

# “Eurasian Laboratory”: Poetry, Prose, Music and Politics in Georgia

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# Abstract

This paper examines the emergence of the ‘alternative’ culture in Georgia in 2006 and maps the structure of the artistic field. I focus my study on artistic collaboration “Eurasian Laboratory” and I argue, by using Anthony Cohen’s theory of symbolic construction of community, that they create an ‘alternative’ community through art as a social activity. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of field and practice, I show how the artistic field is formed and influenced by several political happenings in Georgia from 1917 till 2003. I expose the issue of cultural policy in order to understand the priorities of the State in cultural field and to examine how the State apparatus by providing the dominant symbolic system, excludes ‘alternative’ cultural forms, forms that do not fit in State’s understanding of culture. Following this lines, I trace how artists engage in struggle for legitimation over proper/improper modes of expression. I will also demonstrate how “Eurasian Laboratory” with using subversive cultural forms produces an alternative space for creating music, prose and poetry, which is free from any kind of aesthetic and political restrictions. In addition, I analyze how Georgian context as well as external forces affects formation of the community and art, by looking at the deeper levels of “Laboratory’s” art works.

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Introduction .....	1
Theory of Field and Symbolic Communities .....	5
Bourdieu's Field Theory.....	5
Cohen's Theory of Symbolic Communities .....	10
Methodology.....	12
Analysis of written, visual and audio materials .....	12
Interviews .....	13
Chapter 1: Building the Nation (Development of the State and overview of Cultural progress)..	15
1.1 A Historical Perspective.....	15
1.2 Cultural Policy: Principles and Priorities.....	17
1.3 Amateur and Underground Art.....	19
Chapter 2: Small Sketch of Georgian Artistic field and Habitus of Agents.....	23
2.1 Cultural field, relations inside the field and the Habitus .....	23
Chapter 3: "Eurasian Laboratory" .....	30
3.1 Georgian Underground in 1980-1990 .....	30
3.2 Birth of "Eurasian Laboratory" .....	32
3.2.1 "Laboratory": its essence and aims.....	38
3.2.2 Eurasian Pop and Second Hand Techno .....	41
(Hybrid Subculture).....	41
3.2.3 Illegal Cosmonavtica .....	44
3.3 Community and Boundaries .....	46
3.4 Construction and deconstruction of Habitus.....	49

Conclusion .....	53
Reference List: .....	55
Online Sources: .....	57
Appendix N 1 .....	59
Appendix 2 .....	65

# Introduction

*If culture is a construction we can change it according to our taste, take different materials and  
create a new construct (Zura Jishkariani)*

It was 1990 when Georgia, at that moment already free from the Soviet regime, held democratic parliamentary elections and in 1991 Parliament unanimously adopted the declaration of independence (under the first President of Georgia Zviad Gamsakhuridia), which established the Republic of Georgia as a new sovereign state (Gunia-Kuznecova 2008). Between 1991 and 1992 Georgia lost control over the region of Inner Kartli, the civil war, known as Tbilisi War, took place and Gamsakhuridia's government was defeated from power. With Edward Shevardnadze's appearance on the political stage as the second president of Georgia (1992) situation was stabilized for the short period; however, in 1993 Georgia faced another war in Abkhazia, followed by losing another territory. Consequently, the stability of the state and the country was under question for many years until 2003, when the Rose Revolution, with Mikheil Saakashvili as the leader, occurred as a change and alternative for the old political system. The new strategies of the state designed after the Rose Revolution were mostly concerned around the political and economic issues; however, the topic of culture stayed without any attention and there was indeed no time and relevant situation for thinking about culture. Since 2003 the government of Georgia tried to improve and solve many significant issues for the country, but the direction chosen by them led Georgia to the war with Russia in August of 2008. As the country faced hard political and economic situation, it can be argued that there was no significant development in the artistic

field and process of creating art/culture somehow stopped in 1990. Nevertheless, starting from 2006 different artistic collaborations of young Georgian artists still found the way for bringing their art into play.

This thesis aims to expose how Georgian artistic field is constructed and how the art group known as “Eurasian Laboratory” forms the symbolic boundaries of their community. I look at the creation of the artistic field in Georgia after 2003, especially focusing on how political situation affected the development of this very field and how it facilitated construction of the artistic community - “Eurasian Laboratory”. I maintain that “Laboratory” manages to create the community by engaging themselves musically and poetically in the struggle for defining cultural resistance, thus establishing the new, Eurasian aspect of today’s Georgian culture. I argue that in the situation of political and economic instability the art group is able to put forward the idea of development in cultural sphere and socially and culturally situate themselves in opposition to the ideology and values that are at stake in today’s Georgian society. At the same time, I will show how “Eurasian Laboratory” with using subversive cultural forms produces an alternative space for creating music, prose and poetry which is free from any kind of aesthetic and political restrictions. In addition, I analyze how Georgian context as well as external forces affects formation of the community and art, by looking at the deeper levels of “Laboratory’s” art works. Moreover, my work deals with the issues of cultural policy, thus showing how the State with designing several priorities for cultural development imposes a dominant symbolic system.

I employ theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Cohen in order to analyze the structure and creation of artistic field, as well as to expose how art group “Laboratory” forms symbolic boundaries between this particular artistic formation, the State, and other artists. By using Bourdieu’s theory of field, practice and doxa, I will illustrate the structure of Georgian artistic

field and show how “Laboratory” fights against the state ideology, by using different cultural and social activities. Bourdieu’s theory of practice allows me to look at the relationships between various artistic formations and cultural forms inside the artistic field and will contribute analysis of how excluded or so called “alternative<sup>1</sup>” art and cultural forms reconfigure existing artistic field, thus creating alternative space for artists to work and perform without acknowledging any clichés or symbolic violence from the dominant artistic and political field.

Cohen and the theory of symbolic construction of community allow me to look at how the “alternative” community is built. At the same time, it facilitates analysis of how “Eurasian Laboratory” creates and communicates symbols and meanings and constructs symbolic boundaries of their community by using different types of art. For merging Bourdieu and Cohen I understand artistic field as composed by ‘common’ (‘ordinary’) and ‘alternative’ artists and by looking at differentiation between these two forms through the symbolic system of art, I illuminate how so called ‘alternative’, thus excluded artists build the community.

In order to analyze Georgian artistic field and study community formation processes I use descriptive case study method. To expose the phenomenon of Georgian artistic field I focus my study on artistic collaboration “Eurasian Laboratory”, the group of artists running different types of projects. Their creation includes but is not limited to eight musical projects, translation of various literatures, the project of internet television, painting and producing poetry and prose. My methodology is the synthesis on the one hand of content analysis of “Laboratory’s” concerts, performances, manifestos, poetry and prose, on the other hand I base my study on the interviews

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<sup>1</sup> I use term alternative to indicate something that is not mainstream. The issue concerning “Laboratory” being or not being alternative culture will be discussed in third chapter.

with the members of the artistic collaboration. In tandem with analysis of “Laboratory’s” art and interviews my study is based on the attendance at art group’s performances, concerts and poetry readings. Furthermore, I was able to use “Laboratory’s” blogs and online writings.

Much has written about underground and alternative scenes in former Soviet countries; however, there is no work done for exposing Georgian “alternative” culture, which complicates analysis of this phenomenon. Since, my study is almost the first attempt to expose Georgian artistic field, I am not able to ground this research on previous scholarly works in this field, rather I build my analysis on writings and music of Georgian underground artists using different case studies as an examples. Moreover, while scholarly works about alternative cultures are mainly looking how politics and art intersect, my research understands “alternative” art as an independent social phenomenon which is able to change the values and ideology of today’s Georgian government. My research will be the contribution to the current body of works concerning the issues of “alternative” and “underground” culture and at the same time will help to understand the art of “Laboratory” created in the existing social, political and cultural context.

Chapters are organized in the way to show how different forces, mainly the development of Georgian cultural policy and external aspects, are affecting the art of “Eurasian Laboratory”, and to understand how these factors facilitate creation of Georgian “alternative”. In Chapter one I analyze reasons and basis for creation of “Laboratory” and observe today’s cultural policy in Georgia to demonstrate the priorities of the state. Next chapters are concerned with looking at the art and construction of artists’ community as well as analysis of canonization and legitimization of the “alternative” culture. The limits of this study are two following circumstances; it is a first mapping of Georgian artistic field which is not based on early empirical works in this particular area and the practical contemplations in the scope of this thesis.



## Theory of Field and Symbolic Communities

In the following section I will discuss Bourdieu's theory of field and Cohen's theory of symbolic construction of communities and show how my research will benefit from these theoretical perspectives. Bourdieu's key concepts of "field", "field of power" and "habitus" serves as a framework in which I will organize my data. Moreover, it allows me to explain the structure of Georgian artistic field and the relationships between political and artistic fields. While Bourdieu's theoretical agenda is used as a main body for my analysis, Cohen's theory of symbolic construction of community will help me to theorize how art group "Laboratory" defines and organizes its symbolic boundaries using their artistic work as a main tool for characterizing them (the boundaries).

### *Bourdieu's Field Theory*

Field, which according to Bourdieu is "a network of positions", should be analyzed through three necessary steps: "[first] one must analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power; [second] one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or the institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field is the site; [third] one must analyze the habitus of the agents" (Wacquant 1989b:G-2). The field of power, which according to Swartz (Swartz 1997:136) functions as the "meta-field", is defined by Bourdieu as "the field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power" (Bourdieu 1992:76). In somewhat similar manner, Cohen (Cohen 1989:58) understands the relational nature of boundaries that mark different communities: "the very nature of symbolism itself contains not merely the competence of discrimination, but the sense of negation". It is clear that both scholars acknowledge the presence of the

struggle for definitions in fields and communities, which makes it possible to use them in tandem to conceptualize the relations between agents and fields entrenched in the field of power. In addition, I rely on Trever Hagen's theoretical combination of Bourdieu and Cohen. In this thesis "Underground Impulses: The Czechoslovak Artistic Field, 1948-1977" Hagen finds a good spot for combining Bourdieu and symbolic interactionists- Cohen, he writes "clearly, both Bourdieu and Cohen recognize a relational sociology in definition of fields and communities, which allow them to be used in tandem in order to understand the relations between agents and fields embedded in the field of power" (Hagen 2008). I take up his theoretical combination of these two theories as the starting point in my analysis and as the theoretical framework in which I will organize my data.

As the unit of analysis in the field of power I place Georgian nation-state. The field of power is theorized by Bourdieu in the following manner:

Relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggle over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:229-30)

Inside the power field I concentrate on two specific fields: the political field as well as the artistic one. At the same time, I view the religious field as another unit of analysis. In the political field I situate existing political state (presidential republic, with Mikheil Saakashvili as the president) along with the opposition wing. In the artistic field, one can observe what I call 'official' and 'underground' or 'alternative' artists. The religious field is mainly composed with the Christian Orthodox Church with a very small presence of other religious groups.

According to Bourdieu each and every field absorbs different positions in the field of power. The artistic field "is contained within the field of power [and] occupies a dominated position (at the negative pole) in this field, which is itself situated at the dominant position of the field of class relations" (Bourdieu 1993b:37-8), while political and religious fields are situated on the dominant pole of power field. In every field we can observe the struggle for legitimation though using different modes of capital.

The actors in all fields compete for legitimation over the definition of how individuals must live one's life. This struggle can be viewed by how artists actively pursue what is expressed in the following statements of "Laboratory" member Zura Jishkariani: "Everything that you know is lie" or that "today the state has the monopoly over the information" (Jishkariani 2006b). With monopolizing the different types of informational capital, as well as the economic one state imposes the views and values that they want to promote in the institutionalized form. The subversive strategies that "Laboratory" designs involve making available various types of information on their internet blogs and at the same time they express their understanding of "the proper way of individuals" life in poetry/literature, published books (samizdat practice), magazines, journals and music.

Furthermore, I analyze creation of capital (cultural, symbolic and economic) inside the artistic field. According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:98) "a species of capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to exist in the field under the consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity". Throughout analyses of Georgian artistic field I will be looking at capital that is created and is present in the field. At the same time, I will examine how agents (in my case "Laboratory") inside the artistic field use this capital to construct their community and how the process of capital exchange among different artists happens within the field.

Next step is to analyze the structure of relations inside the artistic field. Here I do not attempt to offer personalized and detailed analysis, since the scope of the thesis is limited; rather I will map out the basic condition in the section three( pg 33).

Third step in my analysis is habitus of artists. Here I am interested in habitus of "Laboratory" members, the circumstances that facilitated construction of their habitus, how the artistic field influenced it and in what ways habitus of "Laboratory" members inclined the field itself. Habitus of agents for Bourdieu is "the system of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic

condition” (Wacquant 1989a). As Wacquant and Bourdieu explain habitus and field have “ontological complicity”:

On the one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or of a hierarchically intersecting set of fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value.... (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989:44)

Habitus which throughout Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice appears as a powerful tool to bridge the dichotomy - individual/society, allows me to look at how agents in the field act based on the strategies which are produced simultaneously by the field and habitus, as well as it helps me to conceptualize how particular habitus shapes the field and vice versa.

In my analysis of the Georgian artistic field Bourdieu’s concept of doxa also comes into play. According to Terry Eagleton (Eagleton 1994b) Bourdieu unlike Althusser is interested in understanding of mechanisms through which ideology operates in everyday life. “Doxa is stable, tradition-bound social order, in which power is fully naturalized and unquestionable, so that no social arrangement different from the present could even be imagined” (Eagleton 1994c:223). With concept of doxa Bourdieu also criticizes the idea of ideology thought in terms of consciousness, false consciousness, unconsciousness etc. and claims that with this kind of thinking we risk losing the true understanding of ideology. According to him with using term doxa rather than ideology “we accept many things without knowing them and that is what is called ideology”(Eagleton 1994a:268). By and large doxa can be viewed as a ‘natural attitude’ of “the dominated groups, which is misrecognized as socially groups as arbitrary” (Myles 2004:94). Another important issue is how and with what mechanisms people practice doxa. This can be seen through the idea of habitus, which is “structuring and structured structure” or in Eagleton’s words “the set of durable dispositions which generate particular practices” (Eagleton 1994c:223).

