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**Toponymy and the issues of memory and identity on the post-Soviet
Tbilisi cityscape**

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Abstract

The present thesis deals with the renaming of the toponymy of Tbilisi, Georgia, from as early as the final years of Soviet rule in the country on the light of recently translated data from Georgian to English. It discusses the changes in the cityscape in relation to the national discourse that was built in the post-Soviet times, assessing how this discourse relates to the city history and the broader national context, which aspects were commemorated and which were left out, intentionally or not. Moreover, it brings conclusions to how the national discourse is imprinted in the toponymy of the capital and its possible implications for the geopolitical context.

Introduction

Studies on aspects of memory, identity and culture can embrace a great scale of subjects, since they are part of everyone's life, in their own realities and environments. These aspects are always prone to be controlled by institutions, such as governments, in order to be modified and molded according to a particular discourse or ideology. Although more easily identified in larger instances, such attempts can happen in micro scales, such as street naming, and that aspect is what I will discuss in this particular research – specifically speaking of the toponymy of Tbilisi, the capital of the Republic of Georgia. As will be shown further, the post-Soviet country went through several renamings on the cityscape, all according to specific political events and shifts in power dynamics. Changing the name of a street does not only imply on a simple modification of a marker in a city – it has a purpose, and an implication on a population's memory and identity. It can be used as a mean of altering the cultural memory portrayed in an everyday place, reinforcing identity narratives that transform space into place by ascribing a certain meaning to a location (Assmann, 1995; Connerton, 1989, cited in Drozdowski, 2014; 67). A government can spread its political agenda by renaming streets, avenues, squares or districts because this act works with the memory of the population. Giving places names of political figures, important political events or historical peoples and places makes people remember and keep such concepts in mind individually and collectively, since toponyms like streets are used and referenced on a daily basis (Azaryahu, 1996: 321; Drozdowski, 2014: 66). This is done in an effort to suppress possible threats to a regime's sovereignty, and their own political discourse (Sharp, 2009, cited by Drozdowski, 2014; 66).

Around the fall of the Soviet Union, Tbilisi underwent a process of replacing the imposed toponymy by the Soviet regime by one that brought back its national figures, being significant on several aspects, such as religious, cultural and historical ones, for example. What is left for a research such as the present one is to analyze how the process of renaming was carried out, find patterns and see how the change of discourse took place, which figures got replaced and which ones replaced them. In order to understand the commemorations placed on the cityscape, it is important to address the history of the city in question, making it possible to have an idea of which ethnonational and cultural aspects were chosen to be remembered and which ones were deliberately (or unintentionally) forgotten. Post-Soviet authorities had the power to choose which discourse they wanted to brand into Tbilisi's place names, for specific reasons and to evidence a certain national identity and ideology; in this work, I will assess which discourse was intended to be put forward and discuss the reasons for it in the light of the recent Georgian national idea of self. This is important in order to make sense of the recent political history of Georgia, how the most contemporary governments dealt with a reassertion of democratic power and how the Georgian national identity was built and commemorated.

It is important, however, to mention the lack of data regarding the renaming of toponymy in Georgia on the academic literature in English; one of the few works on the subject in the language is an article by Elene Bodaveli, who drew her data from a book from Zurab Chelidze which is devoted to Tbilisi's street, avenue and square names – but is entirely in Georgian, with no translated version available. On the present work, the material gathered consists on decrees from the Tbilisi City Council (mostly from the early 1990s) and the aforementioned book about the capital's cityscape, and both sources had to go through translations to English in order to be used. These translations amount to a significant contribution to political science when it comes to Caucasian studies, and one of the aims of this research is to bring them to light so that new knowledge can be reached by future works on the subject. As a way to start contributing, this work will take the data and make a first evaluation of what can be drawn from it, consisting of a general analysis of both sources followed by a division of the information present in them, in order to make sense of the whole

process of renaming and relate it to the building of the Georgian national discourse. The analyses, in a similar way to what Bodaveli did in her work and Drozdowski's geopolitical work in Krakow, are done in order to see how the Georgian identity came to be reflected on the cityscape of the country's capital on the eve of its return to being a Republic after decades of Soviet rule. Later research can look whether it had the desired effect on the population or not, but first it is important to assess how the process of renaming was done and which narrative was put forward.

1. Memory and commemoration on toponymy

To start making sense of how the cityscape can be used to work with political discourses and participate on the process of commemoration, it is important to define some concepts. First of all, we have to discuss the concept of memory – it has to do directly with the placement of historical elements in places. In his seminal work about memory and history, Pierre Nora says that memory “[...] remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialect of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived” (1989; 8). Nora maintains that history is always an incomplete and problematic reconstruction of the past, and while it is a representation of what has been and no more is, memory is “perpetually actual”; it is always present. Memory, however, chooses the most suitable facts to its interests (it is, to the ones manipulating it), in the words of the author, “it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection” (1989; 8). What is being brought from the past into the present is, then, serving a purpose, be it individual, collective, social or following the purpose of a state. In that matter, memory “installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. [...] memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative” (Nora, 1989; 9). Foote & Azaryahu assert that “memory is seen as socially constructed, and shaped by economic, social, cultural, political and ideological contexts of its creation [...]”; Memory is related to the objective notion of ‘history’, but is often a selectively embellished or mythologized version of events, people, and places that serves social or political ends” (2007; 126).

When extending his analysis to a placement of memory in an external place, such as a street or a monument, Pierre Nora comments that a *lieu de mémoire*, a memory site, is created (and, in a sense, is needed) because

memories are not spontaneous, leading to the creation of archives, commemorative anniversaries, celebrations and eulogies – as if not commemorated, such memories would be erased by history (Nora, 1989; 12). In the author's words, "if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them". So even before worrying about erasing or reinforcing an ideology through renaming, the very act of commemorating something is imbued with the will to keep a specific memory, especially one that pertains to a national ideology, alive in the minds of the population. Commemorations, then, add significance to events and figures, creating a "register of sacred history" (Schwartz, 1982, cited by Foote & Azaryahu, 2007; 127); public memory, according to the authors, is part of a symbolic foundation of collective identity, inscribing shared elements in the public space. Place names, however commemorative, are not only symbolic like memorials, but are also functional: while serving as spatial orientation elements, they reproduce official versions of history into daily life in a detached way from ideological contexts or communal obligations, "the ostensible ordinariness of street names that allows them to render a certain version of history not only familiar, but also self-evident" (Alderman, 2000, 2003; Azaryahu, 1986, 1996b; Ferguson, 1988; Gill, 2005; Palonen, 1993; Stump, 1988; Yeoh, 1992, 1996, cited by Foote & Azaryahu, 2007; 128-129; Foxall, 2013; 172). Toponyms are, therefore, important places where state-supported memories are made public, commemorated, and present; most importantly, not forgotten.

Pierre Nora has a particular vision of how memory and history relate to each other – for instance, that they are "in opposition" to each other, and he ultimately believes that history's objective is to destroy memory (Nora, 1989; 8, 9). Speaking about public memory, Foote & Azaryahu maintain that it is the interface where the past is represented in the present, through shared cultural productions and reproductions (MacCannell, 1976: 23-24, cited by the authors, 2007; 126). They also comment that public memory can be conceived as a matrix where time and space are used separately, and through this combination they attach shared historical experience and a sense of a shared past in the public life of a determined group (2007; 127). Memory and identity are intimately related; to be part of a group brings a person to accept not only their behavior standards,

but also mutual history and culture – in other words, social memory (Bucher et al., 2013: 34). On that regard, the authors maintain that memory is a vital component of identity formation, working as “a structural component of social memory of a group identity”. In practical terms, a toponymal analysis can reveal basic elements of social memory which represent group identities in cities (Bucher et al., 2013; 34). Cultural approaches to memory, then, come from the premise that shared past memories are not produced accidentally but are a consequence of cultural mediation, and its character is shaped by all kinds of cultural mediation channels, like texts, images, objects, buildings and rituals (Tamm, 2013; 461). Jan Assmann defines cultural memory as “a body of reusable texts, images and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image” (1988, cited in Tamm, 2013; 461). Aleida Assmann divides it from a social memory that is handed via communication (biologically), stating that cultural memory is rather communicated with the help of material means; it is temporally unlimited, and the act of handing it on is helped by signs and symbols (2008, cited in Tamm, 2013; 461-462). The material which is the receptacle of this cultural memory in this research is the toponym – the street, square, avenue, district, station – and it is where a society is projecting its self-image (however molded by institutional interests).

No better public place to retain memory than a toponym – representing an inscribed commemoration on a physical object, toponyms are important while being a representation of elements of culture and history of a place, as discussed above, describing the “geographical, political, social-economic and demographic conditions, historical moment and traditional, ethnographic, religious and lexical properties of certain people” (Sartania, Nikolaishvili, & Ujmajuridze, 2017; 49). In the words of Bucher et al. (2013; 25, citing Berg and Voulteenaho, 2009), “Toponyms are not merely abstract names in the spatial structure of cities, but also represent the construct of social and power relations, through which the identity of the city and society is being formed”. Using place names consciously is a form of preservation of the unique character of a nation, and to reify, in a way, the “moral” right to inhabit a territory, even in a form of claiming the land and protecting it; a toponym therefore can be seen as a symbolic part of national

identity and part of a state's ideological system (Saparov, 2003; 180). According to Halbwachs (1992, 1980; cited by Drozdowski, 2014; 67), the process of remembrance is inherently social and it is achieved through a refinement of the past in the present day context and "its anchors to places, especially streets, town centers and homes". Street names, in particular, can be a convenient vial to carry political symbols, indicating and at the same time being part of a political identity, helping to spread desired political consciousness among a population (Azaryahu, 1986; 581). It should be noted, however, that the symbolic role and meaning of a toponym matter more than the etymology of it; how the name is perceived by the population rather than what it is that is important for its role in the national identity (Saparov, 2003; 195). Transmitting identity is made through accepted and implemented human culture; "If identity has the ability of generational succession that social development still confirms, then the people of the territory are constantly being exposed to opposing forces" (Bucher et al., 2013; 24). Saparov (2003; 179) argues that place names are among the most durable national symbols, and may outlive most material artifacts of a civilization or even the civilization itself, leaving only the toponyms.

On this light, it is natural to assume that whenever convenient, the toponymy of a place (from a city to a whole country scale) is subject to change, especially when a particular state suffers from a radical shift in ideology. When such political changes occur, politically motivated toponym changes will be most certainly found (Azaryahu, 1986, 1996; Bucher et al., 2013; Drozdowski, 2014; Foote & Azaryahu, 2007; Kadmon, 2004; Saparov, 2003; Sartania et al., 2017). Those in power, therefore, can attempt to make people forget or remember whatever national discourse they wish, reinforce a part of the country's history that is relevant for their agenda or try and erase an "inconvenient" part as well. At several instances in history, patterns and waves of renaming can be identified as a response to political events, from the small scope of a village to the big scope of a country, or even many of them at once. A good example, which encompasses the present work, is the renaming wave of the 1990s, which responded to the democratization in the post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe; it was part of an urban space restructuring in relation to a history that was marked by the communist ideology (Bucher et al., 2013; 27). It is important to remain cognizant

of the possibilities of multiple interpretations of history in place, specifically where the cityscape has gone through successive reinscriptions (Drozdowski, 2014; 67). Streets and other toponymy express geopolitics of memory because they are palpable sites of contestation among competing ideologies, they reveal for the control of public and social spaces; geopolitics of memory is a complex process of determining “who gets representation, in what way and with what political outcomes” (Edkins, 2003; 135, Yeoh, 1996; cited by Drozdowski, 2014; 67). Public memorialization, when imbued in physical objects, bring them the potential to become a nexus of identity formation. When people are subjected to multiple, overlapping geographies of history and politics, the memories of past events may induce controversy instead of consensus; some renamings, thus, can generate “toponyms with contested pasts”, depending on the commemorations they carry (Wagner-Pacifi and Schwartz, 1991; 376, cited in Foxall, 2013; 176). Iterations of such toponyms in Tbilisi will be taken a look at individually in later sections.

Works on place and memory pertain to various fields of study, and as such, are especially useful in geographical studies. That is why I bring Drozdowski’s concepts and work on geopolitics of memory, since her research done on Krakow’s streetscape is very similar to the one in this work, therefore bringing relevant conceptualizations. She states that new regimes seek to assert their own version of national identity in public landscapes “through the creation of a landscape which demonstrates and affirms the values and ideology of the regime”; a successful transference of ideology to the streets (and other toponymy) involves “signification” using semiotic markers, and it is associated with a “quest for order”, an “assertion for authority” and project of “totalization” (Baker, 1992; 4, Light, Nicolae & Suditu, 2002; 135, cited in Drozdowski, 2014; 67). The author also importantly points out that while totalitarian regimes had equivocal power of commemorative choice, even in autonomous governments a determined group’s version of history is inevitably preferenced over another; regardless of how democratic the choosing of the name is carried. This is related to the fact that memory is a social construction, and thus depends on the contexts of the groups it is recalled by – the ruling elite, totalitarian or autonomous, “use their power and resources to make and implement decisions about memorial landscapes” (Forest and Johnson, 2002; cited in Drozdowski, 2014; 68). These

decisions and the specific memories imprinted in the city of Tbilisi are, then, the main object of this research. As a way to make available the data brought by this research, translations of the City Council Decrees and the chapter on toponymy renaming from Zurab Chelidze's book are included in the Appendices at the end of the work, respectively as sections 8.1 and 8.2.

2. Tbilisi's panorama

2.1. Historical background

Before talking about the renaming of the Tbilisian cityscape, it is relevant to provide some context, so in this chapter the history of the city will be explicated with all the aspect deemed to be important for its formation – and some of the first namings to be done in the capital. Ronald Grigor Suny, in his article for the book “City Culture and City Planning in Tbilisi”, gives a good overview of the city's journey. He begins with a commentary that already shows the importance of naming and its connection with politics – a reference to how the city was known by most of the world in the nineteenth century: “Tiflis”, the Russian name, surely because Georgia was under the rule of the Russian Empire at the time (Assche, et al., 2009; 17). Already on the early middle ages, the city was the historic capital of the kingdom of Kartli, in eastern Georgia, and seat of the court of its kings. Its foundation and establishment as capital is credited to the king Vakhtang Gorgasali, and the name has roots in old Georgian: the word *tbili* meaning warm and being a reference to the hot water springs and the mild climate of the place (Badriashvili, 1934; Meskhia, 1959, cited by Assche et al., 2009; 17, 19). Important politically and culturally for Georgians, Kartli's capital was not only significant for them, though; the Caucasian Armenians also regarded the town as an important intellectual and political center, too – and, to a lesser extent, Azerbaijanis (known at the time as non-Christian “Tatars”). It became so because it was a trading center which saw frequent visits by caravans coming from the Middle East and Persia, attracting many merchants, which vast majority comprised of Armenians. It came to the point that, when the Russian Empire annexed summarily the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by 1801, almost three-quarters of the city inhabitants were Armenian (74.3 per cent in 1803) and less than a quarter of them were Georgian (21.5 per cent), rendering the capital a multicultural, cosmopolitan town of mixed nationality (Chkhetiia, cited by Assche et al., 2009; 18, 19).

