HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
SOUTH CAUCASUS

FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC

Transformation of Social Spaces in the South Caucasus

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in the South Caucasus

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FOREWORD

The South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF SC) has been operating since 2003. For 12 years it has been working hard to promote democracy and fair social and political systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. One of the key tools used for this purpose is reflection over the variety of aspects of public life that compose the overall political and social development of the South Caucasus nations. Social research is one of the instruments that facilitate understanding of transformation processes and allow for reflection on the state of societies.

This is why the HBF SC decided to actively engage young social scientists and researchers in its Regional Scholarship Programme. It was an effort to give voice to promising beginning scholars in the region by giving them a channel for expressing their knowledge of their respective societies and raising issues they see as important and worthy of deliberation.

Over its 10 years of existence, the HBF SC regional scholarship programme had benefited 127 young social scientists and published seven selections of articles (containing 74 articles) produced by its alumni: [a] Identity, Power and the City in the Works of Young Social Scientists in the South Caucasus (2005); [b] South Caucasus: Spaces, Histories, People (2006); [c] Figuring out the South Caucasus: Societies and Environment (2008); [d] The New South Caucasus: Overcoming Old Boundaries (2008); [e] City, Migration, Markets: New Studies in Social Science from the South Caucasus (2011); [f] Observing Transformation: Adaptation Strategies in the South Caucasus (2011); [g] Changing Identities: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia (2012).

Scholarly works published in the framework of the HBF SC regional scholarship programme should not be viewed as the only outcome of the programme. The social-political issues raised and acute problems of transformation revealed have given impetus for debating, discussing and deliberating problems of culture and identity, local politics and democracy, urban and sustainable development, and gender democracy and minority rights throughout the South Caucasus.

The knowledge and communication networks established and developed in the framework of the regional scholarship programme had grown into variety of activities by the HBF SC, its partners and alumni. Once given proper stimulus, the mechanism of multiplying knowledge of social and political developments gets stronger over time. Continued academic research, joint cross-border initiatives, cooperation and civic activism based on ideas and visions emerging from the programme still surprise the observer with the endless scope of the work conducted in frames of the HBF SC regional scholarship programme.

After its 10-year anniversary, the scholarship was transformed into the Green Academy of the HBF SC, which is to serve as a platform to promote the values and principles of Green politics in the South Caucasus, it is still important to offer the scholarly works that should be brought to the attention of interested parties in academia, politics, and social sciences in order to deepen understanding of the South Caucasus's uneasy transformation. The present publication, "From Private to Public: Transformation of Social Spaces in the South Caucasus", unlike its "predecessors", focuses on linkages between the transformation of private spaces and the social impact of this process in terms of

defining the notion of 'public' in the context of public activism and the changing nature of public life in the societies of the South Caucasus.

This selection unites 11 articles written by Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian alumni of the HBF SC regional scholarship programme from the years 2011, 2013 and 2014. These papers do not examine "traditionally popular" Caucasian topics like formal democratic institutions, the market economy and its social impact, ethnic conflicts and identity. Rather, they focus on understanding the inherent changes that have occurred in the South Caucasus societies recently. The publication will provide a valuable observation of the last decade of social and political developments in the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian societies through the prism of the professional and academic experiences of local scholars. Hopefully, it will give relevant food for thought to their colleagues and counterparts abroad who are interested in the region and who work on the social and political democratization of the three nations of the South Caucasus.

November 9, 2015

Nino Lejava,
Director

Malkhaz Saldadze
Programme Coordinator

Heinrich Boell Foundation
South Caucasus Regional Office

INTRODUCTION

In the field of sociology collections of various articles (especially by young authors!) are traditionally called "common graves". It is thought that they are read only at random and by a few aficionados. What of interest could possibly be written by some little-known researchers - student works at that?! There is some truth in this notion. There are not many worthy social sciences texts published in the South Caucasus. But now, reader, you hold in your hands a book which is truly worth reading.

In general, the development of social sciences in the South Caucasus has advanced significantly of late. The long epoch of sustained, domineering influence of the Russian Empire (later the USSR) in the framework of the accustomed colonial discourse characteristic of researchers of the 19th and 20th centuries, has come to an end. Now we are seeing the "Europeanization" of the higher education system, though it is still accompanied by processes of science being marginalized, plus the legacy of Soviet-era isolationism. And while the scholarly discourse in the sphere of the social sciences - like the very the states of the South Caucasus themselves - is in an embryonic state, we still can see a surge of interest in scholarship among the young generation of social sciences researchers.

New opportunities have appeared for the realization of planned projects thanks to grants from foreign foundations and joint research with Western partners. Young people with initiative take part in summer schools and conferences abroad and acquaint themselves with the level of social sciences in the course of all kinds of internships. Some of them receive education at Western universities. At the same time, there still exist numerous obstacles to the integration of social sciences in the South Caucasus into the world tradition. As before, the "dependence on the path already travelled" is strong. As neo-institutional theory says, it is possible for institutions to have great influence on the course of history long after they have ceased existing (as is the case with Soviet institutions!).

In the countries of the South Caucasus, higher education reform is still under way and the knowledge of most students lags behind that of the average student at a Western university in terms of both quality and quantity. There is practically no professional middle class where young scholars can "incubate", as is necessary for an academic career. Conferences and seminars are held irregularly and the scholarly journals scene (especially those in languages accessible to foreign readers) is extremely boring. There are very few jobs for those seeking a career in the research field. Worthy of special mention are the "patriotic" bias of the results of many studies. This is partially a reflection of the political situation in the South Caucasus in the past quarter-century, which has been characterized by constant territorial conflicts and wars. (This government-encouraged bias has constantly threatened the neutral reputation of the German Heinrich Boell Foundation when it publishes articles by its scholarship recipients.)

Against this not-yet very optimistic backdrop, the Heinrich Boell Foundation's special research programme for young sociologists, historians and urbanists (over 150 of them!) from the countries of the South Caucasus has played an enormous positive role over the past 10 years.

In the course of a year, each scholarship recipient conducted serious research in constant consultation with experienced Caucasian or foreign advisers who are recognized scholars. Collections of articles resulting from the researches have been published regularly. This programme gave impetus to a number of successful academic careers and

introduced research directions and methods that were new to the region. Many of the scholars have gone on to gain renown in their professional communities and their names are heard more and more frequently at international conferences and in foreign journals.

The editors of the present collection have accomplished the two tasks they set for themselves. First, articles about the results of the most successfully studies by scholars over the past three years are collected here. The inclusion of local discourse in these articles gives them special value, as it makes it possible to critically view the social theories discussed within the professional community.

Let us note that the research was conducted in accordance with modern anthropological methods. After all, the aim of social research is reconstruction of "the grammar of culture" - that is, the rules that guide people in this or that social circle (milieu). And just as we probably cannot speak about the grammatical rules that govern how we speak (we cannot know them but we still speak correctly!), similarly we usually cannot speak about the rules that govern how we act, as we are simply not conscious of them. Surveys are not of use here. We have to spend time painstakingly collecting "texts" about an unknown culture (like texts in an unknown language) in order to reconstruct the rules. In so doing any culture outside our own milieu becomes foreign to us, and any understanding of it without trying to resocialize are illusory.

The decisive criterion in determining the usefulness of a method is the opportunity to try to present a social world in the same way that it exists for those under study, and not how the researcher imagines it. This is where the necessity to use qualitative research methods comes in: participatory observation, first and foremost, and free interviewing. Discoveries in the social sciences cannot be planned - they can only be come across in virgin territory. This is the paradigm in which these young researchers worked.

Second, following the tradition of public sociology, an attempt was made to present the results of the researches in a language accessible to non-professional readers to facilitate wide discussion of pertinent societal problems. The texts included here not only reflect the interests of the community of social sciences researchers, they are also relevant to ongoing public discussions.

The essence of public sociology is encouraging a diverse public to engage in dialogue with the aim of educating one another. In publishing certain texts, we should be thinking about how they will be reflected in the development of society. We must not be indifferent to possible future transformations in society influenced by researchers. We hope for fruitful follow-up debates that will help crystallize and develop our public life, having paid attention to important issues - both private and public - which are usually not discussed in a university auditorium.

The structure of this collection follows the concept of broadening the social spaces under research - from private to public. The rules that guide people in their lives are closely linked to their socialization in specific social spaces. The highly fragile and conditional privacy of the Soviet era is being replaced with the formation of a genuinely private space (first and foremost that of the family), where a person feels comfortable beyond the gaze of strangers. The lack of publicness of the Soviet Union is being replaced by a public space of the kind spoken about by Hannah Arendt and Jurgen Habermas - that is, the existence

of public spaces where private citizens can freely criticize the state (granted this exists to varying degrees in the countries of the South Caucasus). The changes of the past quarter-century in the social space have naturally brought about important social and political processes fundamentally changing the lives of people. It is these changes that are the focus of the research of the foundation's scholars.

THE FIRST SECTION is dedicated to studying problems of the private space (home, family) in a society undergoing rapid social change - as is the case now in the countries of the South Caucasus. Various global processes are posing many challenges to so-called "traditional society". And we are observing a kind of marginalization of the more advanced social groups who received a good education and share many of the ideals of contemporary Western society. These avant-garde groups effectively live in two cultures, receiving some of their values from Western society while at the same time not breaking with "tradition".

HUMAY AKHUNDZADEH and **NINO RCHEULISHVILI** seek in their articles to understand what hides behind the image of the "contemporary urban family" in Azerbaijan and Georgia, respectively. Both researchers argue their conclusions on the basis of analysis of informal interviews with and observations of families of acquaintances.

At first glance we are struck by the clear contradictions between the overall gender equality situation and the real-life picture of behaviour that is fully in accordance with traditional gender rules. But this apparent contradiction is evident - strange as it may sound - almost exclusively among men. **HUMAY AKHUNDZADEH'S** research in Baku shows that the transition to modern family type will be a very lengthy one, as women themselves are wholly satisfied with the traditional roles of mother and housewife and do not consider it a priority to have a professional career despite their good education and familiarity with behaviour patterns characteristic of European society. The main conclusion of the research is the rejection of the notion held by most Western researchers that the more egalitarian views men have, the more equally the housework is divided in their homes. In Azerbaijan this is not at all the case. And this conclusion is confirmed also by the fact that in the social world there are no patterns, there are only rules which in different societies can contradict each other.

NINO RCHEULISHVILI conducted her research in family kitchens in Tbilisi, studying their rules of behaviour and strategies regarding the preparation of food by working married women. Here too the traditional functions of women are placed in doubt. Here, conflicts in the family can arise not out of attempts by women to overcome their "kitchen slavery" (there is not even any talk of this; for the respondents the preparation of food by the woman is axiomatic), but more likely as a result of interference by a mother or mother-in-law who considers herself a more experienced cook, or by an especially finicky husband who is unsatisfied with his wife's culinary skills.

The research done by Nano Zazanashvili pertains to what appears to be a completely different topic, not directly related to family privacy. The author analyses different aspects of the construction of special settlements for the "second wave" of displaced persons (victims of the 2008 war). But the most interesting part of the article is where we learn how displaced persons use their new private space. The researcher makes her conclusions on the basis of many observations made during the fieldwork portion of the study (she lived for a time with a family in one of the settlements) and during interviews taken in the

course of the observation process. She scrupulously describes how the physical space of the homes is subjected to numerous alterations by its residents in a manner depending on the previous socialization of the displaced persons and the social demands that arise in their new place of residence.

The work of Natia Ghviniashvili is devoted to homophobia, a highly sensitive topic for the societies of the South Caucasus. Most of the text is dedicated to describing the discrimination against homosexuals by a homophobic society (tolerant people in Georgia, according to the author's data, comprise only a few per cent of the population!) based on materials from interviews she conducted. She describes the ways homosexuals cope with this situation, including the influence of the LGBT community on whether the chosen path is successful. While Natia did her research on patterns tested by American scholars, the materials collected in Tbilisi are of great value precisely because of the especially high level of homophobia in Georgian society as compared with that of relatively tolerant Western societies. The excellent access that the author gained to the normally very closed LGBT community and the trust she gained with her respondents lend special credence to her arguments.

THE SECOND SECTION of the collection brings the reader into the public space, where social rules are regulated by different conceptions of what is proper compared with how people behave in private spaces. It is well known that a social space is formed by something physical that at the same time reflects the particularities of what came before. This is precisely why the editors chose for publication the most interesting works which demonstrate the connection between physical and social spaces and the changes that take place in the course of the formation and functioning of these spaces. Three of the four articles in this section were written from an urbanist perspective based on research materials collected in Tbilisi and one based on fieldwork conducted in Armenia.

EVIA HOVHANNISYAN conducted her fieldwork in an unusual place - a long-abandoned village which continues to play a vital role in the surrounding social space. It is interesting to see how nearby residents use this "dead zone" and what social consequences come about from the very fact of the ghost town's existence. The majority of researchers on dying settlements across the world focus on the process of its death, not its "posthumous life", so Hovhannisyan's article is particularly interesting in this regard. In addition, interesting results were received thanks to the relevant research methods used - cognitive mapping and biographical interviews - which are not often used by researchers.

ELENE DARJANIA analysed the situation surrounding squatting in Tbilisi, whose history began in the 19th century. Entire settlements have arisen in the city comprising self-made constructions on illegally squatted land plots. Through triangulating sources and research methods (interviews with residents and experts, taking photos, gathering documents), the author performs her analysis with deference to the context of the conditions of the formation of illegal constructions during the Soviet era, problems of legalization and privatization in subsequent years, the particularities of the infrastructure and accommodation in squatter settlements, as well as problems neighbours have in organizing themselves. In sum, four types of illegal housing are defined based on objective criteria and arguments are presented for the need for reform and change of city policy.

IRAKLI ZHVANIA'S article focuses on analysing the build-up of one of Tbilisi's districts. The research uses the case study approach. The author combines classical urbanism with

elements of urban anthropology, having collected all manner of information about the district and extensive field data (first and foremost interview with local residents), observed the dynamics of change in the structure of the construction project dating back to Soviet times. The weakness of state control over the construction of residential housing has led to the disappearance of a specific urban atmosphere and to serious social changes in the area. Especially interesting are his thoughts on how relations develop in practice between new buildings, old buildings and people. We see that the changes to this space led to changes in social relations in the area (see in particular: M. Fatherstone, S. Lash, R. Robertson, Global Modernities (1995) and E. Soja, Taking Space Personally, in The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives // (Ed. B. Warf, S. Arias (2009)). Zhvania analyses the observed processes of gentrification and segregation and gives several recommendations regarding preserving historic heritage, territorial planning around old buildings, local residents' participation in decision-making and mechanisms for regulating new construction.

DATA CHIGHOLASHVILI'S interestingly constructed article looks at issues of urban visual imagery. The author was interested in finding out how the branding and rebranding of modern Tbilisi is reflected and comprehended in the current visual images of the city. He distinguishes three groups of visual images - traditional, modernist and Soviet Tbilisi - and discusses them in the context of ongoing transformations.

The author collected extensive material for analysis thanks to his use of various research methods: interview (with residents and people who make visual images), cognitive maps, observations and analysis of plans. One of the most important conclusions of the article is that the more involved citizens are in transformation processes, the more clearly they understand the city. The classic activist position is situated in the space of contemporary debates (more importantly: C. Boyer, The City of Collective Memory (1996) and N. Mirzoeff, Introduction to Visual Culture (1999)).

The third section of the collection shows the results of research on social activism in the public space. The studies done in this field demonstrate that people are not only a product of societal relations, they also change these relations themselves and create new rules. Matters of residents' participation in the transformation of social relations are especially relevant in societies undergoing rapid social changes, as is the case with today's South Caucasus.

DAVIT SICHINAVA looks into what has influenced the change in electoral preferences of the population during the process of the last electoral campaign in Georgia. On the basis of analysis of electoral behaviour in two districts of Tbilisi which differ in terms of social-demographic characteristics, and interviews with 30-some residents of these districts, he exposes general and specific features of the set of factors that determine this behaviour. Specifically, it turns out that conventional Western theories require significant adjustment in this context. The most important factors determining the choice of candidates are media propaganda (especially TV), orientation towards neighbours (where communities of neighbours are concentrated) and personal networks. Citizens are inclined to vote for populist slogans, as well as on the basis of their own economic conditions and fear of repression from the authorities. And ideology plays no role whatsoever in party mobilization.

HOVANNES HOVHANNISYAN researched the Word of Life Church in Armenia as an example of how a religious minority functions in a society. In his text the author brings together two pertinent issues: minorities studies and media studies. Now forms of religion are interesting for understanding the mix of the traditional and the modern in religious practices. The author examines the transition from the total domination enjoyed by the Armenian Apostolic Church during the Soviet period to the multireligiousness of the past quarter-century, in which Evangelicals are marginalized. Based on participant observation within the Evangelical community, interviews, and focus groups with adepts of this religious minority, the author tries to portray this society from the perspective of the religious minority group itself. Discrimination faced by this minority group from the dominant church is discussed, as is the group's own tolerance towards other groups. The article also touches on a topic that is widely discussed in many countries: how "non-traditional" religious ideas influence national identity (in this case of Armenians).

ESMA BERIKISHVILI'S article discusses a student movement in Georgia which exerted significant influence on political processes in the country. After more than four decades, the study of public movements has not lost its relevance in the social sciences. Rapid social changes related to accelerating globalization tendencies have brought about special interest in the agents of these changes. From the perspective of the sociology of public movements, the author analyses the interviews and statements by activists of the group Laboratory 1918, which promoted a leftist political discourse in media and social networks. The researcher views the activities of the group within the understandings of the sociology of public movements (from this perspective perhaps it would be fruitful to view the entire student protest, where, besides the group described in this article as the leading ideological force, there also existed other elemental parts). The article shows the connection between the success of a movement with a changing structure of political opportunities, the width of the repertoire of protest actions, and the development of the system of social networks. In my view, the article raises the need for further study into public movements in Georgia, as they have played an important role both during the Soviet era and in the last quarter-century.

Reading this collection, one wonders whether it is possible to accelerate social changes in the societies of the South Caucasus using useful ideas demonstrated in the research. I believe that the texts here will certainly be discussed in the professional community. But in order to actually apply the relevant results and the recommendations of the authors in practice, the state - that is, the decision-makers - must show the relevant political will. For now, the impression remains that the societies of the Caucasus have not yet come to understand the usefulness of social sciences for effective transformation. But, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, pessimism arises from intelligence but optimism arises from will.

Over its many years of work, the Heinrich Boell Foundation, with the support of beginning social sciences scholars, has clearly demonstrated that in the countries of the South Caucasus there are many talented young researchers awaiting a chance to realize their potential. The present collection is yet further confirmation of this thesis.

Viktor Voronkov
Founder of the Center for Independent Social Research

CHAPTER 1

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: PRIVATE SPACE

Gender Arrangements in Contemporary Azerbaijani Urban Families

Humay Akhundzadeh

The gender arrangements of family life reflect major aspects of the status and social roles of individuals and peculiarities of relations between them, constituting an inseparable part of the gender structure of society in general. They are actualised by means of everyday family practices. Interrelated elements – such as gender division of labour, the perception of such a division by individuals, gender contracts implemented in families and the performance of parental duties with regard to children of the opposite sex - play a major role in shaping gender arrangements. In our opinion, gender division of labour can be regarded as the central constituent part of a gender arrangement in general and other components can be discussed in this context.

Long-term research throughout the world has shown that everywhere, the majority of household work is usually done by women. The gender asymmetry in household duties is not so prominent in some countries, but in others, there is a big gap in the amount of work done by spouses at home. However, "throughout the world, childcare and household duties fall mostly on the shoulders of women".[1] In other words, despite certain progress in the liberalisation of gender arrangements over the past 50 years, families and gender aspects of family relations have remained very rigid throughout the world as regards the preservation of traditional behavioural models.

This paper examines the gender situation in Azerbaijani families in conditions of a large city - Baku -which has various cultural layers and where traditional conservatism and modern influences are intertwined in families. The unique nature of the situation, where modern

1 "Ves mir" (2001) Gender issues and development. Stimulation of development through gender equality in rights, availability of resources and possibility to express interests (transl. from English), Moscow. "Ves mir", p.69 [Гендерные проблемы и развитие. Стимулирование развития через гендерное равенство в правах, в доступности ресурсов и возможности выражать свои интересы].

families exist in Baku, is that unlike during the Soviet times, when family practices were directly or indirectly prompted by the common Communist ideology, they are now under influence from several different directions. Such varied influences can lead either to attempts to revive certain ideals of the traditional family on the basis of national values by isolating oneself from everything linked to the Soviet past or to the adoption of more liberal and egalitarian relations within families. In addition, these local processes are under way in conditions, where "social transformations embracing all regions in the world bring about a broad spectrum of adaptive reactions: Traditional mechanisms of running families are actualised on the one hand and previously existing norms of relations within families are revised and become more egalitarian on the other".[2]

This paper attempts to identify peculiarities of gender arrangements in present-day families in Baku. *The main issue under study is how gender arrangements of families are changing under conditions of modern society in the city.* Access to higher education, informational openness, development of market economy and economic relations with other countries and exposure to liberal values indicate that society in present-day Baku is modern. However, it is not clear what changes, if any, modern society has made to everyday family practices and what kind of gender arrangements are taking shape at the confluence of the traditional perceptions of spousal roles and the need to adapt to modern conditions. We will seek to bring some clarity to this issue.

Our research shows that multidirectional influences in the contemporary Baku impact males and females differently. The erosion of the traditional lifestyle appears to have affected men more than women, at least at the level of thinking. Practically members of the group involved in this study have received a higher education but nevertheless feel bound to the traditional gender contract of "breadwinner-housewife", which underlies the entire gender arrangement in their families.

THEORETICAL FRAMES OF THE STUDY

The main concepts used in our study are as follows: "Gender arrangement", "gender division of labour", and "gender contract". Being interconnected, they shape the gender arrangements in the specific groups under study.

In her comparative analysis of gender division of labour, German researcher Birgit Pfau-Effinger used the notion of "gender arrangement", which she defined as a frame of social activity created by gender culture (values, ideas, and ideals), gender systems (institutions), social practices, and collective actions.[3] Gender arrangements are nec-

2 Malysheva, M.M. (2001) Contemporary patriarchy. Social-economic essay. Moscow, Academia, p.228 [Современный патриархат. Социально-экономическое эссе].

3 Zdravomyslova, E.A., Temkina, A.A. (2000) Governmental constuction of gender in soviet society/ Journal of Social politics research. Vol.1 (3/4) , pp.299-321// Pfau/Effinger, B., The experience of cross-national analisys of gender arrangement // Sociological reseach. № 11, pp.26-27 [Государственное конструирование гендера в советском обществе/Журнал исследований социальной политики. Том 1 (3/4), с. 299-321 // Опыт кросс-национального анализа гендерного уклада//Социологические исследования].

essarily manifested in the peculiarities of gender division of labour. We can already find interpretations of such divisions in some feminist texts. According to prominent feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin, gender division of labour is a "prohibition" and taboo against the notion of the sameness of males and females, which divides men and women into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo that reinforces biological differences between genders, thus creating gender.[4] However, in general, the leading gender contract prompted by the ideology of a specific country has an impact on the formation of a gender arrangement and gender division of labour.

The notion of gender contract was initially developed by Scandinavian feminist researchers and then supplemented and further developed by various authors such as R. Crompton, C. Pateman, and Y. Hirdman. Given the historical aspects of the formation of gender contracts, we concur with its definition as proposed by Russian researchers A. Temkina and A. Rotkirch. They define gender contracts not as cooperation between equal partners, but as a compromise between agents with various power positions.[5] Of course, as part of the former USSR, Azerbaijan was also subject to the ideology and the use of "normalized" gender contract. Divergences between public and private spheres were usual and women's employment in manufacturing did not lead to the reduction of their work at home. The "double burden on women" linked to the Soviet gender contracts of "working mothers" was quite widespread up to the very end of the Soviet era. Later, it was perceived as "natural" and a "normal state" of women's behaviour, one explained by some peculiarities of national morality and the importance of family values for Azerbaijanis. The dual demands of the state upon women led to divergences in the behavioural models of Azerbaijani women in public and private spheres. N. Tohidi speaks about this on the basis of a study carried out in Baku in the early 1990s.[6]

Before the 1990s, researchers studying gender division of labour were interested in what specific work spouses in families were responsible for. Later on, the focus shifted to the perception of the gender division of labour by husbands and wives. One of the possible reasons for the switch was the fact that despite a sudden breakthrough in the liberalization of gender arrangements, for example in Western countries in the 1970s-1990s, the gender division of household labour remained largely unchanged, and this led researchers to shift their focus to deeper problems. It should be noted in this connection that works on gender division of labour between spouses based on quantitative methods enable us to understand the existing situation and view certain specific variations of behavioural patterns of males and females within families. However, in our opinion, they do not enable us to understand in-depth motives and unconscious interpretations of one's own behaviour in the selection under research. We believe

4 Zdravomyslova, E., Temkina, A. (Eds.), Chrestomathy of feminist texts. Translations. Saint-Petersburg."Dmitry Bulanin" publishing house, 304 p. [Обмен женщинами. Заметки о "политической экономии" пола, //Хрестоматия феминистких текстов].

5 Temkina, A.A., Rotkirh. A., (2002) Soviet gender contracts and their transformation in modern Russia// Sociological research,№11, pp.4-15, p.5. [Советские гендерные контракты и их трансформация в современной России].

6 Tohidi, N. (1996) Soviet in public, Azeri in private. Gender, Islam and nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan/Women Studies International Forum. Vol. 19. Nos 1/2, pp. 111-123.

that it is regular observations and interviews that can draw us closer to the answers to more essential problems of how household duties are divided in specific families, how traditional behavioural models and new realities coexist, how gender setups are implemented within the gender arrangements of families, and, most importantly, how social actors themselves perceive and interpret the process.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Triangulation of methods was used in this research. Problem-oriented interviews, additional observations (covert observations and the monitoring of radio and TV programmes), and group discussions were the main methods. Eight interviews were held with couples living in four families in Baku. The informants had experience of marital life ranging from 3.5 years to 7 years and their age was from 28 to 43. Two families had two children of pre-school age and the other two one child of pre-school age each.

The informants interviewed had a lot in common. All of them lived in Baku; all families were nuclear, i.e. they consisted of two generations, parents and children, who were in this case, of pre-school age. They lived in their own housing purchased after one to three years of marital life and all the families had moderate incomes. All the members of these families, with the exception of one female informant, had higher education and all of them had working experience of between four and 10 years at the time of the study, although some of the female informants quit their jobs by that time. All husbands were involved in intellectual work requiring a high level of professionalism. They were doctors, IT specialists, research fellows, and journalists. The families involved in the research had healthy relationships and empirical data alone show that there were no major conflicts within them. It is also noteworthy that their relations with their parents were also good, but the couples nevertheless relied on themselves in resolving everyday problems and were overall quite autonomous. Yet another feature the families had in common was their discourse regarding the past and history of their families. Nearly all the informants mentioned in some form the difficult first years of their lives together and these difficulties were mainly linked to material and housing problems. Most importantly, they said the difficulties had been overcome due to the correct choice of their life partners, which they referred to as a proof of positive relations within the families.

Why nuclear families? It is known that the breakup of extended families into nuclear families is a broadening trend in many countries and Azerbaijan is no exception in this regard. We selected nuclear families, because, first, gender arrangements are more complicated in nature in extended families and we would probably be unable to cover the problem within the scope of this work. Second, nuclear families created by people with higher education and successfully functioning in modern society in the capital of a country are an example of marital relations for others. In other words, they are the advanced layer that serves as a model for the transformation of gender arrangements.

Interviews were held separately with each spouse with no third persons present. Five of the eight interviews were held at the informants' homes, two at their places of work, and one in a neutral place.

Preference was given to holding the interviews in the respondents' places of residence,

because, in general being in a comfortable space makes people more open. Also, if a person is interviewed at home, the interviewer has a unique chance of comparing data, i.e. the interviewer can also make observations, which helps him/her to achieve the effect of the triangulation of methods, which enables him/her to be more confident in considering empirical data.

Observations were made in various social conditions. The content of the conversations, radio and TV programmes, advertisement clips, feature films, and so forth was analysed. The observations were made in January-June 2014. All observation data were recorded and then analysed together with the data obtained by other methods.

Women aged 20-35 (11 people) were involved in the group discussion (17 April 2014). They were members of the Female Conversation Club for English learners. The discussion was semi-structured. The participants had received higher education and most of them were single and partially employed. There were several housewives among them.

RESULTS OF ANALYTICAL WORK

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

The materials of observation show that public discourse is characterised by essentialism regarding the explanations of traditional divisions of labour. In addition, the essentialist explanations of "female" and "male" household duties often tend to turn into a discussion of features of nationality. For example, the fact that women constantly bear the burden of household duties is justified not just by this being a "natural female duty", but by "our women" or "Azerbaijani women" being constantly distinguished by their extreme readiness to make sacrifices for their families and relatives, which makes their being occupied with household duties quite natural. Another peculiarity of public discussions is a positive assessment of the division of household duties in accordance with the traditional model. Women who play traditional roles in everyday life are said to be exemplary and those who do not are criticized. Let us consider the following excerpts from the records made during our observations:

Positive assessment: *"Z is excellent! She is constantly occupied. Her husband never makes even a cup of tea for himself."* (Z is a middle-age woman, who has a scientific degree and two jobs).

Negative assessment: *"M was such a bad and demanding woman. Her husband feared her so much that he ironed his shirts himself."*

Many assess a hypothetical opportunity of men's involvement in "female" household duties like making food as a threat to their manliness. Even children of pre-school age, who participated in a talk show whose title could be translated as "From the mouths of babes", when asked what their fathers did at home and whether he made food, said that *"father does not do anything at home, because he works" or "men never make food, as it is shameful".*

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

FAMILY AS A CENTRAL SPHERE OF LIFE

Having analysed the interviews, we identified certain peculiarities of the group under research. In three cases out of four, family was the centre of the respondents' lives. This is true of both men and women. The male informants in these three families regarded career and work first and foremost as a means for material support of the family. In other words, careers served families, not vice versa. In the family of N (the man was 32 and had been married for 3.5 years; both spouses worked, raising a child of 2.5 years), professional interests ran parallel with the interests of the family and unlike the other cases, we cannot unambiguously say that the family was in first place, although we cannot speak about disregard for the family and relations within it either. As regards wives, three of the four female informants were housewives. Two of them had received a higher education and had worked before the birth of their children. It follows that there was a classical gender contract in the three families - "breadwinner-housewife" - and the fourth family was a family of two careers and both spouses working, but both had flexible schedules that made it possible to do some work at home.

GENDER ARRANGEMENT AND PECULIARITIES OF RAISING CHILDREN

One of the peculiarities identified during the analysis of the interviews was the connection between the existing gender arrangements in families and the methods for raising children. The more traditional family practices that shape gender arrangements are, the more authoritarian methods are used for raising children. In other words, there was a positive interconnection between traditional gender arrangements and the authoritarian style of raising children. Let us consider the following passages, where approaches to raising children vary from obviously authoritarian to liberal. S (a man aged 35, candidate of sciences and the only breadwinner in the family, who raised two children of pre-school age together with his wife, a housewife, who also had a higher education), said about his four-year-old daughter:

"We do not allow her to be capricious and say: 'No, I do want this.' She already understands that she is not allowed."

Also: *"She also has to bear her burden in all these affairs. In other words, she is aware of her responsibility."*

On the contrary, A (male of 34, a doctor), whose attitude towards his child is most liberal compared with the other informants, was surprised when he was asked what he would like to give the child. He answered:

"Oh, no! Word of honour, I don't want to develop anything in her. She will take what she wants from me. What do I give her? Love and affection."

The Ahmadov family (not their real surname) is somewhere in the middle. Neither spouse holds a tough position expressed in the word "must" regarding the child, but at the same time, the position is not as liberal as that of A, who said: *"She will take what*

she wants". For example, D (female, 37, married for seven years, a housewife, who has a higher education) did not think a lot before explaining how she wanted to raise the child. These were said to be features like *"independence of opinions", "self-sufficiency",* and *"independence from everyone".* Her husband said that his relationship with his three-year-old son were "ideal", adding that one of his positive features was that "it is possible to reach an agreement with him", but he did not mention obedience or discipline.

All the families that were interviewed belonged to a certain extent to the category of families focused on children. The informants felt strongly that they had obligations to their children, which becomes obvious in much of what they said. In general, this corresponded to both public discussions and descriptions of Azerbaijani families in scientific literature. Observations have shown that the presence of children plays a most important role in the maintenance of marital relations. The all-too-common expression that *"a family without children is not a family"* was effectively never questioned during public discussions. Parenthood is the most important component of family life. One of the classical works on the traditions of Azerbaijani families describes the major condition for being happy as follows: "Spouses must treat each other not only as husband and wife, but first and foremost as mother and father and should look at each other through the eyes of their children".[7] In other words, the roles of mother and father are placed higher than other roles of men and women in a family, which creates a basis for gender relations in families.

GENDER ARRANGEMENTS OF FAMILIES THROUGH THE EYES OF MEN AND WOMEN

The method used to study families, interviews with both spouses in particular, allowed us to identify quite important peculiarities of how husbands and wives perceived family arrangements. The most obvious discrepancy became evident in the vision of spouses and their attempts to present their families. Women described their families as corresponding to the traditional model, but men, on the contrary, tried to convince us that their families were more modern than most other families. At the same time, trying to raise their self-esteem in their own eyes and in the eyes of the interviewers as modern husbands with egalitarian views, they often said things that contradicted what they had said before. For example, O (male aged 43, who had been married for seven years and was raising two children together with his spouse, a housewife, who has a higher education) repeated eight times during the interview that duties were not divided in their family as those of females and males, "yours" and "mine", but at the same time, answering separate questions on household duties, he said: *"I have nothing to do with this".* In another case, A (male aged 34, a doctor, who had been married for six years, raising two children with his spouse, who is a housewife) gave hypothetical answers to many questions about household duties: "I can do that". However, when it became quite evident during the interview that his involvement in household work was much lower than that of his wife, he started subtly justifying himself by referring to a heavy burden at work on the one hand and to the attitude of his wife on the other.

7 Alizade, A. (1995) The world of love. Azerbaijan Encyclopedia. Poblishing-polygraphy Union, Baku, p.133 [Əlizadə Ə. Məhəbbət aləmi. Azərbaycan Ensiklopediyası].

"No, I don't do dishes. ... Dishes, when she was sick, if she is sick. ... I would wash dishes, but she would not let me. ... There were times, when I was not so busy. ... Yes, in principle, I could wash them, but she would nevertheless [continues in a lower voice] not allow me, probably because she thought it was not good. [Pause] I can wash. In principle, this is not so difficult. Cleaning up is more difficult, because I may fail to notice things. ... This is more difficult. In a way, this is not [starts speaking more quickly] a psychological barrier, to say 'Never.' No, no, for God's sake... mmm... Well, I can run the vacuum cleaner and clean up the children's mess. That is no problem, but... mmm... There has been no need [pause] to cook. ... Anyway, I cannot cook anything normal." This passage was quite typical of other male informants as well.

It follows that the spouses regarded as the "proof" of their being egalitarian not the real situation in dividing household duties, but their ideas about hypothetical situations, where husbands had to do their *"wives' work"*, but only in extreme situations, when *"my wife is sick"* or *"something happens"*.

Female informants remained loyal to traditions, which became obvious not only from the fact that they were quite happy after quitting their jobs after they got married or gave birth to a child even though they had a higher education. In addition, they were quite loyal to the traditional division of labour. Of course, there were insignificant complaints - *"I do not have free time"*, *"If it weren't for my hobby, I don't know what my emotional state would be now"*, but in general, they were satisfied with such a lifestyle and the fact that the husbands had jobs and women were doing work at home. For example, D spoke about some household duties her husband had "nothing to do" calmly and even with some humour. Assessing the situation, she said: "There is a clear division ... because this is, so to say, traditional. This is within us".

GENDER AS AN OBSTACLE

Speaking about everyday routine duties at home, practically all female informants tended to emphasize their own competence and downgrade that of their husbands. They said that even when men did something at home, the quality was much worse, linking the ineptitude to their gender, not personal qualities.

For example: *"He cannot even [buy] sweets without me"*, *"Yes, he is like this. He does not understand ... He has no idea about getting tomatoes or going to the bazaar."* (E, female of 38, married for six years, a housewife)

"My husband mostly [buys] things, ... but there are some nuances he cannot handle. He cannot do that just because he is a man". (D, female of 37, married for seven years, a housewife with higher education)

In other words, as they see it, being a man already limits a person's capabilities in performing household duties and is an obstacle to successfully accomplishing such duties. Even M (30, married for 3.5 years, job with a flexible schedule, raising a child aged 2.5 years), who can be described as part of the most advanced group of informants and distinguished by her being emancipated and critically disposed to many traditions in

society, expressed quite traditional ideas when speaking about household duties: *"As regards cleaning up, he is a man after all. He cannot do that like women"* or *"I am cleaning up. It is a common practice, so to say [laughing]. I don't even expect that he will clean up."*

In other words, wives were quite persistent in asserting that their husbands were incapable of successfully coping with household duties. Other authors have also noted the same trend. For example, A. Iudin noted that "driving out husbands from household work, women make them incapable and dependent in home conditions".[8] However, we believe that in our case, men are quite seldom "driven out" from household duties due to active efforts on the part of women, as they seldom have the desire to assume more responsibility for household labour. In our opinion, women tend to exaggerate their competence in household duties, because being a leading force in these matters is supposedly part of female identity. For men socialised in a patriarchal society, virility has roots in rejecting everything that can traditionally be described as "feminine". It follows that being unskilled and unable to do household work is a harmonious part of male identity.

FROM TRADITIONALISM TO EGALITARIANISM: THIS "INVISIBLE MARGIN"

The curious fact that the men who participated in the study made attempts to present their families as modern and themselves as men with egalitarian ideas of marital life in conditions of traditional division of labour is further confirmation of the fact that families vin present-day Baku exist in conditions of influence from various directions, which creates a peculiar configuration of the identity of present-day residents of the city. To analyse the situation, let us consider the following passage, where O (male, 43, married for seven years and raising two children with his spouse, a housewife, who had a higher education) answered a question as to how he would take the prospect of his wife's return to full time work:

"[Speaking in a low voice] No, I ... mmm ... would not like that [pause]. I mean, it depends on what work it is. If it is full time and she is fully occupied like me... No, I would... Because there are the children, and the house. Anyway, I believe that this is again... No, at the level I said and that's it, but I believe that women should nevertheless be occupied with household matters. This is what I think, but again, I am not forcing her to put on a burqa. I mean, I am not saying that things will be like that. But I think that all that should be coming from her. In other words... It would be incorrect, if her husband forced her to do this [bangs the table with his fist]. It would be correct, if she herself... [knocks on the table several times]. There are a lot of people, women, who live like that. In other words, she herself [coughs]... Women must be like this. I mean, they should not be forced to be like this, but they must be like this. ... Women must do this, I think, in this manner [pause] ... If you ask me whether I accept a family, where the man stays at home and the woman works, - No. [pause] Not that I do not accept this, but I know that such a family cannot [knocking on the table] hold out for a long time. This is my personal opinion."

8 Iudin, A.A. (2004) Gender roles and the problem of feminization of Russian society// "Vestnik of Lobachevsky University of Nizhni Novgorod". Chapter of social sciences. [Гендерные роли и проблема феминизации российского общества] Ed.1 (13), N-Novgorod, SUNN, pp:144-154, p.149.

This passage clearly shows three important aspects of gender arrangement.

First, saying "I am not forcing her to put on a burqa", the informant contraposes the arrangement in his family with the traditional arrangement. Although the family is based on the traditional gender contract - "man is the breadwinner - woman is the housewife", the man's opinion is that his family is more advanced than others.

Second, he emphasises the importance of women making the decision independently, saying that *"it would be incorrect, if her husband forced her to do this".* In his own eyes, his affirmation of this "choice is yet further proof of his being egalitarian.

At the end of the passage, we can mark the boundary that the informant cannot see. The barrier is that although women are given a certain opportunity to make a choice, it is effectively reduced to the traditional gender roles, as prospects for the inversion of roles are assessed negatively and even potentially dangerous for the family.

COMPARISONS WITH "OTHERS" AND THE FEELING OF JUSTICE AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION OF MEN

Describing their everyday life, informants often resorted to comparisons with "others" - the families of their friends and relatives. They sometimes referred to relations in the families of their relatives and acquaintances, but sometimes they used the word "everyone". As L. Thompson noted, all studies in the division of household duties show that someone's spouse is an important point of comparison.[9] We could broaden the importance of others not only regarding household duties, but also in assessing relations between genders in general. Of course, reference to the experience of "others" and the lifestyle of "everyone" is not accidental. "Everyone" is a kind of ideal or norm, which informants compare their own life experience with. However, an interesting paradox became evident in the conclusions women and men drew as a result of comparisons. As a rule, comparing their own families with the families of "others" - relatives and friends, women "argued" that the arrangement of their families corresponded to that of the majority. Drawing parallels between their lives and the lives of others, they came to the conclusion that they had a traditional family. The experience of "others" was proof that the existing arrangement and the division of labour were just. In comparing their families with others, men also found their family arrangement quite just. However, they chose another path to prove that it was correct and just. Males used "others" and their experience as a proof to show that there were egalitarian relations in their families and that they were different from the majority.

The experience of others was not only "evidence" of more egalitarian relations within their own families, but also part of arguments used for self-justification by men. Practically all men interviewed during the study expressed self-vindicating positions.

9 Baxter, J. The joys and justice of housework/Sociology, Vol.34. No. 4; pp: 609-631. Printed in the UK, p. 614.

MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR WIVES' CAREERS

It is also interesting to describe the attitude of husbands towards the possibility of their wives getting paid jobs. Although our male informants directly or indirectly tried to show that they were egalitarian, two of the four husbands had very specific ideas about the possible careers of their wives. For example, in giving his approval to his wife hypothetically getting a job, A added with a sigh: *"She is going to be bored, if she has no job; the children are going to grow up and so forth."* He said that his wife could choose *"any job she likes",* but a full-time job would be absolutely unacceptable, the main argument being that *"the children are to be pitied".* However, trying to remain loyal to his image of a liberal man, he justified himself by saying that they did not need this and added that *"if there is a hypothetical need [for her to work full time] and there is no way out [lowers voice], I will have to agree".* It follows that a full-time job for his wife is just a desperate measure due to major financial problems in the family.

We found O to have a similar position. He saw his wife's future job as "a chance to have a bit of a social life". In addition, he strongly objected to any full-time job of his wife outside the home.

In other words, in the aforementioned two examples, husbands viewed their wives' hypothetical jobs as an "interesting amusement" outside the home that would give them rest from their problems at home for a limited time, which was also regarded as something necessary for the well-being of families.

N was exceptional in that he regarded his wife as an equal partner and even a specialist with great potential and career skills. He explained that she was not so intensively involved in doing paid work partially due to her involvement in household work (which was her choice) and partially due to her personal peculiarities like anxiety and uncertainty.

Generalising the abovementioned, we can note that husbands view the realisation of their wives' personal potential first and foremost in the private sphere, where they are to play traditional gender roles of wives and mothers, supporting their position with expressions like *"it is the lifestyle of many people"* and *"her life is easier than that of 'working' women".* Employment outside the home is regarded mostly as a kind of easy amusement and prospects in their careers and full-time employment are not contemplated at all or are assessed in a negative manner.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

The generalisation of the results of the study provides grounds for the following conclusions:

- Multidirectional influences in modern society of Baku have a different impact on males and females. In the group we studied, women are more exposed to traditional influences, and this is manifested in their choice of lifestyle and loyal approach to the traditional gender contract and traditional division of labour. They use their potential mostly in the traditional roles of mothers and wives and are quite satisfied with the situation.

- The situation is different with the perception of men, who are also loyal to the traditional division of labour in families but try to present the gender arrangement in their families as more egalitarian. Differences between the descriptions and assessments of everyday family life were more frequent precisely in the interviews with men, and this means that traditions and the influence of liberal values lead to inner disharmony precisely among men. The erosion of the traditional lifestyle appears to have affected men more than women, at least at the level of thinking.

- Practically all members of the group involved in this study have higher education, but they are nevertheless subordinated to the traditional gender contract - "breadwinner-housewife" paradigm which underlies the whole of the gender arrangement in the families. The interviews make it clear that in all the three families with this gender contract, it is not a transitional stage in the functioning of the family, as housewives in our case do not particularly aspire to have paid jobs and realise their potential outside their families, and this is in line with their husbands' ideas of "normal" realisation of female potential.

- Scientific studies point to various regularities in the division of labour in families. One of these regularities is that "the more egalitarian views husbands hold, the more equally household duties are divided".[10] This statement is not confirmed by our study. Of course, the generalisation is a result of a larger-scale work in the USA based on quantitative methods. Such differences could have been explained by differences in methods and selection of respondents. However, our data are quite in line with the opinion put forward by American researcher T. Greenstein, who said that gender ideologies of husbands are not decisive in dividing household duties if their wives are traditionalistic, but they are decisive, if they are egalitarian.[11] Indeed, as we have also noted, women in our group had higher education and were socialised in the capital (with the exception of one of them), but they were quite traditional in their views on their families and the internal dissonance their husbands showed during the interviews had no impact on the practical division of labour at home.

- Yet another important conclusion is that the division of household duties as part of the gender arrangement as a whole is linked to many peculiarities of relations within families, even the approach to raising children, which at first glance seems not to be linked to it. However, our study has shown that the more traditional the gender division of labour is, the more authoritarian the approach to raising children is.

As a generalization, I would like to add that given the aforementioned peculiarities of the nuclear families involved in the study, we can presume that as a whole, despite various influences on families, no egalitarian transformation of gender arrangement should be expected any time soon. A more equal division of labour between men and women can be achieved only through the more intensive involvement of men in upbringing children based on the idea of happy childhood and the value of children for families.

10 Malysheva, M.M. Ibid, p.259.

11 Greenstein, T., N., Husband's Participation in Domestic Labor: Interactive Effects of Wives' and Husbands' Gender Ideologies. Journal of Marriage and Family. Vol. 58. No 3 (Aug.1996), pp. 585-595.

“Modern” Women in the Kitchen

Nino Rcheulishvili

The amount of modern scientific, semi-scientific, and popular literature on nutrition and preparing food makes it clear that these issues remain pertinent. Humankind seems to have become obsessed with the issue back in ancient times and has not subsequently been able to overcome this obsession: Everyone wants to have tasty dishes; some to have meals in the grand style; some want something inexpensive; and others prefer healthy food. The food industry has become so skilful in satisfying various desires that it effectively reacts immediately to any new demands, creating mini-innovations (the phenomenon of Lenten (vegan) dishes, semi-finished products, and confections are a good example from the Georgian reality). But it is not so easy to win over the hearts of lovers of home-cooked food. “*Cooking, it turns out, has roots so deep and stubborn that even the mighty fist of the food industry has not been able to yank all of them up*”.[1] Unfortunately, there are no statistical data in Georgia to show how many people can afford to buy ready-made food and how regularly they do so. Judging by personal observations and oral histories, many people do so when it comes to baked goods.[2] But the same stories make it clear that the cooking of “main dishes” has largely remained a home business. Even in families with little children, most breakfasts, lunches, and dinners are prepared by family members. What are the extent and forms of the involvement of employed women in home cooking? What motives are they guided by in their practices? These are main questions I ask in my study.

1 Shapiro, L. (2004) Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America. New York: Viking. P. xxiv.

2 It is noteworthy that “brands” in the field often bear the names of female founders, which serves to support the message of intimacy and “homemade” quality.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

In effectively all societies sociologists have studied, women do more household work than men. One of the reasons for this situation is that in families - the main agents of socialisation - there are (and have long been) stable views on what can be regarded as "women's work" and "men's work" and these views are transmitted to future generations. Keeping the house and taking care of children were regarded as the main function and source of personal fulfilment for women. The number of women involved in qualified work started rising and inequality in families diminishing in most regions of the world in the 20th century, particularly in its second half.

Researchers have noted the fact that the second process has developed at a slower pace and has failed to unfold on a broad scale. For example, speaking about changes that took place from the late 1970s to 2012 in her book *Second Shift*,[3] American sociologist Arlie Hochschild pointed to the reduction of inequality between working spouses in the division of household work. She noted that female Americans spent more than four weeks on average annually than their husbands taking care of the homes and children at the beginning and that that difference reduced to two weeks per year 20 years later.[4] Can this be regarded as major progress in the direction of gender equality? Hochschild herself failed to come up with an explicit answer.

One thing that is clear is that women continue to do more household work, providing food, planning menus, choosing and buying products, and cooking meals. All this requires a lot of time that could be used for some other purposes like relaxation and career development. However, does this state of affairs cause indignation among women? Studies have shown that women's attitudes are quite varied and self-contradictory. Cooking food arouses both positive and negative emotions in many of them. This occupation is a kind of "double-edged sword for women",[5] as it can be regarded as an act of subordination to the patriarchal system of values or an act that women enjoy and use to express their individuality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is based on the materials of a qualitative research aimed at looking into practices and motives linked to home cooking by working married women with minor children. The objective was to achieve deep understanding of the participants in the study or, in other words, to understand the subjective motives of their actions.

3 The book was written in 1989 and re-published for a third time in 2012.

4 Cf. Hochschild, A. R. & Machung, A. (2012) The second shift: Working families and the revolution at home. New York: Penguin Books.

5 Cf. Allison, A. (1997) Japanese Mothers & Obentos: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus//Food and Culture: A Reader/ed. by Carole M. Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge. P. 307.

Having noticed that conversations with women on the organization of home food encompassed reasoning about other issues (personal problems, relations with family members, and so forth), I decided to pay attention to these issues, too. Therefore, adjacent issues that I deemed impossible to separate from the main issue are also discussed in this study.

METHODOLOGY

SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Within the framework of the study, I held free interviews with eight women living in Tbilisi. I tried to stick to three selection criteria:

- Married, lives together with her husband and small children/child (nuclear family);
- Both she and her husband have full-time jobs;
- Both are white-collar workers.

I should say here that I was an employed mother of a preschool child at the time I conducted the interviews. I defined the selection criteria in this particular way as I thought I would better understand the world of this group of women than that of any other. My personal experience was that cooking took a great deal of my time which I could dedicate to other activities, but somehow I could not change my practice – to cook less or buy ready-made food. I wanted to learn about other women's experience, make reflections on my own situation and get a more nuanced understanding of cooking motives.

I spoke both with my acquaintances (not close friends) and the acquaintances of my friends. Not all of them had time and/or the desire to talk, which narrowed the circle of potential participants. I nevertheless managed to achieve the desired diversity to a certain extent. My respondents differed in age (25-40 years),[6] duration of family life (3-10 years), the number and age of children (one or two children aged from 1.5 to 7 years), family income (1,800-3,000 GEL[7] per month), places of residence (central areas or the outskirts of the city), and the availability of auxiliary personnel in the family (nannies, housecleaners).

FIELD WORK

The conversations with women took place in spring 2013. I let participants construct their stories themselves. I told them that the general topic of the research was the organization of eating in families with two breadwinners, but I told them I was open to listening to any stories beyond the frames of the study.

Research participants were aware of the fact that I was in a situation similar to theirs, so during conversations, they could ask questions, too. They were mostly interested in

6 Seven female participants in the study belong to the age group of 25-35 years and only one is a little older (40 years).

7 Georgia's national currency – GEL (Lari).

my own experience pertaining to the issue discussed (how often I cook lunch, whether I throw food away, whether my husband helps me to do household work, and so forth). In order to avoid asymmetry, which is always characteristic for the interviewer-respondent situations, I answered questions and shared my own experience.

PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

Analysing the texts of interviews, I mostly relied on the instruments used by the followers of sociological hermeneutics (also called hermeneutic sociology of knowledge).[8] There are three stages of the process of hermeneutic interpretation: 1. Familiarisation with the views of another person (her vision of the situation); 2. Consideration "from outside" and comparison of what was said with the temporal and spatial context of the actions (in this case, the understanding of historical, cultural, and biographical frames of our conversations that had an impact on the narratives of the participants in the study); 3. Deep understanding of motives of actions/aspirations of narrators. Correlations of conclusions with the context on the one hand and the transparency of research procedures on the other enable us to assess the validity of the study. In principle, this procedure is very much like interpretative acts from everyday life, wherein people try to understand (and take into account) the motives of other people. However, the interpretative work of a sociologist is nevertheless specific. Its aim is to not only understand separate cases (individuals), but the background "rules of the game" in specific groups or societies (be it the rules of communication or other actions).

I was guided by the model analysis elaborated by the author of the aforementioned methodology and described in one of the works by H.-G. Soeffner.[9] The process of analysis proved to be toilsome, but amusing at the same time. Following the prescriptions of the methodology, I identified several episodes that were interesting to me and interpreted them from the viewpoint of egology,[10] trying to imagine myself in the place of the respondents. For some time, I tried to "forget" everything remaining beyond the boundaries of a specific fragment (the principle of "artificial naivety"),[11] be it other parts of the interview, my knowledge of the respondents and situations around them, or my own experience with the problem discussed in the fragment. The aim of such an approach is to produce all possible interpretations of every phrase. I discounted the least realistic of them when I began comparing them with other passages and the overall "spirit" of the whole interviews.

8 The main sources are: Soeffner, H.-G. Social Scientific Hermeneutics//A Companion to Qualitative Research/Ed. by U. Flick and E. Von Kardoff (2004) London: Sage Publication; Soeffner , H.-G. Der Alltag der Auslegung: zur wissenssoziologischen Konzeption einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik (1989) Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

9 Soeffner, H.-G. (1989) Auslegung des Alltags - der Alltag der Auslegung: Zur wissenssoziologischen Konzeption einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp. S. 185-210.

10 Ibid. S. 192.

11 Maiwald, K.O. (2005) Competence and Praxis: Sequential Analysis in German Sociology// Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung. 6, no.3, Art.31. [6]. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/21/46>. (retrieved 26.05.2013).

Analysing the texts, I tried to identify two types of motives underlying the respondents' actions - *in-order-to* motives and *because* motives. The founders of sociological hermeneutics borrowed these and many other terms from Alfred Schütz. The *in-order-to* motives are directed at the future and point to the fact that an actor resorts to specific actions to achieve his/her goals and the *because* motives belong to the past and serve as the reasons for actions taken. The former represent the plans and aspirations of respondents, what they would like to do, and what kind of persons they wish to become, while the latter serve to explain their current situation (which may be undesirable for them).

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned methodology is based on the structures and logic of the German language and has mostly been used in German-speaking areas.[12] The only thing I did within the frames of my study was to try to take the first steps in the direction of adapting the methodology. As my study was experimental, I ventured to use also elements of the narrative analysis, mostly the strategy of identifying the keynote of a narrative. Following several "rounds" of studying the text of a conversation, I tried to identify the "core" or keynote of the interview, which is the basis of her "me" as a whole ("narrative me") for the respondent.[13] For example, I formulated the keynotes of the participants in my study in the following manner: "I am an excellent housewife", "I am not a bad housewife, but I could be better in another situation", "I am not a proper housewife, but I do not care", and so forth. Having identified the keynote, I reflected on why the respondents chose these particular messages. For example, why does a respondent present herself to me as a bad housewife or cook? Is such a description of herself linked to imagining herself in another role of an employee, mother, or wife?

ANALYSIS OF TWO CASES: KETI AND KHATIA

The narratives of all my informants were very interesting and unique in their own way. However, in this paper, I'm going to focus on two cases - those of Keti and Khatia[14] - and compare them. Some of the women I interviewed said they loved cooking, some of them said they hated it and did it because they were compelled to do so – they have to provide healthy food for minor children, avoid conflict with a 'conservative' husband, etc. One woman, Keti, was in a kind of love-hate relationship with cooking. I found this case extremely interesting because of its contradictory character and decided to anal-

12 Reichertz, J. Das Handlungsrepertoire von Gesellschaften erweitern: Hans-Georg Soeffner im Gespraech mit Jo Reichertz//Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung. 2004. 5, No.3. [47-48]. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/561/1216>. (retrieved 20.03.2013).

13 Zdravomislova, E. Temkina, A. (2004) Analysis of Narrative Biographic Interview in Identity Studies // Social Identity: Methods of Conceptualization and Measurement. Materials of Scientific-Methodological Workshop / ed. by Oberemeko O. and Ozhigova L. Krasnodar: Kuban State University. pp. 200-222 (Анализ биографического нарративного интервью в исследовании идентичности//Социальная идентичность: способы концептуализации и измерения. Материалы Всероссийского научно-методического семинара).

14 The names are not real.

yse the interview very carefully. I decided to compare her narrative with another one, in which cooking was portrayed most positively (compared to all other cases) – this was the case of Khatia. She seemed to me an embodied ideal of a traditional housewife, one which we know from oral stories or from studies of women in traditional societies – a woman who is great at preparing and serving meals, who finds this activity emotionally fulfilling and is happy about being the key person to provide "proper food" for her family.

In the next sections of my paper I will provide readers with some details from the lives of these two women and reconstruct meanings linked to cooking for the family. I would like to emphasize that when speaking about the lives and differences between the two women, I rely on their narratives and the images they created in the context of our conversations.

KETI: DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

Keti was 27 and she had been married for four years. She lived together with her husband and two preschool children not far from the centre of the city. Their flat belonged to the aunt of her husband (who lived abroad). Keti worked in a public institution as a middle-level manager. She had master's degree in social sciences and planned to continue her studies.

Her husband had received a medical education. He had been working to obtain a doctoral degree, but quit the scientific arena, as he decided to do something more practical. At that time, he worked as a senior manager at a medical institution and intended to achieve further promotion. The elder daughter attended a private daycare and a nanny was taking care of the younger child.

Keti worked from 10 in the morning until 7 in the evening. The schedule of her husband was more flexible and he could leave his workplace earlier, so it was he who usually picked up the child from daycare.

The overall income of the family amounted to 2,700 GEL monthly,[15] and the family spent 800 GEL of this repaying loans.

