

Some Considerations on Aspects of Tbilisi's Identity Through Architectural Narratives

Abstract

This article examines major historical cultural narratives expressed in architectural design and artistic forms of public spaces from different epochs of Tbilisi, and aims to verbalize the city's cultural texture formed over centuries and manifested in the complex picture, which now exists; the methodology is based on contextual analysis, including points of formal stylistics, interpretations of artistic output and historical data.

Keywords: *Conceptual Architecture, Post-Totalitarian transformation, Artistic Research, Historical context, Contextual analysis, Visual art in Public Space.*

A feature of artistic forms in transitional periods¹ is frequently the intricacy of research problems connected with them. Most scholars working in the field of architecture and visual art in Georgia find it uninteresting to discuss matters, which are fluctuating or provisional. While robust discussions of post-Soviet architecture in Georgia do sometimes take place, they continue to be fragmentary and inconsistent depending on the changeable political undertones. Public reactions to the Bridge of Peace, which was constructed to connect the historical part of Tbilisi with the new district, as the architectural symbol of New Georgia's new ideological direction, were particularly fierce. The steel and glass construction,² initiated by president Mikheil Saakashvili, was built in 2009-2010 and has been widely criticized: the project was designed by Michele De Lucchi, who had no previous experience planning bridges. The idea of a pedestrian bridge in the historical center of Tbilisi being designed with light and transparent features was, in itself shrewd, as the existing landscape called for an ephemeral-looking construction, which would blend with the environment. Most of the critics belonged to the opposition parties and were politically motivated, but it also became the subject of criticism among architects, urban planners or other professionals. Architect Nino Laghidze (2013), the editor of Style Magazine,³ named the Bridge of Peace an unsuccessful attempt to merge old and contemporary architecture. The urban critic, Lado Vardosanidze (2010, 13) claimed that new bridge is

ungainly, massive and not transparent despite its glass components and obscures views of the city. In his article he emphasized another problem connected to the invitation of foreign architects while ignoring the concerns of local architects. This instance is a typical feature of the cities of the post-Soviet space, according to the vision of ongoing processes that one can find in Grigory Revzin's (2008) analyses of Moscow's newest architectural development in the context of the meeting of local experience with Western practices. In the article, *Between the USSR and the West*, Revzin (2008) considers the appearance of foreign architects in the cities of post-Soviet Russian space as a crucial moment: "The arrival of foreign architects in Russia marks a turning point, which forces us to look again at how Russian architecture has developed from the collapse of the USSR to the present day. Is the configuration of Russian architecture changing? What is the pattern for competition between Russian and foreign architects in Russia today?" Similarly, in Georgia, which for almost a century was closed to collaboration with foreign architects and architectural companies, the building of the first ambitious constructions by foreigners was the start of major changes in the landscape. It was also typical that the decision-makers on architectural changes were government officials. As Revzin (2008) argues in his text: "The initiative in setting the agenda in post-Soviet architecture has been taken by the authorities as a way of legitimizing themselves anew through a revival of pre-Bolshevik traditions".⁴

Architecture is a field where signifiers of the post-socialist condition are extremely clear-cut, all of them displaying specific idiosyncrasies. It is precisely the new iconic architecture and the transformation of the landscape in Georgia, which becomes the target for criticism anxious about the possible loss of the city's identity. But what is Tbilisi's identity and why does its loss seem so fatal to city historians and architects? In this article, I will examine key parts of the subject of Tbilisi's identity and the reasons for the prognosis of its loss, by defining some architectural and partially visual (ideological signifiers on exteriors or interiors of official buildings) narratives, which have shaped the city's historical appearance and have delineated issues, which are problematic today. I will survey those historical layers of Tbilisi, which still play a part in the cultural memory of the city, tracing the transformation of their meaning according to different political agendas and a vague sense of history expressed in mass culture of different epochs under the stress of political pressures.

