Communal Hallways of Tbilisi:

Thinking Spatially on Everyday Life of Urban Neighbourhoods

By

Teona Ivashchenko

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Supervisors:

Alexandra Kowalski

Johanna Markkula

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Abstract

A communal hallway is not a frequent discussion topic in everyday life nor in the academic literature. Its impact on everyday urban life is mostly unnoticeable. However, a transitional political, social, or economic period in the state reveals its importance. Changes in society, state policies, and infrastructure reveal that the transitional space between the public and private cannot be transformed without consequences. Therefore, it is not a mere background for social interactions. Based on this, my thesis tries to analyse the everyday experience of neighbourhoods in communal hallways. My ethnographic analysis is based on the comparison of the physical and social conditions of three types of communal hallways in Tbilisi: pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet. For the theoretical discussion, I follow Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad of perceived, conceived and lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991). I conceptualise a communal hallway as a social space (Lefebvre 1991) which is produced, but, at the same time has an agency in the everyday life of urban neighbourhoods in Tbilisi. I argue that a communal hallway is simultaneously a place for power disposition, a symbolic space for memory and perception of different temporalities, a context for intimate neighbourhood practices as well as for formal interactions and finally a source of personal emotions too.

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Acknowledgement

To my main supporters: my family and Giorgo.

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[1] All the photos in the research were taken by the author: Teona Ivashchenko.

Introduction

On a cold evening in January 2023, I was sitting on the common yard bench in front of the Soviet residential building. We had to freeze outside as it was time for Jago's daily walk. His owner was proud of his dog because he knows how to behave in the apartment to avoid disturbing neighbours. Jago is a good dog because he is friendly with cats.

"Oh, did you have cats as well?" - I was a bit surprised because, based on my experience, owning lots of pets simultaneously is not welcomed by neighbours in Soviet blocks of flats. Due to the lack of space, the cats often walk in the communal hallways. The smell and cats' free movement in the shared space are the primary reasons for neighbours' dissatisfaction.

"Yes, I had to adopt a few cats. When the City Hall changed the main pipes of the sewerage system, rats appeared. I bred cats to fight against rats."

"That was a terrible period," - interjected another resident, my guide in the building -" one day, I woke up to my wife's scream. A huge rat was running around our guest room. I could hardly catch it. I remember we could not go down to the cellar for some time until he brought the cats."

"You know that during the Soviet times, sewerage pipes were made of cast iron. Rats can live there very well. As pipes were old and plus, cast iron produced lots of residues. Rats were following cast iron."

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"Today, they do not use cast iron. New materials are not precipitating that well,

so we are not afraid of rats that much. But that time, when huge pipes were

open, they found a space. So, your cats really saved us."

I found this dialogue intriguing as it shows how people and neighbourhoods adapt to their

common spaces' infrastructural changes. In this thesis, I will use the term "neighbourhood" in the

Georgian sense which refers to the local understanding of the community in the residential

building[2]. The Block of flats in this vignette, constructed in the 70s, is physically transiting from

the past to the present. This process is influenced by Soviet and modern economic and political

decisions. What is more interesting is how this physical transformation of the shared

infrastructure forces neighbourhoods to adapt: to change their everyday practices and to create a

new social order shared in the micro-community (in this case, accepting cats in the communal

hallway).

At first glance, a communal hallway consists of "empty space" squeezed between living

apartments, which seems devoid of any intrinsic meaning. However, even the simplest empirical

observations demonstrate that changes and specificities of that space create various contexts for

relationships native to these neighbourhoods. This ambivalent nature needs further elaboration to

define the nature of the communal hallway – the first "public" space after leaving the house. Yet,

the example of the above-mentioned neighbourhood shows the instantaneous and unpredictable

impact on the social agreement and the everyday life of the neighbourhood. This impact arises

from the infrastructural transformation of shared spaces, which can be governed by external

actors too, such as the city hall. Following this, my research project aims to analyse the

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[2] The more on the connotations of terms "neighbourhood" and "communal hallway" in the Georgian language will
be discussed later, in the section on translation specificities.

communal hallway as a social space and how it shapes the relational nature of the neighbourhood. More precisely, it examines the everyday practice of the neighbourhood – a relational micro field - through the lens of the production of social space in the context of post-soviet Tbilisi. For this research, I plan to explore the meaning of space, especially the social space in everyday life. Furthermore, I analyse if the built environment is just a physical reflection of the political and economic background's influence on social relationships in neighbourhoods as micro-communities or if it is possible for the space to have agency (Latour 2007)in the production of social changes, new norms, and narratives about the past, present and future. In this context, thinking of temporality is a crucial analytical tool for seeing how material infrastructure is related to everyday life through everyday practices, past nostalgia, shared memory, future hopes, and aspirations.

Analysing everyday neighbourhood experiences in such a limited-sized paper is not easy. A communal hallway needs theoretical and empirical elaboration because it should be analysed in different spatial contexts. Moreover, experiencing the residential space and this kind of micro-social relations that as neighbourhood involves a mixture of personal and social scales. Therefore, even if the outline of the thesis is coherent, the overall flow of the ethnographic part of the thesis could be less structured. However, each section always refers to the main goal of the research, namely to grasp the idea of what it is like to live, use and experience communal hallways as a member of a neighbourhood. It is not a simple task to conclude, but presenting the evidence is fruitful for understanding the topic.

A communal hallway is generally perceived as a vague, devoid-of-context space barely mentioned in everyday life. This description only holds as long as it is working as expected. After something breaks or changes, questions emerge about its ownership, borders, social order,

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and residents' responsibilities and rights. In this thesis, I argue that even without a breakage, space and social interactions are interconnected as a communal hallway is both a context and an actor in the everyday life of neighbourhoods. Residents' perception of their identity is partially related to the space through nostalgia, present individualization of the space, the personification of the neighbourhood, as well as future hopes and aspirations. At the same time, conceived space is shaped by residents and their shared memory and narratives of the space (Lefebvre 1991).

This thesis tries to fill a gap in the literature on the spatial experience of living in residential buildings in the post-Soviet environment in general. How do neighbourhoods experience their private and shared infrastructure in different spatial contexts? For this purpose, my research is based on a comparative study of neighbourhoods and spaces of communal hallways in Tbilisi. The communal hallways are divided into three categories according to their construction period: pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet. As a main theoretical framework, I will use Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad (Lefebvre 1991). He argues that every space is a social space and is produced as perceived, conceived and lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991).

 The communal hallway in Tbilisi is a compelling example of challenging topics in modern urban literature. More precisely, communal hallways in Tbilisi are characterized by their breadth of specificities: as they are places of convergence of the public-private distinction, common memory and historicism, a Lefebvrian triad of space production and everyday life. There has always been strict architectural or urban planning in the production of these spaces, which have had different ideological values since the end of the 19th century in residential buildings. However, the usage of communal hallways in everyday life cannot be described as homogenous, especially after the Soviet Union. Therefore, this theoretical gap must be examined carefully. In this thesis, I will talk about the lived space, – the communal hallway in the context of material

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(perceived) and ideological-institutional (conceived) changes in space. How did those transformations change the way residents symbolized and experienced their used space? Hence, this thesis follows a post-modern way of thinking spatially about the everyday life of neighbourhoods in Tbilisi.

Aside from general theoretical literature, this research is salient to studying Georgian urban spaces. However, finding sociological or anthropological texts about the communal hallways in Tbilisi is challenging. Other than Tamta Khalvashi's article (Khalvashi 2019) discussed in this thesis, research about the intersection of communal hallways spaces and social practices is largely non-existent. This work will contribute to the understanding of the urban condition in Tbilisi.

The goal of this research - grasping the experience of neighbourhoods in different spatial contexts - consists of a complex, entangled web of questions and answers. Nevertheless, I unite the analysis into main chapters in this thesis. First, I present methodological decisions, translation and conceptual specificities of communal hallways, and the categories of residential buildings for comparison. In the second chapter, I conceptualize the communal hallway, identify it as a separate space with spatial specificities and characteristics and investigate differences in the spatial identity of various communal hallways. Moreover, I try to prove that a communal hallway can legitimately be called a produced social space while also itself producing micro-communal relations. It produces neighbourhood intimacy and formality of practices, a liminal condition between the public and private, to name just a few. In the last chapter, I also present an analysis of actual communal hallways through the lens of theory. Finally, I offer a comparison of different types of communal hallways as social spaces for neighbourhood interactions by

discussing variations in how each type produces the perception of time, memory, sense of belonging, right to the urban space and individual social roles.

1. Communal Hallways: Methodology and Terminology

The first chapter of the thesis presents the methodological and conceptual framework of my research. First, I describe my ethnographic research, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Second, I discuss the translation of the main term and explain: the methodological and analytical decisions of translating the Georgian word "sadarbazo" into "communal hallways" Third, I offer a conceptual background of communal hallways. Finally, in the last section, I explain my categorization of communal hallways in Tbilisi by pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet buildings.

Methodology

The thesis is based on ethnographic material collected during fieldwork from January to March of 2023 as well as on preliminary fieldwork conducted earlier for my Bachelor's thesis. I also draw on my five-year personal experience of communal hallways as a resident in a newly constructed post-Soviet building which was advantageous when preparing the questions for my semi-structured interviews. I conducted thirteen semi-structured interviews with twenty-two residents of all three types of communal hallways. I also carried out participant observation as those interviews were conducted in private houses or shared spaces (communal hallways or yards), and in most cases, there were two or more interviewees. They were family members, neighbours, and I was a guest. Thanks to the hospitality traditions in Georgian culture, I was able

to spend hours with the families in an informal setting. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews are enriched by my observations.

The selection of the specific communal hallways for the research was arbitrarily determined by my personal connections with residents, as the research needed to be conducted in an intimate and personal space. This made it impossible to have a selection of hallways from the same district of Tbilisi, however, they did share the same urban context. The cohort of respondents represents different gender categories and age groups. The youngest of my interviewees was eight years old, while the oldest were in their late seventies. Most of my interviewees were middle class, albeit with some variations. Some were privileged class members during the Soviet period but now lived as middle-class families. In one post-Soviet building, which is usually a more middle or upper-middle-class residence, there were some working class residents (among my respondents). They had been residents of old houses on the land and the construction company had given them apartments in the building as compensation. I used a pseudonym for all participants in order to ensure their anonymity.

Some methodological choices influenced the topics in other sections as well. For example, the specification of the spatial borders of the research on communal hallways is, on the one hand, an analytical tool for grasping the most vaguely discussed and defined part of the residential block. On the other hand, due to the very specific linguistic connotations that the word "*Sadarbazo*" (communal hallway) in Georgian, it was methodologically more convenient to focus on it during my fieldwork. Instead of talking about "shared spaces owned by a neighbourhood", which could be yards for some people or neighbourhoods or, small common buildings outside outside of residential blocks, "the communal hallway" was more or less the same spatial and social concept for everyone.

