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Sights and Signs. Urban Cultures on Stage

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Is There A Postsocialist City in the South Caucasus?

Abstract

In the 1970-80s there was a useful debate among social scientists posing the key question: Is the socialist city fundamentally different from the city in capitalist societies? To what extent was the process of urbanization in socialist cities different from that in "western cities"? (French, Hamilton 1979: 3) Some scholars revealed that urban life in socialism was not fundamentally different; however, a less diversified, less marginalized, and more calculated order was dominant in Soviet cities due to collective sentiments and egalitarian ideals (Szelenyi 1996). Others have criticized this view by revealing the heterogeneity in the city, the continuation of inequality in urban spaces, and a high degree of social and ethnic segregation in non-Russian cities such as Tbilisi and Almaty (Smith 1996). Others have emphasized the multiplicity of legacies in the region and socialism was not a single factor shaping urban landscapes (Cope/Milerius 2008). This debate prompts the question, is the postsocialist city and its culture of transition fundamentally different from the city in non-postsocialist post-industrial cities?

With consideration for the fact that socialism gave rise to the expectation of a different kind of city from those of the Western world, first I outline some major features of an ideal socialist city including some examples of local peculiarities in the South Caucasian urban life. As my next step, I look at what happened to these city features in the course of the postsocialist urban transformation. Referring to existing literature and giving a wide scope of the topic, this paper puts the emphasis on some features of reconfiguring urban public spaces and re-making places from the anthropological perspective.

Catherine Alexander

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Reconfiguring post-industrial cities: a comparison between Almaty and London

Abstract

Writing against the grain of taxonomies that characterise socialist and post-socialist cities as different from capitalist ones, this paper examines areas of similarities and the different paths adopted after the fall of the Soviet Union and under the umbrella of neo-liberalism. The main empirical focus of the paper is on the current fate of public housing in these two cities. In the same post-war decades, similar new technologies, aesthetics, ideologies and urban housing shortages gave rise to mass-built concrete panel apartment blocks, often purportedly inspired by Corbusier. In both places, these were intended to be short-term responses to immediate need; in both cities these permanent-temporary complexes are largely still standing, together with the infrastructure that connects them to the wider polity and is usually centrally controlled. The retraction of state management from the late 1980s on is the third feature these



places have in common. There are differences now, however, in that Almaty's housing was privatised in the 1990s while Britain's public housing was both privatised and handed over to the third sector. The paper thus highlights some commonalities in the immediate post-War era and the different ways of interpreting neo-liberalism in urban settings.

Lado Vardosanidze

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Vernacular Urban Development, Infrastructural Change and City Smells in Tbilisi

Abstract

The Capital status of newly-born independent country demands establishment of new-fangled identity. In this paper I discuss official goals and tasks of a new identity of the capital city, general tendencies and concrete decisions. The analysis includes artistic aspects of the ideological and socio-functioning architecture within the urban landscape. I will focus my paper on the following aspects:

- Global challenge and Tbilisi "city branding"
- Urban planning folklore
- "Language" of color and scent

The report aims to give some responses to new challenges that Tbilisi face, to explore and arrange such problems which will contribute to establish a new and adequate identity of the Georgian Capital.

Madlen Pilz

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Symbolic Transformation of Urban Landscape: Tbilisi City Maps

Abstract

The rapid transformation of urban spaces in Tbilisi during the last decades was accompanied by a not so rapidly changing city maps and tourist plans in which the city was represented as a symbol of the national proud and the place for Soviet and post-Soviet tourism. In this paper I focus on the change of key elements of Tbilisi City Maps from socialist times (around 1981) until now (2007/08) by about continuities and shifts in recent developments of city representations. Identifying what has actually changed on the city maps since 1981 I discuss in detail ongoing transformations of a symbolic urban landscape by including the analysis of changing physical contour of the streets and their signs as well as the ways people talk about that. The interpretation of visible change on the city maps can be organized according: 1- city's structure, 2- city symbols and 3- urban toponymes.

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***Between Passion For Jazz and Islamic Fundamentalism
A Short Way from "The New Orleans on the Caspian" to the Capital of
Muslim Culture - 2009***



WORKSHOP

Urban Spaces: Caucasian Places. Transformations in Capital Cities

Abstract

Modern urban myths depict Baku of the 1960-80s as one of the three (after Moscow and Leningrad) largest centres of jazz music in the USSR. The passionate love of many Bakuvians for jazz effectively became some kind of a marker of this urban community and a symbol of the aspiration of residents of this industrial, cultural, and cosmopolitan Soviet urban centre for freedom. Stylish clothes, people having rest to the rousing rhythms of jazz, and the radio Voice of America at night-time, which people listened to not because of politics but Willis Conover's programmes "45 minutes" and "In the jazz world" - all this defined the daily life of many Bakuvians of the time.