The family had a car and on the day they received a paycheque, they went shopping. There was an agricultural market not far from their home, but they preferred to visit a hypermarket situated considerably far from their home but had the advantage of being a more friendly place. "*The situation there is pleasant and you can buy a lot of things at the same time.*"

On working days, the spouses had lunch at a cafeteria at their workplaces or near them. But if one of them failed to have lunch during the day, Keti quickly prepared "something", not a "proper meal" - fried potatoes, pasta, or "something like that". The

15 About USD 1,600 at the time.

elder daughter had meals in the daycare and the nanny made meals for the younger daughter at home. On the weekends, the mother of one of the spouses visited the family and usually prepared a "proper dinner" for the adults (a hot meat course) that was to be eaten over the course of several days. However, Keti's husband often refused to have meals prepared a day earlier and Keti complained semi-jokingly that for this reason she had to eat up meals prepared by "grandmothers". In general, she described nutrition in her family as "bad", "not proper" ("*You can see how bad our nutrition is*," she summed up), but stressed that she had no worries about that. She was rather concerned about nutrition for her children and thought it was more or less fine: She said that the elder daughter's nutrition at the nursery was "normal" (of acceptable quality)[16] and the nanny also made "normal" meals for the younger daughter.[17]

KETI'S KEYNOTE: I AM NOT THE CHEF AT HOME!

A total of five people made food in Keti's kitchen: Her mother-in-law and mother, the nanny, her husband, and the respondent herself. As regards the position of chef, it was vacant. According to Keti, no one coordinated the actors and there was no common concept of nutrition. Everyone had his or her niche in this field and their paths did not seem to intersect. Keti regarded her own role in cooking as insignificant compared to the others. Let us consider the roles of all actors individually.

As said above, mothers of the spouses made food for adult members of the family on days off. What she said did not make it clear how this tradition had taken shape[18] and Keti's attitude to the fact also remained unclear. Speaking about the participation of representatives of the older generation in making food for her nuclear family, the respondent did not use any words expressing gratitude. She accepted the help, being a kind of passive recipient, not the initiator of the action.

As the nanny had "good knowledge" of correct nutrition for children of this age and coped with the task, Keti decided to make her responsible for not only cooking, but also planning the menu of the child. It is noteworthy that this practice of delegating tasks distinguishes Keti from other respondents. For instance, one of my respondents reported to have delegated some cooking to the nanny, but thought that still she was the manager, the boss. As for Keti, she did not seem to care much about her power position in the kitchen. The nanny expressed the desire to plan the menu for the child and Keti agreed happily.

On days off, Keti sometimes cooked for the children, but this happened mainly during vacations, when she felt more up to cooking. As for weekends, she rarely cooked for the family and particularly for children – the elder one was fine with leftovers from Fri-

16 Keti did not pretend to be an expert in nutrition, but she could see nothing "suspicious" in the menu of the daycare.

17 Speaking about "normal food" for children, Keti implied soups and for adults a hot first course with meat.

18 Unfortunately, I failed to hold a second interview with Keti to be able to supplement some data.

day and the younger daughter just resisted being fed by the mother. Correspondingly, when the nanny was not there, the younger one ate only what she was able to eat independently, i.e. dry provisions and sweets, instead of food made in a "normal" manner. Keti seemed to be upset that her child did not recognise her mother as an authority, but said she couldn't change anything.

"*I have fewer problems with making food for children,*[19] *but what I cannot do is feed them. Only the nanny can cope with that. ... I am not an authority. I am nothing. Same with the father and grandmothers. ... It is only with the nanny [mentions her name] ... that they are ready to' start.' The nanny [mentions her name] keeps a strict hand over them, but I cannot cope with this. I admit this.*"

Keti's husband was the major figure in her stories about what was happening in the kitchen. His involvement in making food could be described as irregular (unlike the grandmothers and the nanny). He usually made meat courses traditional of the Georgian cuisine (for example, chakapuli, a kind of meat stew) and, as Keti said, he did this much better than she could. However, together with having cooking talents, her husband was highly particular about what others cooked and was "terribly critical". Keti did not want him to criticise her and as a response to this culinary challenge, chose to retreat from the field. Her response could have been different. For example, she could have convinced her husband to eat what she cooked or learnt how to cook meals to please him, but the strategy she chose was different: One fine day, she just stopped cooking dishes that posed problems to her[20] and ceded the business to her husband. It is noteworthy in this connection that the mothers of the spouses continued to make hot meat courses for the young family. They did not allow themselves to be excluded from these activities – maybe they did not fear the criticism of the son/son-in-law as much as Keti did.

"*Oh, do you know how things are with him? First, he is a critic, a culinary critic, but only in matters linked to Georgian*[21] *cuisine. ...* H*e mostly criticises me. 'This dish lacks some spices' [imitates her husband's voice]. ... In short, he may mention some greens I have never heard about. ... Let him break his neck! This is how I deal with this. Let him refuse to eat. He may dislike what his mother cooks as well and refuse to eat it.*"

What happened when the husband said he did not like a dish? Keti said nothing dramatic followed. He would find something to eat - mabye cook a dish himself; or he would remain hungry. In any case, he would never scold his wife.

"*The only thing is that I may feel guilty that he has had nothing to eat on that day ... Otherwise, he will never make a problem out of that and say: 'Why is there no food in the refrigerator?! ' He does not say such things. He loves pasta and fried potatoes. That is enough for him and I am happy, too. The situation in our family is different; not that*

19 There were problems in making food for the husband (discussed below).

20 The story does not make it clear when this happened.

21 I regard the words in bold type in the quotations as particularly important in the relevant episodes. The underlined words are the ones respondents pronounced with an emphasis.

I am a woman and I should cook. The person who has time (is free) and can cook is the person who cooks in our family and it also depends on what we have at home."

The descriptive level of the whole interview makes it clear that the husband took care of the children. He could get them to bed, play with them, and brush their hair and sometimes cooked food. Readers may get the impression that Keti should be satisfied overall with her husband. Although he had his whims (he refused to eat food prepared a day earlier), he did not create additional problems for his wife because of that. However, when I spoke about the character of her husband, Keti said that she did not regard him as a "European-type" of man. In one of the passages not linked to food she said that he was "terribly Asiatic in the depths of his soul"; he did not tolerate some ethnic minorities, which would have been impossible had he been a "European-type" of man. And what was most important for Keti, he liked to be in control.

"*He is such... He is trying to be in control of everyone - nannies, neighbours - and he succeeds, too, using various methods. Well, he loves this."*

Now I would like to refer to the ambiguity of Keti's attitude towards cooking. In general, Keti presented herself as the most insignificant person in terms of cooking for the family. She was the last person to cook something and did so only when there was literally nothing to eat and no one to cook. On the other hand, during the interview she stated several times that she loved cooking. Considering this fact, her situation seemed to me problematic, as she could not perform an activity she likes, because of time constraints or her husband's picky tastes. Later in our conversation Keti revealed she was doing some sort of cookery, other than regular family meal. This practice brought her a lot of pleasure and was outside her husband's area of expertise. She called it "preparation of exotic dishes", which were mostly salads and desserts. She said that she loved "exotic cooking" even before she got married – she learned about recipes via TV or internet or invented things herself. She was involved in this type of culinary activities not because the family needed them. They were an expression of her creativity and individuality.

- Yes, I used to cook [at home]...Well, if I like something, exotic things...
- Where do you get recipes?
- It depends... Sometimes from the Internet and sometimes I will invent things. I have always been disposed to such things...
- Does that mean that you like cooking?
I do... Do you know what I like? I like cooking new dishes. I like to cook what is not obligatory and necessary, but ... what I want and when I want.

Keti cooks such dishes for herself or for guests. Actually, she mentioned just a few persons whom she could consider as consumers of her non-traditional cookery. If anyone else is coming to visit her, she retrains herself from cooking special things and goes with conventional, "regular" salads. Such salads are always welcomed by both guests and Keti's husband. As for "exotic" dishes, Keti's husband did not like them. He regarded what his wife cooked and ate with delight as "oddities" that he did not even want to taste. Such a description of the situation echoed the image of Keti's husband as "Asiatic in the depths of his soul" and unable to share/appreciate different aspirations of others, even his wife.

To sum up, through the stories about cooking and individual tastes in her family, Keti's narrative left an overall feeling of her detachment from family members. She did not cook to bring her family together. I see her case as evidence that cooking is not always and not necessarily linked to the needs of the family as a collective body. In the case of Keti, cooking practices reflected instead individuality and autonomy, even different worldviews of spouses.

KHATIA: DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

Khatia was almost 29. She had been married for nearly five years. She lived in the outskirts together with her husband and a preschool child who attended a state-run daycare. Khatia has a master's degree in public administration and started doing a PhD, but judging by her interview she does not spend much time on her studies. As regards her job, she recently underwent professional retraining and now works at a private company. At the time of our conversation she was working five days a week, from 10 am to 6 pm. Her husband had worked at a state agency and "made a decent living", but lost his job a year before. A short time earlier, he started his own business, opening a hardware shop in the region of Georgia where he is from, and tried to develop the business. The family invested money in the business and Khatia hoped for quick success. Due to these changes, the monthly income of the family dropped and amounted at the time to 1,500-1,800 GEL.[22]

Khatia coped with the household work independently without any involvement of relatives or a housemaid. On the weekends, Khatia cleaned the flat and cooked a "serious lunch". On weekdays, the family made do with simple dishes (fried potatoes and pasta) and dairy products.

As regards her husband's involvement in household work, it was limited to taking care of the child. Like in Keti's family, the husband's involvement was irregular and he got involved only when his wife asked him to. However, unlike Keti's case, Khatia did not regard his involvement as a problem. On the contrary, she was satisfied that her husband helped her to do at least something.

Like Keti's narrative, Khatia's narrative also included the images of her mother and mother-in-law - "important outsiders" from beyond the nuclear family.

Khatia's mother-in-law lived in the country. She spent some time in Tbilisi, taking care of her grandson together with Khatia until the child started attending daycare. At that time, Khatia lived in the flat that belonged to her husband's aunt. Later, Khatia's parents gave her a flat and the whole family, including her mother-in-law, moved to that flat. At the moment the interview was taken, the mother-in-law no longer lived with Khatia, rarely coming to Tbilisi.

Her mother's family lived in the same neighbourhood just five minutes away by car. The respondent said that they had always extended major help to her. Their involvement was so significant that the respondent found herself in a complicated situation

22 About USD 900-1,200 at the time.

when her sister married, because the sister used to take her son from the daycare and take care of him until his parents returned home. The respondent proudly noted that she had found a solution herself: She agreed to pay a nanny from the child's nursery to do same work. The nanny was the first person outside the family, who took care of her child. She had never resorted to the services of a nanny at home.

KHATIA'S KEYNOTE: I AM A NATURAL BORN COOK

A distinctive feature of this narrative is that it is focused on cooking and nutrition in general. The whole of it consists of discussing recipes, the features of various useful and delicious products, strategies for making menus, and so forth.

Cooking was the sphere of Khatia's competence where she felt self-assured. The kitchen was an area where the interests and desires of all members of the family coincided. This situation was sharply different from that described by Keti. The first episode in the text of the interview (self-introduction before the voice recorder) is a good example. It describes a family that is unanimous in loving "delicious" dishes and willing to eat without complaint what the mother of the family manages to cook and she cooks very well. These two messages were repeated and developed during the interview. Khatia often used the pronoun "we", which was indicative of the image of a unanimous family.

"*I will be 29 soon. I have a husband and a three-year-old child. All the three of us love to eat: We love good and delicious food. We never refuse to eat anything, but the food must be delicious and we must be hungry. I have a job and I am occupied at my workplace except at weekends. Therefore, when I come home, I always try to cook something that will first and foremost satisfy hunger and at the same time, be useful.*"

Like Keti, Khatia said that she loved cooking. However, the situation in Khatia's family - more precisely, in her kitchen - was a lucky combination of agreeable and useful. Khatia loved to cook and her family members liked what she made. Things were different with Keti.

In the interview, the respondent presented herself as a good cook/confectioner, using not only verbal, but also visual materials, and showed her special cooking outfit, cookbooks, and so forth. In addition, she showed what she could do and baked a pie for me.

Khatia presented herself as a person competent in making traditional Georgian as well as "European" dishes. According to her narrative, her friend and fellow employee, who had lived in Germany for some time, was the agent of the "Europeanization" of her cooking experience. She regularly gave Khatia not only recipes of specific dishes, but informed her on more general rules of "healthy nutrition", which Khatia tried to implement in everyday life of her family. She tried to watch the calories and quality of the products they consumed and control/balance the food her husband consumed to protect him from diseases typical for "Georgian men" (such as obesity and hypertension).[23]

23 Saying this, she implied her own father.

An interesting aspect became clear from the interview: Khatia followed the rules of healthy nutrition when she cooked for her family. However, when she cooked for guests, she was guided by her ideas and expectation of what might be delicious for specific people and appropriate in a concrete situation. If relatives or friends of her husband unexpectedly visited them at the end of a working day, Khatia would try to cook what she could "in due time", but at the same time, something "more interesting" than fried potatoes (roast chicken, salads, cornbread, and so forth). If a visit was a kind of "official reception"[24] (for example, a housewarming party or a first visit by her husband's relatives) planned in advance, Khatia used her whole culinary "arsenal", consisting mostly of "traditional Georgian" dishes. Khatia staged no experiments at such parties. She stressed in her interview that she did everything according to established rules, hinting that many of her dishes could nevertheless be described as "brands", because they were more delicious than those cooked by other women she knew.

Khatia said that her culinary talents were hereditary, as her mother and both grandmothers were good cooks. She said that she did not have to cook a lot before she married, but the "code" was immediately "activated" as soon as it became necessary.

"*[Even] if you have no experience, you will do everything when the moment comes. All of us have watched and talked to our mothers, who cooked food. … At any rate, you tasted the dish and you learnt what it tasted like. When you face having to do it, you will definitely cook the dish. This is precisely what happened in my case. Before I got married, my mother said I was a nomad. I was either in camping-grounds or attending training courses. In short, I was never at home. Later, when I married and she came to my home, she saw some food and she was so surprised, when she was told that I cooked it*".

Unlike Keti, Khatia's narrative comprises regular ideas about correct household management. To be more correct, Keti's narrative makes it clear that she was well aware of the same ideas (the house should be kept clean), but she did not observe them. Khatia followed the concept of a "good housewife and mother" embodied in two women, a female protagonist of an American TV series[25] and her own aunt, a "real" woman. Khatia's attitude towards such an ideal type was ambivalent: On the one hand, she sought to emulate them in planning her actions at home, particularly as regards nutrition, but on the other hand, she understood that this aim could be achieved only by means of using all her resources (strength and time) "at home", refusing to have a life beyond the home, which she did not want.

"*However, the time will come when I become Bree Van de Kamp… She is a model for me… It is true that it is a TV series, but such women do exist. My aunt is an example. Everything shines in her home. I would also like to have everything shining at home, but I cannot manage it. I never have enough time. Time will probably come and everything*

24 The texts in quotation marks usually belong to specific respondents of the study.

25 Bree Van de Kamp is a protagonist on the series Desperate Housewives, an ideal housewife, who has "everything sparkling" at home, who is an excellent cook, who knows "what to eat and with what".

will be the same with me, too. However, unfortunately, I do not have sufficient time now. On the other hand, I do not want to become a housewife and stay at home all the time either."

In general, Khatia did not complain about being alone in the kitchen without anyone to help her. On the contrary, she presented the situation as a product of her own efforts and struggle. She said that from the very first day of her married life, she aspired to be the only cook in her kitchen. Recalling the time when she lived together with her mother-in-law, the respondent expressed her firm belief that there was a link between cooking and power in the family.

"*My mother-in-law lived with me until last year. She no longer lives here... By the way, I would like to note that I controlled nutrition even then, as... They say, you cannot let your mother-in-law cook dinner [laughs] because the person, who cooks dinner, rules the family. I like to cook without any conditions and by the way, my mother-in-law likes how I cook, so she usually expected me to cook*".

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show individual nuances of "practices of cooking in life of two women". These practices resemble each other and at the same time differ in several ways. Both women like process of cooking (They used effectively identical phrases - "I love the kitchen" and "If you leave me there, I may stay there the whole day"). Both showed an aspiration to achieve higher levels of mastery in the culinary field (improve their skills, enrich their repertoire, try new dishes).
As for the differences, one woman has got recognition for her culinary skills, while the other failed to win this recognition. Khatia's husband did not see kitchen as his area of responsibility, while Keti's husband had certain experience in cooking[26] and a desire to compete with his wife. Unlike Khatia, Keti did not seem to invest much, in terms of time or emotions, in family meals and found it more satisfying to cook for herself or for people outside her family who are open to "new", "non-traditional" dishes.

At this stage, I would like to refer to other studies of cooking to see how my field stories/ material can contribute to current discussions on this topic.

There is a body of literature discussing women's involvement in cooking and the meanings associated with this activity. Some authors present cooking as part of everyday work, which traditionally has been done by women in domestic settings[27]. Food preparation has to be done on a regular basis to sustain people's lives and thus is highly time consuming. In the case of employed women, cooking is presented as a significant part

26 Keti said that she did not have to cook when she lived together with her parents, and her husband lived separately from his parents several years before marriage, which is probably the reason why he learnt to cook.

27 Mennell, S., Murcott, A. & Van Otterloo, A. H. (1997) The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture. London:Sage, 1992; Warde, A. Consumption, Food and Taste. London: Sage.

of unpaid "second shift" work they have to do at home.[28] Although the food industry has affected the frequency and total amount of home cooking time worldwide, the picture varies across countries and genders.[29] Women still cook more than men and are reported to be more focused on family needs. Notably, as a classic in this field, Marjorie DeVault, puts it, "the food provided for a family cannot just be any food, but must be food that will satisfy them." [30]

As for the emotional meaning of this activity, earlier studies indicate that cooking is a type of domestic work that women do with pleasure. Researchers found that a wide variety of meanings might be attached to cooking, from explicit motives like caring for and satisfying beloved ones,[31] to other latent meanings linked to feminine identity.[32] Many women see cooking as a creative and emotional endeavour.[33]

Generally, authors who have focused on women's experience, have been mostly critical towards the home cooking phenomena and saw it as a practice objectively contributing to gender inequality, irrespective of the subjective motives of the women themselves. Another common trope I noticed while reviewing scholarly literature on this topic is that women's involvement in cooking is presented through its close connection with family and the "family's needs". My study and personal observations confirmed the presence of similar discourse in Georgian society – many people believe that women should take primer responsibility for family cooking and that if a woman prepares food, she does this for the family. Different beliefs are associated with men's cooking –they prepare food mostly for fun; they do not cook regularly, but when they do it, they do it very well (the case of the husband of my informant Keti could be a good example).

I argue that scholarly presentation of women as people whose activities are constantly focused on family needs is not always adequate to reality. Furthermore, despite researchers' frequent intent to criticize existing social arrangements, this kind of argu-

28 Hochschild, A. R. & Machung, A. (2012) The second shift: working families and the revolution at home. New York: Penguin Books.

29 <http://www.gfk.com/documents/press-releases/2015/20150330_global-pr-study_cooking.pdf>.

30 DeVault, M. L. (1991) Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. P.40

31 Murcott, A. (1983), 'It's a Pleasure to Cook for Him': Food, Mealtimes and Gender in Some South Wales Households // The Public and the Private / ed. by E. Gamarnikow et al. London: Heinemann. pp. 78–90; DeVault M. L. (1991) Feeding the family. The social organization of caring as gendered work. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

32 Allison, A. (1997) Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus // Food and Culture: A Reader / ed. by Carole M. Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge.

33 Kemmer, D. (2001) Tradition and change in domestic roles and food preparation // Sociology, 2000: 34(02). P. 323-333; Ekström, M.P. Fürst, E. L. The Gendered Division of Cooking // Eating patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples / ed. by Unni Kjærnes. Lysaker: National Institute for Consumer Research. <http://sifo.no/files/file48478_rapport2001_07.pdf>.

ment contains a risk of reinforcing gender-biased discourses in society. Some women want to avoid the role of main cook in the family and some do this. Also, we should not assume that cooking is an activity "where one is relating and responding to another's needs".[34] Though care is a predominant motive, it is not the only one.

To put it another way, I believe that the experience of women like Khatia is over-represented in scholarly literature and popular discourse. Khatia approaches cooking as an activity performed for the sake of her family, one aimed at ensuring the health and wellbeing of family members and creation of a sense of togetherness. She finds cooking a fun and creative activity, but thinks of it primarily as domestic work - she said she loves cooking and hanging laundry out to dry in an attractive way. She longs to be not only a good cook, but a good housewife.

As for cases like Keti's, they are seemingly considered as marginal in "real life" and are consequently marginalized in the scientific literature as well. However, I argue that Keti's case offers some useful "food for thought". It is informative of the existence of marginal types of cooking which are not oriented towards pleasing family members. The "exotic", "strange" dishes she mentioned in our conversation were never consumed by her family members (not acceptable for her husband, not age-appropriate for her children). Keti refers to this type of cooking as "unnecessary", i.e. not geared towards meeting the family's needs. But still, she does not quit this practice. She considers this kind of cookery as her hobby, not domestic work. Maybe she expresses herself through cooking as a female and as an individual, but not as a housewife.

Is she an exception? Maybe yes, maybe no. The main thing I learnt from this study is that if we seek to get a better understanding of what is happening in our society, we have to listen to women's voices more carefully.

34 Fürst E.L. (1997) Cooking and femininity // Women's Studies International Forum, 20 [3]. P. 444.

Dwelling Adaptation in the Settlements of Internally Displaced Persons

Nano Zazanashvili

Problems of the resettlement of internally displaced people (IDP) of the "second wave"[1] remain in the centre of attention of the Georgian public. The number of people displaced by the Georgian-Russian conflict in 2008 is about 22,000.[2] The government assumed responsibility to resolve the housing problem of the people who lost their homes. Unlike the situation after the wars of the 1990s, the government took decisive measures to resolve the resettlement problem and built new "cottage" settlements for many internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Shida Kartli regions at an unprecedented speed (three or four months).

Unlike the first wave of IDPs, the government chose another strategy of housing, offering rural settlements to displaced people. The architecture of the living areas in the new cottages is more convenient than the accommodation in collective centres offered to IDPs of the previous wave. However, some nevertheless have the desire to alter the architectural area.

The main objective of this study is to clarify aspects that motivate IDPs to alter the architectural area around them. What are the social, economic, climatic, traditional, and cultural factors that induce IDPs to reconstruct their homes and, correspondingly, the initial image of the settlement? What impact does the adaptation process have on built-up areas?

1 Internally displaced people (IDPs) from the Tskhinvali and Akhalgori municipalities as well as from Abkhazia's Kodori Gorge during the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008.

2 Various sources give various numbers of IDPs from Shida Kartli (during the events in August 2008). They are between 22,000 and 25,000. (Georgian ombudsman, Report on the state of the rights of IDPs and people damaged during the conflict, 2010, January-June, p. 21); The official website of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Refugees, and Housing - <http://mra.gov.ge/main/GEO#index/1>, retrieved 07.06.2011. Cf. also the website of the Coalition for IDPs' Rights - <http://www.idp.ge/geo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=101%3A2009-05-23-09-31-51&catid=1%3A2009-01-03-10-27-45&Itemid=3&lang=ka>. (retrieded 27 January 2012).

RESEARCH METHOD

I divided my study into two parts, because without comprehending the emergence of these settlements in general terms, it would be impossible to depict a broad picture of the process of adaptation. At the initial stage, I studied relevant literature, as well as Georgian building legislation, and other documents linked to the legal aspect of the problem. To describe the situation in full I visited all 15 settlements covered by the study, spoke with local residents, and determined the main aspects necessary for creating good socio-economic conditions in the settlements. Short-term field work enabled me to view in a broad context general problems that emerge in the process of adaptation with the new living environment and various problematic aspects linked to the creation of good social conditions in the settlements.

Having formed a certain view of the situation in the settlements, in the second stage of the study I spent one week in one of the villages. The week spent in the settlement confirmed my preliminary expectations regarding the matters under study on the one hand and exposed me to absolutely new aspects on the other. Keeping watch over everyday activities and having long conversations with local residents, I managed to better familiarize myself with the realm I previously knew only superficially.

In the second stage of the study, I used both the quantitative and qualitative methods. I calculated and categorized all alterations made to the initial dimensions of the cottages. I did seven in-depth interviews, asking my hosts to show me their homes and describe the stages of alterations. On the basis of the materials collected and data analysis, I tried to identify the most widespread types of alterations, the sequence of the alterations made to homes; hence the implications and "importance" of the new structures. I also tried to identify the major factors that had an impact on these alterations.

FIELD EXPERIENCE

I would like to particularly emphasize the fieldwork and the first day I spent on the ground, as the latter was particularly difficult emotionally. I had to listen to tragic stories about the fate of local residents on the one hand and on the other, it was very difficult to gain their trust, particularly when alterations of homes were discussed. The new accommodation continues to be a temporary shelter for IDPs. The notion of *home* continues to be firmly connected to the former places of residence. Talk about arranging, improving, and altering the living space is linked to pain and a sense of deprivation. Conversations inevitably lead to comparisons between the old and new houses. Tears are also inevitable. It is not easy to remain calm, to avoid being overcome by emotions, and to rationally and methodically continue doing what you have to do. Grief and compassion never leave you alone while you are in the settlement. On the other hand, it is difficult to overcome the distrust of some residents towards the activities of researchers. They fear very much that the activities may harm the settlement and its residents. It proved to be most complicated to overcome the doubts of locals. This motivated me to look deeper into the objectives of my study and give residents of the settlement clearer and more precise explanations. Truthful and honest communication proved to be a foundation for trust.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to describing the processes of architectural and functional adaptation as exemplified by one of the settlements, I would like to briefly touch on the formation of new settlements in general terms.

After the 2008 conflict ended, the government immediately embarked on eradicating the damage inflicted,[3] which meant that they had the political will and the desire to overcome the housing crisis. However, in some cases, the process of making decisions was non-transparent and some decisions were hasty,[4] and this in turn had an impact on both the technical side of the settlements and their socio-economic efficiency. [5]

With state funding as well as with the help of international loans and grants, 15 new "cottage type" settlements were built in 2008-2009 in Shida Kartli and Mtsketa-Mtianeti regions.[6] At the moment there are approximately 4,379 (13,800 IDPs) families living in these settlements.

Taking into account the lifestyle pattern of the IDPs - agriculture - it was decided to build rural settlements,[7] which is a long-term type of resettlement. Eleven settlements were built close to farmlands.[8] The main criteria for choosing state-owned land plots were as follows: 1. Closeness to agricultural land plots, as it was implied that land was to become the main source of income for IDPs and enable them to continue to live independently in the new places of residence; 2. Flat areas were chosen to minimize

3 The first document that envisaged allocation of funds "for providing housing for people who suffered damage due to military operations, and restoring dilapidated buildings," was issued on 8 September 2008 (Edict of the Georgian government No 563 on funding measures aimed at eradicating the damage inflicted by military operations; 8 September 2008).

4 Bruckner T., (Spring 2009) Decision-Making and Georgia's Perpetual Revolution: The Case of IDP Housing, Caucasian Review of international Affairs, VOL. 3(2), pp. 174-176.

5 Transparency International Georgia, Cottage Settlements for Georgia's new IDPS: Accountability in aid and Construction, Tbilisi (April 2010), p. 18.

6 Thirteen settlements - 10 within the borders of Shida Kartli Province (Berbuki, Skra, Shavshvebi, Khurvaleti, Karaleti, and Tsmindatskali are situated on the territory of the Gori Municipality; Teliani, Mokhisi, Akhalsopeli, and Metekhi are situated on the territory of the Kaspi Municipality) and three in Mtskheta-Mtianeti Province (Tserovani, Tsilkani, and Prezeti) - were built during three months, September-November 2008, under the direct supervision of the government. Later, in 2009, two more settlements were built on the funds and under the coordination of the German and Turkish governments.

7 The Verkhvebi settlement near the town of Gori is an exception. It was built under the guidance of the German government and is rather suburban in nature. Therefore, unlike other settlements, no agricultural land plots were earmarked for Verkhvebi. The sector of employment of local residents was determined at the very start of designing the settlement. IDPs who had worked in the service industry were selected for this settlement. They were to be employed in the town of Gori. Agricultural land plots were not given either to the residents of the settlements built on the territory of Mtskheta-Mtianeti Province: Tserovani, Tsilkani, and Prezeti.

8 These settlements are: Berbuki, Skra, Shavshvebi, Khurvaleti, Karaleti, Tsmindatskali, Teliani, Mokhisi, Akhalsopeli, Metekhi, and Sakasheti.

building costs; 3. Closeness to infrastructure like roads, water supply systems, and drinking water was a criterion as well.[9]

Site plans and designs of houses were drawn up after the areas were chosen. In most cases, site plans implied simple distribution of identical cottages along identical parallel lines. The location of the settlements in flat areas led to a uniformity in the appearance of the settlements. Insignificant differences in the configurations of site plans were due to the contours and sizes of land plots in different cases. Visual impressions are the same.

The need for public spaces and social infrastructure was not taken into account in the structure of the settlements at the planning stage.[10] Buildings to host such facilities as dispensaries, public centres, public baths, children's playgrounds, and so forth are still being completed, mostly with the help of donors. As regards schools and nurseries, those in closest villages and towns were mostly used.

The very rapid planning and construction process has been widely criticised. In most cases, architects handed over designs free of charge to the agencies responsible for building the settlements. A respondent recalls that architects were selected based on the principles of "acquaintance" or "one phone call". Projects were not often supplemented with planning objectives and written data. They were delivered to building sites without any inspection of documents immediately after the design process was completed. It was the mistakes made in the coordination of the construction that led to problems linked to the technical and functional sides of the cottages.

Residents of many settlements recall the first days of their resettlement: Damp walls, humidity, cold, and dirt. They recall that after a while, the walls were covered with mould and wooden floors became unlevel. The building process was so quick that major building materials - concrete, cement, and wood - did not have sufficient time to dry. The winter that started soon further protracted the drying process. Half-dry foundations produced a greenhouse effect and humidity spread to the walls and ceilings of the buildings. It was thought that the humidity problem would automatically be resolved during the summer of 2009, but walls continued to be wet and the mould areas had further expanded in rooms, particularly those with no heating. Inspection of the architectural designs of the cottages showed that the designs were also a major reason for the excess moisture. Outer walls were built with 20 cm-thick concrete blocks, while they should have been at least 40 cm thick to provide adequate protection from ground and rain water - or else other building technologies should have been used. [11]

Various designs made by two different groups of architects were used in the construction of settlements built under the supervision of the government, but in both cases the mistakes regarding outer walls of the cottages were identical. It is difficult to es-

9 Transparency International Georgia, p. 10; Interview with the technical manager of the APRL, Irakli Chiburdanidze, 20 April 2011.

10 The settlements of Tserovani and Verkhvebi are exceptions.

11 Transparency International Georgia (ibid.), p. 8.

tablish now whether this was a genuine mistake or the result of an instruction from coordinating agencies who wanted to save funds.

However, it is obvious that the decision resulted in problems linked to the energy efficiency of the houses, healthy living environment, and cost-effectiveness in view of the financial resources spent to correct mistakes.

It became obvious in early 2010 that the houses were in urgent need of repair. The government repaired houses in the new settlements with financial support from international organizations. Roofs were repaired, laminate floors laid, walls painted, and anterooms built at the entrances. However, when I did fieldwork, the problem of humidity remained acute even in repaired homes. It is clear that it is impossible to resolve the problem through repair works alone. Major efforts and financial expenditures are necessary to improve the situation.

There are also problems related to energy efficiency. As the outer walls are thin, cottages do not have necessary thermal isolation: They are very hot in summer and very cold in winter. People find it difficult to keep homes warm and they need more electricity, gas, or firewood, which has a negative impact on the economic status of families and the health of local residents. Bad thermal isolation creates good conditions for the spread of humidity in houses, making the environment in them harmful for health. High humidity facilitates the spread of mould, creating climatic conditions conducive to rheumatic diseases.

There are shortcomings not only in the decisions related to the construction, but also in the structure of design. At the first stage of designing, the sphere of the activities of IDPs was correctly determined and it was planned to choose residential areas close to farmlands. However, when designing homes, it was not planned to build additional storage facilities for agricultural products. At present, this is a major problem for the local people. They cannot store crops (and other items) in an appropriate manner. We will see below what impact this overlooked “detail” had on the alterations carried out in the settlements.

The situation described above makes it clear that insufficient attention was paid to social aspects at the time the settlements were built. The incomplete social infrastructure makes it clear that at the stage of decision making and designing, the settlements were approached in an extremely primitive manner - as unities of houses and night lodgings, not an integral social organism. When you are in the settlements, it is impossible to escape the feeling that they are imperfect and artificial. Because of the rushed and chaotic process of projecting and constructing the settlements, unsustainable decisions were made. At present the living conditions are unhealthy and economically not efficient. Big efforts and financial expenditures are necessary to improve the situation.

1. THE SETTLEMENT

The settlement selected for the study[12] is bordered by the city, highway and agricultural lands provided for the settlement. According to the site plan, its structure is divided twofold - in "quarters" and according to the distribution of residents. The settlement is located on a completely flat terrain and consists of 298 standard one-storey cottages standing in eight long parallel lines. The monotony is broken by five long and five short streets that divide the settlement into 16 full-fledged quarters (sectors) of a prolonged rectangular form. Families from various areas in the occupied territories live in this settlement. They are grouped according to the villages, where they used to live. Fellow villagers continue to live together in the new settlement. [13]

The system of numbering houses is a "particular feature" of the settlement, as the sequence of numbers does not correspond to standards. The cottages are numbered not along long streets, but along short lines of houses. It is impossible to find the house you need even if you know the number unless a local resident helps you or you become accustomed to the "logic" of the numbering. It turns out that initially, the local residents also found it difficult. Such unusual numbering makes it more difficult to orientate oneself in a settlement consisting of identical houses and to perceive a street as a full-fledged structural part of the settlement.

As I mentioned above, organized public spaces were not envisaged in the structure of the settlement when it was originally designed. There are no sports grounds or playgrounds for younger generations and no areas for free-time meetings. Streets are the only areas of this kind, but their structure is not in full accord with the traditions of organizing street areas. There is no clear boundary between a house and a street, because homestead land is not fenced off. When you leave a home, you immediately find yourself in the street. Such openness leads to bustling life in the streets, but at the same time, it makes a family's private life public, which is not always desirable. In conversations, local residents often speak about the feeling of being unprotected, but the need and psychological discomfort do not seem strong enough to "force" people to make fences themselves. They continue their long wait for the government to keep its word and erect fences.

The central short street in the settlement has become the "main thoroughfare". On the one hand, it connects the settlement with the main road that leads to the city and on the other, with farmlands that are adjacent to the settlement. In addition to being intensively used by pedestrians, it has acquired a commercial function. Two food shops and a bakery are situated there. Local residents often assemble outside the shops in daytime and the street is full of young people, mostly males, in the evenings.

12 An ordinary settlement that is no different from others was selected for the study.

13 For example, houses on five short lines were earmarked for families from the Tamarasheni village. Despite being "fellow villagers", these people had to build neighbourly relations anew and better familiarize themselves with each other. My host said about her neighbour that in her native village, she did not know her very well and they became close only after they were resettled in the new village.

A conversation with the saleswoman in a shop in the "main street" shed some light on the economic side of the life of the residents of the settlement. They say that it has changed over the past three years. The saleswoman had the opportunity to observe the growth of the amount of products bought on credit - "*nisia*" - when people take products and pay money later. Her observations showed that at the end of the first year after resettlement (2009), the total amount of money people owed added up to GEL 3,000 and by the end of 2011, the sum doubled and reached GEL 6,000.

Nisia is an indicator of the state of the economy of the families residing in the settlement. The increase in the amount owed is due to the fact that the state and international humanitarian organizations have stopped providing help[14] on the one hand and on the other, it shows that the residents of the new settlements are still in search of sources of independent income. Observations show that the land they received has not yet become a sustainable source of financial income.

It is noteworthy that proximity to the town provides a better opportunity for locals to sustain themselves. Conversations make it clear that this geographical aspect facilitates independent development of the settlement compared to others situated at a longer distance from the town, which is a good place for selling products and other homemade goods. One can also sell mushrooms and berries gathered in the forest, courgettes and pumpkins from orchards, or rabbits grown on homestead land.

Although the town is close enough, the settlement is not within its administrative boundaries. It is under the "jurisdiction" of a neighbouring village. The type of activity and nature of the village proper is rural, but it is tightly tied to the town's social infrastructure. Children attend schools in the town and administrative agencies, churches, and medical facilities are all located in the town. Although the village is not governed by the administration of the town, some prohibitions and regulations valid for the town also extend to the village. The residents of the IDP settlement constantly have the feeling that it is stuck somewhere between the town and village.[15]

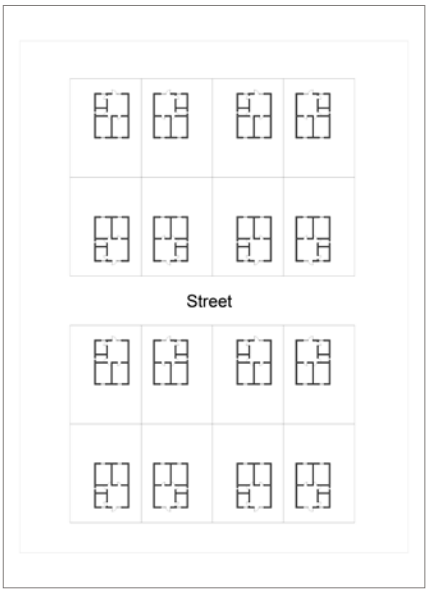
2. ADAPTATION OF HOUSING

HOMELAND AND NEW HOME

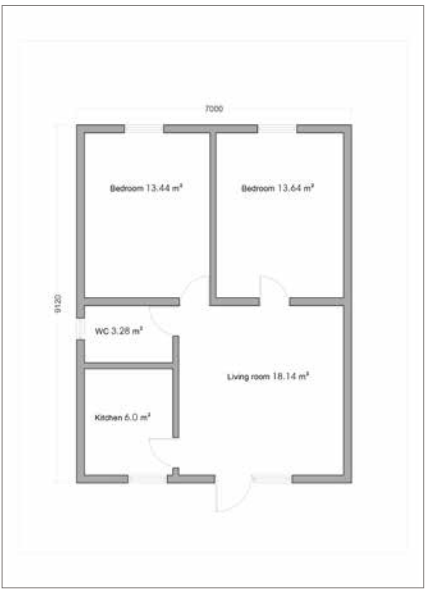
The new living area continues to be a temporary shelter for the residents of the settlements. The notion of *home* continues to be firmly connected to the former places of residence. In the opinion of the residents of the settlements, the new living areas they were offered for the future are both functionally and aesthetically inferior to the houses they left behind. Their stories are marked with strong grief:

14 During the first year after the resettlement, IDPs were provided with all necessary products, but in 2010, humanitarian assistance significantly decreased and it completely stopped in 2011.

15 For example, the residents of the settlement are allowed to keep cattle and use wood stoves.



PICTURE 1 Correlation of the cottages



PICTURE 2 Cottage plan

"Police, all agencies, shops, a cinema... [There was] everything [in the settlement]... I cannot say that the settlement had any defects... Our houses stood in one line, those of all neighbours... When we entered a garden, tender and fragrant roses intoxicated us. It was so beautiful that it is impossible to describe. And what air! It was like immortality and it was very beautiful, very beautiful... That is why we are sorry and weeping. ... And what is this? Does it look like a house!?" (Elene Sh.)

In conversations, local residents very often compare new houses to chicken coops: "We had chicken coops of this size," people say, adding that they had "to abandon palaces". This does not mean that they are not thankful for the shelter they received. They just point to the fact that it is difficult to adapt to the new areas.[16]

Every family would have eagerly changed the internal and external sides of the houses in accordance with their own taste and the needs of their families, but not everyone can afford to do so. The lack of money is the main factor hindering them from altering the houses. Thus functional and aesthetic conversion of the living space can be considered one of the first stages of the adaptation process in the new place.

16 It is more difficult for the older generation to adapt to new areas and they are more hopeful that they will return to their homes.

HOUSE PLANNING PATTERNS

To better understand the logic of modification let us familiarize ourselves with the planning pattern of one typical cottage.

Houses in the settlement were built in the forepart of homestead land plots along long streets. Due to the planning patterns of the cottages, they are located in such a manner as to have a "mirror-like" structure of other cottages (Picture 1). The distance between neighbouring houses is 10 metres on one side and 5 metres on the other. The distance has proved to be a key factor in certain kinds of modifications.

Cottages are individual and belong only to one family consisting of three or four people. The cottages consist of a drawing-room (18 m^2), two bedrooms (13.5 m^2), a kitchen (6 m^2), and sanitary facilities (3.3 m^2).[17] Crossing a small forecourt, you enter the drawing-room. The other rooms - bedrooms, kitchens, and sanitary facilities are located around the drawing-room (Picture 2).

There are 298 cottages in the settlement. At present, 164 (55 per cent) of them have been altered and the remaining 134 (45 per cent) are unchanged. The modified houses have partially or fully lost their initial appearance.

The number of family members, together with insufficient money, can also be named as a factor hindering modifications. A family that consists of one or two members uses only one bedroom. The other bedroom is empty and can be used in winter to store crops and various products. Guests can also be received in that room. In such cases, the family does not face an acute problem of modifying the house.

TYPES OF MODIFICATIONS

When it is a matter of altering a house, it should be noted that the word *alteration* implies all kinds of new developments, including comparatively large rooms and small structures made of planks and other materials, which appeared in the settlement after it was populated.

To analyse and clarify the logic of the alterations, I identified main types of new development (morphotypes) that are widespread in the settlement. Typological grouping was made on the basis of the correlations of the planning structure and functional characteristics. I divided the identified types of alterations into three main groups and subgroups.

1. ALTERATIONS OF FLANK FACADES - 41 CASES

In this group, we encounter various modifications of the rectangular design of the main part of the houses. Their function is that of support spaces. Such spaces mostly serve as storerooms for crops and other items.

17 In Karaleti, sanitary facilities are part of the structure of the homes. Due to its closeness to the town, the settlement has a sewage system. In many settlements, toilets are in the yards and there are no separate rooms for hygienic purposes. Some of them do not even have public baths or, if they have them, they do not function.

2. ALTERATIONS OF FRONT FACADES - 60 CASES

The space between the main part of the house and the street.

2.1 Open porch - "platform" - 33 cases

The function is to protect the main part of the house against the impact of precipitates and dirt.

2.2 Combination of open porch and closed space - 16 cases

Serves to expand the kitchen or create an entrance hall.

2.3 Completely closed extension - 11 cases

3. COMPLEX ALTERATIONS - 63 CASES

Various types of alterations according to the planning patterns and functions. They include the structure of alterations similar to the first and second groups.

3.1 Alteration - between two houses - 16 pairs (28 cases)

3.2 Various types of sporadic alterations of one cottage - 35 cases.

GROUP I

ALTERATION OF FLANK FACADES

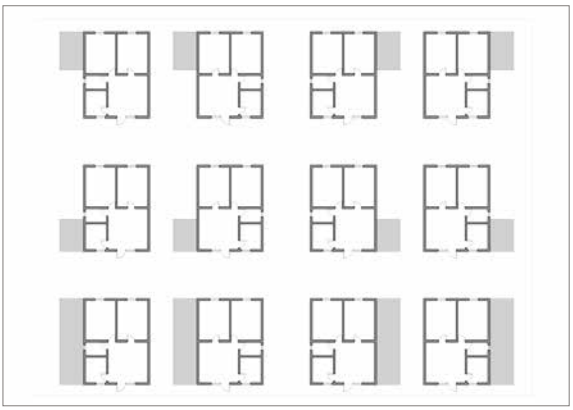
Polling of residents of the settlement and in-depth interviews showed that everyone - every family - needs additional agricultural premises. I said above that the design and structure of the settlements did not envisage additional premises necessary for storing crops and other items in winter. Space and a specific temperature are necessary to store potatoes, onions, and other products. In addition to crops for winter, people need to store traditional jarred food.[18] Products kept for winter in large glass jars or plastic cans need a large space and coolness. You can often hear similar stories. Locals recall the first winter in the settlement with humour. At the beginning, they had to keep products mostly under their beds, but the temperature in the rooms was too high. Glass jars could not stand the temperature and would burst with a loud noise in the middle of the night, frightening the family and giving rise to a lot of problems.

The very first year made it clear that it was impossible to store products in the garrets. Locals also recalled their first summer in the settlement. Those who stored in the garrets products received as humanitarian aid, found everything defective. The roofs of garrets are low, which makes them inconvenient for use. The roofing is also poorly insulated. Correspondingly, it is very hot in summer and very cold in winter in the garrets and products are unprotected against climatic conditions.[19]

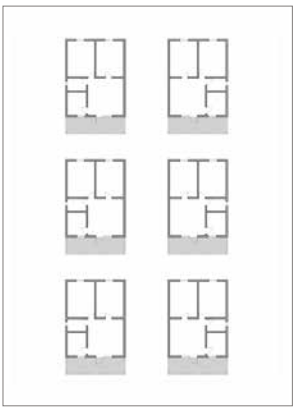
The space in the houses is organized on the basis of minimal standards - for families with three or four members. Correspondingly, any additional person, for example, a relative, who may stay for a couple of days, makes the house uncomfortable and small, as it is full of various products and agricultural tools.

18 In her article, Life in a Settlement for Refugees: The Experience of a Study, E. Tsereteli described in detail the role and tradition of storing jarred food (Tsereteli E. Life in a Settlement for Refugees: The Experience of a Study; Town, Migration, Market: A New Look at the Sociocultural problems in Studies by South Caucasus Scientists (2011), p. 113).

19 The situation is different in one of the settlements. The most widespread type of modifications here is a staircase structure. It enables the use of garrets. As I have not had the opportunity to study the aforementioned settlement, I cannot explain the reasons for the difference.



PICTURE 3 Types of alterations of flank façade



PICTURE 4 Alterations of front façades - Open porch

The tight space motivated locals to build additions to their cottages. Residents started independently modifying and completing their houses without waiting assistance from the state. It is obvious that such measures are necessary. Most widespread alterations are additions to the flank facade. Pantries occupy the additions fully or partially. The size of such additions is that of the whole flank facade or some part of it. As a rule, they are not connected to the main part of the cottages and you can get to the additions only across the courtyard. They are mostly made of wood or building blocks (Picture 3).

Locals say that it is cheaper to build wooden structures. One of my interlocutors, Nano T., recalled that she spent GEL 300 (USD 180 at the time) to build a wooden structure. An addition made of blocks is more expensive. It costs about GEL 1,000 (about USD 600). As a rule, male members of families coordinate the construction of new structures. They make modifications themselves, saving money.

If a family has another room to store products, for example a cellar, which they have made themselves, the addition to the flank facade may serve as a workroom. However, such cases are extremely rare. If a family has a car, such an addition may also serve as a garage, where other items can also be kept.

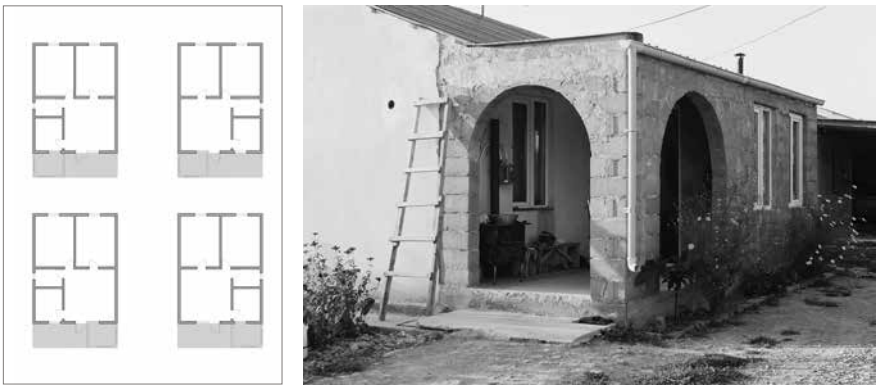
GROUP II

ALTERATIONS OF FRONT FACADES

There are three variations of the alterations of front facades.

2.1 Open porch

The most widespread type in this group is an open porch that runs along the whole of the front part of a house. It is made outside the main part of a house on the homestead land plot between the house and the street, occupying the whole of the front part of the plot of about 3 metres (Picture 4). Locals use the Russian word “ploshchadka” (“platform”) to name such an addition. Thirty-three cottages have been modified according



PICTURE 5 Alterations of front façades - Combination of open porch and closed space

to this plan up to now. The constructions consist of flat concrete floors that are one step higher than the soil and slanted coverings resting on four thin iron pillars. There are platforms open from three sides, two sides, or only one side. The function of such additions is to protect the main part of a house (the drawing-room) from the direct impact of rains and winds. They also protect houses from dirt and serve as intermediate spaces between houses and streets.

In some settlements built for IDPs, people are intensively altering small added porches outside the front doors. The doors are often "packed" in tarpaulin or some other rain-proof materials. The climatic factor is the reason for such measures. These settlements are situated in an area dominated by north-westerly winds. The settlements are planned in such a manner that the front facades of half of the cottages are turned to the west. Therefore, winds strengthen the impact of rain on the front facades, where the front doors are situated. Rain goes through thin walls, doors, and windows and the "packed" porches protect the main parts of houses against rains and winds.

Although one of the functions of the porches is to protect buildings from the weather, this factor is not so obvious, as in the case described above. In my opinion, it is general in nature and is due to the design of the cottages rather than specific climatic conditions.

This alteration is much cheaper, which makes it very popular. It also presupposes prospects for further alterations. If people have enough money, they can completely or partially wall up open porches and enlarge kitchens and drawing-rooms or build entrance halls or any other isolated rooms.

2.2 Combination of open porch and closed space

This kind of alterations is a modified form of open porches. In such cases, front facades are completely modified and the annexes occupy the entire space between the house and the street. However, unlike open porches, half of the spaces are set apart with solid walls. They consist of two structural parts: Small open porches and closed

spaces (Picture 5). The closed parts of the annexes usually have a couple of apertures for windows, mostly on the side of the streets. The presence of apertures for doors depends on the function of the annexes. If they are meant to expand kitchens, the central doors are maintained in the initial place. The closed annexes are linked to the main parts of the cottages by means of open spaces or have separate doors on the flanks. If entrance halls are added, spaces are created before drawing rooms and the main doors are moved to the flank facades, changing directions. However, the modification of details is extremely individual and adjusted to concrete demands of specific families.

The owner of one cottage that was modified according to one of the aforementioned models, Milena B., said that the main reason for the modification was the desire to keep the drawing room clear. The new annex was built along the whole of the front facade and it made the drawing room larger. The annex now also functions as an entrance hall. The front door of the cottage was moved. You enter the house through the porch and the aperture for the door is in the flank wall of the closed annex. The front facade of the entrance hall has two apertures for windows. The front and flank facades of the porch are decorated with arches. The concrete walls of the outer part of the annex are not plastered. The family plans to plaster the facade in the future. On the other hand, the interior is in ideal condition. The walls are painted, the floor is tiled, and so forth.

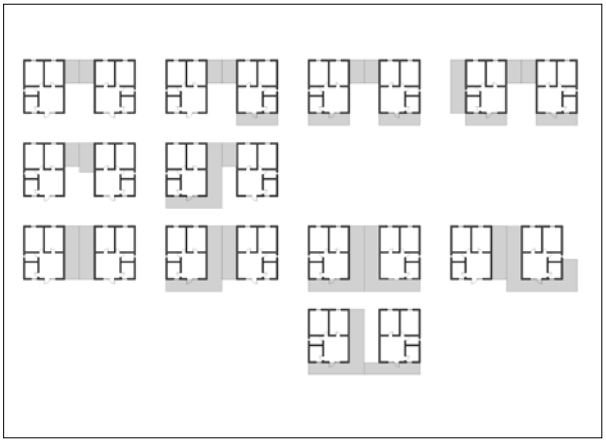
There are three children in the family and two of them are minors. The hostess recalls that in winter, dirt from the street was brought into the drawing room. There was a woodstove in the room and the children had to play nearby. Dirty shoes and vests and overcoats can now be left in the newly-built drawing room and the woodstove can be placed in such a manner as to make it possible to keep the room clean.

The grouping of the types of alterations has shown that front facades are modified more frequently than flank facades.[20] In conversations, local residents say that they are in urgent need of storerooms, but when they independently modify the buildings, some of them modify front facades instead of building additional rooms or fences. It is difficult to explain the difference between what they say and what they do.

My theory is that the tradition of organizing residential spaces may be playing a major role in this process. Along with obvious primary functions, such organization may unconsciously be linked to the harmonious planning of a house. The peculiarities of these modifications may be linked to the traditional understanding of the harmonious planning of a house in Georgia. If we take a look at the history of the development of residential architecture in urban and rural areas, it becomes clear how important intermediate space was. It was perceived as a space between the "harmonized interior" and "chaotic exterior". This theory is based on visual comparison between the type of Georgian house called *darbazi* (widespread in Shida Kartli[21] and other Georgian regions) and the modification of the front facade and open porches of the IDP cottages. The visual and structural similarities are definitely striking .

20 The correlation of modification of the front and flank facades is 41 to 60.

21 It should also be borne in mind that the geographic area, where darbazi-type homes were widespread, coincides with the area, where IDPs used to live.



PICTURE 6 Alterations between two houses

PICTURE 7 Alteration on the land plot between cottages

I will go no deeper into this issue here, because I think that this is a matter of a more minute research. In conclusion, I would like to say that such modifications point to the particularly important role of intermediate space in organizing residential spaces in the new settlements for IDPs.

GROUP III

COMPLEX ALTERATIONS

Group III has two subgroups. The designs of the buildings in this group are of different types. They comprise designs characteristic of both the first and second groups. Additional rooms are always part of the structures of "complex" alterations. There are also functionally new rooms that are not typical of the first two groups.

3.1 Alteration - between two houses

Alterations made in the space between two houses are yet another good example of adaptation to new housing conditions. In such cases, neighbours form a partnership to save funds and construct buildings divided by one common wall on the homestead land plots between their cottages. The distance between cottages plays a key role in such cases. I already noted above that the distance between cottages is 5 metres on one side and 10 metres on the other. People usually use the smaller land plot. The external walls of the drawing room are used for the alteration (Picture 6).

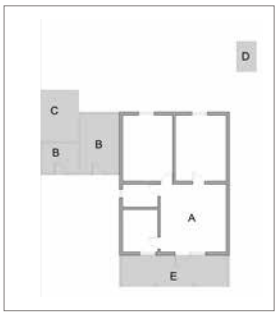
The designs of the structures united in this subgroup are different. They may be simple or more complicated. Simple modifications are more frequent. They imply full or partial modification of flank facades. The annexes serve as storing places for crops, various products, and other things. The modification repeats the design similar to the alterations under Group I.

One respondent, Tamar M., recalled that her neighbours needed additional rooms and they decided to make alterations together. They built a common wall on the border of their land plots and then built their own rooms independently. The annex is symmetric for both houses and it fully covers the flank facades of the houses. Thus, a structure was erected between cottages and now occupies the whole of the land plot between them, connecting the houses in a single structure. The new space, for its part, is divided into two rooms (Picture 7). Each of the rooms has its own garret. The interiors are not well-furnished, walls are not plastered, and wooden structures are bare. The annex is built next to the flank facade and is not connected to the main part of the house. You reach the annex by crossing the homestead land plot, as the door is on the side of the street.

The complexity of alterations and their further development depend on the material well-being of the owners of houses and their needs. Designs often develop in different manners in case of such alterations and some cottages are more altered than others. Such alterations consist of various interesting "building layers" and provide important information about the initial needs of the families.

One of the respondents, Khatuna A., said that the first thing she did was to build an annex to her house together with her neighbours. The annex covers the whole length of the house and is higher than the house. It has a garret that serves as an additional storage space. The annex is divided in two. The back room is used to keep canned food, jams, and other such products for winter. The front part is used to keep wine, but this room is now comparatively empty. The family spent about GEL 1,300 (about USD 770) on the modification. The neighbours divided the money they spent to build a wall on the border. However, the respondent's family did not stop at this modification. At the second stage, they enlarged the kitchen and made a porch. The respondent recalled that the narrowness of the kitchen and smells spreading all about the house motivated them to modify the house. "I changed the style of the kitchen. When meals were cooked there, smells bothered us here, in this [drawing] room," she said. To keep smells away the door leading from the drawing room to the kitchen was walled up. A closed space was

PICTURE 8 The planning scheme of the cottage. A - Primary part of the house, B - the first stage of alteration (storage room), C - alteration of the second phase (extension of the kitchen), D - alteration of the third stage (garage).



PICTURE 9 The planning scheme of the cottage. A - Primary part of the house, B - alteration of the first stage (and storage room and WC), C - alteration of the second phase (the piggery), D - alteration of the third stage (bakery) E - alteration of the fourth stage (porch)

built as an extension to the kitchen, which is a structural part of the annex to the front facade that repeats the design of Group 2.2. You enter the kitchen across the porch through a door made in the side of the new annex. The old window of the kitchen was broadened and an arch connects the old and new rooms. The hostess says that the only thing they need to do now is to buy furniture for the kitchen. At the third stage, the family built a new annex - a garage - on the side of the street. It is as long as the modified front facade and the back part is as long as the adjacent wall of the bathroom. In the future, the family intends to expand the bathroom, too. The hostess explained that since they bought a washing machine, the small space of the bathroom has seemed even smaller. The total sum the family spent on all modifications amounted to GEL 3,000-4,000 (about USD 1,700-2,400) (Picture 8).

The different scales of modifications of the two houses point to the differences in the incomes of the families. The neighbouring family was able to modify the flank facade, but has so far failed to complete the modification. The structure of the modification is bare and there are no windows or doors.

There are modifications of houses in the settlements, where it is impossible to view the initial sizes of houses. I have encountered only one case of such alteration.

Two houses that are connected as a result of a modification often belong to relatives, but this factor is not decisive. Good-neighbourly relations are also sufficient for such modifications to be made.

3.2 Various types of sporadic alterations of one cottage

Each of the modifications of this type is a result of a unique functional and structural plan. The modifications are fully adapted to the specific needs of each family. Annexes are made on a large scale, covering two (front and flank facades) or three sides (front and both flank facades) of a house. Such modifications need larger sums and are indicative of additional incomes. New reasons for modifications are added to those described above. They are often linked to the number of family members and the tradition of hospitality.

