# (RE)PRODUCING THE LOGISTICAL FUTURE: ETHNOGRAPHY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE MAKING OF GEORGIA'S GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

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I, Evelina Gambino confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the making of logistical connectivity. The ethnography follows the project to transform the village of Anaklia on the Georgian Black Sea coast into a major logistical hub set to include a deep sea port, a smart city, and a special economic zone. This development, supported by the Georgian state and managed by a private multinational corporation was commonly referred to as "the project of the century" and understood to be vital for the country's transformation into a transit corridor, an element of the Belt and Road Initiative that would forge new connections between Europe and Asia. Over the course of the ethnography, however, the project came to a halt. By charting the development and eventual demise of this ambitious infrastructural effort, this research brings together a theoretical and political focus on the geography of logistical capitalism with an ethnographic attention to practices of future-making. This thesis figures Anaklia as simultaneously an index and a product of the various processes that are brought together in the reproduction of what I call the "logistical future". Two broad concerns run through the analysis. One is the observation that the creation of Anaklia as a future-oriented logistical space required copious amounts of manual, affective and administrative labour, even prior to its construction, by security guards, manual workers, managers, local residents, public relations professionals and others. The uses, intersections and *dislocations* of these different forms of labour are a central focus of this inquiry. Second, to understand how the village of Anaklia came to acquire the remarkable significance it did, attention needs to be paid to the ways in which infrastructural efforts in the present form as accretions of Georgia's recent history. The logistical future, therefore, is by no means a coherent, linear horizon, rather it is a container for multiple temporal orientations sutured together through great efforts by all manners of actors committed to make logistics look *smooth*.

**IMPACT STATEMENT**

My PhD thesis challenges mainstream accounts that depict logistics as the smooth circulation of commodities, capital, data and practices, by presenting the everyday operations of the companies in charge of developing large transit infrastructures and their relations to workers, affected publics, potential investors and the Georgian state. My research draws on and integrates geographical and anthropological approaches to logistics and infrastructure, benefiting researchers in both of these fields. In particular, it fosters a dialogue between the recent wealth of critical logistics studies in economic and political geography and the analyses of feminist and new materialist ethnographers that have focused on large infrastructure, forging connections between scholarship in geography, anthropology and material culture studies. This is a timely contribution as disciplines such as economic and political geography have been often criticised for their corporate or state centric approaches to the analysis of capitalism. At the same time, the thesis calls for economic anthropology and geography to examine the labour of future making.

The thesis challenges two dominant public understandings of the South Caucasus and Georgia in particular. One is to view Georgia as merely a stage, or element, of wider logistical networks, including the Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative. While ethnographic research has begun to address the making of this unprecedented infrastructural initiative, this thesis demonstrates the necessity of situating logistical projects, within and beyond the BRI, in their local and national context and history. Secondly, the thesis challenges the dominant view of the South Caucasus that tend to represent the area as either an ethnographic curiosity, marked by linguistic and ethnic diversity and conflict, or alternatively as a space that should simply become a natural corridor for trade. Moreover, by locating itself in the Republic of Georgia, the thesis both addresses the general under-representation of the South Caucasus in critical analyses of capitalism in geography and anthropology and related fields, while serving to strengthen dialogue between the post-Soviet generation of Georgian academics and students and English-language scholarship in critical social sciences.

The ongoing Covid-19 crisis has revealed the inevitability of major disruption to projected futures, highlighting the disastrous impact of that large projects of accumulation have already had on the precarious environments in which we live. The effects of the pandemic on logistical connections across the globe are yet to be fully assessed. However, the current situation has exposed the limits of the financial forecasting that justifies large infrastructural developments whereby the necessity to secure shareholders' value in the future is discounted on present ecosystems and on the populations that inhabit them. My research provides an ethnographic insight into the financing models promoted by the international banks and their translations in the making of specific infrastructures. Doing so it lays the foundation for an alternative form of infrastructural forecasting. Rather than simply future oriented technocratic practice, an ethnographic forecasting of logistical futures could counteract unsustainable infrastructural development, creating the basis for different models of transition towards a fairer society. I believe that research like mine, that locates itself on the grounds of the projects that sustain global logistical capitalism is more urgent than ever.

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All figures are by the author, unless otherwise specified. The maps have been drawn by Miles Irving at the drawing office, UCL Geography Department.

## INTRODUCTION

On 28 and 29 November 2017, I attended the first Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum. This meeting, which followed one held in Beijing in May of the same year, showcased Georgia's commitment to establish itself as a key node in the development of the "Belt and Road Initiative"(BRI)[1] and the logistical corridors that will animate this project. Announced by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI involves the construction of various transit corridors between China and the European market. The Chinese government proposed a vast infrastructural effort said to have never been seen before, allocating over a billion dollars to develop transit infrastructure of different kinds, projecting a traffic of 24 trillion dollars' worth of commodities by 2030. By hosting the forum, the Georgian government seemingly presented Georgia as a model for the new global connectivity, one that is at once showcased and negotiated in events such as this.

To kick-start the first panel a promo video was shown to the guests gathered in the main conference hall. As the video commences a deep male voice starts narrating in English:

> "Bridging East and West requires strong collaboration between nations to enhance economic, social, cultural and people to people ties. Revival of the ancient silk road through the Belt and Road Initiative is a great step forward in this direction. Georgia, positioned at the very centre of the dynamically changing Eurasian Region can provide one of the shortest routes from Europe to Asia."

Throughout the next five minutes of the video the different components of Georgia's bid to become a key node in the logistics routes connecting East and West were outlined. It started with a description of the country's business climate[2]: appearing on the screen the Prime Minister of the country, Giorgi Kvirikashvili,[3] confirmed that "thanks to years of effective reform, Georgia is a place where transforming business ideas in business opportunities is easy and comfortable"[4]. The promo went on to showcase the many ongoing infrastructural projects set to turn the country's mountainous topography into a corridor that will facilitate the smooth flow of commodities. Among the projects listed are the large-scale highway expansion – including a new bypass in the proximity of the maritime hub of Batumi – an upgrade of the railway network, the inauguration of the long-awaited Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, connecting Azerbaijan with Turkey through Georgia, and the construction of a deep seaport in Anaklia, a small village at the border between Georgia and the separatist region of Abkhazia. Images of construction work taking place across the different developments were intermixed with animations of future container terminals, large ships docking on hypermodern harbours, and pipelines shining in the sun, waiting to disappear underground. Zooming out from these teeming activities, multiple routes crisscrossing Eurasia are shown, coming from different ends of the continent finally meeting in Georgia. A sped-up reel of the sunrise over Tbilisi introduced

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[1] At the time it was still known as "One Belt and Road"

[2] The Forum itself is a key component of such climate as it produces a space where international and local businesses can negotiate deals under the good auspices of the government and international institutions.

[3] Giorgi Kvirikashvili served as prime minister of Georgian between December 2015 and June 2018. During his mandate Kvirikashvili has been a firm proponent of Georgia's transformation into a logistical hub.

[4] Speech from the Promo video for the Tbilisi BRI Forum, available on Youtube.

the video's conclusion: "Georgia, a gateway connecting Asia and Europe along the Belt and Road Initiative, Welcome to Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum".



*Figure 1 Future logistical routes converging in Georgia as depicted in the Belt and Road Forum promo video*



*Figure 2 The sunrise over Tbilisi as shown in the Belt and Road promo video*

**ETHNOGRAPHY, GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND GEORGIA'S FUTURE**

Across the messy pages of the thick notebook, I filled during the course of the Forum, I repeatedly drew arrows between the words "logistics" and "the future". In retrospect, from the standpoint of my completed fieldwork this event appears as a space where people had congregated not only "in the name of the future" (Appel 2019: 216) but also, and crucially, *to*

*give the future a name.* The Forum[5] was thus framed simultaneously as a point of departure – towards a future of logistical development, but equally a departure from previous developmental framings – and of arrival, celebrating the discovery and naming of the future. This was a performative event that positions infrastructure at the centre of political, social and economic development, domestically as well as internationally. Logistics, crucially, here appears as a way of claiming not just space but also time, of "building the future" by significantly replacing other visions of the past, while simultaneously reactivating their legacy in non-straightforward ways (cf Lasczakowski 2016: 131). Throughout my research this relationship between logistics and the future is one that I seek to unpack, exposing what other temporalities and relations are also conjured up by the projections that populated the Forum.

This thesis will show *how* and *through whose labour* the visions of smooth logistical connectivity presented throughout the forum are sustained and reproduced, and with what consequences. My intention through this analysis is to foster an understanding of the development of global logistics networks as a collection of complex and multifaceted projects sustained by a variety of efforts and agencies (Appel 2019; Bear et al 2015). I have decided to place the forum at the very beginning of this work not because I consider it to be an epochal break with Georgia's past, or a point of origin for a new era (cf Pels et al 2015). Rather, because the Forum was the first space where I was able to observe, quite literally under a single roof, many of the different elements that need to be brough together in order to make logistical connectivity happen. A public-facing and even pompous event, it was indeed a space where the performance of logistics was enacted. Sitting on the velvet chairs of the great hall where the forum was hosted, I was able to discern for the first time, not just the narratives that power the development of a logistics corridor, but many of the people, representatives of powerful institutions, countries and private enterprises who populate the logistical world that until then I had only read about or seen in a fragmented form. All of these people, ideas, performances and more were there for a common project: turning Georgia into a logistics hub. Crucially, there, the logistical future was *performed* through the convergence of different actors. Not the incipit of a logistical revolution, the Belt and Road Forum, was, in substance, the first – very official, albeit effectively personal – encounter between my own project and the logistical project organising Georgia's future.

Throughout the Forum, I noticed that, amidst the many developments that were presented, discussed and speculated over, a special place was given to the Anaklia Deep Sea Port, the largest single greenfield project taking place in Georgia. Months before the Forum, I discussed the deep seaport with a young anthropologist and employee of a logistics company that I had met at a conference at Tbilisi State University. I was sharing with him my intention to conduct part of my fieldwork in Anaklia, the village where the port was set to be constructed. Looking dubious, he said:

> "it is almost like Anaklia is the only thing that keeps the country together, the prospect of the stability which the port will bring, the wealth… Is always heralded like the proverbial carrot for the donkey, it

keeps the hope going, without ever materializing. In some ways I say, this is not that different than during Communism, when they used to say that Communism had to be reached after the evolution of socialism: if we only put another five-year plan than we can make it… No one ever got there!"

During the forum, the construction of Anaklia port seemed perfectly tangible. Renderings of its mechanically operated berths appeared in every promo video and the CEOs of the company managing its development featured in three of the ten panels. Yet the anthropologist's words made me alert to the way a single, unfinished, space could be turned into a repository for visions of Georgia's future and how, simultaneously, it could expose their kinship with very different developmental horizons. As Katherine Verdery argued, amidst the collapse of Socialist narratives of progress, in much of the post-Soviet space the future became an uncertain factor (1999:122). This uncertainty, as my interlocutor suggested, is negotiated in Georgia's present within, from and by the construction of Anaklia Port. While descriptions of this project, through the forum and beyond it, stress its "newness" and state of the art technology it deploys, throughout the past decade the small coastal settlement of Anaklia has been at the centre of multiple infrastructural developments, including a previous attempt to turn it into a futuristic logistics hub that failed, leaving imposing marks all over the village and its surroundings. What was hinted by my interlocutor and what became clear to me during my fieldwork is that projections of the future, whether condensed into the two days of the forum or inscribed over a decade on the shores of Anaklia, crucially, are as important, tangible and complex as the future itself. In the making and re-making of this small village, the intersection between cosmological imageries and failed political visions have been repeatedly worked and materialised (Nielsen 2014:213). Potentially, then, through a deep engagement with Anaklia, I could "reveal the constructed-ness" of Georgia's logistical future (cf Bear et al 2015). It is for this reason that I decided to focus the thesis on a single logistical site, following its construction, and later demise, through the course of my fieldwork between 2017 and 2019.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS, CONCEPTUAL AVENUES AND THESIS STRUCTURE**

Throughout this thesis, thus, I figure the small village of Anaklia as simultaneously an index and product of the various processes brought together in the reproduction of the logistical future. Two broad concerns run through my analysis. One is the observation that the creation of Anaklia as a future-oriented logistical space required copious amounts of labour, even prior to its construction, by security guards, manual workers, managers, local residents, public relations professionals and many others. The uses, intersections and *dislocations* of these different forms of labour are a central focus of my inquiry (cf Harvey and Khron-Hansen 2018). Second, to understand how the village of Anaklia came to acquire the remarkable significance it did, we need to focus less on the Belt and Road Initiative, but rather situate this site of future-making in relation to historical and political events in Georgia and in Anaklia in particular. Highlighting the ways in which present logistics accretes infrastructural pasts, I contend, it is pivotal to understand its workings.

With these concerns in mind, the thesis addresses three key sets of questions:

1. What does it take to materialise a smooth and durable logistical future in Anaklia?

- What reproductive activities are performed to sustain the future promise of durable and smooth connectivity?
- What diverse acts of labour are enlisted by this project?

2. What kinds of temporalities are conjured and/or materialised through this reproduction? And in what ways does the logistical future reactivate Anaklia's and Georgia's past.

3. What does ethnographic attention to the reproduction of logistics in and around one place tells us about global logistical capitalism and its local declinations? In what ways can a thick description of a single space help unpack logistical seamlessness and expose its workings?

The thesis is structured as follows: there are eight chapters organised in four sections. The analysis becomes increasingly ethnographical as the thesis progresses, in this sense, the flow of my argument reflects my approach to the study of global logistics: it starts from the appreciation of the global geometries that sustain logistical development, to trace the historical and political threads woven across the specific sites where my analysis is rooted, to delve, finally, into a close observation of the relations that make up the village of Anaklia. This progression is the result of a tight dialogue between geographical and anthropological scholarship that maps a concern with heterogeneity onto a multi-scalar analysis of logistical capitalism and its politics. The first and second chapters, grouped together in a section titled "studying the logistical future", provide a theoretical and epistemological background to my research. Central to this section are questions regarding the possibility of studying ethnographically the making of global circulation networks. My research brings together a theoretical and political focus on logistical capitalism with an empirical attention to practices of future-making. In weaving these two concerns together, I draw from different bodies of literature, establishing a dialogue between the growing scholarship on "critical logistics" and ethnographic studies of infrastructure that highlight the complex and at times contingent temporal intersection at the heart of the circulation of commodities, bodies and capital. A reflection on the embodied challenges presented by my fieldwork in and around Anaklia is equally crucial to the possibility of studying the logistical future. In chapter two, therefore, I build on feminist epistemologies to outline my own situated research practice. The following five chapters analyse the ethnographic material I have collected throughout my fieldwork. These are organised in three sections. The first section, named "making and remaking an infrastructural space", serves to locate my fieldwork within Georgia's recent infrastructural history, zooming in on the speculations that took place in Anaklia. To do so it firstly critically assesses the intersection between infrastructure and geopolitics in the South Caucasus and the depictions of the region it inspired. Secondly, I focus on the large-scale regeneration that took place in and around Anaklia during the presidency of Mikhail Saakashvili and that came to an abrupt halt in 2012, upon his demise. As I will show, the ruins of these developments haunt present attempts to turn this area into a logistical hub. Following this, the third section, "logistics and its futures", groups together two chapters that read the future promise embodied by the construction of Anaklia Deep Sea Port through the

prism of the activities of various members of the company chosen to manage its development: Anaklia Development Consortium. Observing the consortium's employees and managers, I outline the different futures that the port is tasked to deliver and, crucially, *what kind of effort* is necessary to (re)produce them within and beyond the territory of Anaklia. The final section, named "future dust" is also composed of two chapters. I start this section by following the heaps of dusts that have covered the village since the demise of the port project during the second year of my fieldwork. Then, across two chapters, I explore the sedimented relations that inform the life in the village of Anaklia, before, amidst and beyond the decade-long attempt to turn it into a logistics hub. Taken as a whole, the ethnographic chapters respond to an imperative that is at once theoretical and practical to show the different vital and reproductive forces that are gathered in the making of capitalist projects, and, crucially, to show whose labour is mobilised in making them stick together and project into the future (cf Bear et al 2015).

As Yael Navaro and Hannah Appel have argued in relation to their respective work in Turkey (2002:44-77) and Equatorial Guinea (2019:5), critical ethnographers must challenge the dominant textualizations of the field-sites in which we locate ourselves. Through the lens of Anaklia my aim is also to speak back to different sets of accounts, scholarly as well as popular. To start, I interrogate the dominant narrative that depicts logistics as a network of seamless connections between spaces and processes across the globe (Chua et al 2018). In recent years, a number of scholars, within and beyond geography, have noted the growing importance of logistical operations in the reproduction of a regime of flexible accumulation defined by "the dramatic recasting of the relationship between *making and moving,* or production and distribution" (Cowen 2014:104). Building on these works, it is possible to speak back to accounts that foreground the possibility of a seamless circulation of commodities, people and capital by highlighting the interrelation between the expansion and coordination of logistical networks and the extensification of practices of exploitation, dispossession and extraction on a global scale (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). To further contrast the idea of seamlessness connected to logistical operations, I trace the heterogeneous elements that brought together in the making of a transit infrastructure and its global connections, generating friction. Crucially, rather than just exposing the existence of these different agents and lifeworlds, this thesis responds to Hannah Appel's call to show how these processes work together to make logistics *seem* smooth (Appel 2019:4). A second set of accounts I seek to challenge is more specific to my field site. In local and foreign descriptions, it is common to depict Georgia as a "natural corridor" between East and West (HuaLing 2017; Tsereteli 2014; German 2008; Cornell 2008) or even as strategic pivot for global geopolitics (Mackinder in Barry 2013; cf Dodds and Sidaway 2004). Challenging these discursive categories through a grounded account of the variegated efforts involved in making logistics work can thus provide a productive interlocutor to accounts of the Belt and Road initiative, that as Majed Akhter has argued, disproportionately reproduce already existing geopolitical storylines (2018:232).

One of my key aims is to show how, rather than a pregiven entity the Belt and Road – and thus the logistical seamlessness it advocates – is rather *performative* of its own reality (Butler 2010; Mitchell 1999). Performativity, as Butler notes "describes a set of processes that produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities" (2010:147).

To show how such logistical performativity works, within and beyond Anaklia, the chapters of this thesis unpack "the mundane and repeated acts of delimitation that seek to maintain a separation among economic, social and political spheres, modes of prediction and anticipation […], and organizations of human and non-human networks, including technology, that enter into specific economic activities" (ibid:151). It is the labour necessary to the imbrication of these variegated acts that I call "logistical reproduction". Detailing the (re)production of the logistical future from one site, my ethnographic attention spans across multiple scales, showing how each of the ramifications that converge within my field site are themselves reproduced through, at times awkward and always laboured, connections with other timescapes, but also political and socio-technical imaginaries, international relations and productive forces.

Furthermore, coming to terms with the performative reproduction of logistical connectivity that had taken place in and from Anaklia in the past decade, significantly entails a "reckoning with ruins" (DeSilvey and Edensor 2013). These are at once material and spectral: the ruins of projected futures and of the constructions they inspired. Anna Tsing describes capitalism in the Anthropocene in terms of art of "living on a damaged planet", of living in ruins (Tsing et al 2017). In Anaklia ruination is pervasive. Unlike the smooth computational animations that presented this space at the forum, during my fist visit, the village presented itself scattered with objects left behind by previous infrastructural efforts (Frederiksen 2013). A year into my fieldwork, the company in charge of developing Anaklia Deep Sea Port became embroiled in a political and financial crisis that led to the demise of the project. Another cycle of ruination had unexpectedly started, enveloping the whole village as the months passed, the crisis deepened and the constructions that were supposed to constitute the future port were left to rot. Notably, "fallibility, is built into the account of performativity" (Butler 2010:152). Locating myself within these remains – and pre-empting the ruins yet to come – I seek to interrogate the awkward and errant entanglements that make up the lives of transnational logistical projects, questioning whose labour and time are caught up in their reproduction and what is left in the aftermath of failed speculations.

*Figure 3 A still from Agnes Varda's film "the gleaners and I" (2001)*

In this first part of the thesis, I discuss the theoretical and epistemological foundations of my research including the methodological and personal challenges that have marked my fieldwork and their impact on the research design. My interest in a critique of logistics is grounded in political and theoretical concerns that have guided my work both beyond the borders of Georgia and the limits of this current project. My previous research (Gambino 2017) started from my own experience as a member of a network that supported migrant workers' employed in the agricultural sector in Southern Italy to analyse the "logistics of migration" (De Vito and Sacchi-Landriani 2020), in which the technocratic management of commodity flows and undocumented bodies is dependent upon and is fed by a host of other intersections including structural racism, cliental relations, forms of resistance, gendered oppression and more. The growing body of literature around critical logistics, within and beyond political geography, places these intersections at the core of the expansion of global trade flows, demonstrating their effects across multiple scales and histories. It is with a discussion of these contributions that I begin my literature review in the following chapter, highlighting their relevance to the Georgian context as well as what I believe to be their shortcomings. Thus, building on my previous political and conceptual engagements and in dialogue with these works, my project's attention to logistics development in Georgia is driven by a commitment to mapping the intersections and the awkward encounters between the state, multinational firms, and other actors at the heart of the reproduction of contemporary logistical connectivity, in the hope to challenge the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation and extraction that underwrite global trade.

# CHAPTER 1: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE GEORGIAN LOGISTICAL FUTURE

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of my research, bringing together the critical works that have inspired, challenged and guided my thesis as well as the gaps in the literature that I hope to fill through my work. The chapter is divided in two parts: the first half is devoted to an assessment of the growing body of scholarship around logistical capitalism, within and beyond political geography and political economy, whereas the second explores feminist and ethnographic approaches to the study of capitalism and its infrastructures. In the first half of this chapter, I outline some of the contributions to the study of contemporary trade flows. Distinguishing between two intersecting theoretical avenues, I question the ways in which some studies fall short of engaging with the different lifeworlds that populate and propel the connections they analyse, ultimately risking reproducing a vision of capitalism that accentuates its power and coherence. Following Hannah Appel, my work seeks to treat logistics "*as a project*, rather than as a context" (2019:2 my emphasis). To this end, the second half of this chapter explores the main theoretical and epistemological insights that sustain this thesis. It begins by discussing critical ethnographies of infrastructure in order to contend that logistics cannot be understood exclusively as a spatial process; instead, I argue that it is best understood through an analysis of space/time. As hinted at in the introduction, logistics makes and feeds off temporalities – establishing powerful visions of the future and engendering the present as a protracted not yet. Understanding logistics, therefore, demands coming to terms with the complex temporal orientations involved in its making. In addition to this, I call for ethnographic attention to the labour that goes in the reproduction of logistical worlds. Feminist scholars across disciplines have shown how the circulation of capital and labour is sustained by a host of relations, exchanges and practices traditionally deemed outside the bounds of productive labour (Dalla Costa and James 1975; Hochschild 2012; Bhattacharya 2018; Peano 2019a). However, I understand reproductive labour to exceed the efforts needed for the reproduction of the labour force (Katz 2001b:711), to include the labour necessary to suture together different social, temporal, affective regimes at the service of capitalist projects. In *Knowing Capitalism* (2005), Nigel Thrift writes that "it is all too easy to depict capitalism as a kind of big dipper, all thrills and spills. But capitalism can be performative only because of the many means of producing stable repetition which are now available to it and constitute its routine base" (3; see also Gupta 1992). Mapping what these repetitions are I intend "to reveal the constructed-ness—the messiness and hard work involved in making, translating, suturing, converting, and linking diverse capitalist projects—that enable capitalism to appear totalizing and coherent" (Bear et al 2015).

