SPACES
Cultural Public Sphere
in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

Edited by:
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Art that reacts to life where it actually happens, blurred borders between the producer and the viewer of art, temporary use of public spaces as tactics of sustaining creativity in unfavourable conditions, or to oppose the eternal representation of power that classical statues and monuments on public spaces are loaded with: between 2011 and 2014, the SPACES project assembled artists and cultural workers in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, acting in the public realm of their cities, critically reflecting on societal issues. The team of curators invited international and regional artists to develop interactive projects in urban spaces, with the aim of enhancing civil society processes, to reconsider public space as a place for free expression, social encounter and shared responsibilities. The SPACES interventions succeeded in changing the rhythm of the cities, made private acts public, irritated, dealt with the past, present and imagined futures of spaces and cities, against and dealt the background of the burning question: How involved can a citizen get in current political discourses?

Responding to the urgent need for transformation in Eastern and Central Europe and the question of active citizenship, a large number of artists and cultural actors position themselves on the line of defending public interest, merging artistic, political, theoretical and empirical approaches. After decades of rather, and scattered struggles, public space - a radically changing, highly endangered environment - and its creative usage by artists in particular and civil society in general, has become a key elements in a process of protest, activism and change. This was the starting point for SPACES.

The project created antitheses to the degradation of public spaces in Chisinau, Kyiv, Tbilisi and Yerevan. All these cities suffer from the privatization and fencing off of public properties, the destruction of the historic centres of the cities and of their social structures, and the ownership and symbolic domination of the public space by reigning political and religious groups. These processes exclude many voices,

such as religious and sexual minorities and economically disadvantaged groups, and leave citizens unprepared to consider public space as a common space for all.

The SPACES project concentrated on a proactive approach, developed reform concepts and offered models of alternative practices. What is left after three project years?

- Innovative examples for appropriating public space through arts
- Enhanced capacities for independent cultural and art initiatives in the region
- New sustainable, transnational cultural networks
- Policy advice for improved cultural governance in the four countries
- Friendships

We hope these results will inspire the debate about social transformation processes all across Europe, and will improve the position of artists in the current struggle for change and new, empowered forms of citizenship.

Injecting Self-Knowledge into Aesthetics: Two Decades of Reinventing Cultural Practice Through Institutionalized Friendship

Nataša Bodrožić

The SPACES project was a three year long pursuit of cohering artists' and activists' communities in Tbilisi, Yerevan, Kyiv and Chisinau, particularly those acting in urban (public) space, articulating it as commons.[1] At the same time, the project dealt with new structures that serve more and more as backbones for critical cultural practices: self-established artists', activists', cultural workers' groups and associations, forming a wide field colloquially known as the "independent culture."

The short title of the project- SPACES- is an acronym for *Sustainable Public Areas for Culture in Eastern Countries* and as such it contains a sort of an "error" in the title as it denotes "Eastern countries" as a field of action but in that way keeping the subject (the angle of speaking) out of them, somewhere else. In other words, looking at the project title, one can conclude that it is from the West where the gaze is coming from.

This topic is not new. In the mid 2000s, after the Orange Revolution, when various forms of independent collectivism and self-organized protest groups emerged in Ukraine, the Ukrainian-German-Austrian artists group *Carpathian theatre* created a project space in a village cottage in western Ukraine. What determined the character of their artistic practice is the very location: "they explored" Europe with a shifted centre" in the part of Europe called "the Eastern Europe," which, however, geographically stands in its centre.[2] Perhaps this would be a good point from which

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1 Although the (academic) discussion about the commons is still an ongoing one, theoretically, the term is mostly related to the book by Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt called *The Commonwealth* (2011). Speaking of commons, they do not refer only to the natural resources that capital seeks to appropriate, but also "the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships," which are both the means and the result of bio-political production. They argue for the idea of the "common" to replace the opposition of private and public and the politics predicated on that opposition. Translating this loosely into spatial practices, we can say that for the space to become common *there have to be developed forms of contestation and agreement about its use and character which explicitly prevent any accumulation of power, especially any accumulation of situated, space bound power* (Stavros Stavrides). It is important to note that Hardt and Negri do not necessarily identify common space with the public space, although public space can become common. However, there are theoreticians who are sceptical towards Hardt & Negri's concept of commons. One of them is Chantal Mouffe, who proposes the concept of "agonistic engagement" within the existent institutions, i.e. reclaiming the idea of the public. By the public, Mouffe understands conflictual form of cooperation among citizens. Since there is a confrontation when being in commons she stresses the need of institution to mediate the confrontational nature of pluralism.

2 According to Nikita Kadan: *Coordinates of the Generation. New Art from Ukraine* (in the catalogue of the exhibition *FUTURE WAS YESTERDAY Self-organised artistic practices in Ukraine*, Curated by Slobodne veze/Loose Associations & R.E.P. Group, Zagreb Student Center, Culture of Change, 2009).

the SPACES project should be observed and reflected upon: from the position of the displaced centre, in fact from the place where it was actually happening.

Three years may seem a relatively long time frame for a project, however not enough to grow the real environment for the common action of protagonists, especially as the cities involved are geographically quite remote from each other. Besides, the art scenes and cultural contexts of the four cities are not always easy to compare. They vary in size, level of organization, institutional landscape, specific needs. Finally, the methodology of the project was developed with the presupposition that the partners knew each other well from before, which was only sometimes the case.

On the other hand there has been certainly a common ground from where the SPACES project took off. Roughly, it can be summarized through two interrelated points: as already stated, the first one refers to the appearance and proliferation of the new cultural and social actors who are often carriers of the critical culture, while the second one can be summarized under the phrase "politics of space."

Politics of Space

After the collapse of state socialism, the uncontrolled privatisation that followed created tremendous consequences in the social tissue of the formerly socialist countries–major gaps of economic and social inequalities were produced. Through vastly non transparent privatization processes, the ownership of large parts of the national economies was transferred into the hands of a few through the channels of clientelistic networks that were created at the time. While some factories failed because structurally they could not survive the shock of the market liberalization, others failed because new owners saw that they would be better off selling off the assets of those factories rather than make an effort and invest in their survival. In many post-socialist countries today, there is a public consensus that the privatization of the 1990s was a failure. According to some opinions, the privatization process mostly happened in two waves: the first was the privatization of national economies and the second was the privatization of space.

As we learnt from Henry Lefebvre,[3] space is produced through specific social progress. But unlike other things it is simultaneously a material object and a medium through which other things and social relations are produced. So actually the space constantly reproduces and modifies social conditions of its own production. In short, the society produces the space, and in return, the space (itself) produces the society.

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3   Henri Lefebvre: *The Production of Space*, 1974.

The brutality of the privatization process and the predominance of the concept of the private ownership at public expense, logically dismissed the idea of community[4] which is the most visible in deterioration of the modernist urban environment and the housing stock which is transferred to private owners, who seem to be willing for privileges, but do not always accept (or are not able to accept) responsibilities which arise from such a property concept.[5]

As Levan Asabashvili writes, *"Modernist built spaces with their intrinsic land use patterns, functionality, spatial organization, modes of material assemblage and aesthetic qualities – with their entirety, are the artefacts of planning culture with a social ideal as its generative core. (...) no matter how plain, immature or inaccurate these ideals and efforts could seem to the critical observer retrospectively. Due to these properties, such spaces turn out to be inadmissible in the current logic of production of space. In their entirety, they are abnormal errors in the urban imaginations of new administrators, real estate developers and entrepreneurs."*[6]

Even urban planning has been identified as a relic of state socialism which led to a general devaluation of the achieved level of spatial development, *which takes away its previous socio- economic significance, scientific autonomy and operational independence.*[7]

The articulation of the issue of public spaces as a political, social and cultural agenda in post-socialist countries is inseparable from the critique of the currently prevailing ideological framework at large. This means that it is necessary to break through the monolith of the post-Communist discourse. According to theoretician Boris Buden, "post-Communist discourse"[8] is a prevailing ideological framework from the 1990s on. Central to Buden's writing is a concept of a culturally and politically divided Europe: post-Communist Eastern Europe is regarded as an outsider and "bastard" of the European Union. In its exclusion, however, Buden sees a chance to define anew the universal appeal of Western European culture. Speaking of post-Communist discourse, Buden introduces the term "normalization" as its important component. In short the term "normalization" refers to the adaptation of ex-Communist countries to the prevailing, hegemonic standard of liberal-democracy and the capitalist system.[9] One result of this "normalization"

4 One can question whether the community actually existed in the reality of the Socialist period, but it is evident that it existed as a social ideal, at least nominally.

5 Dafne Berc in an interview: *Planiranje i proizvodnja prostora uvijek su političko pitanje published at http://pogledaj. to/drugestvari/planiranje-i-proizvodnja-prostora-uvijek-su-politicko-pitanje/* (accessed on 09/ 2014).

6 Levan Asabashvili in the statement of support to the MOTEL TROGIR preservation campaign published at http:// slobodneveze.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/motel-trogir-public-discussion/ (accessed on 09/2013).

7 Dafne Berc, ibid.

8 Boris Buden: *In the shoes of Communism* published at http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=ver-anstaltungen&subkat=kongrpro&lang=en

9 If the term normalization presupposes ideal of democratic society, non-conflictual society, society of tolerance, ab-sence of violence, social peace, partnership etc, the process of normalization would be legitimate. However within the post-communist discourse, the notion of normalization goes beyond this description and becomes one of its most important mechanisms. How does that mechanism works? From the standpoint of post-Communist subject,

is a one-sided approach to the recent history of the former socialist countries. It basically produces normalized knowledge which does not allow any sort of dialectics or questioning of the ideological basis that produces it. However, as Buden writes, critical reflection must never mix the Communist past with the cultural Other. As Benjamin warned us, *"the future, as a change for the better, can be born just from our past, only after we have fulfilled that past with the present: only after we discovered the sameness between our present and our own past."*[10]

From Friendship to NGOs

"The cultural crisis in Eastern Europe is not just the absence of institutions, but also that the downward motion of social change has exceeded the possibility of cultural reflection."[11]

This statement by Viktor Misiano, which deals with the early nineties, a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the apparent end of state socialism, makes rather interesting reading today. At that time, a group of artists from Ljubljana established strong connections with members of the Moscow art scene on the basis of direct encounters, mutual sympathies and an interest in each other. It was the time of social turbulence caused by the dissolution of the state along with the disintegration of its institutional framework. As a reaction to the mad dynamics of social transformation, Misiano proposed the concept of the *confidential community* – putting friendship in the centre of the social and cultural relations of the time, perceiving it as *"the most non-institutional and personalized type of social communication."*[12]

Almost two decades later, in her text *Mapping Friendship: the Challenges of Contemporary Art Scene in Armenia*,[13] Yerevan-based curator Taguhi Torosyan introduces a close community of friends as a backbone of the contemporary art "institution" as well. However, whereas back in the old days Misiano noted that the artists perceived friendship as a strategic value, having the value of a project with an artistic character and employed the resources of friendly relationships as part of the program, Torosyan notes another impact in the first decade of the 2000s: institutionalized friendships transformed into NGOs.

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the attitude and "the knowledge" about Communism is formed in accordance with the existing political normativity, meaning that this attitude is necessarily anti-communist. In accordance with existing political normativity, we are convinced in advance that Communism was the name for really failed utopian project that never have had a chance to be realized, that Socialism is social system which is strange to the true human nature, and because of that, not even one normal human being lived in that system by his own choice and that only authoritarian regime was able to force him to live in that kind of system (according to Boris Buden, ibid.).

10 Walter Benjamin in Boris Buden: *In the shoes of Communism*, published at http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=veranstaltungen&subkat=kongrpro&lang=en

11 Viktor Misiano: *The Institutionalization of Friendship* (1998) published at http://www.irwin.si/texts/institualisation/ (accessed on 09/2014).

12 Ibid.

13 The full text is presented in this catalogue; it was commissioned by the SPACES project for the cultural policy research and expanded for this publication (2014).

This shift, greatly encouraged by the sweeping privatization of the cultural infrastructure (cinema halls, houses of culture…) in most of the countries involved, a crisis of the remaining cultural institutions, a lack of local public funds for emerging cultural practices and the subsequent presence of foreign funders with rigid agendas brought changes, both in the structure of artistic projects and also in their content. While Misiano indicates that the work on the confidential project in the 1990s was a pure questioning, moving from the production of artefacts to the discussion of artistic production's preconditions, the NGO cultural field of the 2000s was faced with the imposition of civil society development agendas, along with extreme bureaucratic demands that even compromised the artistic value of works and events. In other words, one could say that the NGO system appropriated the "confidentiality," or used its fabric as its own production infrastructure, transforming the love-for-art and love-for-a-friend collaboration into dedicated underpaid (or unpaid) work. The horizontality of the confidential community from the 1990s often slipped into verticality in NGO surroundings, as a consequence of the imperative of "professionalisation" of the artistic field.

However, even in the situation of limited local resources and rigid agendas of the funding bodies, there is a whole new generation of cultural workers trying to deal with the given conditions and develop their own tactics of survival. In some of the countries covered by the SPACES project, the recent tendency is to connect in larger advocacy platforms in an attempt to lobby for access to local public funds as a support for their activities. In other countries, the difficulty of establishing dialogue with the government forced these actors to establish community-based resources and programs exchanges, and some of them managed to develop their own specific skills and modestly enter the service market game.

In short, the struggle for the improvement of the social position of independent cultural actors goes hand-in-hand with the demand for a fairer redistribution of national wealth and, in some cases, the influence on governmental policies at large. The public space struggle can be viewed as part of this story.

Four Segments of the SPACES Project

In the three-year life of the project there have been four main SPACES segments: four transdisciplinary events in public space, in four capital cities: Tbilisi, Yerevan, Kyiv and Chisinau. In between the main events, each of the four partners were developing additional projects based on the needs of the local context and autonomous curatorial decisions. The project included programme exchanges, artists in residency platforms, discussions, policy forums and capacity-building workshops.

Tbilisi

undergo.the parallels was the title of the first public space event realized within the SPACES project which took place in Tbilisi from May 24th to June 3rd 2012. The curator Nini Palavandishvili of GeoAIR mentioned several reasons for choosing nine underground pedestrian passages in Tbilisi as a focus of the project. In her statement text, she was referring to the "in-between" status of the underground passageways, as spaces in transition, apparently trying to reflect the trajectory between the original intention of the modernist project undertaken by the government in the late 1960s through the mid1980s and today´s evident negligence towards it. Further on, she mentioned two goals of the *undergo.the parallels* project: *"the practical and artistic one: to animate the population of Tbilisi to a more frequent use of underground passageways, hoping at the same time that the activities carried out during the project will provide input to officials for the purpose of improving the given situation. Besides addressing the socio-political issues mentioned earlier, the other, artistic goal was to confront the general public with unconventional ways of perceiving art and engaging with it."*[14]

undergo.the parallels was an artistic and social experiment in which the curator set the framework, pointing out at the neuralgic spots of the city, while the majority of the content, interpretations and readings, were determined by the invited artists and their art work in direct communication with the local population.

Yerevan

Public Talks, the second segment of the SPACES project, took place in Yerevan, from 8th to 12th October 2012. It was curated collectively by a group of local curators and cultural workers gathered around the association Utopiana.am. The program consisted of several components: artistic interventions in various public spaces, talks and presentations by Armenian art and cultural critics taking place in context-specific venues, study visits to independent cultural institutions and a final cultural policy debate formatted as a panel discussion that followed up the events and happenings program.

The topic of modernity, articulated within the question "Have we ever been modern?" occupied the central place of the theoretical discussions of the Yerevan programme. The aim was to focus on the structure and transformations of the public sphere and its spaces of articulation throughout and after the Soviet period. The programme was trying to review the experience and the processes of the past twenty years *when the emptied space of the communist ideology was filled with rising nationalism and manipulated religiousness while the free market of unequal*

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14 Nini Palavandishvili at http://undergotheparallels.wordpress.com/ (accessed on 08/2014)

opportunities came to take the position of state-governed industrial economy.[15] So, what changed and what had remained the same?

By refusing to accept the passive role of the "children of Communism,"[16] Utopiana.am engages with its own historical, political and cultural context by analysing the actual conditions which have created it, in an attempt to review history in relation with its own present.

Kyiv

The central point of the *Architecture of Common* project which was held in May 2013 in the historical center of Kyiv, at Andriyivsky Uzviz, was envisioning the future cultural centre that was about to appear in the place of the old, Soviet textile factory *Yunist* (Youth), which was shut down in 2010.

According to local sources, the *Yunist* factory case is quite a specific phenomenon in the context of Kyiv activist protests against illegal construction and demolition of allegedly cultural heritage. The factory had been out of operation since the early 1990s and the rights to use the land had been purchased and sold several times. In 2008, it was bought by one of the developing companies owned by one of the biggest Ukrainian oligarchs - Rinat Akhmetov. The company planned to build a business centre, but in the summer of 2012 they decided to abandon the project because of the risks to their public image (implicit in building in a historical centre). However, in April 2012, the whole quarter was demolished.

After a series of mass protests and public actions, the company publicly apologized to the citizens of Kyiv and promised to build something for the public on this piece of land. A public board was assembled by public voting for important and trustworthy public figures on the project website. After eight months of debate, the board decided that a multi-purpose cultural centre should be built there.

According to curator Kateryna Botanova, *Yunist* was a unique case, because it was the first ever effective instance of public pressure on private capital, pushing not to physical violence and court battles against activists as in numerous cases of activist battles against illegal construction in the city, but towards an attempt at investing in the public domain. As she states further on, "the creation of a public board and the decision to build a cultural center was quite a challenge for cultural activists. Can

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15 According to the curatorial statement by Utopiana.am.

16 *The notion "children of Communism" is not a metaphor. Rather, it denotes the figure of submission to the new form of "historical necessity" that initiates and controls the process of postcommunist transition. According to these premises, the transition to democracy starts as a radical reconstruction out of nothing. Accordingly, Eastern Europe after 1989 resembles a landscape of historical ruins that is inhabited only by children, immature people unable to organize their lives democratically without guidance from another.* See more in Boris Buden: *Children of Postcommunism* available at www.identitymove.eu (accessed on 09/2014).

we take responsibility over the process? Should we do it? Can the common action of cultural operators change the landscape of this place as the common action of activists did before? What is the meaning of a common action in post-communist realms of cities?"[17] These and other questions were raised by the *Architecture of Common* project by CSM.

Several months after the SPACES event, Kyiv became the stage of an uprising unprecedented in the recent history of Ukraine. The Maidan became a global signifier of citizens" protests followed by conflicts which still threaten to split the country.[18] The description of the course of events on Maidan and beyond is articulated in the text by Oleksiy Radynski, presented in one of the chapters of this book.

Chisinau

Chisinau Civic Center, curated by Vladimir Us of the Oberliht Young Artists Association is a project which cannot be evaluated from a single perspective of the programme, that could be seen or participated in during the main event in Chisinau in September 2013. The *Chisinau Civic Center* project (the fourth and last SPACES segment) is a long-term proposition which started in the beginning of 2012 as a sort of an experiment in "preparing the pro-active (in opposition to the standard re-active) civic urban movement," based on the existing situation – a boulevard marked in the current physical plan of Chisinau, conceived in the Soviet Republic of Moldova, but built only partially, so far. Motivated by recent public debates and the controversy concerning the possibility of re-building the Cantemir Boulevard (and destroying Chisinau's important historical heritage along the way), a group of activists, cultural workers, architects and social scientists gathered around the Oberliht Association tried to react in advance, before the project was implemented, searching for ways to prevent its construction. Their aim was even broader: "to elaborate an ambitious, long-term plan that would allow to identify, recover and return to use the public space of Chisinau." The scope of activities planned to support the aim was wide, including research – mapping workshops with architects, setting up a reading group named *Public Spaces in post-Socialism* including an on-line library, a survey related to the topic in collaboration with students, an international conference, film screenings and series of artistic interventions derived from the artist in residency programs or done in collaboration with the local art scene.

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17 According to Kateryna Botanova.

18   According to Kateryna Botanova, in winter 2014 Rinat Akhmetov turned into a public bane and a scapegoat for not supporting Maidan and political change. In the summer of 2014, the former location of *Yunist* factory turned into the biggest humanitarian aid point in Kyiv, run completely by volunteers and providing clothes, home appliances and psychological help to temporarily displaced people from eastern Ukraine.

The starting point of this group (i.e. the conclusion that the protest movements should take a more active role, instead of always being one step behind in relation to developers or developer-friendly city administrations) is a challenging standpoint which definitely deserves more attention. It basically starts with the premise that organized private business endangering public goods should encounter an organised "front", resistance units embodied in aware and ready-to-act citizens groups eager to defend public interests. This sort of scenario triggers some considerations, especially concerning the methods of realising it, within the prevailing system based on the obsession with private ownership and profit-making that overrides any broader social or public interest.

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When speaking of art in public spaces, it is worth mentioning that, due to the gentrification processes which establish a direct relation between artistic work and the real estate business, the contemporary generation of cultural workers dealing with the city should be aware of the concrete by-products of their own symbolical work. *Consciously or not, they are often paving the way for gentrification processes by transforming real localities into imaginary places, places of potential (for the capitalist economy)*.[19] This is why the main question for the cultural worker today should be: How to prevent the appropriation of cultural and social capital produced within art projects by the gentrification businesses, no matter who conducts them (the state, the city, private business or all three in conjunction)? As Matteo Pasquinelli warns us: *Cultural production and symbolical capital may become interesting constructing ground and the vivid battlefield only when their relationship with materialistic economy is being revealed and when they show their resistance towards it - when a vivid metropolis finally starts demanding its rights over Chimera of the "creative city."*[20]

The SPACES publication that you have in front of you is a collection of texts and photo documentation of a three-year project. It is accompanied by the SPACES Cultural Policy Paper, edited by the SPACES curatorial team, dealing with the origins of civic organising in culture in the four SPACES countries and tracing the beginnings of the so-called independent cultural scene. Our interest within the project was also to challenge the economistic cultural policy concept (the reduction of cultural policy to economic reason) by juxtaposing it with the "cultural public sphere". This idea binds together *"the notion of public debate, democratic representation in terms of politics and policy, with aesthetics and emotion, that is, affective matters."*[21] We understand it as a critical tool for communicating messages that go beyond

19   *On the Ruins of the Creative City,* ed. Ana Vilenica & kuda.org (2012).
20   Matteo Pasquinelli: *Creative Sabotage in the Factory of Culture: Art, Gentrification and the Metropolis, Animal Spirits, A Bestiary of the Commons*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam and of Networks Culture, Amsterdam, 2008.
21   Jim McGuigan: *The cultural public sphere contra economistic cultural policy* in OPEN INSTITUTIONS Institutional Imagination and Cultural Public Sphere (Alliance Operation City, Zagreb, 2011).

cognition. Both publications are the result of the collective work of cultural workers from five (in)dependent cultural organizations: GeoAIR in Tbilisi, CSM (Foundation Center for Contemporary Art) in Kyiv, Oberliht in Chisinau, Utopiana.am in Yerevan and Slobodne veze/ Loose Associations in Zagreb. The project was coordinated by Oikodrom, the Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability.
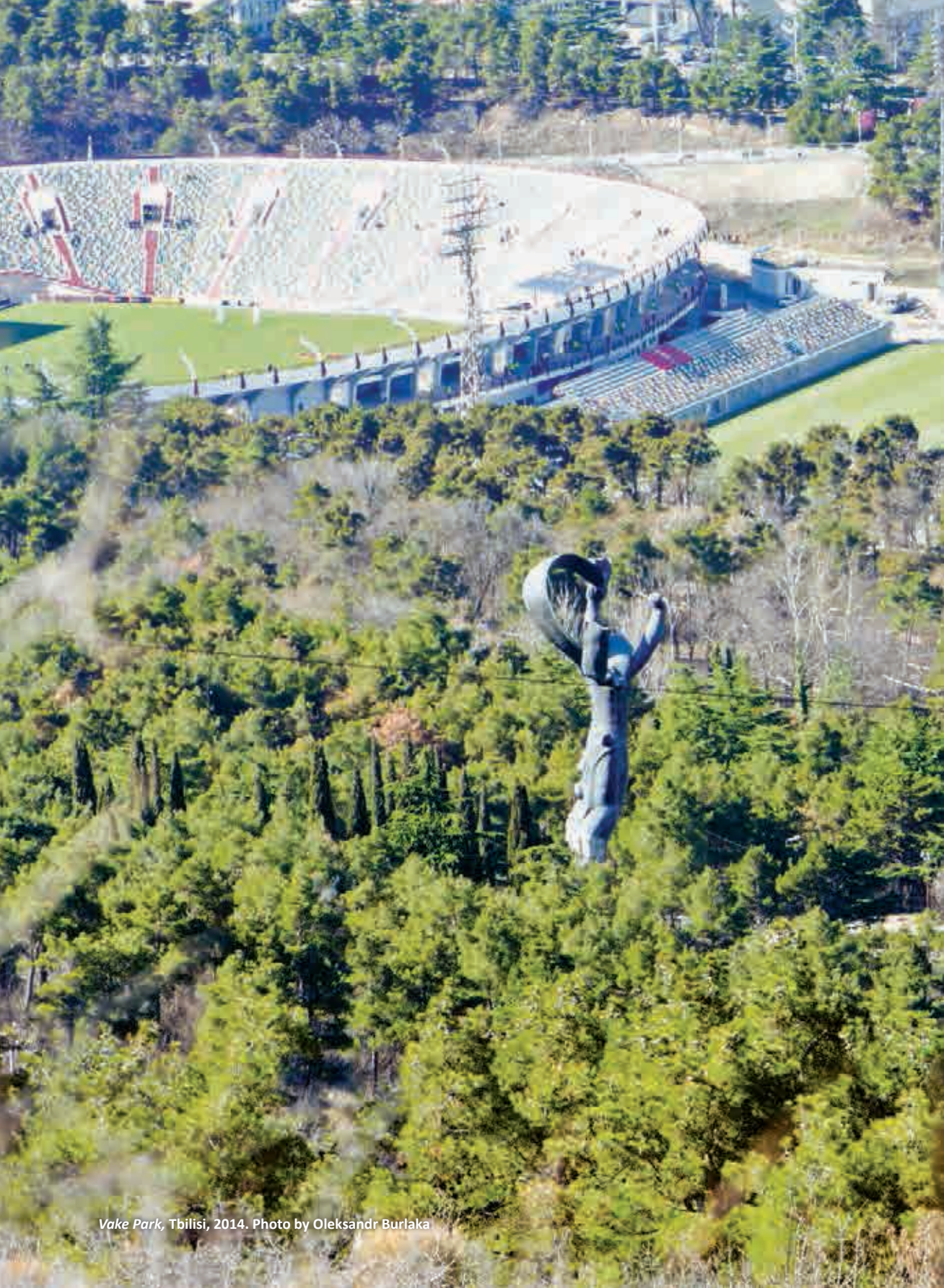
Vake Park, Tbilisi, 2014. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

SPACES: Tbilisi

Vake Park Underground Passage, Tbilisi, 2014. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

undergo. the parallels

24/05 - 03/06 - 2012

Opening 24/05 = 20

Rose Revolution /Republi
square underground

undergo.
the parallels

Nini Palavandishvili

The notion of "public space," together with that of "public art," have acquired a new significance in the last period worldwide. The word "public" means democracy and includes "clearness," "openness," "involvement," "participation" and "responsibilities," not only from the government to people, but among people in general as well. Discourse about "public art"—which takes into account the audience and surrounding environment in the creation of that artwork and which is always site-specific, created in collaboration with others (artists, designers, members of the community, etc.)—not only defines "public," but also realizes the idea of democracy.

The Belgian political philosopher Chantal Mouffe defines public space as "a battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation."[1] According to Mouffe, "public spaces are always plural and the agonistic confrontation takes place on a multiplicity of discursive surfaces." According to Mouffe's definition of the agonistic approach, "critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony."[2]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the underground passages of Tbilisi have experienced different stages of existence. First, they were completely abandoned and became dangerous places of muggings and robbery. As a result, people increasingly avoided going through them, choosing instead to dart across the streets with heavy traffic; this, however, led to a significant death toll. Later, these undergrounds became places where alternative, unofficial selling points arose. More efficient vendors developed kiosks, shops, gambling places, and so on. Some of these underground passageways developed their own life, parallel to "normal" city life above the ground. The passages gradually turned into spaces of meeting and communication: youth gathered at the gambling houses, musicians and students played and listened to music with one another, the shopkeepers were in close contact with the pedestrians and potential customers.

Today these undergrounds continue to evolve. In certain passages, new, "organized" commercial infrastructures have been built, some of which are now in danger of collapse. Other passages lost their function over time, becoming either a dumping ground for garbage or being converted into public toilets.

1   Chantal Mouffe, *Art and Democracy. Art as an Agnostic Intervention in Public Space*. In Open 2008/No. 14/Art as a Public Issue (http://www.skor.nl/_files/Files/OPEN14_P6-15(1).pdf)
2   Ibid.

The project *undergo. the parallels*, which took place in nine underground passages of Tbilisi, aimed for, both practical and artistic outcomes.

In terms of practical goals, we hoped to animate the population of Tbilisi to more frequent use the underground passageways. To do so, we created artistic works directly on site in the passageways, taking into account the target audience and surrounding environment. Some of the works were meant to be displayed during the whole project period, whereas others, more temporary actions and performances occupied certain passageways. A project guide, distributed for free in public places and directly to the population in the streets, contained information about all the activities. In this way, the project activities not only propelled the people of Tbilisi back to the passageways, but also demonstrated to Government officials a possible way to improve the given situation.

On the artistic level, the site-specific works (including light installations, sound installations, photography, street art and more) addressed the socio-political issues mentioned above. Tbilisi and Georgian audiences are not used to public or participatory art. With the project *undergo. the parallels*, we aimed to confront the general public with unconventional ways of perceiving and engaging with art. Some artworks produced during the project were meant to remain on site and act as a long-term attraction in practical and aesthetic ways for the passageways. In reality, though, the aesthetic value of a the majority of created artworks bore a critical dimension at their core.

Referring once more to Chantal Mouffe, these artworks might not propose something absolutely new, in terms of either their form or their content. The project and its artworks can be seen as agonistic interventions in public space, where confrontation takes place on a multiplicity of discursive surfaces. And in many ways, they can also contribute to the construction of new subjectivities.[2]

Participating artists: Ruska Abesadze, ART Laboratory, Mariam Besiashvili, Tamar Chaduneli, Tamar Gurgenidze, Jan Paul Herzer, Sophie Hoffer, Helmut Kandl, Tamuna Karumidze, Andreas M. Kaufmann, Giorgi Kvinikadze, Magdalena Kuchtova, Max Kullmann, Irina Kurtishvili, Keto Logua, Vasili Macharadze, Nuka Megrelishvili, Tilmann Meyer-Faje, Konstantine Mindadze, Michal Moravčik, Natalie Nebieridze, Mariann Opplinger, Agnieszka Pokrywka, Jonathan Karkut/Julie Scott/Torange Khonsari as *Public Works*, Oliver Ressler, Alicja Rogalska, Hans Rosenström, Stefan Rusu, Inga Samkharadze, Mamuka Samkharadze, Romana Schmalisch, Frauke Schmidt, Andrea Schneemeier, Katharina Stadler, Alex Axinte/Cristi Borcan as *studioBASAR*, Kote Sulaberidze, Ludwig Kittinger/Fernando Mesquita as Tuesday Evening, Koka Vashakidze. David Chikhladze, Mamuka Japharidze, Koka Ramishvili, Gia Rigvava, Lia Shvelidze, Oleg Timchenko, Niko Tsetskhladze, Mamuka Tsetskhladze in Archive Material.

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3   Ibid.

"Andropov's Ears" in Different Years, Rose Revolution / Republic Square, online archive material

Andropov's Ears

Tilmann Meyer-Faje

The project refers to the destroyed concrete arches at Rose Revolution Square commonly known as "Andropov's Ears". Its demolition waste still lays in the underground passage. Comparable to the appearing rotting structures Tilmann Meyer-Faje let the ears grow up in the underground again with contemporary commercial waste he collected in the direct neighbourhood.