Tbilisi as a Part of The Russian Empire

Contemporary popular representations of Tbilisi's identity are not based on existing research but rather they mimic the Russian imperial and later, Soviet, or post-Soviet discourses of the city. After the destruction of almost all of the city's medieval buildings in a Persian attack at the end of the XVIII century, the preconditions for the city's development were formed as the capitalist relations began to grow in Tsarist Russia and the new dynamics were reflected in its colonial periphery. Structures influenced by Imperial architecture had to be placed in combination with the remnants of the preexisting city, with authentic architecture described in details by Vakhtang Tsintsadze (1958) in his monographic work "Tbilisi." Tsintsadze (1958, 17-83) emphasizes specific ways of spatial thinking different from European or Russian models. He implies the superiority of conforming buildings to the realities of geographical relief and the aspiration of inhabitants to utilize open spaces, such as balconies or flat roofs, as important parts of everyday life.

Vakhtang Beridze (1984, i-iii) stresses the new stage in Tbilisi's history, when the feudal city, in the context of empire, was transformed into a city of "administrative officials" (Tbilisi was the most important administrative center of the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus) and the eastern or "Asian" city began to transform into one of European style." The remains of the medieval citadel and of older structures were still considered fundamental elements of the city's authenticity. In his monograph, "Architecture of Tbilisi – 1801-1917", V. Beridze (1960, 30) mentions the city's planning records of 1782, 1800 and 1802, preserved in The Russian State Central Military-Historical Archive (formerly the Soviet Central Military-Historical Archive), as source documents for his argument, and identifies Narikala and Metekhi as architectural dominants of the medieval period, which were becoming less important during the city's growth process. It was planned that the palace of the Russian viceroy⁵ and later the Aleksander Nevsky Cathedral of the Russian Army, designed in Russian-Byzantine style⁶, ought to serve as the new iconic architectural landmarks demonstrating the powerful development of the city within the colonial political order. The Cathedral was destroyed in 1930 by the Soviet Government to make space for the building of Georgia's parliament. Photographs from the archives of the Georgian National Museum depicting the medieval architectural landmarks of Tbilisi – Narikala and Avlabari Bridge, with its caravanserais, (Figure 1-2) – clearly demonstrate the specific architecture of a residential area shaped by a complex landform. Houses with balconies and caravanserais" facades with arrow-shaped, oriental-style windows spread over a hilly relief can be perceived as the organic



Figure 1. View of old Tbilisi with Narikala. Photographer: A. Roinashvili. © Lika Mamatsashvili.

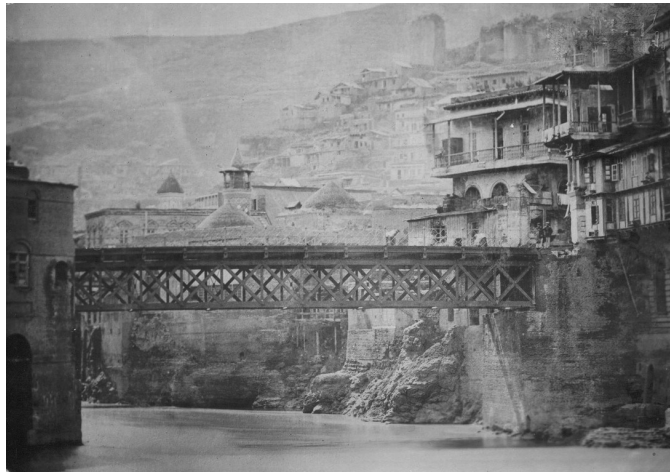


Figure 2. View of old Tbilisi with Avlabari bridge. Photographer: A. Roinashvili. © Lika Mamatsashvili.

