# URBAN RENEWAL AND DISCONNECT

## VARYING PERCEPTIONS ON THE VALUE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN TBILISI, GEORGIA

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# Abstract

In recent years, many cities in the developing world have been experiencing explosive upwards and outwards growth, with economic development often outpacing the capacity of citizens to adapt. A key tool in the reconfiguration of the urban space can be found in Urban Renewal, as an attempt to reverse and prevent decay. Urban renewal, in theory and practice, is often presented as the all-encompassing solution to existing problems whilst simultaneously enabling for further development, particularly in terms of bringing different stakeholders together. However, the degree to which urban renewal facilitates such an interaction, supplementing an integrated planning strategy that empowers and includes local communities remains largely unexplored. In most developed cities, urban renewal has had an eroding effect on the community fabric and used to mask or justify inequality and segregation. As such, the present research serves an examination of whether a similar process can occur in a developing setting. It set out to conceptualise and rationalise urban change by investigating whether urban renewal in Tbilisi has contributed to a sense of 'disconnect' between residents and institutions.

This paper examined existing literature on urban renewal and drew comparisons with data gathered from Tbilisi. A survey with 62 residents, 30 interviews, an analysis of secondary data and local media attempted to understand the effects urban renewal has had on the connectedness of different stakeholders, primarily through an exploration of territorial stigma.

The results of the research confirmed the complexity of the urban experience and the multiplicity of adaptation strategies towards –desirable or undesirable- change. It claims that urban renewal has indeed contributed to disconnect, a dual widening gap between residents and their institutions, as well as between residents themselves. It uncovered how urban renewal has failed to address perennial issues, formalised inequality, challenged notions of possession, and fundamentally altered the enfranchisement of residents in relation to change. Nevertheless, the study also acknowledges the centrality of context in being able to attribute

or substantiate the interlocking of disconnect with any of these phenomena. This proves that further and more systematic research is necessary, while also proposing an enhanced understanding of urban renewal, marginality, and territorial stigma as analytic tools. Therefore, it concluded that any branding of urban renewal as 'sustainable,' even when employed exploratively, ought to be approached with caution, particularly in terms of transparency, optimisation, and emancipation.

# Acknowledgements

When I first visited Georgia in 2018, I was impressed by how much beauty and warmth can be contained in such a little space. Never would have I imagined that 5 years later I would dedicate so much of my time and energy on it. There is a sincere sense of gratitude and responsibility in being allowed to study something I feel strongly about, and I truly hope this paper is rewarding enough to each Georgian. Quite ironically, despite researching disconnect, I got to experience a real connection with Tbilisi and its people. I am confident and optimistic about the future of Tbilisi, the European pathway of Georgia, and the sustainable growth of its people. Which is exactly why I am critical or pointed about my observations. Over the past months, I came to love Georgia and cannot wait to return and reunite with all the people that made this journey possible.

Authoring this thesis has been such a huge portion of my life, containing so many memories, emotions, thoughts, and ideas that cannot be expressed in words. It was an experience full of joyous moments, frustrations, challenges, complex decisions, sacrifices, laughter, and unexpected discoveries. It would not have been possible without the help of some special and meaningful individuals.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for believing in me and supporting me from even before this journey started. This paper is an attempt to make you even more proud and a recognition of your work to make me who I am today.

After this is done, reconciling my feelings, and letting go will be an arduous process but one I am excited to embark on.

Thank you! დიდი მადლობა!

Nikos-Pavlos Kotzias

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# 1. Introduction

In May 2013, the Gezi Park at the European centre of Istanbul was earmarked to be redeveloped as an Ottoman-style shopping mall. The residents were very displeased with the decision, not only because it would erase a valuable green space in a densely populated city, but also because they were not even aware or consulted. In fact, then mayor Kadir Topbaş admitted that he had no say either; the decision had come directly from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. What then started as a peaceful demonstration and sit-in evolved into the largest and most diverse grassroots movement in modern Turkey. While the effort against police brutality, corruption, and authoritarianism inspired many demonstrators (Demirel-Pegg, 2018), that is not the single reason they took to the streets. They genuinely felt as if the government had stopped listening (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014) and was putting forward "issues" that no one cared about, dividing Turkish society, and disconnecting the whole structure of governance from its people; Gezi Park just happened to be the perfect symbol of that *disconnect* (Gül et al., 2014, italics my own). If the government does not know what its citizens want, how can it possibly serve them?

Such an example aptly displays the complexity of urban renewal as a mechanism of good governance and sustainable urban development. Of course, it is not without its problems and criticisms, the main one being how its application is inconsistent and fails to remedy systemic problems inherent in urban landscapes (Lindblom, 1959). While cities are becoming more diverse and polycentric, many spatial divides and conceptualisations are nearing obsolescence (Fainstein, 2010). This is exactly where urban renewal comes in as a tool to 'stitch' cities back together and reverse urban decay (Fagotto & Fung, 2006), in response to a motive and need to reorganise the urban space. This intent is not always matched by policy which is oftentimes unidimensional and guided by a mechanistic understanding of the urban landscape as separate from the experiences of its residents (Hall, 2014). Discussions on commuter times, affordability, green space, employment opportunities, and rural-to-urban migration are valuable in highlighting the complexity of managing a city. Yet, when viewed in conjunction with urban renewal and particularly how it is framed by those with influence, one

cannot help but notice a contradiction; the creation of new divides and concepts that alter the urban experience (van Kempen, 2007). The trend has been picked up by scholars and there exist plenty of analyses on gentrification, marginality, "Superstar Cities" (Gyourko et al., 2013), and racial banishment (Amin & Lancione, 2022) perfectly elucidating the unevenness of urban renewal.

However, the manner in which urban renewal as a process brings together different stakeholders (Corburn, 2005) has not been explicitly studied, let alone the degree of disconnect between them inherent in this process. Previous analyses have either focused on power dynamics, socio-economic elements, or emerging inequality, which form the basis of the present research that seeks to take the analysis a step further by including (diverging) perceptions in the equation. This is a niche direction for two concurrent reasons; On the one hand, similar research is heavily concentrated in a starkly different context (the US, Western Europe, Latin America) which renders the knowledge produced largely inapplicable and biased towards processes occurring elsewhere under different conditions (Amin & Lancione, 2022). On the other hand, literature on urban renewal seemingly rests on a binary, ranging from narratives of exclusion (Kohn, 2004), gentrification, and dispossession (van Kempen, 2007) on one end to being hailed as the future of urban development single-handedly resolving many of the issues of urbanisation on the other. In my understanding, these narratives are not mutually exclusive and, reflecting on the definition of urban renewal, are missing some more subtle nuances that lie in examining how perceptions can act as a catalyst when cities undergo change.

Put simply, the effects of a particular development for the surrounding community and the city can be examined for their economic, social, environmental, or political dimensions. But what is also worth examining is whether these effects match the perceptions of the persons they are supposed to serve. Returning to the original example of Gezi Park, the benefits of the proposed shopping mall or the problems from the demolition of the park, became only secondary to the discussion on the resistance emerging from it (Karaman, 2014).

## 1.1. Scientific and Societal Relevance

Looking at the topic more broadly, its dual relevance can also be inferred. From a scientific perspective, the research can help contribute to the reconceptualisation of urbanisation currently in the works that views the urban as an intersectional plain upon which multiple different interests, identities, and perceptions collide and converge. It also goes beyond stating the –somewhat patronising- observation that local populations need to be included in urban renewal efforts (Fagotto & Fung, 2006), as it will examine how to frame that involvement in principle. The intent is to be critical of the observations in terms of how they are created by different actors, not for their validity.

This perfectly complements the relevance of the research for the field of development. As urban renewal projects are multiplying across the world, including in the Global South, having this perspective can be beneficial in ensuring that these efforts are equitable. Also in the developed world, urban renewal has been repeatedly a violent and unpleasant process and a quick reading on the history of Tokyo, Shanghai, Detroit, or Rotterdam confirms this (Custers, 2021). Thus, there is no reason to believe that, if applied elsewhere, the inverse can occur, exactly because globalisation (and global investment) and gentrification are linked (Davidson, 2007). Nevertheless, having this knowledge can help in advocating for the most vulnerable populations and holding those in power accountable. It is relevant exactly because it aims to track and reverse an invisibilisation (Roy, 2017; Lancione, 2022) of persons threatened by displacement, banishment, and financial capital, in line with Meade's "*problematisation of communities of place*" (2021, p.198). This confrontational approach not only adds to the societal relevance of the study but also reflects the unseen struggle for the control of urban space already in the works (Kohn, 2004, Karaman 2014).

*Figure 1 - A New Housing Development in Didube*

Trends like the ones above are visible in Tbilisi, a growing city in the South Caucasus experiencing large-scale change of perhaps monumental proportions. And this is not an exaggeration, as looking at photographs from just 20 years ago reveals a completely different city. Since then, Tbilisi has not only grown in size and population, expanding sidewards and upwards but it has also reinvented itself as a financial, cultural, and urban centre. Modern high rises coexist next to decaying Soviet apartment blocks, shopping malls compliment little stores and various street vendors, green spaces are next to brownfields and landfills. There is as much construction as there is decay, which is -simultaneously- evenly and unevenly spread throughout the city. Urban renewal in Tbilisi has only made these contrasts and paradoxes more pronounced. Nevertheless, the goal is not necessarily to pass judgement on this process or expect that it could be completed instantaneously; it is a transition that takes time, effort, constant adjustments and is subject to a variety of opinions and ambitions. *For instance, where should the line be drawn between preservation and new construction? What is the ideal residence, shopping district, public transportation hub, or green space?*

Questions like these are indeed fascinating and it is doubtful whether there can be any agreement. Even if there is, however, a lack of resources and other socio-spatial limitations render managing the urban space a perplexing task. Which is why it is interesting to examine where these limitations and urban renewal interject. In this tussle about ideals, changes, and priorities, w*hose voices and interests are actually being represented?* A nice example of this is a recent study by Giorgi Kankia (2023), who displayed how urban mobility in Tbilisi is intimately tied to labour conditions and income. Unsurprisingly, richer districts got more investment and more mobility. Simply put, where a bus lane gets built can affect one's quality of living.

However, such choices also reflect an uneven development that has little to do with costs and more to do with perceptions. Urban renewal has been turned into the trojan horse to uproot prior development (Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016), roll back protections (van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012), and erect new divides which has only helped different stakeholders, and citizens themselves, drift further apart. *Why invest in one place and not in another?* That new bus lane can thus be seen as a symbol of physical and metaphorical disconnect, or a tale of disempowerment and alienation.



*Figure 2 - Housing Estates in Gldani*

Yet, it is also a tale of resistance and emancipation. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about many radical changes almost overnight, with privatisation at the forefront. Older generations benefitted from gaining control over their properties, while younger people grew up in a city that encroached on anything public. Indeed, while citizens might have originally been supportive of -or at least willing to compromise with- this new reality, their disillusionment became increasingly evident. That is because the foundation of modern Georgia was characterised by total socio-economic collapse, political turmoil, bloody conflicts, and the omnipresent eroding influence of Russia that continues to resonate through the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These circumstances encouraged a more managerial, if not authoritarian, style of governance that persisted through Georgia's transition into a modern, developed, and democratic country.

Of course, Tbilisi has massively improved in recent years, yet not all developments were equally desirable or inclusive. In fact, many helped bring to light systemic injustices and exclusionary practices that directly contradicted the dominant narrative. Decision-makers are not familiar or comfortable with the idea of being held accountable because, in their mind, their actions are guided by a desire to deliver tangible outcomes regardless of the sacrifices or methods involved. Government officials, private developers, foreign investors are all caught up in a system that prioritises deliverables over inclusion and is framed by the belief that people are powerless or at least indifferent. The assumption that citizens will once again adapt to the new reality or persevere might not be that far-fetched and there is evidence (including in this analysis) supporting that claim. Nevertheless, there does exist mounting criticism, doubt, and disappointment, as more people are falling behind and experiencing unequal development. Those are the individuals resisting change, reclaiming the urban space, raising their dissenting voices, and realising that they are not so powerless after all.

## 1.2. Study Objectives and Research Question(s)

The aim of this research is to explore the role disconnect, a widening gap between different actors, plays in urban planning and is a socio-spatial phenomenon, particularly in rapidly changing/developing cities, and examine how it connects with marginality. That aim has been condensed down to the following research question:

*How has a disconnect between residents and decision-making bodies affected the urban renewal process in Tbilisi?*

The research question looks at disconnect not just as a precondition or factor that influences decision-making but as a process that continues to resonate in terms of how the city is growing; a process that has affected the 'closeness' of citizens, their relationship with other institutions and the (lack of) understanding of individuals in different positions. It also alludes to the fact that while disconnect could potentially be quantified, it can only be done so by discovering its exact mechanisms and practices. However, that question cannot be adequately addressed or conceptualised unless a series of sub-questions are also included in the equation:

A) *To what extent does this disconnect translate into territorial stigmatisation?*

B) *How has the financialisation of urban space contributed to socio-economic exclusion?*

C) *In what ways do planned, state-led projects (mis)match the residents' expectations?*

D) *How are Tbilisians fighting against their housing/spatial dispossession and how has that struggle informed their understanding of the legitimacy of their original possession of urban space?*

While not working with a specific hypothesis, the sub-questions point to some systemic elements emerging from urban renewal and seek to understand how they translate on the level of perceptions. Perhaps the citizens of Tbilisi are forced to compromise with a change in the urban landscape that is both exclusionary and (re)produces prejudice, presented as if it is the only alternative. Or perhaps territorial stigma is activated and weaponised to alter the city, exclude its victims, and create a veneer of legitimacy and progress. Consequently, citizens are pushed to defend their occupation of urban space, feel disconnected from the urban renewal process, and are prevented from partaking in the decision-making that affects them.

Based on those questions, the research was conducted with three complementary objectives in mind:

Academically, the aim is to explore the role disconnect plays in urban planning. Determining the factors, processes and relationships that contribute to that disconnect has great scientific relevance and can be the basis for further scholarly research on how urban renewal can be better understood as a socio-spatial phenomenon. This is further supported by an aim to shift the focus away from Westernised urban landscapes and towards developments happening elsewhere. As already stated, this can help test the rigidity and applicability of existing scholarship in emerging contexts, while simultaneously advocating against a monolithic reading of urban development as a driver of global development.

Secondly, the research aspires to serve as a description, compilation, and roadmap for change in Tbilisi by bringing together different analyses, processes, and perspectives to adequately capture and narrate the changes on the ground and their effects on the citizens. Some of the circumstances, perspectives, and events described are not only ongoing but also foreign to many Georgians, so having a chronicle of their origination can help serve as future reference.

Lastly, there exists a more practical objective that is about encouraging a dialogue between different stakeholders on their perceptions of how an urban space should be developed. Research should be impactful and meaningful to the individuals and locations being studied, contributing back to those communities in some manner. In this sense, this research is an attempt to encourage both sides to voice their opinions more clearly on the matter. Fostering that inter-group relation, however confrontational, is key in disseminating the results.

## 1.3. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis starts by giving a –brief- explanation of the context of the research by giving a historical account of the urban development process of Tbilisi, and its relation to larger socio-political changes endemic to the country. It also states and slightly differentiates itself from

the larger thematic context of urban renewal and global development. This serves as a point of departure for an in-depth examination of the present academic literature on the topic, a clear delineation of the key concepts employed in the research, and an introduction of the conceptual framework used to untangle all the different elements. The aim is to both establish the exact relation between urban renewal and disconnect and to introduce a potential theoretical lens through which to unpack the topic. This is followed by a reference to the exact methodology of the research, including the different variables, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and methodological weaknesses. The following sections are then dedicated to presenting the results and communicating a clear narrative. The perceptions and priorities of the residents are presented and then contrasted with the role of government in urban renewal. Then the extent of urban development is conferred in short through secondary data to better illustrate the changes occurring on the ground. The subsequent chapters then explore the residents' narratives of dispossession and occupation of the urban space and give a detailed account of territorial stigma in action through specific examples found across Tbilisi. All data is then analysed in more detail and conclusions are drawn, while revisiting both the existing literature and recognising what elements might be Tbilisi-specific. A reflection on the original research question and possible limitations of the research follows, before a final summary of the findings, with particular emphasis on possible recommendations and pointers for further research.

## 2. Context – Georgia in Transition

While it is nearly impossible to fully grasp or communicate the complexity of the context within which Tbilisi is changing, it is important to have a starting point for setting the themes to follow. This section thus serves as a brief introduction to some of the key elements and processes specific to Tbilisi to better substantiate the coming chapters. It looks at Georgia from three different angles and already gives indication as to some of the trends to follow. It constitutes a reminder of the multilayeredness of urban renewal as a whole and of scholarship on Georgia and Tbilisi in particular. Of course, there are many similarities to processes happening elsewhere, so by no means is Tbilisi unique. Yet, the main claim here is that the confluence of factors in Georgia has generated a distinctive mix which can only be approached through a dual lens that also acknowledges the particularities of the indigenous experience and practice (Frederiksen, 2012).

Historically, Tbilisi has been continuously inhabited for almost 1500 years over which it has seen countless conquerors and rulers, from Byzantines and Persians, to Arabs, Mongols, and native Kartvelians. Its modern history begins with the Russian occupation in 1801, with remnants of imperial/tsarist architecture still visible on Rustaveli Avenue. However, after a brief period of independence in the early 20th century, the Soviet Bolshevik forces recaptured the city in 1921 and quickly elevated it into a key geostrategic location, serving as the capital of the newly established Socialist Republic.

*Figure 3 - Gudiashvili Square in Dzveli Tbilisi*

Due to the unique geography of the city, located in a valley intersected by the Mtkvari river, the city centre relocated across the river. Proto-Soviet apartments and businesses were promptly constructed, while the railways and industry took much space of what is now Didube, Isani and Nadzaladevi, with the city reaching a population of 500.000 by 1940. Yet, it was only after the War that Tbilisi started to take its modern appearance. The Soviet leadership embarked on a project to massively expand the city, adding new centrally planned Districts in the periphery (Gldani, Varketili, Saburtalo, Dighomi Massive), which are immediately distinguishable from their grid-based planning and towering apartment blocks and panel housing. Nevertheless, despite the explosive growth, congestion was a real concern; not only were the new housing units relatively spacious and modern, but also particular interest was shown in safeguarding public space through wide streets, green spaces, emblematic public buildings, and strict building regulations (van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012). The Khrushchevka and Brezhnevka apartment blocks, the most iconic pieces of Soviet architecture, came to dominate the Tbilisi skyline and were uniform across the city. Together with the opulently

adorned metro, this critical infrastructure was quickly inherited by Georgia post-independence.

However, the early years of independence saw much of that infrastructure fall into disrepair. Power shortages, scale emigration, lack of resources, and political turmoil quickly tarnished the city's image and control over the urban space (Salukvadze, 1996). Most notably, citizens embarked on an auto-construction spree; by altering the existing buildings, creating new informal settlements in the foothills surrounding the city, or simply by occupying the public space, usually with parking garages, market stalls, and little shops. 2003 saw the Rose Revolution bringing an end to authoritarian rule and ushered in a wave of democratisation and growth, spearheaded by president Mikheil Saakashvili. While his legacy remains controversial, Saakashvili was by all accounts an excellent reformist; he promptly eliminated petty corruption, increased public spending, and focused on attracting foreign investment by creating an efficient public administration (Bigg, 2013; Chkhikvadze, 2021). The consequences of these reforms will be explained below, but for Tbilisi they meant that illegal and informal constructions were promptly legalised and new plans were drafted for the city. Under the new planning regime, density was increased, public land was privatised and sold to developers, and land usage was changed. For the city itself, it meant that resources flowed towards cheaper investment, namely car infrastructure or beautification projects, with particular emphasis on revitalising the city centre (Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016). For instance, street vendors were violently expelled, or the historic neighbourhoods of Avlabari and Dzveli Tbilisi were rehabilitated to accommodate tourist infrastructure.

*Figure 4 - Abandoned Industrial Buildings in Gldani*

From 2015 onwards, the rate of construction once again picked up, particularly in suburban areas, where private contractors were greenlit to embark on large-scale greenfield projects, seemingly to ease congestion. Most notably, however, more recent public and private projects are predominantly focused on upscale residential and commercial development, while existing infrastructure sees little to no investment, particularly in terms of conservation. This has led to a –seemingly chaotic- mixture of modern, Soviet, and classical buildings, rapidly deteriorating edifices, and a relatively disjointed level of development, especially in the outskirts. To put it briefly, this unevenness has exacerbated, or at least prolonged, many of the structural problems Tbilisi is facing.

## 2.1. Factors Informing Urban Development in Tbilisi

Tbilisi makes a rather interesting case study for urban renewal, in part because of some unique circumstances which together weave the pattern of what is happening on the ground. In short, they are: (a) Rising Living Standards, (b) Market Liberalisation, (c) Need for Reconstruction and Rezoning, (d) Desovietisation of Urban Planning, and (e) Influx of Foreign Investment. As a whole, the outlook appears relatively positive, but each component also indicates where some of the problems linked to urban renewal might lie. What these factors have in common is how they all reflect a fundamental and extensive socio-economic shift.

Nowhere is this more evident than in terms of living standards. According to the World Bank, Georgia's GDP per capita (in current US$) has increased by 500% since the turn of the century and is now a strong middle-income economy (World Bank Group, 2023). Growth rates have remained consistently positive in recent years, particularly in relation to disposable income or savings. Literacy rates are amongst the highest in the world (99.7%), most of the population is highly skilled, enjoying a high standard of healthcare, and consistent access to employment and essential goods and services. Even though it might be difficult to draw a comparison with data from before independence, overall quality of life in the narrow sense has indeed improved. Coupled with the increased opportunities and freedom to pursue them, Georgians have been relatively optimistic in terms of their prospects and are able to enjoy a life comparable to that of elsewhere in Europe. Yet, in 2021, 17.5% of the population still lived under the National Poverty Line and there are indications that poverty might increase for the first time in coming years (Asian Development Bank, 2023). All in all, these trends have also impacted the way in which Georgians see themselves as citizens of a rapidly developing economy.

Most particularly, this improvement is paralleled (and possibly caused) by an equally intensive liberalisation of the economy; independence did not automatically bring the end of communism and a transition into a free-market capitalist economy. Economic and financial liberalisation has been a state policy only after 2003 and exercised through specific legislative

and economic tools (Papava, 2006). The pathway of Georgia's economic transition, initiated by Saakashvili, is consequently different to that of Russia, Poland, or Bulgaria. Georgia's meteoric rise in the Easy of Doing Business Index from the 100th position in 2006 to 6th in 2019 is impressive and indicative of the amount of deregulation and permissive stance seen in recent years (Gürsoy, 2012). Given how property rights were not formally established until the turn of the century, the property market and the role of financiers and developers within it were subject to negotiation (Gujaraidze et al., 2007). Within this system, financial incentives are in a favourable position and the construction sector dominates economic activity and interests. In some respects, liberalisation has contributed to the boom, following the recipe of tax havens elsewhere (Papava, 2016); However, many stakeholders, including the European Union, have increasingly expressed their concern towards the lack of oversight that enables for untransparent and anticompetitive practices, with warnings of an upcoming financial bubble (European Commission, 2023).
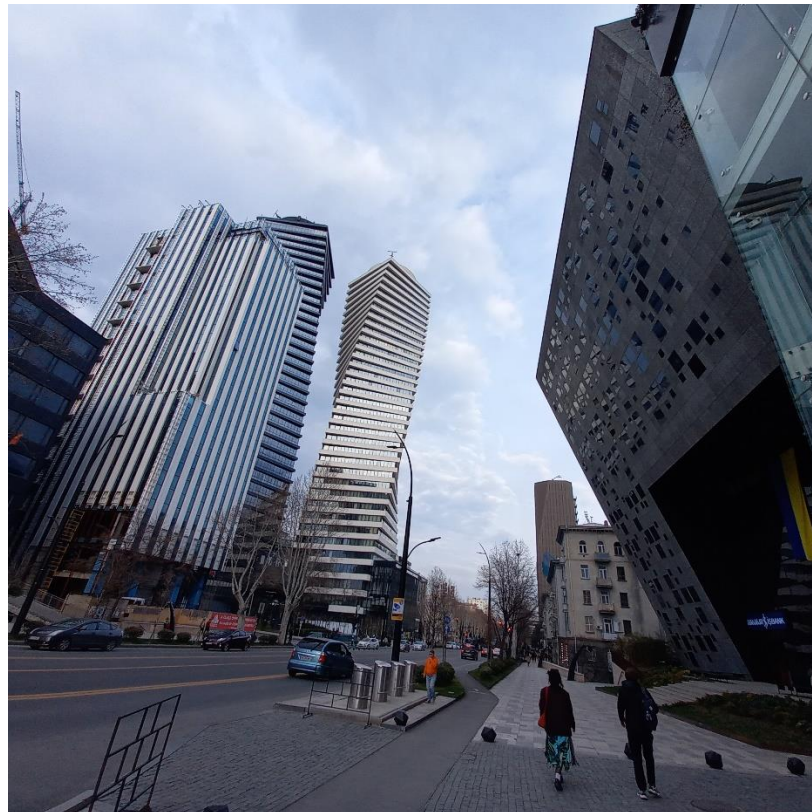


*Figure 5 - Modern High Rises in Vake*

That is not to say that construction and development is unwarranted or unplanned. After 1993, Tbilisi was in urgent need of reconstruction and rezoning. On the one hand, much of the existing infrastructure was no longer suitable, safe, or even necessary (Salukvadze, 1996; Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016). On the other hand, the city had to grow to accommodate new businesses, offices, hotels, tourists, and the thousands of new cars flooding the streets. For example, the industrial infrastructure in the city's core lied abandoned, taking up valuable space. Many of the public and private buildings were also in dire need of refurbishment (Chincharauli, 2018). City officials were tasked with deciding where to place new shopping malls, offices, and housing complexes, while also trying to restore the Georgian heritage in the built environment (Mskhiladze et al., 2021; Qvaraia, 2017); simultaneously, citizens were also forced to make the same decisions. And even though many Georgians left the country, many more moved to Tbilisi from rural areas or wanted to relocate within the city (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). Geographically, this led to prioritisation of certain areas, with public investment often complementing private development, and disinvestment elsewhere. Nevertheless, authorities were also cautious in keeping constituents satisfied, oftentimes postponing planned demolition and preferring new construction over refurbishment (van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012). Working within the spatial limitations, the only solution was to work with existing 'unused'[1] space and encourage further outward expansion (Salukhia, 2009), a big departure from previous planning schemes.

It is exactly this context that has made planning in Tbilisi both difficult and contentious. Simply put, Georgians have had little experience with planning and indigenous knowledge is still lacking (van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012). Because, for most of Tbilisi's growth, planning was done centrally in Moscow, so Georgian leaders were only tasked with implementation. Everything from the street grid to the size and specifications of the apartments, to where schools, hospitals and bus stops would be placed was based on a masterplan that local leaders

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[1] The term 'unused' both in most scholarship and in the present analysis is used euphemistically to reflect the trend of city and government authorities of branding urban space serving multiple functions, e.g. open areas, old infrastructure, private land etc, as 'unused' and in need of development.

could do little to influence. Naturally, every Soviet city faced the same challenges. Markedly, the textile, metallurgy, tobacco, and machinery industries that dominated the local economy on Soviet orders disappeared almost overnight. Impressively, however, Soviet planners had both future-proofed the city and had made plans for well-beyond Tbilisi's current size, as can be seen with the original plans for the metro (Kakabaze, 2019). This suggests that Georgian decision-makers post-independence did have plenty of material to worth with yet were also confronted with an option. It is doubtful whether continuing and trying to adapt the Soviet plans would have been wise or popular. But it is also clear that authorities were in a disadvantaged position when having to manage the urban space. They had to rely on outside expertise or develop the city on an ad hoc basis, especially given the lack of resources and finances at their disposal (van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012).

A solution to this conundrum did present itself in the form of foreign investment. Western partners, particularly the US and EU were very keen to provide development assistance and encourage private investment in Georgia (Papava, 2008, 2020). Turkey, the Arab States, China, and Russia also showed similar interest. Compared to other locations, Georgia was seen as a low-risk and accessible investment option and the Georgian government was eager to support that narrative (Gurgenidze, 2009; Papava, 2016). It is nowadays rare to see a project that does not involve foreign investment, which has also had the effect of encouraging Georgia's economic and political elites in entrenching themselves in these investment flows, often as an attempt to legitimise them (Salukvadze, 2016). Most schools and hospitals have been refurbished using foreign aid, alleviating the pressure on public finances. Foreign investors also brought in their own experts and project managers, reducing the need for oversight and scrutiny from local authorities (Charaia et al., 2020). Besides, the westernised and grandiose scale of most projects supplements the European aspirations of Georgia, seemingly closing a noticeable gap in numerous sectors (Papava, 2016).

*Figure 6 - New Housing Developments in Didi Dighomi*

In many aspects, Georgia has followed a similar course to most other post-Soviet states, whereas in many others the conditions have been characterful. In examining the urban renewal process in Tbilisi, it is worth reflecting on how they have contributed to an initial state of disconnect and why urban renewal perhaps had to serve dissimilar needs and priorities. Adaptation has been at the forefront of these shifts and ought to be revisited when evaluating the impact of change on the urban landscape.

## 2.2. Thematic – Cities in Transition?

As mentioned, Tbilisi presents a confluence of factors (or preconditions, according to the proposed Conceptual Model, see Chapter 3.3) that allude to the existence of an initial state of disconnect.

On the one hand, what must be stressed is that changes in the landscape are not just physical and material. They are reframing and restructuring the social relationships of the citizens of Tbilisi and making them experience marginality (Meade, 2021). They are also unique because they introduce territorial stigma (Wacquant 2007, 2014) to a new context. In simple

terms, until recently it did not matter which part of town one was from; not only has this been completely undone but since independence it has affected people's livelihood outcomes (Salukvadze, 1996). It has thus given rise to a debate on the very legitimacy of urban renewal and force-fed multiple adversarial narratives that rationalise this change (Glasze et al., 2012, Kallin & Slatter, 2014).

On the other hand, a final thought thus lies in uncovering the aspects worth exploring and framing them in theory. Placing Tbilisi under the umbrella of *"Cities in Transition"* in the developing world is convenient and, to a certain degree, the direction taken in this paper; because, such a characterisation has precious explanatory power and academic value, adding another perspective to international development. Still, even thematically, any observations must not be seen as separate to their context, an idea revisited in the closing section.

# 3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter serves as a point of departure and reference for better understanding the concepts and their relationships, by outlining the theoretical foundations, most importantly on the nature of disconnect and on the value of urban renewal. On the highest level, Rawls (1971) argues for fairness, nicely summarising the role of governance in producing equitable outcomes and how that can be derailed by self-interest. On this abstract level, disconnect could simply mean an undemocratic, self-interested, and falsely diverse way of governance, in which different segments of the population never get the chance to form their opinions based on inter-group interaction but on their (under)privileged existence, akin to Gramscian (2007) thought. Similarly, if urban renewal does not necessarily need to serve everyone, it must simply recognise and compensate the individual. For example, by no means can it be inferred that the vulnerable have superior knowledge or that technocracy is illegitimate. In fact, the very notion of objectivity is contrary to democracy and disconnect itself. Therefore, when framing the topic, one does not need to appeal to completely alien concepts to make the necessary theoretical linkages nor does it automatically put forward a radical reconceptualisation of public policy as an outcome-based redistributive mechanism (Lindbeck, 1985).

## 3.1. Urban Renewal and Disconnect

Narrowing down the scope of the analysis starts based on understanding emancipation and differentiation (Young, 1990), in which the obligations that bind distinct groups together cannot be viewed separately from the socio-cultural realities that separate them (Hirschmann, 1992). Harvey (1992), for example, claims that good policymaking is about balancing social control and violence with inclusion and empowerment. In that sense, by combining different analyses, ***disconnect*** *can be defined as a compound of alienation, disempowerment, and social differentiation*. This explains why it can be nurtured by the process of urban renewal when segments of the population are excluded from a process that changes the landscape, increases their powerlessness, and creates a narrative of false universality. Davidoff's (1965) concept of Advocacy Planning did hint towards that direction, but as O'Hare (2010) aptly mentions,

citizens cannot be expected to articulate their needs when the entire system is stacked against them and geared towards external validation.

This preliminary analysis also shows how the academic debate can occur on multiple levels. One can argue, for example, on the very nature of policy and governance and whether it should be fact-based or relativist. Urban renewal perhaps edges more towards the technical/factual side of the spectrum (Hall, 2014). But as Fainstein (2010) mentions, the very models and metrics that go into urban planning are highly subjective and democratic only as far as they are standardised. They cannot guarantee that just outcomes will be reached because they are rarely weighted against other alternatives (Lindblom, 1959). Nevertheless, a relativist -or postpositivist- approach is not necessarily superior, as it may perpetuate inequalities and gloss over attributes that shape identity. There is a substantial difference between listening to poor people's perspectives and fighting poverty itself (Lancione, 2018).

In the same article, Lancione also points to another point of debate which is the degree to which power structures contribute to precarity in the urban space. For example, in a recent paper, Lancione (2022) gives multiple examples of how political elites, including Nicolae Ceausescu himself, knowingly manipulated the urban space; yet he also makes it clear that, even for Bucharest, this was not a continuous or conscious process. What this means is that urge to demonise those in power might seem rational but is unfounded exactly because it ignores how cities are something greater than the sum of their infrastructure and the very way that people exist within that space is what attributes meaning to it. This is not only captured in Holston's 'Insurgent Citizenship' (2008), but in the broader debate on what *Urban Citizenship* has come to mean. As such, a criticism of capitalist development, corruption, political elitism, racial exclusion, or victimisation, can be harmful if it does not recognise the personhood and agency of urban dwellers whose very existence is tantamount to the development of the urban space itself (Roy, 2017). This can be used to defend why the debate needs to shift to the level of the individual and their perceptions, in which the battle against dispossession is the same

as the battle for possession (Porter, 2014). These themes are explored in the following sub-sections.

### 3.1.1. The "Just City" as an Ideal

Envisioning the ideal is a good launchpad in framing the discussion about this thesis, and Susan Fainstein (2010) provides a viable alternative. She claims that while inequality may be starker in cities, it is also more relational. In a critique of neoliberalism that seemingly aims at the best allocation of resources, she observes that via the housing market, public investment, or public-private partnerships, the enfranchised tend to benefit more. Inequality does have a spatial dimension, but Fainstein argues that is worth looking at how governance perpetuates inequality and how small-scale policies can have a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable. Which is why *justice* can be the systemic remedy to inequality, particularly when involving all relevant stakeholders. In her thought, there are three pieces to achieving justice: *democracy*, *equity*, and *diversity*. Democracy goes beyond symbolic inclusion and recognition of diverging opinions, instead encouraging decision-makers to focus on the outcomes of their choices. Similarly, policies ought to have a certain redistributive character to protect those at a disadvantaged position if they are to be equitable. Lastly, diversity is embodied in how one's identity affects their function, not just how they "fit" as part of a greater group. The concepts of this approach are like Nussbaum's (2011) Capability Approach but are distinct because of a focus on societal change and deconstruction of the policy discourse. Admittedly, Fainstein's views are not without their share of criticism, notably for how Westernised and ahistorical they appear.

Despite that, they fit nicely into the broader discussion about urban renewal both as a policy and as an outcome. As such, urban development can be examined to see whether it produces those 'just' effects on a society and city undergoing rapid change. It is doubtful whether equality even lies within the realm of possibility, this pessimism also being shared by Fainstein in one of her earlier essays (2005), who believes a structural shift is needed. So, while

romanticising urban renewal might seem appealing, it can never undo the anatomy of inequality that forms the foundation of any city; instead, it can aspire to be democratic, equitable, and diverse. The pursuit of justice, however, clearly identifies the influence of every stakeholder and their capacity to contribute to decision-making, even at the lowest level. The most disenfranchised citizen still has some agency in determining how their environment evolves, the same way that political and economic elites do on a larger scale. In terms of perceptions, this can apply to prioritisation, the allocation of resources, as well as the intensity of coexistence. To put it differently, a 'Just City' is also a compound of the city as a collective possession and of personhood within a socio-spatial entity.

### 3.1.2. Urban Personhood

The built environment and the norms that govern it cannot be separated from the experiences of the residents populating a city. In this analysis, the term used to best represent that experience is *Urban Personhood*, as a biological, philosophical, and ethical marker of the individual. Inspired by White (2013), personhood in this context is both *existential* and *relational,* being unconditional and inviolable. Citizens are not just entities within a city but agents for whom their state-of-being (and legitimacy) are fluid.

In her recent study, Lowe (2017) looked at the experiences of an African American woman in Milwaukee to better establish her motivation as an urban dweller and how it informs her personhood. She discovered that individualism is a coping strategy for many disadvantaged persons and marked a palpable discomfort with accepting outside help, equating it with an unhealthy dependence. In rapidly developing and unequal cities, there exist patterns of a constructed personhood, particularly through processes of segregation and enclaving (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005; Anand, 2012), cultivating a disconnect. São Paulo is a notable example of a city reinventing itself through violence and weaponising development, with dubious democratic and humanitarian motives (Caldeira, 2000). In other words, inequality goes beyond entrenchment and fundamentally alters the being-in-the-world of residents. It

informs their entitlements, cultural and social capital, decision-making, and social status. In a different context, Zoanni (2018) remarks that social realisation narratives are in principle appraisals of *failures of personhood*. Akin to the caste system, different rules could apply depending on how successful one is; with those at the top as the most "complete." Such a judgement presupposes that the subaltern is by default lawless and meritless. However, as some scholars (Head et al., 2019; Giraud, 2019) point out, the disenfranchised develop their rules and customs, particularly about everyday activities (Doherty, 2020). Schmidt calls that phenomenon (2023) the "ethics of anti-oppression", a mechanism of survival and –perhaps rightful- redistribution, or in many cases of resistance as resilience (Ranganathan & Bratman, 2021).

This notion of *anti-oppression*, both ethically and practically, is central to the question of personhood. Not necessarily in terms of social stratification because of urban development but of a pressing need for many urban dwellers to carve out a space for themselves. Whether that is pursued through resistance or adaptation is second to a larger acknowledgment of an altering state-of-being within a city. It entails a close examination of what specific attributes are adopted and assigned to citizens as the environment changes, urging for an intersectional reading of urbanity. Nowhere is this personhood more evident than in the struggle against dispossession.

### 3.1.3. Possession and Dispossession

*Dispossession* can be best described as *the planned[2] deprivation of property,* usually real estate (Byrd et al., 2018); similarly, *possession is the legitimate -not necessarily official- claim to a particular property, either individually or collectively*. Legitimate here ascertains a certain degree of control, usage, and participation in the property in question. Chakravartty and da Silva (2012) direct attention to the fact that in financialised capitalism ownership is not

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[2] Byrd affirms that planned does not necessary indicate intent or motivation but instead refers to how deprivation is systematic and predicated on dominant structures, such as colonialism or capitalism.

sufficient to establish one's control, as it is predicated along a series of protections and unnegotiable access to the environment. Dispossession can also be socio-economic, often along racial lines, when the opportunity costs of possession become unbearably high. In this sense, possession and dispossession are two sides of the same coin and can be used interchangeably, particularly since more of the former reduces the likelihood of the latter.

Geographer Steve Harvey calls that phenomenon 'Accumulation by Dispossession' (2004) in a Marxist critique of the neoliberal pursuit of wealth. However, that description is limited to an already-established capitalist system (Gillespie, 2016) and is self-limited by disowning the dispossessed. As Owen Jones (2012) aptly identified, the working class can be played into the system of deprivation. He points to Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher and gives an account of how capitalist development and deregulation pitted unions against each other, or how private ownership led to the collapse of social housing while plunging many families into debt. In this instance, possession (homeownership) came together with dispossession (fewer social protections). This infers that dispossession can be more subtle and bilinear than simply imagining local populations being driven off to make space for new developments, shifting the narrative to adaptation (Hernique & Tschaker, 2021) and socio-cultural realities (Hirschmann, 1992).

Besides, automatically equating occupation and informality with practices of dispossession is simplistic and stigmatising. Either because occupation can be formalised or even encouraged (Bhan, 2019) and because land-grabbing within a city can be achieved implicitly. Motivation and benefits can be ascertained more easily when reconfiguring an urban area than a remote rural village (van Noorloos et al., 2019). It just seems more reasonable to remove "blight" from a dense city core where more people can see it, so garnering popular support for dispossession, packaged as redevelopment, is appealing. In fact, there is the paradox that most dispossession occurs in cities, creating an inverse relationship between land availability and security. And as Porter (2014) claims, the lack of security cultivates a fear - reasonable or not- which usually galvanises residents to reestablish their possession, even in

circumstances where it reproduces their marginality and inferiority, with slums in African cities or favelas in Brazil being the perfect examples.