Translation specificities

One challenge of the research is the conceptualization of the space and the definition of what a communal hallway is. Since the beginning of the research, finding an equivalent term for the Georgian word "*Sadarbazo*" has been challenging in that, it encompasses many physical and social meanings and connotations as will be discussed in this thesis. According to the dictionary, the word "*Sadarbazo*" has two meanings "a room for the official reception" and "an entrance of the multi-storied house"[3] ('Language Modeling Association. Ena.Ge' n.d.)The etymology of the word comes from "*Darbazi*" (a hall") and "*Darbazoba*" (an official reception in the hall or hall room), which refers to the period when multi-storied buildings belonged to single, wealthy families (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008). Entrance doors would guide guests into big, decorated halls; therefore, the space was called "*Sadarbazo*" – "the space for the reception". According to t this background, the word "*sadarbazo*" would be more accurately translated as "entrance hall". However, the meaning of "*sadarbazo*" in everyday life also connotates social aspects and covers a wider physical space than an entrance hall.

First, "*sadarbazo*", is used to refer to the whole space inside a vertical row of a residential building, that you can reach by opening the entrance door, excluding private apartments. On the other hand, in everyday life, "*sadarbazo*" can refer to the whole group of people living in the vertical piece of the building. For example, one of the Soviet blocks of flats that I discuss in my ethnography has two *sadarbazos.* When, in dialogue with the neighbours, one of the informants wanted to refer to the whole neighbourhood living in the other half of the building, she used the collective noun "*sadarbazo*": "On the last collective meeting of the block, we did not have many problems. But the second "*sadarbazo*" did". Hence, the term "*sadarbazo*" is spatial and social at

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[3] "Mravalsartuliani sakhlis shesasvleli" - translated by Teona Ivashchenko

the same time or at least implies an aspect of the sociality in the space. Therefore, "communal hallway" (expressing commonness and physicality) is a better translation for the term as it signifies a spatio-social concept.

In English, the term "neighbourhood" means "the area of a town that surrounds someone's home, or the people who live in this area", according to the Cambridge Dictionary ('Neighbourhood' 2023). While in Georgian, the word "neighbourhood" ("*Samezoblo*") can refer to two different scales: first, it has the same meaning as in English ("the people who live in this area"). On the other hand, it signifies the community of residents who live in the same apartmental building. Therefore, the Georgian concept of "*samezoblo*" connotates the idea that neighbours share the common spaces and infrastructure in the communal hallway. In my thesis, the word "neighbourhood" refers to the more local meaning of the term, residents of the same building. Hence, the original English meaning of the term "neighbourhood" is altered in this thesis.

Spatial and conceptual borders of communal hallways

The communal hallway is neither entirely public nor only a private space. This shared part of the building is closely related to the private while, simultaneously, it is a space publicly shared by neighbours or communities. Its ambivalent nature comes primarily from the physical attributes of the space. The exact borders of the space that this thesis focuses on broadly encompass all the space and infrastructure which is outside private apartments yet inside the residential building. For the purpose of this research, the communal hallway includes infrastructural units, such as stairs, elevators, water, gas, and sewage pipes. It encompasses shared areas, naming: cellars, shared balconies, or, in some cases, even shared toilets and bathrooms, while it excludes public

urban space and privately owned houses, gaining different social and legal statuses. This liminality is manifested even in the Law of Georgia on Homeowners' Associations (HOA), according to which these shared areas are the *common property* of homeowners' associations (Parliament of Georgia 2007 Article 1). In the 5th article of the low, we read that the Common property of HOA members includes the following parts of the communal hallway: "d) lobbies, entrances, corridors, stairwell enclosures, basements, attics, boiler-rooms, technical floors, roofs, elevators, as well as shafts, channels, garbage chutes, garbage hoppers of various purposes etc. in an apartment building that are not individually owned" (Parliament of Georgia 2007 Article 5). This law means that each neighbourhood must register this common property under the association's name, a form of private ownership. However, obeying the centralized rules in sharing, administrating, contributing, and benefiting from space is still a part of public governance. On the surface of observation, one hardly imagines communal hallways as spatial units with special legislative, infrastructural or social meaning. When we enter the space, we typically do not have any intention with, or connection to, the space. We do not analyse the importance of the communal halls as a provider of the transitional condition. Our only aim is to get to our house through the space, whether by stairs or with an elevator. On this account, the only prospective function attributed to the communal hallway is "transition". However, as the opening ethnographic vignette showed, some facets are intrinsically hidden in the essence of this common area and its "emptiness" is, I propose, just a result of a lack of investigation. The communal hallway is not a widely discussed urban space, even in modern anthropological literature. Conversely, this thesis aims to discern the various characteristics of the hallways as a produced and lived space with an agency in micro societies.

In the broader anthropological literature, one can find a well-established term for liminality (Turner 1969, 359). The entrance hall is a kind of transitional, liminal area between private and public spaces. The soft border of one's private space is set at the edge of the apartment, while a pronounced public area starts outside the building after exiting the entrance hall. The ambiguity of the common space makes it challenging to use the concept of threshold (Jusionyte 2018, 23), which could be the alternative framework. Liminality is a transitional condition, while "a threshold is a point of entry" (Jusionyte 2018). When people enter the communal hallway, they are not crossing the well-established border between two spaces. They are in an ambivalent condition. Even though the term itself refers to cultural and spiritual states (Bigger 2009), a communal hallway as a liminal space creates an exceptional social condition in which people are transiting "betwixt and between" (Bigger 2009) their social roles in urban and private spaces.

Residential buildings are infrastructural units and parts of the urban space, and as a consequence of this, they connotate the debate about power disposition. Urban changes and spaces encompassed inside the city directly affect residents' lives. For most of the urban citizens in Tbilisi, a hallway is the first shared space they encounter after leaving the space of their apartments. Therefore, this infrastructural context is the first urban experience of everyday life, where they may meet neighbours, "others", "outsiders", and state and municipality politics. During the lockdown and two curfews of COVID-19 (which lasted more than ten months in Georgia), the public nature of the communal hallways was more visible. For example, the social campaign "Stay at home!" did not promote sharing space between private flats. Only the private home or apartment (not the whole residential building) was treated as "a functional shelter" from the virus (Putra 2020, 65). The area of public restrictions included elevators, stairs, and entrance halls too. This, I argue, proves the significance of the topic and generates scientifically valuable

questions about social, political, and economic power representation inside this narrow, seemingly ordinary, space.

At the beginning of 2023, two people died when falling into the shaft of a malfunctioning elevator (Radio Free Georgia 2023). On this issue, the mayor of the city emphasized at a press conference the responsibility established by the law that the HOA is obliged to identify and immediately eliminate the problem of the elevator through expertise. In addition, he announced:

> Friends! The communal hallways and elevators are your property. For those of you living in specific buildings, the elevator in the building is your private property. And obviously, you must facilitate it to be renewed and in proper condition. However, we understand the socio-economic conditions in the country. There are still problems in this direction, and there exists poverty. Hence, we have lots of good programs to help the population of the capital… Undoubtedly, you are determining the priorities, people living within certain buildings and communal hallways together with the chairpersons of your homeowners' associations. Again, I want to define the municipality's role in this process. The municipality of Tbilisi annually pays up to 40 million on the programs of co-funding the neighbourhood projects. Which fund various types of needs arising within homeowners' associations… This is a very good program, a vital program, and one of the most critical directions in recent years where the budget is being utilized 100%. And, of course, this will also continue in the upcoming years. I repeat: we are ready to facilitate repairs and renewals in your living spaces according to your priorities. This could mean the rehabilitation of an elevator, renewal of the communal hallway, replacement of the roof, and so on. This is determined by you and your homeowners'

association's chairperson after you enter the co-funding program[4]. (Palitra Video 2023)

In the communal hallways of Tbilisi, there is no direct claim in the everyday actions of neighbourhoods or social activism that would resist the systemic control over the urban space. Historical experience of urban citizens of Tbilisi in the space blended the distinction between the private and public, posing the question of "who owns the communal hallway?" Even today, when residential buildings are privatized after having been state property during the Soviet period (Andrusz 1984), the right to the space and responsibilities are not solely dependent on legal status. Socioeconomic conditions of neighbourhoods do not allow individual homeowners' associations to distance themselves from the state guidance or reliance. Inherited infrastructure from the Soviet or pre-Soviet periods or negligence of construction companies lead neighbourhoods to the constant failure of infrastructure. Therefore, the space and infrastructure are problematic environments which complicate residents' access to independence from the state. As a consequence, residents of the communal hallway are experiencing socio-economic, liminal conditions as well as spatial liminality.

Three types of buildings -why?

My ethnographic research has shown that dividing communal hallways into three groups was not solely a methodological choice. During fieldwork, I found empirical evidence that pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet residential buildings initiate different practices of everyday life,

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[4] Translated by Teona Ivashchenko. https://www.palitravideo.ge/video/152430-lipti-aris-tkveni-sakutreba-rogor-unda-moikcet-tu-tkvens-korpusshi-lipts-sheketeba-schirdeba-da-ra-aris-sachiro-rom-meriis-tanadapinansebis-programit-isargeblot/

neighbourhood identity and social interactions. To elaborate on the field's specificities, there is an important peculiarity about a block of flats in Tbilisi. Preliminary observations showed material differences in conditions of communal hallways and neighbourhood interactions in causal relation.

This research discusses three main groups of communal hallways differentiated by the construction period: those constructed from the 1880s until the year 1921 (Georgia as a part of the Russian empire and after the Democratic Republic of Georgia 1918-1921 years), the hallways built during the Soviet Union (1921-1991) and modern hallways (from 1991 up to today). However, the comparison is also based on the physical and infrastructural conditions of the space, the political and economic background of the construction and the social meaning it gained through time. These spaces, much like artefacts, carry with them the dominant social, political, and economic backgrounds of their periods of origin. Moreover, this research suggests that the mentioned infrastructure acts as a mediator between historical experiences and modern apartment politics, between macro politics and micro relations between neighbours.

It is essential to bring up that during my fieldwork, the Soviet buildings I visited were built in the second half of the 20th century. However, the state interference in the housing policy and infrastructure can be seen based on the pre-Soviet buildings. They had to experience a social and physical transformation at least twice: from private ownership (owned by a single family) to social housing and then back to private ownership (owned by multiple families). The memory of these transitions is preserved in the narratives of residents. But what about the "modern building"? In my research, it is represented by blocks of flats constructed after 2003. The Rose Revolution in Georgia can be considered a threshold for the neoliberal political and economic transformation characterized by simplified construction permits. Modern housing started in this

period with the "construction boom" when between 2004 and 2007, the construction sector increased five times (Thouse 2017). Therefore, communal hallways, built after the Rose Revolution, are a materialization of neoliberal construction.

I thoroughly discuss the material characteristics of buildings in junction with the ethnographic materials. However, to create a general picture beforehand, we should note the size differences between these buildings: the pre-Soviet buildings were seldom taller than 3-4 stories. In contrast, the 70 years of Soviet rule presents us with a broader range of sizes, and, only within this thesis, we will discuss a 15-floor building from the late 70-ies or the so-called "Khrushchyovka"[5] (Attwood 2013) from earlier in the decade, which united low ceiling small apartments under its height of 3-5 stories. Regarding the apartment blocks constructed after the Soviet Union, here we do not encounter a unifying building policy in the urban planning of Tbilisi. The size of the building is wholly dependent on the district and the project, meaning the agreement between private companies and the state. However, the Post-Soviet buildings discussed in this thesis are all taller than ten stories (13-15 floors) which is an average size.