## 1.1 Critical logistics

> To approach logistics as an unexamined background to contemporary capitalist ways of being and knowing is to question some of the most influential accounts of present transformations to economy and society, labor and life (Neilson 2012:324)

The term "logistics" describes the transport of materials, supplies and consumer goods or their not-yet-assembled parts across borders, as part of what is commonly defined as the supply chain (Chua et al 2018). Transport networks operate across the globe daily, tracing capillary routes

connecting sites of extraction, production and assembly with distributors and finally consumers. The announcement in 2013 of China's plan to develop a novel network of transit infrastructures set to revolutionise the way in which trade, territory and "people to people" exchange are organized globally (National Development and Reform Commission People's Republic of China 2015) has without a doubt catalysed the attention not only of scholars but also policy-makers, diplomats and institutions towards the centrality of logistical connectivity to contemporary "geometries of power" (Massey 1999; World Bank 2019).

So much more than just a technology of movements, according to critical scholars, logistics produces space, politics and subjects through its expanding networks (Neilson 2012). The assembling of logistics corridors mediates labour relations and translates well-rehearsed techniques of oppression into new de-territorialised forms (Bernes 2013; Cowen and Gilbert 2008, Neilson and Rossiter 2010, 2014; Khalili 2020). New spatial and territorial formations are brought into existence to facilitate logistical flows, such as free industrial zones, or special economic zones, that negotiate enclaves within states, redrawing the boundaries of national sovereignty vis a vis the flows of international capital (Easterling 2014; Cowen 2014; Mezzadra and Neilson 2019; Ziadah 2019a). Notably, across these routes, moreover, new moments of conflict have taken place, bridging across distant geographies to form networks of transnational solidarity (Curcio 2015; Cuppini et al 2015; TSS 2017; Fox-Hodess 2019).

In defining logistics as an exercise in "world-making" and challenging the smooth win-win narrative that propels the pursuit of seamless connectivity (Chua et Al 2018), critical logistics scholars tap into two distinguished, but nevertheless interconnected theoretical avenues. The first is rooted in Marx's account of the circulation of capital in *Capital*, Volume two, while the second stems from analyses of how space is produced (Lefebvre 1992; Smith 1984) and how spatial taxonomies emerge and are maintained through the exercise of power (Foucault 2007).

### 1.1.1 Circulation and seamlessness

In recent years, a number of scholars have noted the growing importance of logistics calculation to the reproduction of a regime of flexible accumulation defined by "the dramatic recasting of the relationship between *making and moving*, or production and distribution (Cowen 2014:104; cf Amin 2008). According to Jasper Bernes, the recent "logistics revolution" can be understood as a mutation in the overall structure of capitalism, according to which every aspect of the production process is now subordinated to the logic of material circulation (Bernes 2013). Just in Time (JIT) production is widely understood to be the operational logic of this shift in the global arrangement of time-space. "JIT is a circulationist production philosophy, oriented around a concept of 'continuous flow' that views everything not in motion as a form of waste (*muda*), a drag on profits" (Bernes 2013:2). As Thomas Reifer argues, since the logistics revolution which followed the invention of the container in 1956, global political economy has been profoundly reshaped, bringing the physical movement of commodities at the forefront of processes of capital accumulation and value extraction. "if Marx were writing today – Reifer suggests – [he] might have begun *Capital* by noting that the wealth of nations in the 21st century increasingly appears as an immense collection of containers" (Reifer 2004:7). Echoing this

statement, Toscano and Kinkle affirm that our understanding of capitalism shifts when we locate ourselves within logistical landscapes (2015). This thesis builds on and expands from these views: embedding itself within logistical spaces, it generates an account of capitalism that places not just containers, but infrastructures at its core. In coming to terms with infrastructural worlds, moreover, as I will outline in the second part of this chapter, many more threads need to be included that those traditionally constituting Marxist accounts of capitalist accumulation.

With the term circulation Marx describes the transformations of value into different forms described by the equation M-C-M (money capital—commodity capital—expanded money capital). Capital, for Marx is "value in motion" (Marx, 1993: 256) concurrently, "if value cannot metamorphose continuously through its various phases the capital invested no longer functions as such, and the accumulation process grinds to a halt" (Danyluk 2018:637). While "motion" for the most part does not indicate a spatial movement, and a very small proportion of Volume Two is, in fact, dedicated to the transport of commodities across space, the problem of the relation between time and space, mediated by movement. The literature on critical logistics understands circulation to be central to Marx's analysis of capital. Indeed, acceleration emerges as a fundamental component of circulation as capital value "strives […] to annihilate space with time, i.e., to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another" (Marx [1939] 1993:539). This latter postulation from Marx's *Outline of the Critique of Political Economy*, was also key to Marxist economic geography. David Harvey in particular looks at Marx's understanding of the relation between space and time under capital to develop his theory of time-space compression (1989). In *The Condition of Post-Modernity,* Harvey argues that the technological advancements on which post-Fordism is predicated have allowed capital to expand and dislocate through space subsuming an ever-growing portion of the global space-time to the expansion of capital. Despite this focus, Harvey had little to say about the operation of logistics in practice.

In the wake of the post-Fordist revolution, Marxists scholars have sought to elaborate "a geographical political economy" that could account for two critical features of regimes of flexible accumulation that characterise post-Fordist economies: the expansion across space of capital's reach and the extensification – in time – of processes of value extraction (Bell 1976; Harvey 1989, 1991; Papadopoulous, Stephenson and Tsianos 2008; Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Mezzadra 2010). From these debates the new found mobility of fixed capital, defined as "the global factory", or even the "runaway factory" (Sassen 1982; Massey 1995; Amin & Thrift, 1996) is observed to generate a new international division of labour (Amin and Thrift 2004; Wright 2002; Moody 2017) with direct implications on forms of employment and strategies for organising (Moody 1997; Fox-Hodess 2019). The spatialization of the production process and labour relations, that are explored in these debates are taken up by critical logistics scholars as key concerns of their inquiries (Bonacich and Alimahomed-Wilson 2008). In his history of containerization, for example, Levinson reflects on the "world making interrelation" of JIT and logistics (2006:481-503). "the majority of the metal boxes moving around the world hold not televisions and dresses, but industrial products such as synthetic resins, engine parts, wastepaper, screws, and, yes, Barbie's hair" (ibid 487). What once used to be one factory is now spread across a number of "hubs" thousands of miles from each other. Supply chains have

become flexible and the search for cheap labour power is not limited to one country, different components of commodities are produced in different places and assembled in a warehouse near – or at times far – from their final destination, this allows producers to seek the most profitable factory where to produce each piece.

Powered by the connubium between technologies of movement and the desire for unfettered profit, according to Bernes, "logistics is the power to coordinate and choreograph, to speed up and slow down; to change the type of commodity produced and its origin and destination point; and, finally, to collect and distribute knowledge about the production, movement and sale of commodities as they stream across the grid." (Bernes 2013). What Bernes is highlighting, crucially, is that the power to coordinate the movement of commodities across space vastly exceeds the realm of trade, rather is a constituent power that engenders new spatial relations all together and informs the politics that populate them. In the following section I will outline the arguments of those who have explored logistics' power to make and unmake worlds (cf Logistical Worlds 2014).

### 1.1.2 Making and governing space

While Marx's brief discussion of circulation provides one starting point for recent studies of logistics, Marx himself paid little attention to the practice of logistics, by contrast, for example, to his focus to the labour process and machinery of manufacturing (Marx 1976: 455-639). In this light, critical logistics researchers have taken a bearing from the work of Lefebvre and Foucault. In *The Survival of Capitalism* (Lefebvre 1976), French Marxist, Henri Lefebvre argues that the persistence of capitalism is predicated on its ability to occupy and produce space (1976: 21). Rather than merely incorporate space, therefore, logistical capitalism is understood by critical scholars as being capable of bringing into existence new spaces all together. Illustrating his *Five theses on logistics as power* (2012), Brett Neilson argues that it is through the engendering of spaces that logistics networks actively contribute to the setting and staging of political possibilities (328). Drawing on Easterling (2005) he describes this capacity of logistics as "active form". "Active forms are capable of an infrastructure change that broadly transforms the disposition of an organization or environment" (Easterling 2005:76). Political power inherent in logistics – logistical power – has its roots in this process (cf TSS 2017). Both Neilson and Easterling's influential and programmatic interventions are indebted not just to Marx and Lefebvre but also to Michel Foucault's analysis of power as a productive force. As Foucault notes:

> "we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it excludes, it represents, it censors, it abstracts, it masks, it conceals. In fact, power produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him (sic) belong to this production" (Foucault 1979:194)[6].

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[6] Other than some remarks on quarantine, Foucault had little to say about logistics in his major published works. Except, however, as Andrew Barry highlights, one interview where the French philosopher makes the particularly

Deborah Cowen, author of *The Deadly Life of Logistics*, a seminal work for the critique of logistics, starts from Foucault's understanding of power to outline the century long imbrication of practices of territorial submission and the expansion of global trade (2014). The necessity to shift supplies from one place to another in the quickest and safest way possible – in other words: the development of logistics connections – emerges first and foremost during warfare. For centuries logistical calculations have been applied to the maintenance of military operations (De Landa 1991). As Deborah Cowen notes, "this military history reminds us that logistics is not only about circulating *stuff* but about sustaining life. It is easy today to associate logistics with the myriad inanimate objects that it manages, but the very sustenance of populations is a key stake in the game." (2014: 3 emphasis in the original). Her book focuses on the growing importance of logistics as a constitutive practice, subsuming spaces, populations and politics to the expansion of capitalist production. In her study, however, rather than making a distinction between military and civil – or corporate – logistics, Cowen analyses the latter as a product of the former and, crucially, as inextricably intertwined to it. She does so by highlighting not only the technical developments on which both rest, but also through a careful analysis of the overlapping of spaces, rationalities and events which have defined the development of these two apparently distinguished sectors since the so-called logistics revolution.

In his collected lectures on *Security, Territory, Population,* Foucault describes the emergence of circulation as a key concern of techniques of government (Foucault 2007:65). The concern with circulation, on behalf of those who govern, entails a shift in the boundaries of power "a completely different problem that is no longer that of fixing and demarcating the territory, but of allowing circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that things are always in movement" (ibid). Following Foucault, Cowen argues that logistics:

> "entails not only "transversal networks" but a suite of other spaces that underpin circulation—nodes, chokepoints, "bunkers", borders, and overlapping jurisdictions such as cities and states. The making of logistics space challenges not only the inside/outside binary of national territoriality but also the "tidy" ways that modern warfare has been organized along national lines" (Cowen 2014:11).

As a manifestation of the entanglement of domination and exploitation across space, Cowen continues, logistics has profound consequences for global politics (ibid).

Despite the sense of newness that one feels amidst logistical landscapes and the "technological sublime" (Jameson 1991) which these vast landscapes evoke, these cargo-scapes, as Laleh Khalili argues, are haunted by their colonial and imperial pasts (2019). While indeed, the 'logistics revolution represents a paradigmatic shift in the operations of capital, it also marks the continuation of centuries-old processes of imperial circulation and colonization' (Chua et

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relevant observation that the École des Ponts et Chaussées, the engineering polytechnic in Paris, had "capital importance in political rationality in France"– as , he argues – "engineers, and not architects thought out space" (Foucault 1986, 244; Barry 2015).

al. 2018:19). Today's transportation sector is modelled on colonial efforts not just in its routes, but also in the corporate forms which emerge within these spaces and the violence of labour relation they enforce (Harney and Moten 2013). In these spaces a peculiar encounter between corporate and military force takes place, this, a legacy of the era of mercantilism, according to Khalili is the primary export which travels across logistics networks.  Khalili's recent book follows the "Sinews of War and Trade" (2020) at the heart of the development of the Arab Peninsula. Doing so, it shifts the focus from an awed narrative of the innovations which allowed capitalism to thrive across space, to an account of the sadly familiar forms coercion and the taxonomies of race and place that have sustained capitalist expansion.

These insights help us understand why logistics is projected to be so critical to Georgia's future. The New Silk Road is not just a transport route for finished good but a vital element in the constitution of a form of capitalism that depends on the tight coordination between multiple locations. In his inaugural address to the 2017 Beijing Belt and Road Forum, Chinese President Xi Jinping, stated that thanks to the establishment of multiple logistical corridors composing the BRI "exchange will replace estrangement, mutual learning will replace clashes and coexistence will replace a sense of superiority" (Jinping in Frankopan 2018:133). During the Tbilisi Forum, described in the introduction, China's Deputy Minister of Commerce, Keming claimed that transnational connectivity and competition between corridors to replace the geographies of avoidance and enclosure that characterise the post-Cold War geopolitical order. What is depicted is a new geoeconomic order: within this new configuration, global space is organised through continuous flows. Amidst these flows, resources are no longer, solely, the specific materials, chemicals, or supplies that can be sourced from a distinct location; on the contrary what is here cast as a resource is the *flow itself*. Not a rush to connect two ends of a productive circuit, therefore, the logistics of the New Silk Road is thus the assemblage of infrastructure, territory, manpower, peoples and materials organized into coexisting and competing corridors.

*Figure 3 A still from the opening panel at the Tbilisi BRI Forum*

My contention is that the work of critical logistics scholars allows us to read these statements, and the geoeconomics future they depict, against the grain. As I have discussed in the section on circulation and seamlessness, a critical outlook on logistics firstly shows how relations of exploitation have been recast in the aftermath of the "logistics revolution", exposing how connectivity is not just achieved through technological advancement and favourable agreements between nations, but through the labour of millions of workers worldwide, whose jobs have become more precarious, dangerous and subject to surveillance as a result of the imperative of sustaining seamless flows (TSS 2019). Indeed, during the Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum, when the dream future of connectivity was outlined at its fullest, the few times the workforce was mentioned was to describe it as "young, skilled and competitively priced" (*fig 3*); one of the various "assets" that Georgia has to offer potential investors. As Austin Zeiderman has argued, "in official imaginaries of the future, workers are both essential and expendable: the promise of prosperity is predicated on their labour, and this prosperity may well pass them by" (2020:14). Beyond the Forum and into the events and spaces that are analysed throughout this thesis, we will see how new taxonomies of labour and forms of exploitation emerge in relation to the transnational standards and forms of expertise that travel along logistical networks and how the immaterial infrastructures that sustain transit corridors – including the deregulation of the country's labour market and taxes – are responsible for increasing the vulnerability of the local workforce against transnational capital.

Moreover, by casting logistics as at once a technical apparatus, an emerging geopolitical taxonomy and the economic rationale of late capitalism, the work of both Khalili and Cowen outlined in this latest section speaks to the complex imbrications of agents, technologies and discourses at stake in the survival of capitalism. While, especially in the case of Cowen, remaining crucially concerned with critiquing logistical capitalism as the hegemonic form of political economy, both of these critical accounts are made possible by their attention to

processes that are not reducible to the economy or class relations, such as the construction and deployment of racial categories as a tool of oppression, or the new economic, but also and fundamentally social, technical and geopolitical logics emerging as a result of the increased exploitation of fossil fuels and its impact on oil rich countries such as the Gulf states (Khalili 2017, 2019; Ziadah 2019a; cf Mitchell 2011). Interpreting the dominant narrative powering the New Silk Road, in light of these analyses, it appears how rather than a shift from one regime to another, as the BRI proponents predict, the establishment of logistics infrastructure across the New Silk Road is instead taking place in a complex social space where discourses of domination and profit-driven strategic collaboration have historically coexisted. In likening present operations to the past, as Zeiderman argues, attention must be placed also on the perpetual instability that characterises the global operations of capital (2020: 15; Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). This means that racial taxonomies, as well as the material and socio-economic formations that populate and sustain logistical networks are asserted in never entirely stable ways. In the last section of this overview of critical logistics scholarship, I will discuss some of the elements that risk being left out in the attempt to come to terms with the global reach of logistics networks. It is in response to this perceived lack that I will introduce, in the second part of this chapter feminist and ethnographic analyses of infrastructure.

### 1.1.3 A smooth expansion?

Logistics spaces such as port or trade hubs scattered around distant parts of the world are "paradigmatic space(s) for experimentation and reform, precisely because of the magnitude of the challenge of 'opening and closing' access to trade flows" (Cowen 2010: 603). Throughout her work, Easterling provides repeated examples of what she terms as "the power of infrastructural space" (2014) noting how the proliferation of algorithmically designed "spatial products" is engendering new forms of governance across the globe. In *Extrastatecraft*, Easterling presents a chilling picture of these ever-growing spaces and their relation to the sovereign states that host them. Her examples span from Free Industrial Zones like Basra Logistic City to entire city states such as Dubai, passing for the Chinese model of Special Economic Zone, a hybrid formation between a city and a production district. Amongst these, Easterling counts Lazika, the planned city that was supposed to rise on the territory currently occupied by the fishing village of Anaklia, West Georgia where most of my fieldwork is located.

Lazika was never built and its most comprehensive manifestation is a cheaply made promotion video, circulated by the Georgian government to attract investment. Commenting on the video (2014:38-39), Easterling presents the proliferation of zones as a process through which heterogeneous space is bent to the will of capital accumulation, producing a spatial cocktail intermixing technological experiments with authoritarian violence. However, throughout her own analysis, her gaze never descends to the level of lived relations. Aerial shots of dystopian near futures certainly contribute to an understanding of the imperatives behind the formation of the spaces of logistics, but Easterling's accent on standardization glances over that historical and situated differences that contribute to the functioning of those spaces. From this perspective, the *processes* through which standardization is achieved and negotiated across different spaces are invisible. By tracing the unstoppable advancement of process of

zonification, Easterling is blind to the life-worlds of difference that inhabit and make these infrastructural worlds and to the effort and politics behind their creation. Consequently, and perhaps paradoxically, her work ends up reproducing that same approach that she critically engages. For instance, her critique of the standardized aesthetics of Lazika's promo in which "a zoom from out of space locates a spot on the globe" (2014:39), seems an uncanny indictment of Easterling's own standpoint: for her distance to the objects of her research rarely allows her to overcome speculation and the repetition of equal models to extremely distant spaces.

Similarly, critical logistics scholarship tends to accept as their context the *successful* annihilation of space through time operated by flexible regimes of accumulation has occurred, thus incurring in the risk of reifying the very processes that this literature seeks to counteract. Feminist and post-colonial scholars such as Doreen Massey (1991), Rosalyn Deutsche (1991), J. K. Gibson Graham (1996) and later, Gidwani (2004) have, harshly criticized David Harvey's work for annihilating different spatial agencies and intersections through his own unquestioned straight, white, Western, male, economist perspective. By assuming time-space compression as a given context, rather than an unfinished and fragmented project, accounts of the "logistics revolution" kickstarted by the invention of the container in the 50s often depict a perfect match between a technology of movement and the logic of profitability, achieving ultimate victory against heterogenous space (cf Levinson 2006; Bernes 2013). In mainstream and critical accounts alike, for instance, the container has come to be the fetishized object of capitalist expanding sameness, understood as the proliferation of identical object simultaneously populating the furthest part of the globe, coming together for a common aim: connecting the world though consumer culture. As Chua argues, the proliferation of narratives, creative uses of and references to containers is sign of "a romance with the generalized fantasy of global cosmopolitan movement" (Chua 2016:7). As many have argued, narrations of capitals' expansion that accept capital's ultimate victory against what is defined as its "non-capitalist outside" or heterogeneous space, end up reproducing capital's own oppressive discourses and, ultimately, reifying them (Gibson Graham 1996, 2006; Massey 1994; Tsing 2009).

In *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it)* (1996), Gibson-Graham present a case for questioning our own critical narratives of capital expansion by noting how these very accounts contribute to strengthen capitalist hegemony. Theirs' is firstly a feminist critique that highlights how, even in discourses that are supposed to attack capitalism, this mode of production "is the hero of the industrial development narrative […] the phallus or master term within a system of social differentiation" (Gibson-Graham 1996:8-9). As such it is portrayed by its detractors and supporters alike as penetrating virgin frontier lands and crushing their pre-existing economies, the residues of which are to be found in spaces deemed as "other" and, as such, feminised. To counteract this performative narrative, Gibson-Graham urge us to start observing what is commonly defined as capitalist production and reproduction as an assemblage of multiple, coexisting and conflicting, modes of production. Reworking Althusser's concept of overdetermination (cf Althusser 1969:100) thus they develop an account of the complex diversity of coexisting processes rejecting both binary oppositions and triumphalist narratives.

> "Through the lens of overdetermination, identities (like capitalism) can become visible as entirely constituted by their external conditions. […] Overdetermination enables us to read the causality that is

capitalism as coexisting with an infinity of other determinants, none of which can definitely be said to be less or more significant, while repositioning capitalism itself as an effect" (ibid 45).

Cowen and Khalili introduce logistics as the product of complex intersections that exceed the economic realm and that, at times, negate its imperatives; besides intersections, however, it is also incongruences, friction and different regimes all together that sustain the expansion of trade flows and channels of accumulation. These have been acknowledged by some scholars devoted to the critique of logistical capitalism (Chua et al 2018; Mezzadra and Neilson 2019; Crang et al 2017). For example, as Mezzadra and Neilson have argued

> "The global scope of the operations of extraction, logistics, and finance cannot be thought without attention to the uneven and heterogeneous patterns they create in specific material circumstances. [This] cannot be accomplished without a simultaneous focus on the limits of these processes, which mark the impossibility of capital affirming itself as a self-sufficient totality at the same time as they produce an unbalanced configuration of forces." (Mezzadra & Neilson 2015:8).

Mezzadra and Neilson's most recent book is an account of impressive theoretical and geographical scope, that brings together distant projects and contexts for a powerful critique of the extractive nature of contemporary capitalism. However, despite keeping their call for an attention to heterogeneity, the book fails to detail exactly of what this heterogeneity consists. While their gaze spans across continents, the authors themselves have rarely stepped in those heterogeneous patterns they deem fundamental to the elaboration of an alternative to current extractive regimes. The transnational dimension of logistics, enables them to elaborate a common language of struggle across borders, however, the same transnationality, and the relocation of manufacturing hubs from the north to the global south, demands the development of a perspective which is able to not just to detect but to intimately come to terms with the instabilities that populate logistical worlds and the everyday forms of domestication that translate global networks into local contexts (Smith, Rochovská and Stenning 2010). Overlooking these local manifestations can not only seriously impair the possibility to create sustainable strategies of resistance, but also risks reproducing a vision of transnational struggles that remains rooted in familiar forms of labour and territorial organization, resulting in the imposition of Euro or Western centric political categories, blind to that same transnational dimension they claim to represent (Santos 2015; Code 2006; Graham 1990).

Through the different sections of this first part of the chapter, I have discussed with the rich body of works on critical logistics. Engagement with this literature has been crucial to the development of this project, providing not just a theoretical background but a political rationale for my own focus on logistical connectivity and the futures it promises to engender. I have organised the literature around two main axes, that intersect on multiple accounts: the first one a critique of the political economy of the logistics revolution and the second one a concern with the production and government of space. As I have briefly outlined at the end of section two, both of these insights are pivotal to challenging the smooth narrative of logistical expansion, in Georgia as well as elsewhere. Notably, in this last section I have pointed out to some of the ways in which the global reach of a critical logistics gaze, similarly to the span of the expansion it aims to counteract, can risk obscuring the actual workings of the spaces it describes and the multiple logics and tendencies – irreducible to the logic of logistics – that populate them (Gibson

Graham 1996; Althusser 1969; Bear et al 2015). It is this shortcoming that the second part of this literature review seeks to address.