Since individuals act in society with certain habitus, internalized system or ‘cultural unconscious’, this allows to explain their actions as “objectively regulated, but not being the result of conscious obedience of the rule” (Eagleton 1994c:223). Thus, individuals, who have embodied certain social and cultural values turn to obey rules in unthinkable way, thus reproducing those norms and values and habitus becomes the pass way though which “mental and social structures become incarnate in daily social activity” (Eagleton 1994c:223).

Bourdieu also introduces the notion of ‘heterodoxy’, which should be understood as any challenge to doxa. Doxa differentiates itself from the heterodoxy in a sense that “it goes without saying and comes without saying”. Doxa in Georgia can be seen as “Language, homeland and faith” - the priorities set in 19<sup>th</sup> century by outstanding Georgian social figure Ilia Chavchavadze, ideology which is overwhelmed with traditions and traditional values and is based on those cultural and social codes that are decidedly internalized in Georgian habitus through centuries. Political field is successfully manipulating with these three concepts or in other words, actors in this field are sitting on the ‘black boxes’(Michel Callon and Latour 1992) which are full of traditions and are successfully manipulating with them.

It is here where we have to introduce the concept of heterodoxy. “Laboratory” protests exactly against these principles. They call in question the values of traditional society and struggle against the tyranny of authorities. One of the most famous and debated issues in this terms is Paata Shamugia’s poem “Antityaosani” (Anti-"The Knight in the Panther's Skin") (Shamugia 2006 ) usually referred as a postmodern trick, which was the reinterpretation of “Vepxistyaosani” (“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) by Shota Rustaveli, Georgian national epic poem from 12<sup>th</sup> century. This is only one example of how art group challenges doxa, other subversive strategies used by “Laboratory” will be discussed in the following chapters.

## *Cohen's Theory of Symbolic Communities*

Community, which is one of the most debatable concepts in social sciences, was theorized by several scholars. In this work I base my understanding of community on Anthony Cohen's explanation of community and its symbolic boundaries. According to him:

“Community is that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call ‘society’. It is the arena which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home” (Cohen 1989:15)

At the same time community is seen as arena where people “practice how to be ‘social’” and “acquire culture” (Cohen 1989). While we speak of people learning to be social and acquiring culture it means that we understand the process of gaining the symbols which supply individuals to be social. Acknowledging above mentioned criteria of community formation we can conclude that community is translated and malformed by its members with usage of symbols (the shared ideas) and by individual's aptitude to interrelate in the course of these symbols.

Another important concept and idea that Cohen lays out is the symbolic boundaries of given community. Cohen argues that “The boundary represents the mask presented by the community to the outside world; it is the community's public face” (Cohen 1989:74). Symbolic boundaries are understood as: “existing in the minds of their beholders”, “they hinge crucially on consciousness”, they are largely “constituted by people in interaction” and are symbolic receptacles filled with the meanings that members impute to and perceive in them” (Cohen 1989:12, 13, 19). Taking Cohen's ideas I understand “Eurasian Laboratory” as a community which negotiates symbols and with using them creates symbolic boundaries. In addition, I conceptualize the art group as a disposition toward society and art based on the social interaction. Through usage of symbols that constitute their community members of “Laboratory” are fully equip to express meanings and moreover to create them. Members of the group identify their

selves exactly with the community (that they created) and its values more than with “kinship”, they leave their lives in and within the community and at the same time try to communicate and share their symbols and meanings with members of different communities, thus with the ‘society’ as a whole.

By using these two different frameworks in tandem, I am able to present the theoretical model which addresses my research at two diverse levels. With theorizing Georgian artistic field through Bourdieu I work more on the general level mapping the discursive formation of the artistic field form which “Eurasian Laboratory” emerged and with employing Cohen I attempt to conceptualize the boundaries of this community inside the artistic field, thus it can be seen as a move from general to more specific.

## Methodology

For the purposes of the research I applied two types of analysis. Firstly, I conducted analysis of the written, visual and audio materials of “Eurasian Laboratory” and I studied both the written and online material. Secondly, I did the semi-structured interviews with eleven members of art collaboration. In tandem with analysis of “Laboratory’s” art and interviews my study is based on attendance at art group’s performances, concerts and poetry readings. These three different parts of my research complement each other and give basis for understanding the first type of data though explaining it with the context.

### *Analysis of written, visual and audio materials*

The first stage of my research was analysis of written, visual and audio material produced by “Eurasian Laboratory”. The analysis involved study of several books published by members of art group, articles published in different magazines, as well as the CDs and paintings. In addition, I studied the online sources where “Laboratory” publishes their creation. (The online sources are following: [www.literatura.ge](http://www.literatura.ge) [www.lib.ge](http://www.lib.ge) [www.nextdreamhacker.blogspot.com](http://www.nextdreamhacker.blogspot.com) [www.goldeneternity.blogspot.com](http://www.goldeneternity.blogspot.com) [www.rel0ad.blogspot.com](http://www.rel0ad.blogspot.com) [www.acornguy.blogspot.com](http://www.acornguy.blogspot.com) [www.anatabatadze.blogspot.com](http://www.anatabatadze.blogspot.com)).

I was looking at the message that members of artistic collaboration try to express in their art. I studied how they relate to the political and social context of Georgia and focused on the problems and issues that they are touching upon in their creation. At the same time, I was exposing how they create meanings and negotiate them. I analyzed their music to see what type



of music they create and what, if any, is new in their art. I particularly looked at how they use already existing musical genres to create their own and I also studied with what means “Laboratory” gives birth to the ‘new’ art.

## *Interviews*

The second part of my research was the semi-structured interviews with the “Laboratory” members. The aim of the interviews was to understand more precisely the art collaboration itself. The research was conducted in April, 2009 in Georgia. I did interviews with eleven members of the group, all interviews were semi-structured, were conducted face-to-face and were recorded on the voice recorder. The interviewees were promised to get the written account – the final product. All interviews were conducted in Georgian; consequently the translations are made by the author of this thesis.

The major and guiding questions were about their art and its purpose. I was particularly interested in how they themselves perceive their art work and what they try to archive. Furthermore, I was asking how and if they see themselves as underground culture, avant-garde, subculture or counterculture. At the same time, I was interested who they see as the potential audience. In the following parts of the interviews I was asking questions about the protest that they express in their writings, I was predominantly interested in, against what issues they are protesting, if this protest has more of an abstract character (expressed purely in art) or they take some kind of an action, here I was also asking if they engage with political issues and if so then what type of engagement is it: expressed in art or any other action, shortly I was examining if their art is political. In the final section I was more focused on asking about any kind of pressure that they are possibly facing from state apparatus, other institutions and from other artists in the

artistic field. In the last part I was exploring how they look at selling and making their art commercial and if state designed cultural policy should support their art works and help them in further development.

Using these two methods in tandem allows me to look at two different issues. While analysis of written, visual and audio material produced by “Laboratory” members facilitate the study of their art from the viewers perspective, the interviews with the members of art group help me understand how they actually think about their own art and how they try to establish the ‘new’ type of art for Georgian context. Furthermore, by interviewing the art collaboration I make clear the idea behind their art works. In this way I was able to comprehend how and why the idea of “Laboratory” was born and how the Georgian atmosphere defined it as something ‘new’, something ‘alternative’.

## Chapter 1: Building the Nation (Development of the State and overview of Cultural progress)

In this chapter I will look at how Georgian State and cultural policy developed from 1917 until 2003. In order to provide relatively complete account about the process of cultural development in Georgia, it is necessary to look at the historical development of the state since different happenings in Georgian history from 1917 until 2003 played significant, even crucial role in developing and shaping today's culture. Another important issue is to understand how cultural policy is designed, which assist me in exposing the priorities and role that Georgian state plays in country's cultural progress. At the same time, it is a good barometer for understanding how the State by providing certain priorities for cultural policy supplies the dominant symbolic system, thus imposes the symbolic violence and cultural arbitrariness.

### *1.1 A Historical Perspective*

After October Revolution in 1917 Georgia gained sovereignty and was established as an independent democratic state. Notwithstanding the fact that independence lasted only for three years (1918-1921), it was the most important era for establishing the foundations of cultural policy. At that time the priorities aimed in cultural policy were to maintain the national identity and to initiate the democratic processes. The very first step in archiving the goal was opening of Tbilisi State University (1918) which was established as center for scientific and cultural life.

The Soviet era was hard for Georgia and its cultural policy as for other Soviet countries. Soviet regime was characterized with the constant pressure on culture and especially on national cultures and had an implicit monopoly over culture and ideology. It is exactly this period when two important events happened in Georgian history, which largely influenced the formation of national culture and identity. In 1978, following the acknowledgement of new Soviet constitution, a proposal was put forward for changing official language from Georgian to Russian, which caused the mass protest and these demonstrations managed to archive the goal and Georgian language stayed as the official one. Simultaneously these marches led to the formation of national liberation movements and caused huge anti-Soviet demonstration in April 9<sup>th</sup> 1989 which was discrete by the soviet forces and led to several tragic deaths. However, cultural policy practiced by the Soviet regime did have a positive influence on Georgian culture, since it helped establishing “an extensive network and well-functioning infrastructure of public cultural institutions”(Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-2), with highly accessible academic education regarding arts and culture. Despite the fact that Soviet regime had oppressive character towards culture Georgia still managed to create significant pieces in cinema, music and theatre. “These achievements helped to develop an understanding of culture as a system of values which determines and forms national identity and, as a result, unites the nation” (Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-2)

After collapse of the Soviet regime in 1990 Georgia held elections and in 1991 Parliament unanimously adopted the declaration of independence under the first President of Georgia Zviad Gamsakhuridia and with this act the new Georgian Republic was established. The new political situation in Georgia was followed by losing control over the region of Inner Kartli and the civil war, known as Tbilisi War took place. Gamsakhuridia’s government was defeated from power

and Edward Shevardnadze came as a second president of Georgia (1992). Situation was stabilized for the short period; however, in 1993 Georgia faced another war in for this time in Abkhazia followed by losing another territory. This is the period when issue of cultural development is contradictory and complicated since during 1993-2003 Georgia faced financial crises and was engaged in political refurbish, aimed at “balancing national and liberal-democratic ideas”(Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-2). This was the reason for confusion in the sphere of cultural policy and at that point there was no clear strategy for dealing with the cultural issues, even though culture was acknowledged as one of the most important priorities for the state and society.

The most important change which occurred in contemporary Georgia was the Rose Revolution in 2003, after which president Shevardnadze left the government and Mikheil Saakashvili came into power. Following that period Georgia started to undergo different changes. From 1990 until 2004 Georgia had six ministers of culture and since 2004 cultural, sport and youth affairs were combined into one ministry. As it is evident, the situation is not stable yet especially after Georgian Russian war in 2008, which prevents the country to have sustainable system of policy development and to ascertain the long-term cultural strategy.

After discussing historical and political situation and its role in shaping cultural policy it is important to demonstrate the principles and priorities of Georgian cultural policy emerged after various changes.

## *1.2 Cultural Policy: Principles and Priorities*

Main actor in implementing cultural policy is Georgian Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport. It operates with help of different instances for various spheres of culture such as: The Ministry of Education and Science, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Center for the Protection of Georgian Cultural Heritage Abroad, The Ministry of Economic Development, The Ministry of Finance and The President's Administration. At the same time, while previously cultural policy was centralized now Georgia is establishing decentralized system, which means that the cultural issues are regulated in regions on the local level with help of local actors. Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport is highly involved in international cultural co-operation. The major partners on international level are The Council of Europe and UNESCO as well as USA, United Kingdom, France, Greece and the People's Republic of China. All above mentioned institutions participate in financing the cultural sphere on different levels and policy is financed both by the state and local budgets. For international cultural co-operation the main financial support is provided by international funds and institutions such as: the Goethe Institute Inter Nations Tbilisi, the British Council, South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich-Boll Foundation, Open Society Georgia and Alexander Dumas Center of French Culture ("Cultural Policy in Georgia: National Report " 2002).

In order to understand what are the main priorities for designing cultural policy in Georgia one must look at the definition of culture in The Law on Culture. Although the Law does not give a precise definition of culture it talks about the "cultural sphere" which is presented in following manner:

"the territories and objects of history and culture, buildings, movable and immovable monuments of culture, folklore, art souvenirs, crafts, art education, professional creative work and literature, education, research and development, technologies, popularization of the cultural and creative process via mass media, cultural-entertainment programs and showbiz. "Cultural heritage" and "cultural values" are described as products of cultural and creative work, aesthetic, artistic, scientific and technical values" (Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-17)

And still in Georgia the understanding of cultural is mainly based on the nationality, culture is seen as the main component in creating the national identity and national integrity. Accordingly, it is not surprising that even today cultural policy is mainly oriented on national heritage.

The main priorities as presented in official accounts on culture are preservation, rehabilitation, classification, certification and promotion of cultural heritage monuments. At the same time, the policy is aimed at establishing “of modern systems of cultural heritage management and provision of support to cultural heritage institutions”(Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-17). Another important aspect is promotion and development of minority’s cultural heritage. Significant attention is paid to the development of museums as well.