The original concrete arches were constructed as part of the Rose Revolution/Republic Square complex designed by Georgian architect Otar Kalandarishvili in 1984. "Andropov's Ears" served as tribunes where officials of the Communist party would stand during state parades. Demolition of the complex, which followed the collapse of the Soviet regime, took almost 10 years and was finally finished in 2013.
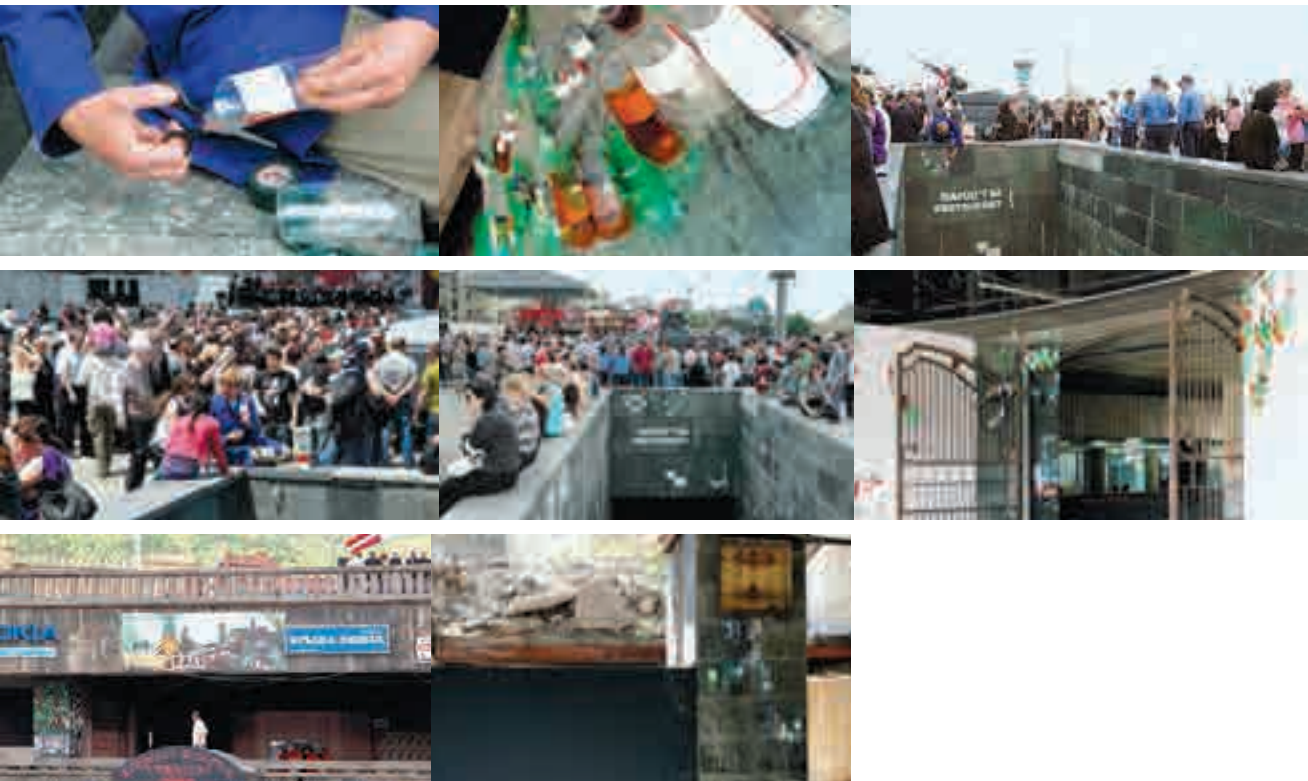
Photos by Tilmann Meyer-Faje

Passage X

Team: Alex Axinte, Cristi Borcan, Tornike Dadiani, Zurab Macharashvili, Gizo Rukhazde

In the framework of *undergo. the parallels* that promoted artistic action in the public space and the recovery of urban public spaces for art, culture and their residents, *studioBASAR* developed the project *Passage X*.

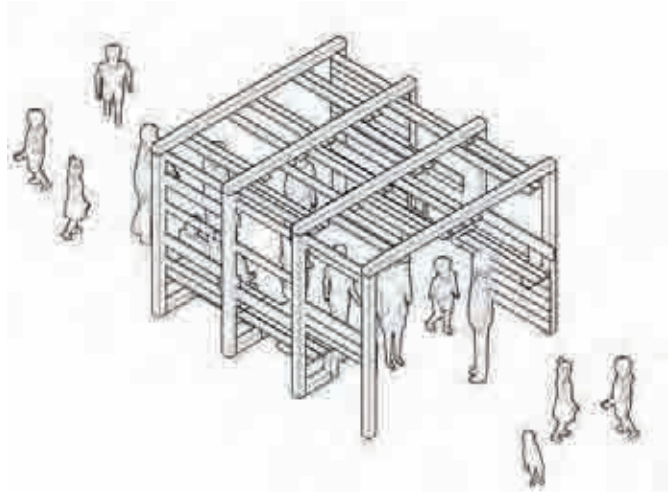Over the past decades, in the former Eastern Bloc, the leftovers of the scientific modernism project were conquered and valued for commercial reasons by the new market-driven society. This is what happened to the underground passages, those large pieces of infrastructure that were dug out in the name of the separation of uses in the city: the car has to go faster and untroubled by pedestrian crossings, and the man has to be safe and go underground. *Passage X* was planned as a temporary passage, a double of an existing passage built as a secondary structure that would support new possibilities and provoke new ways of interaction below the city. For three days, an end of a passage in Tbilisi functioned as the wood workshop where *studioBASAR* recycled euro-pallets that had travelled the world and now covered the exit of the tunnel. *Passage X* was a versatile and unfinished structure, meant for different and unclear purposes: in between a shop and a passageway, a gallery and a hallway, *Passage X* was a place in continuous transit and for temporary rest, where exhibit, commerce or gathering could take place. As a visualization of its potential, on May 30, 2012, *Passage X* hosted an event about the history of the passages in Tbilisi, where texts, images, archive files, interviews or plans transformed the space for transit into a temporary public gallery.

Passage X, Kostava Street Underground Passage,
Tbilsi, May 2012. Photos by *studioBASAR*

Elections are a con, Oliver Ressler, 2012

Red & Blue, Vasili Macharadze, 2012

Red, Natalia Nebieridze, 2012

Pass, Mamuka Samkharadze, 2012

Between Yesterday and Tomorrow.
Irina Kurtishvili/Andreas M. Kaufmann, 2012

Photos by Nini Palavandishvili and Agnieszka Pokrywka

World Riot, Art Laboratory, 2012
Bread and Roses, Alicja Rogalska, 2012

Mapping Vacant Central and Eastern Europe

Residency, Workshop and Intervention
April 2-12, 2014, Tbilisi

GeoAIR in collaboration with KÉK
(http://kek.org.hu/lakatlan/)
and 4AM (www.forum4am.cz)

The Vacant Central and Eastern Europe project follows the project VAC (Vacant Central Europe) initiated in 2013 by *KÉK* - Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre. It aims to address the problem of vacancy by mapping empty properties, by researching planning instruments, architectural tools and by exchanging experiences and strategies of intervention that make the temporary use of empty properties and their conversion for another possible use. The project's objective is to turn the negative effects of the economic crisis and post-industrial economic restructuring into opportunities. By finding spaces for these initiatives, the project aims to serve as a catalyst in helping organisations to cooperate with other functions and by using the same spaces to create synergies and unfold their capacities. The main target is to change the way local policies approach the vacancy issue. Through temporary use of these spaces, the aim is to rescue these buildings from total destruction, as many of them are out of use and abandoned. Due to insufficient financial means, the state is unable to take care of these buildings. Through temporary usage NGOs, social enterprises, communities and individuals raise awareness and create other possibilities and functions for out-of-use infrastructures.

Mapping / Site Visits, Tbilisi, 2014
Intervention in "Cobra" Park, Tbilisi, 2014
Station Babina, exhibition in former bus station, Tbilisi, 2014
Photos by Nanu Giglemiani

Baratashvili Bridge and underground passage, Tbilisi, 2012. Photo by Nini Palavandishvili

In Search of Public Space Agents

Art in Underground Public Space. Guided Tour by Stefan Rusu as Part of the Project *undergo. the parallels*

Stefan Rusu

My first, strongest impressions of Georgia are from the seventies, when my father used to travel there for komandirovka.[1] When he returned from Georgia he brought traditional ceramics, an album of historical, nineteenth-century Tbilisi photos, and a brick of pressed tea ("Gruzinski Chai").[2] He would break off pieces of the tea with a cleaver on the kitchen table at breakfast, in the early morning hours when I was half awake. The ritual continued until the tea was gone. Despite my wish and repeated intentions to travel there in the following years, I would not make it to Georgia until 2012, when I was invited to participate in the project *undergo. the parallels* and organize a guided tour in pedestrian underground passages of Tbilisi.

As I arrived in Tbilisi for a rather short period, I conceived a route of pedestrian walkways in the city centre that would allow us to explore the history of these passages, their functional and aesthetic transformation over time, as well as context-specific artistic practices related to the first attempts of activating public spaces (pedestrian passages and underground architecture).

Like in many other places, in the USSR, underground pedestrian passages were introduced to facilitate the fluidity of car traffic, following the technological process and modernisation of socialist society. In some cases, special attention was given to their aesthetics; it is enough to remember the way they were decorated and maintained during the socialist period, but also to recall the feeling of cleanliness and brightness that the underground passages radiated at that time.[3] Later on, in the period of the so-called transition, along with the collapse or degradation of public services including maintenance, these spaces have turned to decay and became sanctuaries for homeless people, suspicious and "unfriendly zones", rather to avoid. I considered our revisiting

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1 Komandirovka - (Russian: Командировка) a term formerly used in USSR for "duty journey" or "work trip."
2 Gruzinskii Chai - (Russian: Грузинский Чай) a famous tea brand in USSR, this term was popular in former Soviet republics of USSR and is still in use in popular culture in post-Soviet context.
3 An example would be the mosaic in the underground pedestrian passages on Creanga Street in Chisinau.

Entrance of Underground Pedestrian Passage on Creanga Street, '80s. Chisinau.
Authors: Architect - Mihai Rusu, Mosaics - Filimon Hamuraru. Photo by Dumitru Rusu

of the underground passages as an exercise in reconstitution. It was inspired by personal, subjective impressions, interviews with the local artists as well as the photographs, stamps and postcards from my teenage years. Further research with the project team and local volunteers allowed me to learn more about the intimacy of subterranean spaces sporadically activated by members of the local art community.

The guided tour started at the "Kolmeurneoba" underground passage (designed by Shota Kavlashvili, built in 1977) situated near the market place (Former Collective Farmers' market). The next one was the underground passage at the Baratashvili Bridge (designed by Shota Kavlashvili and Vladimir Kurtishvili, built in 1965-1966), followed by the underground passage at the Republic Square[4] (designed by architect Otar Kalandarishvili and built partially between 1985-88). The itinerary ended at the underground pedestrian passage on the Kostava Street.

In this context I would like to bring into discussion several cases of activation of urban spaces organized by Georgian artists, happening more or less on the wings

4   Today Rose Revolution Square.

of Perestroika[5] and political processes for democratization and change which affected Georgia, at the time still part of the USSR. I will also mention some of the practices of the public space activation organized during the early years of Georgia's independence, and also interventions by the participants of the *undergo. the parallels* project.

The practice of placing an autonomous artistic message in the urban space, in post-Soviet context became relevant and obtained a larger resonance only within the last decade. Until the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, artistic practice in the public space was almost non-existent or being limited to the art commissioned by the state authorities (sculpture, ceramics, mosaic, etc.).[6] Many of these pieces of "commissioned art" can be found even today in Tbilisi, but the meaning of this type of public art was mainly to decorate urban spaces and not to engage with the controversies of urban development and its impact on citizens' lives. However, some of the Georgian artists have presented themselves in the urban space by stepping beyond the conventional zones of art (galleries, exhibition spaces, museums, etc.) and begun the exploration of urban spaces. This is the case of Oleg Timchenko, who organized an exhibition in the Deserters' Market in 1994 where, among the stands selling meat, he exhibited his artworks for a day. We can imagine that the artist wanted a confrontation with the public, which was equally a challenge as well as an act of desperation, bearing in mind the lack of a real market for cultural producers. Another example of such practices would be the activity of the group *10th Floor,*[7] which activated abandoned or dysfunctional spaces in Tbilisi and used them for organizing exhibitions through the '80s (for example the space of the Synagogue, the unfinished commercial complex of the Republic square, etc.). The events we speak about took place on the background of an acute economic crisis and the chaos in which the entire society of the USSR was engulfed at the end of the eighties. Some of the artists were trying to escape from isolation and to enter a new type of relation with the society.

Bearing in mind these examples of early artistic engagement with urban space, we will start examining the first stop of the tour, the Kolmeurneoba underground passage designed by Shota Kavlashvili in 1977, as well as a case of artistic

5   Perestroika was a political movement for reformation within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the 1980s, widely associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his glasnost (meaning "openness") policy reform. The literal meaning of perestroika is "restructuring," referring to the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system.

6   From the mid-1920s to the mid-1980s, leading artists in former republics of the USSR were commissioned by the state for propaganda reasons, to represent the achievements of socialist society. Later in '70s and '80s this programme included also other types of art not necessarilly connected with ideology (as it is the case of public art in the former Soviet republics from the Baltic and Caucasus areas).

7   *10th Floor Group*, which formed out of another group *Archivarius*, gets its name from initially being situated on the 10th floor of the Academy of Arts. Afterward the group was particularly active in the workshop of a theater called *Marjanishvili*. The *10th Floor* included Karlo Kacharava, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Mamuka Japharidze, Niko Tsetskhladze, Koka Ramishvili and others. It played an important role in the development of independent art in Georgia during the 80s. There they largely created (Western-influenced) art with an anti-"system" message, a kind of civic protest performed with artistic means, but in a way that avoided a direct commentary, thus avoiding to be accused of "anti-Sovietism" or creating "dissidence through art".

If the Mountain won't Come to Muhammad, Muhammad Will Go to the Mountain,
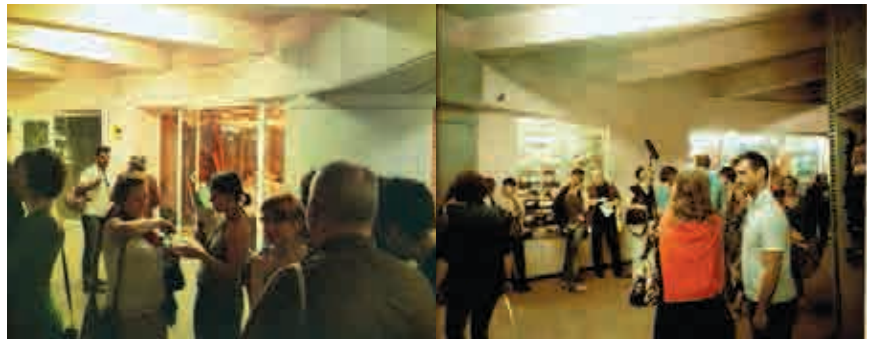Oleg Timchenko, Deserters' Market, 1994. Photo by Guram Tsibakhashvili

Средняя часть подземного перехода на Колхозной площади. Арх. Ш. Кавлашвили, 1977 г.
Middle part of underpass in Kolmeurne Square. Architect Sh. Qavlashvili, 1977

From Tengiz Kvirkvelia, 1982, *Tbilisi Architecture*. *Soviet Georgia,* Tbilisi

Art in Underground Public Space, guided tour, Stefan Rusu, 2012. Photos by Nini Palavandishvili

intervention in this passage. This underground passage is part of the adjacent complex of underground shops that can be accessed via several streets, and opens onto Kolmeurneoba Square. (It is similar to another square by the same architect in front of the Philharmonic on Kostava Street. The style of architecture reflects that of Socialist modernism from the sixties and seventies.) As time went on, the nearby market, which itself continued to expand, attracted pedestrian traffic. The authorities failed to maintain this public space and it became less frequented, offering a shelter to few merchants.

In 1991 two artists, Oleg Timchenko and Niko Tsetskhladze, used one of the then-abandoned underground shops as a site for their performance piece *Stand Against.*[8] One morning between 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM, artists arrived dressed as mannequins, faces painted gold, and positioned themselves in the vitrine window. For some time the two artists remained still, letting pedestrians in the passage

8   Interview with Oleg Timchenko, Tbilisi, 2012.

Stand Against, Performance by Oleg Timchenko and Niko Tsetskhladze,
Kolmeurneoba Underground Passage, 1991. Photos by Guram Tsibakhashvili
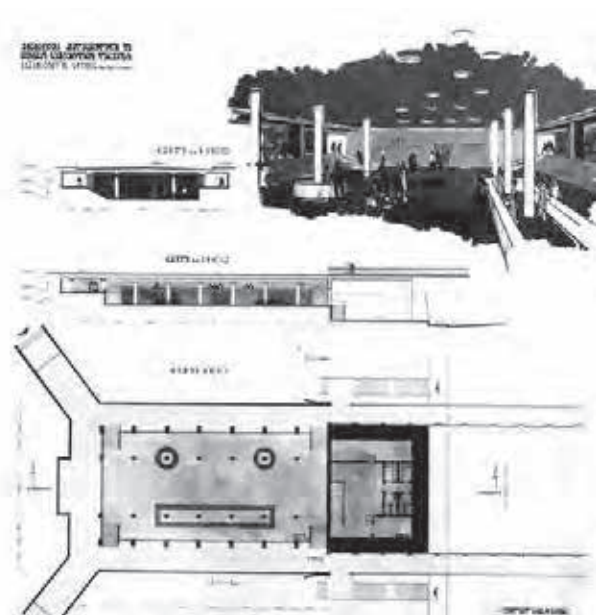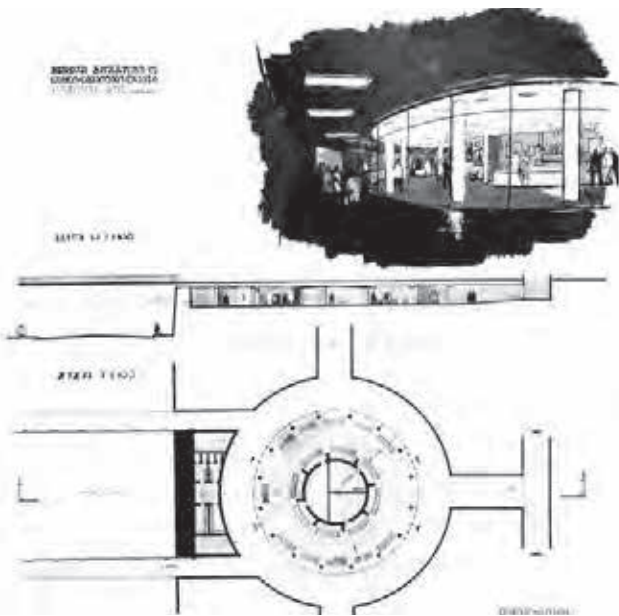
Baratashvili Bridge Sketches, Shota Kavlashvili and Vladimir Kurtishvili, 1964. Courtesy of Kurtishvili family private archive

From Tengiz Kvirkvelia, 1982, *Tbilisi Architecture*. *Soviet Georgia,* Tbilisi

Art in Underground Public Space, guided tour, Stefan Rusu, 2012. Photos by Nini Palavandishvili

adjust to the sight. Then, after approximately thirty minutes, they shattered the glass and walked out of the display window into the passage, toward the exit. The public reacted visibly—some were emotionally distressed—to the sound of broken glass and the sight of two "mannequins" leaving the underground space. Timchenko and Tsetskhladze had decided to organize a performance piece in a public space to "bring the population out of a sort of spiritual numbness,"[9] but also to point out the social clash and blockage due to the conflicts between civilians, supporters of different rival factions from the capital which were spreading at the beginning of the nineties in Tbilisi.[10]

The next destination of our tour under Baratashvili Bridge is significant for its art exhibition space and cafeteria (both of which were later re-developed and destroyed) that functioned in the sixties and seventies. This passage is also notable for its reactivation through several artistic projects in the framework of the *undergo. the parallels* project such as presentation of the personal archive of the aforementioned architect Kurtishvili.

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9   Ibid.

10 The process of disintegration of former Soviet construct, perturbed by a series of military conflicts followed by Georgia's 1992 declatation of independence, affected urban planning and city infrastructure development. Construction sites were stopped, uncertainty and suspended time became a norm for more then a decade.

Between Yesterday and Tomorrow, Irina Kurtishvili, 2012. Photos by Nini Palavandishvili

The 26 meter long bridge that hides the underground structure was built between 1965 and 1966, conceived by Shota Kavlashvili and Vladimir Kurtishvili, with an upper level for public transport and a lower level for pedestrians. Beneath one end of the bridge the cafeteria was planned and beneath the other, the exhibition space. The exhibition space, conceived for the Union of Fine Arts of Georgia, opened in 1966. For the next two decades, it hosted many public events organized by the Union. One of the first exhibitions was that of Vladimir Kurtishvili's graphic works, which he organized together with artist Irakli Ochiauri. This exhibition opened during the inauguration of the bridge.

The project of Baratashvili Bridge later won second prize for its complexity and originality of design in a public contest hosted by the USSR. In the following years, however, the exhibition space was dismantled on the grounds that under a bridge was an inferior place to exhibit art (the status of which was generally elevated in Socialist times). It was then moved to the Union of Fine Arts in a central part of the city. Following such transformations, the passage decidedly became an abandoned territory.

Drawing from her personal archives, Vladimir Kurtishivili's daughter Irina eventually organized an exhibition of the drawings and plans for the structure beneath the bridge that Vladimir and Shota Kavlashvili had designed. These materials recreated the atmosphere of another time and reminded viewers of the old exhibition space and other functions of and under the bridge, now dismantled.

The third stop in our tour was the passage located under the *Republic Square/ today Rose Revolution Square*. This underground space may be seen as a Socialist prototype of the "mall" from the eighties. It was intended to have three levels, with several movie theaters, various shops, and galleries. The complex was designed by Otar Kalandarishvili (architect) and the construction took place around 1985-86, but remained not fully finished due to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

According to architect Otar Kalandarishvili's daughter, he was inspired to develop this type of structure as a follow up of his trips in the West (France, Holland, etc.). On the other hand, this commercial and recreational complex was supposed to be connected to the network of urban transport through a series of underground passages and a line of subway,[11] but this plan was never fully realized. Though most of the facilities in the passage would operate, it was never connected to the subway station. This underground complex became an attractive venue for various artist groups in several phases such as the *10th Floor Group*, the *Thuneleby Art Group*, and the *Vernisage Gallery*. Some media documentations of these groups' activities, such as images from a performance *Margo Arena 2* by David Chikhladze and *Margo Korableva Performance Theater* in 1995, were presented as part of the guided tour.

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11 Interview with the daughter of architect Otar Kalandarishvili, Tbilisi, 2012.

Particularly notable is the *10th Floor Group's* mural paintings in this unfinished "underground mall", which are still visible. These murals by the group *10th Floor* and friends (Karlo Kacharava, Niko Tsetskhladze, Mamuka Japaridze, Koka Ramishvili, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Lia Shvelidze) was made possible through Victor Hatzkhevich, Chief of the National Committee of the Komsomol,[12] who offered the artists to temporarily "activate" the abandoned construction site and provided them with necessary materials. Artists, who did not want to limit themselves to the usual two-dimensional space of the painting medium, intended to find a conceptual relation between the mural paintings executed in expressionist style and the installations of an apocalyptic imagery.[13]

Our final destination was the underground pedestrian crossing on *Kostava Street*, where we viewed a presentation on an art intervention by Bucharest based architect group *studioBASAR*. Accompanying the presentation were related informational documents: explanations of how certain underground spaces were constructed, letters and other official documents from various authority figures, and more.

By revisiting some of the underground passages throughout Tbilisi, both abandoned and in use, some of them once activated by local art community, we wanted to spark a discussion not only on the consequences of the collapse of economy and urban planning starting from the end of the 1980s/beginning of 1990s, but also of the degradation and in some other cases commercialization of public spaces in Tbilisi. Our interest was also to identify some of the early agents of public spaces exploration and the impact of these early explorers on the practices of reactivation of the public space of today.

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12 Komsomol (Russian: Комсомо́л - a syllabic abbreviation from the Russian Kommunisticheskii Soyuz Molodyozhi), was the youth division of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and a political party of USSR. The Komsomol in its earliest form was established in urban centers in 1918. During 1922, with the unification of the USSR, it was reformed into an all-union agency, the youth division of the All-Union Communist Party.
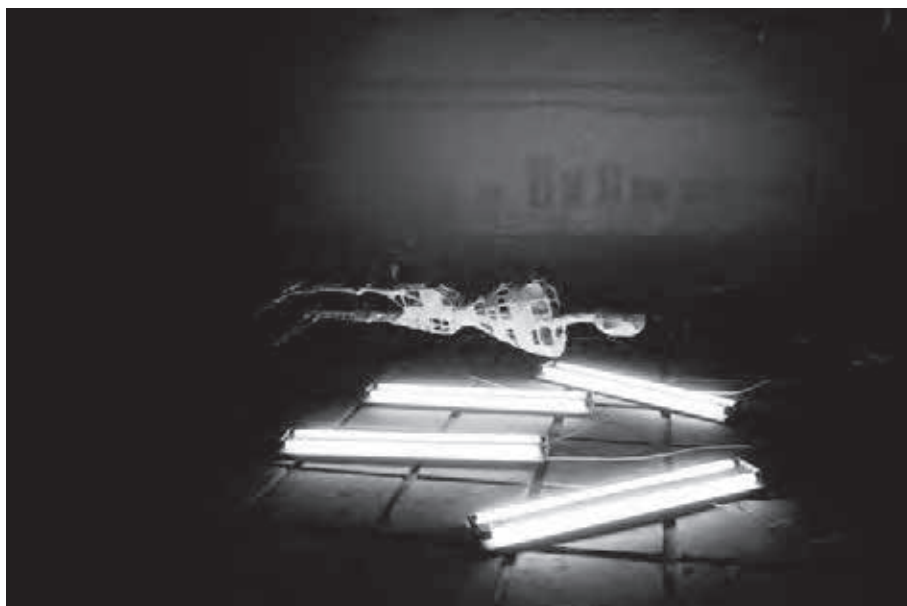13 Interview with Mamuka Japaridze (member of the *10th Floor*). Tbilisi, 2012.

Making of Murals in Republic Square Underground Passage, 1988. Photo by Guram Tsibakhashvili

Murals in the Republic Square Underground Passage, 2012. Photo by Nini Palavandishvili

Exhibition in the Republic Square Underground Passage, 1989. Photo by Guram Tsibakhashvili

The Need for the Protest Shot

Alexandra Krauze and Nini Palavandishvili in conversation with Lali Pertenava

A.K.: Tell us something about cultural and art institutions before the 1990s in Georgia, and how do you see their relation to other social institutions?

L.P.: Until the '90s art institutions were represented by the *Union of Artists* and the Ministry of Culture. Initiatives of the Union of Artists were autumn and spring exhibitions, meaning that the Union proposed thematic exhibitions and up until recently, individual initiatives were very rare.

A.K.: You are basically saying that everything was centralized and framed. How was the situation before the Soviet Union?

L.P.: For three years (1918-1921) before Georgia became a part of the USSR, the Government was sending quite a number of artists to France to get an education there. It was an initiative by the Tbilisi Mayor's Office of the first independent Democratic Republic of Georgia. The Mayor launched a competition for artists willing to study abroad and sponsored a number of them. That is how a new generation of artists educated in the West appeared. However, some of them did not receive diplomas from the academies, but acquired working spaces in Paris. For example, David Kakabadze was refused enrolment in the art school in Paris as he was appraised as a professional artist who did not need to study, but rather needed a studio to work. Besides David Kakhabadze, there were Elene Akhvlediani, Lado Gudiashvili,[1] etc. In short, before the time of the Soviet Union we can speak of the art institution not exactly in a formal sense, but more as the existence of certain artistic societies. There were people actively engaging with historical and social problems and in doing so influenced these spheres. In fact, they were quite active as citizens. The Zdanevich brothers would be a good example. Ilia and Kiril Zdanevich were involved in historical research, and at the same time, they were the founders of the avant-garde movement in Georgia. Both were very creative and artistic individuals. But looking at European modernism, the concept of denying the historical past of culture, we get a different picture in Georgia. Georgian modernists

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1 The 1920s were perhaps the most exciting and prolific time for Georgian artists. In the year 1927 Kakabadze, Akhvlediani, Bilanishvili participated in the 38th exhibition of the *Salon des Indépendants,* annual exhibition of the *Société des Artistes Indépendants,* held in Paris.

and avant-gardists were inspired by old traditions and their historic heritage. This was very important at the time for creating national identity, as well as a local niche for exceptional Georgian art. Of course, this issue was important not only for painters but for other intellectuals and cultural producers including writers, for example.

A.K.: So it was not a massive movement, but rather small groups and individuals, who took part in this what you are describing as the Georgian avant-garde?

L.P.: Yes, there were specific groups like *Tsisperkantselebi* (The Blue Horns)[2] - an avant-garde movement of poets, writers and civil activists who brought global modernist artistic tendencies: Symbolism, Dada, Constructivism in Georgian literature and art. They created revolutionary artistic spaces in Tbilisi in the early 1930s, such as *Café Kimerion* where artists and activists gathered and proclaimed progressive innovative ideas, before a decree on Socialist Realism came into place. Then in the late 1930s, the new law[3] was introduced, which strictly defined art as a tool of the state ideology. Everyone was obliged to obey this law, or they were sanctioned. After that, all artists were obliged to stay within the framework of the imposed law, which was defined by the Soviet ideology. There was no room for any kind of authenticity. The main works that were produced by the artists at that time were monuments and portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and later Khrushchev. Socialist Realism offered not only fabricated icons of Soviet leaders but "Soviet public art" and monuments that shaped the epoch. Today they can be seen as examples of the combination of an artistic quest for individuality within the rigid political system. Some of these artists tried to follow their artistic interests and looked for new forms and subjects secretly at home, even though one could not show them publicly or earn money from such works.

N.P.: What about the state commissions, such as mosaics on public buildings, and sculptures in urban space? Do you know what the procedures were for commissioning and who could apply; how the decisions were made about which artist was chosen for such a commission, and where the finances were coming from - the State or the municipal level? I wonder, can we bring some sort of dialectics into this discussion about art in Soviet Georgia? We know that during Soviet times, masterpieces of art and architecture were made. How could this have happened?

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2   The first modernist group of Georgian poets *Tsisperkantselebi* played an important role in reviving and developing Georgian poetry and prose. It was created under strong influence of the poet Grigol Robakidze and eventually included such prominent poets as Paolo Iashvili, Titsian Tabidze, Galaktion Tabidze, Nikolo Mitsishvili, Kolau Nadiradze, Valerian Gaprindashvili and others. The *Tsisperkantselebi* sought to connect the traditional Georgian culture with modern trends and were influenced by Symbolism. They thrived during the liberal years of the Democratic Republic in 1918-1921 but came under pressure following the Bolshevik occupation of Georgia.

3   Socialist Realism became a state policy through a 1932 decree entitled *"On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations."* After that, Stalin made a more precise hint for cultural policy, expressed in the formula *"Socialist in content but national in form."*

L.P.: Soviet public art such as mosaics, started to appear in the period of the Khrushchev Thaw [from the mid-1950s to early 1960s]. However, the decorative public art was more related to Khrushchev's large scale housing and economic programmes than to arts liberalization processes in the Thaw period. The mosaics and monuments in public squares, near and on factory buildings were results of policies for better working and life conditions of the working class. In fact, the Soviet exterior and facade design was the strongest ideological tool, and artists making exteriors were well-paid professionals. They were getting commissions directly from the state authorities, and making huge scale productions employing big groups of artisan - workers.

The masterpieces of Soviet art and architecture created during and after the Khrushchev period were consequences of melting/loosening of the tense political relations to the world outside the Soviet Bloc, and the weakening of the central control over art, inside the Soviet Union. Artists had more of a chance to get familiar with artistic achievements in other, non-Communist countries; besides, Soviet art had very deep roots in avant-garde artistic movements during the revolutionary period.

A.K.: In other words, you are claiming that the work of potentially "oppositional artists" could not have had any influence on social processes, because they were hidden from the public eye?

L.P.: Yes, that is right. This secret, private art practice did not have any influence on society, but it had an effect on the "underground preparation." But "the underground" as a cultural type did not exist in our country. In Moscow there was a strong underground cultural stream, it was striving to crack through the regime. In contrast to that, we did not face that in Georgia. Free and creative people were working undercover and unregistered by a public eye. Only in the late '60s and '70s, step by step, artists started to make so-called "apartment exhibitions,"[4] which had an influence on shaping small and closed societies of those who were engaged in free, modernist arts and ideas. These apartment exhibitions were mostly an individual initiative of an artist to show his/her[5] works in his/her home, as there was no chance to display them in a gallery. Such creative spaces was not only used for art exhibitions; they also hosted various performances. We have not done a proper research on this period or studied this phenomenon seriously enough, and therefore do not have enough information about it. It is however, still possible to research more about this period because there are still people, protagonists, who took part in such gatherings that could be interviewed.

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4   In the late 1970s, Gia Edzgveradze (born in Tbilisi in 1953) made exhibitions in his apartment. He currently lives in Düsseldorf. He looked into the rules of socialist realism with a critical eye very early on. On the contrary to the required aesthetic standards, he developed a subjectless and content-free language of images.

5   There were female artists and professionals participating in the exhibitions, but they were mainly organized by the male artists.

A.K.: So when did the government start controlling and sanctioning those people, how did it happen?

L.P.: Those artists did not have any access to social benefits, they had no chance to exhibit their works, no chance to become members of academic circles. What actually happened was that they were completely blocked and cast out from official artistic spaces. Later in the 1980s, some artists' groups appeared which were neither considered nor accepted by the mainstream, but were still important in the closer artistic circles and respected by art lovers. Those artists became a sort of "artistic elite." Consequently, in the 1990s, when borders started to open, those artists finally got the chance to enter the official gallery/museum spaces - for example with the exhibition in "Karvasla."[6] Their works brought new visual particularity, and the process of their recognition occurred very quickly since the underground movement suddenly got the chance to splash and reveal itself in all its power in a given moment. It was a movement of active artists and citizens, who brought up a new stream of creative work establishing new forms and rules of artistic expression which had never existed before. When all the borders were opened, this new apparent freedom made it possible to introduce Western art to Georgia.

N.P.: In 1987, at Moscow's Hermitage Gallery and later at the Tbilisi National Gallery, the first Georgian abstractionists' exhibition was opened under the title *Art without Object*. The participants were Shura Bandzeladze, Gela and Iliko Zautashvili, Gia Edzgveradze, Luka Lasareishvili and Gia Mgaloblishvili. The same year the *10th Floor* artists exhibited in the stairway of the Artists' House. Is this the part of the stream, which you are describing, this new important generation of artists coming to light? Can you tell us something about it?

L.P.: In the late '70s, the so-called *conceptual-abstract group* (Zautashvili, Edzgveradze and others) headed by the professor Aleksandre Bandzeladze made the first exhibitions. These exhibitions were in private spaces, but public. However, they were not accepted by the public well and there is a story that they were even destroyed by the Komsomol.[7] Later on artists developed a sort of resistance to public opinion by developing new space and by elaborating on a new visual language. The Fine Arts Academy students formed the movement *10th Floor*[8] as a background to the collapsed Soviet Empire. The group was formed in the studio on the 10th floor of the *Fine Arts Academy* where Mamuka Tsetskhladze was working on his diploma.