Luckily, the period of the Stalinist regime after World War II, which passed under the slogan "first you listen to jazz and then you will sell your motherland", was quite rapidly replaced by the years of the "Khrushchev's Thaw". The latter period, however, saw the death in 1949 of the jazz star of then Baku, sax player Parviz Rustambayov, who was "an anti-Soviet and pro-American person" at that time. In the 1960s, the heyday of Baku jazz started, recalling which connoisseurs now say, along the lines of those very Soviet cliches, that "Baku was the smithy of not only oil cadres but of jazz cadres too". The heyday of jazz did not mean, however, a necessarily good attitude to it on the part of the Soviet authorities. Officials still did not like jazz and were suspicious about musicians. However, this did not prevent jazz nights organized by students from being held to a full house in the Oil and Chemistry Institute in the 1960s. The prestigious and always packed restaurant Druzhba was full of visitors largely owing to a jazz band that performed there. Bakuvians went to the city's central cinemas in order to dance to jazz music in the lobby prior to watching a film. Festivals were held in Baku one after another.

However, the heyday of jazz proved not to be long. In the post-Soviet time, when jazz was definitively rehabilitated, it somewhat suddenly became "an art of the underground" in Azerbaijan. The posh club "Baku Jazz Centre" (people could not even dream about one in the Soviet time), which was built in the first decade of the 21st century, now attracts few lovers of this style. Jazz has in essence turned into a kind of music uniting a small urban cultural elite.

However, many Bakuvians too in the post-Soviet situation quickly lost their adherence to cosmopolitanism, and along with it to jazz too, and started returning to their national "roots". However, like in the years of the heyday of jazz, it turned out that the authorities had their own views about what the "right" citizen should be interested in. The return to the "roots" meant some kind of renaissance of Islam in Azerbaijan. The authorities, which perceive Islam as a mobilizing resource, seek to control Muslims with the help of a supreme religious agency called "Board of Muslims of the Caucasus" under the irreplaceable, since the times of the USSR, leadership of Sheikh ul-Islam Allahsukur Pasazada. However, many active Muslims have decided that, as Pierre Bourdieu put it, the authorities do not enjoy sufficient "social authority".

Given this, a number of Muslim communities - mosques, just like places where jazz used to be performed, turned into a space where a free choice regarding a preferred life style can be made. The High Islam (as Gellner put it) became a shelter for many dissidents. This is again about a particular style of cloths and life style and again an aspiration for freedom, an aspiration to choose the life style that is perceived as the right one. A number of city mosques, headed by Muslim intellectuals and in practice not subordinated to Pazasada came to be such centres for dissidence. For the Shi'is that is the known Cuma mosque in the Old City, whose community is led by the theologian Haci Ilqar Ibrahimoglu, for the Sunnis that the Abubakr mosque whose community is led by Haci Qamat.

Amidst this ceaseless confrontation, Baku has been named the world capital of Islamic culture in 2009. There is some paradox about the fact that a city where



police have been ordered to detain Sunni Muslims and forcibly get their beards (a must-to-have feature of so-called Wahhabis) shaven off became the capital of Islamic culture. Looks are again becoming a problem in the city where several decades ago officials were displeased about the big mustache and long hair of the most famous jazz player, Maestro Vaqif Mustafazada who was a symbolic figure of that epoch. This might be that very history that repeats itself in the form of a farce. Now, however, it is hard to imagine that in a couple of decades some currently known Muslim with appropriate looks will become a symbol of the Baku of the early 21st century. Of course, if Baku does not actually become one of the capitals of Muslim culture.

Irakli Pipia

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Tbilisi's New Symbols after Post Soviet Era

Abstract

The socialistic period in Tbilisi had its own city markers and symbols, like the statue of Lenin at the Freedom Square (former Lenin Square) and other monumental sculptures. After Georgia got its independence, artists were allowed to use their creativity and new styles for decorating the urban landscape.