One respondent, Naira T., said that she had retained her salary as a teacher, her husband received a pension, and the family managed to accumulate money and improve its living conditions. "In the beginning, we made a cellar,[22] then a pigsty, and then we improved the interior of the house by laying tiles. Bread is very expensive, so we made an oven for flat bread. Water penetrated the wall of the room, so we made the porch," she said. The story shows that the reorganization of the house started with the building of an additional annex. When the hostess was showing the modifications, I found that the family had also built a toilet in the yard. It occupies most of the homestead land plot next to the storeroom between the cottages - only half of the flank facade (on the side of the kitchen). The hostess said that an additional toilet was a must for the periods when they had guests in order to avoid awkward situations. "It is awkward to be waiting for each other," she said. At the second stage, the family continued to resolve everyday problems. A pigsty was built at the back of the annex made at the first stage. The refurbishment of the interior was the next step. Furniture was purchased for the drawing room and the kitchen then the oven was placed in the yard, some distance from the house. "Bread is very expensive. If you have guests, you cannot explain to them that you have bread only for the two of you," the hostess explained.[23] At the last stage, the family modified the front facade of the house, adding an open porch. I observed that in warm weather the family spends a lot of time there, meeting guests and neighbours (Picture 9).

22 The hostess described additional rooms built above ground as a cellar, probably because at the moment, the functions of the rooms are those of the cellar in her previous house. The new structure is absolutely different in nature, but the word was probably used due to its similar function.

23 The same issue emerged during a conversation with the keeper of one of the shops. She noted that bread was the main products people bought on credit. She explained that people were particularly likely to buy bread when they had guests.

In conversations, local residents mentioned guests as a factor making the modifications necessary. When respondents speak about family networks, it becomes obvious how large the networks are and how closely the people are linked to each other. The tradition of hospitality also plays an important role here. Appropriate treatment of guests is closely linked to the prestige of families. A guest who visits a large family for some time creates a lot of difficulties and discomfort. Due to crammed quarters, hosts have to cede their bedrooms to guests and spend nights lying on the floor. It is for such cases that families start modifying their houses. New structures are organized in such a manner as to make their use possible as additional residential rooms.

Flank facades (which do not have apertures), as well as front facades, are usually used for such modifications. There is only one case of the modification of the rear facade in the settlement. This peculiarity is due to the design of the cottage, where the windows of bedrooms are on the back side. The space of the bedrooms is convenient and there is no need for expansion or modifications.

FINANCIAL MECHANISMS USED FOR THE ALTERATIONS

At the beginning of the study, I thought that every alteration and the frequency of alterations in the settlement in general could serve as an indicator of the economic status of a family and of the settlement in general. However, observations and analyses have shown that this opinion is not justified for all kinds of alterations, as they may be different in terms of scale, materials, and quality, as well as financing and resources spent.

For example, the families are allowed to receive social assistance and pensions several months in advance on credit. Sometimes this financial mechanism is used for building purposes and altering houses. It should be mentioned that very little money can be collected in this way,[24] so families can afford only very limited activities.[25]

For the time being, only 30 per cent of modifications (17 per cent in the settlement) can be referred to as indicators of the well-being of a family, while others reflect only the particular needs of relevant families, who had to "sacrifice a lot" to satisfy these needs.

LEGAL STATUS OF EXTENSIONS AND PRIVATIZATION PROBLEM

As we have seen, intensive modification of houses is mostly conditioned by the urgent need to build additional rooms for storing crops and protecting homes against climatic conditions. These activities, for their part, are independent attempts at correcting

24 Social allowances are the only monetary assistance provided by the state. The allowance amounts to GEL 30 (about USD 18) for the heads of families and GEL 22 (about USD 14) for others. The average income of a family amounts to GEL 72 (USD 43). If members of a family are retired, pensions amounting to GEL 100 (about USD 57) are added to the social allowances. Every IDP also received a monthly subsidy for the consumed electricity amounting to GEL 12.98. (dollar equivalents are for January 2012).

25 This financial mechanism is used for agricultural activities as well.

mistakes made by the government when coordinating the construction of the settlements. The government is well informed and aware of the problem. Inhabitants have received informal and verbal permission to modify their houses given by the former Governor of Shida Kartli, but there are rumours and fears about potential problems with the formal side of these actions. The residents of the settlement have not officially been informed about their rights to the houses and the Georgian building legislation.

Taking into account the maximum sizes of cottages, homestead land plots and the structure of the alterations, it is quite possible that most modifications fall within the Category I determined by the Georgian building legislation. This means that no building documents or architectural plans need to be coordinated. A permit applicant needs to report to the local municipality and submit a certificate of ownership - otherwise, the building shall be regarded as illegal.[26] In this case, since residents did not inform the relevant agencies about their building plans, the changes are regarded as illegal.

Another question arises here, that of privatization. The problems of legalizing alterations and privatizing cottages are closely linked to each other. The problem of ownership is the factor that makes the legalization of alterations more complicated, even if people want to obey the law. According to the action plan of the state strategy, the legalization of the housing spaces and homestead land plots was to be completed by 2009.[27] However, the housing space in the new settlements still remains under state ownership.[28] So, IDPs should obtain the state's official consent to use its property. Thus, even if residents decided to legally construct a building, they would encounter yet another obstacle - the complicated bureaucratic process, which seems just as unclear to the local authorities as it is to the residents.

The delay in the privatization of cottages and lack of clarity over the rights to the residential spaces hinder the process of habituation and adaptation to the new location. Local residents have been unable to clarify what rights they have regarding the houses. The state handed over houses to them for use, but at the moment when the houses were populated, no agreement or official conditions were signed between the residents and the state that could temporarily (until the privatization of the cottages) regulate conditions of use and the rights and obligations of both sides. Various rumours circulate and numerous questions arise in expectation of privatization. Will the owners be able to sell their homes after privatization? What kind of privatization is going to be carried out - partial (only the part of the house built by the state) or full (with

26 Edict No 57 of the Georgian government of 24 March 2008 on issuing permission for building and building requirements.

27 The State Strategy for IDPs, 2007. Information booklet on handing over property to IDPs and rehabilitation of collective centres: http://mra.gov.ge/files/IDP_Booklet_2_GEO.pdf (Checked again on 05 September 2011).

28 According to the Association for the Protection of Landowners' Rights, by 30 August 2010, land plots of 2,297 families in 10 settlements on the territory of Shida Kartli Province had been legalized (statistical data on the agricultural and homestead land plots (together with houses) handed over to IDPs by the Georgian government). The Association for the Protection of Landowners' Rights: <http://www.aplr.org/files/2/_gqm9z42zj.pdf> (retrieved 2 July 2011).

new modifications)? There are other questions, too. Georgian legislation does not allow privatizing illegal buildings, which makes the future of the recent modifications unclear and leaves the aforementioned questions unanswered.[29]

CONCLUSIONS

Functional and aesthetic reorganization of housing is part of the adaptation process in a new place. It is precisely from the homestead land and the house that the arrangement of the living environment starts. Every family has a wish to modify its house according to its own needs and taste, but not everyone can afford it. Only a few of them can afford relatively large-scale changes, while others limit themselves to small-scale alterations to satisfy their urgent needs in the hope that in the future they will be able to carry on construction activities.

The research makes it possible to outline the main factors determining the alterations and the typology of these changes. Urgent need, climatic conditions, insufficient living space, and the tradition of hospitality are the main reasons that induce new settlers to start reorganize their homes. In some cases the reasons for the urgent need of alterations are conditioned by mistakes made in the design and construction stage of the settlements.

The sphere of the activities of IDPs - agriculture - was correctly defined during the coordination of the construction of the new settlements. The state built the new settlements close to farmlands, but the planning of the settlements and the designs of houses did not envisage additional spaces for storing crops and other items necessary for agriculture. The urgent need motivated residents to build new additional spaces. The design of the cottages and flaws in their structure force local residents to create new spaces on the front side of the houses and protect the building from rains and dirt.

Local residents find it difficult to get accustomed to the crammed quarters, as the size of the buildings does not correspond to the traditional understanding of a "decent home". The space in the houses is organized on the basis of minimal standards - for families with three or four members. The small size of some rooms (for example. kitchens) also motivates people to modify the spaces. The size of families and the tradition of hospitality also play a key role, leading to the emergence of additional residential spaces.

29 Against the background of the passivity of state agencies, the resolution of the problem is dependent on the private initiative of IDPs. Georgian legislation sets forth conditions for the legalization of illegally constructed buildings (Article 39.5 of Edict No 57 of the Georgian government as of 24 March 2008 on issuing permission for building and building requirements). Based on the legislation, residents of the settlements have the right to collectively apply to appropriate agencies (more precisely, the Georgian government) and demand both privatization and legalization of illegal modifications. At this stage, this would be one step towards resolving the problem. Close cooperation between state agencies and residents of the new settlements could become a basis for the resolution of the problems of this kind.

On the bases of the observation and analysis of the planning structure of modifications, the following typological grouping was made. Three major groups and subgroups of alterations have been identified:

1. Alterations of flank facades;
2. Alterations of front facades;
1.1. Open porch;
1.2. Combination of open porch and closed space;
1.3. Completely closed extension;
3. Complex alterations
3.1 Alteration - between two houses;
3.2 Various types of sporadic alterations of one cottage.

Observation shows that for extensions front and side facades are generally used; back facades have so far remained untouched.

In terms of recommendations, I would like to say that improved communication and close cooperation between state agencies and residents of the new settlements, objective assessment and analysis of problems linked to the legal status of new modifications and the process of privatization by the government, and concrete initiatives on the part of local residents can form the basis for the settlement of numerous problems.

Adjustment to the new architectural environment and new living conditions is a long process that is still ongoing. It will continue until the spaces in the houses reach the functional and aesthetic conditions that the residents of the new settlements regard as harmonious. Structures that emerge spontaneously due to the efforts of the local residents, but without the involvement of architects make the settlements "folkloristic" and remedy the monotonous appearance of identical houses. This makes it clear that life is continuing and following a new and more complicated path.

Internalized Homophobia in Georgian LGBQ Community

Natia Gvianishvili

The following research is an attempt to explore levels of internalized homophobia, the main stress factors and relevant coping mechanisms among Georgian lesbian, bisexual, gay and queer community.

As in case of many other marginalized groups, LGBTQ persons often internalize negative attitudes that are so widespread in the society and express them towards themselves and other peers in the community. To date no research has looked into internalized homophobia in the Georgian context and analysed it in terms of gender differences. In addition, in this research I attempt to study main stress factors that can enhance internalized homophobia, as well as coping mechanisms applied by the interviewees in response to the stress. In this regard I look with great interest at the perception of the community as one of the mechanisms for coping with internalized homophobia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Homophobia rooted in Georgian society has more than once been manifested in quite violent ways. The ongoing battle of different minorities to earn a place in the public space has been dominated by religious extremists, homophobic and xenophobic politicians as well as leaders and clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community also participating in this battle is a group that no one really wants to be associated with, whether it is other minorities or mainstream human rights defenders. The main discourse persisting in the Georgian media and education system is that homosexuality is a sin and/or an illness, which does not belong in Georgia, especially in public. Consequently, any attempt by LGBTQ persons to draw attention to the oppression we experience is considered "propaganda" aimed at bringing ruin to the Georgian nation by "spreading homosexuality and other perversions".

While our opponents claim that we are not subject to any violence on their (and general society's) part, research shows a completely different picture. A discrimination survey conducted by the Women's Initiatives Support Group in 2012 found that out of 150 participants nearly a third (32% (N=48)) said they had experienced physical violence at least once. Out of those 48 individuals, 60.87% had experienced it once, 17.39% twice and 21.74% three or more times within the 24 months preceding the survey. Results show that psychological violence is much more widespread and frequent. One hundred and thirty four participants (out of 150) stated that they had experienced some kind of psychological violence within the past two years, merely because of their sexual orientation.[1] The hostile (to say the least) attitude towards LGBTQ people is also demonstrated through various opinion polls and surveys regularly conducted in Georgia. Surveys conducted by CRRC (Caucasus Research Resource Centre) in 2009-2011[2] show that 90% of the population believes that homosexuality is unacceptable. The most recent survey conducted among Tbilisi residents (after the violent assault on LGBTQ activists during the 17 May 2013 demonstration), shows, that 24% of the participants believe that it would be appropriate to force LGBTQ people into exile and 92% of the participants state that they would not accept a gay family member.[3] All the hostility, described above leaves its mark on how we lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and queer people perceive each other and ourselves. Constant stress and lack of positive alternatives, as well as fear of rejection and lack of access to adequate help, leaves us dealing not only with the threats from the outside, but also with the stereotypical images and homophobic attitudes that we internalize.

1.1 WHAT IS INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA?

Internalized Homophobia is defined as *"a set of negative attitudes toward homosexuality in other persons and towards homosexual features in oneself. These features include same-gender sexual and affectional feelings; same-gender sexual behaviour; same- gender intimate relationships; and self-labelling as lesbian, gay or homosexual."*[4]

It is understood that internalized homophobia consists both of conscious and unconscious features. This includes internalization of distorted images of gay and lesbian sexuality; resignation and acceptance of oppressive treatment from others; undermining professional goals by blaming exclusively external bigotry for one's failures;[5] a perceived

1 Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (2012), Situation of LGBT Persons in Georgia, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group <http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/WISG_situation-of-lgbt-persons-in-Georgia_ENG-www.pdf>.

2 <http://www.crrc.ge/oda/>.

3 <http://act-gr.com/eng/index/news/831>.

4 Herek,G.M. (1994). Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications. In Beverly Greene (Ed.), Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues, Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc (p.178).

5 Gonsiorek, (1988), In: Herek, G.M. (1994). Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications. In Beverly Greene(Ed.), Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues, Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc; pp 163-167.

lack of worth and entitlement to love and being loved; irrational efforts to jeopardize intimate relationships; and the projection of the devalued self-image to one's partner.[6] Such self-stigmatization is also facilitated by the fact that most people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer lack protection and support from their families of origin, especially after their identity becomes known.[7]

Thus, most LGBT people (especially teens) lack access to community, mentors and role models who would help them develop of healthy socio-sexual identity.[8] The exposure towards negative attitudes is so overwhelming and consistent, that internalized homophobia remains an important obstacle for gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer psychological well-being throughout their life.

1.2 LITERATURE

There have not been many studies covering the issue of internalized homophobia. One of the biggest researches exploring this concept was the *Longitudinal AIDS Impact project*, which covered more than 1,000 gay and bisexual men in New York area. The original cohort was recruited in 1985. This particular study is important to us because, alongside other issues, the authors covered questions of identity and community involvement. Men in the original cohort, who had higher levels of internalized homophobia, were characterized by less involvement in the gay community.[9]

There are almost no studies comparing internalized homophobia among gay and lesbian groups. One research I managed to discover was *Correlates of Internalized Homophobia in a Community Sample of Lesbians and Gay Men by Gregory Herek et al.* published in 1997**.** The objective of the study was to systematically assess internalized homophobia and its correlates in a sample of gay men and lesbians. The Internalized Homophobia scale used in the study was considered fit for both male and female participants. In this research, women showed lower levels of internalized homophobia than men. For both groups internalized homophobia was associated with more "closetedness" and less connection to the gay and lesbian community.[10]

6 Herek, G.M, B. Greene (1994) Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications, Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues; p.181; Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

7 Crocker & Major, (1989) In: Herek, G.M. (1994). Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications. In Beverly Greene (Ed.), Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues, Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc; p.162.

8 Herek, G.M.(Ed.). (1998) Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice Against Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals.Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues Volume 4,Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc;p.162.

9 Herek, G.M. (1994) Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice Against Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues Volume 4; Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc;p.171.

10 Herek, G.M, Cogan J., Gillis R.J., Glunt E.K., Correlates of Internalized Homophobia in a Community Sample of Lesbians and Gay Men Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, 1997, 2, 17-25.

1.3 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The needs and specificity of the Georgian LGBTQ community are not well researched yet and exploring the topic of internalized homophobia could be one the keys to solving problems that lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and queer persons face in Georgia. With this study I will, first of all, attempt to measure levels of internalized homophobia and several other aspects relevant to the lives of LGBQ persons, including: Connection with the community, public identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer, as well as religious, moral and personal attitudes towards other LGBQ persons.

I also intend to compare the levels of internalized homophobia between the group of LBQ women and GBQ men, in order to see, if the result obtained by Herek[11] (where women scored lower than the male sample on the Internalized Homophobia scale) can repeat itself in today's Georgian community. My hypothesis, in this case was, that women as a largely underrepresented and oppressed group in Georgian patriarchal society, experiencing double discrimination due to their gender and sexual orientation might have shown higher levels of internalized stigma. Another hypothesis which also agrees with Herek's results is that the higher levels of internalized homophobia may be connected to the lower extent of involvement with the community. The findings, however, turned out to be different from both hypotheses. While in the first case male participants scored higher on the Internalized Homophobia Scale, no significant correlations were outlined between community involvement and internalized stigma in the present study.

In the second half of the research, I explored the stress factors that Georgian LGBQ persons face and the coping mechanisms they apply in order to overcome the stress. My hypothesis was that community involvement would be seen as one of the most important instruments for dealing with the stress. While this turned out to be true for the participants of the present study, this part of the research outlined many other significant stress factors and coping mechanisms experienced and applied by the abovementioned group.

2. SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 PARTICIPANTS

At this first stage of the research, I have collected data from 48 female-identified participants and 40 male-identified participants.

The age of participants ranged from under 18 until over 41 (1 person in the male sample). The largest age group in the female sample was 19-25 (N=22) and 26-40 (N=22), while for the male sample the largest age groups were 19-22 (N=22) and under 18 (N=11).
In terms of sexual orientation: 21 (44.7%) of female respondents and 29 (72.5%) of male

11 Herek, G.M. (1998) Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice Against Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals edited Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues Volume 4;Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Incp.171.

respondents stated that they are lesbian and gay (respectively); 8 (17%) of female and 3 (7.5%) of male respondents stated that they are bisexual; 14 (29.%) of female and 3 (7.5%) of male respondents claim that they are queer[12], while 4 (8.3%) of female participants and 5 (12.5%) of male participants claim they are undecided about their sexual orientation.

When it comes to education, most of the female participants (N=26) and 13 male participants stated that they have graduated from the university. Thirteen female and 15 male participants stated that they have incomplete university education (this could be explained both by having dropped out of from the university, or still being students). The majority of both male and female participants were either fully (22 females and 9 males), partly (4 females and 7 males) or self-employed (5 females and at the moment of research. Only 4 female and 3 male participants stated that they were unemployed. Ten female and 16 male participants stated that they are students.

The majority of our participants (37 females (77.1%)) and (33 males (82.5%)) permanently reside in Tbilisi. As was expected, the majority of the participants live with their families. The data is as follows: 8 (16.7%) of female and 5 (12.5%) of male participants own their own apartment; 6 (12.5%) of female and 9 (22.5%) of male participants rent an apartment; 6 (12.5%) of female and 1 (2.5%) of male participants rent an apartment together with their partner, the majority however (25 (52.1%) of female and 24 (60%) of male participants) live together with their parents and/or family. Three (6.3%) of female and 1 (2.5%) of male participants indicated "other" while being surveyed about their housing conditions.

As for involvement with the LGBT organizations, 41 (85.4%) of female and 31 (77.5%) of male participants stated they were in touch with LGBT organizations. Out of the participants who were involved with the LGBT organizations, 33 (80.5%) of female and 23 (57.5%) of male participants had been in touch with the organizations for more than one year, 3 (7.3%) of female and 6 (15%) of male participants were involved with the organizations for less than a year and 5 (12.2%) of female and 1 (2.5%) of male participants claimed they had been acquainted with the organizations for less than 6 months.

The second (qualitative) part of the research involved 15 participants, whose ages ranged from 21 to 31. In terms of self-identification, in this group we have: 2 lesbian women, 2 bisexual women, 4 queer women, 1 bisexual man, 3 queer men, 3 gay men. Most of the participants live with their families (only one lesbian woman and one queer woman live completely apart from their families of origin) and are employed (or self-employed) full-time (one queer man is a student, another gay man is unemployed).

12 Queer has become an academic term that is inclusive of people who are not heterosexual - includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and trans. Queer theory is challenging heteronormative social norms concerning gender and sexuality, and claims that gender roles are social constructions. For many LGBTI persons, the term "queer" has negative connotations as it was traditionally an abusive term, however many LGBTI persons are now comfortable with the term and have "reclaimed" it as a symbol of pride. (ILGA-Europe Glossary: <http://old.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary>).

2.2 INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used for the quantitative part of the research are as follows: Internalized Homophobia Scale (IHS) developed by Herek, Cogan, Gillis and Glunt (1997). This scale explores the issues of alienation, satisfaction, and regret regarding being gay or lesbian. The next set of scales developed by Szymanski & Chung (2001) explores connections with the lesbian/gay community, public identification as gay, personal feelings about being gay/lesbian, moral and religious attitudes towards gays and lesbians, attitudes towards other gay and lesbian people.

All the scales are 5-point Likert scales, though in the first Internalized Homophobia Scale 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, while Szymanski & Chung's scales are the reverse (1= strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree).

In-depth interviews and discourse analysis were used for the second part of the research. I designed a semi-structured interview questionnaire, in which I aimed to explore the main stress factors that LGBQ persons from my sample experience and what coping mechanisms they use. These two aspects are closely connected to my interest in internalized homophobia, since outlining the key coping mechanisms may give the activists and organizations working with LGBTQ persons a clearer vision of how to reduce stress of their target group more effectively.

2.3 PROCEDURE

The research was divided in two parts: quantitative and qualitative. In both cases the participants were mainly recruited through closed LGBTQ groups on social media. I posted an announcement, describing research and conditions for participation and was contacted online by those willing to take part. Since the community knows me, there were fewer trust barriers in the process of recruitment initially. In some cases, the participants helped me get in touch with LGBQ persons I had not been acquainted with. Another resource that was very useful to me during the recruitment process were the outreachers at Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG)[13] and Identoba,[14] who helped me build trust with several participants I had not been in touch with before.

The quantitative part of the research included 84 lesbian, bisexual, gay and queer identified persons. At first, participants were given chance to fill out the questionnaire online, or meet me and fill it out in my presence. In both cases, they would have the possibility to ask me all relevant questions and express their doubts or opinions about the items in the scales. Most of them chose the first option. While they were answering the scales, I was also online so that we could communicate and I could address their concerns.

13 A Georgian non-governmental organization working on LGBT rights, with special emphasis on lesbian and bisexual women and transgender persons.

14 A Georgian non-governmental LGBT organization, founded in 2010.

The recruitment for the second part of the research was carried out in a way similar to the first stage of the research and included 15 participants. At this point, I observed that the members of the LGBQ community were a little less willing to take part in the study. This could be because of the fact that, the sense of insecurity and fear increased in the community after the violent attack of 17 May 2013.[15]

It is important to note that I decided not to limit the research to people who identify purely as gay or lesbian. This research includes participants who identify as bisexual and queer as well. The reason for this choice is justified given the fact that the Georgian LGBT community is still not numerous and organized enough for it to have many subgroups, thus the socialization for all the members occurs mostly in the same space.

3. RESULTS

3.1 LEVELS OF INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

The sample of 84 persons selected for the initial part of the research showed quite positive results on all the scales. However, my hypothesis, that the group of female-identified participants would show higher levels of internalized homophobia, was proven wrong. Despite the fact that according to the scores, the levels of internalized homophobia are not high in either of the groups, the LBQ sample showed a lower score (M=12.65, SD =4.86) compared to their male counterparts (M=16.53, SD=7.71). Another scale, measuring one's personal feelings[16] about one's sexuality, showed similar results. Both groups scored quite high on this scale (theoretical maximum 40 and minimum 8). LBQ community scored (M=34.83, SD=4.92) while GBQ community scored (M=33.13, SD=14.96). This could mean that GBQ persons may tend to have more negative attitudes towards their sexual orientation, than the LBQ community.

It is noteworthy, that on the rest of the scales[17] exploring community involvement and one's personal attitudes towards LGBTQ persons and public identification as such, the female sample scored higher than the male sample.

15 On 17 May 2013 (the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia) a peaceful demonstration that was supposed to be held by Georgian LGBTQ activists and their friends and allies in Tbilisi was attacked by around 10,000 counter-demonstrators lead by Orthodox priests. The LGBTQ activists were evacuated but several people on both sides, including police officers, were injured. Three activists from the LBQ community received concussions. Another consequence of the 17 May events was that for the coming two months or so, there were numerous cases of LGBTQ and gender-non-conforming persons being attacked and harassed on the streets by different groups of young people.

16 Szymanski, D. M., & Chung, Y. B. (2001). The Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale: A rational/theoretical approach. Journal of Homosexuality, 41(2), 37-52.

17 The results of these scales will be integrated with relevant parts of the qualitative half of the research.

The gender differences[18] observed in the present study suggest that lesbians may experience internalized homophobia to a lesser extent than gay men, and that internalized homophobia may be less closely linked to self-esteem for lesbians than it is for gay men. Such a pattern may be explained with reference to empirical studies of heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexuality, which have repeatedly shown that heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men are more negative than their attitudes toward lesbians or heterosexual women's attitudes toward either gay men or lesbians. Because gay men and lesbians typically are subject to the same socialization processes as their heterosexual counterparts, it is reasonable to expect that their internalization of attitudes toward homosexuality would mirror that of heterosexuals. That is, (gay) men may be expected to internalize greater hostility toward (their own) male homosexuality relative to (lesbian) women's internalization of hostility toward (their own) lesbianism.

No significant correlations were outlined in terms of association between community involvement and internalized homophobia levels, or the latter and the demographic data of the participants.

3.2 STRESS FACTORS

As Joanne DiPlacido states in her article on *Minority Stress among Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals*,[19] LGBTQ people experience stress due to their stigmatization, ascription of an inferior status, of sickness and perversion. The stress connected to one's sexuality, occurs throughout the different stages of one's life. In this research we will try to explore the process of self-identification, involvement with the community, and coming out and levels of concealment of one's sexual orientation, alongside with issues of physical and psychological violence. In the end, we will pay special attention to the mechanisms of coping with the outlined stress factors in order to see what tools our participants apply in order to resist the pressure constituted by the stressors.

3.2.1 Self-Identification Process

Lesbian, bisexual, gay and queer people begin to internalize societal negative attitudes towards non-heterosexual persons often long before they realize their own sexual orientation.[20] The group of people participating in this research shows very clearly that the process of self-identification may occur at different stages of a person's life, and can be

18 Herek, G.M. (1998) Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice Against Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals edited Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues Volume 4; Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

19 Di Placido, J., Minority stress among lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals: A consequence of heterosexism, homophobia, and stigmatization. In: Herek GM, (1998) editor. Stigma and sexual orientation: Understanding prejudice against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc; pp. 138–159.

20 Meyer, Ilan H., Internalized homophobia, intimacy, and sexual behavior among gay and bisexual men.; Dean, Herek, L., Gregory M. (Ed), (1998). Stigma and sexual orientation: Understanding prejudice against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay issues, Vol. 4., (pp. 160-186). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, x, 278 pp.

influenced by specific circumstances and may trigger a whole range of different emotions and responses within them.

Most of my interviewees started experiencing same-gender attraction at an early (school) age and around the time they hit puberty they began identifying and labelling themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. While some of them struggled to reject their own sexual orientation and others were at peace with themselves, all of them either by autonomously or due to an "outing episode"[21] started censuring their behaviour and concealing their sexuality.

One of the respondents Levan[22] (27, Queer) remembers that while he was attracted to one of the boys in his kindergarten group, (he describes attraction as wanting to spend time with the boy, sit with him and be close to him), he also, for some reason, realized he had to conceal this attraction, even though he does not remember any homophobic or homosexuality-related conversations taking place in the family. Mia (21, Queer) tells us that she had a girlfriend as early as at the age of five and not only did she not experience any discomfort because of it, she was downright happy. The girls had been together for several years and were once caught kissing by Mia's mother. This is when Mia learned that others perceived her sexuality as something wrong and shameful.

Most of the interviewees state that the process of self-identification was connected to long-term self-reflection and analysis and, in some cases, was facilitated by the first sexual encounter with a partner of same gender. Feeling guilt, shame and fear, while coming to terms with one's sexuality, are commonly reported within the sample. For instance, for Lado (25, Gay) realization of his same-sex attraction was accompanied with confusion, and difficulty in understanding what was happening to him. Lado blames this on the lack of information and no access to the internet. He tried to convince himself that he was bisexual until the age of 22. This, he says, was because he had a stereotypical image of gay men as effeminate that he did not want to become or be associated with. When Lado eventually started receiving adequate information about human sexuality, he finally decided to label himself as gay. In his case it was a conscious decision which came via *"asking [himself] a question: Who am I?"*
One part of the sample reports that the process of self-identification occurred much later. In the case of both bisexual women from the sample, the realization occurred at the age of 19-20. For one of them – Kate (24, Bisexual), it was accompanied with stress of biphobia and disbelief on the part of her friends and partner, while for Ann (29, Bisexual), discovering her bisexuality in adulthood, made the adaptation process less stressful. In fact, she is very self-assured and states that she did not experience any stress at all while realizing that she was bisexual *("70/30 in favour of women",* as she puts it).

A rare case of a positive role model, explaining, that *"it's ok to be gay"* was reported by Nita (23, Queer) whose grandfather explained to her at an early age, that the ability to love and be loved is much more important than the gender of the person which one

21 When others learn about your sexual orientation by chance, or/and against your will.

22 All the names of the participants and locations have been changed in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

loves. However, even in her grandfather's words, there lay a warning: *"If it happens [Nita falling in love with another girl], don't tell your mother, she would not understand."* Nita believes that this was one of the reasons she never perceived her sexuality as strange and did not feel that she is different in that way, yet she has always being aware of the hostility she may face from others.

It is important to see, that in terms of self-identification, the Queer narratives in this sample have in common the rejection of frames, and unwillingness to be accountable to any social group about their sexuality, gender or sexual behaviour:

"I have a huge problem with that. None of those stable and normative (however small they may be) groups make me want to identify with them. But since every social group requires a certain degree of stability, even the narrow communities like this, I am saying that I'm queer … although it's not so much about my sexuality … I'm queer more in other ways." (Mia 21, Queer)

Levan (27, Queer) feels that he identifies as "queer" only because labels facilitate his interaction with people and this particular label is the least obliging/binding one. He tells us that the long and peculiar process of self-identification, in his case, was more connected to gender, rather than sexuality and this, in his opinion, could depend on particular circumstances. While growing up, there were mostly girls in his neighbourhood, so while playing, he had to follow their rules and ways of communication. In addition to that, Levan believes that his sister's passing had a certain impact on his self-perception:

"Being very young… I thought that I would have more love if I assumed both a boy's and a girl's role … stereotypical roles. … So I did everything that girls do, and I did also some of the things that boys do. … Then around 11-12 I started thinking that, if I wanted to be with another boy, I had to become a girl. Then I realized it wasn't at all necessary, since I became friends with a boy in my class who I knew liked me and I liked him back … so, at this point. I realized I didn't have to be a girl." (Levan 27, queer)

In case of Alex (20, Queer) his path of self-identification lead him through the identities of "gay" and "transgender" before he came to labelling himself as queer. Coming to terms with his sexuality was painful at first. He was badly depressed before he started identifying as gay. Once he came to believe he had "found [his] identity", he felt relief. Soon thereafter new shifts in his self-perception began and he started swaying between the identity of a "gay male" and a "transgender". The sense of "losing his solid identity" cast him into the depression again.

Nita (23, Queer) believes that belonging to subcultures is destructive and that this pertains not only to the LGBTQ subculture but also other social and cultural groups. Thus if queer people, as Natia (27, Queer) states, perceive "queerness" as the *"possibility of everything … possibility of any sort of behaviour and self-identification"*, then we can conclude, that narrowly defined identities are stressful for queer persons.

3.2.2 Identity Concealment

Concealment of one's sexual orientation (or leading a closeted life) is one of the most common choices made by LGBQ people in homophobic and heteronormative societies. In the first part of the research, a scale called Public Identification as LGBQ[23] addressed this issue. Female participants showed higher levels (M=57.68, SD=12.04) of public identification as lesbian, bisexual and queer, compared to their male counterparts (M=55.10 SD=14.96). This scale shows that both gay men and lesbians (the latter more than the former) show higher public identification as gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer persons. The results also show that it is still quite important for LGBQ persons in Georgia to conceal their sexual orientation from the family (28 female and 19 male participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement).

As we discussed above, the process of self-identification can be stressful and, in most cases, unaccompanied by social support and positive socialization. While recognition of one's same-gender attraction may psychologically harm LGBQ persons, at the same time a process of re-socialization and coming out towards self-acceptance and acceptance by others needs to begin.[24] We need not forget that coming out - or disclosing one's sexual orientation - is a process that occurs on many different occasions and depends both on one's personal readiness and also on safety issues, which turned out to be true for this research sample.

An important question, one which shows how little support LGBQ persons in Georgia perceive they have and why they choose not to disclose their orientation was included in the scale measuring personal feelings about being gay (question #7) *"If my peers knew of my lesbianism/gayness, I am afraid that many would not want to be friends with me."* Twenty-one male and 24 female participants strongly agreed, agreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

The second half of the study shows that even those respondents who are open in their daily social life need to conceal their sexual orientation at some stage. Most of them conceal their identity at home and at work. Ann (29 bisexual) has not come out at work, but she always talks in favour of LGBTQ rights and has changed the minds of many people around her. Natia (27, Queer) – has to conceal it very actively, which enhances her sense of stress. Stress often makes her angry and makes her want to escape the environment causing the stress. The problem closely connected to the "closetedness" is the fact that the only places where LGBQ people can be safe and open, are indoors and mostly offices of LGBT organizations, or friends' homes. This does not make Natia happy, since she gets bored of having to frequent only these closed spaces, when one can also have *"the forest and the field, instead of the one room."*

23 Szymanski, D. M., & Chung, Y. B. (2001). The Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale: A rational/theoretical approach. Journal of Homosexuality, 41(2), 37-52.

24 Meyer H. Ilan, Dean, L. (1998) Internalized Homophobia, Intimacy and Sexual behavior among Gay and Bisexual Men., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In case of George (23, Bisexual) he is very open about his sexuality, although concealment was a choice that his former partner made and George struggled in this relationship for that reason. Eka (31, Lesbian) states that concealing her sexual orientation from her mother was the most stressful experience in her existence as a lesbian.

We mentioned that disclosing one's sexual orientation is closely connected to the security issues. There are cases, where openness brings tangible negative consequences. In Nita's (23, Queer) case, openness about her sexuality lead to harassment and violence. Several years ago, while she was openly displaying affection towards her female partner on the street, she was stopped by the police, taken to the police station, made fun of, harassed and forced to watch porn to see *"if she was really a lesbian"*.

It turns out that, while some of the participants see concealment as stressful, some others perceive it as ways of coping with the pressure. Eka (31 Lesbian) says that even though she is quite open about her sexuality nowadays, at early stages of her adult life she had to adapt so much to the circumstances in order to survive, that she did not deem it necessary to put emphasis on her sexuality and open up to people who surrounded her. She labels herself as an overachiever and tells us that she gradually made people accept her for her personality, so that her sexuality stopped mattering to them. Lado (25, Gay) believes that he is more comfortable concealing his sexuality at home and especially at work, than coming out. He has achieved a lot and his coming out would jeopardize the good relations with his employers and co-workers. He recalls a story of one of his male co-workers coming out and being ridiculed and gossiped about by the whole team. After a while the man had to quit. Having this example in mind, Lado is very careful about the amount of information he discloses about himself in his work environment.

The issue of the violence that occurred on in Tbilisi 17 May 2013 returns in the narrative of most of my respondents. They agree that the need to be more careful and refrain from public display of affection with their partners, increased significantly. Emma (27, Lesbian) states that holding hands with her partner now is out of the question.
In this chapter we have seen concealment of one's sexual orientation as both a stress both a stress factor and adaptation mechanism brought about by the necessity to survive and avoid violence. It is clear that the balance between security (physical, emotional, financial, social) and public existence as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer, is a constant dilemma for today's Georgian LGBQ community.

3.2.3 Physical and Psychological Violence and other Stress Factors

One of the important stress factors in the case of our sample was physical violence and the constant fear/expectation of it. We already mentioned that Nita (23, Queer) faced harassment due to her openness; however she also recalls facts of physical violence connected to her sexual orientation. She tells of several occasions on which she was attacked, in a subway passage, or near one of the big universities in Tbilisi where she was walking with her partner. On another occasion she was accosted by four young men who beat her up.

Mia (21 Queer) recalls the bullying she experienced in school after other kids learned that she was dating another girl from her class:

"So they basically decided to bully me … and what more bullying do you want when fifty kids constantly hit and kick you … they couldn't bully me verbally, because it's impossible [laughs] … but physically … they beat me up on a regular basis … it was very traumatic …"

The story that Misha (23, Gay) told me was full of violence and harassment. At the time of my research, he lived in a shelter for survivors of domestic violence. Misha told me that after 17 May, 2013 he was repeatedly attacked by a certain group of men. They beat him up twice, once on the street and once at his house, (they found his address on the ID card they stole from Misha the first time). When Misha reported the crime to the police, the latter outed him to his family. He started facing harassment from his family members and had to run away. The story, however, did not end there. In August, he was kidnapped not far from the shelter he was staying, and beat up once more.

Eka (31, Lesbian) was also physically attacked after 17 May, 2013. In addition, she had to give up the apartment she was renting at the time, because of the homophobic harassment. Since she lived with her female friend, she found it very hard to find a new place to live. She believes that after 17 May, everyone suspected that if two women wanted to rent an apartment together, they were lovers by default.

For Lado (25, Gay), the main source of his stress is his "feminine" voice. He is strongly against being mistaken for a woman and to prevent this from happening, while calling someone on the phone, he always starts the conversation by saying his first name. As it appears, this fear of being mistaken for a woman comes from all the bullying and ridicule he faced in school due to the fact that his appearance and behaviour did not conform with the stereotypical standards of masculinity.

In case of Kate (24, bisexual) the biggest problem is the biphobia she encountered both within the LGBQ community and outside it. The mistrustful attitude and attempts to convince her that she was *"not like that"* (meaning that she was "really" either straight or lesbian) came not only from her friends, but also from the partner, who believed that Kate's bisexuality made her unstable by default and meant that she would eventually prefer dating a man:

"When people speak about homosexuality, it's always chromosomes, physiological factors, biological factors. … I rarely hear that someone is born bisexual… even though they sometimes say that all women are bi … still, if you're a lesbian that's easier to accept." (Kate, 24, bisexual)

Ann (29, bisexual) believes that homophobia is most acutely felt in daily life - for instance everyone can bring a partner to a corporate party, but if you're dating someone of your own gender, you cannot do so; or when on Monday everyone is discussing what they did during the weekend you cannot tell them that you spent time with your partner. If you do so, you should avoid mentioning that it is a woman. Ann feels that it is very tiresome exercising total caution all the time; lying and making up stories makes her angry. This particular stress factor brings us back to the initial part of the research, where the scale on public identification as LGBQ contained several questions regarding one's openness about one's same-gendered partners. Results show that 17 female and 16 male participants act "as if their same-gendered lover was merely their friend"; 13 female and 13 male participants avoid using words that would indicate that the partner they are talk-

ing about is of their same gender. Thus, Ann's narrative illustrates clearly how inability to be a part of important social settings publicly as a lesbian, bisexual, gay or queer person in terms, may be a stress factor.

I believe that Mia's (21, Queer) idea of "non-acceptance" provides the central point of stress faced by the participants of this study:

"It [not being accepted] is stressful, because, when there are 200 people who don't accept you and bully you, you feel bad all the time – whether it's verbally or physically – you start feeling that there is something wrong with you, that you're bad. You may analyse it later and realize that it is them that perceive you that way, and that there's nothing wrong with you … but anyways it's a source of stress."

This last quote leads us directly to the one of the central coping mechanisms that are outlined in the previous chapters and will be looked at more closely in the next ones: a solid support system and a safe, prejudice-free space for socialization.

3.3 COPING MECHANISMS

In terms of dealing/coping mechanisms, I will try to analyse them following the stress factor groups. While speaking of the self-identification process and stressors inherent to it, information, self-reflection and positive socialization were named as the means of overcoming these inner struggles. In some cases, finding one's own "stable identity" is also perceived as a way of releasing the tension and starting to enjoy oneself.

George (23, Bisexual) was dealing with his self-identification struggles by reading, obtaining information and working. Another thing that helped him was meeting an older man online, who gave him useful advice and offered emotional support:

"When everyone around you keeps repeating that you're a monster, you start believing that you are a monster, but then when someone comes along and tells you that you're not a monster, that you're great, it's a very good feeling. It was a very good feeling for me."

Kate (24 Bisexual), as we already mentioned, dealt with a fair amount of scepticism regarding her sexuality on the part of her friends and partner when she first came out as bisexual. In response to this experience, she did not focus too much on the stress and started looking for new people, to whom she introduced herself to as lesbian. Kate mentions, that in the past other ways of dealing with stress for her included drinking and smoking, as well as sleeping. The most effective strategy however, is making a clear plan and acting according to it. Another interesting coping method I found with Kate was trying to evaluate her problems in relation to other people's:

"I used to have this interesting method of dealing … I would go on Skype, and talk to complete strangers. I would ask them to tell me about the worst experiences they ever had and I would sit and listen to their problems and somehow focused on their problems…" (Kate, 24 Bisexual)

Mia (21, Queer) states it is difficult to deal with stress when your gender and sexuality is not at all stable and stability and consistency is all that people require of you. Still, she feels that support from other people is crucial:

"It's like this – cats, for instance, they sit somewhere in the tree, together and caress each other … for me 'queer' is something that … it makes me happy that it exists, that I know for sure there is no normativity in a person, no clichés … that a person is ideologically queer and not simply … you know how being queer is trendy nowadays, it became quite mainstream … so if a person is queer in their mind-set, it's easy for me to communicate with them." (Mia, 21, Queer)

Beso (21, Gay) states that aside from the fact that receiving knowledge empowered him, being a future psychologist himself and having read enough he knows that he is not sick or perverted even though others are trying to convince him of that. Instead, getting angry, he tries to provide adequate information to those people, mainly on social media.

When it comes to identity concealment stressors, coming out was emphasized as one of the best solutions. Emma (27, Lesbian) believes that coping with stress starts with self-reflection and analysis. Through this process she is at the moment coming to the decision of coming out to the rest of her friends and family members. Beso (21, Gay) mentions coming out as being a remedy, since after you come out you do not have to lie anymore. He also states that after having come out, he found more support than he expected. Alex (20, Queer) began his coming out process quite early, since his appearance, clothing and behaviour, as well as the opinions he voiced, constantly raised questions. Even though he has not come out to his family, he feels quite comfortable being open to other people around him.

Natia (27, Queer) believes that many people in the community see resignation and as coping mechanisms, although for her it is simply a way of avoiding problems. For her personally, the coping mechanisms include living with her partner; she mentions writing, as well as listening to the music, as a very important part of self-healing.

For Nino (28, Queer), self-healing includes doing something for herself, going to a salon and getting a haircut, even though she admits that she is not a "beauty-shop type of a girl", but most importantly it is talking to friends, or other people from the LGBTQ community with whom she feels at ease. She finds it difficult to communicate with her straight friends, since she feels that they perceive her as strange. Her work, the activities she is involved in at Identoba,[25] is the biggest source of comfort. What she does for women and LGBTQ persons helps her deal with much stress. She underlines that merely having a choice, "going to sleep or going talk to someone from the LGBTQ community" brings relief.

For some of the respondents (Ann 29, Bisexual) speaking up against homophobia is a way of dealing with stress. Beso (21, Gay) has also a very proactive approach, he came out at work and to his friends, after the 17 May, 2013 events, since he realized

25 The interviewee's work place is relevant to the study and is mentioned with her permission.

people need to get adequate information and communicate with gay people if their hearts and minds are going to change. He is a blogger and often fields questions about homosexuality online, which he gladly answers. Emma (27, Lesbian) believes that an effective way of dealing with stress and homophobia is entering into a discussion and finding a right way to provide the opponent with the right information. Gio (23, Queer) reacts to stress factors with higher motivation. Being a journalist working in an LGBT online outlet, he believes that bringing information to people is important and is the right way to deal with homophobia.

Lado (25 Gay) developed a mechanism of ignoring the bullies and people who offend him, even in cases where people later express regret and seek to establish positive contact with him. Another thing that helps is laughing and joking about homophobic initiatives. This way he got used to the negativity and states that it does not harm him as much anymore.

Misha (23 Gay) also mentions the psychological assistance which empowered him and helped him overcome the stress. The help obtained successfully from a psychologist is also mentioned by Alex (20, Queer), who went through the difficult process of self-identification causing him depression.

The fact that the mechanisms mentioned above are applied by our participants on a regular basis underlines the continuity of the stress they are facing. This is exactly the emphasis that Natia (27 queer) makes when I ask her how she copes with stress:

"I do not cope with this stress … I mean this stress always exists … it has been there since I was born… my relationship with society was never harmonic, such that I would feel well in it … so I am used to it , this condition is not strange to me." (Natia 27, Queer)

It is obvious, that LGBTQ persons are in conflict with the society, and this conflict often results not only in stress, but also in violence and marginalization, as we have seen. Internalization of all the negative attitudes directed at our identities may prevent us from organizing and creating an alternative prejudice-free, safe space, which some of us call the LGBTQ community and where we can experience more freedom and feel relief.

3.4 THE COMMUNITY

Relation to one's community and other LGBTQ persons is an important tool in discriminating between internalized homophobia and realistic perceptions of one's own situation. The answer in this case is to assess who or what the person blames for the troubles in their life. When gay people blame themselves rather than a homophobic society for difficulties they experience as a gay person or when they are ashamed of their homosexuality, it is likely a reflection of internalized homophobia.[26] A related view has been

26 Herek, G.M. (1994). Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications. In Beverly Greene(Ed.), Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues, Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc; p.185.

put forth by Crocker and Major (1989) in a review of self-esteem in stigmatized minority groups. They found, that members of stigmatized minority groups who blame themselves for the difficulties they experience tend to have lower self-esteem than those who blame society.

Both the male and female groups of participants scored quite high on the "connection with the community" scale (M=50.42, SD=7.07 for the female sample and M=50.83, SD=8.71 for the male counterparts). This can be explained by the fact that majority of the participants are in one way or another involved in the events relevant to the organized community.[27] Although this result does not mean that the communication within the community runs smoothly and harmoniously.

In the scale called *Attitudes towards Other LGBQ persons* (the results here were also positive M=34.68, SD=5.45 for the female group and M=30.95, SD=6.46) for the GBQ community), I looked more closely at the statements regarding respondents' comfort with the diversity of the community, to see whether or not the participants tend to blame the community itself or "some gays or lesbians" for behaving inappropriately, this generating more negativity in the society. It turned out that out of the sample of 84 persons, 22 male and 15 female participants believe that "if some *LGBQ persons would change and be more acceptable to the larger society, the LGBQ community as a group would not have to deal with so much negativity and discrimination."* A similar tendency was outlined with the question #3 from the same scale: *"I wish some LGBQ wouldn't ''flaunt" their sexual orientation. They only do it for shock value and it doesn't accomplish anything positive."* Nine female and 12 male participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

At last, question #7 *"I can't stand lesbians who are too butch/gays who are too effeminate, they make lesbians/gays as a group look bad."* - 2 female participants and 9 male participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. LBQ women were shown to be more accepting of their fellow community members, than GBQ men.

In the sample selected for the second part of the present study, The Georgian LGBTQ community is commonly described both in negative and positive terms. People usually connect to the organized community through internet or seek out the organization. Most of my interviewees state that the community is: not united around common interests, rather around common sexual behaviour, with the main topic of discussion being sex (Kate, 24, bisexual); it is tense, closed, lacking creativity and members are not well integrated (Mia, 21, Queer); the passive segment of the community chooses to *"stomp in one spot"* instead of moving forward and acting (Emma 27, Lesbian); lacking acceptance of each other (Eka, 31, Lesbian); uneducated and ill-behaved (Alex, 20, Queer); marked with class divisions (Nita 23, Queer).

At the same time, positive characteristics of the community include diversity, open

27 By organized community, I mean the LGBTQ persons that are organizing around the two LGBTQ organizations working in the country.

mindedness towards sexuality issues and mutual support. For many people the community is a safe "place" where they can be themselves and speak freely, where one's sexuality is not viewed as something unusual (Kate, 24, Bisexual). Ann (29, Bisexual) believes that the mobilized part of the community has fewer problems and fewer self-imposed taboos. It is viewed as a site where information and support can be obtained, not only from the organization, but also from other members of the community:

"There I met people, with whom my self-realization became possible, as a person, not only on a professional level … and this is so rare in this country."
(Natia 27, Queer)

George (23 bisexual), who was outed on Facebook and faced significant problems at home, as a result, received support from community members he barely knew. Some of his peers from the community let him stay at their place for several days.

It is interesting that several – mostly queer and bisexual, respondents, like Kate (24 Bisexual), Natia (27, Queer), Nita (23, Queer), Mia (21, Queer) and Levan (27, Queer) say they have a very weak sense of belonging to any social group, including the Georgian LGBTQ community. However, they also recognize the necessity of standing together when it comes to fighting homophobia. Nita (queer 23) believes that all the members of this social group must take their share of responsibility in protecting their own and their peers' interests.

Levan (27, Queer) also elaborates on why he prefers socializing with LGBTQ people:

"LGBT people give me the comfort, since they constitute a social space, where I can speak freely about topics that are important to me, including sex and sexuality … there is a social group specific humour, and other people can't understand it… It is a way of dealing with stress, and also avoiding unnecessary questions on behalf of other people."

The initial socialization with the community is not always unambiguously positive. For Alex (20, Queer) his first impression of a gay man was quite negative. Alex had a stereotypical image of an "effeminate and horny" gay man, which was reinforced by a person who at that time was expressing much interest towards him. Alex states that he was so disgusted by the way this man tried to establish sexual contact with him, that he was despaired believing that he (and all other gays) would inevitably become like that man. He was able to overcome this stress with the help of a psychologist and a positive socialization with another gay man, which was nothing like he had imagined.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this study lies in the small number of participants in the quantitative part. The initial plan was to have a larger number of participants, and to balance the number of participants who are involved with LGBTQ organizations with those who are not. In the final sample, the number of the latter was significantly lower than the number of the former, which did not make it possible to outline the correlation between levels of internalized homophobia and length of time involved in the community.

However, the scales developed by Herek and Szymanski & Chung and translated for the purpose of this research can be effectively used in future for a wider sample of Georgian LGBQ people in order to assess levels of internalized homophobia on a more systematic level.

5. CONCLUSION

The lesbian, bisexual and queer women in the first group recruited for this research showed lower levels of internalized homophobia and higher levels of connection with the community, as well as public identification as lesbian, bisexual and queer. The LBQ group also proved more tolerant towards diversity in the gender expression of other LGBQ persons and tends to blame other LGBQ persons for the discrimination we are facing less than their male counterparts.

The analysis of the 15 interviews I collected during the second stage of my research allowed me to outline both common stress factors that my interviewees face and the coping mechanisms they apply.

The self-identification process turned out to be a complex and largely stressful experience for my interviewees. Its complexity can be broken down to following stress factors:

- Confusion over one's sexuality;
- Struggle to accept one's sexuality;
- Feeling guilty about one's sexuality;
- Loneliness and lack of positive role models;
- Fear of rejection and violence.

These stress factors are experienced in an especially acute way, when a person does not have access to adequate information on gender and sexuality and does not have access to a support system that would provide opportunities for positive socialization.

Physical and psychological violence, bullying, and harassment are all unambiguously perceived as stress factors, and the response is often increased concealment of one's identity. It is interesting to note how concealment at times is perceived both as a stress factor and as a coping mechanism. While some participants cannot imagine living a closeted life and having to lie about themselves, others feel more comfortable not disclosing their sexual orientation and thus diminishing the stress of possible violence, unemployment and psychological pressure from friends and family.

Another important stress factor, especially for the queer participants of the research, is the demand that they obey specific rules and adopting a specific type of behaviour in exchange for membership of a group or a subculture. These participants tend to respond to this stressor by adopting a loose label and maintaining a certain sense of detachment from the general community, while not completely isolating themselves from it. Another case connected to one's self-identification is the case of a bisexual participant, who in order to deal with the stress of biphobia, both from her straight friends and her lesbian partner, started adopting a lesbian identity while meeting new people and only later disclosing her bisexuality. In this case, we see a clear conflict between the self-identification and the necessity of self-labelling.

Interacting with LGBQ community is not only stressful for our queer participants. Many express their discontent with how the community positions itself as a group, how its members behave and what choices they make. However, at the same time, the community comes up also as one of the important instruments of coping with the overall stress and homophobia.

Generally the coping mechanisms applied by our participants in response to stress factors can be grouped as followed:

- Seeking out a support system;
- Seeking and receiving adequate information;
- Self-reflection and analysis;
- Coming out in order to get rid of the necessity to lie and self-censure;
- Engaging in creative activities (writing, playing music, listening to the music);
- Doing something simple for oneself (getting a new haircut);
- Addressing problematic matters with humour;
- Comparing one's problems with the difficulties other people are facing (in order to diminish the gravity of one's problems compared to others);
- Socializing with one's partner;
- Seeing a psychologist;
- Speaking up against homophobia; changing people's hearts and minds by providing them with adequate information and positive experience of communicating with a LGBQ person.

As we see, some people apply a more personal approach in dealing with the stress connected to one's sexual orientation, while some others outsource or even choose more proactive coping mechanisms.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several topics outlined in the present research that may need a more focused approach in future. It would be interesting to see a larger-scale research assessing levels of Internalized Homophobia in Georgian LGBQ persons that would provide more viable statistical data.

In my opinion, similar research needs to be done for transgender people in order to assess to what extent they internalize transphobic and sexist attitudes from the society and what impact it may have on their gender expression.
Another interesting issue is the conflict between the self-identification (or the lack thereof) and the necessity of self-labelling in exchange for membership in the LGBTQ community. In this context it would be important to see how important identity politics are for the Georgian LGBTQ persons and how they affect the members of the community.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PUBLIC SPACE TRANSFORMATION

“Phantom Settlements”: Study of the Abandoned Village Old Harzhis

Evia Hovhannisyan

The shrinkage of rural settlements is believed to be taking place everywhere as a result of isolated economic perturbations or traumatic political events. Each settlement has its own history of emergence, development, and decay. Cities have always emerged wherever necessary economically. The crossroads of trade routes and transhipment points on waterways became centres where urban life emerged. They would grow out of small settlements or be built from scratch.[1] Why do cities and villages sometimes die - and how is it possible to track this process? The main reasons for the desolation of settlements are economic decay, military conflict, depletion of natural resources, closure of strategic facilities, diseases, and natural and anthropogenic disasters. However, abandoned settlements often go on to live secondary, neutral lives on the margins.

The goal of my study is to look into mechanisms and patterns of “secondary” use of abandoned settlements, their role in the lives of neighbouring settlements, and attitudes towards them. The variety of local discourses enables us to speak about certain ways and methods for the reclamation and appropriation of residential areas that have been abandoned. How does the reclamation of “settlements without people” happen and how is this process perceived in everyday life?

Studies devoted to abandoned settlements most often focus on the reasons for and history of their desolation. However, the desolation of settlements is a very complicated and multifaceted process. It is necessary to understand attitudes towards and links to an abandoned settlement (such as one’s own home or a holy site) held by various generations of former residents and the influence of an abandoned settlement on everyday life in adjacent settlements and look into the possibility of secondary use of

1 Weber, M. (1990) The City. Moscow: Progress Publishing. pp. 309-310 [Вебер М. Город. М.: Прогресс. 1990. С. 309-310].

an abandoned settlement by former residents or residents of adjacent settlements and their perception of the local topography. Like a "phantom", an abandoned settlement spontaneously and cyclically emerges in the everyday life of adjacent settlements and/or disappears from them. The "phantom-like" nature of an abandoned settlement as a socially invented feature transforms the area into an emotionally and symbolically charged place that has its own cultural and historic context.[2]

Abandoned settlements lead to radical changes in the lifestyle of adjacent living settlements: ruins of houses and household outbuildings that were previously inhabited and orchards and gardens growing wild are all unusual in the habitual interaction of people. Abandoned and uninhabited areas nevertheless never disappear completely. Their "absence" has a special status that is constructed in specific practices that go beyond the boundaries of the commonplace. An uninhabited settlement becomes a place of memory and commemoration, where the past and collective memories are constructed and reconstructed and experience is translated.[3] The fabric of everyday life is destroyed and the landscape, where the townscape functionality is distorted, develops in a specific manner.

1. "PHANTOM" SETTLEMENT OLD HARZHIS

At the initial stage, collecting data on abandoned settlements in the Republic of Armenia (interviews with the personnel of the Armenian Urban Development and Territorial Management, Statistic Service, State Cadastre, regional administration agencies, and so forth), it became clear that no one was dealing with issues of abandoned settlements. None of the state agencies I addressed gave me any information about abandoned settlements in Armenia, state agencies dealing with the problems of such settlements, or any previous studies in this field. The impression was that either information about abandoned settlements is prohibited from being published or no one is interested in this problem.

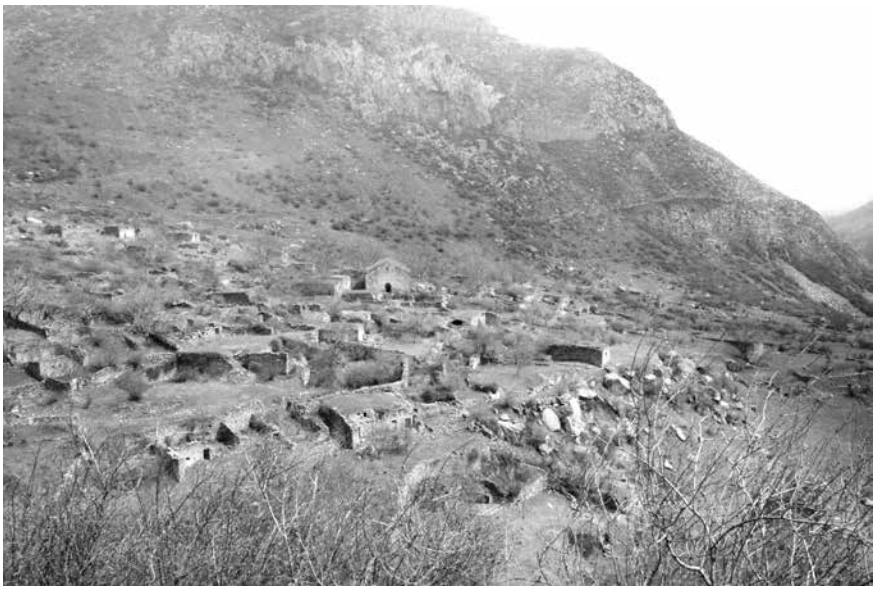
The network of classifications and official conversion tables play a special role in supporting scientific discourse on the problems of demography and abandoned settlements. For the purposes of this study, I took a look at the data of the most recent census carried out in Armenia in 2001 and found that 20 settlements with no permanent population were officially registered in the country.[4]

In order to study the problem of abandoned settlements in Armenia, I selected the village of Old Harzhis (Picture 1.), which was finally abandoned in 1937, but the process started in 1931 as a result of a devastating earthquake in the region historically known as Zangezur.