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6   The first exhibitions with non-formalist artists started to appear in the exhibition space of Karvasla (Tbilisi History Museum).

7   Komsomol, Russian abbreviation of *Vsesoyuzny Leninsky Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyozhi* (All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth), organization for young people aged 14 to 28 in Soviet Union, which was primarily a political organ for spreading Communist teachings and preparing future members of the Communist Party.

8   *10th Floor* group gets its name from initially being situated on the 10th floor of the Academy of Fine Arts. Afterwards the group was particularly active in the workshop of the Marjanishvili Theater. The *10th Floor* included Karlo Kacharava, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Mamuka Japharidze, Niko Tsetskhladze, Koka Ramishvili and others. It played an important role in the development of independent art in Georgia during the '80s. There they largely created (Western-influenced) art with an "anti-system" message, a kind of civic protest performed with artistic means, but in a way that avoided a direct commentary, thus avoiding being accused of anti-Sovietism or creating "dissidence through art".

A.K.: Today we have a very different picture. What happened further on, and why?

L.P.: If we compare the situation in the 1990s with the situation we have today, we will discover a considerable difference. The artistic space of the '90s was, in my opinion, more creative and authentic. It was a moment when all this cumulative energy totally exploded, because people finally got the chance to create. I believe that artists are still trying to find their place in the social fabric - trying to reflect and influence it, but the minds of the people are still closed for this sort of exploration. Of course, a creative person wants to leave his/her own small closed space, get out of the room, out from the gallery and declare that he/she is a social subject. Creative and artistic subjects are needed very much today. They are required, and at the same moment people do not accept them. Today, art and culture are between other borders, still controlled, driven, conducted, and dependent on state or non-state actors who participate in the formation of the local art market; they still do not reflect any social processes and somehow they feel detached from social and public life. Back in the '90s, artists were trying to reflect life, things and events that were happening, what they were seeing with their own eyes and of course feeling the urge to affect it. Today even those people, who made this kind of art in the '90s have lost something: it seems to me that twenty years ago their works were much more full of life, than today. Those people created their own spaces, new spaces, and today very few individuals are trying to do the same thing. Of course, the reasons for this are numerous…

A.K.: I wanted to tackle the topic of so-called *artistic activism.* We have seen examples of it even in Russia and China, not to mention Western Europe. But I have never seen many examples of such practices in Georgia, does it just not exist or I am unaware of certain processes?

L.P.: There are several artists who work on some social themes, but mostly those are Georgian artists who live and work out of the country. I agree with you - here in Georgia we have a deficit of this kind of action and production. I don't know if we need some kind of protest shot, but at the moment we don't have it. Still, it is not all dark - there are several people and groups who seriously reflect and work on social themes. But the question is if they have an audience or anybody that listens, to hear them?

N.P.: You are opening potentially interesting question of the so-called artist as activist. The question is: do artists create and react only when there is an audience? And what happens when they start acting as activists?

L.P.: I think artists create art and audience themselves, but to generalize the topic, it always happens on the verge of different epochs like modernism and postmodernism, when there is a transitory period from one ideological matrix to another. I see the chain: the free space creates artists, artists create audience, dictate style… making groups and tendencies…

Even in Russia, where the human rights situation is quite tough, they create an art institution as the institution. I suppose we, in Georgia should really have an open-minded and free society today and a very strong art institution. We are still trying to get to the mainstream, to adapt and accommodate to some new borders. Of course it is hard to find one's own way and create one's own space. But I truly believe that this can happen! And I hope that this will happen in the nearest future. I am very much aware that today it is very hard for an artist to make some kind of individual steps, to be different and to find the audience who will listen to him/her. The "quality of freedom" in our society today is very low, and of course this fact very strongly and deeply influences the situation. Art and culture need to free themselves as well as society does. I think that the work of artists, on the hard road of independence and freedom will gradually change this situation. I hope we will witness this soon.

N.P.: This was your answer in May[9]. Since then a lot of things happened - the Sakdrisi goldmine protests, as well as some actions by the *Bouillon Group*, Nikoloz, Kote Jincharadze... Can you tell us something about that?

L.P.: There was one recent little break-through in cultural life in Georgia, that went far beyond the cultural circles. A small artistic opposition movement was gradually transformed into a large public campaign for the defence of a cultural heritage site – the ancient Sakdrisi goldmine. The artists came to protest against the Ministry of Culture and against business-oriented policy of Georgian State officials. The case started with the dismissal of a (female) deputy minister from the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, Marine Mizandari, who stood against the irresponsible attitude of the Ministry towards the cultural heritage site. The artists protested with public actions and performances getting the attention of the public. The artist Kote Jincharadze together with a performance *Group Bouillon* made an action in front of the State Chancellery called *Grinding Water* outlining the non-responsiveness of the State authorities to public demands. The artist Nikoloz made protests in front of the Ministry of Culture. A group of art historians and artists protested against the Ministry of Economy, which elaborated the strategy of economic development of the country without even mentioning the word culture. In short, activism articulated by artists has grown into a large social movement.

Finally the court passed a decision against the Ministry of Culture and the company damaging the ancient goldmine. The minister was dismissed; but, ironically, the newly-elected minister appealed the court's decision. So as it happens in Hollywood horror movies – the story continues...

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9   The interview was conducted in two phases, in May 2014 and September 2014.

Grinding Water, Artists' Protest Action in Front of State Chancellor's Office to Save Sakdrisi-Kachagiani Gold Mine, Tbilisi, March 2014. Photo by Gogita Bukhaidze

"Seagull", road mark at the northern entry of Yerevan, 2012. Photo by Ina Ivanceanu

SPACES: Yerevan

Sport and Concert Complex, Yerevan, 2010. Photo by Vahe Budumyan

Vardan Mamikonyan Memorial surrounding area, Yerevan, 2011. Photo by Vahe Budumyan

Public Talks

October 8–14, 2012, Yerevan
Curated by Utopiana.am

Nora Galfayan & Taguhi Torosyan

The overwhelming tyranny of the neoliberal, "free" market economy, a "new capitalist order with Asian values" (in terms of its suppression of democratic freedoms) as Slavoj Žižek points out, has had severe political and social consequences both in Armenia and globally: the rise of "the New Right", ecological nationalism, widespread protest movements, and claims for the recuperation of public spaces and wider social benefits. In light of these consequences, it has become extremely important to rethink the period—or rather the condition—under which the foundations of such rapid commercialization and social disenfranchisement were laid. Heavy industrialization, ideological totality, claims for new types of social and physical environments, failed systems of both state-planned and free market economies—these are all the bitter fruits of Modernism and the modern condition with which contemporary society has to cope. But what does it mean to be a modern society? What are the consequences of becoming one? Is this a reversible process? Where do we find ourselves at this certain point in history? And have we ever been "modern"? It is rather important to ask these questions, and to envision the conditions that prompted these questions, in order to figure out new directions for the cultural worker now, at an ideological crossroads.

Each programme component and participant tried to reformulate and pose the above-mentioned questions according to their own research methods and practices. The presentations and discussions were held in various context-specific public venues and touched upon the topic of Modernism and after the Soviets.

The focus was on the structure and transformations of the public sphere and its spaces of articulation throughout and after the Soviet period. From big squares to parks, kitchens to workspace colours, the panel participants explored where the public sphere and public space coincided. How did Soviet "society" organize and form intermediate territories between the narratives of tiny elements of a big machine and the crowd scene in the big drama performance of a failed socialist dream? How and why did we need to rethink the communication between society and the spaces it inhabited?

Also, special attention was paid to the period and condition of "ex post facto": post-socialism, post-Communism, post-Soviet, post-war, post-independence, and so forth. The aim was to review the experience and processes of the past 20 years, when the emptied space of Communist ideology was filled with rising

nationalism and manipulated religiosity while the free market of unequal opportunities came to replace the state-governed industrial economy. What has changed and what has remained the same? Is there a chance and are there ways to think about the public space of tomorrow that can incorporate both public and private interests?

These were the broader questions that served as basic reference points for the panels, the final wrap-up meeting, and the talks about Modernism, its space and legacy.

As part of the SPACES project, it brought together artists, curators, researchers, architects, and other cultural workers with civil society groups and students from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine in order to foster networking, self-education, social research, and policy debates in the region.

Public Talks, organised by the creative-cultural NGO and Armenian partner in the SPACES project Utopiana.am, consisted of several components: artistic interventions in various public spaces, talks and presentations by Armenian art and culture critics in context-specific venues, study visits to Armenian independent cultural institutions, and a panel discussion - a final debate on cultural policy to follow up on the programme's events.

Participants: Harutyun Alpetyan, Ruben Arevshatyan, Anna Barseghian, Hrach Bayadyan, Heidi Dumreicher, Vardan Jaloyan, Richard Levine, Stefan Press, Davit Stepanyan and Utopiana.am/Media Lab students: Elen Grigoryan, Hasmik Ordukhanyan, Anahit Paskevichyan.

Participating institutions: AJZ Space, ICA Yerevan, Moscow Cinema Open Air Hall, Union of Architects of Armenia, UrbanLab_Yerevan.

Curated by: Nora Galfayan & Taguhi Torosyan, in collaboration with Vahram Aghasyan, Harutyun Alpetyan, Mher Azatyan, Anna Barseghian, Nvard Yerkanyan.

Mother Armenia Monument, Yerevan, September 2012. Photo by Vladimir Us

Post Soviet Urban Spaces

Hrach Bayadyan

In his public reading on the changes which have taken place in the Yerevan landscape since the late 1990's, Hrach Bayadyan discussed the socialist past, as well as the current processes existent in Yerevan.

He focused on the examples seen in two monumental buildings: Mother Armenia (together with Victory Park), and the monument dedicated to the 50th University of Soviet Armenia (together with the entire area of Cascade).
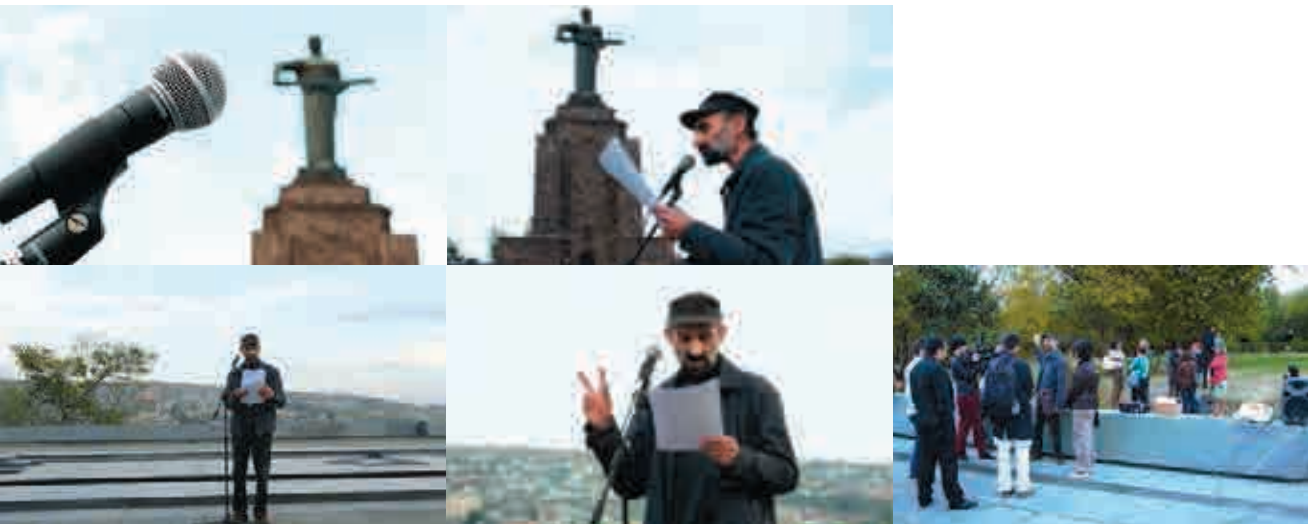
Public reading by Hrach Bayadyan in front of Mother Armenia Monument, Yerevan, September 2012

Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan, Yerevan, 2013

Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan, Gyumri, 2014

Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan

Feminizing public spaces through public readings of poems of the first Armenian feminist and socialist writer

Arevik Martirosyan

The public readings took place on November 30, 2013, in the empty fountains of the Republic Square metro station in Yerevan, and on June 21, 2014 within the Transformer platform in Gyumri, Armenia.

Through Facebook, a call was sent out to join the event and actively participate in the readings. On site, the writer's books were available in Armenian and English and participants were asked to choose and read a poem during the event.

The readings were followed by a street art workshop/event with Kurghinyan's poems.

Open Source Bookstore, Yerevan, 2012

Memorial to the Fallen Trees, Davit Stepanyan, Yerevan, 2012

Private/Public, Yerevan, 2012

Mapping Public Shifts, Gor Yengoyan, Yerevan, 2014

Mapping Friendship: the Challenges of the Contemporary Art Scene in Armenia

Taguhi Torosyan

In the last 20 years of Armenian independence, the country's art scene has experienced complicated conditions. This is partially due to the economic collapse common to many post-Soviet countries, but also to specific challenges that emerged in the late 1980s: the war with Azerbaijan, the economic blockade, the consequent crisis, and large-scale immigration. A lot of art and cultural workers fled the country. Those who remained had to focus on surviving the difficult period.

Welcome to Armenia, the Museum under the Heaven, performance, Azat Sargsyan, Giumry Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2008. Courtesy of the artist

These were fruitful grounds for initiatives such as private galleries and magazines in the beginning of the 90s, founded and run by cultural actors who had great expectations from the neoliberal system and its freedom of expression.

Many context-shaping exhibitions were held, and artists enjoyed experimenting with new media that had been considered illegitimate in the Soviet era. This situation is still a reality for many state-run art schools and some museums. According to one of the notorious statements by a museum authority, 'art that is plugged in to electricity is not art.' Media like performance, action painting, video

art, photography, and installation flourished. The works reflected on issues of gender, identity, urbanism, the Soviet modernism project, the rupture between the imaginary and the real, the expectations and the failed reality of the much-awaited independence. The production of the context was also triggered by the outward interest of the international art market (basically, the curators) toward new media art coming from young 'democratic' post-Soviet countries. Pop-art and photo-realism gained traction as the favoured styles, while content was predominantly comprised of corporal freedom, eroticism, queer and punk subcultures, as well as symbols of Western consumerism.

Artists appeared as 'occult practitioners' in their efforts to invoke the denotative and connotative references of Western capitalism—Reebok, Marlboro, Coca-Cola etc. — on one hand, as a sort of communication with the global world, and on the other hand, as an expression of distrust and anxiety caused by consumerism and the free market that laid its footprint on the changing societal environment and relationships between people. Freedom was imagined as a queer wearing jeans or a naked androgynous couple kissing on the main streets of Yerevan. By legitimizing the 'perverse' topics and images that were alien to a 'traditional', post-Soviet Armenian society and its conservatism, some artists aimed to create a relation between the national and global narratives, thereby developing a 'glocal' (global and local)[1] context for a better, more free and more open-minded Armenia to come into being. This especially refers to the *3rd Floor Group* from the Perestroika period that largely defined independence through art in the late '80s and the early '90s. Their agenda overlapped notably with the cultural policies of the first post-Soviet Armenian government, and thus gained the relative support of the state.

The art scene enjoyed greater freedom attained through independence; positioning themselves as non-conformist and alternative, entangling themselves in elaborate ceremonies of music, dancing at after-parties of exhibitions, home gatherings or other art events, they dreamt of celebrity, recognition, and most importantly, international sales. The festive atmosphere was at the same time notable for its appreciation of the May '68 symbolic and punk subculture that opposed the nationalist manifestations prompted by the Karabakh movement and the ongoing war with Azerbaijan. The Armenian artistic scene was a kind of a crossing of the Left and the Right, consuming the symbols of cultural revolution that had long been market goods in the Western paradigm.

One of the most notable representatives of that era, Arman Grigoryan, often plays with the synergy of national and liberal narratives. A great example of this artistic strategy is a painting called *Sasuntsi Davit, Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill* (1999), in which the artist blends the main protagonist of the national epos (usually introduced and depicted as a horse-rider), David of Sassoun, with the Marlboro

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1   A term used by one of the key art critics and curators, the ideologist of the *3rd Floor Group* art movement in the Perestroika period Nazareth Karoyan.

cowboy, thus creating a hero of new Armenia. Another example is a painting by the same author called *Armenican Dream*. Here the title speaks for itself, further extending the aspiration and the dreamy gaze towards the land of cowboys and immigrants that was epidemically alluring to the masses of unemployed that had overnight lost all their savings and dreams of social security due to monetary transition and default. The queues at the US embassy in Yerevan seemed endless and had long been the subject of bitter jokes and anecdotes.

Mount Ararat, Arax Nerkararyan, oil on canvas, 1991

In works (mostly by female artists) that focused on feminism and gender issues, raising concerns about the exploitative and oppressive nature of the capitalist machine of desire, the influence of Western artists like Barbara Kruger, Marina Abramović, Judy Chicago, Valie Export and Pipilotti Rist is pronounced. Some of these works attempted to rethink their roles as female artists as well as the relationship between the urban environment, advertising and gender stereotypes (Karine Matsakyan, Arevik Arevshatyan, Diana Hakobyan, the millennial generation representatives; Sona Abgaryan, Astghik Melkonyan, Queering Yerevan etc.). Sometimes playing with national myths and simulacra from a gender perspective resulted in side effects such as the institutional neglect and ostracism of another *3rd floor* artist Arax Nerkararyan, whose artwork depicted a comic-strip style orgy with Mount Ararat in the background. As a representative of the younger generation, the artist collective *Queering Yerevan* works with the reflexive intervention strategy of an "art police" (criticizing fellow artists, curators and critics, indexing at the faults and vices in their strategies and tactics). Their practice is greatly based on language and translation revised through gender theory and studies.

In the Memory of the Underworld Bodies, an intervention to the exhibition Body: New Figurative Art in Armenia, Queering Yerevan, 2010 curated by Ararat Sarkissian, Sarkis Hamalbashyan, Arman Grigoryan, Arevik Arevshatyan, David Kareyan (all artist-curators mostly curating the shows they participate at) hinting at the group performance of the *3rd Floor Group Greetings to the Artists' Union from the Underworld* "where the artists appeared dressed up as mummies and zombies, 'embodying themselves as the victims of the Soviet regime which Socialist Realism refused to depict." It was held at the opening of the last Republican All-Soviet Exhibition in 1989. Many of the participants of the *Body: New Figurative Art in Armenia* were the participants of the group performance

One of the most active art collectives that have emerged in 2007, *Art Laboratory*, continually uses street and public art as tools to question the nature of political authority and to criticize the oligarchic kleptocracy governing the country.

Another important group that focused on the relationship between artistic strategies and public space is *Act* artists' group that emerged between 1993 and 2000. Their practice derived from a dialog with the *3rd Floor Group*, where the latter's strategies and striving for representation were put into question, especially in terms of their relation to the institutional system and the rising role of artivism as one of the operative forces of civil society. The following became central to their political action through public manifestations, agitation and referendums: the historical rethinking of the bodily appearance 'after action painting' and its social aspects, the notions of bodily 'utilization' in political processes and the body becoming a 'tool' in politics. Of special interest is the performance/public action/ manifestation entitled *Art Demonstration* in 1995 that took place just a week after the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia was adopted. The group marched from Martiros Saryan's monument to the Museum of Modern Art, within the framework of an exhibition held under the title *Noah's Ark*,

Untitled, Art Laboratory, mixed media, 2012

carrying bilingual posters with slogans like "Intervention in the Systems", "World Integration", "New State, New Art, New Culture", and "Polit-art realization". The *Art of Resistance*, a term coined by one of its co-founders David Kareyan, was believed to be a process of artistic revolution fitting the paradigm of identity politics and civil society development of the 1990s. The geography of the demonstration is also quite notable, since its starting and end points marked the two pillars of Soviet-Armenian art: Martiros Saryan, a member of the symbolist artist association *Blue Rose* in Moscow and the founder of the Armenian national school of painting, symbolized the nationalist agenda of contemporary Armenian culture. The Museum of Modern Art in Yerevan endearingly fostered nationalism by promoting artwork, mainly abstract paintings, that combined the tactics of modern art with nationalist narratives. It is ironic that the demonstration moved along a circular path of nationalist agenda that the country's cultural policies found itself trapped in during the coming decades. Other exhibitions of the group's works took place in such informal environments as the abandoned or badly functioning industrial plants. This questioned the relation between art, space and production in the conditions of a collapsed post-Soviet economy.

The notion of 'pure art', i.e. art looking into and rethinking itself was also quite popular among the group and was further expanded on in the works of Mher Azatyan. Through a combination of landscape photos (mostly urban and sometimes rural) and captions from randomly picked texts and overheard dialogues, they reflect on the relation between memory and space.

Some works also attempted to illustrate the tremendous ideological confusion in Armenian society. For example, the late David Kareyan performed a piece in which he read literature on various ideologies while sitting in a wheelchair, eventually tearing the reading material apart, throwing it in a huge saucepan over a boiling fire, and mixing the contents with a big ladle.

I want to write, but what should I write?, Mher Azatyan, mixed media series, 1995 - present

Some artists, including Azat Sargsyan, explored the role of the artist and the problematic nature of freedom in Armenian society. In one of Sargsyan's performances held on State Independence Day, he hung himself by the foot in the Freedom Square. The work includes a tautological wordplay with 'freedom' and 'independence', where his name ('Azat' means 'Free' in Armenian) is the third (apart from 'Independence Day' and 'Freedom Square') and a main denotation of a free individual and an artist at the same time. The rupture in this case is his body position, hanged upside down, which can invoke the image of the Hanged Man in the Major Arcana of Tarot cards, standing for sacrifice, letting go, surrendering, passivity, suspension, acceptance, patience, contemplation, inner harmony, conformism, non-action, waiting, and giving up.

Azat hanged in the Freedom Square on Independence Day,
Azat Sargsyan, performance, 1996. Courtesy the artist

Grigor Khachatryan is one of the first artists in Armenia who shifted in 1970s towards conceptual art practices (performance, text and photography). The theme of power is central to his artistic oeuvre. Materials for Khachatryan's artistic productions are his own persona, his body and his name that he plays with utilizing humor as a key to understanding the nature of his works. Implicit and explicit interventions in the printed and electronic mass media are essential to Khachatryan's artistic strategies.

Some artists, such as Karen Andreassian and Vahram Aghasyan (another founding member of the *Act* group) pursued research-based projects on political topography, the legacy of the Soviet avant-garde and the history of Soviet industrialization as a failed utopia of the modernist project. Other such examples are the works of Tigran Khachatryan, who mostly focuses on the phallic nature of power and its aesthetics through performance, video and documentary film making.

Brothers Manvel Baghdasaryan and Samvel Baghdasaryan explored the phenomenology of various physical materials (from the construction and biochemical industries) and the latter continues to work with Soviet remnants and artefacts (such as placards et al.) together with their disciple Armine Hovhannisyan.

The art scene also experienced freedom of movement in travelling to Europe and North America, being showcased at art events big and small, national and transnational; from Documenta at Kassel to La Biennale di Venezia, different artist-in-residency programmes and special projects focused on Armenian contemporary art. Exhibition projects such as *Adieu Parajanov*[2] and *D'Arménie*[3] that reflected on Soviet legacy and identity politics had greatest resonance.

Though it would seem implausible today, a few experimental collaborations between the contemporary art scene and the state also took place in the 1990s, with exhibitions held at the National Parliament, the Constitutional Court, etc.

The Current Situation

With the political shifts in the early 2000s, the situation started to change dramatically. The post-Soviet 'thaw' was over and the hegemony of political ideology dressed in national costumes came to displace the relatively 'liberal' (no matter how ironic it sounds) paradigm. The lack of structured economic conditions and legal framework resulted in a poor development of the internal art market. The few contemporary art galleries and initiatives that had striven to operate in the area gradually started to close down. It is nonetheless important to mention that the number of those galleries was nowhere near that of Yerevan in former times. The remaining galleries existing in the market mainly represent fine artists and artworks whose formal elements (such as line, colour, etc.) are conventional or commercial.

At the same time, various institutional initiatives emerged in Yerevan, such as the ACCEA/NPAK (Armenian Centre for Contemporary and Experimental Art) in the early 1990s, the National Association of Art Critics founded in 2005, Utopiana.am founded the same year, the Arts and Cultural Studies Laboratory operating since 2007, the Suburb Cultural Centre operating since 2007, AJZ Space operating since 2009, all of which contribute to the long-term and sustainable development of the art scene in Armenia. These are the main institutions active both on the national and international level and, at the same time, they are the most engaged actors and agents of the independent art scene, voicing concerns regarding the state

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2   The 2003 exhibition *Adieu Parajanov - a retrospective of Armenian contemporary art* organized by Austrian curators Hedwig Saxenhuber and George Schöllhammer at the Künsthalle Vienna.

3   The 2007 exhibition *D'Armenie*, curated by Nazareth Karoyan and Dominique Abensour, organized at Le Quartier, Contemporary Art Center in Quimper, France.

cultural policy and developing reformation proposals in the public sphere. Apart from Yerevan, the second largest city in Armenia, Gyumri is also quite active, with such initiatives and institutions as the Gyumri Biennale held since 1996, the Gyumri Centre of Contemporary Art with its museum (one of the oldest operating art institutions in Armenia, since 1997), the Stil gallery, the Berlin Art Hotel and the Aslamazyan sisters' art gallery. It is important to note that the Gyumri branch of the Yerevan State Fine Arts Academy plays an important role in the development of the contemporary art scene (maybe even more important than that of its headquarters in Yerevan, which is characterized by the heavy censorship and outdated methods and approaches to art education, present in almost every higher state art education institution in the Post-Soviet countries). In Yerevan, on the contrary, contemporary art education is mainly pioneered by independent initiatives such as the Fine Arts Department of the Open University, the newly established Institute for Contemporary Art and the Media Lab for teenagers organized by Utopiana.am.

To refer back to the situation, with the sweeping privatization of cultural venues (houses of culture, the cinemas, etc.), it became almost impossible to organise low-budget events and exhibitions. As cultural actors shifted to participating in social work and the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement-driven NGO sector, it got to the point where projects could rarely be realized without the help of international funding bodies; these donors imposed civil society development agendas with extreme bureaucratic demands that compromised the artistic value of works and events. A shift in artistic content also occurred, to themes of community development, sustainability and promotion of human rights and democratic values. This is especially ironic since all these issues have already been addressed or rethought through critical meditations on the mentioned problematic. However, it doesn't take much to develop a critical standpoint towards the funding bodies, especially in terms of questioning the bureaucratic project management system, in which a certain structure has to be maintained and the neoliberal public sphere vocabulary has to be vocalized for the description of activities that are often disregarded by funding allocation and monitoring authorities with moderate competence in cultural theory, contemporary philosophy and art practice. Prioritizing the quantity of the projects in terms of partners, venues, participants and visibility aspects, the administrative dominance and the unfair budget distribution in favour of the EU countries as main partners often negatively affect the projects' qualitative aspects.

Ironically, the art scene has encountered similar problems in its attempt to collaborate with state structures (such as the Ministry of Culture, for instance), where no cultural policies exist apart from those promoting Armenian cultural heritage (traditional arts, crafts, folk music and dance, religious architecture), forms of mass entertainment (cinema, theatre, dance) and the increasing nationalist agenda (works and events commemorating the Armenian Genocide or emphasizing national narratives). Hierarchical decision-making (which can be traced right up

to the president's apparatus, where no decisions on financial distribution, even on the smallest scale, can be made without the consent of the apparatus' head), corruption and lack of knowledge and skills needed to develop a decent, merit-based cultural policy aren't attractive to the majority of cultural actors.

Lastly, the majority of private businesses are owned and run by oligarchs supporting and maintaining the corrupt regime. It is therefore unsurprising that they do not wish to invest in critical and/or political art that criticizes the existing order and supports revolution on personal and societal levels.

Also, the state institutions have undertaken no serious research on the independent sector or culture.

Suck My Pussy, Queering Yerevan. Street art

Coming Challenges

All the complexities described above are even further complicated by the president of the RA Serzh Sargsyan's decision to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EES), an economic alliance proposed by Vladimir Putin as an alternative to the EU, targeted especially at post-Soviet countries aspiring towards official integration into the EU. This political U-turn has made the future of cultural collaboration between Armenia, the Eastern Neighbourhood and the EU uncertain (especially in the light of recent geopolitical developments in Ukraine and the current aggressive invasive strategy of the Russian government even towards the post-Soviet countries that initially expressed an interest in joining the EES). Armenia's obligations under the Customs Union will be incompatible with those under the Accession Treaty (the completion of which failed after the presented shift in the paradigm). The disheartening and cool stance of the members of NATO and the Russian Federation towards each other, driving the world into the revival of the Iron Curtain, as well as their bilateral political and economic sanctions, will, naturally, also affect the

member states of the Customs Union. The 'back in the USSR' condition will leave no room for illusions about the socio-political, economic and consequently, cultural conditions that Armenia will face at the beginning of 2015 (although as of recently, even Kazakhstan, the main initiator of that project, expressed its concern and hesitation regarding the Union, after remarks questioning the sovereignty of the Kazakh state were voiced by the Russian side).[4]

Soon it will become more and more difficult for the independent sector to receive funding from non-EES countries, since a kind of harmonization of the legal framework will be required by Moscow to keep those countries under total control. One such example is the Foreign Agent Law[5] in Russia that requires non-profit organizations to register as 'foreign agents'. Owing to this situation, human rights and civil society organizations (such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Transparency International), as well as cultural and artistic organizations, will come under attack.

The totalitarian regime of the Eurasian Union with its potential oppression and censorship of free speech will only fuel the creativity of individual artists, whereas it is questionable which institutions will survive and in which direction they will have to move in order to maintain their existence.

Immigration, Art Laboratory, 2014. Street art

This text is just a basic attempt to draw a very simplistic overview of the post-independence contemporary art scene and institutions. Much more needs to be done in terms of mapping and archiving the period and institutions in order to understand their goals, objectives and needs, the structure and the strategies for survival in these complex conditions. Such an endeavor could very well yield possible recommendations for cultural policy as well as further research and advocacy for contemporary art and culture in Armenia.

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4   http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-putin-history-reaction-nation/26565141.html
5   http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/main.nsf/%28SpravkaNew%29?OpenAgent&RN=102766-6&02

Disclaiming and Reclaiming the Public

Ruben Arevshatyan

Within these last 5-6 years, it has been possible to perceive an increasing wave of public activism, in the capitals of former Soviet republics, supporting the protection of urban buildings and spaces which served public functions during the Soviet period.

The process of privatization started right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and has been quite intensive and, in some cases, quite violent. However, only comparatively recently have the societies of these countries started to reflect deeply on these cases of appropriation of public property, and these architectural and spatial reorganizations of the urban body. Previously, when important architectural monuments from various epochs in various republics were demolished, sometimes that resistance came from the public outside of narrow professional circles; but this resistance mainly emphasized the cultural and historical aspects of the buildings, detaching them from their social, political, ideological contexts.

The recent activism is connected with the appearance and hyper-intensive growth of social networks, which, furthermore, diversified the discourse, producing new articulations of the problem. The struggle did not become easier. There were some victories when society succeeded in forcing the state or the developers to give up or postpone their demolition plans. But there were more defeats. New developers, in collaboration with state systems of control, sometimes used brute force to suppress the social protests, and also borrowed from the protesters the inverted tactics and rhetoric of "disagreement." The diametrically opposed intentions of two sides in the midst of fierce discussions concerning the correctness of their arguments often led to dramatic and quite carnivalesque confrontations in which the topic of the conflict gradually dissolved in between the pathetic and cynical attitudes of confronting parties.

The combination of those two attitudes embedded in the core of a struggle for a space could seem, on one hand, paradoxical, and, on the other hand, quite simple if not banal; one party is trying to privatize and capitalize property that once used to belong to everyone, and the other is trying to restore justice in regards to the preservation of the common wealth. The paradoxical aspect is that both sides speak in the name of the public, and propose their versions regarding the reuse and redistribution of formerly Socialist property while juggling old concepts

and constructs, but at the same time either keeping silent about the social and economic origin of those buildings and spaces or openly blasting the Soviet past and its heritage. While maneuvering in between those different, contradictory, uncertain, and quite abstract notions, both sides are thoroughly testing each other, and at the same time speculating about new horizons for societal organization through architectural transmutations.

ապեր ես ընկարում ես, որ տելեվիզորով ցույց տաս 2005թ.

hey bro, are you shooting in order to show it on the TV afterwards, Mher Azatyan, 2005.
Courtesy of artist's archive

In a 2005 photo installation called *Hey bro, are you shooting in order to show it on TV afterwards?* Mher Azatyan depicted simple, out-of-use objects – a broken refrigerator, a gas oven, a rusty bucket, empty vegetable oil cans –placed in the middle of a pavement. The placement looks very random, but it has intervened quite aggressively into the public territory, and in doing so, creating a zone which could merge public and private functions – an anonymous, self-organized territory formed by anonymous citizens for an anonymous public. While quite concrete, the display is rather ephemeral. It functions in the pedestrian zone as a certain point

of interruption, a territory of "idleness" (the display implies a place where people could come together, have seat, rest, talk, or play cards) which proposes itself as an organically-developed opposition to the systematized pedestrian path. Interestingly, apparently-random architectural structures were a common phenomenon in the post-1960s Soviet urban reality. Against the backdrop of evolving state capitalism, it became quite common for Soviet citizens to improve the conditions of their living space by transforming their khrushchevka balconies into glass porches, or by subtly occupying a territory from the public space in the common yard though step by step tactics – planting a tree, building an improvised fence (out of a piece of broken iron pipe, for example) and an improvised bench (like a box or a metal can), which, since the moment of installation, constantly but unnoticeably starts moving, day by day, expanding and securing the territory for the anonymous owner who pretends to create a space for public use.