While cultural policy is also addressed at the promotion of art organizations and programs, there is not much concern about promotion of contemporary art, more precisely about so called underground or alternative culture and art. The main attention is directed towards expansion in the sphere of folklore music and dance tradition, which as well is the attempt to improve the national traditions and values. After the Rose Revolution the state became more and more interested in investment for folklore and especially in organizing different folk festivals such as “Art Geni”, “Chveneburebi” and the “National Voice” and this is evidence that the main priority is traditional culture and art. At the same time state actively participates in financing the popular or the most consumed art.

### *1.3 Amateur and Underground Art*

The Amateur Art as it is explained in 2008’s account on cultural policy in Georgia is divided in two parts: 1) folklore and 2) other amateur arts. As I have already touched upon the issues related to folklore here I will discuss the other type of amateur arts.

As the author of above mentioned account Nino Gunia-Kuznecova (Gunia-Kuznecova 2008) maintains, in the only paragraph dedicated to ‘other amateur arts’, these type of art emerged recently and is more urban based. In this category she means the art which is related to technologies and social development and encompasses “multimedia, graffiti and e-music” (Gunia-Kuznecova 2008:G-65). According to her, this subculture or dimension of arts is not yet developed and consequently there is no funding or state support for it.

The accounts on Georgian cultural policy does not deal with the ‘underground culture’ which can be characterized as subversive and ‘non-official’ art/culture and this is the evidence that Georgian cultural policy does not design any strategies regarding the ‘avant-garde’ art which challenges traditional values of society. In order to understand why the state is not concerned with underground art I will shortly analyze the nature of it on the example of “Eurasian Laboratory”.

As I already explained in previous sections, the ideology of the state in Georgia as one can tell from taking into consideration priorities of cultural policy is tradition and traditional values, which can be also seen in the following statement: “Language, homeland and faith” - the priorities set in 19<sup>th</sup> century by outstanding Georgian social figure Ilia Chavchavadze and is based on those cultural and social codes that are decidedly internalized in Georgian habitus through centuries.

“Laboratory” protests exactly against these principles. They call into question the values of traditional society and struggle against the tyranny of authorities. One of the most famous and debated issues, as I already mentioned in the introductory part, in this terms is Paata Shamugia’s (Shamugia 2006 ) collection of poems “Antityaosani” (Anti-“The Knight in the Panther's Skin”) usually referred as a postmodern trick, which was the reinterpretation of “Vepxistyaosani” (“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) by Shota Rustaveli, Georgian national epic poem from 12<sup>th</sup>



century. “Laboratory’s” project “Illegal Cosmonavtica”, which is “universal and absolute refusal of officially acknowledged political and ontological reality; this is the most mass and the most silent protest against existing historical situation” (Jishkariani 2006a) is another demonstration how the art group opposes itself to the present political and social context. Another example can be their album, made in home based studio with the title “National Georgian B (u) Allet”, (ridiculing the “national Georgian ballet” – ensemble of national dance, one of the biggest proud of the nation, which at the same time is funded by the state) which is dedicated to Georgian-Russian war (August 2008) syndrome and makes fun of the most famous statement by Georgian government that “Georgia will light up”, simultaneously this music is “absolutely abnormal and strange as the war itself” (Laboratory 2008).

As most of the ‘alternative’ art, “Laboratory” does not suit the main priorities set by the Georgian Government. Accordingly, political strategies that are used towards underground culture are restricting them from the cultural resources. Notwithstanding the fact that this is not done through implementing open policy towards underground artists, the state, with some hidden mechanisms manages to ignore the ‘voice of underground’. At the same time, structure of artistic field (Bourdieu 1993c), where the access to the cultural and economic recourses is highly monopolized by the state, shapes the habitus of those who are situated in the negative pole. However, “Laboratory” has its own ‘tactics’ to answer this policy; they are creating alternative economic capital through establishing their own recording studios, magazines, journals, and self publishing texts (using samizdat practice).

As we can witness from this account the State by acknowledging the national culture as the main concern and priority in today’s cultural development, provides artists with the dominant symbolic system, thus one’s who work along with their lines are most probably to succeed, whereas others who do not suit several standards are most likely excluded from the dominant

cultural field. It can be argued that by making somewhat arbitrary the development of the so called traditional or national culture, the State imposes the modes of proper/improper expressions, which can be translated into the dominant/dominated positions within the field of power. Bourdieu explains that symbolic systems can be understood as “logic of difference, of differential deviation” (Bourdieu 1991:237), thus we can claim that they are build on inclusion and exclusion though cultural policy.

However, it is important to understand that we do not leave in the Socialist realm and today’s government does not practice well known restriction practices in the communist era, but still it is obvious that we are dealing with the symbolic violence upon ‘alternative’ cultural forms.

## Chapter 2: Small Sketch of Georgian Artistic field and Habitus of Agents

In this part I will follow three necessary steps suggested by Bourdieu for field analysis. Before going into analysis of Georgian artistic field and its structure it is important to understand the difficulties connected with the lack of material about this issue. Notwithstanding the fact that there are enormous works done concerning the underground art and culture in different ex-Soviet countries there is no work done about the same matter in Georgia, which complicates analysis of this phenomenon. Since, my study is almost the first attempt to expose Georgian artistic field, I am not able to ground these research on previous scholarly works, rather I build my analysis on writings and music of Georgian underground artists, consequently, this work is more the small sketch of the artistic field and has no ambition to be total.

### *2.1 Cultural field, relations inside the field and the Habitus*

According to Bourdieu the artistic field is contained within the power field and occupies a dominated position

Specificity of the literary or artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e. the more completely fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit (Bourdieu 1993a:39)

As it is obvious from this description of the specificities that characterizes artistic field, it is influenced by the field of power in this way or another. Let us look at how Georgian artistic field follows this narrative. The field of power in Georgia contains existing political state with the opposition wing and in a similar

manner in the artistic field one can observe, what I call, ‘official’ and underground artists. Both fields occupy different positions in the field of power. Political field is situated on the dominant pole of the field of power, while the artistic field is placed on the negative i.e. dominated pole. Furthermore there is another level of differentiation inside those fields. In the political field, on dominant position we can observe the existing governmental apparatus and on the dominated position we have oppositional political parties. There is, as identified by Bourdieu, the homology between these fields and accordingly on the dominant pole the so called ‘official’ artists share the positions, while on the negative pole underground culture (we can call them “non-official” artists) is situated. Although, the structure of Georgian artistic field follows the logic offered by Bourdieu, there is a slight discrepancy. According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1993c) there are homologies between the fundamental oppositions of fields, more precisely, if one is on the positive pole in the artistic field is ‘supported’ by the groups or individuals occupying the positive (dominant) pole of the political field and the same is true for negative (dominated) poles. While in Georgian context this logic works for the positive poles and artists from the dominant positions in most cases are supported by the government (the group in power), the same logic does not work for the negative pole. Artists who are on the negative pole and in my case “Laboratory” are sharply opposed to both political groups, claiming that they are against both forces, consequently they do not have any ‘support’. By and large the field of power by supporting the dominant pole of cultural production largely affects the negative pole in a sense that restricts it from the economic capital.

Next step is to analyze the structure of relations inside the artistic field. Here I do not attempt to offer personalized and detailed analysis; rather I will map out the basic state of affairs. First of all, it is important to understand what can be referred as a dominant position inside the artistic field. There are several dominant positions within the Georgian artistic field. The dominant position on the dominant (let us call it the pole of mainstream production) pole itself and the dominant position in the dominated pole of production. On the dominant pole, which at the same time corresponds to the positive pole of political field, artists, who can be referred as popular and consumed ones occupy their places. Inside the dominant

pole we can concurrently observe that there are artists who by being most popular and consumed, thus owing significant amount of the economic capital, dominate this part of the field, hence throwing artists who produce more or less similar products on the dominated pole. In most cases dominant artists within the mainstream part of the artistic field are funded by the state and 'used' for political aims, meaning that they are constant part of politically defined concerts and performances offered by the government. Also on the positive pole there are publishing houses, galleries, theatres; however, not so much influenced by 'politics' as the first category. It is also important to mention that on the positive pole largest concentration of economic and social capital is observable. On the negative pole we have three different branches, first is the consecrated avant-garde, where the most part of the symbolic and social capital is acquired, second, is that part of the underground, which is in the field for two or three years but has less symbolic capital, but impressive social one; and third, the new comers, who are in the field for less than one year and for this time have no symbolic, social or economic capital. Consecrated avant-garde occupies the dominant pole in their part of the field, thus imposing proper/improper ways of expression. Artists situated on this pole mainly dominate the field by monopolizing the information. The very simple example that was given by my interviewees about monopolizing information is following: "Some of the people who are recognized artists and have their 'name, for example are doing movie screenings, the movies that they show are rare and attracting and not everybody knows how to get them. Accordingly, people turn to think that this people are 'cool' and important. What we try to do is absolutely opposite; we try to open sources for everybody. We think that information should be available for everyone and information should not be a virtue for somebody, it should not play the role of 'coolness' factor" (Zura Jishkariani Interview).

"Eurasian Laboratory" falls in the second category (part of the underground, which is in the field for two or three years but has less symbolic capital, but impressive social one) of the negative pole described above. It is in the field for already three years and has accumulated significant amount of symbolic and

social capital; they are quite popular inside the ‘avant-garde’ field and for the audience that can be also placed in the category of underground listeners, if we can call them so.

There is an obvious struggle between different artistic formations inside the field. Even though I cannot offer very detailed and personalized overview of the conflict inside the artistic field, which is caused by the lack of material about this issue it is obvious from my interviews that there is a conflict between the generations. As Bourdieu explains “the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at the stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer” (Bourdieu 1993a:42). This struggle over the definitions of what writer is or in more general sense what artist should be, can be seen in the statement of my interviewee

They [the older generation] say that we don’t know how to use the brush; we do not know how to make art. Artists from 90’s, in the whole sense of this words, suppress us, they have their niche in poetry, prose, music etc and we are seen as somebody who leaves on their remains. They tell us that they were doing art in 90’s, they had performances during the war in the streets, they were talking to people with their art during the worst period in country’s history; basically they claim that they are heroes. This means that we should have also been there when they were doing this, it was then when we should have said something and shout with them, but what can I do I was seven then and moreover, if back then there was something to protest against, does this mean that this country and its culture are in a good condition now? Does this mean that there is nothing left to protest against? Even though we are friends with them, there is still the conflict (Leo-Nafta interview)

Third step in my analysis is artistic habitus. Habitus of agents for Bourdieu is “the system of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition” (Wacquant 1989a:40). Here I am interested in the habitus of “Laboratory” members, so I will not go into the detailed analysis of every above outlined category, I will just clarify that the habitus of artists from the positive pole is defined by the fact that they are educated in the artistic schools (There are several art schools in Georgia but the main ones are the State Art Academy and the State Conservatory, at the same time most of this people are educated abroad and mostly in Russia) and are supported by ‘strong’ families, which itself means that they have powerful economic and social capital. Now moving to the “Laboratory” one

can observe that age of the members is approximately 20-25, most of them come from provincial or to be more correct peripheral part of Georgia and they do not have any trained artistic background and some of them are even with incomplete high education. Subsequently, when they entered the field they were not equipped with considerable cultural, social and economic capital and yet during three years managed to accumulate substantial symbolic and social capital. At the same time the habitus of “Laboratory” members is highly influenced with the instability of political system and the state: “We are living in the country which is underground the world. We are just 20 years old, and we have already been through war, fear, dark, cold, drug-addiction, alcoholism, missing pals and three vain, attempted experiments of building the State. We are just 20 years old, but we already have accumulated enough hatred, mistrust and yearning for warmth to dance on the ruins” (Jishkariani 2006c).

The field and the habitus in Bourdieu’s theory are decidedly related to each other and this relation has dual character. On the one hand, field structures the habitus, while habitus shapes the field on the other. It is important to bring here the understanding of strategies and tactics offered by De Certeau. ‘Strategy’ as defined by De Certeau is “the calculus of force-relationship which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an ‘environment’” (Certeau 1984). ‘Strategies’ are used by authorities or ‘political rationality’, by people who hold the power, while ‘tactics’ is ‘calculus’, which is appropriated by individuals in order to engage with the space designed by ‘strategies’. Political strategies that are used towards underground culture are restricting them from the cultural resources. Notwithstanding the fact that this is not done through implementing open policy against underground artists, state, with some hidden mechanisms manages to ignore the ‘voice of underground’. At the same time structure of the artistic field, where the access to the cultural and economic recourses is highly monopolized by the state, shapes the habitus of those who are situated in the negative pole. However, “Laboratory” has its own ‘tactics’ to answer this policy; they are creating alternative economic capital through establishing their own recording studios, magazines and journals,

self publishing texts (using samizdat practice), thus creating alternative space inside the space designed by the state. “Laboratory” is structured by the field politics; nevertheless they manage to shape the field as well (this issue will be discussed in more details in the following chapter).

As it is indicated in this chapter, Georgian artistic field follows the logic offered by Bourdieu with slight discrepancies. It is hard to understand the direct relationship between the artistic and political fields, which first of all is the consequence of the lack of material concerning this issue. At the same time it is hard to understand how the political field influences the artistic one when we are not facing a direct pressure from the state apparatus on the artists. However, in order to understand how political field plays the game in the artistic field one should look at the case of rock festival which was supposed to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 in the State Art Academy. The Festival never saw the day light and although there is no official information what happened with the festival, the organizers explained to the participants of the event that they had a serious conflict with representatives of the opposition wing, who demanded from the Academy to cancel the event. As it is obvious from this case not only the dominant political force, but the opposition, which is believed to be an alternative to the existing political ‘regime’, are highly involved in deciding what is the proper way of the existence of the artistic field.