Not only peaceful merchant caravans visited the city, however; its strategic position, sitting between Europe and Asia and bordering big empires, rendered the capital vulnerable to foreign invasions, which included raids from Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols and Ottoman Turks, all of who laid siege there at one

time or another, not rarely laying waste to it (Assche et al., 2009; Lang, 166, cited by Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016). Such was the price to maintain its own statehood while being a small Kingdom, a Christian enclave in a predominantly Muslim region, with Persian and Ottoman Empires on the south and North Caucasian tribes under a looming Russian presence. As a way to seek protection and avoid more ransacking, one could seek protection from a bigger regional power, an Empire; and that's king Irakli II did, when he sought the Russian Empire, which had something in common; the Christian Orthodox faith. The treaty of Giorgievski, signed in 1783, did not protect the city from a Persian invasion two years later, which devastated it, but prevented later ones. The treaty, however, brought Kartli to be annexed, losing the sovereignty of the kingdom to Russia (Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 41).

After coming under Russian hegemony, Tbilisi experienced a comparatively long period of peace and development, growth in the population previously constantly decimated by invasions and a renewed urban life. The ethnic cleavages, sometimes, extended to class divisions; the countryside around the city comprised of mostly Georgians, as its nobility (as well as in town), and within the urban area hired workers (the lowest class by then) and some artisans as well. The bulk of artisans, however, and the merchants were Armenian, as well as the wealthier people of property. Division between these two ethnicities started from religious aspects, as they followed different Christian dogmas (Orthodox and Gregorian), extending the segmentation. As the urban life was coming back, both Armenians and Georgians who lived in villages started to venture into towns, especially Tbilisi; the ethnonational identification of these peoples happened when they met their fellow "countrymen" and also foreigners in the city, becoming more aware of who their ethnic brothers were in opposition to the ones who did not understand their language and customs. A growing, Western-influenced intelligentsia started to build on the notion of "nation", new to them, with appearing journals which appealed to a community of readers curious about their own history – "above all, language had to be preserved and literacy spread" (Reisner, cited in Assche et al., 2009; 21). Other ethnic groups also populated the town, and, even though they were not numerous as the Caucasian peoples, they added to the diversity of Tbilisi; one could find Kurdish and Persian neighborhoods

(Abanoebisurani, “neighborhood of baths”, currently Abanotubani), Jewish ones (Bread Square in Old Town) and even German ones (Alexandersdorf, a “German Colony” founded in 1818), giving a distinct urban culture to the capital - people even felt “Tbilisian” before Armenian, Georgian, Azeri, or any other nationality (Manning; Varsodanidze, 2000, cited by van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012; 7-8, Gachechiladze, 1990, cited in Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 43).

Not just an important trading center, Tbilisi was also becoming the most important “industrial” city of the Caucasus, losing the predominance only when Baku rose as a Caspian port with the 1880s oil boom. It had also become the administrative centre of the Caucasus under the Tsarist Empire. Amidst this diversity and development, the city itself was growing like never before not only as a major urban settlement, but also as one above any comparison with other centers in the Empire. By the time of Kartli’s annexation into the Russian Empire, the city had no more than 15,000 people; by the census of 1897, it was already home to a population of 159,590 people, including the viceroy (or governor-general), the highest tsarist official in the Caucasus. The second largest city of the province was Akhaltsikhe, with a mere population of 15,357 (Assche et al., 2009; 21-22, 25; Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 41). All over the town, the signs of foreign presence and influence were an indissociable part of the landscape. At the Golovinskii Prospekt, the main avenue, the palace of the viceroys could be seen in all its might, denouncing the Russian state rule; as well as the nearby Russian Orthodox cathedral and the memorial to Russian war dead. Eastward, the Armenian aspects could then be felt – Erivan Square, with all the caravansarais and trading houses, and above it, climbing up Mtatsminda (“holy mountain”, name of the promontory and later of the district as well), the Armenian bourgeois neighborhood, Sololaki (Assche et al., 2009; 22). The toponym, “Erivan”, references to the important Armenian city and capital, now Yerevan, and having it naming the most important Square and crossroad of the Georgian capital itself is very significant of the ethnic diversity and cosmopolitanism of the town. Further to the south were sitting the older parts of town, the Persian district with mosques and hot spring baths, and across the river Kura was Havlabar, another Armenian district, but way less wealthy than Sololaki. The bazaars and its guilds who were a powerful social group on the municipal

politics, as well as the Persian square (*maidan*) on the eastern part of town were reminders of the past rulers and reminiscents of the Iranian world (Assche et al., 2009).

The demography in Tbilisi was changing with the times, too. From 1801 to 1897, as mentioned above, while the population grew, the percentage of Armenians dropped – from a vast majority of 74 to 38 per cent, mainly because of the migration wave of poor Georgian villagers who left the countryside for the opportunities of the urban life. It did not mean, however, that the Armenians losing in status; by the end of the century, still 43.4 per cent of the more than nine thousand merchants of the city were Armenian, against only 21.6 per cent Georgian and 6 per cent Russian. Half of the large enterprises were owned by them, too, as well as 44 per cent of the 150 largest “industrial” establishments in Georgia; around the same amount belonged to Russians, 10 per cent belonged to Georgians and 2 per cent to Azeris. (Khoshtaria, 1974, cited in Assche et al., 2009; 25-28). Georgians were both at the top and at the bottom of the social circles; their nobles were close to the Russian viceroy, serving in the advisory council and administration, having proved loyalty and military ability in the Caucasian and Crimean Wars – while the bulk of the working class and peasantry was also constituted by them. The contrast between the ethnicities eventually led to stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices regarding nationality. The lower classes (which included also a good number of Armenians) would look to the Armenian businessmen with a certain resentment, since they had economic dominance and even control over the municipal government; although the Russian administration had the final word on any matter in Transcaucasia, local rule was put in the hands of the men who had property and wealth. Later, this would lead to clashes and political turmoil (Assche et al., 2009; 28-33).

Political developments within the Russian Empire were having their repercussion in Georgia and Tbilisi. Some of the Great Reforms reach Transcaucasia by the 1860s, and in 1866 the judicial reform from two years before came to the region too, replacing local courts and laws to integrate it with the Imperial system – in part a reaction to strikes and revolts in the previous year. The municipal government took power off the hands of guilds and into four estates who chose the city rulers: hereditary nobility, personal nobility and

eminent citizens, simple citizens owners of property or businessmen, and taxpayers without any real estate. It was the first time the nobles were included in the urban government under Russian rule. It was the lowest point for Armenians in terms of power, but only temporarily, as in the next decade a system of curias based on the amount of tax paid was established, disregarding the previous division by estates. The wealthiest third of the population had the power in their hands, as they chose one third of the assembly who chose the mayor; for fifty years, until the 1917 revolution, nine of the eleven mayors of Tbilisi were Armenian. Even though the Georgian nobles protested, leading to social and intellectual tensions with ethnic attacks in the press and the city council, their failure to adapt to market economy excluded them politically (Assche et al., 2009; 33-37).

As briefly commented before, the peoples of Transcaucasia didn't have strong nationalistic feelings for most of the 19th century, as much as religious or ethnic prejudices existed. In 1875, for example, the mostly Armenian city council elect a Georgian, Prince Tumanov, as the mayor for the first Tbilisi дума and mayoralty. While people lived in villages, they didn't have any competitive impulses or ethnic hatred towards other nationalities, as the villages themselves were very homogenous and especially peaceful after decades under Imperial control. When the population migrated to the urban areas, though, things changed as it was easier to feel the ethnic differences and affiliate to your fellow nationals, speaking the same language, having the same customs and values and sharing similar views on things like honor and trust. Political and intellectual discussions in the press focused a lot more on the industrial and capitalist developments, the noble estate's future, and the revolutionary opposition than in any ethnic hostilities. Nevertheless, in the 1870s and 1880s Tbilisi saw the rise of three major political tendencies – them being cosmopolitan liberalism (associated with Armenians but also shared by Georgian intellectuals and journalists), a multinational revolutionary populism (influenced by Russian ideas) and a brand new nationalism, that could be seen on the Armenian intelligentsia and the Georgian gentry and intelligentsia too. Throughout the decades, people were becoming politicized, and newspapers from the two major nationalities were

founded here and there, often supported or even originated from wealthier groups who studied at universities in Russia (Assche et al., 2009; 37-41).

Nationalist movements from Eastern Europe, especially in the Balkans, incentivized the intellectuals from non-dominant ethnic groups under Russian Imperial rule all the more. The question was raised to the Armenians as whether they should turn to Russia as a protector in a similar fashion to Kartli or if they should take revolutionary action to improve their situation in Turkey. A series of decisions from the tsarist government, including prohibition ethnic and language schools and repression started to brew the nationalists' anger, leading to the foundation of the first Armenian revolutionary parties. Georgians also reacted publishing textbooks and grammars of their language, founded chorus for Georgian folk songs and ethnographers (both Russian and Georgian) turned their attention to Georgian life and traditions. Cultural appreciation of the poems and stories of Alexander Qazbeki and Vazha-Pshavela arose, as they showed valued forms of the Georgian life, the free spirit of the peoples of the mountains far from the urban troubles. Efforts of Russification like the prescription of the word *Gruziia* (Georgia, in Russian) in published books by 1882 and attempts to eliminate the Georgian language from schools only took the resistance to a revolutionary stage (Reisner, cited in Assche et al., 2009). A noble writer and founder of a journal himself, Ilia Chavchavadze voiced a conservative nationalism that favored his fellow Georgian noblemen and was less radical, but he nevertheless worked to establish schools and cultural institutions that helped raise the Georgian national consciousness (Assche et al., 2009; 43).

As both nationalisms were growing, it was inevitable that they would come to clash, affect the politics and lead to violent encounters. For example, in the years of 1893 and 1897 almost all the Georgians who were elected to the city council refused to take their seats as a way of protesting against as "underrepresentation" of their community in the city politics (Tumanov, 1902, cited in Assche et al., 2009; 45); and this is only one of many cases in a series of incidents that rendered the last decades of the 19th as very confusing and agitated times in terms of politics in Tbilisi. Georgian nobles and anti-Armenian nationalists wrote so many complaints to the authorities that their perception of Armenians as subversive and revolutionary, threatening Russian hegemony – even so that the

tsarist authorities came to begin restricting their cultural and political life. Wealthy Armenians, on the other hand, would annoy Georgians by buying the property of their impoverished nobles. It was also not easy for Georgians to see their political weight in their own country undermined by the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Russian officialdom for such a long time. New political trends were emerging, though – from the final decade of the 19th century to the first years of the 20th, Marxism started to grow in the intellectual grounds of the Caucasus, put forward by people such as the Georgians Noe Zhordania and Philipe Makharadze. By 1905, a Menshevik wing of social democracy led a national liberation movement that resonated more with the working Georgian class than nostalgic, anti-Armenian ideas of the traditional Georgian leaders (Assche et al., 2009; 45-48).

Strikes, clashes with the police and defiance to the tsarist authority were erupting in Transcaucasia, and the workers only did continue with their demands, so that by 1905 they achieved the right of assembly, free expression of their demands and freedom for unions (*Revolutsiia 1905 goda*, 1926; Suny, 1994; Jones, 2005, cited in Assche et al., 2009; 49). The tsarist government was losing control over the population, to the point that Tbilisi was so overrun by opposition that Vorontsov-Dashkov, the new viceroy, came to turn to the Social Democrats, arming them to patrol the streets as tensions arose between Armenians and Azeris in 1905. The first half of the year, however, was a period when the nationalities, social groups, city council deputies worked together to force political reforms from the tsarist bureaucracy; state and society hap their gaps, though, and the second half of the year saw a fragmentation of the opposition. More moderate parties came under the administration, the “constitutional” order. However being able to restore the rule over the city and region, it was proved to the tsarist administration that the clash between social classes was more powerful than any ethnic conflicts, and it would return in the matter of a decade (Assche et al., 2009).

The Social Democrats were still present in the political scene of Tbilisi, even if not as a big united opposition. They kept being elected for State Dumas, and the Georgian Mensheviks became prominent politicians, like Irakli Tsereteli, Nikolai Chkheidze and Zhordania. So it lasted until the fatidic year of 1917, when the Russian Empire fell under the revolutionary. Power went from the tsar’s

viceroy to the worker's soviet hands, but another remarkable shift of power happened – the Armenian middle class turned their political capital over to the Georgian national leadership, the Social Democratic intelligentsia. The existent Provisional Government's organ in Tbilisi had no real power, which gave the Mensheviks control of the situation. The ethnic division, however, did not vanish. Even among the Social Democrats, called the “revolutionary forces”, there were cleavages. Most workers were Georgian and Menshevik, while the peasant soldiers were Russian and Socialist Revolutionary, and the “progressive bourgeoisie” Armenian and either liberal (the Kadet) or *Dashnak* (from *Dashnaktsutiun*, the more radical nationalist movement) (Assche et al., 2009; 52-54). The Mensheviks did a conciliatory job in controlling the interests of all the competing parts, but were afraid that things could descend into a civil war. When the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd by October, the Bolshevik soldiers in Tbilisi were disarmed and the Soviet government in Russia was not recognized. In February 1918, a local parliament (Seim) was created, along with a Transcaucasian Commissariat (Zavkom), and in April it voted to declare Transcaucasia independent from Russia. The Democratic Federative Republic of Transcaucasia lasted for only a month, as in May the Mensheviks declared the independence of Georgia, which later became known as the First Republic. They would only see two and a half years of independence, and after resisting to the Bolsheviks and counter-revolutionary White Army, Soviet Russia succeeded in taking down the Social Democrats. With the Red Army occupying Georgia in 1921, the Mensheviks fled to Batumi and posteriorly to France (Assche et al., 2009; 54-55).

Tbilisi came to be a regional capital again, as in 1922 the three South Caucasian Republics were put together as the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Republic, only to be disbanded again in 1936, returning the city to serve as the center of a Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. The city transformed from a medium-sized, relatively small settlement to a large industrial metropolis, with focus on the expansion of industrial activity by the 1930s and 1950s and mass housing taking the lead from the 1960s. The growth was associated with the Soviet policies, a hyper-urbanization stimulation in the republics' capitals to achieve “agglomeration effects” (Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 44). While

repressing more nationalistic elements, the Sovietization of the country ironically accelerated its “Georgianization”; People from different nationalities were gradually reducing in number in the capital, with tens of thousands of Armenians going to their own Republic or northwards, to Russia (as well as Russians themselves), and a vast number of ethnic Georgians moved there from rural areas. Over time, the entire republic became more demographically Georgian (R. Gachechiladze, 1995, cited by van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012; Suny, 1994, cited in Assche et al., 2009; 19, 55).

