

FROM SOVIET TO CONTEMPORARY TRANSPARENCY: SOCIAL CHANGES IN GEORGIA

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Abstract

The present article examines the practical effects of the new social paradigm of transparency on the Georgian society. While contemporary Georgia affirms a clear European, modern orientation, there is a dark side to this development which needs to be addressed duly. This study examines the challenges that the new social changes bring: it explains in what ways the advent of transparency puts the functioning of the public sphere under risk. To explore the forms that both: transition and transparency assume, a complex set of qualitative methods was used including case studies, media analysis, focus group interviews and expert interviews.

Key words: *transparency, public sphere, private sphere, transition, development*

INTRODUCTION

Georgia is a post-Soviet country which undergoes the process of transition from totalitarian to democratic regimes, and changes the system of values and lifestyle – old standards are not totally devaluated, but new ones have not been firmly established yet. Along with other aspects of development, this transitory stage is evident in the development of the public and private spheres too. Contemporary Georgian society is in the process of (re)discovering the private sphere, which had been long repressed under the Soviet time. The fight against private property had reached even the physical bodies of individuals: metaphorically speaking, the person in the Soviet space (the ‘homo-Sovieticus’) was somehow deprived of their body, and then suddenly, after achieving independence from the USSR, they gradually started to discover their own body, and sometimes even show it publicly. This has been one source of the transition conflict in Georgia since the 1990s. Simultaneously, another conflict between the public and private spheres is starting

to gain strength at another battlefield – the one which fits within the global trend of physical space domination and transparency. Transparency represents a global social paradigm which strengthens social control and often leads to indifference and isolation. In most of the Western developed countries, transparency is a consequence of the intrusion of the private sphere into the public one. The picture is more complex in post-Soviet countries, where the establishment of transparency means the intrusion of the underdeveloped private sphere into the public sphere.

As this research addresses the issue of transparency, it studies specifically the relationship and balance between the two spheres (public and private) in Georgia. In this regard, the habit of the old Soviet experience of the public sphere plays a crucial role while the destruction of its standards is a painful process. This paper intends to answer the following questions: does the paradigm of transparency function in Georgia and how is it manifested? The paper claims that the new paradigm of transparency functions in Georgia too and carries considerable risks on the way to democracy. Along with the positive changes in the country's westernization processes, the social control imposed by transparency assumes a form which hinders the development of Georgian community.

Objective social sciences being a relatively new academic field, emerging slowly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there are many understudied issues in general. This is especially true regarding transparency: this is a topic which has not been addressed at all. Consequently, this research did not face the task to fill a gap in the study of transparency in Georgia, but to start filling an abyss. It rather created gaps the filling of which would put more light to the understanding of transition changes in general, as well as the experiences of transitory and post-Soviet countries which face the paradigm of transparency too.

The methods used for the research are basically qualitative and include desk research, media analysis, focus-group discussions and expert interviews. Thus the results are based on previous quantitative and qualitative surveys, press analysis, and newly produced data as well.

The structure of the paper is as follows: right after the introduction, there comes the review of relevant literature, which is followed by the methodology part. Then the results start with a brief overview of the cultural background of the Georgian society. The fourth section analyses why and how the new paradigm of transparency works in a transitional country like Georgia and, finally, the paper ends with a conclusion, where a general assessment, research implications and shortcomings are provided.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of transparency represents an overwhelming phenomenon which applies to all domains of life: politics, economics and society. This research focuses on the social implications of transparency, although the other domains fall under its rules too.

The concept of transparency is analysed through the theories of two major authors: Richard Sennett (1992) and Byung-Chul Han (2015). Sennett associated transparency with narcissistic tendency, opposing it to play and creativity, which had been the dominant forces until narcissism defeated them. Geographical space becoming more and more open to everyone's sight, people experience

embarrassment: they feel they are seen unmasked – just the way they are, and so everything they do reveals their personal character. According to Sennett, the 19th-century social changes made people abandon social masks in favour of the belief that direct, open relations create warm, long-lasting relationships. The private being inevitably present in the public sphere, social control has encompassed it too. This paved the way to an overwhelming fear to show private character in public. It became even unavoidable, and the solution people found to confront this stress was to create comfort in small communities whose members share many similarities. However, this solution leads to a vicious circle, as the demand on openness between two people burdens relationships with heavy responsibilities and very often leads to frustration. The demand on openness together with the intense social control create a paradoxical situation in which the size of the acceptable community is constantly shrinking, while community becomes ‘destructive’ and ‘loses civility’ – the ability to live in a pluralistic society, to interact with people who may be even dramatically different (Sennett 1992).