Along with understanding the relationship between the political and artistic field, it is important to look at how the religious field tries to impose certain cultural patterns on particular artists. The information about presence of the religious field was gathered during my interviews with the members of art collaboration while I was asking if they have any kind of pressure from any types of institutes. As my informants told me the relation between these two fields can be mostly viewed in the verbal interactions among the artists and representatives of the religious field and the message that is delivered by religious field is mainly concerned around forbidding them to



write and perform certain things. One of the most obvious interventions from the religious field was the exhibition by Georgian artist Ilia Zautashvili. As my interviewee explained the representatives of the religious field attempted to close the exhibition. “They came with the intention to close the exhibition. I am not saying anything about the physical and verbal abuse, but I want to mention what happened to one of his works. These people took one of the artists work and next day it was returned with the white paper on the part of the work which was not appropriate” (Nikoloz Lutidze). The information which I have is not reach enough for deepening the analysis, but I maintain that it is important to recognize that religious field is actively involved in the “symbolic violence” thus imposes the dominant or ‘appropriate’ symbolic system.

## Chapter 3: “Eurasian Laboratory”

In the following chapter I will discuss the emergence of “Eurasian Laboratory”. I will show how the art collaboration was formed, the priorities and goals that they try to archive, how the “alternative” community is constructed and how it establishes the “alternative” social and cultural space for performing without any symbolic violence. I will be looking at different projects that “Laboratory” runs and show how they produce knowledge which is an alternative to the State discourse. I will also demonstrate the external influences on “Laboratory’s” art and expose how this particular art group struggles for legitimation: “for the right to monopolize the exercise of “symbolic violence” (Swartz 1997:123).

### *3.1 Georgian Underground in 1980-1990*

It is important to examine how underground movements emerged in the 1980s in order to theorize the state of arts at that time and also to follow the appearance of “Eurasian Laboratory”. In this part of this chapter I will look at how underground movements were formed in Georgia in the 1980s and show how with the rise of the nationalistic movements the art scene and creation was somehow stopped in 1990. At the same time I will demonstrate how new artistic movements emerged from the historical context and how in 2006 “Laboratory” was established.

In 1980, before the national movements were established, the Georgian underground started a new era in its development. The most important aspect of 80’s scene was that Georgian artists and especially musicians started to create their art in Georgian language. The culture that was

present in Georgia in the 1980's was characterized by a strong social load and it had significant elements of protest. It can be argued that in the 1990's Georgian underground culture experienced highest level of development. For that time there were a significant number of individual artists and collectives who did not suit the established clichés of Communist culture. The most important was the musical scene and its sufficient element rock. During this period various bands were performing not only in the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi, but also in Kutaisi, Batumi, Gori, Rustavi, Telavi and many other small towns. Most of the alternative music was performed in Georgian. From the late 80's there were several important art groups performing in the underground scene: Lado Burduli and his band “Recepti”, Dada Dadiani first with “Taxi” and later “Children's Medicine”, Kisho Glunchadze and the band “Kisho and Inteligencia”, band “Outsideri” with the leader Robi Kukhianidze. A bit later Irakli Charkviani started the individual career. The art that was created by these outstanding artists was not a pure art; it had a clear message of social protest. As it is acknowledged “rock is a political phenomenon both because rock artists sometimes take positions on controversial issues (or on the elites themselves) in their songs and because political elites may use legislative or coercive force to suppress, inhabit or regulate rock performers, regardless of the political intent or content of their songs” (Ramet 1994:102), and the same was true for Georgian rock scene.

The political and social situation that emerged in 1991 had a great influence on the later development of the art scene in Georgia. The circumstances made those bands to fall apart, most of them went abroad and others who were still in Georgia had no chances to work. However, when civil war started artists who were still in the country did not stop artistic work, but their performances lost their scale and after the war, the rock and underground scene were facing the destruction, as nearly everything in Georgia. And still in 1996 the big festival “Margarita-96”

was held where newly emerged artists were present; nevertheless their art lost that social and political aspect which was the main characteristic of 1990's art (Lasha Gabunia 2001).

As it is obvious from this small description, Georgian art and most importantly subversive or underground art lost its 'soul' from the 1990's, moreover the process of cultural development was in a significant stagnation as a result of hard political, social and economic conditions that war brought in Georgia. Irakli Charkviani's words are a clear demonstration of this process: "There is no culture in Georgia against which the counter culture or underground art should be directed". However, as I showed earlier, new transformations of the nation and the state after the Rose Revolution in 2003 made it possible to think about culture, and the state even designed the cultural policy. The new political situation brought new problems and issues for Georgian society and accordingly new art groups were established, whose art was directed at the protest against the new political "regime". One of the most significant movements or art collaborations that emerged in 2006 is "Eurasian Laboratory", which is the focus of this thesis and will be discussed in the following parts.

### *3.2 Birth of "Eurasian Laboratory"*

The group of Georgian artists known as "Laboratory" is an alternative movement which was established in 2006. "Laboratory" is a collaboration of artists Ana Tabatadze, Beso Kapchelashvili, Misha Bajhsoliani, Tazo Liparteliaini, Zura Jishkariani, MK-ULTRA, Paata Shamugia, Leo Nafta, Acorn Guy, Nikoloz Lutidze and Amiko. The official definition of art group that can be found on their blog reads as following:

"ELY" [Eurasian Laboratory] is experimental post-art movement from the ghetto of the third world. Dreamhacking, Art Experiments (audio, video, visual...). Theatre of The Nuclear Sunrises. Movement is completed with different writers, artists, musicians, scientists and just experiment-lover-party-people ([eurasianlaboratory.blogspot.com](http://eurasianlaboratory.blogspot.com))

Throughout the interviews with the members of the art group it became obvious that "Laboratory" started as "tusovka" (party) of people who shared the same ideas and values; however, after a short period it was already established as a collaboration of artists. Notwithstanding the fact that members of "Laboratory" refuse to define themselves in terms of artistic collaboration, I still argue that all characteristics of the group lead us to acknowledge this project as the art group.

Judging from my interviews, all members of art group agree that "Laboratory" is a life style. The roots of "Laboratory" can be found in Acorn Guy's apartment where as he explained different people were meeting for years, talking about art, drinking etc and according to him it was tusovka (party), many people where coming and going and those who stayed finally understood later that they are in the role of observer and decided to create something out of these multiple experiences.

"Laboratory is the life style. When it was established there was no idea of art group. We, people who formed "Laboratory" in the beginning we were living together and were drunk for almost one year. It happened so that everybody had some problems, personal ones, from childhood and everybody was taking the psychotropic pills and I realized that it was a "Laboratory", there was a medical aesthetic everywhere. At the same time, there were demonstrations, wars, the revolution and I got the feeling that Caucasus was the big laboratory where they make experiments to create a mutant and I discovered that we are all mutants. We are not Europeans for Europeans and we are not Asians for Asians, we are absolutely different species, we have mixed consciousness". (Zura Jishkariani interview)

If we look at "Laboratory's" art it is easy to identify elements of avant-garde, alternative culture and other subversive forms of art and yet "Laboratory" according to its members is out of any cliché categories. In order to identify, or if you like stigmatize, or on the contrary to argue that

“Laboratory” is or is not an avant-garde or alternative art, it is essential to look at how avant-garde and alternative movements were formed and theorized later on.

The avant-garde and alternative movements brought a significant change in the concept of art and culture in a broader sense. The term avant-garde can be dated back to 1825; however for that period avant-garde served not only as a term referred to art, but to the political radicalism as well. From Saint Simon the avant-garde was characterized by a balance between art and politics, but from 1930 the ways of these two notions separated and as Huyssen asserts “the avant-garde has lost its cultural and political explosiveness and has itself become a tool of legitimation” (Huyssen 1986b:221).

However, before Huyssen suggested this interpretation of avant-garde, there were different attempts to define what is avant-garde and how it works in society. Even naming the scholars working on this issue would surpass the capacity of this work. The very beginning of the works concerned with avant-garde was Renato Poggioli’s 1962 book *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Poggioli 1968) and Peter Burger’s (1974) *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Burger 1984). They defined avant-garde as non-conformist art and argued that avant-gardists question current trends and ideals. Consequently, avant-garde artists are often estranged from society; moreover they are on the margins of society. The concept of avant-garde refers entirely to marginalized artists, writers, composers and thinkers whose work is not only opposed to mainstream commercial values, but often has an uncompromising social or political edge. The ideas of these two academics were different to some extent, but it is not the subject of this paper. One of the most influential works in addressing the matter of avant-garde was Clement Greenberg’s (1939) essay “Avant-garde and Kitsch”, where the author showed that historically avant-garde was opposed to “mainstream” and “high” culture and argued that it was contradiction to mass culture as well, a culture which was produced with industrialization (Greenberg 1939). Avant-garde movements in

art such as Dada, Surrealism, Futurism, Constructivism and Productivism attempted to overcome the art/life dichotomy. However, Huyssen (Huyssen 1986b) argues that these avant-garde movements, later marked as historical avant-garde, tried to challenge bourgeois “institution art” and this process largely depended on the transformation of bourgeois society itself, and according to him, since this transformation did not happen these movements failed. After the technological revolution new avant-garde emerged, which was again concerned with overcoming the art/life dichotomy; however for this time the new technologies played a significant, even crucial role in defining what is avant-garde.

The avant-garde movements varied from county to country. For instance, Russian avant-garde aimed to create a socialist mass culture using the technical opportunities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it was visible that technology helped to some extent to instigate the avant-garde artwork and its break with traditional art and values, but later on it “deprived the avant-garde of its necessary living space in everyday life” (Huyssen 1986a:227). As opposed to the avant-garde, the cultural industry or mass culture succeeded in overcoming the art/life dichotomy and in changing everyday life in twentieth century.

Notwithstanding the fact that historical avant-garde failed to some extent, today in the world of mass culture and production there can be observed different neo-avant-garde movements radically shaped by internet communication and different advanced software programs, which had a significant effect on all kinds of communication and forms of life and to a large extent on the “art world”. It can be argued that art created in twenty first century is characterized by the use of internet and working on the global level.

If one looks at “Laboratory’s” art it becomes apparent that it suits the characteristics of alternative and avant-garde art and, at the same time they, are pushed to the margins of society and are opposed to the mainstream values; however, it is hard to argue that they are alternative or avant-garde artists, but it is possible to suggest that they suit more the neo-avant-garde movements. It is obvious that “Laboratory” is not a mainstream art, but is hard to claim that they are alternative since the members define themselves in absolutely different terms, moreover some projects of laboratory fell exactly in the category of mainstream, and for instance Tazo explains that one of their projects “Kung Fu Junkie” is precisely directed towards the pop scene. This practice can also be viewed as one of the strategies that laboratory works with in order to spread the subversive viruses in the society. It is important to see how they ‘classify’ themselves and by ‘classifying’ themselves how they ‘classify’ others (Bourdieu 1992). For Zura Jishkariani laboratory is an “experimental post-art movement from the ghetto of the third world” and as he told me during the interview, this art collaboration is a “new world disorder”.

Acorn Guy makes it clear:

If we look at famousness of laboratory in Georgia then yes it is of course underground. But if we look at the things from the artistic perspective I think that we are not neither underground nor pop culture. We do different things, we create not only underground or alternative style but we have many pop projects, using hip hop etc, everything is our instrument. We are not standing on any side (Acorn Guy interview)

This line is continued by Paata Shamugia, according to whom in the begging they were called the “underground project”:

In the begging it was seen as an alternative and then we moved to counterculture, since we realized that what we were doing was not an alternative culture. Alternative culture means that you as an artist are still in harmonic relationship with “official” art. It appeared that we were not practicing that, moreover we are sharply opposed to the official art discourse. It happened not because we were “cool”, but because our creation was not acceptable for society and for artists as well. We wanted to provoke society and we did, but we somehow overdosed and that is why we were marginalized. We were teenagers when we were already marginals



As for Leo-Nafta, he also agrees that in the beginning they were underground, but he also adds that at some point they left the underground “since being and fixed there is not an art”. Leo-Nafta also has more radical claims about being alternative, counter culture or any other categorization “even though we are still called alternative I would ask you: for what are we alternative, where is the culture” (Leo-Nafta interview)

The reason why we cannot claim that “Laboratory” is underground is, as explained by Zura Jishkariani, that even though in the very beginning they were underground this was the period when they were not officially performing, they were somewhere in the suburbs and were not in any kind of field. “We were not even offline; we were online, but online that nobody needs” (Zura Jishkariani interview). After giving some performances they entered the field and as Zura claims they are now the parallel culture. “Maybe for this culture it is a subculture, but I would rather call it parallel culture, it exists as a parallel, it is against everything and yet we cannot call it counter culture since at same point we realized that as banal as it is to be the counterculture, it also troughs you in a such field where you are left alone and you cannot take any action. That is why we chose another strategy”. The other strategy can be understood as following, some members of laboratory are at the same time in so called mainstream culture and are working in that environment. They enter that field and function as a mechanism to spread laboratory’s “viruses”, in that field they do “Laboratorial” things. Zura claims that this is a new cultural strategy “you do and say absolutely opposite things and yet you are in that culture”. Eco, relatively new member of art collaboration is totally against any kind of definitions and as he says in his interview “Why underground? I am undersky”.

Overall, even though one can easily identify aspects of alternative or avant-garde art in “Laboratory’s” art we cannot claim that they fall in these categories, since the members of the group refuse to acknowledge any kind of categories.