confluence of cliffs and buildings. In the photographs of this period, the river Mtkvari is framed as a dominant part of the natural landscape of the city, which plays an active part in the city's life. The river's vital importance is expressed in pictures depicting the uninterrupted cycle of activities along its bank, seen in the watermills, various workshops and shops. The settlement of

these historical parts was spontaneous, analogous to typical medieval, Eastern, cities in contrast to the newly expanded European part. In the second part of the XIX century, Erekle Square was replaced as the center by “Gare-tubani” (“outskirts”), where the palace of the Russian viceroy was erected. This section of the city, imitated western urban planning with classicist buildings on both sides of a long and straight avenue. During this time, the city embraced two urban narratives, the European and local, producing an eclectic mixture alongside different social groups’ relational models, the meeting of East and West.⁷ The coexistence of the medieval remnants of the city and, in the newly-developed part, the “rationally” planned official buildings combining Russian classicism and elements of Renaissance or Baroque architecture, produced the very special form of eclecticism perceived by travelers and researchers as the authentic image of Tbilisi. It also illustrated the relationship model which existed between the Russian Empire and Georgia described in Susan Layton’s (1994) book *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. Russian imperialist consciousness was formed under the influence of its foreign relations. Caucasus came to assume, for Russia, a special prominence as a version of “the Orient’: “...Georgia’s Christian heritage had naturally been accentuated in Russian political ideology since the time of Catherine II. But in the romantic era with its mania for visiting the East, persons desiring exotic experience clearly found it much more satisfying to Orientalize Georgia rather than to contemplate its similarity to Orthodox Russia or its antagonism to Islam.” This model of relations is partly shown in the picture of Georgian society’s cultural life in the first half of XIX century, depicted in notes on Tbilisi written by Alexander Dumas (2009, 228-236) during his journey in the Caucasus, where he describes in detail the design of the Tbilisi Theater Hall, built 1847–1851. “It was the first theater building in Tbilisi. The facades were inspired by Italian renaissance style and specifically by Andrea Palladio’s architectural motifs, with the interior designed by Gregory Gagarin in Islamic motifs” (Mania, 2006-18). It was a time when the theatre/opera was a place to demonstrate the power of the political elite. Dumas (2009, 228), describes the curtain of the opera house, designed by Gagarin (Figure 3) as an allegory of imperial hoarding: “In the centre [of the curtain’s design] is a plinth on which is painted a group representing, on the viewer’s left, Russia; on the right, Georgia. On the Russian side... St Petersburg and the Neva, Moscow with its Kremlin, bridges, railways, steam ships, civilization. On the Georgian side... Tbilisi with its fortress ruins, its bazaars, its, rock escarpments, its wild and unruly Kura river, its clear sky, that is to say, its poetry. At the base of the plinth, on the Russian side, we have the Cross of Constantine, the Shrine of St. Vladimir, Siberian