## 1.2 Logistics and reproduction: infrastructures, space-time and performance

As feminist geographer Doreen Massey once noted "the question of how one presents spaces, places and local cultures is a complex and unresolved one, or certainly that is true of how to do it democratically" (Massey 1990:40). It is with this question in mind that I will introduce the work of scholars which have examined the expansion of capital, the labour processes and the spatial practices that animate logistics infrastructure, paying attention to the incongruences and fragmentations that power interconnected capitalist projects across different corners of the world. These analyses, I contend, provide a necessary corrective to the macro-analyses of logistics presented thus far. Their contribution does not merely provide illustrations of the general conclusions made by critical logistics studies, conversely, it "reveal(s) the constructed-ness—the messiness and hard work involved in making, translating, suturing, converting, and linking diverse capitalist projects—that enable capitalism to *appear totalizing and coherent*" (Bear et al 2015 my emphasis). This body of work is thus a methodological and epistemological challenge to visions of uniform logistics expansion and to the smoothness of the reproduction of capitalism as a global hegemonic mode of production.

The "Gens Manifesto" (2015) is a road map for the study of capitalism that places the emergence of inequality within "heterogeneous processes through which people, labour, sentiments, plants, animals, and life-ways are converted into resources for various projects of production" (Bear et al 2015). In line with Gibson-Graham, the Gens scholars define their key concerns in Marxian terms: inequality, class processes and circulation are pivots around which their works are constructed, however, these are analysed through an ethnographic prism. By shifting their attention from the homogeneity of capital's effects onto the heterogeneous space-times brought together by projects of accumulation, they place friction and mediation as generative rhythms of those same projects, that they understand, in turn, as inherently complex and polychronic. In the two interconnected sections that follow I outline my own ethnographic approach to exposing the constructed-ness of logistical connectivity. Returning first to David Harvey's notion of space-time compression I argue for an ethnographic attention to the different temporalities woven together by infrastructure and, later, by highlighting how the messy business of reproducing the space-times of contemporary capitalism rests on pre-existing ethics and structural relations mostly ascribed to a non-capitalist realm (cf Yanagisako, Rofel and Segre 2018).

### 1.2.1 Heterogeneity and infrastructural timespace

> "Like the fetishised commodity (Marx [1867]1974), a finished road which appears to offer speed and connectivity makes invisible or seemingly unimportant the conditions of its construction. What we have suggested is that the promise of speed operates as a seductive force by feeding on the experience of doing battle with certain kinds of sociality and materiality which are perceived as resistant to the future that the road can deliver" (Harvey and Knox 2012: 529).

What are the processes that allow logistics – much like the finished road described by Harvey and Knox - to seem smooth? Throughout this thesis I locate myself within one infrastructural space in order to observe the project of turning Georgia into a logistical hub. During my fieldwork, as I will detail in the following chapters, the specific infrastructural project I was observing entered a deep crisis, that halted its construction and remains unsolved until the present day. In calling for an ethnography of infrastructure, Star once argued that infrastructures are systems that underwrite and sustain our worlds, yet they are invisible until they breakdown (Star 1999; cf Barry 2016). The prefix "infra" (below, beneath, or within), as suggested by Althusser and others, conveys layered – reciprocal, yet autonomous - relation between different structures (Althusser 1976 in Anand et al 2017:8; cf Berlant 2016). Infrastructures, therefore, perform the, often invisible, reproductive labour necessary to maintain and operate the systems within which we live (Collier 2011).

Yet, as Barry suggests, Star's assumption is questionable on several grounds (2015). Firstly, as it implies that infrastructures have a linear relationship with the worlds they sustain, secondly because it assumes invisibility as a natural condition of these structures, and finally that breakages are exceptional occurrences. Ethnographic studies of infrastructure have since Star's intervention demonstrated the greater variety and complexity of these systems, showing how infrastructural projects are rather characterised "by a range of visibilities that move from unseen to grand spectacles and everything in between" (Larkin 2013:336). Moreover, rather than linear, present infrastructures are palimpsests of past ones: through such overlaps, they acquire what Nikhil Anand terms "accretions" (2015). Moreover, instability and ruptures are common occurrences, rather than exceptional events: infrastructure need constant repairs (Jackson 2015) and cracks, ruination, varying pressure, fixtures and re-wirings punctuate their lives and that of their users (Von Schnitzler 2008, 2015; Anand 2011; Schwenkel 2013). Crucially, it is around all of these complexities that different attachments to infrastructure are negotiated (Harvey and Knox 2012; Knox 2017; Pinker and Harvey 2015). A range of actors – international institutions, states, private entities, affected publics, workers and more – come into contact, bridging across scales, in the attempt of defining or contesting the risks connected to infrastructural efforts and how, if possible, they can be managed (Zeiderman 2016; Hecht 2018). Besides, a crucial insight of scholars engaged science and technology studies has been to demonstrate how political and ethical performances and events are intimately connected to the materiality, including chemical consistency and properties, of different infrastructural networks (Barry 2013, 2017; Collier 2011; Mitchell 2011). Building on these works, throughout this thesis I devote a "special attention to the *materiality and bodily nature* of capital flows" (Chua 2014:5 emphasis in the original). What I show is the changing relation between the materiality of Anaklia's port and its future promise: firstly, the port's material durability is treated as an index of the port's ability to attract investment, and, later upon the project's demise, the unexpected interaction of wind and the sand of the abandoned building site drastically disrupts the port's promise of future wealth, by abruptly dragging Anaklians into a toxic present (Mah 2015). Ethnography, as Yael Navarro notes "works against the grain of paradigm-setting; it asks for all scopes of the imagination to be kept on board" (2007:16). In this thesis, I will focus my ethnographic attention to infrastructure, in order to uncover the multi-layered – at once

imaginative, material, bodily and spatio-temporal – work that goes into the making of a logistical corridor.

Introducing their collection of essays about "the promise of infrastructure" Anand, Appel and Gupta bring together ethnographies from across a wide range of infrastructural projects (2017). What these demonstrate is not just that a host of different places where necessary in order to bring to life what we now consider to be the commonplace ideas of capitalist development – something that macro analyses of logistics successfully expose by tracing how current operations are the product of the circulation of practices and rationales from different sites of extraction and trade and across disciplines (Cowen 2014). Rather, that not just space but *time* needs to be questioned to understand the processes involved in achieving global connections. As Mitchell has rightly pointed out, "the standard way of writing about infrastructure is to start from the question of space and treat time as a consequence" (2020). By paying close attention to the way in which infrastructures make and become the channels for different temporalities, instead scholars were able to challenge some widely accepted views of infrastructural connectivity. For instance, by following the real life infrastructure that make possible the real time communications sustaining financial operations – i.e., the glass and plastic that make up fibre optics cable – instead of an ephemeral slogan, David Harvey's space-time compression appears to be (re)produced through trials, errors, labour and encounters with social, material and environmental ecosystems (Starosielski 2015). Once built, moreover, infrastructures facilitate a host of other spatio-temporal relations, not just by speeding, but extending, deepening, contracting and more (Anand et al 2017:15). Therefore, "thinking of time-space compression through infrastructure paradoxically draws attention to the slowness of the process of speeding up" (ibid). Rather than one directional, moreover, the time engaged in annihilating space, instead appears to be made of multiple strands and trajectories. By questioning the temporalities that converge within and are mediated by the *infra*structures sustaining logistics we may "ultimately undermine any idea that speed or time economy—the grossest simplification of efficiency's logics – is at the heart of capitalism. Instead, we will be able to explore the heterogeneous forms of pacing, duration, waiting, pause, obsolescence, and delay that also characterize its generative rhythms" (Bear et al. 2015; see also Bear 2015).

Attention to infrastructure, as Laura Bear, one of the co-authors of the GENS manifesto, argues, brings into view how politics emerges from timescapes (Venkatesan et al 2018). Taking cue from Massey (2005), Bear's understanding of timescapes "evokes the mutual interdependence of space and time. Within timescapes, techniques, knowledges, and ethics of time conjoin in the mediating labour in/of time that is carried out by individuals and collectivities" (Bear 2016: 496; Bear 2014). If we go back to the description of the port of Anaklia made by the young anthropologist, that I have transcribed in the introduction of this thesis, the multiple layers of interrelation of temporalities, politics and infrastructure is very explicit:

> "it is almost like Anaklia is the only thing that keeps the country together, the prospect of the stability which the port will bring, the wealth… Is always heralded like the proverbial carrot for the donkey, it keeps the hope going, without ever materializing. In some ways I say, this is not that different than during

communism, when they used to say that communism had to be reached after the evolution of socialism: if we only put another five-year plan that we can make it… No one ever got there!"

As his words suggest, Anaklia port is cast as the embodiment of a specific kind of future – what I call the logistical future – however, in its absence, it is simultaneously the proof of the impossibility inscribed in this horizon. By comparing it to Soviet futures, moreover, my anthropologist friend exposes how the technological horizon waged by logistics is at least partially powered by "futurepasts". "Futurepasts", as Koselleck has argued, are imaginaries of futures as well as different *modalities* of understanding what the future is that have become obsolete, while nevertheless remaining alive in people's memory and in the form of sedimented relations (2004; Dzenovska 2020, 2018). It is these very futurepasts, in their familiarity, that allow my interlocutor to relate politically with the promise made by Anaklia port. Finally, from his description we get a sense of how the future is essentially both the product and is generative of different forms of labour: under the spell of the logistical future, the majority of Georgians are being dragged across the field like donkeys, while those who are in charge of delivering the future are scrambling to maintain the illusion of the future to come.

What seems apparent from the description of Anaklia port by my anthropologist interlocutor is that, rather than the agent of a smooth transition, infrastructural projects in Anaklia are "a device for stretching forward the passage of time, an apparatus for the creation of a delay" (cf Mitchell 2020). What does it mean thus, for an infrastructure to be able to place Georgia's future further away?

At the Belt and Road Forum, Georgia's future *was given a new name*. What is striking, however, is that even in a single description of Anaklia port, it appears that the future that was once projected to materialize must be understood in the *hinges* between cosmological imageries, collapsed political visions and a quest for the new (see Nielsen, 2013, 2014; Nielsen and Pedersen 2013; Bryant & Knight 2019). As such it cannot be equated with an epochal break with Georgia's recent past, but one which attends to the work done to sustain the idea of an epochal break. In short, a rather more nuanced understanding of how future promises are reproduced is necessary. Anthropologist Peter Pels has recently argued for an ethnographic rethinking of the future "to identify the ideological effect of futuristic thinking and replace it by a more sophisticated plurality of modern futures. An ethnographic and historical focus on the coexistence of open and empty futures and the tendency to devalue the present by not-yet events" (2015:779; see also Frederiksen 2013; Ferguson 1999; Maurer 2002; Miyazaki 2003; Wallman 1992) Futurism, according to Pels, "may be defined as the classification of an epoch in terms of a prediction of progress– and by an assumption of newness (Pels et al 2015: 782, Tsing 2000b: 332–333). The futuristic promise of logistics in Georgia is easily placed next to the modernist futurism(s) that have preceded it – even the ones subscribing to opposing modes of production (Buck-Morrs 2002:23). Here it is notable, almost a hundred years before the Tbilisi BRI Forum, Lenin had similarly given the future an – equally infrastructural – name by saying that "Communism is power to the Soviets plus the electrification of the whole country" (Lenin 1920). As we will see throughout the thesis, the infrastructural futurism at the heart of the Soviet system (Humphrey 2005; Sneath 2009; Ssorin-Chaikov 2017) is, at least in part, reactivated by current attempts to transform Georgia into a logistical corridor.

Ethnographic attention to the material, social, political and economic reproduction of Anaklia port allows me to expose the coexistence of other future orientation within its infrastructural space and to show how these are woven together through the labour of different actors involved in the project. As I will show, the logistical future is powered by horizons that refer back to "more temporally distant futures of perfection" (Pels et al 2015 783), that, as Guyer has shown, overpower the more accessible futures of previous modern times (Guyer 2007). According to Pels et al "studying genealogies and ethnographies of how specific futures work out in different past and present-day locations helps to […] affirms the universal multi-temporality of the present." (2015: 790). Examining the Georgian "logistics revolution" from the perspective of its multi-temporality, therefore can illuminate how "modern times are characterized by simultaneously existing, inimical, and contradictory forms of the future rather than by epochal breaks" (ibid: 780). This insight can inform the analysis of both logistics and infrastructure in Georgia and complex formations such as the Belt and Road Initiative as well as other global projects to foster logistical connectivity.

## 1.2.2 (Re)producing logistics: gender, ethics and performativity

During her ethnography of "oil futures" in Equatorial Guinea, Hannah Appel sullenly wrote on her field diary "the future is exhausting" (Appel 2018: 52). Throughout my own engagement with Georgia's logistical future what became apparent to me is that capitalist futures "require a tremendous amount of work. From manual, managerial, domestic, and political labour; to material infrastructures and technologies; to legal, ethical, and affective framing processes" (Appel 2019: 3). It is largely this labour of mediation, compensation and translation that sustain processes of production, that, in my own experience render "the future" exhausting. Feminist and post-colonial scholars across disciplines have shown how the circulation of capital and labour is sustained by a host of relations, exchanges and practices traditionally deemed outside the bounds of productive labour (Dalla Costa and James 1975; Hochschild 2012; Bhattacharya 2018; Peano 2019a). Despite these seminal interventions, social reproduction remains a missing figure in many analyses of capitalism (cf Katz 2001a: 710). I started the previous section by revisiting David Harvey's understanding of space-time compression through an infrastructural lens. In what follows I tackle the inaccuracy of Harvey's postulation from a different angle: reproduction. Through its narrative of seamlessness, the pursuit of logistical connectivity seeks to erase the messy reproduction of its making and maintenance. As feminist ethnographer Cindy Katz argues "from the vantage point of capital the world may be shrinking, but on the marooned grounds of places such as Howa [in Sudan], it appears to be getting bigger every day" (2001: 1224). To rework and embrace the altered and multiple geographies of globalization, Katz defines this stretching of social ties and labour as "time-space expansion" (ibid). From the perspective of ethnographic work, the allegedly inherent quality of capitalist projects − standardization, replicability, velocity, compression, technological advancement (Barry 2006) − appear patched together through copious amounts of all kinds of work, from all kinds of actors (Appel 2019:3).

Reading ethnographic accounts of labouring bodies across logistical networks, moreover, what emerges is, thus, the existence of "polyglot language of class formation" that demands to be

articulated by those who seek to counteract extractive processes across logistical networks (Tsing 2009:175, cf Yanagisako, Rofel and Segre 2018). Labour and reproductive processes across supply chains feed off the intersection which define workers' – and indeed managers' – identities outside of the workplace, creating new productive figurations (Ong 1987; Roediger & Roediger, 1999; Rofel, 1999). I understand logistical reproduction to go beyond its classical definition of "the labour necessary to reproduce the workforce sustaining projects of accumulation" (Katz 2001b: 721) and to include all of the productive and messy interactions between ethics, timescapes, affects, political work, materials and other logics that converge in the making of a logistical space. Across the different chapter of this thesis, I analyse the ethical and political performances that organise the relationships between managers, workers and the publics affected by the construction of Anaklia port (cf Barry 2013). What I find is that the transnational ethics that sustain the operations of multi-national corporations such as the one in charge of Anaklia's development, before "hitting the ground" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019) goes through different stages of "domestication" (Smith, Rochovská and Stenning 2010). Through these processes these global ethical postures intermix with a host of diverging imaginaries and rationalities – ranging from visions of care of the Soviet past, to the codes of honour of the Georgian tradition. These lubricate the transition from the global to the local context. Not impalpable cultures of circulation (cf Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003) these travelling ethics are instead made concrete by the embodied efforts of a number of actors populating the infrastructure at the centre of this thesis. These efforts are defined by Laura Bear as "acts of work" (2015:19), that mediate and translate corporate cultures through embodied ethical practices. In some cases, these acts might be performed unwillingly; in chapter five, I recount my experience of being brought into the company's publicity machine and unwillingly performing the role of a "transparency device" (Harvey et al 2013).

Notably, as many scholars have argued, ethical performances are not just performed, instead they are performative of the very reality they seek to describe. Judith Butler argues that "performativity starts to describe a set of processes that produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities" (2010: 147). During my fieldwork, I became acutely aware of the ways in which the efforts of different actors in an around Anaklia Port – including managers, workers at different levels, and affected publics (Barry 2013) – served to bring into existence the very future they were describing. Such performativity is fed by the concrete work done by gender norms and racial taxonomies that criss-cross Georgia's society. As Butler notes, "it seems possible, that performativity seeks to counter a certain kind of positivism according to which we might begin with already delimited understandings of what gender, the state, and the economy are." (2010:147). An attention to the ways in which logistics is itself performative, thus, entails reconsidering the ways in which other realities and identities are produced and recast in its circuits. Indeed, central to my analysis of logistical reproduction is a focus to the gendered performances of my different interlocutors. Irene Peano exhorts research in critical logistics to expose the gendered lives of the supply chain (Peano 2019a)

> "A gendered study of logistics may take into consideration, first, the role of supply chain management in shaping (formal and informal, re/productive, waged and unwaged) workers' subjectivities, movements and relations, including patterns of household organisation, kinship and intimacy […]To overlook such

crucial forces would also mean to foreclose the possibility of imagining concrete, viable opposition against them." (Peano 2019a)

The gendered dimension of logistical operations, similarly to the reproductive labour necessary to their functioning, has been largely ignored by researchers (some exceptions Alimahomed-Wilson 2016, Kambouri 2020; Chua 2018, Gambino 2020). Building on the valuable contributions of feminist ethnographers who have cracked the, ostensibly inscrutable, worlds of financial traders to interrogate the gendered dynamics organising their interactions (McDowell 2011, 2014, Zaloom 2006, Ho 2009, 2015a, Hart and Ortiz 2014), across the different chapters I dwell on the way gendered imaginaries and relations of power the infrastructural projects of Georgia's logistical future. Most of the corporate subjects I observe are men. As Peano has pointed out, the behaviour of men is very often left unchallenged by the naturalising operations of the patriarchy (Peano 2019a). Making what is familiar strange is a classic ethnographic imperative and in the case of the intersection of gender and powerful capitalist rationalities, I consider defamiliarizing and exposing the gendered performativity populating logistics to be a political endeavour: "a confront[ing] and reform[ing] of the transcendence-seeking "hypersubjects" (usually but not exclusively white, straight, northern males) that gifted the world the Anthropocene as part of their centuries-long project of remaking the planet for their own convenience and luxury" (Boyer 2018: 239, cf Gibson-Graham 1996, 97).

My own commitment to rendering the gendered performances powering Georgia's logistics development visible, however, has stemmed also from another kind of familiarity. Not only am I familiar with the way in which patriarchal customs of masculinity sustained and vouched for the claims of the managers of large logistical projects in general, but as my analysis was coming together, what struck me as very familiar are the works of other women scholars coming to terms with the performances sustaining logistical smoothness. Similarly to Charmaine Chua, I have sat opposite managers of large infrastructures who, leaning back on their chair have described their work through a series chauvinist affirmations of power (Chua 2018: 10). Or in accordance with Linda McDowell's observations, I have witnessed the embodied equation between rationality and a certain type of masculinity (1994). And, just like Hannah Appel, I found myself laughing on my own at the extraordinary pride the Health and Safety officers took in their rituals (2019:71, see also Harvey and Knox 2015:130). In the next chapter, I give a detailed description of my own experience as a female ethnographer across different logistical sites in Georgia and its centrality for the development of my own epistemology and methodological strategy. Reading the scholarly works of other women who have spent extensive amounts of time amidst the working of logistical capitalism, crucially, what I found familiar is their experience: they, just like me have had to develop strategies to navigate these male-dominated worlds and, once back to their desks, have found important to recount the clumsy, offensive, infuriating, or at times endearing ways in which the deeply embodied performance of gender intermixes with and propels the allegedly removed and standardized workings of large infrastructural projects (see Kama 2013). Indeed, reading these familiar texts, as an academic at the beginning of my career the thought that someone else had already articulated much more eloquently the critical points I was struggling to elaborate has felt initially disheartening. Yet, upon reflection, another reading prevailed. The intimate familiarity I felt with these texts and the analyses they outline, rather than discrediting my own critiques, is the

mark of a shared vision of how to bring to light capitalism's "otherwises" and potentially the beginning of a common project for doing so (Thrift 2005; Appel 2019:39). To go back to Massey's search for ways to approach and present spatial heterogeneity, then, detecting, but also working with and within the complex web of interrelations, material and immaterial entanglements, at the core of logistics labour processes constitutes the first step towards analyses capable of informing potential clusters of resistance around which a transnational web dissent can be organized.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reviewed some of the key literature that sustains and inspires this thesis. I have firstly discussed the growing body of scholarship around logistical capitalism. Distinguishing between two intersecting theoretical avenues, I have questioned the ways in which some studies fall short of engaging with the different lifeworlds that populate and propel logistical connections, ultimately risking reproducing a vision of capitalism that accentuates its power and coherence. Following Hannah Appel, my work seeks to treat logistics "*as a project*, rather than as a context" (2019: 2 my emphasis). As such, its apparent seamlessness is constantly reproduced through different acts of work and negotiations with the repetitions that populate our worlds (Thrift 2005: 3, Bear 2014). Starting from the Gens manifesto (Bear et al 2015), in the second part of this chapter I have turned to ethnographically grounded works whose "focus on infrastructures as dynamic relational forms […] allows to look at instabilities of the contemporary world, to analyse contingencies and movements and conflict" that converge within the promise of a future of seamless connectivity (Harvey and Knox 2015:5). Rather than merely retrieving complexity through thick description, notably, this thesis aims to provide an interlocutor to works that seek to understand how the logistical future – as a promise as well as a timescape and lived relation – is sustained in Georgia and in countries undergoing similar developments. By arguing that logistics is (re)produced, therefore I seek to place gendered dynamics, ethics, emotional labour, national affects and the management of uncertainty at the centre of the current global rush to logistical connectivity.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

> "To be sure, the task of Geography is also to tell the stories that our work yields in non-reductive ways."
> (Jazeel 2019 :17)

Throughout the literature review I have laid out the theoretical basis for my research project, bringing together different strands of critical inquiry and locating my own contribution within their gaps. The recent body of work on "critical logistics" is the starting point for my research, a lens through which I have located and approached the field and against which I have measured my findings. Rather than an immobile framework, however, my understanding of logistics and my assessment of the tools needed to critically approach its multiple spaces have profoundly changed throughout the course of my fieldwork. Both Keller Easterling and Brett Neilson define logistical networks as "active forms" (Easterling 2005; Neilson, 2012), within which material processes, spatial and temporal practices, and the (re)production of subjects and political possibilities, all emerge and connect. It follows that logistics is more than a sequence of nodes or intermediate points that make it possible to shift cargo from its source to a final destination. Rather, it is a web of interwoven life-words (Berlant 2016) brought together somewhat precariously by the infrastructures that make up logistical networks. Observing the development of these infrastructures in Georgia has entailed broadening my ethnographic attention towards the ways in which the country's history, its dominant affects, reproductive practices and competing temporal regimes are mobilized within the precarious spaces that are expected to materialize the promise of connectivity waged by logistical development. What I have produced is not another general theory of logistics, but a situated account of logistical development, one that spans across different temporalities and volumes and, crucially, one that has placed at its core an effort of grappling with the complexities and incongruences filling the spaces it seeks to narrate (cf Gibson-Graham 1996). In what follows I will outline the methodologies I have deployed and their epistemological underpinnings. Much like the rest of this thesis, this chapter will not provide a smooth account, rather it will attempt to expose and come to terms with the bumpiness and incongruences of doing research in the field (cf Günel et al 2020).

