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MONUMENTS OF MEMORY

Special Editor: Oliver Reisner

Between Memory and Memorial: Anastas Mikoyan and "Social Lustration" in Armenia

By Gayane Shagoyan, Yerevan

Abstract

This article analyzes the public discourse on the Soviet history of Armenia provoked by the initiative to raise a monument to the Soviet political figure Anastas Mikoyan in a central park of Yerevan in 2014. Within this discourse some Soviet historical events have been included into, or excluded from, the "national narratives" by different groups both in Armenia and the Diaspora. This case exposes the complex interrelations between family memories about the Soviet functionary and different versions of the official historiography and non-official oral histories of former Soviet citizens and their post-Soviet descendants.

Introduction: In the Beginning Was a Monument Initiative

When the Armenian Center of Ethnological Studies "Hazarashen" and the German organization DVV-international launched their project "Armenia Total(itar)is" on Soviet repressions in Armenia in 2012, they did not expect that the topic of the "Soviet past" could provoke hot public discussions only two years later.[1] Especially since fieldwork showed that memory of Soviet repressions was rather shadowed. Otherwise, following J. Olick's terminology, the memory of Soviet repressions in Armenia was rather 'collected' than 'collective'.

The situation crucially changed when the relatives of the high-level Soviet official Anastas Mikoyan decided to erect a monument to him in a public garden in the center of Yerevan. Mikoyan was born in Armenia and rose to the highest communist government positions in the Kremlin, achieving the most political longevity in the Soviet government's history. There were already four memorials dedicated to this communist bureaucrat in different settlements in Armenia (outside of Yerevan) before this initiative was started. However, they were never a source of any arguments or debates. And nobody questioned the municipality's decision to name one of Yerevan's streets after Mikoyan in 2008.

We attempt to discuss how and why the Yerevan municipal decision on erecting the next memorial to this Soviet political actor in 2014 caused a wide public response and, in fact, turned into a detonator, which triggered in contemporary Armenian society the need to revise the history of Soviet Armenia. People perceive a particular event as a new link in a successive chain of events and recall more of the personal details from their experience by linking them to a "grand historical event".

Family Memory vs. Public Memory

The discourse on this monument initiative sheds light on some mechanisms of memorializing the political leaders and constructing their glorious image. The Mikoyan monument case is interesting as an example of how the family or communicative memory (in the terms of J. Assman) could affect cultural memory. Mikoyan's descendants managed to form and spread a positive image of this Soviet functionary as the result of their high level positions and their "numerical strength". The domination of the family version of Mikoyan's biography was caused first of all by the political longevity of Mikoyan himself, which saved him from any criticism directed against the Soviet regime in general. The second instrument for making a family version of Mikoyan's bright biography more legitimate are the autobiographies and memoirs written both by himself and other members of his family (in particular, by his son and daughter-in-law). Most of the documentaries, TV programs and even research concerning Mikoyan were composed on the base of consultations or with the participation of his family members. Even the suggestion to erect Mikoyan's monument in Yerevan was initiated by one of Mikoyan's grandsons, Vladimir Mikoyan, who is the Regional Representative in Eastern Europe of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation.

Mikoyan's Monument and a Discourse on "Re-colonization" of Armenia

The suggestion was adopted unanimously by the Standing commission for culture, education and social issues of the Yerevan municipality. However, the decision had to be approved by the Council of Elders—the elected representative body of the municipality. Haik Demoyan, one of the Council representatives and the director of the Genocide museum-institute in Yerevan, said that he would vote against this proposal, because he is acquainted with archive documents which sustain Mikoyan's complicity in the repressions of thousands of

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people. His speech influenced only some opposition representatives of the Council and the proposal to erect the monument was adopted with 51 votes against 4 on 30 April 2014. This session of the Council was widely covered in the mass media for several reasons. Firstly, it was an unprecedented situation when a representative elected as a member of the Council of Elders on the dominant party list (Haik Demoyan) announced that he did not agree with the mayor's position. Secondly, the political context (the association of Armenia with the Russia-led Customs Union instead of the European Union unexpectedly proclaimed by President Serzh Sargsyan on 3 September 2013) created a suitable space for hot discussions on relations (historical or current) with Russia. So, the proposal to erect Mikoyan's monument became a part of the discourse on the "re-colonization" of Armenia by Russia. From the first glance, this discussion could be identified as a contest between "Westerners" and "Slavophiles", with civic activists in the first group and the state power sector in the second. In this discussion the contra group started to build a narrative describing Mikoyan as a "traitor of national interests" and a repressive functionary. However, besides Mikoyan's personality, they discussed the system of values, appropriate political models, and possible perspectives for Armenia. In fact, it seems that the discussions surrounding the initiative to erect Mikoyan's monument just woke a sleeping dog. Of course, Mikoyan was associated with "Russian oriented way of development", but at the same time—because of his political longevity—his figure gave a rare chance to provoke discussions concerning a lot of silenced Soviet events and especially those related to the history of Sovietization in Armenia.

Mikoyan's Monument and the "Lustration" Discourse

The heated debates lasted more than two months and seemed to explode across Armenia's social networks. My colleagues and I counted more than 1,000 Facebook statuses on this topic during two months. An internet petition against putting up the monument received 618 signatures. The theme of Stalin era repressions headlined newspapers and social group publications. A lot of memories, articles, extracts from works of fiction, and social and political essays concerning Soviet repressions were published and republished. It seemed as if society was divided between descendants of the regime's victims and descendants of their persecutors. Many people said publicly that this discussion had substituted for the lustration which Armenian society failed to have in the 1990s. There was also a sense that henceforth there was no need for lustration since the discussion had exposed a lot of hidden "Stalinists".