2 Bell Michael, M. (1997). The Ghosts of Place. Theory and Society. 26. Kluwer Academic Publishers. p. 820.

3 Hutton, P. (2004) History as an Art of the Memory. Saint-Petersburg: Vladimir Dahl Publishing. pp. 39-41 [Хаттон П.Х. История как искусство памяти. С-П.: Владимир Даль. 2004. С. 39-41].

4 Population census 2001: <http://www.armstat.am> (During the census, only those abandoned settlements were considered only those abandoned settlements that were registered at the State Registry and had no permanent population at the moment the census was conducted).



PICTURE 1 Abandoned settlement Old Harzhis

Old Harzhis is located in Syunik Region in the south of Armenia, 24 km from the regional centre of Goris. The settlement was selected, because there were numerous factors that led to its desolation, which enabled me to view it in several contexts:

- Time - the settlement was abandoned in the Soviet times, which is not in the remote past;
- Reason - the earthquake in 1931 - was the main reason for the decline of the settlement (abandonment of the settlement as social trauma);[5]
- Resettlement of the residents in the neighbouring village (New Harzhis) located on a plateau, which was partially linked to the Soviet policy of resettlement of the rural population from gorges to plateaus, collectivisation and re-distribution of settlements;
- Method for resettling people: spontaneous resettlement of residents partially controlled by the government of the Armenian SSR (special temporary barracks for re-settlers were built in the village of New Harzhis in the 1930 and demolished in the 1960s and 1970s);

5 Bell Michael, M. (1997). Ibid. P. 815.

- The first generation of re-settlers (born before 1931) still live in the village of New Harzhis, which enables us to understand (using the method of biographic interviews) and compare the attitudes towards Old Harzhis of the first generation of the re-settlers and its descendants. This because, according to M. Halbwachs, "each group stops time in its own way"[6] and has their own perception of the space;

- Secondary use of the abandoned settlement by former residents and their descendants (economic activities - orchards, gardens, enclosures, "black" archaeology, religious practices, and so forth).

According to historical sources, the village Old Harzhis was founded in the second half of the 18th century - the 1770s and 1780s.[7] This is a legend that is part of the mnemohistories of respondents of the three generations of the re-settlers from Old Harzhis and their descendants. According to the legend: "*Some Turks, who had settled in the nearby village Kurdalar, wanted to get hold of the lands of the Harzhis village [according to the legend there was an even older village on this territory], but they were afraid of the courageous village chief. The Turks invited him over, and he got drunk and fell asleep. When he woke up in the morning, he saw that the Turks had burnt the village during the night, leaving only smouldering homes. The village chief immediately died of a heart attack. Only two of the residents of the village survived: A little girl, who was given shelter in the village of Halidzor, and a boy (named Lukas), who Turks sold in Naxcivan. A priest from the Tatev Monastery had managed to return the boy and give him shelter in the monastery. When the boy grew up, the priests of the Tatev Monastery decided to revive the village. They built St Minas Church (1812) and a stone house - Ambu Khab - on the banks of the Vorotan River, near the vertical cliff. Lukas married a girl from the Tatev village and settled there. The newly rebuilt settlement was called Yayji, which in the 19th century was renamed Old Harzhis.*" (Field materials: G. A. The third generation, New Harzhis)

Stories told by residents of New Harzhis, whose ancestors had lived in the previous village for eight or nine generations, also confirm that the village was founded in the 18th century: "*If we count the whole history of families (of Harzhis), the current generation is the eighth or ninth and we will end up approximately in the 1700s. The dates seen on tombstones remaining in Old Harzhis also confirm this.*" (Field materials: M. A. The second generation, New Harzhis)

The village is surrounded by volcanic hills in the north, west, and east and the vertical cliff and the valley of the Vorotan River mark the southern boundary of the village. The only, heavy-going path goes down to the Vorotan valley to the south-east. The first impression you get, when you see Old Harzhis, is that the abandoned settlement is gradually merging with the surrounding area, dissolving into the greyish yellow cliffs and abundant green plants. At present, most houses (arm. [khab] - stone house) in Old Harzhis that were built in 1910-1912 (as confirmed by dates given on linking stones at

6 Halbwachs M. La Topographie legendaire des evangiles en Terre Sainte. Yates, F. (1997) Act of Memory. St.Petersburg. Universitetskaya Kniga, p. 124

7 Hanzadyan S. Ayrenatatum, E. (1969). Yerevan: Haystan Publishing. pp. 343-349 [Ханзадян С. Айренапатум. Е.: Айастан. 1969. С. 343-349]

the entrances of the houses) are standing intact, but they are covered with vegetation. Khab is a house built of unhewn stones. Such houses have blind walls, arched roofs, *yerdiks* (smoke flaps in the roofs), stone benches, hearths, and earthen floors. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the houses were transformed into barns, where you can find everyday implements - such as crockery, beds, shelves, ovens, metallic doors - belonging to residents of New Harzhis who make a secondary use of the abandoned village. Next to the residential houses, there are small orchards, summer hearths used as kitchens, and household outbuildings. Land plots fenced off with stone walls and even rural paths can clearly be seen in the settlement. The monumental building of St Minas Church, built in the 19th century, dominates the centre of Old Harzhis.

2. ECONOMIC "DELUSIVENESS" AND PATTERNS OF THE SECONDARY USE OF THE OLD HARZHIS SETTLEMENT

Old Harzhis has seen several stages of its life as a "ghost town" over the past 80 years. The Soviet times, when it had the status of a settlement; the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union; and the division and privatization of land, which had a radical impact on the further use of ancestral property for economic purposes - cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees in orchards and gardens, cattle breeding and the sale of artefacts that had any kind of cultural or historical value.

In the Soviet times, the abandoned settlement of Old Harzhis was put on the list of the Committee for the Protection of Antiquities. A man residing in New Harzhis was selected as a watchman: he was to take care of the settlement as a cultural and historic monument. At the same time, there was a collective farm named Pravda, orchards, gardens, and greenhouses on the territory of the abandoned village.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, every family that had a land plot in Old Harzhis before resettlement demanded that these plots be returned to them. This led to disputes within families and among different families them over the distribution of land and the order of irrigation (the use of the water in reservoirs). "*My grandfather had five sons. He divided the land into equal parts for his sons (before resettlement). After the Soviet Union fell apart, my uncle said that the whole of the land belonged to him. My father disagreed and there erupted a dispute between them. My uncle said that my father was not in the village, when the land was divided, so he took his lot for himself.*" (Field materials: M. A. The second generation, New Harzhis).

The climate in the abandoned village is milder, warmer, and more humid. Crops ripen earlier there, but the distance from Old Harzhis to the nearest village of New Harzhis is 1.5 km and the road is in a gorge, so not every family is currently able to take care of their land plot. Youths are leaving the village, so the boisterous wave of privatization of ancestral land in Old Harzhis died away in 1998-2000. There are a few families that cultivate their orchards in Old Harzhis and every family has a clear knowledge of who owns which land plot. According to an unwritten law, land plots belong to the families that owned them before resettlement. Even now, descendants of the residents of Old

PICTURE 2 The church of St Minas

Harzhis sometimes argue over the ownership of land and harvested crops that grow in abundance in the abandoned village without any particular care.

Thus, although the territory of the abandoned village is managed by the village administration of New Harzhis, land plots in it are distributed among the descendants of former residents in accordance with the unwritten law. Land plots belong to individual families, but the settlement as a whole is supervised by the Agency for the Protection of Monuments of History and Culture of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia.

3. SACRAL SPACE IN OLD HARZHIS

As a rule, centres of cultural practices and religious activities are the key points in the semantic field of cultural landscape. They define the direction of the development of the whole landscape and its morphological features. It is particularly interesting to see how the sacral landscape of Old Harzhis influences the temporary revival of the settlement. The semantic space of Old Harzhis continues to live its cyclically reviving life. From the religious point of view, the St Minas Church (Picture 2.) in Old Harzhis does not enjoy much popularity. There is an old graveyard adjacent to the church from the south-east. It is thought to date to the 17th and 18th centuries. Residents of the nearby settlements and descendants of those buried in the graveyard no longer take care of the graves and gravestones which are on the list of "State Register of Cultural Heritage that cannot be subject to dispossession".[8]

8 List of cultural monuments of the Republic of Armenia owned by the state and cannot be subject to dispossession. Decision 385 of the government of the Republic of Armenia of 15 March 2007.

The Parav Khach chapel is most popular among the women of the New Harzhis settlement. It is in the south-eastern part of the churchyard. It is in this chapel that people prefer to light candles and make sacrifices - *matagh*. "*In our garden (in Old Harzhis), there is a (stone) cross in the soil. People still go there. They light candles and make matagh.*" (Field materials: G. A. The second generation, New Harzhis).

There are no religious holidays and days of commemoration when the whole population of Harzhis goes together to the old village. Religious activities become particularly active in spring and summer and are directly linked to the economic activities of the residents of the abandoned village.

The Holy Cross chapel, which is very popular among the locals, was built on the road connecting New Harzhis with Old Harzhis in the 1990s. The popularity can be explained by the fact that the chapel is close to the "living" village. Pieces of broken stone crosses, column caps and steles with crosses on them, a stone for grain threshing, and other items local residents found in the area and regard as sacral due to being "historic" are stored in the chapel. It is noteworthy that this chapel is located on the boundary of the two cultural landscapes - living and dead. Several metres to the east of the Holy Cross chapel, there is a gravestone that locals call "woman with cut off breasts". There are numerous fragments of glass scattered around the stone that bears the image of a human figure (tangled arms can be seen particularly well). In this place, residents of Harzhis hold the ritual of liberation from fear and evil spirits (Cf. with exorcism). Thus, sacral markers that mark the boundaries between the "living and dead" areas are more popular among locals than the religious buildings located in these areas. The boundary divides the social space in two zones. The spatial and temporal markers that serve as boundaries in practice are unusual, super-temporal, ambiguous, marginal, and sacral.[9]

4. SEARCH FOR TREASURES AND "BLACK" ARCHAEOLOGY IN ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS

The problem of treasure hunting and the sale of archaeological artefacts of historic and cultural value is quite acute in New Harzhis. Almost all of my respondents were aware of this trend. Presumably, such trend is characteristic of all settlements that are located close to abandoned settlements. People often invent myths and stories about immeasurable treasures and these are particularly enduring in abandoned settlements.

Old Harzhis was situated on the "salt" trade route. Trade caravans moved from Angeghakot to Sisian via Aghitu, Harzhis, and Uch-Tapalar. Respondents said that a rich gold caravan was robbed close to the Harzhis caravanserai on the Goris-Sisian road. However, the precise place where this happened, and where the treasure was hidden,

9 Bogomaz, S. (2007) Arrangement of Daily Spaces of Turkish People. Culturology of Traditional Communities: Materials of the 2nd Conference of the Young Scientists of Russia. Omsk. pp. 10-16 [Богомаз С.М., Ранжированность бытового пространства тюркских народов, Культурология традиционных сообществ: Материалы II Всерос. науч. конф. молодых ученых. Омск, 2007. С. 10-16].

has remained unclear up to now. "*The segment of the Goris-Sisan road where the gold caravan was robbed has remained unclear up to now, but if you find it, you will have untold wealth (smiles)".* (Field materials: S. N. The second generation, New Harzhis).

Treasure hunting and "black" archaeology are quite widespread among the settlers of all generations. All respondents without exception spoke about hidden gold and treasures buried in Old Harzhis, expressing hope that they will find them and improve their living conditions. They also view researchers from the capital city as potential sources of information about such treasures. "*My great grandfather was the priest of the village. He hid all his property [when Soviet rule was established]. We have been searching for it for three years now, but we cannot find anything. He hid his staff and cross in the old village, but we have been searching for three years to no avail. He had a huge gold cross - 983 grams of pure gold."* (Field materials: G. A. The second generation, New Harzhis).

The fact that the paved floor of the church in Old Harzhis was dug into several years ago by treasure seekers confirms this trend. Local residents also say that there is a specific day in the year, when the first sunbeam falls on the place within the church where the treasure is supposed to be hidden. "*The church stands intact. ... People just dug up the stone floor, as they were searching for gold, but they failed to find anything."* (Field materials: G. A. The second generation, New Harzhis).

Local residents say that the whole area of Old Harzhis was searched with metal detectors. Those searching for treasures robbed graves dating to the first millennium and only gravestones and empty holes now remain in their place. "Black" archaeologists also searched for gold and treasures in Prince Alan's fortress and church located near the abandoned settlement. They removed the sundial from the southern wall of the church and dug over the grave of Prince Alan for this purpose.

The second and third generations of the settlers regard the abandoned settlement as a source for making profit rather than a cultural and historic monument in the ordinary sense. Every stone in Old Harzhis that can be viewed in the cultural and historic context is a potential source of income for them. For example, one of the respondents gave a colourful description of a huge three-metre stone oil-press weighing several tonnes in Old Harzhis. He planned to sell it for several thousand dollars, but had failed to find a buyer. *„The stone has a very high price. If I find a client... Yes, its price is high - several thousand dollars. ... I wanted to drag it to the village using a cable, but I was afraid that it might break."* (Field materials: G. A. The second generation, New Harzhis).

"Phantom" settlements often become means for survival and "black" archaeology can be a "permanent" job. Due to their being illegal, such activities are always shrouded in mystery. This becomes a precondition for myths about innumerable buried treasures. Individual stories and sagas about hidden treasures often appear on a massive scale during extreme situations.[10]

10 Burykin, A. (2001) Sense of the Myths: Mythology in History and Culture. Collection of Articles on Occasion of 90 Years anniversary of Professor M. Shahnovich. "Mysliteli" series. Issue #8. Saint-Petersburg. P. 300 [Бурыкин А.А. Смыслы мифа: мифология в истории и культуре. Сборник в честь 90-летия профессора М.И. Шахновича. Серия «Мыслители». Выпуск 8: СПб. 2001. С. 300].

PICTURE 3 Old Harzhis on a mental map (Elaborated at the fieldwork).

5. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF GATHERED MATERIAL

The method of cognitive mapping was used in order to understand what attitudes former residents of Old Harzhis had towards the abandoned settlement. Mental maps can be made based on information obtained from two major sources: The collective experience of using a concrete area embodied in common stereotypes and norms and individual experience linked to the personal past of individuals.[11] Respondents (14 residents of New Harzhis) were asked to sketch the contours of the abandoned settlement and mark the geographic objects that were "personally" important for them, which means that they were part of ancestral property or objects owned by the public (Picture 3.).

Fourteen maps were selected for the study. The analysis of the mental maps made it possible to identify a total of 18 major objects (paths, houses, orchards, and so forth). The ranking of most frequent objects can be found in Table 1.

11 Seravin, A. (2002) Mental Maps of the Medieval Times / Materials of XI International Conference for Students "Lomonosov". Moscow State University. 2002. pp. 176-178 [Серавин А.И. Ментальные карты средневековья//Материалы IX международной научной конференции студентов, аспирантов и молодых ученых "Ломоносов". Секция: психология. Тезисы к докладу. М.: МГУ. С. 176-178].

No	Object	Frequency
1.	Church	14
2.	Roads and paths	14
3.	Water reservoirs	14
4.	"Public space" (sheds, pecan and blackberry groves, fruit orchards belonging to no one)	14
5.	Ancestral land	12
6.	Church and the grave of Prince Alan	11
7.	Old graveyard	11
8.	Lake	10
9.	Khabs (stone houses)	10
10.	Khach (Cross) chapel	7
11.	Vorotan River	7
12.	Upper spring	7
13.	Cliffs above the village	6
14.	New graveyard	5
15.	Lower spring	5
16.	Kurdanshah bridge	5
17.	Parav Khach (Old Cross) chapel	4
18.	Bargushat ridge	1

TABLE 1. Major objects found on the mental maps of respondents

The results shown in Table 1 enable us to draw conclusions that collective mental maps reveal five major spatial units in the abandoned settlement in the minds of Harzhis residents: Sacral space (St Minas Church, chapels, Prince Alan's Church and grave); one's own space (ancestral land); neutral space (roads and paths, the Kurdanshah bridge); natural physical and geographical space (lake, Vorotan River, cliffs, the Bargushat ridge, springs); public space (water reservoirs, sheds, pecan and blackberry groves, and fruit orchards that do not have concrete owners).

The reflection of the surrounding environment consists of three major components: personal (spatial elements as individual phenomena), structural (connection of urban elements with other objects and the observer proper); and conceptual (practical and emotional value of the given elements for the observer).[12] In order to understand the emotional and practical context of the elements shown on mental maps, respondents were offered pencils of three colours - black, red, and green. They had to use black pencils to mark common spaces of the abandoned settlement; red to mark particularly

12 Jiven, G., Larkham, P. (2003) Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary. Journal of Urban Design. Vol. 8. No. 1. P. 67-81.

important objects in Old Harzhis and the surrounding area; and green to mark ancestral land. Table 2 shows all objects marked red on the mental maps. Correspondingly, they are most emotionally coloured objects.

Object	Frequency
Church	13
Old graveyard	8
Church and the grave of Prince Alan	7
Khach (Cross) chapel	3
Khabs (stone houses)	3
Water reservoirs	3
Parav Khach (Old Cross) chapel	3
Lower spring	2
Lake	2
Pecan groves	2
Ancestral land	1
New graveyard	1
Upper spring	1

TABLE 2. Objects marked red on mental maps

Interestingly, the St Minas Church and the old graveyard adjacent to it are central and most important objects on almost all of the mental maps. This can be explained by the fact that the church is in the centre of the settlement, it is monumental and has sacral connotations. According to the stories of two respondents (from the second and third generations of the settlers), the church in the centre of the abandoned settlement continues to play a role in social structuring and organization. "*During the harvest, livestock-raising, seasonal work, and matagh - ritual sacrifice - men often assemble outside the church (gravestones in the old graveyard serve as 'benches') and discuss the most topical everyday problems of the village.*" (Field materials: M. N. The second generation, New Harzhis)

The mental maps of Old Harzhis show that a communications system - water supplies and paths - is one of the most important systems even for an abandoned and "dead" settlement and the secondary economic activities in the settlement. Most maps reflect clear boundaries of the settlement and its main natural and cultural markers: The Khach (Cross) chapel, the Kurdanshah bridge and/or the church, the grave of Prince Alan, cliffs, and the Vorotan River.

According to K. Lynch, mental maps consist of five main elements: 1. Paths and routes; 2. Boundaries; 3. Districts; 4. Nodes and focal points; and 5. Landmarks.[13] The afore-

13 Lynch, K. (1960) The Image of the City. The MIT Press. P. 47-72.

mentioned elements identified on the basis of the analysis of mental maps of residents of big cities are important also for local cognitive images of a small abandoned settlement - Old Harzhis. Paths (routes), cliffs and the Vorotan River (boundaries), land plots ("districts"), water reservoirs, the churchyard, the Kurdanshah bridge (nodes and focal points), the church, graveyards, the Parav Khach (Old Cross) chapel, and well-preserved houses in the centre of the settlement (landmarks) are particularly prominent on the cognitive maps.

There are certain discrepancies between the visual and verbal reflections of the local discourses on the sacral landscape and "black" archaeology in Old Harzhis and its peripheries. Comparing materials of biographic interviews, it becomes evident that sacral markers (the Khach chapel, the gravestone "woman with cut off breasts") located on the boundary between the "living and dead" settlements are more popular among locals than the monumental St Minas Church. The analysis of data obtained by means of mental maps (Table 2) shows that the church occupies the central place in the perception by residents of Harzhis of the spatial organisation of the old village.

On the other hand, interviews provided abundant materials on treasure-searching practices that are extremely popular on the territory of abandoned Old Harzhis. At the same time, treasure-searching cannot be found in the cognitive reflection of the landscape of Old Harzhis. It can be assumed that these practices that are trivial and ordinary for local residents are fragmentary in nature and are not translated into and superimposed on the general perception of the integral space of the abandoned settlement.

CONCLUSIONS

Old Harzhis is present in the everyday life of the residents of New Harzhis as a "phantom". For an individual resident, the dead settlement is not just a formal entity and a sum of items, but a personal space that is reduced to an individual size. This study has shown that the role of the old settlement is multifaceted: cultural and historic (stories and legends linked to the foundation of the settlement); economic (orchards, gardens, sheds, pastures, "black" archaeology); religious (the St Cross chapel, prayer stone "woman with cut off breasts", the Parav Khach chapel); and social and organisational ("common places" - churchyard, pecan and blackberry groves, orchards that do not belong to anyone). The abandoned settlement of Old Harzhis plays a key role in the life of New Harzhis. It partially constructs the local social space, the cyclic model of time, and personal relations between residents of New Harzhis.

A comparative analysis of cognitive maps and biographic interviews make it clear that the abandoned settlement has a significant impact on the everyday lives, routine practices and consciousness of the New Harzhis villagers. The disputes over the ownership of land plots and irrigation, gardening practices and cattle breeding on the territory of Old Harzhis demonstrate that the settlement is still alive. It simply altered its primary function turned into a "dacha" (seasonal second home). Therefore we can propose the following questions for further discussion: How can the level of abandonment of the settlement be determined? What can be considered the main criterion of devastation? And finally, how can the official list of deserted settlements of Armenia be drawn up on this basis?

Informal Settlements and Illegal Subdivision of Land in Tbilisi

Elena Darjania

This paper discusses architectural and social landscapes created by informal, self-help housing in Tbilisi and introduces a typology for such formations. It argues that a considerable part of the informal settlements were made during the early Soviet era by rural migrants. While it officially prohibited them, even the Soviet government was unable to eradicate such practices. Informal settlements continue to grow after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is argued that the recent privatization of informal housing engenders further marginalisation of the vulnerable households residing in such settlements. The article also focuses on the complex relations among key stakeholders: residents, city government and private businesses. It argues that residents of informal settlements have strong social bonds, which play crucial role in collective problem-solving and self-organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Informal settlements are generally defined as residential formations that were erected without proper formal control over planning and construction. Although such settlements might emerge due to the different factors (wars, uncontrolled migration, natural disasters, etc.), they usually share common characteristics such as lack of security of tenure and lack of adequate access to basic social and infrastructural services. The level of informality and quality of living conditions in such settlements varies significantly from slums in the Global South to luxury residences of Southeast Europe.[1]

1 Tsenkova, S., Potsiou, C., & Badyina, A. (2009) Self-made Cities: In Search of Sustainable Solutions for Informal Settlements in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Vol. 9).United Nations Publications.

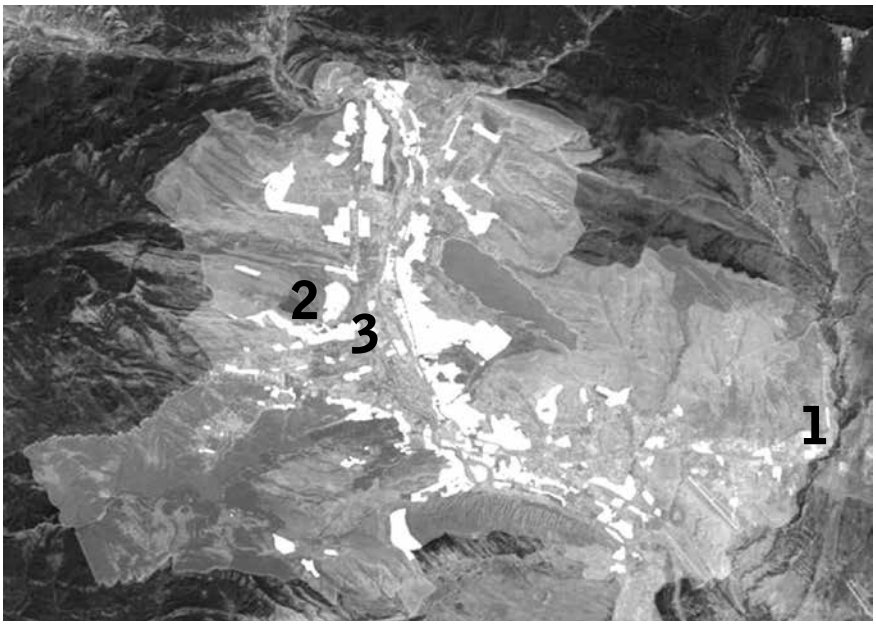
The complexity of the phenomenon of informal settlements is reflected in the variety of names[2]under which such settlements appear. In this paper, I use terms "informal", "squatter" and "self-made" housing/settlements interchangeably to describe residential formations with the following characteristics: location on illegally obtained land; unauthorized construction (e.g. building violates construction norms and rules); insufficient living space (e.g. overcrowding); lack of infrastructure (both social and engineering) and insecurity of tenure.

Problems of informal settlements in post-socialist cities are usually linked to general processes of transition (political, economic, social institutional).[3] However, despite the importance of the problem, there is a lack of empirical studies on such housing in Georgia.

The aim of this paper is to investigate architectural and social landscapes created by the informal self-help housing in Tbilisi, Georgia. It addresses their controversial implications for the present and future use of the urban space of the city. First, it investigates the history of formation and socioeconomic needs addressed by the squatter settlements in Tbilisi. Then it focuses on housing policy, institutional set-up and legislative framework that had caused emergence of informal "self-help" "do-it-yourself" housing. Finally, the paper explores how economic transition and privatization of the housing stock shaped the relationships among residents, city government and private businesses. It shows that despite private economic interests residents of informal settlements have strong social bonds with the community and acute self-organization skills.

2 There are several terms that most frequently appear in the international discussions regarding the informal settlements:"slum", "squatter", "favela", "gecekondu", and "nakhalovka", to name few. Those terms are not synonymous, but coincident. For example, UN-HABITAT defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: 1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions. 2. Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room. 3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price. 4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people. 5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions. Squatter settlements are those without authorized right to ownership; they are not necessarily poorly built. Favela is a name assigned to the slum settlements in Latin America. Gecekondu is a Turkish word for self-help housing in Turkey, it literarily it means "built overnight". "Nakhalovka" is a Russian word for squatter housing. It was adopted in many post-soviet countries to identify such settlements. This term is used in Georgia as well.

3 Tsenkova, S. (2012) Urban planning and informal cities in southeast Europe. Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 29(4), pp. 292-303.



PICTURE 1 Tbilisi Land Use Master Plan (2009): Functional zones: Residential Zone; Residential Zone 2 and Residential Zone 3. (Fieldwork sites: 1- Lilo Settlement, 2 - Zemo Vedzisi, 3 - Chikovani Street). Source: Tbilisi Architecture Service, (2014). www.tas.ge

2. METHODOLOGY

The research employs qualitative methods, namely, in-depth interviews, field observation and photography. Another approach included analyses of the expert interviews with representatives of private businesses (e.g. architects and developers) and Tbilisi City Hall. In addition, the study utilizes secondary data sources such as Land Use Master Plan of Tbilisi (2009) and land registration data from the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR). Although the results cannot be generalized, the data provide a rich insight into the life of informal settlements in Tbilisi.

The fieldwork was conducted in three neighbourhoods: Zemo Vedzisi, the settlement along Chikovani Street and Lilo settlement. Selection of the sites was based on the analysis of the Tbilisi Land Use Master Plan (2009), which identifies two functional zones with elements of informal housing - Residential Zone 2 (RZ-2), and Residential Zone 3 (RZ-3). Those zones are described as "spontaneously formed build-up areas, which encompass single-household homes with yards; in some cases, such developments represent the remains of suburban settlements; structure of such formation is

not organized and infrastructure is underdeveloped".[4] Fieldwork areas in Lilo Settlement and partly in Zemo Vedzisi belong to the described zones. However both the settlement along Chikovani Street and part of Zemo Vedzisi are classified as residential zones. This is a general functional zone, which normatively does not necessarily imply the presence of self-help housing. However, field observation identified formation of large-scale informal settlement in the area. Based on this fact, it was decided to include the area in the research.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There has been active theoretical discussion on urban informality since the second half of the twentieth century. Initially, the discussions centred on the rapid urbanization of Third World countries causing the emergence of slum settlements. In the beginning, such settlements were linked to the concept of "poverty culture" concerning the concentration of the marginalized population in slum/squatter settlements. To understand this phenomenon, researchers applied a dualistic model of formal and informal employment. Caroline Moser was one of the first who say that the urban informal sector is created by those "living in slums or squatter settlements".[5] However, over time the concept of informality has changed from the idea of marginalization towards viewing it as a "new" way of life and "new mode of urbanization".[6]

Since the 1990s, the approach towards informal settlements turned into poverty elimination programs in the framework of sustainable human development. Here the role of the state was envisioned as "helping the poor to help themselves". This stance was of central importance to economist Hernando de Soto. His concept was to enable the residents of informal settlements to participate in the property market.[7] He suggested that private titling of land parcels is the main solution to the problem of the informal settlements.

Gilbert framed a well-argued criticism of De Soto's ideas. He underlined the fallacy of complete "marketization" of informal housing. Gilbert argued that suggesting titling for residents did not yield significant changes in their economic situation or improvement of their social status.[8]

4 Tbilisi City Council. June 5, 2009 Decree N 6-17 by the Tbilisi City Council on Approving Master Plan on Prospective Development of the Capital. P.12 [ქალაქ თბილისის საკრებულო. (2009). ქალაქ თბილისის საკრებულოს 2009 წლის 5 ივნისის გადაწყვეტილება "დედაქალაქის პერსპექტიული განვითარების გენერალური გეგმის დამტკიცების შესახებ"].

5 Al-Sayyad, N. (2004) Urbanism as a "new" way of life. In A. Roy & N. Al-Sayyad (Eds.), Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia. P.10. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

6 Ibid. p.24; and Roy, A. (2005) Urban informality: toward an epistemology of planning. Journal of the American Planning Association, 71(2), p.148.

7 Roy, A. (2005) Urban informality: toward an epistemology of planning. Journal of the American Planning Association, 71(2), pp.147-158.

8 Ibid.

This idea is supported and reviewed in the context of Southeast Europe in the publication "Self-made Cities" by the UN ECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe). One of the key arguments in the book is that individual privatization of land and property, based on recognition of freehold rights, does not work. Such measures fail to integrate squatter settlements into the broader structure of the city. Nonetheless, it agrees that security of tenure is crucial for alleviating poverty and achieving adequate housing conditions in squatter settlements.[9]

Additionally, some authors[10] claim that a positive outcome from upgrading of informal settlements is more likely to be achieved through the process of community self-organization rather than through individual privatization. The latter weakens "collective spirit" and activates individualistic and market-oriented attitudes. By analysing these tensions between individual and collective freedoms, Frediani argues that "neoliberalism and its influence on contemporary urban development policies perpetuate social, political and economic inequalities".[11] According to his findings, when informal settlements are regulated by market mechanisms only, "land speculation takes place and the poorest residents are pushed into even more severe conditions".[12]

4. SETTING THE SCENE: INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN TBILISI

Squatter settlements are not a new phenomenon for Tbilisi, Georgia. The Nadzaladevi (Nakhalovka, Нахаловка) neighbourhood is a good historical example of mass squatting in the city. The district still "preserves" its semantic 'illegality' in its toponym – "Nadzaladevi" means "forcibly occupied". The history of this settlement begins in the late 19th century, when railway construction workers illegally started building individual one-family houses.

The issue of informal housing in post-Socialist cities became topical during and after the transition to market economics.[13] The problem of informal housing should be discussed in the context of the dramatic changes that occurred in the housing sector during this transition. During the Soviet period, housing was regarded as everyone's

9 Tsenkova, S., Potsiou, C., & Badyina, A. (2009) Self-made Cities: In Search of Sustainable Solutions for Informal Settlements in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Vol. 9).United Nations Publications.

10 Ibid.

11 Frediani, A. A. (2009) The World Bank, Turner and Sen: Freedom in the Urban Arena. Development Planning Unit, University of London. p. 12.

12 Frediani, A. A. (2009) The World Bank, Turner and Sen: Freedom in the Urban Arena. Development Planning Unit, University of London. p. 12.

13 Tsenkova, S. (2012) Urban planning and informal cities in southeast Europe. Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 29(4), 292-303.

social right. It was the state's obligation to provide its citizens with housing through a centrally planned distribution system. In other words, state housing represented affordable housing, for which tenants paid subsidized rent. However, the right to ownership was restricted.[14]

Literature on Tbilisi indicates that the city population grew from 25,000 in 1785 to 161,000 in 1897, leading to a severe housing shortage. Migrants settled in the outskirts of Tbilisi and lived in "impoverished shacks".[15] However, there is little evidence in the literature that self-help housing also existed during the Soviet era.

After independence in 1991, mass privatization of housing took place in Georgia. In 1992 settled tenants received the right to privatise the apartments they occupied. Several years later land privatization was also allowed. The process of privatization entailed minimal formalities. This was justified by the government's objective to create a property market despite the absence of proper mechanisms.[16]

The housing crisis in Georgia started in 1990s, caused by the displacement of a large part of the population as a result of civil wars, ecological disasters, and rural-urban migration. Another cause was the construction exclusively of profit-oriented housing while affordable or social housing was excluded completely.[17] This period is marked with significant changes in the mode of housing development. Small-scale constructions marked with low quality and questionable financial deals composed the lion's share in the new housing stock.[18]

Housing policy in independent Georgia has never been addressed in any long-term purposeful policy at the national or municipal levels. Attempts to target housing issues never succeeded due to lack of political will, financial difficulties and radically different visions.[19] There is an extreme lack of legislative framework in today's housing sector. The Constitution of Georgia (1995) does not ensure a right to housing; such issues as homelessness and affordable housing are not discussed in legislation. Likewise, living in substandard housing or in inadequate conditions is not sufficient grounds for eligibility for social assistance.

14 Darjania, E. Vardosanidze, V. (2013) Social Housing - Georgian Reality in International Context. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

15 Badriashvili N. (1957) Tbilisi. Sakhelgami publishing. [Бадриашвили, Н. (1957). Тбилиси. Сахельгами]

16 Darjania, E. Vardosanidze, V. (2013) Social Housing - Georgian Reality in International Context. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

17 Darjania, E. Vardosanidze, V. (2013) Social Housing - Georgian Reality in International Context. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

18 Van Assche, K., Salukvadze, J., & Duineveld, M. (2012) Speed, vitality and innovation in the reinvention of Georgian planning aspects of integration and role formation. European Planning Studies, 20(6), 999-1015.

19 Darjania, E. Vardosanidze, V. (2013) Social Housing - Georgian Reality in International Context. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

A more specific framework and practical norms for development of housing policy, including squatter settlements policy, is given in the context of urban management and functional-territorial planning of settlements. The organic law on local self-governance (2014) does not cover housing issues, but it does say: "Spatial-territorial planning and development of norms and rules of spatial-territorial planning is the responsibility of the self-government bodies". According to the Georgian law on the fundamentals of spatial planning and town-construction" (2005), "spatial-territorial planning" is defined as "an activity, which regulates the use of territories, land use, construction development, protection of environment and cultural heritage, recreation, transport, engineering and social infrastructure, as well as spatial aspects of the economic development of the settlement". Thus, it is the obligation of the municipality to prepare development plans of the informal settlements.

As mentioned above, the Tbilisi Land Use Master Plan (2009) indicates two zones with informal housing. However, this document lacks the vision on future development of such settlements. According to the document, building regulation plans should be prepared to solve this problem. However, no specific timeframe is provided.

Another important aspect is a normative base for housing design, which is quite deficient at present. During the Soviet times the unified normative document "residential buildings, design norms and rules"[20] regulated all types of housing. Given that there were no national rules of this kind in Georgia, the same document was adopted by the Decree of the Minister of Urbanization and Construction of independent Georgia in 2001. Later, in 2010, the minister of economy and sustainable development issued analogous decree adopting old Soviet norms - although "residential buildings" were excluded from the list. Despite the fact that construction of one-flat individual houses in urban areas in independent Georgia became an important segment of the construction market, relevant construction rules and regulations have still not been developed or adopted.

2007 was a milestone year for the residents of informal settlements. In November 2007 the president of Georgia issued a decree asserting the "the rule of decision-making for the body issuing construction permits regarding legalization of an object or its parts constructed without a permit or in violation of the terms of an agreed project". In plain words, this decree enabled the legalization of illegally built buildings without any kind of upgrading programme or even safety assessment. Thus, formally, the city obtained a legal basis to "vanish" its illegal housing. Although bureaucratic barriers of legalization and privatization were significantly reduced, not everyone seized this opportunity. After almost decade, some areas of Tbilisi's built-up territory are still unregistered in the land cadastre. These patterns can be easily documented on the example of the field-work sites. The history of the development of these areas holds the key to explaining the aforementioned pattern.

20 SNiP publishing (1989) Residential Buildings [Жилые Здания]. SNiP publishing.

5. MORPHOLOGICAL IMAGE OF THE FIELDWORK AREAS

Initially, Zemo Vedzisi was a village near Tbilisi. It was incorporated into the city boundaries in the 1960s when the Soviet government started construction of mass-housing quarters in the area. Currently the district is composed of various types of housing. However, the dominant type is one- or two-storey detached buildings. Recent developments in the area include multi-storey apartment blocks that are targeted on the upper-middle income groups. Currently, there is no vacant territory around Zemo Vedzisi, because land is sold to private investors for new premium-class residential developments.[21]

Chikovani Street is located in one of the central districts of Tbilisi and is developed along the valley of the Vere River. Development of this territory started in the first half of the 20th century. At that time, the area was famous for its gardens; the old toponym of the area, "Khiliani", means "having fruit". During the last decade, the area experienced dramatic changes, namely the construction of a new highway, the reconstruction of the Vere valley, and the replacement of old self-made housing with multi-apartment blocks and high-end villas.

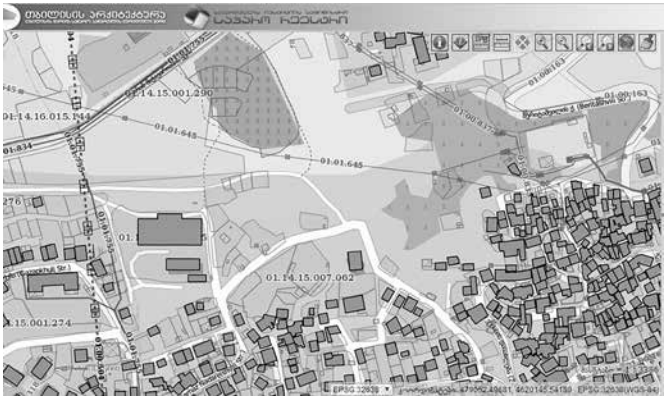
Lilo settlement is on the easternmost outskirts of the capital and represents a typical Soviet settlement. Its development started in the 1950s. Originally, Lilo was constructed for factory workers employed in the area. The settlement's housing stock is composed of 4-, 9-, 12, and 16-storey multi-flat Soviet apartment blocks and individual detached houses; there are no new multi-storey residences in the area. Most construction during the last decade was focused on commercial buildings such as shops or individual houses, some of which are illegal.

These areas feature some distinct differences as well as similarities. One of the main indicators marking difference between these areas is the land and housing price per square metre. The normative land price set by the Tbilisi Council varies from 20 GEL/sq.m. in Lilo to 183 GEL/sq.m. on Chikovani Street to 225 GEL/sq.m. in Zemo Vedsizi. As for the market price, the difference is obvious as well: the average housing price per square metre in the administrative district to which Zemo Vedzisi and Chikovani Street belong in 2012 was 817 USD, while in Lilo it was only 234 USD.[22]

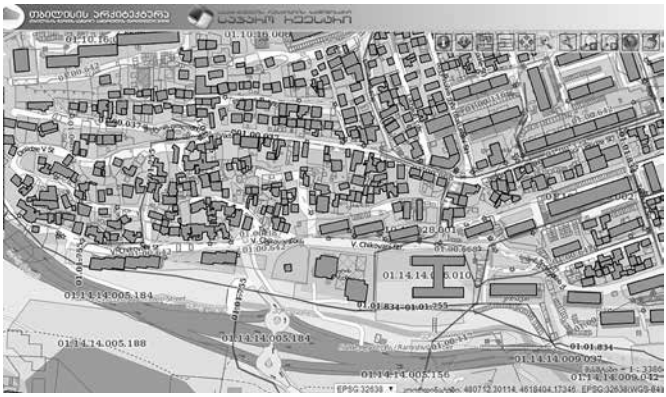
Another important indicator is a ratio of privatized land plots. In general, land plots and housing in the central districts tend to be more actively privatized than in Lilo. Picture 2, 3 and 4 show registered land plots and existing buildings in the chosen locations. Likewise, land parcels differ in size among the fieldwork sites. Parcels in the central districts are smaller than in Lilo. Moreover, parcels in Lilo have smaller ratio of constructed area to land plot, providing more space for agricultural activities (NAPR, 2014).

21 Tbilisi Architecture. Interactive Plan of Tbilisi. Accessed July 5, 2014. <http://mgis.tbilisi.gov.ge/MeriaMapping/architecture/ArchitectureMap.jsp>.

22 Prices on Residential Buildings in Tbilisi Districts [ბინის ფასები თბილისის უბნების მიხედვით] // Kviris Palitra Newspaper, July 16, 2012 Issue <http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/economic/13027-binis-fasebi-thbilisis-ubnebis-mikhedvith.html>.



PICTURE 2 Zemo Vedzisi, Registered land plots
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge



PICTURE 3 Settlement along Chikovani Street. Registered land plots
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge

PICTURE 4 Lilo settlement. Registered land plots
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge

Infrastructure networks (water, sewage, electricity, gas, landline phone) are insufficient in all three cases. Pictures 5, 6 and 7 show that the fieldwork sites are not efficiently supplied with infrastructure networks. However, in reality, such networks exist but are not reflected in the urban planning documentation.

PICTURE 5 Zemo Vedzisi. Scheme of Infrastructure networks
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge

FIGURE 6 Settlement along Chikovani Street. Scheme of Infrastructure networks
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge

FIGURE 7 Lilo settlement. Scheme of infrastructure networks
Source: NAPR, (2014). www.napr.gov.ge

Self-made houses in all the studied areas have similar morphological images and come in various shapes. Usually, they are designed as a single room house or several go-through rooms, not providing sufficient day-lighting and ventilation. As in other parts of the world, self-made housing in Tbilisi is created through multiple transformations, extinctions and additions over the detached individual house. Such houses are structurally dangerous, because they do not have a basement. In some cases, parts of such houses are constructed with stones and blocks, while extensions are built using other materials available to the family at the time of construction. In the worst cases, large parts of the house are built with plywood boards.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 FORMATION OF THE INFORMAL HOUSING IN TBILISI

Squatter settlements in the fieldwork areas were built illegally in the 1950s by means of self-help. The first inhabitants were migrants from villages moving to Tbilisi to find a job. Because of the age of the settlement, it is difficult to track migration patterns. However, it should be noted that group migrations were quite common: family members and relatives would follow each other to the city and build houses nearby. Those relations are still preserved. Almost every respondent mentioned that they had several relatives in the neighbourhood.

Houses were built from local materials, such as stone, clay and wood. Most of the construction was done at night. There was an unwritten rule that if house was finished - e.g. had a bearing structure and a roof - then eviction was not enforced. Research showed that this rule is still valid for present-day squatters.

"*My house was constructed illegally, like "Nakhalovka", by means of local materials. People were coming from villages, then building homes and getting 'housing register books' [*домовая книга*]"* (male, 57, Chikovani street).

"My father-in-law was a risk-taker, he arrived in Tbilisi alone and started working on the construction of the Vazha Phshavela residential area. Later on, he received a three-room apartment, but since he had four children, he decided to build his own house. He was renting a room in the neighbourhood, so he knew the area. He found a small empty place, crumbled a cliff and built a house" (Female, 59, Zemo Vedzisi Settlement)

The Soviet government's official attitude towards squatters was negative. The city government prohibited illegal construction and in some cases, self-made houses were destroyed and lawsuits were filed against the tenants. However, corruption was very common and such penalties could be avoided by means of bribing officials (Interview with resident. Male, 70, Zemo Vedzisi).

"This house belonged to my grandparents, they built it. When this territory was empty, it was used for gardens. The house was built in one night, but then we were taken to the court, which granted us with a permission to live in there" (Female, 63, Zemo Vedzisi Settlement).

Another respondent, Female, 53, ethnic Azerbaijani, said that she grew up in Zemo Vedzisi settlement. Her father's family was one of the first squatters to settle in the area, though she could not recall the details of construction. Currently she lives in her own house, which she constructed on the land plot that belonged to her father. She started construction of her own house in 1987-88, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. At that time, she had to deal with the Soviet Executive Committee, which did not allow her to finish construction works and demolished the house.

"The Executive Committee did not allow illegal constructions. They broke our roof, windows and doors to evict us, but where could I go with two small kids?! Over the course of one year we were staying in different places and then we came back. It was an extremely difficult period for us. The Executive Committee filed a lawsuit against us because we built our house illegally. Consequently, I was paying fines from my salary for some time after." (Female, 53, Zemo Vedzisi).

"I bribed them [government] so they left me and my house alone. Everyone was doing so" (Male, 67, Zemo Vedzisi).

Demolition of self-help housing and resettlement of tenants were the main strategies of that time. Currently, there is limited knowledge about resettlement and allocation of new dwellings for squatter households. However, formally, the state provided housing for everyone. Nonetheless, one of the respondents recalled that when her house was demolished, her family squatted in another area.

A "Red Zone" was an informal term used to define settlements that were slated for demolition. Residents of a "Red Zone" area received "housing books" (домовая книга) – a mandatory document in the USSR, which indicated the place of residence. As the fieldwork showed, informal housing districts in Lilo settlement and along Chikovani Street were termed "Red Zones" and residents were placed on waiting lists for new housing. However, those plans were never fulfilled due to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Obviously, informal settlements lacked engineering infrastructure from the very beginning. Sewage from the settlements flowed into valleys nearby. Drinking water was brought from the "conventional houses" in the area. However, research showed that currently most informal settlements are provided with sewage infrastructure, piped drinking water, electricity and natural gas. All amenities are supplied through the public networks. According to the respondents, infrastructure networks were constructed during the Soviet times.

Emergence of illegal self-help housing after independence was driven by different factors compared to the Soviet period. According to the respondents, the following reasons impelled them to build illegal self-help housing: a) evictions and inability to pay a rent; b) overcrowding and desire to improve living conditions; c) desire to live in an individual house with a courtyard. Some squatters made illegal subdivisions of land by constructing a fence only. Others built supportive housing, garages or small farms on vacant "no man's land". In all cases, respondents were choosing land in the area they were familiar with, had previously lived around and/or had close relatives in the neighbourhood. In addition, there are squats in recreational zones, along small rivers or irritation channels.

"There was space between poplars along an irrigation channel. Who needed poplars?! They have bad seeds in the spring that cause asthma. We [neighbours] applied to the City Hall, received permission and cut them down. Then we used the space as we could – some built houses, others barns for animals. It depended on what one could afford. We took these places on our own. Previously, it was a dump-site. Dirt. We cleaned it all and used it as we needed it. After this we legalized our land plots" (Female, 64, Lilo Settlement).

*"We fenced in this land approximately seven years ago and planted tomatoes and cucumbers. When we could not pay rent anymore, the property owner evicted us and we remained homeless for four months. Then the neighbours gave us some construction materials, such as timber. They helped us. My husband installed four columns and then wrapped them using whatever materials we had. We informed City Hall on the first day we settled here. We prepared documents and submitted them to City Council but have not been able to legalize the house thus far. We were told that it was impossible to do so because of the Landscape Zone limitations" (*Female, 60 Zemo Vedzisi settlement).

"This territory was squatted in the 1990s, because it was empty and belonged to no one. We bought our land for 1,500 USD, but we did not have any formal agreement. Then, in 2009, we bought a trailer-home for 5,000 USD and put it here. But the Supervision Service from Tbilisi City Hall took it away. We still have a fine of 5,000 GEL to pay. When the Supervision Service came, they called the police too. Police officers told us that if we borrowed money and built something, they would not evict us from this land. I followed their advice and bought four columns. Then, only in one night, I installed them as a framework, built-up walls and covered the roof. The Supervision Service said they would destroy our house, but we still live here, they have not evicted us" (Male, 51, Lilo settlement).

6.2 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Infrastructure in informal settlements is sorely deteriorated. Residents claim that they cannot afford upgrades, emphasizing the difficulties and expenses needed for the preparation of architectural projects and building permits. Consequently, "do-it-yourself" practices are quite common. Namely, residents build extensions - additional rooms of various purposes. The key reason is overcrowding, which is a common problem in such developments.

One of the most common types of housing is attached housing units with a common courtyard (so called "Italian courtyard"). Perception towards such type of housing is highly negative, especially when all or some amenities are located in the yard and are shared among several families. Usually, families share a toilet, bathroom, kitchen and drinking water tap, which is the prime source of water. However, research showed a tendency of arranging private amenities inside the houses.

"The problem is that this house is like an 'Italian courtyard'; everything is shared. Currently we share this yard with two other families. We share a toilet and water tap (the only water source) – both facilities are outside. It is very difficult during the wintertime. When water pipes get frozen we do not have water for days. It is incredibly difficult. Overall, living conditions are not desirable for me. One can live there, especially, if there is no other place to go, but the living conditions are not good." (Female, 26, Lilo settlement).

"I did not have a bathroom for 10 years, so I was visiting my parents' house. Then I received permission to build a room and now we have a new bathroom and a toilet connected to the central sewage system" (Female, 53, Zemo Vedzisi).

"I want to build a toilet inside my house and I can afford the construction costs. However, there is not enough space for it" (Male, 57, Chikovani Street).

New squatter settlements (e.g. those built after independence) are in the worst condition, because their houses were built as an emergency shelters without toilets or bathrooms. In some cases, flash toilets were installed outside of the house and connected to the central sewage system. However, the research found that sewage and greywater are usually disposed of via self-made channels into the valleys.

Respondents of all studied squatter settlements mentioned that infrastructure has improved during the last decade and that all houses are registered in the communal services provider agencies (Telasi, KazTransGaz Tbilisi, Georgian Water and Power). Nonetheless some families share meters with neighbours. Respondents who share electricity meters with other families claimed that sometimes it causes delays in payment and, consequently, disconnection.

The unavailability of a properly arranged central system of infrastructure networks is one of the main constraints to upgrading and developing squatter settlements. Lack of space for such facilities as toilet and bathroom is yet another obstacle.

6.3 PRIVATIZATION

Analyses of cadastral maps of the studied areas showed that land plots and housing in the central districts tend to be more actively privatized than those in the suburbs. This observation is also supported by narratives from the fieldwork: People living in Zemo Vedzisi and the settlement along Chikovani Street were more interested in privatization of the property than residents of Lilo settlement. The former viewed their land as a potentially valuable asset for large investment companies, rather than private use. On the contrary, Lilo residents regarded their houses as "place to live" and did not expect to profit from them in the near future.

Another aspect that emerged during the interviews regarding privatization of the property is the subdivision of land among family members. This was a central impediment in the Soviet squatter settlements where several generations of families live together. However, the respondents characterized the privatization process as "easy", provided one had the financial resources and time.

Although the attitude of the government towards both new and old informal housing is similar, squatters who constructed their houses after independence and have not privatized their homes yet experience greater fear of forced evictions than Soviet squatters who have not privatized their property either. It should be noted that only well-off squatters were able to privatize and upgrade their property. Those who did not manage to do so are not able to participate in the property market in full. This means that privatization was more beneficial to those squatters who had some money and owned more valuable land.

6.4. PARTICIPATION IN THE MARKET

Respondents from Zemo Vedzisi and Chikovani Street are in a broad agreement that their neighbours tend to sell their properties and move out from the area. Many who still live in the neighbourhood are looking for developers. However, even in such a central location as Chikovani Street not every parcel is similarly attractive to investors. This is mainly caused by difficult terrain and unavailability of roads and engineering networks. In other words, the less attractive the land plot is, the lower probability there is that it will be sold for a reasonable price. In such circumstances, even owners of privatized property have little chances of selling their land at a proper price, which would be enough for new, better housing. This is especially true for families where several generations live together. In addition, such families seek higher prices on their property, because they have more people to satisfy. Taking into account the fact that overcrowding is a common problem in informal settlements, it becomes obvious that investment in such areas is not feasible for developers.

6.5. SOCIAL BONDS AND SELF-ORGANIZATION

There are strong social bonds among neighbours and a profound sense of belonging to the place of residence. This can be explained by several factors: First, at the time of squatting, relatives were settling together. This created communities of relatives which still exist. Second, people live in the same place for several generations. In addition, all three studied areas had a neighbourhood with a distinct ethnic or sub-ethnic group well represented (Greeks on Chikovani Street, Azeris in Zemo Vedzisi and Khvesurs (natives of a remote Georgian region) in Lilo settlement). The factor of being related to neighbours was the strongest merit in all studied settlements. Respondents would prefer to stay in the area rather than move somewhere else so that they could preserve strong bonds with the community.

Elderly respondents in all three areas felt somehow proud to live in a private, individual house and mentioned its "cosiness". In contrast, younger respondents complained about the low quality of living. Besides, they emphasized the fact that their settlements should be considered urban, not rural. This is relevant not only in Lilo settlement, which is a peri-urban area but also in the central districts. It may be concluded that this attitude is coloured by the agricultural activities of the residents of informal settlements.

In general, self-organization among the residents can be observed during special events only, such as weddings and funerals. However, there is a strong potential for future practices. The case of Zemo Vedzisi could be used as a good practice and an example of self-organization and cooperation between the city government and citizens. When the neighbourhood needed urgent repairs to its drinking water and sewage piping systems, residents collectively applied to Tbilisi City Hall for permission to repair pipes and lay asphalt on a road. When the city hall declined their application, residents collected money to cover the expenses themselves. This type of self-organization might be viewed as a good starting point for a large-scale upgrading project.

6.6. RELATIONS WITH CITY GOVERNMENT

Despite the fact that the Tbilisi Master Plan includes a separate functional zone for informal settlements, there are no upgrading projects so far. Therefore, upgrading of the informal housing is up to either the residents themselves or to large investment companies. The Chikovani Street area is a very good example how external development involving large investments affected informal settlements. Construction of a new highway and reconstruction of the Vere River Gorge attracted the attention of the large construction companies. However, these events affected only residents living "in the first row" – those closest to the areas of development with easy access to the highway. Residents of one of the cul-de-sacs of the Chikovani Street, which is located on a hill with difficult access, claimed that nothing had changed for them.

The risk in such situations is that owners of housing in "profitable" areas, e.g. "first row" from the highway, are seeking individual profit. They regard their property as an investment, and are not willing to upgrade it to make it liveable. This attitude was also supported by expert interviewed, who claimed that under the current economic conditions, there are only two strategic attitudes towards informal settlements, both implying gentrification of the neighbourhoods. One is a densification of the area by means of construction high-rise houses financed by investment companies. The second option would be building high-end villas, which allows preservation of the neighbourhoods' scale. Either of these approaches would severely undermine the existing social fabric, putting the sustainability of such redevelopments into question.

Squatters' attitudes towards the city government vary widely. People who live in houses constructed during the Soviet period, are more likely to mention "*good old Soviet times*". In their interviews, they said they did not feel obliged to obtain construction permits for additional extensions or reconstruction of their houses and complained about modern procedures required by the Tbilisi City Hall. In addition, they have expectations that the government will legalize their informal constructions without fines and sanctions. This tendency likely began in the 1990s, when illegal practices, such as construction of horizontal extensions, were widely accepted by the public. On the contrary, modern squatters who obtained illegal land almost for free are more likely to be happy with the neo-liberal policy of the current government.

7. CONCLUSION

The research revealed that the quality of housing and engineering infrastructure did not differ significantly among the informal settlements located in the central and peripheral neighbourhoods of Tbilisi. However, the analysis shows that differences appear when considering other spatial-economical characteristics, such as location in the neighbourhood, primary functional purpose, tenure type, land plot size and housing structure. This complementary classification, suggested by the UN ECE, also acknowledges regional specifics and socio-cultural peculiarities of the population. Based on these features, informal settlements in Tbilisi can be classified into four groups.

The first type of informal housing emerged during the Soviet period. It was built by rural migrants for residential purposes due to an acute housing shortage. Such housing is

located in the inner-city. Soviet city reconstruction master plans intended to demolish such formations but these plans were never fulfilled. The distinctive feature of this type is that such settlements are relatively large in scale and more densely populated. Due to the relatively central location, this type is more likely to attract investment capital, be redeveloped and gentrified. The social structure in place there took shape over a relatively long period of time. Considering this, it is not a surprise that current residents have strong social bonds and commitment to the community. Although it is difficult to determine the share of privatised housing in such formations, the legal status of this type of housing is less in doubt due to the age of the settlements.

The second type of informal settlement is a result of the post-Soviet transformation and the turbulence that followed. Similar to the first type, it was formed for residential purposes. Unlike the first type, these formations are relatively hard to identify, because they are scattered all over the city and mostly represent "stand-alone" buildings. In some cases, they are built on the edge of the Soviet-era squatter settlements (the first type described above) or on a land parcel seized during the socialist period. Although this type of housing can be legalized, the research showed that residents face more obstacles to legalizing their property as some of the constructions are located in functional zones where construction is not permitted (e.g. landscape protection zone, recreational zone). In addition, this type of housing lacks engineering infrastructure and in some cases such amenities such as bathroom and toilet are absent.

Another type of the informal formations emerged as seasonal/temporary housing. Initially this type is usually built as a supportive structure for recreational or agricultural purposes. Usually the housing is located on vacant land in the same neighbourhood as the primary dwelling and serves as a second home for the family. In most cases, it belongs to the residents of the same area living in multi-flat Soviet houses. However, it differs from the suburban housing called "dachas" (country homes) which have been acquired legally. This type is especially popular among the elderly, who started farming. The quality of the building and availability of the structure varies widely. This type can be found in peri-urban areas of the city.