The chapter unfolds across three sections. Together they outline the epistemology that informs my research and the different methodological strategies I have crafted to navigate my field. As the authors of the manifesto for a patchwork ethnography so aptly note:

> "even prior to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, 'traditional' anthropological fieldwork was in trouble. For some time now, ethnographers have been questioning fieldwork truisms: separations between "field" and "home," the gendered (masculinist) assumptions of the always available and up-for-anything fieldworker, and anthropology's proclivities toward suffering subjects" (Günel et al 2020:2)

Echoing these concerns, in the first half of this chapter, I build on feminist geographies and critical ethnographies to sketch out my notion of the field, presenting it as a composite and interconnected site, beyond traditional anthropological understanding of bounded-ness and stark distinctions between the local and global in analyses of transnational capitalism (Massey, 1994; Katz, 2001a; Rofel, Yanagisako & Segre 2018). What I call a "topography of infrastructural futures" is a means to engage with the in-between-ness and depth of the

ethnographic inquiry needed to understand logistical connections. The central part of this chapter is instead turned on myself. Here I elaborate on my own experience of sexual harassment in the field to reflect on the embodied nature of fieldwork and the role of desire in shaping my experience as a researcher and my epistemological approach in line with the work of feminist theorists and ethnographers. Rather than a separate note, or an "awkward surplus" to my analysis of the field, my embodied experience of ethnography has ended up being pivotal to my understanding of the multiple and invisibilised spaces, practices and frictions sustaining the promise of a logistical future. Finally, in the concluding section, I introduce collaboration as a key experimental practice and conceptual orientation of my fieldwork. Developed within and against the experiences detailed in the previous section, collaboration has not only been a strategy to overcome the "limitations" I have encountered in the field, rather a series of interdisciplinary and intersubjective encounters that have underpinned the conceptual and practical development of my research.

## 2.1 Ethnography: a feminist, geographical approach

My project is an ethnographic study of logistical transformations in Georgia. Since the beginning of my Ph.D. scholarship I have spent one year and a half in Georgia, firstly learning the language, then performing medium-term periods of fieldwork in Anaklia as well as shorter ethnographic visits in different sites and subsequently conducting interviews with a variety of interlocutors in Tbilisi and in the places of my fieldwork. As I have discussed in my literature review, I consider ethnography to be more than a method geared at data collection, rather it is an epistemological position and as such it entails both methods and concepts (Gille 2001; Rofel, Yanagisako & Segre, 2018:6). "Doing ethnography is a commitment to study an issue at hand from the perspective(s) of people whose lives are tied up with or affected by it" (Gille 2001: 323), and, crucially a commitment to reckoning with the multiplicity of dynamics that shape the spaces where the ethnographer is located. My own commitment to ethnography is shaped by my training as an anthropologist. Before this Ph.D., I completed a BA and MA in anthropology, both entailing short periods of research in the field on which my dissertations have been based (Gambino 2017). If my previous training has shaped my relation towards ethnography, it is within geography that the epistemological structure that sustains this work has come into place. A dialogue between anthropology and geography therefore unfolds throughout this chapter and in my analysis that follows.

In their review of qualitative methods in geography, Hitchings and Latham found that ethnography has become very popular amongst human geographers (Hitchings and Latham, 2019:1; Dwyer and Davies 2007). Such popularity, however is fairly recent, and, less than fifteen years ago, Megoran noted how a lack of engagement with ethnography amongst political geographers risked to restrict their critiques to two dimensional discourse studies, that elided those who were more affected by the phenomena they sought to describe[7] (Megoran 2006; cf Herbert 2000). While the sheer presence of more field-based research seems to indicate that

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[7] This is particularly true of political geography, that has been markedly state centric and positivist. For other branches of human geography this risk has been less prominent.

Megoran's critique has been heeded, Hitchings and Latham note that within the large corpus of ethnographic studies they analysed, it was common that very little to no space would be devoted to a description of the workings of the field and the challenges encountered by the ethnographer on the ground. This would leave, at times, the impression of a smooth collection of fascinating stories that seamlessly fitted the analysis presented in the paper a fact, the authors of the review suggest, that raises concerns regarding the depth of engagement with the field (Hitchings and Latham 2019:5). Unlike anthropology that has struggled to challenge and come to terms with the complex legacies of ethnography's "totemic disciplinary centrality", Megoran advances that geography's methodological eclecticism could provide advantageous in approaching ethnographic methods (Megoran 2006:627; cf Madden 2010; Marcus and Fischer 1999). My fieldwork is definitely a testament to this greater disciplinary flexibility as the length and intensity of my permanence in "the field" does not compare with the long-term endurance that was once thought to be required of most anthropologists (cf Günel et al 2020). However, a view of ethnography as a means to retrieve some polished vignettes to decorate one's analysis is equally if not more distant from the practice I sought to develop throughout my fieldwork. Such a practice, that I will outline in what follows is shaped by a commitment to "stay with" and within the troubling complexity of the world we seek to narrate (Haraway 2016).

My own is a commitment inspired by the work of feminist geographers and feminist ethnographers from a range of disciplines devoted to the study of capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham 1996; Gibson-Graham 2014; Katz 2001a; Katz 2001b, 1994; Tsing 2000b, 2004, 2009; Bear 2015; Bear et al. 2015; Rofel, Yanagisako & Segre 2018; Massey, 1994; Massey 2005). It is thinking with them that I have developed what I term as "infrastructural topography" as an approach to the field that would pay attention to the multiple and fragmented elements that intersects within the space-times I crossed and the different scales and histories folded in a single place (Massey 1994).

### 2.1.1 For a topography of infrastructural futures

In the eighties and nineties the seminal volumes by Clifford and Marcus "Writing Culture" (1986) and "Anthropology as Cultural Critique" Marcus and Fisher (1999) sought respectively to collect and support experimental writing as a means to narrate the field experience and to expand the horizon of ethnography beyond the bounded-ness of a singular geographically delimited "field", and the community that inhabits it' in order to address "political and economic processes spanning different locales or even different continents" (Fisher and Marcus 1999:91). The questions raised in those texts are still alive and relevant to an ethnography of logistical capitalism that will unfold throughout this thesis, including the question of "whether an ethnographic elaboration that starts from the precepts of Marx's analysis will merely revise the theory of capitalist society by complementing it or will eventually conflict with its broader assumptions and replace it?" (ibid 87-88).

Such a question has been successfully taken on by feminist geographer Doreen Massey in her essay "A Global Sense of Place" (1994). Here Massey advocated for studies based within localities geared at tackling the socio-economic changes brought by globalization. Crucially,

going beyond the multi-sited ethnography proposed by Marcus and Fisher (Marcus, Fischer, 1999; Marcus, 1995) she stressed how the boundaries of places cannot easily be traced, and that a counter-position with their "outside" is thus not possible (Massey 1994:155). What comes to occupy the core of Massey's analysis therefore are "the linkages to that *outside* which is therefore itself part of what constitutes a place" (ibid). A global sense of place is thus a study of a locality and the in-betweeen-ness to which it belongs. Attention to in-between-ness and linkages speaks of a concern with the infrastructural as the (in)visible patterns sewing together our globalized world (Star 1999)

As a host of scholars have suggested, attention to infrastructure offers a lens through which it is possible to analyse the interlocking spaces and constitutive relations which arrange human as well as non-human life within one, manifold, territory (Anand 2011; Larkin 2013; Mitchell 2014). Looking at recent analyses of infrastructure, the convergence of interest connecting geographers and anthropologist is apparent as scholars from either disciplines have looked at infrastructural spaces to develop analyses that question the meaning of connectivity within the Anthropocene (Günel 2019; Tsing et al 2017; Hecht 2018; Barnes 2017; Zeidernman 2019b). Penny Harvey suggests, infrastructures allow us to perceive the different space/times that compose their geography as belonging to an ecosystem (Harvey 2012). Such ecosystemic gaze has concrete implication for the choice of field sites, primarily, it allows to "locate an ethnographic site, without limiting the scale of description" (Harvey and Knox 2015:3). The majority of this thesis is concentrated on the construction of the port of Anaklia and the five ethnographic chapters that compose the bulk of this work focus quite closely on the municipality of Anaklia where the port and logistics hub were set to rise. Yet my analysis is not contained within that single space. Rather, I view Anaklia as a space of encounter between a host of tensions that have shaped the Georgian territory since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a logistics hub Anaklia was set to become a transnational meeting point for flows of goods, capital and people. While at the moment of writing that future is yet to materialize, in the present, Anaklia is indeed it as a site of encounter – of national and transnational relevance – where flows of capital, workers of different kinds, forms of expertise, technologies and much more have crossed paths. Situating myself in Anaklia I sought to follow these convergences, tracing their relations across different spaces, scales and regimes that went far beyond this location.

A multiplicity of movements has characterised my fieldwork, within, from and to Anaklia. These have been movements of different kind and of different scope: I spent three and a half months in Anaklia, spaced out between different visits between April 2018 and September 2019, but also carried out four field visits to Akhalkalaki, the site where the Georgian hub of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line has been under construction since 2007 that took place in May 2018, September 2018, February 2019; one trip to Kars in Turkey at the border with Armenia in May 2018, one trip to Armenia, performing short fieldwork and interviews in Yerevan and Gyumri in February 2019; one field trip around Samegrelo, the region where Anaklia is located, one visit to Batumi and several visits to the port of Poti, the mining town of Chiatura and Kutaisi, Georgia's second largest city and regional capital. An important part of my time in the field has been spent travelling between places. Being "en route", as Megoran

notes (2006:628) has not constituted a pause from learning, on the contrary it has often been a space/time of unexpected conversations and meetings with people who would end up becoming regular interlocutors throughout the different stages of my research. During my preliminary fieldwork, moreover, as I will describe at length in a later section of this chapter, I have spent a considerable amount of time mapping the logistical landscape within in which the future hub sought to locate itself. This landscape, in turn, consists of a burgeoning network of new transit spaces – free industrial zones, manufacturing and warehousing area, border points, highways – of different sizes and importance that are mushrooming across the country. Behind these new or not-yet spaces, moreover, there are the arteries, mostly still functioning, of the logistical network of the former Soviet Union, consisting of railways, roads, hydropower plants and also factories and urban infrastructure of different kinds. Orienting myself amongst these intersecting logistical landscapes, tracing their ramifications, and reckoning with their ruins, has constituted an important part of my approach in the field.

My fieldwork can thus be defined as a topography of infrastructural futures. According to the dictionary, topography is "the art or practice of graphic delineation in detail usually on maps or charts of natural and man-made features of a place or region" (Merriman Webster in Katz 2001: 1228). A concern with topography as a means to unravel the characteristics of a place understood to be at once specific and related to a wider network of distant spaces is articulated by feminist geographer Cindy Katz (2001a). "To do a topography – as Katz argues - is to carry out a detailed examination of some part of the material world, defined at any scale from the body to the global, in order to understand its salient features and their mutual and broader relationships" (ibid: 1228). Notably, by focusing on the natural and "man-made" elements of a defined landscape, Katz notices, topographies "embed a notion of process" highlighting how places and nature are produced (ibid). Through such topographic attention, logistical capitalism appears not to be a pre-existing context within which different projects take place, but rather it is shown to be itself a project, constantly renewed by all manners of efforts. Crucially this project is materialised in distinct ways, both in relation to different times as well as paces. Seeing spaces as processual and sedimented, topographies makes it possible to excavate the histories of the grounds that one is observing, as well as their present scales and connections, "historicizing the ethnographic present" that has too often been presented as floating in time (Fisher and Marcus 1999: 96, Wolf, 2010). Depth, therefore, together with in-between-ness or infrastructurality and an attention to materiality are the key features of a topographic inquiry, as Katz notes "topographies provide the ground – literally and figuratively – for developing a critique of the social relations sedimented into space and for scrutinizing the material social practices at all geographic scales through which place is produced" (Katz 2001a: 1229).

As I have outlined in the literature review this work is indebted to the insights of feminist geographers and ethnographers committed to develop grounded and imperfect inquiries of localities that can speak back to the master narrative of capital and the smooth analyses that too often have attempted to counteract it. Such commitment necessarily implies a recasting of the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge she produces, assembling a form of knowing that is inescapably "from somewhere" in accordance with Haraway's and Harding's

formulation of situated knowledge and standpoint theory (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1987, 2004). The attention to complex spatio-temporal dynamics that distinguishes geographical knowledge, moreover, as Katz suggests provides a constructive critique to the notion of situated-ness:

> "if the brilliance of the idea of situated knowledge was in making clear that all seeing, all knowing was from somewhere, and that that somewhere was socially constituted, allowing for and occluding particular insights […] Situatedness, nevertheless, suggests location in abstract relation to others but not any specific geography, leading to a politics of "sites" and "spaces" from which materiality is largely evacuated". (Katz 2001a: 1230).

An infrastructural topography supplies to this lack by locating itself in the specific grounds of its enquiry and building its critique from the situated, yet interconnected depth of its sites.

Placing the experience of the ethnographer, and her relation to the site and community she embeds herself within at the centre of the production of "situated knowledge", Haraway makes explicit how feminist objectivity necessarily implies an attention to the "embodied" practices through which situated-ness is achieved and negotiated (1988: 584). The "view from nowhere" targeted by feminist critiques, hides the power dynamics that shape every stage of the production of knowledge. Thus, as Haraway so expressively states: "it matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories." (2016:60). In the next section of this chapter, I will therefore turn to my body as site of struggle within and around which my methodological and epistemological approach to research has been negotiated.

## 2.2 Gender, ethnography and the desires of others

September 2019, hours before my flight back to London. I am in the supermarket, near the house where I'm staying in Tbilisi. I walk in the fruit aisle in search of a lemon and I notice a man looking at me. I keep walking, trying to understand the difference between the two piles of lemons stacked in front of me, my eyes still needing a little longer to decipher Georgian characters. He approaches me abruptly and asks, in English: "what's your name?".

A little startled and annoyed I reply: "why should I tell you my name?"

He looks baffled. Stares at me with a mixture of curiosity and contempt: "because I want to know it!" he says. The rest of the story it's not important ... I managed, eventually, to shake him off, not before he made it clear that he thought I was incredibly rude.

I am exhausted. My month, the last of my fieldwork in Georgia before moving back to the U.K. to write up my dissertation has started with a young drunk man suddenly grabbing me by the arms and waist and trying to push me in a river, only, once again, to act completely baffled when confronted with my rage and fear. He was only joking – he protested, matching my screams – while I am shaking. As I tried to walk away to reach my friend, who, baffled, was

stretching her arm to reach me from behind the man's back, he attempted to block my escape. Was he still "joking" when he pushes me against a rock, his semi erected penis pressed against my body?

I eventually managed to wiggle out.

In the weeks that followed that incident, as I am travelling from Tbilisi to West Georgia to reach Anaklia, I was slapped on my thigh by a taxi driver, and, in the same day, a man sitting next to me in the minibus attempted to wrap the two of us in the same seat belt, touching my whole body in the process. Again my complaints were ridiculed and treated as inappropriate. I spend the rest of the trip, unable to change seat in the crammed bus, and unwilling to make a scene, wishing I could carve a void between me and the man's leg, still obstinately lingering against mine. Back in the city, a group of men in two separate cars decides to clap and beep their horns as I walk on the zebra crossing in front of them. In the weeks and months before more, many more, random men have touched, stared and laid subtle and not so subtle claims over my body, my time, my attention. Exhausting my energy like a host of amateur vampires: clumsy and *tremendous* operators in their quest for sexual favours they shall never receive (Long Chu 2019).

The early days of my fieldwork have been tainted by men's unwanted attention, driving me on the edge of breakdown. In this section I will focus on the difficulties of navigating field research as a young, non-native woman. A discussion of sexual harassment, gender dynamics, unwanted attention and fear, has only seldom unfolded in academic texts discussing ethnographic methods, with few notable exceptions (Hanson & Richards 2019; Kulick & Willson 1995; Mahmood 2008; Winkler and Hanke 1995; Bell, Caplan, and Karim 1993; Wolf 1996) and is largely omitted as a feature of ethnographic training. Throughout my fieldwork, this absence has come to be the source of great anger, some of which I have translated into the reflection that occupies the paragraphs that will follow and around which my research epistemology is crafted.

### 2.2.1 Invisible desires, invisible problems

In a 1983 essay activist ethnographer Nancy Scheper-Hughes comments on the mythologization of the ethnographer as the "Victorian butler, always present and keenly observant, but invisible in his ministrations and empty of personal affect and passion."(Scheper-Hughes, 1983:115). While thanks to seminal intervention in feminist ethnography and theory, reflexive accounts of the anthropological experience and works who blur the boundaries between political intervention and fieldwork (Harding 2004; Shukaitis, Graeber & Biddle 2007; Katz 1994; Kulick and Wilson 1995), this conception of the researcher and the claim to scientific objectivity it supported have largely been abandoned in critical disciplines relying on fieldwork, a discussion of the ethnographers sexuality and sexualisation in the field is still effectively treated as a "public secret" (Taussing 1999; Barry, 2013) amongst those same disciplines.

"Taboo", published in 1995 is a collection of reflections on the gendered and sensual nature of fieldwork. Exploring the complex manifestations of desire riddling the field and ordering the subjects inhabiting it, the different essays collected in the book present a picture of fieldwork as a lived and embodied space/time, one that is extremely different from the sanitised [virgin] space of inquiry portrayed by the forefathers of anthropology (Malinowski 1922,1929). As Don Kulick points out in the introduction to the collection, "sex − their sex, the sex of 'the Other' has always constituted one of the gaudiest exhibits in the anthropological sideshow" however "throughout all the decades of concern with the sex lives of others, anthropologist have remained very tight-lipped about their own sexuality" (1995:3). Such silence, coated in the guise of scientific objectivity has throughout the years concealed the experiences of the most vulnerable of fieldwork's subjects and practitioners. The publication of Malinowski's diary in 1967 and the discovery, in the eighties, of protracted sexual assaults perpetuated by male anthropologist in the Venezuelan Amazon sent shockwaves through the discipline and are partially responsible for kickstarting a discussion on the hidden power-relationships shaping ethnographic fieldwork. Despite the consensus on the necessity of reflexivity and confronting anthropology's colonial legacy, that reshaped the discipline in the aftermath of the post-modern turn in the 80s, a discussion of erotic desire and sexual violence in the field has remained extremely niche in ethnographic writing and a vast majority young ethnographers have continued to approach the field without receiving any training regarding sex and gender issues (Hanson and Richard 2019).

The testimonies collected in "Taboo" include different subjectivities and reflect on a variety of experiences exploring a spectrum stretching from manifestations of desire and consensual sexual relations between researcher and informants to the experience of a female ethnographer being raped by her field assistant (Moreno 1995). Crucially, what emerges from these descriptions is a critique of some of the founding principles of fieldwork. Traditionally in anthropology, "fieldwork is the prescribed rite of passage that must be successfully negotiated before the doctoral student is recognised as fully professional" (Moreno 1995:186), as a most rites of passage, Moreno notes, it is surrounded by secrecy and "a shut up and take it" (Berry et al 2017) attitude, which has for too long unfortunately being translated in a discipline-wide lack of sympathy or support for those who encounter difficulties or are subject to violence in their attempt to navigate ethnography (ibid 220).[8] Interestingly, while ethnography is not coated in the same mystique in geography (Megoran 2006:628), it is perhaps the lack of in depth engagement with its workings, noted by Hitchings and Latham, that prevents uncomfortable conversation on its sexual nature from happening. In the aftermath of her rape at the hands of her research assistant in Ethiopia, Moreno, describes the contempt and blame she experienced from her male supervisors and fellow academics, who seemed to tacitly agree that if something happened, it must have been her fault. In academia, much like in the outside world, such disbelief is a powerful silencing mechanism that acts both externally and internally,

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[8] While I am now a geographer and I have found a lot of sympathy and support from the members of my department, the structural issues that are highlighted here have been without a doubt a part of my training as an ethnographer during my BA and MA in anthropology and in the periods of training that followed desire and gender have largely being left unexplored as elements of ethnographic experience.

disciplining ethnographers into suppressing their experiences in order to be recognised as successful anthropologists. After all, as Moreno provocatively asks: "who wants to be a *female* anthropologist when it's possible to be a 'real' anthropologist?" (ibid:246 highlight in the original).

Notably, Moreno's question casts "female" not in opposition to "male" but to "real" anthropologist. While with this move she aims to highlight the – invisible and naturalised – gendered hierarchy that plagues the academic world as much as any other sector, by extracting female from its binary she opens the term up as a container for a gender subjectivity shaped by oppression and powerlessness: a gender subjectivity that no one is happy to inhabit.

In what remains of this section I take up Moreno's question by exploring the notion of "femaleness" in relation to ethnography and beyond in order to construct my own epistemological and methodological approach to the field. Rather than treating my embodied experience of the field as an "awkward surplus" (Fujimora in Hanson and Richards 2019: 2), here I am centring desire and its effects on my ethnographer's self in order to assemble the epistemological approach that has informed my research. As Kulick reminds in the introduction to taboo: "reckoning with desire in the field for many ethnographers has been an especially poignant means through which to become aware of our partial, positioned, knowing self" (Kulick 1995:19).

## 2.2.2 Female field

In her recently published experimental memoir, transgender writer and critic Andrea Long Chu, puts forward a radically provocative thesis: namely that femaleness rather than a biological experience is a

> "universal sex defined by self-negation against which all politics, even feminist politics rebels. Put more simply: everyone is female and everyone hates it". "Female – she continues – is any psychic operation in which the self is sacrificed to make room for the desire of another. These desires might be real or imagined, concentrated or diffuse – a boyfriend's sexual needs, a set of cultural expectations, a literal pregnancy – but in all cases, the self is hollowed out, made into an incubator for an alien force. To be female is to let someone else do your desiring for you, at your own expense. This means that femaleness while it hurts only sometimes, is always bad for you". (Long Chu 2019:11)

Fieldwork, for me, and I dare say for many others, has been the quintessentially female experience. During fieldwork a host of alien and unwanted desires have taken up residence inside me, assembling my gendered research self as a patchwork of their, at times conflicting, impulses (Balani 2020). I could not agree more with Long Chu on how *deeply* I have hated this condition. No one, as Moreno so vehemently states, wants to be a female ethnographer! It is poignant, moreover, than this femaleness I refer to is a gendered rather than a biological experience. It is undoubtable that my experience in the field, and certainly Moreno's, is tied to our being, biologically, women. However, the femaleness experienced during my fieldwork, similarly to the "*female* anthropologist" summoned by Moreno, is a much broader field of unease and alienation vis-à-vis the desires of others, inhabited and despised by women as well as men.