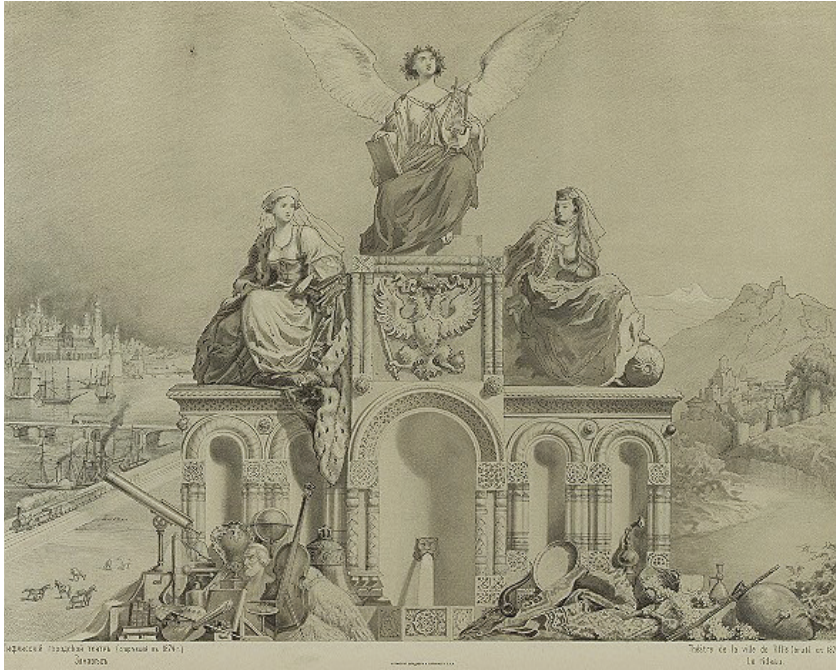


Figure 3. Sketch for Tbilisi Opera curtain by Gregory Gagarin. © Burusi

furs, fish from the Volga, corn from the Ukraine, fruits from Crimea, in other words religion, agriculture, commerce, abundance. On the Georgian side, we find splendid fabrics, magnificent weapons, silver-mounted guns, ivory-and-gold daggers, Damascus sabers, vermillion goulas, pearl-encrusted mandolins, drums with copper bells, ebony zurnas, in other words ornament, war, wine, dance, music.”⁸ Dumas is implying that the Georgian audience in the theatre was faced with a direct message about Russian and Georgian identity, filtered through allegorical images of an imperial scenario according to which, Georgia was an irrational and exotic country, while Russia was a rational bearer of civilization.⁹ At the time no other narratives, which might offer an alternative to this mythologized model, existed.

It was all too easy to “Orientalize” Georgia because of Persian and Ottoman historical influence on it, and also to purposely ignore the occidental basis of Georgian culture. In addition to the architectural manifestations of imperial domination, expressed mainly in classicist architecture, visual art was also utilized to reinforce imperial ideology. In this context, the art of Gregory Gagarin is informative, as his pictures presented an ideological iconography of Russian-Caucasian relations. Gagarin was also a promoter of Caucasian

culture in Europe, as his albums of Caucasian pictures and costumes were published in Paris (Stackelberg 1840). Gagarin has gained the status of “an artist of Caucasus,” who expressed official power through artistic messages. For example, most of his pictures of old Tbilisi, showing scenes of women’s recreation, parallel the oriental exoticism of romantic artists like Delacroix from paintings such as “*Jewish Wedding in Morocco*” (1832) or “*Women of Algiers in their Apartment*” (1834). And yet, despite his imperial perspective, Gregory Gagarin was also sympathetic towards Georgia, where he spent six years of his life (1848 –1853), his vision turning into a deeper perception than the mere representation of the region as an exotic other. In his attempts to express the individual characters of specific persons, as in the portraits of Maiko Orbeliani, Manana Orbeliani or Martha Salaghashvili, Gagarin never resorts to showing them as the female characters of oriental fairy tales, but rather he becomes excited by the psychological individuality of each subject. However, this moment reveals as an artist’s subjective sensitivity, which has no bearing on the general idea of establishing a style of public artistic forms.

The second part of the XIX century in Georgia saw a critical reaction to the Russian imperial policy of assimilation and attempts at Russification. The new discourse was created by the younger generation; most of them were educated abroad and had been introduced to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The confrontation between old and new visions of identity was carried out on the pages of influential publications like “*Tsiskari*” and “*Sakartvelos Moambe*”. In visual art, this was followed by the emergence of a new generation of artists who were educated in the art academies of St.Petersburg and Moscow and created a base for the development of Georgian visual art as a new means of expressing ongoing discourses of national identity. These young painters – Romanoz Gvelesiani, Alexander Mrevlishvili, Gigo Gabashvili, Mose Toidze – were acquainted with the art of the Russian *Peredvizhniki* (the “Wanderers” or “Itinerants”) and with European trends. The first official Tbilisi art gallery was built at the end of the XIX century by Albert Saltzman, an architect of German origin. It was a classicist-style building called the Temple of Glory and at first served as a further means of propaganda for the Russian Empire, displaying images documenting Russian victories in the Caucasus. In the 1920’s, after the Soviet regime was established, The Museum of Military History was turned into an art gallery through the efforts of Dimitri Shevardnadze, a well-known Georgian painter who was also the head of the Committee for the Defense of Culture. This can be considered as a crucial moment when art inspired from modernist tendencies entered the space meant for official art. At the same time, influential modernist cafes were functioning – “*kimerioni*”, “*Argonauts*” boat”,

“Fantastic Tavern” (1919-1922) with the murals on their walls adding bohemian stories to Tbilisi’s life.¹⁰