2.2 Contemporary developments and the national discourse

The Georgian capital, to this day, retain a series of characteristics that make it largely a Soviet city. Most people live in Soviet-built neighborhoods, and in general the spatial structure, even the transportation network, was built in that era. Busses, trolleybuses, trams and cable roads appeared; by 1965, after Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, Tbilisi became the fourth Soviet city to have an underground metro system (Salukvadze, 1993; Ziegler, 2006, cited in van Assche & Salukvadze, 2012; Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 43). Talking more specifically about toponymy, the capital went through noticeable changes in the cityscape since the 1920s, experiencing more than one “wave” of street renaming in order to incorporate Soviet ideology (Bodaveli, 2015; 158).

New names were assigned to both existing and Soviet-built streets, squares, districts and eventually even metro stations – in other words, micro-toponyms, which contrast from the less easily influenced by political changes macro-toponyms, but are not free from them and constitute an integral, minor part of reform processes (Bodaveli, 2015; 156). According to the author, this effort was part of a major plan meant for the Soviet Union as a whole, since it was formed by a very diverse set of Republics with all sorts of ethnicities, cultures and religions; all these aspects needed to be suppressed and replaced by the “Soviet citizen” ideals, and replacing markers of identification such as street names (which are a constant presence in daily life) is part of this effort (2015; 157). Although neither public nor uniform on all Republics, a framework was created to regulate the renaming of places in the Soviet Union (Saparov, 2003; 185). Up to this point, the toponymy of Tbilisi was not particularly nationalistic, as the aforementioned Erevan Square example shows. Instead, it reflected the capital’s

diversity in a certain scale, and the Imperial domination in a larger setting; most names made reference to Russian Emperors and their family members, Noblemen, Governors of Caucasia and Generals of the Russian Army (Bodaveli, 2015; 163).

In the first instance, the policy in Tbilisi was to mix local and Soviet identity (while arguably overcoming the existing Tsarist elements), and then gradually replacing the local by the Soviet one. The Imperial names were symbolically replaced by Soviet Statesmen and important authors that formed the Communist ideology, such as Engels, Marx and Lunacharski; curiously, in this first phase, there could also be seen cases where places were named after Georgian figures who fought against russification and for Georgian independence (Bodaveli, 2015; 170, 176). The Georgians present in these renamings, mostly writers and public figures, were only the ones supporting Soviet purposes. The artificiality of the process didn't put into consideration Georgian cultural aspects, for example, Christian names, associated with the country's Orthodox tradition; Georgian kings, princes and vicariates' names were disregarded too (Sartania et al., 2017; 51). This first part of the renaming process occurred from 1922 to 1923, while a second one took place from 1930 to 1934, as divided by Bodaveli (2015; 158), with 1934 being a particularly prolific year. Other minor tendencies on naming new streets (and renaming some of the old) were the ones related to geographical locations and ethnicities related to Soviet Republics and Socialist state – for example, streets named “German”, “Greek”, “Tatar”, “Russian” and “Armenian”, and names of capitals like “Kiev”, “Baku”, “Yerevan”, “Riga”, “Ljubljana”, “Tashkent” and “Budapest”. Names referring to places in Georgia, like Batumi and Borjomi, were sometimes kept from older times or given to new streets (Bodaveli, 2015; 176).

The second part, which was carried even by the period of the “Great Terror”, was concerned with removing the names of people who succeeded during the Russian Revolution or during the first years of the Soviet Union, and thus deemed “enemies of the people”; they were repressed themselves, and erasing their names from the cityscape was a way to ensure they would be forgotten definitely (Bodaveli, 2015; 158). The process underlying the second trend of renaming in particular was part of the bigger intention of “forgetting” local

heroes, traditional elements and evidences of past regimes (and even newly undesired parts of the current one), as Drozdowski (2014; 68) points out also in regard to other countries' big political changes. It was a continuation that resonated with the aforementioned trend of getting rid of local ethnic markers in the long run.

The conclusion drawn from Bodaveli at the end of her article states:

Since the new names of the places were actively used in everyday life (addresses, maps, street names hanging in the streets, inscriptions on stamps, envelopes, urban transport, was mentioned in the names of schools, etc.), naturally and without too much effort, it damped the Georgian historical past in the minds of the citizens of Tbilisi giving priority to Plekhanov, Marx, Lenin, 5 December etc. The process of street naming, being supported institutionally, played a role in strengthening the Soviet and international identity of the citizens of Soviet Tbilisi.

Tinkering with the Georgian cultural heritage and its elements caused reactions every now and then, though. When the government attempted to change the constitutional status of the Georgian language by putting the Russian language to an equally official status, people demonstrated in Tbilisi in April 1978 – leading Moscow to concede to their demands. It is one of the events that boosted Georgian nationalism, and helped with a process that would find its zenith on the next decade. Radicalizations on the anti-Soviet opposition led to what is known as the Tbilisi Massacre of 9 April 1989, a violent repression of a demonstration in the capital. After this, the oppositional revolutionary movement, led by Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia, led the Supreme Soviet of Georgia to vote for condemning the 1921's Bolshevik occupation as an illegal act and call for new elections (de Waal, 2010, p. 131-132; Salukvadze & Golubchikov, 2016; 44). On the next year, Gamsakhurdia's Round Table bloc won the elections for the reconstituted Supreme Soviet, and on the second anniversary of the bloodshed on the Rustaveli Avenue demonstrations, April 9, 1991, he declared full independence from the Soviet Union, including these words in the declaration: "The territory of the sovereign Republic of Georgia is united and indivisible" (de Waal, 2010; 134). Stephen Jones remarks, however, that the Georgian Independence of 1991 was just as the 1918 independence; it derived from the disintegration of power from the center (of the Soviet Union) and not from a long national struggle, nothing comparable to Solidarity or the Lithuanian underground network; culture and language were more important, as evidenced

by the 1978 protest and the other significant pre-perestroika protest in 1956 asking for the preservation of the Stalin cult (Jones, 2013).

Becoming autonomous involved taking control of institutions and having the challenge of building an independent, nationalistic narrative and choosing which discourse would be preferred for that. In the emergence of the post-Soviet nationalism, the making or re-making of national histories turned into one of the most important instruments for corroborating claims of political legitimacy and strengthening if not even “inventing traditions” of peoplehood (Hirsch, 2005; Hobsbawm, 1983; Ushakin, 2009; Yurchak, 2003; cited by Batiashvili, 2018; 13). States used the mobilization of historical memories in order to consolidate populations around nationalistic goals, while sustaining a discourse of resistance and dissent within and between states at the same time. In Georgia, the nationalist ideology was based in an idea of defying imperial domination and empowering categories of national identity, like the Georgian language and Orthodox Christianity. Markers of collective identity such as these buttressed a discourse of resistance and claims of independence (Khalvashi and Batiashvili, 2009; cited in Batiashvili, 2018; 13). In Georgia, a discourse of the “common past” as a symbolic marker of the nation draws from intellectual ideas of the 19th century, while in the 1990s a revived historical consciousness became an essential part of a specific nationalism. This discourse was employed not specifically to mark Georgia off from Russian space, but to shape cultural and political conceptions of what a Georgian state should represent in terms of its historical mission and cultural belonging; collective images of nationhood (which under Russian rule had gained cultural legitimacy to enable individuals to transgress and subvert the Soviet state’s official rhetoric) were mobilized by the political leadership of independent Georgia and inscribed into the hegemonic discourses on the Georgian state and “Georgianness” (Batiashvili, 2018; 13). Abel Polese maintains that there are certain narrative templates followed by countries when dealing with their national discourse; these templates are rigid frames which contain key features and the main narratives on national identity. In the case of Georgia, Batiashvili divides “Georgianness” in three narrative templates: a) Georgia’s continuous effort to integrate its historic territories into a powerful state, coming from a “golden age” precedent for this, existed during the

eleventh and thirteenth centuries - history is therefore read here as a series of recurrent attempts that are frustrated by the appearance of a “new enemy”; b) The ability Georgians have of preserving their national culture (language, religion and national identity), despite successive attempts from external enemies to defeat and culturally assimilate them, seeing external encounters as a threat to Georgian statehood and the national traits that constitute “Georgianness”; and c) That Georgians have been able to resist their enemies and preserve their culture due to an innate ability that make them irreconcilable to external domination (Batiashvili, 2012; 190, cited in Polese et al., 2017).

In a way, the Soviet Union ended up incentivizing certain types of nationalism, even if still trying to erase ethnic markers. By the 80s, a Georgian cultural intelligentsia had an array of subsidized theaters, film studios, newspapers, publishing houses and universities; it was a way to legitimize Soviet rule, a “nationalization” of communism to prevent dissident forms of nationalism, all of this inspired by ideas of mass education and social egalitarianism (Jones, 2013). Upon analysis of different media sources, history textbooks and political discussions, Batiashvili’s study comes to suggest that the Georgian national narratives have not changed since the Soviet period, with the exception of a bigger emphasis on religion (Polese et al., 2017). The oppressor/victim dichotomy present on the Georgian discourse was useful as a control mechanism by the Soviet power (although subverting Soviet values in the long run), but on the post-Soviet context it led to mutually exclusive constructions of national past among Abkhazians, South Ossetians and Georgians, which led to disastrous developments later (Jones, 2013). Stephen Jones discerns between three models of post-Soviet Georgian nationalism, which are: a model of cultural assimilation upheld by president Gamsakhurdia (1991-1992), who took cultural and ethnical distinctiveness as threats to national unity; Shevardnadze’s (1995-2003) policies of reconciliation between distinct ethnic and cultural groups and inclusive citizenship; and finally Saakashvili (2004-2013) with a mix of his predecessors (Jones, 2013; 216, cited in Polese et al., 2017; 55).

Gamsakhurdia began dismantling the Soviet structures, but was ultimately unable to build a new state; his ambitious radicalism led to a continuing revolutionary crisis. Divisions in the political community, disorder and severe

economic problems plagued the country, and the paramilitary forces ended up performing a coup, with the triumvirate of Jaba Ioseliani, Tengiz Kitovani and Tengiz Sigua taking control of the government until delivering power to the exiled Shevardnadze. He was, ironically, the Georgian party boss from 1972 to 1985, and had to flee the country stigmatized as a Soviet lackey; he came back as some kind of savior by 1992 (Jones, 2013). Jones calls the following three years (until 1995) as a “chaotic interregnum”, a time of troubles when foreign intervention, powerful paramilitaries and military crises in South Ossetia and Abkhazia took place. Between 1992 and 1993, war broke out in the respective secessionist provinces, since from Gamsakhurdia’s times national minorities were distrusted and the territorial organization was still an unsettled issue. Abkhazia had the worst scenario, and after 13 months of war and atrocities from both sides, eight thousand people died and at least eighteen thousand were wounded, with 250,000 ethnic Georgians fleeing the province and 30,000 to 40,000 Abkhazians, Greeks, Russians and Armenians also abandoning their homes in the war zone (International Crisis Group, Europe Report n. 176, 2006, cited in Jones, 2013). The country overall was ruled by warlords, and “Zviadists” (Gamsakhurdia’s supporters rebelling mostly in western Georgia) had to be dealt with. The president was a controversial figure himself; he was considered pro-Russian (and thus had a low capacity to take unpopular decisions) but his role in dismantling the Soviet institutions generated anti-Shevardnadze feelings in influential Russian circles, especially in the military; this made him a problematic figure in Georgian-Russian relations (Jones, 2013). Although making economic reforms and managing to get rid of the opposition (Ioseliani was arrested after being connected to an assassination attempt on the president), mass protests in 2003, sparked by fraudulent parliamentary elections, took the power out of Shevardnadze’s hands. He resigned the day after, and the movement led by Mikheil Saakashvili, later called Rose Revolution, was deemed “both a grassroots response to a venal regime and a seizure of power directly from above” (Jones, 2013). The author also remarks that the events cleared the way for reform, but was not at all an orderly transfer of power; it was the fifth time in century that a Georgian government was removed by force, showing Georgia’s continued institutional weakness. Until then, only Noe Zhordania and Gamsakhurdia

assumed power in a constitutional manner, and even on those cases their accession to power were in the context of revolutionary change.

Saakashvili was elected as president in 2004. He was determined to restore the authority of the state, and symbolically erected the Saint George's monument at Liberty Square in 2006, where the Lenin monument used to sit until 1991, when it got destroyed (Jones, 2013). Other symbolic attitudes were the changing of the time zone from the inherited Soviet one, replacing the national anthem, the coat of arms and the flag (BBC News, 2004; cited by Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 27). The Soviet past is a very important part of Saakashvili's discourse; it has to be anthetisized, be shown as "the other" which is opposed to the identity he builds, a symbol of backwardness. This is evident through his speeches:

The Soviet regime was 'a criminal regime. [. . .] The entire country was a prison' (president.gov.ge 2005b); it was a country where 'monuments were erected to the bandits' (president.gov.ge 2010a), and whose red flag was 'coloured with the blood of revolutionary ideals' (president.gov.ge 2011b). The USSR was depicted as utterly alien to Georgia, as if the latter had never been part of it: in the aforementioned speech he made a reference to his predecessor Shevardnadze casting him as 'a president who was well known in many places as a statesman and official of *another country*' (president.gov.ge 2011b). Of himself he said: 'I spent a significant time of my adult years in Soviet Union, but *it was not my motherland*. [. . .] I didn't love [the] Soviet Union and will do everything in order that [the] Soviet Union will never return to Georgia' (president.gov.ge 2011c). At the EU Parliament he explained away all the evils of post-Soviet Georgia as the result of its Soviet legacy (president.gov.ge 2010b). When, in 2005, he asked Russia to remove its military bases from Georgia, he called them 'the last remnants of the Soviet Union' (president.gov.ge 2010b), construing their removal as part and parcel of a process of 'liberation'. He would stress this idea continuously: 'I consider that Georgia is the only post-Soviet country that managed to dig out everything Soviet from its life' (president.gov.ge 2010b). (cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 28)

While wanting to eliminate this Soviet legacy, Saakashvili also showed a Western orientation. When speaking to European Union's and American officials, he would highlight Georgia's "Westernness" instead of its "Georgianness" and its liberal orientation, opposing Russia's "imperialism" (president.gov.ge 2011a, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 32). He developed a syncretic narrative of the Georgian nation, reviving an appeal to a heroic past in a similar fashion to Gamsakhurdia's and his self-affirmation drive; it was, however, in a more civic way, like Shevardnadze, and not blaming national minorities for the troubles of the country (Jones, 2013, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 32). In the period from 2004 to 2012, Georgia saw an iconoclast fury towards Soviet-era monuments

and symbols, including toponymy, when they were replaced by new “national” ones or “Western” ones, very connected to a perceived need to distance the country from its past with what Saakashvili and his followers deemed “signs of modernity”; the president himself said that “every building we build is one nail driven in the coffin of the Soviet Union” (president.gov.ge, 2011c, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016).