Political elites are aware of the tightrope they must walk on and while making promises (Noy, 2022) and using creative language can be potentially successful, real success lies in making residents embrace their dispossession (Jou et al., 2011; Jones, 2012); whether that is achieved through violence, marginal status, or better living conditions can differ. The common denominator in this tussle is that possession extends well beyond proprietorship, as it is tied to a grounded understanding of status and opportunity.

## 3.2. Key Concepts

Having given an overview of the main theories embedded in this analysis, a brief explanation of some important concepts is in order. They are presented firstly in terms of literature and adapted or clarified to indicate their relationship with the discussion in the thesis (see Chapter 10)

### 3.2.1. Urban Renewal

*Urban renewal, also known as urban regeneration, refers to policies which target specific areas within a city with the aim of reversing urban decay or countering issues specific to a location.* Often, it is used in conjunction with branding a particular area as "problematic," "blighted," or "a slum" to stress how it exists in contrast to, and to the detriment of, the rest of city (Carmon, 1999; Sugrue, 2014). Such areas might have low-quality infrastructure, informal settlements, brownfields, or experience abandonment, high crime rates, and depopulation. Development takes the form of new residences, public infrastructure, businesses, or rezoning, aspiring to stitch together a previously neglected locality (Teaford, 2000). There is no uniform approach to urban renewal, in terms of content and scale. Some examples include the Docklands in London, post-war Berlin, São João de Deus in Porto (Wacquant, 2008) and others. Urban renewal in theory is neutral, meaning that it does not seek to alter the composition of an area, but merely the environment. Nevertheless, because it usually targets low-income areas, redevelopment tends to raise land values, primary seeking to attract middle-high income-

earners. For this reason, it is often –mistakenly- used synonymously with *Gentrification*, the latter being a phenomenon caused by the former (Zhu & Ye, 2022).

### 3.2.2. Marginality

Gatzweiler et al. define M*arginality* as *"an involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, political, economic, ecological, and biophysical systems, that prevent them from access to resources, assets, services, restraining freedom of choice, preventing the development of capabilities, and eventually causing extreme poverty"* (2011, p. 3). Von Braun and Gatzweiler (2014) further reaffirm their position of "*people on the edges*" to display that individuals are peripheral to a system, not outside of it. Consequently, they are still entitled to their assets, occupy societal positions, and exist within a regulated socio-political space. Borrowing from Sen and Nussbaum (1993), marginality stresses that is the deprivation of opportunities that makes people marginal, not status in itself. Women, migrants, or sexual minorities have their freedoms repressed while their function is unaffected; in other words, a woman must work but is preventing from accessing the same employment opportunities as a man. Marginality is multidimensional and can be experienced across many contexts and levels of analysis, yet it is influenced by policy and environmental factors that push people towards precarity or reproduce conditions of deprivation. This led to Kumar (2014) stressing how much shame is endured through repeated exposure to marginality, leading to total disenfranchisement and alienation.

### 3.2.3. Territorial Stigmatisation

Dana Kornberg defines *Territorial Stigmatisation as "the association of residents with damaging characteristics which become the dominant cultural representations of a physical location"* (2016, p. 285). It implies that where one lives can translate into how that person is perceived and what exactly they are entitled to. Wacquant (2007, 2014) has been a pioneer in the conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation as both a process and outcome of institutionalising and weaponizing *otherness* in urban space. In this context, urban renewal cannot be justified without selecting certain districts for redevelopment. This delineation is not

solely evidence-based but also grounded on (prejudiced) perceptions of the elites, both positive (further developing 'good' neighbourhoods) and negative (redeveloping 'bad' ones). Slater and Anderson (2012) further elaborated on the concept to explain varying processes of gentrification in Bristol in the United Kingdom, showing how it has observable manifestations in urban policy. Wacquant also alludes to how it is created by and reinforces disconnect:

> *[…] territorial stigmatization encourages amongst residents sociofugal strategies of mutual avoidance and distancing which exacerbate processes of social fission, feed interpersonal mistrust, and undermine the sense of collectivity necessary to engage in community building and collective action. (Wacquant, 2008, p.30).*

### 3.2.4. Resistance

*Resistance is the collective dissent towards a certain power structure to undermine and overturn certain conditions.* It can take many forms and be directed towards various things or people (Lilja, 2022), but in all cases it directly opposes the institutionalisation and supremacy of power (Ortner, 1995). Resistance does not cover any form of refusal, deviance, or abnormal behaviour (Lilja, 2021) either because it is not constructive but destructive, or because it lacks internal consistency, meaning its own rules and continuity. Baaz et al. (2022) further stress that, while the subtlety might vary, resistance aspires to peace-build and reestablish a 'fairer' alternative that will automatically render the need to resist obsolete.

## 3.3. Conceptual Framework
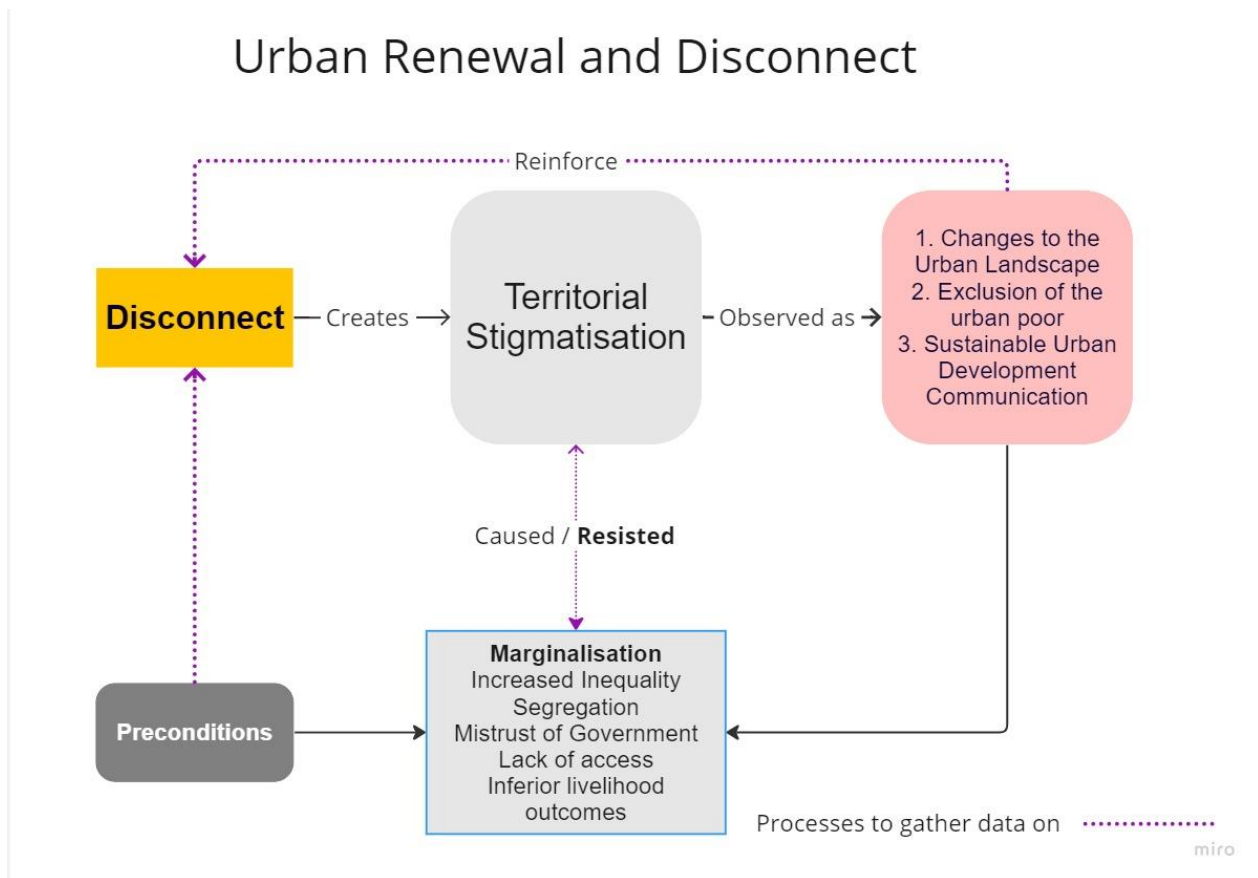


*Figure 7 - Thesis' Conceptual Model*

The figure above links the main concepts included in the analysis. On the one hand, it starts with the assumption that there do exist some initial conditions –specific to Tbilisi- which foster a disconnect in the urban renewal process (see chapters 2, and 3.4). This disconnect is codified through territorial stigmatisation that can be observed through the three main practices which, in turn, reinforce and perpetuate this disconnect. The model also acknowledges the effects this disconnected process has on urban development more broadly, particularly how it further encourages territorial stigmatisation, drawing on the expertise of Slater and Anderson (2012) and O'Hare (2010) who are explicit in their belief that the perceptions of urban planners are self-reinforcing. It also examines the exact degree to which territorial stigma causes the

marginalisation of residents expressed through a series of negative developments and whether or how residents resist it.

In simple terms, the conceptual model seeks to engage in a thought experiment that willingly leaves out the socio-economic, political, and spatial dimensions of urban planning. It is consciously narrow in its reading of reality not only due to practical limitations but also because it seeks to test a new hypothesis, whether three phenomena contribute to the disconnect:

(1) **Changes to the Urban Landscape** - Firstly, whether the changes occurring in urban space and its management present an existential dilemma to different stakeholders that trap them in a perpetual state of needing to justify and negotiate the urban status;

(2) **Exclusion of the Urban Poor** - Secondly, whether the systematic -or implicit- exclusion of the urban poor from decision-making increases their feeling of powerlessness and renders their voices increasingly irrelevant;

(3) **Sustainable Urban Development Communication** - Thirdly, whether the way that narratives of urban development are constructed is just a mere reproduction of prejudice and (under)privilege that does not reflect the experiences of both sides nor seeks to bring them closer together.

Again, it needs to be stressed that the conceptual model is by no means an evaluative approach to disconnect nor is it a euphemism for advocacy. Its strength lies in its simplicity and its conscious avoidance of employing power and status as analytical tools. There is a certain privilege that comes with adopting this stance, however, it also avoids conducting research on whether the two sides reproduce their consciousness (i.e., whether poor/rich people say 'poor/rich people things'). Instead, the framework critically looks at the mechanisms of disconnect and how they complement an intersectional reading of urbanity more broadly. This is exactly why territorial stigmatisation serves as a useful intermediary to

base any assumptions on, because it encompasses the lived experience of both urban residents and the elites and can be translated into how the urban landscape develops.

A succinct summary of the three phenomena through examples from other studies and their basis in scholarship follows:

### 3.3.1. Changes to the Urban Landscape

A lot of study on urban renewal has been focused on the US. For example, Richmond University (Digital Scholarship Lab, n.d.) collected data on how urban renewal programmes displaced residents, highlighting that people of colour and lower socio-economic background were the first to be dispossessed in a pattern that was surprisingly consistent across the country (Schwab, 2018). Aside from not getting adequate compensation, the study noted that the outcomes of many urban renewal projects, like hospitals, business parks, universities, or entertainment centres, often disproportionately served suburban –primarily white- residents. Appler (2017) also documented how many renewal projects are starkly different in rural areas, not only because urban land is more valuable than rural or suburban land, but most importantly because in smaller cities urban renewal had a stronger focus on serving the entire community and creating more equal outcomes. It can be inferred, and is only logical, that changes which do not serve the interests of a particular community or group render them marginal and disconnected, while those benefitting have their perceptions reinforced.

### 3.3.2. Exclusion of the Urban Poor

In a separate study, Mehdipanah et al. (2017) conducted a literature review of academic articles on gentrification. They concluded that urban renewal projects that exclude residents in the planning phase tend to lead to worse health outcomes overall. What is more interesting in the study, however, is the fact that neighbourhoods that were gentrified also saw a shift in policy, with many protections and support for low-income residents disappearing altogether. This is partly because relocation can be ignored or seen as irrelevant to the urban renewal process (Baker, 2008), parallel to a lack of understanding of the importance of "*Community Fabric*" for vulnerable populations (Betancur, 2010, italics my own). Kallin and Slatter (2014), for instance,

point to the contradiction of local governments weaponizing urban renewal in erasing a stigma while simultaneously reinforcing it. The perverse incentive to sideline the disenfranchised in pursuit of development rests on the fact that their inclusion is seen as equivalent to perpetuating the status quo.

### 3.3.3. Sustainable Urban Development Communication

Dana Kornberg (2016) conducted extensive research in Detroit about how the expansion of the city's water network created a 'battle' of who controlled the narrative, meaning the way the project was communicated mismatched its actual implementation. Originally envisioned to be to the benefit of the entire city and central to future development, it was supplemented by a series of urban renewal projects. The project's success was disseminated to the city's white residents, while black residents were demonised and presented as the key to its failings, leading many predominantly black neighbourhoods to further neglect. This is but an example of how a narrative can be communicated in ways that alter the urban landscape. As such, who controls the narrative (in Detroit it was disillusioned white residents) can have profound consequences for urban development (Murphy, 2012), particularly when that narrative is constructed across racial and class lines (Glasze et al., 2012). As such, the claims to legitimacy of urban renewal as an instrument that benefits all are in tandem with the self-perceptions of those that control it.

## 3.4. Connections with Context

Based on the review of existing scholarship, there is a clear connection between academic literature and the processes of urban renewal occurring in Tbilisi. If the 'Just City' is posited as the ideal, *how close is Tbilisi to that goal and which elements are most lacking?* Theory can help in nuancing the context and better understanding exactly where it might fall short; there are already some hints that dispossession and territorial stigma, for instance, might need to be further substantiated to better reflect what is happening in Georgia. Yet, while a study on urban renewal is grounded on theory it is also self-reflecting in terms of the subject matter. Hence,

while applauding existing knowledge, the aim is to examine how Tbilisi could fit into the academic discourse.

For this reason, the context has already been integrated into the conceptual framework and given the umbrella term of 'preconditions,' an acknowledgement that any evolution does not start from zero. To a certain extent, this is already making the research more descriptive and introduces a layer of bias, particularly because it cannot be gauged if a particular factor applies to a greater or lesser extent to the individual. However, it also makes the research process less rigid, actively encouraging doubt and welcoming different perspectives that contradict the overarching narrative. In other words, the context is framing the discussion while the theory is guiding it. The expectation is that results will illustrate why in one location, under specific circumstances, the perceptions of different stakeholders reflect a broader change within a city. This could facilitate a comparison with other locations, different timelines or typify patterns and factors of urban renewal that were previously unknown. Detroit or Bucharest might be poles apart from Tbilisi, but local knowledge and practice generated in Georgia could be applicable elsewhere.

By no means does this insinuate the selection of concepts, theories, or approaches included in this document is arbitrary. It only represents one potential way of looking at the topic to better understand its causes and effects, by aspiring to be context-appropriate, rather than context-specific. The scope of this perspective will be critically reflected on in a later section.

## 3.5. Reimagining Urban Development

What this analysis has illustrated thus far is the complexity and multiplicity of urban development. Starting from the very language used, the perspectives adhered to, the practices adopted, their translation into policy and how those are implemented and reviewed, there is a great degree of variance. On the one hand, this positively affirms that urban development is neither simple nor seamless. On the other hand, it posits an existential question about the very future of cities. Cardoso et al. (2021) provide a way out of this conundrum by suggesting a need

to scale down the analysis and look at what cities can do for their people, how they meet the explicit and implicit needs of their residents. Contextually these needs might vary but their pursuit must be sustainable and enable for unrestricted freedom in realising them in the future.

This approach has been popularised through the notion of Liveable Cities that calls for sustainability to be the norm in future planning (Medayese et al., 2021). *Sustainable Urban Development (SUD)* is central in the effort to create liveable cities, yet it is not something that happens automatically but requires meticulous integrated planning and a series of interventions (Yigitcanlar & Teriman, 2014). Under mounting threats and pressure from climate change and technological advancements, the policies that govern any city need to be restructured (While et al., 2010) to better address current issues. This is to say that despite cities being traditionally the most developed and prosperous loci of human activity, they still need to be developed, or (re)developed to be precise, if they are to remain liveable in the future (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005). This oddity stipulates that underdeveloped cities need to jump an additional hurdle in their growth, in a much shorter period. Admittedly, this is an uncomfortable and unfair concession that dives deep into the realm of coloniality. However, the expertise and technical capacity to pursue such a leap does indeed exist, albeit with many asterisks attached, and less developed areas offer a chance for a more rapid transition.

This is an invitation to reimagine urban development as a transition, rather than as a goal and to critically assess its inclusivity. In a cynical observation, many scholars (Caprotti et al., 2017; Roy, 2017; Cardoso et al., 2021) argue that we are asking the wrong questions; instead of wondering how to improve the urban space the question should be: *is it enough*? As Haughton (1997) illustrated, regardless of what development model is chosen the conditions that enabled cities to grow are long gone. Debate on this matter continues, yet standards should be set at the level of optimisation, especially for those most vulnerable. '*Reimagined Urban Development*' forms the core of the discussion presented in the penultimate chapter.

# 4. Methodology

## 4.1. Data Collection Methods

For the purposes of this research, three different data collection methods were chosen: a) A survey, b) Contextual Interviews, c) Collection of Secondary Data. The core of the research lies with the survey, as a tool to collect and represent citizens' perceptions. This is complimented by contextual interviews to better understand various developments and rationalise change. Finally, the secondary data compliments and confirms the primary data and better substantiates how they fit into the context or how they are communicated publicly. This triangulation was seen as the most viable option in being able to adequately capture most aspects of disconnect, explicit or implicit.

## 4.1.1. Primary Data – Survey

As aforementioned, the principal method for data collection was through a questionnaire gauging the perceptions of the citizens of Tbilisi based on the proposed conceptual model. The proposed variables were translated into questions that were then able to be grouped per dimension. The questionnaire was distributed to everyone aged 16 and over. Care was taken in ensuring the final sample was evenly distributed in terms of the city's 10 Districts and gender representation. Ideally, persons from all Districts would be represented in the final data, regardless of income-level, gender, education-level, or minority status. For this reason, it was also translated and made available in Georgian. More specifically, the survey was made up of four sections: 1) Use and Understanding of Urban Space, 2) Perceptions towards Urban Renewal in Tbilisi, 3) Perceptions of Specific Projects, 4) Demographic Data. It employed a mixture of questions, notably ranking, matrix, Likert scale, multiple choice, and closed-ended questions, to be able to collect an easily analysable and comparable sum of data. Some questions were open-ended, allowing for a short explanation of previous responses, and some willing respondents were invited for short follow-up interviews, to better refine and

understand the instrument. The full questionnaire (in English) with all the measurements and responses can be found in the Annex (sections A, C, E, and G).

### 4.1.2. Primary Data – Contextual Interviews

The second stream of data was collected through contextual interviews. Although originally the plan was to interview decision-makers, particularly city/government officials or developers, this proved almost impossible in practice, as no interview invitation received a positive response. Assuming these stakeholders hold some decision-making power and much better access to information, the initial aim was to identify their priorities for Tbilisi, what projects they would like to see going forwards and what are some potential obstacles. This is because to further establish the disconnect between citizens and stakeholders, it is important to see if decision-makers already know, or can at least understand, the citizens' perceptions. Nevertheless, given the difficulty in reaching out to that group, it was instead chosen to conduct interviews with other similar interested and experienced parties, notably journalists, academics, urban planners, or activists, who are aware of the urban renewal process as well as the potential stance and interests of decision-makers. While not ideal, their input was deemed genuinely valuable in better seeing the various nuances of the topic and better grasping the context. In some instances, they were capable of also commenting on the citizens' and government's stance from a more neutral angle, complementing and better elucidating the data collected through other streams. The Interview Guide and some quotes can be found in the Annex (sections B and C)

### 4.1.3. Secondary Data

Additionally, secondary data was collected on the field. This data consists of visual materials such as (a) photographs taken by the researcher from throughout Tbilisi, (b) planning maps, (c) archival material, (d) concept designs, (e) official publications, and (f) posters. Secondary data also includes official statistics and figures, reports, official statements, local and international online and print media, as well as posts on social media. This was done both to

enhance the explanatory power of the final analysis and as an acknowledgement of the material and spatial implications of the topic, let alone how that change is advertised and communicated via different official or unofficial channels. Much of additional photographic material and planning maps can be found in the Annex (section D).

## 4.2. Dimensions

As has been highlighted so far, there is evidence to suggest that citizens are not always in agreement with their government, developers, or other decision-makers in terms of how the city is changing. Expectations are probably mismatched, and the dominant narrative excludes -perhaps consciously- those left behind, rendering this phenomenon an interesting one to examine. For the research itself, the proposed conceptual model sets the frame for the questions to be asked and how they are potentially linked, with disconnect at the centre of the analysis. What needs to be studied is how this disconnect is reinforced by the urban renewal process, how it is informed by the socio-historical context, and how it translated into territorial stigma, with stigma itself permeating the urban renewal. Nevertheless, disconnect is difficult to observe and interpret, at least in a way that is meaningful. Similarly, it is a term that survey respondents or interviewees might not be familiar with. As such, to avoid confusion and enable for a more systematic analysis, it was broken down into a series of components that all broadly contribute to the concept of disconnect. This decision was also informed by the research question(s) and particularly an effort to understand whether certain elements are more influential than others.

Looking back at the research questions, one ought to look at the urban renewal process as something that is heavily influenced by how different stakeholders see themselves and the others. Consequently, any variable needs to be meaningful and appropriate for both the everyday citizen and officials in the highest levels of government. Additionally, the dimensions should also be relatively realistic and reflect the long-term development of Tbilisi, acknowledging how resources and any form of capital are by default limited. This is consistent

with an effort to capture the ongoing change and assess its direction and inclusivity, rather than make sweeping comments and predictions about the future.

With those thoughts in mind, the following variables were studied:

| Dimension | Measurement Indicator(s) |
|---|---|
| 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space | Ability to use urban space<br>Change in land use<br>Mass use of public space |
| 2. Perceived change in living conditions | Satisfaction with public/private spaces<br>Change in social cohesion<br>Responsiveness to and acceptance of change |
| 3. Self-perception of marginality | Satisfaction with quality of life<br>Emancipation as an urban dweller<br>Experience with stigmatisation and exclusion |
| 4. Priorities in urban renewal | Individual priorities<br>Collective priorities |
| 5. Inclusion in decision-making processes | Self-involvement in urban governance<br>Perception of influence in decision-making |
| 6. Legitimacy of urban governance | Trust in government<br>Alignment of perceptions/narratives |

*Table 1 - Dimensions of Analysis on Disconnect*

### 4.2.1. Operationalisation

The research is primarily based on quantitative data but with an integration of qualitative input. The overarching approach is to first quantify and observe the disconnect between citizens and decision-makers and then use that data to construct and uncover narratives that support what has been observed, both visually and verbally. Keeping in mind the limitations of

the research and how the context is niche, what was deemed important is finding ways to approach disconnect in a manner that is enabling towards future study. This high-level, helicopter view of the topic is based on inductive reasoning, judged as being more suitable for the study. Of course, this means that any results will be very context-specific, perhaps inconclusive, and is a higher risk approach. Nevertheless, they allow for more co-creation, reflecting existing trends in urban studies (Meade 2021; Roy, 2009). By co-creation is meant the practice of attributing meaning to everyday actions carried out by urban dwellers, and effectively legitimising the informality observed. Participants are therefore not only asked to imagine the urban space as they would like it but to also actively what their role and function should be within it. In this sense, they are invited to "co-create" the interventions necessary, instead of being the passive recipients of suggestions.

These dimensions capture a wide range of different parameters pertinent to the research from which both a survey and an interview guide can be developed and useful linkages between different concepts can be made. Additionally, they were chosen because they were seen as simple and understandable enough to be operationalised, made accessible to all participants and useful to them. Looking back at the methodological approach taken, a key goal lies in encouraging participants to self-reflect on issues that were previously considered confounding, so having a simpler model could help enhance the quality and applicability of the research. Of course, there also exists some overlap between them. It is evident that how marginal one feels is intimately related to how included they are, or want to be (Pratt, 2019), in decision-making. An analogous claim can also be made about how living conditions affect one's priorities and their trust in government (Clench-Aas & Holte, 2021). But that overlap is exactly what reinforces their relevance and inclusion in the analysis, increasing the strength of any association observed.

## 4.3. Selection of Participants

Survey participants were randomly selected among people aged 16 or older, with a particular focus on ensuring all districts are represented. Participants were recruited both in person and online, while respondents were encouraged to share the survey with their acquaintances.

Overall, only 20% were known to the researcher and they were not selected for follow-up interviews. The survey was conducted through Google Forms, with an English and Georgian version available, either in-person with the respondents or online individually.

Given how interviews did not form the core of the research, interviewees were selected based on their availability and expertise and include activists, academics, professionals, and journalists. As such, a sample interview guide was developed but interviewees were invited to share their expertise and views on the topic of the research. Their input focused mainly on understanding trends or processes, uncovering attributes unique to Tbilisi, further developing the survey framework, and discussing specific examples of urban renewal. In total, 14 contextual interviews were conducted between March and April.

## 4.4. Data Analysis

Responses were collected, grouped, and analysed in both Excel and SPSS, and made fully anonymous. Altogether, 62 surveys were completed, each with 168 markers for a grant total of 10416 possible entries, both numerical and in text. Some of the demographic data is displayed below:
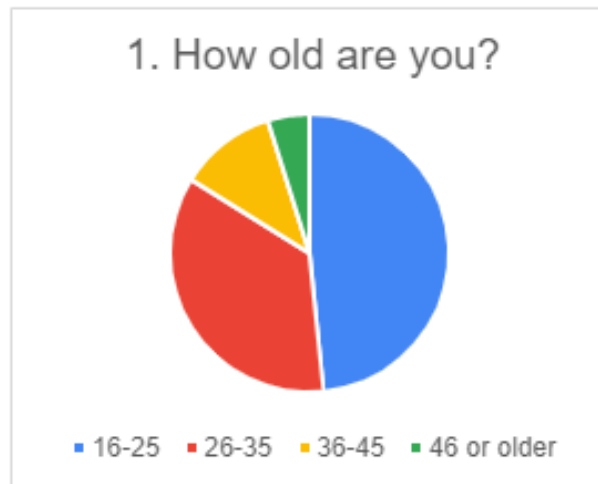


*Figure 8 - Age Distribution of Survey Respondents*
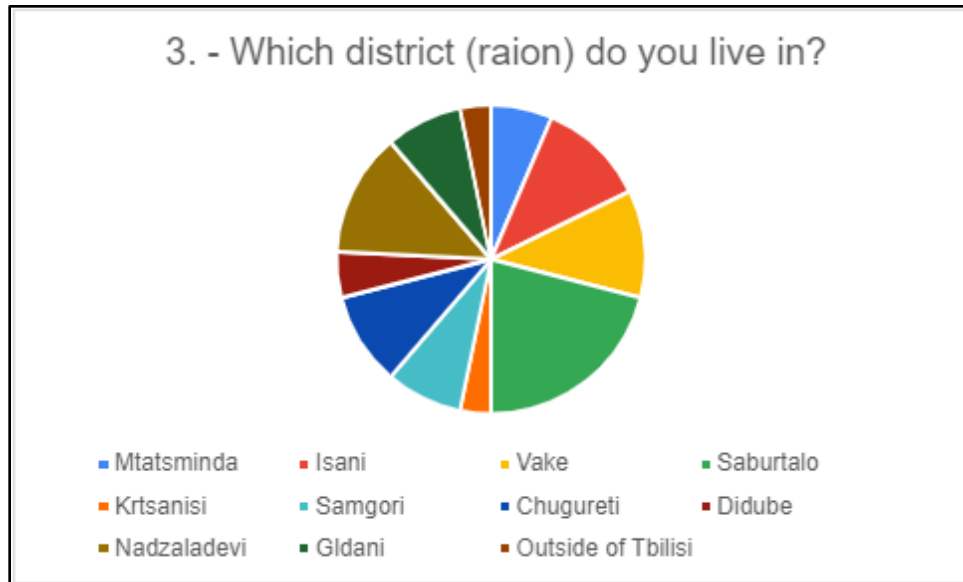
*Figure 9 - Spatial Distribution of Survey Respondents*

The contextual interviews were conducted both in-person and online, with interviewees deciding whether to record the conservation. They were all transcribed, corrected, and anonymised, before being coded using a spreadsheet.

## 4.5. Limitations and Reflections

Of course, the present research is not without its methodological limitations or shortcomings. On the one hand, the sample of the survey is very balanced in terms of gender (50%/48.4%), inclusion of minority groups, income and education level, and spatial distribution. However, there does exist a clear age bias (84.9% of respondents are 35 years or younger) and there are some groups that are not represented, mainly those with no education or very low income. It is thus by no means fully representative of the population of Tbilisi but merely captures their current perceptions on the macro-level, not enabling for cross-referencing across diverse groups. There is intrinsic bias in the responses which is both circumstantial and generated by the profile of survey respondents and interviewees. It was thus not possible to look for individual differences in terms of gender, income, social status, education-level, employment, or minority status, although some indicators for a meta-analysis are indeed provided. On the other hand, due to the difficulty in obtaining access, many important stakeholders were not

interviewed or represented within the data. Consequently, the exact perspectives and priority of decision-makers are not directly represented in the research to fully understand the mutuality of disconnect. A much larger sample of both survey participants and interviewees would be needed to accurately measure every variable.

As explained in the introduction, the research never attempted to make any evaluative statements on how individual changes are affecting the city. Consequently, exactly because the analysis is rooted in perceptions, there can be great variance in how one chooses to engage in the discussion and which aspects get highlighted. Cautioning against being overly critical in interpreting these words is further complemented by simultaneously discouraging the opposite; because by capturing the state of disconnect and attributing it to distinct factors, there is also the risk of being complicit in underrepresenting dissenting voices. As a researcher, this was something that often proved difficult to contain, even when aware of my positionality. While aiming for impartiality it is possible that some of the information was filtered or presented through my own identity marker and ideologic lens, potentially skewing the direction of the analysis or misunderstanding perspectives.

Similarly, perspectives are presented as static, whereas they develop and evolve in a rapidly changing context, rendering the research non-replicable or accurate of a complete and long-term change in Tbilisi. Even changes in the urban environment can be undone, adjusted or may take an extended time to become traceable. However, it would be a logical gap to assume these variables can be applied uniformly to a diverse populace. For instance, a younger person might interpret their (non-)inclusion in different terms than their grandparents. However, this is why context matters in interpreting the results and refraining from making any remarks that go beyond describing perceptions. Again, these variables are in line with the approach of not making any evaluative statements about the quality or contents of the urban renewal. Instead, they merely capture the state of disconnect as a component of a much larger discourse.

It must also be noted that the way this data was collected could lead to bias. Many survey participants were not anonymous, and the discussions and interviews were often based on a certain level of trust which might have affected the objectivity of the reflection. Notably, the way some issues were put forward might have been different from the same issues being communicated to other stakeholders. This could mean that some of the perspectives were expressed more extremely (positively or negatively) than necessary which is something that can be observed in some of the data, particularly the quantitative ones.

# 5. Citizen Perceptions and Priorities – What Tbilisians Want

> *I think a lot of people forget that with the fall of communism many things people used to take for granted were gone. So the quality of hospitals, education and activities for young people went down. Instead, people got cars, restaurants, McDonalds, and stuff like that. I am not criticising, I am also grateful of living in a free country, I just do not understand how many people, especially older ones, are okay with that.[3]*

This quote set the tone for many of the responses gathered through the survey encapsulating both the positive and negative. On one hand, newfound liberties and economic growth brought a series of opportunities and new needs for citizens. On the other hand, it led to the neglect and decline of many structures which had been the norm for years. Of course, any transition is not easy or without its sacrifices but as will be made clear from the following paragraphs, perhaps what people were expecting or needing is not necessarily what they always get. That does not necessarily mean that there is no improvement or change, far from in fact; if anything, changes in the cityscape is the favourite topic of any person living in Tbilisi with as many opinions as construction sites across the city.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the main tool to gauge this perception was a survey distributed across the city. In this chapter, some of the main findings will be mentioned in passing to set the tone for the following chapters which dive deeper into specific aspects. All relevant tables and figures can be found in detail in the Annex, including many not mentioned in this section.

On a grander scale, there is a sincere sense of optimism as most respondents felt that living standards have increased (51%)[4], while 53% believe that the fall of communism has benefitted the city. They are also adamant (72%) about the need for many buildings to be

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[3] Unless indicated otherwise, most quotes are from open-ended questions on the survey.
[4] All responses are on a Likert Scale from 1 to 5, unless indicated otherwise. A 1 represents a fully negative statement, while a 5 a fully positive one, while a 3 is neutral/average. Unless indicated otherwise the positive (4) or very positive (5) responses, and negative (2) or very negative (1) responses are grouped together.

demolished or reconstructed, even though sentiment on foreign investment is quite tepid with only 35% evaluating it positively. Yet, this is also where some of the displeasure first starts to manifest as 48% of respondents disagree with the government's choices, compared to only 25% agreeing. Satisfaction with private and public spaces is mostly average, although there is more dissatisfaction (40%) with private spaces.

However, a much more indicative level of analysis for perceptions is on the scale of the neighbourhood where people reside, work, and coexist. It is on this level that some of the patterns of change start to emerge. The quality of certain amenities is clearly split up between those at are in a satisfactory state and those that are not, as indicated in the figure below. Tbilisi has an impressive and modern road network, and most businesses are either new or have invested in maintenance and upgrades. At the same time, the qualities of housing and public transportation are lower, while most respondents are dissatisfied with educational and health facilities. Similarly, while the number of respondents who know many of their neighbours is equally split with those who do not, trust levels are lower, with 43% having little to no trust in their neighbours. The following quotes from the survey are quite telling of this phenomenon:
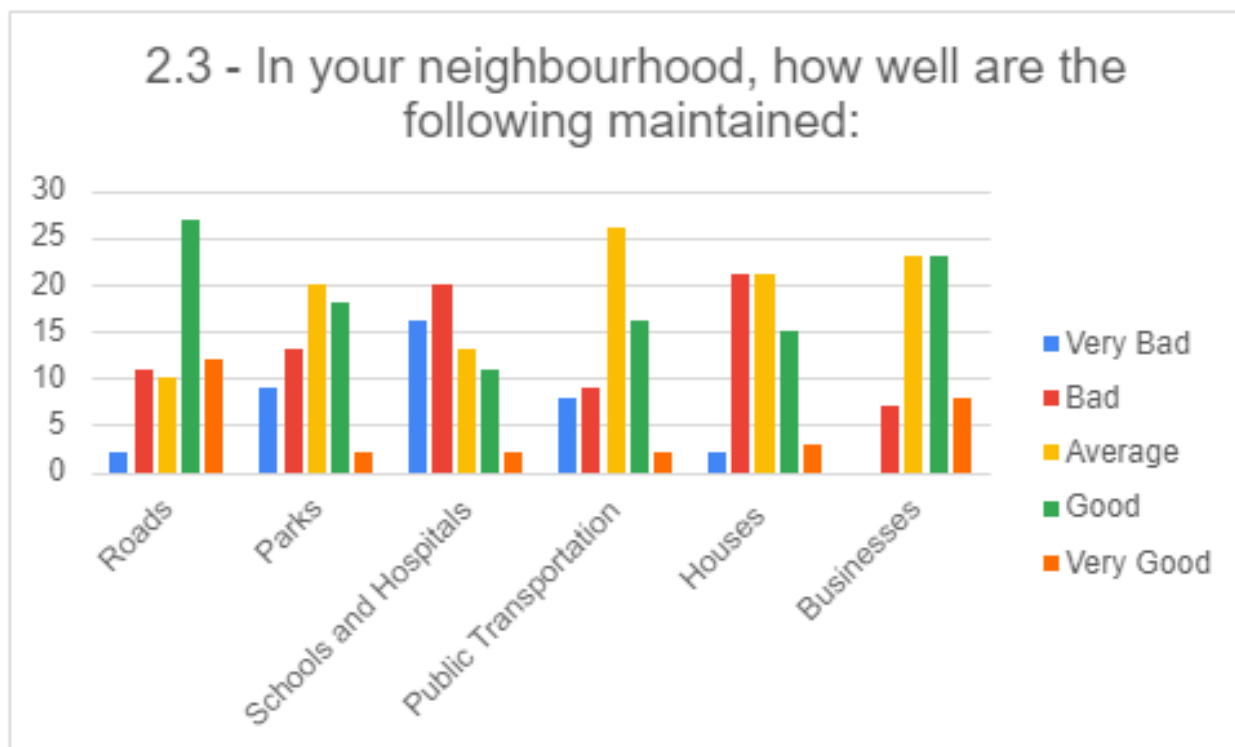
*Figure 10 - Responses on the Quality of Maintenance in Neighbourhoods*

*We don't share the same values, interests and views on many things, so major differences between us makes the trust not possible.*

*They are not bad people, I just think we do not care enough about each other to have any level of trust.*

Yet, it is when they are quizzed about actual changes that real patterns and contrasts are evident. For instance, 33% believe that their neighbourhoods have not changed much in recent years, whereas 37% believe the opposite. However, both agree (87%) that Tbilisi as a whole has changed a lot. As such, it is worth exploring what those changes on the neighbourhood level are. Again, there is some disagreement but many of the grievances are shared by the majority of respondents: 52% think it has gotten dirtier, 48% less green, 52% noisier, and a staggering 80% think it has gotten more expensive, 66% of which think it has gotten much more expensive (5 out of 5). Of course, there is also some positive change; 39% talk about improved safety (against 27% who do not) and walkability, 37% about accessibility and 48% about their neighbourhoods being more multiethnic. Overall, there is an even split on

neighbourhood perception, with 40% noticing a negative change, 35% a positive one, and 24% noting no change. Disappointingly though, in terms of future change the share of positive change drops to 29%, with negative and no change reaching a cumulative 71%. Of course, all the numbers above are generalisations for the city as a whole and do not fully reflect what is happening in every District separately, although interestingly the individual differences between districts are in most cases quite small. Some are displeased with stagnation and are afraid that it will lead to further decay, while others demonstrate the opposite fear of being outpaced by development, as the responses below indicate:

*I feel like nothing ever changes in my neighbourhood, which is what makes it feel worse. Yes, we got the bus lanes around the central avenue but so many things are simply falling into decay.*

*There is way too much construction happening and all of it is very expensive. It makes me angry living in a very old apartment surrounded by new buildings every day. I am worried that at some point our block will be demolished and we probably would get something very bad in return.*

*So, is the picture for the whole of Tbilisi any different?* In some metrics it is, but in many others it is not. On the surface, most people (68%) agree that Tbilisi needs to change a lot, 53% believe that newer buildings are better and that they fit the neighbourhood better. They are also firm (70%) that improvements and investment in public infrastructure are insufficient, with the opposite being true (60%) for private buildings. When it comes to changes in specific aspects many perceptions carry through; only 19% think Tbilisi has gotten any greener and only 25% think it has gotten any cleaner. Meanwhile 71% complain about increased noise pollution (only 3% do not), while for safety and accessibility opinions are quite divided; 58% have noticed the city becoming more multi-ethnic and 40% more walkable. But, if there is one thing that all residents can agree on, it is that the city has gotten more expensive, at 100%, of which 78% think it has gotten much more expensive (5 out of 5). These numbers are an early indication growth has not been as inclusive as envisioned.