### 3.2.1 *“Laboratory”: its essence and aims*

According to different definitions the word “Laboratory” means the facility that provides controlled conditions in which experiments, scientific research and measurements can be carried out. In a similar manner the credo of “Laboratory’s” art is free creation and unlimited experiments. According to its members, “Laboratory” is interested in schizophrenia, autism, atomic dawn, cosmic migration, the perspectives of cyberspace, and the resistance of the third world, embryonic dreams, coma, totalitarianism, and the post biological opportunities of humans, conspiracy and paranoid theories. Media art group “Laboratory” is working on different projects, which includes but is not limited to eight musical projects, translation of various literatures, the project of internet television, painting and producing poetry and prose.

The identity of “Laboratory” is characterized by claims that they live in the country which is in the world’s underground (meaning Georgia). They are just 20-22 years old and have already experienced “war, fear, darkness, cold, drug addiction, alcoholism, dead (lost) relatives and three unsuccessful attempts to build the state. Consequently, they have enough abhorrence, mistrust and yearning for warmth to dance on the ruins” (Zura Jishkariani). These above mentioned aspects of lives of “Laboratory” members are crucial for defining their identities. They are heavily influenced by the instability of the state and the enormous number of different wars in Georgia. They are children of war.

On the other hand “Laboratory” is inclined towards Timothy Leary’s ideas and this can be seen in their activities and art. They claim that human mind can be seen as a biocomputer, where different practices of human life are accumulated and the individual can reset, delete, change and release anything from those programs that are installed in his/her brain. They refer to Leary who started to investigate the possibilities of programming the human mind seen as a biocomputer. At the same time, “Laboratory” refers to Ivan Stang’s “Church of the SubGenius”, the organization which is interested in researching the methods of the realization of an individual’s freedom. They are ridiculing religion, UFOs, conspiracy theory and popular culture and try to create and spread alternative conspiracy theories. “Laboratory” has a somewhat similar aim; they are spreading conspiracy theories and claim that these theories are tools against the existing system.

“Laboratory” has an ambition to be global and they argue that with their art they are talking to the whole planet not only to Georgia. However, as it can be seen in their art, for this level they are more concerned with local problems and fight against local stereotypes. They call in question the values of traditional society and struggle against the tyranny of authorities.

“Laboratory” has different aims: lots of demonstrations, concerts and diffusion of created media-viruses (demonstration for supporting the first unborn Georgian Cosmonaut) psycho-geographic campaigns, creation of alternative informational stream- magazines, journals, forums, recording studios, radio etc. The projects which are already realized are psychotropic poetry of Zura Jishkariani (patient number 0), imperativism of Paata Shamugia (patient number 13) and fragmentary prose of Aryis Bichi (patient number minus infinity). Art group “Laboratory” aims experiments on the ontological basis of civilization, experiments on the basic codes of culture such as: classical physics, family, moral, economy, taboo, art, religion, law. They have and ambition to be total. As Zura Jishkariani, one of the founders, explains “Laboratory is Antonin

Artaud's the theater of cruelty (for more details about the theater of cruelty see Antonin Artaud "The Theater and Its Double" 1958), it is the vagina where progressive mutations are born, Laboratory does not care about government (and Vano Merabishvili - Interior minister of Georgia), Laboratory asks for legalization" (Zura Jishkariani 2006<sup>2</sup>).

"Laboratory" addresses their art to different types of audience. Their audience includes the inhabitants of huge, post-industrial and small, anonymous towns, empty flats, self-made laboratories, inhabitants of ghettos and soviet electrification underground. The synthesizers of probing drugs, stripteaser beginner writers, feminist gays, triple pillers lesbians, desperate housewives, young penniless chemists, aliens dressed as a neighbors of sleeping humans, constantly unavailable abonents of all networks, ozone logs of the system, proletariats who are motivated with new ideas of beauty, viruses of elite, the teachers of geography with strange habits and cocaine in globe, melancholic's with post-apocalyptic instincts, children of forgotten wars, cheaply sparkling queens of spoilt ghettos, retired secret generals and astrophysics, cybernetic shamans with ugly eyeglasses, failed self-murderers, researchers of dreams and anonymous painters of town walls from communal settlements, documented citizens (Zura Jishkariani 2006). However, the current audience of art collaboration is not that wide. As members of art group explained in their interviews, in the beginning their audience was limited to their friends and a very small circle of people, but today the audience is growing and this tendency can be mainly observed on their concerts. As Acorn Guy explains in his interview, even though their audience is not that wide, the most important is that people who come to their performances leave the place with slightly changes attitudes and start thinking in another ways: "this is the highest satisfaction for us as artists" (Acorn Guy interview).

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<sup>2</sup> The texts by the members of Art Media "Laboratory" are translated by the author

It can be argued that “Laboratory” is industrial since it is based on five elements of industrial cultural collective established by Jon Savage in the introduction to “Industrial Culture Handbook” (Savage 1983). These elements are: organizational autonomy, the processing of information, the usage of electronic and alternative music, the usage of extra-musical elements (elements which are out of “musical borders” and choking tactic). Artistic collaboration “Laboratory” can be address in the same terms and viewed as cultural collective which is industrial since they are successfully using the above mentioned aspects.

“Laboratory” uses different strategies to legitimize itself. They are often giving performances in public places, for instance, parks, cafes, famous rock clubs. They publish journal “Sindromi” (Syndrome), where one can find their prose, poetry CD’s etc. “Laboratory” is an active user of different web cities ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com). [www.lib.ge](http://www.lib.ge). [www.literatura.ge](http://www.literatura.ge)) and at the same time every member has his/her personal blog. They are quite famous in Georgian art-space; however they still manage not to assimilate with mainstream culture and are devoted to their “unique” art code.

### *3.2.2 Eurasian Pop and Second Hand Techno (Hybrid Subculture)*

The music of “Laboratory” is labeled as Eurasian pop and second hand techno. They are creating Georgian music on the basis of western musical traditions. On the other hand, second hand techno is the mixture of illegal Cosmonavtica, chemistry, spoilt sound in music, the memories

from ghetto (meaning regions where most of the artists were born and grown up), the love of 2pac, the obsession with Eurasianism (meaning the red Eurasianism established by Rustem Vakhitov, which is different from Alexandr Dugin's idea of Eurasia. For more details see [www.eurasia.info](http://www.eurasia.info) and [www.redeurasia.narod.ru](http://www.redeurasia.narod.ru)). According to Zura Jishkariani, "second hand techno is the glamour of the third world, it is experimental music played in Saxinkle (the place for special Georgian food xinkali), second hand techno is the byte inspired by psychotropic pills, it is the rhythm of our reality, reality without compromise" ([www.nextreamhacker.blogspot.com](http://www.nextreamhacker.blogspot.com)). The principal knowhow of second hand techno is to use old Pentium three computers during live performances, instead of laptop.

I would argue that in this sense the music of "Laboratory" is the product of cultural hybridization. As Robert J. Holton argues "World music is, in a sense, self-consciously unbounded, and is thus a particular subset of hybridized cultural practices" (Holton 1998:180) at the same time according to hybridity theories cultures are created by mixing different cultural practices and as it can be seen from "Laboratory's" musical practice they are the clear example of hybridity by usage of traditional and international musical practices.

The essence of music created in "Laboratory" can be viewed in Zura Jishkariani's following statement:

This music is very different from traditional electro music. When I was writing about second hand techno, this term was invented when we could not fit the music that we were doing in any kind of traditional musical style. I do not want to say that we are so cool that we give rhythm to the planet, not at all, simply the music that we are doing depends on any kind of socio-political, cultural, technological and non sober anomalies, problems and changes that itself determined the sonority, instruments and rate of music.

Moreover, it can be emphasized that "Laboratory" tries to establish a new subculture which is characterized by mixing of live performance and electronic music without using the laptop. They

are using Georgian language for the lyrics; however they are changing the words with replacing the letters and thus creating a new language. This tendency can only be seen in their music, as for writings they are using proper Georgian language. On the other hand, they have their specific jargon in everyday conversations, which can be characterized with usage of Russian and English words along with Georgian. They already have kind of history and material which is their CDs, few published books, blogs and journals. Since subculture is defined as culture which has its own language, jargon, its history and material objects we can define “Laboratory” as a new subculture, which has all the above mentioned aspects of subculture and is distinguished with mixing of live performance and electronic music without using the laptop.

Another aspect of “Laboratory’s” art is the usage of popular culture. Both formalists and Contextualists think that avant-garde is isolated from popular culture. However, in the case of “Laboratory” it works in a different way. The members of collaboration actively use the items of popular culture. First of all, this tendency can be seen in their music and how they use the well known sounds from various computer games, for example “Mario” and “Dendy”, they successfully incorporate the eight and sixty byte sounds from above mentioned games and their somewhat strange musical style. Secondly, one can observe the elements of popular culture in their paintings and design of their stage while performing.

This new type of music that “Eurasian Laboratory” is creating can be seen as something absolutely different from any other type of music present in Georgia and Zura Jishkariani’s following lines claim exactly the same.

90 percent of Georgian punk, rock, metal and electro groups are endlessly boring. I cannot see anything interesting or abnormal in their music and style, I cannot see passion, breeze of Chernobyl, five floors Xrushovka’s, professor grandfathers and drag edict fathers, black sea and mains of Chiatura, beautiful girls and boys, abandoned industrial

buildings and dreams about Georgian Cosmonavtica. I cannot see the desire to dance. I see only trash and badly performed cloning (Zura Jishkariani)

It is apparent that with using of several cultural forms “Laboratory” establishes the new subculture, which has its unique characteristics and creates the new type of music and in a broader sense art, which is totally different from other cultural forms present in Georgian artistic field.

### *3.2.3 Illegal Cosmonavtica*

“Eurasian Laboratory” is based on the idea of entire cosmos. One can identify this from their writings. They agree with the assumption that first there was a cosmos. “Once we had cosmos and huge planet, the unlimited possibilities of counting the stars, self-made ships and the map of stars. We were visited by gods from Sirius and they were teaching as mathematics and beer production. And then everything changed” (Jishkariani 2006). In addressing this problem “Laboratory” claims that they are creating new science from unconscious folders of individuals, new pagan celebration and new idea for (r) evolution. According to “Laboratory” we are not able to examine cosmos since the government has monopoly on it. Consequently, their project “Illegal Cosmonavtica” “will start with universal and absolute refusing of officially acknowledged political and ontological reality; this is going to be the most mass and the most silent protest against existing historical situation” (Zura Jishkariani 2006a). They aim to research inner and outer cosmos with all available and unavailable tools, emotions, landscapes, individual, and situation. According to them humanity has experience in studying inner cosmos which can be seen in Shamanic, Buddhist and other older practices. They appeal people to use this experience and then to lie down on the roof and think about cosmos, receive the cosmos this



unlimited freedom, entropy, evolutionary metamorphosis, nightmares, wars, sleep, dreams. “Cosmos is our motherland, it is far and near at the same time. It is vagina in which billiards of stars, live organisms and bacteria’s are born. It breathes, it feels, it sees, makes noise, changes face and genetic code. You should think of your girlfriend and boyfriend as cosmos, you should buy telescope” (Jishkariani 2006). We should examine cosmos with sex, drugs, music, dreams and dance. “Laboratory” argues that during this research the tools will change and we will receive absolutely new sex, drugs, music and dance and this is the guarantee for fundament of a new cosmic civilization. “Illegal Cosmonavtica” will use the mass produced everyday objects for experimental tools, every meaningless object in the hand of “Illegal Cosmonavtica” will turn into the tool of spiritual research and potential bomb for governmental apparatus, which are based on violence. They as well believe that when you will start the research you will get beautiful and huge but illegal art. Illegal Cosmonavtica is already forming as empirical, anti-authoritarian science and art and today it consists of following aspects: 1. international movement towards the air. 2. Cyber feminism. 3. Psychonautica. “Laboratory” claims that an alphabet of Cosmonavtica is the New Testament, a new drug and new stimuli for (r) evolution. One of the most interesting aspects of “Illegal Cosmonavtica” is the idea of cyber feminism; however “Laboratory” has not yet clearly defined what can be considered as cyber feminism. The attempts to establish this new type of feminism can be only observed in Ana Tabatadze’s paintings (See Appendix number 2).

Once again with this project and its main goal to establish the Illegal Art, “Eurasian Laboratory” opposes itself to the dominant symbolic system provided by the state and calls into the question the cultural arbitrariness. Cosmos also can be seen as a metaphor for the country (in this case Georgia) which is monopolized by the state apparatus and the idea of opening this space for people can be also viewed as “Laboratory’s” another opposition to the dominant state discourse.

### 3.3 *Community and Boundaries*

Community for Cohen as I already cited him in the theoretical part of the thesis is “that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call ‘society’. It is the arena which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home” (Cohen 1984: 15). I argue that “Eurasian Laboratory” can be seen as the community in Cohen’s sense. Artists of this collaboration made it clear during the interviews that “Laboratory” is a society in itself. Ana Tabatadze explains “I can’t tell you what is Laboratory for me; it is society, where I belong, where I have people who share similar ideas and values”. The same line can be observed in Amiko’s interview: “Laboratory” first of all is my friends. People, who have virtue of free thinking, people who share my views. I see what they see; I imagine things in a way as they do” (Amiko) or MK-Ultra who maintains that “Laboratory” is the people united under one idea”.

The usage of historical items as it was demonstrated above is one of the characteristics of “Laboratory” art (The example of Paata Shamugia’s *Antityaosani*). Cohen argues that “communities often employ past when faced with contemporary threats of culture” (Cohen 1994: 46). The usage of bricolage practice, the usage of Timothy Leary’s ideas, and the usage of past practice is present in “Laboratory’s” art works. The use of the sixty bite music and other contemporary art illustrates what Cohen explains as “the selective construction of the past with contemporary influences”. At the same time, I argue that “Laboratory” uses the different cultural forms and recourses as a strategy to subvert the culture supported by the State, thus to subvert the State characterized with orthodox strategies, with creating the new type of knowledge different from the State discourse.