The support for the initiative revealed that many functionaries valued Mikoyan because of his brilliant ability for bureaucratic survival and conformism, while at the same time their attitude provoked a discussion about official and civic responsibilities under totalitarian circumstances. Summarizing the pro and contra arguments that have appeared in the mass media, the position of the supporters of the monument could be mainly defined as "it was not Mikoyan's fault, it was the call of the times", in response to this the new formula showed up: "the time was so terrible because Mikoyan and Co. made them like this".

National vs. Soviet: The Soviet Politician without Soviet History

One more important issue of this discussion concerned Mikoyan's biography. The question was the content of the biography, which should be considered official, as the representatives of the Council asserted that the biography in the package submitted to the Council did not include any discrediting information. For the Council representatives, the fact that Mikoyan occupied the highest power positions during the years of political repressions was not enough to reject the proposal to erect the statue. It is interesting that in the package submitted to the municipality, it was mentioned that Mikoyan was decorated by many USSR states. Using 'state' instead of the usual 'Soviet republic' the biography makers, on the one hand, seemed to raise the value of the awards (one may think that they were from different countries, though in fact they were from one single state, the USSR), and on the other hand, tried to reduce the "Soviet vocabulary" as much as they could. By the way, in the municipality project, Mikoyan was presented just as a "political figure" without mentioning "Soviet" or "communist". This all demonstrates the urge of the monument project initiators to keep Mikoyan out of the Soviet context and represent him out of historical time and even space. There was no mention of Mikoyan's deeds related to Armenia. They left the feeling that being an Armenian was enough to have a monument in Yerevan (the political leaders, especially from Mikoyan's native region, accentuated his Armenian descent). It is noteworthy that Mikoyan is represented as an extremely positive Soviet political actor even in the post-Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia. One might think that the composers of the package relied just on the encyclopedia article and perceived it as the official one. The positive image of Mikoyan could be much more convincing, if his apologists had referred to the works of professional historians who mention a long list of his diplomatic successes: participation in the Korean crisis, negotiation with China, success in international trade

and the establishment of the new industrial sectors, new approaches to the food industry and the creation of the "Soviet food ideology", and so on. However, these facts were familiar only to a few persons, mainly to professional historians who were not involved in this discussion or preferred not to speak about these facts because they were in principle against erecting monuments to any political leader.

Virtual Memory vs. Hardcopy Memory

According to the chief architect of Yerevan, another source used by him when making Mikoyan's "official biography" was Wikipedia. Interestingly, several days after the scandal concerning the municipality decision on Mikoyan's monument began, a copy of Yezhov's letter to Stalin was added to the entry; in this letter the head of the NKVD wrote at Mikoyan's request about the necessity to increase the list of sentenced persons to be shot by another 700 persons. In other words, the monument discussion crucially changed the most popular digital resource.

Black-and-White Mikoyan vs. Complicated Mikoyan

As municipalities only erect monuments to positive heroes, it was necessary to prove that Mikoyan fit such a role or, if he didn't, to prove the contrary. So the discussion gradually took the form of an argument over whether Mikoyan was a villain or a real hero, with the argumentation being based on a black and white interpretation of history. Even the participants of the discussion who were against such a framing of the question and tried to explain that a monument to a political figure would reduce the space for public debate on historical issues in fact were involved in discourse that was alien to them and tried to argue mainly from the position of the inexpediency of considering Mikoyan a "national hero".

In this discourse, a number of interesting topics turned up: about the sort of monuments needed in Armenia today, like who would be "a hero of our time" and in which art style such monuments should be done. For instance, there was a suggestion to put up monuments to women because of gender misbalance in the "sculpture family" of Yerevan. As the decision on accepting or rejecting Mikoyan's monument should have been made by the Council of Elders, the arguments on both sides of the debate were oriented to the imagined basis of the acceptable norms for the Council members. The

discourse likely took the form of a nationalistic discussion first of all as a result of this reason. Another point was that the elected body in this case reflected the position of their "nationalistic electorate" (let us remember that the main ideology of the dominant party in Armenia is a nationalistic one though there is a widespread opinion that the majority of this party does not have any ideology and perceives their membership as a chance to get a fast promotion track). So "Mikoyan's crimes" in the mass media discourse were arranged on a downward line: crimes against the Armenian people, participation in the genocide of Poles in Katyn, participation in Soviet repressions of different nations without any special differentiation, indifference and detachment in taking his relatives' and friends' destiny into his hands when having such possibilities. As a result a very negative image of Mikoyan was popularized and the not yet erected monument turned into an "anti-monument". Apparently as the discussions unfolded Mikoyan's family realized that with their initiative they had only done a lot of harm to Mikoyan's public image. It seems that they now prefer consigning this initiative to oblivion, at least until feelings calm down.

In addition, the decision making process concerning any new monument or memorial plaque was severely criticized after the scandal around Mikoyan's monument. For instance, the decisions to put up memorials to the Soviet marshal A. Babajanyan and military industrialist M.T. Kalashnikov in Gyumri where a Russian military base is located drew a wide response. While the discussions on the memorial to Kalashnikov became a part of the discourse on the re-colonization of Armenia and military ideology spread by Russia, the memorial to Babajanyan was considered more in the context of the re-sovietization of Armenia.