Nevertheless, change does not necessarily reflect the state or quality of a certain aspect of living. This is why survey respondents were asked how good particular things are in Tbilisi, in contrast to the severity of certain problems. Those problems are, in ascending order of severity: Lack of shopping facilities (4%), vandalism and graffiti (11%), lack of recreation (24%), crime, prostitution, and drugs (26%), abandoned buildings and trash (both at 32%), lack of quality education (48%), lack of green spaces (52%), and unsafe buildings (69%). The most serious problems are unemployment (84%), lack of affordable housing (89%), and traffic (100%). Indeed, many of the negative trends have translated into problems but this is only half the picture, with an assessment of quality completing the puzzle. The only two attributes that residents think are at good or very good levels are safety (71%) and shopping opportunities (73%). Many other things are average, like roads and sidewalks, access to hospitals, cultural opportunities, sense of community and the quality of parks and open spaces. And 4 of them worry most people, notably the quality of housing (53%), transportation (56%), employment (69%), and cost of living (75%, against 5% positively). As such, on the level of perceptions, many developments have come hand-in-hand with negative changes, with many problems being either unresolved or deteriorating. Many respondents also expressed their disillusionment in relation to unresolved issues through the survey:

> *My part of town does not get that much attention and it is very big area that requires a lot of work. The government would never care enough to fix the issues.*

> *Although some old industrial buildings have been demolished, the area still does not feel like a neighbourhood people would want to live in and there is not much improvement.*

Having said that and to get a better understanding of what these perspectives mean in terms of how the city develops, respondents were asked to rank their priorities for their neighbourhood given 8 different options. The results were as follows: The highest priority was more jobs (no respondent lower than in 5th position), followed by better schools, and then more buses. The lowest priorities in ascending order were more tourists, more stores, and new

houses. The prioritisation of more parking spaces was also evenly divided as a top and bottom priority. Employment and more transport are consistent with the previous responses, while education has seen a lot of attention, despite not being strongly mentioned before. On the opposite end, in stark contrast with previous worries about the affordability and quality of housing, new residences are low in terms of priority, with only 17% even mentioning them in their top 3.

Finally, it is also worth looking at how citizens engage with urban governance and actively work towards meeting their priorities. A mere 21% said that they were involved in addressing issues and developing their neighbourhood, perhaps because 70% mentioned it is difficult to even be involved. Furthermore, only 8% believe their voice matters in deciding what gets built, seemingly because 79% believe that people with more money do. Many respondents also explained why that is so, reflecting on internal and external factors that hinder participation:

*Many things are not published or announced so it is difficult to keep track unless you read the news or know someone else who is involved.*

*I try to keep up with the news, keep my neighbourhood clean etc. I do believe, however, that citizen participation in most things is very scarce both in practices and as a mentality.*

*Things just happen from one day to another so you cannot keep up. And even if you try and be involved what is promised is not what gets funded and clearly not what gets built.*

All in all, there is mounting disappointment in the direction the city is developing that is slowly eating away at any optimism. The fact that many problems have persisted, with new ones emerging, in addition to a noticeable lack of investment in maintenance, has left many citizens disillusioned with the prospects of the city. This has translated into less involvement, low levels of trust, and a strong feeling that certain priorities are getting sidelined. Nevertheless, there are also visible divisions in terms of where the city should be heading, the

quote below anecdotally giving an example. Given how there is no single solution put forward, there are many alternative pathways that different citizens would like to see being pursued. The role of government in picking which ones to put forward and how that has influenced the citizens' perceptions is analysed in the following chapter.

> *It is funny how this [survey] is making me argue with my mom. There are things we both agree on like how we want more green space, nicer hospitals and schools and better jobs but she also thinks we need more parking and things for cars. She also believes that foreign companies who came to Georgia are good for jobs but I think they rarely pay enough or will not hire you.*

# 6. Role of Government and Lack of Transparency

Looking at the self-perceptions of citizens is valuable, but it is more valuable to see how they are expressed in relation to other stakeholders, namely the role of government as an arbiter of urban development. For example, 53% of respondents believe the government is not making the necessary changes and 50% have no trust in the government being able to improve Tbilisi; And even more disconcerting is the fact that solely 8% believe that the government always tells the truth about what is getting built. Citizens have taken notice and express feeling let down by the government:

> *[…] the government will say one thing one day and then end up doing something completely different. So you cannot even trust that they are actually doing the things promised to be able to contribute in any meaningful way.*

Residents feeling marginal is something that ought to be explored relationally. If citizens are not being listened to or involved in any of the processes, *who holds the most influence?* Most respondents had a straightforward answer, not them. When asked to rank different stakeholders in terms of influence, the national and local government occupy the first two spots, followed by construction companies, big businesses, and foreigners. Citizens themselves are second to last, having only slightly more influence than local businesses. Regardless of whether that ordering reflects the degree of influence each stakeholder possesses, the fact that citizens rank themselves so low is disheartening. But if the government is not engaged with its citizens, then what is it prioritising? Respondents were asked again (see Chapter 5) about the priorities for their neighbourhood, this time from the perspective of the government. Their responses are quite remarkable, in the most negative way. According to citizens, the government prioritises new houses, followed by more parking spots, and more tourists. The lowest priorities in descending order are more jobs, more parks, and better schools. In fact, for 7 out of 8 metrics, as can be seen in the figures below, the prioritising is almost perfectly asymmetrical, with only public transportation seeing a similar spread between both groups.
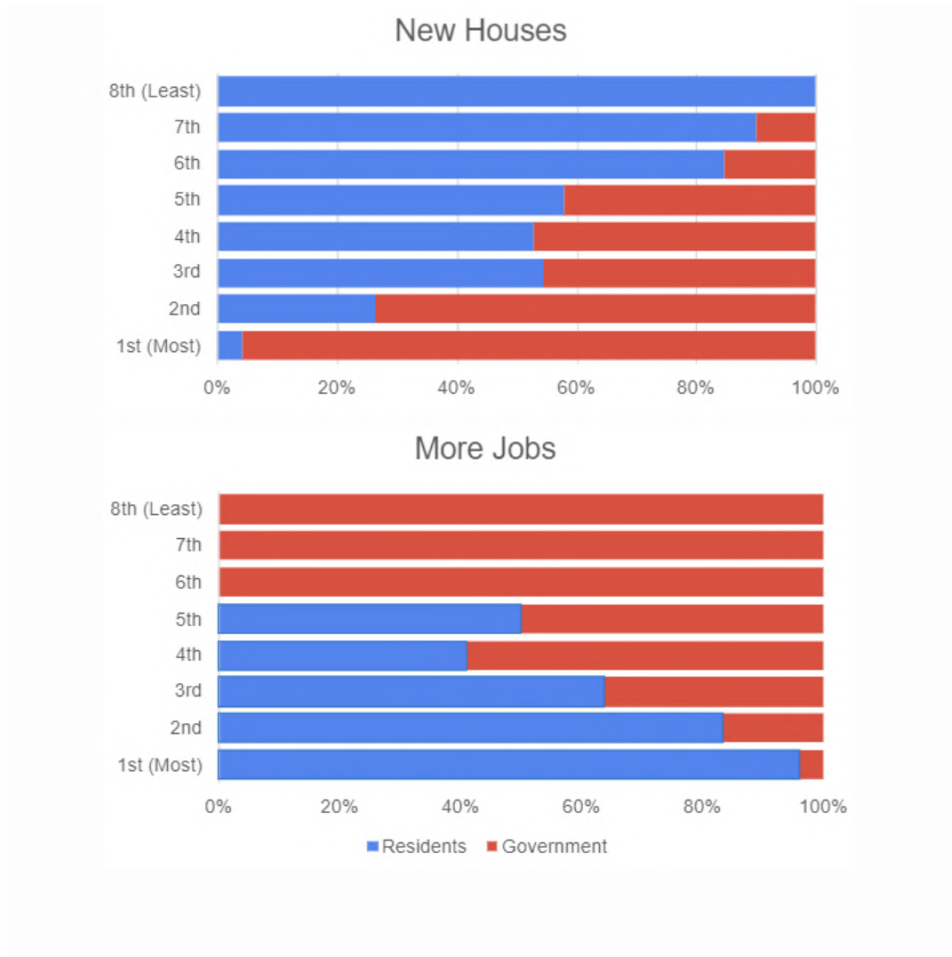
*Figure 11 - Perception of Prioritisation for Jobs and Housing by Tbilisi Residents and the Government*

## More Parking Spaces

## Better Schools
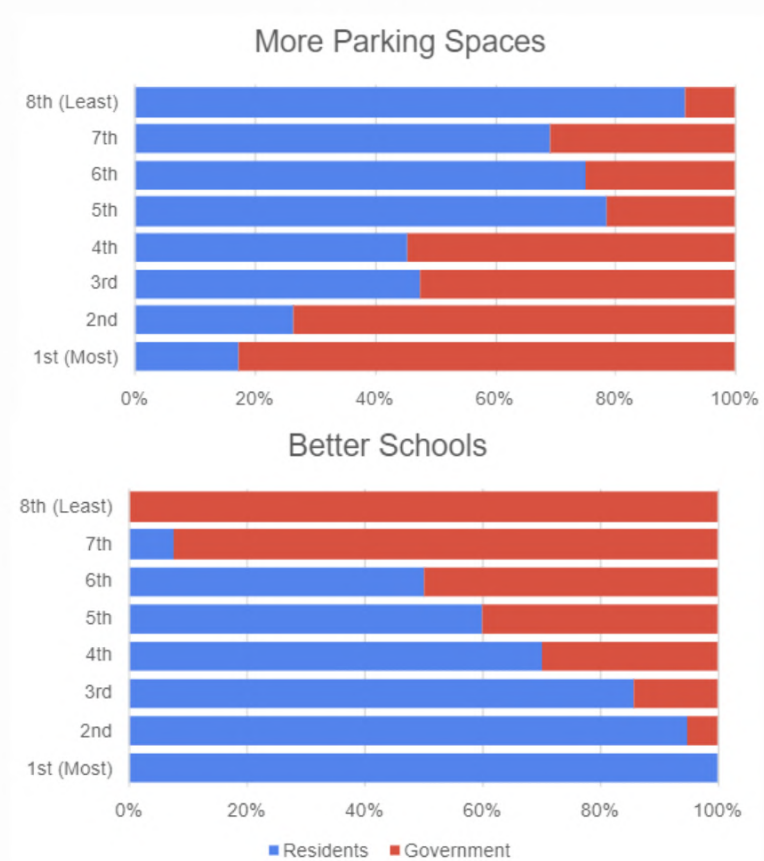
*Figure 12 - Perception of Prioritisation for Parking Spaces and Schools by Tbilisi Residents and Government*

Snap judgement aside, the fragmentation of urban politics is pronounced, and in most residents' minds, the government has a clear stake and role in the state of things. Asking the government to take a more proactive role and prioritise development is nothing new for states with a small domestic public sector and lack of resources (Auty, 2000; Vincent et al, 1997). Hence, the role of government in attracting and facilitating investment, ensuring an even application of all relevant regulations, and having to choose from an array of options is not that farfetched of a popular demand (Bloom & Williamson, 1998). Yet in Tbilisi, in many instances, the opposite is also true, with residents believing that the government is too involved in a manner that is self-serving and does not directly address them. They have a noticeably clear opinion on where they believe investment is channelled towards and are discontented with being peripheral to such decisions. More starkly, however, they see the city undergoing

extensive change without them, which raises many interesting questions. *For example, if the quality and affordability of housing was a concern, why is it not a priority? Why are education and employment so important?* These queries will be revisited later but encourage first having an objective look on the role of government in Georgia and Tbilisi, to better understand why these perceptions are being shaped in such a manner.

As explained before (see Chapter 2) Georgia has made many crucial steps towards democratisation, notably by increasing the efficiency of government and eliminating low-level corruption. Despite individual dysfunctional elements, government institutions remain stable and firmly in power, with fundamental freedoms guaranteed and strong central administration, on the local and national level. This means that the government actively manages urban space through a series of scalable policies and interventions. For Tbilisi, the implementation of a new transport policy that saw private minibuses (marshurtkas) gradually being replaced by modern public buses and the creation of bus lanes on key arteries is a notable example (Agenda.ge, 2022; Patsatsia, 2022). Another programme saw small-scale neighbourhood upgrades, primarily through creating controlled parking spaces. (Patsatsia, 2022) A further initiative saw the historic centre being revitalised, with many old buildings being renovated and repurposed, primarily for touristic reasons (Agenda.ge, 2016). The greatest example, of course, is the massive beautification project that saw many of Tbilisi's most iconic landmarks being constructed, such as the Peace Bridge, the Public Service Hall, the Biltmore Hotel, or the Rike Park and Concert Hall (Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016). None of these initiatives were without criticism yet they go to show that involvement with urban renewal is a priority for the government as well, at least in terms of public investment. Foreign aid and investment, as well as more efficient tax collection has afforded government institutions with adequate, albeit limited, resources to carry out such schemes.

The same rigor has also been challenged in terms of enabling private capital to (re)develop parts of the city. In that front, four main policy tools have been employed. Firstly, zoning regulations and planning maps have been adapted to allow upwards and outwards

expansion, densification, and mixed-use zoning, often to the detriment of green space. Secondly, capital investment has been made easier through the deregulation of the banking sector, facilitating both the flow of capital, and enabling for real estate to be securitised as investment (KPMG Georgia, 2016). Thirdly, by defunding public institutions and services (healthcare, medical insurance, education) while enabling the same services to be provided privately at more competitive prices, or by directly privatising them (Radnitz, 2010). Fourthly, by routinely outsourcing construction and procuring private expertise and funding for the implementation of improvements. In some respects, the consequences of such policies have been positive, while in others they have proven quite disastrous (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2022).

More broadly, however, the national and local governments have not been without their share of controversy, primarily aimed at how different contracts are awarded and doubting the impartiality of procurement processes (Kupatadze. 2018). A substantial portion of such deals are directly linked to construction and infrastructure improvements in Tbilisi, where most power and capital are concentrated (TI Georgia, 2023c, 2023e). For some organisations, the decline in petty corruption has been paralleled by an increase in political elitism and high-level corruption, with Transparency International alluding to the fashioning of a *"kleptocratic regime"* (2023). Allegations like these are not new to Georgian politics but they seem to be gaining momentum and are directed to how development is linked to the direct enrichment of a select few, through preferential access to -and secret deals with- private capital. Increased interest has also brought more scrutiny, including calls for more government accountability and transparency (Boffey, 2023). A government official also alluded to that worrying trend:

> *I work for the procurement department and we have much less freedom than I wish. This means that things are often done without much thought and without the best solutions. Everytime I disagree with something, my boss urges me to finish it quickly, even if we pay more than we should for things.*

In recent years, the situation has deteriorated with many freedoms restricted and the Rule of Law challenged. In March 2023, thousands flocked in front of Parliament on Rustaveli Avenue in the largest protest in years where multiple instances of police brutality were reported (Gabritchidze, 2023). The spark behind the protest was the decision of the government to go forward with the adoption of the "Russian Law," a piece of legislation that would make organisations receiving funding from abroad being subject to increased government control and them being branded as "Foreign Agents." The legislation caused an outcry amongst civil society and watchdog organisations and soured the relationship with the EU and the US (Katamadze, 2023). However, it was everyday citizens that were the most infuriated, with many acts of disobedience and protests almost paralysing Tbilisi. For them it was clearly a law that no one wanted nor needed and a direct threat to democratisation and the European aspirations of most Georgians (Askew, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023; Kunchulia & Heil, 2023). Nevertheless, according to the government, protesters were either planted and bribed by the opposition, "*satanists*" (Kevanishvili, 2023) or "*misled and uneducate*d" on the benefits of the legislation. After multiple days of protests, the government backed down but has continued pursuing a warmer economic and political relationship with Russia, notably by resuming direct flights between the two countries in late May. However, according to the most recent biannual Georgian Survey of Public Opinion, 92% of all Georgians believe that Russia's aggression against Georgia continues and 87% see Russia as the greatest threat (International Republican Institute, 2023). Given how 89% aspires towards EU membership and only 9% want warmer relations with Russia, the government's decision seems unreasonable.

*Figure 13 - A crowd of Protesters against the Russian Law on Rustaveli Avenue in March 2023*

**How do you feel about the direction of each of the following issues? Have they progressed or regressed over the past year?**

| Issue | Progressed | Neither progressed nor regressed | Regressed | Don't know/Refused |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Freedom of expression | 32% | 37% | 30% | 2% |
| Media independence | 27% | 39% | 30% | 4% |
| Individual human rights | 22% | 39% | 37% | 2% |
| Education | 20% | 36% | 40% | 4% |
| Democracy | 19% | 41% | 37% | 4% |
| Fighting crime | 19% | 36% | 40% | 5% |
| National security | 16% | 42% | 37% | 5% |
| Economy | 15% | 24% | 60% | 1% |
| Fighting corruption | 14% | 39% | 35% | 11% |
| EU accession | 14% | 38% | 40% | 9% |
| Reducing political polarization | 8% | 35% | 47% | 11% |

*Figure 14 - Opinion Polling on Political Developments in Georgia in 2022 (Source: Georgian Survey of Public Opinion, International Republican Institute, 2023)*

The current state of government is inherently problematic, and the positions adopted by the ruling Georgian Dream party are alarming, as they show a trend of further political entrenchment and disregard for democratic processes. Following Georgia's application for EU membership in 2022, certain conditions have been set before negotiations can begin; they involve the complete independence of the judiciary, deoligarchisation, further regulation of the financial sector, financial transparency, and respect for the Rule of Law, stipulating specific recommendations, (European Commission, 2022, 2023; Venice Commission, 2023). Yet, the EU has repeatedly (Demytrie, 2023; Dettmer, 2023; EU Neighbours East, 2023) lamented government decisions since, branding them as undemocratic and questioning Georgia's European aspirations. Domestic and international independent media and civil society organisations also regularly bring to light damning allegations of corruption (OECD, 2022). For example, the de facto leader of the ruling party is ex-prime minister and the richest person in Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who has been accused of meddling with political processes for his

own gain (TI Georgia, 2022). Similarly, the current mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze is the owner of an investment and development firm, active in the construction sector, with numerous allegations of awarding public contracts to himself (TI Georgia, 2012). In fact, the practice of awarding contracts based on political affiliation is quite common (TI Georgia 2023b, 2023c, 2023d). 20 public agencies, including the Government Administration, have failed to publish procurement contracts, allegedly due to technical issues (TI Georgia, 2023e). In 2022, the director of the government-critical TV station Mtavari Archi was arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned[5] (Scott, 2023), while former president Saakashvili remains incarcerated despite his deteriorating health, multiple appeals for his transfer, and being a Ukranian citizen (European Parliament, 2023). Meanwhile business deals with Russia and sanctioned individuals continue, with Georgia facilitating or obfuscating the transfer of Russian money, with Russian companies still operating in Georgia, again with Ivanishvili being involved in many of them (TI Georgia, 2023a, 2023c). The establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency has stalled, a case about vote buying dismissed, judicial reform has failed to materialise, and the Parliament has systematically broken its own rules.

The enumeration of instances above does not serve as an attack to the current government but instead exposes the brokenness of political processes and the erosion of democratic safeguards. If anything, the current government was democratically elected in 2019 (despite allegations of fraud) and Parliament is comprised of 15 different political parties. Under these circumstances, the disappointment felt by residents and the concerns expressed by international actors are very well grounded. With lack of transparency at the forefront of these issues and amidst an uncompromising pursuit of development, the role of government as a responsible stakeholder is in doubt, indicative of a growing disconnect between citizens and their political elites.

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[5] He was subsequently pardoned by President Salome Zourabichvili in June 2023

## 7. A Growing Tbilisi amidst Capitalist Development

To put the observations so far into perspective, one also needs to understand their scale, so a slight detour to exhibit the nature and future of (capitalist) development in Georgia is necessary. The scale of construction in Tbilisi is unprecedented and paints the image of a prosperous metropolis, comparable to many Western European cities. The many success stories of foreign press that suggest Tbilisi is the city and destination of the future are indeed true yet tend to cherry-pick memorable aspects of urban development while ignoring how they contribute to the city's growth.

A snapshot of the housing market is very indicative of the current trends. For example, Korter, an online marketplace that allows developers to advertise their most premium properties, has a list of the current residential development projects in Tbilisi, planned, available or under construction. There are currently 381 developments and 4,113 apartments for sale listed. The developments are unevenly distributed across the city with most taking place in the districts of Vake and Didi Dighomi, where most high-rises and high-end housing developments can be found. In fact, a studio apartment in a remote part of town in Didi Dighomi can sell for 60,000 GEL (~21,000 EUR) and a 2-bedroom apartment in Lisi or Vake can sell for upwards of 2,000,000 GEL (700,000 EUR). According to the Ministry of Justice, since January 2022, more than 20,000 apartments have been bought by foreigners (mostly Russians), in addition to hundreds of non-residential and commercial spaces (საქართველოს პარლამენტი, 2023). Many houses have also been bought as investment and are currently unoccupied or temporarily lived in, mostly by Russian immigrants planning to return to Russia. A university professor during one of the interviews claimed that in total, counting all the housing for sale, rent, or investment, those temporarily occupied, and the buildings under construction and planning, there are circa 150,000 properties on the market; or almost 1 per 9 residents.

Selling prices in 2022 alone have increased by around 20% while rent prices by around 80% or even 200% in some areas (Tchania et al, 2023). The average cost of living per person in

2023 rests at 3,000 GEL (1050 EUR). For comparison in 2013, a small 1-bedroom apartment in Saburtalo would rent for 500 GEL (210 EUR at 2013 rate), whereas today it would cost 1300 GEL (450 EUR) for an older apartment, or 2000 GEL (700 EUR) for a new one. Meanwhile the average salary in Tbilisi has grown from 940 GEL in 2013 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023a) to 2000 GEL in 2023, while also being noticeably lower for women, public sector employees and retail workers (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for 2022 was at 172.3 (2010=100; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023c) when for the Eurozone it stood at 126.6 (2015=100; Eurostat 2023). As such, housing prices have risen much faster than wages and the cost of living has almost doubled, following repeated inflation in most goods and services. Housing costs, fuel, food, transport, and restaurants are behind the increase, while only communication, education and clothing costs have remained stable (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023c, 2023d). That being said, increases in prices are normal and positive signs in growing economies, but for Georgia they largely outpace actual economic development, let alone how they are inflated and skewed by the proliferation of high-income earners and foreigners.
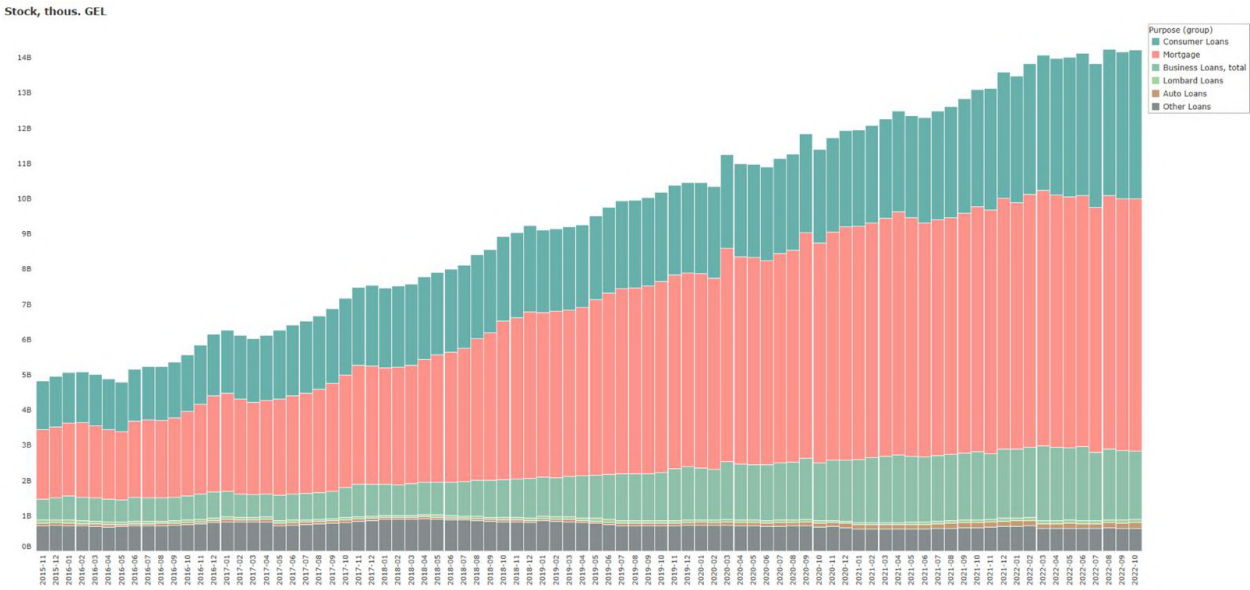


*Figure 15  - Loans taken by type for Tbilisi, 2015-2022, data provided by the National Bank of Georgia (2023)*

The graph above taken from the National Bank of Georgia depicts the growth of loans taken by households in Tbilisi from 2015 onwards. While most types of loans have remained stagnant, mortgages have increased by 250% (National Bank of Georgia, 2023a). Similarly, households in Tbilisi have increased their deposits by around 200%, yet around 75% of those deposits are in a foreign currency, mostly through remittances (National Bank of Georgia, 2023b). Seen together, the data can help explain the explosive growth of the housing market in Tbilisi and might suggest that homeownership is indeed prioritised by the population. However, they also point to an emerging housing bubble as banks cannot financially support this growth nor can they handle the consequences if multiple households' default on their debt in the medium-term. This is further compounded by the fact that there has been a large influx of foreign capital, mostly from Russia (Fackcheck.ge, 2023), which might disappear overnight when Russians leave.
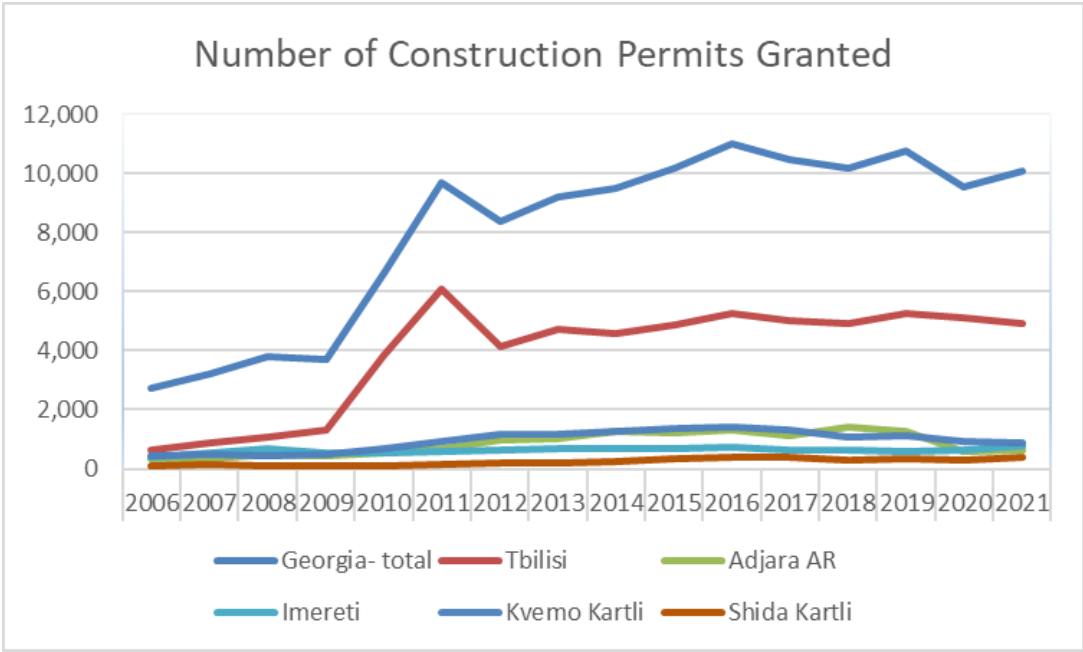


*Figure 16 - Number of Construction Permits Granted, 2006-2021, data provided by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (2023)*
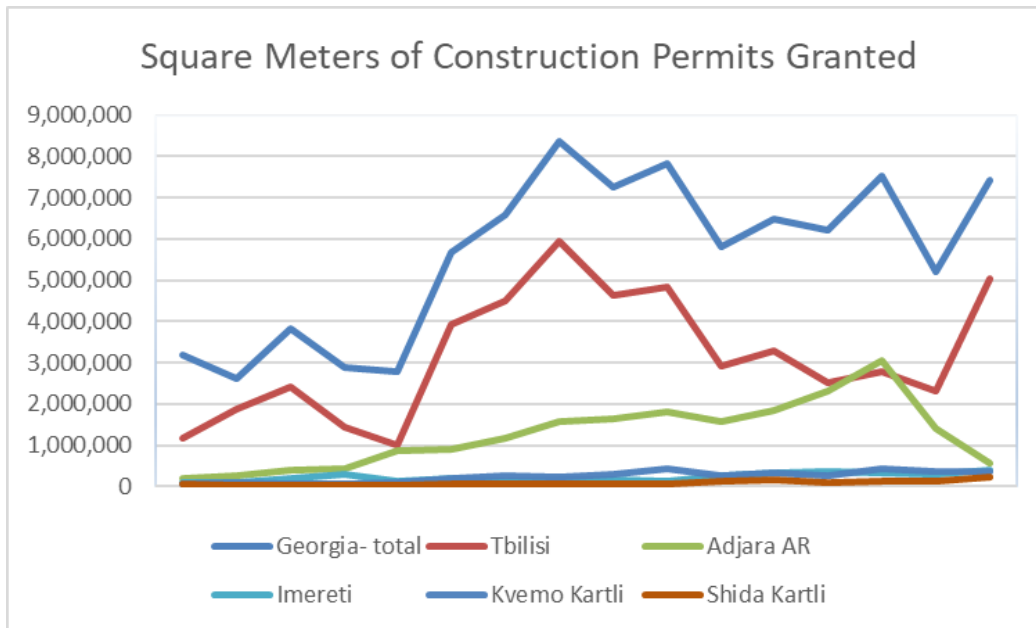
*Figure 17 - Square Meters of Construction Permits Granted, 2006-2021, data provided by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (2023)*

The twin charts track how many construction permits have been issued since 2006, by number and area. Not only does Tbilisi count for almost half of all the construction permits issued in the country, but the construction boom observed in the city since 2009 has not been matched elsewhere (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023e). This means Tbilisi is growing while other regions are remaining mostly stagnant. Similarly, looking at the acreage of permits granted it can also be observed that the city is growing horizontally and vertically, as looking at how Tbilisi's trend line matches the national one, it can be inferred that the number cannot represent just renovations or rebuilding of existing infrastructure in a densely populated area (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023e).

Transformations like these are transpiring in a system of extreme deregulation, liberalisation, and financialisation. Initially, under Saakashvili, this economic development was largely welcomed and hailed both within the country and internationally (Bigg, 2013). Yet, the reforms were far more extensive than kickstarting the crumbling economy; they were aimed at eliminating corruption, creating new markets, encouraging competition, and attracting foreign investment. By the end of Saakashvili's presidency in 2012, Georgia was an

overperforming free market economy (IFAIR, 2012). The only thing missing was capital. The Eastern Partnership Programme (EaP) of the European Union and better relations with China and the Arab world enabled for foreign investment to pour into Georgia, reluctantly at first, as an alternative global investment, and the Georgian government was eager to accommodate (Akhvlediani, 2021; Mammadov, 2021; Standish & Chkareuli, 2023). After 2018 and the first wave of successful inflows, the rate of investment skyrocketed and expanded to more risky investments, particularly in real estate. In 2012, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) amounted to 1 billion USD, with 5% in real estate; in 2022 that number is 2 billion USD with real estate at 20%, following the financial sector at 26%. There is also massive investment in hotels and casinos (8.7%), construction (4.6%), energy and others (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023f). Consequently, urban space has been commodified, deregulated, and financialised to an astounding degree, serving as the attestation of Georgia's successful transition into a developed economy. To quote urban planner and researcher, Giorgi Kankia:

> *[After 2003] big companies were in a favourable position, trying to possess everything. Urban development is [for them] a tool to influence citizens and public institutions, to do big projects [with] many players. […] There's westernisation, the narrative of European integration and beautification that makes people move out.*

There is a contrast in how Tbilisi can be an attractive city for expats, immigrants, and high-income individuals, who are able to enjoy affordable luxury and plenty of new development; at the same time, for the average Georgian, especially low-income earners, little has actually changed as they are trying to keep up with rising costs. Economic development by all metrics is undeniable and –in some respects- impressive, a true success-story of capitalism. Tbilisi is also growing, seeing a wave of construction that has transformed it almost overnight. Yet, the degree to which that success and growth has trickled down to benefit the citizens, let alone encourage their inclusion is a different question.

# 8. Occupation and (Dis)Possession

Succeeding the previous chapters describing the status quo from different perspectives, Tbilisi is audibly a city of contradictions and socioeconomic split. Borrowing from the theoretical framework, dispossession has been packaged as urban renewal and development, ultimately leading to a mounting deprivation. However, deprivation in Tbilisi is relational, not absolute. Walking in the streets of Tbilisi, one can still see expensive cars in the poorest areas, people enjoying a meal at restaurants, and traffic at most shopping malls. Such instances give the impression of prosperity, or more specifically, of individuals reaping the benefits of capitalism. What this assumption glosses over, however, is that an increase in disposable income has not necessarily improved living standards per se, partly because certain goods are more accessible than others and partly because wellbeing is also predicated on goods and services that cannot be purchased, especially for those most at need. Beneath the surface, possession as an attribute is fragile and under threat.

The scale of development in Tbilisi is impressive but occurs in a tight geographic setting in an already dense city surrounded by mountains and little room for expansion. In some cases, development has been outwards, as is the case with Krstanisi and Didi Dighomi, two greenfield developments outside of the city. In fact, many apartments and businesses are constructed prior to these areas being connected by public transport, new road arteries, utilities, or services. In some other cases, existing space is rezoned to enable for new construction. The hillside in Lisi is a perfect example of dense development in a previously undeveloped area. Even the hills in the historic area of Dzveli Tbilisi next to Narikala Fortress and the Botanical Garden have been carved out to make way for luxury residences that clash with the surrounding architecture. Perhaps the most notable example is how a $5\text{km}^2$ area (about the size of central Amsterdam) next to the dendrological park was declassified as green space and given to Hualing, a Chinese company with ties to the CCP, for development over the next 20 years. (Lomsadze, 2019; Gogua, 2021) Expansion can also be upwards, with Vake being the most notable example of high-rises steadily replacing existing buildings. This densification can

also take the form of shopping malls and office buildings, or new buildings bridging the gap between existing edifices. The overarching idea is that of 'unused' space being redeveloped, ignoring the strain that increased density places upon existing infrastructure.



*Figure 18 - A private garden blocking a sidewalk in Avlabari*

Through processes like these businesses get to possess and privately manage the urban space, benefitting from newer and more stringent property legislation (Parliament of Georgia, 2023). Nevertheless, the same protections do not extend to citizens, especially many living in Soviet apartments who even though may legally own them enjoy less control over their property. Expropriation and eviction notices can thus be easily served to tenants from the local government which still legally owns the land upon which they are built. That means that residents have less power in negotiating their compensation against eminent domain, with the land then resold to private developers. This legal arrangement has largely enabled older buildings to be demolished and replaced by newer ones with less bureaucracy involved and puts into question the original possession of residents by blurring the lines between private and public land.

*Houses like these are the greatest legacy of the Soviet times. They are sturdy, fairly spacious and were easy to upgrade or extend. Again, I do not mind people having control over their homes, my parents did the same to ours, I just believe that there was not enough oversight in the whole process, which made many of them being of substandard quality. (In reference to a photograph of a Soviet apartment block)*

As a matter of fact, residents are not always the legal owners of the full land upon which they reside and make a living. Since independence, many families -some haphazardly- have expanded their houses and apartments through auto-construction which has given Tbilisi its characteristic disjointed architecture and defaced many historic buildings. As the survey respondent above aptly mentioned, most of those changes were made informally, without permission, although some have been legalised later but only a few demolished. For apartments, expansion is relatively easier because it usually replaces balconies or takes up airspace, but many of the modifications are on the ground where the reality is more complicated. Sheds, parking garages, private gardens, workshops, and small stores regularly take up the surrounding space of buildings, often extending to and occupying public streets. How formal or legal that occupation is can vary, mostly relying on concessions from other residents and being a widespread practice that few want to condemn. Citizens were able to expropriate the urban space at a time when the State was unable or unwilling to stop them and over the years have grown to assume ownership. As can be seen in the photographs below, the quality or soundedness of such construction leaves a lot to be desired, regardless of the legitimate needs it fulfilled. The point here is that in an already dense and constantly evolving environment, such edifices add another layer of complexity to managing urban space. While demolition might seem a reasonable and safe option, fair compensation is expected. Because for most Georgians this is neither occupation nor even extended property rights but an integral part of one's ownership and changes to the status quo would be both unpopular and disproportional.

*Figure 19 – (Clockwise) An auto-constructed apartment in Saburtalo, Makeshift sheds and garages in front of an apartment in Gldani, an auto-constructed detached house in Zghvishubani*

The degree to which such practices can be branded as resistance is revisited later. Still, it problematises dispossession, at least on the level of perceptions. In fact, there is an increasing dichotomy between areas in which occupation is tolerated and encouraged and those in which it is not. For instance, such sights are exceedingly rare in the city centre, Vake or on main streets, but common in the outskirts. Similarly, while the local government tried to clean up the centre by kicking out street vendors, unless relocated to specific rented spaces with permits, the same vendors can still be seen around metro stations in the suburbs where seemingly no permit is necessary. This duality can also be observed with newer apartments or

shops being marked and carefully curated when Soviet ones are not. All things considered, it is evident that the newer and more expensive a particular property is, the better it is protected.

Consequently, the responsibility for displacement lies on capital as an institution, rather than on a specific stakeholder. Developers and construction companies might dispossess residents but so does the government, private individuals, foreign investors, expats, businessowners and so on. On the other side of the spectrum, for the dispossessed it is not just financial means that decide their fate but a series of factors including their complicity, social status, community ties, legal aid, or quality of housing. It is not a narrative of gentrification driven by rising prices or population replacement, instead being one of increasing deprivation that calls for adaptation. *Does someone have the resources to relocate? What is the opportunity cost of the dispossession?* What is happening in Tbilisi is in many ways less violent than elsewhere but still employs powerlessness, as can be inferred from the following quotes:

> *Although my area used to be predominantly a working class neighborhood, new developments, offices, and commerce has attracted middle class to it, boosting housing prices. Most people in the area now are middle class.*

> *[Tbilisi is] obviously better as in newer buildings, fancier things and more "developed". But I think worse in terms of affordability and being a sensible place to live in.*

> *Sure there are new buildings [which] are more luxurious and modern. But there are also way too many cars and few parks, which are mostly for decoration. The streets feel less safe, prices are going up, and older areas are [losing] their character. I think it's both the city and the people that are actually getting worse.*

It must also be stressed that dispossession is not solely spatial, far from in fact. The issue that almost all interviewees mentioned is how they are under pressure and feel like they are falling behind. Primarily the dispossession translates through the rising cost of living preventing many people from moving to their own spaces or opening a business. It also takes the form of disinvestment and neglect, as aforementioned, obstructing and complicating

everyday life. Nevertheless, there are also serious issues with securing a stable employment that pays well, moving around the city using public transport, having access to quality healthcare and education, or being included in public processes. The latter means that to a great extent, dispossession is mental, reflecting an overarching feeling of being prayed and encroached upon. During the interviews, it was repeatedly mentioned that change is not communicated or adequately explained, leaving residents frustrated.

> *One of my friends lived in Vake and one day they just started building a skyscraper in front of their house. They never asked them, they never told them anything, they never even apologised for the noise. They don't ask you, they just do whatever they want.*

What some respondents stressed was how economic development and social mobility has fuelled a distaste for vulnerability and shared ownership; interest to preserve common goods is waning because they can be acquired privately for a premium. Those who rely on social protections or are in a vulnerable position are marginalised for seeming failing to progress. This narrative of failure has eroded social ties, facilitating and legitimising dispossession from inside out. Put simply, an eviction notice is only a formality for someone who already knows they are unwanted or unable to live somewhere. Yet, if you already live in an informal area life can go on as usual because seemingly there is no interest or stake in your possession. This unique mixture of weaponising formality, access, and aspirations is where Georgia diverges from similar narratives. In Tbilisi, dispossession is about elitism with those most enfranchised being able to reestablish their possession, formalise their occupation, and actively benefit from the urban development process. One of the interviewees perfectly summarised the situation:

> *I would say the government is not trying to increase the quality of life of people. They want money. All of the investment and construction is just for money. This is also the reason why there are more Russians. […] If there are so many things being built, where are the new jobs? […] If they cared about our wellbeing, they would adopt different policies. I do not understand why money always goes to rich areas when*

*that money could go to poorer areas with more people. But it is probably because*

*rich areas are more financially sustainable and beneficial. […] Whatever the*

*government is doing is only bring the aristocrats closer. The people with money,*

*influence and positions [of power] are getting closer.*

In terms of disconnect, this implies that dispossession and exclusion is a self-reinforcing mechanism. It depends on residents being alienated and disempowered and contributes to their further isolation by increasing the distances with those at positions of power and influence. The implications of this phenomenon and its connection with territorial stigma are explored in the following chapter.