Today you can find small impressionistic sculptures all over the city, including the central street, Rustaveli Avenue, which hosts sculptures of Levan Bujashvili, one not very famous sculptor. Artworks represent casual Tbilisi citizens, from 19th and 20th Century, some lies in front of the market with basket in hands, some in front of the opera house in suits. The filling is like someone wants to "build new city with new symbols", but people has their interactions with "new-old iron citizens" some of them turns to be a celebrity, some seems to be got broken.

One more symbol is architectural decor; designers are trying to furnish interiors and exteriors with so called Georgian Bricks, to give old fashioned appearance to their production (bars, cafes, ect.), it mostly takes place at the downtown, like Avlabari, Ortachala, and Sololaki, but sometimes even in new neighborhoods. At the opening ceremonies of such 'old-new styled' relaxation spaces it is usually mentioned that the style is 'true Tbilisian'.

The basic message people are trying to give is: "Tbilisi is not dead, it still consists and you still can enjoy here as back in 19th century". Somehow, everyone is trying to 'forget' that there was Soviet Era as well; but this is not so easy and not everyone wants to forget that time, most of all not everyone is able to do that. Finally new, post soviet Tbilisi style is going to give its birth.



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«ДО ОСНОВАНИЯ, А ЗАТЕМ...»: ТРИ ВЕКТОРА ЗАСТРОЙКИ ГЮМРИЙСКИХ ПЛОЩАДЕЙ

Абстракт

Хотя г. Гюмри никогда не был столицей, но будучи вторым по размеру городом Армении, тема «столичности» и претензии на роль некоего центра

достаточно часто появлялись и появляются в гюмрийском общественном дискурсе.

После разрушительного землетрясения и реальной готовности мирового сообщества помочь в восстановлении пострадавших районов возникла уникальная возможность постройки необычного для советского пространства города, которая однако завершилось «минимакетом» распадающегося СССР. Большая доля гуманитарной помощи (в том числе в виде финансирования архитектурных застроек, особенно восстановление/строительство религиозных построек, установления скульптур) приходилась на армянскую диаспору. Однако реальная застройка старой части города (в том числе установление памятников малой формы) в основном осуществлялась силами самих жителей, большинство которых на месте или около своих прежних домов (квартир) установили домики (временное жилье), впоследствии частично перестроенные в более или менее добротные дома.

Итак, застройка и скульптурный ландшафт Гюмри определялась тремя векторами: застройки, осуществленные властью (сначала советской, потом республиканской и муниципальной), посткризисная архитектура (вначале «временная»), построенная за счет международной гуманитарной помощи, впоследствии в большей степени за счет ресурсов армянской диаспоры и соответственно продиктованная ее вкусами, и, наконец, «народная архитектура» и неофициальная скульптура, отражающие местные возможности и предпочтения.

Указанные векторы будут проиллюстрированы при сопоставлении трех гюмрийских площадей: двух в старой части города и одного в новом квартале. Обзор стадийной застройки и скульптурного заселения площадей дает возможность отразить разные образы одного и того же города, увиденные по крайней мере с трех перспектив: властей, диаспоры и местного населения.

Levon Abrahamian

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Yerevan Sacra: Old and New Sacred Centres in the Urban Space

Abstract

The paper will discuss the role of religious symbolism in shaping the space of Yerevan. It will cover the following topics.

- Alexander Tamanian, the creator of modern Yerevan, desacralized old Yerevan (destroyed the Gethsimani church) in order to create a new sacral centre (People's House, the future Opera Theatre) with structural characteristics of Armenian church architecture (Zvartnots-type circle-in-plan temples). We will discuss how the architect's imagined ancient pagan centre (the temple of love and dance) was planned (but was not realized) to turn into a centre of Soviet celebrations and how his dreams came true during the late- and post-Soviet "all-national" protest rallies.
- The discourse on the post-Soviet St. Grigor the Illuminator cathedral will be presented from its project contest (1992) to construction (ended by 2001) and present-day perception. A special focus will be the Zvartnots temple and its image in historical and imaginative perspective.
- A discourse on the place of religious (or other historical) monument in the urban space will be presented on the case of St. Astvacacin church, a 13th century building preserved from the late-medieval Kathoghike church complex destroyed during Soviet times, which is planned to be included into a new church complex.



- The phenomenon (or rather fashion) of constructing smaller churches in the periphery of the city will be discussed in the context of their origin and functioning (oligarch contest, preference in replicas, parish and flock).
- Religious thematic will be outlined in modern Yerevan both in stable and mobile objects (temporal cross in the Republic Square, khachkar and khachkar-type memorials and decorations, souvenirs and kitsch objects like Crucifix-shaped cognac bottles).