Many of those spaces over the years transformed into garages, some into kiosks, small shops or even houses by the silent consent of the society, which, during the Soviet period, subconsciously supported the appropriation of its collective property, wordlessly sympathizing with the invisible manifestations of anarchic individualism as a form of disagreement with the existing political, economic and social setup where commonality was the basic determining ideological concept. General disappointment and, since the late 1960s, increasing disbelief in socialist and communist projects generated in the collective consciousness of late Soviet society a quite paradoxical world outlook, where the public wealth was considered as something given, while the fair distribution of it seemed absolutely impossible.

The gap created within the dichotomy of that logic became a perfect space for different kind of speculations, varying from theoretical assumptions to prosaic manipulations leading to the accumulation of capital. And, interestingly, those speculative tactics within the last decades of the Soviet empire did not have the logic of vertical confrontation between the power system and society. There were many cases (sometimes even really anecdotal) of how architects in collaboration with the local political elites found ways to bypass the system and general regulations in order to construct something that did not fit the assigned economic quotas or ideological frameworks.

A good example is a story from the early 1970s. A delegation from Moscow GOSPLAN (State Economic Planning Commission), accompanied by Armenian political authorities in a car on the newly-constructed 70 kilometer highway from Yerevan to Sevan suddenly discovered that the highway they were taking should not have existed, as it was not planned and was not subsidized by their Central State Economic Commission. So the highway, metaphorically speaking, appeared out of thin air. There were, of course, explanations about savings and the management of the regional budget; but in the end, the highway was needed, even though it was not on GOSPLAN's list of planned and subsidized constructions. The highway was

built to address the public need, which, in fact, was the major argument used in any disagreement with the Soviet system. The occupations of residential yards were motivated by similar sentiments: that the "randomly" developed spaces (though everybody knew that they were not randomly developed) fulfilled a public need.

In Mher Azatyan's photo installation, we confront a formally recognizable, typical post-Soviet situation, which is emphasized with a decontextualized extract from a street conversation. By superposing that text with the image, the artist creates a new poetic context that discloses the hidden significance, the final goal, and the whole prehistory of that "random" display.

Hey bro, are you shooting in order to show it on TV afterwards? is a question that ironically rewinds and inverts the logic of that display to its hidden motivation, where, in the name of the public, the private anonymous is asking the artist/ photographer/anxious citizen if he is making a video to show back to the public.

That apparently naive question contains curiosity, anxiety, and a certain portion of warning or threat.

After the fall of the Soviet system, the privatization of former socialist property took place in a comparatively short period of time. But it was still difficult to uproot from the collective memory the perception that those buildings, sites and spaces had been associated with a different form of property. Of course the destruction and transformation of those buildings and spaces involved many different premises and motivations (mainly related to economic factors and the qualitative incompatibilities of those buildings in a new epoch), but the economic, social, political and cultural inconsistency of those buildings always remained in the background, in the unconscious, popping out in the most critical moments of the public confrontations that took place in recent years protecting of several buildings in Yerevan – the Youth Palace, the Moscow Open Air Hall Cinema, Mashtots Park, Zvartnots Airport and the Covered Market.

The case of the reconstruction (a better term would be "fundamental corruption") of the Covered Market in Yerevan is a significant example of conceptual reassignment. It was privatized in the first years of the post-Soviet Armenian reality, but it continued to be perceived by the citizens as one of the most important traditional public spaces in the urban texture of the city. A marvelous example of local late Stalinist period architecture, the market was also categorized as a historical-cultural monument. The building needed major renovation, as for at least two decades it had had no proper maintenance. No one expected that the new owner of the building would want to completely reconstruct the historical monument, and it was absolutely beyond imagination that neither the Ministry of Culture nor Governmental authorities of the city of Yerevan would be unable to prevent the obvious act of vandalism.

Demonstration of civic activists in front of Covered Market, Yerevan, 2013.
Photo by Hayk Bianjyan. Courtesy of Hayk Bianjyan archive

The developer masterfully maneuvered through the gaps in the legislative system, leaving all the responsible institutions paralyzed. He delicately developed a step-by-step tactics of carrying out the construction work, breaking it into phases, starting with unnoticeable changes, in order to give the public a false sense of security. Then on New Year's Eve, when people were busy with their families and holidays, he started the massive destruction of the rear arches of the building. He was actually applying the same tactics described in the beginning of this text, in which an anonymous individual occupies communal space. He perfectly understood the collective psychology and the perceptual gaps in the collective thinking of people who still bear the trauma and undifferentiated perceptions inherited from their past, and he succeeded in dealing with the public rage that came up as a result of his vandalism by confronting it with a different rage from a different public living in the vicinity of the market – people whom he had promised to return to the market after its reconstruction, where they would find themselves in clean, cozy, warm, new conditions.

The developer formed a new social group that argued for the improvement of its economic and social conditions, and he set it against the other group of activists who appealed to notions like "collective memory," "cultural heritage," and "urban history." This confrontation brought up all the actors and all the polarized

Demonstration of supporters of reconstructing the market in front of Covered Market, Yerevan, 2013.
Photo by Hayk Bianjyan. Courtesy of Hayk Bianjyan archive

mentalities that were involved in the communal property occupation process during the late Soviet period, but in an inverted form, where the lumpen (who in the former occupation process used to have an has invisible and active role) now took the role of an active revolutionary class, accusing the other party (the one that during the Soviet period used to silently sympathize with the appropriation of common as a protest to the system) of having a bourgeois attitude, of being detached from the local socioeconomic reality.

The confrontation lasted for a few months in front of the market. The culmination of it was the formation of another new group of demonstrators. This group (among whom it was possible to recognize the same people that were appearing in other rallies initiated by the owner of the building) proactively claimed to be socialists at the moment when the discourse started to shift from cultural complaints to the social and economic aspects of the problem. Ironically, that staged confrontation of so-called socialists with the civic activists protecting the market building from destruction revealed the fake socialists' major fear: when the social component was reinstated in the collective consciousness, they comprehended their own complicity in the collective economic and social set-up (even if it is embodied in architecture), a complicity that they had denied.

Confrontation scene of demonstrating groups in front of Covered Market, Yerevan, 2013.
Photo by Hayk Bianjyan. Courtesy of Hayk Bianjyan archive

The civic activists were defeated. The Covered Market kept its front façade, but the whole body of the building was changed, and the market was converted into a shopping mall. The fake socialists fighting for the reconstruction of the building got a few counters to sell some vegetables and fruits in a tiny sector in front of the building to create the impression that it was still a marketplace and to show the social significance of the new space. A few months later, all those people were thrown out from the mall, as they were corroding the logic and aesthetics of the modernized shopping centre.

The new shopping mall is working and creating its own public, despite the fact that the building has lost its former significance, was crossed off by the citizens from the list of popular urban sites, and continues to be boycotted by a great number of Yerevan dwellers. It is difficult to judge if it was a smart investment by the owner, but one thing is obvious: the reconstruction of the market did not arise from a pragmatic business approach, but more as a manifestation of symbolic and political gestures.

The case of the Covered Market is one of many similar cases that took place in various post-Soviet urban situations. Societies try and fail to defend some historical building, then end up in a deadlock. These deadlocks are more complex than

Confrontation scene of demonstrating groups in front of Covered Market, Yerevan, 2013.
Photo by Hayk Bianjyan. Courtesy of Hayk Bianjyan archive

they seem at first sight, and people try to explain the reasons for them. But it is becoming obvious that the way beyond them can come from asking the right questions. What exactly are the societies trying to defend? What vital concepts and important constructs are embedded in the forms and functions of those buildings and spaces, making them so significant? What constructs are embedded in the collective thinking of the society? What are the conceptual inconsistencies of those constructs? And what are the gaps between opposing positions which might serve as for speculation on new forms of common space for different individualities?

Komsomolsky district, Kyiv, 2013. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

SPACES: Kyiv

Unfinished Culture Centre, Vinogradar, Kyiv, 2014. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

Photo by Kostiantyn Strilets, 2013

Architecture of Common

Kateryna Botanova

Despite all that has been recently said on the crisis of public space in post-Soviet domains, there remains much to be explored in the broader relationship between people and places.

Places, how we see them, how we use them, what we want from them, how much we are ready to contribute to them, and how they form and inform us, have been in a state of flux during the last 20 years.

During the Soviet period, "public" actually meant "state", where freedom was substituted with control, regulations, and a system of punishments. Everything public was potentially subject to punishment, to repressions. The only safe zone was a private, secluded place. Thus public spaces—such as public squares, wide sidewalks, parks, and gardens—were perceived as no one's land, as belonging to everybody but needed, shared, and participated in by no one.

When the political pendulum swung from Soviet to independent states and the economic one from communism to the extreme forms of capitalism of the "Chicago Boys" style, it was the private sphere as the only one to rely on trust that exploded into the public domain. What used to be (public) spaces of fear now had to develop into spaces of private triumph. Public spaces became not just unclaimed or superfluous but simply unnecessary, as there

was no kind of unified "public" to claim them, use them, and take responsibility for them. However, they did not remain abandoned neither. Squares became occupied by kiosks and markets, sidewalks became used as spontaneous parking lots, and parks and gardens quickly developed into construction sites. Places, like people, became valued only as long as they could produce certain results and effects.

However, it is not merely this economic factor of effectiveness that resulted in alienation among people and between the people and their environment. Throughout this time there were also major changes in the mechanisms and possibilities of self-identification that grew not only out of economic development.

"The world is characterized not only by its division into sovereign states but also by the presence within it of a multiplicity of political authorities in different registers [...] many of these authorities claim they are not political—only cultural, economic, religious, communal or whatever—and such a move often enhances their autonomy, not least in relation to the authorities that claim sovereignty", writes Warren Magnusson in "Politics of Urbanism: Seeing like a City". Thus Magnusson proposes to redefine the notion of politics from one of setting a certain order controlled by a sovereign authority to one of an activity that generates

"new spaces of action and new histories, in relation to which new identities, interests, and forms of authority are established."

Living their tough everyday lives, caught between constant political and economic changes and wrongdoings, post-Soviet societies are quite reluctant to see new identities and forms of authority that can be recognized and acquired. They still identify themselves predominantly by ethnicity and nationality or by economic, I-am-what-I-own markers. Thus a large number of social, local, spatial, or gender-, activity-, and interest-based identities are not activated. For one, this leads to a certain identity collapse and confusion—it is not enough to say "I'm a middle class Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainian" or "I'm a barely-making-my-ends-meet Russian-speaking Ukrainian miner" anymore—and for another, it prevents the establishment of new groups and forms of authority.

Combined with the general atomization of societies, rising mobility, and high degree of social uncertainty and mutual distrust, this results in total reluctance to extend one's concern beyond private interests to the common or even public ones.

Russian journalist and architecture critic Grigoriy Revzin points out this irony of contemporary Russian society: "Speaking about everybody—they won't be good anyway. So what sense does it make for me to be no good with everyone else? How about at least I have it somehow better?"

As the notion, needs and politics of the public change in post-Soviet societies, so do the notions of place and public place. Nowadays "place" refers not simply to a physical space and its history, but rather to a network of interrelations between different people, ideas, other locales, and the actions that connect them all. In other words it is no longer just a fixed point of gathering and sharing, but a spot that can produce new possibilities, routes, and relations.

Public spaces in contemporary post-Soviet cities are neither passively accepted nor actively created—they are mostly fought for. However, rather than fighting for the building and opening of spaces that can create new possibilities, generate new histories, help establish new identities, they expend their energy on fights against those trying to take existing spaces away (be it political authorities or economic ventures). The public space, which post-Soviet cities truly need requires a different form of collaboration and common action. Creating public places today requires a different architecture of the "common", be it common needs, common action, common interests, or the common good.

Public spaces can exist only when there is a real need for them, not the idea of a need. It seems that in the post-Soviet region such spaces have to be created from scratch, and will call for an architecture we have yet to imagine.

All the public events of *Architecture of Common* took place at the former Soviet sewing factory *Yunist* in the historical part of Kyiv that is to become a cultural hub in the coming years. Public protests against putting up yet another business centre at this site resulted in the investor's decision to build a cultural centre for the community instead. This made *Yunist* a symbolical place, showing that local communities in Kyiv are ready to fight for their public places, and that the collaboration between citizens and business representatives is possible.

Architecture of Common brought together local and international artists, curators, social researchers, architects, and other cultural professionals with local communities. The programme had three main components: a discussion platform, art projects and evening events. The discussion part included a public cultural policy forum, public lectures, workshops, open discussions, and presentations. For four days, the location of the *Yunist Factory* became a space for art interventions of invited artists from Ukraine, Moldova, and the Russian Federation.

Participating artists: Pavel Braila, Oleksandr Burlaka and Ivan Melnychuk as *Grupa Predmetiv*, Tetyana Goryushyna, Alevtina Kakhidze, Alina Kopytsya, Yuriy Kruchak, Sasha Kurmaz, Myroslav Vayda, *Partizaning* group, Vova Vorotniov.

Music performances: band *DRUMТИАТР* (Gryts Semenchuk, Yurko Izdryk, Oleksiy Gmyrya), band *Lyudska Podoba / Human Shape* (Anatoly Belov, Georgiy Babanskyi, Ivanna Yarema, Artur Kocharyan, Oleksandr Ratushnyak).

Participants of the discussion and lecture programme: Levan Asabashvili, Nataša Bodrožić, Oleksandr Burlaka and Ivan Melnychuk as *Grupa Predmetiv*, Arevik Martirosyan, Igor Ponosov as *Partizaning* group, Iryna Solovey, Vitalie Sprinceane, Mikheil Svanidze, Roman Tsybrivsky, Igor Tyshchenko.

Spiral Landscape

Pavel Braila

Former *Yunist Factory,* Kyiv, May 2013
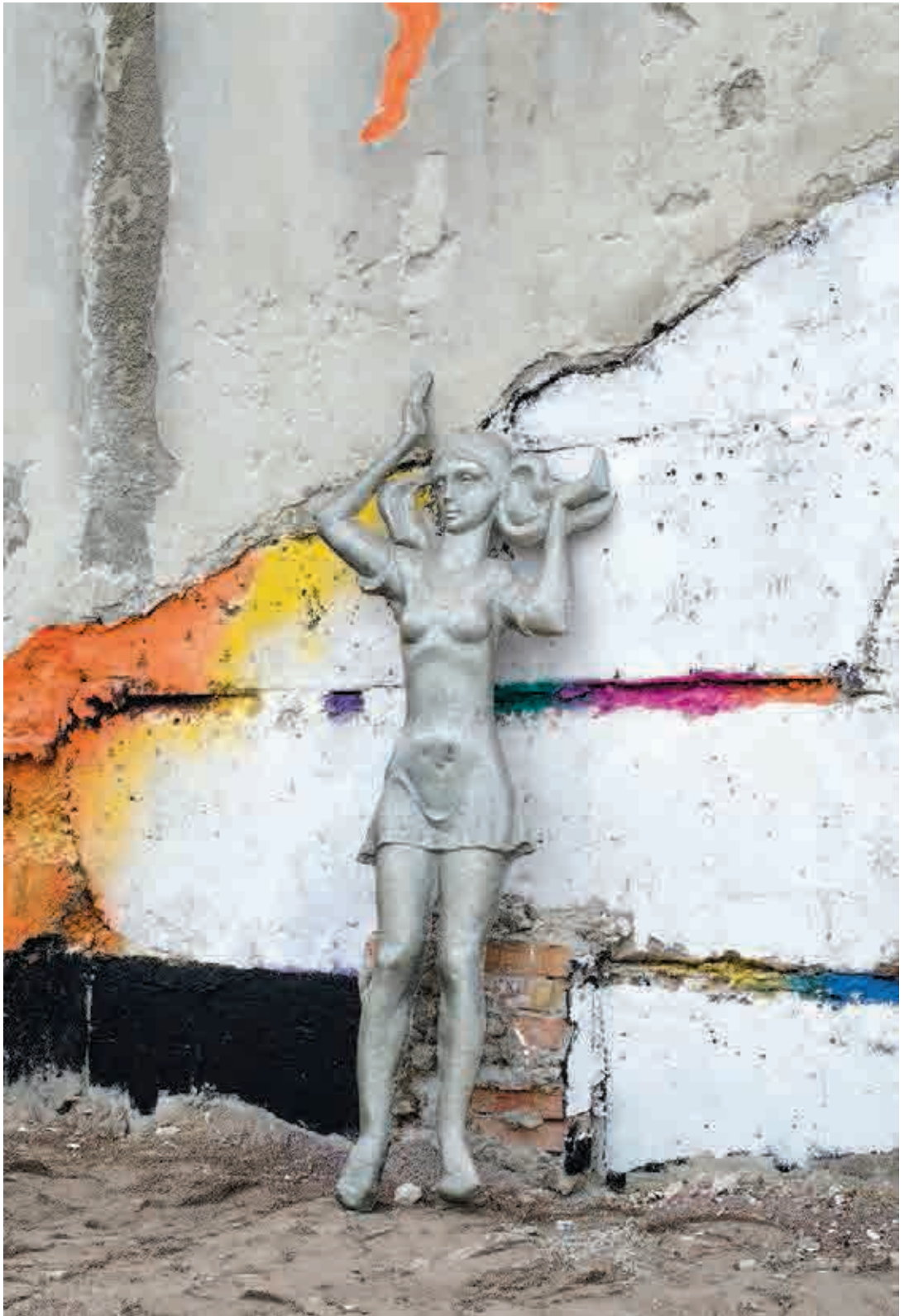
Yunist (Youth), Vova Vorotniov, 2013

Untitled, Myroslav Vayda

View on the former *Yunist Factory*, 2013
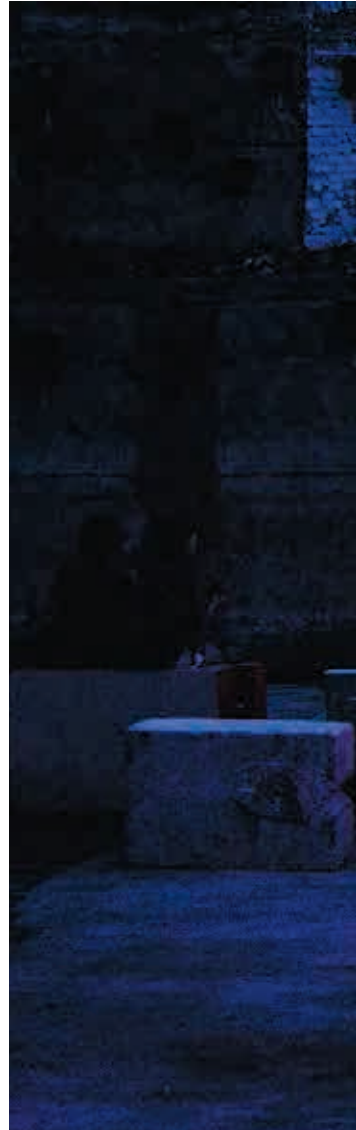
Desire. Opportunities. Expression, Alevtina Kakhidze, 2013

Lumina Amintirii / In the Light of Memory, Screening by Alyssa Grossman, 2013

PP 103-107 Photos by Kostiantyn Strilets

Kyiv Guided Tour with Oleksandr Burlaka

Kyiv Crematorium Complex
Designed by Abraham Miletsky,
Ada Rybachuk & Volodymyr Melnychenko, 1975

The idea for a crematorium in Kyiv appeared after WWII. But only in the end of the 1960s Abraham Miletsky started on the design and invited the young monumental artists Ada Rybachuk and Volodymyr Melnychenko to work on the project. The artists rejected the original concept of a crematorium early on as technicist and therefore conducted research in Carpathian villages. They developed the concept and scenography of the *Park of Memory* – a therapeutic space of park-columbarium with the *Halls of Farewell* in the centre and the crematorium hidden under the ground. For thirteen years Rybachuk and Melnychenko have been working on site with a small team of builders almost every day, knitting reinforcement for the monumental *Wall of Memory*, a sculptural relief. Suddenly, at the beginning of 1982, the decision on the liquidation of the Wall was taken by the local authorities, and the unfinished work was buried under 950 tons of concrete.

Kyiv Crematorium Complex, May 2013. Photos by Nvard Yerkanian

Maidan Square, Kyiv, May 2013

Salut Hotel, Kyiv, May 2013
Photos by Nvard Yerkanian

Holidays on the Block

July 4–27, 2014
Poznyaky park, Kyiv

In July 2014 CSM implemented the social and artistic project *Holidays on the Block* in Poznyaky park in Kyiv. Over one month artists, activists, and sociologists worked together with Poznyaky district's residents to come up with a common vision for the city and their district. Poznyaky is a typical 'sleeping district' in Kyiv, a new and dynamic part of town, where the city infrastructure is developing actively. The image and character of Poznyaky changed significantly after Maidan, since activist groups of self-defence and civic control have been launched here (as in many other parts of town). However, alienation between people and the space, where they live and which they usually do not see as public, is still present. In *Holidays on the Block* in Poznyaky we learnt together how to bridge this alienation,

how to 'bring' the city to its citizens. How to fill all 12 libraries and 2 cinemas, spaces around abandoned lakes, playgrounds around apartment blocks and waste grounds with creative actions of Poznyaky residents? How to prove that art can change the country, and not only during revolutions? Where does the country start – from your yard, district, from the left or from the right bank of Dnipro river? Where is contemporary art born – in an artist's studio, in a laptop or on the fence? During the month of July, participants of *Holidays On the Block* worked in their own individual ways with these questions and stressed that art can be a reliable social instrument for hearing the others, to share values and to learn together as/how to change lives through common action.

Photos by Kateryna Yaremenko, 2014

Cherkasy Regional State Administration, January 24, 2014. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

Maidan and Beyond

Oleksiy Radynski

Part I

Integration, Oleksiy Radynski, Video still, HD video, 2014

1.

On November 21, 2013, Ukrainian journalist Mustafa Nayem posted a call on Facebook to gather at Maidan square in Kyiv, a common site for civic dissent: "If you really want to do something, don't just 'like' this post. Let's meet at 10:30 p.m. near the monument of independence in the middle of the Maidan."[1] Nayem called for the protest after the Ukrainian government announced earlier that day that it would not sign a trade agreement with the European Union, and would halt further integration with Europe. This may seem like an unusual reason to rise up. But what started as an apparently minor attempt by the tiny Ukrainian creative class to carry out another "social media revolution" rapidly developed into a gigantic people's uprising centred on Maidan square in Kyiv.[2] It lasted for several months and resulted in hundreds of casualties, the violent overthrow of the regime, and the subsequent reshaping of the world map.

Scholars of social media may interpret the Maidan uprising as a brilliant example of how Facebook helped people to start a revolution without resorting to a military

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1   See the original Facebook post (in Russian) here → https://www.facebook.com/Mefistoff/posts/1020117728026015
2   Maidan's official name is Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Ukrainian). However, the word "maidan" (square) acquired a special political meaning of its own, as described by Timothy Snyder: "Interestingly, the word maidan exists in Ukrainian but not in Russian, but even people speaking Russian use it because of its special implications. In origin it is just the Arabic word for "square," a public place. But a maidan now means in Ukrainian what the Greek word agora means in English: not just a marketplace where people happen to meet, but a place where they deliberately meet, precisely in order to deliberate, to speak, and to create a political society." See http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine/

coup or self-immolation. Yet it is all too easy to claim that everyone is Adbusters now. There is another, less enthusiastic view of the role of social media in world politics. For adherents of this view—such as Vladimir Putin and his ultra-nationalist supporters—the launching of the Maidan uprising was part of a covert Western plot to overthrow the reigning political regimes in the post-Soviet world. According to this view, just as the suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi was aimed directly at toppling not only Ben Ali of Tunisia but also Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Mustafa Nayem's Facebook post aimed ultimately to overthrow not just Victor Yanukovych of Ukraine, but also Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, and of course Vladimir Putin himself.

Disturbingly, the proponents of this theory are the same ones hosting Edward Snowden in exile and publishing Slavoj Žižek in Russian.[3] They also possess one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals. The theory is just one of the many components of Putin's propaganda machine, which has allowed him to plunge Russian society into an anti-Western, militaristic hysteria, while he simultaneously tries to persuade the Western public that the real fascist threat now comes from the decaying post-Maidan interim government in Kyiv—and not from Russia itself. Meanwhile, the Russian government has expropriated sovereign territory, endorsed pro-Russian irredentist terrorists in Ukraine, staged spoof referendums, racially segregated Crimean Tatars in occupied Crimea, and pursued an ethnicization of international politics based on Russia's alleged need to protect its apparently endangered *Volksgenossen* across the former USSR.

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3   In recent years, Europe Publishers, a publishing house with close ties to the Kremlin, has had a monopoly on translating Žižek's books into Russian.

The scale of conspiratorial thinking in Russia is now comparable to that of the US after 9/11.[4] But the problem with conspiracy theories is not the fact that they are false products of a paranoiac imagination, but rather that some conspiracies do exist. To reject this means to turn a blind eye to one of the many important tools of world politics. It thus seems crucial to avoid a simplistic opposition between middlebrow paranoiac thinking, and apparently enlightened reason unaware of its own blind spots. Thus, the first step toward a proper understanding of the Maidan movement in Ukraine is to replace the dominant question *What is behind this?* with the question *What is beyond this?*

2.

On November 30, 2013, Ukraine's elite riot police, the Berkut, attacked the pro-EU encampment in Maidan square, violently dispersing the protesters and seriously injuring dozens of them. This attack turned out to be a powerful jolt for the Maidan movement, which by that time was already in decline and would have probably ceased to exist in a matter of days if the police had not intervened. After the attack, what had started as a peaceful, liberal, pro-globalization student movement transformed into an all-encompassing uprising that grew increasingly violent and at times nationalist, all the while invoking "Western values" and EU symbols.

The Maidan movement has brought into stark relief not only the issue of Ukrainian identity, but also the issue of European identity. The irony is that the Maidan protests, the "biggest pro-EU demonstrations in history," were comparable in size to the anti-austerity, anti-EU protests that have shaken Southern Europe. It turns out that the same political structures and institutions that are loathed by many Europeans inside the EU, are genuinely praised and desired by numerous Europeans on its outside—simply because their lives are incomparably more miserable than the lives of the most aggrieved victims of European unification. Although Ukraine's courtship of Europe has looked like a tiresome attempt by an underclass admirer to charm an upper-class beloved by constantly praising her values and accomplishments, the West can nonetheless recognize in the Ukraine conflict many of its own antagonisms in a condensed, crystallized form.

For instance, the violent methods of the infamous Berkut forces are not unknown to riot police in Europe and the US, where dissenters experience comparable violence. This is not to suggest that the scale of police violence carried out in Ukraine is in any way similar to that carried out in countries beyond its Western border; in recent years, police aggression has become an everyday reality for many Ukrainians. The police apparatus has increasingly merged with the criminal underworld. Blackmail and forced bribery are the day-to-day business of the

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4   The presence at Maidan of the likes of John McCain and Victoria Nuland certainly contributed to this line of thinking in Russia and beyond—which doesn't mean these guests were warmly greeted or even noticed by the majority of the protesters.

police. The abduction and killing of detainees at police stations throughout the country is rarely investigated or even documented. But ironically, the Maidan protesters, who did not experience the joys of kettling or mass arrest, waved EU flags without knowing that in the EU itself, the response to their protest might have been only a shade less violent.

In his 2011 documentary *All Watched Over by the Machines of Loving Grace*, Adam Curtis gives an account of Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution—a popular protest against electoral fraud and an important precursor to the 2014 Maidan uprising.[5] According to Curtis, the Orange Revolution was part of the wave of newfangled uprisings—leaderless, self-regulating, largely organized via the internet—that puts them in the same context as the Occupy movement and the Indignados. For any viewer of the film who actually participated in the Orange Revolution, this account is very surprising. The Orange Revolution had strong, highly influential leaders. It was primarily organized by opposition parties and politicians. And it took place before social media started to have any significant impact on Ukrainian society. Curtis's reading of the Orange Revolution actually applies more to events in Kyiv in 2013–14, three years after his film was completed.

The Maidan uprising was largely spontaneous. It may have even come as a surprise to the official opposition, which during the protests lost its grip on the dissenting masses. Although the uprising did have some leaders, their authority and credibility was constantly questioned and subverted by various grassroots groups and movements. Participants in the Maidan uprising displayed an outstanding skill for self-organization, sustaining the huge protest camp in Kyiv's main square for three months amidst increasing legal repression, constant abduction, and violence from police. At the same time, there were some fairly frightening aspects to the Maidan uprising. In addition to providing many thousands of supporters with food, relative safety, and accommodations on a daily basis for several months, many participants in the Maidan uprising occupied their spare time with paramilitary training, national and religious rituals, and a hunt for internal enemies. As if to illustrate Adam Curtis's critique of self-organized grassroots movements, the Maidan protesters reproduced many of the hierarchies that existed outside their temporary autonomous zone in the middle of Kyiv. Although Maidan never did pick a leader, the movement's self-defense units, which grew increasingly paramilitary in response to mounting violence from police, started to resemble miniature totalitarian entities. These units—called "hundreds," referring to the number of participants—play out a kind of postmodern identity politics, since most of them were formed on the basis of regional, occupational, or symbolic affiliation: Maidan had its "Jewish hundred," "female hundred," "cyber-hundred," "Crimean hundred," and so on. However, not all identities were accepted by the Maidan crowd. From the very

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5   See: http://vimeo.com/73536828

beginning of the Maidan uprising, its intolerance of certain groups that tried to join the movement (most notably leftists, unionists, and feminists) put it at odds with its proclaimed devotion to "European values"—and in line with Russian authoritarianism and anti-pluralism. When Western audiences saw reports about militarized protesters wrapped in EU flags professing nationalist views, they experienced a kind of a cognitive dissonance. The immediate Western response was hypocritically colonial, proclaiming that Ukrainian protesters were not European enough to claim allegiance to European values. In reality, the juxtaposition of neo-Nazi symbols with EU flags in the streets of Kyiv exemplified a pan-European malady.

For years, the EU project was presented in Ukraine as the ultimate anti-communist endeavor, which was not necessarily the case in Europe itself. Since communism has long been gone, it became a convenient culprit for all post-Soviet disasters. It was the communists, then, and not the rampant post-Soviet neocapitalists, who were blamed for more than twenty years of post-1991 impoverishment and stagnation in Ukraine. Equating all stripes of totalitarianisms was another bad and widely accepted idea. By condemning communism as an evil equal to Nazism, Europe did the Eastern European far right a great favor: if communism is as bad as Nazism and there are still plenty of communists around, by that logic the existence of Nazis is equally justified. If the Soviet red stars still decorate governmental buildings and Lenin statues are still there, why can't the Nazis still paint swastikas and praise Hitler? If members of the racist and

xenophobic extreme right sit in nearly every one of the European parliaments, why are we constantly told that racism, xenophobia, and fascism contradict European values? The ideological composition of Ukraine's Maidan square mirrored Europe. That's why so many in the West turned away from that mirror in horror.

3.

On December 8, 2013, an angry crowd of Maidan protesters toppled a Lenin monument in central Kyiv. This act was absurdly greeted by liberals in Ukraine and abroad as a final cutting-of-ties with communism—almost a quarter century after it had already fallen. At the same time, skeptical voices claimed that this outburst of mass frustration directed at a historical statue revealed the total impotency of the movement. Soon, monuments to Lenin fell in many other Ukrainian cities. Anti-communist iconoclasm became an important feature of the first movement in twenty-first century Europe whose outcome at least vaguely resembled a revolution.

The site of the Maidan movement in Kyiv is intimately linked to revolutionary ideas and practices, and not only by the old Soviet name for Maidan square—*"the Square of the October Revolution."* The urban structure of central Kyiv itself, as envisaged by the Stalin-era city planners, was meant both to commemorate the event of the revolution, and to prevent its repetition by rendering expressions of dissent on the part of Soviet Ukrainians impossible. Maidan square and nearby Khreschatyk Street were designed to accommodate mass communist rallies and demonstrations—as long as these celebrated state policies. The Haussmannian proportions of the central squares and avenues were designed to make it easy for police forces to contain any public unrest.[6]

The monument to the October Revolution, erected in the late 1970s at what later came to be known as Maidan square, was an astute commentary on the relationship between the revolutionary masses and their revolutionary leaders. In this monument, the figure of Vladimir Lenin was surrounded by the four pillars of the October Revolution—the male worker, the female worker, the peasant, and the sailor, all represented in bronze. The figure of Lenin stood apart from the masses not only in size—it effectively dominated the composition—but also in medium: his likeness was made of red granite, suggesting that he belonged to a different, transcendent mode of being. More than twenty years after the October Revolution monument was removed during the Soviet Union's collapse, this spatial relationship between masses and leaders was re-projected, or reenacted on a different level, during the Maidan uprising. Although the Maidan movement did not have clear leaders or did not accept those who claimed their role, the representatives of the movement were clearly visible and constantly appealed to the assembled public via the large, mounted screens that broadcasted the revolution in real time from

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6   In the Guardian, Owen Hatherley had recently outlined the architectural implications of Kyiv's revolts: http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/apr/08/architects-revolt-Kyiv-maidan-square-ukraine-insurrection

the square. In this way, the relationship between the screen and the televised demonstrations actually reenacted a familiar, monumental representation of the revolution.

During the Soviet years, October Revolution Square was the site of so many pseudo- or counterrevolutionary rituals that it is hard to imagine it as a site for a genuine uprising. This cynical use of fake demonstrations led to the discrediting of the very idea of public assembly. In 1986, the square was the site of perhaps one of the most cynical uses of public assembly in history. Thousands of Kyivites marched through the square during the official Labor Day parade without knowing that five days earlier, a disaster had taken place in Chernobyl, about one hundred kilometers away. Soviet workers were made to march through the radiation-exposed streets for the sake of communist ritual. While the Labor Day ritual was not cancelled by atomic disaster, little could be done to prevent the Soviet society from its subsequent atomization.[7] Very soon, the Thatcherite formula "there is no such thing as society" was realized in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states in its most radical form.