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[5] Houses were named after Nikita Khrushchev and were constructed in the 1970s. These houses represented the state program of low-cost communal housing with the motto "To every family its own apartment"(Attwood 2013).

Figure 1Pre-Soviet. Doors of shared bathroom and toilet[6]
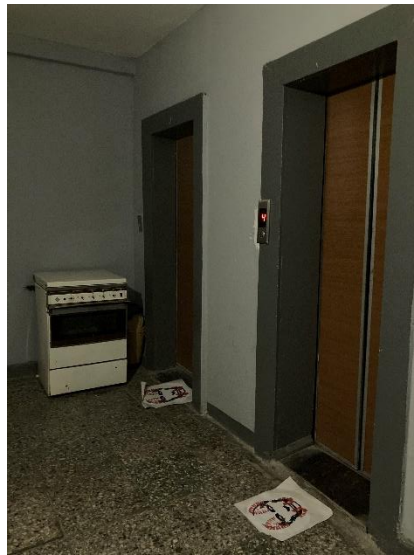
Figure 2 Soviet. Freight and passenger elevators[7]

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[6] A bathroom and a toilet are shared by the whole floor, except in cases when families built their own utilities. All photos in this thesis are taken by the author.

[7] Freight elevator works on demand. Every family in the communal hallway knows where the special button is located in the corridor of the 14th floor. And it costs double the price (each way) of passenger elevator usage. 20 Tetris for freight elevator and 10 Tetris for passengers' only moving up. Going down is Free.

Figure 3 Post-Soviet. Spacious staircase and "wobbling handrails"[8]

2. Communal Hallways Before Neighbourhoods

The title of the chapter hints at the argument of the whole thesis, namely that to understand neighbourhood relations, in Tbilisi, we, first, need to examine the communal hallway and how this social space's inherent characteristics influence social practices. In doing so, we can show how this communal space has an agency in the everyday life of the city.

This chapter opens with a theoretical and analytical discussion on the communal hallway as a central social space. On the one hand, space is presented as produced by the social interaction taking place within. On the other hand, the neighbourhood is an inherently spatial relational concept which implies that social interactions are determined by their shared living space, not to mention that even micro, relational practices are historically influenced. Hence, the chapter also

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[8] Citation from the ethnography. Will be explained later in the text.

covers studies on specific historical, socio-economic, and geographical areas. In a more specific manner, today, life in Tbilisi is part of the post-Soviet urban discussion which started in the 1990s. The last sections of the chapter are an analysis of that exact period and the local practices which emerged on the grounds of the macro social, political, and economic practices of that time.

Thinking spatially

The spatial thinking in modern social science starts with French Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre, "who has been more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality" (Soja 1996, 6). In his 1974 book "The Production of Space", Lefebvre claims space, especially urban spaces, is produced. According to his theory, space should never be understood as only a geometrical or abstract material entity (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre states that spaces are produced by everyday social practices, and at the same time, they produce the everyday experiences of humans. Therefore, space is always social, "shaped by classes, experts, grassroots, and other contending forces" (Molotch 1993, 887). In the same book, he develops his famous "Spatial Triad", which includes three primary forms of (social) spaces: perceived, conceived and lived spaces. These spaces represent forms of social practice: spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. Spatial practices (perceived spaces) "embrace production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (Lefebvre 1991, 33). They encompass everyday routines and space-related behaviours. Representations of space (conceived space) are the dominant space of symbols and abstract codifications; "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers " (Lefebvre 1991,

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38). Lastly, representational spaces are lived spaces "as directly lived through their associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users" (Lefebvre 1991, 38). Consequently, in this part of the triad, we can discuss the physical aspect of using space.

Lefebvre's triad is a very influential theoretical framework, but its generalisation should be presented delicately. Material space and infrastructure are not always mediators between ideology and everyday social practices. Even in totalitarian regimes like the Soviet Union, the theoretical possibility of agency can be maintained in perceiving the spatial unit and infrastructure. Caroline Humphrey (Humphrey 2005) studied Soviet ideology in infrastructure, particularly three forms of residential spaces: the House Commune (dom kommuna), dormitories, hostels (obshchezhitya), and communal courtyards (dvory). According to her article "Ideology in Infrastructure: Architecture and Soviet Imagination", it would be hard to study ethnographically how the centralised government realised intended social forms and moral values in Soviet citizens' minds (Humphrey 2005, 42). However, she used literature as a resource to study imagination. As a result, she concluded that material space, in the role of a produced object, always leaves space for some agency since no matter how significant the threat and pressure from the authority is to implement intended values in individual everyday lives, there is a "conceptual freedom" for the imaginative reflection of a "person-recipient" (Humphrey 2005, 43). This very possibility is discussed in this article as a reason why housing space could not play the role of ideological mediator but turned into a prism (Humphrey 2005, 55). Lefebvre's insights were innovative, as they were engaging not only in urban theory but also in broader theoretical understandings (Molotch 1993, 888).

While communal hallways are still untheorized spatial entities, Henri Lefebvre's triad will help to start its conceptualization as a conjunction of spatial practices, representations and lived

experiences (Lefebvre 1991). One of those influenced authors, Edward Soja, created a radical interpretation of Lefebvre's ideas on the production of space. According to his post-modernist interpretation, the production of space opens a discussion of a general "thirding" – the radical openness against all binarism (Soja 1996, 5). He perceives Lefebvrian lived space as a process, mainly as "real-and-imagined". While perceived, material, spatial form is a Firstspace -real space, and a Secondspace is conceived in ideas about the space – imagined (Soja 1996, 10).

While commenting on Lefebvre, David Harvey offers more political-economic approaches. His perspective is presented mainly from the statist angle, emphasising social struggle, the state's role and a macro-social transformation (Goonewardena et al. 2008, 8). This research aims to study communal hallways as a space inside and outside the state. Nevertheless, the scale of Harvey's critiques is broader than the focus of this research. Consequently, Edward Soja's reading of space production is more relevant to this thesis. What is more, the way this research deals with the sources of information is directly connected to the idea of "real-and-imagined" spaces. This means that interviews and participant observations[9] represent both real material space with imagined and narrated social space.

Another helpful conceptual framework for analyzing communal hallways as a social space is a spatial identity (Kalandides 2011). The article "The problem with spatial identity: revisiting the "sense of place" by Ares Kalandides discusses different conceptual framings of spatial identity in the literature on place marketing and branding (Kalandides 2011, 28). He particularly discusses the sense of place in an urban environment. The author offers several uses of the term "spatial identity", and some of them are relevant to this research, including "(1)place identity as part of individual (human) identity; (2) place identity as formative of group identity; mental

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[9] The main source of the empirical data.

representations of place by an individual; (4) group perceptions of place; place/space"(Kalandides 2011, 30). The conceptualization of identity in relation to space/place has multiple variations in the literature. While Kalandides discusses just a few of these, they nevertheless show the analytical potential of the term "spatial identity". On the one hand, spatial identity is presented as just a synonym of place image or in connection with local culture (Kalandides 2011, 28). On the other hand, it can be analyzed with historical experience and traditions. The other interpretation argues that spatial identity is just the homogenous or static content of the place (Kalandides 2011, 29). For this research, the more appropriate approach is presenting spatial identity as opposed to spatial image: "Identity though is not the same as "image" which defines how an organization or a place is perceived externally. Naturally, an image may be strongly influenced by the "objective" identity and image makers will seek to structure the perceptions of others but cannot finally control them" (Barke and Harrop 1994, 95). On that account, I am using the term spatial/place image as something external and the spatial identity as something "objective" – perceived and experienced as such.

Overall, the result of spatial thinking for this thesis is that space is not a passive container of social relations. It has an agency (Latour 2007) in social relations, everyday life (Lefebvre 1991) and cultural and social transformations (Soja 1996). Bruno Latour talks about the importance of "inquiring about the agency of all sorts of objects" in social sciences (Latour 2007, 76). Spatial units (in this case a communal hallway) and other non-human objects could be active participants in the social process.

Scaling of the urban social life

Apart from the material representation, the abstract forms of space production mentioned above can be observed in residential hallways. In other words, the borders between intimate relations akin to the neighbourhood are not strictly defined by the physical arrangement of space. On this basis, this infrastructural unity can be analysed in terms of a spatial locality and a locality of social interactions. As Arjun Appadurai shows, the idea of locality is "primarily relational and contextual rather than [as] scalar or spatial" (Appadurai 1995, 178). In this definition, there is an idea of everyday production practices and the reproduction of the relational sense of commonness between the residents. Neighbourhoods and communal hallways are localized at the crossroad of two scales, i.e. – the lower scale – the individual level and the upper scale, which corresponds to the urban scale. Both are critical preconditions for the analysis.

Living simultaneously in the physical space and social surroundings is a big pressure for individuals due to various interactions. The intensity of impulses is higher, especially in the urban space, which is why we need to elaborate more on this spatial entity. German sociologist George Simmel in his essay of 1903, connects this issue to the problem of individuality against the sovereign powers of society in modern life. This conflict is the most modern version of the struggle the primitive man had when placed in opposition to nature as a whole (Simmel 1903, 324). However, the expression of this conflict is significantly different from a personal experience in a megapolis and someone from a small rural settlement. Rural spaces are relatively stable and homogeneous, while urban spaces like megapolises tend to undergo rapid changes in many details: "The metropolis creates these psychological conditions - with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life-it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life" (Simmel 1903, 325). While in rural areas, the perception of

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changes is much less rational and more focused on individuals' emotional connection to the condition they were so used to. Hence, citizens of large cities are rational by nature and more inclined to participate in complex economic structures.

On the other hand, the complexity of urban social space creates disconnectedness that, on the one hand, changes the perception of individualism because of the "blasé attitude", as he calls it (Simmel 1903, 329). "Blasé attitude" is a saturation of stimuli that requires an emotional response - "an indifference toward the distinctions between things" (Simmel 1903, 329). As a result, people redefine their individuality. But, on the other hand, precisely because of a large number of possible human connections in metropolises, people develop general common algorithms to approach them, enabling the urban economy to thrive (Simmel 1903, 328).

"The Metropolis and Mental Life", discussed above, is a valuable source for literary analysis since it shows a clear connection between individual and urban processes and space. That individual level influences the success of the urban economic transformation. At the same time, Simmel still maintains the scale of society as the primary actor. However, in this analysis, this causality is introduced as the common action of individuals in a particular space. While reading "The Production of Space", one can have the impression that Lefebvre leaves space for the discussion on the individual level when he talks about "the social relations of reproduction, i.e., the bio-physiological relations" (Lefebvre 1991b, 32).