Artyom Kosmarski

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Tashkent in the 2000s: the loss of locality?

Abstract

In my presentation I will discuss key pathways of change in the urban environment of post-Soviet Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. In the 1990s-early 2000s the city witnessed the processes common to the whole post-Soviet space – state-led national reconstruction of the symbolic landscape of the city and market-driven destruction of old residential districts to give space to luxurious hotels and villas. Yet in recent years more subtle and subterranean changes in the imaginaries of the city have taken place.

In the perspective of 2009, the whole period after the USSR seems like an age of transition that is by now almost over. Early post-Soviet Tashkent, losing its unique flavour and "European"/cosmopolitan atmosphere, and peppered with shots of glamorous edifices constructed by the state (public buildings, desolate business centers) was a city of governmental self-assurance coupled with provincialism, and of popular disdain towards anything new that was happening in the city (coupled with the nostalgia for "warm and cozy" Soviet Tashkent). But now, by late 2000s, new consumer culture has penetrated the city on the capillary level: now not a handful of supermarkets and hotels, but a whole environment of refurbished evro-remont flats, DVD kiosks, Daewoo cars, cell phones, etc.

In this environment, nostalgic notes are fading, and Tashkent becomes simply the "the capital", the place with the best job opportunities, consumer culture and urban amenities in the whole country. In other words, Tashkent undergoes a transition from the creative locality (a cherished genius loci, arts and literature, complex mythologies) towards consumer uniformity.

Севи́ль Гусейнова, Ильгам Аббасов

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Постсоветский Баку: Практики Репрезентации Столицы, как Пространства Этнической Толерантности

Абстракт

Процесс трансформации Баку из столицы одной из советских республик в столицу независимого национального государства в значительной степени определял специфику упрощения этнического разнообразия населения города. Так, в контексте Карабахского конфликта, прежде многочисленная армянская община города становится практически невидимой. Вынужденная эмиграция большинства армян проживавших в Баку, сопровождается медленным вытеснением маркеров пространства и памятных мест. В результате, после того, как вначале 2009 года был демонтирован памятник «26-ти Бакинским комиссарам», главным из

22.-23.09.2009

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которых был Степан Шаумян, практически единственным физическим объектом, напоминающим о прежде многочисленной общине, стала давно уже не функционирующая армянская церковь.

Однако, вместе с тем, столичный Баку в постсоветский период становится также тем пространством, в котором политический режим стремится сконцентрировать все свои «достижения». Активная поддержка режимом дискурса о «врожденной» этнической толерантности азербайджанцев в значительной степени определяет и политику репрезентаций декларируемой толерантности. В результате, прежде всего, именно в Баку, где сосредоточена также общественная и культурная жизнь страны, в постсоветский период возникает также сеть различных этнических организаций, репрезентирующих около 20-ти этнических групп проживающих в стране.

Впрочем, наиболее разветвленной организационной структурой обладают только две этнические общины – русская и еврейская. Эти общины обладают различными статусами. Так, значительно уменьшившаяся в числе еврейская община является главным символом «толерантности» азербайджанцев вообще и нынешнего политического режима в частности. Одним из результатов этого символического статуса становится масштабная перестройка старой синагоги европейских евреев и строительство комплекса новой еврейской школы.

Что касается, русской общины, то развитие ее организационной структуры, с одной стороны, определяется относительно большим числом русских, и ныне проживающих в городе. С другой стороны, например, успешное функционирование «Русского Культурного Центра» определяется не столько наличием в городе относительно многочисленной общины русских, сколько гораздо более широким русскоязычием значительной части населения Баку.

Нам представляется, что именно сравнение специфики организационной институционализации, а также специфики вытеснения или нет маркеров пространства и памятных мест, связанных с длительным присутствием в городе армян, русских и евреев, позволяет увидеть глубину социальных трансформаций происходящих в Баку.

Oleg Pachenkov

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Urban Public Spaces & Cultures: Case Study of Flea Markets Cases of Saint Petersburg and Berlin

Abstract

In our paper I will address the phenomenon of urban flea markets that we consider a good example of an urban public space, production of the urban cultures and social life. To grasp the multiple 'nature' and functions of the phenomenon, we employed a comparative perspective: the paper is based on the ethnographic case studies done in St.-Petersburg and Berlin in 2002-2007.