# 9. Territorial Stigma in Action

Before independence most of Tbilisi was fairly even and uniform across all districts, at least in terms of how the built environment was curated. Roads and houses were constructed based on strict standards, schools and healthcare were spread throughout the city and the quality of maintenance was kept at prominent levels. Apartment buildings were painted and cleaned regularly, heating was freely available, trash was collected daily, parks and open spaces were meticulously maintained and so on. This is not a romanticisation of the past, but an acknowledgment that this uniformity occurred at a time of Soviet occupation and relative deprivation, or at least less economic development. Similarly, inequality and social stratification were very much present, albeit more subtly. This reference matters because it also marks the inheritance Tbilisi got post-independence, namely a reasonable uniform starting point for the city to develop. However, since independence development has been anything but even, marshalling the image of modern Tbilisi built on widening gaps and inequalities. This process was founded on utilising territorial stigma -consciously or subconsciously- to dictate unevenness.

That is to say that in modern Tbilisi being low-income, living in a particular neighbourhood, attending a particular university, or doing a particular job can carry a marker of shame and stigma. And increasingly, those markers are causing spatial divisions, as Georgi Kankia (2023) has shown in his research. Naturally, stigmatisation is not surprising on its own and can be observed across the globe but what makes Tbilisi stand out in this regard is the origin of stigma and how residents respond to it. Yet, before delving deeper into the causes and consequences, the various mechanisms of "branding" different sections of the city and attributing a series of –mostly negative- characteristics to its residents can better be explained through two different examples.

Firstly, there exists an IDP settlement for people from Abkhazia in the middle of Vake, the most prestigious and developed neighbourhood. The settlement is right next to the Axis Towers, a new skyscraper that is currently the tallest building in the city. The buildings they

occupy are from the 1930s and were originally the dormitories of the State University. They lack access to electricity and sanitation and are in abysmal condition. The resettlement process of the IDPs has been markedly slow and some families continue to reside in these dwellings, on one of the most valuable plots of land. As such, repurposing the land and evicting the residents has been an extremely contentious point for the local government. The current solution has been to erect a fence around the settlement and hide the buildings behind some plants, while also removing street access. Meanwhile, various concepts have been drafted about turning the area into a shopping mall and business centre. While this example stands out for its extremity, it is also indicative of the lengths officials are willing to go to in avoiding addressing territorial stigma. Given the historic significance of the settlement, restoration and rehabilitation would seem like feasible and affordable options, yet the government is aware that it is also not the most profitable one.



*Figure 20 - The IDP settlement in Vake hidden by a fence, with the Axis Towers in the background*

Secondly, there is Gldani, a district on a plateau to the Northeast of the city. The district was first built under Soviet leadership to accommodate an influx of workers, split up into micro-blocks of towering apartment buildings, aspiring to be a model neighbourhood. Even today, Gldani is less crowded but also one of the least desirable places to live in with a tainted reputation; issues with public transport, inexistent green spaces, crime, old housing, and industry next to houses makes Gldani an undesirable place to live. One of the survey respondents who lives in the area aptly explained it in one sentence: *"No one ever wants to live in Gldani. It is far, ugly, and poor."* Such claims are not unfounded, the built environment in Gldani is indeed visually unappealing and the area is facing serious issues of abandonment. An entire district has lost almost all its prestige within the span of a generation.



*Figure 21 - A soviet apartment block in Gldani*

People are taking note of such changes, although from a conceptually limiting perspective. A few of their interviewees expressed their disappointment at how unequally the city is developing. Some, while agreeing that resources might be limited, showed disbelief that

a portion of the funds cannot be diverted to less privileged areas. Yet, they also recognise that certain neighbourhoods also increasingly carry a certain degree of (under)development. Survey respondents also noted the same concerns. While all agree that reconstruction and demolition are necessary, the majority is unsatisfied with how well houses in their area are maintained. Looking at their priorities again, public investment in things such as schools, public transportation and green spaces is at the top. Yet, when it comes to their perception of what the government prioritises, they are last.

There is a pattern of trying to create value through new developments and areas, rather than achieve the same value through renewal. For instance, the area around Marjanishvili in Chugureti, which formed the core of proto-Soviet Tbilisi, is adorned with beautiful buildings and was traditionally the centre of economic activity, easily accessible from everywhere. Logic would dictate that it would be prioritised for renewal, yet today most of the buildings are in disrepair and the area has an increasingly bad reputation for crime and prostitution. In this case, stigma is used as an excuse to divert attention elsewhere.

However, while people are aware of territorial stigma, more so after the influx of wealthy Russians and the scaling up of construction, they are somewhat apprehensive or dismissive of their confidence in how it personally affects them. When the concept is explained to them, they are able to identify patterns and examples. For example, the overwhelming majority (82%) of respondents are confident that some neighbourhoods are better than others, while the number of people who believe that their area will be better/worse/the same in the next 20 years is split. Individuals are aware that the development is affecting their immediate environment yet have difficulty reconciling the fact that it might affect them. Some interviewees believed they would be able to escape any stigma, while others attributed it to purely external factors, or even thought it was the natural progression of development.

Based on these observations, territorial stigma as a sub-topic would warrant its own analysis. Because the main difference for Tbilisi is that stigma is not necessarily related to segregation, quality of housing, or access to services. Instead, it takes the form of

abandonment and disinvestment. Most particularly, stigma can be observed in how strictly the urban space is regulated. In less prestigious neighbourhoods, buildings are usually less structurally-sound, sidewalks are obstructed by private parking lots or stalls, there are no canopies on bus stops, fewer streetlights, less connections on public transport, abandoned buildings, and polluting businesses. And while accusation could be traded between different stakeholders, it is citizens themselves who are the subjects and origin of stigma as a dominant perception; a perception which reinforces and justifies inequality and marginalisation. To quote an urban planner on this:

> *Territorial stigma has always been there, a taking for granted attitude towards development, they just want things to happen.*

# 10. Discussion

## 10.1. Analysis of Key Findings

In this section the main research findings from previous chapters will be recapped, analysed, and compared with the existing scientific literature. Some of the information included is context-specific and should be interpreted as such, but still valuable in terms of analysis. For clarity and conciseness, they will be presented per dimension, as introduced in the Methodology chapter (see Chapter 4.1), although there is some clear overlap between them. This is followed by an assessment of the contribution of the analysis as per the research question and some reflections on the conceptual validity of this scholarship. The latter is done through the lens of trying to reimagine urban development (see Chapter 3.5) by focusing more on transitional rather than static elements. A summary of the main points of discussion can also be found in the table below:

| Dimension | Key Takeaway(s) |
| --- | --- |
| *1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space* | Encroachment of Public Space<br>Competition for Access<br>Unresolved Problems |
| *2. Perceived change in living conditions* | Improved Quality of Life<br>Limited Public Provision<br>Unrestricted Socioeconomic Freedom<br>Anti-poverty Sentiment |
| *3. Self-perception of marginality* | Aspiration towards Social Differentiation<br>Refusal to Accept Marginality |
| *4. Priorities in urban renewal* | Qualitative v. Quantitative Improvements<br>Diminished Access to Goods and Services |
| *5. Inclusion in decision-making processes* | Entrenched Decision-making<br>Disinterest towards Public Policy |

| 6. *Legitimacy of urban governance* | Pragmatism towards Policy |
| | Stakeholder Conflict Cycles |
| | Parallel Spaces |

*Table 2 - Summary of Main Research Findings*

### 10.1.1. Perceived Change in Use/Access to Urban Space

On the surface, urban renewal in Tbilisi has altered the way in which individuals commute, work, shop, socialise, and co-exist within the city; with some certainly benefitting and others experiencing mounting hurdles. Practical considerations aside, citizens are asked to navigate those changes and reevaluate their placement as components of the urban experience. Indeed, there is a trade-off between reconfiguring urban space and encroachment on anything public, with Tbilisi increasingly erring on the latter. There is also a discontinuity in terms of how the city develops as wave after wave of modifications are often contradictory, incomplete, or are built at capacity from the beginning. The distinct lack of algorithmic thinking grounded on optimisation, as suggested by Showkatbakhsh and Makki (2022), has instead led to a conflated mix of biased assessments and urgency to deliver without calculating all the parameters. Combined with a permissive environment for private investment and a pursuit of beautification, the implementation of a series of marginal improvements has largely prolongated existing issues and fuelled scepticism. As such, residents tend to negotiate access on an already diminished axis, believing that they are at loss anyway or are receiving substandard attention, regardless of opinion. That is to say that even though motorists might disagree with public transport users about the extensiveness of, or investment in road infrastructure, they acknowledge that the current situation is detrimental to them both.

The situation also confirms the observations of Kostourou (2022) and Tomba (2004) of guided urban development as a mechanism of social engineering. Amidst the seemingly chaotic and random development, there exists a concealed effort to reestablish how one is allowed to access and use the urban space. Perhaps similarly to Tomba's account of Beijing, distribution in Tbilisi is a bottom-up process wherein a growing upper-middle class is experiencing expedited access to privilege, whilst working class individuals are remaining

stagnant. In other words, expensive things are proportionally more accessible for those with resources, compared to their affordable alternatives. On the level of perceptions this is captured by a sense of being left behind and having to compromise for less. Housing issues are not a product of an imbalance in supply and demand in terms of absolute numbers; many residents identify as belonging to a completely separate housing market. Citizens are thus dragged into a competitive structure that is stacked vertically -rather than horizontally- spawning a palpable sense of resentment and alienation. To quote a young student who moved to Tbilisi a couple of years ago:

> People like to say that Tbilisi has more opportunities. Where are they? Because I do
> not see [them]. You cannot do the jobs rich people do, live where they live, eat what
> they eat, travel abroad or never worry about health. In their world... everything is
> easy, but they still look down on you for not being able to be like them.

This observation is consistent with similar processes elsewhere in the post-soviet space (An et al., 2019), specifically of proletarianism giving way to extreme socio-economic stratification. However, Libman and Obydenkova (2019) co-attribute this departure from egalitarianism to the strength of informal networks and the presence of social solidarity, noting decreased inequality in areas of deprivation, the opposite of the situation in most of the developing world, namely South Africa (Seekings, 2007) or India (Balasubramanian et al., 2021). For Georgia, widening inequality could be adequately traced back to the erosion of the social linkages between residents caused by the rapid reconfiguration of its main city based on affluence.

## 10.1.2. Perceived Change in Living Conditions

There exist two possible readings regarding how living conditions have changed because of the urban renewal effort; the former refers to the perception of change. As explored before (see Chapters 5 and 7), positive developments are primarily the case, enabling citizens to live a comfortable life. Noticeable progress has greatly expanded the umbrella of options available, from shopping and entertainment to mobility and digitisation. The rate of uptake of innovation

is enviable and Georgians pride themselves in being able to meet their ever-expanding needs, boosting their confidence and emancipation. They are not the passive recipients of change but actively seek to improve their status with the means at their disposal, largely affirming Roy's (2017) conceptualisation of the development of the urban space as a marker of agency. Nevertheless, a positive appraisal is not universal, referencing a noticeable disinvestment in public goods and services, that cannot be solely explained in terms of increased entitlement. Instead, it reaffirms the negative effects privatisation of social services can have when employed to justify weakened public provision (Mehrotra & Delamonica, 2005), with a parallel commodification of urban space (Serin et al., 2020). The latter has left a sour aftertaste to most Tbilisians who feel threatened by the urban landscape deteriorating and public space blurred.

The second reading pertains to how one approaches transition. Tbilisi and Georgia is characterised by a principled adherence to libertarian ideals and positive attitude towards neoliberal capitalism as guarantor of development and social progress (Papava, 2013). All political parties largely support the same series of policies, varying only in terms of State involvement and regulation (Gozalishvili, 2022; Tarkhnishvili et al., 2022). Yet none are openly supportive of redistributive economic structures and stronger social policy. The narrative of autonomy and unrestricted freedom to pursue one's upwards socioeconomic mobility has persisted and permeated across all classes; this is a double paradox. From one side, Georgia's vision of Westernisation seemingly ignores the abandonment of middle-class-driven neoliberalism occurring in recent years across Europe (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2016). From the other, it attributes any failure to the lacklustre implementation of the libertarian ideal, rather than to structures of inequality deeply rooted in everyday life. Calls for a smaller and less engaged government will not elicit a reversal in elitism or exclusion. The ability to dramatically increase one's living conditions in the span of a single generation exists separate to notions of success and individual freedom. Considering the relative disengagement from decision-making processes and unenthusiastic attitude towards inclusion, the perceptions of residents at this front ought to be analysed critically. Quite disappointingly, an anti-poverty sentiment endures and is shared by many individuals who continue to attribute ailing living standards to

notions of *"failures of personhood."* Here, Zoanni's (2018) social realisation narratives ring true, as widening inequality had profoundly affected residents' entitlements, by conflating potential safeguards for those vulnerable with vulnerability itself. As Cho (2001) aptly mentions, there is a logic behind resisting redistribution despite rising income. It is possible that this sentiment can be traced back to recent Georgian history and the battle for self-preservation following independence that required rapid adaptation under pressure. Nonetheless, in today's Tbilisi, not everyone can adapt.

### 10.1.3. Self-perception of Marginality

This notion of adaptation lies at the heart of a social upheaval. The fact that instances of territorial stigma are not known unless explicitly communicated, in which case they are still perceived as external to one's experience, masks a worrying trend intricately linked to disconnect. Many residents indeed have an affinity for otherness and are positively conscious of being different than their peers. An aspiration towards social differentiation conceals territorial stigma as a mechanism of planned deprivation. To a certain extent, the socioeconomic and political fluidity engulfing multiple aspects of one's life justifies ignoring negative manifestations, or at least introducing them as part of the transition process; but this exposition is incoherent. Again, Tbilisi offers fertile ground to enrich the concept of territorial stigma by highlighting that 'blight' does not necessarily need to exist in contrast with the rest of the city (Sugrue, 2014) but can be part of its core. It also alludes to the fact that vilifying territorial stigma as a mechanism that enfranchises the already privileged is simplistic; it may be true for Detroit and Kornberg (2016) and inform marginality, as explained by Wacquant et al. (2014), but territorial stigma can also inform the identity of the non-marginal. Those caught in the middle have openly welcomed territorial stigma because it either positively reaffirms their social status or acts as a safeguard from further unwelcome change.

Most importantly, however, Tbilisi offers a resounding rebuttal of Gatzweiler's (2011) conceptualisation of marginality since any self-perception of marginality in Tbilisi is oftentimes voluntary. There is no denying that some individuals are by all accounts marginal, the key

difference here is that said individuals refuse that label. Seemingly no person is willing to self-identify as marginal, even if the objective circumstances warrant such a characterisation. It also directly challenges dominant definitions of marginality because the overarching narrative is that no person is getting left behind or pushed to the edges. According to the government or mainstream media citizens are thriving and whichever problems exist are mere exceptions that can be worked on. Likewise, residents discuss social issues under a mantle of guided criticism and cynical relativism. For example, poverty is presented as a political failing in a dehumanising fashion towards persons in the position of poverty, regardless of its components. In Tbilisi, marginality is always attached to a negative marker which does not translate into any form of representation or political alternativism (Brady et al., 2020). Contrastingly, in the US, black people consistently highlight their skin colour as the origin of their marginality and use it as the foundation for a political and social struggle; their marginality is their culture. Georgia offers an exposition of the opposite. In fact, minority and marginal groups willingly pursue their invisibilisation and try to establish themselves as segments of collectivist entities. On this front, there exists a clear gap in literature to encompass the experience of camouflaged marginality, but perhaps Kumar's (2014) notion of shame offers some insight. What is certain is that urban renewal is the trojan horse that brought marginality into the limelight without Tbilisi being ready to address it.

### 10.1.4. Priorities in Urban Renewal

As presented, the field of priorities is where residents are most at odds with decision-makers, or where negative perceptions are most pronounced. In this sense, Lindblom's (1959) assumption of public policy being blind to what is desirable rings true. In addition, densification, and expansion without radical reconfiguration of existing space offers diminishing returns, at least to the extent it is interpreted as neglect. Notably, the citizens' current priorities are largely qualitative, preferring improvements in services over more construction. For the vast majority, urban development needs to be adapted to actively promote sustainable job growth, expand, and densify public transport infrastructure, upgrade education, and safeguard public space. The sentiment towards new construction, more

shopping facilities and tourist-oriented development is one of relative saturation. As Maculan and dal Moro (2020) point out, urban renewal often fails at being strategic, one that is inclusive, human-oriented, and incremental. This strategic incrementalism is missing from Tbilisi, where instead new developments seek to replace or substitute decay. Ng (2018) also claims that there can be a duality in urban renewal with aggressive interventions that break up local communities, and inclusive ones that make local populations co-sponsors of their environment. There is also the position of Lin and de Meulder (2012) who argue that urban renewal should guarantee unnegotiable access to public facilities and open space. This is to support that citizens in Tbilisi have become alienated from the urban space in a manner encouraging disengagement from public affairs, including the relationship with public services. Quite surprisingly, average citizens seem to understand the multidimensionality of urban renewal better than institutions, or what Priemus (2004) calls the *"social, economic, physical and safety agendas".* Regardless of the decision-making capacity to indeed prioritise and exert control in a rapidly developing setting, Boex et al. (2016) stress that the determining factor in assessing success ought to be institutionality. How these priorities develop over time would offer valuable information to better understand the patterns of disconnect emerging from them.

### 10.1.5. Inclusion in Decision-making Processes

Sadly, O'Hare's (2010) pointed criticism also strongly resonates with the processes occurring in Tbilisi. Urban renewal is not only predicated on injustice but also sports a mantle of false inclusivity and sustainability. Decision-making structures are stilted to benefit the initiators' interests but none of the citizens', who are automatically relegated to a disadvantaged position. They simply lack the resources, knowledge, and emancipation to participate in processes which are never based on co-decision. Policymakers consult and placate the communities through false promises but do not actually grant them decision-making power. Secondly, many projects are getting pitched in a top-down manner, which leaves little room for residents to make new proposals and puts them in the position of needing to adapt, compromise, and negotiate in fear of losing out on the development altogether. As a result, the

supposed empowerment and inclusion of the communities is not matched by an adherence to their needs and priorities, let alone an understanding of their status. What is happening on the ground alludes to what Miftarab and Willis (2005) call "Insurgent Citizenship", the conflicts embedded deep within entrenched inequalities of the urban space. It relates to the struggle for participation, consultation, legitimisation, and recognition, connected with the making and unmaking of the urban landscape. All the mechanisms of resistance, state violence, privatisation, and reproduction of inequalities are disproportionately in favour of the ruling classes. Put simply, those with power and resources are either already embedded in decision-making or have no interest because they acknowledge it is to their benefit. On the flipside, those at a disadvantage have no access or stake in participating in the first place. It is the remonstrance most often mentioned by participants during interviews or through the survey, that new things are simply not for them. The key in this analysis is the need to encourage divergence, rather than convergence, in public policy and during citizen consultations. An expert also brought up this issue during one of the interviews:

*Every person with the tiniest amount of power assumes they can just carry out a project. There is no interaction between different departments or agencies, between experts, between developers or investors. So we end up wasting money on a project that is always less than ideal or gets quickly abandoned when someone new takes charge. […] We need a new mentality of actually sitting down and looking at all the data and information before making any decision, while also including the people affected.*

The contribution of Tbilisi at this front is a reminiscence that the upscaling of development is also a rescaling of human development. The idea of economic development outpacing society's adaptation is not new. For example, acknowledging the effects of globalisation, Davidson (2007) believes that construction in city increasingly targets a global audience of investors, tenants, businesses, and tourists which encourages both uniformity and upscaling existing infrastructure. Architects and developers thus aim for an artificial sense of 'authenticity' that dictate which aspects of living are to be prioritised. There is mounting

evidence to support that in Tbilisi the audience is the same, with beautification and communication seeking to normalise explosive growth as the authentic normal. But average residents see nothing normal in the changes, particularly the discontinuity and lack of transparency. Claims to sustainability, opportunity, and modernisation leave most people unphased, in a way that makes development narratives feel alien, exactly because public policy reproduces damaging stereotypes (Glasze, 2012). Consequently, there is a distinct lack of security underpinning a fear that drives individuals to focus on retaining their possession over participating in processes concerning their future, supplementing the scholarship of Porter (2014) on the interlocking of displacement with co-optation.

### 10.1.6. Legitimacy of Urban Governance

To better explore the question of legitimacy, a return to the concept of Just City is necessary. But before that, it also needs to be clarified that governance has nothing to do with government but borrowing from Francis Fukuyama (2013) it is instead "*about the performance of agents in carrying out the wishes of principals*". Fukuyama stresses that queries about democracy or inclusion are secondary, with the focus instead lying on procedures, inputs, outputs, and autonomy. This is relevant for two congruent reasons: Firstly, it avoids looking at governance issues from a political science narrative, accepting that processes and structures of governance are both indigenous and unreplaceable. Secondly, it assesses legitimacy cyclically, where much of the debate on justice is internally defined (Haggart & Keller, 2021). Can *the solutions and changes in the urban environment be branded as 'just' for the institutions involved?* The answer to this question is again two-fold: From one hand, Tbilisians have a complicated relationship with institutionalism as a concept, preferring decisive action over processes of policy formation. That is not to say they are short-sighted or naturally authoritarian, although mistrust in government does not help with idealism; they are just very pragmatic. From the other hand, platforms for consultation and multistakeholder participation rest on a cycle of conflict. Debates are not an issue of *us against them,* but of a vertical and horizontal antagonism to retain a position within the system. Lisa Griffin (2013) reasons about the spatiality of power, where for example the State can have less control or

directly disaffect the citizens, with the trend of unstoppable auto-construction being a poignant instance. Tbilisi is fertile ground for structures of anti-oppression (Schmidt, 2023) that radically reconceptualise how one understands legitimacy.

*So, to what extent is Tbilisi becoming more just and secondly, to what extent is it more democratic, equitable or diverse?* The reply here is inconclusive, being affirmative for the last parameter, negative for the first, and split for the second. Starting from diversity, there is no doubt Tbilisi is a city that welcomes adversity and the trends of social differentiation have indeed informed individuals' functions within the urban space. Any processes of segregation and the discourse surrounding policy continue to embody diversity, even when rejecting its existence, as explained in the previous subchapter. Democracy on the other hand is severely undermined by a pronounced lack of transparency, a wave of self-serving attitude, and a disdain towards interpreting the city as a collective possession. All stakeholders are quite guarded in their appraisals and unwavering towards compromise. Lastly, redistribution continues to exist to the extent that deprivation has not being systematised enough to exclude a specific subgroup of people who can still benefit from them. For instance, beautification projects might have primarily catered to support upscale investment but were never designed or communicated as exclusive. Nevertheless, equity is also challenged by the fact that most developments are not accessible to the majority, creating parallel markets and spheres of urban existence.

At present, it would be unwise to classify Tbilisi as just or unjust, but the foundation to make a reasonable comparison has been set. It is precisely the "*space between Justice and Legitimacy*" (Wellman, 2023) and its philosophical ramifications where the present analysis has contributed to informing the academic debate.

## 10.2. Connection with Research Questions

*How has a disconnect between residents and decision-making*

*bodies affected the urban renewal process in Tbilisi?*

Looking back at the research question, it is confirmed that disconnect between different stakeholders has indeed influenced urban renewal; yet this affirmation lacks some nuance. The state of disconnect was pre-existing, meaning that Tbilisians never felt directly connected with decision-makers, nor did they assume that their interests are represented in the highest echelons of power. The preconditions for disconnect did exist but were specifically triggered by urban development. Disconnect is also clearly a self-reinforcing mechanism; on the one hand, residents feel powerless and alienated which only fuels their disillusionment and disengagement with urban governance. Urban renewal has persistently failed to meet many of their needs which are relegated to either self-provision or adaptation. On the other hand, exactly because of that disempowerment, decision-makers have increased flexibility in pursuing their own agenda, amidst rising inequality, corruption, and clientelism. In other words, those with influence can afford to ignore citizens' voices in a system that is based on collusion and lacks safeguards and transparency, yet is also incredibly fragile. Furthermore, that entrenchment occurs in a way that can be contradictory and competitive even for decision-makers which explains the disjointed and random nature of urban renewal in Tbilisi. Urban development is extensive but not systematic enough, producing many negative -but also often positive- outcomes. What lies at the heart of this phenomenon is a shift from factual representations of developments towards perceptions, with citizens at the forefront. This gradual realisation of disconnect as a looming aspect of the urban experience is still in its infancy but continues to gather momentum. Alluding to Fainstein's thought, calls for justice are multiplying as residents feel the gap widening. The ramifications of this realisation are yet to be seen.

Territorial stigma takes up a substantial portion of this disconnect but it is neither its sole cause nor effect, perhaps because it is interpreted as a natural phenomenon, rather than

a side-effect of policy. What is interesting here is the disconnect and divides observed are equally stark between citizens themselves. Of course, there never was any expectation that everyone would be in accordance. Still, the need for differentiation and the alienation residents acknowledge positively are only furthering pre-existing divides and reducing the urgency of more inclusive policymaking. Citizens are only helping to further territorial stigma. Divides in terms of opinion contribute to their voices being rendered increasingly irrelevant. There is also the clear contradiction that even though financialisation may be harming those most vulnerable, it continues to garner support from residents, who are just hoping for better redistribution.

Looking back at the role of government it is quite thought-provoking that the way in which citizens' expectations are not met has more to do with the government being too involved, rather than the opposite. Most people would rather see the pace of development slowing down, with the government investing more in public goods and services, increasing supervision, and sticking to smaller-scale plans, rather than seeking to attract investment and encouraging swooping changes to the urban environment. This attitude cannot solely be attributed to mistrust or broken promises but rather reflects an affinity for deregulation and a limited conceptualisation of governance.

Lastly, spatial dispossession might exist but constitutes the exception, not the norm. Instead, it takes the form of encroachment, limited access, and planned deprivation. Uniquely for Tbilisi, there is no struggle against dispossession but a fierce competition to reestablish possession, claim legitimacy, and sustain the same quality of living for a premium.

## 10.3. Omissions and Methodological Constraints

As indicated already, the conceptual framework employed, the themes explored, and the terms used are indeed relevant in unpacking the topic of urban renewal in Tbilisi. This is a positive assessment of the rigidity of the conceptualisation and its applicability in a specific context. Nevertheless, they are all descriptive and need to be reconceptualised to adequately capture the substance of perceptions on urban renewal; territorial stigma might exist but in a

different format than elsewhere; urban governance means something completely different to both residents and decision-makers compared to their peers in Western Europe or the US; or, most notably, disconnect can be observed but is grounded on perceptions of individuality, rather than community engagement. These alterations limit the applicability of the initial theory presented and how it was revisited.

It would be interesting to enter into dialogue with government officials or other decision-makers with this information and better capture their perspective or examine how they rationalise their actions. This is the most major omission that would have profoundly supplemented the analysis.

Another omission pertains to the formation and evolution of perceptions on the level of ideology, inviting a more formalised and sociopolitical analysis. Given how polarised Georgia is on many social issues, reconciling diametrically opposite opinions with what is genuinely feasible and best for Tbilisi and its residents, lies well outside the scope of the present scholarship. One illustration would be the tepid sentiment towards dispossession which has not been adequately explained or understood.

In conclusion, this research is self-limited by referring to a series of fast-paced phenomena and processes. Keeping track of every change, every project, every alternation of the urban space was practically and conceptually impossible. The present analysis can be better explained as a descriptive report, rather than a roadmap for further scholarship, based on strong empirical evidence that is reflected on scientific literature. This obsolescence might be a privilege but being able to adequately capture the rate of change, ask the right questions and put the answers into paper in a perpetually meaningful manner severely limits the scope of the analysis.

# 11. Conclusion

This thesis has brought to the fore a new conceptualisation of urban development, more human-oriented and in line with notions of sustainability. In retrospect, some aspects have been assessed critically and others relationally to scout a potential blind area in the discourse on urban development. Of course, disconnect has been difficult to explain and while it is perceivable and has consequences on how the city develops, it is also inherently multifactorial. Likewise, urban renewal, in any context, is neither a simple nor a uniform process, but rather an umbrella topic under which many different elements can be explored, some converging and some diverging. Tbilisi offers a telling account of these elements because it stands at the nexus of a large-scale transition; it combines ingredients from both developed and developing cities and constitutes a challenging reading of urban change more broadly. At the heart lies an all-encompassing and intersectional shift which has penetrated all layers of society, all aspects of urban life, and every corner of the cityscape.

At the beginning of this research, a rhetorical question was posed: *If the government does not know what its citizens want, how can it possibly serve them?* Many words and thoughts later, this question remains more pertinent than ever. Yet it is also a query containing multiple nuances and contradictions, having spawned more questions than answers. *Is what the citizens want in their best interest? Is any part of the change inevitable? Is urban development a process of improvement, or one of inequality and entrenchment?* I do not know the answer to any of these questions, but neither am I in any position to express an opinion, rather than by summarising the status quo. Nevertheless, the ability to uncover these issues, quantify and rationalise the perceptions, give a voice to citizens, and shed light on an obscure corner of the world has been priceless.

*Figure 22 - A panoramic view of Western Tbilisi from Narikala Fortress*

In any circumstance, this reading of disconnect is surprisingly close to notions of contractualism put forward by T.M. Scalnon (1998) where he rejects the idea of justice or equality to explain the rules surrounding human co-existence. Instead, he suggests that morality is always relational, and we need to ponder on *"what we owe to each other"* as the basis of all reason. I would concur that disconnect is almost synonymous with what is *owed* between all stakeholders, or more accurately *what is increasingly not*.

## 11.1. Summary of Findings

This thesis set out to better understand the human dimension of urban development by focusing on Tbilisi, Georgia. It sought to find similarities and differences with related processes occurring elsewhere and gather empirical evidence on matters of international attention. It has employed two core ideas, those of urban renewal and disconnect to explore their interaction but also their implications on the material and human environment of a city. Those ideas were operationalised through an examination of six different congruent dimensions: (1) Perceived change in use/access of urban space; (2) Perceived change in living conditions; (3) Self-perception of marginality; (4) Priorities in urban renewal; (5) Inclusion in decision-making processes; (6) Legitimacy of urban governance. Based on those variables, the mechanisms of disconnect were pieced together. Starting from the citizens' perceptions there are poignant divisions in terms of opinion on the value of urban renewal as a whole, but a convergence in recognition of challenges, prioritisation, and civic participation. Furthermore, there was a genuine distrust towards the local and national governments, which is justified by a series of negative political developments and outstanding issues, many intricately linked to the Rule of Law. Macroeconomic trends, particularly an exponential rise in cost of living and an expansion of the banking sector have deepened inequalities whilst simultaneously creating ample opportunity for upscale investment, notably from foreign actors. In addition, the urban space is set up in a way where ownership and possession are oftentimes mismatched, creating an urgent need to reestablish legitimacy. Finally, even though territorial stigma might be spreading across the city, it is both weaponised and co-opted to emphasise positive characteristics and remains at the heart of developments.

Conceptually, this research has demonstrated the intimate relationship between urban renewal and a broadly defined disconnect, a widening gap between residents and decision-making institutions. This disconnect is also internal, pointing to fragmentations both within decision-making structures and amongst citizens themselves. The thesis has also explored the degree to which urban renewal in Tbilisi has brought justice to the city, with evidence supporting the claim that further fermentation will determine the need for such a

characterisation. It also affirmed the centrality of urban personhood as a marker of identity and mechanism of anti-oppression juxtaposed on a fluid cityscape. Moreover, it attests to the eroding and divisive effect an underlying battle against dispossession has had on the emancipation and self-identification of citizens, especially those most vulnerable. Still, whilst particles of resistance can be seen, they fall short of a fairer alternative, due to disillusionment and disempowerment towards urban governance structures. Territorial stigma has been activated across Tbilisi and is the culprit behind a series of sociofugal tendencies and fissions (Wacquant, 2008), most evident in the fragmented and incongruent development of the urban space. Marginality, in contrast, has been masterfully avoided or veiled, reflecting a constant struggle and pervasive belief against any form of social stratification.

In short, this thesis is a sampling of a more profound and extensive analysis on a reimagined urban development, providing many of the pieces necessary to understand, expect, and plan transition, when and where it occurs. That knowledge is fundamentally precious to the field of development studies, capturing the contrasts and trends observed globally. However, in many aspects, Tbilisi serves as the antithesis of phenomena occurring elsewhere, signifying it needs to be analysed and approached in its own context and circumstances.

## 11.2. Recommendations

In the problematisation of the topic, it is important not to look at it as an issue but as an opportunity for further reflection and as a call for action. The complexity of the issues presented should not be understated but must also not be seen as an obstacle or stopping point for further endeavours. Similarly, any criticism is only valid insofar as it is fair and pointed towards all the stakeholders involved. Because all of them have some capacity and agency to act and must be held accountable for their action or inaction. Consequently, a series of proposals to tackle some of the most pressing items is in order. Yet, the following enumeration is far from exhaustive but merely captures desired positive change from different perspectives:

**(1) Urgent need for transparency** – Institutions, public or private, ought to be more open to public scrutiny by regularly publishing all relevant information in a timely manner whilst also strengthening the safeguards that prevent abuse of power or cronyism. This transparency must be further supplemented by a scaling down of inflammatory or misleading political rhetoric on the actual value of each intervention, removing urban governance from the political arena.

**(2) Long-term planning –** Regardless of any constraints, urban development needs to be systematised and institutionalised, primarily by viewing all the components in their totality. Provision of public services must keep the same pace as expansion of public transport, housing construction, beautification, curation of green space etc.

**(3) Optimisation –** The logic of marginal improvement in many instances has fallen short in resolving issues whilst also spawning unfamiliar problems. Future interventions must be initiated and framed as optimisations from the beginning, capable of being complementary to existing or future development.

**(4) Civic Participation -** Citizens must be embedded in any decision-making process not in terms of symbolic consultation but in their active involvement as co-creators of the urban space. Tbilisi has the infrastructure and collectivist legacy to revisit such structures capable of responding to modern problems.

**(5) Mapping of the Urban Space –** It is imperative that the city is mapped from the beginning, with clear zoning, expansion plans, and an account of all safety issues, violations, or occupations. Ownership, usage, and access to the urban space must be fully formalised, protected, demarcated, and made inviolable.

**(6) Bottom-up Urban Renewal –** Building on the symbolic and historic past of Tbilisi as a hub of auto-construction, more measures are needed to encourage everyday citizens to upgrade their properties and immediate environment with limited government involvement. Residents

must be made aware of and accountable for their possession, placing particular focus on conservation and those most vulnerable.

## 11.3. Pointers for Further Research

Given the constraints and omissions of this research, as explained in Chapters 4 and 10, there is plenty of space to further analyse processes and components of the topic, expanding on the reflections presented in the discussion. To that end, there are four main directions in which more scholarship and study is warranted. Firstly –and most pressingly- the survey that guided this research ought to be scaled up to cover a much larger sample of people of all genders, education levels, income brackets, status, and districts and to look for discrepancies or differentiations based on those markers. This thesis offers valuable background information and preliminary conclusions to structure such a quantitative analysis in the most efficient manner possible. Secondly, the exact same topic should be revisited from the scope of decision-makers to fully understand their stake in these processes but also to directly confront them with this information. Thirdly, it must be explored how disconnect or any of the other themes included translate in the technical side of urban development, both in Tbilisi and elsewhere: What is the economic cost or benefit of disconnect, how does it affect urban architecture, how can it be implemented in public transport planning? It is certain that the answers will be fascinating and, as claimed before, necessary. Lastly, this research serves as an invitation to abandon the strictly scientific approach to human issues and explore how academic study can be a form of effective storytelling, reconnecting with the societies in which it takes place. Lancione (2022) has already made a similar appeal for science to serve everyday people.

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[ENGLISH VERSION] - Model Questionnaire

# Urban Renewal in Tbilisi

You are invited to participate in an online survey to know more about Urban Renewal in Tbilisi. This is a research project being conducted by Nikos-Pavlos Kotzias, a student at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, as part of a master's thesis in International Development Studies. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, or around 30 minutes if you choose to also respond to the open-ended questions.

**Participation**

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. All questions are by default non-mandatory, but you are strongly encouraged to respond to every question, with optional or extra questions clearly indicated as such.

Please feel free to share this survey with your friends, family, and acquaintances. Your help and participation are much appreciated.

There are no clear or immediate risks associated with participating in this survey. However, some questions might make you feel uncomfortable or might feel a bit too personal or intrusive.

**Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Protection**

The present survey is fully anonymous, and the responses cannot be traced back to you nor will they be published. Your data will be safely stored online and is inaccessible to third parties, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview. If you choose to provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential. You are also given

the option to consent whether you want your responses to open-ended questions to be quoted anonymously.

**Contact Information and Withdrawal of Consent.**

If you have any questions or concerns about your privacy, the processing of your data or this research, please contact Nikos-Pavlos Kotzias at n.p.kotzias@students.uu.nl. You are reminded that you can withdraw your consent at any moment and can request your data be deleted.

By clicking on "**Agree**" you have indicated that:

1. You have read and understood the above information;
2. You voluntarily agree to participate;
3. You agree to have your data stored and processed;
4. You are over 18 years of age.