The fourth type can be called "Garage lofts". They emerged as the result of recent changes of property function from garage to residential. Usually this type is a result of reconstruction of a supporting structure like a garage. In many cases both construction of the primary structure and its following reconstruction were illegal and did not employ proper architectural documentation. Like the second type, this housing is scattered all over the city, in some cases "garage lofts" are located between the Soviet-era multi-family high-rise buildings.

The suggested typology of Tbilisi's informal settlements shows that these structures face different socio-economic and infrastructure problems. Consequently, the solution should be based on diverse policies and approaches. However, city authorities continue to use a blanket approach to all types of informal housing.

Although there have been significant reforms in land administration, individual titling is not affordable for the households in the informal settlements. Building Regulation Plans required for the development of such territories do not cover the entire territory of Tbilisi. This creates additional obstacles to the upgrading or re-development

of squatter settlements. Even though the government of Georgia and particular Tbilisi City Hall have accelerated the development of modern land administration systems, the coverage is limited (not everyone registered their own property) and information on illegally constructed or legalized buildings is not incorporated.

Georgia's national and local urban policies towards informal housing are neoliberal, granting "individual freedoms" to the tenants and enabling the market to define the rules. This attitude provides socially vulnerable poor families with mechanisms to "help themselves" without any social or environmental responsibilities. The legacy of this practice is the main obstacle for the city to cease illegal land seizures. Just as Al-Sayyad argued, the paradigm of liberalization prompts squatters to expand their unlawful activities.[23] Accepted practices of allowing the occupation of public land with little sanction from the government and no judgement from society are the main drivers of the emergence of new squatter settlements and/or the expansion of old ones.

Analysis of the existing policy shows that the primary purpose of the mass privatization was the introduction of the real estate market. However, in fact, the process was marred by weak urban planning and construction regulation, and this enabled private capital to set "the rules of the game". As a result, residents of squatter settlements have to either sell their property and move to other parts of the city, or live in inadequate conditions. Even those who move, do not always end up in better housing. Taking these circumstances into account, it can posited that there is a strong likelihood of the further marginalization of the residents of the informal settlements. Nowadays, Tbilisi is facing risks of severe marginalisation of the "economically disadvantaged" squatter formations in the suburbs and land speculation in the informal settlements in the inner-city, which also follows the pattern described by the UN ECE and Tsenkova.

Contradictory to the assumptions of the international scholars that individual ownership weakens collective bonds and social networks, in Tbilisi, residents of the informal settlements showed high potential for self-organization and strong social relations among neighbours. Despite that, there are no legal mechanisms of organizing a "condominium" or "land trust" of the individual houses. In conclusion, despite the "capitalistic" private interests, residents of the squatter settlements can be considered as trustworthy parties in upgrade projects.

Considering the findings of the research, the main obstacle to future study is the identification of the informal housing in Tbilisi. Quantitative approaches are required for further research into the socio-economic conditions of the squatters. This will allow for the elaboration of a targeted policy on the specific needs of the informal settlements.

23 Al-Sayyad, N. (2004) Urbanism as a "new" way of life. In A. Roy & N. Al-Sayyad (Eds.), Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia. pp 7-30. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Transformation of the Historic District through Residential Developments in Tbilisi

Irakli Zhvania

"When masses of people reside together, it is called a city, as one man cannot make do on his own; rather we must help each other in life and share in its spoils"
Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658-1725)

In childhood, my younger brother and I used to visit our grandparents at the weekends. They lived in Tbilisi's historic part, which was very different from the district where we lived. My brother could not perceive such dissimilar neighbourhoods as both being parts of one city and described them as "grandma's Tbilisi" and "our Tbilisi".

The purpose of this research is to review post-Soviet residential housing developments in the historic Vera district in the Georgian capital. The aim is to understand these developments and asses their impact on the urban layout of the district. The district has been chosen for this research, because the clash between old and new housing is most vivid here. Although it is not the oldest, this area has undergone one of the most significant urban changes caused by residential construction in the city.

The process of modern housing construction is very dynamic. Central districts of Tbilisi have become zones of active reconstruction and face fundamental problems from the point of view of urban design, planning and development.

The research reviews the development of Vera over time and deals with questions of negative outcomes of housing construction during last two decades. It tries to provide historical background, discusses the values of the district and analyses how new hous-

ing developments affect the existing urban environment. One of the main issues is the review of the legislative base, the accordance of constructions with regulations, the role of the public sector in the housing and construction spheres and assessment of expectations of old and new residents for the urban qualities of the neighbourhood. It is important to understand what kind of dissonance recent residential developments brought into the spatial structure of the district.

This research also presents views and opinions of the local residents about housing developments and changes in the neighbourhoods of this historic district, as well as the evaluations of real estate brokers. In order to get an understanding of the problems, background literature was researched, four site visits were made and seven interviews were conducted.

Major findings and analysis cover the categories of legislation and regulation, ecology, social aspects and views of the local population about the qualities and image of the area they inhabit.

In our era of rapid urban growth nobody doubts the need for new developments. But apart from new developments, old historic surroundings should be protected and respected. The districts with official status of heritage preservation zones have special requirements for new construction projects to ensure that they conform to the existing spatial and architectural setting and social and technical infrastructure. Municipal authorities should ensure sustainable development of historic districts through a strong legislative and regulatory framework, elaborate housing policies and monitor implementation and adherence to regulations. Big investments and the need for development are characteristic for countries in transition. Without a strong public sector, market pressure on the old districts is big and threatens historically established valuable urban and social features. Having overall strategic views and proper planning is crucial for the harmonized development of every city. Ad hoc interventions are uncoordinated with the objectives and goals of wider urban development strategies or policies, which ensure sustainable growth and are meant to serve public interests.

During the Soviet period housing was provided by the state. After regaining independence in 1991, Georgia plunged into its so-called "transition period". Tbilisi deviated from its planned development and began to grow spontaneously. This was caused by newly emerged real estate market forces and new types of land uses. Overall, the process of spatial changes underwent several phases which can be divided as follows: 1. Degradation of urban structures, 1991-1996; 2. New construction of limited scale in the central areas, 1997-2003; 3. Start of large-scale structural changes and the construction boom from 2004.[1]

One of the main changes over these years was the entry of the private sector into the housing market.

1 Salukvadze, J. Van Assche, K. Shavishvili, N. Others. (2010) Tbilisi in Times of Change – Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Urban Space and Urban Planning, Tbilisi State University Publishing House, Tbilisi.

The need to improve housing quality of Soviet standards caused a boom of brokerages and construction companies. The private sector became very active in buying existing buildings and building new ones. Builders and developers demolished old buildings and constructed new ones two, three and four times taller in order to maximize profits. New high-rise housing developments arose in many places, especially in central locations.

The construction sector has been very profitable over the last two decades. Thus it has rapidly expanded its activity, touching on practically all parts of Tbilisi, and leaving a deep impact on urban development.

While the residential developments have provided significant housing to citizens, there are several problems with the impact it has had on Tbilisi. The quality of planning and execution often is poor.

- To reduce expenses and provide competitive prices, materials and build up execution were not of high aesthetic appearance. Several years ago, when public authorities were weak and corrupt, building cheap and fast and selling at a profit was the only aim.

- Many newly developed buildings, especially high-rise buildings, do not fit into the historically established urban environment. Companies and business groups often did not take appearance and scale into account. Building 10-15-storey buildings in place of 4-5-storey ones drastically changes the environment of neighbourhoods. These buildings are like alien bodies for the city.

- Many attractive urban areas of Tbilisi – especially in Vake and Vera – became construction fields of disproportionate building complexes. Today we can see unregulated changes or alterations and newly erected infills. This resulted in increased densities and typical problems connected with it such as disadvantageous expositions of buildings and parking problems.[2]

- Rapid real estate development creates new social challenges. Market prices are rising far beyond affordability. The new housing market is accessible only to certain income groups, those who invest in real estate. Because of these tendencies many flats stay empty and become objects of speculation. Conversely, the settled population starts to be pushed out of the quarters where they have always lived.

Contemporary housing construction is one of the main components of urban development in Tbilisi. It is generally characterized by high-speed growth. This is a positive fact in the economy of the city, but it also requires serious research. Historical and political processes, along with the economic crisis, have had a big influence on the city and its housing sector. The chaos in this sphere has strengthened those tendencies. A complex of measures is needed to deal with problems. The process of privatization

2 Sida. (2004) A Future for the Past; Sustainable Urban Environment: A holistic approach, Malmo University, Malmo.

without clear policy has damaged urban heritage of the city and its areas of historical preservation.

Vera, a historic district of Tbilisi, provides one of the best illustrations of how unregulated developments have impacted an established urban environment. In Vera, as in the other old parts of Tbilisi, two-, three- and four-storey housing with corresponding width of streets is developed on a diverse relief. The street, buildings and natural environment form a unity in which all components are connected with each other. This makes Tbilisi an urban structure, organically fitted to the landscape and natural environment. High-rise concrete structures arising in the old parts of the city, change not only the scale of areas, but also pose a threat to their identity and uniqueness. Already in 1985, Vera was included in the state preservation zone as an urban entity. In those times, it saved the area from the intrusion of typical Soviet housing blocks.

One of the most significant factors of change in old quarters is new housing construction. For a deep analysis of these issues the particular micro environment should be taken into account. Interaction of structures from different periods is clearly seen in the historically very interesting Vera district, which bears the inherent characteristics of old, districts. The district of Vera is remarkable for its oldness, authenticity, attractive views created by both nature and architecture, the cosiness of streets and lively social connections. Yet uncontrolled private developments in this historical area created a number of severe problems, interfering with the organic structure of the quarter, reducing the quality of life and ultimately also decreasing the value of these new developments. The future of this district is in doubt.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

When in a low density residential area there appear high buildings, the number of inhabitants and cars increases. Streets remain the same in width and are not suitable for the increased volume of vehicles. It causes traffic congestion and parking problems. The environment is affected. Social behaviour in crowded neighbourhoods changes. The problem of chaotic and destructive “invasion” in the old parts of the city is not only low architectural quality, but also disrespect to the city’s urban fabric. The aesthetic values of the neighbourhood, which, inter alia, attract tourists, are disappearing. The burden on the technical and social infrastructure is unreasonable. All this is due to the indifference of the relevant authorities and the city needs to take immediate action to survive and sustain. The problems and issues in Vera should be regarded from a historical, as well as legislative and regulatory standpoint.

The aim of the research is to analyse the threats to the existing urban environment and what precious features of Vera are being lost.

The objectives include study and analysis of legislative, urban, ecological and social aspects of the housing construction taking place in Vera, the part of Old Tbilisi administrative district, and explore the preferences and expectations of local residents about the changes in their neighbourhood or living conditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

GENIUS LOCI

Every historical city has its own spirit - the guardian of the place, or *genius loci*. Present in the nature and topography of the cities, in the historical buildings, in the original concept of the edifices, in the creative craftsmanship and the power of imagination of the masters, in the dwellings and in the spiritual make-up of the human beings who are creators and an integral part of the whole, it is what distinguishes historical cities from each other.

In order to understand the rich qualities, vulnerability and sustainability of old Tbilisi's urban heritage, both *genius loci* and *stabilitas loci (continuity of place)* need to be explored.

The charm of every city, along with other things, is predetermined by place-making in different parts of its body. The *genius loci* is accumulated over the course of years. Those areas do not necessarily have their spirit from the very beginning of their existence - rather it comes into being as the result of intensive interaction between districts, as the product of contacts and adaptation among the people living in the city. Such connections may have the same influence on the general mood of the city as particular building, bridge or other element of the built environment. Sometimes areas charged with a sense of place are on the scale of the city, sometimes more local, narrow-district character, but are very important anyway. They are important, because intensive contact with areas which people see as attractive influences humans. Urban psychology supports the opinion that contact with such districts may positively affect humans, ease depression, reduce aggression, and lower criminality. Places form layers in bodies of cities and create spatial history.

Years of living in particular urban areas contribute to the formation of personalities. Almost everyone either is consciously aware of, or under consciously feels the aura in the neighbourhood. It is precisely this sense that makes people feel comfortable and happy in their places of habitation. The invisible energy that fills us up is transferred from the place to the people and they share it in the neighbourhood through everyday contacts and interactions. It is the people who give life to places. It is all their activity in forming neighbourhoods through construction, inhabitation, social contacts, responsibilities and caring for one another. Humans are the key actors in place-making. Through our actions and behaviour we create a certain kind of living environment, we create a place which attracts or estranges us. This aspect is an important factor that influences our decision when we choose places to live and gives quality and satisfaction to our habitat. Humans should be especially careful when dealing with a neighbourhood that has a history, because while fascinating historic neighbourhoods and communities may need years or even generations to form as social systems, it takes very short time to destroy them.

Vera has always had a strong *genius loci*. The inhabitants of this district are all aware of its presence around them and between them. Yes, aware of having something that one cannot touch and cannot smell, that has no shape, no colour - rather it is experienced. Such energy was accumulated and layered during the history of Vera by the genera-

tions. It gives psychological comfort and provides satisfaction with place of residence and therefore constitutes a big portion of mental life quality. It is an absolutely social phenomenon determined by the bilateral influence of the surrounding (built) environment and human activity, while the latter is largely affected by the social atmosphere in our immediate living during this process. It can be concluded that we create an urban environment like us, and vice-versa: the urban landscape forms us.

The spirit of Tbilisi, and that of all other historic cities, is mostly determined by the level of authenticity of the streets and surviving structures. By maintaining the unique and genuine qualities of our historical urban fabric we can help to preserve *genius loci*.

SOCIAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AND URBAN LANDSCAPE

It would be appropriate to say that the understanding of city, first of all, goes along the whole history of mankind as a social-cultural phenomenon. Already in the eighth century AD, Isidore of Seville stated: "It is not the stones that are called the city, but inhabitants; it is not a type of build-up (*urbs*), but the character of relations between people (*civitas*)".[3]

The social influences are the influences of the cultural and legislative environments, while the material influence is one of the material environments created by the natural and cultural processes. The same is the case for the legislative and cultural environments. With their local traditions, ethnic or confessional peculiarities and the characteristic features of social layers, these environments can be vital components of smaller landscapes.

If we accept the urban landscape as the unity of the social and the material, then it is in a constant process of formation, along with the *socium*, while the human being is in a constant development. Mankind is creating the forms of public life appropriate for every stage of its own evolution. These forms significantly determine the character of the human impact on the surrounding environment, which changes according to the development of the above-mentioned forms. Every particular landscape acquires its identity from the combination of natural processes and human individuality acting in it. It is especially seen in the landscapes where accents made by human creativity play a significant role. There is a feeling that without this accent the place would lack something that makes it whole. Taking into consideration such a footprint allows us to say that landscapes have history and biography like humans.[4]

Vera has its history of development as a neighbourhood. The Georgian term *ubani* is a smaller understanding of district or quarter, which not denote a specific adminis-

3 Stephen A. Barney (Translator), W. J. Lewis (Translator), J. A. Beach (Translator), Oliver Berghof (Translator) (1999) The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville. Cambridge University Press.

4 Bakradze Z. (2010) Tbilisi as a Cultural Landscape. Tskheli Shokoladi Magazine [ბაქრაძე, ზ. თბილისი, როგორც კულტურული ლანდშაფტი, "ცხელი შოკოლადი". 2010].

PICTURE 1 G. Akhvlediani Street

trative unit. Essentially, it means "neighbourhood". It is more about how people and residents socially and historically perceive some particular area or territory. *Ubani* was always one the most essential structural elements of the city. Many travellers mention its identity. *Ubani* encompasses the system of streets, which have been characterized with its own relatively independent liveliness, its inner social connections and regulations. *Ubanis*– neighbourhoods - were in close connection with each other and formed the central core of the city. It ensured the integration of the medieval town's entire populace. This coordination was ensured through the functionality of the streets, on which workshops and taverns were located. Vera is a typical example of a broader *ubani* consisting of sub-*ubanis* and is often mentioned in historical sources as "Verisubani".

Vera is attractive as a social-spatial phenomenon, where the degree of public reverence to the space was always high. The sense of neighbourhood and social connections were strongly present here. Perimeter housing with inner yards, blocks with L-shaped houses in the corners, and the proportion of house heights to street width are characteristics of the residential blocks in Vera. Urban design typologies directly dictate lifestyle. The historically existing housing layout of Vera is one of the main creators of the social values and connections in the neighbourhood. Inner courtyards, low- to medium-rise housing, easy-to-cross street width, walkability - these characteristics make human contacts easier, connect many families, strengthen the concept of neighbour. These features are being completely erased by high-rise residential buildings built during the past twenty years. Those concrete blocks do not provide any opportunity or space for public interaction; beyond that, they destroyed existing ones.

One of the values of Vera, as is the case with other old districts in Tbilisi, is the so-called Tbilisi yard, which is a semi-public space. It is an inner courtyard partially or fully surrounded by houses with balconies and galleries on its perimeter and accessible from the street. The yard serves as a space for contact with neighbours and encourages social connections between them. At the same time it is a transitional step between private (apartment) and public (street) space. Psychologically it eases this transition; it makes it possible to be outside, out of the private enclosed space, but not in the street. The inner yard is semi-public because it is for neighbours, for those living there and knowing each other. It is a logical link in the conceptual chain of "my apartment, my yard, my street, my neighbourhood, my city". It is regrettable that new housing projects do not envision any semi-public or public spaces.

The presence of these courtyards, and open courtyards in particular, not only in Kala, Isani and Seidabad (Abanotubani), but also in other parts of Old Tbilisi, makes the spatial organization of the Old Town a remarkable phenomenon. The tradition was adopted later in other districts that emerged in 19th century, such as Sololaki and Mtatsminda and Shota Rustaveli and Davit Aghmashenebeli avenues and their surroundings. Moreover, such houses can also be found in the earliest surviving areas in what is now the district of Vera.

The values of Vera are in the integrity of the urban context. New construction should not suppress old buildings and destroy the uniqueness and authenticity of the district. The problem does not belong only to the sphere of architectural heritage preservation. Not every house in Vera is a landmark - not by far. Judging by the changes to Vera in the past 20 years, it is obvious that old concepts of cities and neighbourhoods like street, alleys and lanes, plazas, their harmonic unanimity with buildings and their concord in scale are lost and architects and developers have not tried to achieve that psychological comfort of urban environment which attracts us so much in old districts.

Harmonized evolution of the city requires conservation of its historical environment, one of the most important functions of which is to protect the existence of different lifestyles from those who foist monotony-spreading uniform and absolutely uninteresting architectural production.[5]

It is precisely in these architectural productions that people live, work and do indoor activities. It is the built environment that forms urban areas; the buildings that form streets and cities. And it is clear how much we are influenced by this built environment. Living in urban areas means living together, in the neighbourhood, among others, all together. Living close to each other means the whole network of social connections and contacts.

It is well known that children include the name of their country, which they frequently hear from adults, in descriptions of the place where they live. They know this name means something close to them. At the beginning of their conscious life, kids see their home, their house as such place.[6]

5 Jacobs, J. (1993) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, The Modern Library, New York.

6 Bakradze, Z. (2010) Tbilisi as a Cultural Landscape. [თბილისი, როგორც კულტურული ლანდშაფტი] Tskheli Shokoladi Magazine.

So the urban landscape, with its social and material components, on the one hand significantly affects the formation of human identity, and on the other hand carries traces of mankind's creative activity. This mutual interchange creates the scene for public life. Humans have the ability to harmonically develop their individual and social skills within this scene. By doing this, they form the configuration of the society and determine its development.

A successful city neighbourhood is a place that copes with its problems in such a way that it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighbourhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more helpless before them. Cities contain all degrees of success and failure.[7]

On the whole, our city is not good at handling city neighbourhoods in the broader sense of the term. Vera is one of the examples of a Tbilisi neighbourhood which lacks deep understanding of its nature. Handling the city neighbourhood is not only a matter of laying new pipelines, refurbishing facades or just providing new housing.

Good shelter is a useful good in itself, as shelter. When we try to justify good shelter instead, on the pretentious grounds that it will work social or family miracles, we fool ourselves.[8]

Failures and successes with city neighbourhoods are failures and successes in localized self-government. Self-government in its broader sense, meaning both the informal and formal self-management of society.[9]

Informal self-management in Vera was mainly organized in the past on the neighbour-social level. Higher income classes do not necessarily build good neighbourhoods and lower income classes do not necessarily fail to do so. Constituting a good neighbourhood does not depend on the income level of its inhabitants. Of course we should not forget that in the past, which according to study period of this research corresponds to the Soviet times, residents had absolutely different social circumstances. During the post-Soviet era and today, these circumstances changed dramatically and the society faced such difficulties, threats and realities, which they were absolutely not ready to overcome. They were not acquainted with the market economy and with the ways things can be dealt with in the new reality.

On the other side, there was a new market, which saw the unprecedented power of money and other means of influence. This power and influence was enabled by the new political and economic realities. Not even the representatives of this powerful side knew the rules of the new game. The lack of awareness of the essence of new kinds of regulations in the market economy and the very weak supervisory ability of the public sector enabled the strong to feel free to do as they pleased and pursue only their own

7 Jacobs, J. (1993) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, The Modern Library, New York.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

interests. The public interests, needs of society and legal, social or even human rights did not have any importance. The weaker party began to lose the game and largely accept the conditions of the winner, of the real estate market developers. The price of the game was losing a lifestyle, social environment, urban pattern and the neighbourhood as the whole. All these resulted is such processes as gentrification and social segregation.

The social mission of the neighbourhood is to comfort strangers as well as locals, to grow networks of small-scale, everyday public life and thus of trust and social control and to help assimilate children into a reasonably responsible and tolerant city life. The neighbourhoods have still another vital function in self-government: they must draw effectively on help when trouble comes along that is too big for the individual or family to handle. This help sometimes must come from the city as a whole, at the other end of the scale.[10]

The present state of Vera, and not only Vera, indicates that the people there have little capacity for collective action or to pressure the city government to help some of the problems of community. Successful neighbourhoods are not just administrative units, but physical, social and economic continuities and any significant changes in these continuities have to be well analyzed, researched, justified and thoroughly implemented.

A young Russian researcher put this sense of belonging the following way:

For the identity of Tbilisi residents it is very important to be associated with *ubani*. By *Ubani,* I mean as the neighbourhood community, perceived by its members as real community, as well as the territory associated with this community. Such communities may coincide with district division or may not. Almost always blocks (like Vera, Mtatsminda or Sololaki) consist of many neighbouring communities. By neighbouring I mean a community connected by a common habitation area, that needs mutual support and mutual control and appropriate practice, as well as with common local identity. In this regard, locals in Tbilisi talk about *ubani* as about a community of neighbours, using this word in its collective meaning "my neighbours" (for example "the whole *ubani* is looking for you" or "the whole *ubani* is talking about you").[11]

Vera is an example of a neighbourhood which performed well and earned its residents' loyalty, until it was disfigured by new residential developments and neglected by the city. "One of the main functions of a successful neighbourhood is the ability to mediate between the politically powerless population and the powerful city. This can be achieved by good self-government. But among those responsible for the city at the top, there is much ignorance about it, because the city is too big and too complex to comprehend its detail - the neighbourhood. An effective neighbourhood has to count as a force in the life of the city as a whole. It has to be able to fight the city hall. This func-

10 Ibid.

11 Zakharova, E. (2010) Tbilisi street as the environment for men's socialization, Laboratorium, St. Petersburg.

PICTURE 2 One of the inner courtyards in Vera

tion may be the most important for the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood lacking the power and willingness to fight city hall and win when its people feel threatened, will possess no power to fight other serious problems and will be gradually overwhelmed by them."[12]

Now the question is: does city hall want the neighbourhoods to be strong enough to stand against some of the city hall's interests and its allies in the private sector? Absolutely not - recent years of our history and experience show that.

Neighbourhood planning is not a matter of planning buildings and block lay-out on a geographical piece of land or issuing construction licenses - rather it deals with a living, complex organism, capable of shaping destinies.

THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The concept of landscape is described in the European landscape convention, which was presented by the European Council on 20 October 2004 in Florence. The convention was ratified by 10 countries that the same year. At present 38 European countries have joined the document. Georgia signed on too, and the convention has been in effect since 1 January 2011. This document, for the first time in Europe, assesses the

12 Jacobs, J. (1993) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, The Modern Library, New York.

landscape as a cultural heritage, preservation whose development is set as an objective for the society. The convention regards natural, as well as cultural, also urban and rural landscapes. The main point is that a landscape is a material and social environment for human life. It exercises decisive influence on the formation of one's identity and is of existential importance. It underlines the right to landscape and deems the infringement of the landscape to be an infringement of human rights. Also underlined is the responsibility which everyone should bear for the preservation and development of the landscape. The governments of the convention signatory countries, including Georgia, commit themselves to implement the tools to protect, care for, restore and develop landscapes.

THE URBAN ENSEMBLE: WHAT SHOULD WE PRESERVE?

The concept of urban ensemble, as a subject of preservation, does not include only material substances like houses. The ensemble, like the landscape, has social values too. It encompasses buildings, the natural landscape, views as well as social networks. The members of this social space, the residents, are influenced by the atmosphere of the neighbourhood where they live over the years. The atmosphere should be the subject of thorough care, while it is a social and psychological aspect largely formed by the material surroundings. These surroundings are created by humans, the same humans who stand to benefit from mentioned social and psychological comfort. In the way, it is a positive cycle, and disrupting it can have far-going negative outcomes. One of the main goals of urban planning is to envision these networks and create a liveable and socially attractive place. Vera district had very strong social network. With mixed ethnicity and income level composition, it historically had the spirit of a unique neighbourhood. Vera was an urban body bringing together dissimilar social groups into a single unity. We should especially take into consideration the fact that Vera is a predominantly residential district where residents spend most of their time and have close contact with other dwellers of the area.

The human scale, inner courts, and social atmosphere provided a firm basis for relations between neighbours. These features encouraged people to be in close contact with each other and build connections that would last generations. The most regrettable thing is the loss of these very traditional social values of Vera. The housing construction of last 20 years almost never respects the above-mentioned virtues and instead destroys them. Nobody doubts the need for new construction and upgrading, but only with regard to the long-established urban landscape. By intruding upon the urban organism as foreign body, it was precisely the virtues which attracted the new developments in Vera that destroyed them. The question is: Do we realize that we destroy what we love? The end result will be a concrete jungle in the centre of the city in place of a once-charming district.

From a geographical point of view, we can observe quite a blend of real estate premises of different types, especially in the central districts. To put it another way, we can see multi-storey buildings with or without extensions standing next to new high-rise or individual single-family houses. Often, such an arrangement creates the impression of a functionally as well as visually indigested urban space.

PICTURE 3 New residential blocks in Vera

PICTURE 4 New vs. old

The varied relief and impressive exposure to the rest of the city areas from Vera, as well as the view of this area from the city, can be considered to be among the most significant positive features of the neighbourhood. At the same time it is worth noting that we can find different architectural styles combined with traditional "Tbilisi" planning that can be regarded as noteworthy examples of architecture.

A city, a neighbourhood, or any urban space is a common space for citizens. The neighbourhood, the street, the green, belong to all. Besides private property, inhabitants of any given place share some common property (which can be managed in different ways). Taking care of what belongs to us is a civic responsibility. Of course, it can be either the municipality's or a private company's obligation to provide electricity for the streets, manage waste or put down a new asphalt layer, but this does not mean each individual is free of any commitment towards his/her immediate neighbourhood and the city as a whole. Only by realizing these commitments can we be citizens. Being a citizen is not just a matter of residing in an urban environment.

The end of the Soviet era was marked by significant social changes. The financial difficulties and self-interest connected to capitalism became a new challenge for Tbilisi. The lack of responsibility towards the city for last two decades was manifested in the corruption of municipal authorities, the expansion of developers and absence of civic consciousness. People experienced extreme poverty. Social insecurity, lack of a sense of justice and hope became a major psychological burden. The city sank into a collective depression. Such circumstances undermined one's ability to optimistically and joyfully view the surrounding environment. These symptoms are well known in psychotherapy. This is why the population started feeling uncomfortable in their own city. When in such conditions the home neighbourhood is gradually bulldozed, totally changed and filled with ugly concrete high-rise blocks, the already unhealthy public atmosphere becomes graver.

Different neighbourhoods of a big city may exist without coming into conflict with the larger urban spaces around them. This depends on the harmonic coexistence of historically established and well-planned developments. Such harmony is possible if the positive experience of the past is balanced well against the modern demands for urban space. The contact between the old, historic areas and contemporary developments does not necessarily result in conflict. It depends on the attitude of modern growth towards the positive experience of the past, which successfully has been established for many decades or even centuries. The past, which proved itself throughout the years and "passed the test of time", gives a unique identity to cities and neighbourhoods. This identity makes them distinguishable and gives them value. The virtues which benefit many spheres can be social, urban, architectural, material, financial or all of them in a bundle.

Cultural heritage is more than an old monument. Preservation and restoration is not the only purpose. Culture is a social dimension. Cultural environment, as a universal value in itself, may play an important role in promoting sustainable social development and be its integral part. Cultural heritage programmes therefore should not be limited to the restoration or preservation of historic monuments; they must also include preservation of the urban environment of ordinary city-dwellers. The focus should be on the social history and sustainable development of urban settlements and cities.

In the Rio Declaration of 1992 the heritage sector is given the role of driving force towards a sustainable future. The strategy for sustainable development rests on three dimensions; ecological, socio-cultural and economic. Accordingly, heritage in a wider sense is a starting point for any planning and development in a sustainable society, and cultural heritage should thus also be seen as an integral part of physical planning. The socio-cultural dimension of sustainability has the potential to contribute to social inclusion, social cohesion and democratic citizenship.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND INFRINGEMENTS

It is interesting to look at the legislative side of the urban processes in Tbilisi and in Vera in particular. Laws and regulations are meant to control progress and direct it in a correct way. Any sphere of human activity obeys some rules in order to satisfy the interests for all the members of the society. Directives in city planning should ensure order and sustainable evolution for our habitation and create a liveable environment for different generations. If this is not the case, the mistakes of today can have repercussions for decades and cause more damage in the long term. Wrong decisions can become a heavy burden for the future. Rectifying such problems can be either extremely costly or even impossible. Wounds on an urban body may not heal for a long time and may disrupt its healthy functioning.

The direct link between our mindset and social behaviour and the urban landscape we create, depends in large part on our attitude towards the law. Laws are made for regulating and avoiding negative outcomes. Laws in the urban planning and construction spheres among others are essential to ensuring places for our socially and physically comfortable living.

There is a set of documents guiding and regulating construction in Tbilisi. The most important of them are "The Main Statutes of Regulation for Settlement Territory and Development" (Ministry of Economic Development, decree N 1-1/2114, 8 July 2008), "Georgia's Law on Cultural Heritage" (Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports N4708-Is;8 May 2007) and "Regulation Rules for Territory Use and Development in Tbilisi" (city council resolution on approval N 4-13; 27 March, 2009). The latter provides the coefficients to define total construction areas of buildings and the portion of land plot allowed that can be covered by the building footprint. "Independent Mandatory Map of Principle Zoning of Tbilisi" defines the main functions of different zones: residential zones of low, medium or high density, public-commercial zones, mixed zones and recreational zones.

Vera is a residential zone of medium intensity. According to the Regulation Plan of Development, construction plot development coefficient K1 and construction plot development intensity coefficient K2 for Vera, except the main Melikishvili Avenue, are 0.5 and 1.8 respectively. K1=0.5 means that only half of the land plot can be used for construction and in this way regulates the building footprint area. The total land plot area multiplied by K2=1.8 gives the total floor area of the building and thus sets the height of the building. Construction plot greenery coefficient K3 prescribes the area to be used for green and cannot be under 0.1. Table 1 shows the normative and real K1 and K2 coefficients and differences as additional construction areas from several addresses in upper Vera, which are in fact illegal.

TABLE 1. Exceeded coefficients and illegal additional area in new residential buildings in Vera

	Address	Plot area m²	K1 norm.	K1 real	K2 norm.	K2 real	Difference	Storey
1	Janashia 22-26	1160	0.5	0.5	1.8	4.2	2784 m² (57%)	8
2	Janashia 28	640	0.5	0.8	1.8	3.6	1152 m² (50%)	7
3	Tarkhnishvili 25	419	0.5	0.6	1.8	2.4	251 m² (25%)	4
4	Kazbegi 15	242	0.5	0.7	1.8	3.8	484 m² (53%)	5
5	Tarkhnishvili 4	328	0.5	0.8	1.8	3.3	492 m² (45%)	9
6	Janashia 21	402	0.5	0.5	1.8	3.3	603 m² (45%)	7
7	Barnovi 49	617	0.5	0.7	1.8	3.0	777 m² (59%)	7
8	Gudauri 7-11	630	0.5	0.9	1.8	6.5	2992 m² (72%)	7
9	Gudauri 3, 5	600	0.5	1.0	1.8	7.8	3636 m² (77%)	8
10	Janashia 16-20	450	0.5	0.6	1.8	4.7	1305 m² (62%)	7
11	Tarkhnishvili 28	1102	0.5	0.5	1.8	1.9	143 m² (7%)	8
12	Janashia 19	482	0.5	0.8	1.8	4.7	1398 m² (62%)	7
13	Tarkhnishvili 9	532	0.5	0.8	1.8	6.9	2713 m² (74%)	9
14	Khorava 4	400	0.5	0.6	1.8	3.4	660 m² (48%)	8
16	Barnovi 53	698	0.5	0.7	1.8	2.8	733 m² (37%)	7

Source: Urban Planning Department of Tbilisi City Hall, 2006

These coefficients practically rule out the construction of multi-storey buildings in Vera. But the large majority of high-rise residential buildings built during the last 15-20 years absolutely do not comply with given coefficients. The data in Table 1 shows the extreme extent by which the coefficients are exceeded. The table shows the addresses, plot areas, normative coefficients set by regulation, coefficients in reality and the additional residential space received, which is in fact illegal. It must be noted that these constructions were executed before it became legal to pay to increase these coefficients.

The Department of Monument Protection at the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports (now the Ministry for Culture and Monument Preservation) made a list of constructions not agreed with the department. The list contains the addresses of illegal construction. The following list shows such construction in Vera:

- Kuchishvili Str. 12, 14, 16
- Ghambashidze Str. 2
- Janashia Str. 24, 26, 28
- Gogebashvili Str. 26
- Khoshtaria Str. 23
- Corner of Gunia Str. and Makashvili Str.
- Svanidze Str. 8
- Tarkhnishvili alley
- Chovelidze Str. 6

- Chovelidze Str. 8
- Tabukashvili Str. 33
- Tabukashvili Str. 50

Incongruous buildings were marked on the Historic-Cultural Basic Map and were coloured in gray during the assessment of cultural heritage monuments in 2007. In Vera such incongruous buildings are at the following addresses:

Zandukeli Str. 14; Eristavi-Khoshtaria Str. 25, 32/34; Milorava Str. 6; Tarkhnishvili Str. 9/2, 29; Gudauri Str. 1, 3, 7, 8/10; Khorava Str. 9; Janashia Str. 19, 29, 30/51; Barnovi Str. 52-54, 59; Kuchishvili Str. 6, 8, 12; Kostava Str. 50; Vera alley I 1, 3, 5, 15; Ghambashidze Str. 4;

The presented materials illustrate how architects and their clients find themselves in difficult situations when there are no general urban development policies and regulations. Construction infringements are also noted at the following addresses in Vera:

- J. Nikoladze Str. 1/2 – no construction permit
- Barnovi Str. 51/27 – number of storeys exceeded
- Gogebashvili Str. 30 - number of storeys exceeded
- Gogebashvili Str. 34-36 - number of storeys exceeded
- Rcheulishvili Str. 6, 8, 10 – without permit
- Bakradze Str. 9 - number of storeys exceeded
- Gogebashvili Str. 46 - number of storeys exceeded
- Kuchishvili Str. 18-20 - number of storeys exceeded
- Chovelidze Str. 6-8-10 – permit to increase number of storeys requested

All the above-mentioned addresses are marked with black dots in Picture 8 (p.141).

The Georgian National Science Foundation has provided the information about the number of infringements in Tbilisi in 2002-2004. According to the same source, in 2002-2003, 488 out of 1,486 buildings did not have relevant projects submitted; 469 did not have permits; in 70 cases projects were violated; 106 had no construction licence; 15 were without state inspection; 131 did not comply with construction quality requirements; 78 constructions were executed without certified materials; and 283 violated regulations governing the exploitation of buildings.

The data was provided by the Architectural and Construction Monitoring Service. In those years this organization was regarded as having one of the highest levels of corruption and it can be assumed that the real numbers are much higher.

The municipality should intervene actively in the regulation of developments. The public sector should strictly control the processes of construction and ensure their compliance with legal regulations. There are special regulations in the historic zone, but they are not effective enough. Public and private interests differ from each other and a detailed regulative framework must balance them and serve the interests of city's proper development. Municipal organizations have the right not to provide service and infrastructure to the buildings violating regulations and not complying with

standards, but this does not happen. Fines in particular cases do not change general situation. The relevant authorities must monitor and administer legislative compliance more effectively; including labour safety on construction sites, and feel greater sense of responsibility towards society. Raising public awareness is crucial and can greatly contribute to improvements.

A legislative and regulative base is in place, but needs improvement and execution. Loopholes must be eliminated.

After the Rose Revolution in 2003 there was an impression that the new government strictly monitored construction. There was a hope for improvement in this sphere. The public even saw some demolitions of illegal buildings and additions. High fines were imposed on many construction companies for failure to comply with the regulations.

The situation definitely improved. Illegal actions were significantly curbed. But at the same time it became obvious that double standards were often applied. All these years later, we are still observing the same bad practices of the past. The city needs to develop and the municipality is trying to attract investment. Generally, many cities with a historic core worldwide are confronting new challenges. Main development interests are often in the centre of the cities. We witnessed several cases in Tbilisi where the municipal government delisted historic monuments in order to be able to realize new development projects of investors.

Every developer wants to squeeze maximum resources of land and in the choice between regulating and leaving matters up to "market forces", the city government has tended to go for the latter. A review of the 564 cases dealt with in 31 public protocols of the Commission on Issues of Regulation Rules for Territory Use and Development in Tbilisi only for the period January-October 2009 shows that 76% of the decisions of the commission (whose purpose is to prevent violations) had the effect of legalizing violations.

From this standpoint, in the case of Vera, it will be interesting to review one residential construction on Kuchishvili Street. The street runs almost parallel north of the research area's central Melikishvili Avenue. At its beginning and its end, it is connected to Melikishvili Avenue via Ghambashidze and Nikoladze streets and via Rodin Street (marked with white lines on the aerial photo, Picture 6) in its middle. In both corners of the junction of Kuchishvili and Rodin Streets there were low rise houses with backyards. An investor has demolished them and built a new residential building with 11 storeys (highlighted white building on the aerial photo). The current construction occupies both plots, Kuchishvili18 and Kuchishvili 20. Now, the new building perpendicularly standing on both sides of Rodin Street has left the access to Kuchishvili Street from Rodin Street only through the arch.

As a result, the scale of ratio between the street and housing has changed dramatically. The small Rodin Street became oppressed by the high-rise building perpendicularly crossing it. The visual perception of the whole area has been blocked.

PICTURE 5 Rodin Street closed by construction and arch passage

Information about this site was available at City Hall. The Architecture Service of Tbilisi City Hall provided documentation for the construction permits. The initial construction passport was issued in 2002. The department did not have the project from the year in which the passport was granted. But the existing papers show that the developer, a company called Rodin 18-20, applied to City Hall with a new project and asked for permission to make changes to the initial project. The department for architecture reviewed the changes in the architectural project, agreed to them and permitted the construction.

Kuchishvili Street, like most of Vera, belongs to the zone of median intensity development. As already mentioned above, the coefficients for this zone in Vera are K1=0.5 and K2=0.8. The area of land plot designated to build a new high-rise residential house is 786 sq. m. In accordance with the K1=0.5 coefficient, the footprint area for the new structure should be 393 sq. m. K2=1.8 gives total floor area of 1,415 sq. m. for the entire building. According to this calculation, it is not possible to build more than 3 floors with an attic, building on that land plot using the existing coefficients. But the construction permit issued in 2007 allowed the construction of 10 storeys. The architectural department says that the project and the changes to it were approved by the architectural council of City Hall. The council has the power to decide whether a particular project is acceptable, even if it totally disregards the official coefficients. The law allows the developer to buy additional coefficients in order to increase the area of construction. Such practice is also known in other countries, for example in Paris, France. But everywhere the limit of additional coefficients is restricted and does not drastically exceed the original ones. When no maximum limit is set, the regulation is senseless and is subject to various interpretations. It is absolutely unclear according to what logic the council decided to allow 10 instead of 3.5 storeys.

PICTURE 6 Unfinished residential building, Kuchishvili Str.18-20, on the aerial photo

In 2009, the investor applied to make new changes. That same year, the construction permit was issued again by the Permits Department of Old Tbilisi District, which Vera belongs to. This time the K1 was increased from 0.5 to 0.82 and K2 from 1.8 to 6.7. The number of stories rose to 12. Total floor area had been set at 5,206 sq. m. in 2007 and later to 6,903 sq. m. after approved changes in the project in 2009.

Positive decisions about increasing the allowed built-up area are normally made when it can be concluded that minimal additional square metres will not have significant negative impact on the surrounding area. That is also the purpose of having coefficients. But when there is 3.4-fold difference between the coefficients and the council determination, when a 12-storey building can be constructed instead of 3.5-storey one, it is absolutely incomprehensible what the arguments of the council members could be.

According to the permit, the developer was obliged to finish construction in 2010. It did not happen and the investor asked to extend the permit. Extension was granted. The latest available and publicly open documentation about this construction on the Tbilisi City Hall official website states that building was to be finished on 25 April 2011. Now, in 2011, the construction is far from complete and the unfinished structure disfigures the neighbourhood. Photos of the area from May 2011 do not show considerable building progress over photos from 2009. Because the site is fenced off for safety reasons, the passage to Kuchishvili Street from Rodin Street has been closed for years, preventing citizens' free movement. Local residents say they have not seen construction workers at the site in two or three years.

PICTURE 7 Unfinished residential building, Kuchishvili Str.18-20

This research does not aim to dispute the quality of architectural solutions and aesthetic appearance. But after a thorough examination of the building, it is easily recognizable by the naked eye that the facade does not fully correspond to the approved project - and this makes it subject to monetary fine.

Unfortunately we see that permits to construct buildings inappropriate for Vera have been issued throughout the years since 2003 as well. There are a lot of rebukes towards the current municipal authorities now as well. Vera is part of the Zone of Historical and Cultural Heritage Preservation. This means new projects should be evaluated in regard to this heritage. The coefficients regulating built-up areas and the height of new buildings are set out. But when the authorities allow constructions that neglect these aspects, it causes discord between different official documents meant to guide the development of the city. Legislative discord regarding various urban decisions on the political level inevitably leads to flaws in sustainable urban development.

Traditional, obvious selfishness in regard to land and real estate from the part of the local and central governments, who acknowledge the legitimacy of the master plan and are proud of it but feel free to neglect its statutes and brazenly interfere in the matter, strengthens public indignation.[13]

Georgia should better clarify its course in urban planning to explicitly show that planning policy and laws are prerequisite for socially just and generally accepted forms of coexistence. Planning influences living conditions of many people and these conditions affect settlements, regions and the state as a whole.

Buildings marked dark grey are monuments of cultural heritage; the map shows how dense is the area with listed houses (GIS & RS Consulting Centre “Geographic”). Black dots indicate buildings violating regulations (Author).

13 Salukvadze, J. Van Assche, K. Shavishvili, N. Others. (2010) Tbilisi in Times of Change – Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Urban Space and Urban Planning, Tbilisi State University Publishing House, Tbilisi.

LOCAL RESIDENTS

It is interesting to know what the inhabitants of the neighbourhood think about the high-rise residential construction on Kuchishvili Street. For this reason I decided to talk with people living in the house on the opposite side of the street. From the Kuchishvili Street side, the house has 5 floors and stands directly in front of the above-described construction site.

It is notable that Kuchishvili Street has been almost completely transformed. On the street side of the researched construction, Kuchishvili 18-20, there is no single building left from the old housing units. On the opposite side there are couple of houses left in a row at the corner joining Ghambashidze Street, then comes a void, a land plot where houses have been demolished, then comes the house where interviewees live and next to it, as we move in the direction of Nikoladze Street, another construction site. The house where I talked with neighbours is one of few houses left where people still can describe how the street looked like some 15 years ago and how it felt to live there. It is also the house most affected by the unfinished structure standing like a ghost in front of it.

PICTURE 8 Vera on the map of the Zone of Historical and Cultural Heritage Preservation.

The interviewees were open to talk about the problem, answer questions and share opinions. Mr. Zurab, Mr. Avto and Ms Marina (none of whom were willing to disclose their surnames), were representatives from three different families who own flats with windows on Kuchishvili Street. It was a group interview in front of the house. They were asked hypothetical as well as open- and closed-ended questions in the beginning. Later on, the interview evolved in an open discussion and exchange of opinions, which helped the respondents to freely express their views. Another face-to-face interviewee was Ms Maka Batiashvili, from the same house. The fifth respondent is Ms Nini Chotiashvili, who owns a flat at Kuchishvili 12, the high-rise residential block next to researched building at Kuchishvili 18-20 and she was interviewed via internet as she resided abroad at the time. The sixth respondent, Ms Nana (not willing to disclose surname), from the building Kuchishvili 12, was interviewed by phone. One woman on Rodin Street refused to talk.

Zurab, Avto and Marina were basically unanimous about their experience. They talked quite negatively regarding recent constructions on their street. Marina lives on the ground floor and complains about the extremely decreased insulation in her flat. The 12-storey structure in front of her windows places her apartment completely in shadow, in a situation where the narrow Kuchishvili Street is the only direction from which direct sunlight can reach their house.

Avto has lived there since he was young. He lives on an upper floor with more sunshine, but is concerned about traffic jams on the street. Kuchishvili Street is narrow and short. Historically it had 2- and 3-storey buildings. Now, one side is completely occupied by two tall hotels, an office building, a 10-storey residential building, one suspended construction and one land plot with a banner announcing the next residential building to come. Next to the house of our interviewees there is a construction project under way. Given that the street is already congested with cars, it is hard to imagine the situation when all the constructions will be completed. A once cosy and quiet street is becoming jammed and noisy, badly impacting the air quality and health of the residents.

The district of Vera has good natural ventilation because of its location on the Mtatsminda slope. The fresh breeze from the forested ridge gives breath to the district. Zurab explains that it was enough to just open windows on hot days and the light breeze made the temperature in the apartment cooler. Now high-rise buildings block fresh airflows coming from the mountain and the temperature in the apartments rises. If we take into account the worsened traffic-carrying capacity of the street, the situation has definitely become problematic. In this way people consume more electricity for air-conditioning, costing them more and affecting the environment.

Zurab says he enjoyed the street. He would enter his neighbour's garden, knock on their windows, communicate with friends and spend free time chatting with them. Now it is completely impossible, because there is only one family he knows from old times left in the neighbourhood and they currently live on the upper floors of the new high-rise house, where everyday communication access is difficult for him. All the ground floors are now full of shops, garages, and hotel and office entrances. The charm of the place and satisfaction from social contacts has disappeared for Zurab.

All respondents are unhappy with the blocked views on Mtatsminda mountain range.

I asked interviewees if they protested against the construction of Kuchishvili 18-20. The answer was no. when I asked why not, they told me that a few years ago, when building #12 was under construction, all the neighbours signed the petition against it. But nobody reacted to their protest; no one paid any attention to their opinion, neither the official authorities, nor the developer. So this time they felt it was useless. The 10-storey building #12 stands next to 18-20 and was constructed earlier.

Respondents think that the precedent of constructing the Vere Palace hotel led to a chain reaction on the entire street. If it was possible to build one high building, why was it not possible to construct another next to it and so on. One of the neighbours thinks it all began even earlier, in Soviet times, with the erection of a 16-storey residential block at the corner of Nikoladze Street. Even non-professionals think one incorrect decision can have a very long-term negative influence on the wider territory. Unacceptable intrusion is causing a chain reaction, spreading poisonous seeds which grow and eat up the urban fabric like a cancer.

"The Main Statutes of Regulation for Settlement Territory and Development" from 2001 could be interpreted in various ways. For example, one of the paragraphs including parameters setting construction heights says that height should be based on the heights of buildings around, street width and building densities. Referring to this, developers were choosing the factor comfortable to them and noted the heights of nearly high buildings to justify constructing more multi-storey houses. It is evident that we are dealing with a defect caused by the absence of a detailed zoning plan not precisely prescribing what was allowed and what was not.

Ms Maka Batiashvili, 36, has also lived in the house at Kuchishvili 9 with her daughter for the past 10 years. Her apartment is located on the -1 floor from Kuchishvili Street. Only one room, which is a studio for painting, has a window on the Kuchishvili Street side; it faces a wall, because it is under the street level. The main orientation of her apartment (bedroom, kitchen, living room) is on the other side of the house. Therefore, because of such location, she is not affected by the decreased sunlight, blocked view or absence of natural air circulation from Kuchishvili Street, because it has never been an asset of her apartment. Maka does not place big value on having close relations with her neighbours; she rather prefers the privacy and remoteness in her studio to work as a painter. But she is concerned about the appearance of high residential blocks and the changed scale of housing in the quarter. Maka misses the architectural aesthetics of the old Kuchishvili Street with its human-scale brick houses.

The other interviewees are Ms Nini Chotiashvili, 35 years old, and her sister. I know Nini personally and contacted her by e-mail as she lives abroad. She also talked with her mother and sister. She shared their views with me. The family lived at Kuchishvili 12. They owned a one storey private house with a garden. Now the Chotiashvili family has an apartment in the high-rise block in the area. They and majority of their neighbours suffered from bad interior planning of houses and flats. They experienced difficult times of economic depression when there were no funds for improving housing conditions. Toilets were located in the yards and they used the Vera public baths. Only in 1986 did the father of the family undertake renovation works and arrange sanitary units in the house. Some of the neighbours still have toilets outside, for example residents of Melikishvili 17.

Nini and her family think that the neighbourhood was much quieter and had a special "soul" which is gone and will never be back. According to her, the reasons are the high buildings and narrow street overcrowded with cars. The family prefers to live in a low-rise private house with a garden and improved living conditions, rather than in an apartment in a high-rise building. No wonder.

Now they have only one old neighbour in the building, the aforementioned Zurab. All others are newcomers and Nini is on good terms with them. She says of course anybody can live anywhere, but the neighbourhood no longer has the same "aura". Nini's sister Maya said they have no contact with the neighbours in their building apart from one family living above them - and even with them contacts are rare. She does not even know the faces of many of her neighbours. From the point of view of social contacts in the neighbourhood Maya describes the lifestyle in the residential high-rise building as enclosed, very different from what they were used to in former times.

Ms Chotiashvili concludes that if it is not possible to maintain or renovate the old, then we need to construct new buildings, but in accordance with some kind of standards: regulating the density, ensuring architectural qualities and preventing the kind of mess that has already taken shape. For her it is unacceptable that every investor builds whatever he wants. She thinks her street is an example of a horrible transformation. Nini prefers the old housing development, because she has memories tied to it while nothing connects her with the new structures.

Ms Nana lives on the 6th floor in the same building as the Chotiashvili family. She moved from Ninoshvili Street some years ago, because her house there needed emergency repairs. Ms Nana knows the Kuchishvili Street area from her youth (her grandmother lived on Barnov Street in upper Vera) and she always saw it as a quiet island in the centre of the city. Her brother offered her and her husband this apartment on Kuchishvili. She describes the overall current condition in this area as very uncomfortable for residence. Ms Nana is very disturbed by the car traffic and jams on the narrow street and from the resultant pollution. Her previous neighbourhood was also marked by friendly relations among neighbours, which she personally values very much and finds life "behind the doors" in the 10-storey house less exciting from the point of view of the social interaction. She hopes her house on Ninoshvili Street will be covered by the "New life of old city" municipal programme or that she will be able to exchange the house for another one - quieter and cleaner place than her current residence on Kuchishvili Street.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The technical condition of underground infrastructure, water supply and sewerage in Vera is alarmingly poor. Pipelines are old. Leakages from pipes frequently damage the foundations of old houses. In most cases sewerage pipes of newly constructed multi-apartment houses are joined to the old infrastructure, which is absolutely not designed to serve increased densities. Pipes often break, creating problems also with the water supply on upper floors. After new construction the pipes are not replaced with newer ones.

In some cases, especially in central areas, housing density has reached an undesirably high level, which threatens the appropriate functioning of certain places and areas. Public infrastructure networks became overloaded and ecological conditions worsened.[14]

The municipality does not require that developers provide sufficient underground infrastructure. When completing repairs, emergency brigades cover the places with new layers of asphalt. But very soon they have to come back to another place. Costs are high and these problems need a single approach.

Social infrastructure is not developing around the new housing construction. No additional kindergartens, schools, parks or other public spaces have been created. Existing recreational, educational or medical service providers have to serve significantly increased populations. Now, to take their children to public school, the parents have to register according to place of residence. The number of students is limited to avoid overcrowded classrooms. Certain families face the problem of being too late for registration and lose the chance to take their children to the public school closer to their homes.

In two major Georgian cities – Tbilisi and Batumi –historic urban fabrics are not the only targets of constant, aggressive, uncoordinated, profit-oriented attacks by developers. The primary victims of legal flaws in the city are public spaces and buildings with healthcare, educational and cultural uses, but residential areas have suffered as well, especially in the capital. The increase intensity caused "pressure" on the existing population and infrastructure. Large-scale "infills" have changed usual contours of districts, local residents received problems with insulation, natural daylight, ventilation and aeration.

PRICES, REAL ESTATE AND AFFORDABILITY

Prices of residential real estate properties significantly increased during the last decade. In years 2005-2007, prices of Tbilisi's residential properties, especially in the central areas, which Vera belongs to, increased considerably, compared to rental prices, whose growth rate was lower. Part of the price growth was fuelled by purchases by investors rather than people seeking homes to live in.

According to the Erdo Group real estate agency, prices for residential space in Vera district were already up to 2000 USD per sq. metre for "white frame" housing in 2008. After the short war with Russia in August 2008, which was followed by the global financial crisis, prices for housing dropped by 30%. The next year housing prices in residential areas in Vera began to rise and in 2010 the increase was at 10% and in 2011 already 15%.

14 Salukvadze, J. Van Assche, K. Shavishvili, N. Others (2010) Tbilisi in Times of Change – Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Urban Space and Urban Planning, Tbilisi State University Publishing House, Tbilisi.

Profitable construction business attracts a lot of investors. Erdo Group describes Tbilisi as the business centre of the Caucasian region and says the real estate the market is characterized by constant price growth. No decline in prices is predicted, because they have not reached their peak yet. The company estimates prices to reach the maximum level in approximately five years. Georgia's economic development and integration into European organizations are contributing to price growth. For example, in Baltic countries, where the housing price per sq. metre is up to 15,000 USD, the biggest factor in driving up prices was the countries' accession to the European Union.[15]

In an interview, Erdo Group representative Nino Palavandishvili said that Vera belongs is one of Tbilisi's more prestigious districts. Generally, prices for newly constructed multi-story houses grow twice as fast as those for old ones. But in the last 3-4 years, the company had problems selling new apartments in Vera, because the popularity of the area is declining due to new high-rise construction, totally changing the character of Vera and damaging its attractiveness. This is proof of disharmonizing development harming not only the historic architectural values and social structures, but also the economic sustainability of the area.

The real estate market clearly shows that attractiveness of Vera has been dramatically damaged and residents of high-rise housing blocks no longer find themselves in the same charming neighbourhood which attracted them in the first place. The residential developments they inhabit have disintegrated the very same urban environment whose value they came for. There is a high probability that these buildings, constructed only for the sake of profit without thorough architectural, planning and urban design considerations, will face the threat of being abandoned one day. This is exactly what happened to many housing developments in western European countries and the United States. Low construction quality, lack of attention to architectural aesthetics, poor planning and poor quality of public space, caused so called *ghettoization* and *slumification* of these areas. Residents of such habitats do not develop an attachment to the place and do not take care of their neighbourhood. As the result such housing developments deteriorate and it takes significant efforts and resources to revitalize or even demolish them (e.g. Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, Harbor Point in Boston, Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and others).

After the war and global financial crisis, demand for residential space in Vera dropped significantly, but since then it has recovered and reached the pre-war level. The reason is the shortage of residential space after 2008 that in turn resulted from decreased investments in the market because of the war and global financial problems. Analysts state that during the years 2003-2008 the prices of real estate increased by about four times and they dropped in 2008. But the prices started to recover already in 2009.

Erdo Group says that, according to the sales and pricing statistical data accumulated during the years of brokerages, the district of Vera used to be the second most presti-

15 Baharoglu, D. (2003) Public housing in era of privatization: a solution or the process of slumification in transition economies? A paper presented at the world congress cities and markets, Vienna.

gious area for residence in Tbilisi after Vake, and at times even competed with Vake for the first position. Now, Vera falls behind other central districts in terms of prices and desirability of housing.

Today there is greatest demand for residential space in the districts of Mtatsminda, Sololaki and Abanotubani. Then comes Vake, and, of the central districts Vera beats out only Saburtalo. Brokers see the reason for this in unattractive high-rise residential buildings (and disadvantages they brought: decreased sunlight, poor natural ventilation, lost views, increased traffic pollution and noise, etc.) in Vera, which dramatically robbed the district of its attractiveness, which once enticed so many developers and dwellers. Now the prices for housing per square metre in Vera are 200-300 USD lower in comparison to other central districts. Now it is clear that residential developments during the last 15-20 years affected real estate values for both old and new housing. Currently, Vera inhabitants are mainly look for residential space in Vera when the move. The reasons may be different, but this shows they are attached to the district and would like to stay in the area, by moving or obtaining additional flats.