The case of St.-Petersburg (Russia) is very interesting example showing how flea market could become a spot of public sphere where citizens of the former soviet state (meaning, they were fossil '*homo soveticus*' with very limited sense of human rights and publicness) organized to express a grass root civic initiative and fought for their rights and freedom to gather in an urban public space.

Berlin flea markets, especially those located near the line of the former Wall and supplied with the consumers and vendors from both parts of the Berlin, provide very interesting evidences of the flea market as a space of production of new postmodern urban identities. One can find here alternative youngsters trying to avoid the 'mainstream', to practice different way of life, expressed mostly in



practices of 'alternative' consumption. Although it could be considered an example of a 'vicious circle' of consumerism (Eco 1967), someone would identify it as 'aestheticized counterculture' (Desmond et al. 2001).

As an activity flea market is an urban performance itself, a postmodern relative of medieval carnival and travesty (Bakhtin 1968). As I will show on the example of German flea markets, this institution could be approached as a "city scene" (Blum 2003) – a spot of a city's public life characterized by theatricality and festivity, absurd and performance – all producing the unique allure of the flea markets and the hosting cities.

Гамлет Мелкумян

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Ереванский "Вернисаж" как представитель и создатель бренда армянскости (The Yerevan Vernissage: Presenting and Creating the Brand of Armenianness)

Абстракт

В докладе представлен феномен, зародившийся и сформировавшийся в начале 1980-х годов в центре города Еревана, в сквере около памятника Мартиросу Сарьяну, который стал известен под названием Вернисаж. Вернисаж представлял собой выставку-продажу произведений искусства на открытом пространстве. Изначально произведения, выставленные в Вернисаже, считались продуктом самодетельности и противопоставлялись общепринятым академическим канонам и стилям искусства.

После провозглашения независимости Республики Армении в Вернисаже стали заметны функциональные противоречия: в периферийных частях Вернисажа стали появляться ремесленно-сувенирные изделия и предметы быта, которые придавали ему вид некоего «черного» («блошиного») рынка. Естественно, что эта часть Вернисажа была вытеснена из культурного центра города в еще «некультурную» ее часть, расположившись в ареале от площади Республики до памятника Вардану Мамиконяну.

«Периферийники» сарьяновского Вернисажа особым образом распределились в новом пространстве, причем мастера-резчики по дереву и камню заняли центральное место, а «блошинный рынок» снова оказался на периферии.

В докладе мы попытаемся проследить формирование и развитие «нового» Вернисажа, его функциональные особенности, роль в культурной жизни города и республики в целом. Будет представлена также роль Вернисажа в межкультурных отношениях с армянской диаспорой, как «внутренней» – армянами, проживающими в Российской Федерации, так и «внешней» – армянами западного зарубежья.

Вернисаж исследуется как городской культурный центр, представляющий («презентирующий») символы армянских традиционных национальных ценностей, но в то же время генерирующий новые символы и бренды армянскости в целом и города Еревана в частности.

Stefan B. Kirmse

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Kyrgyzstan's 'Southern Capital': The City of Osh between Transition and Globalization



Abstract

This paper discusses local experiences of post-Soviet transformation in the city of Osh, Southern Kyrgyzstan. In particular, it focuses on the competing representations of the city by various social actors.

In the first part of the paper, I examine the ways in which state authorities, Islamic movements and international organisations draw on images of the city in their search for meaning and identity. The government of Kyrgyzstan promotes Osh as the 'Southern capital', mainly to stress the national importance of this city whose population is predominantly Uzbek. Through public celebrations and the promotion of pilgrimage sites, the authorities try to utilise Osh as a national symbol. Islamic movements, by contrast, view the city as a testing ground for 'true Islam' and an egalitarian Islamic state. Many activists are ethnic Uzbeks, and thus, the symbolic appropriation of Osh also allows them to define themselves against the state and institutions of Kyrgyzstan. Finally, the country's relative openness to external advice led to the influx of international organisations. Many of these construe the city of Osh as a 'powder keg' ravaged by inter-ethnic violence and Islamic radicalism and thus in need of Western donor support.

The second part of the paper discusses perceptions of the city from the perspective of a specific social group: youth. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research, I show the ways in which young people use representations of the city to 'make other'; to highlight their own identities as 'urban', 'Muslim' or 'Southern'. I also discuss young people's appropriation of urban 'youth spaces', from clubs and NGOs to internet cafes and sports grounds, as sites in which they experiment with different styles and identities.