Going back to my own experience in the field might help clarify what I mean. During my first solo field trip to Anaklia, in May 2018, I was very keen to embed myself in the community and looking for a way in. I was eager to understand the experience of locals close to my age so I contacted a young local man who had featured in my friend's Tekla's documentary film and had agreed to show me around. During our first excursion around the village he offered to help me climb the steep wall of an abandoned construction from which we would be able to see the whole port territory. As he helped me go up, his fingers deftly overcame the obstacle of my skirt and underwear to grab the bare skin underneath it. I was so confused by this gesture, unsure how to react. Was it an accident? Turning towards him to see him flustered, visibly excited, convinced me that it was not and plunged me into despair: I was now on top of a semi ruined wall with a man that just groped me. I jumped down. I spent the rest of our walk trying to maintain a distance, but I felt that the gesture had precipitated the situation in a direction I was not able to control. To my surprise, a touch I did not sanction – but also not openly condemned – had seemingly escalated our interaction into intimacy: as we sat on the edge of the beach he picked up some sand and started to softly sprinkle it my knee. For a while I just continued to talk, ignoring the pouring sand, but as he picked a second handful I edged away from him and got up, asking if he wanted to play ping pong on the concrete table behind us. He accepted and we continued our conversation at a distance, until I had to leave.

When I had to meet him again, I decided to confront him about the event and the incessant advances that he had subjected me to during our first meeting. Thinking that honesty could be a way to put that episode behind us, refusing to believe it was vicious and rather understanding it in terms of the power disparities between us two – me being a mobile, independent, university educated, middle class woman, him being a Georgian precariously employed young man, with little available income and a passport that precluded him to circulate freely across the world – I resorted in explaining to him how his behaviour made me feel. Moreover I was aware that having established myself in Anaklia for my research I was "impos[ing] me, the fieldworker, on the time-space of others," (Katz 1994 in Nast 1994:58) demanding their attention and collaboration in a project whose aim and scope – especially at that early stage – was not clear to my interlocutors[9]. Broaching the subject as we walked together on the boulevard I explained to him how, as he knew, I was committed to my partner in the U.K., to whom I was planning to get married[10], and I was not interested in pursuing any sexual relations while in Anaklia, I also said I felt hurt by his touching me inappropriately and that he should not do that again. I asked him why he did it and told him that I would be very happy to be his friend and if he could please treat me as one. I mentioned Tekla, my friend and collaborator who had introduced me to him, and asked me if he could please treat me in the same way he treated her. What he said illustrates my femaleness: I was different from Tekla – he said – unlike her who was his friend (ძმაკაცი/dzmakatsi) I was a sexual woman (სექსუალური

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ქალი/sexualuri qali). He was very stern when he repeated that he simply could not treat me like Tekla because she was his mate and I was not, I was a sexual woman and, he thought, we should have sex. He said other things, which unfortunately I have forgotten I was not taking notes in the moment and my Georgian was quite uncertain, but the phrase "sexualuri qali" said in the most earnest and direct of the manners, as if it was just a fact that had to be reckoned with, is imprinted in my memory.

Despite appearing as the most basic assertion of my biological characterization: I was a woman made for sex, this is a comment about my femaleness rather than me being a woman. In short it is a comment about gender, not about sex. The Georgian language is particularly enlightening on this account: in describing Tekla, in fact, the man said that she was his ძმაკაცი/dzmakatsi. The term ძმაკაცი/dzmakatsi is composed by two words "ძმა/dzma", brother, and "კაცი/katsi", man and it indicates the highest level of friendship, meaning essentially a friend who is like a brother to someone (see Frederiksen 2011; Curro 2015)[11]. There is a feminine version of it "დაქალი/daqali", "და/da" meaning sister and "ქალი/qali" meaning woman, that however is used less frequently and carries different connotations. Despite the fact that him and Tekla had only met months before during the shooting of Tekla's film, my interlocutor decided to describe her as her "bro" to denote two things: firstly by using that term he placed her as part of his crew, an insider as opposed to me who was an outsider, secondly, he classed her as a friend rather than a gendered subject, their friendship being comparable to the one between him and his male friends. Despite being biologically a woman, thus, Tekla, in this instance, was not *female*[12]. I on the other side will never be a dzmakatsi for I was quintessentially something else: a repository for his desires. I was just female and he, honestly, did not see how I could be anything else.

Months after, I discussed with Tekla about my inescapable female-ness, although I had not yet read Andrea Long Chu's book, and so I was asking primarily her opinion on why was I constantly the target of unwanted and shameless sexual attention. She told me that after observing my behaviour in different situations, in particular the way I spoke Georgian, she thought that I was perceived to be a "ქარაფშუტა/qarapshuta qali" an expression that roughly translates as "frivolous" or "loose woman"[13]. My mannerism, she said, were distinctively non-Georgian, I was too colloquial, often failing to respect the polite addresses required when speaking to strangers: addressing people who I had just met with the singular "shen" rather

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[11] Colloquially it could be translate as "buddy" or "bro".

[12] It is important to note, that Tekla had herself being subjected to a certain degree of sexualisation during her time in Anaklia, as it's the case for other Georgian female researchers and tourists that I have spoken to. However, unlike me, she was able to contain and confront the advances and incite a higher degree of respect in her interlocutors in virtue of her higher degree of fluency in the local culture and off course language.

[13] Unlike the English expression: "loose woman" that has an explicit sexual undertone, "qarapshuta qali", is more accurately translated as "silly" or "frivolous" woman, indicating the lack of ability to think or be serious. However, Unlike frivolous or silly, the word "qarapshuta" could not be applied to a man, as it indicates a specifically gendered silliness, one that albeit not directly sexualised, as Tekla herself explained to me, can imply a degree of openness to become the prey of male desire. For this reason I have decided to translate this word as "loose woman".

than the plural "tqven", and often breaching unspoken codes by being too inquisitive and open to chat. The combination of all of these behaviours suggested men that I was not serious and therefore potentially "fair game".

While I absolutely do not think that any behaviour on my part, short of a clear invitation to have sex, could have justified the way I have been treated, especially as the bulk of unwanted attention and advances has come before I could ever speak to anyone or in situations in which I was speaking in English, a language I master better than all of my Georgian interlocutors. I do however think that the men's stubborn desire for me to be a "loose woman" had carved a space within my own conscience and my sense of self in the field. Despite rejecting it, the Anaklian man's matter of fact characterization of me as a "sexual woman" had, at least in part, become my own. As Don Kulick argues "many young anthropologists, especially heterosexual women, lesbians, and gay men, are likely to find themselves in the field afraid to 'be themselves' but quite unsure of who else they might be" (1995:11). Beyond the sexual desire asserted by men, in the field I found myself stuck between different, conflicting desires, and the struggle to navigate them, quite literally loosened my sense of self. In some sense, thus, I was indeed a *loose woman*, loosely attached to my own identity. But, more accurately, I was female.

Poignantly, in calling out my perceived "looseness", Tekla acknowledged my female-ness. As is evident from the experience I recount above, throughout the initial stages of my fieldwork I have performed a form of docility that I would not have adopted in my outside life. Had someone groped me in London he would probably be the one having to jump off the wall rather than me and I can't imagine sitting still while a stranger pours sand on my naked knee. Or, even more poignantly, why had I accepted to climb on top of a ruin with a stranger in the first place? Or sit on a beach with someone that just groped me? Tekla's suggestions on how to avoid be considered as a "loose woman" was to be more accurate in my language, less open, firmer in my assertion of the boundaries between me and my interlocutors and less prone to start discussing with strangers. But how to enforce all of these measures when my primary tasks was to engage as deeply as I could in a culture that was not my own? In a language that was not my own? In other words how could I be a successful foreign woman ethnographer if I had to shield myself from the persisting gendered stereotypes that surrounded me? In the absence of answers what I was left with was femaleness.

### 2.2.3 Foreign-ness and female-ness

Language played a key role in my disorientation. Before my fieldwork I underwent difficult language training sponsored by the ESRC, the training granted a nine month extension to my scholarship that I have spent in Georgia taking daily individual lessons. Once my fieldwork had begun I continued to have irregular lessons and immersed myself in the language as I spent time in Anaklia and other sites. By the end of my time away my Georgian had reached a solid intermediate level that allowed me to communicate efficiently and at times fluently with my research subjects on a daily basis and to read and write in the Georgian script. The Georgian language, however, is extremely challenging to master as it is a non-Indo-European language, with a complicated script and a grammar that privileges irregularities, my semi fluency in the

colloquial language spoken throughout my fieldwork, therefore did not entail a fluency in more formal speech, while reading complex texts has remained challenging and extremely time consuming. Furthermore, even within familiar settings such as Anaklia and Tbilisi, my Georgian was never fluent enough to engage in punning or partake in jokes or understand the subtlety of certain addresses, an issue that has been the source of anxiety at different moments of my ethnography (cf Morton 1995:176). Antithetically, I quickly learned how my non fluency, was also a resource for starting conversations with would be informants. To this day very few foreigners, even amongst those who have lived in the country for a long time, are fluent in Georgian. This is due to the complexity of the language as well as to the still widespread use of Russian as a *lingua franca*, especially amongst the older generations who grew up during the Soviet Union. Moreover, Georgia is not a monolingual country, including significant Armenian, Azeri, Megrelian and Svan minorities, for whom Georgian is a second or third language. The fact that I had taken the time to learn Georgian, and that I had not even considered learning Russian, was thus, a fact that caused great admiration in many of my interlocutors and that facilitated our initial interactions. In some cases, especially towards the end of my fieldwork, when my command of the language was at its highest, I was often mistaken for a Georgian migrant who had left the country as a child and thus was at once fluent and disjointed, having only spoken the language at home for decades. Navigating my (un)fluency thus has not been a straightforward effort, but an often renewed play between insecurity and confidence, modulating my relation to the field.

From Tekla's description, it appears how my use of language contributed to my perception as a "loose woman" in virtue of being a marker of my inescapable foreign-ness. The equation of "foreign" with "loose woman" is not exclusive to Georgia, as Dubisch details during her fieldwork in Greece the two were often taken as synonyms (Dubish 1995:31). While "loose woman", is a misogynist archetype and does not describe any actually existing creature, the perceived "looseness" of foreign women is related to the different gender dynamics that, ostensibly, Western women inhabit and their, much rumoured, greater openness to casual sexual encounters in comparison to local women. As documented by scholars such perception has a long and complex history across different spaces, informed and renewed by the legacy of colonial domination, orientalist imagination, imperialism, sexual tourism and exploitation (Nader 1989; Klein 2015; Williams 2017; Puar 2007). In Georgia, and especially in Anaklia, the mythologization of the sexual availability of Western and, more commonly, Russian women (Frederiksen 2014), is at least partially tied to an Occidentalist horizon of tourist development and boundless freedom promoted firstly by former President Mikheil Saakashvili in his plans to turn Anaklia into a leisure and logistics hub on the Black Sea (Ahıska 2003). I will discuss these imaginations at length in the ethnographic chapters describing the early development of Anaklia, however here it is important to note how as subjects of desire, loose women, embody a complexity of urges that exceed the desires of the person most immediately lusting for them. These urges, moreover, are to an extend prescriptive of the kind of behaviours that can be addressed to a woman who is perceived as "loose". This is probably why, when discussing with the young man who groped me in Anaklia he was so candid that he could not treat me in the same way as Tekla. Looseness, therefore, does not only affect its subject, but sets a code of conduct for all parties involved.

As Hanson and Richards note, however, "fieldwork is a dual or amorphous workplace. It is constitutive of our academic careers, and what we do in the field is shaped by scholarly norms and expectations, as well as the norms and expectations that structure the social worlds we study" (2019:14). In addition, Mary Louise Pratt has highlighted the "sheer inexplicability and unjustifiability of the ethnographer's presence from the standpoint of the other" (1986:42). Such inexplicability, which is heightened in the case the ethnographer is not recognized as a traditional expert by the community in which it locates herself, i.e. in my case as a young woman, can be the source of considerable anxiety regarding the possibility of being rejected by ones imagined informants (Kulick 1995:11). In my case this fear of rejection and anxiety over my presentation have shaped my interactions with the subjects of my research, making me climb rocks, muffle my otherwise strong instincts and endure harassment.

At times it felt that my femaleness was the only thing I could hold on to. Those desired had become mine as I lacked any other way to interact with my subjects. According to Judith Butler, gender is "an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts." In this way, gender is "the appearance of substance[…] a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief"(Butler 2010:141). Long Chu's crucial point however, as Sita Balani aptly notes, is that gender, any "gender, as we know it, is simply a reaction to the condition of being female – 'woman' is one possible reaction to being female, 'man' another. Gender is always *for* someone else" (Balani 2020). In the field, the short circuit of desire I became subject too, simply exposed the struggle at the core of my own gender identity: if my gender identification as a "woman" is the result of a sustained grappling with the condition of female-ness, a "loose woman" is what emerges when female-ness triumphs. Sexualization, foreignness, and the gendered politics of expertise informing fieldwork (Berry et al 2017) gathered within me giving rise to the perfect short circuit of the alien desires, despised, but still real.

To go back to Moreno's question: who wants to be a *female* anthropologist when one can be a real anthropologist? The answer is, off course, no one. But it might be an impossible question to answer, for it is not any individual ethnographer to be female, rather is *the field itself being the quintessentially female space*. The silence surrounding questions of desire and sexuality shaping fieldwork, the legacy of sexual and colonial violence that underwrites anthropological knowledge (Peano 2019b), the institutional, epistemological and personal barriers that too often prevent early career ethnographers to incorporate and sustain desire, their own as well as the one of others, within their research practice results in fieldwork being a space where "everyone is female and everyone hates it". Rather than escaping it, therefore, I acknowledge that the ethnography that occupies the chapter that follow is the product of female fieldwork. As such it does not claim objectivity of any kind, if objectivity is seen as a view dethatched or extracted from the embodied and situated experience of being in the field. This realisation, crucially, it is not contingent to my analysis of logistical performativity that fills this thesis: performativity, as Butler states, "implies a certain critique of the subject" (2010:151), the breakdown of my own subjectivity, in some ways, provided a privileged standpoint for observing the seams and fissures that constitute the apparently seamless regeneration of logistical connectivity (ibid:149); the

effort necessary to hold together my own self as an ethnographer provided an insight into the gruelling efforts necessary to hold together the precarious pieces of the logistical reality my interlocutors were busy bringing into existence. Indeed, thus "my power/lessness (in the field and in my field) as well as that of the people with whom I work are complexly interwoven in the fieldwork process and the ways I report on my work" (Katz:1994 69).

### 2.2.4 (Re)producing the logistical future

My initial project involved spending substantial time with workers employed in the construction of the port and in other logistical sites across the country. My goal was to embed myself in these sites as an observer and produce an account of the working conditions and potential struggles that were emerging in Georgia's logistics sector. The harassment I have been subjected to since approaching the field has inspired me to shift my attention away from these spaces almost exclusively populated by men and to devise a whole new set of strategies to construct a field that I could navigate without or with less fear of being addressed exclusively as the repository of someone's desires.

Shifting my focus away from the building sites I started spending greater attention to the corporation in charge of Anaklia Deep Sea Port's Development, ADC, and their interactions with the local community. This shift has not implied a retreat from a gendered analysis of the relations and encounters I observed and engaged in throughout my fieldwork, rather, whilst shielding myself from potential violence, I have maintained a commitment to show how gender in its different declinations is indeed crucial to sustain and underwrite the logistical developments I have documented during my time in Anaklia and the and corporate subjectivities that populate them. During my second visit to the village, I began interviewing members of ADC at different levels and participating in the activities organised by the consortium in the village such as the English classes they held weekly in collaboration with USAID. Through these I met different middle aged local women, and later their families, who have become key interlocutors of my research. Spending time in the company of these women and their friends and families, many of whom have invested in the hospitality sector in view of the tourism development that the construction of the Port and the City were set to generate has allowed me to understand how the capitalist promise of a seamless transit for cargo, money and people waged by the construction of the hub of Anaklia rests on and its populated by a disparity of subjects, forms of production and interactions that are completely left out from accounts of logistical development. It is with these practices, hopes, and timescapes making up the social reproduction of a future logistical space that this thesis is concerned (Haugen, 2019; Katz, 2001b)

At the beginning of my fieldwork I had envisaged a research mostly based on participant observation, changing my focus I have also adopted different techniques for data collection. These included attendance of events of different kinds – large governmental forums like the Belt and Road Forum held in Tbilisi in November 2017, national parades, press conferences, corporate events, public meetings and inaugurations – as well as protest and meetings of different labour rights groups and activists based in Tbilisi and elsewhere. From these events I

also collected a large range of written materials – leaflets, brochures, magazines, press releases – that I have catalogued and used as part of my analysis of the discourses informing logistical futures. Finally, interviews have been a key part of my data collection. Besides the in-depth interviews I have performed in Anaklia that I will discuss below, I conducted seventeen semi structured formal interviews in English with elite participants, including government officials and ministers, ADC managers, managers of other large infrastructures, academic and policy experts and development workers.[14]

Unlike many female ethnographers before me, who have stuck with their original project, paying the, at times life threatening consequences of it (Moreno 1995), I have renounced my original aims to pursue some trajectories of inquiry in order to preserve my sanity and my safety (Reeves 2014). In calling for what they term a "patchwork ethnography" Günel, Varma and Watanabe propose a "kinder and gentler way to do research [that] expands what we consider acceptable materials, tools, and objects of our analyses" (2020:3). In remaining convinced of the importance of ethnographic methods, it is to this – ongoing and contested – process of adaptation that my thesis speaks to. This, however, does not mean that I have obliterated my female-ness in the field, rather I have deployed tactics to come to terms with it, "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2012) instead of ignoring it or succumbing to it. It is in response to my femaleness that my ethnographic methods have been crafted as a situated intervention, a form of creativity adamantly from somewhere and by some-body. Moreover, it is through my embodied experience of the field that I have directed my attention away from the sites of production into the sites where the reproduction of the promised logistical future was negotiated. Indeed, what I so painfully perceived as a methodological failure to meet the standards of participant observation, has instead proved to be a resource for conceptually understanding the centrality of sites deemed as "other" in sustaining the promise of capitalist development (cf Gibson Graham 1996, Rofel, Yanagisako & Segre 2018). It is with these sites, actors and relations that much of this thesis is concerned.

## 2.3 Topography, infrastructure and collaboration

Having exposed the development of my epistemological approach as an embodied process, I will now outline some of its practical translations into the strategies I have deployed as a feminist researcher and gendered subject in the field.

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[14] A concern with ethics has guided my fieldwork and the interactions I have entertained with interlocutors of different kinds and across settings. Throughout this thesis, I have committed to protect the anonymity of those interlocutors who have requested it, or who could be negatively affected by having their opinions revealed publicly. Informed consent has been sought prior to every interview. The names of most informants have been anonymised. I am aware that Anaklia is a very small village and even if rendered anonymous most of my interlocutors can still be identified by someone with knowledge of the area, for this reason I have not reported anything that was shared with me as confidential. Several of the interviews I analyse throughout the thesis with high profile managers – such as the ADC CEOs Keti Bochorishvili and Giorgi Mirtskhulava – have also being filmed, prior obtaining informed consent, by Tekla Aslanishvili for her documentary *Scenes from Trial and Error (2020)*, these interviews have not been anonymised.

Collaboration has emerged as a central theme of my research practice for reasons that are at once political and practical. By the term collaboration, I do not refer to the practice of collaborative ethnography, where knowledge production is the result of cooperation between the researcher and its subjects (Lassiter 2005). Although I share Lassiter's definition of ethnography as an inherently collaborative practice, as well as the commitment to question an idea of the researcher as the sole proprietor of the knowledge she gathers, this research project is indubitably my own. However, collaboration with fellow researchers, art-practitioners, students, film-makers, activists, some of which are indeed my subjects, has allowed me to expand and deepen my individual observations and challenge the disciplinary boundaries within which my research was developed. The different people with whom I have collaborated have become an infrastructure for my research, peopling the in-between-ness I have sought to locate my inquiry within and enabling channels of communication and exchange that have underlined the development of my thesis and provided me with connections – conceptual and material – that would have not emerged otherwise.

In their book on sexual harassment in the field, ethnographers Hanson and Richards highlight how standards of solitude, danger and intimacy—which they refer to as "ethnographic fixations"—encourage researchers to endure various forms of violence in the field. (2019: 2) It is in opposition to this yet rarely challenged disciplinary framework that I decided to pursue and maximise the collective elements of my fieldwork. As part of a crowd or a pair, I could gain strength, legitimation and direction from the other members of my group. Crucially I could also learn from and with them. Rather than exclusively a way to shield myself from possible harassment, the pursuit of a collective form of navigating the field has been an experimental and profoundly creative process (Marcus and Fischer 1999:73), one that has allowed me to put to work my own commitment to generating a partial but nevertheless politically and ethnographically grounded form of knowledge. Such commitment to partiality, in turns, rather than a limitation is  resonates with the insights of feminist theorist across different disciplines (Strathern 1991; Haraway 1986). Partial and split knowledges are generated as part of a larger epistemological network, to be stitched together imperfectly but able to inspire transformative action. It is in this sense that the collaborators of my research, with their different roles and commitments have been infrastructures sustaining the creation of this work (Simone 2003) Below I detail the different collaborations that have punctuated my fieldwork and outline their role in both shaping and becoming part of my ethnography.

### 2.3.1 Reckoning with linguistic limits

As I described above my attempts at navigating the Georgian language have underpinned my engagement with the field. During the second part of my fieldwork I started working alongside a research assistant, Sophio Tskhvariashvili. Sophio is a young researcher from Tbilisi who has worked on topics close to my own, such as the contested development of hydropower infrastructure in the Georgian borderland of the Pankisi Valley. More than just supplementing my language skills, Sophio became an inquisitive and inspiring interlocutor throughout the latest stages of my time in the field. We travelled together to the Black Sea coast for three visits and we conducted eight informal semi structured interviews in Samegrelo, nine follow-up semi

structured interviews with villagers in Anaklia as well as visiting together a number of key sites and events. With her help I have also been able to conduct background research on property arrangements in and around the village of Anaklia.

A small part of my fieldwork has taken place in sites where I was unable to speak the language such as the Armenian majority town of Akhalkalaki, where the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line is currently being built and the town of Gyumri in Armenia where the former railway used to pass; there I have also relied on the support of local research assistants, however, while in Gyumri I was lucky to find a fellow academic, Dr Sushan Ghazaryan, who had a great command of English and is experienced in assisting foreign scholars. In Akhalkalaki, a small and isolated town, where the population has been subjected to decades of marginalization from the central government and the rest of Georgia, the search was much harder and the scope of my enquiry has been limited, I nevertheless received valuable assistance from Kristina Marabyan. Due to these limitations, interviews have been the main source of data gathering on these sites, more specifically, eleven structured interviews concerning the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line conducted in Armenian and Russian by my research assistants Sushan Ghazaryan and Kristina Marabyan in my presence.

### 2.3.2 Sketching logistics

Throughout my preliminary fieldwork in 2017, I have collaborated with the Georgian chapter of the urban sketchers movement. Urban Sketchers are a global movement of individuals who gather together to sketch their surroundings. In Georgia sketching has become popular in the past five years as an alternative means to protest against the land speculations plaguing the country. As Lali Pertenava, art curator and coordinator of the Georgian urban sketchers, told me:

> "I think urban sketching is not opposed but it's an alternative to photography, because when you come to a place and take a picture and then go, you are just colonizing space. This is what's happening with all of these new buildings popping up around the city, they are just appearing, as if out of nowhere with no connection to their surroundings [instead] when you are painting or sketching you are *making the space*, [you are making] an effort to come in dialogue [with what surrounds you] this sense of sketching it's like hand-made space, it gets closer to you and you enter in it though depicting it, and struggling to describe it."