The following quotes reflect the thinking of some scholars on this issue:

"Cities need old buildings, it is impossible for streets and districts to grow without them. New constructions should respect urban environment in which they are arising. New houses have high construction costs and can only be afforded by higher income groups. Their demand creates market pressure, whipping out residents with lower income who lived there for decades."[16]

"Time makes the high building costs of one generation the bargains of a following generation. Time pays off original capital costs, and this depreciation can be reflected in the yields required from a building. Time makes certain structures obsolete for some enterprises, and they become available to others. Time can make the space efficiencies of one generation the space luxuries of another generation. One century's building commonplace is another century's useful aberration. Due to very high prices, there is no place for hundreds of thousands of people in new construction. What they need, is old construction in a lively district, which some among them can help make livelier. New residential buildings are not unadulterated good for the city. Many disadvantages accompany new residential city buildings. The value placed on various advantages, or the penalties accruing from certain disadvantages, are given different weights by different people. Some people prefer more space for the money or equal space for less money to apartments in new houses offered by developers. Some people would rather pay for improvements in their living conditions by selecting which improvements are most important to them, instead of being indiscriminately improved, and all at a cost of money"[17]

"Due to the original (during Soviet era) public dominance on the urban land, privatization investments and high cost in central locations, housing units command high

16 Jacobs, J. (1993) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, The Modern Library, New York.

17 Ibid.

prices and prices continuously rise at high rates. These increases are not adequately accompanied by increases in income."[18]

In Tbilisi, house prices to income ratios are extremely high compared to international experience.

Prices for residential space in Vera are not affordable for middle-income groups and only the high-income group can pay that value. Prices are extremely high and inadequate to quality. Such situation is the reason for speculation with residential real estate. Many flats stay empty because owners do not need it for living; it is just a good investment.

That privatization does not necessarily help local residents is highlighted in a 2003 World Bank report:

It is argued, that privatization helped households to make some savings to soften economic problems in transitional period, or in other words formation of private housing market has provided residents with financial means since they were able to command high market prices from their property after privatization. Indeed, people sold their property to improve living conditions and at the same time meet other basic needs such as food or education and moved to less desirable locations. Selling an apartment was a cushion in those difficult days. Housing in better locations and conditions has become affordable only for better-off families while the lower-middle income population was filtered out to outskirt areas. Privatization and the private housing market in this way have enhanced spatial concentration of low-income groups in less attractive districts of the city. Many families that move find themselves in a more difficult situation several years later. When the savings are spent, they again face the same financial problems and at the same time now are located in worse locations with a much lower market price for their property. Clearly private housing stock is far beyond the reach of the low and lower-middle income groups, and does not provide them with housing options.[19]

Average household size in Tbilisi is much higher than in any other Eastern European capital (Deloitte & Touche, 2007). The problem of affordability is one of the main reasons for it. Younger generations cannot afford high prices for residential space. The majority are forced to live with their parents. Mingled families of different generations cause many social problems and difficulties. The feeling of living uncomfortable negatively affects lives of people in various ways.

In recent years the banks eased the process of taking out loans. The mortgage sector started to develop and is experiencing strong growth. But the banks provide mortgage loans at high interest rates. By the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 interest rates were between 15 and 20%. In 2008, when residential real estate reached its peak, the interest rate rose up to 30-35%. Now, after the recession loan interest rates returned

18 Baharoglu, D. 2003, Public housing in era of privatization: a solution or the process of slumification in transition economies? A paper presented at the world congress cities and markets, Vienna.

19 Jacobs, J. (1993) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, The Modern Library, New York.

to an average of 18%, which is still extremely high even in comparison to developed countries, where interest rates are around 4-6%. Longer maturities, 10 years and more become available. Besides the mortgage loans, loans with documentation requirements including proof of stable income are also available, but only a small percentage of the population can afford loans with such high interest rates. According to the information provided by the World Bank, the number of apartments sold in Tbilisi is low because of the high interest rates.

The state does not provide any financial mechanisms to support low income groups with housing. The significance of housing problems is not yet fully acknowledged by the government. It is important to underline the absence of social housing. Ninety-five per cent of former public housing has been privatized (Economic Commission for Europe 2007). Georgia is aiming to approach European standards. The European Social Charter refers to the right for housing in its legal text: "With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to housing, the parties undertake to take measures designed: 1. To promote access to housing of an adequate standard; 2. To prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination; 3. To make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources."

Housing is affordable when a household's expenditures for housing leave them with enough finances for other basic needs. The purpose of social housing is to provide access to housing for low income and vulnerable groups. It is based on rules for ensuring the allocation of housing for eligible households and has a system of cost-price rents, not market prices. These problems are mainly financial but also can be connected to discrimination or different social issues.

Generally, the government of Georgia does not really address problems of housing affordability and vulnerable households. Attempts by the government to improve some housing conditions are too little to change the situation. These attempts are also not coordinated or related to any policy visions. This approach can be described as "muddling through". The housing sector is strongly market-driven and prices are high. The problem of affordability is acute.

RESEARCH METHODS

MAIN DERIVED RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS:

1) To what extent was the development of the housing market and production in Vera uncontrolled by the government during the last 20 years?

This question is answered by the literature review and evaluations of experts interviewed. It was also investigated empirically.

2) What are the outcomes of uncontrolled development of the housing market in Vera?

Outcome aspects:

- Affordability.

- Environmental aspects: use of public spaces for construction and air pollution caused by increased traffic.

- Social changes: gentrification, segregation, (change of social networks in the neighbourhood).

Investigated from the literature, official documents and empirical research.

INSTRUMENTS

The research is an exploratory single-case study. To investigate the processes in the housing market development in 1995-2011 and their impact on Vera, primary and secondary data was used.

Primary data was gathered: Qualitative data from interviews with real estate brokers about trends and quantitative data about amounts of new housing construction from official sources, official records regarding breaches of regulations, as well as quantitative data regarding price development for housing during the period covered by the research.

Secondary data was used for desk study. It includes qualitative data from various sources: private persons, library and official resources from business, non-profit and public organizations. Quantitative data about demand, supply and other features of the residential real estate market were gathered from official studies and researches.

The research sample is the district of Vera in Tbilisi. The research analyses processes of new housing construction changing the historically established environment of Vera.

The research includes multiple units of analysis to find out individual perceptions, data, opinions and experiences.

One of the most important aspects was talks and interviews with local residents, in order to know directly from the inhabitants what they think about their neighbourhood and how they would like to see it.

Questions are of two kinds: hypothetical and open-ended. Hypothetical questions help define interviewee's abilities and experience. Open- and close-ended questions help obtain more detailed information on related topics in the research.

The research has an inductive-deductive approach. It implies that theory development took place prior to data collection. It means that central concepts are defined on the basis of different academic, non-academic, theoretical literature and former studies. The concepts of the research are supported by scientific literature, official documents, interview findings and other types of primary and secondary data.

Future Image(s) of Tbilisi

David (Data) Chigholashvili

I was walking in Sololaki, a historic district of Tbilisi, together with a group of international researchers and artists and we stopped by a ruined building to take pictures of street art on it. Two teenagers from the neighbourhood walked by and commented in Georgian: "*Hey, they are taking pictures of these ruined buildings. Do not show it to people, take a picture of something new and beautiful in Tbilisi.*" I had already started fieldwork in this neighbourhood and what they meant by "*something new and beautiful*" interested me. This statement later linked up to the future directions of Tbilisi I was researching.

In the past decade, there has been a massive "modernization" process going on in Georgia. This affected the capital Tbilisi significantly, as it has expanded new forms while also emphasizing the old ones. I look at Tbilisi's transformation of this period in the city centre and see how it has changed the image of Tbilisi and where this kind of planning directs its future. As a starting point, I take pictorial representations, which reflect, affect and communicate these processes and the socio-political reality around them.[1] By following symbols of different periods, I identify "traditional," modernist" and "Soviet" Tbilisi and analyse them in relation to the changing image of the city. Through both an ethnographic approach and visual analysis this study offers the context of Tbilisi's transformation. Research from visual perspective is not very popular in the explorations concerning Tbilisi's recent makeover and in the wider context of urban anthropology, the study offers an interesting example from relatively unexamined, yet important case.

The urban changes of this period were, and still are, communicated mostly visually, some as image-based simulations, others as implemented ones connected to the former. Hence, the branding, PR and advertisement strategies of Tbilisi's transformation offer an interesting perspective for analysing the changing image of the capital. Accordingly, this research aims to answer the following questions: How is the recent branding and advertising of Tbilisi reflected in images and how does that affect the urban identity of Tbilisi dwellers?

1 In my MSc dissertation I analysed Tbilisi's transformation through contemporary visual art and anthropological works, as well the methodological connection between them. In this research I address visual communication of changes and its effects on city's image and future, analysed through ethnographic material from my fieldwork in 2013.

And are we therefore able to grasp the upcoming effects this kind of "advertising Tbilisi" is able to have on its inhabitants and the city's identity?

As I set to explore these questions, I was not surprised to find out that the urban "traditional" is commonly agreed to be most important for the character of Tbilisi. But it also turned out to be a controversial term, sometimes becoming secondary in relation to the new establishments, which are connected to another contested term, "developed." This controversy can be observed in many cities, which also happened to be Soviet during their history - the complexity of these layers poses challenges for the image of Tbilisi.

ANTHROPOLOGIST IN/OF ONE'S OWN CITY

When I studied abroad and researched the transformation of the city I have lived in for most of my life, I realized the importance of exploring these processes from the perspective of the people living in a given city. After returning to Tbilisi, I decided to make an anthropological study of urban issues through visual[2] representations and the social processes surrounding them.

The fieldwork was carried out in following sites: Betlemi Quarter and various neighbourhoods in Sololaki, newly built Rike Park and other surrounding areas. I applied ethnographic observations and "*thick description*,"[3] where the interpretations of what people say and do took place in selected sites. I conducted respective semi-structured in-depth interviews with the citizens[4] and another group of actors referred to as "image-producers."[5]

The sites that I discuss in this paper might not seem directly connected at first. However, discussing the image of Tbilisi and the explorations of the city, or sometimes just living in it while researching and as it transforms, shows connections between sites and metaphors of the city as discussed below. Methodologically, it links to multi-sited ethnography, implying designing research around particular threads of locations, through which the researcher establishes connections and physical presence.[6] Sites become not simple collections of places, rather "*translocal linkages and interconnections*" are created for the study.[7]

2 Visual anthropology is taken as the study of visual communication, where visual worlds are seen as social processes. Ruby J. The Last 20 Years of Visual Anthropology - A Critical Review // Visual Studies. 2005. 20(2). pp.159-170.

3 Geertz, C. (1973) The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz. New York: Basic Books.

4 Those who identify themselves as living in the historic part of Tbilisi, also those visiting Rike Park and central areas of the city. Age range of respondents was mostly between 20-60.

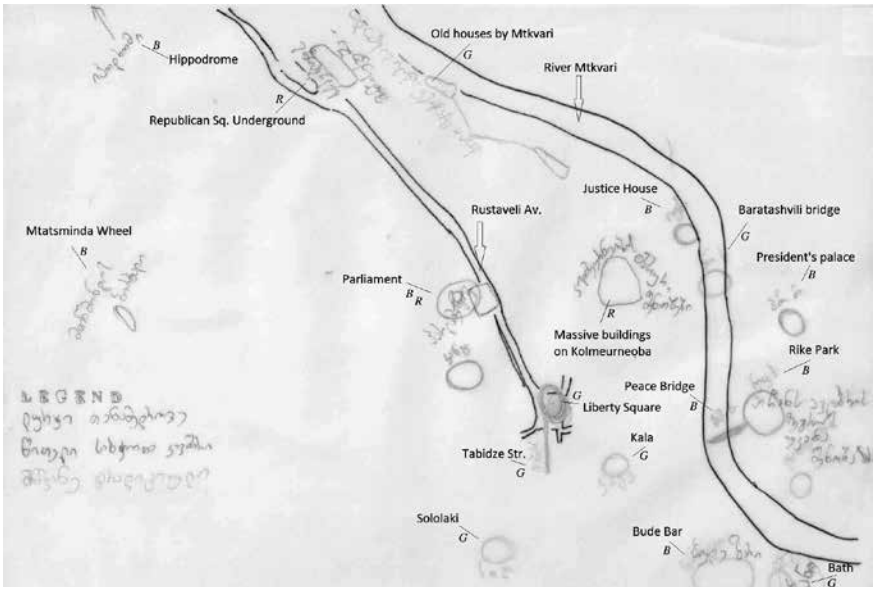
5 By this I mean contemporary artists, curators, researchers and/or activists who remain critical towards transformation issues in Georgia and more importantly, utilize images of the city in different contexts.

6 Marcus, G. (1995) Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography // Annual Review of Anthropology. 24. pp.97-117.

7 Hannerz, U. (2003) Being There... and there... and there! : Reflections on Multi-Sited Ethnography // Ethnography. 4(2). pp.201-216, p.206.

During the interviews in different locations, I also obtained Mental Maps (MM) from the respondents.[8] It is important to analyse them in relation with other ethnographic and visual material in order to see the complexity of the issue in greater detail. I asked each respondent who made MMs to indicate the landmarks in central areas of Tbilisi as "contemporary," traditional" or "Soviet." They marked these landmarks with three different colours on semi-transparent papers, which made it possible to overlay different respondents' maps on each other for comparative analysis. Mapping this way shows how various landmarks are associated with particular periods and/or aspects of the city. I based it on the strategy of mapping one place through different aspects[9] (MM1).

The Parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue is an interesting example here. One of the maps is created by the image-producer who said this building can be represented



MM1: Three colours on the maps are given as following: green – traditional; red – Soviet; blue – contemporary. (Due to black and white prints, corresponding letters (G, R, B) are added) (Elaborated at the fieldwork). The Parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue is an interesting example here. One of the maps is created by the image-producer who said this building can be represented in different contexts, and hence perceives it as contemporary. However, in the overlapping one, made by a Tbilisi resident of a different profession, this building is presented as Soviet, due to the period when it was built. The map also shows a number of other major landmarks identified as central to the image of Tbilisi.

8 MMs were obtained from both categories of respondents, both male and female with major age groups between 20-30 and 40-60. Overall, there were 24 MMs obtained, as some of the respondents refused to draw them. Corresponding English names are provided on original MMs stating names as written and/or said by the relevant respondents. Additionally, the River Mtkvari and Rustaveli Ave. are marked in black later on all of them.

9 Schoemaker, J. (2012) The Undivided City. Eindhoven: Onomatopee.

in different contexts, and hence perceives it as contemporary. However, in the overlapping one, made by a Tbilisi resident of a different profession, this building is presented as Soviet, due to the period when it was built. The map also shows a number of other major landmarks identified as central to the image of Tbilisi.

IMAGES OF TBILISI – THE CONTEXT

The word *image* is a key term, one that is taken as a metaphor with double meaning - first, it represents the wider understanding of the term, referring to visual, pictorial representation of certain things and processes used for communication. Secondly, after the notion of Lynch, the term refers to the "*image of the city,*" a mental image also called image ability, implying a material object creating a vivid image for spectators, in which the colour, shape and/or arrangement intermingle and make "*highly useful mental images of the environment.*"[10] The image of the city is not a separate abstract creation, but links with the city as experienced by its inhabitants.

Moreover, there are five major elements constituting the image of the city: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks.[11] But analysing all the aspects would have been impossible in the scope of this research. Considering the context and aspects that arose in the interviews, *landmarks* were deemed most important. This implies physical objects such as buildings and shops, which can be seen separately, or constituting a single image when observed from a distance.[12] Additionally, in the post-Soviet context, particular landmarks are one of the most important aspects discussed in relation to the direction of a city's future.

Taking Liberty Square as a starting point, the following landmarks were identified as constituting the image of Tbilisi: around Rustaveli Ave. the most noticeable are the Youth Palace (former Pioneer Palace), the former Parliament building, the National Museum, the Rustaveli Cinema, 1st School, Rustaveli Theatre, the Opera House, the IMELI Building, the former Post building, the Georgian National Academy of Sciences and others. In relation to Old Tbilisi, the most mentioned are Sololaki district in general, the Betlemi Quarter, Tsikhisubani, Abanotubani (sulphur baths), the Narikala Fortress and Leghvtakhevi. In another direction -the Peace Bridge, Rike Park, Concert Halls, the President's Palace, and the Justice House.

Based on urban anthropology, I identified three major categories for Georgia's capital – "Traditional Tbilisi," Soviet Tbilisi" and "Modernist Tbilisi." In anthropology, "city" is taken to mean "*not a reification but the focus of cultural and sociopolitical manifestations of urban lives and everyday practices.*"[13] Theorizing a city makes it possible to see it from different perspectives, where the emphasis is put on particular aspects.

10 Lynch, K. (1960) The Image of the City. Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press. p.9.

11 Id., pp.47-48.

12 Ibid.

13 Low, S. M. (1996) The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City //Annual Review of Anthropology. 25. pp.383-409, p.384.

Generally, in *"the Traditional City"* we seean aspiration towards "*the desire to preserve cultural traditions in the face of rapid social change.*"[14] Traditional can be understood in different ways, but "Traditional Tbilisi" emerges when emphasis is placed on Old Tbilisi. The significance of this is agreed among the majority – the citizens, as well as the officials:

"I think it is interesting to live in Tbilisi. You can find a mentality and situations which you cannot find elsewhere.... For instance, in old districts you might be able to find strange old buildings, which are interesting for me... I cannot think of some right now, but mostly in the Bath's district and the surrounding streets, I like to walk there, mostly in Sololaki..." (person living outside Old Tbilisi)

The quote above is of typical responses regarding "traditional" elements in the city. However, as we will see, "traditional" is a very controversial term in this sense. While in this period the government put much effort into emphasizing the "traditional" nature of the city (which in most cases might have actually resulted in its disappearance), it was also contested by new forms, taking us to the understanding of "Modernist Tbilisi." This urban category in anthropology represents a city "*where modern technologies of planning and architecture are employed to build new societies and indoctrinate citizens within spatial confines of rationally planned towns.*"[15]

In the case of Tbilisi, it was the emergence of those new forms and places that was to symbolize country's "development" after the Rose Revolution in 2003. This kind of planning has no link to previous forms and sometimes replaces traditional spaces. Even though these places seem to be less favoured by residents, they are already present in the city:

"It's good new places were added to Tbilisi, for instance, the Peace Bridge. When some things were added, it [Tbilisi] became more complete." (person living in Sololaki)

The interplay between "old" and "new" is partially caused by the post-Soviet condition of Tbilisi, which created the category of "Soviet Tbilisi." It implies a post-Soviet state where symbolic urban elements from this period are present and further challenge the image of Tbilisi.

"The Academy of Sciences is a very Soviet symbol to me, because it was built in that period. Also, the former "Univermaghi" [shopping centre] which is not there anymore" (person living in historic Tbilisi)

In reality, elements of the three categories intermingle and create a complex image of Tbilisi. This is expressed in the images of Tbilisi and reflects its residents' understanding of it. One of the interesting cases is the wrapping of images around the demolished site on Erekle II Square, within walking distance from most of the places mentioned above. The wrapping represents *"The New Life of Old Tbilisi"* showing traditional renovated forms in Tbilisi and new elements, some already implemented, some soon-to-come. In total, the images of particular sites are quite eclectic (picture 1).

14 Ibid., p.399.

15 Low, S. M. Introduction: Theorizing the City // Low. S.M. (Ed.) (1999) Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp.1-33, p.15.

PICTURE 1: Images around the demolished site.

Images can be understood as a *"'certificate of presence': the presence of the past within present."*[16] Additionally, I argue that they also come as the certificate of the future, expressed in the "futuristic" images of Tbilisi. Accordingly, we can consider images as "*time markers,*"[17] which represent the socio-political reality behind them. Moreover, as "*we assume that the things we see have the properties of being,*"[18] what we see in city images, even in those which are simulations, creates some kind of knowledge (pictures 2 & 3).

We can differentiate between the "*near future*" and the "*distant future.*"[19] In this context, the "*distant future*" can be understood as the intended future image. Therefore, the "*near future*" is in those materializations of the city, which link to the image sought. The simulation of new Tbilisi as proposed by City Hall might seem like something that is not there, but some materialized forms resemble these simulations. The connection between these images provokes some ideas about the future direction of the city.

VISUALLY COMMUNICATING TBILISI

The Rose Revolution in 2003 ushered in huge changes in Georgia's recent history, starting mass building processes in various cities, including Tbilisi (with its symbolic importance as the capital). Tbilisi City Hall says that the past and the present are connected in the city, where we witness the construction of many contempo-

16 Rabinow, P. (2008) Marking Time: On The Anthropology of the Contemporary. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 115.

17 Ibid.

18 MacDougall, D. (2006) The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography and the senses. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p.1.

19 Guyer, J. I. (2007) Prophecy and the Near Future: Thoughts on Macroeconomic, Evangelical, and Punctuated Time // American Ethnologist. 34(3). pp.409-421.

PICTURE 2: Simulated image from the "New Tbilisi" gallery on the official web page[20] of Tbilisi City Hall.

PICTURE 3: Concert hall in the Rike Park, President's Palace in the background

rary buildings making a new image of the 1500-year-old city.[21] The "old" and "new" are interrelated and said to be important, but analysis shows that the "new" was more favoured by the governmental agenda. The position of the state and President Saakashvili underlay the expansion of new forms in the capital. Three years after taking power, he stated the ambition of building contemporary architecture, which would last for centuries.[22]The process of creating new forms was very intense since and these forms were actively communicated visually through publicity strategies. Examples are Rike Park, the nearby glass-covered Peace Bridge and concert halls, among others.

Branding in this case implies incorporating methods to communicate changes and the development of Tbilisi through new establishments. City branding includes creating a collection of visual identifiers in urban realms, so that a new image is created.[23] I propose to look at visual communication strategies and see how they have affected the image of Tbilisi in the eyes of its residents.

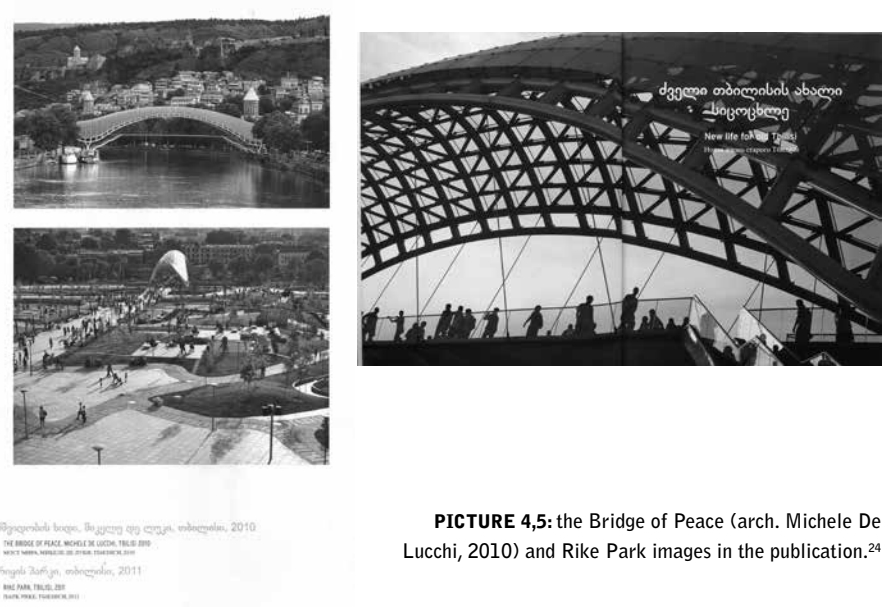
These processes in Tbilisi's makeover were directed towards creating symbols that would celebrate Tbilisi as a successful modern city. However, during city branding, as-

20 <http://new.tbilisi.gov.ge/newtbilisi> [Accessed 3 July 2013].

21 Tbilisi City Hall. Contemporary Tbilisi [თანამედროვე თბილისი] // Online. 2011. <http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=242> (2.07.2013).

22 Civil.ge. Saakashvili emphasized the progress during the annual report [საკაშვილმა საანგარიშო მოხსენებაში პროგრესზე გაამახვილა ყურადღება] // Civil Georgia. Online. 2006. <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=11761> (retrieved 25.02.2013).

23 Vardosanidze, V. (2012) New Reality of Urban Culture – A City as "Commodity" and Its Branding. What Vitruvius Could Not Have Considered [ურბანული კულტურის ახლებური რეალობა – ქალაქი, როგორც „საქონელი"და მისი ბრენდინგი. რას ვერ გაითვალისწინებდა ვიტრუვიუსი] // Civilization Researches. 10. pp. 46-58.



PICTURE 4,5: the Bridge of Peace (arch. Michele De Lucchi, 2010) and Rike Park images in the publication.[24]

sociations between various urban elements should be sustainably relevant[25] and the interplay of urban symbols from different periods should have been crucial in Tbilisi's transformation. As Insch argues "*city authorities often become fixated with the visual aspects of the branding process*"[26] because they are easy to create. They spend vast resources for "*one-dimensional campaign*" which is not sustainable or memorable. The engagement of city dwellers can show the identity of a city, which can be used for its branding.[27]As argued,[28] visual representations are very significant in branding processes, but can be dangerous for the image of city. In Tbilisi's case, it has created an eclectic series of images and presented new forms in its image.

The publication *"New Georgia: Georgian Architecture after the Rose revolution 2004-2012",*[29] distributed before the parliamentary election in 2012 to families living in Tbilisi elucidates very well the visually communicated changes. The title marks the period of implemented projects and in colourful images it visually represents the direction of the state in this period. It was ordered by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, togeth-

24 MCMPG, et al., 2012. New Georgia: Georgian Architecture after the Rose Revolution 2004-2012.pp.4-5. // 5. MCMPG, et al., 2012. New Georgia: Georgian Architecture after the Rose Revolution 2004-2012. pp.2-3.

25 Ibid.

26 Insch, A. (2011) Branding the City as an Attractive Place to Live // Dinnie. K. ed. City Branding: Theory and Cases. Basingstoke:Palgrave Macmillan, pp.8-14, p.12.

27 Ibid.

28 Dinnie. K. ed. (2011) City Branding: Theory and Cases, Basingstoke:Palgrave Macmillan.

29 MCMPG et al. New Georgia: Georgian Architecture after the Rose Revolution 2004-2012. 2012.

PICTURE 6: application example[30]

er with few leading banks in the country and big business enterprises. In the case of Tbilisi, urban planning did not imply citizen participation.[31] Hence, the project "New Georgia" proposes creating architecture and urban settings aimed at establishing new ideals.

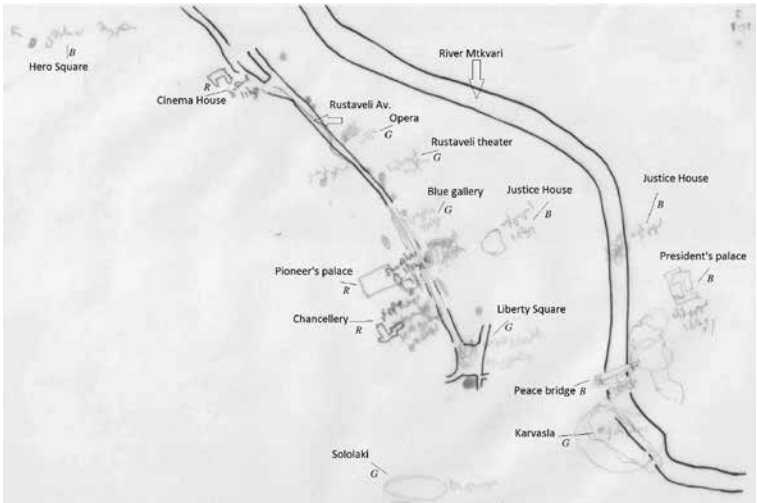
In the publication we see subchapters on "*New Batumi*" and "*New Kutaisi*," but in the case of Tbilisi we read – "*New life for old Tbilisi."*[32]These statements already mention the dual importance present in the city, which was incorporated in the agenda of the transformation. The part about Tbilisi starts with the image of the new *"Bridge of Peace."* The images inside are various, representing new establishments and renovated buildings, both traditional and those from the Soviet times (Pictures 4 & 5).

Moreover, under the "*New Life of Old Tbilisi*" images are already partially linking to the old, but representing the new as well. Overall, with all the different categories and elements in Tbilisi, together with accompanying challenges, Tbilisi also becomes a

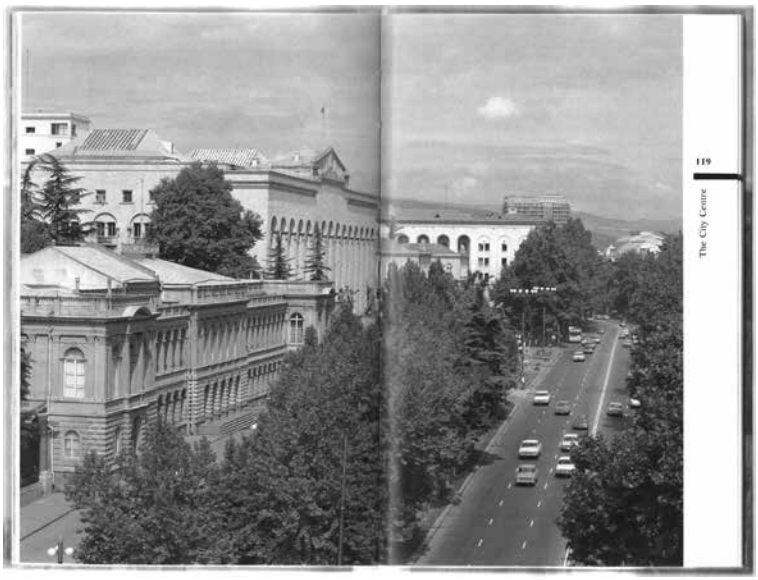
30 <http://speakingstones.jumpstart.ge/en?pairing=40> [Accessed 3 July 2013].

31 Van Assche, K., Verschraegen G. and Salukvadze J. Changing (2010) Frames: Citizen and Expert Participation in Georgian Planning // Planning Practice and Research. 25(3). pp.377-395.

32 In different sources, this sentence in English is sometimes written as "New life for old Tbilisi," sometimes – "of old Tbilisi." Considering the Georgian version [ძველი თბილისის ახალი სიცოცხლე], "New life of old Tbilisi" is more appropriate to use.



MM2: Two MMs created by respondents from both categories, combined. This illustrates that in the mental image of the city Soviet symbols (here: the Cinema House, the Pioneer Palace, The Parliament building, the State Chancellery) are concentrated mostly on Rustaveli Avenue (marked with red on the maps) (Elaborated at the fieldwork).



PICTURE 7: view of the central street of Tbilisi depicting former Pioneer Palace, the Government House and the Iveria hotel in the background from the guide published in 1985.[33]

33 Tsitsishvili, I., 1985. Tbilisi: Architectural Landmarks and Art Museums – An Illustrated Guide. Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers. Photography by the Laboratory for Registering the Art Monuments of Georgia. p.119.

"*wounded city*" implying intensive level of "*creative destruction*."[34] The wounded image of Tbilisi perhaps allows establishing new-forms in the future image.

However, the visual communication of Tbilisi is present not solely in the abovementioned way. Recently, an interactive online tool juxtaposing new and old views of Tbilisi was presented by JumpStart Georgia, called "*Speaking Stones*." It helps to explore and compare old and new spaces in the city. With a slide bar, overlapping photos from different eras can reveal how an environment has changed over time[35] (picture 6). According to the project authors, the pilot project was so successful among Tbilisi residents, that people started contacting them to submit their own images.

The state-initiated branding through images did not discuss the historical layers present in the city when merging them - rather it showed the agenda decided for its future. In contrast, more activist approaches, such as Speaking Stones offer more insight into the various levels of the complex image of Tbilisi. They are usually shared through online media, and show how much the city has changed. Sometimes this is said to be nostalgia towards what the city used to be. I believe that this phenomenon of image sharing, as well as the character of using images by different initiatives, deserves separate study, but what is interesting for now, is to see that there are different ways of utilizing visuals when talking about the city - those that are designed more from the state perspective and others that come from individual initiatives and are critical of the former. The aspects of Tbilisi discussed here maybe mixed with each other when visually communicating the city. Analysing each one of them below shows us how to better understand this complexity.

The post-Soviet context has partially given rise to contestation between "new" and "old" in contemporary Tbilisi, and the Soviet past is often neglected as if it never existed. Therefore the discussion below starts with this side of Tbilisi, followed by an exploration of notions of what "traditional" and "new" are in Tbilisi's transforming image.

GHOSTLY PRESENCE OF "SOVIET TBILISI"

"*On 25 February 1921 new era in the history of the city has started. Tbilisi became the capital of socialist Georgia.*"[36] The development of the city turned towards the planned urban development which was gradually implemented. The city obtained new buildings, landmarks such as the Institute of Marxism and Leninism (IMELI), the government house, Dinamo Stadium, the top station of the funicular, the circus, and multi-apartment residen-

34 Harvey, D. (2003) The City as a Body Politic // eds. J. Schneider and I. Susser. Wounded cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World. Oxford: Berg, pp.25-44, p.25.

35 Speaking Stones. About // web page. 2013. <http://speakingstones.jumpstart.ge/en> (retrieved 3.07. 2013).

36 Jaoshvili V. (Ed.) (1989) Tbilisi: Economical and Geographical Research [ჯაოშვილი ვ. (რედ.) თბილისი: ეკონომიკურ-გეოგრაფიული გამოკვლევები], p.88.

PICTURE 8: Star on the National Academy of Science in Jumpstart Georgia application.[37]

tial buildings. As we can see, the majority of these landmarks are situated in the central area of the city and are still identifiable. For instance, the former parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue, which is still mostly identified as a Soviet building (MM2).

City images of that time predominantly emphasize the architecture speaking about the regime (Picture 7). Taking into consideration the fact that most of these buildings are still present in the city and live as memories in people's minds, it constitutes the image of Tbilisi to most residents. Some Soviet names of places are still used - "Lenin Square" among older generation and "the Pioneer Palace" also among those, who were born in the Soviet Union, but were not pioneers.

In 2011 the parliament of Georgia approved "*the Liberty Charter*" which includes a "*law on lustration*" and a ban of Soviet symbolism.[38] The latter part of the law bans *"Soviet and Fascist symbols, iconic buildings, statues, monuments, reliefs, inscriptions, names of streets, squares, villages and towns, as well as other means of propaganda for the Soviet and fascist ideologies."*[39]

37 <http://speakingstones.jumpstart.ge> [Accessed 3 July 2013].

38 Kharadze, N. (2011) The Liberty Charter was Passed by the Parliament' [პარლამენტმა თავისუფლების ქარტია მიიღო] // Radiotavisupleba. Online. <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/content/article/24210559.html> (retrieved 9.08.2012).

39 Liberty Charter //online. 2011.<http://codex.ge/2946> (retrieved 3.07. 2013).

There are several types of forgetting identified in memory studies and it is argued that forgetting is not always a negative thing and can sometimes be seen as gaining or reclaiming something. One of the types is the "*forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity*"[40] implying agreed obsolesce by shadowing those memories, which are not "of use" in ongoing identity discourse. In the case of post-Soviet Tbilisi and the formation of its image, it incorporates forgetting those urban symbols, which link to the Soviet period in the city.

However, the law aimed at rethinking the Soviet past can be seen as counterproductive and further challenging the image of Tbilisi. The notion of "*art of forgetting*" argues that "*iconoclasm the destruction of buildings and monuments – must be the most conventional way of hoping to achieve forgetting*"[41] and it has been the initial strategy in most of post-Soviet countries, which was later changed in some. In such a context, iconoclasm works to the opposite end and prolongs the memory through the remnants.[42] The law can be considered as a manifestation of the iconoclasm which recently emerged in Georgia and we could posit that these "removed" Soviet symbols prolonged their memory in the image of Tbilisi, as it was the partial destruction of symbols on the buildings which are associated with the time they were built in. The removed star on the top of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences on Rustaveli Avenue is one such example (Picture 8).

With the approach discussed above their presence can be said to be rather ghostly. Ghost in this case would mean the *"sense of presence of those who are not physically there."*[43] Soviet symbolism is absent from the official advertising of Tbilisi's image, but it lives in mental images:

"When I think of the Soviet landmarks in the city, the first one that comes to my mind is the Cinema House [on the side of the Academy of Sciences], because it still has the star on the top remaining. Wait, they took it down? Funny, this is the association I have..."

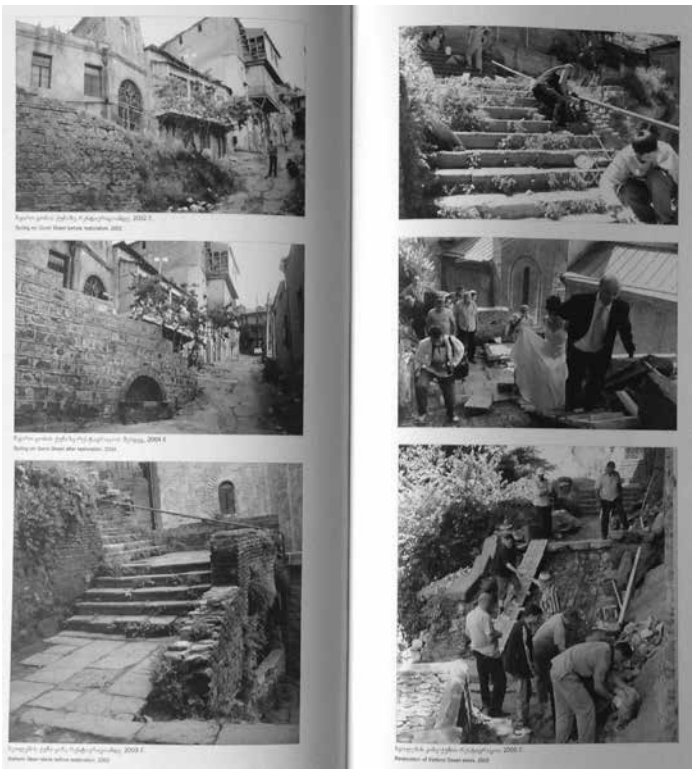
said one of the respondents when talking about Soviet landmarks in the city. The star which was taken down from the building after the law went into force, still remains as a topic of discussion among people who knew it was there. Moreover, Soviet landmarks are identified on mental maps, as well as during those tours, which the respondents would take foreign visitors on. However, image-producers would show Soviet urban elements as linking to the history of Tbilisi, while others were more likely to describe them as either "traditional" and "historical" - since it is on Rustaveli - or as "new" since it does not repeat the "old Tbilisi style". Therefore, being absent from the official discourse, but being materially present, Soviet landmarks have different associations for younger generation and further challenge the image of Tbilisi.

40 Connerton, P. (2008) Seven Types of Forgetting // Memory Studies. 1(1). pp.59-71, p.62.

41 Forty, A. Introduction // Forty, A. & Küchler, S. (Eds.) (1999). The Art of Forgetting. Oxford: Berg, pp.1-18, p. 10.

42 Id.

43 Bell, M. (1997) Ghosts of Place //Theory and Society. 26(6), pp.813-836, p.813.



PICTURE 9: Unlike those images used in the branding processes of Tbilisi, the revitalization process of the Betlemi Quarter, presented by ICOMOS Georgia, shows the process, rather than solelythe results.[44]

"TRADITIONAL TBILISI" AND COMMUNITIES

If you ask the majority of people in Tbilisi what is symbolic of their city, the response is most likely to be "traditional" elements such as balconies, narrow streets and the unique close relationship that is among the neighbours there:

"When you look from Metekhi and see the newly built houses, that is not Tbilisi. Tbilisi is here, it is not reconstructed and the buildings are those built by people who were called Tbilisi. People were the symbol of Tbilisi. We did not even have to close the doors, but these kind of relationships are gone" (person living in Sololaki)

Interestingly, the same person attested that when showing Tbilisi to others, they would take them to the renovated parts, as they look nicer, which links to the idea that in representing Tbilisi, the "new" can be favoured, while the "old" and "traditional" are romanticized.

44 ICOMOS Georgia, (2011) Tbilisi, Kala: Betlemi Quarter Revitalisation. Programme Report 2000-2010. Tbilisi. pp. 46-47.

Hence, "traditional" becomes a controversial term. Also, the passivity of local communities and (re)building of sites without their participation has lead to a lack of knowledge about the city. The research on old Tbilisi's architecture attests that its authenticity is endangered.[45] For instance, Tsikhisubani, represented on the images of "*New Life of Old Tbilisi,"* is believed to have been improperly renovated in 2011, due to which the traditions of architecture and historical street structures of the neighbourhood were lost.[46] I do not address the restoration of historical Tbilisi, as that is a separate topic for research. However, the challenges accompanying "traditionality" in Tbilisi and citizens' participation should be seen in order to understand the wounded image of Tbilisi.

It is said that "*Tbilisians are highly educated, they love their city, are knowledgeable about its qualities and its problems, and are not entirely cynical about possible improvements."*[47] However, as seen from an ethnographic study, this statement might seem rather generalized. Moreover, when discussing the role of civil society and the case of Tiflis Hamkari - Union of Tbilisi Caretakers,[48] in heritage protection processes, it is said that the "*passive and uninformed citizens / indifference of the citizens towards our common living space and cultural-historical heritage*"[49] is a problem. The majority of people, especially those who say they live in historical Tbilisi, think of its traditional elements as very important to the city. However, the significance is mainly on the level of images and does not imply an understanding of what is important or why. "Traditional" might refer to new establishments:

"The historic parts of Tbilisi are very important and make our city one of the best cities in the world. I look at the ancient houses built opposite the Metekhi church and I am proud of how long they have lasted." (person living in Sololaki).

The understanding of traditionality is clearer in the case of Betlemi Quarter residents, which is due to their active involvement in the revitalization processes of the quarter, which has been happening for more than a decade now, and has been initiated by ICOMOS Georgia. The revitalization of the quarter was chosen due to its unique his-

45 Mania, M. Tbilisi – A Unique System of Houses with Courtyards // conference. Urban Heritage Preservation: Identity and Spirit of Old Tbilisi. Tbilisi, Georgia 3-6 June 2010, pp.9-15.

46 Mania, M. (2012) Tsikisubani – the Lost Treasure of Old Tbilisi [ციხისუბანი - ძველი თბილისის დაკარგული ფასეულობა] // ARS GEORGICA. Online. <http://georgianart.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=139%3A2013-01-13-12-44-43&catid=42%3A2010-12-03-16-05-33&Itemid=91&lang=ka> (retrieved 5.07.2013).

47 Van Assche, K., Verschraegen G. and Salukvadze, J. (2010) Changing Frames: Citizen and Expert Participation in Georgian Planning // Planning Practice and Research. 25(3), pp.377-395, p. 392.

48 A group of citizens implementing various activities for protecting historical sites of Tbilisi.

49 Elisashvili, A., (2011) The Role of Civil Society in Heritage Protection, Case: Tiflis Hamkari – Union of Old Tbilisi Caretakers // conference. Community and Historic Environment. Tbilisi, Georgia 20-22 September, pp.91-95, p.93.

tory, architecture and social diversity.[50] Moreover, together with professional restoration standards, another major goal was to maintain balance with the involvement of the local community. This seems to have resulted in them having the pride in their neighbourhood (picture 9).

Betlemi Quarter holds an annual Festival in which I also got involved parallel to my research and worked with the festival organizers. Like other informants living five to ten minutes walk from the area, Betlemi residents express the importance of traditional elements for the identity of Tbilisi. However, unlike their neighbours, Betlemi community members discussed the importance behind the symbols. It was not just any traditional Tbilisi balcony that was important, but balconies of particular houses and particular people, with the district having its histories, its local landmarks and individual meaning being accorded to them.

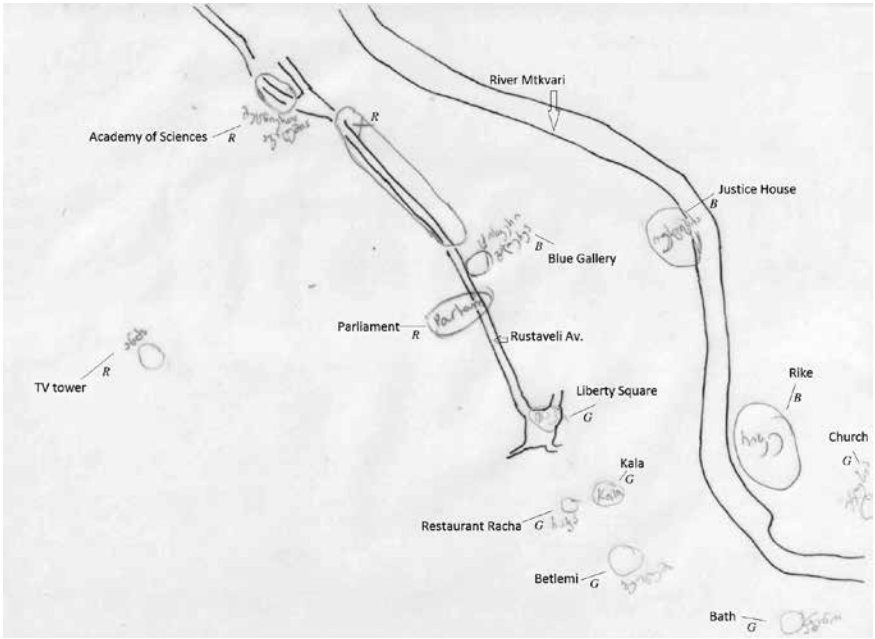
A person who has been living in the Quarter for most of her life, migrated abroad for some period, but later returned. She mentioned that her foreign friends were asking her why she was going, and she responded - *"I want my house, my land... I was born here, every stone knows me, I know every stone. I wanted to be home, only my balcony is worth everything..."* Like this person, those who have lived nearby and participated in the processes, renovation or preservation protests, around their neighbourhoods seem more aware of why and what they liked about their city and showed a critical attitude for the new establishments:

"These yards existed in reality with all their conflicts and caresses. These houses were built recently, but they are dead, they seem like empty properties. It makes me sad, it is my humble opinion, that a city is not just a house, but a person, a person is the most important. They call these Italian yards for some reason, this is not Italian, this is clearly Tbilisian yard... Each family had 2-4 kids. In the morning, when they would come in the yard, there would always be quite a hubbub. Especially during the holidays. Now it is sad! You cannot hear anything in the yards..."[51] *(person living near Betlemi Quarter).*

This kind of approach, which is not as present in other historic neighbourhoods that I worked in, is very active among Betlemi dwellers. In the cases of citizens' involvement, what it used to be is favoured and discussed, if altered. In cases where people were less active in the processes affecting their neighbourhoods, they favour the "traditional" but at the same time see it as ruined, and for this reason do not feel like referring to it for representation. Urban image and identity area lot stronger when locals get involved in transforming or caring about it. In such case the city's image is not easily wounded. The Betlemi Quarter festival itself seems to be the celebration of local community's pride:

50 ICOMOS Georgia. Tbilisi, Kala: Betlemi Quarter Revitalisation. Programme Report 2000-2010. Tbilisi.

51 The stories also appear in the publications "Travelling Foodways: Betlemi Quarter Stories" for the Quarter Festival, which was initiated, conceptualized and coordinated by GeoAIR (Nini Palavandishvili and myself), and implemented together with anthropology and graphic design students and ICOMOS Georgia.



MM3: map by the image-producer,where Betlemi Quarter is marked as traditional. All the other places provided in the same category (for instance, Racha restaurant), were connected to the personal memories of the person who made it (Elaborated at the fieldwork).

"The festival is directed towards appreciating the Quarter. Community wanted to do something as well and it became a tradition, everyone loves it. It takes years, sustainability and patience is needed." (image-producer about Betlemi Quarter)

Authors responsible for the development program of the Quarter also state that it has become a favourite place for people living in Tbilisi to gather. Indeed, the quarter is attracting more and more people every year. However, probably due to the aforementioned branding strategies mostly communicating other places in the historic city, respondents, including some of those living nearby but not in the Quarter, rarely marked it on the maps. On the contrary, image-producers said Betlemi Quarter as an important landmark for the identity of the city (MM3).

Tsikhisubani, mostly identified as traditional by Tbilisi resdients is part of "*New Life of Old Tbilisi*." Initiated by Tbilisi City Hall in 2009 and it" *is aimed at the rehabilitation of Tbilisi historic quarters and its environs, support of the banks and construction sectors, completion of unfinished new buildings and creation of job opportunities."*[52] It has been predominantly visually communicated together with other images of future Tbilisi,

52 Archuadze, Z. (2011) New Life of Old Tbilisi //conference. Community and Historic Environment Tbilisi, Georgia 20-22 September, pp.21-22, p. 21.

however, it is seen as a simulation of traditional Tbilisi. Lack of citizen participation and low awareness about the historical sites of Tbilisi also wounded its image.

When traditional places lost the values they had, the wounded image of Tbilisi was challenged by a set of new establishments, also communicated visually. Another set of futuristic images transformed to the reality and entered the mental image and identity among Tbilisi dwellers.

CITY OF IMAGES: NON-PLACES AS SYMBOLS OF THE FUTURE

Among various terms describing transformation issues ongoing in Georgia, one particular addressing the issues for "Modernist Tbilisi" *is Singaporisation/Dubaisation*, meaning:

"The unofficial name of the policies designed and advertised by the former government, to adopt Singapore and Dubai as model countries for Georgia's future development… Shiny glassed skyscrapers and mega-constructions of the freakiest designs have emerged almost in all urban centres."[53]

Those new establishments, which have been identified as the future of Tbilisi, can easily fall under this category. As stated, some of them are already being implemented, linking to "*the near future*" already lived. Some are simulated in the images for "*the distant future*." With their functionality and design, they acquire characteristics typical to *non*-places. Augé writes that "*if a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.*"[54] Moreover, non-places characterized as "*to be passed through,*"[55] are different from anthropological places – "*as anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality.*"[56] For these reasons, recently built Rike Park has some of the important signs of non-places, while on the contrary, Betlemi Quarter, offering the "*organically social,*" is more typical to anthropological places.

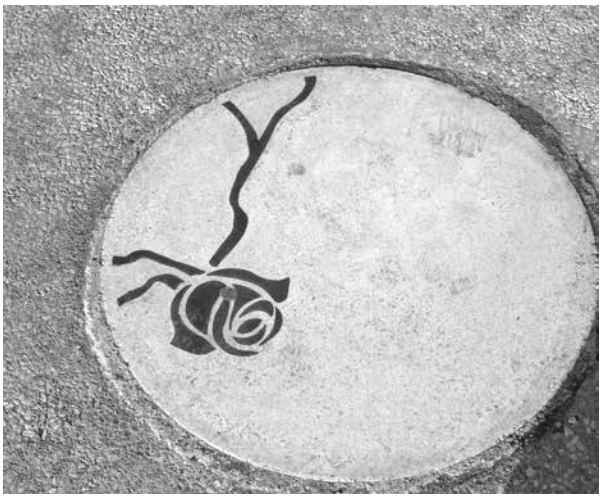
I visited Rike Park on multiple occasions and seemed like most visitors do not stay for long - people generally walk through and leave. It is especially like that during the day. Due to the almost total lack of shade (as trees need to grow) the sun makes it hard to stay there for long.

53 Asabashvili, L. (2013) Post-Soviet Urban Timeline // Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia. Kamikaze Loggia: Georgia at the 55th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia. Tbilisi, p.29.

54 Augé, M. (2008) Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. Translated by J. Howe. London: Verso. p.63.

55 Ibid., p.83.

56 Ibid.,p.76.

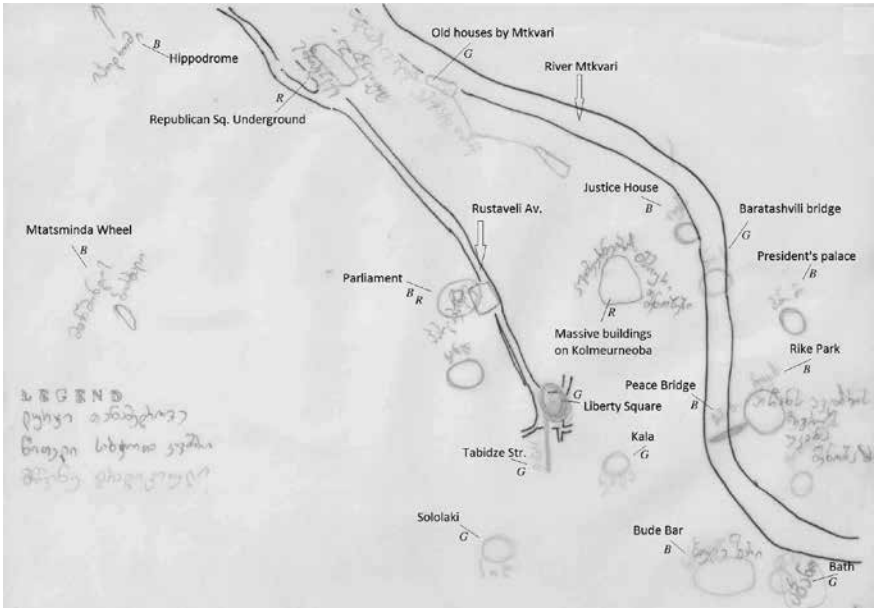


PICTURE 10: Typical rose symbol on the grounds of the park.

It has an area of around 60,000 square metres, which was not developed until the 1830s. Later it was developed with settlements, rows of tailor shops and windmills connected to the Mtkvari River. It flooded in 1972 and additional layer of soil was added to it.[57] I remember in the 1990s and the early 2000 sit was full of restaurants. In October, the Tbilisoba city festival was held here and a lot of people would visit. The place was indeed always important and known for different reasons. Hence, there has been extensive discussion among architects and urbanists regarding its development. Multiple projects were made, but never implemented. Some favoured rebuilding it in the spirit of old Tbilisi, some had ideas of making multiple facilities on the territory, so that it could have been attractive and accessible to a lot of people. It is hard to say if what was here before was an exemplary anthropological place, but what is interesting here is the link of its current form to the notion of non-places. This, and its connection to other symbols of the "Modernist Tbilisi" illustrate the complex issues of its image.

In 2011 it was reconstructed, thus giving Tbilisi a new park. It was visited by many and widely discussed. Coming down from Avlabari, or across Metekhi Bridge one has to pass through Europe Square to reach the cable car station where the cars go up to Narikala Fortress. The most commonly used way to get there is via the Peace Bridge, which goes over the Mtkvari River and goes directly to the park, heading to the central fountain towards the cliff. On the left side are sitting areas, playgrounds, a grand piano statue and massive concert halls. Behind the park, the President's palace is visible. While it looks out onto the historic part of the city, the park itself is mostly in concrete with a lot of glass and metal constructions.

57 Loladze, N. Any Tbilisian would Invest in this Construction [24 Saati newspaper] // 24 საათი. 2008. 2(69). p.2.



MM4: representing different maps combined, where colours show that the symbolical attachment to particular landmarks varies, making the image of Tbilisi complex. Moreover, the elements in blue identify those "new/ modernist" elements in the city which citizens understand as constituting to the image of Tbilisi, scattered in the city and very closeto other elements (other colours) in the urban reality (Elaborated at the fieldwork).

Glass was very symbolic to the architecture of Saakashvili's period, symbolizing the transparency in the country. Even police stations were built with facades entirely of glass. There is not much symbolism integrated in the park, other than that and design of roses on chairs and the concrete ground of the park (picture 10). In a way this park can be understood celebrating the architecture and symbolism of "modernized" Georgia after the Rose Revolution.

Visitors to the park who live in Tbilisi say they visit it occasionally, as it is the only place where they can come for a short walk and then enjoy the cafes in surrounding areas.

However, every single time I visited the park, I witnessed people being forbidden by the security to sit on the grass. Once, on a very hot morning there were few tourists who were the only people there, apart from me. They put their feet in the fountain. Park security forbade them doing so right away and they left. Other visitors also complained about not being able to sit on the grass. One of the important characteristics of non-places is a control overmovement - "*the user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the powers that govern it). He is reminded, when necessary, that the contract exists.*"[58] In the case of this park, or perhaps non-park, it is not visual signs but

58 Augé, M. (2008) Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. Translated by J. Howe. London: Verso. p.82.

active control through internal regulations, the "secularization" of the site emphasizing its agency and importance.

The people who spend the most time there are security and local sellers of balloons, toys, ice cream, pop-corn and face painters. Like many of the visitors, they might not feel very keen to discuss the area with the strangers taking notes, but they can explain the general situation: the park is mostly visited by young people, couples on dates and families with children. After some time, you might even hear the comparison of this area to "Europe" in that its cleanliness stands in contrast to the rest of the city, which is dirty and unorganized.

The conveniences of being clean, secure and accessible in the city seem to be the most important considerations for the visitors. Hence, the park, with its high internal control and lack of any urban symbolic significance has become quite popular for locals, even for those living in historic Tbilisi. One younger resident of the area said they did not like the new bridge and park and preferred spending time in traditional Tbilisi yards, but added:

"A tourist would be more interested in the old neighbourhood, I would take them to Old Tbilisi and then to Rike Park for the impressions." (person living in Sololaki)

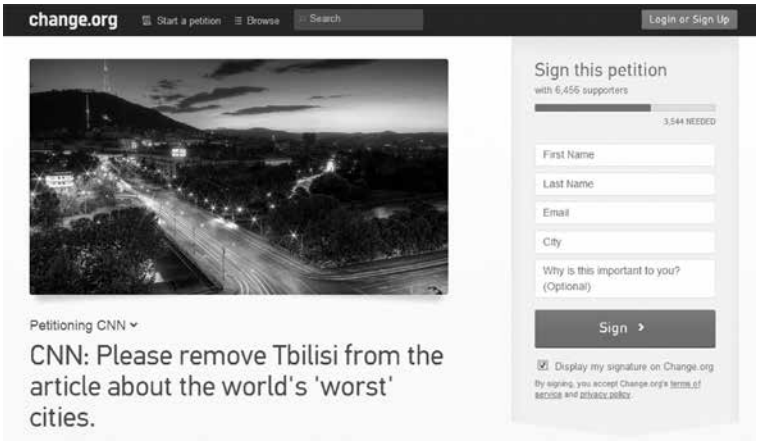
Pilz[59] argues that "old" and "new" forms exist together in Tbilisi and the "old" forms are preferable to the "new" ones. However, the preference seems to be solely on the level of romanticized separate images and when representing the city, what looks "beautiful" and "modern" can be favoured. Most respondents said they would take the visitors to those parts of the city that show how much the country has developed. The way these places were built also explains why the image-producers remain critical of them and only would give people tours of them in order to show the challenges of Tbilisi's transformation.

However, the urban elements of Tbilisi, which have important characteristics of non-places, have already somehow become important to the locals. Even those living in historic Tbilisi, like to show off the new establishments as part of Tbilisi because they allow them to demonstrate their city as representationally equal to those they have seen abroad through TV, internet, visiting or otherwise. However, it also means that these places - rather non-places - have become part of the wounded image of Tbilisi and the urban identity of its inhabitants (MM4).