Socialist Classicism and a New Course for Mtkvari

A new period of the cultural and stylistic concept of Tbilisi commenced with a new search for a national consciousness, resulting from the fundamental changes taking place with the end of the Russian Empire, the 1917 Revolution, the brief history of Georgia as an independent republic, followed by the establishment of the Soviet regime. As early as the 1920’s, the subject of the loss of the city’s original appearance was discussed not only by officials but also by artists. In his seminal book, Ioseb Grishashvili (1927), a famous poet, who devoted all of his artistic energy to Tbilisi, notes:

“As we know, old Tbilisi is losing its old appearance. To avoid the complete disappearance of valuable materials the museum, belonging to the City Council, is arranging an exhibition entitled “Old Tbilisi.” The initiative was announced by the Museum of Tbilisi Municipality on December 3, 1926. We are pleased to note that, in parallel with our research, the Museum of Tbilisi Municipality was conceived as a place where the reader will be at least partially acquainted with some notable monuments of old Tbilisi. The City Council is justified in declaring that “Tbilisi is gradually losing its old appearance.” Is it not true that little by little the exotic finesse of the old city is disappearing, along with the public customs of the Karachogeli and the robust examples of urban folklore?”

These reactions arose as a result of the drastic measures, concentrated on electrification and industrialization, which were realized in the first years of Soviet rule. In connection with planning the city’s renovation, several large-scale projects were elaborated. The General Plan for the reconstruction of Tbilisi was worked out in 1932-1934 (architects: I. Malozemov, Z. Kurdiani, G. Gogava; economist: S. Shelekhovski). The reconstruction was meant to increase the scale of the city, including the development of new communications systems. The growth of the city followed its historical axis and the central task was to build concrete dams and to organize public services along the river banks. The changes, which had to be made, were considered in rational and functional terms but there were also some flaws, which later became the subject of sharp criticism. T. Kvirkevelia (1985), author of the monograph

“The Architecture of Tbilisi”, finds the main shortcomings of the General Plan in the changing of the Mtkvari river's connection points to the city's arteries, which resulted from the diversion of its course under the Plan. Architecturally, the river had been the city's compositional axis, and “the city was open to it.” After reconstruction, in which new dams were built, a new riverbed made and the old one turned into a highway, Tbilisi's position changed, with the river's main course now to be found on the other side of the city.

New architectural styles were added in the Soviet period. Firstly, the so-called Stalinist architecture, followed by examples of late socialist architecture. T. Kvirkvelia (1985, 73-98) identifies two major tendencies in the architecture of this period: one was an attempt to create a so-called “National Style”, while the other was concentrated on the use of rationalistic principles for architectural compositional design, the “National Style” being expressed in the use of some repetitions of details from Georgian feudal architecture. The realization of the General Plans of 1943 and 1955 added new districts and street networks and some important buildings were built in these years, including Heroes' Square, the complex of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences (architects: G. Lejava, V. Tsukhishvili) and the Government House (V. Kokorin, G. Lejava). Examples of Soviet classicism were ideologically completed by pieces of monumental art: mosaic panels, reliefs and sculptures. A monument to Lenin, by V. Topuridze, was installed in 1956 in the main square of the city, named after Lenin. A sculptural relief by V. Topuridze and Sh. Mikatadze, entitled “Labor, Science, Technology,” was placed on the facade of the Government House.¹¹ The historical part of city, with its distinctive landscape, acquired new symbolic sculptural accents, created by Elguja Amashukeli: the monument to Vakhtang Gorgasali, the founder of Tbilisi (1967), and the Mother of Georgia (1958-1960) at the Narikala fortress ruins.