Nevertheless, this aspect is not explicitly articulated in the text, and overall, for Lefebvre, the city is the space for communities. His famous concept of "the right to the city" is not an individual right either: "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city" (Lefebvre, cited in D. Harvey 2008, 23). This concept can be understood easier by negation as the solidaristic

opposition against exclusion from urban space (King, 2018). "The right to the city opposes property rights over urban space" (King 2018, 76). Accordingly, the individual role in the right to the city can still be open if we start analysing the nature of "property rights". From a historical perspective, several ideas (e.g., in early utilitarianism or Marxism) (King 2018, 84) do not have one specific answer in the literature discussed here and require more clarification. Yet for this research, we must elaborate more on a collective right to urban space – a communal hallway. The neighbourhood is an owner of this collective right.

Post-Soviet Transformation and urban informalities

Post-socialist/post-Soviet is a primary characteristic attributed to Tbilisi's urban environment in this thesis. This definition highlights the position that the post-socialist transformation continues to influence most of the infrastructural environment of the city (Khalvashi 2019, 94). Besides, as Gregory Andrusz claims in the book, "Cities after Socialism"[10], in an analysis of socialist cities in the transitional period, the path-dependent nature of the process is indubitable (Andrusz, Harloe, and Szelenyi 1996, 11). Therefore, capitals like Tbilisi are still somehow related to the Soviet past.

There is a body of literature in social sciences which normalizes the discourse that "socialism failed" in architectural, urban and infrastructural planning (Murawski 2018, 908): "A great deal of what was ultimately built in this planned city was, paradoxically, unplanned, while much of what was planned remained unbuilt" (Lebow 2013). Michał Murawski, on the contrary, develops the idea that some specific socialist spaces remain "still-socialist" and prove themselves "capable

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[10] The full name of the book: Cities After Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies".

of resisting the property-privatizing, spatially-stratifying pressures of the capitalist economy"
(Murawski 2018, 921). Collectively experiencing the brokenness of infrastructure (Khalvashi
2019) and maintenance practices in Tbilisi's neighbourhoods show that there is an existence of
"still-Socialist urbanism" in the capital of Georgia (Murawski 2018, 911). Ethnographic and
theoretical analysis shows that the Soviet material legacy is changing slowly. Nevertheless, the
ruins of the Soviet planning still have active, vital signs: "Socialist spaces linger ubiquitously,
whether they be hidden behind large advertisement billboards, preserved within the confines of
inner-city brownfields, or between the inner walls of the large monotonous housing estates built
since the early 1960s" (Borén and Gentile 2007, 97). Therefore, the question is: what is "post-
Socialist" urbanism or housing? Is this only a chronological and historical term, or does it have a
particular meaning, social and material forms?

The most interesting part of the discussion about neoliberal marginalization can be seen in the
material forms of post-Soviet urban infrastructures and connected practices. In Tbilisi's reality,
an evident example is a coin-operated elevator. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, residents
of the multi-storied residential buildings had to find a supplementary principle to maintain
crumbling spaces (Khalvashi 2019, 93). In the early 2000s, pre-payment coin-boxes were
introduced in shared elevators and fixed on the wall because of the failure to collect money for
repairs (Khalvashi 2019). In other words, as a consequence of the failure to replace previous
state responsibility, 5 or 10 Tetris coins could provide one lift and were the basic source of the
neighbourhood's common fund for maintenance [see Figure 2]. At first glance, it is the economic
practice to solve the issue of free riders or infrastructure that needs repair for the common good
(Khalvashi 2019, 102). But also, this kind of elevator "directly mediates access to the flow of
bodies and things, dividing rich from poor, healthy from weak, or mindful from unmindful, those

who remember and those who forget to have coins" (Khalvashi 2019, 93). Residents knew that the elevator would break again. However, they are "voluntarily involved" in the "reciprocal exchange between humans and machines" – the brokenness and repair practice. However, it is not fixed in time and still becomes the ground for certainty in post-Soviet Tbilisi (Khalvashi 2019, 94).

From an outside perspective, the infrastructure itself is characterized by its periodical brokenness, and the need for repair is the way for state institutions or businesses to interfere with the inner relations and bring economic, social, and political narratives from the outer society. For example, malfunctioning or outright not-working elevators are essential for hallway spaces. Changing approaches to them symbolizes the transition from socialist to neoliberal reformative narratives described in an article by Tamta Khalvashi (Khalvashi 2019). The frequent damage caused a lack of trust in the Soviet Union because the elevators, like the rest of the hallway's infrastructure, were controlled by the centralized organizations by the technicians hired by the state. In the '90s, there was an attempt to preserve shared responsibility by using cooperative unions, which gathered funds to repair malfunctioning elevators. Still, framing this as more of individual responsibility has proven more effective under new conditions. As a result of this thinking, neighbourhoods installed an apparatus that required a coin for every trip taken by the elevator. The metamorphosis to the market principles and the process of developing a citizen's responsibility should have been transitional and liminal but has become the new regular state of being. The brokenness of the infrastructural space is how "outsiders" are invited inside the intimate area of the neighbourhood.

Produced experience: temporality and common memory

People's perceptions and experiences in space are often shaped by their perception of time. In his book on rhythmanalysis, the term he borrowed from French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre explores the concept of rhythm - bodily, social, and psychological rhythms (Lefebvre 2013). They are cyclic and repetitive, and their analysis helps to understand the individual and social experience of "Le quotidian" - "mundane, the everyday, but also the repetitive, what happens every day" (Lefebvre 2013, ix). For Lefebvre, in the study of rhythm, the interrelation of space and time is the most crucial aspect (Lefebvre 2013, vii). For my research, rhythmanalysis is helpful for understanding how individuals and neighbourhoods experience time and space in everyday life, as lived space – the space of inhabitants - embraces rhythms of everyday life (Simonsen 2005, 7).

Time and space are produced: "The analysis of everyday life shows how and why social time is itself a social product. Like all products, like space, time divides and splits itself into use and use-value on the one hand, and exchange and exchange-value on the other" (Lefebvre 2013, 73–74). Biological and psychological rhythms are cyclic; however, the most dominant way of experiencing time by society is linear. This is because capitalism enforces a homogenised, linear notion of time (Biagi 2020, 234).

The literature on infrastructural anthropology highlights how infrastructural projects create expectations in time and temporal perceptions of the past or the future. In neoliberal cities, the powerholders produce different kinds of expectations: enchantment (P. Harvey and Knox 2012), hopes, aspirations and visions of the (desirable) future (Frederiksen 2013). In these dynamics, there are three main actors: the state, private companies and citizens or users of the

infrastructure. The first two can influence the other. For example, while discussing urban transformation projects in Istanbul, Alize Arican argues that "delays are generative of the asymmetrical power relationships between subcontractors, the head company, AKP politicians, and construction workers, yet these asymmetries are always dynamic and amenable to improvisation" (Arıcan 2020, 485). Delays in the "linear trajectory from inception to completion" (Arıcan 2020, 482) economic and political power works through delays within urban transformation as projects are constructed (Arıcan 2020, 484).

French historian Pierre Nora suggests the concept of "lieu de mémoire" (Nora 1989) (site of memory) in which "the past is symbolically constructed to suit the present and future needs of the nation. Symbols, rites, monuments, textbooks, poems, movies—are all examples of lieux de memoire" (Peled 2010, 140). On the one hand, this concept is useful in how pre-Soviet buildings symbolise the European past. On the other hand, another concept from Nora's work could be more appropriate for analysing the space where memory is produced and can be produced, meaning milieu de mémoire, "real environments of memory" (Nora 1989, 7). The terms are connected to the lieu de memoire but not much elaborated by Nora. "He did not define the term milieu de memoire, but it may be taken to mean the means of indigenous peoples and traditional societies to sustain themselves, keep their values, and pass them further on. Rituals, customs, crafts, idioms and proverbs, for example, are components of a milieu de memoire" (Peled 2010, 140). Nora remarks that we realize the meaning and importance of places of memory only after experiencing a rupture from the past. The requirement of historical continuity and wholeness poses a problem which needs a physical embodiment of memory for a solution. The places of memory are created because the space of real memories has ceased to exist (Toria 2003, 23).

3. Space in Time and Today's Neighbourhood

The research aims to study the social space in today's Tbilisi. Nevertheless, historical perspectives on these communal hallways and residential buildings are essential to see the origins of the spatial identities. For a short overview, pre-Soviet communal hallways with European style are associated with the memory of the late 19th and early 20th century when the interior hinted at the riches and privilege of their respective owners. Soviet residential buildings are reviving the memory of Soviet communal living with "different, warmer relationships in the neighbourhood"[11] and state interference. Post-Soviet buildings are accompanied by narratives on more privacy and spatial and social distance between neighbours. Therefore, the history and the memory of communal hallways are embodied materially and realised in narratives and perceptions of the space, neighbourhood, and temporality.

This chapter is an analysis of empirical and historical material. First, all three types of communal hallways and residential buildings are presented with short historical perspectives with empirical data from the fieldwork. Then, to cover most of the various facets of the intersection of the neighbourhood and communal hallways in today's Tbilisi, sections on each socio-spatial context will have a particular direction. The last section is comparative and will be focused on common social roles produced in the neighbourhood of urban residential buildings. This section illustrates differences in neighbourhood relations built upon the physical and social body of the communal hallway.

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[11] Citation from the interviews.

Pre-Soviet: Nostalgia and honour

Research is not needed for noticing that communal hallways from the late 19th and early 20th century in Tbilisi are symbols of the past. Usually, they symbolize something valuable and a source of pride. Still, the pre-Soviet hallway is not a classical form of "lieu de memoire" (Nora 1989, 7). However, in different discourses, they are changing their appearance from "milieu de memoire" ("real environments of memory") to "lieu de memoire" (Peled 2010, 140). The neoliberal state urban politics in the post-Rose Revolution Tbilisi facilitates this idea through the privatization of pre-Soviet residential buildings or by enhancing investors' involvement in reconstruction and reusing old buildings. To be more precise, the historical image of pre-Soviet buildings serves political and economic agendas, which will be discussed below.

To illustrate the idea of Pierre Nora Malkhaz Toria uses the first attempts to restore the memory existing before the Soviet Union: "For example, there are no real memories of the first republic in Georgian society, because its history was muted and forgotten in the Soviet period. In the post-Soviet era, especially after the "Roses Revolution", slots for new memories became available, which sought to form and promote the memories of the battle against the Soviet Union" (Toria 2003, 23) At the juncture of the 19th and 20th centuries, the culture of Tbilisi was European yet still self-defined, however, the city's space of real memory was either drained of colour or fully extinct by the subsequent 70 years of Soviet rule. Restoring of the old entrance halls, or at least providing them with the title of monuments of cultural heritage has become an opportunity to create spaces of memory (Nora 1989).