Cohen (Cohen 1989) argues that “symbolic boundaries [of a community] increase in importance as the actual social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred, or weakened”. As I

illustrated above “Eurasian Laboratory” occupies the excluded position in the field of power. Coming from this position in the field art collaboration clearly defines set of boundaries between their ways of thinking in contrast to those proposed by the dominant position in the power field. As Zura Jishkariani states “one of the main goals of our art is to make any kind of information accessible to everybody, everything that you know is lie”, while official discourse (the state) “has monopoly on the information and cosmos”. The claim that everything that you know is lie was directly expressed in Beso Kapchelashvili film “CRU” (false), where hero presented as Mother of Georgia (monument statue in Tbilisi, which depicts Georgian woman in national dress. The statue is anticipated to symbolize the Georgian national character: in her left hand she holds a bowl of wine to greet those who come as friends, and in her right hand is a sword for those who come as enemies) expresses the following message:

Who tells you what is good or what is bad. Indoctrinated monkeys are destroying themselves, you are just another piece of meat does not matter if they are not eating you yet for their purposes. There is no truth and reality. You are absolute zero in this total spuriousness, they are giving you the bone and you gnaw. Institution is lie, religion is lie, television is lie, mother land is lie, you are a product, which is created for million similar to you products. I, you and we are CRU (false)

The idea of truth, which is monopolized by the state, can be viewed as the object of the struggle for legitimation contained in the field of power. The concept “truth” is also permeating with the claim that there should be a room for free speech and free expression. This need to tell the truth and free expression I argue is an imperative for the community. I also maintain that the struggle over definition what is free expression and free information within the artistic field can be seen as a symbolic violence form different artists and art collaborations towards each other. As my interviewees agreed inside artistic field whoever has the information, they try to keep for themselves and never share with others, since it is one of the most important aspects of their self-

assurance factor. This is exactly what “Laboratory” is against; on the contrary they believe that any information should be reachable to everybody.

As I already demonstrated above “Laboratory” is against defining themselves in terms of underground, counter culture or subversive culture. The quote from Zura Jishkariani is clear evidence of this attitude: “to be the counterculture, it also troughs you in such field where you are left alone and you cannot take any action.” Contradictorily, in my interviews it is still obvious that “Laboratory” is opposed to so called mainstream values and is the “counter culture” for Georgian culture: “We try to destroy heroes, we try to destroy values, we try to show that there is another way” (Leo-Nafta interview). Indeed we can still witness the relational existence which is based on the binary opposition created though the symbolic system of art within the artistic field. Following this line, in order to make sense out of what can be seen as boundaries between “Eurasian Laboratory” and other artists, as well as the boundary between the former and the State, we should read the lines “we are not opposed to the state”, as indicator that art group does not want to engage in, let us call it critical dialog with the state, and on the other hand claim that “we are not alternative” can bare the same meaning. Judging from abovementioned strategies that “Laboratory” chooses, I argue that they do not want to be engaged in political issues in the same way as so called dissidents do, rather they try to find change through establishing their own alternative space for free expression and free information.

The actions taken by “Laboratory” are strategic in a sense that detection of community is not to overthrow the existing political “regime” or change the system politically; rather their aim is to establish space, an alternative, one to give room for free expressions. Demonstration of this process can be seen in music label that was created by art group “Laboratory”

"SOKO" is an indie label which is open to collaborate with everyone, anytime & anywhere! Label is an open space where different Eurasian music projects are sharing their music, art experiences, instruments and pills. Laboratory Muzik (SOKOMUZIK) means the post-soviet mutation sound, influenced by abnormal soviet and post-soviet lifestyle, Chernobyl catastrophe, civil wars and low technologies. Music which is created after these dark periods is a Laboratory SokoMuzik. SokoMuzik is based on weird synthesis of high and low music technologies. We love to use the HOME COMPUTER on the stage instead the laptop. We love to use a killing 16BIT SOUND in the soft pop-oriented dance music. We love the incredible electronic of the third world. We call this music -- SECOND HAND TECHNO. Hail Eurasia

To a certain extent the claim that "Laboratory's" pursuit is not the clutch the power of the state can be seen as contradictory to the claim for their project "Illegal Cosmonavtica" "which will start with universal and absolute refusing of officially acknowledged political and ontological reality; this is going to be the most mass and the most silent protest against existing historical and political situation" (Zura Jishkariani 2006), but while only few members of art collaboration are concerned with political issues other claim that "art is for art and for life, we just enjoy doing art, doing what we do, we are not and we do not want to fight against regime". The contradictions are mainly based on the struggle between what can be referred as form and function: for certain members of "Laboratory" the art is purely aesthetic, while others believe that art and culture can be a significant challenge for the State.

### *3.4 Construction and deconstruction of Habitus*

I already discussed the habitus of "Eurasian Laboratory", but in this part I will look at how the field shaped their habitus and at the same time I will analyze how members of this artistic collaboration "work" to change their embedded habitus.

In "The Logic of Practice" Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1992 [1990]) delineates habitus as:

a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1990: 53)

Habitus in Bourdieu's understanding emerges from the primary socialization and is embedded in deep levels of individual consciousness.

As it was described in chapter two the habitus with which "Laboratory" entered the artistic field is significantly shaped with the instability of political system and state. "Laboratory" consists of colorful members poets, musicians, "drug-addicts" (phsycodealic pills), painters, specialists of international relationships, sociologists etc. And yet all of them share more or less similar attitude towards art and life. As I have noted in the second chapter most of the members of the art group come from the so called provincial part of Georgia and allocate relatively similar socio-economic background. This "specific" type of socialization was internalized and structured the habitus of the young artists, thus shaped the perceptions, actions, positions and dispositions of the members of "Eurasian Laboratory".

The habitus, with which "Laboratory" entered the field, was also shaped by the structure of the field itself. As it was mapped out above, art group made the choice to stay in the artistic field with the strategy to be somehow the parallel to the mainstream culture, otherwise there was a high probability that field with its internal lows would totally excluded them. "Laboratory" started to use different already existing cultural capital in the field and tried to make something absolutely different out of it. Dispositions of the already present capital stated to be cultivated by the members and they started to socialize in the field. The manner of discernment of various artistic forms thus served and serves as a base and resource for symbolic constriction of the

community, in that the members of “Laboratory” are able to take into custody these forms based on habituation over time as well as negotiate them in the venture of community construction.

Another important and at the same time interesting issue is how “Laboratory” tries to deconstruct and destroy the deeply embedded “structuring structure” (Bourdieu). As it became obvious from my interviews with the artists they try to work on their habitus in order to change it. “We do realize that we have some incorrect codes existing deeply in our minds, what we do is to take those codes, analyze them, reinstall them and establish the new, a more approvable for us codes” (Acorn Guy interview). The idea of reinstalling habitus can be clearly seen through the lines of Zura Jishkariani’s interview

System that you have is installed through education, family, social atmosphere etc. We promote new practice, which means that you become the author of these installations, you create viruses yourself and these viruses are aimed at destroying those antivirus that are inside you and your consciousness. For instance, experiments on the control of your consciousness or other example, when you see homosexual you get signal in your head and you understand that you are homophobic, you start to work out this antivirus in you and create more appropriate one

The idea of reworking habitus is obvious also in writings produced by the members of this artistic collaboration. As I explained above, “Laboratory” refers to Timothy Leary who started to investigate the possibilities of programming human mind seen as biocomputer. They claim that human mind can be seen as biocomputer, where different practices of human life are accumulated and individual can reset, delete, change and release from those programs that are installed in his/her brain.

However, while the idea of working with their habitus is pretty much attracting, for Bourdieu it is not that simple. According to him “the schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will”

(Bourdieu 1992:466). As we can see Bourdieu does not really leaves the room for thinking about the possible changes in habitus, since it is there and it is the fruit of the long experience; nevertheless we can still relay on Swartz's idea of action as the strategy: "Actors are not rule followers or norm obeyers but strategic improvisers who respond dispositionally to the opportunities and constraints offered by various situations" (Swartz 100).



## Conclusion

Georgian artistic field is an interesting phenomenon as we have seen through this paper. I demonstrated how the field of cultural production is influenced by the field of power in which it is contained. Throughout the analysis of cultural policy that is designed by the Georgian Government it is palpable how by establishing proper/improper modes of expression the field of power imposes the dominant symbolic system. I also showed the transformation of artistic field along with the transformation of the State and we witnessed how the political development of country affected the cultural field. The analytical power of Bourdieu's sociology made it possible to expose the structure of Georgian artistic field and helped understand how the construction of binary differentiation in cultural forms leads to the divergence, suppression and dissimilarity in the social order. This is epitomized by "Eurasian Laboratory" who fabricates and withdraws into an alternative cultural and at the same time social space where they create their own set of artistic and social values, thus reducing the capital into the capital of significance. Or to put it in other way, this cultural and social space that is created by the art group "Laboratory" offers the place to establish a symbolic spot where individuals can create their own system of values and allows them to create music, prose and poetry which is free from any kind of aesthetic and political restrictions. I argue that in the situation of political and economic instability Art group is able to put forward the idea of developing culture and socially and culturally situate themselves in opposition to the ideology and values that are at stake in today's Georgian society.

As it was shown all the way through my paper, the creation of alternative space by "Eurasian Laboratory" inside the cultural field also produces the symbolic boundaries of this community. I

maintain that “Laboratory” manages to create the community by engaging themselves musically and poetically in the struggle for defining cultural resistance and establishing new Eurasian aspect of today’s Georgian culture. The struggle over the proper/improper ways of expression can be observed within the cultural as well as between the cultural and political fields. The performance of subversive cultural practices, creating the knowledge different from the State discourse allows members of “Laboratory” to establish symbolic boundaries between them, other artists and the state.

Taken as a whole, this thesis is only but a small representation of the rich sociological perspectives and opportunities for investigation of Georgian artistic field and “alternative” actors within it, who try to shape, modify and affect taken for granted values and systems of society and the artistic field itself. Choosing to focus my study only on this particular art group opens the prospects for more detailed analysis of the field of cultural production in Georgia and raises the interest in studying the roots of the present field. Even though I described the genesis of the today’s cultural field it is still of a great interest how artistic field in Georgian was formed and how it functioned in Soviet and Post-Soviet period, since the cultural field and especially underground scene in Georgia was one of the most interesting phenomenon across the Soviet reality. On the other hand, my study also opens the room for investigations in the present artistic field in order to see how internal and external forces affected and affects the current state of affairs inside the field and how Georgian artistic field follows the development of the art in the globalized world.

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## Appendix N 1

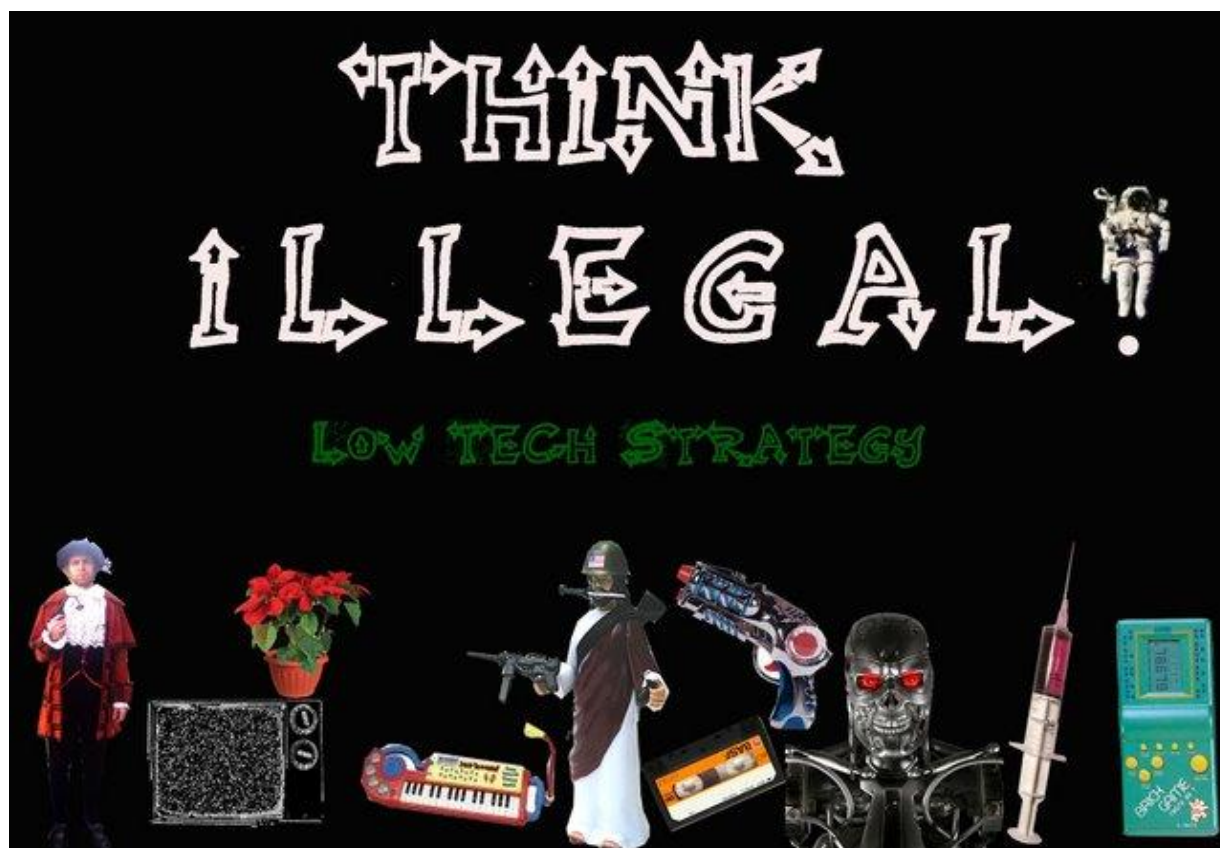


Picture1. Eurasian Vespers by Ana Tabatadze and Zura Jishkariani





Picture2. Think Illegal the Basis by Ana Tabatadze and Zura Jishkariani



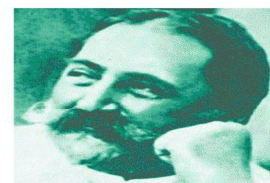
Picture3. Think Illegal Low Tech Strategy by Ana Tabatadze and Zura Jishkariani