In the Soviet period, the urbanization process turned Tbilisi into a much larger city and alongside the remnants of feudal buildings and the eclectic style of the Russian Empire, there arose the third defining style of the Socialist epoch. This layer was more conspicuously homogeneous, embracing the Stalinist period, Khrushchev's buildings, followed by comparatively diverse expressions of late socialism, manifested in several bold projects, e.g. The Palace of Sports (architects: L. Alexi-Meskhishvili, J. Kasradze, 1961), the Hotel Iveria (architect: O. Kalandarishvili, 1967), and the former building of the Ministry of Highways Construction (architects: G. Chakhava, Z. Jalaghania, 1975). Up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tbilisi combined three historical narratives – the feudal period, Tsarist Russian rule, and Socialist-style development, including social and cultural sub-narratives.

A complex and layered history was represented in the look of the city; but changes became more radical and chaotic after the fall of the Soviet regime.

Urban Tensions in post-Soviet Tbilisi

The post-Soviet developments in Georgian architecture can be viewed in the context of critical debates around the coexisting problems of the introduction of postmodernist forms and materials of architecture to spaces with pre-existing buildings. Almost all post-Soviet countries are familiar with architectural renovation projects and controversial transformations. Svetlana Boym (2001, 83-121), defines this state as *authoritarian postmodernism*, when discussing post-Soviet Moscow architecture, where “there is no written directive, no manifesto directing its development.” In the case of Georgia, it seems adequate to examine the issue of post-Soviet architecture and public space transformation in the following order: 1. The development of spontaneous architecture during the 1990’s; 2. The euphoria of the Rose Revolution and new architectural icons; 3. The ambitious new architectural projects taking place in parallel with increasingly enthusiastic protests of organized citizens.

The collapse of the Soviet system became a starting point for new urban tensions. It was a period when regulatory institutions ceased to function and spontaneous architecture flourished. The legislation was inoperative or was not nuanced enough to prevent this kind of activity. The period from the early 1990’s to the third political metamorphosis – the Rose Revolution, in November, 2003, is defined as “an incessant crisis” by Stephen Jones, since “the collapse of the USSR in 1991, and turmoil under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia (1990-2), was a period of mass hysteria during which Georgia descended into a hellish version of its fragmented past” (Stephen Jones 2013, 13). This context produced architectural curiosities. The so-called “parasite buildings” tendency (making new additions to old buildings) started at the end of the 1980’s and in the end involved almost the entire city. It was a reaction to Soviet-era restrictions on living space, which allowed only a fixed floor area per person for living space, and under which residents could not change their living spaces into bigger ones even if they could afford to do so. The results, which were revealed in the very odd and variegated structures, greatly influenced the city’s appearance. Following the “incessant crisis” of the 90’s the “parasite building” trend ceased but the lack of architectural regulation continued to produce problems for Tbilisi.

The dissatisfaction of Tbilisi inhabitants with contemporary changes was expressed in the criticism of modes of decision-making in connection

with new projects characteristic of contemporary Georgian architecture. After the Rose Revolution, in 2003, the Georgian government's intention to demonstrate progress and rapid transformation, even if it was superficial, was criticized by civil society. Similarly to Moscow's *authoritarian postmodernism*, described by Svetlana Boym, it was President Mikheil Saakashvili's own personal taste and his own imagined model of a contemporary and progressive city, to which Tbilisi had to conform. In a TV interview,¹² president Saakashvili talked openly about how decisions on new constructions were made; noting that if any building seen while travelling internationally impressed him and his team, they immediately worked out plans to build a similar structure in Georgia. The space, defined by such a policy, was creating a distinct "fake" reality, thus resembling a more modest imitation of the rapid growth and modernization of the cities of the Middle East.

Beside the official architectural innovations Tbilisi was transformed under the signs of gentrification, as some historical buildings in the old city were bought and reconstructed by the new elite, as old habitants were not able to keep or renovate their inherited houses. Paul Manning (2009, 71-102) ironically describes the new Georgian's architectural reality as "Post-Modern":

"...skyscraper townhouses rising up behind their imposing "Neo-Feudal" defensive walls, like some sort of post-modern version of a Norman moat-and-bailey fortress. The new architecture of Tbilisi, both its focus on exteriorized display of wealth and quantitative style, post-modernism as the architectural equivalent of hypercorrection, *mari-azhoba*, as well as its architectural embodiment of the rigid separation, atomization, of social relations stand in contrast to respectively to classicizing norms of *kultura*¹³ and the traditional cityscape as well as to the normative "openness" of the courtyard based communality of Old Tbilisi, in different ways expresses the changing values of the new elites versus those of the old city dwellers."