In colonial Tbilisi, importing European Architecture or Europeanisation of houses was associated with the elite. In the middle of the 19th century, Tbilisi (known as Tiflis) "became a seat of the

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Emperor's representative (Governor) in the Caucasus (*Namestnik Imperatora na Kavkaze*)"
(Salukvadze and Golubchikov 2016, 41) and started "European-style" transformation of the city.
This "Europeanisation of architecture", new norms of everyday life, had the most influence on
the design of the living house, which is tasked with fulfilling the everyday needs of humans.
New forms and elements penetrated the architecture, including communal hallways, symbolising
the houses' respectability and European influences. "Rich citizens attempted to achieve European
living standards, they were no longer satisfied with the visuals and level of comfort of their older
houses"[12] (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008). Moreover, the 19th-20th century
Tbilisi Architecture style is often characterized by its combination of Asian and European styles
as "a colonial 'dual city' with oriental-type, irregular, topographically diverse and culturally
mixed Old Town, and newly built European-style areas, established following a regular plan on
relatively plain terrains (e.g., Sololaki)" (Salukvadze and Golubchikov 2016, 41). The duality of
the urban lifestyle considered uniquely distinct for Tbilisi is often named as "Tbilisian Style".
Hence, the old communal hallways carry with them "the spirit of Tbilisi", which, together with
its historical setting and apart from urban exclusivity has also become a symbol of national
culture and character as well (Sumbadze 2013, 8). The sense of uniqueness is reflected in
people's memory of the atmosphere in the communal hallway, even in the Soviet Union: "Of the
people who lived here there was no discerning of nationality, of the people living here there
were: Greeks, Jews, Armenian, Abkhasians, Kurdish. There existed only one nationality:
Tbiliseli[13]"[14]. Today, residents' national sentiments are combined with the "romantic memory"
and nostalgia of a "bourgeois urban lifestyle", which are evoked by the remnants of communal

[12] Translated by me.
[13] Tbiliseli – Georgian თბილისელი - Means "Tbilisi native". The original ending of "Tbiliseli" has the same suffix as in Georgian it is used for ending nationalities.
[14] This is a comment from one of my interviewees reminiscing about his childhood in a pre-Soviet residential building.

hallways' decor, showcasing samples of Pseudo-Renaissance, Pseudo-Baroque, and Pseudo-Classical styles (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008).

Pre-Soviet residential buildings were mainly three or four-storied buildings built for a single or a few families. At the end of the 19th century, European-style houses were only accessible and affordable for wealthy aristocratic and bourgeois families (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008). The buildings I visited during my fieldwork belonged to multiple families - each floor was a single apartment with all facilities. According to the informants, residential buildings had outbuildings connected to the main house where servants, cook, and service staff were not living in the private apartments. In the spatial disposition, the class division was visible. Spaces for servants were separated from the residential areas of the house owners. Lower classes only served and worked in this space and did not use common infrastructure as residents. Therefore, the original image of those communal hallways was strictly stratified.

During Soviet times, private apartments were transformed into communal houses – multiple families in one apartment. Residents on the whole floor had to share one bathroom and toilet and, in some cases, kitchens as well [see Figure 1]. In the late 40s, the government reconstructed the interior of the communal hallways – decorated walls were painted, colourful glass-filling on the ceiling was replaced with colourless, transparent glass, while carpets on the stairs disappeared and decorative garden lanterns were replaced by simple bulbs [see Figure 5]. The oldest informant from the field, born in the building, told a story about how her vision of the communal hallway and its history was constructed in a day. Before the reconstruction, a good-looking lady "with aristocratic manners" visited the hallway. "The lady was nostalgic and mesmerized – she recalled when she used to visit the building for beautiful, significant gatherings in friends'

houses. That building was a sign of a happy life. This was the first time; I had seen a woman smoking, and I was amazed". This story attracted the whole audience of the neighbourhood that day. Nana - my host that day – whose husband got the house as an inheritance, was listening to this story for the first time. She was sharing the excitement by the imagination of the initial "wealthy and happy life" in those currently "cracked walls". The nostalgic and fairytalelike vision of the communal hallway's past and its initial design seems to be the shared perspective on the space: "I have not seen, but they say that a building in the next block has already returned its initial appearance. Residents have not paid anything. We should finish the petition and apply for reconstruction. Then, maybe, the City Hall will be attracted by our communal hallway as well. Imagine those beautiful lanterns in our hallway back again" [see Figure 4]. Excited and dreamy faces and expressions are common in pre-Soviet buildings when they are talking about the past (pre-Soviet times) and future ("if someone will invest in their building/s reconstruction").

The spatial identity of pre-Soviet communal hallways as a vessel of "the spirit of Tbilisi" (Sumbadze 2013) and prestige have been strong markers. However, honourable unity was an ideal vision of reality during the time of the construction of those houses. The outbuildings, which also became communal apartments during the Soviet times, are material symbols of spatial class segregation. Working-class families could not use communal hallways as living spaces. Therefore, communal hallways were hardly a unifying space on the everyday level. This means that current residents whose families received houses from the Communist party cannot be the direct inheritors of the nostalgia of the lieu de memoire.

Nevertheless, the cultural heritage status of the building helps to give the impression of continuity of the honourable lifestyle. According to Georgian National Agency for Cultural

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Heritage Preservation, one hundred and fifty houses are preserved as material cultural heritage in Tbilisi from the pre-Soviet period[15]. Reconstructed memory of the place highlights the value of the common past of Tbilisi. However, in everyday life, it cannot save residents from the problems caused by the material present.

Figure 4 Original marble stairs and the bottom of the once-present lantern.

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[15] ('List of Material Cultural Heritage' 2007)
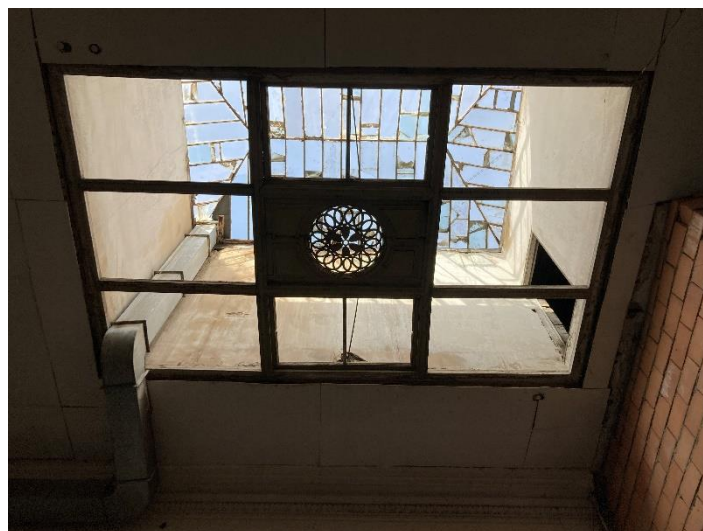
Figure 5 Transparent glass-filling, which replaced one with colourful glass.

Pre-Soviet: Escaping or benefiting from the past

From my ethnography, it became clear that nowadays there are three possible scenarios for a hundred-year-old communal hallway in Tbilisi: privatization, renovation by the state organizations or waiting for the change. "The land where the building stands is what is valued, not history. Investors do not care about history. Our state should care about it, but the latter cannot help and avoid responsibility through privatization. Residents just must wait because nobody can afford to restore it. You either live as it is or sell your house – that's what residents do" – this comment does not belong to a resident of a historical building, but Giorgi had a friend "who was struggling with the problems in an old building". That friend struggles since his family cannot afford a private bathroom to avoid using common facilities from the Soviet inheritance – communal housing. These previous short comments have valuable aspects for our discussion in multiple ways. First, we can identify three interest groups in the old historical buildings: the state, investors, and residents. Second, it is important to mention that the house Giorgi refers to is

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in the city centre. Therefore the market value of the land is high. But still, the age of the building and its historicity is the main "product" for the exchange.

What is more, Giorgi's comment can represent how Tbilisi urban residents see state politics on historical buildings: commodifying the history of the building and avoiding the responsibility against its residents and cultural heritage. On the other hand, it shows the actual residents' perspective on an old building with a marketable historical value. However, the infrastructural and material structure is a space of struggle for them. Finally, it evidences how the neoliberal state negotiations and post-Soviet economic struggle deprive residents of the agency.

Further studies show that the state's position is not always an avoid the responsibilities. Most of Aghmashenebeli Avenue is in one of the districts embellished by "elite entrance halls" during the transition of the 19th-20th century. Because of this, the recent infrastructural project "New Tbilisi" serves to reanimate the national past that had been forgotten due to Soviet politics (Tbilisi City Hall 2011). This process entails the restoration of the entrance halls of Aghmashenebeli Avenue and its neighbouring districts, together with returning the city to its visual roots. In the Ordinance of the Government of Tbilisi about the reconstruction program called "New Life for Old Tbilisi", it is written: "The goals for the declaration of this project are the real estate development of Tbilisi; improvement of the living conditions for the population; stimulation of participation from construction businesses and financial institutions" (Tbilisi City Hall 2011 Article 1). The neoliberal political agenda in Tbilisi uses history and hardly survived cultural artefacts to attract finances for gentrification.

 "There is a rumour that a former president was visiting this street and liked the place. "That could be a good tourist spot", - the president said, and the governmental organizations found investors for the restaurant. They say the former prime minister could have owned it - we do not

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know for sure." Nana and her husband only know that they must struggle with consequences: huge cracks in the wall caused by the deconstruction of the breast hall. Then they showed me an almost newly renovated wall with a recently appeared crack on it. Residents tried to act against the noise coming from the restaurant: "We contacted the town hall, and they told us that the noise under some decibels was acceptable within that range and did nothing after that. We even went to the management of the restaurant. They told us the owner was in Russia and did not deem us worthy of an answer." They ask for help, but the shaking continues.

It is significant to point out that residents are not mad at neighbours who sell their houses. They even appear happy for those neighbours who managed to escape from the old building. However, it does not mean that whoever still lives in the Tbilisian-style houses feels the urge to escape. For example, a middle-aged family moved into their inherited house fifteen years ago. They could save money to construct their bathroom in their private room. Other residents managed too. They showed me the shared balcony, used as a common kitchen and storage room. "Fortunately, we are free from that commonness". However, there are houses the owners of which will never be able to construct their bathrooms. They must use common toilets and bathrooms in the corridor [see Figure 1]. These houses are mostly rented for a short period – a few months or even weeks. Residents who have the comfort of living in relatively private homes are less inclined to escape.

In conclusion, pre-Soviet communal hallways are places of contradictions which is well-established in the conclusive statement of the "Charms of Tbilisi": "True Old Tbilisi, already destined for the past, still live in these houses, waiting for care and help" (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008). On the one hand, there is the image of the "romantic memory" (Kiladze, Gersamia, and Medsmariashvili 2008); on the other hand, communal infrastructure, which is "waiting for care and help". On the one hand, who is supposed to protect cultural

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heritage? On the other hand – the same state invites and supports private companies that do not respect the material heritage and its residents. Also, on the one hand, residents have dreamy faces when talking about the prestigious past and possible beautiful communal hallways in the future. On the other hand, they dream about the same opportunity as their neighbours who managed to sell their property and escape from space.

Soviet: Private space in Soviet houses

In 1921, Georgia became a part of the Soviet Union (Suny 1994, 209), which initiated a deliberate process of deprivatizing all private property gradually (Klepikova 2015, 382). They started to confiscate property from the wealthier class of society. However, after Lenin began to employ new economic policies, several changes occurred in the housing sector. As a result of these changes, the portion of workers employed in the industry was supposed to increase. The population migrated from villages to more urban areas. However, housing construction could not keep up with this process. As an answer to this issue, the residents of the cities who lived in large apartments had their property confiscated and distributed among the workers (Andrusz 1985). Moreover, since the apartment spaces were no longer viewed as private property and the responsibility of distribution also fell on the central government, the Soviet Union was considered the absolute ruler of the living spaces.