One of the most prominent aspects of the Georgian national discourse, as cited several times above, is religion. The Georgian Orthodox church came to institutionalize an ethno-nationalist doctrine into its orthodox practice, making religion political then; Georgia’s nationalism has been emphasizing the rule of the country as stronghold of Christianity in a hostile Muslim environment since the 1980s (Shnirelman, 1998; 58, cited in Batiashvili, 2018; 14). The church is perhaps the most influential institution in Georgia, having leaded this campaign of fusion between religion, nation and Georgian statehood into a single insoluble whole; some statements like the 1992 Easter Message of Patriarch Ilia II make this clear: “Orthodox faith is the spine of our national body” (Batiashvili, 2018; 16). There are elements present in the contemporary Georgian narrative that raise controversy due to revisionism, for example – which is the case of the “Museum of Soviet Occupation”, located in the National Museum and opened in 2006. It deals with the rise of the (first) Democratic Republic of Georgia, the Russian Soviet takeover and the events carried since then. The timeline is conclude with a map of the country showing highlighted South Ossetia and Abkhazia with a caption saying “The occupation goes on”; suggesting an Imperialist continuity between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation (Isaacs & Polese, 2016). Most interestingly, though, is the depiction of the Georgian Independence on 1918; it is laid out as an achievement long coveted for, rather than being the actual involuntary by-product of the October Revolution, also ignoring the fact that the Georgian Menshevik leaders who proclaimed the Republic back in May, 1918 had been against it until the end (Lang, 1962; 192-225, Jones, 2013; 220, Suny, 1997; De Waal, 2010; 60, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016). Another glossed over fact is the *de facto* protectorate status of the Republic under Germany, and after the German surrender, its replacement by the British as “protectors” (Lang, 1962; 206-7, 216, Lorusso, 2011; 50, De Waal, 2010; 63, cited in Isaacs &

Polese, 2016; 37). Georgia's overthrow by the Red Army in 1921 is represented as a conquest favored by the legalization of the local Communist Party, depicted as a fifth column of the "enemy"; the subsequent decades are presented as an endless series of repressions and struggles of brave patriots that kept national resistance alive. Eloquently, the Georgian fallen in WWII are counted as "victims of Soviet power" (Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 37).

Regarding the shift of focus on national discourses, Suny comments that after most Armenians and Azeris emigrated as a consequence of 1918, 1921 and 1991 events, all of those countries' national narratives emphasized their own ethnicities. Georgian, Azeri and Armenian scholars (both Soviet and post-Soviet) neglected the complexity of the ethnic politics in Caucasia; each republic tells its story in isolation from the other. Georgians underplay the significance of the Armenian contribution on Tbilisi's growth, while Armenians emphasize Erevan's (Yerevan) history disregarding their dispersed past and the centrality of the Tbilisi Armenians in their nationalism's history (Assche et al., 2009; 19).

As will be shown later in this research, from the agonizing years of the Soviet Union onwards, the toponymy went through changes in an attempt to smother the imposed Soviet ideology present on the capital's cityscape and daily life. Tbilisi, once a myriad of nationalities and cultures with a rich and diverse history, became very homogenously Georgian with the changes it went through in the Soviet times and in its independent era. One, however, can still see hints of the cosmopolitan past in its remaining churches, mosques and mansions. With this unique setting as a backdrop, we will analyze and see how the national Georgian elements were commemorated in the capital's cityscape in the light of the national discourse developed in contemporary years, and what was chosen to be forgotten in its place, in this most recent chapter of Tbilisi's history.

3. Research methodology

As Drozdowski (2014; 77) says, “[...] by investigating how, why and when, names changed in the past, we construct better topographies for understanding the importance of geopolitics to everyday spaces, especially those which are silent witnesses to trauma”. One of the aims of this research is to analyze toponyms, paying special attention to those with contested pasts, in order to assess their importance, the political regime’s process and effectiveness in applying cultural and identity aspects to the toponyms and which instances of those were applied. Doing this is directly connected with the memory elements and concepts discussed before; the imprinting of historical elements in public places, as a form of commemoration – memory and its manipulation.

Bodaveli’s (2015) work is an important one in this research, both because of the data and the inspiration it provides, so the exhaustive discussions regarding place names are done in a similar way, as they are deemed essential for a thorough comprehension of the process. Since the bulk of the important renamings from Imperial Russian/First Republic of Georgia to the Soviet era are covered in her article, they will not be part of this research; however, whenever convenient, they may be part of the discussion – for example, when a street is returned to its pre-Soviet name or when a clear replacing of an undesired name from that time takes places instead of the replacing of a Soviet commemoration. Bodaveli decides to select a certain number of street according to their location in Tbilisi, the time of their establishment or their significance because of the size of the material she works with; since the present research is dealing with all the renamings from 1988 to 2007, selecting this period is a sufficient measure to make the number of analyzed toponymy reasonable, and thus no place name was taken out of the research. It may be the case that more toponyms were indeed renamed in the selected time frame, and that such information was missing from the consulted sources. Since the portion of data analyzed here differs from that of Bodaveli’s, different classifications were crafted in order to group the streets; still, they are closely inspired by her work. Another important acknowledgment has to be made regarding Drozdowski’s (2014) work, from which the central theoretical ideas were drawn from and where the intention of

analyzing the geopolitical implications of the renaming process came from (only transporting the setting from Poland to Georgia).

The data concerning the subject of this dissertation, being it, Tbilisian street and place names (old and new), the year of such renamings and the location of the places in the city is very scarce (if not nonexistent) in the English scientific literature. It was possible, however, to obtain such data in Georgian, in the book by Zurab Chelidze - *The "Georgian Encyclopedia - Tbilisi: Streets, Avenues"*, published in 2008. Additionally, on the Tbilisi City Archives under the Georgian National Archives, it was possible to find an extensive list of renamed toponyms, with all their old names, and the correspondent districts; the list does not include the year of the renaming, though, whereas the book includes them. It was necessary to combine both sources in order to get a full, comprehensive list, which could be used for the present work. In the archives, it was also possible to find some of the decrees regarding the renamings, some of them explicating the reasons for that and the people responsible. The chapter on toponymy from Chelidze's book, due to its extensive nature, was translated by a translation office and can be provided upon request – it is not presented in the appendices here due to its size. The City Council decrees, however, compose appendices 1 to 13, translated with the help of academics fluent in Georgian, nationals or not, also composing chapter 8.1 in its entirety.

With such material in hand, it is possible to make a general, previously non-existent database. In that sense, a table was crafted out of crossing the available data from both sources. It includes streets with their current name and the previous names, according to the list provided by the National Archives of Georgia. Then, based on the translation of the renaming section of Chelidze's book, it was possible to assess the year of each renaming, when possible to find – unfortunately, some of the streets or the year of their renamings sometimes were not included in the book. With such a table in hands, it is possible to start separating toponyms by district, year of renaming and other patterns that may be found during the research. From the patterns and the decrees, it will be possible to draw conclusions regarding the political implication of the renamings – not only what is being commemorated on the toponymy, but also what has been forgotten, or rather chosen to be.

To begin with, since the Renaming Policy Decrees provide the most concrete set of data for this research, a chapter will ensue to make an evaluation of the information it can provide regarding the process, the reasons (when mentioned) and what can be drawn from those – an analysis of the whole operation and its outcomes. The first part of the chapter will be dedicated to a general analysis of documents, what they tell us as a whole and what inferences we can make regarding the renaming process based on them. According to the relevance of the information and in order to structure a more in-depth survey of the data, it was divided into subchapters: Districts, with thorough explanations of their renamings and the meaning of it; and Streets, with a likewise dedicated unraveling.

Later on, another chapter will turn to the scrutiny of the table put together for this research. There, the toponyms will be divided by district and year of renaming. Then, other set of division will take place, dividing the names according to their role; since the majority makes reference to people, the division refers mostly to the activity that made them relevant.

The categories, classified according to the names found rather than being pre-made to fit the data, are: Artists; Historical figures; Religious themes and people; Sportsmen; Scientists; Politicians; Foreigners; Geographical places; Concepts; and Unknown. The Artist category includes poets, writers, composers, singers, painters, sculptors, ballet dancers, actors and directors. The Historical figures include people who were part of Georgian history like kings, princes, important military commanders and also people which are commemorated because they took part in key events, like martyrs from civil wars and national symbols of resistance. The Religious themes and people include priests, bishops, patriarchs, saints, theologians and more rarely, religious concepts (like “Transfiguration” or “Trinity”) and names of churches or monasteries. Sportsmen include footballers, rugby players, chess players, cyclists, tennis players and athletes in general. The Scientist category groups together linguists, philosophers, historians, psychologists, electrochemists, architects, political scientists, biochemists, physicians and doctors. Politicians include people with contributions that made them famous in a specific area, like presidents, congressmen, and sometimes revolutionaries who became part of the

government. Foreigners include the few instances when non-Georgian people were commemorated in the toponymy, and it overlaps with other categories, like politicians, artists or even religious people. Geographical places include all references to cities, villages, countries and other toponyms in general, like names of mountains or gorges. Concepts is self-explanatory – it brings concepts deemed important enough for Georgians that they are commemorated, like “Freedom”, “Friendship”, and also important historical dates. The unknown category, as the name indicates, includes all the streets which names were not possible to be assessed, due to lack of information available.

Structurally speaking, the categories were presented in order of perceived importance, apart from the division based on the source materials, so more evident or even bigger toponymy like the names of entire districts and stations come first. When it comes to why certain patterns were chosen, they reflect the tendencies that were found to be intentionally considered for the renaming process, like the categories discussed above. When none were found, broader scopes were applied, like the analyses by year and district, so to make it easier to look at.

Information about the commemorated people is drawn mostly from Chelidze’s book, where there is a chapter dedicated to give information about the names inscribed on Tbilisi’s cityscape.

The final part of the research will be composed of a concluding chapter, bringing the findings of the present work and making sense of them as a whole, the impact they have on providing a better understanding of the subject – so to say, the impact of renaming practices on the geopolitical arena, specifically on the post-Soviet context, and the efficiency of this ideological battle.

4. Renaming Policy Decrees

4.1. General Analysis

The Renaming Policy Decrees provide a very unique and interesting source of data. First of all, they come with a heading and stamp which specifies the entity responsible for the issuance and official character of the decree. This is important because through it we can already start making inferences regarding the political implications of the renamings: while most of the decrees analyzed here refer to the “Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People’s Deputies”, evidencing that they were produced during the agonizing stages of the Soviet Union in Georgia, there are two decrees from as early as August 1991 which claim to be issued by the “Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Georgia” – in other words, from the government of the newly independent Republic of Georgia. Interestingly, those last two decrees are the ones treating directly with the end of the Soviet Rule in the country. The first one (see Appendix 12) is signed by the prime-minister, Bessarion Gugushvili himself, under the Cabinet of Ministers. It follows directly on the president’s decision to call off the Soviet rule 3 days before, (and the Supreme Court’s banishment of it) and demands that the responsible committees evaluate the worth of all property belonging to the Communist Party. Four days later, the second decree, this time issued by the City Hall of Tbilisi, calls for a similar action to take place, along with an inventarization of the belongings of the Communist Party and its bodies, but also giving the responsibility to the district prefectures and assemblies. By this act, it is evident that the Tbilisi City Hall and its Council, prefectures and assemblies already start to act independently to any Soviet ruling or decision, cutting ties definitely.

Therefore, it can be seen that when Georgia and, consequently, Tbilisi as well were still part of the Soviet Union (and thus still keeping the term “Soviet of People’s Deputies” on the City Council name and the Georgian Soviet Republic’s stamp on the top of the document), the city administration was already changing the names of the local toponymy. This phenomenon can already be assessed from as early as 1988, with the decree that changes a square and a street from their previous denominations to the name of the Georgian painter Lado Gudiashvili; it can be seen as a challenging act, since Gudiashvili acted in opposition to the Soviet ideology in 1946 when painting religious motives in the

Kashveti Church, which brought his dismissal from the Academy of Arts two years later. Even though he was awarded the title of Hero of Labor of the Soviet Union in the 1970s (and therefore not seen with bad eyes by the government), the fact that a “Georgian Hero” (as stated in this words by the decree) was being deliberately put on a square and street name meant that the administration didn’t condone anymore with the creation of a “Soviet identity” (Bodaveli, 2015, p.157) and its expression in Tbilisi, and such a renaming can be seen as a way to protest. Feeling more confident to oppose Soviet Rule, the administration of Tbilisi started to rename more toponyms in the city – the year of 1990 is particularly prolific in terms of issuing renaming decrees, comprehending nine of the documents present and investigated here. This evidences how the influence of the Soviet Union was waning throughout its Republics; feeling no longer threatened by retaliations from Moscow and probably encouraged by *Glasnost*, the City Council felt free to oppose the imposed Soviet ideology through the act of renaming. It was also resonating with the events carried on the streets of Tbilisi and on the Councils; as discussed before on the historical section, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was leading the revolutionary national movement, and it is certain to infer that this incentivized the reactions evidenced by the decrees, the rejection of the enforced Soviet elements branded in plain sight.

Moreover, the decrees contain information that couldn’t be directly found anywhere else in this research. They cite the renaming of entire districts, metro stations and, in rare occasions, comment on the political situation of Tbilisi as the capital. One of them, from May 1990 (see Appendix 6) states that: “[...] as advised by workers, unions and students, and also by the institution’s advisory council, decides to rename Shaumian Street to Ketevan Tsamebuli Street [...]”. Another one, from August 30th, 1990, brings very interesting information:

In latest period, the practice of returning historical names to Tbilisi districts and streets is being implemented successfully. (Davit Agmashenebeli, Tamar Mepe and Ketevan Tsamebuli streets).

Lately, the speed of the process has significantly decreased which dissatisfies the society of the capital. There are a number of objects of different purposes renaming of which is of immediate necessity because of their toponymics. (Dzerzhinsky, Kirov, Communist Labor streets, stations of Metro like Komsomol and others).

The Council of the capital takes into consideration the will of the population manifested through letters we have received and newspaper publications and issues resolution:

The [Executive Committee of the City Council of People's Deputies of Tbilisi] ECCCPDT is to continue the practice of changing names to Tbilisi districts, squares, streets and other objects together with its advisory board and to give relevant proposals within 10 days.

The sessions of district councils of Lenin and October district deputies are given ten days to give official proposals of returning their historical names, in collaboration with their populations.