The findings are based on qualitative research in and around the city of Osh from mid-2004 to mid-2005. This involved a large number of interviews, an analysis of local media, and participant observation in schools and universities, in family homes, religious groups, leisure spaces and NGOs.

Olga Brednikova

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Reshaping Urban Landscape

(Case of Labor Migrants in Saint Petersburg)

Abstract

The report is based on few research (collective and individual) projects by the Centre Independent Social Research in 1998-2007: «Caucasians in the City: integration in the frame of xenophobia», «Woman Labour Migration: transformation of gender contracts» and «Living spaces and Concepts of Home for Women Migrants». In the report I would like to discuss next issues:

1) Concept of migrant 'home' and redefinition of the border between 'public' and 'private' spaces in the city

The Home of migrant workers can be characterised by the following features: instability, mobility of address; minimisation of possessions; insignificance of the domestic space for personal identity; Home – only a space for resting after work. Their Home is mobile, situative and not linked to long-term perspectives. The concept of Home as a private space for migrants ceases to be relevant. Such Home gradually broadens out spatially, its borders become unclear and are in constant flux. Home of migrants doesn't go into the frame of rent apartments. That why 'privacy' come out in the public urban spaces (for example cooking in



the courtyards etc.). Such practices redefine 'public' and 'private' spaces in the city, form plural regimes of publicity.

2) Redefinition of the urban "places".

Labour migrants occupy free 'empty' urban places frequently. For example transitory spaces change into extempore market area. Such use places at the end redefinition their social meanings.

3) (Post-) Modern city for post-modern subject?

The City as a localised place of practices becomes a habitable and safe space, 'their' space. For all the apparent localisation and restrictedness of their lives, the migrant enjoys ease of movement around the city, they change place of work and abode, and do not get tied to one neighbourhood or district. Their conceptions of urban space fit perfectly with the idea of the (post-) modern city that has neither ends, nor a centre, nor demarcated districts. It is rather an alloy of often disassociated processes and social heterogeneity, a place where far and near intermingle, a place constantly spilling out in new directions (Амин, Трифт, 2002).

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Why are the Dolls Laughing? Tbilisi Culture between "High Art" and Socialist Labor

Abstract

The figure of the doll in Georgian culture resembles the figure of the kinto, the urban street peddler who represents in 19th century intelligentsia the 'low', intimate picturesque register of the urban milieu in which the Georgian intelligentsia sought to locate their imagining of Tbilisi as an urban Bohemia.

While the history of the doll and Tbilisi culture has antecedents before the 1960s, in this presentation we wish to focus on one central moment, a movie, 'The Dolls are Laughing', which came out at a time when Tbilisi urban culture was being reconfigured by a massive influx of population and when new cultural forms were being created to create a new socialist cityscape. We believe the role played by dolls in this film provides a crucial key to understanding Tbilisi urban life of late socialism.

'The Dolls are Laughing' turned out to be a successful comedy precisely because in it the diffusion between official, semi-official and almost unofficial cultures of Tbilisi in the 1960s are elegantly represented. But the film does not so much revive the nostalgic urban culture of the past, as it points to emergent tendencies within urban culture—from a certain perspective, it is an anticipation of the coming postmodern cinema-poetics of Sergo Parajanov, where 'Dollishness' is one important artistic element, and, at the same time, Rezo Gabriadze's "Doll" aesthetics. Precisely Rezo Gabriadze's Marionette Theatre, along with Robert Sturua's Theatre, Otari Ioseliani's and Sergo Parajanov's cinematography, became in the 1980s one of the main 'brands' of Tbilisi Culture.



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Гей территории в урбанистической среде города Тбилиси

22.-23.09.2009

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
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Абстракт

Современная городская культура Тбилиси складывалась на протяжении многих десятилетий под непосредственным влиянием разновеликих взаимоопределяющих факторов. Сожительство людей различной этнической, религиозной и ментальной принадлежности в городской культуре Тбилиси формировало особое культурное пространство, которое в XVIII-XIX веках характеризовалась пестротью национальных и конфессиональных явлений. Субкультуры, которые десятилетиями, а в отдельных случаях столетиями складывались в Тбилисской городской культуре, всегда являлись частью общей культурной среды города. Хотя они в отдельных аспектах и отмечались противостоящими целому культурному контексту, но в главных чертах согласовывались и продолжали ту культуру, которая пользовалась статусом доминирующей культуры.