The factual rule was executed through primitive administrative means, which included apartment committees and associations. Despite the fact that the existing houses were redistributed, the early Soviet Union still suffered from crowdedness. The apartments turned into so-called communal houses were not enough to create a sense of private space. This process also

intensified due to the legal pressure created to control it, called the legal census, according to which 49% of the working class had a per capita living area of less than 4 square meters, only 6.1% of them occupied a space larger than 10 square meters per a single member of the family (Andrusz 1984, 17). In 1927 Walter Benjamin, who was visiting the Soviet Union, wrote in his diary: "Bolshevism has abolished private life" (Klepikova 2015, 353). The roots of this phrase can also be seen in the transformation undergone by the living spaces: you are a guest of the Soviet Union in a house which does not belong to you, and you share only a few square meters with other proletariats who were previously strangers. This situation is accompanied by moral pressure, which is pivotal in building an ideal state. After World War 2 in 1950, the plan of the new 5-year period included large sections about building new multi-storied buildings and transforming the apartment policies. The years 1956-1960 saw the funding of apartment construction reach 23.5% of the entire capital investment. The increase in funding caused an increase of personal space to an average of 8.8 square meters per capita by 1960. Moreover, this number rose to 13.2 square meters by 1980 (Andrusz 1984, 20).

However, this process was accompanied by an emergence of a new view of personal space, which was also a product of an originally centrally planned apartment policy. The fraction of new apartment buildings was rising owing to apartments built for newer and newer industrial cooperations. While the percentage of private homes was continuously noticeably decreasing. As a result, the home was considered not a private space but a cooperative one because to receive a house, you had to be a union member. Also, the government took responsibility for the rights to the communal space. Therefore, receiving an apartment was not a personal choice or an

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achievement; it was a gift from the state[16]. This condition is acknowledged by the comment from one interviewee's mother: "Communal buildings were just built. You could have bought an apartment there and moved in. Cool people used to move like that. It was cool to not live in a house that was designated to you". Furthermore, within Soviet terminology, a privately owned house was considered personal property and never private property. The latter was only ever applied to property acquired by non-salary funds, which was a counter-logical idea for Soviet society (Andrusz 1985). Therefore, the sense of personal belonging to your house is more easily translated into an identity of a worker in the cooperation, which removes it from being understood as personal or private. As a result, as Svetlana Boym describes, the citizen of the Soviet Union had more anonymity in public spaces than at home, in private spaces (Boym 2001).

Soviet: Maintenance of neighbourhood unanimity

"My daughter lives in a modern block of flats. This summer she was at a party and met a very good friend of hers. Can you believe that they found out they had been living in the same hallway for months and could not even meet each other?" — I was told with a smile by an elderly woman called Dali, living in the blocks of flats for the consumer society union members. This family was one of the "cool people"[17] who were able to pay for their own houses in the late 1960s. From the very beginning, all the residents shared the same privilege and knew each other from the same workplace. However, Mrs Dali disregarded these circumstances in her reasoning: "I have been thinking on this issue for so long and still could not find an answer. Maybe, times have changed. We have moved to Europe."

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[16] By 1982 a total of 172 million people (64% of the whole population) lived in spaces provided by the state (G. D. Andrusz 1984).
[17] This is an excerpt from

The "European Time" stands in opposition to another time proposed by her husband – "old, Soviet times":

> It's a different time now, Dali. That's why they don't meet each other. Now they come to the block, enter the house, close the door, and stay there for themselves. Before, during Soviet times, whether it was necessary or not, people would celebrate birthdays and marriages in their neighbourhood. We have also gathered to feast countless times for no obvious reason at all, just to talk together to maintain unanimity. Those things still can happen even today, but they are much rarer. Half of the new neighbours are renters, and they engage with the neighbourhood but not how it used to be. So our situation is not too bad. The newer buildings have it worse, as people do not even know their next-door neighbours.

Social connections and pre-neighbourhood bonds cannot be crucial explanatory terms; otherwise, their daughter would have known about her friend living in the same communal hallway. However, the "time", which certainly implies personal, social, and spatial habits in everyday life, is central to the analysis. On the one hand, there were the "Soviet times", with purposely maintained traditions in the common spaces. On the other hand, there is the "European lifestyle" with individual isolation, which somewhat excludes even the spatial unity in everyday life, as walking a few meters on your floor, using elevator, and leaving the building needs just a few minutes. As a result, there is a very low probability of meeting neighbours to form bonds with them. Therefore, close neighbourhood connections are not ontologically indivisible from the communal hallway as a space; they need purposeful common practices "to maintain unanimity". However, Mrs Dali's smile and astonishment about her daughter's story reflect the general

expectations of actual interactions with people who share the common space with you daily. This is a spatial aspect of the neighbourhood, but its intensity is stipulated by other conditions as well that will be addressed subsequently.

Notably, this couple's alienation is not an attribute of generational differences. However, it is mentioned in the context of the social and temporal attribution of residential buildings. "The change in time", "moving to Europe", and "newer buildings have it [social situation] worse" - are expressed through the habits tied to the space rather than the age or social group. Although this couple has more free time than they used to have, they do not express initiative to gather the neighbourhood the way it was "before". - If, in newer buildings, the social interactions are left "behind the doors", the neighbourhood interactions of the couple with a nostalgia for "Soviet times" are still somewhat localized. Specifically, it is expressed through everyday communication with their next-door neighbour. I assumed that the man who entered the house so casually, without knocking while I was visiting the family, was their son. However, after the introduction, I understood that he was a close neighbour who is a son of a co-worker of that family and that he is continuing his father's friendship with this couple. The scale reduced from "neighbourhood unanimity maintenance" practices experienced "countless times for no obvious reason at all" to chats with the next-door neighbour everyday. These conversations and daily visits intensified forms of regular neighbourhood practices. At the same time, these connections are localization and maintenance of former practices.

Sharing a communal hallway does not motivate neighbours to interact intensively. Still, sometimes space and infrastructure liaise economic and communicational problems in the community. For example, the neighbourhood of Jago's owner was only described as "average" by the most positive inhabitant. Everyone else called it "unfriendly". Stories about their various

neighbours were widely known but not just the elderly but even the youngest teenage son of the family:

> I don't talk with them; I just know stories about our neighbours. It is impossible to talk with some of them: the common sewage pipeline is defective in the hallway, for example. It is costly to replace it. Not just alone we could not even afford it with the City Hall's help because no one extends the funds. There are just five floors, and each has 2 or 3 apartments, some of which are empty. These pipes only leak on our side of the hallway. Furthermore, those people [on the other side] say that since it is leaking on our side, we should pay for all the repairs. Imagine only three families left on our side having to collect so much money. Why is it just our problem? You see how unfair they are. That's why we don't have much of a relationship.

Together with this narrative of undetermined responsibility, he told me about a few other detailed stories regarding his neighbours' personal affairs, some of them heard from his parents, some of them seen personally. It is crucial to highlight that, in this case, physical maintenance of the communal hallway overshadows the maintenance of neighbourhood unanimity. This prioritization is affected by the transition from Soviet central planning and caring practice to personal responsibility, which was more than a feast in the yard. Maintenance and repairment problems, specifically massive infrastructural units, such as sewage or elevators, were evolving financial obligations which the state could not cover. They "could not even afford it with the City Hall's help". One can conclude that challenges in extended neighbourhood practices started in the 1990s, accompanied by newly emerged economic and social conditions.

Post-Soviet: Demography of the post-social buildings

In the urban society of modern Tbilisi, the shared ideas regarding communal hallways reflect traces of a transitional period. On the one hand, the 70-year-long Soviet political, economic, and legal framework was the longest experience for the communal hallways in Tbilisi. While on the other, after gaining independence, people were freed from the pressure tied to their living spaces. They could personally build new apartment buildings or join private deals. After the Soviet Union, people could independently build houses, which was a completely novel experience compared to prior apartment politics, which enforced the distribution of apartments and left the inhabitants in the roles of passive receivers (Semenova 2004). This transition influenced demography in residential buildings.

In post-Socialist countries, the young generation has not benefited from the process of the giveaway privatization in the early 90s'. However, they had to pay for the post-Socialist failures of the housing policy (Chelcea and Druță 2016, 533), which was an example of "buttresses neoliberal politics and new configurations of inequalities" (Chelcea and Druță 2016, 522). Young families in post-socialist societies remain highly reliant on their parents' privatized resources because they can primarily not purchase owner-occupied housing and form independent households independently. However, for the families who could not amass enough assets during the post-socialist privatization, occupying relatively small apartments in large multigenerational groups remains the only feasible option (Chelcea and Druță 2016, 533). In the Georgian context, my fieldwork revealed the early 2000s tendency of young families to buy houses in modern buildings. The majority of early residents of post-Soviet blocks were young families who could afford to leave their extended families. However, the class distinction in these buildings has not been homogenous because of the construction tendency of the time.

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In many cases, private companies were purchasing old residential buildings and land with the condition of giving free houses in the new building. Accordingly, at least ten to twenty families who could not afford to buy houses were residing in the modern buildings. This is one of the desirable scenarios for the residents of the pre-Soviet buildings mentioned above. On the other hand, over time, even older families started selling their big Soviet apartments. Instead, as some of my older respondents did, they bought two houses in the newly constructed blocks in the less prestigious districts. This being the case, even in the last few decades post-Soviet houses have developed some socio-economic peculiarities that influence the demography of the building.

Post-Soviet: A statue in the middle of the yard

"If I had to build our communal hallway now, I would install a better elevator, one that's bigger and less bulky. I would also build in good lighting and add handrails to the staircases. When the elevator bill is due, I have to walk up the stairs to the 8th floor, and I don't like our handrail; it is wobbling." [see Figure 3] - I was told by Ilia, eight years of age, who was impatient to express his opinion on a hallway which is "neither good - nor bad". His family, much like most of the inhabitants of the building moved, in in 2012 and like other neighbours, finds persistent problems with lighting, "Soviet-style painted walls", and an untrustworthy elevator. The issues are rare for new buildings, which I found odd. As I found out, they also find them odd and quite exasperating. The whole neighbourhood had to finish the construction of large parts of the communal hallway and the yard. However, the financial burden was not distributed equally among different inhabitants owing to both that a large portion of the apartments was not sold yet, and yet 30 families living in the building had not purchased the apartments themselves. The

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company gifted those houses in exchange for attaining the land and demolishing old buildings that were there before.

Ilia's parents were among the responsible families for the reconstruction expenses back in 2012. "If you are to enter their houses even now, you will see they still live as if they are in a regular typical Soviet-era apartment. They do not have the money, have not bought the houses themselves, and were saying that the company promised to give them to them finished. We could not take money from them, could we?!" This excerpt was just an argument to illustrate why they had to dedicate significant funds during an already difficult economic time while living in a house bought before its construction[18]. We can infer several conclusions from their speech. The most obvious and the least important of these is equating the Soviet lifestyle to living in poor economic conditions. "Soviet lifestyle" was mentioned several times in the different hallways of this type and implied that they were seen as "less prestigious". From the ethnography that follows, it will become apparent that financial mistrust and non-transparency are also significant issues in post-Soviet buildings.