As stated by the decree, people were unsatisfied because the process was being carried out too slowly; seeing the first renamings, the own population wanted to bring back their cultural elements on the city namings, with all its aspects included – historical, religious and national figures altogether (or, at least, the ones they were taught were theirs). It is another solid evidence of how the liberation movement was resounding very loudly through the country and especially at the capital; the historical and religious character of the renamings was also in accordance to the narrative being constructed for years, as aforesaid in previous chapters. Heeding the call of the populace, the City Council requests the district councils of Lenin and October (still to be renamed) to propose renamings which bring important historical names back, in collaboration with the residents – which is very interesting. It is possible to note that the “practice of returning historical names to Tbilisi districts and streets” does not refer directly to bringing back old street names, but rather historical figures on the toponymy, as none of the streets mentioned on the decree returned to their previous names. After all, before the Soviet renaming practices, the first independent Georgian Republic had a very limited time-frame to name its toponymy, and before that the Imperial rule would not focus on commemorating distinct Georgian national elements, so there was not much to bring back from previous times. Some other streets, however, got their previous names back, as well as the majority of districts, as it will be discussed in the dedicated subchapter.

The decrees also include the names of the City Council Chairman and the Secretary, giving crucial information about who issued the decrees. Although not including all the renamed toponymy in Tbilisi, they include a significant amount of those which underwent such process from 1988 to 1991, *ergo*, the time period that is pertinent to this research. Other decrees from further and previous years could not be found on the research made in the Georgian National Archives.

4.2. Districts

On the Decree from the “Executive Committee of the Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People’s Deputies” issued on April 26th, 1990 (see Appendix 4), it can be read:

The ECCCT has decided, along with the Commission to “perpetuate the memory of distinguished persons and public figures” and the workers of the capital, unions and student youth, as well as the decisions of the sessions of the districts themselves, that the following districts will be renamed:

First of May District – Didube District

Kalinin District – Mtatsminda District

Kirov District – Krtsanisi District

Orjonikidze District – Vake District

Factory District – Samgori District

26 Commissars District – Isani District [...]

On another decree from November 7th 1990 (see Appendix 9), other two districts go through renaming: “[...] Lenin District – Nadzaladevi District [...] October District – Chughureti District [...]”. It is not known, why there was a span of months between the renaming of those last two districts, and they were part of a decree that was mostly worried about renaming streets; it also included railways, medical and engineering institutes. One assumption we can make is that due to the sensitivity of times, some elements were deliberately kept due to their importance – after all, Lenin’s name is still remembered and commemorated even nowadays in some post-Soviet places, and is sometimes detached from the totalitarian nature of the later years. Nevertheless, it was to the Council’s interest to remove that too. Since most of the districts had older designations, they were returned to those toponymics. As will be made evident on the individual analysis of the districts, it is possible to see traces of the rich history of Tbilisi on the names, given that many of them carry an etymology related to the language of the various peoples who were part of its formation.

Namely, the first decree was signed by the ECCT’s Chairman I. Andriadze and Secretary V. Japaridze, and the second one, by N. Lekishvili.

4.2.1. First of May/Didube district

The First of May is nowadays commemorated in many countries as “International Worker’s Day”, being called so by the International Socialist Congress, and therefore used with great symbolic importance during the Soviet

Union, marked by military parades on its capital and turning into an iconic date for the Soviets (Chelidze, 2008; 12). It returned to its previous name, Didube, which means “large plain” in Georgian. In this case, the new name does not directly bring an opposition to the Soviet ideology, but from the very act of bringing it back, it symbolizes a restoration to an old name, in the country’s own language. What is important is not what is being commemorated instead, but what is being **forgotten**.

4.2.2. Kalinin/Mtatsminda district

Mikhail Kalinin was commemorated in this district’s name, and in many other places across the Soviet Union; the province and city of Kaliningrad, the Russian exclave, is still named after him, to this day, probably due to the difficulty of finding a proper name different from the previous one, “Konigsberg” – a good example of a toponymy with a contested past. Kalinin was a Bolshevik who became head of state of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and of the Soviet Union, as well as member of the Politburo of its Communist Party (Chelidze, 2008; 293). Mtatsminda, its current name, means “Holy Mountain” in Georgian and is the district where the referred promontory is located. As in Didube’s case, the return to the old, local name is already something, but the very nature of the name – “holy” – also stands in opposition to the atheist, religion-free Soviet system, since it refers to an icon of the Georgian Orthodox church.

4.2.3. Kirov/Krtsanisi District

Sergey Kirov was a Bolshevik, head of the party organization in Leningrad, and close friend of Stalin. He was killed in 1934 (with suspected involvement of the NKVD and Stalin himself), and the assassination was a pretext for repression inside the Party. Publicly, Kirov was commemorated through the renaming of several cities in varied places in the Soviet Union, including the aforementioned Tbilisian district (Chelidze, 2008; 295). The current name, Krtsanisi, was also used before, meaning yet another return to a historical name. More importantly, Krtsanisi is an area historically out of Tbilisi that hosted many important events in Georgian history, for example, the Battle of Krtsanisi, where the Persian Qasar armies won and ransacked the capital – being a reprimand against the Georgian alliance with Russia, who, according to the Treaty of Georgievski, should protect

Georgia (Suny, 1994; 55-59); a fact that is resentful to many Georgians up to this day. This renaming brings about a memorial past from Georgia's struggles through the centuries to try and keep the territory against all sorts of foreign invaders, and constitutes a central part of the national discourse, as discussed in the second chapter.

4.2.4. Ordzhonikidze/Vake District

Sergo Ordzhonikidze was a Georgian Bolshevik, member of the Central Committee Politburo and leader of the 1921 invasion that deposed the Democratic Republic of Georgia (also known as the First Republic) and instituted the Socialist Republic of Georgia. His mysterious death also suggests that Stalin was involved in the process (Chelidze, 2008; 313). The new toponymic, Vake, first appeared on the 19th century and was the previous name of the district as well, meaning "flat place" in Georgian (Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, 1979; 274). As well as being a return to a historical name, this renaming also means the scraping of a Georgian collaborationist to the Soviet Regime out of the cityscape – the invasion of 1921 is a recurrent part of the narrative of negation of the Soviet past, that reached its peak during Saakashvili. His inauguration of the "Museum of the Soviet **Occupation**" inside the National Museum of Georgia is a good example of this, and he specifically targeted Ordzhonikidze in the inauguration speech (president.gov.ge 2006, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016).

4.2.5. Factory/Samgori District

The name "Factory" is part of what Bodaveli calls "functional" names (2015, p. 4; 15-16), meaning that the toponymic is linked to an activity carried on the region, or maybe referring to a residential area assigned to workers. As she comments, it may be related to the process of industrialization all over the Soviet Union, and the valuing of the proletarian work. The district came back to its previous name, Samgori, which means "three hills" in Georgian, returning once again to the historical toponymic.

4.2.6. 26 Commissars/Isani District

The 26 Commissars were members of the Baku Soviet Commune, on the city of the same name, comprised of Bolsheviks and Left Socialist

Revolutionaries. It lasted until 1918, when they were captured by a coalition of oppositional parties, then escaped, but were recaptured and executed. It became a symbol of the early Soviet struggles and was commemorated in several places, including the present district (Chelidze, 2008; 263). It returned to the previous name, “Isani”, which is a derivative from Arabic and means “stronghold”.

4.2.7. Lenin/Nadzaladevi District

Vladimir Ulyanov, better known by Lenin, was a Russian revolutionary who became the chairman of Soviet Russia and later of the Soviet Union, managing to create a single-party communist state; his ideology eventually was canonized as its own variant of communism, known as “Marxism-Leninism”. The leading figure of the Revolution and of the early Soviet Union, he was commemorated all over the USSR and his name and statues of him still figure in many post-communist countries. (Chelidze, 2008; 299) In Georgia, however, the district named after him returned to its previous name, “Nadzaladevi”, which means “taken by force” in Georgian. It was named like this after the fact that the Tbilisi workers occupied the land along the railway in the 1880s, despite not having the necessary permissions; previously, it was known locally as Nakhalovka, from the Russian *nakhal*, “imprudent person” with the same connotation as the Georgian version (Assche et al., 2009; 22).

4.2.8. October/Chughureti District

The name “October” refers to what is the “October Revolution” of 1917, on the Julian calendar, when a Bolshevik coalition took over the Provisional Government in Petrograd, following the events of the February Revolution. It eventually led to the creation of the Soviet Union in 1922, and thus also known as the “Red October”. Chughureti, the previous name then returned, was an artisanal and agricultural district that was included into the city territory in the 19th century. Its etymology is from Turkish, “chughur” or “chukur”. In Georgian, it means a trench or deep area (Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, 1987; 171).

4.3. Stations

A decree from November 7th, 1990 (issued the same date of the second decree changing the district names; see Appendix 10) asks the metropolitan leadership of Tbilisi to change the metro station names, as follows:

Tbilisi City Council Presidium decides to change the names of Tbilisi Metropolitan Stations' names in collaboration with its advisory council workers of the capital, as well as labour collective of the metropolitan workers.

Stations: 'October' to 'Nadzaladevi'

'Komsomol' to 'Medical Institute'

'26 Commissars' to 'Avlabari'

'Lenin Square' to 'Freedom Square'

'Polytechnical Institute' to 'Polytechnical' [...]

The City Council Chairman signature is from N. Lekishvili.

4.3.1. October/Nadzaladevi Station

Explanations for these names and their meaning can be consulted on the previous subchapter on districts (sections 4.2.7 and 4.2.8). The difference here is the substitution, since the Nadzaladevi district replaced Lenin district, and the Nadzaladevi station replaces October station. Due to the fact that these changes may cause some confusion, the present clarification is done in order to prevent any misunderstandings.

4.3.2. Komsomol/Medical Institute Station

The Komsomol (in Georgian: Komkavshiri) is an abbreviation of the Soviet Union's youth organization, literally "All-Union Leninist Young Communist League", which started in 1918 and lasted until the end of the USSR. The renaming, "Medical Institute", is due to the nearby Tbilisi State Medical Institute (currently, University). When the institution was renamed to Medical University instead, the metro station followed the change. Once again, the change is more related to the erasing of an element than to the evidencing of one.

4.3.3. 26 Commissars/Avlabari Station

Contextualization on the 26 (Baku) Commissars can be found in section 4.2.6, on the district named likewise. The station was renamed to "Avlabari", which is also the name of a historical district in the same region. The name, coming from Arabic etymology, means "area beyond the wall". It was previously

known as “Havlabar” and it was the Armenian district, as stated in the historical background chapter; one of the few toponymic reminiscents of the cosmopolitan past of Tbilisi.

4.3.4. Lenin/Freedom Square Station

Explanation on the figure of Lenin was already done in the district subchapter: see section 4.2.7. The renaming of the place to “Freedom Square” is not new – it first had the name in 1918, during the short-lived First Republic. In this case, the change was literal to the material level; the existing statue of Lenin, which stood in the Square named in its commemoration, was torn down by the fall of the Soviet Union. A statue of the Patron Saint of Georgia, Saint George, was put there in 2006 (Bodaveli, 2015; 175, Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 36). The name, “Freedom”, is very symbolic and important for Georgians, as an embodiment of their independence and cutting of ties with the Soviet regime.

4.3.5. Polytechnical Institute/Polytechnical Station

The reason of this renaming does not sound very relevant; it is probably not specified well enough on the Decree, or a deliberate change which is not apparent at first sight. The most probable reason is that the referred Institute, during the Soviet Union, was called “V.I. Lenin Georgian Polytechnical Institute” – changing the name to rather only “Polytechnical” seems like an effort to dissociate the name of the Russian revolutionary by not making reference to the Institute directly, at least until it went under renaming as well. Later, when the Institute became “Georgian Technical University”, the metro station was renamed accordingly, to “Technical University Station” (Buachidze, 1979).

4.4. Streets

Since there is a large number of streets being referenced in the renaming decrees, the present analysis will be limited to choosing the ones which represent the whole process, instead of making a detailed and probably repetitive commentary on each one of them. A very symbolic renaming is from May 24th, 1990 (see Appendix 6): “The Executive Committee of the City Council of Tbilisi, as advised by workers, unions and students, and also by the institution’s advisory council, decides to rename Shaumian Street to Ketevan Tsamebuli Street

(Ketevan the Martyr)". Shaumian was a Bolshevik revolutionary, leader of the Baku Commune that became the famous 26 Commissars, also commemorated on toponymy around the Soviet Union (and previously mentioned in this piece) (Chelidze, 2008; 342). His name was replaced by Ketevan the Martyr – this is very significant because it is a very clearly religious expression, as evidenced by the name. Ketevan was a queen of Kakheti who died under torture by her Safavid suzerains for refusing to abandon her Christian faith (Chelidze, 2008; 336). As an atheist state, the Soviet Union didn't approve of religious themes, and orthodoxy is a very important part of the Georgian culture; the perfect formula to make a nationalist, patriotic act via renaming.

Another decree, from September 7th, 1990 (see Appendix 8) concerns renamings done specifically in the district of Mtatsminda:

Changes for the following streets located in Mtsatminda area: A. Lunacharski, A. Makharadze, M. Tskhakaia, A. Oboladze, S. Kirovi, G. Leonidze, A. Japaridze.

From now and then the street names should be changed and every responsible department must follow their duty in order to make those changes on time. The street names should be changed as:

1. A. Lunacharski st. – as Levan Laghidze st.
2. P. Makharadze st. – as Geronti Kikodze st.
3. M. Tskhakaia st. – as Vukol Beridze st.
4. A. Oboladze st. – as Vakhtang Kotetishvili st.
5. S. Kirovi st. – as Giorgi Leonidze st.
6. G. Leonidze st. – as Brother Sargi (scientist) and Davit (artist) Kakabadzebi st.
7. A. Japaridze st. – as Paolo Iashvili st.

As it can be seen, it is posterior to the renaming of districts, since the district is not called "Kalinin" anymore. It was also issued after the decree that comments on the population's dissatisfaction with the speed of the renaming process. The fact that the renaming is not done at random, but focused on Mtatsminda, is most probably because the district is located in Old Tbilisi, rendering it an important location to include important historical figures from the Georgian pantheon; bringing them to a place called the "holy mountain" above others also stresses the importance of religiosity for the local culture. As for the streets, they replace names of Bolshevik revolutionaries for Georgian figures, in short; they either were opposed to the Soviet regime, or had no relation to it and

represented important figures for the Georgian national consciousness, from painters and poets to scientists. The fact that they were all markedly ethnic Georgians is already a transgression to the “Soviet citizen”, ethnic-free ideology.