Sketching, thus, is understood by its proponents as a spatial practice that going beyond visual representation allows a deeper, more haptic, feeling of space (Paterson 2009). A process of negotiation that can teach an alternative way to relate to the sites we cross in our daily lives. As such, the practice of sketching can be seen as a precondition for a topographic inquiry into Georgia's logistical present. Quite literally a form of "site writing" (topos + graphia) sketching is predicated on a detailed, albeit limited, and situated engagement with the landscape in which it operates (Rendell 2010).

It was this idea of a protest articulated as a form of inquiry into space and as a (re)claiming of that process of reckoning with its features and obstacles that inspired me to include sketching as a part of my preliminary fieldwork (cf Barry 2001:175-196). By 2017 I had visited Georgia

four times firstly as a tourist and later as a researcher in residence for the local organization Geo-Air and finally as a master student working on my dissertation. My level of Georgian was very basic during this period and my knowledge of the country, outside Tbilisi, limited. Writing my M.A. dissertation that focused on social movements against privatization in the capital I had come in contact with activists and a variety of practitioners involved in campaigns to halt estate speculations. I met the urban sketchers in this context and upon embarking in my Ph.D. research I crafted together with Lali Pertenava an itinerary across different regions of Georgia that would allow us together to explore key sites of the country's logistical future. Alongside the sketchers I have explored five logistical spaces (*map 3*), each of them hosting a different kind of movement and representing a different element of Georgia's bid to become a transit corridor. After each session, an impromptu exhibition was set up in the same spot. Each sketching session, preceded by a site exploration and followed by often lively discussions between sketchers and inhabitants has allowed me not only to visit the different spaces of logistics across Georgia, but also to begin to map them in relation to one another and to the existing socio-economic grievances of different Georgian publics.

Together, the sketching sessions that we ran between April and June 2017 proved to be an exercise in collective piecing together the space of my subsequent research. What resulted from it is an ephemeral and animated infrastructural topography, made of impressions, drawings and anecdotes that compose a sketch of the logistics I set myself to uncover. Many of the questions that came to the fore during our sketching encounters have remained central to my research that shaped the focus of my research in the months to follow. These are questions around the multiple logistical regimes, sedimented histories and ecosystems coexisting within a singular space and shaping its present topography. These tensions rather than occupying opposite time/spaces are instead entangled through friction and together they shape the current efforts to realise logistics in the country. The analysis of these frictional environments firstly detected alongside the sketchers occupies the centre of this PhD.

*Map 1 Sketching logistics*
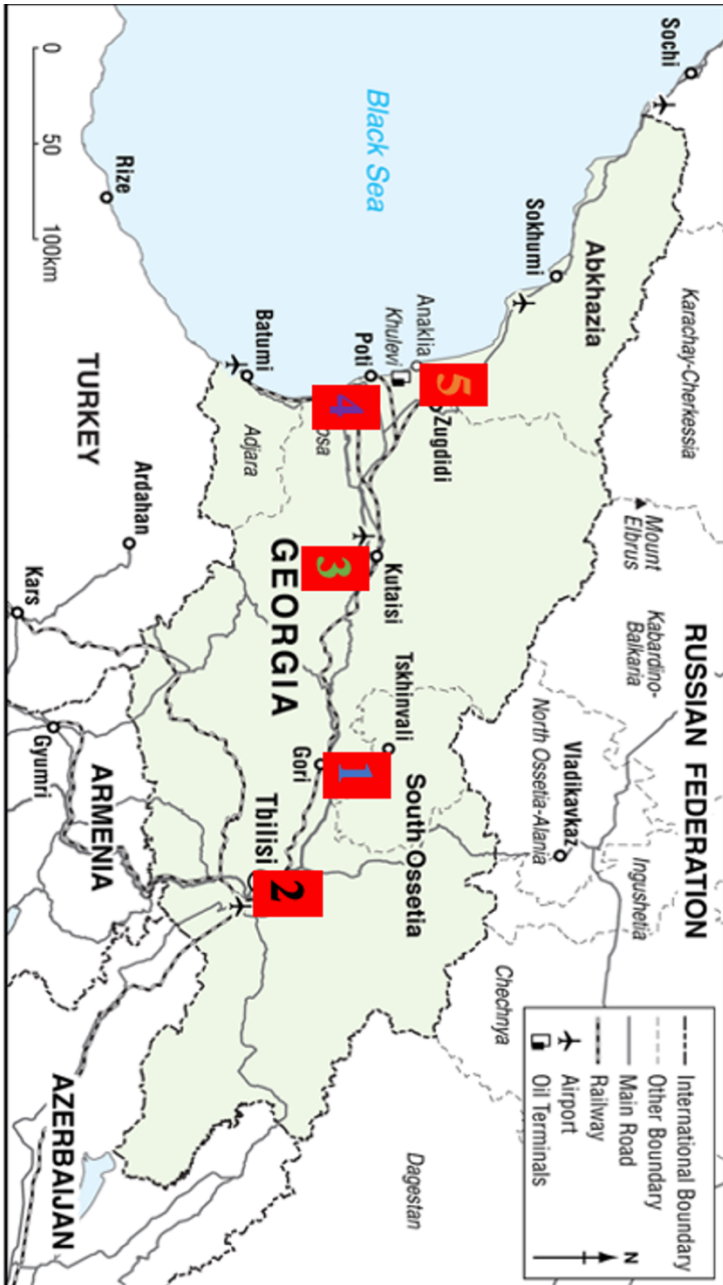
**1)** Our first session was in the outskirts of Gori, in a village called Ergneti adjacent to the occupation line that since the 2008 war divides Georgia from the *de facto* state of South Ossetia. Between 1996 and 2004, before the six days war precipitated the ethnic conflict and geopolitical relations shaping this border area, Ergneti hosted a large, and largely unregulated, outdoor market where all kinds of goods, legal and illegal, could be bought and sold and where ethnic Georgians, Ossetians and others met daily to carry exchange commodities (Toal 2017: 139).

**2)** The second site we visited was at the edge of Tbilisi in the microrayon of Varketili. There, in 2015 the Chinese group HuaLing, built a residential complex known as HuaLing Tbilisi Sea New City, the complex, originally built to host the participants to the 2015 Youth Olympics, is a gated agglomerate of multi-story buildings delimited at its northern edge by a 5 start hotel, glass panels on the outside. Next to this complex, which currently is largely inhabited by IDPs after the government bought sixteen at a discounted price another structure occupies a large area on the shores of the lake, this is an indoor market where local traders sell goods imported from China.

**3)** Our third stop was in Kutaisi, the country's second city, here HuaLing Group has since 2009 obtained a government contract to open a Free Industrial Zone (FIZ). HuaLing Free Industrial Zone is located inside the abandoned carcass of what used to be one of the biggest factories in Georgia, Kutaisi Auto Mechanical Plant. During Soviet times this plant employed were over than 15,000 workers.

**4)** In Georgia there are to date five operative Free Industrial Zones. The most established of these Zones is the one located inside the port of Poti, not far from Anaklia, on the Black Sea. It is here that we travel with the sketchers after Kutaisi.

**5)** The final stop on our sketching map has been Anaklia where the bulk of my fieldwork subsequently would take place.

58

*Figure 4 The exhibition that followed the sketching session in Hua Ling FIZ*
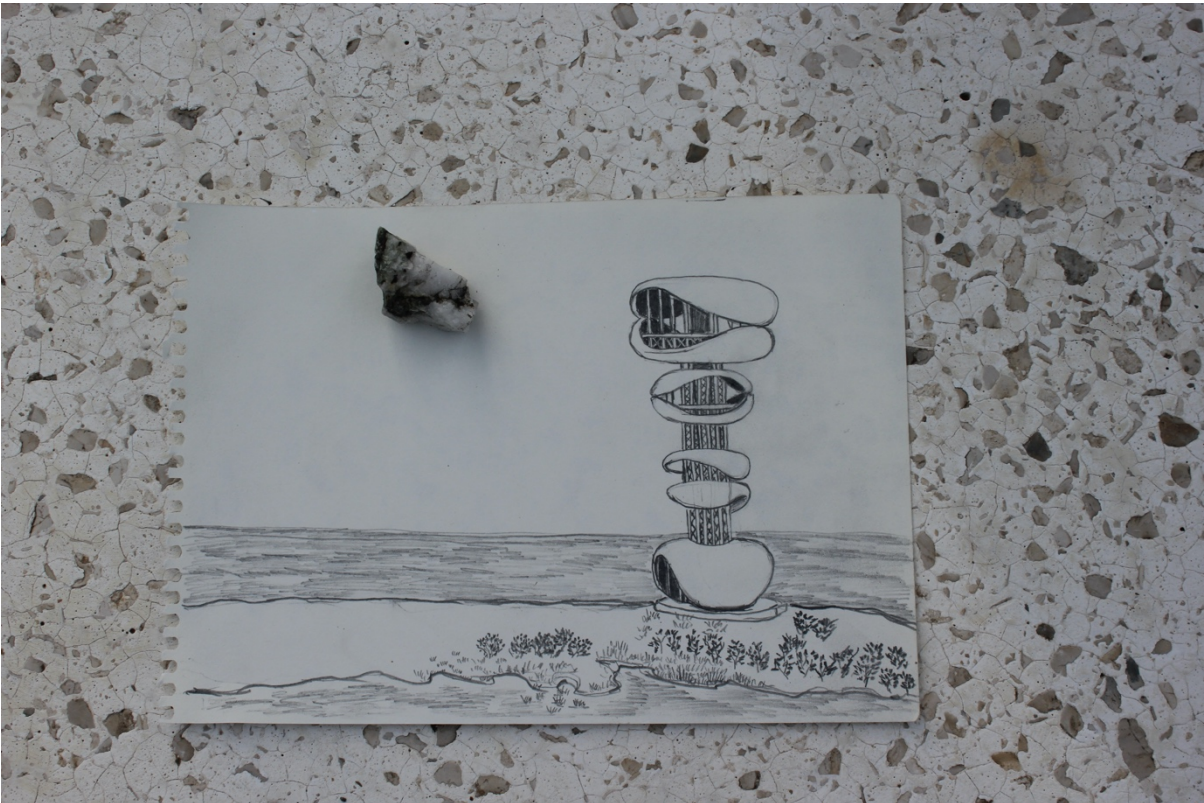


*Figure 5 A Sketch of Anaklia's alien sculpture, May 2017*

### 2.3.3 Interdisciplinary collaborations

The two collaborations that I will outline below have been especially important as interdisciplinary meeting points of my research practice (Rendell 2010). In their work on interdisciplinarity Barry, Born and Wezskalnys look closely at different forms of collaboration to challenge the notion of interdisciplinary knowledge as a unity emerging within contemporary academic context (Barry, Born & Weszkalnys 2008; Born and Barry 2010). By placing their focus on multiplicity and difference, they argue for interdisciplinary collaborations to be spaces of multiplicity rather than a problem solving exercise. As Jane Rendell suggests, echoing the concerns of the effort of interdisciplinarity implies a way of "thinking between" that challenges the way individual disciplines operate. This positionality, in turns resonates with the infrastructural commitment of my research as the relations I have established throughout my research with practitioners outside my discipline have been pivotal in informing my inquiry and expanding its scope

Since my preliminary fieldwork in October-November 2017, I have been involved in a collaboration with two lecturers based at Oxford Brookes, Charlotte Grace and Maria Alexandrescu, who invited me to design and co-ordinate alongside them a field trip for a year-long design studio they were running for the second year students of the MA in Architectural Practice. The studio, who ran for two consecutive years involving two different classes of students, sought to think about the architectural processes at stake in the planning of Anaklia Port and Smart City, reflecting on the different buildings necessary to construct an industrial city from scratch and the planning paradigms informing the present visions of its development. As a design-oriented studio, each of the students were tasked with developing a single building for the future Anaklia. As someone with absolutely no experience in design I did not participate in this part of the project, focusing instead on organizing the logistics of the trip, running a series of lectures to introduce them to the Georgian context and the country's recent architectural history and leading the exploration of the studio's main site: Anaklia. Each trip stretched over eight days and included two days in Tbilisi, one in Batumi and one Chiatura before arriving to Anaklia where three full days of field activities would take place. The two trips running respectively from the 2 to the 9 of November 2017 and from the 22nd to the 29th of October 2018 have become very important moments for the development of my research as my interactions with the students as well as their interactions with the sites have allowed me to observe events, encounters and details of the environment that I would have otherwise not been able to access. The ethnographic chapters which will follow focus at length on the details of these moments and I shall not dwell on them in this chapter, however a reflection of the relation between me and the studio, including its different participants is important for a discussion of the methods and epistemology informing this thesis. Akin to the sketching project, that allowed me to piece together a mobile and animated topography of my future field, the interdisciplinary collaboration with architects and their students has allowed my research to benefit from a multiplicity of insights and specific practices that I would not have been able to mobilise otherwise. These practices, in turns, as Barry, Born & Weszkalnys suggest have not just served my research as a one off contribution towards a specific end, rather they have influenced the

way I have related to the field ontologically, intersecting with my own disciplinary perspective (Barry, Born & Weszkalnys 2008).



*Figure 6 The students mapping Anaklia, as depicted in Scenes from Trial and Error by Tekla Aslanishvili (2020)*

During the first field visit we performed a mapping exercise in Anaklia. Groups of students spread across the entire territory between the edges of the future port and the border with Abkhazia, hand drawing different maps of the space, noting the different terrains, the urban settlements and other key features (*fig 6*). While this exercise was obviously not aimed at producing an accurate cartography of the territory, it nevertheless required a meticulous technical effort for the student to experience the place first-hand, measuring its extension and coming to terms with its different limits and specificities. It was in this moment that the notion of topography illustrated by Katz first made sense to me in relation to my own task. As a researcher observing the students I found myself learning about their strategies to chart the sites we were crossing, mimicking the topographical attention requested by their exercise and struggling in the attempt to translate the live space we were crossing onto the two dimensional map they had been tasked to produce. While I did not contribute to the making of the map, however, the labour of translation in which the students were engaged allowed me to appreciate the complex materiality of the space I had located myself within. The students were teaching me a lesson about the difficulties of representing complex spatialities and the messy work necessary to reach a satisfactory account, inspiring me to attune my researcher's gaze to things that I had previously not been able to detect (cf Gerlach 2015). Observing the process in which they were engaged, another set of processes became apparent, those intersecting in the making of Anaklia and that I would have to detect and unfurl in order to produce my own situated topography of logistical capitalism.

A final collaboration has been pivotal to my project. This has been the one with film-maker Tekla Aslanishivili. Tekla, who is an artist living in Berlin, has been working on a documentary

on the port of Anaklia that started at the same time as my fieldwork. Her work and mine converge in many ways as we share a similar political analysis of global logistics and an identical commitment to reporting of the workings of difference and friction shaping the attempt to foster seamless transit on a global level. Throughout the two years since our meeting and since we travelled together to Anaklia for the first time, our understanding of the place and of its relevance for the broader context within which it seeks to operate has developed in tandem, making it difficult to separate ones insights to the other's. Our collaboration and the uninterrupted dialogue in which we are engaged has resulted in different projects that have exceeded the boundaries of Anaklia. We have written collaborative pieces for number of non-academic publications and produced a video essay based on our collaborative research, as well as participating together to international academic and political events. I have followed closely the filming process of her documentary while acting as an advisor and featuring in her film. During my fieldwork we have spent time in Anaklia together where she has filmed some of the interviews I have performed with different interlocutors in the village and elsewhere while I have observed her shooting many of the scenes of the film. We have selected specific sites to be featured in the film and spent time observing them and recording them together. My knowledge of events and people in Anaklia has informed the narrative presented in the documentary, while Tekla has introduced me to people who have later become key interlocutors of my work. Moreover, when I first arrived in Anaklia my association with her as a native film-maker has allowed me to navigate the field as a foreign geographer whose work could not be easily summarized or visualized through props or tools. Despite deploying different media and acknowledging the differences that shape our approaches we see our efforts as part of a collective intellectual endeavour to question smooth narratives of logistics development.

My collaboration with Tekla has been particularly important for my understanding of fieldwork, its limits and depth as well as its constantly shifting locations. Born in the field, our collaboration and our friendship has travelled across different settings and countries to become a daily element of our respective lives. The continuous conversation in which we are engaged in and that unfolds through different media, from text messages to written samples, stills of her film, meetings, discussions, phone calls etcetera, is a testament to the impossibility of treating the field as a bounded object as well as to treat fieldwork as an experience that can be contained by any strict time/space or discipline. As Katz notes as critical scholars we are "always, everywhere, in 'the field.' [Our] practice as a politically engaged geographer-feminist, Marxist, anti-racist-requires that [we] work on many fronts: teaching, writing, and non-academic based practice not just to expose power relations but to overcome them" (Katz 1994: 72). Besides a simple appreciation of the multiple locations through which our conversation has unfolded therefore, the ubiquity of our engagement shows the multiple registers, affective, political, personal, intellectual, disciplinary and more through which any analytical and political work is takes shape.

Collaborative research has long being practiced by feminist geographers (Sharp 2005; Pratt 2010). It has been practiced for different reasons some of which, as Susan Hanson eloquently describes are due to "the sheer pleasure of the friendships spawned through learning and producing knowledge" (Hanson in Pratt 2010: 43), some others are related to the fundamental

solidarity that is generated between two women who work amidst a male dominated environment such as the academy and within a society still plagued by patriarchal norms. Finally, as Pratt suggests collaboration can be a means of achieving the kind of reflexivity necessary to recognize the limits of the knowledge that we produce so as to enable the localizing and situating of knowledge claims. (Pratt 2010: 46). The, painful discussion reported above on the topic of my perceived "looseness" as a female in the field, I believe, is an example of the value and complexity of these field exchanges. Most importantly, however, I believe that collaborative research can be a way to honour exactly that in-between-ness that characterizes the infrastructural and topographical inquiry I have attempted to compose. In collaborative research, in betweenness is this political and embodied space of creation, discussion, conflict and finally knowledge production linking the two or more collaborating parts. It is the space where the doubts and reflexivity are practiced and through which the experience of the field is mediated. In other words the space between me and Tekla has in many ways being a laboratory for the political space we have sought to craft through our common research.

My research has been possible thanks to the many people with whom I have collaborated, by describing the different collaborations that have shaped my work, here I have intended to point out their infrastructural role in enabling the analytical work that is presented in this thesis. Rather than a sequence of utilitarian relations, crucially, I hope to have shown how collaboration has been a transformative space where conceptual, methodological, political and affective negotiations have taken place. The notion of interdisciplinarity I have deployed to capture these collaborations is intended to show exactly this transformation, honouring it as the foundation of my own research practice.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have outlined the methodologies deployed in my research and the epistemological and political frameworks within which they have emerged. As I stated at the beginning, rather than presenting a smooth narrative, I have paused on the bumps that have characterized my time in the field and showed the process behind my research design and choice of sites and methods. What has been presented here are thus multiple layers of negotiation. Firstly, I have outlined the development of my own notion of fieldwork within and against my own disciplinary training as an anthropologist and, currently, as a geographer. Despite the fleeting relation between fieldwork and human geography, the work of feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey, J.K. Gibson-Graham and Cindy Katz is characterized by a strong commitment to localities-based inquiries of capitalist globalization, these works, I argue dialogue with and complement recent anthropological literature on infrastructure and transnational processes of accumulation. For the second layer of negotiation, I turn onto my own body as a site of struggle between the oppressive and competing desires of my interlocutors in the field and the academic culture within which my work takes place. Rather than an awkward surplus to my research experience I place my embodied struggles at the centre of my own research practice, showing how they have been pivotal to the development not just of my methodology but of my conceptual framework. Finally, I discuss the collaborations that have underpinned my fieldwork as creative and experimental strategies that have and continue to

bridge the gap between research, politics and life. A commitment to feminist epistemologies, the production of situated knowledge and weak theory runs throughout the different sections bringing them together (Gibson-Graham 2014). As I have outline throughout the different sections, the difficult processes that have allowed me to negotiate with and stick together what I call the field, are not separate from my analysis of Georgia's logistical futures, rather they constitute a point of departure for and a way into the invisibilised and heterogenous dynamics that reproduce logistical time-space. Following the Gens Manifesto, I focus my "attention to these issues [in order to] ultimately undermine any idea that speed or time economy—the grossest simplification of efficiency's logics—is at the heart of capitalism" (Bear et al 2015). The ultimate goal of my research is, following Cindy Katz, to make the complex and murky operations of logistical capitalism more intelligible in order to build effective counter-narratives and start imagining new ways to organise the (re)production of our lives (cf Katz 1994:71).
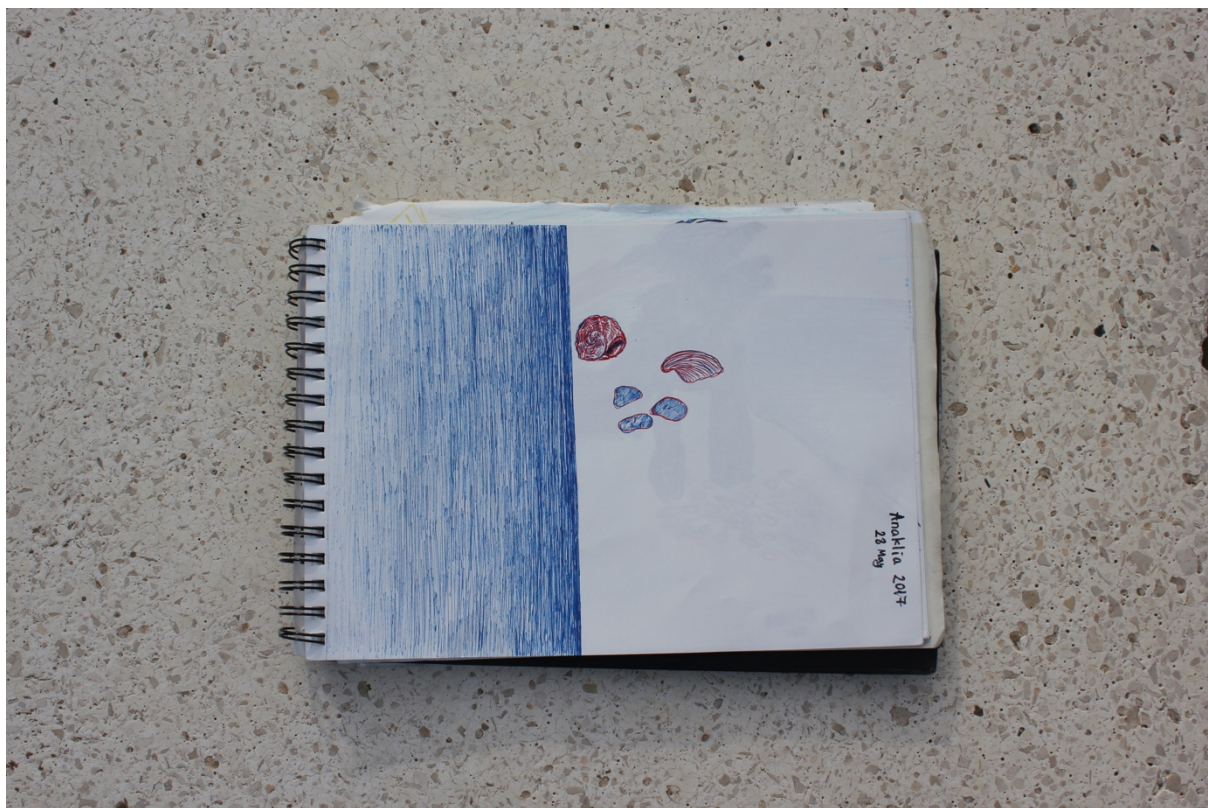


*Figure 7 A sketch of Anaklia, May 2017*

*Map 1, 3 Georgia and the South Caucasus*

The proposed development of Anaklia exists in relation to a contested history of zones of infrastructural interests, (geo)political relations, post-Soviet and post-industrial decay, real estate speculation and new and old forms of marginalisation. In this second section of the thesis I discuss the infrastructural pasts of Anaklia Deep Sea Port. Across Georgia the making of logistical connectivity intertwines a host of agencies: national and international institutional actors can be seen interacting with corporations, local populations and environments. Detecting these contemporary intersections, in turn, has entailed a broadening of my ethnographic attention towards the ways in which the country's history, its dominant affects, reproductive practices and competing temporal regimes are mobilized by the promise of future connectivity waged by infrastructural development. As Anand has argued, "infrastructures accrete. […] They are brought into being on top of already existing infrastructures that both constrain and enable their form" (2015:1 see also Star and Ruhleder 1996). This insight informs my analysis of both logistics and infrastructure in Georgia and, I believe it should be extended to the study of complex formations such as the Belt and Road Initiative as well as other global projects to foster logistical connectivity. It is crucial to understand how current developments in Anaklia emerge from the encounter between multiple historical trajectories: from the legacy of post-Soviet geopolitics, to Tsarist expansionist policies in the South Caucasus and their romanticization in a vast range of texts; and from the recent history of privatization and deregulation taking place under the leadership of Mikhail Saakashvili to the echoes of Socialist infrastructural policies and developmental vision. Through these intersections the reproduction of a logistical future reactivates sedimented futurepasts (Dzenovzska 2020). As I have mentioned in the literature review, according to Pels "studying genealogies and ethnographies of how specific futures work out in different past and present-day locations […] affirms the universal multi-temporality of the present" (2015:790). To address these multiple threads this section is composed of two chapters. In chapter three, I expose some of the dominant textualisations of the South Caucasus – spanning from geopolitics, Orientalist narratives, and contemporary geoeconomics – reading them against the grain with the aid of some recent critical accounts of the region. Following, in chapter four, I provide a more detailed account of the projects that directly precede the developments I have observed in Anaklia during my fieldwork. This is the spectacular infrastructural effort taking place during the Presidency of Mikhail Saakashvili, aimed at turning Anaklia into a hyper-modern hub where tourism, logistics and geopolitical affirmation would merge into one another, transforming the village, and with it the entire country into a hub for global connections. Reflecting on the failure of this large scale development, and on the conflicting imaginaries that merged into its attempted making, I will introduce some of the sedimented relations, material ruins and timescapes that still inform the villages life in the present.