☒I Agree

☒I Disagree

| Number | Question | Possible Responses | Variable |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Section 1: Use and Understanding of Urban Space* | | | |
| *In this section, you will be asked a series of simple questions about your everyday life in Tbilisi and your immediate area.* | | | |
| 1. | *Please rate the following statements. How much do you think they apply for Tbilisi?*<br>1) *Living standards have increased,*<br>2) *The fall of communism has benefited the city,*<br>3) *Many buildings need to be demolished or reconstructed,*<br>4) *The government has made the right choices in choosing what to build,* | Matrix: 1 (Not at all) - 5 (Very much) | 1.Perceived change in use/access of urban space,<br><br>2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal, |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 5) *Foreign investment has benefited the city* | | 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 2.1. | *(Select all that apply) In the past month I have visited/been to … at least once:* | Multiple choice, multiple answers:<br>  1) A park,<br>  2) A church,<br>  3) A restaurant,<br>  4) A bar,<br>  5) A shopping mall,<br>  6) A museum, theatre, sports stadium<br>  7) A protest,<br>  8) Dzveli Tbilisi<br>  9) Turtle/Lisi lake, Tbilisi Sea, | 4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
| 2.2.1 | *How satisfied are you with public spaces (parks, schools, cultural centers, streets) in your area?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Very Dissatisfied) - 5 (Very Satisfied) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
| 2.2.2 | *How satisfied are you with private spaces (houses, shops, offices) in your area?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Very Dissatisfied) - 5 (Very Satisfied) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
| 2.3. | *In your neighbourhood, how well are the following maintained:*<br>  1) *Roads,*<br>  2) *Parks,*<br>  3) *Schools and Hospitals,*<br>  4) *Public Transportation,* | Matrix: 1 (Very Bad) - 5 (Very Good) | 1.Perceived change in use/access of urban space, |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 5) *Houses,*<br>6) *Businesses,* | | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 3.1.1 | *How many of your neighbours do you know?* | Likert Scale: 1 (None) - 5 (Many) | 3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |
| 3.1.2 | *How much do you trust your neighbours?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) - 5 (A lot)<br><br>Please elaborate | |
| 3.1.3 | *Please elaborate on why you (don't) trust your neighbours.* | Open-ended question | |
| 3.2.1 | *What type of people live in your neighbourhood?* | Multiple choice:<br>  1) Working class<br>  2) Middle class<br>  3) Upper-middle class | 3. Self-perception of marginality<br>5. Inclusion in decision-making processess |
| 3.2.2 | *Could you please describe the people in your neighbourhood in a sentence or two* | Open-ended question | |
| 4.1. | *Is there any public space within 5 minutes from where you live?* | Closed-ended question:<br>  1) Yes<br>  2) No | N/A |
| 4.2. | *(Select all that apply) What would you use public space for?* | Multiple Choice, multiple answers:<br>  1) Walking, exercising<br>  2) Walking the dog,<br>  3) Playing sports,<br>  4) Meeting friends,<br>  5) Playground for kids,<br>  6) Enjoying nature, | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |

| | | 7) Attending concerts/performances, 8) Attending protests, | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.3. | *If you had the time and resources, would you like to use public spaces more?* | Closed-ended question: 1) Yes, more 2) No, less | 1.Perceived change in use/access of urban space, 3.Self-perception of marginality, 4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
| 5. | *Anything else you would like to add about…?* | Open-ended textbox | N/A |
| **Section 2: Perceptions towards Urban Renewal in Tbilisi** | | | |
| 1.1.1 | *How many things do you believe need to change in Tbilisi?* | Likert Scale: 1 (None) - 5 (A lot) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, 4.Priorities in urban renewal, 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 1.1.2 | *How much do you believe the government is trying to make those changes?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) - 5 (A lot) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, 4.Priorities in urban renewal, 5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |

| | | | 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.2.1 | *How much has your neighbourhood changed in recent years?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) - 5 (A lot) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, |
| 1.2.2 | *How much has Tbilisi changed in recent years?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) - 5 (A lot) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, |
| 2.1.1. | *Please rate the following statements:*<br><br>*In the past 10 years my neighbourhood has become:*<br>1) More expensive,<br>2) Safer,<br>3) More multiethnic,<br>4) Cleaner,<br>5) Greener,<br>6) More walkable,<br>7) More accessible,<br>8) Noisier | Matrix: 1 (Totally Disagree – 5 (Totally Agree) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space,<br><br>2.Perceived change in living conditions, |
| 2.1.2. | *Please rate the following statements:*<br><br>*In the past 10 years Tbilisi has become:*<br>1) More expensive,<br>2) Safer,<br>3) More multiethnic,<br>4) Cleaner,<br>5) Greener,<br>6) More walkable,<br>7) More accessible,<br>8) Noisier | Matrix: 1 (Totally Disagree – 5 (Totally Agree) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space,<br><br>2.Perceived change in living conditions, |

| 2.2.1. | How serious do you think these problems are in Tbilisi:<br>  1) Crime, Prostitution, and Drugs,<br>  2) Vandalism and Graffiti,<br>  3) Trash,<br>  4) Unemployment,<br>  5) Traffic,<br>  6) Lack of Green Space,<br>  7) Unsafe buildings,<br>  8) Abandoned buildings,<br>  9) Lack of affordable housing,<br>  10) Lack of recreational/cultural opportunities,<br>  11) Lack of shopping facilities,<br>  12) Lack of quality education, | Matrix: 1 (Not at all serious) - 5 (Very Serious) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal,<br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.2.2 | How good are these things in Tbilisi:<br>  1) Transportation,<br>  2) Roads and sidewalks,<br>  3) Cost of living,<br>  4) Safety,<br>  5) Access to schools and hospitals,<br>  6) Activities for people your age,<br>  7) Cultural Opportunities,<br>  8) Employment Opportunities<br>  9) Shopping Opportunities<br>  10) Parks and open spaces<br>  11) Quality of housing,<br>  12) Sense of community, | Matrix: 1 (Very Bad) 5 (Very Good) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal,<br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 2.3.1 | Overall, how has your neighbourhood been lately? | Close-ended question:<br>  1) Better<br>  2) Worse<br>  3) The same | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, |

| | | | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, <br><br> 3.Self-perception of marginality, |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.3.2 | *How will your neighbourhood be in 20 years from now?* | Close-ended question: <br> 1) Better <br> 2) Worse <br> 3) The same | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, <br><br> 5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |
| 2.3.3 | *Why?* | Open-ended question | |
| 3.1. | *If you were to choose, please rank YOUR priorities for your neighbourhood with 1 being the highest priority:* <br> 1) *Better Schools,* <br> 2) *More buses,* <br> 3) *New houses,* <br> 4) *More stores,* <br> 5) *More tourists,* <br> 6) *More parks,* <br> 7) *More parking spaces,* <br> 8) *More jobs,* | Ranking: 1 (Top priority) - 8 (Lowest priority) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, <br><br> 3.Self-perception of marginality, <br><br> 4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
| 3.2. | *Please rank the priorities you believe the government has for your neighbourhood, with 1 being the highest priority:* <br> 1) *Better Schools,* <br> 2) *More buses,* <br> 3) *New houses,* <br> 4) *More stores,* <br> 5) *More tourists,* <br> 6) *More parks,* <br> 7) *More parking spaces,* <br> 8) *More jobs,* | Ranking: 1 (Top priority) - 8 (Lowest priority) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, <br><br> 3.Self-perception of marginality, <br><br> 4.Priorities in urban renewal, <br> 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 4.1.1 | *How involved would you say you are in addressing issues and developing your neighbourhood?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all involved) - 5 (Very involved) | 3.Self-perception of marginality, |

| | | | 5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1.2 | *How easy is it to be involved?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Very difficult) - 5 (Very Easy) | 3.Self-perception of marginality, |
| 4.1.3 | *Why is (not) easy to be involved?* | Open-ended question | 5.Inclusion in decision-making processes, |
| 4.2 | *Please rank the people you believe have more influence in what is going in your neighbourhood, with 1 being those with the most influence:*<br>1) *Local Residents,*<br>2) *National Government,*<br>3) *Local Government,*<br>4) *Local Businesses,*<br>5) *Big Businesses,*<br>6) *Foreigners,*<br>7) *Construction Companies,* | Ranking: 1 (Most influence) - 7 (Least influence) | 2.Perceived change in living conditions,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>5.Inclusion in decision-making processes,<br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 4.3 | *Please rate the following statements:*<br>1) *I believe my voice matters in deciding what gets built,*<br>2) *People with more money decide what gets built,*<br>3) *I trust the government in improving Tbilisi,*<br>4) *I trust that government always says the truth about what gets built,*<br>5) *I believe that newer buildings are better,*<br>6) *I believe that newer buildings fit the neighbourhood,*<br>7) *Enough public buildings (schools, bus stops, parks, hospitals, squares)* | Matrix: 1 (Strongly Disagree) - 5 (Strongly Agree) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space,<br><br>3.Self-perception of marginality,<br><br>4.Priorities in urban renewal,<br>5.Inclusion in decision-making processes,<br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *are getting improved/built,* 8) *Enough private buildings (offices, apartments, shopping malls) are getting improved/built,* | | |
| 5.1. | *Do you believe that some Districts/Neighbourhoods are much better/worse than others?* | Close-ended question: 1) Yes 2) No | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 5.2. | *How do you think other people view your neighbourhood:* | Likert Scale: 1 (They dislike it) - 5 (They like it) Please elaborate. | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, 3.Self-perception of marginality, 6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |
| 5.3.1 | *Have you ever felt ashamed or uncomfortable to tell others where you live?* | Close-ended question. 1) No, never 2) Yes, almost always 3) Depends on the situation | 2.Perceived change in living conditions, 3.Self-perception of marginality, |
| 5.3.2 | *If yes, what exactly makes you ashamed or uncomfortable?* | Open-ended question | |
| 5.4.1 | *Given the opportunity, how likely would you be to move to another part of town?* | Likert Scale: 1 (Very unlikely) - 5 (Very likely) | 1. Perceived change in use/access of urban space, 3.Self-perception of marginality, |

| | | | 4.Priorities in urban renewal, |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.4.2 | *If yes, which part of town would you like to move to?* | Open-ended textbox | 3.Self-perception of marginality, |
| 6. | *Anything else you would like to mention?* | Open-ended textbox | N/A |

| **Section 3: Perception of Specific Projects** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *In the following section, you will be shown a series of images from around Tbilisi. Please rate how much you like each one. You may also comment and explain your rating.* | | | |
| 1 – 20 | In this section, participants were shown a randomised list of 20 photographs from Tbilisi. They were asked to scale how they "feel" about these images.<br><br>The images were randomised and (secretly) split into 4 different categories of 5:<br>- Old/Soviet/Derelict Buildings (Dzveli Tbilisi, Fabrika, Houses in Nadzaladevi, State University Dormitory, Auto-constructed apartment block)<br>- Public Infrastructure (Central Station, Pekini Avenue Cycling Lanes, Metro, Vake Park, Chronicle of Georgia Monument)<br>- Modern Public Developments (Peace Bridge, Public Service Hall, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Aghmashenebeli Str.)<br>- Modern Private Developments (Biltmore | Likert Scale: From 1 (*strongly dislike*) to 10 (*strongly like*)<br><br>Open-ended answer | 1. Perceived Change in Use/Access of Urban Space<br>2. Perceived Change in Living Conditions.<br>4. Priorities in Urban Renewal<br>6.Legitimacy of urban governance; |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Hotel, Axis Towers, Green Budapest, East Point Shopping Mall, Panorama) | | |
| Section 4: Personal Information | | | |
| 1. | *How old are you?* | Multiple Choice:<br>a) 18-25<br>b) 26-35<br>c) 36-45<br>d) 45 and over | N/A |
| 2. | *What gender do you identify with?* | Multiple Choice:<br>a) Female<br>b) Male<br>c) Non-binary<br>d) Other | N/A |
| 3.1. | *Which district (raion) do you live in?* | Multiple Choice:<br>1) Mtatsminda<br>2) Isani<br>3) Vake<br>4) Saburtalo<br>5) Krtsanisi<br>6) Samgori<br>7) Chugureti | N/A |

| | | 8) Didube<br>9) Nadzaladevi<br>10) Gldani<br>11) Outside of Tbilisi | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.2. | *Which district (raion) do you spend most of your day in?* | Multiple Choice:<br>1) Mtatsminda<br>2) Isani<br>3) Vake<br>4) Saburtalo<br>5) Krtsanisi<br>6) Samgori<br>7) Chugureti<br>8) Didube<br>9) Nadzaladevi<br>10) Gldani<br>11) Outside of Tbilisi | N/A |
| 4.1. | *(Optional) - How would you describe your (family) income?* | Multiple Choice:<br>1) Very Low<br>2) Low<br>3) Low-Middle<br>4) Middle<br>5) Middle-High<br>6) High | 3. Self-Perception of Marginality |
| 4.2. | *(Optional) - What is the highest level of education you have attained?* | Multiple Choice:<br>1) High School<br>2) Diploma<br>3) University Degree<br>4) Post-graduate Degree/PhD | 3. Self-Perception of Marginality |
| 4.3. | *(Optional) - What is your ethnicity?* | Multiple Choice:<br>1) Georgian<br>2) Russian<br>3) European<br>4) Other, please specify: | 3. Self-Perception of Marginality |
| 4.4. | *What is the primary language spoken at home?* | Closed Question:<br>1) Georgian<br>2) Russian | N/A |

| | | 3) Other, please specify | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.5. | *(Optional - Select all that apply) Do you consider yourself to belong to any minority group?* | Multiple choice, multiple answers:<br>1) Persons with disability,<br>2) Ethnic minority,<br>3) Queer/ LGBTQI<br>4) Refugee/ Asylum Seeker<br>5) Religious minority<br>6) Socioeconomic minority | 3. Self-Perception of Marginality |
| 5.1. | *Are you originally from Tbilisi?* | Closed Question:<br>1) Yes<br>2) No | N/A |
| 5.2. | *If not, how long have you been living in Tbilisi for?* | Open Question | N/A |
| 6. | *What is your current living situation?* | Multiple Choice Question:<br>1) I rent<br>2) I own<br>3) I live with someone who owns/rents<br>4) Other, please specify: | N/A |
| **Section 5: Contact Information** | | | |
| 1.1. | Would you be interested in participating in a short interview in English? | Close-ended question:<br>1) Yes<br>2) No | N/A |
| 1.2. | If yes, what format would work best for you? | Multiple choice:<br>1) In person<br>2) Online<br>3) Phone | |

| 1.3. | If yes, please provide your email address and/or phone number | Textbox | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | If you have responded to any of the follow-up questions, would you be okay with being anonymously quoted? | Close-ended question:<br>3) Yes<br>4) No | |

## B. Interview Guide for Experts/Stakeholders

**Introduction**: *Hello, my name is [...x...] and I am a student of the Master of International Development Studies in Utrecht. I currently in Georgia researching people's feelings towards urban development in Tbilisi, partially by means of interviews. This research is part of my Master's thesis for the International Development Studies programme the University of Utrecht. My aim is to understand the perception citizens hold towards changes in the cityscape and especially how those affect relationships with other people or stakeholders. I am thus interviewing people about their everyday life in the city and how that has changed in recent years. [In your case, I also wanted your personal expertise in the field, to better understand the processes occurring on the ground and the motivation behind them]*

*The data collected will be processed anonymously and untraceable back to you. The sole purpose of this interview is research related. Moreover, I would like to record this interview for the purpose of accurately transcribing the answers to our interview. Do you give me consent to record and collect the data?*
*Do you have any questions for me before we start?*

| No. Of interview: | Age: | Ethnicity: | Place of residence: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender: M/W/O/N.A | | Occupation: | Expert: Y/N |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. Introduction** | **Questions:** <br><br> a. How much has Tbilisi changed in recent years? <br> b. Do you believe that change has affected you personally? | | **Probes:** <br><br> N/A |
| **B. Change in Urban Landscape** | **Questions:** <br><br> a. How satisfied are you with living in Tbilisi? <br> b. How do you feel towards public and private space in Tbilisi in general? <br> c. What are some problems you believe need resolution? <br> d. What is one thing you have noticed changing in the past year, and is it a good development or not? | | **Probes:** <br><br> Which elements? <br> Why prefer one over the other? <br><br> Why are they still problems? <br><br> N/A |

| C. Priorities | **Questions:** | **Probes:** |
|---|---|---|
| | a. If you need to choose, what would you prioritise for development?<br>b. Why is that your preferred development? What motives are involved? | Past experiences with development<br>Relevance |
| D. Public Governance | **Questions:**<br><br>a. How are decisions regarding urban development made in Tbilisi?<br>b. Are those involved in decision-making on an equal footing?<br>c. Are average citizens involved in similar decision-making processes?<br>d. Is the way in which developments are presented and communicated appropriate and accurate?<br>e. Are the policies implemented beneficial to all citizens and businesses? | **Probes:**<br><br>Policy cycle<br><br>Power Relations<br><br>Open democracy<br><br>Bias and reproduction of prejudice<br><br>Issues and benefits |
| E. EXPERT | **Questions:**<br><br>a. <u>Vary based on the person's field of expertise</u><br>b. Do you believe your opinion, knowledge, and experience are represented in policy-making? | **Probes:**<br><br>VARIES<br><br>Involvement in Governance |
| F. EXAMPLE | **Questions:**<br><br>a. <u>Give an example of a particular development and have the interviewee guide you through its conception, realisation, impact and review.</u><br>b. Do you think that this development was the best option available? | **Probes:**<br><br>VARIES<br><br><br>Improvement v Optimisation |
| G. Future | **Questions:**<br><br>a. What changed can and should be made in how urban development is done in the city?<br>b. What would you want your role to be in that system?<br>c. What would you say is the long-term future of Tbilisi? | **Probes:**<br><br>Solutions<br><br>Stakeholder participation<br><br>Policy v Values |

## C. List of Quotes

Below some quotes were taken from the survey (numbered) or interview guide (lettered):

***3.1.3 - Please elaborate on why you (don't) trust your neighbours.***

*I live in a multi-flat building with approximately 20 families in it. I do not know any of them as most are tenants and they either are too private or choose not to engage with neighbours. Therefore, I have no trust for them.*

*We have been neighbors with them for many years across generations. They have never given us reason not to trust them. In general, the informal associations of inhabitants of the building (in Georgian called "building friendships") also contribute to the feeling of being on the same teams*

*We don't share the same values, interests and views on many things, so major differences between us makes the trust not possible.*

*I think they are nice people. I grew up playing with the neighbour's kids and in a moment of need I could rely on them. But I live in a big building and most people simply don't care. It took us almost a month to fix the elevator last time.*

*Some of the people I grew up with. I know them very well, they are my friends and almost feel like a family. But when we moved to a new apartment, many of the other tenants were not very friendly and are acting very entitled. Not to mention many are Russian and I cannot wait for them to leave.*

*I live in Avlabari which is one of the most touristy and busy neighbourhoods. So not only are there many foreigners, the neighbourhood is always changing.*

*I grew up in one of those blocks with a little park/garden in the middle. So I used to play with the other kids a lot and up to this day I trust them. However, I do not like my neighbours, especially the old ones.*

*I am Russian so most people do not want to speak to me or help me.*

*They are not bad people, I just think we do not care enough about each other to have any level of trust.*

*It's a small neighbourhood, so I grew up next to most of them and they are all nice people, except for when you discuss politics*

*Our building has a central yard so we used to meet and play as kids and I know most of them well enough to say they are nice people.*

*They always see me as Georgian and are very kind. I also like how when I was younger I would hang out with them quite often.*

***3.2.2. - Could you please describe the people in your neighbourhood in a sentence or two?***

*Although my area used to be predominantly a working class neighborhood, new developments, offices, and commerce has attracted middle class to it, boosting housing prices. Most people in the area now are middle class.*

*A big part of the population is now aging. There is a sense of elitism and displeasure with change. As it is a busy neighborhood with a lot of businesses many people who you see there do not live there.*

*It is increasingly old people and poor families, as literally everyone wants to escape this place.*

*They are the most economically active and mostly everyday families. However, many have emigrated in the past years.*

*Vake was always the most desirable part of Tbilisi. Even during the Soviets, all the political figures and intelligencia used to live here. This cultivated a sense of elitism that resonates to this day. Every time someone moves into to Vake they act like they live in New York or something. And if you ask me, parents are usually worse than their kids because they believe they somehow are very successful when they are just rich or made money through bribes.*

*It is the hipster neighbourhood which many bars and clubs so the people who see at night are not necessarily the ones living here. In terms of actual residents, I think it's mostly single people, I do not see many families or kids around.*

*Avlabari has traditionally been very multi-ethnic but nowadays it is also quite touristy. I would not say that is necessarily bad but what bothers me is how everyone thinks I am a tourist.*

*Many of them are from the countryside who settled in Tbilisi in the 80s and 90s. They still have the village mentality and are always judging or watching me. I think many just do not have anything interesting to do.*

*It is a newer neighbourhood so many people moved here recently. I think it's better than where I used to live but I do not the people well enough to say anything about them.*

*Many people moved here in the late 70s and 80s and even more left for abroad afterwards. This means that the average age of the area went way up. It is not necessarily a bad area, it just very far from many places, not a lot of attention is placed on infrastructure and particularly people are not happy about living here. But usually rent and housing is cheaper and even the newer are not as expensive.*

*They are mostly poorer families working in jobs that do not pay well. But there are also new people coming in who have money and do not want to live in the city centre.*

*It is mostly newly rich people who wanted an alternative to Vake and increasingly Russians. Many are honestly very unpleasant and quite snobbish.*

*I might be exaggerating but my feeling is that many of them are poor people who are struggling to make ends meet yet still have the most expensive cars and want to show off. Don't get me wrong, my parents also have the same mentality and we often argue about how they manage their finances. The problem is that exactly because they are so materialistic, they seem very disinterested in the community, political change or actual development.*

*It is traditionally the people who are too poor to live closer to the city, although in recent years there is also many new buildings.*

*I live in Mtsatsminda close to the funicular, so this place is traditionally where all the elites used to live.*

The area is relatively new, so most families moved here in the past 20 years, most are relatively affluent and work in other parts of the city. Many foreigners, particularly diplomats also live around this area.

Many of the old families of Tbilisi have their houses here. But there is also a mix of poor and rich people which is very ironic.

I live close to the cemetery so the area is not very developed and most buildings are not more than 5 floors and there are many individual homes too. I do not see many young people but most families are just average.

I live in one of those soviet blocks with open space in the middle so there is a bit of a community feeling. However, I feel like recently people have become more aggressive and more unhappy, particularly because of the prices.

### 5.1 - Anything else you would like to add about…?

I think a lot of people forget that with the fall of communism many things people used to take for granted were gone. So the quality of hospitals, education and activities for young people went down. Instead, people got cars, restaurants, McDonalds and stuff like that. I am not criticising, I am also grateful of living in a free country, I just do not understand how many people, especially older ones, are okay with that.

I do appreciate living in a free and democratic country, free from Russian influence (although that is debatable lately), so in the political sense, I am glad we no longer have communism. However, based on what my grandparents used to say and what I have read, things were relatively easier back then. People did not have expensive cars or sushi or cheap flights to go on vacations but they definitely had more protections. Schools were really good, particularly in regards to sciences, you did not have to wait in line at the hospital and so many activities were free. My grandpa would always argue with my parents that I should learn to play the piano and do some sports and even paid for my lessons, because during his time those things were free and pretty much granted. It was the same for buildings and roads, they were all maintained, painted, cleaned and taken care off. So when we transitioned into capitalism people kinda forgot they still need to take care of those. And of course the country is far more divided nowadays.

### 2.3.3. – Why [has your neighbourhood (not) changed?

Many things have improved in terms of public transport, cycling infrastructure, redistribution of space, but the area has also become much more expensive, noisy and crowded. I maintain optimism that with more improvements in infrastructure, it will get better in the years to come.

Tbilisi is expanding and my neighbourhood is a bit suburban area - which is much greener, peaceful etc - expansion of Tbilisi will make my neighbourhood probably noisier, less green and there will be big development projects (?)

I feel like nothing ever changes in my neighbourhood, which is what makes it feel worse. Yes, we got the bus lanes around the central avenue but so many things are simply falling into decay.

New things are getting built but not all of them integrate in the neighbourhood.

*It is becoming more and more like a city. People are just angrier and I don't feel safe for my kids.*

*Obviously better as in newer buildings, fancier things and more "developed". But I think worse in terms of affordability and being a sensible place to live in.*

*I am not experienced enough to say, but I feel like it is becoming too touristy. And if you go into the side streets, the buildings are actually in pretty bad condition.*

*My neighborhood has escaped development so almost nothing has changed. However, I feel that in the future this will make it worse.*

*I think because my neighbourhood is considered more historic there are better efforts to preserve its original character. So we do not have massive new buildings that look too modern. Of course, many of the things built are for tourists and foreigners but overall, Avlabari has gotten noticeably better.*

*There is way too much construction happening and all of it is very expensive. It makes me angry living in a very old apartment surrounded by new buildings every day. I am worried that at some point our block will be demolished and we probably would get something very bad in return.*

*I think where I live now the way the area is developing is more sensible. It does not mean I like everything but it certainly feels less crowded.*

*Aside from the new buildings I do not think much will change to make it actually better. In fact, it will only get busier.*

*Compared to some other parts of town, the place where I live has seen little change and has just become more chaotic. There are some improvements but they are not enough to cancel the problems.*

*There is some development but not to the extent it can actually make a difference. It is just more houses or newer roads.*

*My part of town does not get that much attention and it is very big area that requires a lot of work. The government would never care enough to fix the issues.*

*For better or worse, Ortachala has some of the most sensible and normal development in Tbilisi. I know a lot of it has to do with the fact that it is one of the more affluent and newer areas but I also think that new constructions are better integrated and less opulent than those in Vake. However, transportation links are very bad.*

*I live on the hills so my part has largely escaped gentrification but I also feel like there's been little improvement overall. Most buildings have only gotten worse and the neighbourhood is still not autonomous enough, so I need to go to other places which takes time. However, I am optimistic and hope that some mid-density development would definitely bring enough attention and improvement in the area. I am not so sure how much the government will do something as sensible though.*

*Although some old industrial buildings have been demolished, the area still does not feel like a neighbourhood people would want to live in and there is not much improvement.*

*It has gotten to the point where it is starting to feel very overpopulated*

*There isn't much more space for development. The only things that could get better are transport and better public services.*

*Lots of new constructions that alter the character of the neighborhood without fixing the older buildings*

*I think there is a lot of aging buildings and apparently no plan on fixing things. They just build new things, change the swings in the playground or pave the roads and think that is enough.*

*Sure there are new buildings witch are more luxurious and modern. But there are also way too many cars and few parks, which are mostly for decoration. The streets feel less safe, prices are going up, and older areas are looking their character. I think it's both the city and the people that are actually getting worse.*

*The improvements are not actually for ordinary people, just the elite with tons of money who do not need them anyway*

### 4.1.3 - Why is (not) easy to be involved [in Public Governance]?

*There is not a strong sense of community among residents, therefore it is difficult to take action.*

*You would really have to go out of your way to find a way to be involved in most cases*

*Lack of communication among other people in the neighborhood, I mentioned there are some differences between us*

*I just do not want to deal with the people from the city hall who are slow and incompetent and will probably say there is nothing they can do.*

*In the past I was in the council so I know that my voice does not matter much.*

*In my village when there is a problem we solve it. Here, it will be at least a year before someone decides to do something about it.*

*No one wants to get anywhere near the government.*

*It is my job to be involved. And being involved means I know the financial situation and difficulties associated with it. However, for Vake specifically I believe it is money and construction that talks.*

*I think people who live in apartments just do not care enough to change anything. In our street, we try and sort our own problems. We have a meeting every three months or so to discuss things. Sadly, it does not do much but at least it's clean and we are able to sort many of the problems that would cause trouble otherwise.*

*You believe the government or even local people have any time to listen to a young person?*

*I come from a small town (Poti), where it usually easier to get things done and people are more interested in taking care of their area. The government is equally bad in both places but in Tbilisi they can get away with it more easily.*

*Because the government will say one thing one day and then end up doing something completely different. So you cannot even trust that they are actually doing the things promised to be able to contribute in any meaningful way.*

*In Georgia we do not have the culture of working on issues in our area, at least not in the cities*

*I try to keep up with the news, keep my neighbourhood clean etc. I do believe, however, that citizen participation in most things is very scarce both in practices and as a mentality.*

*Things just happen from one day to another so you cannot keep up. And even if you try and be involved what is promised is not what gets funded and clearly not what gets built.*

*Because the government (any government) cannot be trusted*

*I no longer live in Tbilisi, at least long enough to be involved.*

*I do not believe that the government or builders want to listen to what the average person has to say.*

*I work for the procurement department and we have much less freedom than I wish. This means that things are often done without much thought and without the best solutions. Everytime I disagree with something my boss urges me to finish it quickly, even if we pay more than we should for things. I think that for everyday citizens that difficulty must be more difficult.*

*I do not know what to do to be involved, the people from the raion do come from time to time but they do not seem interested or able to fix the issues.*

*I think that there are little things every person can do. I do not want to blame the government (even though they are the main responsibles) because ordinary people do not care enough about the city. They throw trash everywhere, want a car and then complain about traffic and are the first ones to want expensive things. I do believe that if enough people had the motivation, they could make some difference. In my school we have a council and we asked for some things and this year they did fix some of the issues.*

*You cannot go up and stop construction workers. It is the government that should be checking things more regularly rather that doing whatever.*

### 5.2.2. Please Elaborate [on why people like/dislike your neighbourhood]

*Saburtalo is a mixed-function neighborhood that embraces polycentrism of Tbilisi. There is most things a person might desire, therefore, people usually like it.*

*I live in Vake, which by most is considered to be a highly desirable area to live, but generally for it status symbol value and not actual livability standards. Although, Vake does also have access to more green areas and shops then other neighbourhoods.*

*The first thing they think of is crime and the prison. They also think it is too far from everything and that everything is old.*

*Everyone likes Saburtalo. It has good connections and shops but it is getting quite crowded.*

*Everyone thinks Saburtalo is the best neighbourhood. But it really is not.*

*Vake is so good at selling the "Georgian Dream". Skyscrapers, expensive stores, overpriced coffee, parks and construction. Which is ironic because I do not think almost anyone can actually afford living here. But Georgians do like to show off their wealth, so being in Vake is usually a sign that you have made it good.*

*I think the area around here does have the potential to be very good. It just looks a bit abandoned in places though.*

*It feels less like the city and more like a small town. Some people think that is bad but personally I prefer it to living in a big apartment.*

*Avlabari is not a neighbourhood people have any reason to travel to, except for transit to other places. I think they like the historic aspect but would probably not live here.*

*For so long it was the standard Soviet block, nothing special. This day it just feels increasingly old when everything else is very modern.*

*It is not a bad area, it is just very far from many things and I certainly feel it more after moving here. Even shopping feels more difficult.*

*Personally, I do not think it is bad, at least not much more than some other areas. It is just not the prettiest place to live and feels quite disconnected from other parts of town.*

*Everyone I know wants to live in Vake.*

*No one would live in Varketili if it was not for the cheap rent.*

*No one ever wants to live in Gldani. It is far, ugly and poor.*

*Ortachala has always been a nice neighborhood and most people think of it positively but I am not sure how many would want to live here, let alone how many can afford it.*

*It is less dense than some other parts and less "Soviet" so that is attractive to some people, although as a whole I would not classify it as a good area.*

*I do not believe anyone would want to move here unless for the cheaper rent or access to transport.*

*It is a historic area with nice views and small streets that is in urgent needs of repairs.*

*I think people would only move here because houses are bigger and cheaper but everything else is more difficult.*

### A.b. Do you believe that change has affected you personally?

*[Laughs] there is no person that has not been affected. Of course, it has made my work more interesting because there is a lot more happening. But as a citizen I am concerned [since] many of the changes have made it more difficult and you need to constantly plan around them. You do not know how much things*

*will cost the next month or if a big apartment will [be] built in front of your house […] there is a lot of uncertainty.*

*It is interesting you are asking me [this]. I am quite happy to see the city changing and I am not a person who will say that I know better what can be done, because I really don't. However, when you hear everyone around you talking about the city you know it is important and many people are afraid of change. So even though I might not be affected, I also [am] afraid that the future is unclear.*

### B.b. How do you feel towards public and private space in Tbilisi in general?

*There is no such division in Georgia, at least in the way you mean it. Private can be the inside of your house, your car, your phone, your family and friends or the clothes you buy. But that does not mean everything else is public. […] Because public would mean that all people share ownership of something and no Georgian would feel entitled to a park or a street. […] A school is a different kind of public than the metro or a police car, so every person assumes they can do whatever they want.*

*Sadly, private usually means that something is better funded and maintained, [and] I share that feeling. Try and compare the inside and outside of someone's house. Given the past, it is understandable.*

### B.d What is one thing you have noticed changing in the past year, and is it a good development or not?

*I can say I am extremely worried about divisions in the city. Divisions of any kind. The government has consistently lied and tried to silence us [journalists] and that is to the detriment of public interest. I would not mind being unwanted by the government, but I am concerned that many citizens are joining that hostility. […] think of the protests about the children not receiving medication. To this day I do not understand why those women had to take to the streets and demand something so basic and why I had to cover the issue [as if it is] something up for debate.*

*The EU membership process has brought to light lots of issues regarding transparency and proved the myth of ending corruption. Of course, no one would say that we have no corruption but few thought, including myself, that it is so systematic. And the city hall is somewhere where you can see [corruption] more clearly […] partly because it is lots of small violations.*

*The whole Russian situation. I know this is not what we are discussing but it was managed so poorly and [this] has left many people angry and disappointed. Especially when it comes to apartments, it felt as if the Russians were in control.*

### C.a. If you need to choose, what would you prioritise for development?

*I would like not to be asked questions like this [laughs]. Not by you personally but if you think about it, you will realise that this mentality is exactly what got us into this mess. Every person with the tiniest amount of power assumes they can just carry out a project. There is no interaction between different departments or agencies, between experts, between developers or investors. So we end up wasting money on a project that is always less than ideal or gets quickly abandoned when someone new takes charge. […] We need a new mentality of actually sitting down and looking at all the data and information before making any decision, while also including the people affected.*

**E.b. Do you believe your opinion, knowledge, and experience are represented in policy-making?**

*Represented, yes. But only nominally. I do not want to brag and say that I am perfect or know everything. […] Yet I do feel frustrated every time I am invited to consult on something and then my opinion gets thrown out the window. Once me and my colleagues had to do a feasibility study and we concluded that [a particular project] was way too expensive and a politician whom I shall not name told us that they decide what is expensive and what is not. It was almost as if they did not understand that [it was] my taxpayer money going into the project.*

*In our field [advocacy], our job is by default to be the bad cop. Naturally, this does not make us the most popular person in any room because they all believe we are there to complain. This bias might be justified but it creates the belief that we have no knowledge or input and we are just another box someone needs to tick. […] no one believe we have the capacity to contribute to policy-making and we are slightly afraid of putting forward our proposals. […] The Russian Law would have it even more difficult and is indicative of the disregard towards those who are seen as outside of the system.*

*Of course no, we constantly need to endure all sorts of harassment and obstacles to doing our job properly. […] If you are pro-government, you automatically get privileged access to all sorts of information and […] are able to shape an opinion. In our case, many information requests get ignored or we find out things after they are announced. I do believe in the power of journalists in shaping public opinion but in order to be able to provide neutral information we need more freedom and to know things beforehand. […] there is a difference between reporting on the news on the spot and being aware of future policies where we are actually able to accommodate all opinions.*

**G.a. What changes can and should be made in how urban development is done in the city?**

*The city currently lacks vision and development feels very random. I sense a feeling of urgency and needing to get things done fast but a lack of strategic planning. I would also admit it is my fault… well everyone's fault… for not wanting to be more involved.*

*Perhaps it would [be] beneficial to change the debate. Talking about development creates a sense of needing to catch up with the rest of the world and make Tbilisi look more like Dubai or New York. Bigger buildings do not necessarily make a city better, nor does beautification or monumental architecture. […] I also believe we need to reduce the influence foreign investors have on our policy-making, because they often have this attitude of charity that makes locals appear powerless […] against them.*

*The million dollar question, honestly. From a policy standpoint, I will repeat that we need better consultancy and more inclusive decision-making structures. What you said about disconnect really stuck with me and we are clearly not aware of how we are drifting apart. […] But then the question is: Can that disconnect be reversed and is it for better or worse? I can think of some circumstances where we need more disconnect, for example in building regulations. […] However, I am also worried that realising that distance will make people care even less, both those in power and ordinary citizens. Personally, I would like a bit more honesty in how we communicate.*

*You mentioned something about stigma and that is probably what needs to be done. A sort of change in how we approach development and problems by asking the right questions. Is our policymaking*

*benefitting everyone and what can we do to protect those most vulnerable? […] I am not idealist enough to believe that all problems will go away or that we will stop inequality. But we can no longer pretend that we can just keep going forward as it is without noticing that we are also creating problems. If more developed cities have them, why would Tbilisi not have them too? […] We are too afraid to start big discussions and find ways to use the knowledge and expertise at our disposal.*

## D. Additional Photographic Material

In this section, some additional photographs providing context about urban renewal in Tbilisi and better substantiated the observations in the main analysis



*Figure 23 - The market in Gldani*

*Figure 24 - New housing developments in West Gldani*

*Figure 25 - Soviet Housing in Central Gldani*



*Figure 26 - An informal settlement in Zghvishubani*

*Figure 27 - Panoramic View of Gldani, Didube and Didi Digbomi*



*Figure 28 - A New Apartment Block in Sarajishvili*
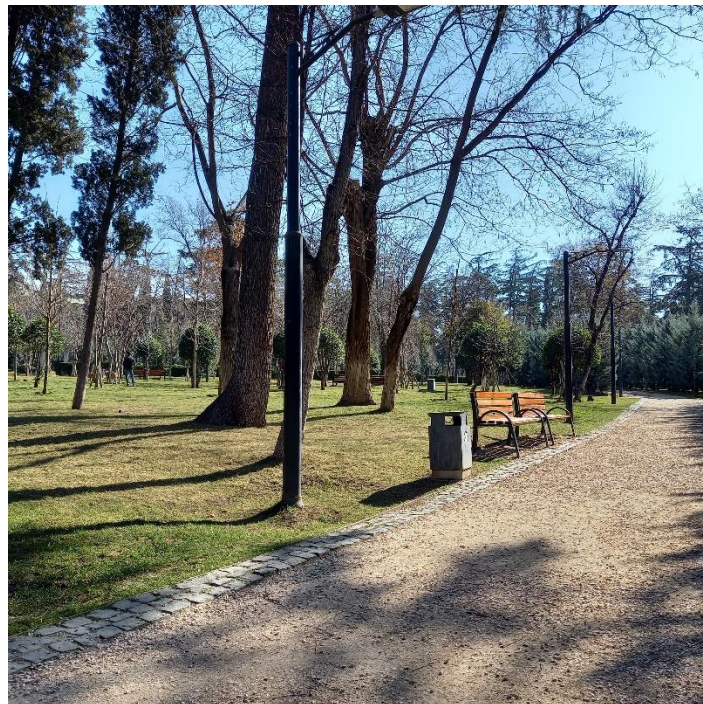
*Figure 29 - An Unfinished House in Nadzaladevi*



*Figure 30 - Kikvidze Park in central Didube*

*Figure 31 - Shops and Apartments on Tsotne Dadiani Street in Nadzaladevi*



*Figure 32 - A House on Tsotne Dadiani Street in Nadzaladevi*

*Figure 33 - An apartment block in Nadzaladevi*

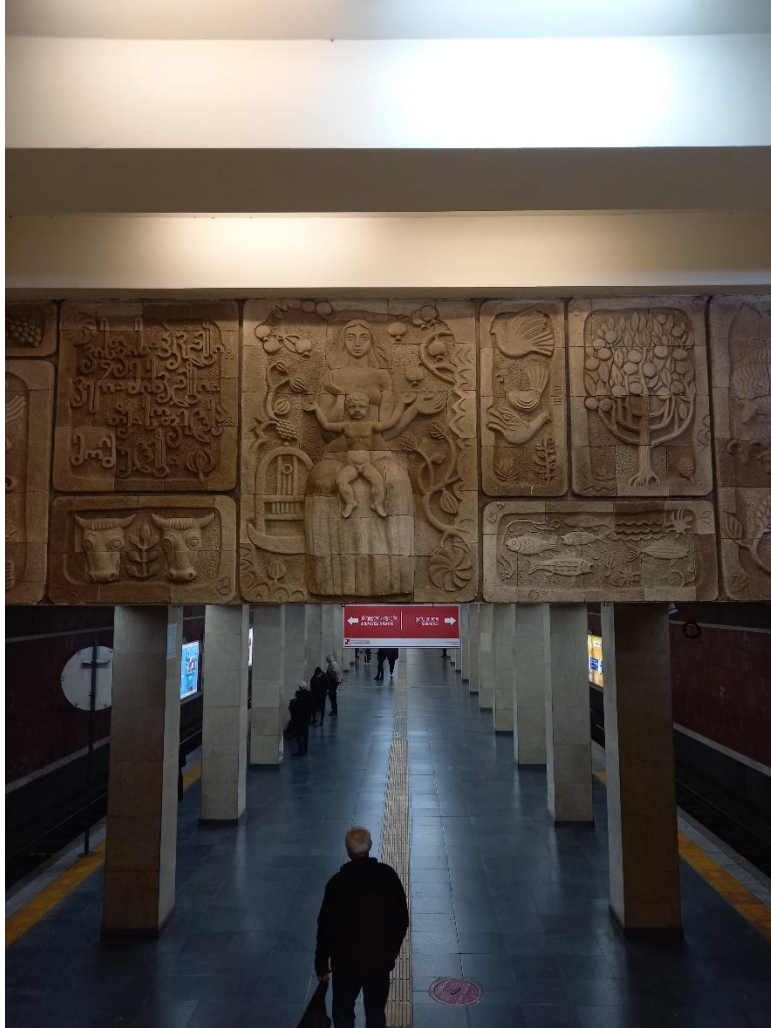*Figure 34 - A historic house in Chugureti*

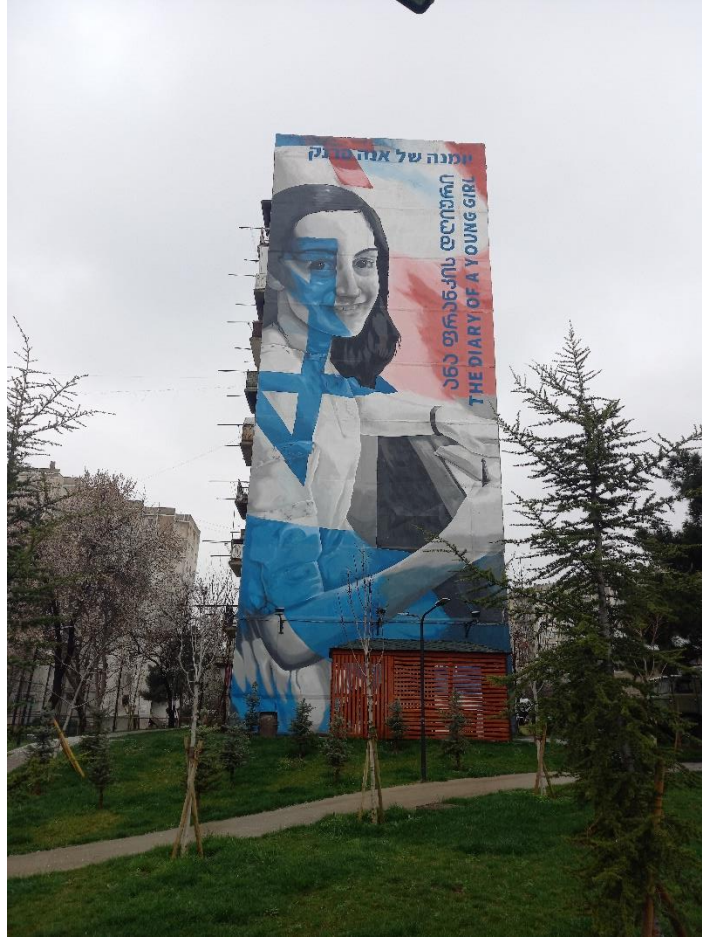*Figure 35 - A Mural in Samgori Metro Station*