В городской культуре Тбилиси XVIII-XIX веков, гомосексуальность уже воспринимается как явление довольно обычное и естественное. Возможно, это обуславливалось тем, что столицей Грузии на протяжении многих столетий управлял арабский эмир. Тбилиси являлся городом, где формировалась и генерировалась своеобразная среда с участием разных культур, которая развивалась как бы самостоятельно, несинхронизированно с остальной Грузией. Здесь царила совсем другая, более секуляризованная, вольная и многообразная социальная жизнь.

Несмотря на то, что для урбанистической культуры Тбилиси гомосексуальность не так уж чуждое явление, это все-таки не отражает общую картину общества. Следует заметить, что городская культура Тбилиси сегодня отличается более низкой степенью толерантности к гомосексуальности по сравнению с былыми временами: согласно советскому законодательству, гомосексуальность являлась уголовным преступлением.

На сегодняшний день, несмотря на то что общая гомофобная атмосфера Тбилиси не позволяет индивидам гомосексуальной ориентации открыто поддерживать свой образ жизни, в городе все-таки существуют места, т.н. "cruising area" – их любимые территории.

Если понаблюдать повнимательнее, то можно сделать вывод, что все известные гей-территории тайным смыслом символично связаны с урбанистической символикой, именем или историческим контекстом конкретного топонима города. Доказательством этому служат разные гей-территории, носящие прямой или косвенный гомосексуальный характер: статуя юноши перед дворцом спорта, скульптура Параджанова, сквер им. Пушкина (как известно, Пушкин считался gay-friendly человеком, и тесно дружил с гомосексуалом Филлипом Вигелем), а самая популярная гей-плешка Тбилиси «увенчана» гомозротичной скульптурой Прометея.

Кроме конкретных территории, любимыми местами для представителей Гей субкультуры Тбилиси являются ночные бары в центре города, хотя после закрытия специальных гей-баров в городе по мере безопасности эти «туссовки» носят непостоянный характер.

Еще одним важным местом для тбилисских геев является специальный фонд, который представляет собой единственную в стране организацию, занимающиеся защитой прав и свобод ЛГБТ-граждан, борьбой с дискриминацией по признаку сексуальной ориентации, содействием воспитанию самосознания геев, лесбиянок, бисексуалов и транссексуалов, как равноправных и полноценных граждан общества. До сегодняшнего дня фонд является единственным официальным местом в Тбилиси, где открыто могут собираться представители сексуальных меньшинств. Не удивительно, что именно в стенах данного фонда образуют они особую социальную и пространственную среду, в которой можно уловить черты субкультуры.



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***Street Corner Life. Ubani and Urban Neighborhood in Tbilisi
(the second half of the 1970s – end of the 1990s)***

Abstract

Besides the official division of Tbilisi into districts, there is another, unofficial, but more vital for the city dwellers' identity division into *ubani*-s (quarters). Local belonging, defined by the answer to the question "Where are you from?" is the major element of street culture.

As a researcher I conceptualize *ubani* as a neighborhood, perceived as a real community by its members, and also as the area, associated with this community.

The key institute for a neighborhood is *birzha*. From the outside *birzha* looks as a group of teenagers or young men, who regularly hang out in parks, near garages and front doors in their *ubani*. I define *birzha* as the male peer group that, being a part of a wider neighborhood, interacts mainly in its public space.

I consider *birzha* through its external, interquarter links with other *ubani*-s' *birzha*-s, and through the internal ones – with its own neighborhood. In particular, I address questions of intergroup rivalry and try to identify the role that street peer groups play in "their" neighborhood, and the links, that determine relationships between *birzha* and the neighborhood, which it belongs to. I also try to highlight the informal rules, according to which neighborhood functions, and the spheres, control of which is shared by *birzha*-s.

I also deal with the changes that the "street" is undergoing lately. After the advent of Saakashvili to power the state started a demonstrative company against the "street" and the whole system of informal rules and underground economy based on the street code. The state lays claim to the monopoly on violence and seeks to take control of the spheres that formerly were mastered by neighborhood peer groups. Considerable shifts taking place in Georgian society today could have changed the location of the sphere that in life of the youth was previously reserved by *birzha*-s'. Perhaps in the case of *birzha*-s it is even possible to speak about gradual disappearance of the object.