Interestingly, at the same time respondents did not provide any direct connections of their urban identity or that of the city to these new places, making them once again non-places. The vast majority of informants would not disapprove if the big piano standing in the Rike Park were replaced with something else, or if the Peace Bridge were taken somewhere else

59 Pilz M. Tbilisi in City-Maps: Symbolic Construction of an Urban Landscape // Darieva, T. Kaschuba, W. & Krebs, M. (Eds.) (2011) Urban Spaces after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Spaces in Eurasian Cities. New York: Campus Verlag, pp.81-105.

PICTURE 11: Screenshot from the article.[60]



PICTURE 12: Screenshot from the petition.[61]

60 <http://travel.cnn.com/top-sights-worlds-worst-cities-775756> [Accessed 3 July 2013].

61 <http://www.change.org/petitions/cnn-please-remove-tbilisi-from-the-article-about-the-world-s-worst-cities> [Accessed 3 July 2013].

in Tbilisi, or if Rike Park were totally changed into something new. However, if a skyscraper were built instead of the Tbilisi sulphur baths, which was said to be the heart of the city, they would not like it and protest, even though they usually do not participate in urban protests. The people I talked with, would even not like to replace the "Pioneer Palace," while they would not mind seeing the new concert halls taken somewhere else. The existence of non-places and their becoming important to the image of the city, together with the issues addressed above, gives rise to the risk of a once-historic city being transformed into a mere collection of separate images - a non-city.

CONCLUSION

In 2013, CNN travel article *"Redeeming sights in the world's 'worst cities'"* came online, which responds to "*Mercer's Quality of Living Survey for 2012"* that placed Tbilisi at top of this category.

The article states that "*these cities may have been ranked among the least liveable in the world, but that doesn't mean there's nothing there worth seeing."*[62] Despite the intentions of the article, the fact that Tbilisi appeared in such a context offended many and an online petition, "*CNN: Please remove Tbilisi from the article about the world's 'worst' cities,*" was launched. What is interesting here from this story, are the visuals attached to these two cases, as they speak of the processes discussed above. The image, which accompanies the article, is of the Bath District in Tbilisi, while the petition depicts the one with shining lights of a very general view (Pictures 11 & 12).

This brings us back to the story of the teenagers who wanted us to take a picture of something new and beautiful and present Tbilisi this way. The makeover in previous yearsput Tbilisi in a situation where we find romanticized notions of "Old Tbilisi" and at the same time witness the importance placed on "modernization,"while the Soviet pastof the city needs rethinking. *Creative destruction* in different ways has wounded the image of Tbilisi, which can be hard to grasp, as the three aspects I presented in this text are so related, and at the same time very distant from one other.

In order to understand the future directions of the city, I have looked at the visual representations used to communicate the ongoing changes in the city centre. Distinction between the "*near and distant*" future made it possible to see which of the city's future plans will be implemented and how they link to the new forms which have already been realized as Georgia's new symbols. The wounded image and citizens' predominantly passive involvement in the capital's transformation allowed new establishments, typical of non-places to become part of the image of Tbilisi. Continuing the transformation of Tbilisi in a similar manner could make its image a corporeal one, consisting of various images in the future.

62 Morisson L. Redeeming sights in the world's 'worst cities' // CNN Travel. Online. 2013 <http://travel.cnn.com/top-sights-worlds-worst-cities-775756> (retrieved 4.03. 2013).

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE

Understanding Voter Decision-making in the Urban Context of Tbilisi

David Sichinava

This article explores the perceptions of voters about the factors influencing electoral decision-making in Tbilisi. Based on in-depth interviews, it is argued that exposure to the media and personal qualities of the politicians are important to voters when it comes to political allegiance. It is argued that the 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia were primarily associated with the wish of voters for changes, their feelings of injustice in political and economic life, the personality of billionaire philanthropist Bidzina Ivanishvili and finally, widely publicized video clips of prisoner torture.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the aspects of decision-making by voters in Tbilisi, Georgia and the influence of particular contextual effects on its formation. The study of electoral behaviour has been central to many disciplines across the social sciences, including political geography. A great deal of scientific literature is dedicated to the study of electoral geographies of the United States and to a lesser extent Western European democracies.[1] Studies concerned with the geographic aspects of voting in the post-Soviet countries are scarce. They primarily investigate regional and historical agents

1 Leib, J., Quinton, N., & Warf, B. (2011) On the shores of the "moribund backwater"?: Trends in electoral geography research since 1990. Revitalizing Electoral Geography, pp. 9–27.

dealing with elections in Ukraine[2] and the electoral geographies of Russia.[3] There is a significant body of literature dedicated to the role of societal cleavages. It is argued that the origins of the cleavages can be traced to the particularities of the democratic transition, types of the Communist rule,[4] pre-Communist and "Leninist" cultural legacies.[5]

It is not clear whether the abovementioned factors provide enough context for explaining the reasons of voting behaviour. This is true especially in the case of Georgia, where the study of elections has been largely neglected, as the country lacks stable party institutions[6] and local political regimes can be more described as hybrid rather democratic.[7] However, since 2008, elections in Georgia have shown a high level of political contestation and voter polarization.[8] They also revealed a strong difference in the voting behaviour of "prestigious" and "working class" neighbourhoods of Tbilisi.

The first context which can contribute to the understanding of voting decision-making in Tbilisi is in the peculiarity of Tbilisi's urban development during the Soviet epoch. Like other union republics, Georgia underwent a very rapid process of urban growth alongside the rise of industrialization. Spatial development of the "socialist" city neighbourhoods was accompanied by a significant level of social segregation, especially in terms of housing allocation in places like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Soviet Union.[9] In the case of Tbilisi, the central prestigious areas of the cities were allocated for the "white-collar" workers and intelligentsia (or so called "privilligentsia"), which formed a distinct social landscape. It can be argued that the social fabric had an influence on the formation of the "networks of discussion and persuasion".[10]

2 O'Loughlin, J. (2001) The regional factor in contemporary Ukrainian politics: scale, place, space, or bogus effect? Post-Soviet Geography and Economics, 42(1), pp. 1–33.

3 Perepechko, A. S., Kolossov, V. A., & ZumBrunnen, C. (2007) Remeasuring and rethinking social cleavages in Russia: Continuity and changes in electoral geography 1917–1995. Political Geography, 26(2), pp. 179–208.

4 Whitefield, S. (2002) Political cleavages and post-communist politics. Annual Review of Political Science, 5(1), pp. 181–200.

5 Kitschelt, H. (1995) Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies Theoretical Propositions. Party Politics, 1(4), pp. 447–472.

6 Nodia, G., & Scholtbach, Á. P. (2006) The political landscape of Georgia: political parties: achievements, challenges and prospects. Eburon Delft.

7 Wheatley, J., & Zürcher, C. (2008) On the Origin and Consolidation of Hybrid Regimes: The State of Democracy in the Caucasus. Taiwan Journal of Democracy, 4(1).

8 Schofield, N., Gallego, M., Jeon, J., & Muskhelishvili, M. (2012) Modelling Elections in the Caucasus. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties, 22(2), 187–214.

9 Topham, S. (1990) Housing policy in Yugoslavia. Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Routledge, London and New York, 402–39.

10 Cox, K. R. (1969) The voting decision in a spatial context. Progress in Geography, 1(1), 81–117.

While the influence of media exposure, political mobilization and campaigning is still influential in established democracies,[11] one cannot neglect the influence of political communications and the media in emerging (or transitional) democracies. As Voltmer notes, in transitional societies, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of mass media, especially considering the formation of institutions and party structures.[12] As is well-documented in the case of Russia,[13] state-controlled media outlets are decisive in ensuring electoral victories of the governmental political groups. Consequently, this pattern could be an important factor in the electoral choices of the individuals in our context.

In light of the above discussion, this article seeks to understand the mechanism of voting decision-making among voters living in Tbilisi. The paper explores the role of voter exposure to the media as one of the influential determinants of electoral choice. It is argued that there are few, if any ideological bases for political affiliation. There is more room for personality-based voting as well as different electoral manipulations. The article also looks through the possible influence of social background and family heritage in the context of the formation of "networks of discussion and persuasion".

This paper analyses 60 in-depth interviews collected in two areas of Tbilisi. Respondents were recruited in the central and prestigious Vake district and in the peripheral, working-class Gldani neighbourhood. First, I will review the research literature which conceptualizes and investigates the peculiarities of voting in post-Communist societies. Later, the aspects of political communications and media influence will be discussed. In the data analysis part, I will summarize key results of the in-depth interviews and finally, discuss main findings and their relation to the literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a significant body of literature investigating the peculiarities of electoral behaviour in post-Communist societies. As it was shown, the "tabula rasa" hypothesis[14] regarding the lack of long-term ideological preferences[15] seems to be either outdated or not sound in the case of this region. There are numerous other debates suggesting

11 Norris, P. (2006) Did the Media Matter? Agenda-Setting, Persuasion and Mobilization Effects in the British General Election Campaign. British Politics, 1(2), 195–221.

12 Voltmer, K. (2006) Mass media and political communication in new democracies (Vol. 42). Psychology Press.

13 White, S., Oates, S., & McAllister, I. (2005) Media effects and Russian elections, 1999–2000. British Journal of Political Science, 35(02), 191–208.

14 Shabad, G., & Slomczynski, K. M. (1999) Political Identities in the Initial Phase of Systemic Transformation in Poland A Test of the Tabula Rasa Hypothesis. Comparative Political Studies, 32(6), 690–723.

15 Kitschelt, H. (1995) Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies Theoretical Propositions. Party Politics, 1(4), 447–472.

different explanations to voter allegiance and the mechanisms of electoral decision-making in these societies.

All institutions in post-Communist countries are complex outcomes of Communist-era systems and of particularities of the transition.[16] On the one hand, current electoral systems mainly depend on the compromises and institutional changes brokered by the elites during the demise of Communism[17] and electoral systems have enormous influence on electoral outcomes.[18] On the other hand, voter preferences and their allegiance can be linked to the particularities of the Communist regime and its transition to democracy.[19] Past legacies, especially voter socialization and exposure to the Soviet past can influence one's political preferences in a systematic manner.[20]

Societal cleavages have long been an important tool for explaining the emergence of party systems in Western democracies,[21] despite criticism.[22] It appears that cleavages are important for post-Communist societies as well.[23] Disregarding the more advanced democracies of the region, divisions along societal borders and their translation into electoral policies can be observed in Ukraine,[24] Russia[25] and at some point – in Georgia.[26]

Cleavages in the post-Communist polities are based on local factors (Whitefield & Evans, 1999) - in contrast to Western European countries, where the emergence of the di-

16 Ishiyama, J. T. (1997) Transitional electoral systems in post-communist Eastern Europe. Political Science Quarterly, 112(1), 95–115.

17 Andrews, J. T., & Bairett Jr, R. L. (2013) Institutions and the stabilization of party systems in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Electoral Studies.

18 Birch, S. (1995) Electoral behaviour in western Ukraine in national elections and referendums, 1989–91. Europe-Asia Studies, 47(7), 1145–1176.

19 Evans, G., & Whitefield, S. (2000) Explaining the formation of electoral cleavages in post-communist democracies. Elections in Central and Eastern Europe: The First Wave, 36–70.

20 Pop-Eleches, G., & Tucker, J. A. (2013) Communist socialization and post-communist economic and political attitudes. Electoral Studies.

21 Karvonen, L., & Kuhnle, S. (2003) Party systems and voter alignments revisited. Routledge.

22 Johnston, R., & Pattie, C. (2003) Representative democracy and electoral geography. A Companion to Political Geography, 337–356.

23 Evans, G., & Whitefield, S. (2000) Explaining the formation of electoral cleavages in post-communist democracies. Elections in Central and Eastern Europe: The First Wave.

24 Clem, R. S., & Craumer, P. R. (2008) Orange, blue and white, and blonde: The electoral geography of Ukraine's 2006 and 2007 Rada elections. Eurasian Geography and Economics, 49(2), 127–151.

25 Perepechko, A. S., Kolossov, V. A., & ZumBrunnen, C. (2007) Remeasuring and rethinking social cleavages in Russia: Continuity and changes in electoral geography 1917–1995. Political Geography, 26(2), 179–208.

26 Sichinava, D. (2015) Cleavage Theory and the Electoral Geographies of Georgia. In Security, Democracy and Development in the Southern Caucasus and the Black Sea Region (Vol. 14).

visions can be explained by the four societal[27] revolutions (these are center-periphery, church-state, urban-rural and employer-employee dichotomies). Evans and Whitefield show that the age, education, religion, ethnicity and employment type define ideological perspective.[28]

Ultimately, these approaches show that Communist and pre-Communist legacies, together with socio-demographic factors, are prone to influence the long-term political affiliation of the voters. However, in many cases voter allegiance seems fluid depending on the particular context. Even in Western democracies, even before the start of "the end of history", politics in Western democracies had become based on short-term factors such as the public image of the candidate and his/her attitudes towards particular issues.[29] Societal cleavages suffered the most, as "traditional" cleavages were gradually suppressed by issue-based voting and "new" cleavages, such as divisions along materialist and post-materialist values and the role of the state regarding foreign policy.[30]

Politics in post-Communist Europe also follows the described pattern. Tavits argues that in post-Communist societies electoral preferences are defined by the economic programmes of the parties and how they communicate with the voters.[31] Consequently, political communications play an important role in defining the political attitudes of the voters.

Political communications and the influence of the media have been important to electoral politics. An immense amount of information and consumption of television opens the floor to the candidate-centred politics.[32] Exposure to mass media has proved effective in electoral campaigns not only - for example - in Britain[33] but also in new democracies.[34]

27 Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967) Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (Eds.), Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives (pp. 1–64). New York: Free Press.

28 Whitefield, S., & Evans, G. (1999) Class, markets and partisanship in post-Soviet Russia: 1993-96. Electoral Studies, 18(2), 155–178.

29 Dalton, R. J., Flanagan, S. C., Beck, P. A., & Alt, J. E. (1984) Electoral change in advanced industrial democracies: realignment or dealignment?. Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ.

30 Deegan - Krause, K. (2007) New dimensions of political cleavage. Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour, 538–556.

31 Tavits, M. (2005) The Development of Stable Party Support: Electoral Dynamics in Post-Communist Europe. American Journal of Political Science, 49(2), 283–298.

32 Habermas, J. (2004) Public space and political public sphere–the biographical roots of two motifs in my thought. Commemorative Lecture, Kyoto, 11.

33 Norris, P. (2006) Did the Media Matter? Agenda-Setting, Persuasion and Mobilization Effects in the British General Election Campaign. British Politics, 1(2), 195–221.

34 Voltmer, K. (2006) Mass media and political communication in new democracies (Vol. 42). Psychology Press.

If we look at the specific examples, the case of Russia is particularly interesting in regard to the effects of media on political engineering. Currently, Russia lacks rigorous democratic institutions while the media strongly influences people's electoral choices. In 1999 and 2000, the previously unknown Vladimir Putin and the ruling Unity party were able to garner comfortable majority in the State Duma, thanks to wide support from the state-run TV channels.[35] The same sources argue that the supporters of the Unity party were more likely to have been watching the news programmes of ORT TV.[36] In a country which can be characterized as having "genuinely pluralistic unfree media",[37] not only do parties use television as a tool for influencing voters, media outlets themselves lead to the emergence of "broadcast parties and candidates".[38]

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper aims to achieve an understanding the mechanisms of the decision-making process among the voters in the urban context of Tbilisi. To do so, I employed in-depth interviews conducted among the residents of two localities of Tbilisi. The selection of the qualitative rather quantitative method is justified from the point of view of capturing varieties of narratives and ideas which cannot be achieved through opinion polls. As the literature suggests, qualitative approaches for investigating people's attitudes towards elections and the electoral processes "generate new insights – which the opinion poll surveys do not".[39] The limitation of such studies is the difficulty of generalizability. However, the approach generates rich data and contributes to the understanding of the processes.

The respondents were recruited from the Gldani and Vake neighbourhoods of Tbilisi. These neighbourhoods were selected in order to capture a wide variety of ideas from diverse respondents having a different social background. As the peculiarities of urban development of Tbilisi suggest, the social fabric of these two areas differ significantly. During the Soviet times, housing in the Vake neighbourhood was mainly allocated to the representatives of so called "privilligentsia" – members of intelligentsia, party officials, artisans and other privileged strata of Soviet Tbilisi, whilst Gldani generally was a "bedroom neighbourhood" for factory workers and lower-level executives.[40] The cur-

35 White, S., Oates, S., & McAllister, I. (2005) Media effects and Russian elections, 1999–2000. British Journal of Political Science, 35(02), 191–208.

36 ORT – state-run federal TV channel in Russia

37 De Smaele, H. (2004) In the name of democracy. Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies, 35.

38 Oates, S. (2006) Where's the Party? Television and Election Campaigns in Russia. Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies. London/New York: Routledge, 152–167.

39 Wilson, K. (2012) How Russians View Electoral Fairness: A Qualitative Analysis. Europe-Asia Studies, 64(1), 145–168.

40 Salukvadze, J., Van Assche, Kristof, & Shavishvili, N. (Eds.). (2010) Tbilisi in Times of Change:socio-cultural dimensions of urban space and urban planning [თბილისი ცვლილებების ხანაში: ურბანული სივრცისა და ქალაქდაგეგმარების სოციალურ-კულტურული განზომილებანი]. TSU publishing.

rent pattern of the social composition in these two areas to a large extent still reflects the Soviet legacy.

I conducted sixty in-depth interviews in both areas (30 in each neighbourhood) taking into account geographic and demographic peculiarities. The respondents were recruited randomly from the electoral precincts being either "typical" or '"deviated" according to the results of the 2012 parliamentary elections of Georgia. The fieldwork was conducted between May and July 2013. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and anonymized bearing in mind ethical considerations.

The respondents were asked about their personal perceptions of particular elections and the electoral process. They were asked about their viewpoints as to how other people decide which political groups or candidates to support. The respondents also spoke about their own strategies of electoral decision-making. The influence of personal networks on individual decision-making led us to ask questions about territorial concentration. The final discussion included narratives on family background and history of living in the place of current residence.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 SETTING THE CONTEXT: NETWORKS OF DISCUSSION AND PERSUASION

This section analyzes the particularities of social networks revealed through the interviews. As Ron Johnston mentions, "attitudes and behaviour patterns are…learned through social interaction in places'[41] and "socialization of voters is a contextual process",[42] hence in many ways, voting decision-making is bound to a particular place and its spatial peculiarities.[43] If we follow the paradigm of political geography, from the theoretical point of view, the possible role of personal networks of influence cannot be denied.

The peculiarities of housing seemingly define the characteristics of these networks and may contribute to their territorial concentration. As the literature shows, the Soviet urban housing allocation system was characterized by a significant level of segregation both in terms of housing quality and geographic location.[44] Until the early 1990s, the residential structure of all socialist cities was almost completely defined by the state,

41 Johnston, R., & Pattie, C. (2003) Representative Democracy and Electoral Geography. A Companion to Political Geography, p. 110.

42 Ibid. p.187.

43 Agnew, J. A. (1987) Place and politics: The geographical mediation of state and society. Allen & Unwin Boston.

44 Gentile, M., & Sjöberg, Ö. (2013) Housing allocation under socialism: the Soviet case revisited. Post-Soviet Affairs, 29(2), 173–195.

with occasional signs of private initiatives.[45] This pattern was maintained in Tbilisi as well, which led to the emergence of distinct prestigious and less prestigious residential areas.

However, as the interviews clearly show, currently the population of the two areas are significantly influenced by population mobility. "*There are very few core families left who were the original residents of this apartment block from the beginning*" (female, Gldani); "*These days we get new neighbours very often…earlier we used to have very close relations with the original residents*" (male, Vake). It seems that formerly close-bonded neighbourhoods were set to deteriorate after the economic transitions of the late 20th century. Population mobility has made it so the only issues which bring the neighbourhood together are those that arise from communal concerns.

Communication between neighbours generally revolves around communal issues. Problems with lifts, water supply, and roofing are the most widely discussed topics that bring neighbours together to resolve common problems. It cannot be denied that there are some discussions about politics and current events, but they do not take place on regular basis. Moreover, almost all neighbours are aware of the possible political preferences of others.

Politics are within very close networks, such as family and immediate friends and the respondents emphasize this fact: *"The truth is formed after debates with family members and friends…things said by a close friends has more weight than some commentary on the internet" (male, Vake).*

As the respondents recall, voter decision-making still depends mainly on personal judgement, rather than on influences from others. The networks of discussion are mainly limited to the immediate family members and, to an even greater extent, close friends, whom the respondents considered their most trusted sources of information. As it is still considered as sensitive topic for discussion, the respondents tended to be cautious in speaking about politics.

4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF VOTING AND ELECTORAL DECISION-MAKING

This section summarizes main narratives regarding the factors pertaining to electoral decision-making. The narratives expose the issues central to the political affiliation and voting intensions of a particular political group or individual. The respondents were also asked to describe the role of particular events which in their opinion had significant influence on the electoral decisions of the population.

The most influential factor revealed from the interviews is the media, especially television, which currently is the main source of information for most Georgians. The respondents underlined the role of the media and television in forming voters' opinions

45 Smith, D. M. The Socialist City // G. Andrusz, M. Harloe, & I. Szelenyi (Eds.) (1996) Cities After Socialism. pp. 70–99. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

and subsequently, their voting intentions. The respondents mention the role of "biased" or "impartial" sources of information. They mention that journalists, who are also partial - can be paid off or "bribed" in turn for spreading news or opinion favouring particular individuals or political groups.

Yet the respondents' thoughts on the media are not totally negative. The narratives include the notion of media importance in general and indicate that media outlets "have to be improved" – *"[Media outlets] need to change, to improve... in order to bring [the truth] to the people"* (male, Gldani); *"[unlike the 1990s], people are more aware now... because of television."* (male, Gldani)

People unanimously agree that television can be an important factor for an individual to decide whom to vote for: *"Bidzina won the elections with the help of Maestro"* (female, Gldani) (Maestro is a TV station that harshly criticized former President Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement party). Respondents state that in many cases voters receive and accept information without sufficient analysis or discussion – "*The influence of mass media is so huge that the individual cannot think for himself... he just follows other ideas"* (male, Vake).

Economic difficulties can push people to accept "bribes" offered by particular political groups. Deepening socio-economic hardships can force people to choose candidates who offer social benefits and jobs. One female respondent from Gldani said: "*People now can be easily bribed with sugar or flour...they do not think about the future but rather about trying to support themselves.... For the pensioner it is ten Lari, addition to his/her state assistance."* Some respondents said that the 2012 parliamentary elections in particular bore a distinct "economic" character on top of the political issues.

Campaigning and party programmes and promises are very central to any democratic election. Normally, they follow the political ideology of a political party/candidate and try to attract voters of corresponding beliefs and maximize their own electoral outcome. Still, the respondents do not consider these to be important. As the interviewees pointed out, political campaign and pre-electoral promises from politicians seem not to strongly influence voters' decisions. It is good to have attractive promises and some people would take this into consideration, but the voters still do not know what they will get after the victory of a particular political group. One respondent recalled that "*I have never seen campaign promises ever fulfilled in Georgia*." (female, Vake)

Another important discussion topic that emerges as important for voting intentions is the personal characteristics of an individual politician or political leader. Mostly respondents agree that a charismatic, strong personality of politician can draw many supporters to him and ensure him a successful political career. Interviewees would especially underline the personality of one politician - "*For some people [like me], education and professionalism is important"* (female, Vake); "*[Ivanishvili] will not 'devour' us as he has already collected a fortune"* (male, Gldani). However, the assessment of personal values is quite controversial – starting from charisma and ability "to do things quickly" to personal fortune. When speaking about the particular personalities and their role on voters' decisions, the respondents in particular recall the case of the 2012 parliamentary elections. Society needed someone who would dare to challenge the existing government. This sort of person would necessarily need an already established positive public image. Among other characteris-

tics, the religiousness of a candidate - more precisely the alignment of a candidate's policies to those of the church - is an important factor for some respondents – *"First of all, I am Orthodox Christian and vote for those who are not against the Church"* (female, Gldani).

The interviews touched on various ideas which, according to the respondents, influence the minds of voters when it comes to voting intentions. They form inter-related clusters of ideas which can be summarized into broader categories. The influence of media, economic aspects, party programmes and the role characteristics of particular politicians are the general topics around which the narratives evolve.

4.3 WHAT LED TO THE "ELECTORAL COUP"?

In the previous section, I summarized the main outcomes of respondents' perceptions regarding the reasons for making specific electoral decisions. As the analysis shows, none of them can be attached to the particular ideological pillars which define party affiliation in more advanced democracies. Apart from the general perceptions, the respondents spoke about their personal experiences of voting decision-making, as well as their perceptions of the most recent elections. In order to differentiate, the respondents were able to compare and describe the situations in the 2008, 2010 and 2012 elections, draw parallels and list the approaches they took.

There are several main directions in the narratives about the main reasons affecting people's decision-making in the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections. The respondents maintained that results of the elections in 2008, especially the presidential election, were falsified and did not reflect the genuine attitudes of voters. Additionally, the weakness of opposition political groups and candidates challenging the incumbent government was named as a reason for the opposition's failure: *"Gachechiladze [presidential candidate] was the wrong leader"* (male, Gldani); *"There was no contest [between the government and opposition] because of the qualities of candidates [from the opposition]"* (female, Vake). The weakness of the opposition, their inability to challenge the government and to fully unite greatly affected the election outcomes.

When discussing the elections of 2008, the respondents also recall the role of political tensions which were fuelled by the opposition protests that were forcefully dispersed on 7 November 2007 and the violent closure of Imedi TV on that day. However, they also point to the indifference from of society caused by pressure from the state.

The local elections in 2010 were largely neglected by the opposition, and the ruling party, Saakashvili's United National Movement, easily achieved a convincing victory. The respondents had a hard time remembering the elections, which also points to low public interest. The informants indicated the greater frustration caused by the 2008 war with Russia, and the weakness of the opposition. Moreover, one can observe some positive attitudes towards Gigi Ugulava[46] as a *"good mayor, who did a lot especially regarding communal services"* (male, Gldani). The proactive campaign on behalf of the

46 UNM candidate running as incumbent for Tbilisi mayor in the 2010 local elections.

government candidate greatly influenced frustrated voters, mobilizing them to vote for Ugulava.

The growing dissatisfaction with the existing system, as well as fear and the release of videos showing inmate abuse in Georgian prisons late in the campaign led to the *"electoral coup organized by the people"* (female, Gldani) in October, 2012. This important milestone in Georgia's recent history was one of the main topics of discussion during the interviews.

The main narrative as to how the voters decided as they did can be broken down thematically. One important reason pointed out was the intention and desire of people to achieve change. The turbulent political situation starting in 2007, economic hardship and widely perceived injustice and the August 2008 war with Russia were listed by the respondents as the reasons for the growing dissatisfaction with the ruling party: "*People en masse understood that something had to change in this country… [Saakashvili's government] did some things but more needed to be done"* (female, Gldani).

Injustice in economic and political life and the "lack of freedom" were other topics pointed out by the interviewees. The most popular phrase for describing this situation was "we were fed up with feeling fear". Fear and the feeling of injustice grew during the last few years of the Saakashvili administration. "*People were stressed … and fed up, as they were not able to speak about their economic problems"* (female, Gldani). Despite the fact that almost all respondents mentioned the many reforms carried out by then-time governing political party, the success achieved was less impressive because they felt the government was disregarding their personal freedoms.

Another important issue pointed out by the respondents was the personality of Bidzina Ivanishvili. As one of the respondents mentioned, in Georgia people have always been preoccupied with personalities, especially those with a strong and established nature. Ivanishvili was the one who could challenge incumbent government – "*Neither [then-opposition figure] Alasania, nor others were able to get rid of the government…"* (female, Vake), additionally, his wealth and experience in economic activities kindled popular hopes for an improved economy and more jobs. Even swing voters who would otherwise sympathize with the United National Movement, would affirmatively vote for Ivanishvili "*hoping that he would do more" for the economy* (female, Gldani). Ivanishvili's emergence in politics greatly influenced the path of political developments in the country - *"Such a person came along who was famous for his good deeds" (female, Vake), "there was no choice, either Misha [Saakashvili] or Bidzina" (male, Vake)*. Ivanishvili's entry into the political battlefield was also linked to popular desire for change.

However, the crucial moment which drew the most swing voters towards the Georgian Dream Coalition was highly publicized prison abuse recordings. Almost all respondents mentioned that even though many people were aware that such abuses took place in prisons, actually seeing the footage sparked waves of protest and pushed neutral voters towards the opposition coalition. Nevertheless, the respondents said that they, as well as the majority of their neighbours, friends and relatives had already made up their minds before the release of the videos. When speaking about their own decisions, the respondents point out that it was totally personal and no one had influenced them, but many of them indicate that there were important discussions among close individuals prior to the voting process as well.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are several factors contributing to electoral decision-making in the described context. Political campaigning and pre-electoral slogans do not play significant role in attracting voters to a particular platform. As Georgia largely remains a country where TV is the main source of information, the attitudes towards different political actors are influenced by voters' exposure towards media, especially television. The October 2012 election outcomes markedly displayed the role of socio-economic difficulties, the sense of injustice and the fear of persecution, which appear to have contributed to the formation of the protest vote. Finally, the personal values of the candidates also played an important role in voter decision-making.

When it comes to discussion of various topics, including politics, friends and family members are the main interlocutors. Discussion and persuasion inside these interpersonal networks are one of the import factors contributing to the formation of voting behaviour.

Despite the theoretical background drawn from the experience of new Eastern European democracies, the collected evidence in Tbilisi shows that during for at least the last five years, there has been limited basis for the mobilization of voters under the umbrella of ideologically motivated political parties. It cannot be denied that major political groups in the country claim to be following one or another ideological path, however, party preferences in the above-described context could be better connected to the love-or-hate attitude towards (particular) politicians and additionally, towards media outlets.

Here we come up to the "chicken or the egg" problem– is the lack of ideologically motivated political parties pushing the voters to concentrate on the personalities and mass media or does the present state of the society itself not allow such parties to exist? We could argue these circumstances are not mutually exclusive and can exist together.

On the one hand, it should be noted that the respondents tended to recall the images left from the previous parliamentary elections, where the role of ideological voting was totally neglected. Additionally, despite declared attachment to a particular ideology, political groups in Georgia are more "catch-all" and populist, even amorphous unions,[47] which makes it difficult for ideologically based parties to exist and for voters to concentrate on ideological considerations.

Theoretical evidence shows[48] that communication of economic platforms can play an immense role in persuading voters to back particular political groups. Collected evidence points to the strength of this pattern in case of Tbilisi. Economic injustice, which was named as one of the reasons for popular disdain with the UNM government man-

47 Nodia, G., & Scholtbach, Á. P. (2006) The political landscape of Georgia: political parties: achievements, challenges and prospects. Eburon Delft.

48 Tavits, M. (2005) The Development of Stable Party Support: Electoral Dynamics in Post-Communist Europe. American Journal of Political Science, 49(2), pp. 283–298.

aged to draw more interest to the personality of B. Ivanishvili, as a successful entrepreneur and famed philanthropist.

However, for the 2012 parliamentary elections, political communications can be acknowledged as the main tool for influencing voters. As is the case in Russia, both the government and the opposition widely acknowledge the crucial role of media outlets, especially television. Must-carry rules mandating cable providers to offer all Georgian news broadcasters were approved under pressure from civil society organizations[49] and opened up new forums for the opposition.

The interviews show that exposure to television significantly influenced voters. In the 2012 polls the then-opposition managed to communicate effectively with the voters and influence a big enough share of swing voters. Potential voters were already affected by the image of B. Ivanishvili, who can be described as a "broadcast candidate"[50] taking into consideration his successful image-making through the means of print and electronic media.

The opposition found another way of influencing undecided voters. The distribution of the recordings of prisoner abuse through television and other sources of electronic media was described by the voters as an important trigger for particular electoral action. The opposition not only successfully engineered the image of the coalition leader but, by distributing potentially disturbing materials, gained the support of many swing voters.

To summarize, the described context follows the already predefined path of post-Communist polities. As there is no stable basis for party identification, voters are exposed to the political messages and significant media bias.[51] Close similarities to the Russian case do not necessarily mean the possibility of a "Russian scenario" in Georgia. Improved electoral systems and economic situation experienced through the multiple cycles of democratic transition can lead to higher valence party systems (Tavits, 2005),[52] which can suppress the role of media bias and aid the switch to party identification on ideological bases.

49 Civil.Ge | "Must-Carry" Rules in Pre-Election Period Approved. Retrieved June 7, 2015, from <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24940>.

50 Oates, S. (2006) Where's the Party? Television and Election Campaigns in Russia. Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies. London/New York: Routledge, 152–167.

51 Voltmer, K. (2004) Political communication between democratization and the trajectories of the past. Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies, p. 215.

52 Tavits, M. (2005) The Development of Stable Party Support: Electoral Dynamics in Post-Communist Europe. American Journal of Political Science, 49(2), pp. 283–298.

The Issue of Religious Pluralism in Armenia

Hovhannes Hovhannisyan

Religious pluralism is a multidimensional and comprehensive concept which refers to the interaction of religious actors, their approaches to religious diversity and their behaviour in religious matters. The article discusses the current situation and prospects of religious pluralism on the example of the Word of Life religious organization[1] in Armenia. The article analyses the general attitude towards religious minorities, the factors affecting to the formation of these attitudes and the impact of these attitudes on the lives of individual representatives of religious minorities. The article also examines the situation in the religious sphere through the eyes of the members of the minority religious organization - in contrast to previous studies which tended to emphasize the position of the majority or restrict their interests to independent analysis of the overall situation from outside. The attitude of Armenian Apostolic Church and the local media towards religious minorities is also within the article's scope. The basic research question is: how did the de-privatization of religion or the return of religious ideas to the public space influence the national identity of Armenians? The sub-questions of the research are: How is religious pluralism interpreted within the Armenian context under the influence of the evolving Word of Life religious organization? Judging by the example of minority Church members, does religious affiliation influence national identity? What is the impact of the media on identity perceptions of minority groups? What are basic ideological characteristics of the Word of Life religious organization by its follower-members?

The research revealed that the Word of Life religious organization has a special place within the framework of religious organizations in Armenia. Its members are fully involved in the social, cultural, economic life of Armenia and their ethnic identity sometimes supersedes their religious identity. Like the members of other minority groups, they also experience lack of religious pluralism and different problems stemming from negative media portrayals, but still they try to be more integrated into the public life of Armenia and Armenian society.

1 The Word of life organization is an Evangelical-Pentecostal church based in Armenia in 1990. The first pastor of the Church was Leonid Marco. Since 1993 the chief pastor of the Church has been Arthur Simonyan. In 1993 the Church was registered at the Ministry of Justice of Armenia. The Church is a member of international Word of life movement but is completely independent. It has more than 10,000 followers in Armenia.

The research is based on a qualitative methodology which includes the following components: review of specialized books, studies, articles, reports and electronic resources in different languages, media resources (press conferences, articles, etc.), in-depth interviews conducted with representatives of Word of Life religious organization, focus groups, observations at the Church.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT: THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO THE ARMENIAN CASE

The term "religious pluralism" in Armenian context is translated in two ways: կրոնական բազմախոհություն /kronakan bazmakhohutyun/ and կրոնական բազմազանություն /kronakan bazmazanutyun/. The first term may be translated literally as religious multi-thinking which refers mostly to the virtual sphere of rationality and not to the social reality. The second term is translated as religious diversity, and this refers to the social diversity of religions but does not encompass attitudes towards the religious organizations. The term "pluralism" does not have appropriate true synonym in the Armenian language and for this reason it is usually confused with diversity, tolerance and other similar terms without involving the comprehensive meaning of the term pluralism. The term pluralism implies a reality which is between "religious multi-thinking" and "religious diversity" and also refers to the rules of interaction among different religious and non-religious actors and institutions within a society.

Review of religious developments in Armenia takes place, too, within the context of the broader scholarly study of religion around the world. This study is characterized by "privatization/new forms of religion" (Luckmann), "de-secularization" (Berger), "revival of religion" (Tomka), etc. In modern times theories in religious studies have dramatically changed along with the social situation in respect of religion. One of current theories is the theory of "return of religious ideas to the public sphere (Casanova)", which is quite useful from the standpoint of the present research and its methodological approach. In the case of privatization and individualization theories it is emphasized that religion in modernity has to find its place outside public debates or political engagement.

D. Griffin understands the religious pluralism as an attitude which does not accept only one religion as the only legitimate one and rejects the beliefs of others, while religious diversity refers to the sociological understanding that there are many religions and religious traditions.[2] Religious pluralists believe that religions other than their own

2 Griffin, D. R. (2005) Deep Religious Pluralism, Westminster John Knox Press, p. 8-21.

may provide positive values and through ethical means even bring people to salvation.[3]

It is very interesting to learn about the attitudes of new religious movements and their adherents towards each other, towards other religious groups and vice versa.

The emergence of new religious movements and their forms of representation brought about the development of a new theory on the "de-privatization" of religion. J. Casanova argues that in the 1980s religion returned to the public sphere as many professionals, social scientists, media representatives and others started to pay more attention to religion, religious ideas, the role of religion in society, politics, history and other forms of social and public life. This theory was revolutionary in the context of the past theories - which were mostly theories of secularization and religious privatization. It argues that religion exited the private realm and entered the public sphere, thus becoming subject to moral and political contestation. Another interesting aspect of this theory is that Casanova illustrates his theory through the political developments in the modern world.[4]

The central term of his theory is "de-privatization" of religion in the modern world. By this term he tries to counter theories on marginal and private religions, as well as theories on secularization, and shows that the social movements of the late 20th century are tightly connected to the processes under way within the societies, which in turn are linked to the processes under way within the religions. In modern times religious institutions refuse to restrict themselves to the salvation of individual souls and think globally about issues like diseases, wars, the formation of civil societies, and about ways to connect private and public morality. At the same time he asserts that the "de-privatization" process forces scholars to think innovatively and critically, while not necessarily denying the equivalence of secularization to religious decline, differentiation and privatization.[5] Following to this theory we should state that in the Armenian case it is quite difficult to differentiate the religious and secular spheres as there has not been any valid research on this matter. This differentiation is difficult also because, unlike the European countries or America, Armenia was part of Soviet Union and had forced upon it false values in the form of atheism and after the collapse of Soviet Union a significant number of atheists remained. Sometimes "atheists" are sometimes not differentiated from "secular people".

To understand and critically evaluate the role of religion and religious institutions in the present time and in respect to other social structures and institutions is also important to study the new forms of religions or new religious movements from the point

3 The theological implications of the term "religious pluralism" are beyond of the scope of this article. To understand the theological aspect of the term religious pluralism and the pluralism of Christian theology it is useful to study the works of authors such as John Hick, Paul Knitter, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and John Cobb. See, John Hick and Paul Knitter, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religion.

4 Casanova J., (1994) Public religion in the modern world. Chicago.

5 Ibid, p. 17-39.

of view of the clash between the modern and traditional. How do these religious movements overcome such clashes or how they manage to adapt these two largely contradictory aspects of life into one religious structure and movement? How do modern and pre-modern aspects cooperate in a social context and how do the social configurations impact individual religious organizations. The variety of configurations of modern societies is much greater than earlier theorists were aware of, and has now led to the concept of "multiple modernities".[6]

Exploring the concept of pluralism, D. Eck defines it as opposite to religious extremism. She concludes that pluralism is not just the enumeration of difference, and it is certainly not just the celebration of diversity in a spirit of good will. Pluralism is the engagement of difference in the often difficult yet creative ways that the scholars can observe, investigate, and interpret. In investigating the deliberate construction of multireligious relationships, we might find a set of paradigms for pluralism, a set of practices, each of which expands the social space of religious encounter. Pluralism is something that should not eliminate cultures but rather connect them.[7] The attributes of exclusion and inclusion dictated by religious pluralism and development of diversified societal order is further developed by W. R. Hutchison. He states that "pluralism is the acceptance and encouragement of diversity, is a fighting word for participants in contemporary culture wars, and a key concept for those who write about them".[8] He also makes some important implications for the concept of pluralism, which in his opinion is not only a right but also a responsibility involving participation. "Pluralism as participation implied a mandate for individuals and groups to share responsibility for the forming and implementing of the society's agenda".[9]

T. Banchoff extends the normative description of religious pluralism to describe the patterns of peaceful interaction among diverse religious actors—individuals and groups who identify with and act out of particular religious traditions. Religious pluralism is the interaction of religious actors with one another and with the society and the state around concrete cultural, social, economic, and political agendas[10]. In this respect the author concludes that the concept of religious pluralism maps best within the national democratic context. In its turn global politics has a great impact on the transformation of religious pluralism but at the same time one should consider the emergence of such new phenomena as change of transnational religious networks, the rise of evangelicals, changes in papacy, Muslim networks or the Jewish Diaspora. These forces have started to more actively interact with actors of international politics and have indirect influence on the change of politics globally and locally.

6 Eisenstadt, S. N. (2002) Multiply Modernities, Transaction Publishers.

7 Eck, D. Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion. Journal of the American Academy of Religion, December 2007, Vol. 75, No. 4, pp. 743–776.

8 Hutchison, William R. (2003) Religious Pluralism in America. Michigan, p. 1.

9 Ibid, p. 7.

10 Banchoff, T. (2007) Religious Pluralism, Globalization and World Politics. Oxford, p. 5.

The emergence of new forms of religious pluralism is somehow connected to the development of new means of communication. "New communications technologies not only enable the creation and sustenance of transnational religious communities, thereby sustaining a high degree of religious pluralism in world politics, but also foster an internal diversification of religious traditions".[11] New means of communication somehow change the role and functions of religious actors which in turn brings changes to the relationship with world politics and international political actors. Summing up his ideas on the interaction of religion and religious institutions with State authorities and institutions, Banchoff concludes that "religious pluralism in world affairs is a fragile construct because of the decentralized structure of the state system".[12]

Another angle of the concept is developed by P. Beyer, who argues that religious pluralism was given specific interpretation and explanation in order to give privileges to a specific religious organization in respect to others. He argues that religion may serve as a source for inclusion as well as a source for exclusion. He makes a clear distinction between freedom of religion and freedom of religions interpretation, the latter clearly showing in a country context which religions are recognized and which organizations can be considered as religions. He also identifies the relationship between religion(s) and other societal institutions, including the state and the law. This relationship decided the future of religions and their role in society in general. The third essential aspect is the relationship of local and global. He shows how religion or religions may change depending on the situation and the context they belong to. He analyses the impact of political institutions on religious freedom and its restrictions and concludes that religions may serve in societies to achieve such goals that may become useful even for non-religious groups or for other religions.[13]

Religious pluralism is a social construct differing from society to society as the interpretation and application of this concept in legal, political, societal and discursive dimensions are not only different but sometimes even contradictory. The Armenian context is no exception. Religious pluralism in Armenia depends on the social structure of Armenian society, its political orientations, religious and other traditions. Religious pluralism in democratic and multiethnic and multi-religious societies cannot be compared to ethnically homogenous countries (such as Armenia) and non-democratic regimes which reject the notion that there is a need for any kind of diversity and pluralism. "Where State Institutions guarantee individual freedoms, majority rule, and constitutional order, the interaction of diverse religious communities is more likely to remain peaceful."[14]

11 Ibid, p. 10.

12 Ibid.

13 Beyer, P. Constitutional Privilege and Constituting Pluralism: Religious Freedom in National, Global, and Legal Context. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, No.42, 2003, pp. 333-339.

14 Banchoff, T. (2008) Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics, Oxford University Press, p. 5.

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT IN ARMENIA, ITS CLASSIFICATION AND CURRENT REPRESENTATIONS

The Armenian Evangelical Church was founded in 1846 by a group of reformists within Armenian Apostolic church who were excommunicated by Armenian Patriarch Matteos Chouhajian. Four years later it was granted the status of independent Protestant Millet (confessional community in Ottoman Turkey) by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Mejid. After excommunication, a group of reformists officially established the Armenian Evangelical Church in Constantinople in the Bera section in 1846. The first members of the Armenian Evangelical Church (37 men and 3 women) were evangelized by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.), who were previously members of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Nevertheless, the Armenian Evangelical movement tries to connect itself with the medieval Armenian religious movement of Tondrakian and Paulician.[15]

By permitting the establishment of the Armenian Evangelical Church in Turkey and by giving it some privileges the Ottoman government aimed to weaken the positions of Armenian Apostolic Church and the role of Patriarch in national affairs. Small Evangelical groups started their activities in Eastern Armenia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In Shushi, Shamakhi and Tiflis Evangelical schools and colleges were functioning.[16] The evangelicals implemented quite a wide variety of activities, starting with missionary work, education, publications, and translation of the Bible. Unlike the Armenian Apostolic church, the Evangelicals received financial assistance from Protestant churches of the West, which enabled them to carry out wide-scale education activities through secular and spiritual schools, colleges and other institutions. At the same time many Armenians may have been motivated to convert to the Armenian Evangelical church because of the insecure situation in Turkey - as they thought that doing so might lead Western states support their security and national integrity. Raffi suggest that the Armenian Evangelical church had more converts during the repressions and massacres initiated by Sultan Abdul Hamid at the end of 19th century.[17]

15 The ideological and historical connection of the current Armenian Evangelical movement with the Tondrakian and Paulician movements was a hot topic within academic circles. This idea was promoted by F. C. Conybeare based on the eighteenth-century manuscript titled The Key of Truth. See F.C. Conybeare, The Key of Truth. A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia (Oxford, 1898). Also see N. Garsoïan, The Paulician Heresy, …A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire, (The Hague, Paris, 1967). This hypothesis was also developed by L. Arpee, A. Keorkezian, V. Tootikyan, R. Levonyan. In a recent work, A. Ohanjanyan denies that this hypothesis is based on the textual, historical, theological analysis and calls it "mythos waiving". Ohanjanyan, A. Evangelical and Pentecostal Communities in Armenia: Negotiating Identity and Accommodation. Armenian Christianity Today, ed. by Alexandr Aghajanyan, 2014 pp. 100-101.

16 For detailed information on the branches of Armenian Evangelical church see Tootikian, V. Armenian Evangelical church (1846-1996), Detroit, 1996.

17 Raffi, What kind of reformations does Western Armenia need?, Collection of Volumes, vol. 11, Yerevan, 1991, p. 55. [Րաֆֆի, Ի՞նչ վերանորոգություններ պետք են տաճկական Հայաստանին, Երկերի ժողովածու, հ. 11, Եր., 1991, էջ 55]:

Nowadays, Turkey does not recognize and does not register the Armenian Evangelical church as a religious minority though the Church continues its activities in the preservation of Armenian identity.

In 1923 the Government of Soviet Armenia officially recognized the Araratian unity of the Armenian Evangelical Church and registered its statue. But after the repressions of the 1930s, the activities of Evangelical churches were prohibited in the territory of Soviet Union. The Armenian Evangelical Church maintains amicable and cooperative relations with the Armenian Apostolic Church. The cooperation in providing education to Armenian migrants in Constantinople is a vivid example of the good relations between the two Churches.[18] The same cannot be said for the relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Evangelical/Pentecostal churches operating in the Republic of Armenia.

Evangelical churches and groups in Eastern Armenia were independent units, as a result of the political division of Armenia between Turkey and Russia. The Armenian Evangelical Church in Soviet Armenia could not operate because all religious organizations were prosecuted or prohibited by Soviet authorities. In the 1970s several protestant groups were secretly created which eventually - after independence - became the sister churches of the Evangelical/Pentecostal movement under different titles and names. One of the first Evangelical pastors in Armenia, Samvel Navoyan, described the evangelization process in Soviet Armenia and also during the current period, as well as the all Pentecostal/Charismatic communities and unions in today's Armenia.[19]

The Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, following the common tendencies in the world, started to diversify and branch out in the 1990s. The majority are registered in the Ministry of Justice of Armenia and conduct quite transparent activities.[20] A. Ohanjanyan divides the Protestant churches of Armenia into three large groups: Evangelical churches, Evangelical Baptist churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches.

Among the aforementioned groups, the Pentecostal churches are the most diverse in Armenia. A. Ohanjanyan also divides these churches into traditional and neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic branches. Probably the oldest traditional Pentecostal Church is the Full Gospel Church of Armenia (Amboghjaavetaranakan ekexeci). The largest neo-Pentecostal church is the Church Word of Life (Kyanki khosk) which is thought to be the most socially active and at the first glance as liberal but at its roots is very conservative. Its senior priest is Arthur Simonyan, who is seen as one of the most powerful leaders within Pentecostal circles.[21]

18 Ghanalanyan, T. Armenian Protestants. 21st Century, N2 (8), 2010, p. 78-79.

19 Navoyan, S. Challenges for Awakening. Yerevan, 2012, in Armenian.

20 The list of registered religious organization may be found here: <http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kron/Tsutsak2-%20herakhos%20gov.pdf>.

21 The typology or classification of current Evangelical/Pentecostal movements and churches is done by A. Ohanjanyan and I have used her article to describe the current situation in Armenia. Ohanjanyan, A. Evangelical and Pentecostal Communities in Armenia: Negotiating Identity and Accommodation. Armenian Christianity Today, ed. by Alexandr Aghajanyan, pp. 97-98.

The Word of Life religious organization has connections with other Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Russia, as well as good relations with Pentecostal churches abroad. The leaders of Pentecostal churches often go abroad to have meetings with their sister churches and preach in their communities. Global Pentecostal bodies often send priests to Armenia who come and preach in foreign languages to Armenian communities. These churches regularly cooperate with each other through different platforms.

Apart from spiritual matters, these Churches cooperate with each other in their relations with state authorities. The recent developments in the discussions on the law on freedom of conscience and religion showed that Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are firmly united in the issues concerning their communities and their future functioning in Armenia. The only exception is the conservative Pentecostal church, which does not maintain any regular relationship with other churches and is concentrated purely on worship and somehow is isolated not only from society but also from the sister churches. The other Evangelical and Pentecostal churches usually discuss issues concerning the religious minorities and make decisions concerning their future and current life in Armenia.

According to the press secretary of the Word of Life religious organization, the Evangelical Baptist and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have tried to start a dialogue with the AAC, but the relationship between them still remains cold. As previously mentioned, only the Armenian Evangelical Church and the Evangelical Church of Yerevan have achieved a mutual understanding with the AAC. The leader of the Word of Life Church, Arthur Simonyan, has called for the organization of a round table for all Christian churches, where the AAC would have precedence, since it is the root of Armenian churches. He says this would be a good start for launching a dialogue at an appropriate level.[22]

The dominant Church, however, has not responded to such proposals, as the Armenian Apostolic church considers all these protestant churches as "robbers" who "robbed" the members of its community. It openly says that the members who are now within the Evangelical or Pentecostal churches will come back to the mother-Armenian Apostolic Church and that this is only a matter of time.[23] The Evangelical and Pentecostal churches usually do not answer or reply to the criticism from the priests of the Armenian Apostolic Church or individuals and organizations supporting the Armenian Apostolic church. These people often use the argument of identification of national, ethnic and religious identity and consider that any other church - with its non-traditional values and approaches - is a threat to the preservation of Armenian identity in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

22 Interview with Word of Life Church secretary Armen Lusyan, 06.05.2014.

23 The speech of archimandrite Vardan Navasardyan, head of Christian Education center at Etchmiadzin at Erebuni Hotel during the presentation of research on teaching issues of the Armenian Church history subject, May 2012, <www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6Rm7Y7q6T8>.

"SECTS" AND "BELIEVERS": IS THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF ARMENIANS UNDER THREAT?

After the of adoption Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD, the Armenian Apostolic church gradually became the lone religious institution for the majority of Armenians. During the following centuries it claimed to be the main preserver of Armenian national identity by conflating the religious and national identities and affiliations. This position brought the Armenian Apostolic Church into conflict against "others", especially the "religious others". The Armenian Apostolic Church called the other religious minorities "sects" or "heretics". The best known "heretics" were the Paulicians and Tondrakians. For a long time the Armenian Apostolic Church did not have any real competitor in the spiritual sphere save for some missionaries from Protestant and Catholic Churches, who had experienced short-lived success.

After the independence of Armenia in 1991 and the proclamation the freedom of conscience, many religious denominations established communities in Armenia. The majority of them were Evangelical/Pentecostal churches. The hegemonic role of the Armenian Apostolic Church was endangered. The Armenian Apostolic Church refused to have any formal or informal relationships with these communities which, according to Church leaders, endanger the national unity, identity and integrity of the Armenian nation. The Armenian Apostolic Church identifies its members with the Armenian nation, considers itself the national church and, according to some hierarchs, the members of other churches are not considered to be "real Armenians". Even atheist Armenians are not considered Armenians by some priests.[24]

The issue of faith or belief does not play a central role in the relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and religious minorities. According to some surveys, the majority of Armenians associate themselves with Armenian Apostolic Church but do not take active part in rituals or liturgies apart from major feasts and traditional rituals (weddings, baptisms, etc.).[25] The issue of faith or belief among Armenians was never previously a topic of discussion, and now people who proclaim their beliefs openly and publicly are labelled as "sects" in public discourse. At the same time, members of non-Apostolic religious groups, who are often called "sectarians", are also called "believers" by the majority, and this word used in that context has a negative connotation. One of the followers of the Word of Life religious organization says: "*Many of my neighbours and relatives started to talk to me saying that you I would go mad but over time they understood that there is nothing bad in attending this church and they have stopped to condemning and criticizing me*".[26] For this reason the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church do not identify themselves as "believers" - though if they do identify as such they stress that they belong to the majority Church. For the clergy

24 Announcement of Priest Ter Asoghik at Yerkir Media TV show, <www.youtube.com/watch?v=VV4vqErTBcU>.

25 Caucasus Barometer 2009-2013 (Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by the Caucasus Resource Research Center), <www.crrc.am/research-and-surveys/caucasusarometer/online-data-analysis?lang=en>.

26 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 07.05.2014.

of the Armenian Apostolic Church, "belonging without believing" is more important than "believing without belonging". This is linked to the fact that the majority of the population in Armenia can be described as largely secular and the Church does not play major role in their everyday life.

The focus on the identification of nationality and Church membership not only contradicts the local and international legal instruments, it also may lead to stratification within the Armenian society, as a part of Armenian society becomes marginalized. The marginalization process is strengthened by the close relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the state authorities on one hand and the media on the other. The distinction in Armenian society happens when somebody is not a member of the mainstream and declares herself/himself part of a minority group. "*In Armenia, you are already deprived of some rights - no matter which minority group you belong to - and also you should expect to be under pressure all the time from different actors of the society.*"[27]

As a result, members of Word of Life religious organization sometimes talk about their personal marginalization due to the selective attitude of the Armenians in the majority. They even try to hide their belonging to this minority Church at job interviews or at their jobs, as they fear that either their will not get the job or they will be fired because of their religious affiliation. Notwithstanding these fears, in interviews they could not mention any specific case when somebody was fired on the basis of religious affiliation.[28]

Members of the Word of Life religious organization are quite suspicious and critical of the use of the word "sect" as many of them have faced the problem of being called adherents of a sect and have experienced intolerance or even hostility. This attitude is general to all kinds of "other religious organizations" as the mainstream in the society thinks that sects destroy the national identity of Armenia and act against national interests. Such notions are exacerbated by the statements by some officials and Armenian Apostolic Church clergy.[29] A member of the Word of Life church says that sometimes very nationalistic people call her a sectarian and insult her in social media - especially on Facebook. Xenophobic commenters are often provoked by journalists who write articles condemning religious minorities. "*There are certain people who work against religious minorities and create a false image of these organizations and the rest of the nation believes this so-called news. The society does not have the ability to analyze and they are against the Word of Life most of all because this Church is one of the biggest and fastest growing.*"[30]

27 Ibid.

28 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization on 11.05.2014. He only recalled one case when an Armenian from Los Angeles refused to talk to him when he learnt of his membership of the Evangelical/Pentecostal church.

29 The announcement by Archimandrite Komitas that religious minorities receive billions of dollars from abroad to destroy the Armenian state was made at a press conference at the Noyan Tapan club, 09.09.2013, <http://nyut.am/archives/41868>.

30 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 07.05.2014.

Marginalization of Word of Life members happens even more often in their neighbourhoods and families. Many members of the church said that their relatives and neighbours had some suspicions and hidden fears towards them when they learnt about their religious affiliation but after some time they start to continue the regular relationship though some barriers exist. Mostly they try to avoid religious topics, as the discussion of such topics often leads to disputes and arguments. One of the interviewees described his relationship with his father after becoming member of the Church. His father told him the following: *"'It would be better if you became a drug user than a member of that Church.' He even threw my clothes into the street saying 'go and choose between me and your God and until you make your choice do not come back.' He did not know anything about churches but for him the concept of being a believer - which is mostly associated with religious minorities - was shocking."*[31] This approach is not very common but it does happen within some social groups, particularly those where the influence of criminal subculture is strong and one's belonging to a minority church or being a "believer" is not considered honourable or "manly" behaviour.

The members of the Church take part in the national and state celebrations just like the other citizens of the country. They have quite patriotic approaches towards national ideas and national unity, as well as towards the 1915 Genocide or the Nagornyy Karabakh issue. Many of them served in the Armenian army and are ready to send their children to protect the country and to fulfil their constitutional obligation. They are critical of those who paint all religious minorities in Armenia with the same brush and stress that Jehovah's Witnesses do not serve in the army. They mostly connect this to lack of knowledge about religious organizations operating in Armenia on the one hand and intentional accusations form state authorities and other bodies on the other. Though there are some cases in the army when they knew that people belong to some religious organizations (they fill in special forms, which include a question on religious affiliation, and as these people are not inclined to lie they write their true religious belonging) they do not promote them or they end up in more dangerous places, particularly places close to the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. One of the respondents described how the Word of Life religious organization changed his life and led him to decide to come back from Turkey (where he was working) and live in his homeland. He explained that the Church made him more patriotic regarding national issues.[32] In other words, Armenian identity is stronger than the identity of being a member of the Word of Life religious organization.

The members of Word of Life say that their basic distinguishing characteristics are their values system, which, in their opinion, is different from that of the majority of Armenians. While defining social identity, core values may be secular as well, but in the majority of cases they refer to some religious idea or religion itself.[33] Many members of the Word of Life religious organization are in the process of personal, group, or social identity construction

31 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 11.05.2014.

32 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 08.05.2014.