One of the latest works on transparency is authored by Byung-Chul Han. Han assesses the dominance of the transparency paradigm as essentially based on the mistaken assumption that ‘transparency creates trust’ - in reality, transparency brings total surveillance and control, leaving trust behind (Han 2015, p. vii). To show its decaying effect, the author equates ‘the transparency society’ with ‘the society of control’, and ‘the society of positivity’ where negativism is destroyed just like on Facebook where there is no ‘dislike’ button – for negativity is a drawback to communication and is economically useless too. (Han 2015, pp. 7-8). Also, Han refers to ‘the society of exhibition’, ‘the society of pornography’ or ‘the society of intimacy’, where the public sphere is an exhibition space, whereas the society, experiencing ‘the pornographic lack of distance’, loses critical consciousness (Han 2015, pp. 35-36). It becomes the ‘society of opinion’, which leads to no consequences and ‘leaves what already exists untouched. ... Compulsive transparency stabilizes the existing system most effectively’ (Han 2015, p. 7). Among other spheres of life, transparency negatively affects political performance and kills long-term planning (Han 2015, p. vii).

Most of the statements that Han made find relevance in the Georgian society. The development of communication and networking made being different or holding a different opinion more and more difficult. As Han states, transparent communication has a unifying and levelling effect, which causes de-individualization (Han 2015, pp. vii, 29-31). Transparency turns freedom and communication into total control precisely by the means of the members of the transparent society – they communicate with each other not because of an outer constraint, but voluntarily, out of inner need (Han 2015, p. 46). Thus Han states that the ‘transparent consumer is the new prisoner’ (Han 2015, pp. 48-49).

The application of Han’s and Sennett’s theories to transitory Georgia made me claim that the social control imposed by transparency assumes a different, more extreme form in Georgia for two reasons: 1) The transition period implies a passage from the traditional homogenous society to a more pluralistic one, from a collectivist consciousness to a more individualized one, and finally, from a poorly developed private sphere to a capable one (Leshchenko 2002); and 2) Georgia is among those cultures ‘which rely heavily on shame’ (Benedict 1984, p. 222).

When conducting an anthropological study of Japanese culture, Ruth Benedict distinguished and contrasted two types of cultures: one emphasizing the importance of guilt (like the American culture), and one privileging the importance of shame (like the Japanese culture). In the latter type of culture, individuals need to refine ‘prudence and watchfulness’, and live up to other people’s expectations (Benedict 1984, pp. 220-222). Benedict’s work gives an explication of the reason why the transparency paradigm was easily established in a post-communist country like Georgia.

As the paper addresses the functioning of the public sphere, and claims that transparency affects its functioning negatively, it was essential to consider the work of Jürgen Habermas: “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” (1991). Habermas notes a certain disjunction between the functions that the public sphere practically assumes, and those functions which are expected from it in a democratic society (Habermas 1991, 222). He sees one source of the problem precisely in the disappearance of privacy due to the plurality and abundance of opposed interests – this incites the suspicion that it is impossible to find a common interest on which public opinion would rely. However, Habermas believes that the public sphere can fulfil an effective role if, along with the maximal diminution of bureaucracy, interest conflicts would be balanced according to universally acknowledged standards (Habermas 1991, 234-235).

2. METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a set of qualitative methods. First of all, desk research was carried out to select relevant previous studies: both qualitative and quantitative. There are two major surveys encompassing Georgia: the ‘World Values Survey’ (2008 and 2014), and the ‘Caucasus Barometer’ carried out annually in the South Caucasus countries. Those two databases are incommensurably important as they are the only sources showing general tendencies and attitudes in the Georgian society. In addition, another quantitative survey was carried out by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation: ‘Generation in transition: Youth study 2016 – Georgia’. Thus the quantitative data was used to strengthen different arguments of the study. As for qualitative researches, this paper uses studies by different scholars published in academic journals, as well as a report fulfilled by a NGO – the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC).