Conclusion

The initiative to erect a memorial to the long-lived Soviet politician Anastas Mikoyan unexpectedly turned out to trigger a cardinal revision of the Soviet past in Armenia and expose many previously taboo subjects, including discussions of the totalitarian rule concerning not only the past, but also the present. In other words, this initiative produced results which usually occur after political lustration. There is an important difference in this case: while these kinds of processes are typically provided top-down, as a decision of the new authorities concerning the former one, in Armenia they unfolded bottom-up.

About the Author
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Armenian *Khachkar* as a Current Transformer of Collective Memory

By Jürgen Gispert, Leipzig

Abstract
Based on the findings of the French sociologist of memory, Maurice Halbwachs, the following article tries to show how the Armenian traditional *khachkar,* or cross stone, is applied in the context of the monument of Mother Armenia in commemoration of the Great Patriotic War, i.e. World War II. After a short introduction to the character of the Cross-Stone (CS) and its contextualization within the realm of socialist ideology, the practical impact of the CS is analyzed on the basis of the monument named Mother Armenia in the capital city Yerevan.

Introduction

The current construction activities in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, seem to symbolize progress, but obscure the fact that throughout the last century Yerevan always was subject to civil development like this. In the middle of the remains of former houses waiting for reconstruction or replacement, for example near the Republican Square, a mason has set up his workshop. His cross-stones or *khachkars* probably appear for the people as a latent pole transforming the movement around him into something spiritual.

Armenian *khachkars* are markers of ethnic identity, mediators between Armenian history and the present age. *Khachkar* not only reflects a mere affirmative symbolism of why it was erected. Beyond that it feeds an intrinsic kind of potential counter history to the rule of a foreign or hostile power. To exemplify this insight, I will sketch out the positioning of the cross-stone on behalf of the "Mother Armenia" monument to the victory in the Great Patriotic War in Yerevan, which I compare with the Sardarapat Memorial to commemorate the 1918 battle which stopped the Ottoman advance into Armenia as we know it today.

The Character of the Cross-Stone

The cross-stone (CS) is a vertical stone with a westward-facing carved side. The background is made up of geometric elements interwoven with plants. Cross-stones are the descendants of steles, which originated with the megaliths in the 3rd millennium BCE. These stones are found all across the Armenian uplands in old settlements and cemeteries, at cross-roads, on mountainsides, springs, wells and bridges as well as near monasteries. They are also found where Armenian refugees erected them along the roadways they used. A cross-stone is an individual art form, not just for Armenian art but also as part of the early Christian cult of the cross. Alongside the sun as the most powerful and immutable body in the heavens, they symbolise salvation, eternity and resurrection, life, death, redemption and destruction. They symbolise periods of life and history which were not only important for individuals, but also for Armenians as a whole. The events which give rise to their erection can be secular as well as purely sacred.

A cross-stone not only reduces the complexity of history to its own shape and its content, but reformulates it as a symbolic event using an original Armenian code, which includes the aforementioned current event, but at the same time transcends it. Thus, a singular, historical event becomes a link in a time-based chain which stretches a long way back.

A CS is an architectural artefact, which is not only created within a space. Any architecture, which is organized by human labour, first creates the space. Beyond that man is positioning within space, thus developing

a particular perspective towards the latter and architecture. The Museum at Sardarapat has only two windows. One window looks out on Mount Ararat in Turkey, the other on Mount Aragats in the Armenian Republic. The effect is as if the two are connected by means of the museum, and so the political border between states is symbolically overcome. This needs to be put in the context of the overall design of the building, which through its architecture and exhibitions provides a glimpse into the depths of time, the history of Armenian culture. This includes the socialist movement, which after its collapse is able to remain intact so to speak through this interconnection with the present day.

Socialist Realism and Its Possible Overcoming

The ideology of Socialist Realism goes back to Lenin's article "Party organisation and Party literature" in 1905, where he divided the socialist times' preceding cultures into reactionary and progressive culture. In Stalinist architecture in particular, which implements this ideology only superficially, old forms were taken and pervaded by new ideological content. This synthesis included both the completion of all the traditions and the end of history (V. Paperny).

The problem is the one-sided emphasis of the progressive part of the culture subject to and coinciding with Moscow's centralism, where the criteria for being reactionary or progressive were defined. An over-exaggeration of Paperny's paradigm of Soviet architecture misjudges the intrinsic value of the thus centralist state of the incorporated national art. An example for this is the notable architect of Soviet Armenia, Rafael Israelyan (1908–1973), whose monuments are related to religious themes. His daughter told me in an interview, that if someone will see his works some centuries later being unaware of the date of their creation, he won't think that they have been built during the times of socialism. Israelyan was ignorant of the requirements demanded by the system, which is certainly reflected in the fact that he didn't get large commissions. For him it was immoral to subject art to politics as well as setting the artist's creativity into definite frames. Israelyan didn't pay attention to politics. His aim was to keep alive the architecture and the 'soul of his ancestors'. Thus the contradiction between a socialist society and the autonomy of individual imagination can be detected.