The problem of a single individual deciding on changes to the public space and the scenario of progress subordinated to one person's taste, caused trenchant criticism. Besides this, there was a disparity between the high costs of such projects and the country's financial capabilities. This problem drew sharp criticism from the party then in opposition, but after its victory in the elections the vision of future architectural development became even more utopian, expressed most clearly in the large-scale Panorama Tbilisi project¹⁴ – a new subject for critical debate.

Post-Soviet history gave new architectural accents to Tbilisi. The cityscape of the renovated city is defined by the monumental building of the Holy Trinity Cathedral (Sameba)¹⁵ designed by architect A. Mindiashvili, who synthesized in his project different details of historical examples of Georgian Christian religious architecture. Religious buildings, in general, are an important part of the architectural trends in post-Soviet space. Another prevalent architectural trend is expressed in designs of police stations, which are mainly steel-framed glass buildings, based on the concept of police transparency. Apart from churches and police stations, there are examples of designs for extraordinary projects, which are redefining the shape of Tbilisi. Beside the Bridge of Peace mentioned above, two large scale buildings were inserted in the central part of the city: The House of Justice by Doriana and Massimiliano Fuksas – (opened in 2012) and the Concert Hall (in progress) in the Rike district. Both buildings have impressive massive silhouettes of dynamic lines inspired from organic forms of plants or pure geometry. The House of Justice is covered by layered mushroom like roofs creating a canopied structure.¹⁶ And the Concert Hall presents two huge tubes of steel and mirror like glass surface. Most Georgian professionals appreciate Fuksas' work¹⁷ in their interviews, but agree with idea that the two structures aggressively invaded into Tbilisi's historic area (Berekashvili 2013, 44).

Thus, the new projects realized in the old city, in order to demonstrate its new history, have failed because of the destructive role they have acquired, turning themselves into aggressive invaders into the historical texture of the city by ignoring the historical context of their surroundings. This invasive architecture is typical for the post-Soviet condition, and ignores the contemporary developments in world architecture.

The general picture gives the impression that there is an ongoing struggle, carried out under unequal conditions, where individuals or companies try to appropriate parts of public space in order to profit from it, while on the other hand citizens demand that historical character and the ecological balance not be lost.

Tbilisi today openly illustrates the radical changes inherent in the birth of an absolutely new city. The medieval and Soviet layers of the city are already in the past, but the city is currently in a process of transformation, which reflects features of the global city, but one whose content is still unclear and has a mixed character. The transformation of the former Iveria hotel¹⁸ (Figure 4) can serve as a symbolic illustration of the changes of this last period. The hotel was built in 1967, then became a camp for refugees after the post-Soviet crisis and the war in Abkhazian 1992, and in its final stage

it was transformed into a Radisson Blu hotel (opened in 2009) – a typical global city hotel construction.



Figure 4. Iveria Hotel transformation. © Guram Tsibakhashvili.

Notes

1. The term “transitional period” specifically refers here to the political and cultural processes of the Post-Soviet period.
2. The bridge’s length is 150m and it’s covered with fishnet like steel canopy filled with glass panels. The night lighting uses 50000 lights designed by the French lighting designer, Philippe Martinaud.
3. STYLE magazine – the periodical in Georgia featuring information on architecture, design and construction.
4. In the case of Georgia intercommunications between officials and new architectural settings served more to demonstrate the new course of the country as an independent state distancing with its Soviet past than a “way of legitimizing themselves anew through a revival of pre-Bolshevik traditions”.
5. “The palace of the Russian viceroy was created by the architect Semionov (1845-1847) and expanded and finished by Otto Jacob Simonson (1850-1868), who “redesigned its facade opening onto Rustaveli (formerly Golovinski) Avenue by adding motifs of the Italian Renaissance. The austere and official elevations alternate with the facade featuring elegant columns and curved stairs on the garden side. The “Islamic” hall with its stucco ornaments, mirrors and moucharabieh, creates a sharp

