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The Study of Kala Urban Section and Reconstruction-restoration Analysis

(Abstract)

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Tbilisi is a completely unique city whose exceptional spatial and architectural characteristics, as well as its artistic identity, are shaped by both the landscape and the urban heritage that has organically adapted to this landscape over the centuries.

This thesis explores one micro-district of the ancient historical area of Tbilisi, Kvemo Kala, which is situated between G. Abesadze, Sayatnova, Grigol Khantsteli, Aboviani, and Abo Tbilieli streets. Most of the houses preserved here are cultural heritage monuments.

The thesis describes and assesses the physical condition of all buildings in this micro-district, conducts an artistic and stylistic analysis of them, and defines the historical and artistic-architectural value of these buildings and the micro-district itself. A significant portion of the work is dedicated to a critical analysis of the rehabilitation works carried out on six houses in this area from 2020 to 2023, identifying various problems and shortcomings that emerged during the rehabilitation process (including insights from resident surveys), as well as discussions and considerations on these issues. The results of the rehabilitation and restoration works are analyzed from multiple aspects, leading to the development of several recommendations aimed at aiding the establishment of specific methodologies for the restoration of residential buildings in Tbilisi in the future.

Research Objective

Initially, our aim was to study the houses located within this neighborhood from various aspects, identify different types of problems, and develop specific recommendations for future restoration work. However, in April 2020, rehabilitation work began on several houses in our micro-district, which presented us with new challenges. We closely monitored the rehabilitation process of each of these houses, making the analysis of the restoration and rehabilitation work a priority.

During the initial phase of the research, before the commencement of restoration work, we successfully captured photographs of nearly all the houses in the study area. We meticulously documented their descriptions and evaluated their physical condition. We are confident that this documentation has already become a valuable record for the houses that have been restored.

During the second phase of the research, our objective became clearer: to analyze and discuss the results of the restoration conducted in the study area within the context of international

practices and in relation to international charters and doctrines. Additionally, we aimed to conduct a sociological study through surveys of the neighborhood residents to understand their level of involvement in the rehabilitation process. Ultimately, based on the entirety of our research activities, we sought to draw certain conclusions and formulate recommendations.

Relevance and Novelty of the Research Topic

The cultural heritage protection system in Georgia has a rich history and a strong foundation, particularly through the 20th-century Georgian restoration school. However, the field of architectural restoration, including urban planning, preservation of old city districts, and restoration of eclectic and secular buildings, faces significant challenges today. The rapid evolution of restoration practices over the past few decades raises the question of whether we have effectively kept pace with the latest trends and developments in this dynamic field.

The development of built historical environments is a natural dynamic process that requires management to preserve its authenticity. Therefore, the management process necessitates a systematic approach that comprehensively addresses issues. This requires the participation of professionals from various fields in the restoration and conservation of historical cities, and, as stipulated by multiple international documents, the involvement of local communities in these processes is also essential. Ultimately, all of this should serve the sustainable development of old districts and the preservation of their authenticity.

This thesis attempts to clarify these issues based on analyzing the rehabilitation of one section in Kala. The main challenge is that we do not have specific standards tailored to our context and cultural characteristics at the local level, which would obligate the professional community to follow. The necessity of developing such specific standards is outlined in the Nara Document (1994), which states in Article 11 that pre-established criteria for authenticity may vary across different cultures, taking into account cultural context. Thus, although Georgian legislation does not directly refer to this document, its consideration is essential. To maximize the preservation of authenticity, appropriate criteria must be established at the local level, which will be mandatory for the restoration of cultural heritage monuments. Clearly, this will require work and, consequently, time. Steps must be taken immediately.

The relevance of our work lies in the fact that the analysis of restoration works in one micro-district, taking into account the unique characteristics of Tbilisi's cultural heritage and cultural context, will create a certain foundation for formulating general guiding principles and criteria for the rehabilitation of the city's old districts. This, in turn, will ultimately contribute to the preservation of Tbilisi's authentic character.

Literature Review

The micro-district we are studying and the cultural heritage monuments contained within it have not yet been the subject of specialized research. Therefore, there are no research papers directly addressing them. However, in order to address the issues posed in our thesis and clarify various aspects, we have had to engage with different types of literature:

1. First and foremost, we utilized sources related to the history of Tbilisi and its development, as well as fundamental works on Tbilisi's architecture. We also consulted studies that examined various aspects of the cultural heritage of old Tbilisi.

2. The second type of literature we reviewed included works and articles related to international practices in restoration. This category comprises studies that focus on various cities worldwide, such as York, Dubrovnik, Dublin, Edinburgh, Vilnius, Fes-Medina (Morocco), and others.

By synthesizing this literature, we aim to establish a solid theoretical foundation for our research and draw upon successful case studies that may inform the restoration efforts in Tbilisi.

This literature included issues related to the restoration of urban sections or individual buildings and the associated experiences.

3. Additionally, we reviewed restoration manuals, international and local regulatory documents (laws, charters, conventions, etc.), and ICOMOS materials to examine the results of our district's restoration within the context of the latest approaches to conservation and restoration. This helped us formulate recommendations regarding the restoration efforts.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured according to the specific research topic, with separate chapters and sections dedicated to the main themes and issues. The text is supplemented with annotations, a bibliography, a list of photographs and diagrams, and an appendix containing questionnaires completed by the residents of the study area. Illustrations are also an integral component of the thesis.

Chapter I: The History and Development of Tbilisi

This chapter will address the history of Tbilisi and its architectural heritage from a historical perspective. It consists of several sections that examine the stages of Tbilisi's development in chronological order. This chapter also includes the history of the development of Kala, one of the oldest districts of Tbilisi.

Chapter II: Description of the Physical Condition and Assessment of the Artistic-Architectural Value of Each House in the Selected Urban Section of Kvemo Kala Before Rehabilitation

This chapter discusses the planning characteristics and configuration of our study area based on various historical maps of Tbilisi. It is followed by a detailed description of the houses in the study area, including an assessment of their physical condition and documentation of damages. The façades, yards, and individual architectural details of the houses are described.

The materials and detailed descriptions gathered in this section have greatly assisted us in analyzing the restored houses later. They allow for a comparison with the pre-restoration material and clearly highlight the changes that occurred due to the restoration process.

Chapter IV: Analysis of the Results of the Residents Survey Conducted in the Study Area and Its Surroundings

This chapter defines the objectives and methods of the sociological survey and discusses the methodology for designing the questionnaires. Notably, residents of both the restored houses and the non-restored ones were surveyed using different questionnaires, and their responses were analyzed separately. This process revealed the key issues that have affected, and

continue to affect, the residents. Based on these findings, corresponding recommendations were developed.

Chapter V: Description and Analysis of the Restored Houses

This chapter provides a detailed description and analysis of the rehabilitation results. We conducted a thorough analysis of each restored house (a total of six), examining their current condition and appearance. We compared these to their pre-restoration state, identifying changes and shortcomings that emerged during the process. This analysis highlights the effectiveness of the restoration efforts and any areas that may require further attention.

Chapter VI: Rehabilitation of the Study Area in the Context of the Concept of Authenticity

This chapter delves into whether the rehabilitation carried out in our study area effectively maintained the authenticity of cultural heritage monuments and the overall micro-district. To address these issues, the micro-district was evaluated based on internationally recognized parameters for assessing the authenticity of monuments. These parameters include intervention strategies and methods, their appropriateness, restoration materials, changes to the artistic appearance of the buildings and the surrounding environment, intangible elements, cultural context, and the complexities of preserving the "spirit of the place," among other factors.

The concluding section of the thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the research, along with conclusions and recommendations.

The primary concern that emerged regarding the renovated houses in our research area was the preservation of authenticity. As evidenced by the historical exploration of the concept of authenticity, experts in the field have ultimately determined that the primary objective of restoration should be to uphold the "spirit of the place." This entails not only the physical safeguarding of cultural heritage sites but also the safeguarding of their social and cultural surroundings and the complete richness of the local community's way of life.

The analysis of the rehabilitation of our study area in relation to the issue of authenticity was conducted based on the following vital parameters established in international practice:

1. Intervention strategies and methods
2. Restoration materials
3. Artistic appearance of the restored houses
4. Location and surroundings
5. Intangible elements and cultural context

Intervention Strategies and Methods Used in the Study Area

The intervention strategies and methods employed in our study area undoubtedly impacted its authenticity.

Analysis of the six restored houses revealed various approaches: some houses (N2 and N4 on Abos Tbileli Street and N1 on Sayatnova Street) were completely demolished and rebuilt. Others (N3 on Sayatnova Street and N6 on Abos Tbileli Street) were only partially demolished and reconstructed, while some (N13 on Sayatnova Street) were not demolished at all but were reinforced and restored.

It was essential for us to determine which approach architects used in each specific case, what determined their chosen strategy, and as a result, to assess their current status in relation to authenticity.

Among the houses we examined, three—one building of N1 on Sayatnova Street, as well as N2 and N4 on Abos Tbileli Street—were completely demolished and rebuilt. In this case, we are dealing with reconstruction.

Reconstruction was a widely used method in the 19th century. Beginning in the early 20th century, a movement emerged against the methods adopted in the 19th century, which were primarily focused on reconstruction. It is generally accepted that "reconstruction refers to the rebuilding of structures that were destroyed due to accidents, natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes), or military actions. In relation to monuments and generally significant places, it involves the recreation of lost originals based on images or written descriptions."

Despite the negative attitude toward the method of reconstruction, it has been frequently used, leading representatives in the restoration field to decide to place this method within certain regulations to prevent any arbitrariness in the future. In 2000, the "Principles for the Conservation and Restoration of Built Heritage," known as the Krakow Charter (2000), defined

the concept of reconstruction and stated that "the reconstruction of an entire building destroyed as a result of armed conflict or natural disaster is acceptable only if there are exceptional social or cultural motivations related to the identity of the entire community." ¹This highlights the importance of considering the broader societal context and the potential impact on community identity when undertaking reconstruction efforts.

The Riga Charter on the Authenticity of Cultural Heritage and Historical Reconstruction (2000) also addresses this issue. It states: "In exceptional cases, following a disaster, whether caused by natural or human factors, the reconstruction of lost cultural heritage may be acceptable when the monument possesses outstanding artistic, symbolic, or environmental (urban or rural) significance for regional history and culture."

Clearly, reconstruction is permitted in contemporary restoration under certain conditions. However, the complete demolition of an existing building, even if damaged, and the construction of its replica raise many questions. First and foremost, it is interesting to consider Western experiences in this regard.

One of the most prominent and successful examples is the restoration of the city of York, a process that took a long time to develop and implement. One of the main principles of York's restoration was to preserve the city's appearance as much as possible, maintaining each building in the condition it had reached by the present day. Most buildings were dilapidated, with structural elements aged and out of order. However, during the project, it was decided, with the help of engineers, to preserve these buildings in their original form.

No residential house was demolished or rebuilt; instead, restorers, conservation, engineers, and builders succeeded in maintaining the shapes of these deformed houses. Today, you can find houses in York with leaning walls, warped horizontal roof lines, and other characteristics that vividly showcase the age of these structures. A similar approach was applied during the restoration of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik.

In the case of Dubrovnik, the approach was also focused on ensuring that no building was demolished or replaced with a new replica. This strategy was chosen even though Dubrovnik was among the cities heavily damaged by war. The commitment to preserving the original structures, rather than opting for reconstruction, reflects a deep respect for the historical and cultural integrity of the city. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of maintaining

authenticity, even in the face of significant destruction, and highlights the value of existing heritage as a testament to the city's history.

In short, if we rely on international experience, it becomes clear that reconstruction, as a method, is only used for buildings that have been destroyed in exceptional cases (such as war, catastrophes, or other natural causes). At other times, the goal of restoration is to preserve the building as much as possible in the condition it has reached us, even if that involves maintaining deformities or other signs of age. This approach allows buildings and the surrounding environment to retain the so-called "spirit of their time" and the scent of antiquity, while a newly built replica cannot express this in any way. Our newly constructed three houses are a testament to this. The corrected horizontal and vertical shapes, the precisely crafted decorative details, and the polished surfaces no longer carry the aura of antiquity and resemble a kind of theatrical prop decoration.

In this context, concerning our neighborhood and specifically the three houses that were reconstructed, one crucial issue has emerged: it is evident that the reconstruction method was applied as the houses were demolished and rebuilt. How correct was this approach? If we consider that rebuilding provides a basis for classifying the work as reconstruction, then what should we make of the part of the definition of reconstruction in documents that states that a key condition for conducting reconstruction is the existence of a destroyed or ruined building?

In no regulatory document or charter is there mention of reconstruction in cases where a building is completely intact and, moreover, in use—that is, being utilized by people. In our case, however, two buildings (N1 Sayatnova and N2 Abo Tbileli) were entirely standing, with only the northern wing of one building (N4 Abo Tbileli) having been demolished and taken out of operation. Thus, in the cases of N1 Sayatnova and N2 Abo Tbileli, as well as partially of N4 Abo Tbileli, we are dealing with a situation where the original, which was completely preserved, was demolished by the builders themselves, followed by the construction of its replica.

Based on the above, it may be deemed inappropriate to use the term reconstruction in relation to the restoration of the houses in our study area. These houses are merely replicas of the old cultural heritage monuments, and the word "replica" should probably be placed in quotes. However, since these buildings were rebuilt in a manner consistent with the application of the reconstruction method, we still conditionally use this term about them.

A very important issue is the preservation of the internal layout of the buildings. It should be noted that in the buildings we analyzed, the old layouts have been altered almost everywhere. This is often justified by the needs and demands of the residents, as confirmed by surveys conducted among the inhabitants of this area.

The issue of preserving the old layout is quite a complex problem in restoring monuments. One of the articles in the ICOMOS Charter of 2003 (Principles for the Analysis, Conservation, and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage) states that "the demolition of internal structures does not meet the criteria for conservation unless the facades are preserved." However, at the same time, when rehabilitating residential neighborhoods, it is essential to address social and everyday issues as well. The Washington Charter (1987) states that "improving living conditions should be one of the main objectives of conservation." Similarly, the Valletta Principles document (2011) notes that "any intervention in historic cities and urban areas should aim to improve the quality of life and the environment for local residents." In this case, it is essential to find a so-called golden mean, ensuring that changes to the monument's internal layout are minimized while also considering the interests of the residents in improving their living conditions. Therefore, close collaboration with the community during the planning process is necessary, along with their active involvement and consideration of their wishes and needs regarding everyday issues. Additionally, it is essential to conduct awareness-raising efforts with them.

Among the restored houses in our study area, the houses located at N6 Abo Tbileli and N13 Sayatnova stand out for their differing intervention strategies and approaches. These buildings were not demolished, but they were completely stripped of their finishing materials and incorporated into reinforced concrete frameworks, which included fortifying their foundations with concrete.

Thus, it has been determined that three of the six restored houses in our study area underwent the reconstruction method, one was subject to a combination of partial and partial restoration, and two were fully restored.

Restoration Materials

In the list of defining characteristics to preserve urban areas, authentic materials hold an equal place alongside interior and exterior elements, size and scale, style, construction method, color, and decoration. The material is also mentioned in the Nara Document as one of the components determining authenticity.

If we look at international practice, we can see that specialists pay particular attention to the authenticity of materials when restoring any cultural heritage site, a practice that is also supported by normative acts.

It is clear that the newly constructed houses in our study area used entirely new building materials for both the interiors and exteriors. Only a few details were salvaged, restored, and

preserved from the old buildings, such as the macarons, the wooden balcony at N1 Sayatnova, and some entrance doors. The building material used for these houses included brick, which is the authentic material that the old houses were constructed with.

In the other houses, as observed during the restoration process, various building materials were used. For example, all the restored houses were reinforced with reinforced concrete structures (N3 Sayatnova and N6 Abo Tbileli). Concrete was used to strengthen the basements and foundations, resulting in the permanent loss of traces of the old basements in many places. Some architectural elements that were changed during the restoration were made from non-authentic materials. For instance, the yard gate at N1 Sayatnova was cast, and the current hanging gate accurately replicates the old design but is made from tubular square pipes. It is unclear why the slightly deformed old gate was replaced, as its repair would not have required much effort.

It should be noted that authentic materials were indeed used in some cases. In all the restored houses, the intermediate floors are constructed with wooden beams, following the old tradition, with concrete flooring used only under wet areas. Most windows on the facades are wooden, and metal-plastic is used only in a few instances. For the staircases, skylights, and other details on the courtyard side, traditional materials for old Tbilisi (wood and metal) were employed. Historically, construction in Tbilisi utilized locally produced materials, such as the so-called old square bricks, stone, clay, and wood, which created the characteristic texture, color, and light-shadow effects of the walls. However, these materials, along with their composition and other properties, have been studied very little and were not used in the case of our neighborhood.

The materials used in the interiors are a separate issue. In the entrance of the house at N6 Abo Tbileli, which was almost completely demolished and is now fully restored, authentic materials can be found. The flooring is finished with various marble colors, and the murals have been accurately restored based on old photographs and preserved fragments.

Modern materials have been used throughout the interiors of the residential houses, and it is evident that, along with the layout changes, the original character and appearance of the old interiors have been completely erased.

Regarding the use of authentic materials, the basement of the house at N3 Sayatnova is particularly interesting. During the restoration of this house, only the second floor was

demolished, while the first floor and the basement remained intact, with only the foundation being reinforced with concrete. The basement walls are not plastered, revealing both old and somewhat new brickwork. Notably, to avoid damaging the brick walls, the builders used outdated electrical installation techniques and ran the electrical cables above the brickwork, creating an impression of antiquity.

Thus, in the restoration of our neighborhood, there is an inconsistency in the use of materials: both authentic materials (brick, iron, wood) and non-authentic materials (metal-plastic, square tubes, cement, concrete, reinforced concrete) are employed.

In our case, the construction techniques that skilled traditional artisans mastered were disregarded. The facades were completely stripped of their old plaster, the buildings were reinforced, and then roughly re-plastered. Profiles were cast without documentary precision, and the facades were then finished with cement and painted, which resulted in a significant loss of authenticity.

The artistic appearance of the restored houses

in the study area is a complex issue that comprises multiple components. One significant aspect is how the project authors approach the elements acquired from different historical periods of the monument.

Our research area has historically been a residential neighborhood with a high population density. Due to various living conditions, residents have consistently sought to improve their circumstances. This led to the spontaneous construction of extensions during different periods of the 20th century, primarily in the courtyards. These extensions reflected the characteristics of their time and did not initially consider the artistic appearance of the original houses. Initially, these structures held little value. However, over time, they became an integral part of the neighborhood, gaining historical and social significance as elements that represented their era. For instance, there was a shapeless single-story residential building located at 1 Sayatnova, dating back to the latter half of the 20th century. It had a cubic form and was covered in cement plaster. Its bulky appearance, featuring expansive wall surfaces and just two windows, clashed with the artistic charm of the traditional Tbilisi courtyard, standing in stark contrast to the lively ambiance created by the balconies and airy staircases.

The architects chose to preserve this building. However, instead of the cement-plastered walls, we now see a brick facade. They enlarged the windows, which reduced and lightened the wall surfaces. A mansard was added on top of this single-story volume, further constricting the space of the courtyard. What guided the architects in preserving this structure? Clearly, their primary motivation was to ensure that the residents did not lose space. Moreover, instead of reducing the area, they even increased it by adding the mansard.

At first glance, it seems that the builders adhered to the principle established by the Venice Charter regarding such cases: “The preservation of a monument must take into account all the elements acquired during different periods; the objective of restoration is not solely to maintain one style. When a monument contains various layers superimposed on each other, their removal and the exposure of hidden layers is justified only when the removed layer is of lesser value and the revealed one possesses exceptional historical, scientific, or aesthetic significance and if its existing condition justifies such action...”

Considering this article of the Venice Charter, we might assume that the architects acted correctly in preserving this "insert" from the Soviet era, as it was part of the architectural environment that had developed over time, representing a piece of history as a living organism. However, the new forms and materials they used completely transformed the appearance of the building, changing it from an unremarkable specimen of its time into a contemporary structure. Essentially, the traces of the Soviet period were erased.

It is clear that this building held no artistic value, and its removal would have been entirely justified according to the Venice Charter. However, it is also understandable that doing so would raise the issue of finding alternative accommodation for the tenant, which would not be easily resolved.

Thus, instead of the Soviet extension, which held no artistic merit and aptly reflected the dullness of that era, we now have an imitation of the old brickwork on the first floor—essentially a façade—and a modern mansard constructed with contemporary materials.

The traces of the Soviet period remain in the yard of the house at 4 Abo Tbileli Street, where two garages have been left intact, creating a complete dissonance in the courtyard's overall aesthetic.

The staircases in this area are integral to its artistic character, serving as focal points within the courtyards. Constructed from wood and iron, the stairs come in various forms. The architects were careful to preserve two- and three-flight stairs, as well as spiral stairs, which are essential to the defining character of the old Tbilisi courtyards, along with other typical elements. In cases where additional stairs were needed (such as in the yard of N2 Abo Tbileli), the architects opted for traditional spiral iron stairs commonly found in Tbilisi courtyards. In the small courtyard of N3 Sayatnova, they emphasized a spiral wooden staircase painted orange, effectively creating a focal point in the relatively narrow space of the yard.

The artistic appearance of the neighborhood is significantly defined by the contours and silhouettes of the buildings. Maintaining deformations during restoration preserves a unique charm of antiquity in the structures. A great example of this is the restoration of the city of York, which we discussed earlier. Conversely, the restoration of Dubrovnik resulted in an entirely different outcome. The roofs throughout the city were replaced with new tiles, which altered the artistic impression; the curved lines of the buildings covered with old tiles, which created a lively, dynamic effect, were replaced by straight lines and orderly geometric silhouettes, resulting in a rigid rhythm.

In our neighborhood, both the newly constructed and restored houses, with their neatly aligned walls, no longer convey an aura of antiquity. An exception is the second house on Sayatnova Street, where the first floor was not demolished; instead, it was reinforced and left tilted. Since the angle of the tilt is not very pronounced, one might not even notice it, but the eye still perceives this subtle slant. As a result, the building does not express a rigid form but rather appears as a living organism with its own character.

Consequently, we can conclude that the newly painted façades of the meticulously aligned buildings in our study area have seemingly stripped them of their aura of antiquity, imparting a somewhat theatrical character that raises questions about their authenticity. This transformation calls into question the very essence of what makes these structures historically significant.

Location and environment

Location and environment are crucial aspects when it comes to preserving authenticity. Many documents related to restoration emphasize the importance of maintaining the environment and achieving harmonious artistic coherence: "...when it is necessary to construct a new building or

adapt an existing one, attention must be paid to the existing spatial layout, particularly in terms of scale and plot size...”

In this regard, very little has changed in our study area; the scale of the buildings has been preserved, and no significant additional volumes have been added to any structure (excluding a few courtyards). The proportions of the buildings remain intact, contributing to the overall coherence and character of the neighborhood.

What were the characteristic features of our study area's environment? This area (and the Kala district in general) was marked by narrow, winding streets with a medieval layout, creating cozy, human-scaled spaces surrounded by one- and two-story houses. After restoration, this characteristic has been preserved in most of the streets of our study area. However, due to the demolition of several houses on Sayatnova Street (N5, N7, N9, as well as N4 and N6), this impression has been disrupted, leading to large open spaces that completely erase the cozy sense of a traditional Tbilisi street.

These houses have deteriorated and collapsed over the past few years, leaving the restored houses in an unfamiliar setting. It is important to consider how to complement these spaces without overshadowing the scale, form, or style of the old buildings, ensuring that any new additions harmonize with them. This approach would also help define the space, unify the street perimeter, and restore the cozy atmosphere typical of old Tbilisi streets.

Another crucial aspect is landscaping. Prior to the restoration, there were trees in the area, some of which were quite large. These trees added to the vibrancy and coziness of Tbilisi's yards and provided shade. Unfortunately, all of them were removed during the restoration process. As a result, the neighborhood now lacks trees altogether, further accentuating its resemblance to a stage set.

Intangible Elements and Cultural Context

The Quebec Declaration defines cultural heritage as having both material and immaterial dimensions. The latter includes memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, traditions, values, textures, and even scents (Quebec Declaration, Preamble). In summary, this encompasses the socio-cultural environment and the way of life of society. All of this, alongside the material dimension, defines and creates the "spirit of the place" (*genius loci*), the preservation of which is one of the important tasks of the present day.

Historically, this neighborhood, like the entire Kala district, was multi-ethnic; alongside Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Yezidis, Jews, and others lived here. In terms of social composition, it was a very diverse area, home to representatives of various classes and professions. The population density was also quite high. Certain types of relationships and ways of life characteristic of Tbilisi formed in these old city neighborhoods as early as the 19th century, continuing to exist, albeit with some changes, during the Soviet period. The so-called communal apartment system took hold in these areas, with shared kitchens and bathrooms, fostering close relationships among neighbors. Furthermore, due to climatic conditions, the communal living of neighbors flowed onto the open balconies that their apartments opened onto for about eight months of the year. In short, the architecture itself, along with its structure and communal conditions, contributed to this open and accessible lifestyle. While this was often inconvenient from a practical standpoint, it also had positive social aspects. People inevitably knew everything about their neighboring families; they shared their joys and sorrows and participated in each other's lives.

During the Soviet period, particularly from the late 1960s, when the construction of the so-called Khrushchyovkas began en masse in new neighborhoods, gentrification was actively underway in the old districts of Tbilisi. The rapid movement towards more comfortable new housing contributed to the outflow of residents from Kala and other old neighborhoods of Tbilisi. Consequently, those who remained in these areas sought to improve their living conditions, facilitating the establishment of individual kitchens and bathrooms, which led to significant changes in the internal layout of apartments.

Moreover, in the last decades of the 20th century, the accelerated pace of life and changes in social and economic conditions intensified trends toward isolation, a global phenomenon affecting not just Tbilisi. Neighbors gradually began to shut themselves in their homes. It was during this time that iron soundproof doors appeared at the entrances to apartments, which had previously been glazed and often served as the only source of light in the rooms.

Thus, changes in social conditions led to alterations in lifestyle, which affected various aspects of that lifestyle as well. Over the past two decades, one of the hallmarks of the spirit of old Tbilisi—the calls characteristic of its neighborhoods— is that the street vendors have vanished as shops have emerged nearby, where all these goods are now available for purchase.

After gaining independence, as the monitoring system diminished and nearly completely disintegrated, and as the laws that had been somewhat upheld during the Soviet era ceased

functioning, illegal constructions and arbitrary modifications to the interiors and exteriors began in old Tbilisi. Additionally, the old houses gradually became dilapidated and began to collapse. The fact is that during the Soviet period, the neighborhoods of old Tbilisi would occasionally be renovated for certain holidays, especially during Tbilisoba, but this was merely a superficial update that had nothing to do with conservation or restoration. Utilities were not changed, and often even the buildings were not reinforced; the updates were limited to painting the facades or installing balconies. As a result, the condition of the houses continued to deteriorate.

This attitude from the Soviet authorities was hardly surprising, as they viewed old Tbilisi purely as an external phenomenon—a favorable architectural "theatrical" backdrop for socialist celebrations, tourism, and excursions—while neglecting the severe condition of its infrastructure.

Thus, we can infer that the new political and social conditions that emerged over time fundamentally altered the way of life and traditions in these neighborhoods, leaving only memories in people's minds. Architecture, which was once well-suited to the mentality of individuals of that era, has become an obstacle for the modern individual, who is locked in their own individualism and seeks to isolate their living space. (This does not solely refer to the improvement of living conditions.) This explains the residents' desire to modify interiors and change layouts.

It is clearly utopian to think about restoring the old "spirit of place"; this is impossible because everything that is alive does not remain static—it changes and develops. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to consider how we can capture the memory of this place under new political, social, or economic conditions, preserving it as much as possible while adapting it to the new circumstances so that this spirit does not entirely disappear but evolves, even if only to a certain extent, maintaining its essence and core.

To achieve this, the spirit of the place in old Tbilisi (*Genius loci*) must be studied and thoroughly examined, resulting in the identification of the reasons for its vulnerability, its potential for vitality, adaptation to new conditions, and possibilities for continuity and sustainability. This should be followed by practical recommendations and tangible steps in various fields. This will allow us to maintain the continuity of the place—*Stabilitas loci*—preserving the spirit of the place—*Genius loci*.

Recommendations for Intervention Strategies and Methods:

- Based on preliminary data, it is mandatory to carry out the so-called opening of the monument in each specific case. This should include excavation and probing to reveal earlier layers. The data obtained from the opening must be considered when developing the restoration strategy and project.

Architects, architecture restorers, and engineers should conduct investigations for each specific case. First and foremost, the structures' stability should be examined, and the materials used in these structures should be analyzed by relevant specialists (chemical, physical, etc.).

Appropriate documentation must be created.

- Based on this research, specific damages should be analyzed, pathways for their elimination should be outlined, and a relevant restoration method should be selected with the involvement of specialists from various fields.

- All these investigations, along with the corresponding documentation, should be presented for discussion among broad professional circles (which did not occur in the case of the reconstructed buildings in our area), and decisions in favor of the reconstruction method should only be made as a last resort.

To avoid the inevitable use of reconstruction methods, the state should implement the following measures:

Create a registry to document and describe the physical condition of all recognized cultural heritage monuments in Old Tbilisi that have been damaged.

Categorize the damaged buildings in the registry based on their physical condition. For example, categories could include "Severely damaged and at-risk monuments" and "Partially damaged monuments in need of repair and reinforcement."

Allocate specific timelines for the rehabilitation of each category. Once these timelines have passed, restoration efforts may no longer be effective, and the buildings may need to be considered for demolition.

Establish an annual schedule for restoration efforts based on the condition of the monuments to ensure timely interventions for those approaching critical physical thresholds.

Secure a dedicated budget for the restoration of Tbilisi's cultural heritage monuments in the city's annual budget, safeguarded by law, in accordance with the restoration schedule outlined in the registry.

Recommendations Related to Construction Materials and Structures:

To preserve the historical buildings of Old Tbilisi, it is essential to create a registry of construction materials used in these structures. This process involves the following steps:

1. **Formation of a Scientific Team:** A team consisting of material scientists, restorers, architects, art historians, chemists, and physicists should be assembled. Their task will be to study the construction materials characteristic of Old Tbilisi, such as brick, limestone, clay, wood, tile, metal, glass, and paints, based on the surviving structures. This group will investigate the chemical and physical properties, composition, and production technology of all materials and create a comprehensive registry.

2. **Registry of Characteristic Structural Elements:** Additionally, there should be a registry of the characteristic structural elements that define the unique character of Old Tbilisi. This effort should involve the expertise of art historians, architects, structural engineers, and restorers.

Recommendations for Preserving the Artistic Appearance of Buildings:

Preserving the artistic appearance of residential buildings involves numerous components and materials. It is essential to identify these components, develop related recommendations, and consolidate them into a single document. The recommendations can be divided into three groups:

1. **Forms:** The first group of recommendations should focus on the forms of the buildings themselves.

2. **Connections Between Forms:** The second group should address the relationships between these forms, as well as the overall composition of forms.

3. **Systems:** The third group should deal with the systems involved, such as drainage, heating, electricity, etc.

- **Creation of a Comprehensive Document:** A document should be created that includes a list of components defining the artistic appearance of the buildings, along with specific recommendations for each component.

- **Formation of a Research Group:** Establish a team of scientists and researchers to identify the components that define the artistic appearance of the buildings and to develop recommendations for each of them.

Recommendations Related to Location and Environment:

It is important to establish a standard that defines the specific components falling under regulation. This may include factors such as scale, number of stories, volumes, forms, façade construction, individual architectural elements, shapes and sizes, decorative elements, and more. The key question is to determine the strategy for filling empty spaces with the appropriate building types. Analyzing global practices and making informed decisions for each specific case is crucial. It is essential to adopt standards and recommendations to guide this process.

Guidelines for New Constructions: When new buildings are constructed in the open areas within the old neighborhoods of Tbilisi where buildings have been demolished, professionals should determine the appropriate approach and develop recommendations accordingly.

Recommendations Regarding Greenery Concerns:

- **Formation of an Expert Panel:** It is recommended to establish a team of professionals to research the historical greenery of old Tbilisi, specifically identifying the plants and trees that were traditionally prevalent in these areas.

- Creation of Guidelines and Maintenance Suggestions: Upon completion of the research, the panel will be responsible for developing greenery standards and providing recommendations for the upkeep of the green cover following restoration efforts.

Recommendations Related to Community Engagement:

Our conducted survey revealed a number of issues. The survey indicated that the residents were poorly informed about the cultural heritage status of their homes. Additionally, they either lacked knowledge or had incorrect information about which organizations to contact for household issues or if they wished to make changes in their apartments. They were not actively involved in the process of developing rehabilitation projects, which led to various changes in the initial restoration plans. Explanatory work was not conducted in cases where residents' requests threatened the authenticity of the heritage or could not be considered for other (e.g., technical) reasons.

Recommendations for Enhancing Community Engagement:

- To ensure that all residents are informed about the cultural heritage status of their homes, the municipality should create a specific conditional sign indicating this status, which will be placed on the address plate (this could be achieved through a competitive process). As a result, not only residents but also any citizen will have information about the building's status.

The local government, particularly the municipality, should regularly disseminate information (online / offline) to increase public awareness. This information should include details on who residents can contact for different household matters or to make modifications to their apartments.

- Establishing close communication with residents at every stage of the project is essential, thereby founding the principle of participation, which will make the decision-making process transparent at every level. To achieve this, the state should develop communication methods that consider the experiences of other countries and the mentality of the local population: explanatory meetings, the establishment of an information center, forming a residents' association, and so on.

General Recommendations:

During our work on the topic, we found no documentation related to the restoration of this neighborhood in open spaces. Therefore, we consider it essential to include several general recommendations regarding this matter:

- Detailed documentation should be created at every stage of the restoration process, and it must be made public.

- Documentation containing the procedures for assessing the heritage site and their results should be published in advance and subjected to public discussion.

- After the rehabilitation of each specific heritage site, comprehensive documentation should be published.

- An open electronic archive should be established, where it will be mandatory to upload all documentation related to the restoration of heritage sites, including pre-restoration, restoration process, and post-restoration documents.

In 2001, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee recognized the outstanding value of Tbilisi; however, the inclusion of Old Tbilisi on the World Heritage List has not yet occurred. The committee provided recommendations to establish the necessary legislative framework, management structure, and essential guiding principles for monitoring changes. Thus, forming the principles for the rehabilitation of Tbilisi's urban living environment is a critical task.

We hope that the recommendations we have developed will contribute, even if in a small way, to the creation of this document.