The 1992 documentary *Levels of Democracy* (directed by Georgiy Shkliarevsky), which portrays various political assemblies that took place in and around Maidan square in the late 1980s and early 1990s, grasps the ultimate transformation of Ukrainian (and, more broadly, late-Soviet) society into a post-social assemblage of individuals overwhelmed by the need for personal survival. The film's opening scenes are filled with the joyous exultations of the masses, who for the first time had been granted the right to celebrate their national identity. In 1991, however, the situation changes drastically: the protesters stop caring about national identity, since they are suddenly faced with a collapsing economy and the urgency of physical survival. People still assemble—but instead of listening to performances of the Ukrainian national anthem, they now listen to a teenager singing Yegor Letov's songs on a guitar, or to a speech by a paranoid anti-Semite preacher. When freedom of assembly finally becomes a real constitutional right, practicing it is very difficult due to a sudden lack of basic goods.[8]

In the early 2000s, when the effects of economic collapse and social degradation started to wane, the Ukrainian people started to reclaim Maidan as a place for assembly and dissent. In the winter of 2000–2001, protesters set

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7   On May 1, 2013, artist Volodymyr Kuznetsov decided to reenact the notorious Labor Day march of 1986 as a gesture of remembrance. This march took place amidst the politically charged atmosphere of pre-Maidan Kyiv, with numerous groups, from the far Left to the far Right, trying to claim the Labor Day tradition as their own.

8   In the autumn of 1990, a group of students organized a hunger strike and a tent occupation of Maidan square, demanding, among other things, the resignation of the Ukrainian cabinet and more autonomy from Moscow. The authorities didn't crack down on the protesters, and after two weeks, their demands were met. The successful Occupy-style protest, which emerged victorious against the Soviet authorities twenty years before the actual Occupy movement was conceived, became a symbol of the Ukrainian transition from Soviet socialism to post-Soviet neocapitalism. But the blind spot of this transition was also exemplified in the hunger strike: the students starved voluntarily, while for many of their compatriots, hunger soon became a stark everyday reality.

up an encampment in the square and called for the resignation of Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, who was accused of ordering the murder of the opposition journalist Georgiy Gongadze. The encampment was dispersed, and in order to prevent any further use of Maidan square for public dissent, President Kuchma ordered that it be redeveloped as a consumer space—a shopping mall combined with a para-historical sculpture park. The new surface of Maidan, dotted with kitschy sculptures and glass domes linking it with the promising shopping mall underworld, was supposed to prevent large crowds of protesters from gathering there. Instead, the public was supposed to assemble in the shopping mall underneath for the sake of pure consumption. On the spot where the October Revolution monument previously stood, a notoriously ugly monument to the independence of Ukraine was erected in its place, its use of imperial Corinthian order absurdly reverting Ukraine's post-colonial imaginary. But Kuchma's plan for doing away with Maidan as a public space failed— probably because his corrupt tendencies led him to award the project to a group of wealthy businessmen who had no prior experience in the construction business. Kuchma's stated reason for redeveloping Maidan was the tenth anniversary of Ukrainian independence. Instead, the second decade of Ukraine's alleged "independence" saw a tremendous proliferation of protest activity at Maidan square.

4.

On February 20, 2014, I was standing on the fourteenth floor of the Ukraine Hotel overlooking Maidan square, watching the sniper massacre that was unfolding down in Instytutska Street. The preceding days and weeks had seen a tremendous escalation in violence both by the government and protesters. After the Ukrainian parliament passed a number of laws that severely restricted civic freedoms—rendering the Maidan movement largely illegal and threatening its participants with long-term prison sentences—the protest entered a decidedly violent stage. An attempted blockade of the government quarter, which was supposed to force the authorities to repeal the new draconian laws, resulted in a monthlong street war with the police, centered on a piece of land adjacent to the National Museum of Ukraine. The Maidan movement had acquired a "radical" iteration in addition to its "moderate" one, which found its physical form in the tent camp and protester-occupied buildings.

Autonomous and self-sufficient, most of the different protest mini-camps in Maidan square and the surrounding area became grassroots laboratories for ideas and practices of all stripes. In the Ukrainian House, a neomodernist palace that had previously housed the Museum of Lenin, a leftist student assembly tried to implement consensus decision-making and horizontal democracy among the frustrated, increasingly violent crowd. At the same time, the occupied city hall of Kyiv, several hundred meters away, became a breeding ground for the most bizarre kinds of far right ideologies. Between the two, in the encampment of tents that hardly protected their dwellers from the freezing temperatures outside, a hodgepodge of various resistance and partisan groups was boiling over.

After the first protesters died in clashes with Berkut forces outside the National Museum, a peaceful resolution seemed highly unlikely. The National Museum itself was taken hostage by the street war: the building, strategically crucial for access to the government quarter, was blocked by riot police. Berkut fighters made themselves at home under the museum's neoclassical porticus, taking a rest between its columns or observing the raging crowd from its stairs. The National Museum was living through a state of emergency, with the artworks hastily removed from the walls in preparation for the worst-case scenario. This worst-case scenario did finally arrive elsewhere, in the form of a sniper assault that killed up to a hundred desperate protesters as they tried to make their way to the government quarter through neighboring Instytutska Street. Ultimately, however, the regime was unable to pit the army against the people—it collapsed the next day. The protesters refused to remove their encampment and their barricades after the regime fell, claiming that its collapse was merely the start, and not the end, of a genuine revolution. The government buildings remained occupied, and some militias, claiming they needed more space for their activities, even took over numerous boutiques next to Maidan, which had previously been left untouched. Even the McDonald's at Maidan was shut down and turned into a clinic

for protesters suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Only the luxurious shopping mall underneath Maidan remained completely intact during the uprising.

Days after the regime's collapse, masked gunmen from right-wing militias began arriving at the National Museum, still shut down and deserted. The gunmen brought artworks discovered at the private suburban residence of the toppled president, who was notorious for kleptocracy and bad taste. The artifacts were to be stored in the museum halls, still empty after a monthlong siege. Meanwhile, some of the protest tools invented by the Maidan demonstrators (like the famous catapult used in clashes with riot police) were claimed by museum workers as artworks and acquired for the collection. If classical revolutions turned royal palaces into museums, the Maidan uprising started to become a museum object before it was even over. Its second phase—the counterrevolution—was yet to come.

Part II: The Cacophony of Donbas

1.
On February 22, 2014, the activists of the Maidan movement seized the suburban residence of ousted Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovych, who had fled Kyiv the previous day. Yanukovych's residence, Mezhyhirya, was notorious long before the fall of the regime for the extent of its megalomaniac luxury. Nevertheless, the occupiers were utterly shocked by the discoveries they made inside. Stocked with a tremendous amount of artwork—icons, portraits, and pieces of decorative art— Mezhyhirya resembled a bizarre museum of looted treasures. These works turned out to be mere leftovers from Yanukovych's art collection; it soon became clear that the president had begun evacuating his possessions at least a couple of days before he himself fled.[9] In any case, the activists and cultural workers who discovered the collection found it significant enough to be taken to the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

When the Maidan militiamen along with the cultural activists brought the Mezhyhirya treasures to the National Museum in Kyiv, amidst the smoking ruins of the barricades that had surrounded the museum's premises for more than a month of street battles, the museum's staff was initially puzzled. The content of the donation seemed dubious at best—despite the fact that a painting ascribed to Jan Bruegel the Younger was also there. What the protesters perceived as sublime works of art turned out to be a random collection of luxurious items, most of which were actually gifts presented to the former president by his cronies. Now these

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9   CCTV footage from Mezhyhirya proves that Yanukovych was already packing his bags during the negotiations on the resolution of the Ukraine crisis that he held with the French, German, and Polish foreign ministers on February 20– 21, 2014. Some suggested that Yanukovych had to flee Kyiv because the agreement arranged by the international negotiators (which included limitations on presidential power and early elections) was broken by the opposition. But Mezhyhirya's evidence proves that Yanukovych was about to flee anyway, with the intention of creating a pretext to undermine the agreement because of alleged security concerns.

View of the "Codex of Mezhyhiria," The National Art Museum, Ukraine. Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka

gifts were filling the empty rooms of the National Museum—all artworks had been evacuated when the fierce street fighting with the riot police began. Meanwhile, the Mezhyhirya residence itself was opened to visitors, who flooded its enormous territory in the thousands, exemplifying a bourgeois interest in the wellbeing of the upper classes rather than a spirit of revolutionary destruction. The attitude of Ukrainian revolutionaries towards the palace of an ousted autocrat differed drastically from their French and Soviet counterparts. In Paris and Saint Petersburg, revolutions gave birth to public museums. In Kyiv, the revolution's outcome was an art show.

Soon after the fall of the regime, the Yanukovych collection being stored in the National Museum's empty halls was turned into an exhibition. The show was organized with the assistance of a notorious nationalist militia of Maidan called the Right Sector (we will hear more of them later).[10] A note accompanying the show said that the objects presented there had no artistic merit, and that they were exhibited as mere evidence of an evil dictator's taste. The curatorial statement was full of snobbish, elitist contempt for the "tasteless" political class—supposedly personified by the former president—and seemingly directed towards Yanukovych's lower-class background.[11] But in fact, unconsciously, the exhibition represented the

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10 See the National Museum's website: http://namu.Kyiv.ua/en/exhibitions/active/view.html&eid=234
11 See: http://artukraine.com.ua/eng/a/inventory-of-a-dictator/#.U5sSmxagHKG

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View of the "Codex of Mezhyhiria," The National Art Museum, Ukraine. Photo by Maxim Belousov

troubled imagination of a whole society rather than that of a particular kleptocrat. None of the works shown at the exhibition were acquired by Yanukovych himself. Rather, it was the others—his business partners, party comrades, occasional guests, and relatives—who chose these objects based on their own assumptions about his preferences and tastes. The complex interplay of projections of desire behind the Yanukovych collection was now being displayed publicly.

At the heart of this interplay was an incredible story of social mobility exemplified in Yanukovych himself—a story that could be dubbed the Ukrainian Dream. His was a story of an orphan raised in an economically depressed, crime-ridden area, who was jailed twice as a youngster for hooliganism and robbery, emerged during the turbulent post-Soviet transition as a mafia boss, ran for president, stole the vote, and was removed from power by the "color revolution" against this electoral fraud. He then won the next presidential election, putting his country on the brink of economic collapse and civil war during the four years of his autocratic rule. His lifestyle of excessive luxury was not just the perverse obverse of the poverty and denigration that most of his compatriots live through. It also represented the roots of the bizarre political regime of post-Soviet oligarchy: unprecedented, and largely arbitrary, social advancement based on the ultimate looting of assets left behind by the Soviet state. Most of those who donated to the Yanukovych collection were of course the successful beneficiaries of this kind

Detail of a Map of Donbas region, on view at the "Codex of Mezhyhiria," The National Art Museum, Ukraine. Photo by Maxim Belousov

of advance—while most of the audience that flooded the National Museum, the passive spectators of this luxurious world, were its victims.

One of the objects presented at this exhibition was a late-nineteenth-century map of Donbas, an impoverished coal-mining region from which the ousted president hailed. It was also home to a vast majority of the president's clan, which had built its fortunes and political capital through the rampant privatization and exploitation of the region's numerous industrial assets. By the time the Yanukovych exhibition opened in the museum in late April, large swaths of territory represented on that map of Donbas were engulfed in armed civil conflict—one of the outcomes of the Maidan revolt in Kyiv. This war was of course inspired by the clash of financial interests, but justified solely by the ghosts of the past.

2.

In 1930, Dziga Vertov completed *Enthusiasm (Symphony of Donbas)*, a documentary film praising the labor of Donbas coal miners during the first Five Year Plan in the USSR. One of the film's episodes shows a fierce anticlerical campaign in Donbas, with Soviet stars replacing Orthodox crosses on the tops of churches, and with churches themselves being turned into museums and workers' clubs. In one of the shots, a procession of atheists removes the treasures found at a church, just like the Maidan activists would carry away the possessions of Yanukovych from his residence.

In spring 2014, a comparable outburst of iconoclasm took place in Donbas, this time directed at the institutions of state rather than the church. Some groups in Donbas did not accept the overthrow of the regime of their fellow Donbasian, despite the fact that their region suffered from his corrupt rule no less than any other. As a result of total impoverishment under Ukrainian authority and a massive Russian propaganda campaign, an active and radicalized minority decided that joining the Russian Federation would be a good solution for Donbas, and a violent protest campaign was launched. The furious crowds of Donbas dwellers (with the substantial support of mercenaries from neighboring Russia) stormed city halls, security services, police stations, and other state institutions, tearing down Ukrainian flags, tridents, and other governmental symbols, and replacing them with Russian tricolors—or with the flag of a self-proclaimed People's Republic of Donetsk.

Symphony of Donbas, Dziga Vertov, Film still of a passage portraying anti-clerical campaign underway in Donbas, 1930

In between these two waves of iconoclasm lies the fascinating history of a region that until recently was probably one of the most ignored and depressing places on earth, despite the fact (or maybe precisely because of the fact) that it had served as a backbone for the Soviet project from the 1930s until its inglorious end—both in industrial and cultural terms. At the heart of this project were the ideals of labor and proletarian identity—and the Donbas region was one of their most highly promoted representatives.

Symphony of Donbas marks one of the first cinematic representations of shock labor—an ideology and practice of superproductive physical work. Shock labor was supposed to transcend the capacities of the human body and contribute to the accelerated industrialization of the Soviet Union—and thus to the creation

Symphony of Donbas, Dziga Vertov, Film still, 1930

of a Communist society. The Donbas region became a breeding ground for shock workers—a new kind of laborer, ready for endless, voluntary, sacrificial self-exploitation that had to replace the outdated, capitalist modes of exploitation based on market relations. In the mid-1930s, Donbas gave birth to the Stakhanovite movement, a Soviet application of Taylorism named after Aleksey Stakhanov, who had reportedly mined 227 tons of coal in a single shift. But in the postwar Soviet Union, the ecstatic ideology of acceleration from the Stalinist era was replaced by an all-encompassing stagnation. Time in Donbas went by slower and slower until the clock of progress finally froze for good in the early 1990s, when the state largely shut down the region's factories and mines and sold them off to new private owners for nearly nothing. The sites of the shock workers' records of the 1930s were transformed into places of sacrificial self-exploitation of an entirely different kind: illegal, mostly manual work in the abandoned mines controlled by the mafia, which provided yesterday's labor heroes with the most miserable means of existence.[12] Meanwhile, the idea of shock labor was outsourced and implemented elsewhere, in the ever-accelerating cognitive factories of digital turbocapitalism.

In *Symphony of Donbas*, Vertov envisages the conflation of shock work and cognitive labor, and reveals that the point where the two meet is propaganda. In fact, the film itself was often dismissed as mere propaganda, while it actually explores and transcends the limits of propaganda by laying its device bare. The film opens with an image of a young woman listening to the titular *Symphony of Donbas*—a radio programme about the fight for communism in the region. Shots of the woman wearing headphones are intercut with documentary shots of workers in Donbas, which by way of parallel montage are rendered her "internal cinema," in other words, emerging from her imagination. The documentary nature of those labor scenes is thus subverted, and the border between reality and fiction becomes blurred. Vertov's montage allows us to perceive political reality as an internalized experience, and turns our subjectivities into small propaganda machines of their own.

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12 See the first episode of *Workingman's Death* (2005) by Michael Glawogger.

Just as Dziga Vertov's experiments were easily appropriated by the Soviet media machine (devoid of their self-reflexive dimension, of course), this machine itself was then swallowed by the ideologues of post-Soviet Russia. To be sure, various means of conflating reality and fiction are part of the everyday job of mass media virtually everywhere, also in the demoliberal societies of the West. What differs in the current Kremlin-backed propaganda machine is that for more than a decade it has not been limited by any democratic procedures of influence and control.[13] Postmodern ideas of reality as a mere collection of narratives were never realized as successfully as in Russia. The media picture can be assembled out of disparate fragments of reality completely voluntarily, given the fact that there is no credible possibility for publicly verifying the media's claims.

Exhibition view at the Museum of Great Patriotic War, Donetsk, 2012

Since the Maidan movement began, the Kremlin-backed media has launched a total information war against political dissent in Ukraine. This campaign has proven especially successful in Donbas, a region with strong economic and historical ties to Russia, and where the Russian media is still dominant. If Dziga Vertov's art was supposed to engage the viewer in intensive physical work via mobilization at an immediate motoric level, the Russian media was able to push the population of Donbas into a kind of ideological shock labor. But the major tool of mobilization is no longer an idea of a bright distant future. On the contrary, the historical memory of the Soviet past became a force behind the second phase of the Maidan revolt— its counterrevolution, dubbed the Anti-Maidan, which took the form of an armed uprising in Donbas.

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13 Despite all the shortcomings of representative democracy, it is ironic to see its mechanisms being despised in the West by those who still possess them, while being ridiculed by authoritarians in Russia who have effectively privatized the right to be elected. It's obviously a trap to regard the Russian crackdown on representative democracy as an argument in its favor; according to this view, Western representative democracy is the only "still democratic" option available. But it's far more dangerous to consider the Putinist system as a "counter-imperialist" alternative that could provide opportunities for reclaiming democracy.

3.

On May 9, 2014, celebrated as a Victory Day, a group of unidentified gunmen attacked the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Donetsk, stealing the WWII-era arms that were on display in the museum's exhibition.[14] The gunmen called themselves the Home Guard of a self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and told the museum staff that the seized weapons would be used in their fight against the alleged fascists that are attacking their land, just as they did over seventy years ago. It may sound like the most bizarre case in the history of museum heists, but this episode is probably the best summary of the ideological confrontation induced by Kremlin-backed television in its Donbas audience. Devoid of any vision of the future, this confrontation was focused on the battles of the past that were to be restarted today, as if for over seven decades they were simply on pause and could now be launched again by pressing the "play" button on the YouTube channel of Russia Today. Now, the glorious war of the Soviets against the fascists had to be fought again. This time, fellow Ukrainians who happened to be the followers of the Western-backed government in Kyiv impersonated the fascists. How could this twist ever take place?

The specter of fascism has been haunting Eastern Europe at least since the collapse of USSR. There were plenty of historical parallels that justified the fears of a post-Soviet fascist threat. In the early 1990s, the West had subjected the new post-Soviet states to economic and cultural humiliation comparable to that of the Weimar Republic after WWI. Western politicians and entrepreneurs did not only want to profit from what they perceived as their victory over USSR in the Cold War. It seems that the ultimate (albeit unconscious) goal of the "transition" from the Soviet system to post-Soviet neocapitalism was to punish the societies of the former USSR for their sin of adhering to Communist ideology. This sin had to be burnt out of their minds by means of savage shock therapy and other neoliberal measures, implemented in the post-Soviet countries more radically than anywhere in Europe. The West did avoid the mistake of Versailles when dealing with Germany after WWII, but then it repeated the same mistake when dealing with the leftovers of USSR after the Cold War. As a result of economic impoverishment and political denigration by the victorious first world, a perfect ground for extreme revanchist nationalism was created in a formerly second-world region that quickly joined the ranks of the third.

In Russia, this nationalism is peculiar because it justifies itself on the basis of the Soviet project, which is still perceived as leftist and antifascist, despite its nearly total absorption into the symbolic world of the far right. Russia's apparent greatness was thus based upon its victory over the Nazis, claimed to be a victory of the

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14 "The Great Patriotic War" is the name given to WWII in the Soviet Union. According to Soviet history, the Great Patriotic War started in 1941, with the German attack on the USSR, rather than in 1939, with the division of Poland. (In this way, Soviet historiography tries to conceal the fact that the USSR made a deal with the German Nazis before the start of WWII to divide Poland.)

Symphony of Donbas, Dziga Vertov, Film still, 1930

Russian army rather than Soviet one, which was actually composed of Belorussians, Georgians, Kazakhs, Tatars, Ukrainians, and many others who fought alongside Russians. Meanwhile, some Ukrainians fought against the Red Army—and this was a great pretext to launch a reenactment of a half-century-old feud.

During the last decade, there was a tremendous process of excavating the ghosts of the past on both sides of the Russian-Ukrainian border. While the myth of the Great Patriotic War was being resurrected in Russia, in Ukraine a right-wing government put in power by the Orange Revolution began glorifying the nationalists who fought both the Red Army and the Nazis, despite being one-time Nazi collaborators. The historical stupidity of the Ukrainian government provided the Kremlin propaganda machine with an opportunity to warn its audiences of the Nazi threat coming from Ukraine, while the Russian authorities were destroying the remnants of freedom of speech in their country, outlawing public dissent, supporting far-right youth organizations, persecuting ethnic minorities and labor migrants, and banning "homosexual propaganda."

If there is such thing as "politics of memory," it is exactly what Donbas saw in spring 2014, when the pretext to pit citizens against each other did not stem from ethnic, religious, or social issues, but from conflicting (and equally mistaken) views of the past. Kremlin-backed media took advantage of the presence of some far-right groups at Maidan and painted all of the antigovernment protests in Ukraine as a Western-backed neo-Nazi coup. When enough people in eastern Ukraine believed this story, they were told that Ukrainian Nazis were coming to eliminate

Russian-speakers with the weapons they got from NATO, so the locals should arm themselves. In some places, police stations were seized with the help of Russian mercenaries, and the armed rebellion against the Ukrainian state began. When the army sent troops to disarm the separatists, the initial fairy tale of "Nazis coming back to eliminate us" started to fulfil itself in the minds of those involved.

There's a certain irony in the fact that the resistance in Donbas still claims to be somehow antifascist, since from the very beginning many of its participants openly identified themselves as sympathizers of the Russian far right. The rule of the Donetsk People's Republic in Sloviansk, the first town taken over by the separatists, started with an attack on the local Roma population. In the so-called constitution of the Donetsk People's Republic, abortions are banned, and the "leading and dominating faith" is the orthodox Christianity of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Donetsk People's Republic actually seems like an attempt to reverse time and undo the anti-obscurantist iconoclasm captured in Donbas by Vertov. It's no surprise that the Donbas war immediately became a magnet for history lovers and military geeks of all stripes. The so-called leader of the Home Guard of the Donetsk People's Republic, proven to be an officer from the Russian secret services, is actually famous as a participant in the historical reenactment movement in Russia, known for his love of monarchy. He had been an active participant in numerous historical reconstructions of the Russian Civil War before he actually became a military commander in real life. It seems that history no longer repeats itself as farce. It repeats itself as historical reenactment.

P.S.

In March 2014, weeks before heavy fighting started in the Donbas region between the Ukrainian army and local separatists joined by mercenaries from Russia, I went to a small Donbas town known for its huge salt mine, which now serves as an army weapons warehouse. The entrance to the mine was surrounded by an Anti-Maidan protest camp opposing the possible transport of weapons from the mine, weapons that allegedly could be used by the army against the protesters in Donbas. Most of the weapons stored in the mine were said to date back to WWII, although they still seem to be fit for fighting. Everyone I talked to in the camp (like nearly all the dissenters in Donbas) was sure that the government wanted to hand over these weapons to an obscure post-Maidan militia called the Right Sector. Why them? From the very beginning of the Maidan movement, this newly founded, loose coalition of marginal far-right sects became the darling of each and every Kremlin-backed media outlet, which reported on every one of the group's provocative moves. The group thus became a nightmare for many Eastern Ukrainians opposed to Maidan and loyal to Russian TV. Its actual role in Ukrainian politics is very hard to determine, because it hardly exists anywhere outside these media reports. The group boasts from two to three hundred members, and its candidate in the

presidential election of 2014 won around 1 percent of the vote.[15] Social media analysts said that its swift rise in popularity during the Maidan uprising bore clear signs of very professional web promotion. When standing at a checkpoint together with some pro-Russian activists who were staring into the misty Donbas steppe, waiting for the armed units of the Right Sector to arrive, I asked myself what those much-feared warmongers were doing at that time. Maybe they were actually preparing for an exhibition at the National Art Museum of Ukraine?

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15 In an outstanding media prank on the day of the presidential election in Ukraine, Russian state TV announced that the Right Sector's candidate was actually winning the election, with 37 per cent of the vote. See (in Russian): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkTvACx5LaM

Chekhov Theatre, Chisinau, 2012. Photo by Ekaterina Trohina

SPACES: Chisinau

Bucuresti str., Chisinau, 2010. Photo by Vladimir Us

Chisinau Civic Center

Vladimir Us

Considering art as an autonomously performed act that develops in relation to social, economic and political transformations in society, it is important to ask ourselves the following: How has the role of art evolved during the last two decades, and has it gained any new societal functions since a new, neoliberal model resulting from economic globalization replaced authoritarian regimes in our region? How do artists, curators, cultural workers and other professional groups see themselves involved in these changes?

In the Soviet Union, art was largely used as a propaganda tool, but it was also perceived as a powerful potential tool of criticism, a fact which motivated the state to regulate it via a system of creative unions, cultural institutions, state-commissioned works and censorship – by clearly outlining its possible actions in accordance with the ideology of the only party. Important question include whether art has preserved its critical potential today, two decades later, and whether artists are able to offer any alternatives to a newly-established economic and social order which still produces massive inequalities.

How can we make – through art, research, urban planning, architecture, institutional creativity and activism – the public spaces of our cities more welcoming, open and democratic? How can we create and promote local responses to larger systematic

inequalities, such as the inclusion of Chisinau residents (especially the social groups who are frequently excluded from such discussions) in municipal decisions regarding public spaces? Finally, how could can we build resistance in the face of economic and political pressures that create so much inequality, and how can we strengthen the positions of the civil society members in their relation to those in power?

Especially with ongoing debates about the radical transformations of Chisinau's public spaces in a period of transition – degradation, privatization, commercialization, politicization – the quality, accessibility, openness and democratization of public space are particularly crucial topics. Moreover, this is not just a local issue; similar processes are taking place and acquiring regional significance in Tbilisi, Yerevan, Kyiv and other cities.

During the last two decades, public spaces (parks, cultural and sports infrastructures, recreational areas, playgrounds, courtyards of residential buildings, etc.) in urban areas of former Socialist countries have undergone degradation, non-transparent privatization and commercialization. Additionally, many of their public functions have been replaced with profit-making activities. One major consequence of these transformations has been the constant and permanent exclusion of certain social groups from the use of

public spaces. Another is that citizens have been deprived of their right to participate in decision-making processes regarding these spaces.

The Chisinau Civic Center series of projects and events calls into question the present situation of public spaces. It opens a dialogue on the issue of the spaces during a period of transition, on common goods and their role in community development. It also proposes new models for governing these spaces and goods, as well as forms of institutional innovation, through which we can protect or democratize them.

Open Air Cinema

The project consisted of a two-week residency for several collectives of architects and focused on two different spaces in Chisinau: a public square at Bucuresti str. 68 (that in the meantime had become a parking lot) and an abandoned fountain in front of Chekhov Theatre, next to a luxury hotel and a shopping mall. Both spaces are evidence of the state's failure to maintain public spaces in the city and provide the necessary public services (lighting, security for pedestrians, and proper clean-up, among others).

In the square there was also the issue of illegally parked cars in front of the Cultural Department of Chisinau.

Several art collectives that used Flat Space (an open structure installed in the square in 2009 that serves as a platform for artistic events) gradually expanded their activities and moved beyond the walls of Flat Space into the rest of the square, reclaiming it for cultural action. They organized exhibitions, poetry readings, screenings, concerts, artistic interventions and campaigns there. To support the needs of the artistic community, they designed an open-air cinema as an extension of Flat Space, increasing its surface area. This not only blocked one of the automobile accesses to the informal parking lot, but also accommodated a diverse public who came for the film screenings, flea markets, sports and other activities organized within the period of the residency.

During the same time, a special film programme called *Demolition* was screened on one of the exterior walls of the Chekhov Theatre, facing the Leogrand Hotel ("Leopress" SRL), which was responsible for the demolition of an architectural monument next to it in 2011. To create seating, participants adapted an abandoned fountain in front of the Chekhov Theatre; they cleaned and repainted it, as well as created a staircase access into the fountain. As a result, the fountain acquired a new meaning and public function, transformed from a water fixture into an open-air cinema.

Beyond the Red Lines

One of the issues raised by the artistic and architecture community in Chisinau was the construction of Cantemir Boulevard. The boulevard was designed in the 1970s by Soviet architects, and was only partially built, but still remains on the official Chisinau General Urban Plan, two decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Moldova's independence. To address this issue, a group of artists, architects and researchers participated in a residency programme and conference to share similar experiences that could enrich their understanding of this situation and reveal new forms of criticism and protest. This collaboration turned into a series of participatory art works involving Chisinau inhabitants. Together they opened new public spaces for culture and civic engagement in the areas where Cantemir Boulevard had been planned to be built.

The project challenged the way in which urban plans which were designed during an authoritarian regime in the past are, half a century later, taken for granted and not even discussed publicly, thus hindering citizens' participation in the process of urban planning.

People's Park

Beyond the consequences of the major infrastructural projects and their effects on the life of the city, the curatorial team was concerned for the fate of some smaller spaces that can be found in the historical centre. The third part of the *Chisinau Civic Center* programme focused mainly on the park located at the intersection of Sf. Andrei and Ivan Zaikin streets. The park, one of the few green spaces from the historical area, is situated at the edge of the old centre, once known as one of the most dangerous districts. Characterized by abandonment and decay, it has threatened to disappear into the shadow of real estate interests. Once rehabilitated, the park could fulfil some vital needs such as green areas for leisure and communal activities of the city's residents, including children and parents, youth and elderly people.

The programme put a strong emphasis on involving the residents of Chisinau, especially the ones who lived nearest to the area. Through their interactions, they settled on a common vision for the park as a public spot accessible and open to all.

The activities, developed in collaboration with the SPACES partners, encouraged the citizens involved in cultural, urban and social work to look back at their work through such

tools as criticism and protest – to think of the public role that art could have in post-Soviet societies. The project also examined the potential of art to bring about change by organizing participatory art events in Chisinau, making use of available public spaces.

The public programme included exhibitions; residency programmes for artists and architects that resulted in a series of artistic interventions in Chisinau; study visits by groups of experts; followed by international and regional conferences for scholars, activists, journalists and local authorities; city tours; film and video screenings; workshops; awareness-raising campaigns; presentations; community work and picnics and social gatherings. All three programmes were inspired by and are based on the results of the Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau workshop that took place in July 2012 (http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartografiere/). The programmes, in turn, stimulated a series of artistic interventions and sociological research by artists, curators, architects, sociologists, historians and other professionals interested in urban development. They explored and intervened in the existing context of the inequitable distribution of spaces and resources that characterize post-Soviet states.

Participants: Projects, workshops and events by Valeria Barbas, Ludmila Bouros, Maxim Cuzmenco, Ghenadie Popescu, Levente Polyak, Stefan Rusu, Teatru Spalatorie (DJ Codec & VJ Vaki), Vitalie Sprinceana, Igor Tyschenko.

Residency programme: 4AM (Jan Svobodova, Šárka Svobodová, Jaroslav Sedlák), Paula Durinova, Karl Hallberg, Public Pedestal (Jana Kapelova and Michal Moravčik), Ewa Rudnicka, Tom Russotti, *studioBASAR* (Cristi Borcan, Tudor Elian, Ana-Maria Toni, Alexandra Taranu), Stefan Tiron.

Conference participants: Ruben Arevshatyan, Levan Asabashvili, Oleg Brega, Sonja Damchevska, Heidi Dumreicher, Bettina Kolb, Joanna Erbel, Hamlet Melkumyan-Alexanyan, Anna Khvyl, Dmitrii Kavruk, Saimir Kristo, Arevik Martirosyan, Levente Polyak, Stefan Rusu, Vitalie Sprinceana, Ion Stefanita, Mikheil Svanidze, Igor Tyschenko, Vitalie Voznoi.

Contributions: Ina Borozan, Alexei Dimitrov, Diana Draganova, Elka, Antoine Fourmy, Irina Grabovan, Andrei Hohlov, Irina Iachim, Dmitrii Kavruk, Gaelle Mege, Alexandru Munteanu, Corina Rezneac, Asta Slapikaite, Ion Ungureanu, Andrei Vatamaniuc, Stanislav Vrednik, Artiom Zavadovschi, Vlad Zderciuc.

The project was inspired by the results obtained during the Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau workshop (July 2012) coordinated by Eugen Panescu.