On November 7th, 1990, yet another decree concerns the renaming of several streets located in different parts of the city (see Appendix 10). It is possible to see many very distinct names related to the Soviet ideology being replaced, like “Marx Street”, “Koooperatsia Street” (Cooperation), “October Street”, “Pioneris Street” (Pioneers), “Lokomotivi Stadium” (Locomotive) and “S. Ordzhonikidze Institute”, for example. The names replacing them were once again of distinct Georgian people, also religious icons; Azizbekovi Street became Betlemi Street (Bethlehem) and Cherniakhovski Street became David Gareja Street (after a monastery complex). A particularly important one is the renaming of Volodarski Street to Haidar Abashidze, a Muslim Georgian who was a key figure to keep Batumi under Georgia by the fall of the Russian Empire (Chelidze, 2008; 249).

5. Toponymy Renaming Table

5.1. General analysis

Differently from the City Council Decrees, the table resulting from the combination of the data sources does not give us descriptions or direct information about the renaming process. On rare occasions, Chelidze's book gives short commentary on it, usually when it is talking about streets named after people who lived in it or naming processes related to events which happened on the toponym. Otherwise, there are no explanations. This requires that we make our conjectures based on what is possible to draw from the raw data, like the number of names commemorated on the same year or district, or nature of the names as a group. Let us have a look at sheer numbers first, then. There are 1,070 toponyms in the resulting table, out of which 244 were renamed between 1988 and 2007. It is relevant to mention that some of the renamings were applied to the same object, e.g. a street that was renamed in 1996 and, later, received a new name in 2000. This happened eight times, which amounts to a total on 251 renamings in 19 years. When talking about numbers, there are some assortments that we can make to have a clear view of the patterns. First, on Table 1 below, we see the nature of previous, replaced names.

Table 1. Number of renamed toponymics by category

Non-Soviet	Soviet	Previously unnamed or new street sections	Toponyms renamed twice	Toponyms renamed three times	Toponyms renamed four times	Toponyms renamed five times	Toponyms that returned to the old name
107	99	36	74	47	21	6	32

Total number of commemorated names (1988-2007)	242
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The table makes it evident already that most of the names that were took out didn't contain ideologically Soviet elements. This grouping includes, among Georgians and foreigners, people who weren't connected to the Communist Part in any way, sometimes being detached completely from the period of time when

the Soviet revolution took place. Since the vast majority of streets in Tbilisi were first named during Russian Imperial times (as we can see in Chelidze's compilation) or at least included in city plans from the period, there were still instances when the most recent renamings were directed at them. Soviet instances, however, do not fall behind too much, with only 8 occurrences short of non-Soviet ones. However, as will be discussed further, even when the renamings were not directed at a Soviet toponymic, the new names they carried were almost always Georgian (at least 90%), and thus serving as a way to reinforce the national narrative to the detriment of any previous ideology put forward in Tbilisi's cityscape. The remainder of substituted toponymics were previously unnamed streets or also unnamed stretches of old streets that were deemed to deserve a different name. When two names were given to different sections the same street, but were still replacing an existing name, both occurrences were included separately in the first two categories of Table 1 – this causes the number of commemorated names to be different from the total number of renamings as presented on Table 3. The renamings counted in the columns to the right (the ones indicating how many times the toponymy was changed) include renamings that occurred before 1988, but on toponymy that got renamed again in the 1988-2007 period. It is useful so to understand how contested some toponyms are. The toponyms that returned to old names do not include some famous names like Rustaveli or Vakhushti Bagrationi, but are mostly geographical and with minor national references, not following a particular pattern regarding their location or function of the commemorated aspect; they just seem to be what the name states, a geographical return to a previous denomination. Regarding the themes present on the new names of the toponyms, a subchapter follows to explore them.

5.2. Renamings by theme

Jumping now to an analysis of the new imprinted names, we arrive at Table 2, where can see a classification of the commemorated names according to the groupings mentioned on the methodology chapter.

Table 2. Commemorated people or concepts by theme and their percentage

Artists	Scientists	Historical Figures	Unknown	Religious	Geographical places	Sportsmen	Foreign people, concepts or places	Politicians	Concepts
69	47	42	19	17	16	13	13	7	7
27.6%	18.8%	16.8%	7.6%	6.8%	6.4%	5.2%	5.2%	2.8%	2.8%

Before talking about the conclusions we can draw based on the table, some clarifications are in order. The concepts, first of all, do overlap sometimes, since it is possible for a foreign artist to be commemorated on a toponymic, or a religiously relevant geographical place (for example, Jerusalem, which is also foreign). In this case, a decision was made to only include names in two categories when they are making reference to foreign people, concepts or places that already fall into other categories. This is done to make a better separation of the number of commemorated people on other categories, so for example, a medieval patriarch is included in the Religious category and not on the Historical figures one, according to which characteristic is more important or most salient. Another important note is that some names occur more than once in the namings, so they were only included once in the table. This makes it difficult to calculate a percentage of renamings that fall into a bigger group, like how many renamings commemorate certain people or concepts in absolute numbers; but we can have an idea of the proportion by just looking at the numbers and making general calculations.

The first inference we can make is the high number of local ethnic references, since the bulk of new names indicate Georgian people, places or related concepts, with an aforesaid number of at least 90%. Only 13 renamings refer to any kind of foreign people or place, and even then, some of them have relation to Georgia or at least the Caucasus. As can be seen, the most populated category make reference to artists, who are praised for their contribution to cultural production and their representations of national symbols, sometimes even revered internationally, and thus being an important expression of a national, independent regime. The second biggest category, scientists, also play

an important part in a country's development, materially and culturally speaking. Since the category includes historians, philologists and professors, it also represents certain people who help the country to understand itself and pass that knowledge forward, being an integral part of a national identity's development. Historical figures, the third category, are all about a representation of the past, an integral part of one's perception of her own group and its characteristics. A few of the later renamings in this category make reference to more recent developments too, since they refer to people killed in the civil war in Abkhazia, in the early 90s. The fourth category includes all naming which meaning couldn't be assessed, it is, people whose information couldn't be found anywhere. It probably means that they commemorate local people from the neighborhood or street itself, with no big national importance; they are only known in the said neighborhood. The next category, Religious representations, is deeply tied to the revival of ethnic Georgian expressions, since the Orthodox Church is very important in the country and in direct opposition to the atheist Soviet state. Geographical places also mostly refer to cities, villages or mountains in Georgia itself, with only a couple of foreign references. The sportsmen category is made entirely from Georgian players or competitors, and most of the Politicians too. The concepts are tied to things deemed important for the Georgian culture, including "Freedom" (Square), "Artist" (Street), "Fighters for Georgia's Freedom" (Street) and "Rose Revolution" (Square). This category also groups important dates commemorated, like "26th of May" (Square), referring to Georgia's Independence Day.

There seems to be no concentrated effort to commemorate a certain theme according to year or district, since references to each of them are scattered around the city and along the 19 years (1988-2007) here analyzed. No other patterns were noticed regarding that, and we would only know about specific intentions on that matter with new data, like recent City Council policies. We'll now turn to other patterns found through the data.

5.3. Renamings by year

As aforesaid in previous chapters, renamings as a political act against the Soviet regime in Georgia already started before the end of the Soviet Union, most probably connected to the movements of national liberation. Here, a subchapter

is in order to analyze the renamings per year thoroughly, with investigation of the patterns found and the commemorations, along with reflections on the findings. The number of renamings per year can be consulted on Table 3 below:

Table 3. Renamings according to year

Year	Number of renamings
1988	4
1989	5
1990	49
1991	17
1992	30
1993	12
1994	14
1995	21
1996	9
1997	6
1998	6
1999	17
2000	6
2001	8
2002	0
2003	18
2004	3
2005	6
2006	12
2007	8
Total number of renamings	252

It started with a shy number of four renamings in 1988, but they already carried a Georgian symbolism: Besides Lado Gudiashvili, as seen in the City

Council Decrees chapter, other people commemorated on those renamings were Elene Akhvlediani and Davit Aghmashenebeli (David the Builder). Akhvlediani was a painter like Gudiashvili, and although not having any notorious acts against the regime, she is revered as an important Georgian artist, especially for making portraits of other national figures of importance. David the Builder, on that behalf, is one of the best-known Georgian figures of all time, remembered as a great medieval king who managed to liberate a large portion of the country from Seljuk domination. He was also canonized by the Georgian Orthodox Church due to his big involvement with the expansion of the religion, being an important religious figure as well (Chelidze, 2008; 277). 1989 saw only one renaming more than the previous year, but they also carried symbolism: three of the renamings made reference to important medieval Georgian kings (Tamar, Teimuraz and Pharnavaz) and another one to Merab Kostava, one of the most important Georgian revolutionaries who died on the same year. Having been jailed several times due to “anti-Soviet” activities and being very active on the independence movement (Chelidze, 2008; 298), his commemoration on a street name makes it probably the most significant of all other renamings done before 1991. Along with these figures, the first name of a foreign person appears: Alexandre Dumas, a French writer – he visited the Caucasus, including Georgia, and this is probably the reason for the commemoration (Chelidze, 2008; 280). Dumas’ name also replaced Zheliabov, who was a Russian Revolutionary, one of the organizers for Tsar Alexander II’s assassination (Chelidze, 2008; 318).

Then we come to the most prolific year of renamings of all: 1990, with no less than 49 names changed. While some of them were carried in order to name previously unnamed streets and new sections of existing ones, the majority of the renamings took out distinctly Soviet names, such as Lenin, Marx, Herzen, Ordzhonikidze, Perovskaya and Volodarsky. They were replaced by Georgian people, which compose all of the anthroponyms of this year. More direct religious names also start to come up on the year, such as Anton Catholicos (a Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church), Transfiguration (of Christ), Bishop Gabriel, Ketevan the Martyr and Jerusalem (although being foreign, it is also important for the Orthodoxy). Geronti Kikodze, one of the members of the Constituent Assembly of the First Republic of Georgia, is commemorated in this year (even

though he is more known as a writer and literary critic) (Chelidze, 2008; 336). It is also markedly the year when the main square of the city, Liberty Square, replaced Lenin Square, with an incredibly high symbolism. One medieval Georgian figure is present, too (Bagrat III). The next year, 1991, hosted way less renamings, 17. They were still following the trend to replace Soviet markers, though, and streets like “Communist Labor”, “Tsiteltsqaro” (Red Spring), “Mogilevsky”, and “Engels” were gone. Once again, predominantly Georgians names were brought back. “Dedoplistsqaro” (Queen’s Spring) replaced Red Spring, since the name of the city commemorated also returned to that name (Chelidze, 2008; 59), and Mogilevsky became Saint-Petersburg (before Mogilevsky, the street’s name used to be Leningrad), a very political statement, since it was also adhering to an old name of one of the most important cities in the late Soviet Union. Two medieval figures also appear (King Archil and Queen Tamar). A different kind of commemorated people (included in the Historical categorization) appear: the ones who died in the 9th of April protests or were directly related to it. Eka Bezhanishvili is one of these, who was only 16 when she died, in 1989 (Chelidze, 2008; 263).

In 1992 the first year after Georgia’s Independence, the renamings raised in number, almost doubled, with 30 occurrences – it can be seen as a renewal in the effort now that the country was free to express its own cultural elements without any fear of reprisal. Other Soviet names were erased, with this trend now consolidated definitely. Streets such as “26 (Baku) Commissars”, “Pravda”, “Paris Commune”, “Collective Agriculture”, “(Rosa) Luxembourg” and “Matrosov” disappeared, to give way to a myriad of ethnic Georgian names, such as Erekle II, a historical king from the 18th century (Chelidze, 2008; 281). Particularly important is the naming of a square as 26th of May, aforementioned Independence Day of Georgia and anniversary of the massacre at Rustaveli Avenue. In 1993, the number of renamings dropped again, to less than half of the previous year: only 12. Soviet commemorations were starting to become rare now, with only a few of them removed, like “Traktor”, “Grizodubov” and “Lunacharsky”. All of the replacements were Georgian anthroponyms. 1994 kept it around the same number, with 14 renamings, but this time only two Soviet commemorations were erased – “Komsomol” (Leninist Young Communist

League) and “Kakhovka”, the city in Ukraine, which itself is not a great symbol of the Soviet Union, but the commemoration of another Soviet city can be seen as an ideological act. Georgian anthroponyms were majority, with a few geographical places (one religiously relevant, Jerusalem Square) and a medieval king (Peter the Iberian, from the historical Georgian Kingdom of Iberia). Spiridon Kidia, a prominent figure during the First Republic, is commemorated as well (Chelidze, 2008; 294). Another unique kind of commemoration, under the Historical theme, appears, with Koka Kldiashvili, a young man who died during the war in Abkhazia (Chelidze, 2008; 295). 1995 had a small spike in numbers, with 21 changes, taking out names like “Labor”, “Deputies”, “Pioneers”, another “Lenin” and “Stakhanov”. All the replacements, like 1993, were Georgian anthroponyms. One of them was Sergo Ksovreli, who died in the Abkhazian war in 1993 (Chelidze, 2008; 337); other was Gia (Giorgi) Chanturia, who along with Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava, was a prominent figure of the national movement, leader of the National Democratic Party. When Gamsakhurdia came to power, he went to the opposition due to disagreements, and also opposed Shevardnadze’s government. He was assassinated in 1994, in a very likely political character (Chelidze, 2008; 352).

The year of 1996 saw the beginning of a decline in the renaming process, as the Soviet commemorations were becoming more and more scarce. Only nine streets were renamed that year, and only one of the renamings carries the former regime’s ideology: “Leninasheni”. All the replacements are Georgian anthroponyms once again. Rostom Muskhelishvili is one of them – he was a colonel, Chief of Military Intelligence during the First Republic. He participated in the 1922 effort to repel the Red Army advances, but was arrested by the Cheka and shot in 1923 (Chelidze, 2008; 308). 1997 dropped even more, with only six instances, almost two of the replaced ones being heroes of the Soviet Union, “Shirshov” and “Voronin”. It is deemed “almost” because only part of Voronin Lane got renamed, and one part of the street kept the old name – probably because he was awarded two Lenin Orders and two Red Banners of Labor, but was never a member of the Communist Party, and even so performed several activities in Tbilisi (he was Russian) (Chelidze, 2008; 285). All the names that replaced the previous ones were of Georgian people in this year, too. In 1998,

once again six toponymics were replaced; only one Soviet commemoration, however, “Budapest”, which referred to a fellow Socialist country’s capital, at the time. The only non-Georgian name to figure in the new commemorations was Hermann Gmeiner, a famous Austrian philanthropist (Chelidze, 2008; 270). In 1999 a sudden spike on the renaming activity happened, with 17 instances. Nevertheless, it only got rid of three Soviet names, “Pisarev”, one of the authors who influenced Lenin (Chelidze, 2008; 316), “Gagarin”, the famed first man to go to space under the Soviet Union and worldwide (Chelidze, 2008; 268), and “Kurnatovsky”, a revolutionary, organizer of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party Tiflis Committee (Chelidze, 2008; 298). One of the names of that year, which replaced a previously unnamed street, was “Fighters for Georgia’s Unity”, a very ethnically and politically Georgian name, very expressive of the national discourse. As expected, the other names are Georgian anthroponyms.