Maurice Halbwachs respected this in his conception of collective memory. Individual memory always develops as part of a group, but never is its image. Every individual participates in several groups by socialization. Thus there never can be congruency between individual and collective. In this perspective there is no single one collective memory but many. This principle affects not only Israelyan's thoughts and thinking but the broader Armenian society as well. Material forms like machines, monuments, and digital media bear incorporated "histories" (St. Tyler), which are individually discussed in a collective (M. Halbwachs). We can study the effect of this by focussing on the monument of Mother Armenia.

The Monument Mother Armenia

The monument of Mother Armenia is dedicated to the victory of the Great Patriotic War (GPW), i.e. World War II. It should record and memorialise the contribution of the Armenian people to the victory of the Soviet Union over fascist Germany (as everywhere in the Soviet Union). In the beginning of the 1950's it was a statue of Stalin himself posed on a pedestal. Some years after its removal, the statue "Mother Armenia" was erected there (1967). It was Israelyan who implemented a museum inside the pedestal (1974), whose exposition was about the GPW. Among the parts of the monument nearby the huge figure, which can be seen from the City of Yerevan, several CS are bordering the so-called Victory Street. On these CS the names of fallen Armenian participants of the war are engraved. It was those CS I was wondering about, when I saw them for the first time. Roughly the question was: if they possess such great significance to Armenian identity, why did the Armenians offer them up as a present of sorts to Socialist realism, leaving normative aspects aside.

Adding to this the content of the ascription of Israelyan to have revitalized the CS-culture in Soviet Armenia, we may have to pay attention to the character of the Museum, inside of which the hall in the 2ⁿᵈ floor is the most striking part. Israelyan said about this: "I have rebuilt Haghbat!" The hall resembles a Chapel of Haghbat monastery in Lori province. Inside the hall we can also see the model of a bell tower in one corner opposite of which swords with downward peaks are posed. By both we are reminded of the architectural function of a monastery as a fortress and the highly politicized function of the Armenian Church throughout the history.

Israelyan was asked to work on the Sardarapat monument (project). First he designed a sword of huge proportions pointing towards the skies. But this design was not accepted by the government. As a substitute he designed a tower with bells, which is reminiscent of the old bells ringing to call the whole people to stand up and defend Armenia. Israelyan had to change the form, but didn't change the content, because both forms (co-)exist in the same context referring to themes of battle. Thus form and content are interchangeable. Compared to that, e.g. Stalin preferred the pre-eminence of content before form, thus forcing heteronomy on art.

On Mother Armenia monument sword and bell-tower refer to the character of the hall resembling Haghbat monastery, thus symbolizing the defence of Armenian Christianity. For Israelyan sword and bell-tower are complementary to one another.

Khachkar as a Material Form of a Counter-History

Let's have a look at the development of the museum's content in relation to the meaning of CS. Having been focused on the importance of Armenian participation in WWII, the relevant exhibits of the museum were shifted into the chambers of the basement. The other ones on the first floor were replaced with those of the Karabagh independence war. Thus the CS keeps its meaning as part of the national fight for the existence of Armenian culture. One has to bear in mind that people always talk about Stalingrad as a decisive moment for Armenian culture, too. They assumed that if Stalingrad would have been lost to Nazi-Germany, the Turks—standing at the Armenian–Turkish frontier—would have invaded the country and completed what they had attempted in 1915–18. In this perspective, the names of the fallen on the memory stones besides the CS relate to those of the Karabagh war like a metonymy.

Here we can turn to the Sardarapat monument again. Since 1997 there are graves of eight Armenian defenders who fell in Karabagh. This probably demonstrates the most visible change to the memorial landscape at Sardarapat since Armenian independence. But, by content, the addition of the graves implies a continuity connecting Sardarapat to the conflict in Karabagh. The daughter of Israelyan explains the important symbolism of the addition: "If we lose Karabagh, the Turks will invade the whole country." Sardarapat and Karabagh both are symbols for ethnic identity and national existence, which exactly is represented by a memorial stone behind the graves with a carving of an eagle as its focus. This memorial stone we may categorize as a cross-stone as well. The meaning of the positioning of the eagle as part of this CS is the connection of part to a certain future in the presence.

The highly political value of *khachkar* is demonstrated by the cemetery in Djugha in former Armenian Nakhichevan, today belonging to Azerbaijan, whose President Aliyev had it destroyed in the beginning of the 21st century to annihilate the final traces of the Armenian existence there. In 1604 Persian Shah Abbas deported hundreds of thousands of Armenians to Persia, where they built a new home for themselves (the present Isfahan) and brought prosperity to the Persians. Abbas left ruins in Djugha and the cemetery. This we have to bear in mind to analyze the destruction of the cemetery by Aliyev. It is no wonder that he could announce that no Armenians had ever lived in Nakhichevan. There are no material forms to prove their existence. This again gives way to discussions of the cultural Genocide as a step before and after Genocide (R. Lemkin) as a way to destroy the memory of the Armenian presence in this region.

Conclusion

If we take Lenin's slogan "national in form, socialist in content" and look at the facts about Israelyan and the description of the monuments, we may conclude an inversion, which changes the form into the content. Israelyan did not only create his art in spite of the system, but in correspondence with it. Looking from outside, both the Museum and the CS seem to be part of a Socialist Realism project, but this again hides the content from the message as just its form. The spiritual character of CS raises Armenian history onto the level of socialist presence, and, while opposing it, it incorporates the latter without being reduced to a secularized level.