- contrast with the European interior and exterior decoration.” M. Mania. *European Architects in Tbilisi*. Tbilisi. 2006.p.21.
6. “[The Aleksander Nevsky Cathedral of the Russian Army] was built on the initiative of the Russian Tsar to commemorate the end of the Caucasian war and to complete the conquest of the Caucasus... The project, by Victor Schroter and the painter A. Huhn, who won the competition, remained unrealized due to the high costs associated with the construction work. The building was erected to the design of the second-prize winners, David Grimm (1823-1898) and Robert Gedike, between 1871 and 1889.” M. Mania.*European Architects in Tbilisi*. Tbilisi. 2006.[Georgian] p. 35.
 7. On one side were the city craftsmen and tradesmen along with picturesque personages like Kinto-and Karachogheli-types and on the other side Georgian aristocrats following the new mode of life under the influence of Russian officials, which creates the illusion of a dichotomy, while multi-ethnicity was also a consistent part of the cultural texture of the city.
 8. English translation by Martin Barlow.
 9. Dumas did not mention the two-headed eagle – the State Emblem of the Russian Empire – depicted in the center of the plinth beside an allegorical figure of a winged muse.
 10. Today the great part of these murals lost, only Kimerioni painted by Lado Gudishvili, Sergei Sudeikin, and David Kakabadze was partly restored in 1980-ies. “Kimerioni was an important part of the 1919-1921 Tbilisi artistic milieu – the place of concentration of creative life of that period, where art became the object of not only presentation, but that of active discussion, theoretical reasoning. This was indeed a special area – a social structure (café-restaurant), set up for a specific society (art circle) with a specific function (in the sense of the place of demonstration of their art), a certain cultural context, one might say, a special mode of life of the creative society, referred to as “café culture”. “T.Tabatadze. *Artistic Café Kimerioni and its wall-painting*. Tiflis.1919. TSAA.2010.
 11. These monuments were destroyed after the tragedy of April 9, 1989 in which an anti-Soviet demonstration was broken up by Soviet Army, leading to Georgian fatalities.
 12. M.Saakashvili interview in Nanuka’s Show. Rustavi2 TV. 17.07.2013
 13. «Kultura” is transcription of Georgian equivalent of culture emphasizing the special meaning of this term in the process of changing semiotics of the post-Soviet city discussed by Paul Manning .

14. "Co investment fund of Georgia presented Panorama Tbilisi Project in March, 2014, which is a hotel complex in the Sololaki district zone. The 7-star hotel on Freedom Square and the Sololaki complex will be connected by ropeways... The Sololaki slope will include one and two-floor hotel apartments and this zone will be connected with the basic complex in the Leghvtakhevi Valley through elevators..." The Caucasus Business Week. <http://cbw.ge/business/panorama-tbilisi-supporters-objectors-and-their-arguments/> Accessed in May 19, 2015.
15. The Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi – Sameba is the main cathedral of the Georgian Orthodox Church located in Tbilisi (1995–2004) of cross-domed construction with three apses. It's one of the tallest Eastern Orthodox Cathedrals (height is 68m crowned with cross of 7,5m). It can be taken as a part of after Soviet Religious Renaissance realized in monumental design and huge sizes like Cathedral of Christ Savor in Moscow (completed in 2000) or renovated version of The Bibi-Heybat Mosque in Baku (opened in 2008).
16. "The building is made up of 7 volumes that contain offices (each volume is made up of 4 floors located on different levels). These volumes are placed around a "central public square", which is the core of the project, where there is the front office services. Offices are connected to each other by internal footbridges that stretches on different levels." De zeen Magazine. October 15, 2012.
17. Architects Nino Laghidze, Merab Gujejiani mentioned Fuksas's works as valuable projects in different interviews.
18. The Hotel Iveria in different periods. Photo archive of Guram Tsibakhashvili.

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