The next method used for this study was in-depth interviews with experts of social and political sciences. Namely, I conducted three interviews in November and December 2016: one with the sociologist Emzar Jgerenaia, two with political scientists Ghia Nodia and Thornike Sharashenidze. Those interviews aimed to reveal the actual issues of the Georgian public sphere, in addition to those revealed by desk research.

Another method used for this study was focus group discussions. There were two categories: the first two focus group interviews recruited high school students of 14-15 years old (10 in each group); whereas the other two focus groups were composed of respondents aged 25-35 and represented different social backgrounds. For the youngest groups, two public schools were selected in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia (namely, the 21st and the 55th state schools), as the situation in Tbilisi often gives

possibility to estimate what happens in other big cities and rural areas: if certain prohibitions or taboos would be evident in Tbilisi, then it would be probable to find them even more intensively in other big cities and rural areas. The focus-groups were composed considering gender balance, and the questions were the same for both age groups, the comparison of which gave dynamics. Nevertheless, there were a few issues that were discussed only with the older groups, as they already had accumulated considerable experience of social life. All the focus-group interviews took place in January 2017 and aimed assess young people's attitudes, as well as their compatibility with the 'transparency society'.

Finally, I have analyzed two popular employment web-sites in Georgia: 'hr.ge' and 'jobs.ge'. This method was an additional mean to assess the presence of transparency paradigm, more particularly, the presence of narcissistic principle in social relations. The study of the demands of employers towards potential employees clarifies what is acknowledged as desirable at least verbally and officially. Overall, 100 vacancies were selected that were announced in March 2017: 55 cases from 'hr.ge' and 45 cases from 'jobs.ge'. Those were vacancies for 'white-collar' jobs (as Sennett names it), where cadres have to deal with office work. I analyzed categories like 'administration' and 'management', with positions like 'sales manager', 'brand manager', 'office manager', 'administrator', 'development manager' or 'director assistant'. This kind of jobs select employees according to their 'personal skills' precisely.

3. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Georgia stepped on the transition road in the second half of the 19th century – if we imply in transition not only the passage to democracy, but from the traditional to the modern system of values too. In this regard, we cannot avoid the importance of the Georgian Enlighteners' work, as it was precisely their initiative to implement the first project of modernization in Georgia. Apart from social reforms, they strived to establish modern values such as the importance of education, work, common welfare, and they harshly criticized inactivity and indifference (Kekelia 2015). To what extent were they successful in their intentions is a separate case for discussion, however, one thing is clear – critical thinking in the Georgian society started with Ilia Chavchavadze, the most famous figure of the Georgian Enlighteners. Ilia Chavchavadze was the person who criticized the society and handed it a 'mirror' so as to show all its flaws. For this reason, he was despised, as he writes in one of his poems: 'they say about me: "he speaks the vice of a Georgian, does not hide his flaws, this is obvious hatred!"' (Chavchavadze 1861). In spite of the Enlighteners' efforts, critical thinking proved to be hard to be implemented in the society, and this was due to two main reasons: 1) Georgia's last two centuries' history; 2) shame-based culture.

3.1. Russia-Georgia relations

Due to the restrictions that started with the Russian Empire, the last two-century history of Georgia could be assessed as a tragic 'existence' and not even 'history' (Jgerenaia 2017). Jgerenaia sees the reason in the opening of the Caucasus

mountain road by King George XIII of Georgia, which caused the chaining of Georgia to the mountains and the land instead of the sea.

“The land, unlike the sea, always creates conservative, recluse culture which is inclined towards autarchy. On the other hand, the unstable element of the sea and the seafaring are the basis for openness, liberal values, freedom, the giving and sharing of others’ cultural norms and customs” (Jgerenaia 2017: 32).

After having chained Georgia to the Caucasus Mountains, the Russian Empire was soon replaced by the Soviet Union, under the conditions of which all kinds of differences were persecuted, not to mention critical thinking. The attempt of homogenizing the society enrolled every person who was considered different into merciless repressions. Jgerenaia notes the influence of the Soviet regime on the homogenization process and the distortion of the meanings of some words: ‘words were deprived of their meaning, what was supposed to designate war was called “international aid”, “love” was understood and interpreted without “sexuality”, while “the workers’ and peasants’ state” did everything to deprive work from all its meaning’ (Jgerenaia 2017: 24-25).