Open Air Cinema

August 18–31, 2012, Chisinau

Mapping of public space in Chisinau, Casa Zemstvei Guberniale, 2012

Open Air Cinema at Flat Space - Building an extension, Bucuresti str. 68, 2012

International Football Competition at Flat Space, B68 - free zone/art space, 2012

A Cleaner City - Cleaning the abandoned pool in front of Chekhov Theatre, 2012

Creating access to the abandoned pool in front of Chekhov Theatre, 2012

Open Air Cinema – Demolition, International Screening Programme, abandoned pool in front of Chekhov Theatre, 2012

Public space in post-socialism - Reading Group with Vitalie Sprinceana, Casa Zemstvei Guberniale, 2012

Photos by Ekaterina Trohina and Vladimir Us

Beyond the Red Lines

August 26–September 22, 2013, Chisinau

Moldova holders, Jaroslav Sedlák, Flat Space, 2013

Zea Mays next to Flat Space, Ghenadie Popescu, B68 - free zone/art space, 2013

If you don't need it, Michal Moravčik and Jana Kapelova, Public Pedestal, 2013

Intersections, Karl Hallberg, Triangle 2, 2013

People's Park

August 11–September 6, 2014, Chisinau

Picnic, studioBASAR, Triangle 3, 2014

Defensive pOm, Angela Candu / Pedestrian crossing, Maxim Cuzmenco and Tatiana Miron, Triangle 3, 2014

Workshops with Children, Dusan Dobias and Ludmila Bouros, Triangle 3, 2014

In the end you have to work for us, Hannes Zebedin, Triangle 3, 2014

The Scene in the Park, studioBASAR, Triangle 3, 2014

The Park Fanfare, Anatolie Cazacu and the inhabitants,
Triangle 3, 2014

Aqua-park, URBalance, Triangle 3, 2014

Aqua-park. Planting Flowers Activity, URBalance,
Triangle 3, 2014

When I start to express myself – the conversation begins,
Alexandra Sosnicova, Serghei Golovnea, Ina Falikova,
Roman Solianyk and Contact Improvisation Group,
Triangle 3, 2014

Aqua-park. The Cascade, URBalance and Ludmila Bouros,
Triangle 3, 2014

Former cinema Iskra, Chisinau, 2011. Photo by Vladimir Us

The City Belongs to Everybody: Claiming Public Spaces in Chisinau

Vitalie Sprinceana

At the Chisinau City Council meeting on September 5, 2013, a scandalous, unusual, informal alliance sprang up between representatives of the Liberal Party (PL, the party of the present mayor Dorin Chirtoaca) and those of the Communist Party (PCRM). Together they decided to allow allotments, green areas, and other city property to the representatives of these parties and certain affiliated groups.[1] The Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) boycotted the meeting, accusing the PL and the PCRM of making dubious deals under the table to divide city grounds and spaces between themselves.[2] The mayor of Chisinau, in turn, accused the PLDM party of theft of public property, ineffective management, and dubious administration of the Chisinau Airport and the Economy Bank.[3] These accusations aroused suspicion from a small group of civil society members, but their misgivings came too late and had no bearing on the decisions already adopted by the local administration.

This anecdote illustrates an all-too-familiar scene in current post-Soviet Moldovan politics, including the arbitrariness of ideological platforms; the importance of economic interest over slogans and party rhetoric; and the weakness of civil society and activist groups. Such groups are constantly unable to voice criticisms, and are thereby excluded from the decision-making process, and condemned for their supposedly reactive attitudes.

In short, the political landscape of Chisinau comprises three groups: an administration that acts mostly on behalf of business interests, scattered groups of activists, and the mostly passive citizens.

The paradigm has remained mostly unchanged during the last 20 years. Chisinau, along with other parts of the country, did not previously witness massive urban protests that targeted the city and its problems. The tensest moments of recent Moldavian history were related to more general themes of national identity (1989), social policies (2000), and elections and democracy on a national level (April 2009).

1   http://unimedia.info/stiri/doc-edina-CMC-loc-pentru-tranzaii-frauduloase-65204.html
2   http://www.inprofunzime.md/stiri/politic/pldm-a-boicotat-sedinta-consiliului-municipal-pl-si-pcrm-au-facut.html
3   https://www.adevarul.ro/moldova/politica/haos-sedinta-cmc-nu-vorba-despre-alianta-pldm-trebui-vina-munca-nu-arunce-acuzatii-1_52286987c7b855ff564b98ab/index.html

Major problems of the city – the urban public space, the policies of discrimination and exclusion within the urban space, urban citizenship, the right to the city, decision-making transparency in local public administration – have been ignored, either pushed to the edge of the public discourse or, in the best case, merely assimilated into larger political debates such as that of Communism versus democracy (in the 2003 election campaign for local administration). The result of this continued disregard can be attributed to the deplorable state of public space in Chisinau. Within the last 20 years, the city has suffered a series of transformations that have had detrimental consequences:

- Existing public spaces (parks, sport and cultural infrastructures, recreational areas, courtyards near blocks and playgrounds, etc.) degraded due to lax administration of the spaces by local authorities.
- The privatization/fencing of public property resulted in the transformation of public spaces (parks, green areas, etc.) into private spaces where hotels, restaurants, and other commercial buildings were erected.
- A rise in the number of cars led to a daily overload of traffic in the city center (the amount of daily traffic in Chisinau has increased several times within the past 20 years). The absence of available parking spaces has also turned most of the sidewalks and the areas between blocks and roads into parking areas, thereby limiting space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Intense migration from rural to urban areas and subsequent need for residential buildings has resulted in the explosion of the construction industry. Between 2005 and 2010 over 10,000 new apartments were built in Chisinau,[4] resulting in the deforestation of green areas, reduction of spaces between blocks, and destruction of playgrounds and recreational areas.
- The commercialization of public spaces resulted in an explosion of street advertising and vendors (of newspapers, baked goods, cigarettes, alcohol, clothing, fast food, kvas and other refreshments, etc.).
- The public/social activities (recreation, socialization, rest, artistic activity) of public spaces have been replaced with profit-making entities (parks, public toilets, water sources, etc.). The city has thus not only lost public spaces for social activities, but also become devoid of free public toilets and sources of drinking water.
- Citizens have been continuously excluded from decision-making processes concerning urban policies, city development, local project financing, and more.
- The city center has been taken over by large commercial projects such as those of Sun City (a mall), Skytower (an office building), the Nobil Hotel, and Grand Plaza (a residential complex).
- The historic city center and its existing social structure have been destroyed. Within the past 17 years, of 977 architectural sites that formed the center, 78 (nearly 10%) have been completely demolished, and another 155 have

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4   Construction in the Republic of Moldova. National Statistics Bureau, Chisinau, 2011, p. 58
     (http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Costructii/2011/Constructii_2011.pdf).

undergone reconstructions that significantly altered their uniqueness and authenticity.[5]

- Certain political and religious groups took over public spaces in a way that excluded others (religious minorities, economically disadvantaged groups, etc.) from use of those spaces. Police-enforced political control of the spaces contributed to the marginalization and exclusion of groups that do not fit into the image of a "decent" city, such as homeless people, beggars, prostitutes, people with alcohol or drug addictions, etc.

Such transformations are not unique to Chisinau. Most post-Socialist cities have undergone similar processes related to the political-economic context.[6] They have encountered accelerated reforms for the introduction of the market economy, the de-industrialisation of urban economies and the growth of the services sector, the rise of consumption, the gradual dismantlement of the social state, the rise of social inequality, political and religious populism, and the consolidation of some political-economic oligarchies on local and national levels.

Claiming Public Spaces in Chisinau: Methodological Introduction

This article intends to describe several urban activism movements from Chisinau that have differed in vision, strategies, ethnic and political compositions, messages, and symbols. These movements are rather recent, having taken place in the last two to three years, although some of the organizations became active much earlier. The Oberliht Association, for example, a participant in the protest at Europe Square, has been active in the public space of Chisinau since early 2000.

My perspective is two-fold, as both an activist and a sociologist. Therefore this text will speak in two voices that may sometimes overlap but in other cases will speak distinctly. As a sociologist I will attempt to anchor my observations, facts, and activities in the context of contemporary social theory. My activist perspective will be influenced more personally, as I participated directly in various ways (in the organization of the activities, dissemination of materials, etc.). I fit this methodology within the tradition of public sociology, inaugurated by Michael Burawoy:[7] I understand my approach not only as one of theoretical reflection upon social processes, but also as a presentation of one type of local activism that might be connected to other types of activism, and as a development of some recommendations which might facilitate other urban movements.

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5   The Black Book of the Cultural Patrimony of Chisinau, 2010.
6   For a larger discussion see Hirt, Sonia, Iron Curtains Gates, *Suburbs and Privatization of space in the Post-socialist City,* Hoboken, N.J.; Wiley & Sons, 2012 and Stanilov, Kiril, The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form an Space Transforma-tions in Ceantral and Eastern Europe After Socialism, Springer, 2010.
7   Burawoy, Michael, 2007, "For Public Sociology" Pp. 23-64 in Public Sociology: *Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Poli-cies and the Profession the Twenty-First Century,* edited by Dan Clawson et al., Berkeley, University of California Press.

I will present three cases of activism toward claiming public space: the anti-Sbarro protest on Europe Square, the movement for the revitalization of the Cantemir Boulevard axis, and the reconstruction of the Rotonda in Valea Morilor Park.

I examine these three cases within the theoretical framework of "reactive protests versus proactive protests" or "from opposition to proposition."[8] This conceptual model developed following a reflection upon anti/alter-globalization movements such as the World Social Forum (WSF) and the 1999 Seattle protests.

The category of reactive protests, as defined generally, includes protests that are "anti" actions, through which the social movement, group of activists, or civil society opposes an action of the state or local authority, of the economic agent, or of other groups of citizens. Protests against demolition of historic monuments and illegal constructions can be included in this type of protest.

The category of proactive protests, on the other hand, refers to protest actions by which the social movement, group of activists, or civil society not only opposes a certain type of action but also implements reform projects or offers suggestions for alternative practices.

The distinction between these categories – which appeared from contemporary Gramscian reflections on discursive dominations and the possibilities of combat against neoliberal hegemony through "alter-hegemonies" – is obviously not absolute. It should be perceived as a flexible continuum rather than a dichotomy. Such flexible approaches (see especially Pinsky)[9] are aware that the protest isn't fixed in a linear scheme, but rather under a dynamic logic, in which the reactive and proactive aspects coexist. As arbitrary as it is, the distinction is still necessary because it guides the protest movements, allowing them to not only identify the fact that they oppose a certain cause (via the reactive phase), but also to recognize and contest what the dominating discourse may present as "natural" or "the only possible solution" (in the proactive phase).

Case 1. The Anti-Sbarro Protest in Europe Square

a) Chronology
The Europe Square, situated at the entrance in the Stefan cel Mare si Sfant Public Garden, was inaugurated by a delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova and the city council of Chisinau in 2008. A presentation of the EU logo redesigned with flowers and a newly installed flag marked the occasion.

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8   Marian Pinsky, *From Reactive to Proactive: The World Social Forum and the Anti/Alter-Globalization Movement*, Mc-Gill Sociological Review, Volume I, January 2010, pp.3-28; Marks, Gary, and Doug McAdam, *"Social Movements and the Changing Structure of Political Opportunity in the European Union 1."* West European Politics 19, no. 2 (1996), 249-278; Buechler, Steven M., "*New Social Movement Theories"*, Sociological Quarterly 36, no. 3 (1995); 441-464.

9   Ibid.

The political significance was obvious – the newly elected mayor Dorin Chirtoaca represented the Liberal Party, a political formation whose platform placed great emphasis on accelerating the country's European integration. This directly opposed the governing party of the time, which had a pro-Eastern, Communist orientation.

The new leadership of the city invested enormously in the symbolic aspect of this location; it is where the mayor annually presents to the citizens his report of the year's activity. Indeed, Europe Square was built deliberately as a monument-space that symbolizes the European aspirations of Moldova.[10]

In the beginning of December 2012, a fence went up around the square, indicating new forthcoming construction. The first person to signal this new construction site was the activist Oleg Brega, on the web television platform Curaj TV.[11] Later there appeared some texts about this construction site on personal blogs, on some public platforms,[12] and on social networks. There was much controversy about the lack of information on a supposedly public entity.

Finally on December 17, the mayor commanded the city hall's architecture and public relations directors to provide the public with more information on the construction on the square.[13] These authorities merely asserted that the construction was "perfectly legal," which did not satisfy the activist communities, including NGO *My Dear City* and other organizations such as Save the Green Chisinau Association, Salvgardare Association, Oberliht Association, the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments, as well as informal groups of other active citizens and bloggers. They agreed to organize a public protest for Wednesday 26, at 11:00 A.M. In the meantime, they created a Facebook page and a blog dedicated to the protest.[14]

The online social networks not only brought people together who did not know each other, but also facilitated the organization of the protest. The activists were able to efficiently share the tasks: soliciting the official documents from the city hall, researching the legal aspects to prepare juridical criticisms, printing the banners and slogans for the protest, etc.

Several days before the protest, the Europe Square construction site also caught the attention of the mainstream media.[15] The public debate was therefore widened.

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10 In the Republic of Moldova, the process of joining to the European Union represents more than a technical process, of negotiation of policies: it was conceived as a national project of modernization and as civilizing choice.

11 http://curaj.tv/local/chisinau/constructie-noua-la-intrarea-in-parcul-central/

12 Vitalie Spranceana, National culture as a drinking house. About the Stefan cel Mare si Sfant Public Garden. http://voxreport.unimedia.info/2012/12/15/cultura-nationala-ca-o-carciuma-despre-gradina-publica-stefan-cel-mare-si-sfant/

13 http://www.privesc.eu/Arhiva/14079/Sedinta-saptamanala-a-serviciilor-primariei-Chisinau-din-17-decembrie-2012

14 http://gradina-publica.blogspot.com/

15 See: A new cafeteria with terrace in the centre of the capital. The building will be placed near Europe Square, http://unimedia.info/stiri/foto-o-noua-cafenea-cu-terasa-in-centrul-capitalei--localul-va-fi-amplasat-in-preajma-scuarului-europei-55580.html#!prettyPhoto; Natalia Hadarca, *A new "pighouse" in the centre of Chisinau?*

On December 25, the day before the protest, the entrepreneurs made a public statement that they intended to build a pizzeria that is part of the American chain Sbarro.[16] Later that day, the activists participated in a workshop organized by the Oberliht Association to write protest slogans.

The protest was held, as planned, on December 26, and without any major setbacks. The press, widely present, reported on the event in positive terms and gave voice to the protestors' statements. Because the construction didn't comply with all legal requirements, lacking the approval of the Ministry of Culture and the National Monuments Council, the protesters demanded the suspension of the construction, the initiation of some public consultations, and as a measure that would prevent similar situations in the future, increased transparency and citizens' participation in decision-making processes.

At this moment, Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca ordered construction on this site to stop until the circumstances could be clarified. Thus the first objective of the protest to stop the construction was successfully accomplished. However, the same evening, under the pretext that the mayor's order had not yet been presented to them, the entrepreneurs continued construction, pouring the concrete foundation of the future pizzeria.

An activist who witnessed this by chance immediately passed the news on in the social networks. Several activists, accompanied by television reporters, went to the site and filmed the process. Mayor Chirtoaca also appeared, promising to punish the entrepreneurs for wilfully disobeying city hall orders. The next day, the secret construction was broadcasted on television and drew much commentary.

At the weekly city hall meeting on December 28, the authorities reconfirmed their intention to cancel the construction authorization and to restore the historic ground to the public garden space. The fence was removed the same day and the pizzeria foundation demolished in the beginning of March 2013.

b) Reflections and Practices

In a way, the protest against the construction in Europe Square, with its effective social mobilization, media presence, pressure on the authorities, and eventual dismantling of the illegal construction, is an exemplary story of success. Furthermore, in order to avoid future scandals, city hall began to publish on its official website all construction authorizations granted and applied for. More broadly speaking, the protest also initiated the practice of opening sensitive subject matter regarding the historical site to public debate.

Still, from a different point of view, the protest failed in several respects. First, as one of the protest participants pointed out, "although the construction itself was

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16 http://adevarul.ro/moldova/social/o-nouacostereata-centrul-chisinaului-1_50d82da5596d720091300cd5/index.html

stopped, the bureaucratic machinery of the directions that give illegal authorization still remained functional and untouched."[17] No official in the long bureaucratic chain that initially authorized the construction has been prosecuted; Mayor Chirtoaca only promised that he would withdraw his personal trust in the guilty individuals. The effort also failed to generate a debate large enough (i.e. involving at least a majority of the city) about urban citizenship, participative democracy, exclusion, and the right to have a voice.

But if we bear in mind that the activist scene is presently ethnically and linguistically disjointed, the protest had a generally favourable result.

What lessons can we learn from this protest?

I will not elaborate on all the circumstances and factors that influenced the events that transpired (anyway we do not know much about what took place beyond bureaucratic curtains), but only on some I consider noteworthy.

- **The legalistic moment.** The entrepreneurs did not have all documents in order. A decisive factor in making the legal aspects clear was the presence and active participation of Mr. Ion Stefanita, the Director of the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments (AIRM), an institution affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and responsible for protecting the heritage of the Republic of Moldova. As a member of the National Monuments Council, the institution that would have granted the entrepreneurs authorization should they have warranted it, Mr. Stefanita knew that they had not properly received approval from the Council. This permitted the activists to position themselves clearly within the legal context, with all its practical and moral advantages. The entrepreneurs had no choice but to inhabit the legal realm and to suffer the negative moral and symbolic consequences of this positioning.
- **The symbolic moment.** As studies of social movements demonstrate, a vital tool in such movements is the ability to build and manipulate symbolic interpretations,[18] which can catalyse the growth of activist networks or generate additional pressure upon political actors. In the case of the Europe Square protest, the symbolic strategies were moulded on an abundance of pre-existing symbolic formulations: the Classics Alley, the Stefan cel Mare si Sfant Public Garden, the most important monument to Chisinau which has existed in the centre of the city for 200 years, the monument of the national poet Mihai Eminescu, Europe Square and the current Mayor's declared commitment to the project of European integration, his own image of a young reformist insistently promoted by the Mayor, etc. The activists subverted the rhetoric of the

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17 Vitalie Sprinceana – How we protest (about Europe Square, Sbarro and Mayor Chirtoaca). http://www.spranceana.com/2012/12/27/cum-protestam-despre-scuarul-europei-sbarro-si-primarul-chirtoaca

18 Keck, Margaret E. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell University Press, 1998. pp.22-23.

authorities to use it against them. Thus the slogan "The Public Garden resisted for 200 years under authoritarian regimes but now is on the edge of vanishing in 20 years of democracy" combined references to the democratic rhetoric of the mayor and the authoritarian rhetoric from which he claimed separation. Another message, presented as a collage, showed Mihai Eminescu, the national poet and guardian figure of the democratic right, with a Sbarro pizza beside him. The poet was depicted as saying he would like a pizza for his birthday (coincidentally, his birthday is celebrated on January 15). This strategic juxtaposition aimed to reveal an inconsistency – on one hand, the authorities self-importantly celebrated Eminescu every year, and on the other hand they intended to build a commercial pizzeria right by his monument!

- **The technological moment.** Much has been written about the role of information technology in protest movements, both positive and negative.[19] The "Twitter revolution from Moldova" on 7 April 2009 put the country on the map, making it a prominent focus in studying the impact of technology on the political process.[20] The Europe Square protest certainly benefited from effective use of the Internet – one might even say that the protest would have been less successful if the participants had not used it. They created several discussions groups on Facebook, as well as a blog on which to post daily updates, explanations, scanned copies of official documents, protest resolutions, etc. The blog was also a useful place to compile feedback from the press: links to news sites, television channels, and other media presentations. The use of Facebook also led to connection via mobile phones, which has continued past the end of the protest. Other blogs and discussion forums, among them voxreport. unimedia.md, also helped generate visibility for the protest.

- Unfortunately, the protest also suffered from certain negative aspects of technology. Several activists received anonymous phone calls trying to intimidate them.[21] Even though these calls failed to achieve their goal of causing rifts among the activists, they still showed the potential vulnerabilities of online communication during protest actions – ill-intended anonymity can erode the fragile trust of an eclectic community that only knows each other online!

- **The communicative moment.** Throughout the duration of the protest, the participants maintained a distinct voice and tried to make it heard despite the media turmoil. Especially important was to answer, at each step, three fundamental questions: Who are we? Why are we protesting? What are the demands of the protest? Sometimes local media misinterpreted certain aspects. For example, the fact that the City Hall was guilty of bad management of public

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19 For enthusiastic opinions see especially Howard Rheingold. *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution.* Basic Books. 2007. For a critical view over the liberating potential of Internet see Evgeny Morozov. *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom.* PublicAffairs, 2012.

20 "Twitter Revolution. Episode 1: Republic of Moldova", ARC, Știința Publishing Houses, Chisinau, 2010"

21 The conflict related to the construction from Europe Square is growing: a protester claims to be intimidated by phone." http://www.noi.md/md/news_id/18156

property resulted in identifying the mayor as responsible for creating the conflict. This, in turn, allowed certain members of the press to infer an anti-mayor logic, against the party that he represents. Another logic attempted to find violence within the protest actions. Due to such misinterpretations, keeping a voice of our own, where we could, was a crucial to the success of the protest.

- **The political moment.** In many regards, the protest actions of Europe Square represented political innovations within the Moldovan political context. First, the activists managed to build a new field of action and discourse outside the traditional political space. This new political field has centred on the issue of public space and served as a platform for the discussion of some broader political themes – urban citizenship, symbolic policies, the right to claim the city – that often escape narrower partisan discourses, as well as of social movements in Moldova. Second, the theme of political space turned out to be one that could transcend the ideological, ethnic, and linguistic barriers that fissure the activist medium in Moldova: The protest brought together organizations of artists, Russian-speaking activists, Romanian-speaking activists, left-wing activists, and right-wing activists.

Case 2. Cantemir Boulevard

The project of Cantemir Boulevard, led by architect Alexei Shchiusev, emerged immediately after the Second World War in a development plan for the city of Chisinau. According to the plan, the lower part of the city was to be demolished in order to give way to a spacious boulevard that would allow for the synchronization of the upper part of the city with the lower. The mass destruction of the Second World War, which partially or totally destroyed approximately seventy percent of the city's buildings,[22] and the immense respect that Shchiusev commanded allowed the authorities to carve the city as they pleased.

The first plan intended for Cantemir Boulevard to end at Cosmonauts Street, but in 1972 the boulevard was extended to reach Calea Iesilor Street. Only several parts of the projected boulevard have actually been built, however: the Cosmonauts Street, the part between Negruzzi and Ismail Streets, and the part extending from Calea Iesilor.

Surprisingly, the idea of building Cantemir Boulevard survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union and has continued under the democratic leadership and its General Urbanistic Plan (GUP) adopted in 2007.[23] The leadership argued the boulevard could make road traffic through the central sector more fluid, and connect the Chisinau Airport with the Buiucani district. A large community of architects criticized this

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22 Virgil Paslariuc. "Who devastated the historic Chisinau?" http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/cine-devastat-chisinaul-iulie-1941
23 General Urbanistic Plan. http://www.chisinau.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=500

initiative on the grounds that it would violate national laws and international conventions signed by the Republic of Moldova protecting historically significant parts of the city, which includes the city centre.[24] The architects accused the City Hall of adopting decisions without consulting specialists in the field. Afterwards, the GUP was rejected by both the Moldova Academy of Science and the Ministry of Culture.

Presently, Cantemir Boulevard remains in limbo. The discussions surrounding the GUP have shifted to the Zonal Urbanistic Project (ZUP), which likewise hopes to improve the city centre and to build the boulevard.

In response, a group of artists and architects launched a project to prevent the building of the boulevard, the mass destruction of historically significant architecture, and the subsequent negative impact on societal life. They aimed to engage locals – temporary and permanent residents, service workers, passers-by— in various activities that would strengthen local identity, revitalize some abandoned public spaces, and attract and inspire other parts of the city.

The first stage of this project of revitalization, which took place from July 2-6, 2012 and was organized by the Oberliht Young Artists Association (Chisinau, Moldova) and Planwerk (Cluj, Romania), was a workshop entitled Mapping the Public Spaces of Chisinau.[25] The programme included an exploration of new criteria and ways of cataloguing the city's public spaces, conception of a new grid for evaluating selected public spaces, and tours of the mapped zones. It also identified ten locations of the would-be Cantemir Boulevard with potential for revitalization.

The second stage was the creation of a reading group called Public Space in Post-Socialism led by the author, which was held in the summer and autumn of 2012 and gathered students, artists, and activists. This reading group, also present on social networks, aimed to familiarize its members with fundamental theoretical concepts necessary to understand urban policies, urban democracy, the right to the city, and the regional and local transformations that had occurred in post-Socialist areas over the last twenty years. A direct result of the group was the organization of a regularly previous updated online library containing relevant texts, both classic and contemporary, in Romanian, Russian, English, and French.[26]

The third stage was to conduct a survey of users of the public space from the chosen ten locations along Cantemir Boulevard. The author developed the questionnaire in collaboration with several students from the Faculty of History

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24 A group of architects claims that the decision to build Cantemir Boulevard has been taken by interested persons without consulting the specialists. http://unimedia.info/stiri/-1212.html.
25 Mapping of Public Space in Chișinău workshop (2012-13). http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartogra-fiere/.
26 http://chisineu.wordpress.com/biblioteca.

and Philosophy, and the Department of Philosophy and Anthropology of the State University of Moldova and conducted the survey in March-April 2013. The survey included questions about the activities of the places, civic involvement, wishes and visions for changes in the locals' use of public space, mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion, and emotional attachment to the place. The results were publicly presented in May 2013.

The most interesting – and perhaps most useful – feedback was the prevailing skepticism among users of the public spaces regarding the possibility of their being involved in decision-making processes. A large majority of those surveyed expressed that they would gladly participate in those processes, and have many ideas for the renovation of these spaces, but are doubtful whether the authorities would pay any attention to them.

As such, this community of artist-activists decided that the project they launched must not only be done for the citizens, but also by them. They organized, through international participation as a part of the project *The Civic Center of Chisinau*, a series of artistic events on Cantemir Boulevard concerning the revitalization of the ten identified locations. Architects Alex Axinte and Cristi Borcan from *studioBASAR* in Romania organized a public workshop of urban interventions during September 7-13, 2013.[27] This workshop was followed by a hands-on rehabilitation project by residents at the intersection of Ivan Zaikin and Sf. Andrei Streets, as well as a picnic and film screening. As part of the same project, Slovak artists Jana Kapelova and Michal Moravčik conducted an intervention in a different location, on Balanescu Street, reusing old furniture gathered from local residents.[28] Swedish artist Karl Hallberg contributed an intervention of his own, in "Triangle 2", the intersection of Pruncul, Sf. Andrei, and I. Doncev Streets.[29]

One of the great difficulties in evaluating the success of these movements is in the fact that they are almost always works-in-progress. Such is the case with Cantemir Boulevard. It is still too soon to evaluate its chances of long-term success. Fortunately, the boulevard plan is still in discussion and there is strong opposition from the artistic community against its construction. On the other hand, entrepreneurs and commercial agents have taken advantage of the chaos of GUP and ZUP to demolish and rebuild large parts of the area without approval from the authorities. As indicated by one of the activists, there is a risk that the Cantemir Boulevard zone could be completely demolished even before any decision is made on its plans. In these circumstances, two communities gain particular significance.

27 T*he Civic Center of Chisinau: Recovered Spaces*. Urban Interventions Workshop with *studioBASAR* (Cristi BORCAN) and Tudor ELIAN [RO], September 7-11, 2013 http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/spatii-recuperate/.

28 SPACES: Projection by Jana KAPELOVA and Michal MORAVĆIK (Public Pedestal) [SK"If we don't need it?" 21.09.2013, 20:00 http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/09/21/daca-nu-va-trebuie-film/.

29 SPACES: Intersectionsan installation by Karl HALLBERG, 20.09.2013, 17:00 http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/intersectii/.

The first is artist communities, specifically those within urban activism. They decidedly enrich the symbolic repertoire, make activist movements more attractive, and bring about new reflections and arts practices in public space. Urban activist-artists are as opportune as "regular" local artists are obsessively separate from politics – this is a consequence of the excessive politicization of art in the Soviet period and tendency to keep any political art to "quiet" themes such as anti-Communism, national identity, or orthodoxy. The possibilities of art interventions are truly limitless, both in real space and in virtual space.

The second community is that consisting of foreign artists. Their significance lies in the possibility of establishing transnational connections. However, this community is not without its complications. Although its efforts could improve the visibility of local actions outside of the country, it could also take away opportunities from local Moldovan artists; art interventions in public spaces could become a privilege of foreign artists, leaving Moldovan artists to search for other niches. There is a difficult balance to strike between their respective involvements.

Case 3. The Rotonda of Valea Morilor Park

a) Chronology
Valea Morilor Park (known during the Soviet era as the Central Culture and Recreation Park of the Leninist Komsomol of Moldova, Leonid Brezhnev) was developed by the architect Robert Kurtz. Its construction began in 1950 under then-first secretary of the Moldovan Communist party, Leonid Brejnev.[30] The eponymous youth division of the Communist party, the Komsomol, and other youth throughout the city executed the actual construction of the park, the lake, and cultural objects. In the seventies, the main entrance at Serghei Lazo Street, where the Rotonda and the Cascade Ladder are situated, became an important centre of cultural life and recreation for the city residents.

After the fallout of the Soviet Union, the lake became filled with mud and the surrounding park significantly degraded. Although from 2006 to 2011 the authorities organized a thorough cleaning and reconstruction of the lake and it is now open again to the public, other parts, including the Cascade Ladder, the street lights, and nearby roads remain in a state of decay and disuse. The Rotonda also became covered in inscriptions and its base a site of public garbage disposal.

The park's condition moved Moldovan immigrant Antonina Svalbonene, originally from Greece, to put out a discreet call on Facebook for the revitalization of the Rotonda. In January 2013, she urged city residents to organize a collective clean-up of the area surrounding the Rotonda, especially the steps and pavilion. The

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30 *Chisinau: the Encyclopedia. A – Z* / A. N. Timush. Main edition of the Moldovan Soviet Encyclopedia, 1984.

response was positive: a small but slowly building community consolidated on the Facebook group "Vosstanovim Kishinev"[31] (Russian) or "Sa restabilim orasul Chisinau" (Romanian), which translates to "Let's recover Chisinau" in English. After further deliberations, the group decided to organize a clean-up for Sunday, February 3, 2013.

Despite the cold weather and the snow, several dozens people went to the park, where they set to work cleaning the area. They gathered the withered leaves and branches, the plastic and metal trash, and other garbage. The clean-up attracted the attention of several politicians, including a former mayoral candidate, as well as several television stars, journalists, bloggers, and activists. This civic action, all the more admirable considering the weather conditions, was widely presented in the media later, both through traditional media (some of which were present at the clean-up) as well as social media and blogs. Together they sparked further interest in the area.

City leadership also reacted to this initiative, with Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca promising at a city council meeting that he would grant the necessary support to recover the Rotonda. He ordered calculations of the finances required, but the sum presented turned out to be extremely high: 600 million Lei (50 million USD). Some activists suspect that city hall justifies its lack of action and withdrawal from the rehabilitation effort due to this potential financial burden.

Meanwhile, for several months, the Rotonda initiative continued within the online social networks; locals decided that they had to take the effort into their own hands rather than count on the support of the authorities. They decided that the recovery of the Rotonda meant not only restoring its physical condition, but also restoring the cultural life it once had. This would sustain their motivation and efforts, and make them meaningful in the long term.

A second collective clean-up took place on August 10. This time the activists not only cleaned the area but also painted the Rotonda itself, as well as the fence in the back. The clean-up was followed by a master class of Argentine dance organized by the School of Dance Tango Argentino Chisinau, led by Tatiana Grodinskaia.[32]
On August 22, the Rotonda hosted its first live concert with the support of the Presidential Orchestra of the Republic of Moldova, drawing 2000 people to the event. In September several benches and trash cans were installed.

b) Reflections and practices
The revitalization of the Rotonda in Valea Morilor Park is an interesting case of activist effort with important transnational and multi-ethnic participation. Like the

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31 https://www.facebook.com/groups/vosstanovim.kishinev/
32 Residents of Chisinau are called to clean the Valea Morilor park. http://www.pan.md/blog/Kishinevtsev-zovut-pribratisya-v-parke-Valea-morilor/41125

aforementioned rehabilitation of the Cantemir Boulevard area, however, this is a movement still in development and its potential outcomes are numerous.

The movement still has to face several challenges in the near future, including the following: building bridges with Romanian-speaking communities, accepting alternative cultural groups, traps of political affiliations and maintaining its civic dimension.

Below I will reflect and elaborate further on significant aspects of the movement:

-   The proactive moment. This is perhaps the most significant contribution of the movement: The actions not only helped to restore a space that was abandoned for many years, but also reintegrated it into the city's cultural life. Furthermore, through this movement, the activist community shifted decidedly from the reaction phase to one of social and political creativity. The Rotonda recovery initiative undoubtedly enlarged the protest and activist repertoire of the city.
-   The political moment. Even though the organizers and activists took care to avoid affiliation of the cause with any political parties, political influence has been palpable at each step. Initially, Igor Dodon, a former mayoral candidate and president of the Socialist party – and therefore a political rival of the present mayor – participated actively at the general cleaning from February 3, both personally and through a youth organization he leads. His presence as well as his declarations significantly impacted the mayor's quick reaction, who dubbed the recovery of the Rotonda populist. After this, political interest in the Rotonda diminished for a while, allowing the movement to develop upon a logic of its own and to plan, far from the eyes of the press, its further actions. Eventually, however, some journalists, political activists from another opposing party – the Communist Party (PCRM) – became involved. These included Dimitrii Kavruk, the editor-in-chief of the communist publication PULS, and Constantin Starish, deputy in the parliament of the Republic of Moldova from PCRM. Even though they claimed exclusively civic, non-party-affiliated participation, their known affiliation represented a challenge for the movement to constantly prove that it positions itself outside party sympathies.

The challenge of political affiliations will likely be more acute than before in 2014, which is an election year for the Parliament. In the present political context, Mayor Chirtoaca represents a national political party that is in strong opposition to and competition with the other parties, especially the Communist party. The success and failures in Chisinau will count immensely on Chirtoaca's election agenda; this is why a successful initiative such as the Rotonda, conducted without support from the local authorities, will be rather uncomfortable for the city administration, which may decide to get involved in order to co-opt the movement and claim its success for the administration. On the other hand, some other political forces such as the Socialist Party, which has the most consistently anti-Chirtoaca platform, may decide

to claim to be part of the success of this movement and to become involved at a later stage of the project. If that happens, we shall see.