On the turning of the millennium, 2000, the practice decreased again, to a number of six replacements. Two distinct Soviet names were put out, “Tchernichevski” (revolutionary writer who influenced Lenin) (Chelidze, 2008; 343) and “Kaludin”, a famous revolutionary worker, symbol of labour (Chelidze, 2008; 293). The totality of new names amounts to all of them being Georgians again. 2001 saw only two more streets than the previous year, eight, but with only one Soviet toponymy replaced, once again a street name commemorating Gagarin. The only name which is not a Georgian anthroponym is Ochamchire, a city on the coast of Abkhazia (Chelidze, 2008; 138). In 2002, for unknown reasons, there are no renamings registered. They were revived in 2003, with a good increase in numbers – 18 renamings, out of which only one Soviet commemoration was erased: “Kerch”, the strait in the Black Sea, part of the USSR at the time; during the 1941-45 phase, when the Soviet Union fought Germany, many Georgians fought and died in combat there (Chelidze, 2008; 178). The majority of the names put in the toponyms were Georgian people, apart from “Artist” Street, rather a concept. Four of them were actually naming previously unnamed parts of existing streets, including “Artist”. Zurab Abuladze, one the commemorated people, was a young man killed during the war in Abkhazia (Chelidze, 2008; 251); other street was named “Student Heroes” (Gmiri Kursantebi), a reference to the students of the police academy who died in

Abkhazia (Chelidze, 2008; 46). In 2004, only three renamings were carried, but one of them is quite relevant: it replaced Stalin Embankment by Zviad Gamsakhurdia Embankment, figuring the first president of Georgia for the first time and removing the most infamous Georgian of the Soviet Union from the toponymy. It was part of Saakashvili's anti-Russian, self-affirmation drive, including the rehabilitation of Gamsakhurdia and presiding over his reburial at the Georgian Pantheon on Mtatsminda in 2007 (De Waal 2010; 135, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 32). It is very likely that removing Stalin's name from the embankment took so long because he was still revered by a good number of people and still is to this day, as evidenced very strongly by the street named after him in Gori, his hometown, and his museum there (Asatiani, 2007; cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 31, 38). Another renaming put the name of Anatoly Sobchak on the commemorations; he was a prominent figure in the Soviet Union, and demanded that the responsible people for the 9th of April massacre to be punished. Later, he worked with Boris Yeltsin on the democratization of Russia and became mayor of St. Petersburg (Chelidze, 2008; 324). Yet one more important name is Noe Zhordania, who had an important role on the socialist movement in the Russian Empire, becoming the prime minister of the First Republic, later exiling to France, where he died in 1953. He is the only declared Georgian Menshevik to be commemorated in the post-Soviet renamings (Chelidze, 2008; 318). Only a bit more renamings were carried on 2005, six, and only one was replacing a Soviet element, "Atarbegov", a member of the Cheka at the time of the Soviet Occupation of Georgia. Notably, new streets were named George Bush (the American president at the time, named after his visit to Georgia) (Chelidze, 2008; 264), Rose Revolution Square, commemorating the recent developments on the country, and Europe Square, showing Saakashvili's Western orientation very clearly. Another one was renamed after Zurab Zhvania, the only Prime Minister of Georgia who died while in office, in 2005; he participated in the 2003 protests that ousted Shevardnadze (Chelidze, 2008; 318).

On the penultimate year included in this research, 2006, there were 12 renamings. Three of them replaced streets bearing the same name, all of them after Gagarin, like in previous years; and all but three of the new names weren't

Georgian, namely, Picasso (the Spanish painter), King Solomon (the biblical figure) and Peking (the Chinese capital, also known as Beijing). One of the new names was after Natia Bashaleishvili, another 16-year-old protester who got killed in the 9th of April events (Chelidze, 2008; 263). Another was Kote Apkhazi, a General-major of Artillery during the First Republic. He was killed by the Cheka on the same event as Rostom Muskhelishvili (Chelidze, 2008; 259). One more figure from the First Republic commemorated on the year is Giorgi Kvinitadze, the commander-in-chief of the army, who fled to France after the Sovietization of Georgia and died there (Chelidze, 2008; 295). An interesting name with a contested past commemorated in 2006 is Meliton Kantaria – he is the junior sergeant who (along with M. Egorov) raised the flag over the Reichstag in 1945, but his name was still chosen to be inscribed in the toponymy. It was part of Saakashvili's "nationalization" of Georgian war heroes, detaching the "Georgianness" from the "Sovietness". Later, in 2011, Saakashvili named a school after him as well, lamenting that "Kantaria is the most classical example of the tragic fortune of our country" (president.gov.ge 2011e, cited in Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 31) because he was a Georgian living in Abkhazia and ended up his life as a refugee; in fact, Kantaria was expelled from Abkhazia and even found refuge in Russia, making Saakashvili's act a selective appropriation and manipulation of history, confirming his narrative of Georgian victimhood and stressing its resilience (Isaacs & Polese, 2016; 31). On the last year, 2007, eight renamings are figured, and again, two Soviet names stand out for how long it took for them to be removed from the toponymy; Stalin and Red Army Street. All but one name is not Georgian on the new names, Heidar Aliyev, Azerbaijan's former president, who was one of the most important post-Soviet figures in the country (Chelidze, 2008; 254). It is probably a representation of the friendship between the two post-Soviet Republics, but also a commemoration of the liberation of the Soviet times, since Aliyev was an important figure on the consolidation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

From this set of information about the years and their commemorations, we can draw some conclusions. As made clear in other chapters and reinforced here, the renaming process echoed the political events in Georgia. Starting slowly with an oppositional movement, it grew to become a big mobilization, as made

apparent by the renamings carried in 1990, such was the will to antagonize the Soviet regime. A decrease during the year of Independence is probably due to the political turmoil that took the country by assault. Even though it contributes for the political freedom, which lets the process carry on without censorship, the abrupt change on the power structure is traumatic and the City Council must have had other priorities. As with other projects of nationalistic revival, it kept steadily going, and even if decreased in number, renamings were constant and most of the times substituting the previous regime's ideology, and when not doing so, still reinforcing cultural, ethnic and nationalistic elements, as evidenced by the fact that the bulk of new names commemorate Georgian people. Odd years like the renamingless 2002 are an exception, and it will only be possible to know whether the process of renaming stalled after 2007 if we get a grip of a new, updated set of data. Now, a more geographical kind of analysis will be carried in the next part.

5.4 Renamings by district

In this ensuing subchapter, we'll take a look at the spatial distribution of the renaming process, dividing it by district and year. A compilation of this data can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Renamings by district and year

		District					
		Didube-Chugureti	Gldani-Nadzaladevi	Isani-Samgori	Mtatsminda-Krtsanisi	Old Tbilisi	Vake-Saburtalo
Renaming Year	1988	1	0	1	0	2	0
	1989	0	0	0	0	3	2
	1990	7	7	4	0	26	6
	1991	1	3	1	0	10	2
	1992	3	3	3	0	13	8
	1993	0	3	1	0	2	6
	1994	1	1	4	0	2	6
	1995	1	8	4	0	3	5
	1996	0	2	1	0	5	1
	1997	3	1	2	0	0	0
	1998	0	0	0	0	2	4
	1999	2	3	3	1	3	5
	2000	0	2	0	0	4	0

	2001	0	1	1	0	2	4
	2002	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2003	0	2	6	0	2	8
	2004	0	0	0	0	1	1
	2005	1	0	2	0	2	1
	2006	2	0	1	0	2	7
	2007	1	1	1	0	1	4
Total renamings by district		23	37	35	1	85	70

The district which bears the highest number of toponyms renamed is Old Tbilisi, with 85 names being replaced there. The high concentration on the district certainly has to do with its historical significance, as made obvious by its own name. It is very symbolic that the oldest neighborhood in town sees the majority of the new names, almost all Georgian, put there. There also seems to be a deliberate effort to rename streets in the Vake-Saburtalo area. Both districts combine to form the famed part west of river Kura, where many universities are located, as well as a lot of bars and hotels and where the more economically active population lives; they were home to the “red intelligentsia” and the Communist Party nomenklatura (Jones, 2013). One of the lines of the Tbilisi metro covers the most extension of Saburtalo and is named after the district. As for the other districts, they keep a constant number of renamings through the years and in total, so there does not seem to be a concerted effort to rename them. They are located in more peripheral areas of the city. The one exception is Mtatsminda-Krtsanisi, which recorded only one renaming, done in 1999. Though it is not known why the district received so little attention in the process, one possibility is that it felt victim to geographical disagreements. The National Archive’s list only includes one street in the district, but if we consult the City Council Decrees, one of them places several renamed streets in Mtatsminda on a decree from 1990, which would put more commemorations on the neighborhood. This research is not a place to dwell into demarcation of districts in Tbilisi, and since the National Archive’s list is the most comprehensive record of renamings done systematically, preference will be given to this source.

6. Conclusions

On the past 200 years, Georgia has only been an Independent Nation State for 31 of them, having only a few decades in hand to assert its sovereignty on recent times. Marks of past regimes can still be seen in its cities, and particularly in the capital; most of them are from the Soviet period, the most recent former regime to assert its power in it. Along with the national liberation movement, the revamping of the cityscape of Tbilisi carried on with a process of commemorating elements associated with the rich Georgian history, running in an opposite direction from the Soviet ideological imprinting; Bodaveli (2015; 177) comments that more than 90% of their place namings were anthroponyms, with an almost total absence of Georgian historical people and events – while the post-Soviet Republic filled the capital with more than 90% of anthroponyms, almost all of them referring to Georgians, historical, religious, and cultural figures altogether, as evidenced by this research. It is paradoxical, however, that the Soviet nationality and development policies ended up incentivizing the “Georgianisation” of the capital (in detriment to other nationalities) and fueling the national discourse described in chapter 2.2. While the Soviets only left Tbilisi with cultural aspects of identity, the Independent Republic revived national, religious and ethnic aspects to the cityscape. Analyzing the data brought into this research shows clearly that the renamings intended to make the city a portrait of a homogenous Georgia, an assertion of a regained sovereignty over totalizing efforts. Branding memory in a place requires choosing elements from a real or even imagined past, and such choice was made - the capital, once famous for its diverse and cosmopolitan culture, now is more Georgian than ever. The Armenians and Azeris, once teeming in population and influence, were gone, and the toponymy is not the place where they are remembered. A lack of the own city’s past is evident, when it comes to the representation of the city culture and the participation of others in the urban space.

This intention of this research was to unveil the process of inscribing the geopolitical landscape of the post-Soviet Tbilisi and its intentions – and what has been found is that the function of the capital turned a lot more to the commemoration of national figures and aspects, mostly disregarding local figures and the urban identity, with only a few foreign mentions. The city shows only shy

signs of its diverse past, mostly in derivative names of old neighborhoods and metro stations, a few survivors from the Russian Imperial rule. A nationalistic discourse is the rule when it comes to toponymy now, not only downplaying the Menshevik nature of the First Republic, but also ignoring national minorities and a broader, shared transcaucasian history – the city now displays broader national themes instead of a particular city history and culture. The cityscape reflects the politics of Gamsakhurdia and Saakashvili, most of all, in their effort to consolidate Georgia as a united, homogenous country and solidify this claim by etching it in shared, public elements. From 1988 to 2007, old names were returned or undesired names were renamed in order to achieve such objectives (with a particular vigor on the first years of the free republic), and although no specific patterns were perceived, the commemorations were mostly after famous Georgian people and, after the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, “martyrs” of the civil conflict. One thing that can be said for sure is that the naming process is consonant with the Georgian national narrative, adapting throughout the years to major political events and ideological changes, as been shown by the analysis of the data presented in this research. The public memory inscribed in the cityscape draws from history, but a specific and detached part of Georgian history, carefully sewn together so to reinforce the territorial and cultural claim.

The selective nature of the process, picking only the intended historical aspects in the memorial commemoration, is very clear. It is not only evident through the names, aspects and events chosen but also the ones not chosen, and the ones which choice is deliberately oriented. There are important people from the First Republic present on the renamings, such as Noe Zhordania, and these commemorations, along with important dates from the time, are primarily concerned with bringing about the first democratic expression of power from the Georgian nation; it glosses over the Socialist, Menshevik nature of the First Republic, though, in a desire to forget everything related to the Soviet Union, even if it sharing a few ideological traits. All other commemorated aspects from the First Republic were not party leaders or relevant participants, with the exception of Zhordania, certainly only because he became president – a perfect example of the selectiveness of the process. These contested elements of the commemorative process express the troubles of Georgian people in dealing with

the conflictuous past they have – “toponymy with contested pasts”, clearly seen in Zhordania’s case and in other instances like the aforementioned commemoration of Meliton Kantaria, where the appropriation of the Georgian character of the historical figure is done while stripping him of his “Sovietness”. This is all part of what Assman calls cultural memory, the cultivation of which stabilizes and forms a society’s self-image; and according to Bucher et al., it is an indivisible part of the formation of group identity, in what is called social memory. Whatever memorialization concept we choose to apply, what is been looking at in this work is the expression of a shared history and culture in the toponymy, filtered by institutions and for the sake of a particular national discourse.

As we can see, a predominantly Georgian presence in the population and in the naming of Tbilisi is a very recent thing – only the past few decades have seen it. With its regained sovereignty, the Republic of Georgia is now tasting a full-blown commemoration of its culture, its heroes and martyrs, its religion and its history. The etching of its national elements in the capital serves a reminder of these very elements, so that the population gets reminded every day of who they are, which history they are intended to share and which fellow countrymen they can look up to in the journey to contribute themselves to the formation of the Georgian Nation. In retrospect, nevertheless, this stressing eliminates the signs of a shared past with other Caucasian peoples, and even if not completely intentionally, erases their participation in an essential era of the city’s development. There is no evidence that the reason for such disregard of the foreign influence on Tbilisi’s history should be other than simply the reinforcement of the national, homogenous Georgian discourse. For instance, in discourses like Gamsakhurdia’s, one can see nationalistic ideas that downplay the significance of national minorities, like Abkhazians and Svans, in favor of a uniquely Georgian nation; doing the same with other nationalities is just the next step. There are no xenophobic connotations to this lack of foreign representation, historical or not, but it would be interesting to analyze the impact this has on the population – whether they are aware of such shared past, what their opinion on the nations in question is, and other related questions. While we know that in their overall national discourse Armenians and Azeris also downplay the participation of others in their

historical journey, it would be interesting to conduct similar research in their capitals to see how their discourse deal with commemorations of the past – they may be just like Tbilisi, or maybe not. Identifying such tendencies in blooming nationalistic revivals (or even births) like the post-Soviet ones might show us interesting things about political processes as a whole.