Picture5. Poster of Illegal Cosmonavtica by Ana Tabatadze

LANGUAGE  
HOME LAND  
FAITH



INFORMATION  
CONSCIOUSNESS  
TECHNOLOGIES

Picture4. Languge, Homeland, Faith by  
Ana Tabatadze



Picture6. Poster of Laboratory by Zura Jishkariani

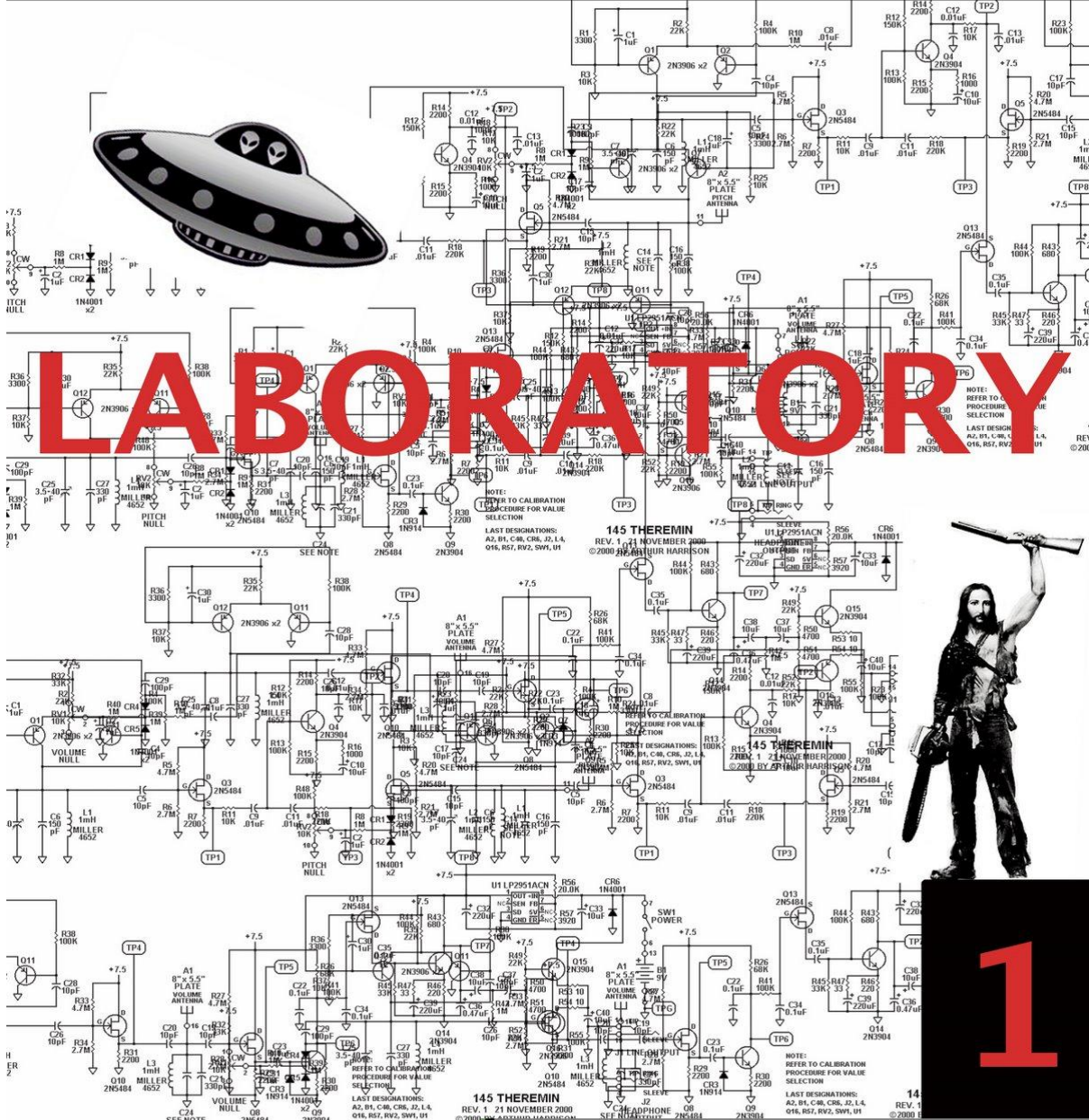
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# laboratory



1

Picture7. Laboratory Samizdat Cover by Ana Tabatadze



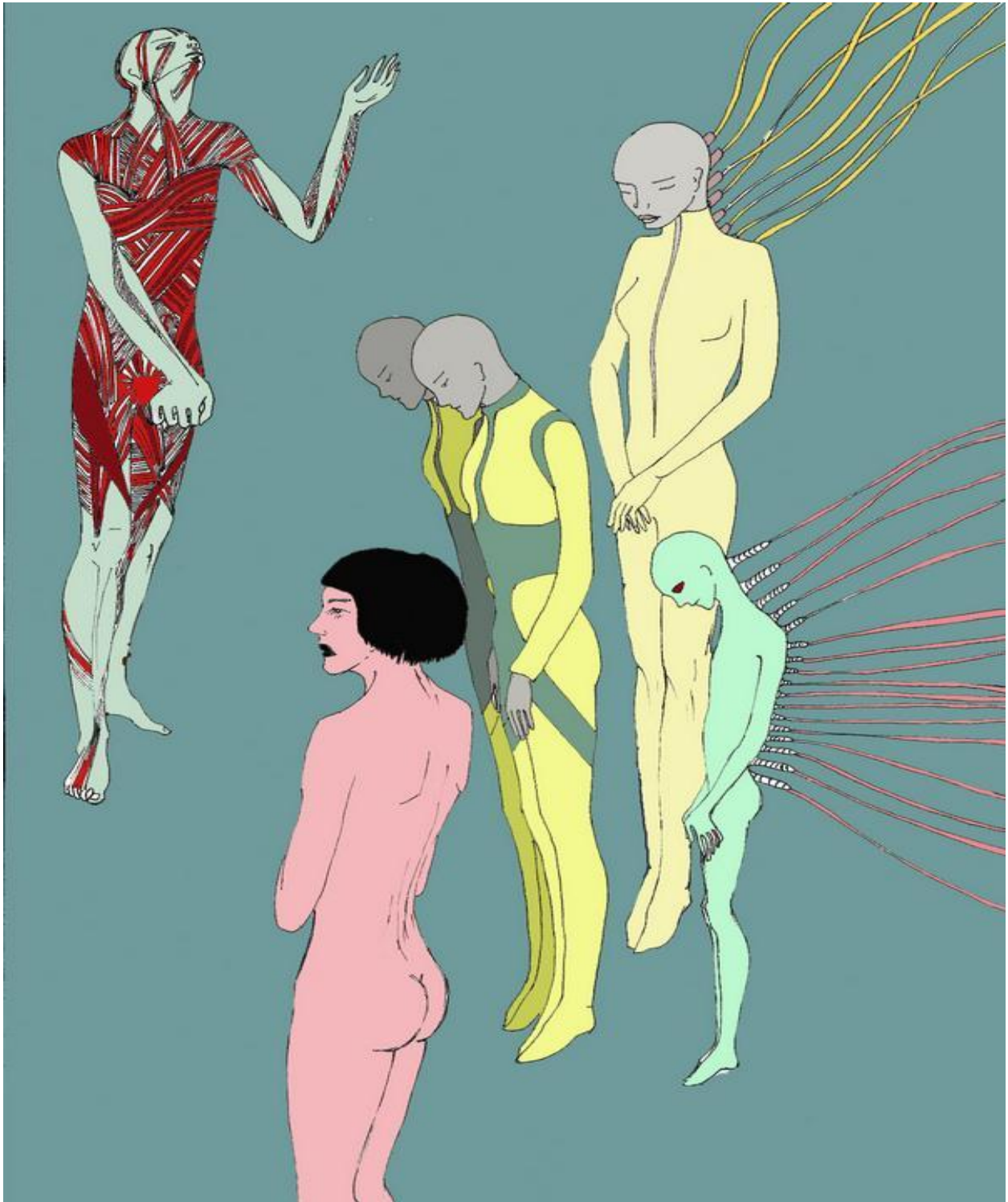
Picture9. Laboratory Samizdat Cover by Ana Tabatadze