33 Weissbrod, L. Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society. Review of Religion Research, Vol. 24, No. 3, March 1983, pp. 188-189.

as many of them were newly proselytized and still clash with the traditions and orders of the society where they continue living. This is the reason why they identify the Armenian Apostolic Church as their mother church and many of them even continue to get married in the Apostolic Churches, bowing to tradition and societal pressure.[34]

One of the core values they mention in the Church is "living as real Christians". For many of them the inspiration was the life of senior priest and Church leader Arthur Simonyan. They say that they chose the Word of Life because they *"did not see any discrepancy between the behaviour and the words of the people and they lived according to the word of the Bible".*[35] Being Christian to most of them means maintaining traditional family values and in this respect there are no discrepancies with the traditional conservative churches. During the Saturday and Sunday services, the pastors pay essential attention to the preservation of family values and the importance of the firm and traditional family in Christian life.

Many of the respondents are under the influence of the mainstream negative attitude towards Europe and European values, which are considered to be at variance with Christian values. This is probably the result of the influence of Armenian media coverage in recent times - that is, in circumstances[36] where European values are mostly seen as promoting homosexuality and homosexual marriage, destroying the traditional family and crushing the national identity (language, traditions, customs, religion, etc.) of small nations through globalization and integration. This approach was evident among some of the respondents. One of them, who repatriated from Ukraine, says the following: *"There are many issues where Europe went astray, such as the gender problem or the homosexuality issue. But Armenia stays traditional and this is very good from the standpoint of maintaining the classic form of the family"*. He was also unhappy with family arrangements in Ukraine *"where men are drinking and women start to work to support the family"*. He was also against sex education classes in schools and talking about such taboo topics in general.[37]

RELATIONS WITH MEDIA

Media, especially TV, play an enormous role in the generation of public opinion and has quite a significant impact on the public consciousness. Media surveys conducted by CRRC in 2008-2011 served as a good source for this. On the institutional or public level, informa-

34 Interview with a couple of the Word of Life religious organization, 08.05.2014.

35 Focus group with Word of Life church members, 07.05.2014.

36 On 3 September 2013 Armenia announced its plan to become a member of the Russian-led Customs Union, backtracking on its previously stated commitment to sign an Association Agreement with EU. Afterwards, the pro-governmental media started a "crusade" against the Europe and European values.

37 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 07.05.2014.

tion regarding religious minorities generally comes from the media.[38] Many representatives of religious minorities say that nothing harms their institution, activities, and everyday life more than unprofessional reporting by corrupt journalists. The Yerevan Press Club, a professional media monitoring organization, monitored the coverage of religious issues by the media for the period of 18 November 2011 - 25 July 2012. The volume of studied media material comprises 1,020 items touching on religious issues in one way or another. Ninety-six of them (less than 10%) contained value-based convictions and stereotypes towards religions, religious denominations and religious communities. The study also found that, more often than not, the term "tolerance" in the Armenian media context, generally means ignorance of other religious organizations rather than tolerance as such. On one hand, these numbers suggest a relatively neutral position by the Armenian media regarding religious issues. On the other hand, there are very few, if any, reports and materials providing affirmative information or creating a positive image of religious minorities. According to this study the most tolerant TV channel towards the other religious organizations was Shoghakat TV, which is under direct supervision of Armenian Apostolic Church. This channel discusses only the AAC and never refers to any other religious organization. However, the term "tolerant" seems meaningless in this context as not referring to any other religious organization other than AAC is not a sign of pluralism or tolerance.

Recently, international organizations and local NGOs have been paying much attention to the training of journalists writing about religious minorities. After attending seminars journalists claim an essential change and improvement in their knowledge but in general the situation does not improve.[39]

Media sensationalism poses a real problem for religious minorities, according to most respondents. Journalists emphasize religious aspects of stories, often out of context, especially in cases that are likely to attract attention. During the past five years the volume of electronic media outlets in Armenia has increased substantially but the quality of the information has not improved. Many such electronic resources just copy from the other media in violation of ethical and professional rules. Many journalists want to garner more "clicks" for their website and prove their efficiency to their employer - this is why they tend towards the sensational in writing headlines about issues such as religious minorities.[40] Such sensational headlines sometimes truly hurt members

38 Media content analysis conducted by Armenian Helsinki Committee in 2010 covering the years 2001-2009 shows that media in general reported positively on Armenian Apostolic Church and rather neutral and often negatively on other religious denominations. See Freedom of Religion in Armenia, A study by M. Yeranosyan, A. Ishakhanyan, V. Ishkhanyan, chapter 3, pp. 27-35, <http://armhels.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/344eng-Freedom_of_Religion_in_Armenia.pdf>. There are examples from various media outlets included. A study by the Collaboration for Democracy NGO called "Religious Tolerance in Armenia" also addressed the issue of mass media, focusing on specific media publications. Authors suggest that the media plays an extremely negative role in the formation of negative stereotypes of religious minorities - Jehovah's Witnesses in particular. See Danielyan S., Vardanyan, V., Avtandilyan, A. Religious Tolerance in Armenia, Yerevan, 2011.

39 OSCE and Collaboration for Democracy center each year organize such seminars for about 40 journalists. See <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/92291>.

40 Media monitoring 2009, Religious Tolerance in Armenia, by Collaboration for Democracy center, <www.religions.am/arm/documents/comments/ Կրոնական-անհանդուրժողականությունը-Հայաստանում/>.

of religious minorities. For example, one newspaper headline was "Was the person who committed suicide a Jehovah's Witness?". After complaints from the Jehovah's Witnesses organization, the same newspaper wrote another article with the following headline: "20-year-old man committed suicide on religious grounds".[41] Such titles not only harmed the family of the man who committed suicide but also created the impression that representatives of religious minorities are prone to commit suicide. Such perceptions within the media became apparent when some TV channels organized special talk-shows during which they condemned religious minorities for their "anti-human" and "anti-state" activities and raised the issue of suicide committed by members of religious minorities.

Usually, if something negative happens to or if a certain negative act is carried out by member of any of the religious minorities in Armenia, it is quickly attributed to all religious minorities, irrespective of the fact that there are essential differences among these groups, their behaviour, institutions, theology, etc. Some TV channels, while preparing reports on religious minorities and their activities in Armenia, use scenes and parts of films from other countries and other religious organizations having no connection to the Armenian reality. This kind of policy also tends to engender an intolerant and suspicious attitude towards the religious minorities. Attacks against religious minorities escalate during times of political and economic crisis in the country as criticizing minority groups (especially religious and sexual ones) is the best way to distract the attention of the society and feed them with "nationalistic seeds".[42]

The Word of Life religious organization is very often the target of such biased media coverage, as it is one of the biggest and fastest growing religious organizations and has the biggest church in Yerevan city. Recently the Church filed a lawsuit against the Iravunk newspaper, which published an article titled "Pornographic photos row merges with sects and expands into accusation of paedophilia". In it, the newspaper accused the religious organization of spreading pornography and promoting paedophilia. At the same time the newspaper published an offensive collage featuring a photo of Church leader Arthur Simonyan with one of actress Anzhela Sargsyan, who was involved in sex tape scandal.

The case against the newspaper was rejected by the first instance court and court of appeals. The Church intends to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights for the rehabilitation of its honour and reputation.[43] According to experts the court's decision may not only affect the reputation of a single religious organization but also create fertile ground for other newspapers to spread unverified and false information about any religious organization and, thus, "gave the green light" to slanderous coverage of religious organizations, which would violate the basic principles of democratic soci-

41 "Azg" Daily, No. 58, April 02, 2009.

42 Focus group with "Word of Life" church members, 07.05.2014.

43 See more <http://kron.armhels.com/?p=233>. In 2012 Armenian Public TV had to apologize for spreading false information about a person who killed his parents because the station wrongly said he was a Jehovah's witnesses. After a lawsuit against the TV by the religious organization the TV leadership retracted the information it broadcast.

ety and freedom of expression. "If any organization is accused of paedophilia, that is a serious accusation, so the newspaper should have serious evidence if it is going to write such an article or show that its journalists conducted an investigation and such facts appeared after this investigation. When journalism is based on information from a third party, that is not journalism but a threat to the development of a democratic society", says lawyer Ara Ghazaryan, who was involved in the suit.[44] The whole process showed that religious organizations in Armenia are quite vulnerable and, as Ara Ghazaryan says, the courts are afraid of the Armenian Apostolic Church-State relationship and cannot take a decision that would somehow affect the authority of the Armenian Apostolic Church. At least for some people, any accusation against the religious minorities is considered an argument in favour of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

This case affected not only the image of the Word of Life religious organization within the society but also hurt the spiritual and religious feelings of the followers of the Church, who were accused of paedophilia. They consider themselves proponents of the traditional family and condemn any kind of sexual abuse to any human being. The lawsuit against the Iravunk newspaper was stressed by the Church leader Arthur Simonyan during a Sunday service at the Church.[45] He stressed that the Church is often slandered by different media outlets intentionally or unintentionally but that its members try to ignore this as they know their path is the right path. Iravunk's claim was so offensive that they decided for the first time to fight for their rights and to restore their honourable name.[46] He explained to the community that they do not want to enter into different legal processes and spend their time on such issues that would distract them from their main aim, which is worshipping God and praying for people.[47]

The articles published in the media without proper investigation and argumentation affect the everyday life of the followers of the Church. Many of them mentioned that they have developed special immunity against such accusations because they often hear such accusations on TV, especially during talk shows that promote simplistic, nationalist propaganda. These shows exacerbate the intolerant and discriminatory attitude towards religious minorities and sometimes lead tolerant people to become hostile and aggressive.[48] Some members of the Church mentioned that they are quite tolerant towards the media and its criticism and think that everyone has to earn his

44 For more details see "Shall the Word of Life" apply to European Court?" <http://www.a1plus.am/62615.html>.

45 Observation at the Church, 30.03.2014.

46 The court expressed discriminatory opinions against the religious belief of the applicant organization (Word of Life) and its followers. The court in fact openly stated that the belief system of the applicant organization was in deviation from the belief system of the dominant Holy Apostolic Church of Armenia and therefore it was to be considered as a sect. Moreover, in order to substantiate its finding, the court relied on an opinion which was provided in writing by the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church. Thus, the court expressed an opinion leading to the indoctrination of the belief system of the dominant church in Armenia which gives rise to a discriminatory attitude towards other religious minorities.

47 Observation at the Church, 10.05.2014.

48 Focus group with Word of Life church members, 07.05.2014.

living in his own way. But at the same time they think that people should not believe information coming from one source, as media outlets spread very different information, often mixing truth and falsehood, and make it hard for consumers to distinguish fact from fiction.[49]

Another source of intolerance cited by the Church members is social media - especially Facebook - where quite often people accuse religious minorities of destroying the nation, national identity, the church, the state, etc. These accusations are usually levelled under the discussion of articles written by journalists on a religious topic. Anti-religious minority hysteria in social networks is also provoked by uneducated journalists or journalists specifically seeking to provoke heated debate. Some of the members of the Church mention that sometimes users' comments contain offensive and hostile language, though they try not to react strongly in order not to raise new aggression against religious minorities.[50]

Some Church members say the propaganda against them can actually serve to advertise their faith. Some said they approached the Church after having heart salacious rumours about its anti-state nature or evil secret rituals but discovered quite the opposite to be true. For these people, the propaganda had the opposite effect - one of proselytizing for the Church. The majority of the Church members agreed that the majority of journalists writing about religious matters do not have enough knowledge and training to write about churches and religious minorities.

THE ATTITUDE OF WORD OF LIFE MEMBERS TO THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The attitude of Armenian Apostolic Church towards the religious minorities is evident and has been expressed many times by high- and low-ranking clergy. It is mainly negative, as the Armenian Apostolic Church is convinced that new religious movements "rob" it of its believers and members. In this context let us view the attitudes of members of a religious minority (in this case the Word of Life) towards the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The very first thing which is evident in the attitudes and speeches of the members of Word of Life religious organization is caution and a careful attitude while speaking about the Armenian Apostolic Church as an historical institution. Even Church senior pastor Arthur Simonyan mentioned in his speech that the Armenian Apostolic church should be respected as the mother Church. The members of the Church mentioned that the Armenian Apostolic Church is a national church which preserved the Armenian nation for centuries, but they also say that in contemporary Armenia there should be healthy competition among religious organizations and full respect given to each other. What is notable in this approach is the separation of the Church from the clergy.

49 Ibid.

50 Interview with a couple of the Word of Life Church, 06.05.2014.

This was one of the basic ideas of the reformers of Armenian Apostolic Church at the beginning of the 20th century.[51] Word of Life members also stress that the attitude of some clergy should not be attributed to the entire Armenian Apostolic Church, as the clergy does not represent the official position of the Church and not all clergymen are aggressive and intolerant towards religious minorities.[52]

In this cautious attitude one may notice fear - this is the result of the marginalization partly caused by the close relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the state. In this sense the members of Word of Life are well-aware of the constitutional privileges given to the Armenian Apostolic Church and hope that one day all religious organizations functioning in Armenia will have equal rights and responsibilities. However, they mentioned that they see the reformation of the Armenian Apostolic church as an essential step towards the normalization of the situation in the field of religious tolerance and pluralism, and this in turn will be beneficial to the unity of the Armenian nation. At the same they are concerned about the very close relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the state and the close cooperation between individual bishops and some high-ranking officials. Such cooperation is usually good but when it becomes something aimed against a third party it can bring about negative results.[53]

The intolerant attitude towards the members of Word of Life may be seen in the speeches of some clerics who declare religious minorities to be agents seeking to dissolve the Armenian state[54] or undermine the identification of the Armenian nation with the Armenian Apostolic Church. Such pronouncements inspire an aggressive and hostile attitude among the majority population, who uncritically accept the righteousness of such claims. Nonetheless, many Word of Life members say that neither the Armenian Apostolic Church nor all of its clergy can be considered intolerant - rather it is an individual issue governed by the background of a given cleric. Word of Life members compare the situation to that of a football team which plays very well but loses due to one bad player. This does not mean that the whole team is bad - rather the player does not correspond to the team level and standards. There are some people who can "eat you" and there are some people who can sit down and talk to you. If you are a spiritual person you should not attack your opponent even if you think he/she belongs to a destructive sect - rather you should sit down and talk to the person and try to understand him/her.[55]

Some of Word of Life members who dealt with clerics of the Armenian Apostolic church abroad mention that they notice big difference between the clergy of the Cili-

51 Hovhannisyan, H. (2008) The reformation movement in Armenian Apostolic Church in 1901-1906, Yerevan, pp. 159-164.

52 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 07.05.2014.

53 Focus group with Word of life church members, 10.05.2014.

54 Statement by Archimandrite Komitas that religious minorities get billions of dollars from abroad to destroy the Armenian state at a press conference at Noyan Tapan club, 09.09.2013, <http://nyut.am/archives/41868>.

55 Interview with a couple belonging to the Word of Life Church, 06.05.2014.

cian See and the Mother See Holy Etchmiadzin. They even mention that the clergy of Etchmiadzin are more tolerant towards them when they meet outside Armenia. There is even some cooperation between Church activists and priests of Etchmiadzin abroad, as they have a common agenda in issues related to Armenian national interests. Clergy from Cilicia have quite a different agenda and are much tolerant towards such religious denominations.

Since 2002 "Armenian Church History" has been taught at public schools in Armenia and numerous discussions and disputes have arisen over this. The majority of the members of Word of Life religious organization were positive about teaching this subject at public schools. They think that Armenian Apostolic church history is an integral part of Armenian nation, thus its teaching can benefit their children. Their basic concern was about the teaching methodology and the training of professional teachers to provide objective and impartial information and knowledge. At the same time they pointed out that the history of other churches, especially the Armenian Evangelical or Armenian Catholic churches, should also be taught. They expressed their concern that all other churches apart from the Armenian Apostolic Church are considered as "sects" in the negative sense of the word - which connotes to the younger generation that all other churches are wrong. This in turn does not promote the diversity, pluralism and democratic culture.

Many of them conceive the teaching of this subject as teaching Christian theology or the Bible and they support such an approach. One of the Church members said that she thought of complaining when a teacher put pressure on her child at school: When the child started to quote Bible passages, the teacher remarked that the child was certainly a member of a "sect". The Church member pointed to the common stereotype that people who regularly read the Bible and know it well are seen as members of religious minority groups rather than the Armenian Apostolic Church. She thinks that this subject should be obligatory and not elective.[56]

The Word of Life religious organization had its own school and it teaches Armenian Church history as a subject as well. The Church asked for textbooks from the Mother See Holy Etchmiadzin but was refused and had to acquire books from other sources.[57] The fact that Word of Life asked for the books shows that it has no agenda to go against or criticize the Armenian Apostolic Church but - rather it tries to find ways and means for cooperation and modus vivendi.

WORD OF LIFE AND OTHER MINORITY GROUPS: SELECTIVE APPROACH?

Many of the religious minorities and their members talk about the intolerant attitude of Armenian society towards them and assess this as a result of anti-minority propaganda in the

56 Interview with a member of the Word of Life religious organization, 02.05.2014.

57 Interview with Word of Life Church secretary Armen Lusyan, 06.05.2014.

media and from government and Armenian Apostolic Church representatives. One topic that rarely receives attention is how different religious minority groups view each other (and other kinds of minority groups) and what these attitudes are based on.

The representatives of religious minorities are usually quite cautious in expressing their opinion about any other organization or authority and try to avoid any criticism or negative comment towards any other party. The members of Word of Life were no exception. They mentioned that it is their Christian agenda to keep amicable relations with other religious organizations, to respect their philosophies and theological precepts. However, these words mostly concern traditional churches and non-traditional Christian denominations. They were quite suspicious towards the non-Christian denominations and the word "Christian" for them had a subjective theological interpretation.

In line with that overall outlook, they have a negative attitude to the Jehovah's Witnesses religious organization, as the later does not accept the divinity of Christ and the Holy Trinity. Some of them called the Jehovah's Witnesses organization a "sect" and explained that "sect" is a theological term attributable to the "deviant" religious organizations. They do not accept the use of term to describe themselves, as theologically they consider themselves to be true Christians following the orthodox theology. The term "sect", when attributed to them, has political connotations, Word of Life members said. They criticized the Jehovah's Witnesses also based on nationalist concerns, noting that they refuse to defend the motherland and do not serve in the Armenian army.[58] There are, however, members of the Church who think that religious differences or differences in the beliefs of different churches should not play a negative role and that dogmatic differences should not overshadow the notions of the Christian brotherhood, friendship and other positive elements.

Another group to which Word of Life members are intolerant or indifferent is atheists. Church members recall that for seventy years the atheists were persecuting believers as they did not have any ethical or religious limitations. As Christians they cannot understand how a man can live without having anything of the divine in his life. As "true followers of Christianity" they are mostly ignorant or intolerant towards atheists.

However, the most intolerant attitude was expressed towards the sexual minorities. They think that homosexuality destroys the family and family values. They consider homosexuality a sickness and almost all of them expressed willingness to provide help to a loved one who was involved in "such activities". At the same time they mention that they would limit or terminate their communications with such a person. Several said homosexuality was unacceptable for them because it can lead to the eradication of the nation.[59] However they have dual approach, one based on human laws and morality given by God. From the human law perspective they cannot say anything if it is not prohibited by law, but from the point of Bible and the morality handed down by God,

58 On 17 December 2003 Armenia adopted a law on alternatives to military service, thus allowing the Jehovah's Witnesses to serve in other places without taking part in the military, <http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kron/ayltsar.pdf>.

59 Interview with a couple of the Word of Life Church, 07.05.2014.

it is not acceptable for them. However, their common approach is based on the words of Jesus: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." (John 8.7)

CONCLUSION

The article shows that Armenia, like many other countries of the world, is going through a process of de-secularization and de-privatization of religion.[60] One of the manifestations of religion in the public space is the Word of Life religious organization. After the collapse of Soviet Union we notice a general "revival of religions", which is accelerated by specific events that happened in Armenia – the traumatic history of Genocide, the new trauma in the form of 1988 earthquake, the war in Nagornyy Karabakh, the economic blockade, etc. But the new era brought new challenges for the vulnerable Armenian society and the identity-based religious monopoly of the Armenian Apostolic Church presented new challenges to various religious minority groups. This new challenge may be overcome through the application of the various approaches of contemporary religious pluralism in the public life of Armenia.

According to different reports and studies[61] there have been violations of rights of religious minorities in Armenia. However, these violations occur sporadically. The article analyses not only the violations of rights of a minority group, but also the overall situation in this sphere through the eyes of members of a particular religious minority. This religious minority is one of the fastest growing Christian-Pentecostal denominations and it is called Word of Life. The organization recently opened the biggest Church in Armenia - it seats about 5,000 and holds services twice a week due to the large number of attendees.

The members of Word of Life are fully integrated members of Armenian society and place their affiliation to the Church after their national identity. This indicates that religious belonging did not change or influence their national identity - rather, belonging to a minority group even accelerated their national feelings and identity. Notwithstanding this fact they sometimes experience intolerant attitudes from their neighbours, friends, relatives, employers and other people. They usually develop immunity to such attacks and respond without aggression. They emphasize that such attacks are unusual and are generally provoked by the media or certain members of the clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The media often criticizes religious minorities, calling them "sects" and describing them as something "foreign" to Armenian national identity and against the Armenian National Apostolic Church. Journalists often use stereotypes and generalizations in writing about

60 Casanova, J., (1994) Public religion in the modern world. Chicago.

61 Religious Tolerance in Armenia, by Collaboration for Democracy Centre, <www.religions.am/arm/documents/comments/ Կրոնական-անհանդուրժողականությունը-Հայաստանում/; Freedom of Religion in Armenia, A study by M. Yeranosyan, A. Ishakhanyan, V. Ishkhanyan>, <http://arm-hels.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/344eng-Freedom_of_Religion_in_Armenia.pdf>; Danielyan S., Vardanyan, V., Avtandilyan, A. Religious Tolerance in Armenia, Yerevan, 2011; <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222399.pdf>.

religious minority groups and take no interest in differentiating their origins or explaining theological differences. Sometimes journalists write that religious minorities refuse to serve in the army, although in fact this applies to only one group, the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The members of Word of Life are quite cautious in expressing their opinions on the Armenian Apostolic church, the Armenian State or the authorities as well as about violations their rights. This is typical of minority groups, as they afraid of being persecuted. Church members called the Armenian Apostolic church the mother church for all Armenians but criticized some of its clergy for their biased, non-professional and pseudo-nationalistic views and approaches. Almost all of them mentioned that they would like to see cooperation between their church and the Armenian Apostolic Church and that this would promote an atmosphere of tolerance in the country. In this respect they agree to have the Armenian Church history subject taught at secondary schools as it is an integral part of the history of the Armenian nation. But they also mention that poorly trained teachers sometimes poorly treat members of religious minorities and create conflicts in the classroom.

One of the major findings regards the attitudes of the members of Word of Life towards other minorities, including religious and sexual ones. The attitudes of the members is based on theological approaches and perceptions and from this standpoint they have quite good and amicable relations only with their sister protestant denominations. As for other religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses or the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), they have a negative attitude and call them "sects", saying that in such cases the use of this term is justified from a theological perspective. They think that these religious organizations should not be called Christian organizations because they reject several basic doctrines and dogmas of Christianity. If the attitude towards religious "others" was sometimes tolerant, the attitude towards sexual minorities was absolutely negative and critical. They cited their notion of "family values" as the reason for this approach.

The religious revival or reappearance of religion in the public space impacts the identity of Armenians in different ways. Armenians belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenians belonging to minority religious groups, such as Word of Life, went through different experiences and consequently developed different means and ways to show the interrelation of their religious and national identities. Minority group members often face questions about their national identity because of their religious affiliation.

The article shows that such challenges arise from the articulation of quasi-nationalistic approaches, which impact the overall situation in the sphere of religious pluralism in Armenia. In its turn the quasi-nationalistic rhetoric is promoted by the governing elite for manipulation of nationalistic feelings which leads to the rejection of diversity, pluralism and tolerance by the majority of the population, which is subject to such propaganda via media and other channels controlled by elite groups. This situation may be changed by building a democratic society, active participation of civil society groups and interested parties evaluating the damages of the current situation on the development of the country and Armenian society.

Youth Political and Social Activism in Georgia

The Case of Laboratory 1918

Esma Berikishvili

Student activism is not a new phenomenon in Georgia. Historically students were at the forefront of most political and social protests and the same is true for the recent history of student activism. In 2011-2012 students started to organize as a group called "Laboratory 1918". The main factor that united students under the activism umbrella was the problems inside the university, but soon the group managed to transform a small scale protest into a fight against wider social and political problems and inequalities.

Based on case analyses, using theories of social and student movements, the article explores the dynamics of the group Laboratory 1918 and studies the characteristics that allow us to see it as a social movement. Moreover, the article explores in what political and social conditions student movements can emerge, particularly, what political and social environment contributed to the emergence of youth collective action in that particular time of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's rule. Additionally, the article aims to map the "leftist" discourse in Georgia promoted by the group.

Through analysing the political situation in post-rose revolutionary Georgia, the article argues that the vulnerable political system existing in Georgia before the parliamentary elections of 1 October 2012 and the absence and ignorance of leftist discourses by the state made it possible for the students to organize as a leftist group.

Through analysing the group's political opportunities, identity and ideology, as well as their repertoires of contention and management principles, I argue that Laboratory 1918 can be seen as a social movement since the members of the group shared similar identity, had strong informal networks, had shared beliefs, expressed their dissatisfaction through repertoires of contention such as demonstrations, wearing specific col-

ours and using distinct slogans. The group had its iconic enemy in the form of Saakashvili's neoliberal state, around and against which they mobilized.

Taken as a whole, this article is small yet important representation of the dynamics of new student movements in Georgia. It paves the way for intensive future research of social movements in Georgia as well as towards comprehending in greater detail the new history of left-wing activism in the country and in South Caucasus in general.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, students have always been at the forefront of most social and political protests, and today they are often seen as a group that can bring about important social and political change. These statements remain true for the recent developments on the student activism scene. Starting in 2010 some of the bright examples of how students can influence political decisions were the United Kingdom student protests, the Quebec student protest in 2012 and the Chilean student movements in 2011-2013.

Youth activism is not a new phenomenon in Georgian social and political life. Already in 1956, students were the most active in transforming the mourning of Joseph Stalin into a critique of the authoritarian regime. In 1978 students led the large protests against the proposed removal of Georgian as an official language of the republic. The success of their activism is cited to this day as proof that students can have a radical impact on politics. Finally, it was the student mobilisation in the late 1980s that played a crucial role in subverting the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Georgia and called for independence. Political life in Georgia since independence (1991) has also been significantly impacted by youth mobilisation. Students, led by the organisation Kmara ('Enough') were at the forefront of the infamous peaceful "Rose Revolution" of 2003. By 2011-2012, a new student movement, Laboratory 1918, entered the scene, quickly gaining wide publicity, and earning some of the credit for facilitating the first peaceful change in government since independence.

While in Europe and in the United States the issue of youth activism and social movements was and still is a subject of comprehensive research which resulted in substantial body of academic work, in Georgia there only are few scientific works addressing these topics. Georgia has seen numerous contentious moments, or sustained contentious episodes in its 20 years of independence. However, besides the Rose revolution in 2003, these contentious moments have attracted little scholarly attention, and have not been analyzed in the light of social movement theories. Accordingly, this paper aims to fill the existing gap in researching Georgian student movements and takes Laboratory 1918, established in 2011, as a case study.

The recent developments in youth activism in Georgia can be dated back to the movements in the early 2000s which culminated with the 2003 Rose Revolution and the overthrow of the government. The most vivid example of youth activism was Kmara!, which emerged prior to the Rose Revolution and played a crucial role in defeating the government of Eduard Shevardnadze. Kmara!, like almost all previous youth movements, put forward only political demands and was mainly concerned with rebellion against the political regime, accordingly, they did not make any effort to look into the deep

social problems existing in the Georgian state and society. It is essential to understand that all youth movements present in Georgia were characterized by strong patriotic stance and the Kmara! movement was not an exception. In fact it strongly supported the neoliberal ideology of Mikheil Saakashvili and his team. Kmara! was launched by the Liberty Institute, a group that was established during Shevardnadze's government and "became known as a group of young militants struggling for the rights of religious groups, freedom of expression, and against corruption of the bureaucracy".[1] As a result of the Rose Revolution, members of the Liberty Institute and Kmara! joined the establishment and became members of new President Mikheil Saakashvili's government.

After Kmara!'s dissolution, the youth movements were not particularly politically active, nor did they enjoy much publicity, until the formation of Laboratory 1918 in 2011. The facilitator of the movement's creation was an incident that occurred at an event called "Translate" (presentation about translating study materials in Georgian). The physical confrontation happened between the supporters of group "Targmne" ("Translate") and the representatives of student self-government of Tbilisi State University. This event led to a protest action against violence where what had been an informal group of active students was now united under the banner Laboratory 1918. The name of the group was chosen to mark the year 1918, when Tbilisi State University and the Georgian academic tradition were established. "Laboratory" represented a place where the scientific process should be reinvented.

For the purposes of the research it is important to understand what constitutes a social movement. According to Charles Tilly a social movement is a combination of:

- sustained campaigns of claim-making; 2) an exceptional combination of claim-making performances (SM repertoire); and 3) concerted displays of supporters' 'worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment by such means as wearing colours, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs or chanting slogans, and picketing public buildings.[2]

The collective claims that social movements propose include "identity", "standing" and "programme", all these elements support each other in such a way that "a distinctive identity makes it easier to claim public standing, and standing gives credence to public support for a program".[3] Other scholars such as Della Porta and Diani also argue that there are two main components that are crucial for the existence of a movement. These are: a) informal networks based upon shared beliefs and solidarity and b) conflictual issues around which they are mobilized.[4]

1 Cheterian, V., (2008) Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects. Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, p. 700.

2 Tilly, C. (2006) Regimes and Repertoires. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago. pp. 182-184.

3 Tilly, C. (2006) Regimes and Repertoires. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago. p. 185.

4 della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (1999) Social Movements: An Introduction. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Inc. p.16.

In social movement theories it is believed that different types of social movements emerge in the response to different types of social and political environment. For Tarrow:
People engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society; when they bring people together around inherited cultural symbols; and when they can build on - or construct - dense social and connective structures, these episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents in social movements.[5]

In order to round out the theoretical aspect of this article it is also important to bring an understanding of student movements into the discussion. Student movements are a type of social movement and their characteristics and dynamics are not therefore different from what theorists have thought about other social movements.

The methodology used for studying Laboratory 1918 is a qualitative research method, in particular 15 semi-structured interviews with the former members of Laboratory 1918 were conducted. Simultaneously, I have analysed their appearance in social media - their Facebook page as well as videos recorded of their activities. Using these methods in tandem allows us to look at two different issues. While analysis of their appearance in the virtual space facilitates the study of their activities from viewer's perspective, interviews with the members of the group help me understand how they perceive their activism. In this way I was able to understand how and why the idea of Laboratory 1918 was born and how the Georgian atmosphere defined it as something "new", something "alternative".

The group Laboratory 1918 was created in the late period of Saakashvili's rule. Spring – Summer 2011 was characterized by a unique political environment. This was the moment when the electoral political opposition comes into play and non-partisan political activism of students is slowly born. Precisely at that time Laboratory 1918 started to establish itself as a student movement and the main factor that united students under the activism umbrella were the problems inside the university, however, soon the group managed to transform its small-scale protest into a fight over wider social and political problems and inequalities.

The objective of the research is to study in what political and social conditions student movements can emerge, particularly, what political and social environment contributed to the outbreak of youth collective action at that particular time of Saakashvili's rule. Accordingly, the article tries to comprehend the history of the group and answers questions about how the group was established, what the group's recruitment and management strategies were and, most importantly, it asks whether Laboratory 1918 managed to grow into an actual social movement and what were the reasons for its

5 Tarrow, S. (2005) The New Transnational Activism. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press. p.29.

success or failure. The article also discusses the tools and repertoires of contention[6] that Laboratory 1918 used to accomplish its tasks. It presents what is left of the group and offers discussion about where the former members continued their activities. In order to grasp the birth of "the left" in Georgia the article analyses the ideology and identity of the group and provides the reader with a history of leftist movements in Georgia. At the same time, it claims that Laboratory 1918 was the first student group that was united under leftist ideology and discusses the ways in which the group managed to deconstruct existing stereotypes of leftist movements and ideas, which in Georgia were usually associated with Soviet Union, and how they overcame the leftist vacuum in the country through fighting against their main enemy, the "neo-liberal state". Finally, it argues that the group managed to reinvent the notion of "the left" and opened a new niche where leftist ideas can be generated and acted upon.

LABORATORY 1918 – INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY

Laboratory 1918 emerged in the late period of Saakashvili's regime, which was characterized by a specific political environment. This is the time when the electoral political opposition comes into play and non-partisan political activism of students is slowly born. The creation of Laboratory 1918 starts at that time and the main factor uniting students under the activism umbrella are the problems inside the university. To be more precise the problems that students faced at the university were administrative problems, low quality of education, and high enrolment fees. But slowly the movement transformed into being more reflexive towards societal problems and earned took on a social and political platform.

According to the respondents, Laboratory 1918 emerged at Tbilisi State University and initially included only students from this university. The facilitator of creation of the movement was the incident that occurred at the event "Translate" (presentation about translating study materials in Georgian) which was organized by the students of the Social and Political Sciences Department at TSU. At the "Translate" event students presented a system of how the resources of the university and in particular self-governance expenses could be divided in a way that would solve the problem of the lack of Georgian-language study material. The representatives of the student government understood the event as a personal challenge and a physical confrontation broke out between "Translate's" supporters and the representatives of the TSU student government. The incident led to a protest action against violence and, as former Laboratory 1918 member Alexandra Aroshvili put it, here it became clear that it was time to direct the sentiments and ideas in one way or another and it was time to organize a formal or informal group that would unite people sharing similar values and ideas. One month after these developments Laboratory 1918 was established.

6 Tarrow, S. (2005) The New Transnational Activism. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press. p.29.

The main body of the group were friends who shared similar viewpoints and felt that it was time to put together their demands and act. They claim that the main motivation for uniting in the first place was that students were just coming to understand that some sort of change was needed and secondly, they realized that collective action was required in order to bring change. As the former members of the group recall, they used to express their dissatisfaction with the educational system during breaks between lectures; for years they gathered together, in an informal environment, discussing the problems they experienced and their protest at that time had a fragmented character. However, after the dramatic developments at the university, the students decided to draw together the pieces of their protest and start acting in more organized way.

The first manifesto published in the social networks in 2011 stated that:

Laboratory 1918 will be an educational space model based on self-organizational principles, where we will work with professionals to create a free educational space and the university will become a vanguard for civil society. Society deserves a university that rejects self-deception and obedience to authority and that is oriented towards development and freedom

The movement started at TSU and was later joined by students from other universities, though their participation was always insignificant. As one of former member of the group, Soso, argues, in the very beginning the activities of Laboratory 1918 did not go beyond the capital city Tbilisi. He maintains that this was a local "Tbilisi" phenomenon, but the paradox, he said, was that "the group openly expressed this attitude and was not afraid of having a marginal status and did not strive to be integrated or to coordinate its activities with party politics" (Soso Chauchidze, interview).

However, he also states that after one year, when the group already had some political weight, the movement understood that it was impossible to focus on only one issue as doing so would place the group in a vicious circle. Ultimately, the group managed to translate every sensitive political event through the leftist prism and turn it into a subject of protest. Furthermore, all the respondents agreed that, even though the group was very eclectic, the members shared one ideological standpoint and the movement was created on the leftist platform.

According to former members of the group, Laboratory 1918's management principle was the horizontal distribution of power. The members of the group understood this principle as the one "which denies any type of leadership and maintains equal responsibility for every member" (Tornike Chivadze, interview). According to the respondents, Laboratory 1918 chose this principle of management based on two assumptions. First, nearly all members were reading contemporary anarchist literature and were inspired by their ideas and second, because they looked at the experience of other youth organizations in Georgia that were led by a single person and were seen as a groups united around one person rather than under one idea. Finally, they argued that the idea of their protest was to fight against an authoritarian regime and therefore they could not operate under the same principle - having a single leader. In theory, the positive side of this principle was that there was not a single leader - rather the leader was created according to the given situation. The leader was not somebody chosen but someone who would work hard, who would put forward some initiatives. But later

it became clear that this type of organizational principle resulted in big arguments among the members, and it was not obvious in the end who could speak in the name of organization and making joint decisions was difficult. The respondents say this type of management was not justified and the activities of the group slowly became ineffective because they were not fully able to work in an environment where the power was horizontally distributed.

CONSTRUCTING CONTENTION

THE REGIME AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

To answer one of the main questions of this paper - What social and political environment facilitated the outbreak of youth collective action at that time? - It is important to look at the political opportunities that students had at that time. As Tarrow argues, it is important to research political opportunities and threats in order to understand why "movements emerge in some periods and not others". For him, "Contentious politics is produced when threats are experienced and opportunities are perceived, when the existence of available allies is demonstrated and when the vulnerability of opponents is exposed".[7] Going along Tarrow's line of thought, we see that political opportunities are signs that motivate people to get involved in contentious politics.

If we take a close look at the political developments of that time in Georgia we will see that for the time when Laboratory 1918 started its activities Mikheil Saakasvhili's regime was going through hard times. Generally speaking the political atmosphere in late 2010, when the group initially started to informally, organize was very tense. The country was undergoing political and financial crisis after Georgian-Russian War in August 2008 and at the same time Saakashvili's government had a complete monopoly over ongoing political and social processes. The situation in post-revolutionary Georgia was as follows: the government managed to strengthen state institutions and at once power was consolidated in the hands of executive government and thus political power was more monopolized in the hands of elite than at any other point since Georgia's independence.[8]

One of the aspects of the enlarged repressiveness of the post-revolutionary Georgian government was expressed was that it became progressively intolerant of peaceful demonstrations. Notwithstanding these developments, Saakashvili's government enjoyed popular support in the early years "thus the repressive nature of the regime was only revealed by 2007, when the first mass demonstrations since the revolution where violently demolished."[9]

7 Tarrow, S. (2011) Power in Movement: Revised and Updated Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 33.

8 Rekhviashvili, L. (2013) Institutional Change and Struggles of Illegal Street Vendors in Georgia. Conference Paper - Informal Practices and Structures in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. University of Fribourg.

9 Mitchell, L. A. (2009) Compromising democracy: state building in Saakashvili's Georgia. Central Asian Survey, pp. 171-183.

From this description one can understand the political atmosphere in Georgia for the time when group Laboratory 1918 started to organize; however, I think that for the aims of the research it is important to picture how the former members of the group perceived the existing political order.

It became clear from the interviews that all respondents agree that the political environment in Georgia at the time they mobilized as a group was sharply authoritarian. The members of the group saw the government "as an authoritarian group which limits freedom, which is against having any type of social policy, which is corrupted, which is violent" (Tornike Chumburidze, interview).

More importantly, it was a time of serious financial crisis, and the government was trying to cover up these problems by implementing projects with money borrowed from international organizations and with "black" money. The authorities mounted an ideological campaign aimed at justifying their policy and their efforts to create a police state were quite visible (Levan Asabashvili, interview).

The respondents say the influence of Saakashvili's regime reached far beyond matters of state and the most visible example of this type of management was the situation at the university. One of the respondents said the government exerted great influence on the administration of the university and on the student self-governance body. Tornike Chumburidze argues that the student government of that time was "controlled by Saakashvili's government, which led to some authoritarian practices" (Tornike Chumburidze, interview).

For respondents, the establishment of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports during Saakashvili's rule was significant in that it allowed them to focus their youthful energy in a particular direction. In particular, basically every student activity was governed by the party directives and was in line with the general ideology of the state. The main accents were made on events that were designed for pure entertainment, and this was seen by the members of Laboratory 1918 as an ideological calculation by the government that helped prevent students from mobilizing around problematic issues and to shift their focus from important topics to non-existent ones. On the other hand, the student government employed direct repressive actions towards rudimentary forms of student protest over issues of their concern. The example of such actions can be seen in the physical altercation between the members of the student self-governance body and activist students at the "Translate" event. As the former members of Laboratory 1918 say, in this situation some of the students felt that this was the time to act and react to the situation and raise issues that had previously been in the shadows.

We can argue that political opportunities for Laboratory 1918 slowly started to open up during its emergence; however it is also important to understand that real opportunities for the group arose prior to the campaign ahead of the October 2012 parliamentary election, when Saakashvili's political system became even more vulnerable and entered its final crisis.

Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, the group saw Saakashvili's regime as explicitly neo-liberal which made it easier for the "leftists" (grounding their protest on leftist ideas) to define themselves in opposition to the classical neoliberal state. For

the members of the group Saakashvili's political ideology ignored any leftist ideas and I argue that the absence of leftist discourse at a time when the vast majority of the population already stated to acknowledge and talk about social problems can be seen as yet another opportunity for the leftist group to organize.

IDENTITY AND IDEOLOGY

What constitutes the identity of Laboratory 1918 first of all is that the members were students of Political and Social Sciences at TSU and shared similar beliefs and ideology. The department of Social and Political Sciences was known for having professors who did not share the mainstream ideology of university and were active in criticizing the university and the Georgian government. It is also true that these professors had from the sympathy of the students who were reading "leftist" literature and who were spurred into action when these professors were fired from the university for their political views. One of the arguments that group member Dimitri presented to the rector of TSU was "we have little time left in the university, we are tired of your promises, and we will act now or never" (Dimitri Khuskivadze, meeting with the rector, 2011).

Second, the members of the group were from a similar social background: most of them were from families who at that time were experiencing difficult financial situations. Having a more or less similar family and financial background also helped in creation of their identity. Students felt that they were paying good money for a low-quality education. They went even further and linked their demands (low enrolment fees, high-quality education) to the wider social and political context and demanded that universities should enjoy autonomy and be free from any type of state influence.

For the members of the group it was also important to look at the student activism on the international arena. They thought they could not limit themselves to the local context. In terms of education, Georgia is involved in the Bologna Educational Programme and accordingly it has to keep up its standards. Even more, if we look at Europe and South American countries we will see that large scale student movements that also put forward similar demands as Laboratory 1918 are very active, such as the success of Quebec student movements in influencing political decisions and bringing about changes to the educational system. Having successful student activism as an example, Laboratory 1918 reasoned that if people sharing similar ideas and ideologies unite and act together, they can transform the existing social and political order.

As it was already shown in the previous section, all the respondents agreed that even though the group was very eclectic, the members shared one ideological standpoint and the movement was created on the leftist platform. In order to better approach leftist discourse in Georgia it is important to look at recent history. A thorough examination of the Soviet experience makes clear that this experience buried leftist ideas deep in the ground. People started to perceive social-democratic ideas as closely connected to the Soviet Union and after revival of the nationalistic movements people started to perceive these ideas as a fallacious remnant of Soviet times - especially as in the last period when Soviet era started to be seen as negative on the whole. As the nationalistic discourse was later replaced by the right-libertarian discourse of the Saakashvili government, the words "socialism" and "Soviet Union" took on a very negative meaning for people, however, at some

point leftist youth started to become active. It is interesting to see how Laboratory 1918 positioned itself in an environment that was hostile towards leftist ideas, how they represented leftist ideology and how they started to deconstruct existing stereotypes against leftist movements and ideas that in Georgia were usually associated with the Soviet Union and, finally, how they reinvented the left – or to be more precise how they brought social-democratic ideas back to the discourse.

As to the subject of real change the group achieved and how they helped established a leftist platform we refer to Giorgi Chubinidze's argument:
Today the civil society and the "educated" youth are standing on a higher level from the perspective of social responsibility than it was before the new leftist generation was formed. While previously people were more passive towards the social issues today we can observe that the situation has changed.

We can argue that youth became more politicized in the sense that they started thinking more about political and social issues in the country and the movement managed to create a platform where new, more organized leftist protest can be born.

Finally, their educational background, similar social and financial conditions, the same age frame and emotional attitude towards different issues helped students to articulate their demands and united them under the umbrella of the social movement Laboratory 1918.

REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

According to Tarrow, "people do not simply act collectively", they employ different types of repertoires for expressing their contention.[10] These repertoires vary in time and location as well. Social movements are characterized by an ability to use a wide range of performances and combine them in campaigns of contention. The forms of action employed by the social movements also change in long term perspective since repertoires of contention change in response to the changes in states and capitalism on the one hand and on the other hand actions can change in the shorter term and this is caused by the changes in political opportunities and constraints. As Tarrow argues "the repertoire of contention offers movements three broad types of collective action – disruption, violence and contained behaviour; they combine to different degrees the properties of challenge, uncertainty, and solidarity".[11] For him disruptive forms of contention are not as successful as the contained forms - demonstrations, marches, and strikes.

In this part we will discuss how Laboratory 1918 used contained forms of action such as protest actions and specific language to complement their repertoires.

10 Tarrow, S. (2011) Power in Movement: Revised and Updated Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 29.

11 Tarrow, S. (2011) Power in Movement: Revised and Updated Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 29.

PROTEST ACTIONS

The people who comprised Laboratory 1918 held several educational activities before formally establishing the movement. Once the group appeared on the scene of activism it started to express their protest in form of demonstrations, meetings and marches.

The demands that Laboratory 1918 put forward in the beginning were to give autonomy to the university. Soon after the group became active, the university fired several professors because of their political beliefs and appointed Andro Barnovi as head of the Political and Social Sciences department. This, according to the members of the group, made it totally clear that the state had a big influence on the university, especially as Andro Barnovi was seen to be a protégée of the Saakashvili government (Alexandra Aroshvili, interview). Laboratory 1918 organized a protest action to support dismissed professors. Soon the protest grew in scale and students started picketing the university. There are video recordings showing how they enter the building of the university, call students to act and ultimately approach Andro Barnovi and the rector at the time, Aleksandre Kvitashvili. However, when the protest actions were at their peak other political events in the country overshadowed the demonstrations at the university.

One of the most important protest actions that was organized by the group - according to Tornike Chumburidze and Tornike Chivadze - was the solidarity action towards the workers in the Chiatura mines, when students visited the region and showed their support. Shortly, after the Chiatura protest Laboratory 1918 became more and more engaged in protesting on social issues - they declared solidarity with socially unprotected and homeless people, held protests demanding a better healthcare system.

When video footage of abuse of inmates at Georgian prisons emerged 12 days before the 1 October 2012 parliamentary election,[12] Laboratory 1918 was caught off guard, according to former member Soso Chauchidze. Laboratory 1918 was not initially planning to lead protests over the issue but former laboratory member Sandro Tsagareli said that students who came out in the streets during that period firmly demanded that the group pick up their megaphones and lead demonstrations. It so happened, said Soso Chauchidze, that Laboratory 1918 found itself to be a tool in the hands of the Georgian Dream coalition, which benefited immensely from the demonstrations. Unfortunately the group realized this too late, when the protest was near its peak and the processes were beyond its control. The majority of Laboratory1918 respondents said they did not believe that these protests helped change the government; rather, they think that it was their achievement that next government at least focused on the social issues that were raised by the group. Overall, the actions of the group helped to alter the political discourses and introduced the issues of equality, poverty, accountability.

12 The footage was first broadcast by a TV station belonging to Bidzina Ivanishvili, the leader of the then-opposition Georgian Dream coalition. It spurred protests across the country, with students taking active part. There is broad consensus that the release of the videos contributed significantly to Georgian Dream's victory over President Saakashvili's United National Movement.

Social movement theories (Tilly, Tarrow, McAdam) maintain that these types of groups exist for as long as there is some kind of feeling of agitation in the society and as long as one feels that one can be in opposition to something even if it is simulated opposition. According to Soso Chauchidze, before the elections Laboratory 1918 had a feeling of being real non-partisan opposition, however, after the elections the movement lost this niche. As discussed by the respondents, the new government came into power and loudly talked about those social issues that Laboratory 1918 had put forward. The authorities spoke from a centre-left position about issues like universal healthcare and more investment in the educational system. Accordingly, part of the movement took the position: "let us see what they will do". Several months after the new government came to power total political stagnation set in and the topics that Laboratory 1918 hoped would be dealt with were ignored. The group decided to become active again and organized another important protest on May Day 2013, which later became a turning point for the movement. The protest rally that started at the university turned into a noisy street demonstration, the protesters using radical forms of action such as blocking the roads for the cars, writing slogans like "capitalist pigs" and "slaves" on the walls of banks and a McDonald's. The May Day protest resulted in a clash with police, where approximately twenty activists were arrested.

The event revealed some major problems the movement was facing at that time; first of all it was the gaps in the inner organization and also more or less negative attitudes from the members of society. Laboratory 1918 broke up shortly afterwards, dashing hopes that the events of 1 May would bring group members closer together.

From analysis of video documentation of how the group worked and from the interviews, it is clear that the demonstrations organized by the group were of a chaotic character. The protests were not thought through, they were planned spontaneously and it took hours and hours to come up with ideas that all members would support. This once again proves that the group was lacking the right management approach and suffered organizational problems.

This is in line with the key features of students movements as identified by Alexandra Duda "1. identifiable homogeneity within time limits, which facilitates a sense of solidarity and the creation of a specific identity; 2. exposure to abstract ideological concepts that generates the tendency among students to struggle for massive social change in an effort to create a utopian society; 3. privileged familial background (mainly in developing countries) and stronger political consciousness of movement participants, which makes them particularly prone to ideological orientation".[13] All three points made by Duda can be applied to the members of Laboratory 1918. In many cases student activism can only reach the university level, as issues promoted by them cannot relate to wide political and social problems. In the case of Laboratory 1918, students who started their protesting with a focus on university issues soon connected them to the major political and social problems existing in the broader Geor-

13 Duda A., (2010) WHEN "IT'S TIME" TO SAY "ENOUGH!": Youth Activism before and during the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. p. 60. Centre for Russian and East European Studies. The University of Birmingham.

gian society. We can therefore conclude that in our case students were a group brought together by strong emotions which later were linked to broader social and political issues. They believed that their activism could affect the future of the country, reducing social inequalities and improving the political atmosphere in Georgia.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PROTEST

For Charles Tilly one of the components that constitute a social movement is "commitment by such means as wearing colours, (...) displaying signs or chanting slogans, and picketing public buildings".[14] In case of Laboratory 1918 protest actions were one dimension of the repertoires that Laboratory 1918 used for their actions. It is also interesting to see what type of language they used and what colours they chose to symbolize their movement, and how this differed from the existing body of protest language.

The respondents were asked to talk about the expressions, posters and slogans that they used. Sandro Tsagareli said that the group was emotional and noisy in its actions. It was also stated that as the topics of protest were new in Georgian political life, the slogans accordingly were distinctive. Giorgi Chubinidze said "our language was not related to nationalist or patriotic ideas, we thought and talked about workers, inequality, education, health care, etc." Slogans such as "Worker, not Slave", "Equality, Liberty, Solidarity", "Education is a Right, not a Privilege", "Work, Consume, Die", "The System Must be Destroyed", "No to Militarism, No to Violence, Not to Authoritarian Regime" show that they were different from the slogans that were used at various political protests in Georgia's recent history. Laboratory 1918 was not using the words that public loved such as "Homeland, Language, Faith" and, as the respondents say, in the beginning the public was not really ready for the new language. The messages from the group were distributed in the Georgian and English languages. The former members of the group also say that they brought the colour red back to the protest scene and that it was not welcomed. According to Salome Danelia "people were asking us questions like, Do you want the Soviet Union back? - Why are you using colours and posters similar to ones in Communism?" (Danelia, interview).

Overall, Laboratory 1918 used the social movement repertoires described by Tilly and Tarrow such as organizing protest rallies and demonstrations, wearing the colour red and using "new" slogans as their core tools of contention. Furthermore, the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that the movement's failure to prevent political actors from using them for their own ends and the loss of the main enemy (Saakashvili's regime) are what led to the closure of the group's opportunities and ultimately its end.

14 Tilly, C. (2006) Regimes and Repertoires. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago. pp. 182-184.

THE END OF LABORATORY 1918

WHAT IS LEFT OF THE GROUP?

After two years as an active movement Laboratory 1918 broke up. According to the former members there were several reasons. First, horizontal distribution of power as a management principle in the end resulted in growing tension between the members, as they were not always able to reach agreement on different topics.

Another important matter was that the movement was composed of partisan (Social-Democrats) and non-partisan members, and this also contributed to internal tension. After the 1 October 2012 parliamentary election, the partisan part of the group was represented in government (the Social-Democrats had an MP on the Georgian Dream coalition party list while the non-partisan faction decided that it was time to step back and observe the newly elected government, which purported to be interested in the social topics that Laboratory 1918 put forward.

According to the former members of the movement, the group had problems reaching consensus on certain issues. The last such disagreement was over whether to support organizers of a planned anti-homophobia rally on 17 May 2013 that ended up being violently thwarted by tens of thousands of counter-demonstrators led by Georgian Orthodox clerics. Laboratory 1918 knew it had to make some kind of announcement concerning this topic, they knew that if they wanted to be a movement that addresses all important issues present in Georgia, they should do something about this one as well. However, they were not able to agree on a single position. Part of the group wanted to support the gay rights groups behind the planned 17 May rally, but others argued that by taking such an "unpopular" step, Laboratory 1918 would lose supporters. This was the final nail in the coffin and in late May 2013 the movement officially disbanded.

During their relatively short existence Laboratory 1918 managed to gain significant publicity in traditional and social media. The reasons behind this are in line with Duda's argument: "although it is often difficult to frame problems unique to youth, there are some general beliefs in society about the entitlements which youth should be granted, such as access to quality education".[15] Accordingly, it is no surprise that when these privileges are under threat young people often become capable of effectively framing the issue in order to gather comprehensive public consideration. And in cases where young people can proficiently connect their specific issues to the broader appeal of youth culture, they might enjoy wider support from society[16] (As cited in Duda). Furthermore, if students echo significant social issues, they often attract the attention of media and other segments of society, and this is certainly the case with Laboratory 1918.

15 Duda A., (2010) When "It's Time" to Say "Enough!": Youth Activism before and during the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. p. 66. Centre for Russian and East European Studies. The University of Birmingham.

16 Tarrow, S., (2005) The New Transnational Activism. p. 36. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

One of the interesting topics for the research was also to see if the members of Laboratory 1918 continued to be involved social activism. From the analysis it emerged that the former members of the movement went in three different directions. One part decided that it was time to become occupied with educational activities. As noted above, the members of the group saw that a big part of the society was not ready to accept this leftist type of protest because of the lack of the education in this area. Accordingly, some former members of the group started implementing educational projects and held lectures and discussions about topics of youth activism and leftist discourse at different universities in Tbilisi and in regions. Others started they own blogs where they share various educational materials and write articles about political and social problems.

Some of the Laboratory 1918 members joined other movements such as "Mtsvane Mushti" (Green Fist) and "Guerrilla Gardening Tbilisi". And some of them continued taking part in various demonstrations as individuals rather than as members of a group. Also, the respondents said the partisan part of the movement is still involved as a group with different protest actions.

In order to answer one of the main questions of the research about Laboratory 1918 being a social and/or student movement, we look to the explanation of social and student movements proposed by Tilly, Tarrow, Della Porta, Diani, and Duda. If we accept Duda's conclusion that: "a social movement is a series of collective challenges by social actors that build on a sense of belonging and are driven by a vision of change in existing social or/and political structures, usually directed against the authorities",[17] Laboratory 1918 can be seen as a social movement since the members of the group shared similar identity, had strong informal networks, shared beliefs, expressed their dissatisfaction through repertoires of contention such as demonstration, and using distinct slogans and had conflictual issues and a single image of the enemy in the form of Saakashvili's neoliberal state around and against which they mobilized.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work has been to study the group Laboratory 1918, whose emergence is a thought-provoking and controversial event in modern Georgian history. The research aimed at studying whether Laboratory 1918 could be seen as a social movement and what are the characteristics that allow us to define this group as a social movement. Moreover, the objective of the research was to study in what political and social conditions student movements can emerge, particularly, what political and social environment contributed to the outbreak of youth collective action in that particular period of Saakashvili's rule. Overall, the article aimed at mapping the "leftist" discourse in Georgia promoted by the group.

17 Duda A., (2010) When "It's Time" to Say "Enough!": Youth Activism before and during the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. p. 22. Centre for Russian and East European Studies. The University of Birmingham. 2010.

In order to accomplish the tasks set above, I first looked at the political opportunities and challenges that the group faced in order to understand the outbreak of youth collective action at that particular time of Georgian history. Through analysing the political situation in post-rose revolutionary Georgia, I have argued that the vulnerable political system that was in place in Georgia before the parliamentary elections on 1 October 2012 and the absence and ignorance of the leftist discourses by the state made it possible for these students to organize as a leftist group.

Furthermore, I have analysed the identity and ideology of the group and demonstrated that similar educational background, similar social and financial conditions, belonging the same age group, and shared emotional attitude towards different issues helped students to articulate their demands and unite as the group Laboratory 1918.

As Tilly and Tarrow argue, people employ different types of repertoires for constructing their contention; these are called SM Repertoires. I have offered an analysis of repertoires of contention in forms of demonstrations, protest actions, wearing distinct colours and chanting specific slogans used by Laboratory 1918 and have also maintained, using Duda's argument, that the students who formed the group Laboratory 1918 enjoyed the privilege of being students and thereby being exposed to leftist ideological concepts.

In the closing part of the paper I have spoken about and outlined the possible reasons of the break-up of the movement. It is also important to emphasize that the group enjoyed major publicity and support, but the inner tension and the different controversies inside the group ultimately brought it to its end.

Once again I argue that Laboratory 1918 can be seen as a social movement, since the members of the group shared similar identity, had strong informal networks, had shared beliefs, expressed their dissatisfaction through repertoires of contention such as demonstration, protest actions, wearing colours and using distinct slogans; they also had a specific image of an enemy - Saakashvili's neoliberal state - against which they were able to mobilize.

This article gives analysis and overview of the new/alternative phenomenon in the history of Georgian student activism. It is small scale research that has no ambition to offer comprehensive analysis of the topic; however, it lays the groundwork for intensive future research which can be directed towards studying social movements in Georgia, as well as towards comprehending in greater detail the new history of left-wing activism in the country and in the South Caucasus in general.

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The essence of public sociology is encouraging a diverse public to engage in dialogue with the aim of educating one another. In publishing certain texts, we should be thinking about how they will be reflected in the development of society. We must not be indifferent to possible future transformations in society influenced by researchers. We hope for fruitful follow-up debates that will help crystallize and develop our public life, having paid attention to important issues – both private and public – which are usually not discussed in a university auditorium.

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