Georgia achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, nevertheless, the society’s mentality was still far from freedom. The data of the World Values Survey in 2014 suggest that 61.6% of the Georgian population think that it would be a positive change if respect towards authority increased in the future. This is assessed negatively only by 6%, whereas 30% holds a neutral position. The society is habituated to the fact that its fate is decided from ‘above’, and thus is constantly waiting for a hero that will save the nation. First, it was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Georgia’s first president, who was regarded as the savior of the nation, then – Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia’s second president, who wore ‘Stalin’s shade’ (Jgerenaia 2017) and was glorified as a hope for the Georgians. The same is true for the third president, Mikheil Saakashvili, and even as late as in 2012, the society believed that Bidzina Ivanishvili, the leader of the new opposition party, would be the guardian of the Georgian nation, and would care of their welfare as he is a famous millionaire. It seems that indeed, ‘having been a colony for a long period of time renders people deeply skeptical towards their own intellectual abilities and the capacity to create their own political order’ (Jgerenaia 2017: 33).

3.2. ‘Shame’ culture

Ilia Chavchavadze’s work had a crucial importance: it represented the first blow on the Georgian ‘shame-based culture’. However, the blow must have been far less than enough, as the indicators of the ‘shame culture’ are still clearly evident in the society. First of all, there is the famous phrase from a Georgian writer Chabua Amirejibi: ‘You should be your family’s emissary in your homeland, and your nation’s emissary outside your homeland, because your behaviour is your family’s face in your country, whereas it is your nation’s face outside your country!’¹ The

¹ Phrase retrieved from:
http://patriotebi.ucoz.com/load/brdznuli_gamonatkvamebi/ch'abua_amirejibis_brdznuli_gamonatkvamebi/2-1-0-54 (accessed 17 July 2017).

shame-based culture is suggested by the World Values Survey 2014 as well, according to which it is important for 78.8% of the Georgian population ‘to always behave properly; to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong’ (World Values Survey 2014).

The actual presence of the ‘shame culture’ was revealed through the focus-group interviews too: young respondents accorded importance to ‘people’s opinion’ and assessments, as well as the importance to behave conformably to their expectations. In this regard, a girl who is in her twenties and works as an assistant of lecturers at a state university in Tbilisi provides a most illustrative speech describing her insecurity:

I have a problem in the public space and I get tensed whenever I see that there is a certain expectation from me in the particular social environment. For example, I should live up to a certain expectation or I should do something. I do not worry at university lectures because I am sure about what I am doing. But if I have even a slightest doubt that I might not be [behaving the right way] in a concrete situation, then I just ‘stand in my corner’², not to mention communicability. I need to be sure that there is coincidence between others’ expectations and my capacities (girl from 25-35 year-old category).

This is the dominant attitude among the youth in Georgia, regardless of the level of education.

4. TRANSPARENCY AND THE DESTRUCTIVE ‘GEMEINSCHAFT’

Due to the specificities of Georgia’s political experience, the country has not developed firm democratic traditions yet. Neither is its private sphere developed. However, the modern stimulus of transparency is irrepressible and establishes a mixed and paradoxical situation where the underdeveloped private sphere already claims its transparent presence into the public sphere.

In a popular TV emission of the Soviet Union, a Georgian movie director Giga Lortkipanidze said: ‘the most terrible word for a Georgian ... is the word “[misleading] appearance”’ (Young Communist, 27.10.1988: 4). These words suggest that the transparent notion of ‘personality’ has existed in the Georgian society for at least decades already: as ‘[misleading] appearance’ implies play, a certain mask that the transparent society does not tolerate. Indeed, even at a glimpse, the actual picture of the Georgian society fits within the paradigm of transparency: the concept of personality has certain value, the social control encompasses the private sphere via the public sphere, and there is hardly any capacity to live in a pluralistic environment.

4.1. Narcissism

As one of the aims of the research was to assess whether or not the public sphere is transparent, it addressed the presence of narcissistic principle in social relations. First of all, the focus-group discussants were asked which attitude favours warm and strong relationships more, and the majority of both age groups chose

² Idiom in Georgian meaning to stay inactive.