Although the monuments discussed here are a product of Socialism, their parts intrinsically are inscribed with basically national elements, which contradict socialist ideology as well as they incorporate it. The architect is characterized as someone, who interprets the cultural heritage of his native architecture. He does not repeat the styles of the preceding times but creates original, deeply national and at the same time modern works of architecture. Thus the architect is not only defending heritage, but the heritage itself is incorporated in the present. The heritage of CS is not merely handed down, nor is it passed over as an object to be used against the Soviet system to maintain a distinct identity. Consequently it gives us the opportunity to utilize the period of the Soviet system within the context of the thousands of years of Armenian history to characterize Armenian culture itself.

About the Author
Jürgen Gispert is an anthropologist at the University of Leipzig.

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Stones Speaking: Reading Conflicting Discourses in the Urban Environment

By Jana Javakhishvili, Tbilisi

"People in the post-totalitarian societies are exposed to many changes in the external reality which demand new evaluations, new patterns and solutions. These new patterns clash with the old ones, and new external objects impinge on old internal objects. Therefore contemporary post-totalitarian societies in Eastern and Central Europe seek their own democratic organization."

Michael Sebek
1996

Abstract

The urban environment and especially monuments say a lot about a society, particularly its political and cultural values and systems. They could be messengers of a discourse delivering a grand narrative, which supports, or even imposes, a power distribution within society, as happens in totalitarian societies. Alternatively, they could reflect the process of liberating society from totalitarianism and experimenting with different forms, shapes and materials for the sake of finding one's own identity and defining oneself. This article reflects on how the urban environment in Georgia reflects contemporary socio-political developments taking place in the country.

Deconstructing the Totalitarian Environment

Monuments often serve as objects in which society invests considerable emotions[1]. Therefore, it is not a surprise that during times of political turbulence and change, some of the monuments gain an extra meaning and significance and become objects symbolizing or externalizing societal dynamics and changes. For example, in the late 1980s, the monument to Sergo Orjonikidze (the Georgian revolutionary who facilitated the re-occupation of the country by the Red Army in 1921) standing on the crossroad of one of the central (Vake-

Saburtalo) districts of Tbilisi was regularly desecrated with eggs, tomatoes or a rainbow of paint colors. Initially, the communist government, which was still in place at that time, tried to clean up the sculpture following each incident (and that was happening almost every day…). But at some point the government just gave up taking care of the sculpture, symbolizing the ongoing developments in the country and the fact that change and, therefore, the release from the Soviet Union and communist regime was inevitable and irreversible.

In parallel and in line with the regaining of independence in the late 1980s–early 1990s, the process of removing totalitarian sculptures started in the country, indicating liberation. Lenin's sculpture was removed from the very centre of Tbilisi. It stood in the so-called Lenin's square which after liberation was renamed again as Freedom Square, the name the square had carried dur-

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1   Monuments also could maintain specific meaning and symbolize grief related to the trauma experienced by society as chosen trauma and/or pride and joy related to the certain victory as chosen glory. Both—chosen trauma and glory—are well described by the psychoanalyst and conflict expert Vamik Volkan.

ing the short period of liberation from Russian Empire in the years 1918–1921.

Alongside Lenin, a large number of totalitarian sculptures, including Orjonikidze's, were removed, but with the multiple—economic, political, social—crises starting in the country, the population entered a survival mode and some totalitarian monuments were left intact. Such monuments serve as messengers of the totalitarian past in the present.

The buildings and sculptures from Stalin's period were grandiose and most often triggered among the Soviet population feelings of insignificance and insecurity (if the viewer identified with the victim) or narcissist pride and superiority (in case of identification with aggressor), or a mixture of those two. (Both identification with victim and aggressor are ego defense strategies first described by Anna Freud). This monumental environmental design was dashed by the aesthetic of the ugly grey stereotypical 4–5 floors buildings with low ceilings introduced by Nikita Khrushchev. The population was so unhappy with the invention that they called the buildings "khrushchobi"—a word, combining Khrushchev's name with the Russian word for "slum". Not much was changed during Brezhnev's period of stagnation.

Co-Habitation of Conflicting Discourses within the Urban Environment

In Georgia the revolutionary changes of the urban environment (and monuments among other things) started together with the Rose Revolution. The United National Movement (UNM) young governmental team tried to change the monumental, detrimental, grey, stereotypical and ugly aspects of Georgia's cities, which they associated with totalitarianism. The most visible things introduced were: a twinkling TV tower (after almost 13 years in darkness—due to the electricity deficit in the country), colorful painting of the houses, both in the capital city and the regions, and big and small fountains installed in almost every place available. The revolutionary period was an era of changes from the grey dull ugly dark environment inherited from the Soviet past into a colorful one. But the society which during the Soviet period had become accustomed to the totalitarian environment met the changes with anxiety and resistance revealing itself mainly in skepticism: the new colors for the buildings often became a matter for mockery, the fountains were considered as reflecting the young government team's childish attitude and desire to play, the twinkling TV tower was seen as the "president's caprice", etc.

The main serious argument against the changes was its "façade" character—the society desired and expected sustainable changes—i.e. renovation of the old "Khrushchoba" style buildings not only from outside but from

inside as well. On the one hand, that was an important matter and argument. The UNM government's approach to some extent provoked associations with the well-known Russian empire approach of "Potemkin Villages". On the other hand, the desire of the population to change everything at once (i.e. to repair both the facades and interior of the buildings in parallel) probably was a bit too much to expect. This kind of "magical thinking"—expecting a miracle—is peculiar to societies in crises. The government had its own "portion" of magical thinking and maximalist attitude as well because it was rushing to introduce changes—a good illustration is a Tbilisi airport building: the government gave such a tough deadline to the builder that quality suffered and the roof of the airport building blew away twice after the building was opened, requiring more work to fix the roof.

