal for collective public appeals and petitions known as “Mening Fikrim” (My Opinion). A petition to stop the illegal removal of trees in the city is, for instance, gathering signatures to request that parliament regulate the process. However, these systems are not suitable for all citizens, as there are people in the mahallas who are not active users of the Internet and thus cannot take advantage of virtual appeals systems. It is therefore vital that Public Councils be established to engage all layers of society, including vulnerable groups.

The city is also a space inhabitants can identify with. The right to the city means the “potential use of the city as a source of identity.” The new district of skyscrapers and modern structures should have some meaning and purpose for local people, too; city dwellers, as the main “consumers” who are affected by the city’s transformation, should have the right to participate in the planning process.

In essence, when designing a national brand for the country, leaders ought to first ensure local populations’ wellbeing and treat citizens with due respect. As Anholt puts it, “no place on earth can hope to make others respect and admire it unless it first admires and respects itself.” Currently, however, the Tashkent City project is causing damage to the population’s wellbeing rather than contributing to it. The Uzbek government needs to reconsider its approach to urban planning, making the process more inclusive and more representative.

Policy Recommendations

Recommendations for the central government:

Short-term goals:
- Establish a separate complaints system for discussion of further phases of the Tashkent City project to address the concerns of citizens (replicate the existing appeals portal)
- Provide mahalla residents with equal, adequate housing compensation, taking their needs into account

Long-term goals:
- Establish a Review and Compliance division (a system of checks and balances) to ensure unanimity of decisions and compliance with regulations among decision-making bodies
- Create a legislative basis for the protection of housing rights; ensure adequate relocation process with timely notification on evictions and relocations
- Reform the local governance system to give khokimiyats more autonomy on urban planning and development

Recommendations for khokimiyats:

- Support establishment of Public Councils in all districts of Tashkent
- Provide funding to Public Councils to develop infrastructure and public services

Recommendations for communities:

- Raise housing issues and concerns on urban projects in the presence of a legal expert, mahalla leaders, the media, or local activists
- Report on unexpected urban reconstructions in their mahallas to their khokimiyat and appeal to a court
- Use social media to connect with communities and together raise concerns on urban matters
5 Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, Deputy Foreign Minister, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, March 2018.
7 Ibid.
8 Resident of Olmazor mahalla, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, April 2018.
12 Gazeta.uz, “‘Proektom Tashkent City’ mi dolzhni zaiavit o sebe’ – Sh. Mirziyoyev.”
13 Ibid.
14 Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, Deputy Foreign Minister, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, March 2018.
15 Ibid.
24 Residents, comments to the author on “Tashkent City” project, Tashkent, 2017.
26 Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, Deputy Foreign Minister, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, March 2018.
28 Abdujabbor Abduvakhitov, Deputy Foreign Minister, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, March 2018.
31 Group of Olmazor dwellers, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, April 2018.
33 Tojiboev family, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, April 2018.
34 Evgeniy Gorbunov, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, April 2018.
35 Group of Olmazor dwellers, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, April 2018.
37 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
45 Ishakov, “Dom kino.”
46 Letter to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, from F.F. Havrutdinova, signed by the Architects’ Union, November 2017. See Appendix 1 for a reproduction of the letter.
47 Rushena Seminogova, a granddaughter of Hayrutdinov, personal interview with the author, Tashkent, March 2018.
Уважаемый Шавкат Мирамович!

В дирекции штаба строительства «Ташкент - Сити» рассматриваются 5 (пять) вариантов проектов застройки, предложенные отечественными и зарубежными архитекторами.

Творческая общественность Узбекистана - Союз архитекторов, Союз художников и Союз кинематографистов - хотела бы принять активное участие в рассмотрении окончательной концепции застройки «Ташкент - Сити» и просит организовать открытое обсуждение предложенных вариантов в соответствии международной традицией реконструкций столиц мира.

Мы обеспокоены намерением проектировщиков «Ташкент - Сити» убрать уникальное, в своем роде, здание «Дом кино», построенное в 1982 году на средства Союза кинематографистов СССР при участии Узбекской ССР, под руководством Шафара Рашитовича Рашитова.

«Дом кино» является единственным в мире зданием, специально созданным для творческого развития кинематографистов Узбекистана.

Мы просим сохранить «Дом кино» и вписать его в окончательный проект застройки «Ташкент Сити».

Союз кинематографистов Узбекистана: