

U3iQUADERNI CALL FOR PAPER



Cities of the South Caucasus: three decades of transformation

edited by **Alessandro Coppola & David Gogishvili**

Cities of the South Caucasus: three decades of transformation

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the three now independent states of the South Caucasus region - Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia – have experienced a dramatic set of political, economic and social changes going through violent armed conflicts, massive population displacements, authoritarian political regimes and the destabilization of economic and state structures.

These changes have had significant, although variegated, impacts on the region's urban areas. As in many other post-soviet urban societies, the transition from centrally planned economies to market economies and the privatization of the large part of state-owned assets has unfolded in a context of weak institutional and planning frameworks, rampant corruption and spreading informality leading to both deep changes in pre-existing urban structures and to the emergence of new structures and urban actors.

Since the mid-2000s, in a context of relative political stabilization, the state has taken charge of wide urban restructuring initiatives generally in close partnership with the emerging economic elites. Such ambitious and often large-scale urban development and regeneration projects have aimed at rebranding South Caucasian cities through the revitalization and beautification of central urban cores, the taming and containment of informal urban practices, the expansion of real estate markets and the restructuring – mainly through privatization and outsourcing - of certain municipal services leading at the same time to new forms of social and spatial polarization, decline in the stock of affordable housing, displacement, deterioration of traditional public spaces and of urban heritage. Despite the contestations and mobilizations activated by newly formed urban social movements, such projects have often succeeded in reshaping the reality and imaginary of some of the region's major cities.

However, notwithstanding the relevance and similarities of these redevelopment processes unleashed across the region, South Caucasian cities also followed variegated local trajectories largely dependent on pre-existing economic structure, levels of political openness and differences in national institutional frameworks, origins and degrees of capital mobilization. This variability is particularly relevant when looking at the evolution of urban phenomena and policies involving marginal areas beyond the cores of major, capital, urban metropolitan concentrations and at wider processes of regional and territorial restructuring.

This special issue of Quaderni focuses on the cities of South Caucasus and is dedicated to the exploration and analysis of the socio-spatial implications of more than 25 years of transition in urban landscapes. The issue is particularly interested in the processes developed from the early 2000s, but not exclusively, as this is the period of more intense change in the whole region both in terms of political alterations, economic growth and urban restructuring.

Call for papers

We invite contributions from the wide range of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches within the realm of urban studies addressing one or more of the following questions:

- How did the role of cities change in the region since the early 1990s and what has been and still is the role of national governments in urban restructuring and development processes?
- How did political elites exercise their influence and power in and through cities? How did they alter urban landscapes in the quest of remaking national and local history, shaping national identities and operating urban rebranding?
- How recent, large state-led urban redevelopment and regeneration projects involving major urban cores and beyond were manufactured, implemented and what were their impacts on local populations and economies?
- How post-1990s economic growth affected and fuelled the transformations of the region's urban geographies and what are the main territorial and urban impacts of large resource-based economies?
- What are the main characteristics and evolutions of informal practices, their relevance, and impacts on cities? How did the nature of public spaces evolve amidst the tensions between informal economies and large-scale urban projects?
- In times of political conflicts and contestations how did urban social movements arise and evolve and what has been their influence on urban governance and landscape?
- What were the impacts of different demographic processes - from shrinkage to growth – on cities and how in particular monofunctional industrial cities adjusted to the post-socialist context?
- How did cities change and adapt in light of recent increased touristic flows directed towards the region?
- How did the housing policy of the three independent states evolve since the collapse of the Soviet Union and what has been the impact of privatization on housing affordability?

Schedule

May, 15th:	deadline for abstracts' submission
May, 30th:	communication to authors
September, 30th:	full Paper Submission
November 15h:	communication to authors of the double blind review's outcomes

Please send an extended abstract of maximum **800 words** with essential references by **May 15th** to **urbanisticatre@gmail.com** articulating the object of the contribution, a reference of how it relates to the call and to one or more of the topics listed, its disciplinary and methodological context and its main interpretative arguments.

Authors will be notified of the status of their proposal by Urbanistica Tre and then ask to submit a full paper of maximum **30.000 characters** to be submitted to a standard peer-reviewing process.

Alessandro Coppola (1978) holds a M.A in literature and history at Università of Roma 3 and a Phd in urban studies at the same university. He has had research and teaching and appointments in the broad field of urban studies at Università di Roma 3, Politecnico di Milano, Università Cà Foscari di Venezia, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Accademia di Architettura of Mendrisio, Kent State University in Florence. He is currently a member of the committee of the international Phd school in Urban Studies and Regional Science at the Gran Sasso Science Institute. His research has focused on urban policy and politics, neighborhood change, informality, shrinkage mostly based on qualitative and ethnographic approaches leading to the publication of monographs, book chapters and scientific articles on reviews such as Urban Studies, Urban geography (under final review now), Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa (under final review now), Rivista Geografica Italiana, Metropoles, Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali, Territorio, Urbanistica. He has extensively consulted for national and international institutions and organizations and for grass-roots groups on urban affairs and policy. He has coordinated the Roma Resiliente initiative and has been and still is part of several EU urban policy on issues resilience, temporary uses and neighborhood development. An extensive traveller, he has a passion for urban reportages.

David Gogishvili (1988) holds M.A. in human Geography at Tbilisi State University and is currently completing a Doctoral Programme in Urban Studies and Regional Science at Gran Sasso Science Institute. During the last three years, David has been working on his doctoral research on the role of mega-events in transforming urban landscapes and the role of the exceptional planning practices on urban environment of Glasgow, Baku, and Tbilisi by applying the philosophical concept of exception. Before starting his doctorate, David has been researching the impacts of state policies and urban environment on internally displaced persons living in collective settlements in the urban areas of Georgia and the changes in the post-soviet cities of Georgia. Besides his studies, David has been involved in various NGOs and urban social movements working on open data initiatives, open source geographic information and various urban issues in Georgia and South Caucasus.

UrbanisticaTre is an on-line, peer-reviewed scientific journal listed by the Italian national agency for the evaluation of research (Anvur) promoted by scholars working in the urban studies area of the Department of Architecture of Roma Tre University. The journal is edited by Giorgio Piccinato - former head of the Urban Studies Department at Roma 3 University - and has a Scientific Board of Italian and international scholars and experts in the field and an Editorial Board of lecturers, PhD students and department staff. UrbanisticaTre was established to provide a common space where current research on urban and territorial transformations could be shared. It gives researchers, PhD students and professionals an opportunity to present emerging research in a variety of media such as scientific articles, photoreportages, videos and other media.