- The ethnic-cultural moment. The initiative for revitalization of the Rotonda is certainly anchored in the personal and collective nostalgia of a particular social group – a large part of the Chisinau's Russian-speaking population (which includes Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews). This is one of the project's strengths, but simultaneously also one of its greatest vulnerabilities. The explicit aim of the community, declared countless times, is to restore the Rotonda as an object of local and national importance, as it was before the 1980s. However, the logic of restoring a particular path conceals several pitfalls. First, doing so anchors the movement in a specific, pre-conceived notion of public space, one "controlled" and accessible only to certain social groups (the so-called "good" people). This definition explicitly excludes those of "unwanted" social groups, like homeless people, but also those of alternative social groups – graffiti artists, rockers, punks, hipsters. Another pitfall is in the different Soviet architecture and monuments and their interpretations. For example, there are many Romanian-speaking activists who consider Chisinau overloaded with traces of the Russian and Soviet presence and believe that some of these should disappear completely.[33] The city has not yet established a long-term identity strategy – one that would succeed in integrating the different architectural and historic heritages of the city. This is why, even if the initiative of the Rotonda is an excellent and successful one, too few Romanian-speaking activists find themselves within a project of restoring a Soviet architectural monument. Many of them would prefer a different form of restoration that would include the destruction of pre-Soviet era monuments. Therefore activism confronts a variety of seemingly incompatible restoration discourses, a fact which the community of activists has not yet overcome.
- Another challenge for the Rotonda initiative is a cultural one. The cultural actions for revitalization of the zone have consisted until now of events of traditional or mainstream culture: fanfare music, dance, poetry readings. During a conference dedicated to the public spaces of Chisinau, one of the organizers said that the space was still "spared" the interventions of informal and alternative groups such as rockers, punks, and others. How the community will react to a potential cultural intrusion of this kind, and or how and whether it will succeed in integrating the image of the Soviet idyll is still to be determined.

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33 See for example the statements of historian and politician Octavian Tacu during television show Publika Report from the 14th of October 2013. http://www.publika.md/editie/_371_2576111.html

Conclusion

The social movements in Moldova described above have, without a doubt, commonalities with other similar movements in surrounding countries. The dependence of the movements on the Internet and online social networks; the use of information technologies for mobilization and organization; the effort to enlarge the national and local political discussion by including new and relevant topics, such as urban citizenship, the right for the city, local democracy, and transparency of decisional processes; the inequality of power and resources both among activist groups and among big businesses and local or national authorities—these are some elements which can be found in other capitals of post-Socialist countries as well. Yet some aspects – such as the separation of the communities of activists by ethnic and linguistic criteria, cultural and ideological separation concerning the Communist city heritage, the activist efforts to counteract traditional political actors' attempts to co-opt successful movements for their own interests—are unique to the Moldovan context.

Due to all these complexities, it is quite difficult to paint a definitive picture of urban activism in Chisinau. Still, I would permit myself two preliminary conclusions:

- Even if these social movements were to further develop only under the worst circumstances – that is, if they were dissolved or co-opted by other political actors – they would still have made a significant contribution in that they introduced new themes in political debates: of public space, of domination and control over public space, and of urban democracy. These themes have already solidified and found a place within the agenda of current political debates in various forms (in topics such as protection of architectural heritage, or preventing exclusion of certain sexual or religious minorities in public spaces, and actions for revitalization of public spaces). We expect them to be discussed more intensely in the upcoming elections.
- An indirect but very important effect of these movements is the recovery of protest as an instrument of creating political pressure. It allows us to propose new forms of political organizing and co-operation outside the traditional political field, and to use various communicative means in the arts, such as performance, to express an important message. These elements will help build an active urban citizenship and give citizens new, innovative means to get involved.

SPACES of Possibilities – An Epilogue

Underground Passages, Parks, Squares with Historical Monuments, Boulevards – Places of Public Spaces Ready for Art?

Heidi Dumreicher, Bettina Kolb, Richard S. Levine

What are the basic conditions for art intervention in public space, and how do these interventions interfere in spatial structure and artistic contexts? The SPACES project collected many people's experiences with artistic actions and started a discussion about art production in public space. The present conditions for cultural production in the SPACES' cities offer limited resources for artists, but they are nevertheless vibrant parts of the contemporary art scene. Art communities are inadequately supported and face many challenges; in fact, both the region and international art production itself need appropriate support. The artists who participated in the SPACES project and their artistic production showed the gap between the artists and activists on the one hand and the officially approved arts expressions on the other. By exposing these concepts in public space, the different views and interests expressed in SPACES were occasions for innovative encounters between the participant artists and an audience made up of random passers-by.

SPACES organized art interventions in public spaces in four post-Soviet countries. The SPACES caravan chose the capitals of Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, and Moldova for artistic, participatory events. In this way they supported the local culture and arts CSOs and NGOs in their own organizational and artistic work. The project invited submissions from international and regional artists for interactive projects that would take place in selected urban spaces, establishing civil society processes on marginalized public sites that could support and empower local residents. This text focuses on the spatial and communicative circumstances of these artistic interventions in urban public spaces, and on their regional, societal and political contexts. Within the SPACES project, our qualitative social research accompanied the artistic interventions, aiming to reflect the processes happening in public urban space during the SPACES caravan events. This study of social impact showed that SPACES art performances enabled and supported changes in the usual interaction with the audience. The authors applied a qualitative approach to social research, based on interviews accompanied

by participant observation, interpretation of visual and written material, and narrative analysis. The sociological interpretation and reflection are based on the grounded theory approach.[1] The following article summarises the theoretical outcome and presents some of the empirical evidence.

Places for Communication: Conditions for Implementing Arts in Public Space
Realizing artistic intervention in the reality of public space requires several capabilities on the part of both the organizers and the artists. In addition to the artistic Gestalt, which is described well in other parts of this publication, the implementation of the SPACES project raises the question of whether public space as a stage needs security measures – or what strategies artists and activists have chosen in this regard. Activities in the public space, even if provocative, should not lead to unpleasant disturbances by anyone, neither by governmental authorities nor by a critical audience. The governmental and societal conditions for a safe environment are not present in all the SPACES' countries to the same degree. Generally speaking, such a safe place for communication has to be created through a societal process that is accompanied by governmental acceptance. When reflecting on these basic conditions, we concentrate on the urban spatial conditions which are needed to establish a safe urban arts event; in a second step, we describe the conditions for communication which the SPACES artists aimed to create.

A Safe Place: The Urban Spatial Conditions for Articulating the Artists Expression
Artistic interventions in public space need a safe environment so that they can take place and create communication with the audience. It was actually possible for most of the planned SPACES' activities to take place, some of them even in unpleasant urban environments where artists took the risk that hostile individuals might intrude. Even very small artistic interventions are connected with the general urban situation, and show that it is possible to use public space for democratic demonstrations and protests.

The basic conditions for private interventions in public spaces include an interested audience and a feeling of safety. These conditions varied according to the current political situation in each of the cities. The artists capitalised on their long years of experience to find safe ways to perform their actions. Chisinau was the smallest of the four capital cities where SPACES worked. In our fieldwork there, we observed several well-organized activities in public spaces, by groups ranging from large private companies to school classes. Such individual and private activities in public spaces were especially present in specific parts of the cities, for example in the big parks in the city centre. Activities in urban public space, such as recreation activities for individuals or families who rested and played in the open spaces of the parks, could not to observed outside specially designated areas of the city. In fact, we were

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1   Barney Glaser & Anselm Strauss: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago* (1967).

told that authorities excluded the population from specific areas of the city. The authorities dedicate certain selected urban areas to be legal sites for urban space activities. The SPACES interventions took place in urban areas accepted by authorities, who allow public activities by private individuals if they have a community aspect. Several of these activities, such as Flat Space, were carried out over a long period of time, slowly gaining a presence in public space based on repeated art interventions.

How Can the Artist Create a Communicative Setting with the Audience?
In the public space, the level of communication is different from what it is in traditional art settings. In the relationship between art and audience, the level of communication which the artists manage to create through their work can be quite different. The SPACES artists saw their artwork as a means to disseminate and articulate societal issues that were urgent and well known, but not yet discussed in the public media channels. Art interventions were a way to concretise topics that had often been discussed in meetings between activists, but were not perceived by the general urban public or governmental representatives. Art interventions offered a way to present hidden topics in a public forum – these points arose in our dialogues with artists and with the bystanders and onlookers. In public space events, the intention to communicate with the audience was important for the artists, and they spoke of communication as a necessary precondition for artistic intervention in public space. Artists who were experienced in art performances in public spaces discussed with us in interviews the various levels of communication that were possible, and added that they tried to integrate the peculiarity of each specific place into their communication with spectators. One artist we interviewed pointed out that there is no art without context, and that the uniqueness of the particular environment invites her to include it in her performance. When applying this contextualisation to the creative process, the artistic intervention reflects the space itself, and incorporates that reflection on the space. Within this circle of communication, art interventions developed into public voices of criticism in public space.

SPACES events show that artistic intervention created places for a public voices and made it possible to reflect these statements in discussions with the public. Several interviews with artists addressed the topic of how artists become activists and how artists can transform societal discussions into artistic actions. Several artistic projects collected the voices of citizens to articulate their views, and developed the communicative setting to voice people's interests and opinions. In this way, the art interventions contributed to discussion and debate on life in various cities, and supported the democratic use of public space. In a flash mob on Northern Avenue in Yerevan, Armenia, the *Monument to Martyred Trees* by Davit Stepanyan evoked ecologically damaging governmental and economic activities in Armenian forests. The place chosen for this flash mob also recalled civic movements to save vanishing parks and to protest the forcible removal of old houses and their inhabitants. The action took place in the inner city of Yerevan, where the new avenue invites its

visitors into a modern shopping mall and an urban avenue. In the action, an activist had collected tree trunks, and, together with artists, built a massive monument in the middle of an elegant shopping street. Soon after erecting this monument, these artists had to make the monument vanish before the authorities could respond. The audience recognised this activity as a contribution of the ongoing, hidden debate, and was surprised to be confronted with the history of this place.

Lessons Learnt from These Examples

The experience of the SPACES project shows that interventions in the urban public space are possible even if several societal and governmental conditions hinder the artistic production and activism. Further, SPACES art events prove that interventions can, in principle, be implemented, and organizers in the post-Soviet partner countries demonstrate that cooperation with local art scenes and governmental administrations is also possible. We observed that these art interventions had a positive effect on public and semi-public spaces, establishing new sites of urban encounter and civil debate, although the necessary safe conditions were not present in all countries. Within the SPACES project, a large number of independent, non-institutionalized cultural actors (i.e. civil society actors) positioned themselves to defend common urban public space and encourage public interests against the steady encroachment of capitalistic structures.

The Audience in Public Space: Art Events Change The Spectator's Role and Reflect the Social and Spatial Context

The Public Pianos Project in Yerevan, Armenia placed pianos in the meadow of a city park for public usage. This example shows how a particular art intervention respected existing societal rules and preconditions of public space. The Swan Lake park is a conventional park, and the town administration has clearly made great efforts to make it attractive for the citizens: many topiaries made of bushes, an artificial lake with water fountains, a statue of the famous Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian playing his piano, numerous elegant garden and terrace cafés and restaurants, children's playgrounds. The park is part of the elegant city centre, very close to the renowned opera house. All evidence indicates that visitors come mostly from the city centre itself, rather than from marginalized neighbourhoods. Next to bushes which had been trimmed into the shape of pianos, the SPACES artists Anna Barseghian and Harutyun Alpetyan mounted real pianos, which allowed musicians and ordinary visitors to make their own music. This art intervention was carefully placed into the given social setting, respecting the role of the visitors and audience. Although they were not provided with stools to sit on, these five real pianos, on which the park visitors were happy to play, stood in strong opposition to the piano made from bushes at the entrance of the park, a mere decorative element without invitation to play.

With their pianos, the artists respected the scenery of the park: within the public space, they supplemented the bland scenery with a new aspect of activism. Some

visitors, young and old, enjoyed the pianos by playing or at least trying to play, occasionally with vocal accompaniment. Placing the real piano in the public park, the artist's intervention produces new options for visitors and invites them to be an active part of the scenery. The intention of the artists was to invite visitors and to relate them to the object of the piano without any communication technology: The deeply provocative open invitation calls the passer-by to the pianos. "And if you even know how to play, you can share your skills with the public [...] Whereas the piano tuner knows that there is no mechanism which would enable communication with the public."[2] In this context, one of the SPACES pianos was at the same time part of the scenery and a provocation: the artists had purposely put it out of tune, referring to societal issues that are similarly discordant. The piano reflected the cultural scenery: pianos are often to be seen – and heard – and used in kindergartens, in concert halls, and in cafés and restaurants, but the presence of these pianos transgressed the boundaries of those places. This art intervention also changed the role of the audience: the Swan Lake intervention managed to find its way towards a new audience that was not used to expressing themselves in public or encountering contemporary music theory and practice. The material aspect shows a headstrong attitude, by placing five pianos in the free area, without protection against the weather, the rain. The concept of the artistic intervention is more powerful than the material constraints of the instruments.

The Swan Lake example shows that the public spaces where the SPACES intervention took place have their own ownership structure: a carefully designed inner city park with facilities and decorative furniture respecting the taste of the daily guests. The functional pianos as tangible art objects changed the use of this park. Similarly, in Chisinau, Moldova, the Oberliht Association created a new landscape by connecting several open places through several caravan activities: one park between two bigger streets became linked to the street corner of a park used by chess players, thereby integrating existing usage patterns. The Flat Space project transformed the existing usage patterns, reinterpreting the setting of a parking lot in Chisinau: in Oberliht's year-long presence in that space, the artists actually introduced completely new usage traditions: instead of having a storage place for old derelict cars, this rare free space transmuted into a housing estate and a centre for urban cultural actions. The parking lot of the former Soviet House of Culture thereby became an inspiring space of possibilities for youth meetings, film projections, and even gardening: using a strip of earth on the asphalt, the artists managed to grow corn, which they harvested during the evening when the SPACES Caravan was present.

In general, SPACES art activities in public space showed that most urban places, even if they look deserted and desolate, can be used by local people and transformed from places that seem neglected or abandoned into personalized environments. Carefully inserted within the given social structure, the art event

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2   Descriptions of the arts interventions can be found in the official programme at utopiana.am.

could create a common communication system where social roles could change. It was the artists' effort to transform the existing social situation into a new communicative system in public spaces. SPACES showed that this effort was rewarded with excellent art events.

An action in Tbilisi was a highlight for artists and social researchers. In Tbilisi's underground passages we observed that public space can change its previous functions and roles of spectators and the audience in general. By communicating in ways different than traditional arts production, interventions in public space invite participation in the situation and co-create an art event. This definitely changes the role of the audience and spectator.

The underground passages in Tbilisi are still-functioning remnants of the former Soviet regime, and under-used public places in the city. The passages were constructed underneath major boulevards and squares to separate pedestrian traffic from vehicle traffic. These low ceiling and poorly lit passages were constructed with only enough amenities to provide for their basic function, yet wide enough so that informal commercial activities could take place. In one ordinary passage that contained a number of semi-informal shops under Rustaveli Avenue next to the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, artist Natalia Nebieridze covered the pathway through the passage as well as both entrance stairs at either end with a Hollywood-style red carpet. Every time a pedestrian stepped down the stairs to cross the street, spotlights came on, a video camera recorded the passage, music played, and everyone clapped and cheered. The passers-by reacted with surprise, sometimes dancing along the carpet playing the part, sometimes meekly smiling, sometimes walking more quickly, sometimes slowing down and acknowledging the friendly crowd. Some passengers also stopped to use their Hollywood moment for a film clip on their mobile phones… famous for one second!

Formulating Lessons Learnt from These Examples
The distinct temporal extent of art interventions had a massive impact on the function and roles of places: by changing physical elements, the arts events were modifying the social experiences of passers-by. Most art interventions, including Red Carpet in Tbilisi, changed the experienced realm of the space. Transformative and transformational art, as present in the SPACES events, were required to evoke an arts discourse amongst artists, curators, and passers-by, and were directly connected to debates on the treatment of public spaces in post-totalitarian political systems. Thereby, facets of established and non-provocative arts were integrated into the critical approach of the single projects, in order to change the role of the audience.

Cheers and applause, these ingredients of traditional street theatre with a rather unspecified and random audience, found their moment. In this sense not just the role of previous functions and functional sequences of public spaces changed, but SPACES also established places of encounter towards contemporary arts.

Selecting Public Spaces for Art Interventions in the SPACES Project

SPACES invited submissions from international and regional artists for interactive projects in urban space that would take advantage of the unprivileged characteristics of the architectonic heritage. Artists and organizers tried to establish civil society processes by empowering marginalized places that could support them. The following part of the article highlights several urban public spaces where actions took place and summarizes the social activities seen in different urban spatial arrangements. This does not refer to the quantity or highlights at a specific place, but describes the social activities in the selected urban space. The social activities depend on the intended architectural functions, and their actual use. For understanding and reflection, as can be seen in our photographs and material obtained through participant observation, we observed several social activities which were performed by passers-by before the SPACES events or independently. Following these fieldwork observations, we distinguish among urban places the artists chose based on whether they were spaces intended to move people through the town, whether they were parks that provide places to relax, whether they were (former) factories devoted to industrial production, or whether they were urban spaces whose purpose is controversial and not yet determined.

Functional Spaces. Pedestrians Moving Through the Town: the Example of the Underground Passages in Tbilisi, Georgia

The SPACES project partner in Georgia selected the underground passages of Tbilisi as the site of a participatory arts intervention. The curator Nini Palavandishvili claimed the public spaces as places of intervention; the artists selected them to develop their art projects. The SPACES curatorial team organized a process to select artists with high artistic standards, bringing the interventions of art into daily life in public spaces. These art interventions took place in daily urban spaces of pedestrian tunnels, of a functioning bridge and of a huge underground shopping mall that was no longer used. All of these were spaces devoted to pedestrian mobility and the transport of goods. The art interventions encouraged citizens to interact amongst themselves and with the artists. The social impact study showed that the audience of the interventions considered themselves part of a daily social intervention with Tbilisi underground passages, with other residents and visitors. The extent of interaction varied by individual, but all of them made active contributions to selected urban spaces – by changes in the atmosphere, light, noise, or in the material appearance of the public space. Tbilisi underground passages were built during the Soviet era underneath major boulevards and squares to separate pedestrian traffic from vehicle traffic. They still function this way. For pedestrians it is almost safer to cross the street underground, although the passages are poorly lit. This functional urban space became a place for arts interventions.

SPACES art interventions showed that it was possible to change this functional urban space, where pedestrians walk through the underground city, through very modest material changes and social activities, which are presented by the

artists. In *Red Carpet*, the tunnel transformed into a stage for stars, and with the new identification of the space, its daily appearance changed too. The functional urban space was transformed into a personally-experienced community place. Looking back, some of the underground passages in Tbilisi were renovated after the interventions through privatization.

Recreational Spaces. Parks and Malls for Well-Being and Places for Memories, Landmark Spaces: the Example of Yerevan, Armenia
The SPACES project partner in Armenia was the arts organization Utopiana.am. Its artists selected public spaces like parks, avenues and memorial spaces for their participatory arts intervention. All these spaces, including Swan Lake and Victory Park with its statue of Mother Armenia, represent different historical periods during and after USSR – Soviet, post-communist and post-independence. Utopiana.am is aware of the long tradition of activism between arts and public spaces in the city, being themselves partially involved in such activities. They were aware of the conditions given by the local authorities. Artists presented the ongoing discussion about losing public spaces and the critique of this development, and contributed with art events and public lectures to this public debate. Yerevan is the biggest city of Armenia, has about 1.1 million inhabitants, and, since 1918, has been the capital of the country. The city has a long history, but the contemporary urban landscape goes back to the General Plan of Yerevan, when Armenia was part of the Soviet Union. In 1924, the first Soviet city plan for the future development of the city was elaborated by the architect Alexander Tamanyan, who considered parks and plazas important urban spaces for urban residents. Today, Yerevan is losing its remarkable urban design. Through capitalism and contemporary political and societal changes, a new urban structure is developing: former recreation and amusement places change to commercial sites, and new shopping centres and apartment buildings are replacing parks and urban spaces. In the newly-built North Avenue, an example of failing civil engagement was established: this large new urban development is one of several recreation spaces where a civil activity failed. The inhabitants were forced to move out, although there were riots against the new construction plans.

Landmark Spaces
SPACES art interventions and public lectures in Yerevan took place in areas of recreation and at memorials. The locations were chosen according to their official status in the city as landmarks, such as the monument of Mother Armenia and the Cinema Moscow. The pianos at Swan Lake Park were cultural interventions that would fit into the local programme, where contemporary art could give a new accent to a public audience.

This led to debate and reflection on places that carry a load of history, tradition and confirmed habit. With simple interventions like playing a piano, reading poems in public, and gathering for a public lecture, a new common experience was created. The urban spaces of recreation and memorial dedication were transformed into spaces to reflect on new ideas and revised memories.

Spaces in Transformation. Points of Conflicts and Neuralgic Urban Spaces: Chisinau, Moldova and Yerevan, Armenia

Large town areas that obviously need planning scenarios and public interventions as they concern the city as whole are often topics of discussions among local residents. Projects going beyond small neighbourhood interventions require large-scale discussions about the new urban planning.

In the SPACES project, two partners choose such urban situations. One, in Chisinau, Moldova, was that of the proposed Cantemir Boulevard. The other was the Kond district in Yerevan, Armenia, whose future has also been under discussion for many years.

The SPACES project partner in Moldova, Oberliht, selected everyday public spaces like small parks and a large degraded urban district, conflicted urban spaces in the context of city development. The team related its work to history and presented an area which was strongly connected with the actual city planning for the Cantemir Boulevard.

If the Cantemir Boulevard is built, an urban neighbourhood will be demolished. The construction of the Cantemir Boulevard, which would follow a plan dating from Soviet times, would interfere with the old Chisinau with its 19th century buildings and traditional housing patterns. The public space events of the SPACES project focused on this contested urban area, establishing a contrast between old and new, between restoration and historical interests, and dealt with upcoming conflicts and/or possibilities of privatizations and new housing areas. The art events of Michal Moravčík and Jana Kapelová contributed to the work in the context of the idea of collective memory – expressing the voice of the neighbourhood, the traditional Balkan part of the city. Within the artistic intervention, artists invited residents to replace their old chairs: each donated chair was replaced by a new one. Out of the old furniture, the artists assembled a new public monument. This artistic intervention resonated with the transformations which this district is going through, and with its new character.

Although Chisinau seemed constrained by questions of ownership and privatization, the SPACES art interventions contributed to a new activism and new opportunities of encounter and discussion. The boulevard plan represents a general problem in Chisinau: a similar case is the plan to demolish the old 19th century post office.

Even in the time that Moldova has been an independent state, Chisinau has not managed to build up a new city plan. To some degree, the government aims to follow the old Soviet plans, and to some degree it wants to come up with new postmodern urban planning. The transformation process within the city includes both restoring historical buildings and creating new construction. This, combined with the uncertainty on the part of the government, leads to numerous rips

in the urban fabric. There are also uncertainties about the responsibilities in the government, which makes the work for the artists and activists even more difficult: the question of how to protect the old Chisinau buildings from the 19th century, which is the task of the Ministry of Culture, interferes with the local city government and its own plans for the future. Stakeholders who are willing to contribute to where and how the new Chisinau should be developed are not being integrated into this political process.

In Yerevan, Armenia, the artists' intervention in the quarter of Kond revealed a similar urban constellation. SPACES worked with a local architectural team in an area similar to the Cantemir area in Chisinau: in its official city plan, the government designated the area as neglected area, which has to be razed and rebuilt with new modern architecture. In Kond, the city's neighbourhood planners respected the area's old landmarks such as the Moldavian Orthodox Church and the historic Persian mosque, but planned to transform this degraded neighbourhood and move the residents elsewhere. The old houses are slated to be replaced by expensive luxury buildings. In contrast, SPACES activists proposed that the city consider the quarter as a neighbourhood with high social and architectural qualities, emphasizing the communication patterns between neighbours as well as the traditional housing and street patterns. They have started participatory processes, and propose to include the residents in further city planning.

Neuralgic Urban Spaces
SPACES art interventions took place in the urban areas with conflicting future plans. By choosing these specific urban areas for art intervention, the activities at those places contributed to strengthening the public debate about future city planning. In a bottom-up urban planning mode, plans for restructuring urban neighbourhoods should be under public discussion; SPACES art interventions supported the public debate and expressed conflicting views on present and historic city planning. This experience also showed that the use of present public space in a city is strongly connected with the overall urban processes of the whole city.

Industrial Areas. Space for Former Industrial Production: *The Yunist Factory* in Kyiv, Ukraine
The Kyiv SPACES project partner selected the industrial buildings of a factory for their art interventions and performances. This intervention recalls a strategy practiced in several European countries (like England and Germany) which consists in transforming the closed down industrial areas into artistic places like museums, exhibition halls, or cultural centres for performances.

The Yunist Factory has a long history of being demolished and rebuilt. In the 1970s it flourished as a textile producer; in the 1990s the factory was closed for good. Since then the place has been waiting for a new life. Within the inner city of Kyiv,

this place is a valuable and expensive piece of land. There were plans to tear the buildings down, which created lots of public protest, and discussion spread. The owner publicly announced in February 2014 that he was dedicating the place to become a cultural centre. What kind of culture and arts should go into this place has yet to be decided, and the owners have entered a dialogue to negotiate possible strategies.

The SPACES project chose this place for a series of artistic actions in 2013 and established it as a locus of artistic possibilities. Most of the events had a performance character and invited the audience to interact. In this case, the audience was not ordinary passers-by as in the other towns, but people who had especially chosen to come for the event.

In one of the interventions, the audience was anxious to join in with Oleksandr Burlaka and Ivan Melnychuk who put 38 blocks of reinforced concrete that they found in the deserted factory, added 24 additional modules, and let the public create their own *Yunist* site – arranging round tables, amphitheatres, benches and combinations of all possible spatial arrangements with these blocks.

The target of the performance *Garden of Symbiosis* by Alevtina Kakhidze was to invite viewers into an artistic journey to a newly established place. In her performance, the auditorium took part in a fictive discussion with a company that invites Kakhidze to develop a project that goes beyond normal economic standards and ideas, offering her a honorarium for the artistic concept of one million; the audience was invited to express a preference for euros, dollars, or roubles. In stark contrast to the present economic atmosphere of competition, the artist developed the image of a public garden where plants would be displayed in their symbiosis in mutually beneficial biological coexistence. In the societal background of her performance, she included an ironic criticism: a business partner who first wanted her to sell "just ideas" asked, at the end, for products. The performance ended with her distributing funny paper origami hats produced on demand for all the audience. Although her concept placed equality as the central topic for the symbioses idea, the sponsoring company insisted that every hat, at the end, express a rigid hierarchy. When she presented her phantom house, Alevtina opened a second imaginary future space in her fantasy performance: a building that would contain things that we want to forget or not to see.

Overcoming alienation: what do urban residents know about each other, about their neighbours, about people whom they see at metro stations? Do they know their names? Again, Alevtina returned to an example from nature: she put a name tag on every little plant at the entrance of the former *Yunist* factory, as in a botanical garden: you should know which plants, which animals, which living creatures you share your neighbourhood with.

Industrial areas for future usage
In his performance, Pavel Braila installed a camera on a toy airplane that he let fly in circles over the derelict *Yunist* factory. All the images that the camera saw were sent to a large public screen where the audience experienced the shifting environment, which gave the viewers a strong sensation of physical alienation: they were standing on an apparently stable ground, but at the same time getting dizzy from this vertiginous moving through the air – a symbolic statement of the insecurity of people's position.

It is hoped that new alliances will spring up and that the city government and the art scene will enter into a dialogue about a possible future for this urban industrial area which could be used as a place for artistic interventions. Will the citizens be able to influence the governmental system of the city according to their own preferences?

Historical Places and the Collective Memory Leading to New Identities
The SPACES art interventions in the urban public spaces of the four post-Soviet countries took place in public places with symbolic representations and meaningful histories. Some of these places represented specific collective memories of the country, connected with specific historical events. With SPACES activities and activism, artists produced new meanings and new collective memories. Connecting the public place with new experiences created new occasions for remembering these events and, in a more general sense, for memory building based on a new contemporary situation. Public spaces conserving the memory of societal processes in the early 20th century were subjected to activist intervention in the SPACES project. Several of the urban environments which the artists chose were transmitters of historic presences, from post-Soviet to nationalist movements. When selecting such a spot for an urban space public lecture or for a guided tour, through their action, the artists attracted new attention to these places.

Cinema Moscow, Yerevan
The backgrounds of the historical uses of these public spaces, including specific historical situations and conflicts, were researched in the SPACES project. Some of the selected places, like the Open-air Hall of the Moscow Cinema in Yerevan, showed the particular power relations of former times. This was true everywhere where the church, the government, and the numerous socio-political players including diaspora Armenians play their international power games.

In present times, the Cinema Moscow is a significant example in this struggle. It was saved from demolition by a civil society movement including a petition signed by many members of the public. Choosing famous places of common collective memory, the passers-by reconsidered the past of their own society and developed new perspectives on the past of the social space they were living in.

Mother Armenia, Yerevan

Another impressive example of changing the collective memory was visually present on the poster of the Armenian caravan event. The Mother Armenia monument is "full of signs of the Soviet ideology" and has "essentially lost its monumental discourse dimension."[3] The local curatorial team of Yerevan created a work group of local artists and selected public spaces in Yerevan that symbolized the changes that occurred in the socio-political situation in Yerevan of the last 50 years. One such place was the public space in front of the Mother Armenia statue. This location had formerly hosted a monumental statue of Stalin standing on the same huge base as the one on which the Mother Armenia statue now stands. The official poster of the Armenia caravan is an image of the empty base, which is what would have been seen during the short transition period when it had supported neither the monumental figures of Stalin nor Mother Armenia. As no one would have likely taken a photo of the "topless" monument base, the photo on the poster had to be reconstructed by airbrushing out the statue from an existing photograph and replacing it with an ephemeral cloud. The ambiguous image thus alludes to an in-between time when any course could have been taken, but which itself had been largely forgotten.

The public lecture right in front of the monument explained the history of the monument and discussed related contemporary issues. In this lecture, too, reflections on former historical theories were presented, relating them to the Marxist theory of the material conditions and the human relationships in a town. This public space lecture transformed the surroundings of the Mother Armenia statue into a place of collective memory, attributing to the place a new function of reflection, in addition to the established daily use by tourists and visitors. This open place is high above the city, in view of Mount Ararat (formerly within the borders of Armenia, but now in Turkey). It is without doubt one of the most attractive places in the city: a good place to begin the journey from indoctrination to discussion and reflection.

Spaces Reflecting the Past

SPACES events showed that an ongoing process of production and arts interventions starts the process of building up a new collective memory. There are several realms of reflection. They may be related to the town and its physical space. One of the Armenian artists explained in an interview how in Soviet times, government property was considered something foreign, even within the city and things that belonged to it. In his experience, this feeling still exists. Residents in former times, he said, felt that they could destroy this property without doing harm to anyone.

From this statement it becomes clear what a huge task the SPACES partners assume when they start reclaiming rights to the city.

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3   A description of the official opening can be found in the official programme of utopiana.am

All four cities seemed to be dealing with serious questions of ownership, identity and privatization. The SPACES art interventions contributed to a new activism and offered examples and new opportunities about how to use public places of the city in a participatory way.

This was the case with the Cantemir Boulevard area. SPACES carried out a residency programme which invited inhabitants to join the art intervention. The artists put up new attractive traffic signs and utilized the four symbols of playing cards – hearts, diamonds, spades and clubs – and used them as new, playful signs for how to appropriate public space. The audience did not appreciate their artistic value, and would have preferred other symbols like pigeons or trees, but they appreciated the fact that an action took place, the artists thereby giving importance to their living space. The fact that an artist was showing interest was the important message, even if the artist himself had started out with a more sophisticated message: according to his own interpretation, his signs carried a philosophical message, namely that some people have good cards and other have bad cards, according to the luck of the draw – or according to their position in the social hierarchy.

With this art intervention, SPACES contributed to the renewal of the area and started to reshape the collective memory of this place. The contemporary city government has excavated hierarchic planning schedules from Soviet times that aimed at establishing a huge boulevard based on their monumental aesthetics; the small symbolic arts interventions helped enhance the discussion about urban design and its political dimension in the past as well as in the future.

Conclusion: Artivism in Public Space
The tactic of the SPACES partners, connecting societal conflicts over public space with artistic interventions in the local place, was based on the fact that the events were conceived as occasions for encounter within the civil society partners, and the public spaces turned into places of communication, discussion and further on in places of civic protests.

The forms varied from town to town. In some cases, the passers-by could interfere in the physical realm – for instance by changing the colours of the electric bulbs of an underground passage: in the artist's intention, this gave the passers-by the possibility to make an active choice in an existing urban setting. In other situations, artists used the public space for meetings, protests and arts interventions.

The arts interventions in SPACES show that arts find a way, even under difficult societal conditions, to articulate visions and scenarios concerning the present and the future of public spaces. Statements from artists and passers-by illustrate how they welcomed these interventions, establishing public space as a place for

expressing the residents' opinions. They argued that even these small interventions express how the citizens can claim an active role in the city, thereby going in the direction of citizens' rights.

Through SPACES interventions in the urban public space, art events created a space of possibilities for new points of view and interpretations of urban situations. They gave an opportunity to connect the place with new social activities and to build up a new experience for the place and its residents. This new experience opens up the mind for new possibilities, simultaneously creating new histories and new uses for the place, new collective memories and new spaces for civic and democratic activities.