‘straightforwardness’ or ‘openness’ against ‘the presence of certain norms and distance’, play and wearing social masks – the conviction that, according to Sennett, leads to disappointment and reduces the number of acceptable people in the community.

Secondly, the research addressed play and creativity as the forces towards which the narcissistic principle is hostile. Apart from the World Values Survey, low level of creativity is suggested by the focus-group discussions as well. Notwithstanding single exceptions, the desire to play was not manifest. One of the respondents even assessed play as ‘irrelevant’ in his age and even joked that it was a ‘soviet inheritance’. Another respondent saw the problem in the fact that he did not have relations with his childhood friends anymore, whereas another one mentioned the lack of infrastructure. ‘People of my generation do not have the same wish to play as I have, so I play with children and cats’ – said a girl from 25-35 year-old category.

In the third place, narcissism in the social space implies the emphasis on personal skills and characteristics instead of deeds and action. On the official web-sites of employment, a great majority of the vacancies had personal features and skills as requirements, often (in about 50% of the cases) in separate categories too, under the headings ‘personal features’ or ‘personal skills’. The mostly demanded personal features are ‘communicability’ (65 vacancies out of 100 search for communicative cadres), responsibility (56%), and organization and discipline (55%).

Table 1: Personal skills required by employers in Georgia

| Personal skill | Percentage % |
|---|---------------------|
| communicability | 65 |
| responsibility | 56 |
| organization and discipline | 55 |
| team work ability | 36 |
| time management skill | 33 |
| capacity to work in a stressful environment | 23 |
| negotiation skill | 22 |
| diligence and hard work | 21 |
| energy and activeness | 21 |
| analytical thinking | 21 |
| punctuality | 20 |
| motivation | 17 |

| | |
|--|----|
| ability to work independently | 17 |
| ability to plan | 16 |
| attentiveness to details and concentration skill | 14 |
| ability to act operationally | 14 |
| ability to take decisions rapidly | 13 |
| creativity or creative thinking | 10 |
| logical thinking | 9 |
| persuasiveness | 8 |
| honesty and morality | 8 |

Obviously, it is hard for employers to define to what extent most of these required personal features characterize potential cadres, as it is a matter of theoretical perception. Therefore, employers rely on the impressions that prospective employees leave on them, as well as on recommendations and existing opinions on those candidates.

4.2. Social networks

The transparent social control would not be perfect without social media. According to a latest quantitative research in Georgia, 84% of the youth (14-29 year-olds) is a daily user of 'Facebook' (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2017), and is not exempted from the overwhelming social control of transparency. Facebook has become significantly popular in Georgia, and reduces the amount of time spent in face-to-face interactions. One can often observe, especially in Tbilisi, young people sitting in a café around the same table and staring into their cell phones. This happens everywhere: cafes and other public distraction spaces, on a village bench or at a public lecture. 88% of the youth (aged 14-29) have access to internet, spend about 3.7 hours there daily, and 86% use it for social networks (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2017). Social networks are predominately used for their visual effects – i.e. for exhibition purposes, for sharing or viewing photos and videos. Thus Facebook implements the culture of 'exhibition' and 'positivity': especially among young people, who use the social network for 'publicizing' themselves via 'selfies', pictures, and 'statuses' about their feelings. The pictures must necessarily be positive: showing smiling faces, beauty or fun. It is not 'normal' to corrupt the positive mood anyhow – negative statuses, although quite few, do not get much sympathy, nor response. It would even look awkward to 'like' negative statuses or pictures.

Compulsive transparency is evident from the fact that Facebook users 'post' and 'check-in' voluntarily, out of their own inner need – as if they knew that if they do not stay active and do not remind Facebook users of their existence, they would practically cease to exist – as disappearance in social network means leaving the stage of attention, and thus to be forgotten in reality. Therefore, posting or

exhibiting is the only way to 'sell oneself' on the social market. This constraint is fulfilled voluntarily, as if it were not a constraint but freedom. One illustrative example from Georgian Facebook users is a young girl who exhibited almost every step of her wedding and honeymoon.