## Appendix 2



Picture1. Abortion by Ana Tabatadze



Picture2. Androids Dream by Ana Tabatadze





Picture3. Eating by Ana Tabatadze



Picture4. Models by Ana Tabatadze

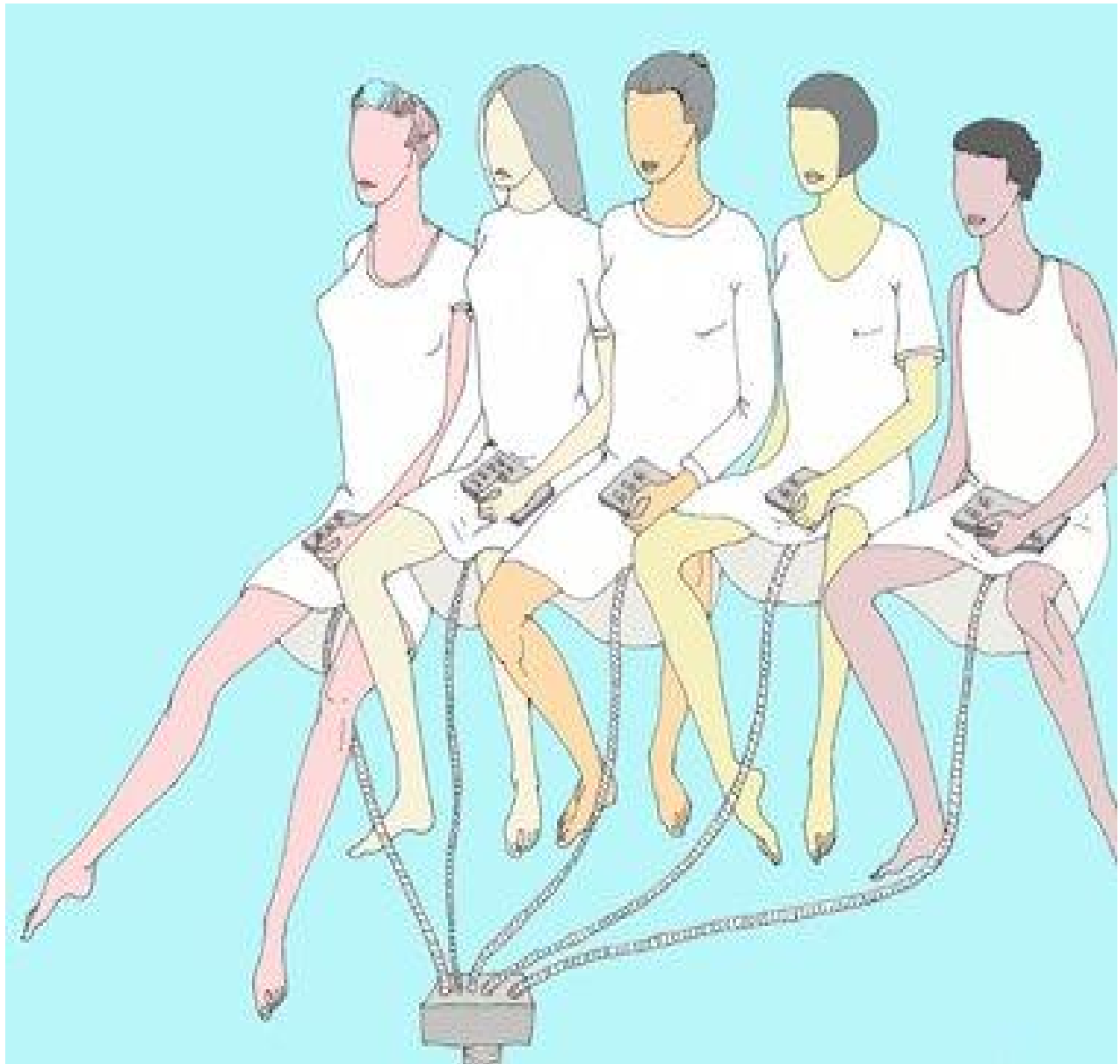




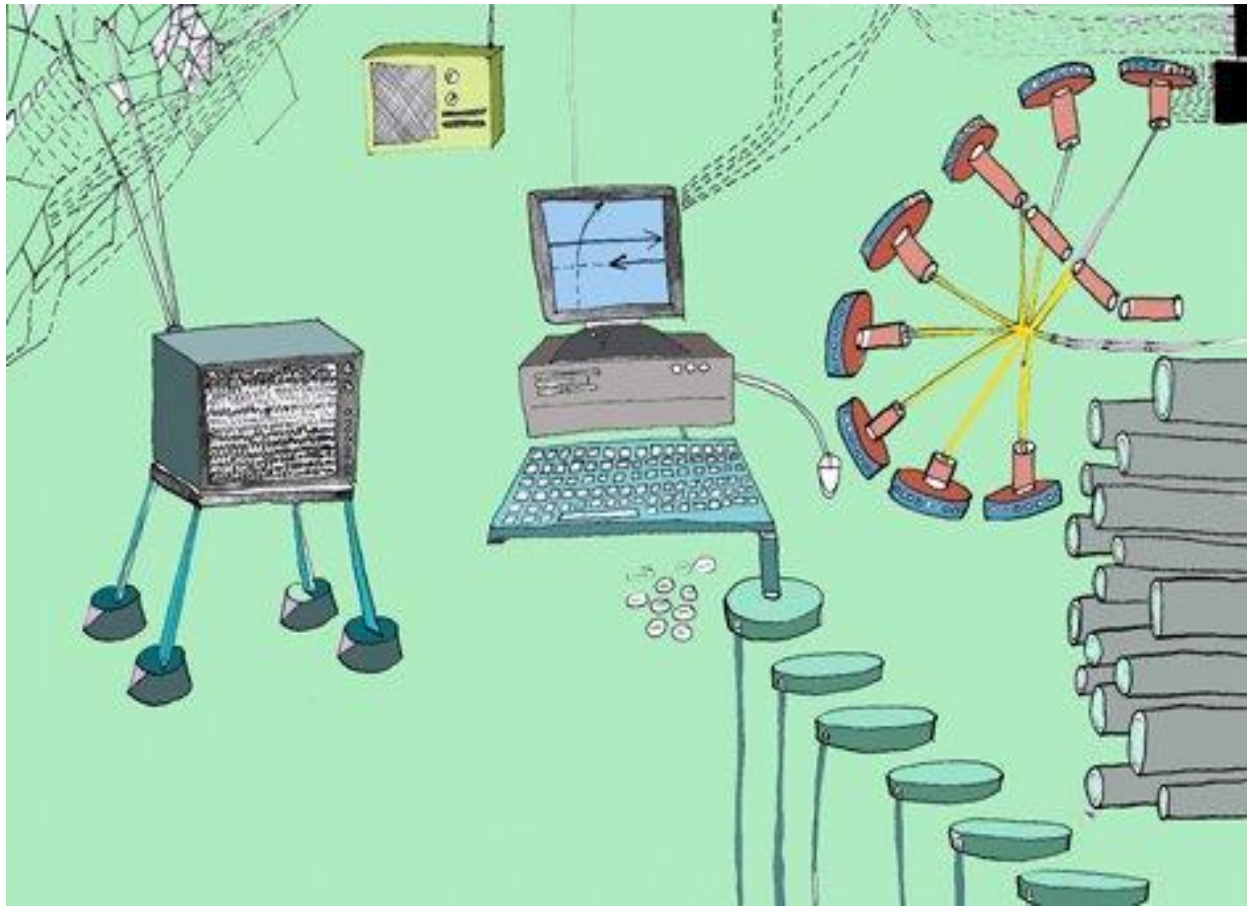
Picture5. Sistole Diastole by Ana Tabatadze



Picture6. Teachers by Ana Tabatadze

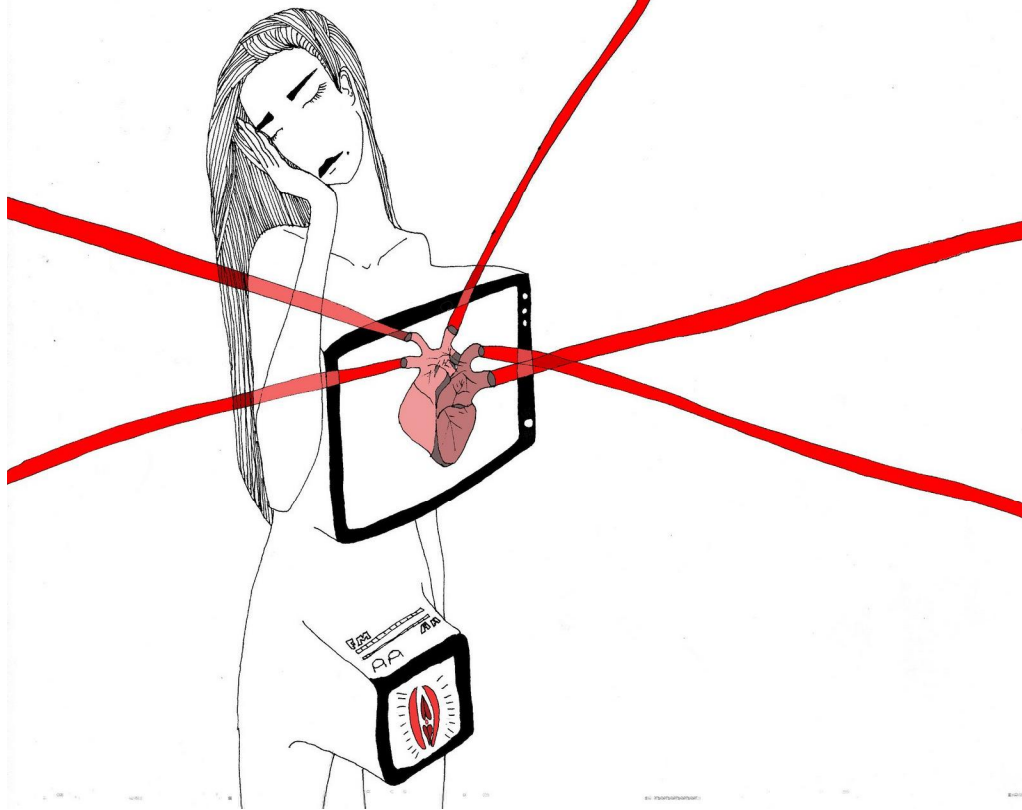


Picture7. Orgazm Scanner by Ana Tabatadze. Illustration for magazine “Hot Chocolate”



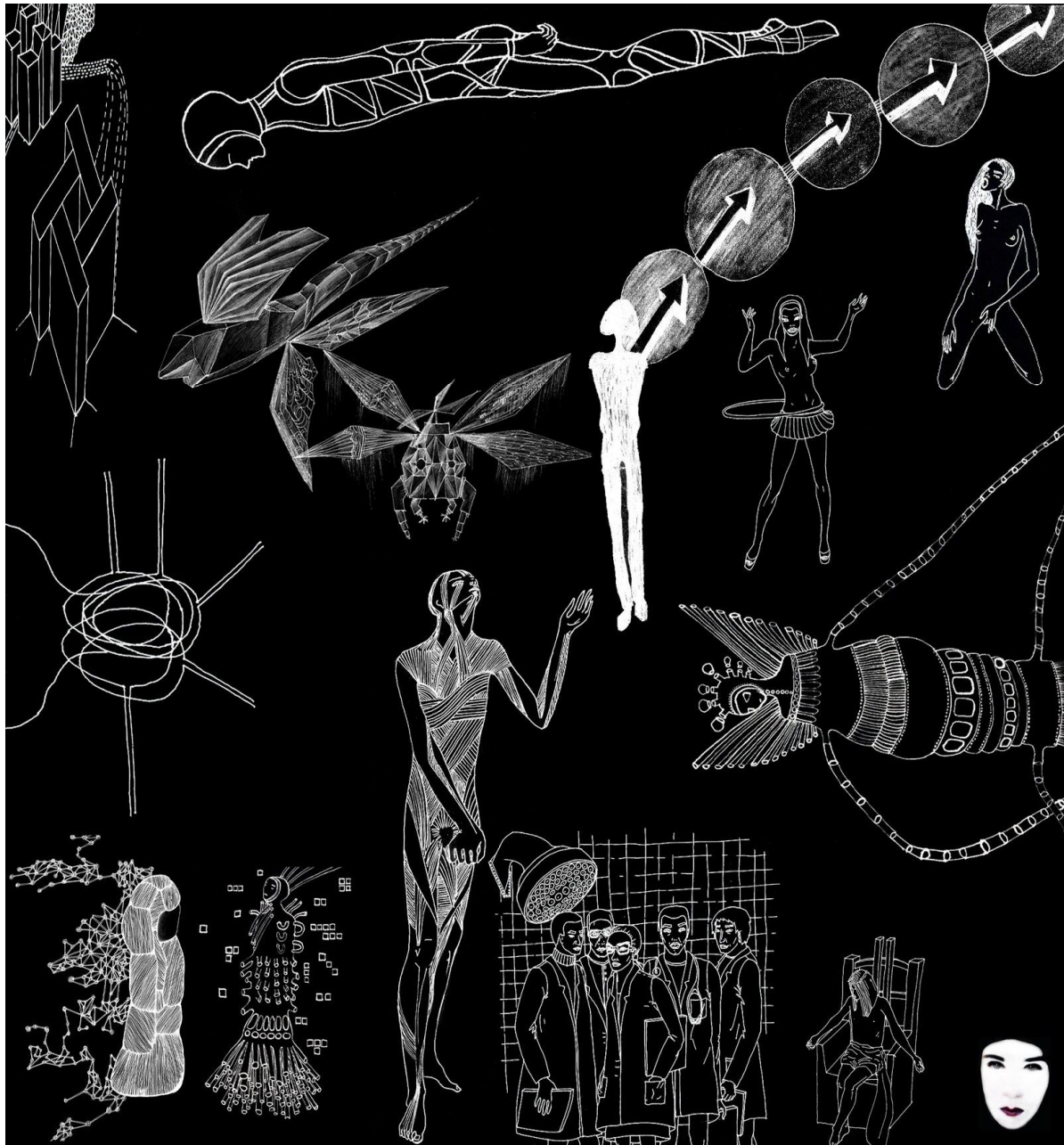
Picture8. Untitled by Ana Tabatadze

**show me youre home technique**

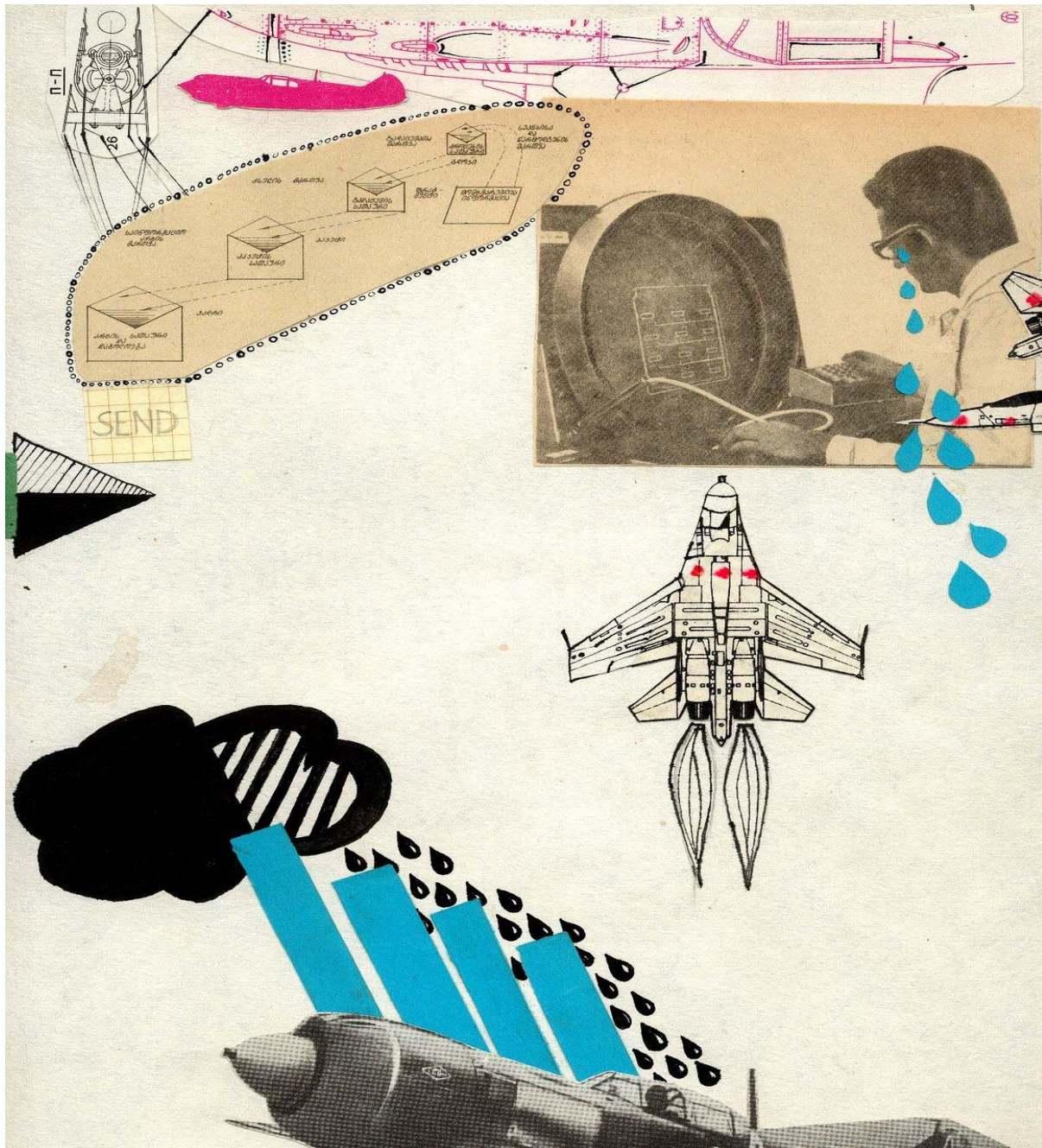


Picture9. Show me your home technique by Ana Tabatadze. Cover for magazine “Syndrome”





Picture10. Untitled by Ana Tabatadze



Picture11. War by Ana Tabatadze





Picture12. Me by Ana Tabatadze