## CHAPTER 3: INFRASTRUCTURAL HISTORIES

> "Rather, area studies played a crucial role in a new production of the world, a new *fabrica mundi*, or the invention of what we have called a new pattern of the world. Framing the planet in such a way meant that tracing new (literal as well as metageographic and cognitive) borders produced new maps of domination and exploitation for capitalist development in the long decades of the Cold War, inscribing the specter of European hegemony within a new geographic imagination." (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:43)

The South Caucasus has emerged as one of the most contested spaces left behind by the Soviet Union's collapse. Amidst the socio-economic as well as territorial reconfigurations that took place across the entirety of the post-Soviet space, this area has come to be known as a territory torn by ethnic conflicts and political instability, at the heart of wars that have threaten, and indeed keep threatening, to shake the global geopolitical order (Asmus 2010; De Waal 2003; King 2008). In Georgia, one of the newly independent republics of the South Caucasus, making sense of this history of territorial struggle and foreign domination has been at the heart of efforts not only to generate collective and longstanding narrations of Georgian national identity but also to develop a strategic vocation which would secure this new born state a place within the post-Cold War geopolitical order (Batiashvili 2011, 2017; Toal 2017). Scholars, foreign and native, have sought to explain the conflicts in the region through an examination of its troubled history as a transit corridor between competing empires, a space characterised by geographical barriers – being encased between two seas and divided by the Caucasus mountains – and the cultural liminality of a territory shaped by the contrasting and competing influence of the empires which have historically dominated it, from Persia to the Russian and Ottoman Empire (Gachechiladze 2014). However, in many cases, the proliferation of these narratives has resulted in portrayals of the Caucasus, and its different republics, as either 'an ethnographic curiosity or a strategic object' (Jones, 2015: xxi) where ethnic or geopolitical tensions are reified and in some cases assumed to be a natural feature of these territories (Tsereteli 2014).

Rather than a natural disposition, in fact, Caucasia's geopolitical positioning is an historical formation whose roots can be traced across a variety of often conflicting events. This process is still ongoing; in its making mobilises discourses, materials, policy, mythical and fictional accounts, international treaties and in some cases warfare. As I have mentioned in the introduction, Yael Navaro and Hannah Appel have argued in relation to their respective work in Turkey (2002: 44-77) and Equatorial Guinea (2019:5) that critical ethnographers must challenge the dominant textualizations of the field-sites in which they locate themselves. Crucially, what is held as a fact must be exposed as geopolitically and historically relative constructions. Contemporary logistical efforts are not just the logical progression of Georgia's history as a transit corridor, rather they exist "in the wake of" the geopolitics of empires and the scrambles for resources that has shaped the region's past (Sharpe 2016, Zeiderman 2020). This is foundational to understand how certain spaces and geographies come to be placed at the centre of different projects of capital accumulation, geopolitical affirmation and national arrival and, poignantly, how do these histories and intersecting threads come to sustain the promise of a *smooth* logistical development. Thinking of present infrastructures as the accretions of a variety of histories "draws our attention to how these are not smooth surfaces that perform as planned; instead they are flaky, falling apart forms that constantly demand maintenance"

(Anand 2015:1). In what follows, I introduce some recent critical accounts of the Caucasus that read dominant narratives of the region against the grain. This enables me to locate my fieldwork within and against the multiple threads of imagination and agency converging around infrastructural developments in and around Georgia.

## 3.1 Geopolitics, thick and thin

In his recent book on post-Soviet geopolitics, Gerard Toal criticises the primacy of what he terms "thin geopolitics" in providing accounts of Russia's foreign policy.

> "thin geopolitics thinks in universal abstractions and operates with only the most superficial regional geographical understanding. Its primary mode of representation is moral dichotomization. Ideographic and geo-graphic contrasts— empire versus freedom, democracy versus authoritarianism, Russia versus the West— are its lexicon" (Toal 2017:279).

As commentators, including Toal have argued, Georgia has been a pillar in the discourse of thin geopolitics: presented in endless characterization as an agency-less pawn crushed − or at times saved − within the struggle between Russia and the West, still defined in Cold War terms (Gahrton 2010; Toal 2017). In contrast to thin narrations, Toal suggests that "thick geopolitics rests on recognition of the importance of spatial relationships and in-depth knowledge of places and peoples. Grounded in the messy heterogeneity of the world, it strives to describe the geopolitical forces, networks, and interactions that configure places and states." (Toal 2017:279). This distinction between thick and thin, moreover, poses a challenge to the boundaries of geopolitical discourse. By putting accent on the practices of non-state actors as well as the imbrication of local agencies and international relations, thick geopolitics pays attention to the workings of what Smith and Cowen term the "geopolitical social" (2009). This is namely the historical assemblage of diffused discursive practices that justify and materialize geopolitical calculations within social space that is the daily space of interactions, impositions, crossings and renegotiations that makes up the inside of a nation state.

Rather than just a Cold War phenomenon, the elements that Toal groups under the definition of thin geopolitics, as many critical scholars have argued, are integral to the postulation of early geopolitical knowledge, shaping the relation between imperial powers and the rest of the world, including the Caucasus (Dalby and O'Tuathail 2002). At the turn of the 20th century, British geographer Halford Mackinder placed Central Asia and the Caucasus as the strategic centre of the world: "is it not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads, and is today about to be covered by a network of railways?" (Mackinder 1904: 434). He asked, suggesting that this area would draw the greatest world powers into a scramble for its control.

The discursive production of this geopolitical order is, as Barry argues, not only informed by foreign policy decisions on the Caucasus, but contributes to the creation of a mythical land:

> 'this strategically vital territory does not have a specific name, but is a border zone, lying roughly between Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Black Sea and Afghanistan. This is an imaginary region of espionage, political instability, corruption, violence and ethnic conflict, considered critical both to the security of the British, Ottoman and Russian Empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to the energy

and military security of the US, the UK and Russia at the end of the twentieth century. The contours and borders of the region are not given, but both inform and are redefined by the area's various conflicts' (Barry, 2013: 38).

The description of this imaginary pivotal zone is not only reproduced across the wealth of geopolitical analyses of the area, but it permeates a variety of works on this region. Upon reading recent accounts of political events in the South Caucasus, both from foreign commentators and local political scientists (German 2008; Tsereteli 2014; Gahrton 2010) it appears how pervasive Mackinder's arguments still are in shaping the language and focus of contemporary inquiries. Commenting on the narratives concerning energy security and the threat of warfare in the region, Barry argues that 'all of these accounts of the Caucasus should be viewed as elements of a broader historical system of geopolitical representation' (Barry, 2013: 37). Such discursive system posits the different South Caucasian countries as part of an infrastructural corridor granting access to and transportation of natural resources – mainly oil and gas – into Europe (cf Trotsky 2021). The existence of this corridor is thus given by geological and geographical factors: namely the presence of the valuable resources and the geography of the corridor's arrangement. These natural factors, however, are complemented by infrastructural developments allowing the circulation of those essential materials.

In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, Georgia, where Menshevik currents overpowered Bolsheviks declared independence from its former empire and set up a social democratic republic ruled by Noe Jordania, leader of the Georgian Mensheviks. The First Republic, as it's currently remembered, sought alliances with European Social Democrats, including members of the British Labour Party (Jones 2014) and maintained its independence from the emerging Soviet Union[15]. In 1921, Soviet troops invaded the republic, eventually crushing the Mensheviks and forcing Jordania into exile in Paris. The annexation of Georgia, was harshly criticized by European socialists, including the 2nd International. To the critiques, however, Trotsky gives an explicitly geopolitical response: "it has been said that the Soviet forces must evacuate Georgia, but the Georgian coasts are washed by the Black Sea, in which the Entente warships reign supreme" (Trotsky 1921). Leaving Georgia to pursue its pro-Western social democratic independence therefore would mean leaving a strategic territory open to further imperialist conquest. The defence of the first Republic by European socialists, is according to the revolutionary an act that is at once naïve and a symptom of the imperialism to which western social-democrats pander:

> "Because Mrs. Snowden never heard anything about Baku oil? Perhaps she has not. May we inform her that the road to Baku is via Batumi-Tbilisi? This last point is a strategical Trans-Caucasian fact, of which the British and French generals cannot plead ignorance. […] All this struggle is for oil and manganese" (Trotsky 1921:3).

The *strategic fact* of Georgia's connectivity has for Trotsky a double significance: on one side is held as a proof of the hypocrisy of Western deterrents of the Bolshevik annexation. The Great Power's interest in the Baku oil fields, and the existing infrastructure that foreign capitalist had

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[15] The First Georgian Republic was at first part of a Transcaucaian Union alongside Armenia and Azerbaijan until 1918 and after it remain independent until Soviet annexation in 1921 (Lee: 2017).

established for the extraction and export of crude, in Baku and across to the Black Sea, in Trotsky's view, provided an explicit threat to the establishment of workers' power in the region and the Georgian Social Democrats' pledged allegiance to European socialism (Jones 2005; Mitchell 2011) a clear indication of their betrayal of the revolution. On the other however, although not explicitly stated, Georgia's proximity to oil and its production of manganese ore are strategic facts for the Soviet Union for whom the control of resources – infrastructural and natural was a necessity, defining thus the Bolshevik's own geopolitical struggle. Looking at the descriptions above, it emerges how the South Caucasus has not only been characterised as a geopolitical pivot but as what can be termed as an *infrastructural space* where connectivity and materials intersect in the formation of strategical territories. Unlike its neighbouring Baku whose oil and gas fields are the object of so much geopolitical desire, the scarcity of valuable natural resources in Georgia – except for manganese – shifts the attention of great powers on its function as a transit corridor, and in some cases buffer zone as well as potential chokepoint, to be defended from enemy invasion (see Chokepoints Collective 2018). As such this space is defined in virtue of its ability to facilitate or, indeed, halt, the movement of people, goods, matter and chemicals on which the development of entire empires is predicated. Controlling this area relies on a combination of territorial domination and technological innovation, in which control of infrastructures is casted to be equally as important as the one of natural resources.

### 3.2 Through the Caucasian wilderness

Contemporary ethnographies of the 19th century in Georgia help trace a link between Imperial accounts of the Caucasus and geopolitical readings of this region. In particular the work of Bruce Grant (2009) and Paul Manning (2012) uncovers some of the key tensions at the heart indigenous nationalist discourse and the foreign geopolitical gaze framing the area. Popular geographies of this area, from guidebooks to travellers' stories to magazine articles also orient their narrations across 'contested borders', pipelines, treacherous mountain passes and military roads (Grant 2009 13-15; Manning 2012). Spanning a spectrum from the mundane to the macro-analytical, thus, this focus, as Manning argues, informs and is reflected by a specific type of Orientalism that feeds from topographical elements to elaborate evocative narratives of Caucasian wilderness and infrastructural prowess (Manning 2012: 25-29).

> "Anyone who has chanced like me to roam through desolate mountains and studied at length their fantastic shapes and drunk the invigorating air of their valleys can understand why I wish to describe and depict these magic scenes for others." (Mikhail Lermontov cited in Manning 2012: 65)

> 'I know not who could behold the Caucasus and not feel the spirit of his sublime solitudes awing his soul' (Robert Ker Porter cited in King 2008: 5)

A tension between openness and enclosed-ness plays an important role in influencing the geopoetics of South Caucasian narrations since the 19th century, that, in turn, is reactivated by contemporary geopolitical discourse. As Grant notes in his account of the histories of trade and conquest linking this region to the Russian Empire 'one of the most powerful paradigms of knowledge about [this area] is the Caucasus as a 'closed space', as a set of warring societies, closed to outsiders and to one another (2009:160). Matched to this closure was the heroic

portrayal of travellers' and missionaries' penetration into these unknown and dangerous locations. To this paradigm corresponds an aesthetic regime that, reaching its peak in Romantic narrations of the Caucasian mountain range, continues to influence mainstream accounts of the area to the present day (De Waal 2003). In his poem *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* (1822) Pushkin describes a failed romance between a Russian traveller and a Caucasian woman. The main themes of the poem are the tensions between captivity and freedom, civilization and wilderness. These themes, from Pushkin onwards populate the narratives of Russian and Europeans' travels to this region, describing at once its people and its topography. The mountain range thus, exerts an irresistible attraction for the urban dweller, whilst bringing incommensurable danger. Notably, as Grant explores, these binaries have a specific effect in orienting the Russian Empire's relation to its South Western territories. The notion of captivity in particular condenses the fears of Russian emissaries, not only about the fierce Caucasian folk, but of its landscapes, which through its narrow passages, and cave dwellings hides people and potential treasures. Captivity therefore is interlinked with domination, describing the process of trial, error and fascination at the core of the Russian infrastructural domestication of the Caucasus.

As an element of the Russian Empire politics of expansion, Orientalist representations of the Caucasus mediate between the place's centrality to the imperial expansionist mission and it's marginality or otherness to the centre's mores and customs (Jersild 2002). As the latest outpost before the Ottoman territories, Georgia is thus characterized as a frontier. Anna Tsing speaks of the multiplicity that informs the notion of a frontier:

> "a frontier is an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet—not yet mapped, not yet regulated. It is a zone of unmapping: even in its planning, a frontier is imagined as unplanned. Frontiers aren't just discovered at the edge; they are projects in making geographical and temporal experience. Frontiers make wildness, entangling visions and vines and violence; their wildness is both material and imaginative. This wildness reaches backward as well as forward in time, bringing old forms of savagery to life in the contemporary landscape. Frontiers energize old fantasies, even as they embody their impossibilities" (Tsing 2004: 101)

This evocative description is relevant in Georgia's case, as, since Russia's conquest of the South Caucasus in 1801, sublime accounts of the area's nature have been accompanied by accounts of the efforts necessary to *tame* and *integrate* this frontier into the empire. Infrastructures have been pivotal to this task. In this period, accounts of Georgia by Russian emissaries, travellers as well as by an emerging class of Georgian intellectuals, as Paul Manning argues in his book on the making of Georgian nationalist discourse, re-orient the view 'from the sublime mountains to the road' (2012:64), constructing a geopoetics of the Russian empire's expansion and maintenance. Central to these discourses is the Georgian Military Road, firstly constructed in 1801 and rendered operative in 1817.

The road's journey from Vladikavkaz to Tbilisi and vice versa is across some very well-travelled literary terrain for European, Russian, and Georgian Romantics (Ram and Shatirishvili 2004). This landscape, however, changes with the development of the road and its naturalisation as a vital artery for trade and travel. If during the times of Pushkin, the road was still struggling to

make its way across the Terek river and the Darial gorge[16], making for a treacherous journey and the constant potential of becoming captive, by the time of Lermontov's *A hero of our times* (1840), the military road had become, as Manning following Larkin argues 'an invisible infrastructure' (Manning 2012:65, Larkin 2008:245), an habitual and therefore un-noticed sight of the presence of the state in this once untamed outpost of the empire (cf Star 1999). Despite its naturalisation, however, the road started shaping the way in which authors, outsiders and locals, described the environment it crossed and its people. Amongst others, the Georgian mountain writer Urbineli focused on the road as an infrastructure of domination, capable of radically changing the life of the territories it crossed.

> 'The road [itself] is different, roads are the veins and arteries of the state, as one old economist said. This, from one perspective, is correct. Yes, this Georgian military road too— is an artery of the Russian Empire and if you want to sense the strength and might of this empire, keep an eye on the travellers [along it]. Here military personnel are constantly moving, various chinovniks [bureaucrats]; rarely do we encounter an ordinary person, a merchant, a tradesman. Why? Because, in my opinion, that the whole life of Russia for the most part is based on military force and on bureaucracy.' (Urbineli in Manning 2012: 70).

Urbneli's confrontation with the Russian road as an infrastructure, Manning notes, bears a certain resemblance to what Larkin (2008) has termed "the colonial sublime," in which the colonizing power shows "the terrifying ability to remake landscapes and to force the natural world to conform to these technological projects by levelling mountains, flooding villages, and remaking cities; these were the ways in which the sublime was produced as a necessary spectacle of colonial rule" (Larkin 2008, 36). Crucially moreover, Tsarist infrastructural projects established in Georgia what Benedict Anderson calls a 'grammar of nationalism' (1991:163-185). By connecting different parts of the country these projects allowed communication and links between regions that had previously being cut off from one another or tenuously linked. Internal roads slowly crafted a national geography, whilst roads like the Military Road traced a linear connection between Georgia and the empire. Urbineli's account, Manning concludes, is an example of this productive power of Tsarist infrastructure: by describing infrastructure as an artery of violence, generates a new observing subject, one that upon looking at the Caucasian landscape does not feel a mixture of awe and terror at its sublime sceneries, but on the contrary expresses the rage of a colonial subject at the sight of what he casts as an instrument of his own oppression (Manning 2012:71).

Therefore, if infrastructural connections – their failure and successes, but also the longing for them – have informed a large portion of 19th century's narratives on the Caucasus, generating the awe inspired odes to the mountains' greatness as well as the myths surrounding the fierce and free Caucasian folk, they also have to be interrogated as developments around which emerging (post)colonial subjectivities and national identities took shape. Urbnineli's description is particularly relevant for contemporary accounts of infrastructural developments in the Caucasus, as it highlights that 'around infrastructures the public thickens' (De Boeck 2012). New political subjectivities and modes of participation are wired into and spread through

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[16] At the border between contemporary Georgia and Russia.

infrastructure.

Fast forwarding a century from the completion of the Georgian Military Road, another strategic infrastructure has fostered new forms of politics and spatial relations. In the early 2000s a segment of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, then the largest infrastructural system ever completed, was built across Georgia's Western regions (Barry 2013:31). The construction of the pipeline constituted a major event in Georgian politics, not only due to the substantial economic investments connected to it, but also for the proliferation of narratives, alliances and fostering new spaces of political action within Georgia's public sphere (cf Barry 2013; Marriott and Minio-Paluello 2012). The complexity of relations that are activated by the construction of large infrastructure, are the focus of many of the critical ethnographies I have discussed in the literature review, in the context of an infrastructural overview of Georgia and the South Caucasus, such complexity is particularly good to think with. If infrastructures accrete the past, through their material "overwriting" of previous systems and structures (cf Frederiksen 2013: 73), they also have the ability to reactivate past modes of engagement, while enabling new ones. In a recent essay, Lauren Berlant (2016) distinguishes between structure and infrastructure in order to develop a definition of the infrastructural as something living and contested rather than solely the functional links between defined entities. For Berlant, infrastructure "is not identical to system or structure," rather, it "is defined by the movement or patterning of social form […] the living mediation of what organizes life: the lifeworld of structure" (2016:394). Keeping in mind such life-worldliness of infrastructure is crucial to read against the grain of the thin geopolitical storylines that I have sketched so far and that, as I outline below, remain attached to contemporary infrastructural efforts, including the Belt and Road Initiative (Akhter 2018).

**3.3 New Silk Roads**

In the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia sought distance from Russian influence by pitching itself as a potential key ally for US foreign policy in the Middle East. This shift is commonly attributed to Mikheil Saakashvili, who came into power in 2003 after overthrowing his predecessor Eduard Shevardnadze in what has come to be known as the Rose Revolution[17] (Mitchell 2012; O'Beachain and Polese 2010). When he became President, as he uncovered his vast plan of reforms aimed at liberalising the country's economy and declared his allegiance to the West, Saakashvili declared Georgia's "transition" to democracy and to a market economy to be officially over, sanctioning an epochal break from the chaos that followed the Soviet Union's collapse (Frederiksen 2013:9; Shatrishvili 2009:60). The new President however, who reportedly was affectionately called by George W. Bush as "our boy in the Caucasus" (Toal 2017:101) and who prided himself to have studied in the U.S., his himself a product of his predecessor's efforts to approach the U.S. and Europe. Shevardnadze,

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[17] The name Rose Revolution was attributed to this uprising due to the waving of red roses by Saakashvili and his allies as they stormed the Georgian Parliament. The storming of power took place after large protests had engulfed the capital Tbilisi, channelling the growing discontent with Shevardnadze's corrupt rule. The Rose Revolution is commonly understood to be part of the Colour Revolutions – a term used to describe the non-violent uprisings that dotted the former Soviet and Socialist space in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

who before going back to his native country, Georgia, had served as foreign minister under Gorbachev and its thus one of the architects of Perestroika, upon becoming the country's leader in 1992 commenced to tilt Georgia's foreign policy away from Russia: in 1994 for instance he enlisted the country's in NATO's Partnership for Peace Program and in the following years supported NATO in its campaigns in Bosnia and later Kosovo and Serbia – an action which marked a definitive break with Russia. Under Shevardnadze's rule, moreover as Toal argues:

> "a narrative was developed that artfully presented Georgia to Western donors and patrons within the terms of broad liberal principles and goals. A skilful geopolitical entrepreneur , Shevardnadze sold a particular geopoliticization of Georgia to U.S. constituencies that reflected they're own aspirations and hopes" (Toal 2017:108).