4.3. Empty Public Sphere

Both Sennett and Han postulate that the transparent society is characterized by inactivity and mistrust – in fact, striking features of the Georgian society which represent major challenges of societal development. People verbally claim they care about various issues, however, when it comes to practical action – they do nothing. This is suggested by both the focus-group interviews and quantitative surveys. The focus-group respondents reported a great concern, for example, on acts of violence in the street and the neighborhood, however, they do not or do not dare to interfere: some boys said they feared to become victims of violence too. Two girls from the 25-35 year-old category told they knew a lot of cases of domestic violence, and they were concerned, but they had disappointing experiences which made them decide not to intervene again. A girl narrates:

I have a relative in the village who is beaten by her husband. Once he even inflicted a concussion of the brain to her. She did not like her condition and often ran from the house. One time I happened to be in the village too, and I was the only person in the whole village who supported that woman at all. Everybody would tell her: 'why are you complaining? He is your husband and your family'. ... She left the house and lived with me for about a week. I convinced her to write a complaint at the police office where I would accompany her. However, the very previous night her husband came raging and 'almost beat' me too. This was followed by serious discussions: why would I meddle with and why would I 'predispose' his wife against him. Then the woman was returned to her house by force. She was 'cured' as a fool with psychotropic medicine and now she lives unhappily (girl from 25-35 year-old category).

Another girl from the same category added that she had lost the wish to intervene: 'I stopped interfering because I try to persuade people to fight, I offer my support and strategies, but in vain. ... I prefer to stay in the three monkeys' position [I don't see, I don't hear, I don't speak]' (girl from 25-35 year-old category). In general, boys were more categorical in supporting indifference in domestic violence. A boy from the same age category even stated that it is not right to interfere in a husband-and-wife relationship, as it is only their business and no effort would make sense. Another boy noted that 'it is a very bad tone to interfere in an act of violence in the street. One would not want to do it, so I do not do it' (boy from 25-35 year-old category). Only one 14 year-old girl reported a successful act of interference, but not in domestic violence: she saved a boy of a different race in a subway passage from the bullying of a Georgian boy band by pretending she was his girlfriend.

The general high level of inactivity is evident from the World Values Survey (2014) as well. For example, 97.1% of the population considers itself as religious, but only 21.8% attend religious services at least once a week. Another illustrating example is that 80.2% of the population affirm they care about the environment, but only 6.6%

has participated in a cause for protecting the environment during the last two years. Moreover, there is a general readiness for inactivity: about 80% of the Georgian population states that they would never participate in protest actions, strikes or boycotts. 60.6% of the population would never join even peaceful demonstrations, while 71.2% would never sign a petition. In addition, the level of membership in all kinds of voluntary organizations fluctuates between 0.2%-1.9% (including inactive membership), except from membership of religious organizations which is as high as 21% (World Values Survey 2014).

As regards mistrust, its level is still high in the Georgian society (Caucasus Barometer 2015; World Values Survey. 2014). Except from the high level of trust towards religious institutions (80% of the population trust their religious institution), the highest indicators of trust is revealed only towards those institutions that underwent successful reforms during 2004-2011: namely, the army is trusted or fully trusted by 74% of the population, then comes the police and the committee for university enrolment exams with 45% of trust each. In the cases of all other institutions, neutral position dominates all with about 35-54%, whereas trust affirmation is relatively low: the ombudsman as well as local governments are trusted or fully trusted by 26%, the media – by 22%, the judiciary system – by 24%, political parties – by 8%, the parliament – by 16%, the executive government – by 21%, the president – by 33%, and even the non-governmental organizations by – 23% (Caucasus Barometer 2015). Such low rates of trust means, according to Han's theory, that those institutions are deprived from the capacity to act.

The deceleration of the functioning of the public sphere is also manifested by the non-existence of a common interest that would consolidate the society (Habermas 1991, 234-235). This could also be an additional reason in Georgia, as experts of political science point to this issue:

The problem lies in the absence of a common link among the population that would be stronger than what differentiates them. Often such common link is incarnated in an external threat. In Georgia, many people perceive the threat of Russia as artificial and invented by 'The United National Movement Party' ... Endlessly as we may speak of the threats and problems, the society is relaxed and inert. ... sensitivity towards even small problems is higher in most prosperous countries, whereas in countries like Georgia, where there are many serious issues, this sensitivity is low (Interview with Ghia Nodia, 19 November 2016).