SPACES The Team

SPACES Curatorial Team:
Nora Galfayan & Taguhi Torosyan | Utopiana.am (Armenia)
Nini Palavandishvili | GeoAIR (Georgia)
Vladimir Us | Oberliht (Moldova)
Kateryna Botanova | CSM Kyiv (Ukraine)
Nataša Bodrožić | Slobodne veze/Loose Associations (Croatia)
Heidi Dumreicher & Ina Ivanceanu | SPACES Coordinator, Oikodrom – the Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability (Austria)

SPACES local teams:
Armenia: Vahram Aghasyan, Harutyun Alpetyan, Anna Barseghian, Vahe Budumyan, Nvard Yerkanian
Austria: Ruth Eiselsberg, Stephan Pfeffer, Sarah Pfeifer, Ursula Pfrimer, Caroline Tagesen, Alexandra Überbacher
Croatia: Nataša Bodrožić
Georgia: David Chigholashvili, Elene Kapanadze, Theona Kartlelishvili, Sophia Lapiashvili, Mariam Rubashvili, Ketevan Skhulukhia
Luxemburg: Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu, Bady Minck, Philipp Reimer, Tatia Skhirtladze, Claudia Stanetty
Moldova: Ina Borozan, Irina Iachim, Alexandru Munteanu, Stefan Rusu, Mariana Seremet, Vitalie Sprinceana
Ukraine: Kateryna Gorlenko, Anna Pohribna, Yuliya Vaganova

SPACES Participants (2011–2014)

Georgia

undergo. the parallels
Participants: Ruska Abesadze, ART Laboratory, Mariam Besiashvili, Tamar Chaduneli, Frauke Schmidt/Jan Paul Herzer/Max Kullmann as Hands on Sound, Tamar Gurgenidze, Sophie Hoffer, Helmut Kandl, Tamuna Karumidze, Andreas M. Kaufmann, Giorgi Kvinikadze, Magdalena Kuchtova, Irina Kurtishvili, Keto Logua, Vasili Macharadze, Nuka Megrelishvili, Tilmann Meyer-Faje, Konstantine Mindadze, Michal Moravčik, Natalie Nebieridze, Mariann Opplinger, Agnieszka Pokrywka, Jonathan Karkut/Julie Scott/Torange Khonsari as *Public Works*, Oliver Ressler, Alicja Rogalska, Hans Rosenström, Stefan Rusu, Inga Samkharadze, Mamuka Samkharadze, Romana Schmalisch, Andrea Schneemeier, Katharina Stadler, Alex Axinte/Cristi Borcan as *studioBASAR*, Kote Sulaberidze, Ludwig Kittinger/Fernando Mesquita as Tuesday Evening, Koka Vashakidze
David Chikhladze, Mamuka Japharidze, Koka Ramishvili, Gia Rigvava, Lia Shvelidze, Oleg Timchenko, Niko Tsetskhladze, Mamuka Tsetskhladze in Archive Material

Travelling Foodways. Betlemi Quarter Stories
Collaboration with ICOMOS Georgia: Lia Bokuchava, Lela Ninoshvili, Nato Tsintsabadze
Participants: Anna Benidze, Nazi Beridze, David Chigholashvili, Tsira Elisashvili, Ana Gzirishvili, Lala Karaiani, Nini Khuroshvili, Tatia Khutsishvili, Maja Malinovska, Larisa Mezhdoiani, Ana Ramazashvili, Irakli Sharvadze, Katharina Stadler, Vato Urushadze

Garden on the Wheels: Visiting Eliava
Collaboration with Dali Darjania and Natalia Nebieridze as group *DontheC*
Participants: Teo Abaishviili, Mariam Aslanishvili, Kakha Bakhtadze, Aude Benhaïm, Dachi Chegia, Kuji Davituliani, Nora Frohmann, Irakli Ioramashvili, Luisa Laperadze, Eka Mgebrishvili, Sopo Miminoshvili, Mikho Mirzashvili, Steffi Schöne, Giorgi Sumbadze

Garden on the Wheels: Herbening
Ana Ramazashvili

Film "Beauty Heals All". 1st Stomatology Clinic of Tbilisi
Elene Asatiani, Nini Palavandishvili, Nano Zazanashvili

Soviet Modernism Architecture in Georgia
Oleksandr Burlaka, Rusudan Mirzikashvili, Nano Zazanashvili

Mosaics of Soviet Period in Tbilisi
Tamara Bokuchava, Oleksandr Burlaka, Sophia Lapiashvili, Nini Palavandishvili, Lena Prents

Workshop

Participation VS Participatory. City Dwellers and Urban Interventions
By Anna Danilewicz
Presenters: Tamara Bokuchava, Katharina Stadler, Lela Ninoshvili
Participants: Kristine Bebia, Tamuna Chabashvili, Nutsa Kandelaki, Ernst Khechumov, Helen Mechitova, Nuka Megrelishvili, Gvantsa Nikolaishvili, Elene Rakviashvili, Nano Zazanashvili

Opening the Public Space for Citizens: Innovation and Inclusion
Researchers: Ruben Arevshatyan, Levan Asabashvili, Kateryna Botanova, Elvan Dajko, Sandra Kapetanovic, Anna Khvyl, Arevik Martirosyan, Stefan Rusu, Vitalie Sprinceana, Mikheil Svanidze, Ihor Tyshchenko, Vladimir Us
Conference presenters: *Group Bouillon*, Dali Darjania/Natalia Nebieridze as *DontheC*, Aleko Elisashvili, Icomos Georgia, Irakli Khvadagiani, *Laboratoria 1918*, Nina Kurtela, Tamara Shavgulidze, Gala Eristavi/Aleksander Soselia/Tamar Muskhelishvili as *Tetsi Group*, Nano Zazanashvili

Public discussions

DOCOMOMO_Georgia
Rusudan Mirzikashvili, Nano Zazanashvili

Art in a Public Space
Tamar Muskelishvili, Rusiko Oat, Lali Pertenava, Aleksander Soselia

"Laguna Vere" and Forgotten Architecture 'Monuments' of Soviet Modernism
Levan Asabashvili, Oleksandr Burlaka, Ketusia Ignatova, Nano Zazanashvili

Cultural Policy Forum

#1: Urgent Issues of Contemporary Visual Art: Alternative Financial Sources and Possible Changes in Legislation
Tamara Janashia, Zviad Mchedlishvili, Konstantine Natsvlishvili

#2: Role of Independent Cultural Scene
Nataša Bodrožić, Ina Borozan, Kateryna Botanova, Tsira Chikvaidze, Heidi Dumreicher, Nora Galfayan, Tamar Janashia, Theona Kartlelishvili, Nana Kipiani, Nino Kuprava, Sophia Lapiashvili, Richard S. Levine, Nini Palavandishvili, Ursula Pfrimer, Julie Scott, Tamara Shavgulidze, Taguhi Tarosyan, Nana Tsikhistavi, Gvantsa Turmanidze, Vladimir Us, Yulia Vaganova

#3: Role of Independent Cultural Scene
Nataša Bodrožić, Ina Borozan, Kateryna Botanova, Nino Choghoshvili, Dali Darjania, Nona Davitaia, Heidi Dumreicher, Nora Galfayan, Mari Gorkoladze, Tamara Janashia, Sophia Lapiashvili, Natalia Nebieridze, Nini Palavandishvili, Lali Pertenava, Ursula Pfrimer, Ana Riaboshenko, Tamara Shavgulidze, Taguhi Torosyan, Saba Tsikolia, Nato Tsintsabadze, Vladimir Us, Yulia Vaganova, George Vanyan

#4: Recent Reforms in Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia Regarding Cultural policy
Levan Avalishvili, Badri Bagration-Gruzinski, Theona Dolenjashvili, Sophia Kilasonia, Lali Pertenava

INCUBATOR Team
Tamara Janashia, Sophia Lapiashvili, Zviad Mchedlishvili, Nini Palavandishvili, Ana Riaboshenko, Tamara Shavgulidze

Artists in Residence/Associates
Jaroslav Sedlák and Šárka Svobodová as *4AM,* Oleksandr Burlaka, Anna Danilewicz, Nina Kurtela, Levente Polyak as *KÉK*, Jonathan Karkut, Julie Scott and Torange Khonsari as *Public Works*

Armenia

Exhibition *Private/Public*
Curated by Taguhi Torosyan

Exhibition *Like That: Green and Black*
Curated by Arman Grigoryan and Vahagn Ghukasyan

Intervention *Open Source Bookstore*
Curated by Nora Galfayan, Taguhi Torosyan

Intervention, Video Lecture *Sweet 60s*
Ruben Arevshatyan

Lecture *What is Public Space*
Aghasi Tadevosyan

Utopian Readings
Nora Galfayan, Anna Barseghian

Public Talks
Curated by Nora Galfayan, Taguhi Torosyan
Participants: Harutyun Alpetyan, Ruben Arevshatyan, Anna Barseghian, Hrach
Bayadyan, Heidi Dumreicher, Vardan Jaloyan, Richard Levine, Stefan
Press, Davit Stepanyan and Utopiana.am/MediaLab students: Elen
Grigoryan, Hasmik Ordukhanyan, Anahit Paskevichyan.

Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan
Arevik Martirosyan

Workshops

Inheritance and Dynamic
Alain Chair

Take the Square* and *Spatial Occupations
Oliver Ressler

Art, Mobility and Enlightenment
Vardan Azatyan

Public Sphere: Between Contestation and Reconciliation
Vardan Azatyan

Speak Through Forum Theater
Yana Mkrtchyan, Carlos Muradyan

Thinking with Photography
Karin Grigoryan

Cultural Policy Forum

The Third Sector
Vahram Aghasyan, Harutyun Alpetyan, Shushan Avagyan, Anna Avetisyan, Nora
Galfayan, Gor Hakobyan, Nazaret Karoyan, Eva Khachatryan, Davit Stepanyan,
Lusine Talalyan, Nvard Yerkanyan

Mapping

Local Air Lines
Karin Grigoryan and Vaghinak Ghazaryan

Mapping Public Shifts
Gor Yengoyan

Institutional Mapping
Research by: Anna Zhamakochyan, Nvard Yerkanyan, Nora Galfayan, Ninel Melkonyan, Nare Sahakyan, Arevik Martirosyan, Lilit Petrosyan, Ruzanna Grigoryan, Taguhi Torosyan

Local Publication

Local Air Lines
Karin Grigoryan and Vaghinak Ghazaryan

The Public Sphere
Vardan Azatyan

SPACES TV
Areg Amirkhanyan, Vahe Budumyan, Vaghinak Ghazaryan, Karin Grigoryan, Davit Stepanyan

Artists in Residence/Associates
Torange Konsari, *Grupa Predmetiv* (Ivan Melnychuk and Oleksandr Burlaka), Katharina Stadler

Ukraine

International Discussion Platform *Spaces of Negotiation*
Elke Krasny, Yuriy Kruchak and Yulia Kostereva, Anton Lederer, Stefan Rusu, Romana Schmalisch

Architecture of Common
Artists: Pavel Braila, Oleksandr Burlaka and Ivan Melnychuk as *Grupa Predmetiv*, Tetyana Goryushyna, Alevtina Kakhidze, Alina Kopytsya, Yuriy Kruchak, Sasha Kurmaz, Myroslav Vayda, *Partizaning* group, Vova Vorotniov
Music performances: band *DRUMTИATP* (Oleksiy Gmyrya, Yurko Izdryk, Gryts Semenchuk), band *Lyudska Podoba/Human Shape* (Georgiy Babanskyi, Anatoly Belov, Artur Kocharyan, Oleksandr Ratushnyak, Ivanna Yarema)

Participants of the discussion and lecture programme: Levan Asabashvili, Nataša Bodrožić, Oleksandr Burlaka and Ivan Melnychuk as *Grupa Predmetiv*, Arevik Martirosyan, Igor Ponosov as *Partizaning* group, Iryna Solovey, Vitalie Sprinceane, Mikheil Svanidze, Roman Tsybrivsky, Igor Tyshchenko

Holidays on the Block
Participants: Mariam Agamyan, Tekla Aslanishvili, *BaraBooka* literature club, *Bokmal* literature club, Oleksandr Dolhiy, International festival of film and urbanism "86", Alevtina Kakhidze, Ksenia Kharchenko, Alina Kondratenko, Alina Kopytsya, Yulia Kostereva, Irina Kostyshina, Yuriy Kruchak, Maria Kulykivska, *Kyiv Cyclists' Association* (AVK), Kateryna Mishchuk, Zhanna Ozirna, Nadia Parfan, El Parvulesco/Teta Tsybulnyk, Oksana Shynkarenko/Victor Ruban, Darya Tsymbalyuk, Ksenia Utievska/Larysa Ishchenko

Participants of *Ponyaky Portrait* research workshop: Mariya Borysova, Tetyana Bulakh, Anna Dobrova, Eugenia Don-Zakharova, Maria Grishchenko, Dmytro Isaiev, Dana Kosmina, Lidia Lelechenko, Valeria Nepeina, Natalia Otrishchenko, Roman Pomazan, Olena Pravylo, Galina Sukhomud, Kseniia Utievska, Dan Voronov, Oksana Zinchenko

Public Policy Forum for *Kyiv Co-Existence in Public Space*
Vita Bazan, Kateryna Botanova, Yevhen Glibovytsky, Nataliya Gumenyuk, Yulia Filipovska, Yulia Filonenko, Yuriy Kruchak, Aksiniya Kurina, Volodymyr Kuznyetsov, Vladyslava Osmak, Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta, Mykola Skyba, Iryna Solovey

Expert Forum with Ministry of Culture of Ukraine *Short-Term Priorities for Reforms in Culture*
Kateryna Botanova, Anna Bubnova, Oleksandr Butsenko, Evhen Bystryyskyi, Olha Cheremska, Kateryna Chueva, Valentyna Demian, Anatoliy Dnistrovyi, Lyudmyla Garbuz, Lyudmyla Gubianuri, Oleksandr Hrytsenko, Denys Ivanov, Evhen Karas, Oleksandra Koval, Bohdan Kozhushko, Lesya Kulchynska, Aksinia Kurina, Serhiy Layevskyi, Iryna Magdysh, Neda Nezhdana, Evhen Nishchuk, Olena Oliynyk, Vladyslava Osmak, Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta, Vladyslav Pioro, Olena Pravylo, Serhiy Proskurnya, Yuriy Reshetnikov, Oleksandr Roitburd, Yuriy Rybachuk, Mykola Skyba, Iryna Slavinska, Iryna Solovey, Lyudmyla Tomilovich, Hanna Veselovska

Artists in Residence/Associates
Tekla Aslanishvili, Pavel Braila, Zora Jaurova, Birgitta Persson

Moldova

Chisinau Civic Center - Open Air Cinema
3*2*1*0 / 4AM (Lea Hawerlandova, Michal Macuda, Jaroslav Sedlák, Jan Svoboda, Šárka Svobodová), *3A* (Ina Borozan And Andrei Vatamaniuc), Johanna Michiels, *studioBASAR* (Alex Axinte, Cristi Borcan, Radu Lesevschi, George Marinescu), Bianca Stumptner, *Urban Reactor* (Levan Asabashvili, Mikheil Svanidze), Laura Bohigas Vendrell, Vlad Zderciuc

Chisinau Civic Center - Beyond the Red Lines
Ludmila Bouros, Maxim Cuzmenco, Antoine Fourmy, Karl Hallberg, Alexandru Munteanu, Ghenadie Popescu, Tom Russotti, Asta Slapikaite, Spalatorie Theatre (Dj Codec & Vj Vaki), Stefan Tiron, Ion Ungureanu, Ewa Rudnicka, Stanislav Vrednik

Chisinau Civic Center - People's Park
Addm (Serghei Golovnea, Alexandra Sosnicova And The Contact Improvisation Group), Ion Andrusceac, Valeria Barbas, Mihai Boicu, Ludmila Bouros, Angela Candu, Maxim Cuzmenco, Diana Draganova, Ina Falikova, Sandra Hirtz, Michal Holy, Anatolie Juraveli, Natalia Jurminskaia, Ina Ivanceanu, Taras Kamennoy, Kinga Lendeczki, Marie Lukacova And Jakub Rocek, Bogdan Lypkhan, Alfonso García Marcos, Ramin Mazur, Cristina Magurean, Gaelle Mege, Tatiana Miron, Mihai Moldovanu, Victoria Moldovanu, Anastasia Palii, Alina Popa, Tatiana Popadiuc, Ghenadie Popescu, Ion Rosca, Diana Sandu, Roman Solianyk, Soska (Mykola Ridnyi And Serhiy Popov), *Spalatorie Theatre* (Data Tutashkin), Victoria Stoica, *studioBASAR* (Alex Axinte, Tudor Elian, Maria Oancea, Daniela Palimariu, Andrei Pripasu, Cristian Stoian), Mariana Seremet, *Urbalance* (Ewa Rudnicka, Marlena Happach And Grzegorz Mlynarski), Viorel Ursu, Vladimir Us, Alexandru Vakulovski, Anna Witt, Hannes Zebedin, The Park Fanfare With Anatolie Cazacu, And The Inhabitants

Chisinau. The Boulevard That Never Happened
Film by Ruben Agadjanean, Denis Bartenev, Oleg Gherman, Stefan Rusu

Opening The Public Space for Citizens:
Innovation And Inclusion
Ruben Arevshatyan, Oleg Breg, Bettina Colb, Sonja Damchevska, Alexei Dimitrov, Heidi Dumreicher, Joanna Erbel, Irina Grabovan, Andrei Hohlov, Irina Iachim, Dmitrii Kavruk, Anna Khvyl, Saimir Kristo, Arevik Martirosyan, Hamlet Melkumyan-Alexanyan, Corina Rezneac, Stefan Rusu, Vitalie Sprinceana, Ion Stefanita, Igor Tyshchenko, Vladimir Us, Vitalii Voznoi, Artiom Zavadovschi

Zpace Conferences
Teodor Ajder, *C2c* (Miljenka Buljevic, Katarina Pavic), Vasyl Cherepanyn, Cocosul Rosu (Eugenia Rosu, Vasiluta Vasilache), Vasile Ernu, Mihai Gotiu, Alexandr

Lomakin, Vadim Lungul, Petru Negura, Norbert Petrovici, Florin Poenaru, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, *Political Critique* (Agnieszka Wisniewska)

Workshops

Zpace Workshops
Corina Bucea, Dusan Dobias, Katarína Gatialova, Yaroslav Minkin, Ganna Ostafiychuk, Darius Polok, Raluca Pop, Renata Popa, Olha Reiter, Valentyna Zalevska

Recovering Spaces
studioBASAR (Alex Axinte, Cristi Borcan, Tudor Elian, Ana-Maria Toni, Alexandra Taranu)

Reclaiming Spaces
Levente Polyak and Vitalie Sprinceana

Mapping Of Public Space In Chisinau
Ion Andrusceac, Ina Borozan, Dumitrita Efremov, Natalia Eremciuc, Eugen Panescu, Corina Rezneac, Vladimir Us, Andrei Vatamaniuc, Vlad Zderciuc

Artist in Residence
Paula Durinova, *Public Pedestal* (Jana Kapelova And Michal Moravčik)

SPACES Partners

A Collaborative Project by:

AMOUR FOU, Luxembourg
Throughout the process AMOUR FOU stands for vision and pushing the envelope, whether in regard to aesthetics, production or distribution strategies. The focus is on European independent auteur cinema and the distinctive "handwriting" of the directors who work with AMOUR FOU. A further emphasis can be found in the development and realization of films and projects that are located at the interface of science, film and art, and in the production of documentaries concerning issues in the visual arts.
www.amourfoufilm.com

CSM (Foundation Center for Contemporary Art), Kyiv/Ukraine
Founded in 2005, CSM supports emerging and non-commercial contemporary art practices. It explores the social role of contemporary art in provoking continuous dynamic dialogue between art and society. As an institution it serves as a platform for discussions and communication channel for artists, researchers, policy makers, and wider public. It operates as a vital communicator between the contemporary visual arts and actual social processes.
www.csmart.org.ua

GeoAIR, Tbilisi/Georgia
GeoAIR has a rich experience of implementing art projects in public spaces of Tbilisi and beyond. As an independent art initiative, GeoAIR organises and supports international exchange projects with the goal of strengthening the Georgian and Caucasian art world, bringing together artists from different cultural backgrounds and finding relevant contexts for them to work in.
www.geoair.ge
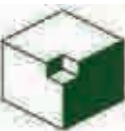
Oberliht Young Artists Association, Chisinau/Moldova
Founded in 2000 and based on a long experience as an independent cultural actor, "Oberliht" aims to interconnect dispersed artistic scenes and build an artistic community making use of public spaces. It will specifically contribute to the creation of public space events, bring in its NGO management know-how and will support the creation of the cross-regional platform and network representing the non institutionalized cultural organizations.
www.oberliht.com

Oikodrom, Vienna/Austria

Oikodrom is a private research institute founded in 1994. It generates future images and strategies for human settlements in countries all over the world – from Europe to China and to the Mediterranean Islamic countries – under a concept of strong sustainability. The emerging future scenarios contribute to the creation of systemic knowledge as well as to the participatory implementation of sustainability processes. The team has a vast experience in working at the interface of science and art.

www.oikodrom.org

Slobodne Veze - Loose Association, Zagreb/Croatia

Slobodne Veze is focused on the analysis of the current processes happening in public spaces, the problems of the shrinking public and ways of resistance against it. Its interest is also pointed towards the "non-institutionalized art scenes" in post-Socialist Europe, based on self-organization and collective creation. Its basic interest can be summarized as follows: "We are looking for modes of destabilization of the system of apparent reality through mechanisms of discursive analysis (and visual representation) in order to create gaps, territories of "the possibilities undiscovered" which are to be found outside of the given choices imposed by the dominant politics of culture."

www.slobodneveze.wordpress.com

Utopiana.am, Yerevan/Armenia

Utopiana.am is a creative-cultural organization founded in 2003 in Yerevan, Armenia. Utopiana uses contemporary art practices to contribute, interfere and participate in the social-cultural transformations thus ensuring new harbors for contemporary art. Archive/documentation: as a possibility to understand the interrupted/accomplished or ongoing social-political processes, Self-sufficiency: as a prerequisite for the institutional "independence" and (Self)education: as an agent for procreation, are the main strategic directions of the organization.

www.utopiana.am

	Public Space Event	**Workshop**	**Mapping**
GeoAIR	undergo. the parallels — 24.05-03.06.		Possible Alternative Art Spaces in Tbilisi
Utopiana	Private/Public Intervention, Open Source Bookstore — 21.02	Inheritance and Dynamic Alain Chair — 01.05.	
	What is Public Space - Civic Tribune: Aghasi Tadevosyan — 22.02.	"Take the Square" & "Spatial Occupations" Oliver Ressler — 15-16.09.	
	Utopian Readings within Open Source Bookstore Interv., Video Lect, Sweet 60s — 29.02.		
	Europe Day Celebration — 12.05. / Public Talks — 8-12.10.		
CSM	Publication In Search of Spaces of Negotiation	Art Engaged in the Neighborhood. Diversity, Participation, Knowledge Anton Lederer (ROTOR, Graz)	Kyiv Project Kyiv Soviet Modernist Buildings Grupa Predmetiv
		Local is the New Global Yuriy Kruchak & Yulia Kostereva — Sept.	
Oberliht	Chisinau Civic Center - Open Air Cinema — 18-31.08.	Central Park Writing Banners Workshop — Dec.	Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau, with Eugen Panescu — 02-06.07.
Slobodne Veze	SPACES Cultural Policy Research		//
Amour Fou	Film Shootings During Caravan Programmes		//
Oikodrom	Presentation of the SPACES Project in Liverpool/ UK		//

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Residency/ Associates

Public Discussion

Cultural Policy Forum

Jonathan Karkut/Julie Scott/ Torange Khonsari as Public Works

May-June

DOCOMOMO Georgia- Soviet Modernist Heritage

29.05.

Urgent Issues of Contemporary Visual Art

27.04.

31.05.

Art in Public Space

Role of Independent Cultural Scene

May-June

Incubator Initiative for Changes in Cultural Policy of Georgia

Opening the Public Space for Citizens: Innovation and Inclusion

Dec.

The Third Sector

20.06./28.06

International Discussion Platform "Spaces of Negotiation"

20-29.09.

Paula Durinova

Apr-June

Public Space in Post-Socialism, Reading Group with Vitalie Sprinceana

July-Sept.

SPACES Curatorial Team Coordination/Consultation   //   SPACES Post-reflections Blog Editor

First Project Documentary

SPACES Networking Breakfast in Vienna

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Public Space Event	**Workshop**	**Mapping**

GeoAIR

Travelling Foodways. Betlemi Quarter Stories	17.05. Participation VS Participatory – City Dwellers & Urban Interventions Anna Danilewicz	09.11. Art and cultural Organisations in Tbilisi http://yellowradar.ge/
Garden on the Wheels: Visiting Eliava Garden on the Wheels: Herbening	18-19.05. 08.06.	Soviet Modernism Architecture in Georgia Mosaics of Soviet Period in Tbilisi
Film "Beauty heals all" 1st Stomatology Clinic of Tbilisi		

Utopiana

	Art, Mobility and Enlightenment Vardan Azatyan	Local Air Lines Karin Grigoryan/Vaghinak Ghazaryan
Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan. Arevik Martirosyan	Nov.	
SPACES TV		

CSM

Architecture of Common	23-26.05. Architecture of Opportunities Yuriy Kruchak	April Collective Mapping Partizaning group

Oberliht

Chisinau Civic Center - Beyond the Red Lines	04-22.09. Sociological Research	April Reclaimed Spaces Levente Polyak and Vitalie Sprinceana	10-12.09.
Temporary Art Zpace National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History	Recovered Spaces studioBASAR	07-11.09.

Slobodne Veze

SPACES Cultural Policy Research	//

Amour Fou

Start SPACES TV (with Utopiana.am)

Oikodrom

2   S

Residency/ Associates		Public Discussion		Cultural Policy Forum	
Nina Kurtela	March	Opening the Public Space for Citizens: Innovation and Inclusion	March	Recent reforms in MoC Georgia Regarding Cultural Policy	20.05.
				Incubator Initiative for Changes in Cultural Policy of Georgia	
Katharina Stadler	Sept.				
Pavel Braila	15-28.05.	Opening the Public Space for Citizens: Innovation and Inclusion	May	Co-existence in Public Space	26.05.
		Opening the Public Space for Citizens: Innovation and Inclusion	Sept.	Zpace 1#: Independent Organizations and Initiatives in Chisinau	08.08.
		International conference	17-18.09	Zpace #2: Activities of Independent Cultural Initiatives from Chisinau	06.11.

SPACES Curatorial Team Coordination/Consultation // SPACES Post-reflections Blog Editor

1 3

	Public Space Event	Workshop	Mapping
GeoAIR	Mosaics of Soviet Period in Tbilisi Launching Exhibition &Publication *(Nov.)* Film "Beauty Heals All" 1st Stomatology Clinic of Tbilisi	Vacant Central Eastern Europe. Vacant Tbilisi http://www.vacanteurope.eu/en	Art and Cultural Organisations in Tbilisi http://yellowradar.ge/ Soviet Modernism Architecture in Georgia Mosaics of Soviet period in Tbilisi
Utopiana.am	Living with Shushanik Kurghinyan Arevik Martirosyan *(May-Oct.)* Open Source Bookstore Ijevan, Gyumri, Chambarak, Vanadzor	Public Sphere: Between Contestation and Reconciliation Speak Through Forum Theater Yerevan, Ijevan, Gyumri, Chambarak, Vanadzor *(May-Oct.)* Thinking with Photography Karin Grigoryan Gyumri, Chambarak, Vanadzor	Local Air Lines Karin Grigoryan & Vaghinak Ghazaryan *(Feb.-Apr.)* Mapping Public Shifts Gor Yengoyan *(Apr.-June)*
	SPACES TV	Local Air Lines Publication by Karin Grigoryan & Vaghinak Ghazaryan	
CSM	Holidays on the Block *(4-27.07.)*	Ponyaky Portrait research workshop for students and activists *(10-27.07.)*	
Oberliht	Chisinau Civic Center - People's Park Public Space Library *(11.08-6.09.)* Temporary art Zpace National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History Special Issue of POSTBOX Magazine	People's Park Drawing Workshop for the Park Sociological Research Addressed to the Inhabitants of the Area Around the Park Creation of the Master-Plan for the Park	Zpace (Capacity Building Workshops for Independent Ngos) #1: Management of Cultural Project *(Feb.-Apr.-May)* #3: Management of Independent Art and Culture Centers Recovered Spaces studioBASAR *(June-Aug.)* *(14-28.08.)*
	A Boulevard that Never Happened, a Film by Stefan Rusu		
Slobodne Veze	SPACES CULTURAL POLICY PAPER- Research, Publication Editor //		
Amour Fou	SPACES DVD Compilation		
Oikodrom	SPACES Final Conference in Vienna		

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Oleksandr Burlaka

March

Levente Polyak, KÉK
Šárka Svobodová &
Jaroslav Sedlák, 4AM

Apr.

Incubator Initiative for Changes
in Cultural Policy of Georgia

Gruppa Predmeti

Oct.

Torange Konsari and
Metropolitan University Students

Nov.

// The Public Sphere Publication editor Vardan Azatyan

Tekla Aslanishvili

14-28.07.

Short-term Priorities for Reforms
in Culture

29.07.

#2: Management of
Cultural Projects in
Rural Areas

May-June

Zpace#3:
Activities of Independent Cultural
Organizations from Outside of Chisinau

06.03.

#4: Advocating
Cultural Changes

Zpace #4:
Cultural Web Platforms

17.04.

Zpace #5:
Advocating Cultural Changes

24.06.

SPACES READER - Coordinator, Co-editor // SPACES ZAGREB: Lines of Movement (Final Event - Public Lectures, Talks and City Tours)

1   4
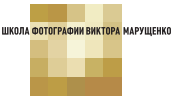
SPACES Supporting Institutions

Georgia

BRITISH COUNCIL

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Adam Mickiewicz Institute CULTURE.PL

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Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

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Armenia

IDHR — Institute for Democracy and Human Rights

urbanlab yn

[NeST] COMMUNITY CENTER RESIDENCY

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INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART YEREVAN

Ukraine

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Croatia

Austria

SPACES Catalogue Authors

Ruben Arevshatyan is an artist, art critic and independent curator based in Yerevan. He is the president of AICA-Armenia and teaches at the Contemporary Art Institute, Yerevan. He is an author of numerous critical texts in local and international magazines and publications. His critical articles deal with the current problems of Armenian contemporary art, architecture, the transformation of post-Soviet urban space, art theory and art education.

Nataša Bodrožić is a curator and cultural worker based in Zagreb. She is co-founder of Slobodne veze/ Loose Associations, a contemporary art platform established in 2009 in Croatia. Her special interest lies in the "non-institutionalized" cultural practices in post-Socialist Europe. As a member of the SPACES curatorial team, she edited the SPACES Cultural Policy Paper focusing on the newly emerging cultural actors in Chisinau, Kyiv, Tbilisi and Yerevan.

Kateryna Botanova is an art critic, curator, contemporary culture researcher and cultural producer. Since 2009 she has been director of CSM-Foundation Center for Contemporary Art (Kyiv, Ukraine). She is also founder and chief editor of the online journal *KORYDOR* on contemporary culture. She works with issues of social engagement of art and the role of art in societies' transformative processes.

Oleksandr Burlaka is a Ukrainian architect and artist. He is a member of *Grupa Predmetiv,* the *Melnychuk-Berlaka* group, the *Hudrada* interdisciplinary curatorial association, and the *Art Workers' Self-Defense Initiative.* He also works in the fields of design and photography. Lives and works in Kyiv. As an architect he questions and studies the role, ideology and responsibility of architects today.

Heidi Dumreicher is a linguist, pioneer in integrated sustainability research and founding director of Oikodrom – the Vienna Institute of Urban Sustainability. She is the initiator and main coordinator of numerous interdisciplinary European Research Grants. Main research interests: social theory on sustainability, public space and the knowledge society.

Nora Galfayan is a cultural manager and civic activist from Yerevan, Armenia. She is president of the creative-cultural NGO Utopiana.am. Her main interests and professional activity are related to contemporary art practices and their role in social-political transformations as well as potentials of self-sustainability for independent (cultural) organizations in post-Soviet countries.

Ina Ivanceanu is a filmmaker, cultural worker and journalist in the fields of science, culture and arts, with a wide regional experience from Sub-Saharan Africa to China to the Arab world. She is interested in participatory art and video work and innovative ways of culture and science communication.

Bettina Kolb is a sociologist based in Vienna, Austria specializing in visual sociology (photos) and the participatory photo interview as a qualitative approach to the empirical world. She is a member of the visual study group at the University of Vienna. Research fields: public space, healthy public space, and health promotion.

Aleksandra Krauze is a student of the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, Design faculty. She has been working as a journalist for the English language edition of *The Georgian Times*, and as an office manager at Kakha Bakuradze's Movement Theater; she also collaborates with the Women Initiatives Support Group.

Richard S. Levine is a US-based architect, urban designer, author and emeritus professor who promotes sustainability-driven architecture and urban design. In the sustainable city, citizen participation in democratic decision-making, particularly in the development and use of public space animated by art and performance activities are a key dynamic and the linkage of Levine's activities to the SPACES programme.

Nini Palavandishvili is a member of the GeoAIR team in Tbilisi, Georgia, and a curator who researches social and political contexts and their interpretation in the context of cultural production and contemporary art. She is interested in an artistic practice that finds innovative forms and languages with which it is possible to speak about political and social matters.

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Oleksiy Radynski is a filmmaker and writer based in Kyiv. He is a member of the *Visual Culture Research Center*, an initiative for art, knowledge, and politics founded in Kyiv in 2008. Since 2011, he has been editor of the Ukrainian edition of the magazine *Political Critique*. His latest films include *Incident in the Museum* (2013), *Ukraine Goes To War* (with Tomas Rafa, 2014), and *Integration* (2014).

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Vladimir Us is an artist and curator based in Chisinau, Moldova, and a founding member of Oberliht Young Artists Association. He studied art, curating, cultural management and cultural policy in Chisinau, Grenoble and Belgrade. Through his recent works and projects, he examines the processes of transformation of the public space in post-Soviet cities, along with the need for conceptualizing an alternative network of public spaces in Chisinau.

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