Alongside with painting old buildings, constructing new modern ones, building roads, installing fountains and setting up children's playgrounds, the removal of the totalitarian monuments (messages of the totalitarian past) developed with such speed and scale that some arts experts began complaining that the "Soviet piece" of Georgian arts history was almost totally lost. From 2003 to 2011 essentially the only two totalitarian monuments left intact in the country were the grandiose figure of the so-called Mother of Georgia standing on top of Tbilisi's Mtatsminda Hill (it is a typical Soviet invention and a similar figure was installed in parallel in Soviet Armenia), and Stalin's monument in the central square of Gori—his home town—provoking an ironic association of a totalitarian mother and father still present in the country.

Exploring Totalitarian Objects in the Urban Environment

The failure to remove Stalin's sculpture resulted from sensitivity about the issue for the Gori population for whom Stalin was, and probably still is, a matter of pride. Though, UNM eventually succeeded in removing it in 2010, under cover of darkness to avoid public unrest. Later developments revealed that such changes introduced in a hidden way, without public participation and transformation, are not sustainable.

Unlike Stalin's sculpture, the Mother of Georgia monument stands stably on its pedestal since 1958. We can think of several alternative explanations here. One explanation could be that this monument could easily be integrated into the national discourse as symbolizing the Georgian nation with wine and sword. Here it was easy to forget or suppress its Soviet origins as a present of the working people to the city of Tbilisi. But, as the United National Movement government was responsive to the

younger, pro-Western generation, which did not have much affection for the wine and sword based national discourse, we can think of other explanations as well.

One such could be populism and/or the fear of public unrest as the mother figure is hyper-important for the Georgian population, which could be attributed to the influence of the mother archetype as it was understood by Carl Gustav Jung. But this hypothesis could be rejected by the fact that the government was not afraid to remove other monuments which were provoking resistance and even struggle from the side of the population. One example is the above mentioned Stalin monument. Another illustration is the case of the King David the Builder's statue: in 2005, after selling the territory where the King's sculpture was standing (the beginning of the Rustaveli Avenue, in front of the Radisson Blu Iveria hotel) the UNM government had to remove it and decided to reinstall it at the entrance of Tbilisi. This provoked a huge wave of dissatisfaction within the population. Many considered this as a sign of giving up national or traditional values. To protest the removal of the sculpture from one part of the town to another, people started to guard it, and even introduced night shifts; to resist the police and stay around the sculpture, many were fastening themselves to the monument with handcuffs. In spite of this resistance, the sculpture was removed outside the town centre.

Another explanation could be based on the ideas of the American psychiatrist Frank Ochberg, author of so-called Stockholm Syndrome, who studied kidnapping and human captivity. In these situations, Ochberg speaks of the ironic attachment and voluntary slavery—phenomena experienced by the captured individuals towards the capturer for the sake of survival. Inertia of these phenomena lasts longer than the actual danger—survivors may still experience them after they are released.

And, one more explanation which could be applied to both the Stalin and Mother of Georgia monuments implies the notion of an internalized totalitarian object, as understood by Michal Sebek, based on Melanie Klein and Anna Freud's works. According to Sebek, to defend one's self from the threatening totalitarian figure in the social surrounding, an individual, as well as an entire society, might identify with and internalize the totalitarian figure, which leads to the internalization of totalitarian values as well as patterns of behavior.

Internalization of the totalitarian object creates conditions for the transmission of the internalized totalitarian object from generation to generation via corresponding patterns of social interactions. This shapes the life of post-totalitarian societies and explains the explicitly observable bonding with the reminders of the totalitarian past, monuments in our case. To overcome it, the society needs to have opportunities to dissociate or distance itself from, discuss and reflect on the totalitarian past and to learn lessons from it, which was and is fully lacking in Georgia, similar to many former Soviet states.

Thus, the hypothesis about the internalized totalitarian object could be reinforced by the fact that in parallel with the removal of the totalitarian style monuments, the UNM government was erecting similar totalitarian-style monuments, such as the bombastic monument to commemorate those fallen for Georgia in the centre of Heroes' Square; or the Saint George statue on a huge column erected on Freedom square, on the very place were Lenin's sculpture used to stand.

The installation of the Saint George statue was accompanied by protests from the younger generation due to several reasons: they do not respect the sculptor, Russia-based Georgian artist Zurab Tsereteli, a controversial figure who collaborates with Putin's regime; secondly, the sculpture itself was considered to be in an old fashioned imperial style reminiscent of Nelson's Column in Great Britain (not that much of Nelson himself, but definitely his column…); thirdly, the installation of the ecclesiastic figure in the main square of the town somehow reinforced the power of the church, which was and continues to be already beyond the limits of secularism in the country (though, the Church itself did not like Saint George's statue due to its deviation from the canonical norms).

The Saint George statue, provoking associations of an internalized totalitarian object, ironically, titled as "Statue of Freedom", is a personification of the paradox existing nowadays in Georgia, reflecting a power struggle and internal split within the country's society.