Moreover, the privateness mentioned above in a common hallway creates a presumption that issues of the communal hallways will emerge as equally shared financial responsibility. However, as we learn from these discussions, neighbourhood solidarity stands taller than such economic concepts, and even assuming the opposite leads to genuine confusion ("We could not take money from them, could we?!"). Another example of neighbourhood solidarity was when a young family expressed anger at their neighbours for putting out furniture and excess items in the broad passage of the communal hallway. However, an elementary school student sometimes goes to study on one of the floors, where they have a large sofa with a table standing in the

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[18] Which would have cost more than to buy an apartment in an old house.

middle of the hallway. When they were sharing this story, they remarked with empathy and a little pity: "It seems there are so many in the family that the kid does not have free space to study. Let him come and study, as long as his older family members do not come out to smoke in the communal space". [see Figure 6] Hence there exists a framework for solidarity even concerning utilizing the communal hallway, which defines acceptable norms for occupying the space. To get back to Ilias' parents, the third observation visible from their approach to this topic was acceptance of discomfort and anger. This also connects to the title of this section.

Figure 6 The sofa and the table where a kid goes to study.

Ilia's parents confronted the real estate development company to issue a complaint on extra charges. It was not hard to find them - they own a considerable business area in the same building and often intrude in regulating the space which is already supposed to be finished and owned by the inhabitants. "They often intrude in the decision-making process. They are trying to guide the situation there. Almost as if they perceive space as their creation and probably feel responsible, to have us care for it the way they intended". However, when asked why they did

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not give the homeowners a fully finished communal hallway and infrastructure as was "conceived" and planned in the project, the leader of the company told them:

- You should build me a statue in the middle of the yard that I managed to build and deliver the houses to you. That's what he said, and he is right; those were the times… But, unfortunately, so many companies did not fulfil their responsibilities and left the people hanging in the air.

- We were lucky. Considering the times. Then, after the 2008 war came the economic crisis, and many companies just stopped. That's why in 2010-2011, the City Hall announced an amnesty for political points, and they let the municipality absorb some of the unfinished projects. That is also how they overtook our project before the elections. No one would have done that now that the construction laws are much stricter.

- That's why those buildings are so pretty. You can look at the building in front for comparison, it is so…

- Ours was not a bad project either. It just was never realized… To be honest, the communal hallway is one of the reasons why I want to leave this house. The walls are so ugly: they are painted like a Soviet hospital. You would be ashamed of the elevator; it could also get stuck. You would be ashamed to bring a guest here; it is a new building… If not for the hallway, the area is very convenient, but I've been considering moving for a long time now.

Their neighbouring young family is also unhappy. They had to move in from a different newly built building to their relatives' house, and as they are saying, "They can't wait to move" and are planning to in several months. "I have nothing against my neighbours, I almost don't know them anyway, and I did not know my neighbours in the previous house either, but everything was run properly there. Here there's always something broken". Ilia's father, who was with us during the talk, could not resist. He is the one who is ashamed of the elevator or "Soviet walls". Even

though he has had to deal with more problems in the last eleven years due to the company's unmet construction responsibilities, he adapts more to problems.

For him, the communal hallway carries more personal characteristics than for the new family in the building. He had already justified that the primary constructor may deserve the statue in the middle of the yard as 2009-2012 was bad timing for big infrastructural projects. The temporal aspect of construction and the luck accompanying this process are intertwined, as in the case of someone from "the building in front for comparison" who is lucky to have shared space built during stricter construction laws. Besides, bad luck can justify the company's fault, but the "ugly, Soviet walls", an elevator or handlers still materialize the shame. The latter is also somewhat connected to the incompatibility of the special identity and its perception. The image formed by marketing (Kavaratzis 2007, 708) is that post-Soviet communal hallways are perceived as "places for the lucky people"[19]. In contrast, the perception of some communal hallways can be radically different, such as shame.

Voluntary and formalized neighbourhood

In this section, I discuss two different individual social roles in the specific social context characteristic of communal hallways. During the research, several individual blueprints emerged, which were repeated in every space or, on the contrary, created an opposing vision. Due to the word limit, I hand-picked only a few of these roles to discuss in concrete examples: "active neighbour" and the chairperson of the HOA. "Active neighbour" - voluntarily involved in either financial or social affairs and the chairperson of the HOA (Parliament of Georgia 2007) – the

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[19] According to this narrative, they are lucky because they could afford newly-constructed houses; lucky to have finished residential building, "considering the time".

formalized, institutionalized shape of the neighbourhood. This comparative section will help to answer the question of how the individual identity is produced in the neighbourhood and the space. It will also illustrate the way the spatial framework creates differences in the realization of those social roles.

The "active neighbour" as an aspect of the urban space is a separate, well-known role in Georgian society. Even in pop culture and TV shows, we find a comic-relief version of this archetype, usually an unemployed woman. Hence, neighbourhood voluntarism is predominantly a socially determined role. The function of this role usually is to go door to door, collect money and spread information. Regardless of technological progress, personal communication is deemed more effective in most cases.

The field observations yielded several functional and relational specificities, which usually change regarding space. The sizes of the hallway and the building are especially important, which determine both the size of the population and the voluntary labour required by the space. For example, in pre-Soviet hallways, there are usually only a handful of families, and this means that the most efficient method is usually going door to door. Moreover, even displaying information on noticeboards is a forgotten practice in one of the pre-Soviet buildings, which only six families inhabit. "What would we need a notice board for? We tell each other, or someone will just go to every apartment to tell them something. If there's money to be collected, it will be collected similarly." Because of the minuscule population and the importance of this role in the pre-Soviet buildings, even the stereotype of an "unemployed neighbour" is altered. The lady mentioned above, Nana, is a teacher who, after coming home after work, fulfils her obligations given to her by the neighbours periodically: "Nana is responsible for collecting money for Birthdays, Funerals and other stuff like that". Due to the limited space, this usually voluntary

work takes on a much stricter, obligatory nature. However, in newer buildings that are characterized by much less mobility within the neighbourhood, similar initiatives are not obligations but rather smile-inducing and even outdated approaches:

> Ever since we moved to this new building, my sister forbids me from actively communicating with the neighbours - I do not want the life of the old times when they left you no personal space - recognized you and always knew when you came in or left. I wouldn't initiate neighbourhood myself, but you know, everyone has one active neighbour, and we have one too - they came by and talked to us and took some money. My sister is always angry with me: Leave her alone!

In other new buildings, they talk with smiles about neighbours who "are not lazy to come up to the ninth floor several times a day". In buildings like these, where most of the population of working-class families purchased the homes independently, most people are employed, so "leisure" and free time, in general, are rare and joyful. The smile on their face may come from the fact that they are astonished by the fact that there is a person, except the chairperson of the HOA, who is known or have met almost everyone in the communal hallway.

The latter is responsible for organizing official gatherings, fundraising for infrastructural projects, including those subsidized by the City Hall, and informing residents on changes in the communal hallway. In addition, "in legal relationships, an HOA shall be represented by the chairperson or another duly authorised person" (Tbilisi City Hall 2011 Article 14). It is important to mention that a chairperson is elected by the whole block of flats and is a legal representative for the whole HOA. Consequently, if the building is significant, the chairperson has

representatives in each communal hallway[20] or could negotiate with volunteer neighbours and facilitate the workload with their help. In smaller residential buildings (especially in the pre-Soviet ones), it is easily probable that the chairperson lives in the same communal hallway. This means more efficiency and more involvement in the everyday life of the neighbourhood.

No matter if the chairpersons have a representative, this position still retains an institutional face of the neighbourhood, albeit the social network causes the depersonalization and abstraction of the neighbourhood traditions. For example, if you ask in pre-Soviet and Soviet hallways whom they approach in case of a problem, everyone will tell you the name of their neighbour or, very naturally and without thought, point at the door next to theirs – "I will call upon them, and they will help me". In general, in old neighbourhoods and communal hallways, even to me - a mostly unknown guest - they would tell stories of people and their shared past using personal names. When they were talking about neighbours, even ones that had recently moved in, they would use their specific characteristics as markers to confirm their identity: 'We elected a new chairperson last week. We do not know her very well. She moved in recently. No one else wanted it, and the lady said that she would concede in that case. She is now unemployed and has time… "- say people living in a Soviet building. However, after several minutes I am hearing talk about the work experience of the new head and her compatibility with the position. Apparently, they have enough information to pass such judgments.

In newer buildings where more than half of the population moved in after 2012, people point to each other mainly using spatial indicators. "I can't even recognize most of them. I know of Nana's family - they live on our floor, and Gia's family lives two floors above. I don't know anyone else. I know one more from the third floor and sometimes meet 2-3 families from upper

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[20] "The chairperson of the HOA may appoint a representative per entrance, whose functions shall be determined by the charter of the HOA" (Tbilisi City Hall 2011 Article 14)

floors in the elevator." "The neighbour from the third floor", "The neighbour from the seventh floor", "below me", and "They live on the right side" - are often used as the only indicators for the neighbour. However, everyone knows the name of the neighbourhood chairperson. That is why every neighbour remembers them when they have some technical problem. Without exceptions, every inhabitant of the post-Soviet building told me that they would call the chairperson or text them on the social network (Unlike going there personally or knocking on the door in the older buildings) if they needed something.

The negative side of being a chairperson is, on the one hand, the responsibility (from the chairperson's perspective), and the other is that no one wants to replace one. Some heads of the community I met wanted to leave their post, but there were no volunteers to take the responsibility, so the common pressure obliged them to stay and serve. This denial is similarly persistent in every type of communal hallway. The main argument against it is that being the chairperson is too formal for such intimate relationships and spaces such as neighbourhood and communal hallways. "My father helps everyone and does everything for the community but denies being a chairperson every year. Unless it is voluntary, everyone appreciates as soon as it becomes official, problems start. He does not want to lose neighbours"[21] – neighbourhood intimacy in urban space is even more intensive if they have been living in the same communal hallway for a long time. There is another reason, said a resident of another Soviet building: "the position of HOA chairperson has always been very politicized. This has been the case since Soviet times. Even ten years ago, chairpersons had to collect potential voters for the ruling party during elections. I do not want to be a kind of a party activist, so I deny the offer". In this paragraph, different kinds of doubts are presented, but one is the expectation that the

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[21] Comment of a resident of a Soviet communal hallway.

formalization of the neighbourhood is opposed to neighbourhood intimacy. Caring practices are appreciated as they are equal. When someone gains power or different rights, the honesty of the work is doubted.