*Figure 36 - A mural on an Apartment Block in Varketili*

*Figure 37 - New Apartments across the Street from the Previous Photo*

*Figure 38 - The Hualing Housing Estate*



*Figure 39 - A new Apartment Block in Vazisubani*

*Figure 40 - A House Blocking the Street in Vazisubani*



*Figure 41 - New Developments in Didi Dighomi*

*Figure 42 - A Luxury Apartment Block in Saburtalo*



*Figure 43 - Kruschevka Apartments across the Street in Saburtalo*

*Figure 44 - Old Apartments on the Lisi Hillside*

*Figure 45 - Rustaveli Theatre*



*Figure 46 - A Historic House in Dzveli Tbilisi*

*Figure 47 - Houses in Dzveli Tbilisi*

*Figure 48 - A panoramic view of Western Tbilisi, with Dzveli Tbilisi in the foreground*

*Figure 49 - Newly Refurbished Houses close to Gudiashvili Square*

*Figure 50 - A Street Getting Redeveloped next to Gudiashvili Square*

*Figure 51 - Historic Houses in Chugureti*

*Figure 52 - Historic Houses in Chugureti*

## E. Photographs and Responses from the Survey

These are the photographs used in Section 3 of the Survey, where respondents were asked to rank how much they like each one and then provide a short explanation. The photographs and some of the responses are displayed below:

1. **Fabrika**



*Figure 53 – Fabrika, a Multi-use Space*

*Although the shown facility has sparked a wave of gentrification in the area, I believe that it has also had a major impact on culture and economy of the area.*

*It is a great multi-purpose social space, but it is not may favorite thing in the world. It gets pretty crowded and boring after a while.*

*I think it's a nice example of reusing an old space. Very attractive to young people but also expensive.*

*Fabrika is a place you can love or hate. On one hand, I do feel it's unecessarily "edgy" and "alternative" and they sell that as something exclusive. But on the other hand you cannot imagine how important spaces like this are for young people. Both Fabrika and Stamba are great examples of reusing old industrial infrastructure in a way that is more sustainable than big offices and shopping malls.*

*Fabrika was the best example of reusing an old space. But because not many other spaces did the same thing, it became increasingly exclusive and less desirable.*

*It is a cool concept but it has started to feel dated by now.*

*Fabrika is very much an inclusive space that is attractive to many young people, including myself. For example, it's a queer-friendly space without being exclusive "gay", so you can definitely meet people from all walks of life there, including many tourists. I have many nice memories from that place and believe it is a great use of an old space. Stamba is even more beautiful. If you ask me, buildings like these would make amazing offices and exhibition spaces, as they are more authentic than modern buildings that are just glass.*

*I go there often and it is a nice space to hang out with young people and foreigners.*

2. **Tbilisi Central Station**



*Figure 54 - Tbilisi Central Railway Station*

*It is a nice, massive railway station, but the infrastructure in adjacent areas is in a shameful condition.*

*It feels structurally unsound and unclean when you are in there. Also just complicated to navigate with the layout.*

*It takes so much space and is honestly about to collapse. And the surrounding area is just very bad.*

*To this day I do not understand why the Station has not been redeveloped. It takes so much space and there were plans to do amazing things with it.*

*It is an impressive building but it is just not safe or comfortable to be in it.*

*Probably one of my least favourite places to be in Tbilisi.*

*Takes too much space and offers little in return, cutting the city in half.*

*The building could use a massive upgrade, at least the shopping area*

*Not a place you want to be in after dark*

3. **Peace Bridge**



*Figure 55 - Peace Bridge*

*While the view from the bridge is great, the architecture of the bridge really clashed with the spirit of the old city and stands out like an eyesore. To me it symbolizes the mentality of just wanting to blindly and desperately push for "westerness" while completely disregard you own unique identity as a country and a culture.*

*When it was built there was the promise of a new city. It is beautiful but now feels out of place.*

*I think it was built as a tester for "modern" Tbilisi. Since then not much else has been built that is in the same theme.*

*It is beautiful more than actually practical. Probably the least useful bridge in the city. But in terms of spending money on new things, at least this one had some meaning and sense.*

*The bridge was part of a larger project to revitalise and modernise the city centre, as an alternative to the more traditional parts of town. I genuinely believe that if the modern things were actually implemented along with a complete rehabilitation of the old town, Tbilisi would be so much better. But it genuinely feels as if both sides have been abandoned in favour of more private businesses, hotels, casinos etc.*

*The bridge in itself is very nice and not too extravagant. The area around could really use more development however.*

*It is a landmark, not anything more than that.*

*I do not think that location was the right one, it would have been better to built it more to the north closer to Heroes Square.*

4. **Biltmore Hotel**



*Figure 56 - Biltmore Hotel on Rustaveli Avenue*

*They kept the old facade on the lower level at least.*

*No character and I don't like the UAE flag at night.*

*Looks like a kid tried to make a skyscraper*

*The intent was to create something iconic, that is why they kept the original building at the base. But it does not look iconic, it looks out of place.*

*Built by rich people, funded by rich people, aimed at rich people.*

*This set the tone for all the ugly construction to follow.*

*I do not understand the point of keeping the facade if they just drop a glass thing on top of it.*

*They destroyed a historic building to add something made of Legos.*
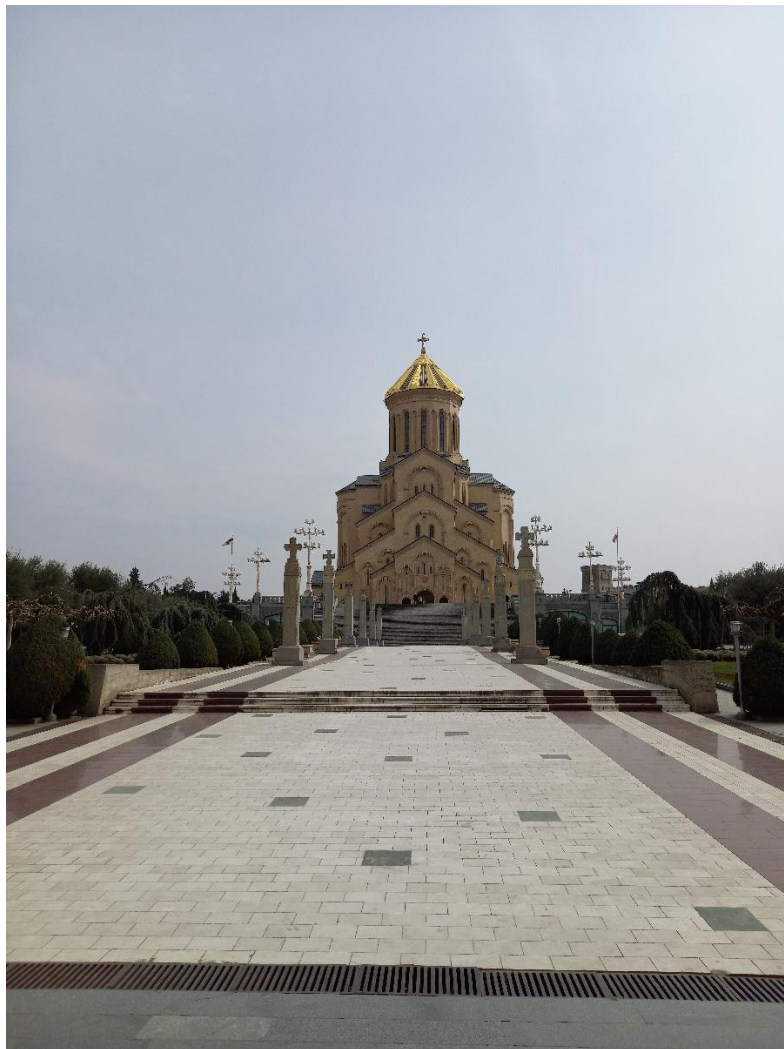
5. **Tbilisi Cathedral**



*Figure 57 - Tbilisi Cathedral*

*I'm not religious but I love architecture that showcases Georgian culture. The location is bad though.*

*I am not sure if the Church paid for it, or if taxpayers did. However, in terms of urban renewal and survival, I am very much in favour of projects with some sort of historical significance and religious buildings are perfect for that role.*

*Outside it looks okay, even though the area is not ideal. The inside is just disappointing.*

*I understand why they felt they need to built a church like this to showcase Georgian culture. Even though I am not religious myself, I can still admire it.*

6. **Chronicle of Georgia**



*Figure 58 - Chronicle of Georgia*

*A beautiful work of art and history. But in desperate need of repair and maintenance*

*Best piece of Georgian history*

*Not all Soviet monuments were bad. The Chronicle is a great example of that and I genuinely wish there were more (smaller) monuments around Tbilisi of a similar style.*

*The nicest soviet monument.*

*It is Tsereteli's masterpiece but I wish the surrounding area was made into a park.*

*In the summers I usually hike up there and the view is amazing. Very underappreciated monument.*

### 7. Vake Park



*Figure 59 - Vake Park*

*Part of this is subjective since I grew up going here a lot. But it is also very accessible on the cross points on travel, so it is common to use this green space in between going places. They also have a library on the premises that I used to study at all during university because it was brighter and more modern then the university library and had an outdoor space. So this is the park I have spend the most time in in Tbilisi.*

*It is a nice place but I hate how it is the "one" park. People want to go there all the time and it's just too far away from where I live.*

*This looks like an old photo. Vake park is very beautiful and very busy and I have many memories of being there. I genuinely believe it should serve as the template for more developments in a similar style. The thing about the park is that it is perfectly "built" and natural, so it offers people a wide range of things to do. Some other newer parks feel a bit fake in comparison.*

*It is overhyped, probably because it is the only big enough park in the city.*

*I like it, it is a very nice park and I used to visit the library there quite often. I just think that the part added to the exclusivity vibe of the surrounding area when parks should be normal and everywhere.*

*Vake is a good area and even I can admit that. But I am really unhappy about how all of the money and attentions goes there. The park, along with Mziuri, are indeed very beautiful and I like being there but it feels slightly weird that only one district has decent parks, at least ones that are big enough to accommodate many people and offer activities. At this side of the river parks are just usually small parts of a block and just have some trees and benches and probably a playground for kids. But they rarely have something more that makes them attractive enough to go there and play sports or have a pic nic, at least not without it seeming weird.*

8. **Axis Towers**



*Figure 60 - Axis Towers across from Vake Park*

*Since this is built on the new part of town, it doesn't clash so much with the surroundings*

*I honestly hate myself for liking it because it is very much gentrification at its best. However, the architecture is very good, particularly in comparison with other newer buildings that look like they were made by a kid. Besides, at least it openly exclusive and expensive.*

*It looks nice but it is also a perfect example of rich people buying apartments as investment.*

*It is a nicer design than most of the other buildings.*

9. **Panorama Tbilisi**



*Figure 61 - The concept render for Panorama Tbilisi*

*I am against development of hills and mountains around the city*

*Like the concept of developing the notion of more suburban living in Georgia, where not everyone needs to be cramped into spaces right downtown and the goal is to have more greenery around.*

*I have read that this building is actually illegal and the bended the law. But then again, its Ivanishvili.*

*Ivanishvili's monstrosity is enough, we do not need a second one.*

*I assume this is a concept and not actually built yet. But it look very sustainable and much less concrete than usual.*

*I remember reading about it and I do not understand why exactly it is necessary and why cutting down the mountain is fine just for Ivanishvili to built another thing.*

*I genuinely do not understand why buildings like this are considered the future. Not only has it defaced the mountain, it is just another exclusive thing catered to the rich.*

*Ivanishvili does whatever he wants, so I am not surprised he is able to build this. I am curious to see whether the final result will look good.*

## 10. Public Service Hall



*Figure 62 - Public Service Hall next to the Mtkvari River*

*I think it is a nice concept, but there is too many parking spots swallowing what could potentially be a riverside public space.*

*Not crazy about the architecture but the interior of the building functions really well to the purpose.*

*When it comes to public buildings and modernity, the Public Service Hall is a good example and it is genuinely used by the public.*

*The park next to it and the overall surrounding area are very nice. I just feel like the Public Service Hall is a one-off landmark and the rest of the government offices are just ugly, inefficient and dark.*

*At least this is public money well spent. I am surprised they haven't privatised it yet.*

*I really wish that more public buildings were like this. Usually they are very old and unfriendly and I do not mind my taxes spent on things like these.*

*It looks nice next to the river and much better than another hotel or mall.*

## 11. Green Budapest



*Figure 63 - Green Budapest photographed from the Street*

*It is a good quality housing development but does not fit the context of the area*

*One off architectural projects like this make the city look even more disjointed*

*A friend lives there and the inside looks a bit cheap.*

*I think this is fake-modern. It looks impressive and I assume the quality of housing is not that bad but it also looks more exclusive than it needs to be.*

*One of those bad skyscrapers, it looks like it was stolen from Amsterdam or Berlin.*

*Looks like it was made by a kid and not suitable for Tbilisi.*

## 12. Cycling Lane



*Figure 64 - Cycling Lane on Pekini Avenue (Source: Georgian Journal)*

*Good start, although not very usefully until they are added through the whole city*

*Tbilisi is not made for bikes.*

*Tbilisi has wide enough roads and a grid system to enable for cycling lanes to be built. However, at the present the network is quite disjointed and just painting the sidewalk or road does little for actual safety. The photo is honestly the exception, as most cycling lanes are just bus lanes (Have you seen how bus drivers drive?) or on the side of the street. So no, as long as there is the danger of getting run over by a car, I would much rather not use them.*

*I am very much in favour of more bikes and less cars. But at the moment you cannot go to many places.*

*I am hopeful than in a few years taking a bike will be a genuine option in Tbilisi.*

*I do not think that cycling is doable on a large scale, but in some parts like Saburtalo it could make a difference and reduce traffic.*

*I am not sure how useful they are. Personally I am too afraid to use them*

## 13. Dzveli Tbilisi



*Figure 65 - Dzveli Tbilisi Photographed from Narikala Fortress*

*It's a beautiful and historic area, although the recent addition of really trashy tourist oriented businesses in the area are ruining it a bit.*

*It's sad to think that it looks good because of tourist shops and AirBnbs*

*In the photo you can see four interesting things. The mosque which is extremely beautiful and needs to be conserved at all costs. The baths which are okay I guess. The houses which are probably empty and owned by someone or AirBnBs and hotels. And in the back you see the new buildings which should absolutely not be allowed.*

*My favourite part of town but so many buildings (not in this picture) are usually a bit abandoned.*

*If only people still lived here and if the conservation was stricter.*

*I understand that it is historic and it looks good. What annoys me is how it is a tiny area dedicated to tourists and people ignore so many other similar buildings across the city that were either demolished or are in bad condition (like in Vera)*

*Dzveli Tbilisi has been restored, one of the first actually but it is also empty, as no one lives there.*

*I think the restoration made all the people move out to create apartments no one lives in.*

*They are nice to look at but not many things to do there which is a bit sad.*

### 14. Auto-constructed House



*Figure 66 - An auto-constructed House in Zghvishubani*

*It makes my heart hurt for people who have to live in those conditions*

*I genuinely feel ashamed there are such building in my city.*

*I do not know how such houses can be improved, so demolition is perhaps the only option. But I also feel sad that they were let to deteriorate in such a way.*

*People should not be allowed to live there. But it is not like the government cares.*

*I do not want to judge the people living there but I feel like they could have taken better care of their houses.*

*I am angry because these houses were able to be built and extended and no one from the local government bothered to check if they are even safe, let alone invest in their rehabilitation.*

*This is an image of the suburbs that many people prefer to forget exists. Not everyone lives in an apartment.*

*This looks like the buildings a few streets from here. But the government did not care enough to prevent people from getting those built in the first place nor does it care to restore them.*

*Very typical building where people added things to it without permission or safety.*

## 15. Interior Ministry



*Figure 67 - Interior Ministry on Kakheti Highway (Source: M-Ofis/ArchDaily)*

## 16. Aghmashenebeli Avenue



*Figure 68 - Marjanishvili Theatre on Aghmashenebeli Avenue*

*It is quite nice, it was a restoration that accounted for the history of the street. But the quality was lacking so it already needs to be restored again*

*Again, probably done for the tourists but it does not feel that extremely exclusive.*

*There are still many cars in the area and the buildings feel a bit fake because the restoration was very rushed.*

*I liked the restoration and the area is now more attractive but I just wish it was more than just one street full of things for tourists or restaurants.*

*It was a good attempt at restoring but because it is just one street and not the entire surrounding area it is mostly stores and things catered to tourists. With the right redevelopment it could genuinely become my favourite part of town.*

## 17. State University Dorms



*Figure 69 - State University Building in Saburtalo*

*It looks scary, and the living conditions there are horrible, but at the same time it is an interesting monument of Soviet brutalist architecture*

*When it was originally built it was actually impressive and was supposed to represent the future of Soviet housing. There was even a dedicated cable car to get there and certainly helped with reducing crowdedness. Those were dormitories for students and incredibly affordable. Yet, I think it also helped start the idea of developing the hills around Tbilisi and it is certainly in a very bad condition today.*

*I do not want to imagine what the living conditions there are and it is in shameful state. The concept is not bad though and I would like the modern equivalent of it.*

*This represented an ideal which is long gone but I think a more modern concept would still work.*

*Even the Soviets did some unreasonable developments in the hills. Honestly, this is how many of the new buildings will also look in a few years.*
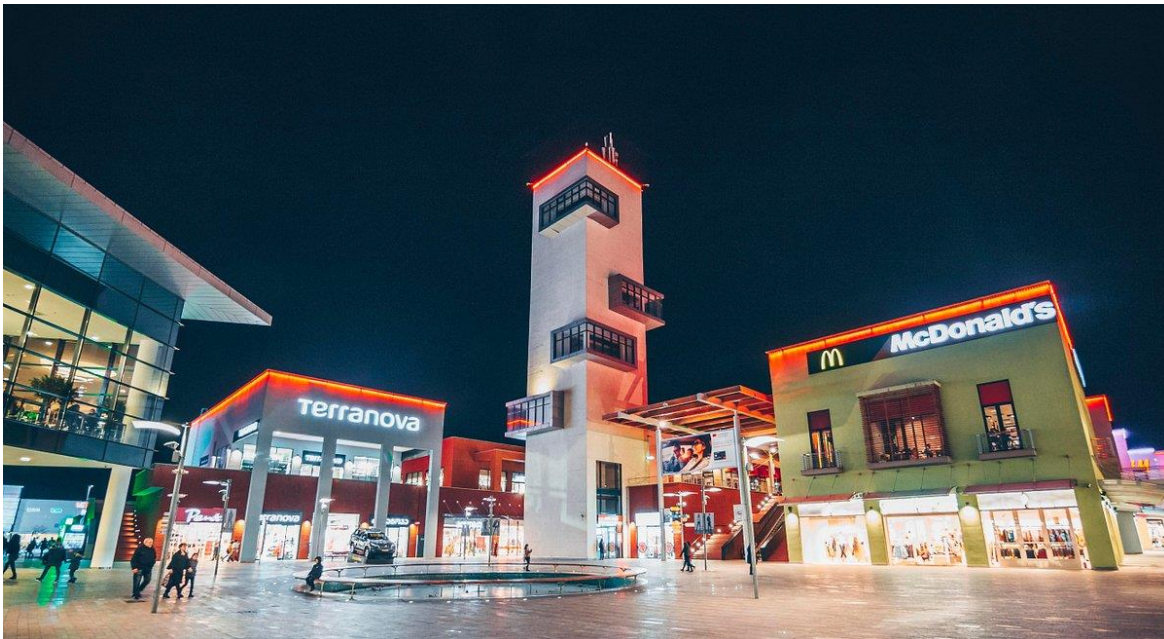
### 18. East Point Mall



*Figure 70 - East Point Mall at Night (Source: TripAdvisor)*

*You average American-style mall.*

*I went there, it is just shops with little else that is interesting.*

### 19. Soviet Apartment Block



*Figure 71 - An Apartment Block in Gldani*

*It could be Stockholm syndrome, but this feels "homey" to me*

*This looks like my street. The problem is not the building itself. The problem is all the random stuff attached to it that block the street and the random balconies and extensions to the houses.*

*Your average Soviet-style panel housing. Also for as much as tenants have been able to add balconies or change their windows, they sure did not bother to fix the entrance or remove all the rusty stuff in front of the building.*

*Houses like these are the greatest legacy of the Soviet times. They are sturdy, fairly spacious and were easy to upgrade or extend. Again, I do not mind people having control over their homes, my parents did*

*the same to ours, I just believe that there was not enough oversight in the whole process, which made many of them being of substandard quality.*

*Looks like my building. I think it's fine because it does not have any architecture, just concrete but I am unhappy with all the warehouses and parking you see eveywhere.*

## 20. Tbilisi Metro



*Figure 72 - Sarajishvili Metro Station*

*I do not understand why they have put a net instead of painting the roof*

*The metro is the most valuable thing in Tbilisi of the Soviet times. And, for better or worse, unchanged.*

*The metro is the heart of the city and the one things binding people and different areas together. The level of service is not bad, although it is in urgent need of extension and renovation.*

*I think you mean the metro in general and not that particular station. It is very convenient and I am quite happy with it. But I wish they took care of it a bit more.*

*The metro is running and it is reliable. It just clearly needs more investment and expansion. But I also recognise that only Russia can help with that and we would much rather not be affiliated with them.*
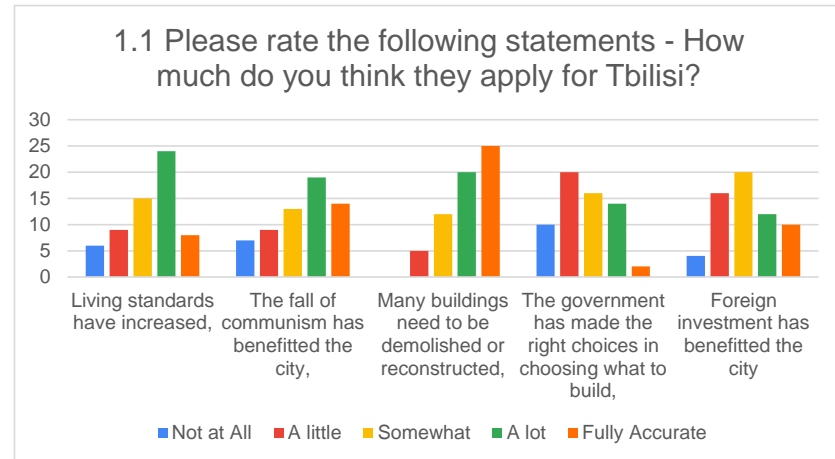
*The metro needs so much more work to be able to accommodate the increase in population and reach every place. But at the moment they cannot even keep the existing stations nice.*

*I am disappointed because the metro has seen almost no repairs or even basic fixes in many years and it now very crowded and unpleasant, especially during the morning.*

*It took them years to fix one station so I have no hope they are capable of repairing and making the entire metro beautiful once again.*

## F. Survey Responses

**1.1 Please rate the following statements - How much do you think they apply for Tbilisi?**

| | Not at All | A little | Somewhat | A lot | Fully Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Living standards have increased, | 6 | 9 | 15 | 24 | 8 |
| The fall of communism has benefitted the city, | 7 | 9 | 13 | 19 | 14 |
| Many buildings need to be demolished or reconstructed, | 0 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 25 |
| The government has made the right choices in choosing what to build, | 10 | 20 | 16 | 14 | 2 |
| Foreign investment has benefitted the city | 4 | 16 | 20 | 12 | 10 |



1.1 Please rate the following statements - How much do you think they apply for Tbilisi?

**2.1 (Select all that apply) In the past month I have visited/been to … at least once:**

| | No | % |
|---|---|---|
| A park | 60 | 96.8 |
| A church | 17 | 27.4 |
| A restaurant | 58 | 93.5 |
| A bar | 41 | 66.1 |
| A shopping mall | 43 | 69.4 |
| A museum. theatre. sports stadium | 26 | 41.9 |
| A protest | 22 | 33.5 |
| Dzveli Tbilisi | 32 | 51.6 |
| Turtle/Lisi Lake, Tbilisi Sea | 22 | 35.5 |



2.1 (Select all that apply) In the past month I have visited/been to … at least once:

| 2.2.1. How satisfied are you with public spaces (parks, schools, cultural centers, streets) in your area? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Very Dissatisfied) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Very Satisfied) |
| 6 | 19 | 21 | 15 | 1 |



2.2.1. How satisfied are you with public spaces (parks, schools, cultural centers, streets) in your area?
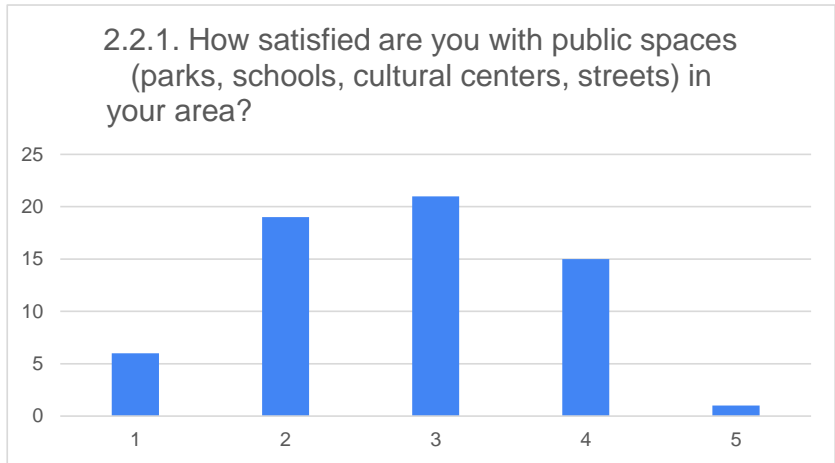
| 2.2.2. How satisfied are you with private spaces (houses, shops, offices) in your area? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Very Dissatisfied) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Very Satisfied) |
| 6 | 13 | 22 | 15 | 5 |



2.2.2. How satisfied are you with private spaces (houses, shops, offices) in your area?

| 2.3 - In your neighbourhood, how well are the following maintained: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Very Bad | Bad | Average | Good | Very Good |
| Roads | 2 | 11 | 10 | 27 | 12 |
| Parks | 9 | 13 | 20 | 18 | 2 |
| Schools and Hospitals | 16 | 20 | 13 | 11 | 2 |
| Public Transportation | 8 | 9 | 26 | 16 | 2 |
| Houses | 2 | 21 | 21 | 15 | 3 |
| Businesses | 0 | 7 | 23 | 23 | 8 |



2.3 - In your neighbourhood, how well are the following maintained:
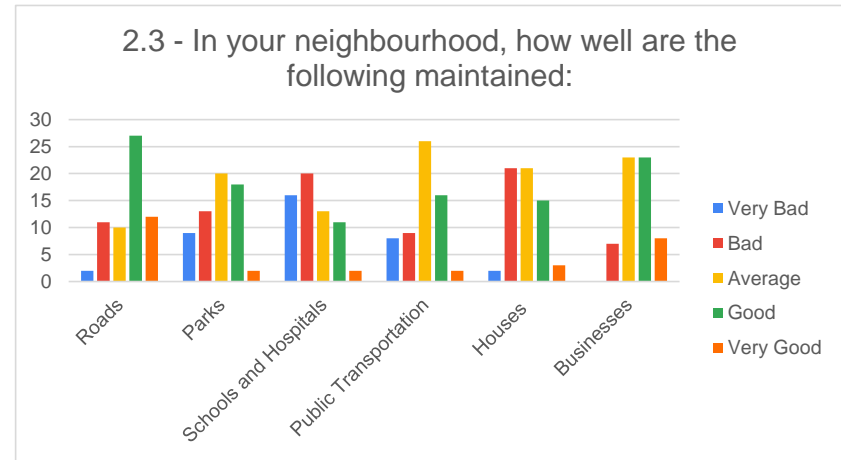
| 3.1.1. - How many of your neighbours do you know? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (None) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Many) |
| | 12 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 4 |



3.1.1. - How many of your neighbours do you know?
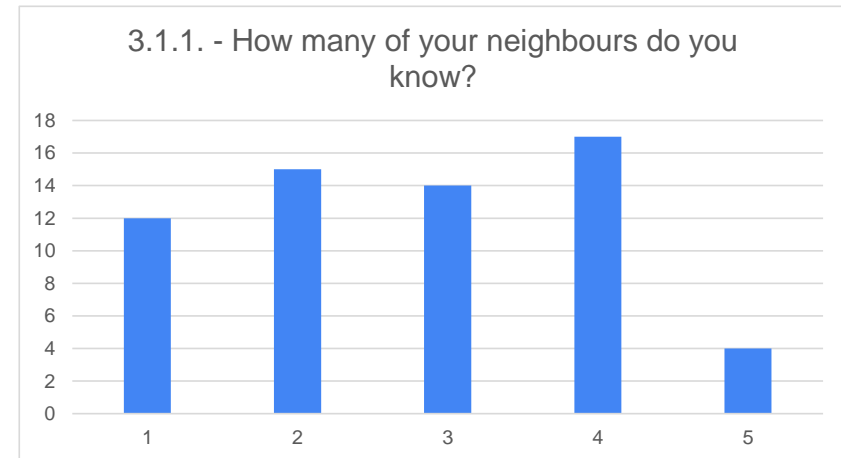
| 3.1.2. - How much do you trust your neighbours? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Not at all) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (A lot) |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 11 | 7 |

### 3.1.2. - How much do you trust your neighbours?

| 3.2.1 - What type of people live in your neighbourhood? | |
|---|---|
| Working Class | 22 |
| Middle Class | 34 |
| Upper-middle Class | 6 |

### 3.2.1 - What type of people live in your neighbourhood?

Working Class  Middle Class  Upper-middle Class
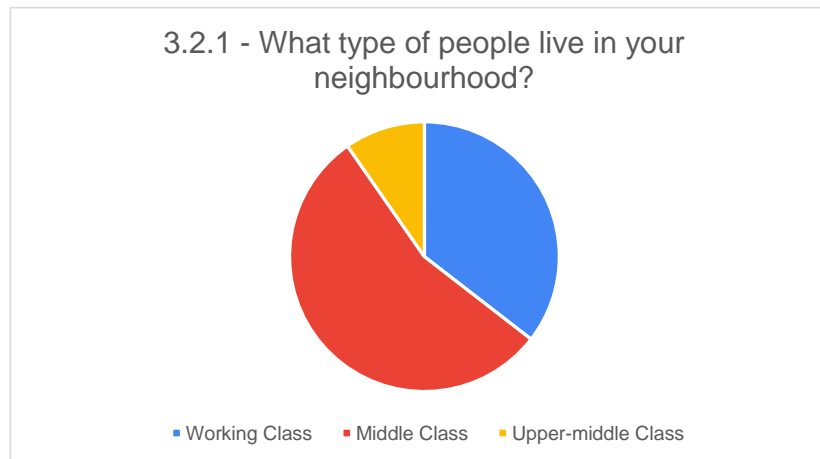
| 4.1 - Is there any public space within 5 minutes from where you live? | |
| --- | --- |
| Yes | 48 |
| No | 14 |

### 4.1 - Is there any public space within 5 minutes from where you live?

Yes No
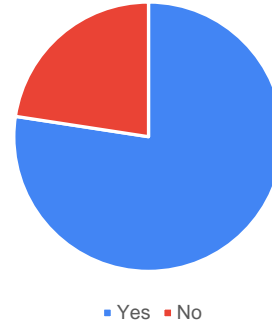
| 4.2 (Select all that apply) What would you use public space for? | No | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Walking, exercising | 57 | 91.9 |
| Walking the dog | 44 | 71 |
| Playing sports | 45 | 72.6 |
| Meeting friends | 53 | 85.5 |
| Playground for kids | 30 | 48.4 |
| Enjoying nature | 35 | 56.5 |
| Attending concerts/performa | 26 | 41.9 |
| Attending protests | 17 | 27.4 |

### 4.2 (Select all that apply) What would you use public space for?

Walking, exercising — Walking the dog — Playing sports — Meeting friends — Playground for kids — Enjoying nature — Attending… — Attending protests
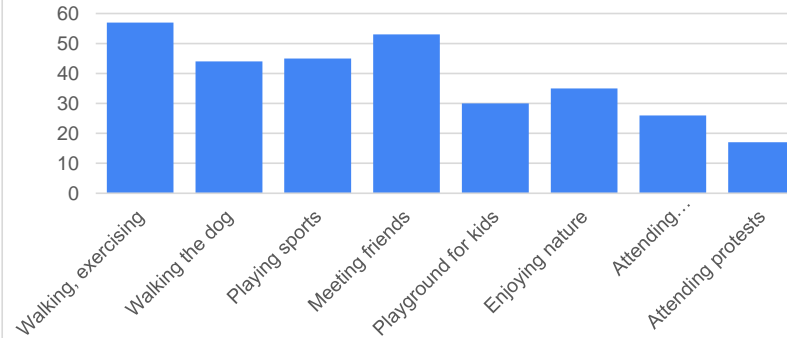
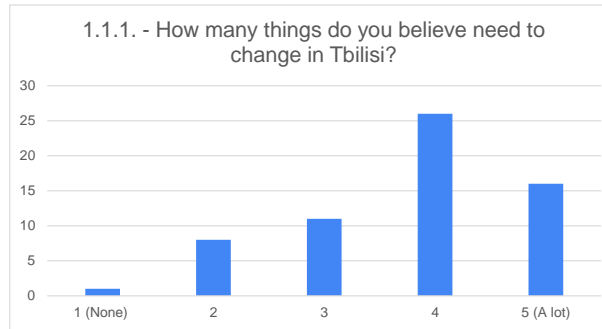| 4.3. - If you had the time and resources, would you like to use public spaces more? | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 46 |
| No | 7 |
| Same | 9 |

## 4.3. - If you had the time and resources, would you like to use public spaces more?
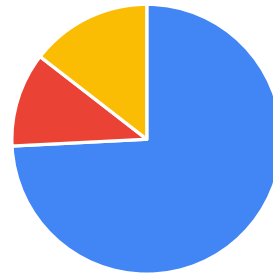


■ Yes  ■ No  ■ Same

| 1.1.1. - How many things do you believe need to change in Tbilisi? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (None) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (A lot) |
| 1 | 8 | 11 | 26 | 16 |

### 1.1.1. - How many things do you believe need to change in Tbilisi?

| 1.1.2. - How much do you believe the government is trying to make those changes? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (None) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (A lot) |
| 13 | 20 | 8 | 14 | 7 |

### 1.1.2 - How much do you believe the government is trying to make those changes?
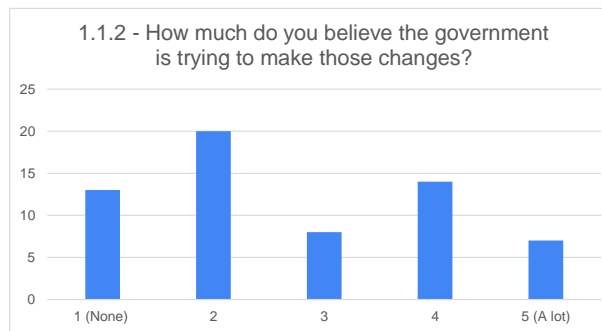
| 1.2.1. - How much has your neighbourhood changed in recent years? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (None) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (A lot) |
| 4 | 17 | 16 | 10 | 13 |

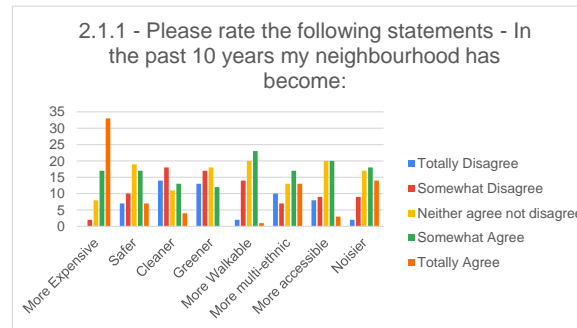### 1.2.1. - How much has your neighbourhood changed in recent years?
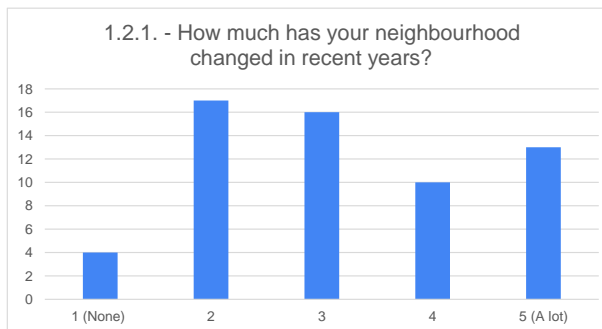
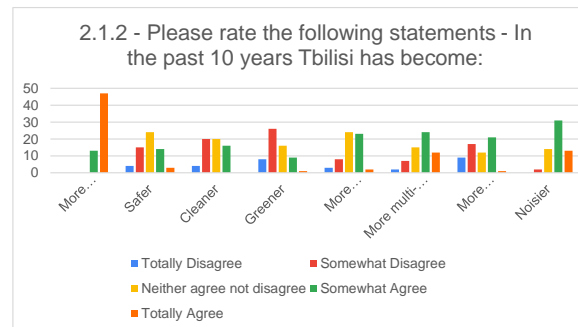| 1.2.2. - How much has Tbilisi changed in recent years? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (None) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (A lot) |
| 0 | 1 | 5 | 31 | 23 |



1.2.2. - How much has Tbilisi changed in recent years?
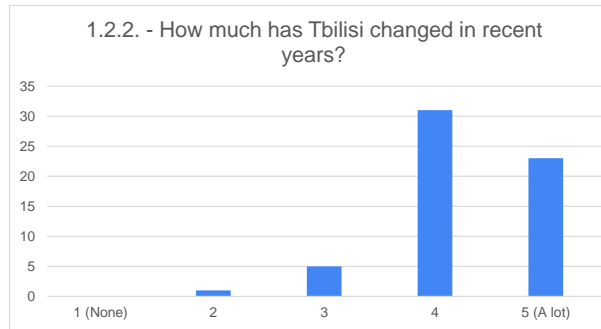
| 2.1.1 - Please rate the following statements - In the past 10 years my neighbourhood has become: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Totally Disagre | Somewhat Dis | Neither agree | Somewhat Agr | Totally Agree |
| More Expensive | 0 | 2 | 8 | 17 | 33 |
| Safer | 7 | 10 | 19 | 17 | 7 |
| Cleaner | 14 | 18 | 11 | 13 | 4 |
| Greener | 13 | 17 | 18 | 12 | 0 |
| More Walkable | 2 | 14 | 20 | 23 | 1 |
| More multi-ethnic | 10 | 7 | 13 | 17 | 13 |
| More accessible | 8 | 9 | 20 | 20 | 3 |
| Noisier | 2 | 9 | 17 | 18 | 14 |



2.1.1 - Please rate the following statements - In the past 10 years my neighbourhood has become:

| 2.1.2 - Please rate the following statements - In the past 10 years Tbilisi has become: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Totally Disagre | Somewhat Dis | Neither agree | Somewhat Agr | Totally Agree |
| More Expensive | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 47 |
| Safer | 4 | 15 | 24 | 14 | 3 |
| Cleaner | 4 | 20 | 20 | 16 | 0 |
| Greener | 8 | 26 | 16 | 9 | 1 |
| More Walkable | 3 | 8 | 24 | 23 | 2 |
| More multi-ethnic | 2 | 7 | 15 | 24 | 12 |
| More accessible | 9 | 17 | 12 | 21 | 1 |
| Noisier | 0 | 2 | 14 | 31 | 13 |



2.1.2 - Please rate the following statements - In the past 10 years Tbilisi has become:

## 2.2.1 - How serious do you think these problems are in Tbilisi?

| | Very Unserious | Somewhat Unserious | Unserious | Somewhat Serious | Very Serious |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crime, Prostitution and Drugs | 17 | 18 | 10 | 13 | 3 |
| Vandalism and Graffiti | 23 | 22 | 10 | 5 | 2 |
| Trash | 12 | 18 | 12 | 14 | 6 |
| Unemployment | 0 | 2 | 8 | 25 | 27 |
| Traffic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 57 |
| Lack of Green Spaces | 0 | 12 | 17 | 23 | 10 |
| Unsafe Buildings | 0 | 7 | 12 | 20 | 23 |
| Abandoned Buildings | 13 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 8 |
| Lack of Affordable Housing | 0 | 3 | 4 | 20 | 35 |
| Lack of Recreational Opportunities | 10 | 21 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| Lack of Shopping Facilities | 30 | 16 | 12 | 2 | 2 |
| Lack of Quality Education | 1 | 11 | 19 | 15 | 15 |



2.2.1 - How serious do you think these problems are in Tbilisi?
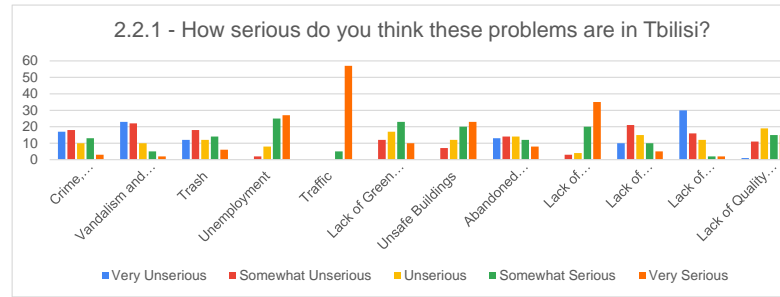
## 2.2.2 - How good are these things in Tbilisi?

| | Very Bad | Bad | Average | Good | Very Good |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation | 12 | 23 | 17 | 10 | 0 |
| Roads and Sidewalks | 0 | 17 | 18 | 24 | 3 |
| Cost of Living | 29 | 18 | 12 | 3 | 0 |
| Safety | 1 | 6 | 11 | 30 | 14 |
| Access to Schools and Hospitals | 3 | 12 | 26 | 18 | 3 |
| Activities for People Your Age | 2 | 16 | 15 | 25 | 4 |
| Cultural Opportunities | 4 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 4 |
| Employment Opportunities | 20 | 23 | 13 | 6 | 0 |
| Shopping Opportunities | 1 | 7 | 9 | 32 | 13 |
| Parks and Open Spaces | 1 | 21 | 34 | 5 | 1 |
| Quality of Housing | 8 | 25 | 26 | 2 | 1 |
| Sense of Community | 10 | 17 | 23 | 11 | 1 |



2.2.2 - How good are these things in Tbilisi?
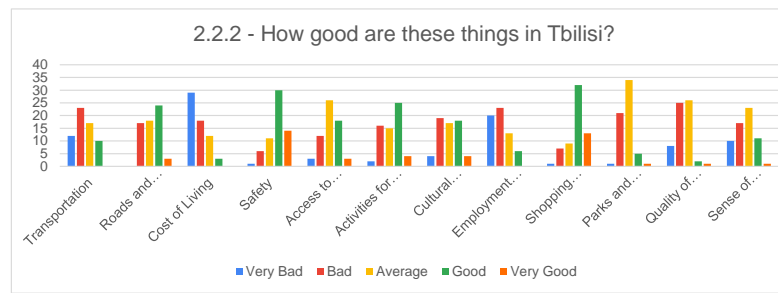
| 2.3.1. - Overall, how has your neighbourhood been lately? | |
|---|---|
| Better | 22 |
| Worse | 25 |
| The Same | 15 |

2.3.1. - Overall, how has your neighbourhood been lately?