4.4. Uncivil Society

Compared to other countries where democracy has long been established, transparency bears more risks in a transitory country like Georgia. First of all, transparency becomes a drawback to creativity, which was already repressed in the USSR. The Soviet legacy can still be observed today in people's attitudes: only 9% of people mentioned 'imagination' as an important quality to develop in children, against 19% mentioning 'obedience' (WVS 2014). Secondly, transparency has the quality of leaving things as they are, which is undesirable in a place experiencing transition shock and difficulties in living in a pluralistic environment. The level of tolerance towards different minorities are very low not only regarding homosexuals,

but also people of different religion, race, and ethnicity: according to WVS 2014, xenophobia is strongest towards homosexuals: about 86% think homosexuality is never justifiable, and would not like to have them as neighbours. Another 36.4% would not like to have people of a different religion as neighbours, whereas 32.8% mentioned immigrants and foreign workers as undesirable neighbours, 83.4% agreeing to the statement that when jobs are scarce, people of this country should be given priority over immigrants. About a third of the population (32.1%) would not like to have people of a different race as neighbours. Even the young focus-group discussants highlighted the diverse restrictions imposed by the society, especially regarding ethnicity, religion and sex. Although most of the respondents claimed the readiness to be friends with people of different social, religious, ethnic or perspectival grounds, some boys and girls from the 25-35 year-old category could not imagine creating families with persons from a different culture: they mentioned linguistic and 'other striking cultural differences' as the reason.

Recent facts pointing to intolerance and 'uncivility' overgrows into violation of human rights. Namely, Muslims living in Georgia were deprived of their right of prayer in October-November 2012 in the villages of Nigvziani and Tsintskaro, and in May 2013 – in the village of Samtatskaro (Mikeladze 2013). Over a year later, on 10 September 2014 a group of Orthodox people hung a pig's head at the door of a Muslim boarding-school in Kobuleti (*UN Association of Georgia*, September 11, 2014). As Sennett had noted, the only 'action' a modern community can take is shrinking the size of the community by excluding and marginalizing more and more individuals from it (Sennett 1992, pp. 221-223). Another striking fact occurred on 17 May 2013, the international day against homophobia, when Orthodox priests, organizations and parish attacked the peaceful meeting that supported the LGBT groups in Tbilisi. Meanwhile, the Patriarchate declared May 17 as the family purity day (Patriarchate of Georgia, May 16, 2013).

Thus the fact that the Georgian society still experiences intolerance towards people of different religion and culture should not be necessarily considered as a remnant of the obscure notion of 'traditional times', when society was mostly homogenous. Rather, this could be a consequence of the advance of pluralism and globalization which favour the 'shrinking' of communities. And indeed, since as recently as in July 2017, a community called the 'Georgian march' organizes in demonstrations against 'non-Georgians' living in Georgia. Such 'uncivility' in the society is unprecedented in Georgia, and it has reached even 'different' Georgians, who differ not by big differences like sexual orientation, religion or socio-economic stand, but by character, communication style, or different thinking. When someone is said to be 'a little different' or 'strange', it means that the community experiences hardship in integrating them. Moreover, in a great part of the Georgian society, there is intolerance towards happiness too: a person should not be considered happy – sometimes, rich or just free – so as not to be outcast from 'we'. A sign of such disintegration is when a person is told resentimental phrases like: 'you are carefree, we have issues', or 'how would we have as much capacities [as you]?'

CONCLUSION

The research strived to examine the functioning of the paradigm of transparency in Georgia and its forms of manifestation. The results suggest the presence of

transparency and its accompanying control, reduced civility and prolonged transition. The transparency paradigm in transitory Georgia manifests itself in the intrusion of the underdeveloped private sphere into the public sphere, and is divulged by the intense social control of people's *private* characters in the *public* sphere. This form of conflict hinders the already fragile capacity to live in a modern, pluralistic environment.

In Georgia, the transparency paradigm was facilitated by the culture of 'shame', which was already oriented to external appearance and visibility. That Ilia Chavchavadze encountered so much criticism in the 19th century because he 'spoke the vice of a Georgian' publicly, it means that the Georgian society at that time – just like today – accorded importance to what others would say, and how one would appear in public, more than what was ethically right.