Projected Power Struggle

Another landscape of the town indicating the power struggle between the key stakeholders is a triangle created by the three newly-built architectural monuments in the Tbilisi town-centre: Trinity Church built on top of one of the city's hills neighboring the Presidential Palace—again, located on the top of another hill and the house of the head and sponsor of the new political coalition which replaced Saakashvili's government after parliamentary elections in October 2012, on the third hill above Freedom Square. All three landmarks are competing in size and pompousness.

Most interestingly a power struggle between supporters of the former and current government reveals itself in the articulated intention of the new government to deconstruct monuments built by the ex-government: the glass bridge (so called Peace bridge) giving a post-modern eclectic style to the old Tbilisi and the Music Hall—

in the same area of old Tbilisi, an expensive building uniting two wings of phallic shape, which is not appreciated within the society.

However, in parallel with the grandiose monuments, the ex-government was installing small sculptures that were light, full of humor and a humanistic mood, in different parts of Tbilisi, especially in touristy areas. If you walk on Rustaveli Avenue you can easily find these sculptures, creating a flirty, lovely, friendly atmosphere and feeling of safety. A good contrast with the monumental Mother of Georgia is a sculpture of a young lady sitting on the handrails of the Baratashvili Bridge, which once again illustrates the paradoxical co-existence of totalitarian and non-totalitarian discourses in the city, reflecting the internal split within the society.

Co-existence and competition between totalitarian and anti-totalitarian discourses became even more explicit immediately upon the change of the government in October 2012 through the debate around Stalin's sculptures. Interestingly, immediately after the Government was changed, reinstallations of Stalin's sculptures began. This happened simultaneously in both urban and rural environments. For example, the sculpture was reinstalled in the village Zemo Alvani of Akhmeta region on December 21, 2012 (Stalin's birthday). Quickly, however, someone painted the monument pink. In January 2013, Stalin's bust was re-erected in another village of Kakheti region of Georgia—Akuri. Again, after a while, an unknown vandal removed it from its base and painted it pink. On 1 September 2013 Stalin's sculpture was reerected in one of the biggest cities of Kakheti region, Telavi. The same night, it was painted red. During the spring of 2014 the first attempts to reinstall Stalin's sculpture in Gori started.

The described debate around Stalin's monument could be explained by a number of political factors, but I prevent myself from political interpretations and again focus on so-called "Software factors" (as psychological factors are specified by Vamik Volkan).

Conclusions

In the Georgian society (as in any post-totalitarian society), where the internalized totalitarian object plays a role in the societal dynamics, it is not possible to introduce sustainable changes only via changing the external environment. It is not simply possible, as the example of the last decade in Georgia shows, when the removal of totalitarian monuments and the development of a non-totalitarian (funny, flirty, joyful) urban environment was somehow combined with the controversial tendency of invention and the installation of the new totalitarian sculptures.

Catalyzing sustainable changes in the post-totalitarian society requires consistent and congruent democratic governance in all aspects of the societal and political life as well as encouragement of public participation and the creation of corresponding opportunities. The totalitarian object first should be overcame in our own selves, not only in the environment.

Reinstallations of the Stalin's sculptures immediately after the change of government, who removed them out of the public view, illustrate and externalize the internal struggle within the society between the old (totalitarian) and new (democratic) discourses.

This could be a starting point for the discussion and rethinking of the totalitarian past which was and is lacking in our society—it is a chance that we need to use. Building democracy requires thinking and reflection by all members of society, not only by the governing elite. Via reflection, ceasing to be afraid of critical thinking and especially the articulation of it, we can dissociate ourselves from the totalitarian object and that's the first and necessary step in overcoming it.

About the Author
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26 November 2015 – 16 February 2016

26 November 2015	Georgian Interior Minister Giorgi Mgebrishvili meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss cooperation on regional security and the fight against organized crime and terrorism
27 November 2015	Village elders call for an investigation into a police raid in the Nardaran settlement in Azerbaijan on 26 November in which two police officers and four suspected militants were killed in an attack against a "criminal gang" planning terrorist acts according to official sources
27 November 2015	Deputy Head of Georgian State Security Service Levan Izoria says that "up to 50 Georgian citizens" are fighting with extremist groups in Syria, but that the flow of fighters from the country to Syria has declined
1 December 2015	Protesters in Armenia's capital of Yerevan rally against planned constitutional changes that would transform the country into a parliamentary democracy
1 December 2015	The Georgian State Security Service says that four people have been arrested on suspicion of having links to the Islamic State
2 December 2015	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss strategic cooperation, including the security of pipelines running from Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia
3 December 2015	Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says in Baku that Turkey and Azerbaijan have agreed to speed up the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline project (TANAP) in order to complete it before 2018
4 December 2015	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili signs a decree terminating the Georgian citizenship of former President Mikheil Saakashvili, who is now governor of the Odessa region in Ukraine and has been granted Ukrainian citizenship
6 December 2015	A referendum is held in Armenia about a proposal to switch from a presidential to a parliamentary system of government. The referendum passed with 66.2% of the vote.
6 December 2015	Two persons died and 29 workers are declared missing after an oil rig, owned by Azerbaijani state oil company SOCAR, catches fire on 4 December
9 December 2015	A retired military officer is arrested in Armenia on charges of spying for Azerbaijani secret services
10 December 2015	Police in Yerevan prevent demonstrators protesting the results of a referendum on constitutional reforms from putting up a tent in the city's Liberty Square
10 December 2015	Georgian Economy Minister Dimitri Kumsishvili and China's International Trade Representative, Deputy Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan, sign a memorandum of understanding to launch negotiations on a free trade agreement between the two countries
11 December 2015	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili visits Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's capital, to participate in an international conference marking 20 years of the country's neutrality
13 December 2015	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says that the arrival of a first container train from China's port of Lianyungang to Tbilisi en route to Istanbul is a landmark event for the country
16 December 2015	The Council of Europe launches an official probe into Azerbaijan's compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights
16 December 2015	The number of prisoners serving life terms in Armenia and on hunger strike to demand that their cases be reviewed reaches 35
17 December 2015	Defense ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey hold a trilateral meeting in Istanbul to discuss strategic cooperation and regional stability in the Black Sea and Caucasus region
18 December 2015	The European Commission says it will propose to the EU-member states to allow visa-free travel for Georgian citizens since Georgia has fulfilled all the benchmarks of its visa liberalization action plan
19 December 2015	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, meet in Bern in an attempt to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
21 December 2015	The central bank in Azerbaijan announces its decision to abandon its currency peg and float the national currency, manat, with the manat falling by nearly 48 percent against the U.S. dollar following the announcement
22 December 2015	The Russian Foreign Ministry announces that visa requirements are eased for Georgian citizens starting from 23 December 2015