The influence of the renamings on the people, however, is the subject of other researches, probably through interviews. The present work's intention was not only to show how the Independent Georgian regime has reinforced its narrative on the cityscape, but to bring data and knowledge to the international academic world and audience, so that more people can access and produce such kinds of work, letting us better understand how political and historical processes are carried and how they are cope with. I do not claim that this research has brought all the knowledge on the renaming process even on the time period here discussed – many of the streets present in the City Council decrees lack information, especially on the year of renaming. Perhaps on the future more sources will be found, more accurate and complete, and the understanding of the process will be ever bigger. This serves as an invitation for more research and memory work to be done and new conclusions be made from the data presented here and eventually other data, sharing the rich Caucasian history which we have still much to know about.

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8. Appendices

8.1. City Council Decrees

Appendix 1

8.1.1 Lado Gudiashvili Street renaming by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decision

27 of October, 1988

1. As most of the people in Tbilisi, decided to make some changes for Street and Square names and name them by famous Georgian Artist and Georgian hero Lado Gudiashvili. The street/square was between:

- a. Lermontov St.
- b. 1st of May St.
- c. Kasheni St.
- d. Akhospireli St.

And was named Lado Gudiashvili Street.

2. They must put a desk/poster which explained who was Lado Gudiashvili.

3. Choosing the best place for the poster.

4. There should be written: "For the famous Georgian artist, the street/square is named after Lado Gudiashvili, 1988.

Several different departments were asked to prepare everything needed to change the street/square name, to prepare special desk/poster for Lado Gudiashvili, in 1988.

Signed by ECCCT chairman I. Andriadze and ECCCT secretary V. Japaridze.

**8.1.2 Abo Tbileli, Transfiguration and Brothers Zubalashvili street
renamings by the Tbilisi City Soviet**

ECCCPDT

Decision

date: 26/01/90

Tbilisi

Concerning the renaming of [...]

the EC has decided together with that committee on public figures, the advisory council, capital's workers, unions, student youth and Kirov, 26 Commissars and Kalinin district councils' executive committees' proposals.

Kashen street in Kirov district --- Abo Tbileli street,

Pigner (maybe Figner) street in 26 Commissars ---- the street of Transfiguration (of Jesus Christ),

Atabegov street in Kalinin district ----- Brothers Zubalashvili str.

1938 Dec. 7 n° 69 decree of issuing these names is now cancelled.

The ECs of the three districts are given a month for memorial boards.

The general (main) architectural-planning division is required to draft memorial board projects and determine the places of their installation.

The memorial boards should have information in Georgian and in Russian with the format mentioned in First Document.

Once again the list of all services in relevant districts responsible for stuff: housing, design and 'well-construction' of the city whose EC-s are given a month for memorial boards and street signs.

Responsible supervisors: the ECs of the three district councils of the three districts.

EC chairman I. Andriadze

EC Secretary V. Japaridze

8.1.3 Renaming of several streets by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of City Council of People's Deputies of Tbilisi

Decision

Date: 22/03/90

Tbilisi

Concerning the renaming of [...] streets.

The ECCCT has decided to accept the proposal of the affiliated commission (the one I have already written about, about public figures and famous people), advisory council, the workers of the capital, unions, student youth and executive committees of district councils of Saburtalo, Orjonikidze, October and Lenin and to rename D. Guramishvili (he had nothing to do with the Soviets) street in Saburtalo and Orjonikidze districts to Mikheil Tamarashvili str.

9 January street in October district to be named Terenti Graneli str and Collectivization str. in Lenin district to be named Konstantine Iluridze str.

The decisions of 1938 December 7 number 69 and 1965 December 30 number 951 are now cancelled. The first one gave name to 9 January and the second one to Guramishvili.

The memorial boards to be remade within a month by executive committees of Saburtalo, Orjonikidze, Lenin and October districts.

The general (main) architectural-planning division is required to draft memorial board projects and determine the places of their installation.

The memorial boards should have information in Georgian and in Russian. It will contain information like this: "the street was named after Georgian historian Mikheil Tamarashvili in 1990".

Then there is a list of all the services responsible for housing, design and 'well-construction' of the city whose EC-s are given a month for memorial boards and street signs.

The info about the decision to be spread to relevant organizations for them to make changes.

Responsible supervisors: administrative inspection, scientific organization of labour, center for control of production, and ECs of above-mentioned districts.

EC chairman first deputy M. Mgebrishvili signature

EC secretary Japaridze signature

8.1.4 Renaming of several districts by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of the Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decision

26/04/90

Tbilisi

Concerning the renaming of...

The ECCCT has decided, along with the Commission to “perpetuate the memory of distinguished persons and public figures” and the workers of the capital, unions and student youth, as well as the decisions of the sessions of the districts themselves, that the following districts will be renamed:

First of May District – Didube District

Kalinin District – Mtatsminda District

Kirov District – Krtsanisi District

Orjonikidze District – Vake District

Factory District – Samgori District

26 Commissars District – Isani District

The Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR is asked to “accept the relevant decision”.

Chairman Andriadze

Secretary Japaridze

8.1.5 Renaming of several streets by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decision

24/05/1990

The Executive Committee of the City Council of Tbilisi, as advised by workers, unions and students, and also by the institution's advisory council, decides to rename Shaumian Street to Ketevan Tsamebuli Street (Ketevan the Martyr). The decree cancels the decision of the ECCCT of 1936, December 7 (nº 69) according to which the street was named Shaumian in the first place. All of the Isani district council executive committee responsible services for producing street name tags, memorials, housing and etc. are given a month time to change everything to the new name. The memorial tables have to mention that the avenue and the square were named Ketevan Tsamebuli in 1990.

The above-mentioned decision should be spread to organizations together with attached lists so that they may make necessary changes.

The bodies responsible for supervising its implementation are the administrative inspection, "scientific organization of labour" and "the centre for management of production", Isani district council executive committee.

Signed by ECCCT chairman I. Andriadze and ECCCT secretary V. Japaridze.

8.1.6 Returning of old toponyms by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Presidium of ECCCPDT (PD - people's deputies)

Resolution

30 August 1990

Concerning renaming of Tbilisi districts, squares, streets and objects of other purposes.

In latest period, the practice of returning historical names to Tbilisi districts and streets is being implemented successfully. (Davit Agmashenebeli, Tamar Mepe and Ketevan Tsamebuli streets).

Lately, the speed of the process has significantly decreased which dissatisfies the society of the capital. There are a number of objects of different purposes renaming of which is of immediate necessity because of their toponymics. (Dzerzhinski, Kirov, Communist Labour streets, stations of Metro like Komsomol and others).

The Council of the capital takes into consideration the will of the population manifested through letters we have received and newspaper publications and issues resolution:

The ECCCPDT is to continue the practice of changing names to Tbilisi districts, squares, streets and other objects together with its advisory board and to give relevant proposals within 10 days.

The sessions of district councils of Lenin and October district deputies are given ten days to give official proposals of returning their historical names, in collaboration with their populations.

City Council chairman N. Lekishvili

8.1.7 Renamings in the district of Mtatsminda by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decree

7 September, 1990

Changes for the following streets: located in Mtsatminda area: A. Lunacharski, A. Makharadze, M. Tskhakaia, A. Oboladze, S. Kirovi, G. Leonidze, A. Japaridze

From now and then the street names should be changed and every responsible department must follow their duty in order to make those changes on time. The street names should be changed as:

1. A. Lunacharski st. – as Levan Laghidze st.
 2. P. Makharadze st. – as Geronti Kikodze st.
 3. M. Tskhakaia st. – as Vukol Beridze st.
 4. A. Oboladze st. – as Vakhtang Kotetishvili st.
 5. S. Kirovi st. – as Giorgi Leonidze st.
 6. G. Leonidze st. – as Brother Sargi/scientist/ and Davit/ artist/ Kakabadzebi st.
 7. A. Japaridze st. – as Paolo Iashvili st.
2. Must be cancelled the decision made in December 7, and February 16, 1967 regarding giving the names for the following streets (that I mentioned above, in the first column).
 3. Mtatsminda municipality will be responsible to make all these changes within 1 month
 4. Special desk or poster (where you can read brief info) must be prepared within 1 month.
 5. The desk/poster must include a brief info about the artist/scientist etc. in Georgian and Russian lang.

The following changes must be done on time including street names, signs and desk/posters. And changes must be officially registered in papers.

**8.1.8 Giorgi Tsabadze, May 26th and Archil Kurdiani Street
renamings by the Tbilisi City Soviet**

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decree

2 November, 1990

Changes for Telman; 25 February St. and Gldani Street names.

1. Telmani St., which was in Didube, should be changed to Giorgi Tsabadze St.; 25 February St. must be changed to 26 May st. and Gldani St. must be renamed as Archil Kurdiani St.
2. Should be cancelled the decision made in December 7, 1938 regarding naming streets as Telmani and 25 February.
3. Streets should be name as Giorgi Tsabadze.
- 4/5. Different departments were asked to make changes and inform the responsible person(s) regarding the changes.

8.1.9 Nadzaladevi and Chughureti districts and several streets renamings by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decree

November 7, 1990

Regarding changes for Tbilisi streets and other organizations as well.

1. Following the decision made by council some of the names in Tbilisi as well as the names of some organizations must be changed
2. The following changes must be done within 1 month
3. The following information must be sent to all responsible departments in order to start making changes
4. Administration must control and take care that all these changed will be done within 1 month

City Council Chairman N. Lekishvili

Here is the list of old names (in the first column) and new names (in the second column):

1. Lenini district – Nadzaladevi district
2. October district – Chughureti district
3. Marx str. – Aghudga. Old bridge str.
4. Kooperatsia str./ Didube district – Shota Iamanidze str.
5. Azizbekovi str. Krtsanisi district – Betlemi st.
6. Klara Tsetkini str. – Mikheil Tsinarmdzgvishvili str.
7. Berzhinski str. – Pavle Ingorokva str.
8. Sevastopoli str. – Guram Rcheulishvili str.
9. Grinevitski str./ October district – Kolkheti str.
10. Perovskaia str. – Giorgi Akhvlediani str.
11. Mechnikovi str. – Dodo Abashidze str.
12. Montini str. – Gigo Zazishvili str.
13. Komkavshiri alley – Sololaki alley

14. Volodarski str. – Haidar Abashidze str.
15. Zakomoldini str. – Giorgi Maruashvili str.
16. Sverdlovsk Str. – Saint Nikoloz str.
17. Elbakidze downhill – Vere downhill
18. October str. – Tsotne Dadiani str.
19. Sherozia str. – Z. Chavchavadze str.
20. Boris Dzeladze str – 9 April str.
21. Magnitogorski str. – Tornike Eristavi str.
22. Al. Topuria str. – Erosi Manjgaladze Str.
23. Vatutini str. – Khornabuji str.
24. Pioneris str. – Samghereti str.
25. Cherniakhovski str. – David Gareji str.
26. Hotel in Gldani district – Hotel “Alaverdi”
27. Touristic hotel in Gldani – Hotel “Bakhtioni”
28. Tbilisi 13th music school – Otar Taktakishvili
29. Tbilisi 77th public school – Grigol Kobakhidze
30. Lokomotivi stadium – Vake stadium
31. S. Orjonikidze Medicine institute – Tbilisi N3 medicine institute
32. Eliava transport railway – Tbilisi railway
33. Mechanical Engineering N26 factory – Tbilisi Mechanical engineering factory

8.1.10 Renaming of metro stations by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of Tbilisi City Council (Soviet) of People's Deputies

Decree

November 7, 1990

Tbilisi City Council Presidium decides to change the names of Tbilisi Metropolitan Stations' names in collaboration with its advisory council workers of the capital, as well as labour collective of the metropolitan workers.

Stations: "October" to "Nadzaladevi"

"Komsomol" to "Medical Institute"

"26 Comissioners" to "Avlabari"

"Lenin Square" to "Freedom Square"

"Polytechnical Institute" to "Polytechnical"

The metropolitan leadership together with services of design and "well-construction" are told to do all the necessary works for its implementation in the shortest times possible.

The Permanent Commission for Transport and Communications is responsible for supervising.

City Council Chairman signature's N. Lekishvili

Sent to ECCCT, Metropolitan, Culture "Sammartvelo" "ruleship".

8.1.11 Renaming of several streets by the Tbilisi City Soviet

Executive Committee of the Tbilisi People's Deputies City Council (Soviet)

Decision

14.03.91

Tbilisi

Concerning the renaming of [...]

ECCCT decided:

To accept the proposals of ECCCT advisory council and the workers of the capital.

Former Ivane Javakhishvili Street, in the Mtatsminda district, to – Mikheil Zandukeli Street

Engels Street – Lado Asatiani Street

The nameless portion from the end of Davitashvili Street to Kojori until Okrokara – Maro Makashvili Uphill

5th of December Street in the Isani district – Kakutsa Cholokashvili Street

The decree cancels the previous decrees of ECCCT that named the streets Engels and 5 December on Dec. 7, 1938 (Nº 69) and of Ivane Javakhishvili on Nov. 22, 1946 (Nº 31)

Street signs should be installed within a month by Mtatsminda, Krtsanisi and Isani district executive committees. The decree is to be sent to the relevant organisations for them to make changes, together with the attached list. Responsible supervisors: ECCCT administrative inspection, Mtatsminda, Krtsanisi and Isani district executive committees and technical production union "Tbilsystemotechnic".

Chairman Andriadze

Secretary Japaridze

8.1.12 Declaration of the Soviet Union's cease of operation in Georgia, by the newly formed Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Georgia

Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Georgia

Decree n^o 732g

29 of August, 1991

Tbilisi

Since according to the decree (lit. command) of the President of the Republic of Georgia, issued on August 26, 1991, the operation of the Communist Party has stopped on the whole territory of the country, and since the "court college" of the supreme court of the Republic of Georgia has banned the Communist Party and has stopped its existence and activities as an organization, the cabinet of ministers demands that its committees evaluate the worth of all the property owned by the communist party. The same is demanded from city halls and local municipalities, like confiscations.

Prime-minister of the Republic of Georgia, B. Gugushvili

8.1.13 Establishment of commissions to inventarize the communist party's belongings and its bodies by the City Hall of Tbilisi

City Hall of Tbilisi

Decree

02/09/91

Since according to the decree of August 26 of the President of the Republic of Georgia the operation of the communist party has been “stopped” on the whole territory of the country and since the decree of “the supreme court college” has banned it, the following has been assigned to the prefects of the Tbilisi districts and the chairmen of gamgeobas of assemblies (gamgeobas of sakrebulo).

1. Establish district commissions that will implement inventarization of the material belongings of the communist party and its bodies in collaboration with the representatives of the owners of the properties.
2. The district prefectures and gamgeobas should take the property under their protection, their “balance” and protect it.

Merab Mgebrishvili

I, Augusto Dala Costa,

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