The transparency paradigm reinforces the point of departure and prolongs the way to the point of destination. In the circumstances of transparency, transitory Georgia experiences the 'emptying' of the public sphere, as transparency hinders creativity, promotes mistrust, aimlessness, general passiveness and inability to have long-term perspectives. Even notwithstanding consolidation around a common interest, the results of the research affirm the positive link between transparency and the dysfunction of the public sphere. In the absence of trust and action, nothing is interesting any longer, nothing 'happens', everything exists in a passive mode and nothing matters except one: the self-presentation in social networks (which covers greatly the public sphere). All that matters is the image that an individual constructs about themselves. In such circumstances of transparent control, it is unlikely to have a common interest, as the only interest common to all the members of the transparent society is this control precisely, derived from economic motivations. That 'sensitivity towards even small problems is ... low' is a result of transparency. When the transparency paradigm entered Europe, the society already had firm democratic habits and values, and so the ceasing of socio-economic development ensuing transparency does not harm them as much as transitory countries, where there are many unresolved problems in general, but the society does not yet have the skills to perceive and solve them. It is commonly known that the 2008 august war between Russia and Georgia did not 'happen' for part of the youth in Tbilisi, as they were not interested in politics and led their usual transparent life. Here lies the wittedness of Han's theory: transparency and the 'information society' does not bring light into darkness.

The obstruction of the public sphere's functioning promises poor consequences to a transitory society: in the best case, it will remain frozen in the middle of the road, there where it was standing when the transparency paradigm was established. As transparency leaves the social and cultural situation intact, the paralyzing effect of transparency in transitory countries means to stay crowded in transition for ages, far from reaching the point of destination. Even though transparency is assessed as dangerous for developed countries too, the level of development and the internalized modern values there represent a certain shield which does not yet exist in transitory states: there the situation is more vulnerable because of the lack of the democratic tradition, values, and critical thinking.

Even though the issue of transparency is relatively new and its impact is subjected to constant change, it should be paid more academic attention especially regarding

transition societies. Those societies which have not reached a firm tradition of democracy yet appear more vulnerable to transparency's negative effects, which bases its power on the development of information technology. The worldwide trend towards radical and extremist movements are modern phenomena boosted by the digital revolution, facilitated by easier communication, and thus derive from the paradigm of transparency. Consequently, it is a complex question to distinguish the reason lying behind a transitory society's intolerance, inability to live in a pluralistic environment: this could be either the total absence of civility, or a drawback from a certain level of civility to the shrinkage of community. The Soviet Union used to work in both directions: on the one hand, it promoted 'international friendship' (international – meaning between Soviet nations only), whereas on the other hand it sowed tensions between different ethnic groups for political purposes and favoured a homogenous society. Consequently, the study of the reason of a society's uncivility is very important in order to define its practical solutions.

The impact of transparency assumes a greater importance in the light of the infantilization process reappearing in the developed world. Experience has shown that the Enlightenment process as defined by Kant is not irreversible, and that 'immaturity' can be self-re-incurred even in societies which have accumulated firm democratic experience. It seems that transparency facilitates this process especially in transitory countries like Georgia, where the high level of respect towards authority along with the low level of independence and personal freedom allow the 'guardians' to keep individuals in immaturity. In the case of Georgia, latest research suggests that the main goal of the Enlightenment 'Sapere aude!' and the depreciation of authorities remain unfulfilled.

Considering all the above mentioned importance of the study of transparency in transitory societies, future research should focus on different factors influencing it either positively or negatively: for instance, influential institutions like the Georgian Orthodox Church, and see what role they play in the transparent transitory process. Future research could also take the task of clarifying who are those powerful 'guardians' that keep the society infantile and what are the ways they use in order to deter independence and critical thinking. As transparency leads to the immobilization of the public sphere, the existing socio-cultural situation, and thus questions the possible end of the transitory stage at all, future research should provide answers to the following question: how can civil society transform non-liberal values and attitudes in favour of democracy in the transparency conditions when the society is still under the influence of authoritarian values implemented by the former totalitarian regime?

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