23 December 2015	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili announces his resignation on live television, but does not give a specific reason to explain his decision
23 December 2015	Armenia, Georgia, Iran and Russia agree to work on the development of a power transmission system to foster electricity trading between the four countries during a meeting of energy ministers of Armenia, Georgia and Iran with the chief executive of Russia's power distribution grids company, Rosseti, in Yerevan
24 December 2015	The National Bank of Georgia (NBG) sells 20 million US dollars at a foreign currency auction to support the national currency lari in its ninth intervention this year
29 December 2015	Russian presidential aide Vladislav Surkov meets with leaders of the breakaway region of Abkhazia and discusses Abkhazia's relations with Turkey
30 December 2015	The Georgian Parliament confirms Giorgi Kvirikashvili as the new Prime Minister, replacing Irakli Garibashvili and becoming Georgia's third Prime Minister since the Georgian Dream coalition took power in 2012
2 January 2016	The Georgian Interior Ministry says that visits to Georgia by foreign citizens reached 5.89 million in 2015, a 6.9 percent increase from the previous year
4 January 2016	The Georgian Ministry of Energy says that talks have been initiated with Iran over possible gas supplies via Armenia, but there is no concrete agreement yet
8 January 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili signs a bill on the redistricting of single-mandate constituencies into law
11 January 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze says that ongoing talks with Russian gas company Gazprom focus on the monetization of transit fees that Georgia receives on Russian gas being imported to Armenia via Georgian territory
13 January 2016	Scores of demonstrators are detained in Azerbaijan amid countrywide protests over worsening economic conditions in the country, including price hikes on flour and bread
13 January 2016	President of the Azerbaijani state energy company SOCAR, Rovnag Abdullayev, holds talks with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze in Tbilisi to discuss gas supplies from Azerbaijan to Georgia amid ongoing talks between Georgia and Russian state company Gazprom
14 January 2016	Azerbaijani authorities withdraw licenses from independent currency exchange booths
15 January 2016	The National Bank of Georgia releases figures showing a decline of 25% in remittances to Georgia, mainly due to a sharp drop in transfers from Russia
19 January 2016	The Azerbaijani parliament approves a package of measures aimed at addressing the economic and financial crisis in the country caused by low oil prices
20 January 2016	Azerbaijan commemorates "Black January" when 137 anti-Kremlin protesters were killed in Baku and several more wounded and arrested during a crackdown by Soviet troops on 20 January 1990
22 January 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze says that no deal has been reached yet on transit terms of Russian gas following a meeting with Russian company Gazprom's executives in Vienna on 20 January
26 January 2016	Georgian state arms manufacturer Delta says that it has won a contract to supply armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia
27 January 2016	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank discuss a possible emergency loan package to Azerbaijan to alleviate the country's economic hardships as a result of a steep drop in oil prices
29 January 2016	The credit rating agency Standard and Poor's downgrades Azerbaijan's debt rating to "junk", making it more expensive for the government to borrow funds by issuing government bonds
30 January 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili visits Pankisi gorge, together with the U.S. and EU ambassadors to Georgia, and meets with local residents of the village of Duisi
1 February 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli meets with her Armenian counterpart Seyran Ohanyan during a visit to Yerevan and stresses that Georgia's goal is to contribute to peace and security in the Caucasus region
5 February 2016	Amnesty International says that a bill currently discussed by the Georgian Parliament which makes "insulting religious feelings" an administrative offense undermines freedom of expression

9 February 2016	The Georgian Foreign Ministry says that Georgia will reintroduce 45-day visa-free travel for Iranian citizens starting from 15 February
12 February 2016	Georgian Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze meets with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif on the sidelines of the Munich security conference to discuss Georgia's transit potential and other opportunities for further cooperation between the two countries
15 February 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze starts a visit to Iran to discuss possibilities for importing Iranian gas to Georgia as well as other energy projects
16 February 2016	Low-cost airline Wizz Air says that it will open a new base at Kutaisi airport, a large town in Western Georgia

Compiled by Lili Di Puppo

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ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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