Better  Worse  The Same
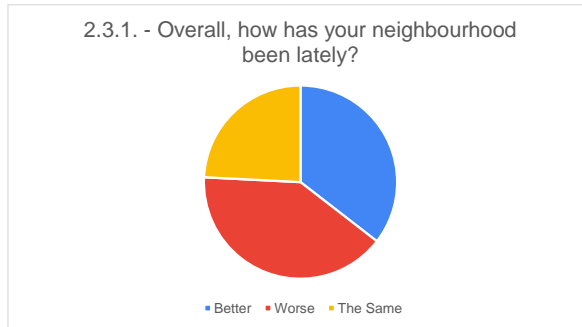
| 2.3.2. - How will your neighbourhood be in 20 years from now? | |
|---|---|
| Better | 18 |
| Worse | 25 |
| The Same | 19 |

2.3.2. - How will your neighbourhood be in 20 years from now?
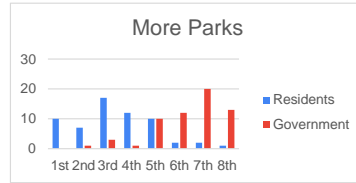


Better  Worse  The Same

**3.1. - If you were to choose, please rank YOUR priorities for your neighbourhood with 1 being the highest priority: / 3.2. - Please rank the priorities you believe the government has for your neighbourhood, with 1 being the highest priority:**
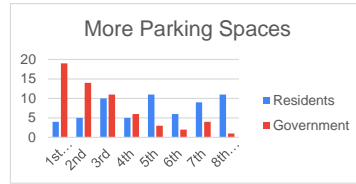
| Better Schools | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st (Most) | 10 | 0 |
| 2nd | 18 | 1 |
| 3rd | 6 | 1 |
| 4th | 7 | 3 |
| 5th | 9 | 6 |
| 6th | 9 | 9 |
| 7th | 1 | 12 |
| 8th (Least) | 0 | 28 |



Better Schools

| More Buses | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 10 | 3 |
| 2nd | 12 | 10 |
| 3rd | 7 | 16 |
| 4th | 11 | 10 |
| 5th | 5 | 9 |
| 6th | 10 | 7 |
| 7th | 5 | 4 |
| 8th | 1 | 1 |



More Buses

| New Houses | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st (Most) | 1 | 23 |
| 2nd | 5 | 14 |
| 3rd | 6 | 5 |
| 4th | 9 | 8 |
| 5th | 11 | 8 |
| 6th | 11 | 2 |
| 7th | 9 | 1 |
| 8th (Least) | 8 | 0 |



New Houses

| More Stores | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 0 | 8 |
| 2nd | 0 | 8 |
| 3rd | 6 | 11 |
| 4th | 7 | 12 |
| 5th | 7 | 11 |
| 6th | 13 | 3 |
| 7th | 14 | 4 |
| 8th | 13 | 3 |



More Stores

| More Tourists | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 1 | 7 |
| 2nd | 0 | 10 |
| 3rd | 2 | 9 |
| 4th | 1 | 8 |
| 5th | 1 | 7 |
| 6th | 9 | 7 |
| 7th | 20 | 5 |
| 8th | 26 | 8 |



More Tourists
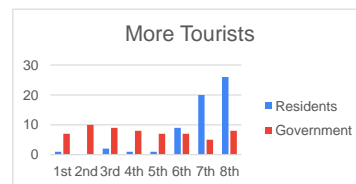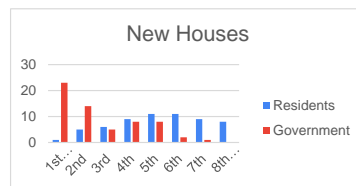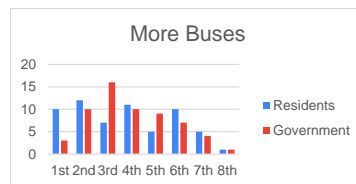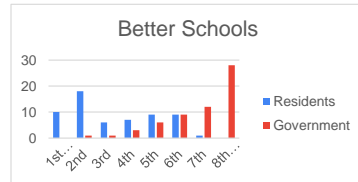
| More Parks | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 10 | 0 |
| 2nd | 7 | 1 |
| 3rd | 17 | 3 |
| 4th | 12 | 1 |
| 5th | 10 | 10 |
| 6th | 2 | 12 |
| 7th | 2 | 20 |
| 8th | 1 | 13 |

| More Parking Spaces | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st (Most) | 4 | 19 |
| 2nd | 5 | 14 |
| 3rd | 10 | 11 |
| 4th | 5 | 6 |
| 5th | 11 | 3 |
| 6th | 6 | 2 |
| 7th | 9 | 4 |
| 8th (Least) | 11 | 1 |

| More Jobs | Residents | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1st (Most) | 24 | 1 |
| 2nd | 15 | 3 |
| 3rd | 7 | 4 |
| 4th | 9 | 13 |
| 5th | 6 | 6 |
| 6th | 0 | 18 |
| 7th | 0 | 10 |
| 8th (Least) | 0 | 5 |
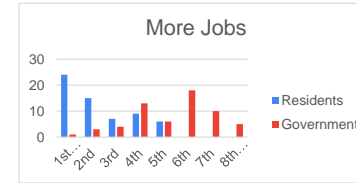


More Parks



More Parking Spaces



More Jobs

| 4.1.1. - How involved would you say you are in addressing issues and developing your neighbourhood? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Not at all Involved) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Very Involved) |
| 20 | 19 | 9 | 7 | 6 |



4.1.1. - How involved would you say you are in addressing issues and developing your neighbourhood?

| 4.1.2. - How easy is it to be involved? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Very Difficult) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Very Easy) |
| 20 | 23 | 14 | 4 | 0 |
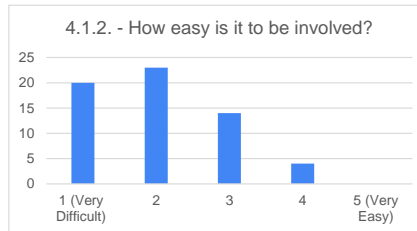


4.1.2. - How easy is it to be involved?

| 4.2 - Please rank the people you believe have more influence in what is going in your neighbourhood, with 1 being those with the most influence: | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1st (Most Influence) | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th (Least Influence |
| Local Residents | 2 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 21 |
| National Government | 22 | 13 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Local Government | 14 | 18 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Local Businesses | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 19 | 21 |
| Big Businesses | 6 | 8 | 15 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Foreigners | 5 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 8 |
| Construction Companies | 11 | 12 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 6 | 1 |



4.2 - Please rank the people you believe have more influence in what is going in your neighbourhood, with 1 being those with the most influence:
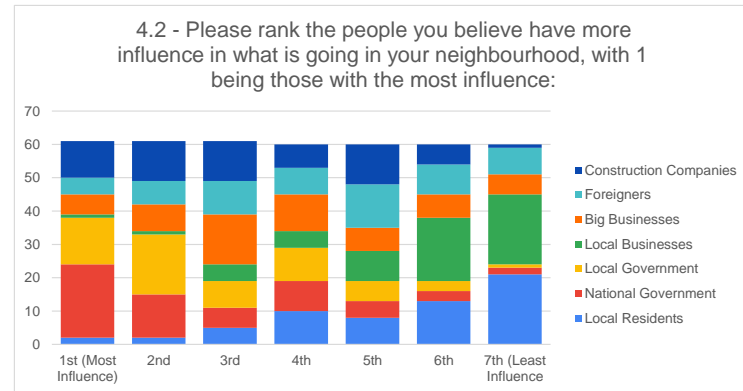
| 4.3 Please rate the following statements | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| I believe my voice matters in deciding what gets built, | 20 | 22 | 15 | 4 | 1 |
| People with more money decide what gets built, | 2 | 6 | 5 | 20 | 29 |
| I trust the government in improving Tbilisi, | 10 | 21 | 13 | 16 | 2 |
| I trust that government always says the truth about what gets built, | 30 | 22 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| I believe that newer buildings are better, | 4 | 8 | 17 | 22 | 11 |
| I believe that newer buildings fit the neighbourhood, | 8 | 12 | 9 | 27 | 6 |
| Enough public buildings (schools, bus stops, parks, hospitals, squares) are getting improved/built, | 19 | 24 | 13 | 4 | 2 |
| Enough private buildings (offices, apartments, shopping malls) are getting improved/built, | 1 | 8 | 16 | 25 | 12 |
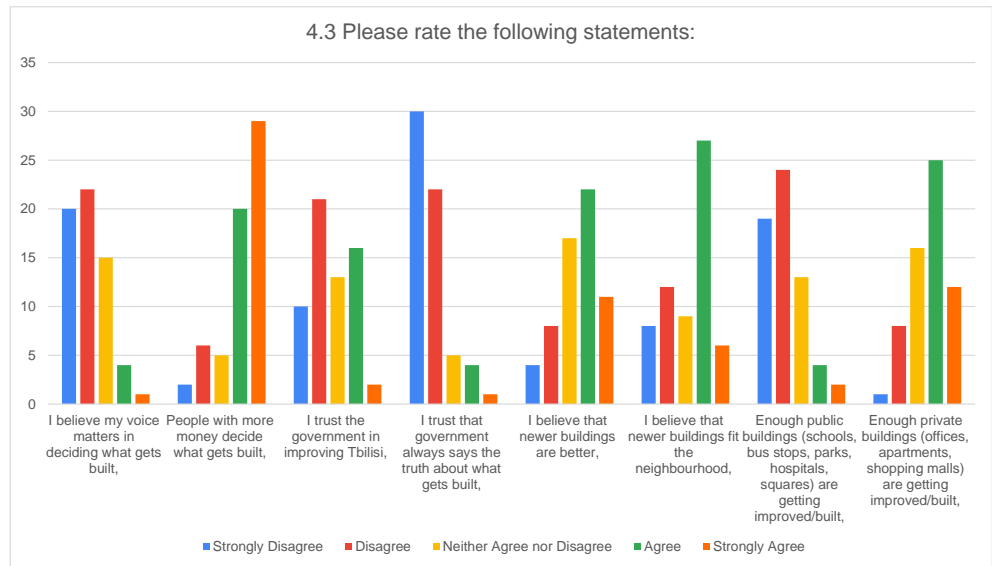


4.3 Please rate the following statements:

| 5.1 - Do you believe that some Districts/Neighbourhoods are much better/worse than others? | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 51 |
| No | 11 |

**5.1 - Do you believe that some Districts/Neighbourhoods are much better/worse than others?**



■ Yes ■ No
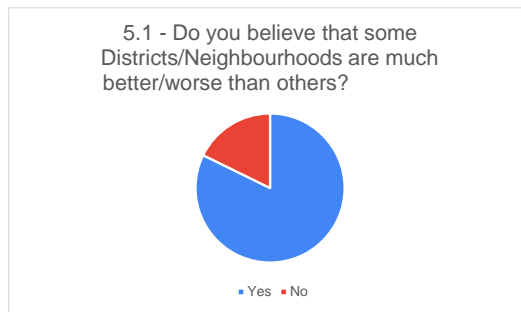
| 5.2.1 - How do you think other people view your neighbourhood? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (They Dislike It) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (They Lke it) |
| 5 | 13 | 13 | 23 | 8 |

**5.2. - How do you think other people view your neighbourhood?**
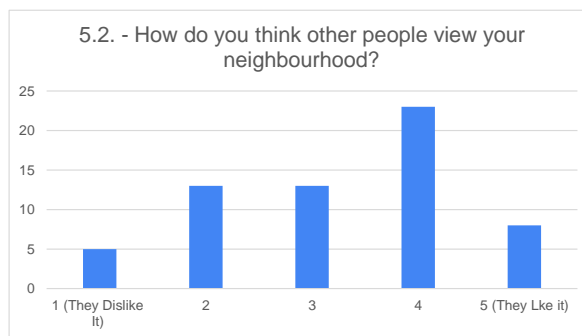


| 5.3.1. - Have you ever felt ashamed or uncomfortable to tell others where you live? | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 10 |
| No | 49 |
| Depends on the Situation | 3 |

**5.3.1. - Have you ever felt ashamed or uncomfortable to tell others where you live?**



■ Yes ■ No ■ Depends on the Situation
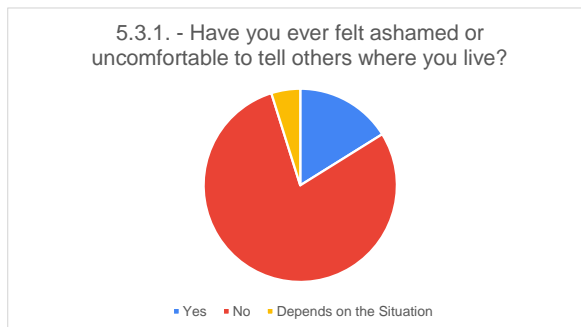
| 5.4.1 - Given the opportunity, how likely would you be to move to another part of town? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Very Unlikely) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Very Likely) |
| 5 | 13 | 13 | 23 | 8 |

5.4.1 - Given the opportunity, how likely would you be to move to another part of town?
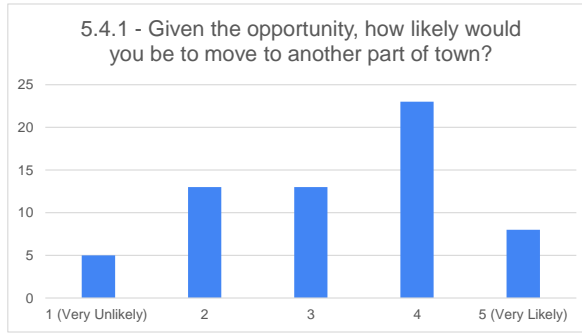
| 1 - Fabrika | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 8 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 10 |
| 7 | 14 |
| 8 | 12 |
| 9 | 4 |
| 10 | 5 |

## 1 - Fabrika
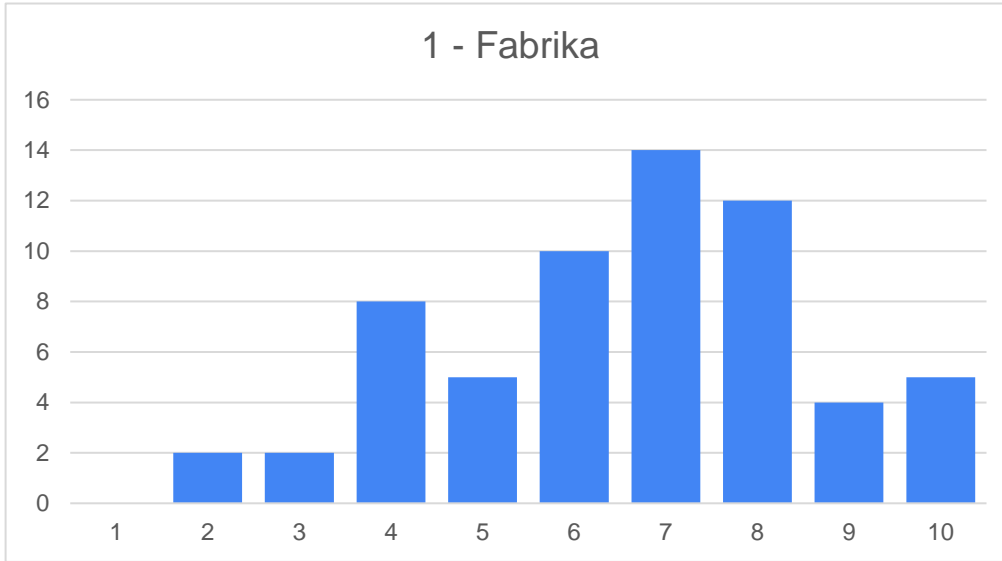


| 2 - Central Station | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 11 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 13 |
| 6 | 6 |
| 7 | 2 |
| 8 | 3 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 1 |

## 2 - Central Station
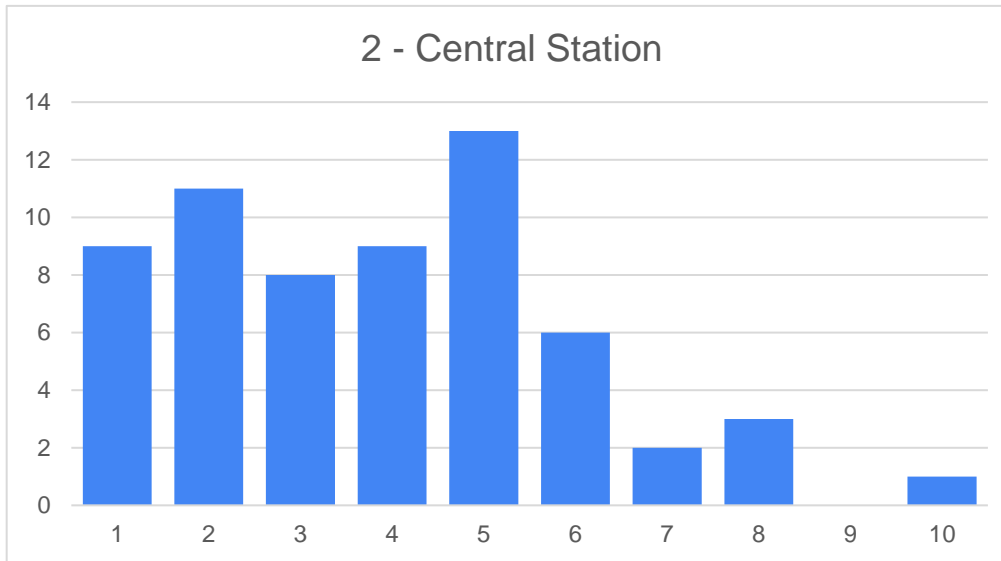
## 3 - Peace Bridge

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 6 | 10 |
| 7 | 11 |
| 8 | 18 |
| 9 | 8 |
| 10 | 4 |
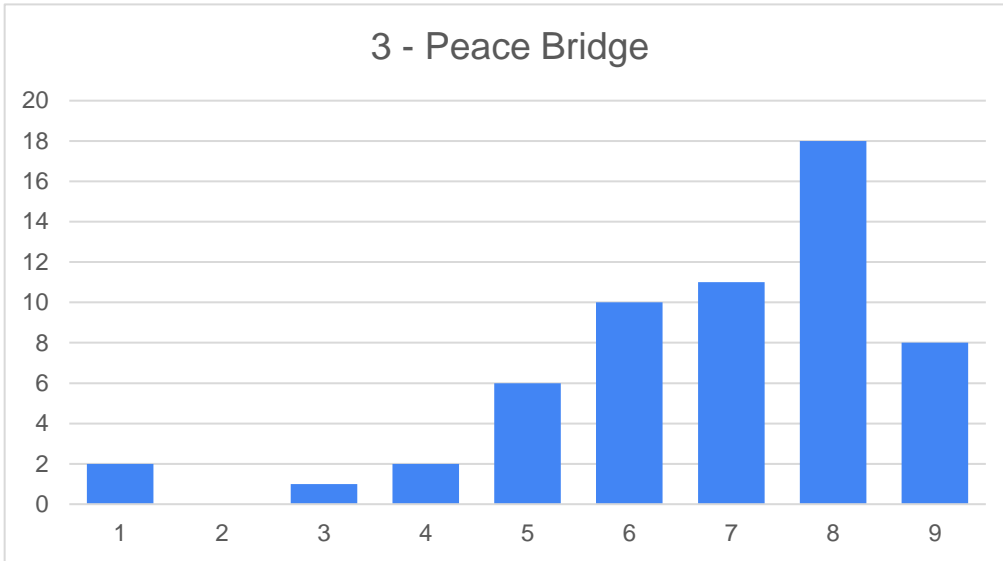


## 4 - Biltmore Hotel

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 10 |
| 3 | 14 |
| 4 | 10 |
| 5 | 11 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | 1 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 1 |
| 10 | 2 |

| 5 - Cathedral | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 7 |
| 5 | 8 |
| 6 | 9 |
| 7 | 5 |
| 8 | 14 |
| 9 | 4 |
| 10 | 4 |
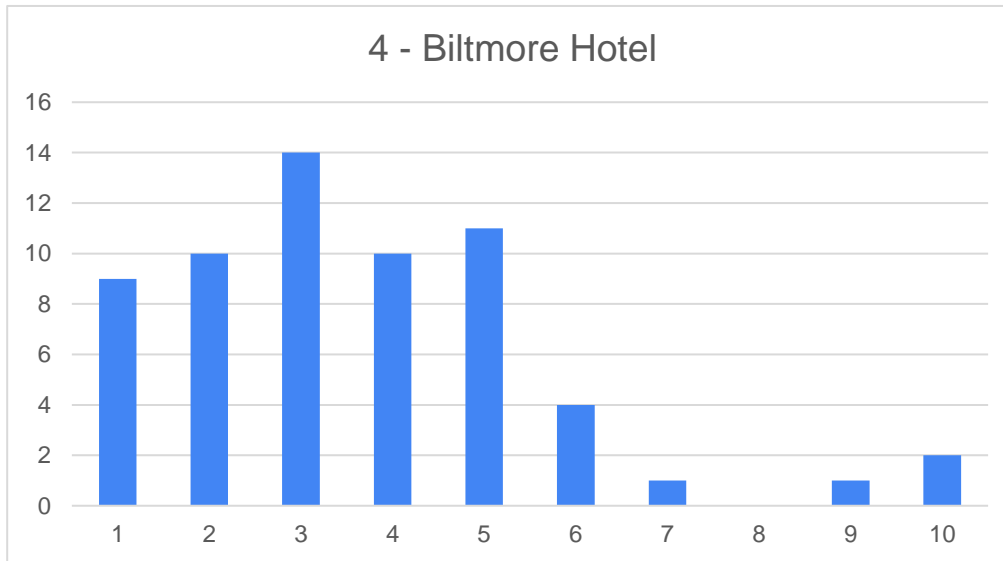
## 5 - Cathedral
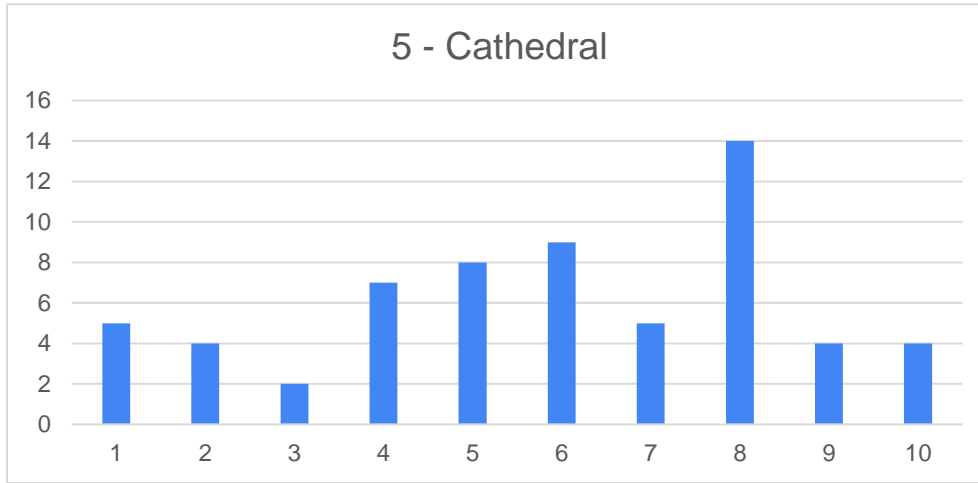


| 6 - Chronicle of Georgia | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 6 |
| 8 | 11 |
| 9 | 19 |
| 10 | 13 |

## 6 - Chronicle of Georgia
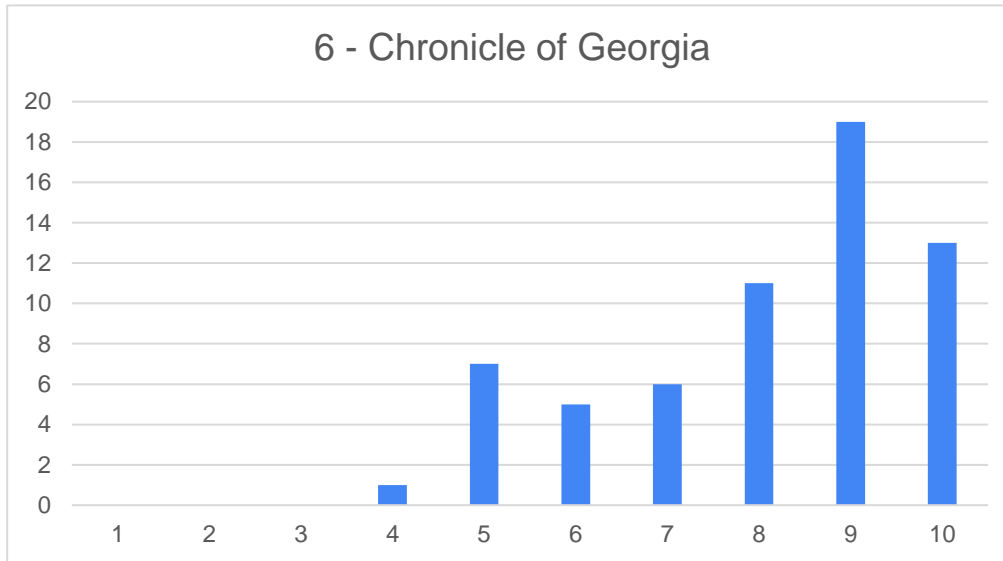
| 7 - Vake Park | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 8 |
| 7 | 13 |
| 8 | 21 |
| 9 | 5 |
| 10 | 6 |



7 - Vake Park
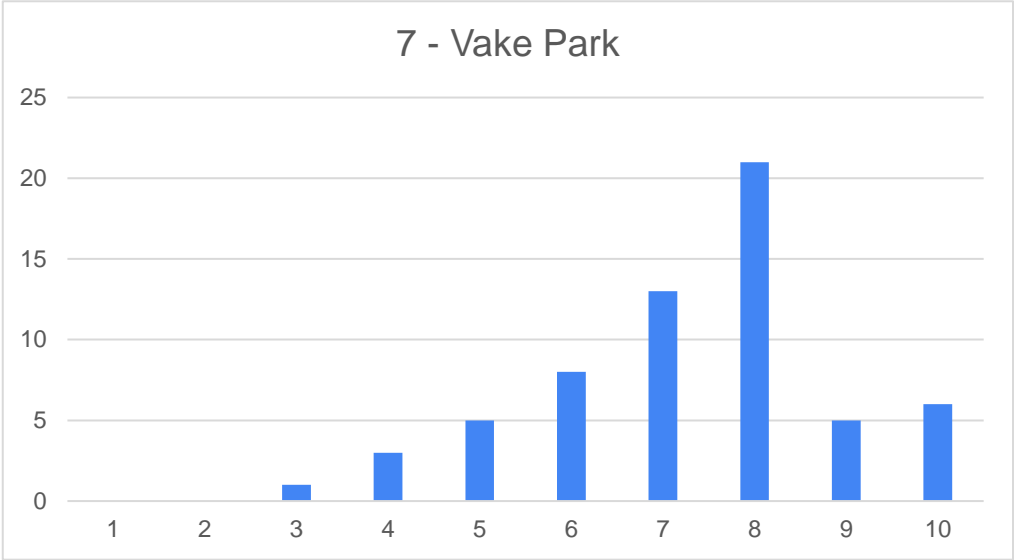
| 8 - Axis Towers | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 6 |
| 4 | 12 |
| 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 9 |
| 7 | 13 |
| 8 | 8 |
| 9 | 1 |
| 10 | 3 |



8 - Axis Towers
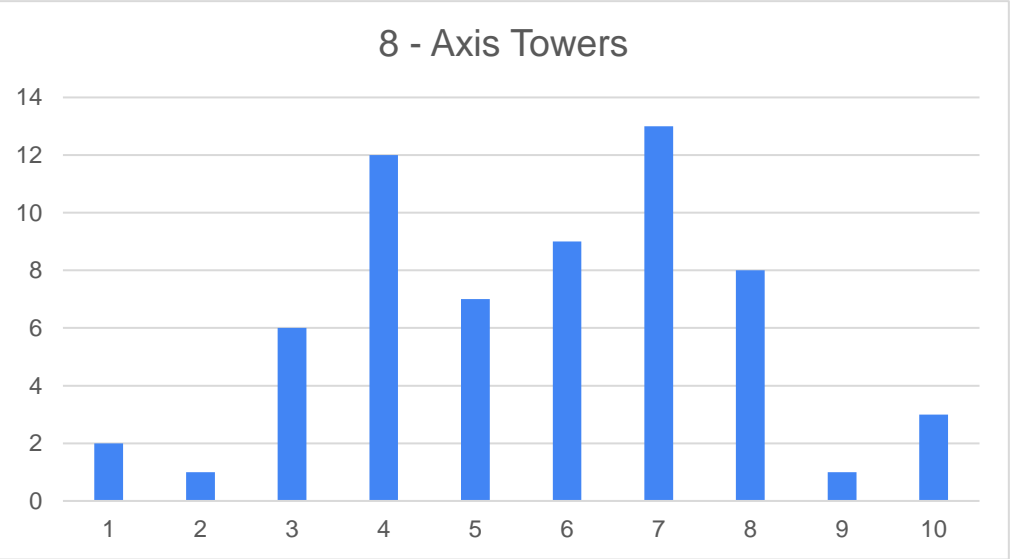
| 9 - Panorama | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 11 |
| 2 | 11 |
| 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 6 |
| 9 | 1 |
| 10 | 1 |



9 - Panorama
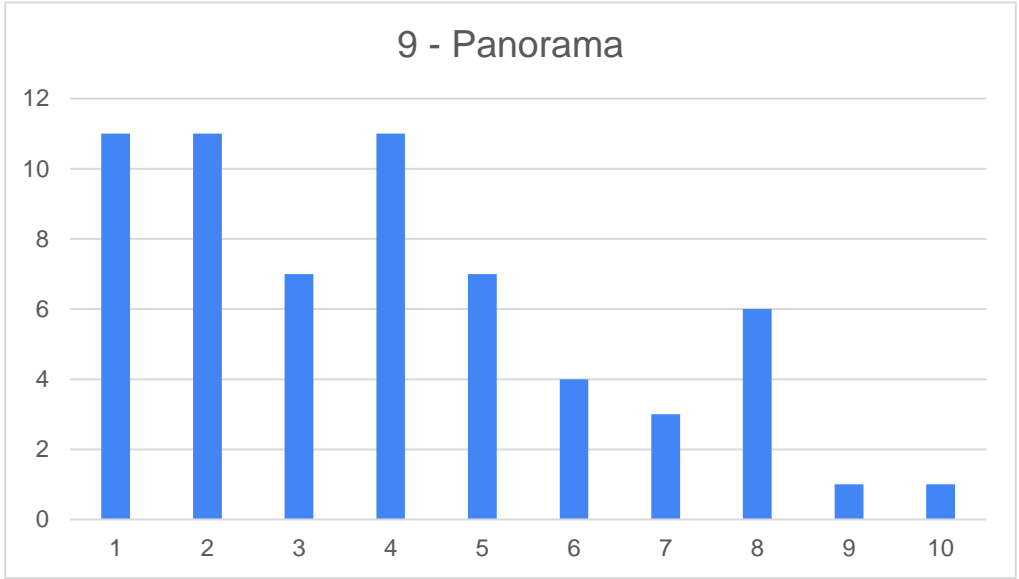
| 10 - Public Service Hall | |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 12 |
| 7 | 16 |
| 8 | 16 |
| 9 | 10 |
| 10 | 2 |



10 - Public Service Hall
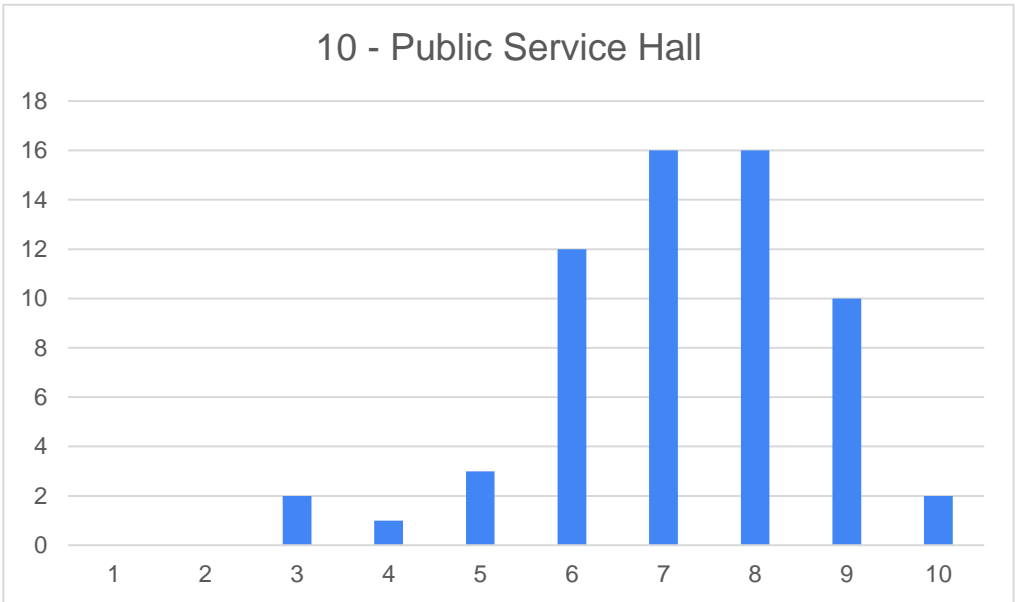
| 11 - Green Budapest | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 20 |
| 5 | 11 |
| 6 | 8 |
| 7 | 5 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 1 |

## 11 - Green Budapest
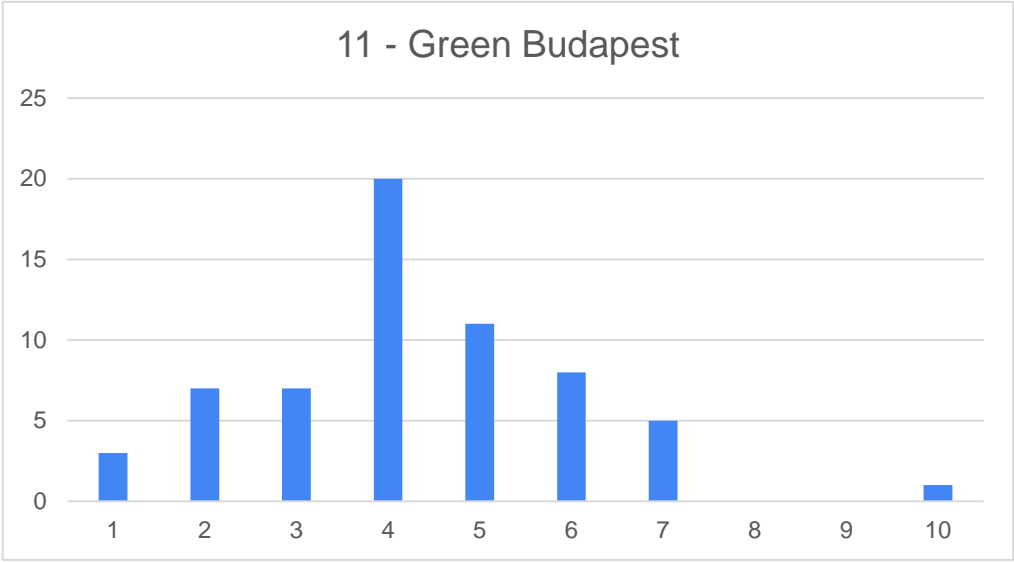


| 12 - Cycling Lane | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 5 |
| 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 13 |
| 7 | 13 |
| 8 | 14 |
| 9 | 4 |
| 10 | 5 |

## 12 - Cycling Lane
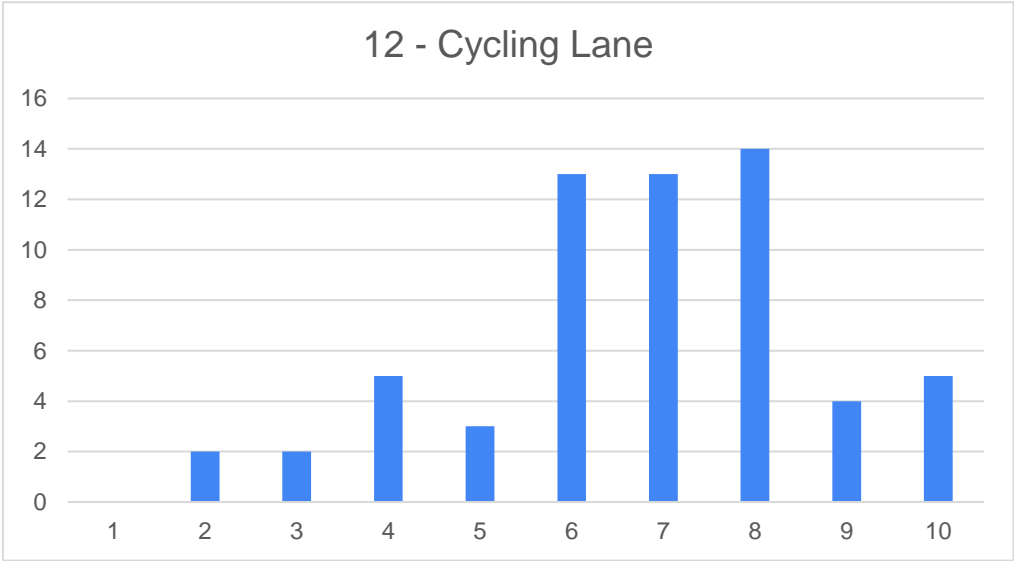
| 13 - Dzveli | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 2 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 14 |
| 8 | 14 |
| 9 | 13 |
| 10 | 14 |