In the post-Soviet communal hallways, the institutional neighbourhood of the union's chairperson has new, much more neutral and depersonalized competitors in a certain sphere. One is a social network: "Now, you don't need to call the head of the community and ask them how soon the water will come back. What's happening with the sewers? Has the lift been fixed? Now you can access the Facebook group and find out who is worried about someone else using their parking space and who is waiting for the lift". Even older people from the communal hallway know most of the information from the Facebook group – their younger family members or relatives help them to follow the digital neighbourhood. Although, in contrast, in Soviet houses, older people are distanced from the social network, as online interaction is not that intensive; their every day chats with other neighbours can still compensate for online news in Facebook groups. Regarding the pre-Soviet communal hallways, they do not even consider having a Facebook group for organizational purposes because personal interactions and phone calls still can resist the pressure of the meta world.
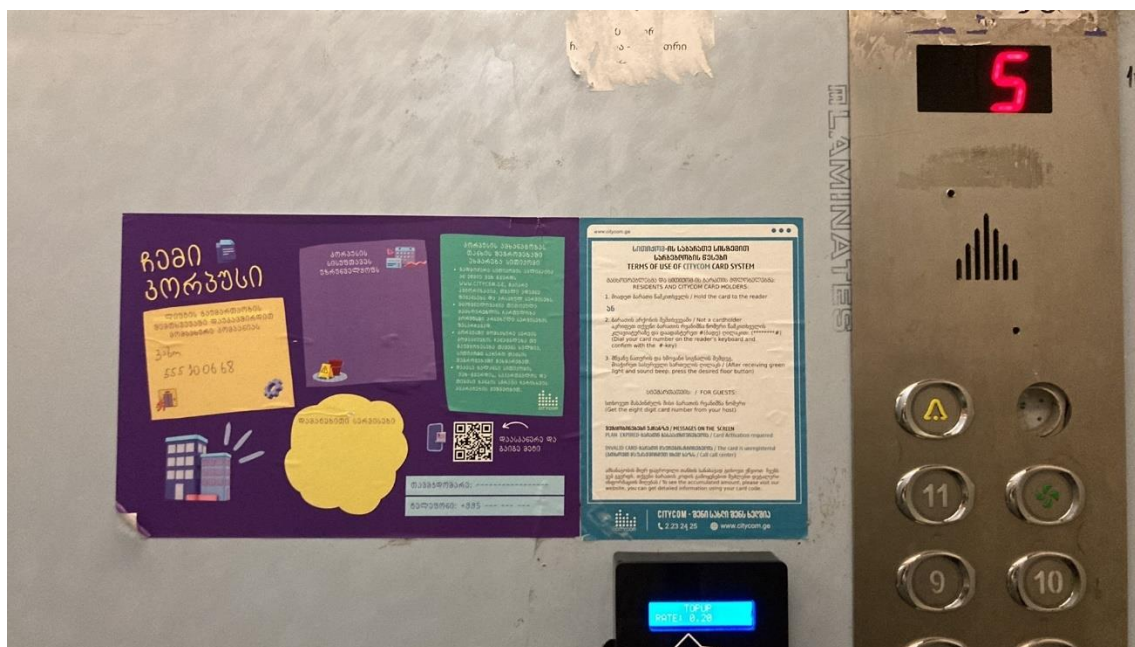
Figure 7 Citycom's ad in an elevator of a post-Soviet house

Another one is Citycom, - a private business which reaches out to the unions and offers them to collect money for maintaining the elevator, cleaning, and managing problems associated with lighting and other infrastructure[22] [see Figure 7]. The whole neighbourhood is hopefully observing the emergence of a private company in the hallway: "We have had that issue ever since we moved in, we collect money, and it gets spent momentarily. Here Citycom has emerged, and we can now see how much the union has on its account, fully and transparently. Hopefully, we won't have these problems. Maybe we can even gather the money to repair the elevator fully"[23].

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[22] ('სითიქომი - Citycom' n.d.)

[23] Full citation: "We have had that issue ever since we moved in, we collect money it gets spent momentarily. How much does it cost to keep a cleaner and maintain the lights every now and then? Each family sends 20 Laris every month and from that 2500-3000 it is impossible that more than 500 would be spent on that, more so that it reaches 1000. But the union head never shares the receipts, and it invites questions. there are always fights about that. Once there was not "enough money" collected for 3 months in a row and they would not show us the bills at any cost. That is why we don't trust them much; they take the leftover money for themselves probably. Although they say, I only put the money on my telephone to be useful when you need me. We say they should say that they have a fixed salary, for example, 500 Lari. Other places had 300 Lari or less but let it be 500 and make it transparent. Here Citycom has emerged, and we can now see how much the union has on its account, fully and transparently. Hopefully, we won't have these problems. Maybe we can even gather the money to fully repair the elevator".

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CEU eTD Collection

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Depersonalization and shifting responsibility to a neutral third party bring the hope of mutual understanding. Because of this, every neighbour has a positive outlook on the new project. "Hopefully, we will not have to fight over the money during the meetings, gossiping behind others' backs, and break up into fractions will end. It seems that the others also like this".

As an example of these two individual social roles, we can talk about different types of hierarchy in communal hallways. If a chairperson of HOA is institutionally more powerful, and representatives in each entrance are officially subordinated, then informal activity and help become more valued in everyday neighbourhood relationships. The distrust against the formality is an obstacle to the management of the space; simultaneously, it is a shared feeling to protect neighbourhood intimacy.

Discussion and concluding remarks

This thesis offers a conceptualization of a communal hallway as a social space, which is planned and ideologically burdened but, in practice, has its agency in the urban neighbourhood. Communal hallways also trigger ambiguity of caring and maintenance responsibilities, as in to what extent the City Hall and the state are responsible for private property which was not initially planned to be cared for privately. Pre-Soviet and Soviet communal hallways inherit the physical conditions of Soviet housing policy while they have to exist in the neoliberal legal framework[24]. This contradictory, liminal condition gives rise to informal practices in the neighbourhoods.

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[24] Meaning "Law of Georgia on Homeowners' Associations" (Tbilisi City Hall 2011) and modern construction regulations.

First and foremost, the ethnographic images presented in this thesis showcase that the communal hallway as a liminal space with contradictions between public and private, old and new, and commonly and individually cared for is a remarkable space. Notwithstanding, there is a presumable criticism of the theory proposed in this thesis. This possible criticism is that space is merely a backdrop to the class struggles that occur, and research should be redone to account for different classes separately. However, the argument presented in the section on post-Social communal hallways showcases that representatives of different classes often live within the same space, meaning that one single space can simultaneously impact a spectrum of social classes. The different classes can share the same communal hallway, but this material context can still have an agency or effect on their social and everyday lives.

Moreover, comparative analysis strengthens the argument that spatial identities and images of the spaces can be contradictive (Kalandides 2011, 29). As an example, images of the pre-Soviet buildings are honourable lieu de memoire (Nora 1989) and is part of the spatial identity of the communal hallways. However, the material substrate connected to signs, symbols and representations (Läpple 1991, 196) stays while social interactions leave the space. The power influences the production of a false image of space. The state and private companies interfere not only with the production of the image but also with the state marketizes the history of the building. Facilitated memory is the easiest source for the neoliberal state to fulfil the responsibility: "take care of the history of a communal hallway"[25]. As the second chapter showed, state care mostly passes on the responsibility to the HOAs or businesses, which interferes in the everyday life of communal hallways physically[26] or due to the social and

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[25] From Giorgi's quote: "Our state should care about it [history of the communal hallway], but the latter cannot help and avoid responsibility through privatization".

[26] Meaning: deconstruction of the breast hall in the house preserved as a cultural heritage.

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economic capital[27]. "Power is everywhere and therefore, nowhere" (Soja 1996, 33). However, resistance is still possible against structural power as residents still do not internalize the institution of the chairperson of the HOA into the neighbourhood.

A communal hallway as a social space is produced based on the interplay between the development of the forces of production (knowledge, technology...) and social relations organized around production, reproduction, and renewal (Soja 1996, 33). In communal hallways today, when forces of production (media, workplace, social networks, innovative companies) attract residents, space becomes a place of isolation rather than interaction. Neighbourhood patterns still exist, and these change over time, such as through more localized practices of an intensive neighbourhood or more spatialized right to the communal hallway and solidarity.

Finally, this thesis places the communal hallway within the framework of Lefebvre's triad from a very specific angle. Specifically, experiencing and producing perceptions of temporality is part of space production. The argument of this thesis does not follow the linear understanding of time. The classification of spaces is based on the historical chronology of construction. In historical and conceived times, the way states and other sources of power are represented is more linear. Therefore, their political discourse and the tactics of producing infrastructural hopes and expectations follow the logic of linear causality, while the lived space and perceived and practised space are not always linear. The neighbourhood experience in the communal hallway is a mixture of neighbourhood and individual rhythms, everyday routines, perception times, and architectural, urban political, social, and economic influences. Hence, communal residents' and external observers' perceptions of the communal hallway are contradictory. The externally

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[27] Meaning: [construction company] "They often intrude in the decision-making process and are trying to guide the situation there. Almost as if they perceive space as their creation and probably feel responsible, to have us care for it the way they intended".

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produced image of the communal hallway is based on the perception of the linear causality – if something happens, that will be the consequence. For example, consider these extracts from my ethnographic interviews: "if you wait, you may live in a renovated monument of cultural heritage," or, "you bought a newly constructed house in 2012, your communal hallway must be fancy," or "this huge infrastructural problem of the sewage system only comes to light on your side of the shared space, so only you are responsible for it". These extracts present how residents formulate external images and perceptions of their communal hallways. In contrast, the "spatial identity" of residents themselves within this ambivalent physical space is not perceived or experienced in the same way.

Conclusion

The communal hallway does not have a fixed function. However, I argue that we can prove its influences to be extended to collective and individual identities. Hence, communal hallways present us as non-human agents of the urban tissue. The differences in how this space is planned, what perceptions and presumptions exist regarding the space, and how the inhabitants utilize said space show us that the communal hallways as social spaces are more than just a temporal context.

This research unites the already prominent body of literature on space, spatiality, and spatial identity by examining the multi-layered nature of communal hallways within their socio-spatial contexts in Tbilisi. The results have direct implications for urban planning, policymaking, and understanding the complex relationship between architecture, history, and social dynamics within residential communities. In addition, they pose questions on the public-private role in creating common memory and spatial identity of residential buildings. This thesis deliberately does not

paint a single definitive picture. However, it showcases a diverse palette of experiences grounded in their unique spatiotemporal contexts only found in the communal hallways of modern Tbilisi.

Concerning the topics for future investigation, this thesis has several natural directions through which it could further develop. Here I will shortly discuss two of them. First, it is worth asking the question of how do migration waves change the social situation in communal hallways. From Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February to November of 2022, more than 100 000 Russians escaped to Georgia to avoid enlistment in the army (Cordell, 2022). As a result, only in 2022, the rent in Tbilisi went up by 75% (Cordell 2022).

The second alternative subject of inquiry could be whether neighbourhood practices are transferable between different spaces. To be exact, can we see the same patterns in post-Soviet communal hallways inhabited by upper-middle-class families? For example, in the prestigious gated communities, the class distribution is more homogenous than in other residential buildings discussed in this thesis. A comparison inside one type of building would allow us to research how different classes produce this specific social space in everyday practices.

As a final comment, even if this thesis might not cover the full extent of the ambitious topic presented above, it hopefully highlights the need to study unnoticed lived spaces. It can be helpful as a starting point for future research attempting to reconcile various urban spaces and their respective social practices within the context of post-Soviet Tbilisi.

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