## 13 - Dzveli Tbilisi
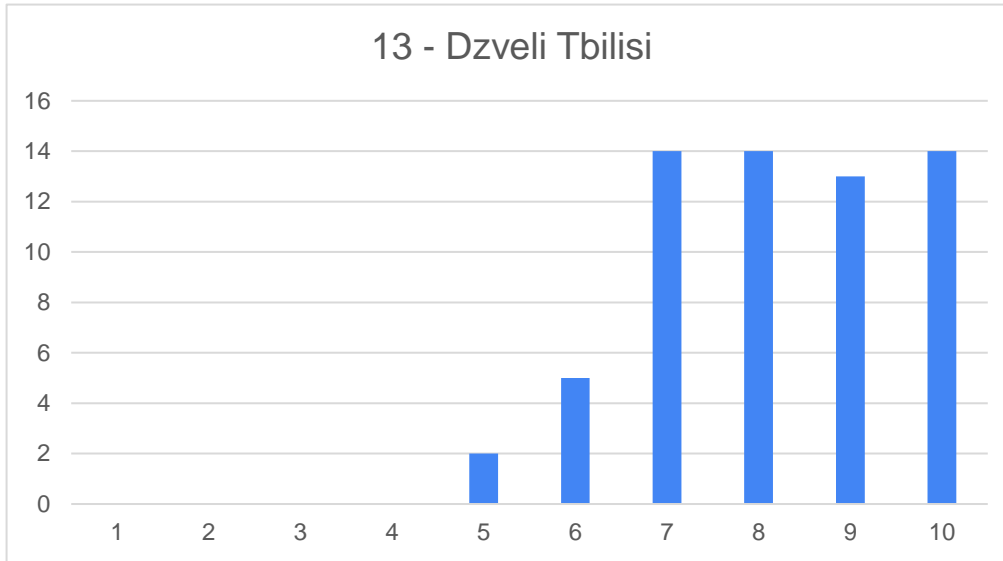


| 14 - Old House | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 10 |
| 3 | 11 |
| 4 | 19 |
| 5 | 11 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 1 |

## 14 - Old House
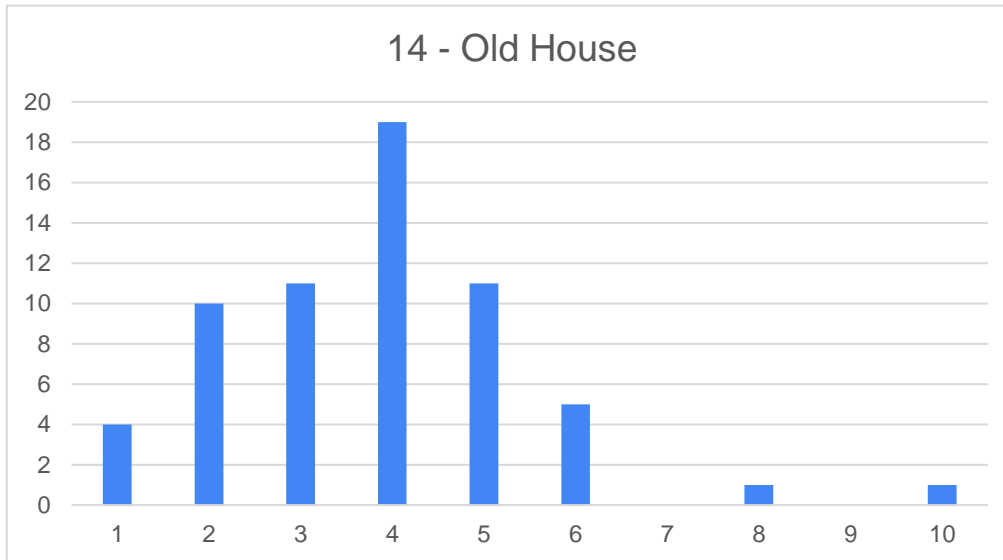
| 15- Interior Ministry | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 10 |
| 2 | 16 |
| 3 | 11 |
| 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 9 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | 1 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |

## 15 - Interior Ministry
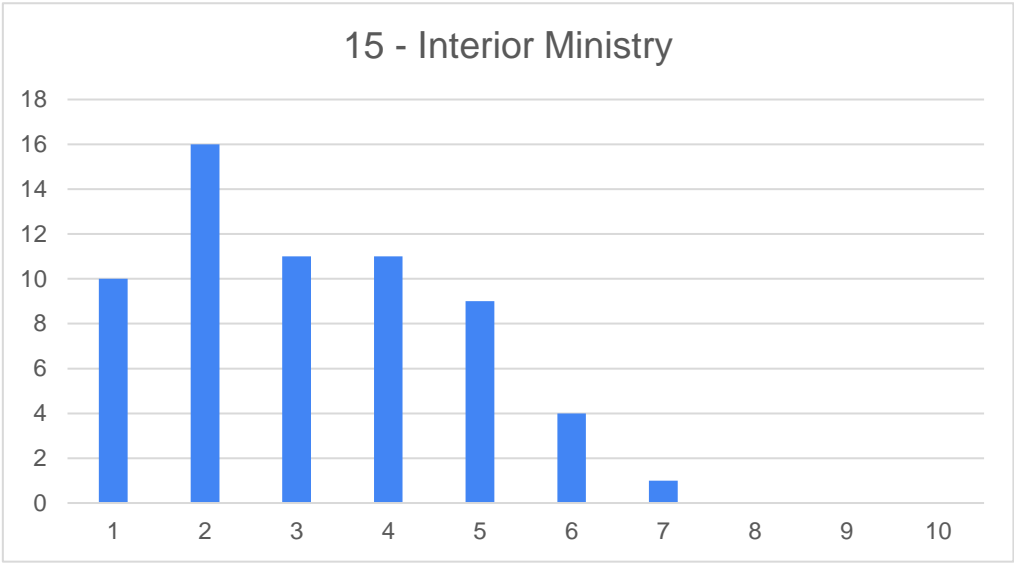
| 16 - Aghmashenebeli | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 |
| 6 | 6 |
| 7 | 16 |
| 8 | 21 |
| 9 | 9 |
| 10 | 4 |

## 16 - Aghmashenebeli Avenue

## 17 - State University Dorms
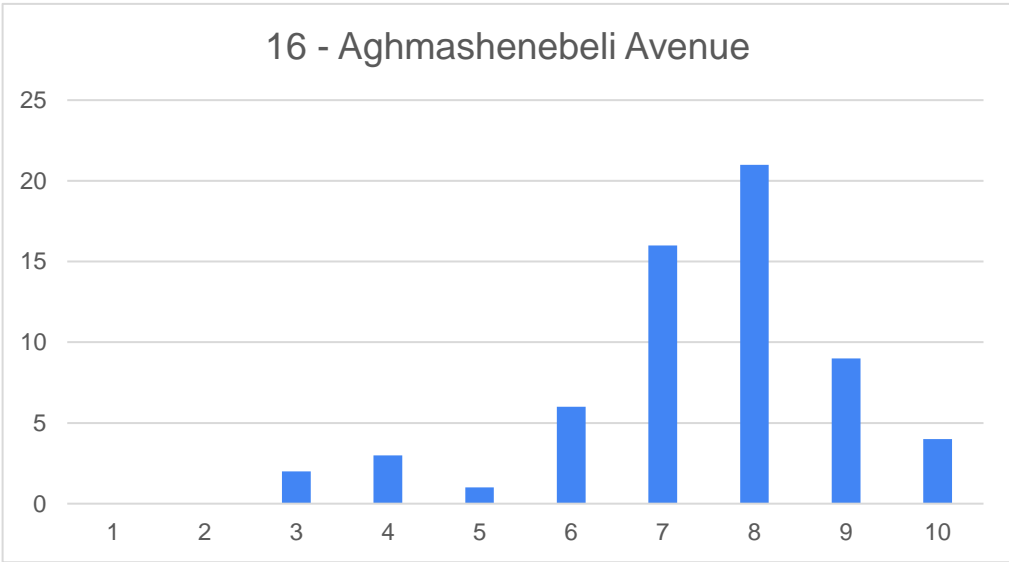
| 17 - State University Dorms | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 19 |
| 2 | 15 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |

**17 - State University Dorms**
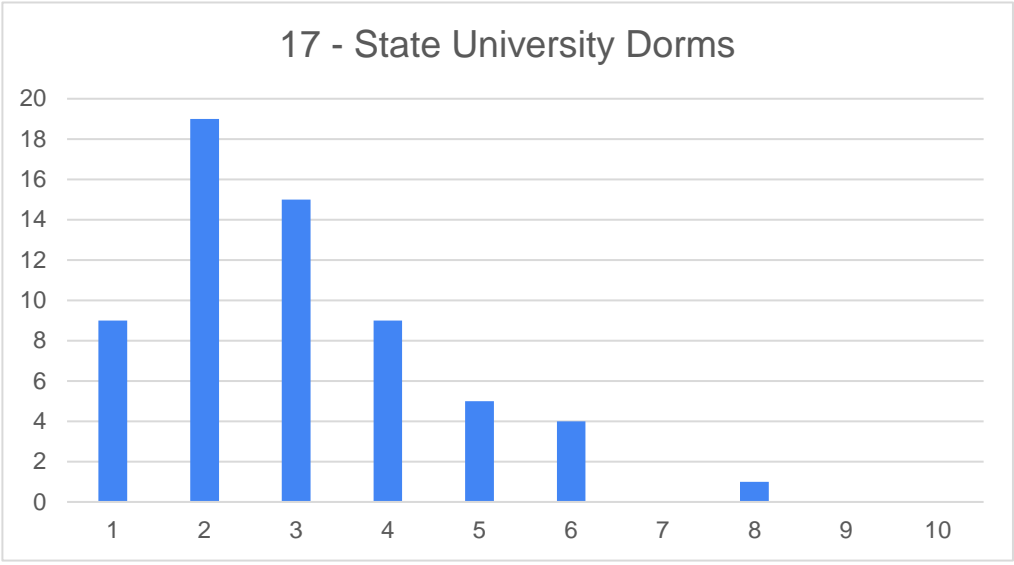
| 18 - East Point Mall | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 2 | 12 |
| 4 | 15 |
| 5 | 13 |
| 6 | 8 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 4 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 2 |

**18 - East Point Mall**
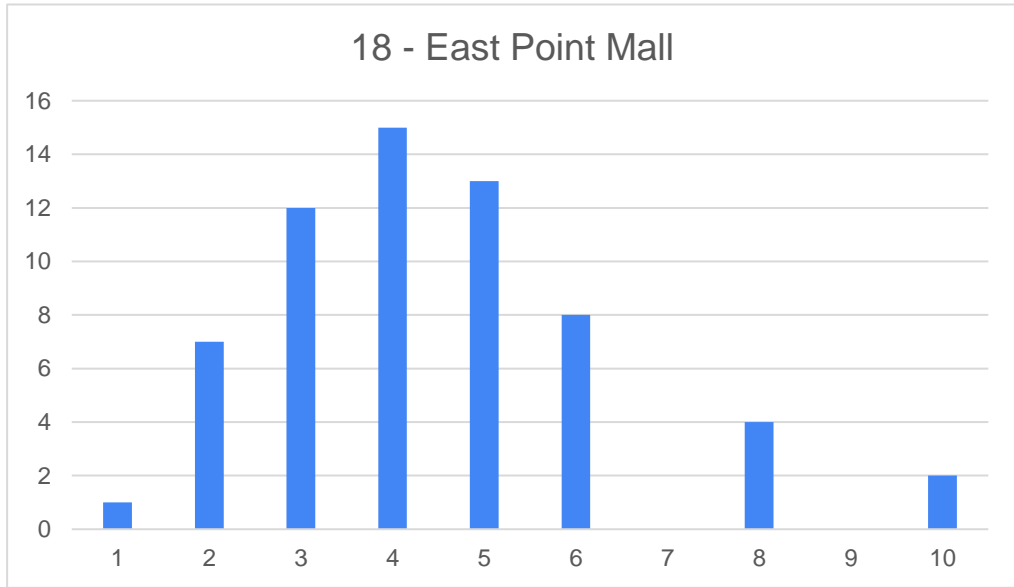
| 19 - Apartment Block | |
|---|---:|
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 4 | 24 |
| 5 | 15 |
| 6 | 10 |
| 7 | 1 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |



19 - Soviet Apartment Block
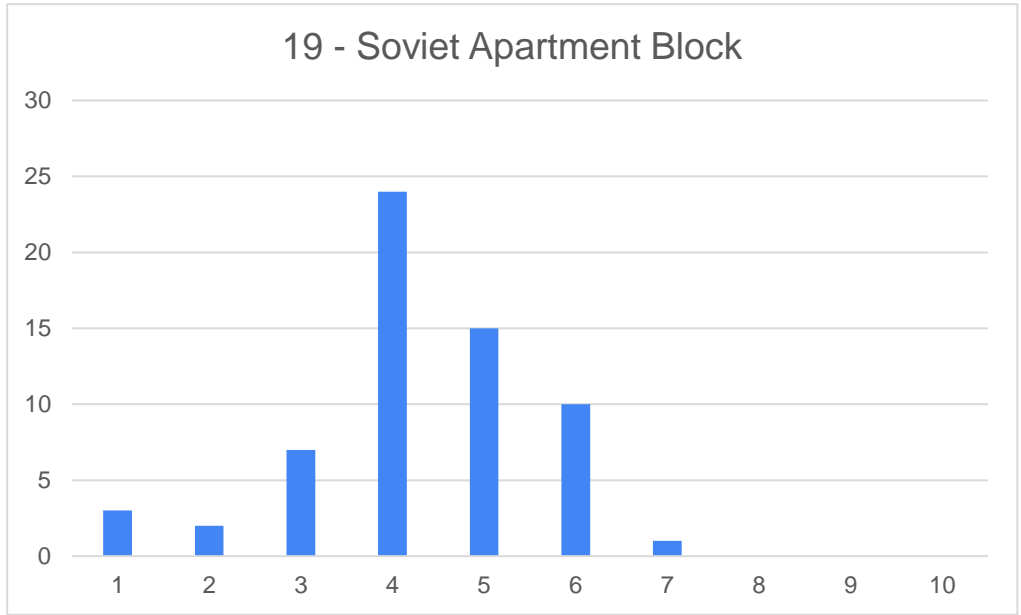
| 20 - Metro | |
|---|---:|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 2 | 10 |
| 4 | 8 |
| 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 14 |
| 7 | 10 |
| 8 | 5 |
| 9 | 1 |
| 10 | 0 |
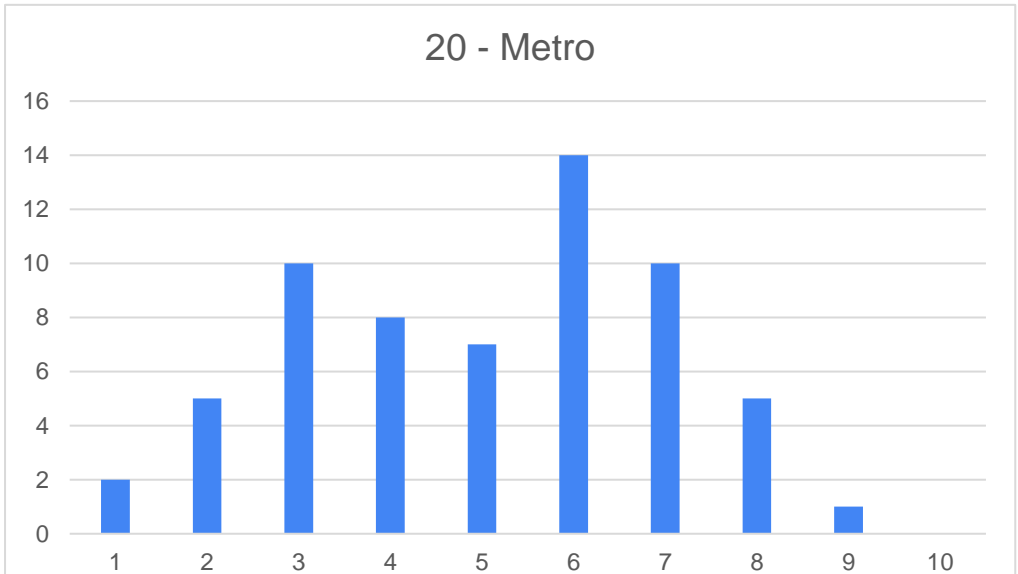


20 - Metro

| | | | | State University | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Dzveli | | Soviet | University | |
| Score | Tbilisi | Fabrika | Apartment | Dorms | Old House |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 19 | 10 |
| 2 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 15 | 11 |
| 4 | 0 | 8 | 24 | 9 | 19 |
| 5 | 2 | 5 | 15 | 5 | 11 |
| 6 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | 14 | 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 14 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 9 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 14 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Soviet Buildings
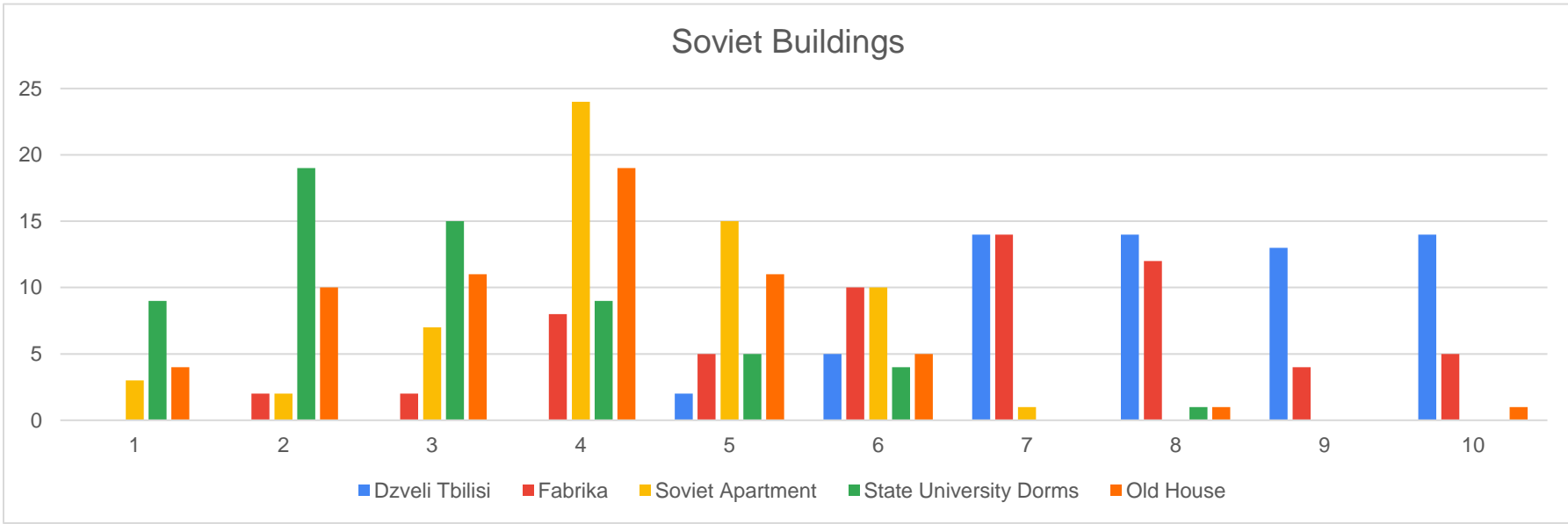
## Public Infrastructure

| Score | Metro | Central Station | Cycling Lane | Vake Park | Chronicle of Georgia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 5 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| 5 | 7 | 13 | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 14 | 6 | 13 | 8 | 5 |
| 7 | 10 | 2 | 13 | 13 | 6 |
| 8 | 5 | 3 | 14 | 21 | 11 |
| 9 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 19 |
| 10 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 13 |



Public Infrastructure
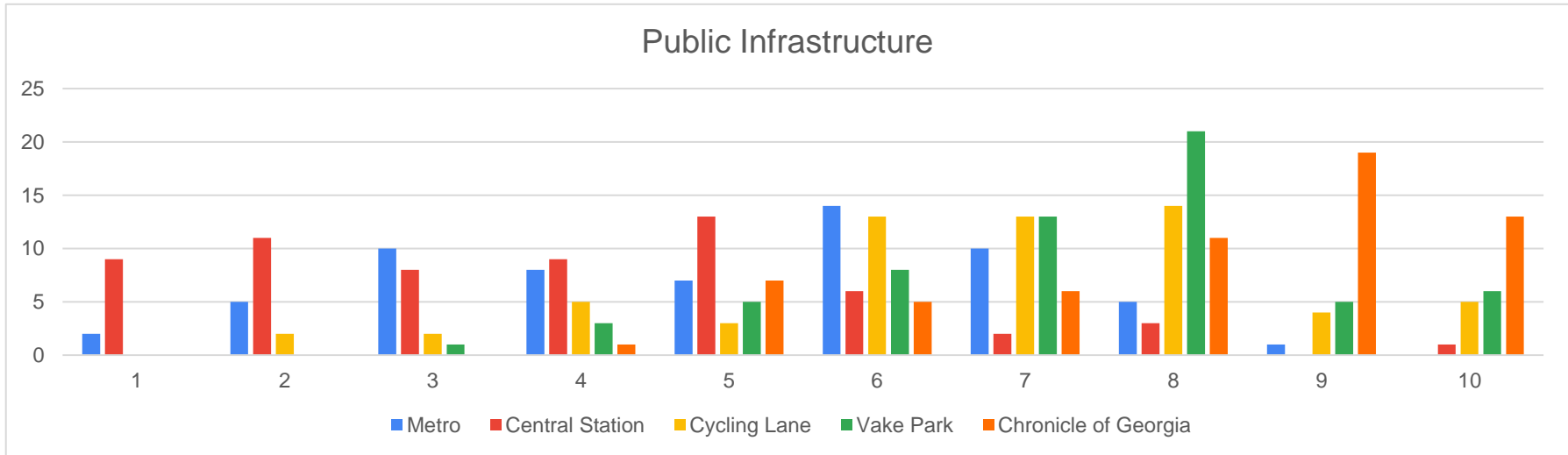
| Private Developments | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Score | Axis Towers | Green Budapest | Panorama | East Point Mall | Biltmore Hotel |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 10 |
| 2 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 12 | 14 |
| 4 | 12 | 20 | 11 | 15 | 10 |
| 5 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 11 |
| 6 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| 7 | 13 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| 8 | 8 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| 9 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 10 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |



Private Developments
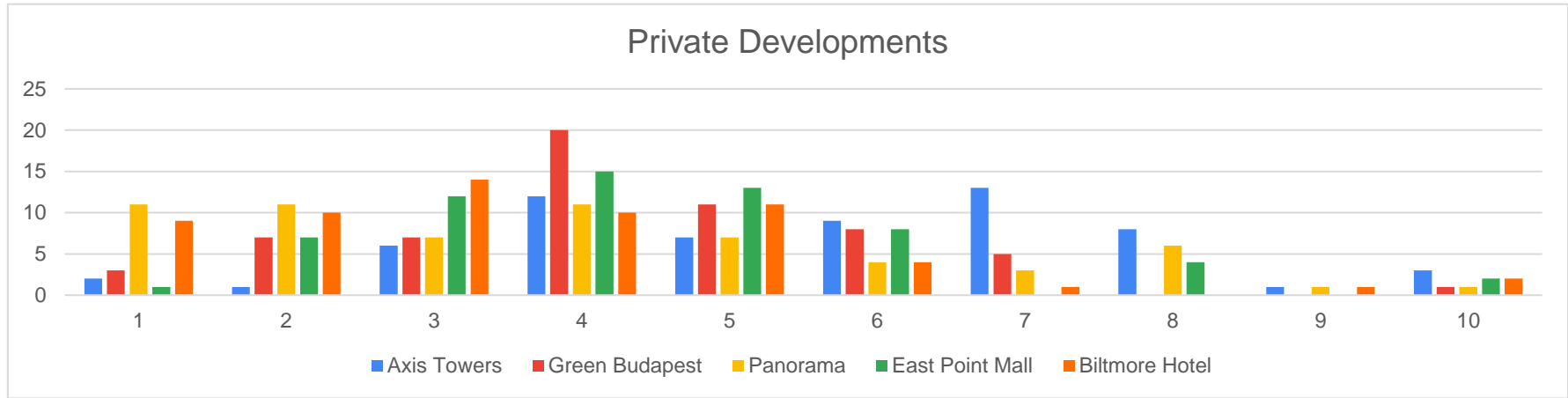
| Public Developments | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Score | Interior Ministry | Peace Bridge | Tbilisi Cathedral | Public Service Hall | Aghmashenebeli |
| 1 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 16 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 11 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 4 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| 5 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| 6 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 6 |
| 7 | 1 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 16 |
| 8 | 0 | 18 | 14 | 16 | 21 |
| 9 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 9 |
| 10 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 |



Public Developments

Interior Ministry · Peace Bridge · Tbilisi Cathedral · Public Service Hall · Aghmashenebeli
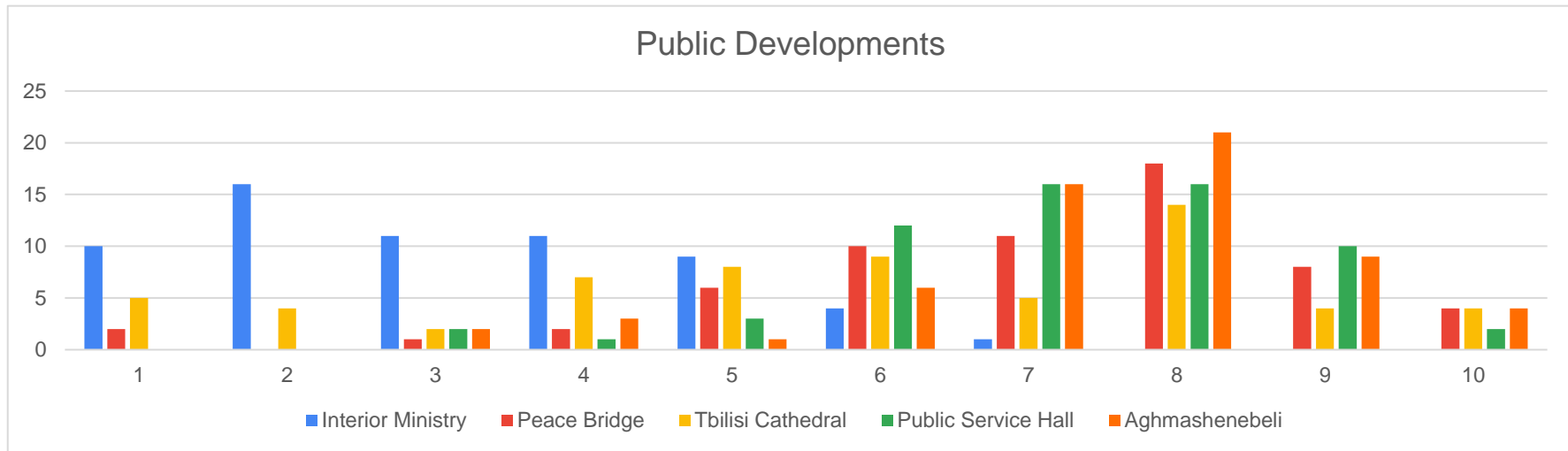
| 1. How old are you | |
|---|---|
| 16-25 | 30 |
| 26-35 | 22 |
| 36-45 | 7 |
| 46 or older | 3 |

## 1. How old are you?



■ 16-25  ■ 26-35  ■ 36-45  ■ 46 or older
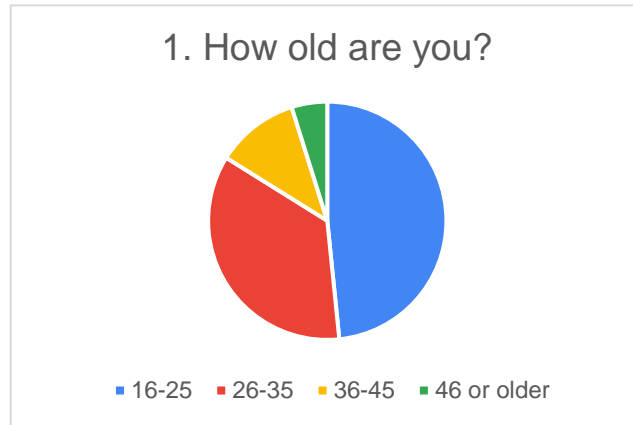
| 2. - What gender do you identify with? | |
|---|---|
| Male | 31 |
| Female | 30 |
| Non-binary | 1 |

## 2. - What gender do you identify with?



■ Male  ■ Female  ■ Non-binary
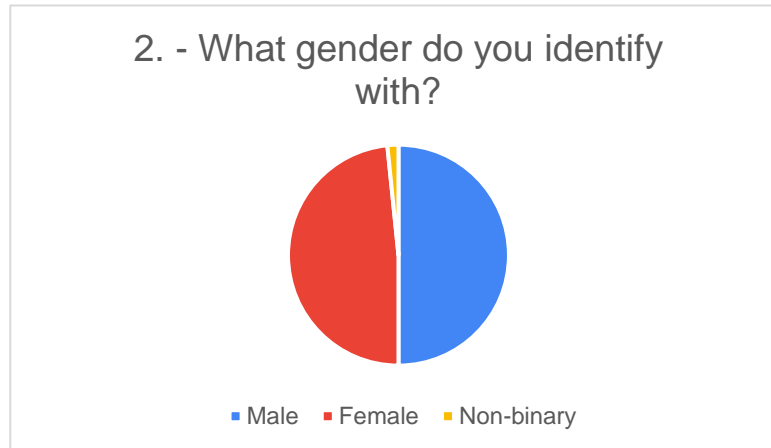
| 3.1. - Which district (raion) do you live in? | |
|---|---|
| Mtatsminda | 4 |
| Isani | 7 |
| Vake | 7 |
| Saburtalo | 13 |
| Krtsanisi | 2 |
| Samgori | 5 |
| Chugureti | 6 |
| Didube | 3 |
| Nadzaladevi | 8 |
| Gldani | 5 |
| Outside of Tbilisi | 2 |

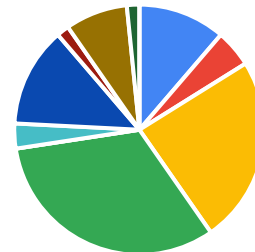## 3.1. - Which district (raion) do you live in?



Mtatsminda — Isani — Vake — Saburtalo — Krtsanisi — Samgori — Chugureti — Didube — Nadzaladevi — Gldani — Outside of Tbilisi
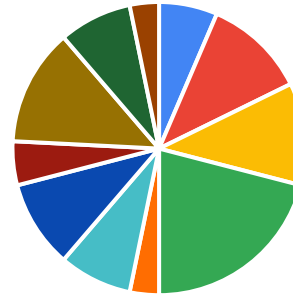
| 3.2. - Which district (raion) do you spend most of your day | |
|---|---|
| Mtatsminda | 7 |
| Isani | 3 |
| Vake | 15 |
| Saburtalo | 20 |
| Krtsanisi | 0 |
| Samgori | 2 |
| Chugureti | 8 |
| Didube | 1 |
| Nadzaladevi | 5 |
| Gldani | 1 |
| Outside of Tbilisi | 0 |

## 3.2. - Which district (raion) do you spend most of your day in?



Mtatsminda — Isani — Vake — Saburtalo — Krtsanisi — Samgori — Chugureti — Didube — Nadzaladevi — Gldani — Outside of Tbilisi

| 4.1. - How would you describe your (family) income? | |
| --- | --- |
| Very Low | 2 |
| Low-middle | 9 |
| Low-middle | 20 |
| Middle | 16 |
| Middle-high | 13 |
| High | 1 |



4.1. - How would you describe your (family) income?

Very Low ▪ Low-middle ▪ Low-middle ▪ Middle ▪ Middle-high ▪ High

| 4.2 - What is the highest level of education you have attained? | |
| --- | --- |
| High School | 13 |
| Diploma | 13 |
| University Degre | 26 |
| Master's/PhD | 9 |


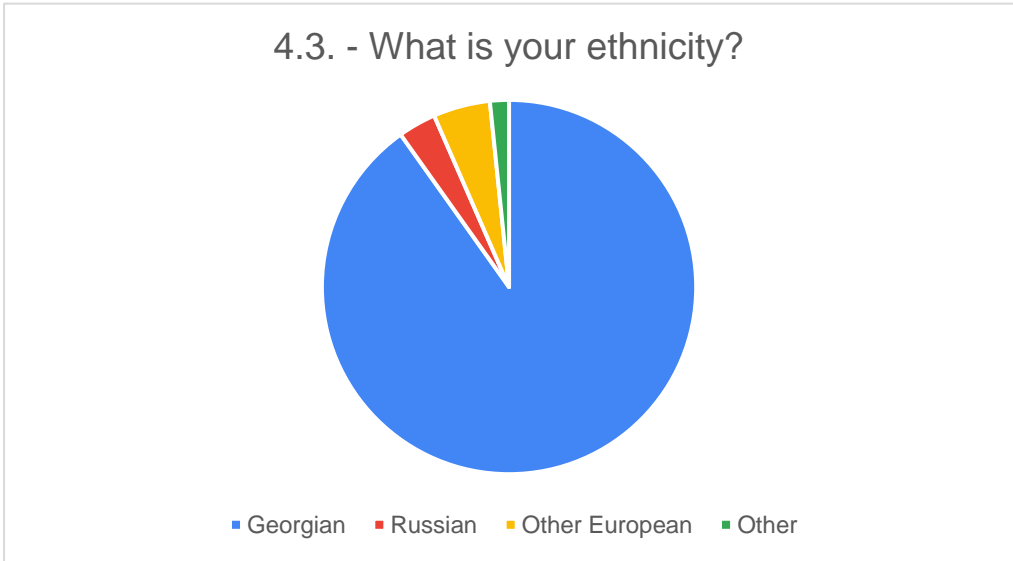
4.2 - What is the highest level of education you have attained?
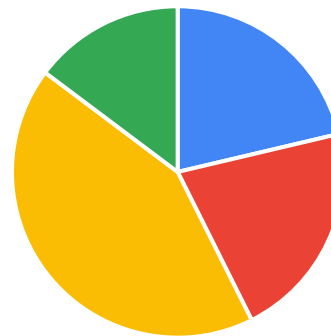
High School ▪ Diploma ▪ University Degree ▪ Master's/PhD

| 4.3. - What is your ethnicity | |
|---|---:|
| Georgian | 55 |
| Russian | 2 |
| Other European | 3 |
| Other | 1 |

### 4.3. - What is your ethnicity?

- Georgian ■ Russian ■ Other European ■ Other

| 4.4. What is the primary language spoken at home? | |
|---|---:|
| Georgian | 55 |
| Russian | 2 |
| English | 1 |
| Other | 3 |

### 4.4. What is the primary language spoken at home?

- Georgian ■ Russian ■ English ■ Other
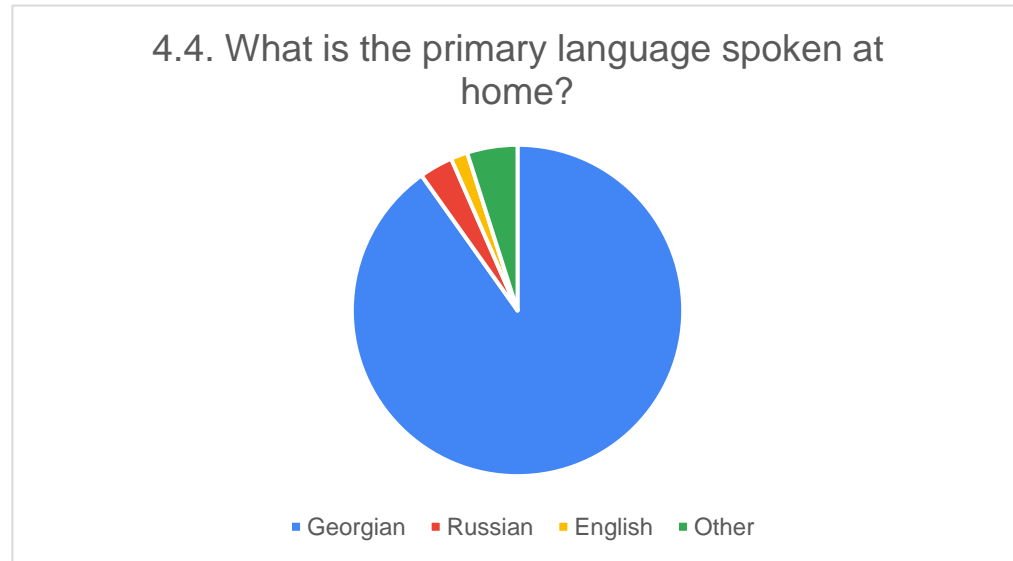
| 4.5. - Do you consider yourself to belong to any minority group? | |
|---|---|
| Persons with Dis | 5 |
| Ethnic Minority | 3 |
| Queer/LGBTQI | 11 |
| Refugee/Asylum | 4 |
| Religious Minorit | 5 |
| Socioeconomic I | 1 |

## 4.5. - Do you consider yourself to belong to any minority group?
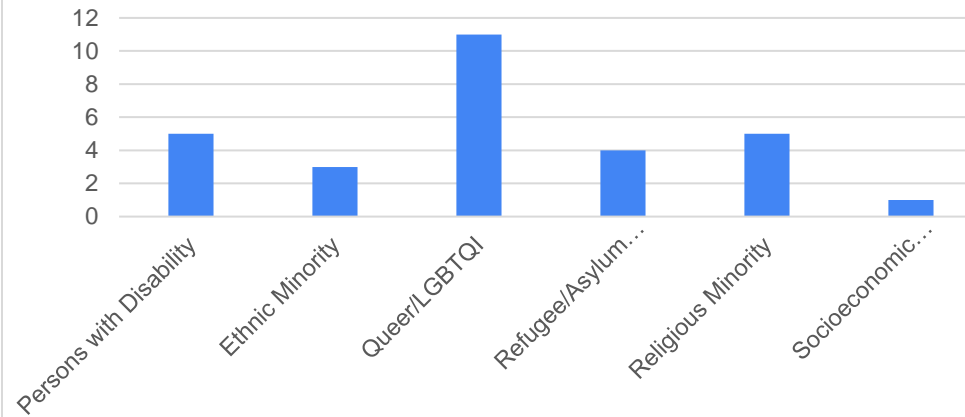


| 5.1 - Are you originally from Tbilisi? | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 47 |
| No | 15 |

## 5.1 - Are you originally from Tbilisi?



■ Yes  ■ No
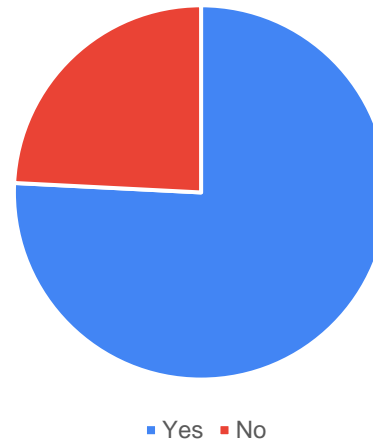
| 5.2. If not, how long have you been living in Tbilisi for? | |
|---|---|
| >1 year | 2 |
| <1 year | 3 |
| <3 years | 6 |
| <10 years | 3 |

## 5.2. If not, how long have you been living in Tbilisi for?



| 6. - What is your current living situation? | |
|---|---|
| I rent | 12 |
| I own | 14 |
| I live with someo | 31 |
| I live abroad | 4 |

## 6. - What is your current living situation?



- I rent
- I own
- I live with someone who rents/owns
- I live abroad