What took shape under Shevardnadze, was thus a specific 'geopolitical storyline' (ibid) that placed Georgia as a desirable territory for U.S. foreign policy. This storyline was *overwritten* (Frederiksen 2013) onto the geopolitical narratives illustrated earlier in this chapter that had placed Georgia as a key infrastructural node on a pivotal region for the world order. Differently from past discourses, however, Shevardnadze constructed Georgia's strategic position in relation to its willingness to cooperate and its desire to pursue the road to democracy promoted by the U.S.-led liberal order, while becoming a corridor between East and West[18]. This view, which has its roots in his own reassessment of the world order during the final years of the Soviet Union can be best understood in his commitment to the idea of establishing a land bridge between China and Europe.

Shevardnadze's plan, in his own worlds, was to establish a land bridge between China and Europe, a project that he themed the "Great Silk Way" (Shevardnadze 1999). Indeed, the idea of a Great Silk Way was first presented during his time as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, in 1990 at Vladivostok International Conference (Gorshkov & Bagaturia 2001). At the time the Silk Road represented a vision of a new political horizon for countries that were shaking off the remains of the crumbling Soviet Union. Through rail connections, the enhancement of roads and maritime routes as well as the development of pipeline systems to transport effectively gas and oil from the Caucasian and Central Asian fields to Europe, the Great Silk Road provided a framework for economic as well as political cooperation between Eurasian countries. In 1993 this vision concretised into a transnational transport corridor sponsored by the E.U.: TRACECA. The corridor, which includes thirteen CIS countries has since its inception secured funding from the World Bank and EBRD and provided a framework within which mega transnational projects such as the development of the oil fields in Baku and the construction of pipelines such as the Baku-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan has taken place. In June 2018 accords between TRACECA and BRI were stipulated to include the pre-existing framework of cooperation as part of the new politics of corridors set to shape BRI logistics.

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[18] While the former Communist's astute game translated into a profitable vocation – in 2001 Georgia was the third largest recipient of U.S. aid per capita (Jones 2015:17) – Shevardnadze's orientation remains different from the staunch pro-U.S. propaganda put in place by Saakashvili as it played on bridging between the two former Cold War poles.

Shevardnadze's vision of the Great Silk Road was his contribution to the new post-Soviet world order. Faced with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the former USSR minister envisioned an infrastructural *glasnost* to replace the divisions of the Cold War. However, similarly to the period of Perestroika he had overseen during the last Soviet years, his government was plagued by endemic corruption, internal conflicts, including the aftermath of the Abkhazian War. Despite the huge infrastructural effort that took place during the eight years of Shevardnadze's rule, that set the basis for the current oil and gas corridors which cross the country today, internal infrastructural provision was in a state of semi-permanent disruption. To the point that those years are commonly remembered as "the dark years" in reference to the frequent power cuts (cf Humphrey 2005). From his demise, as Saakashvili proclaimed, a new [infrastructural] Georgia could be born. One that nevertheless was unescapably overwritten over the sediments of its past.

## 3.4 Becoming a corridor

Three decades after Shevardnadze's vision was first outlined, and in the aftermath of an intensification of the conflict between Russia and the West, the description of the Belt and Road Initiative made by Xi Jinping echoes that of the former president's:

> "Symbolizing communication and cooperation between the East and the West, the Silk Road Spirit is a historic and cultural heritage shared by all countries around the world. In the 21st century, a new era marked by the theme of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, it is all the more important for us to carry on the Silk Road Spirit in the face of the weak recovery of the global economy, and complex international and regional situations. (National Development and Reform Commission 2015).

The notion of a new geo-economic world order to be materialized under China's guidance, has emerged as a recurrent discourse around the BRI (Escobar 2015; Molavi 2016; Peyrouse 2009). Translating this call, as I have outlined in the introduction, Georgia's is once more characterised as a crossroads between East and West. In the words of the Chinese corporation HuaLing, one of the most prominent foreign investors in the country and manager of two Free Industrial Zones "Georgia resembles a stretched-out hand, which accepts and connects Europe and Asia" (HuaLing Group 2015). This catchy phrase willingly plays with historical narratives that portray Georgia as a quintessentially logistical territory. In line with Shevardnadze's view, at the centre of this definition is an inversion: no longer a strategic place ravaged by conflict, Georgia is now an open corridor ready to receive the flow of commodities coming from the East. Recent critical accounts on the region, however, help see beyond such representation and expose the efforts necessary to sustain the creation of a logistical corridor.

Becoming a corridor, as many scholars have argued, requires foundations that are not only material but legislative (Arvis et al, 2014; Grappi, 2016, 2018). Logistical connectivity is indeed dependent on the elimination of barriers of various types. Overcoming spatial barriers, through investments in hard-infrastructure projects, is not sufficient to effectively connect the global space within the framework of the New Silk Road. An equally important obstacle are the soft barriers created by local legislation such as trade protectionism and bureaucracy and the

barriers to the exploitation of resources and labour[19]. The sum of all measures needed to enable the transit of goods through a country has been termed a 'transit regime' (Arvis et al, 2014: 33). In the case of Georgia, this regime has been assembled over fifteen years[20]. In this period, the goal of facilitating smooth business flows has been a unifying thread for the organisation of the country's economy and society, contributing to the accumulation of wealth and resources in the hands of few actors (Broers 2005a, 2005b; Radniz 2010; Wade 2016). Starting from the dismembering of Soviet bureaucracy, including its social provisions, from labour rights to welfare, the reforms that took place in the country, firstly under the lead of Mikhail Saakashvili have assembled an economic system which prides itself on being one of the most deregulated in the world[21] (Wade 2016). Beyond material structures, contemporary logistics is sustained by another kind of accretion: the precarities, marginalisation and dispossession that have reorganised Georgia's society since the fall of the Soviet Union. Effectively, the elimination of all barriers and the collapse of the Iron Curtain, have, as Mezzadra and Neilson argue, given rise to the proliferation of all manners of borders: separating the few who greatly benefited from privatization from the many who lost all they had, and creating new channels of circulation, new disputes and physical barriers between territories all of which intersect in the making of emerging logistical regimes such as the Belt and Road and it's local articulations.

Focusing, in particular, on the impacts of the large scale deregulation implemented in the country since the Rose Revolution, recent critical accounts have looked into the new forms of marginalization, both territorial and socio-economic (Dunn 2008 2014; Pelkmans 2002; 2006; Frederiksen 2013) as well as the practices deployed to domesticate the sudden absence of state provision (Rekhvashvili 2017; Rekhvashvili and Polese 2017, 2018), and the affective landscapes that these have informed (Khalvashi 2015, 2018). Engaging with critical ethnographies discussing different aspects of Georgia's recent past, has been fundamental in sketching powerful pictures of the social lives of deregulation and privatization (Pelkmans 2003). Tamta Khalvashi, in particular, traces the affective cycles of debt, credit and

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[19] As confirmed by the Director General of the European Commission for Mobility and Transport, Henrik Hololei during the Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum: "barriers are a fundamental obstacle to the joy of our people and our businesses!". In Hololei's view, people and businesses are seem as benefitting in the same way from the seamlessness of connections and trade which is promised by the New Silk Road.

[20] Currently outside of the European Economic Area, Georgia takes pride in its bilateral trade agreements with the EU, China and India. This favourable trading position, which is being enhanced by negotiations with India, according to different commentators makes the country a perfect platform for the multi-sited manufacturing and transit of commodities (Hualing Group, 2015; Charaia & Papava, 2017).

[21] Georgia is currently number 9 in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking – a result which, as Robert Wade argues, is 'almost taken as a policy goal' (2016). Currently in Georgia it is possible to open a business in a single working day, thanks to the lifting of most forms of licencing. Benefits for investors also include a flat rate of income tax fixed at 20%, and the recent introduction of the Estonian tax model, which grants an exemption from profit tax to companies that reinvest in the country. On the whole, as Sopiko Japaridze argues, the country possesses one of the most regressive tax systems in the world. Including the measures mentioned above there are only six types of taxes: a Value Added Tax at 18%, an import tax that ranges from 0% 12%, and a property tax which is up to 1%. There is no progressive taxation, no inheritance tax, and there are no social security taxes (Japaridze, 2017).

construction on the Black Sea Coast, and shows how the sprawling dispossession caused by Mikheil Saakashvili's radical reforms intersect with and is mediated through references to a mythical past, nationalist pride, Soviet conceptions of home and other collectively held affective orientations (2015; 2018). As I will show in the next chapters, these same repetitions are conjured by the attempts to develop Anaklia, firstly by Mikhail Saakashvili and later by the company in charge of Anaklia Deep Sea Port. Khalvashi's work and a small number of recent ethnographies (Frederiksen 2013, 2014; Dunn 2004, 2015, Frederiksen and Dunn 2014; Gotfredsen 2014, 2016; Pelkmans 2003, 2006), constitute an important new body of ethnographic work on Georgia. These critical accounts shifted studies of Georgia away from the exclusive concern with either ethnicity or the geopolitical conflict plaguing the region, that Jones called to problematise (Jones 2015 xxi e.g. Toal 2007, Cornell and Star 2009, Mitchell 2009), or analyses of "post-Soviet transition" (e.g. Herzig 1999, Wheatley 2005). Instead, they provide grounded and evocative discussion of the way different social groups negotiate the effects of Georgia's neoliberalization. By looking at the transformations that the country's landscape, kinship structures and imaginaries of the future underwent in response to the multiple "conjunctural shocks" that have shaped Georgia's past three decades (Ingram 2019), these ethnographies effectively challenge dominant textualisations of this area, allowing comparison with a range of other places experiencing similar processes across the globe. Reading these works, there is the sense of a layering of ethnographic insight: in particular Pelkmans, Frederiksen and Khalvashi have all observed the development of the same city, the coastal town of Batumi that grew from an abandoned backwater in the early 200s (Pelkmans 2006), to the site of the most extensive, yet tangibly exclusionary, urban redevelopment undertaken under Saakashvili's presidency (Frederiksen 2013; Khalvashi 2015), These ethnographies also exist in accretion to one another, building a recursive archive of the speculation, hope, crises and spectrality of the most spectacular city in Georgia. Albeit a few tens of miles north along the road from Batumi along the Black Sea, my ethnography proposes to add to this recursive ethnographic archive, contributing to the theorization of Georgia's present seeing through the grain of its contested geopolitical past and the multiple future horizons that have invested its territory.

The discourses outlined in the earlier sections of this chapter speak, amongst other things, of epochal breaks – of the emergence of new space times from the ashes of previous ones – whether through the discourse of frontierization and infrastructural penetration of Caucasian wilderness taming its lands and people, or that of a new global order set to emerge from geopolitical scramble or, more recently the new geoeconomics vision of the Silk Roads to reorganise the world after the Cold War. With their recent collection of essays, anthropologists Elizabeth Dunn and Martin Demant Frederiksen speak back to these multiple ruptures. They propose an unearthing of the permanence in the present of those relations, objects, affects and more, ostensibly rendered void in the shift from one era to the other (2014; Gotfredsen 2014; Manning 2014). What they successfully show is that "modern times" and in this particular case post-Soviet times and the dominant developmental visions that inform them – "are characterized by simultaneously existing, inimical, and contradictory forms of the future rather than by epochal breaks" (Pels et al 2015: 780). "From breakaway provinces to homes destroyed in war, from statues to jars of fruit, from long-lapsed sexualities to personal biographies, all of these

absent things have looming presences that shape present-day Georgian society" the Georgian territory is punctuated by an "ambiguity about what rightfully belongs to the past and what rightfully belongs to the present"(Dunn and Frederiksen 2014:243) and, we might add, what rightfully belongs to the future.

## Conclusion

> "Thus, this is a book about how specific people in a particular place have inherited the manifold consequences of a complex history but also have been and continue to be vital participants in the making of that history and their distinct location within it, in a manner that necessarily leaves them ultimately situated at the center of an open-ended historicity." (De Genova 2005:1)

In this short overview I have sought to question some of the dominant textualizations framing Georgia's recent past. Sketching a brief genealogy of infrastructural narratives in and about Georgia helps read the contemporary vision of global geoeconomic alliance through logistics against the grain, allowing to detect the permanence of previous geopolitical histories, pre-existing territorial struggles, frontier space-times and future-pasts. Orientalist discourses born during Russian Imperial expansion in the region portray the Caucasus as an impenetrable land in need to be tamed through infrastructures. Over a century later, these narratives still permeate geopolitically thin accounts of this area, shaping foreign approaches to the region and informing indigenous storylines alike. As Barry has argued in relation to the Baku-Tbilisi-Cheyan pipeline it is within and around infrastructural spaces that the [material] politics of the newly established post-Soviet Georgian Republic has largely been negotiated in the past three decades. Given the dominance of these geopolitical narratives, the task is to detect the multiple and excessive lifeworlds that spring from infrastructural efforts and the variegated politics they inspire (Berlant 2016). To this end, a recent wealth of ethnographic accounts of Georgia's post-Soviet re-organisation have begun to render the complexity of the relations between different agencies, histories and imaginations that are negotiated in the Georgian present. Crucially, these temporal sediments, affects and material ruins are "active forms" (Easterling 2005) of the logistical future that is set to be inaugurated from Anaklia. As we will see in the next chapter, many of the histories I have sketched here are reactivated and recast by the efforts to transform Anaklia into a worldly logistical hub, turning the village into a site of synthesis and friction between converging future visions.

*Figure 8 Sketch for the industrial development of Anaklia, 1974, never realised (source Anaklia Development Consortium)*



*Map 4 Anaklia and surrounding territories*

## CHAPTER 4: SAAKASHVILI'S LAST DREAM

"On a shore by the desolate waves He stood, with lofty thoughts, and gazed into the distance."(Pushkin 1853, *The Lat Horsemen*)

"There are few better ways to stage the effect of state presence than to build a highway or bridge" (Zeiderman 2019a:13)



*Figure 9 Mikhail Saakashvili in Anaklia. Still from news report aired on 23 August 2011 on Georgian private channel Rustavi 2*

It's the summer of 2011 and Mikheil Saakashvili, then president of Georgia, is sitting on a boat not far away from the shore in Anaklia, on the Black Sea. He looks relaxed in his holiday attire, wearing nothing but a pair of sunglasses, a gold chain around his neck and a swimsuit. Earlier in the day he posed for pictures with many locals who came out to see him, hugging small children and being chased by women of all ages who run fully clothed in the water to get a chance to hug him[22]. Misha[23] is in Anaklia to celebrate the inauguration of the tourist resort that is set to redefine the life of this village and the whole territory that surrounds it. The developments, that have been under construction since 2009, include a number of luxury hotels, a yacht club, and a new 540 metre long pedestrian bridge, connecting the village of Anaklia with Ganmukhuri on the opposite side of the Enguri river, the last settlement before the contested border with the separatist region and *de facto* state of Abkhazia. These are just the

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[22] A reportage by the private channel Rustavi2 captures this tragi-comic moment (Rustavi 2011).
[23] Saakashvili's nickname, commonly used by the population.

first pieces of a wealth of projects that were set to transform this borderland into a sought after destination for tourists, businesses and much more. Talking to pro-government tv-station Rustavi 2, Misha tells the story of his first encounter with Anaklia: one day during a trip on the Black Sea, him and his crew found themselves stranded at sea in proximity of Ochamchire, in Abkhazia, their boat begun to sink and just in the moment when they started to lose hope, two Anaklian men came to the rescue, bringing the president and his fellow travellers to safety on the shore of their village. It was then, after spending the evening with his saviours, that Misha observed for the first time the beauty of this bit of the Black Sea coast and its exceptional microclimate[24]: immediately understanding the potential of the place – he notes – he decided it must be turned at once into a tourist resort.

Today, almost a decade has passed from that day on the beach and Mikheil Saakashvili is no longer allowed to roam on Georgian shores, with or without clothes. A year after this visit to Anaklia the leader of the Rose Revolution was defeated at the polls by the opposing coalition "Georgian Dream", led by Saakashvili's former ally, the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Although he maintained his role as president until the following election[25], his defeat had been sanctioned and upon leaving his post in 2013, the loss of his parliamentary immunity exposed him to a number of criminal charges, including abuse of power during his presidency, for which he was ultimately convicted in absentia. Despite his demise, however, the many projects and processes he initiated, and often forcefully completed, during his ten years in power have left deep signs on the country, informing its present trajectory. Amongst these, the development of Anaklia still occupies a central role in the imaginations and practices of the Georgian state and its society.

In what follows, I will sketch out the recent history of the developments taking place in and around the village of Anaklia during the last years of Saakashvili's government. The developments culminated into the attempted construction of a futuristic city, Lazika, to be surrounded by a Special Economic Region. This project during the years of its planning and partial executions came to embody the different, and not necessarily harmonised, aspects of Saakashvili's political governance and the future(s) it sought to materialise. Through an examination of the variety of "spatial products" (Easterling 2005) composing Anaklia/Lazika – including buildings with different functions, but also promotional videos and renderings that spatialise the president's vision to different publics – it is possible to understand this territory as a site for the awkward encounter between different temporal orientations, spatial practices and socio-technical visions. These include the pursuit of a free market and deregulated economy, the fluxes of financial capital and global logistical networks; but they also include ancient mythologies, the Occidentalist horizons composing Georgia's post-independence discourse,

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[24]Throughout the Soviet Union, geographical research and economic intervention went hand in hand (Bagdasaryan et al 1968). In the subtropical region of the USSR, in particular, microclimatic studies were aimed at locating the areas for the cultivation of special crops such as citrus fruit and tea – both of which were extensively farmed in the areas surrounding Anaklia. Misha's reference to a "microclimate" reaffirms this continuum between geographical knowledge and economic development.

[25] As Georgia is a mixed presidential system, despite the defeat of Saakashvili's party at the 2012 parliamentary elections, he maintained his role until the presidential elections of 2013.

geopolitics and geo-economics and more. Unpacking the short life of Lazika, thus, the project emerges as the gathering point of different imaginative horizons and sedimented histories (Crapanzano 2004:24; Khalvashi 2018) at once as the culmination of the process of market deregulation and privatization initiated by Saakashvili after the Rose Revolution, a daring attempt to turn the borderland neighbouring the separatist region of Abkhazia into a spectacular showcase of Georgia's timeless greatness and the coronation of Georgia's European desires. To capture these complex intersections, the chapter is divided in five sections: the first two sections explore how Lazika's embryonic project was planned as a "special territory", product of the decade of deregulation undertaken by Saakashvili and his allies and an aspiring hub within global networks for the smooth circulation of capital and people. Such deterritorialised ambitions speak directly to the accounts of logistical seamlessness that I have outlined in chapter one and indeed, Lazika's promo video is analysed by Keller Easterling as an example of the new territorial formation of "the zone" (2014 25-71). At the same time, however, in the following two sections, I will outline other contrasting visions that inform the making of Lazika: firstly by discussing the geopolitical and nationalist discourses that Lazika sought to embody and later by exposing the pre-modern, and indeed pre-capitalist, mythical prophecies which this development was set to fulfil (Khalvashi 2015, 2018). In the last section, I will focus on Lazika's only building, the sole to be completed before Saakashvili's demise, in order to show how the intersections of all of these elements hit the ground (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). In the conclusion, by walking around on to the grounds left behind by the failed Lazika project, I introduce a timescape that is crucial to the understanding of large infrastructural projects like Lazika and, later, Anaklia: *suspension* (Gupta 2018).

While in many ways Lazika can be read as a signal of Saakashvili's final demise (Frederiksen and Gotfredsen 2017:131), combining all of the elements converging in its failed construction we can unearth the project's lasting impact on subsequent developments including, above all, the Anaklia Deep Sea Port. In light of the attempt to develop a deep seaport and logistics city in Anaklia, that aimed to be included in the middle corridor of the BRI and that constituted the focus of my fieldwork in Anaklia between 2017 and 2019, it is important to show how the making of logistics spaces relies on a host of pre-existing and at times contrasting histories and rationales (cf Bear 2015; Bear et al 2015; Mitchell 2002; Gibson Graham 1996). Rather than existing outside capitalist projects of accumulation, these histories, discourses and rationales, and the practices and ethics they engender, play an active role in making subsequent accumulation possible, or imaginable. As Hannah Appel has argued, observing the hauntings that populate large capitalist projects, what appears is that capitalism *itself* is spectral filled with unfinished attempts, unfulfilled desires and the remnants of previous failures (Appel 2019:33). This finding has a validity that is at once local and global: firstly it allows to shed light on the controversies investing the space of Anaklia and reverberating on the whole of Georgia in recent years, secondly it speaks to a fundamental concern for the analysis of logistics expansion: namely to upset the smooth and monolithic narratives emerging around large logistical networks such as the BRI by exposing the constructed-ness, messiness and the role played by friction and awkward encounters in making them work (cf Tsing 2004). What follows, therefore, is a chapter about Anaklia's "future past" and the different traces, ruins and scars that this multifaceted spatio-temporal orientation has left on present days Anaklia.

## 4.1 Deregulation, architecture and the unfinished story of a "special" territory

A few months after Misha's appearance on Anaklia's shore, in the winter of 2011, during a speech given in Zugdidi, the administrative centre for the region of Samegrelo, to which Anaklia belongs, the President unveiled plans to further and intensify the development of Anaklia:

> "we have decided to build a big city between Anaklia and Khulevi[26], and to call it Lazika […] In ten years' time there will be a minimum of half a million people living in the city. It will be Georgia's second biggest city, the main trading and economic centre in West Georgia and Georgia's principal centre in the Black Sea"[27].

Mikheil Saakashvili and Kakha Bendukidze, a Georgian businessman and free market proponent who occupied different ministerial positions between 2004 and 2009[28], give their own account of the Lazika project in a collection of essays on the post-Soviet space with the suggestive title: "The Great Rebirth: Lessons from the Victory of Capitalism Over Communism"(2014).

> "We planned to make the new city the center of economic activity in western Georgia […] Lazika was to be the Hong Kong of the Black Sea, its economy was to be extraordinarily open: legal outsourcing was to ensure that property rights were strictly protected, that everyone could use the currency of choice, and that infrastructure projects would be constructed and developed by private owners and investors. The sole responsibility of the government was to link Lazika to Georgia by a high-quality communication system and establish government agencies." (Saakashvili and Bendukidze 2014:161).

When in 2004, following the Rose Revolution, the Georgian government announced plans for massive privatization, Bendukidze, who had just come back from Russia to occupy the role of minister of the economy declared: "we will sell everything, except our morals." (ibid:153). Almost a decade after, the plan to build a paradise for the free flow of capital and private enterprise came as the latest in a long list of infrastructural measures to erase the legacy of state Socialism. Reading the lines above, it becomes apparent that to understand the "unfinished story" (ibid) of Lazika, we must trace its connection to the unfinished story of the process of privatization, market deregulation and real estate speculation started after the Rose Revolution.

As many have argued, the aftermath of the Rose Revolution was characterised by a reform effort unprecedented and unmatched in the entire post-Soviet space (Papava 2005; Broers 2005a, 2005b; Manning 2009; O'Beachan 2009; Bennett 2011; Gotfredsen 2015; Jones 2015; Gabitsinashvili 2019). Saakashvili and his government embarked in a deep restructuring of the state apparatus and its key institutions (Light 2014) ostensibly ridding the country from the corruption that had plagued the Shevardnadze years and laying the infrastructural grounds for

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[26] As mentioned above Khulevi is an oil terminal on Georgia's Black Sea coast owned by SOCAR, the Azeri state oil company.
[27] Speech reported in (Frederiksen and Gotfredsen 2018: 125).
[28] Bendukidze was Minister of the Economy (June-December 2004) then Minister for Reform Coordination (December 2004 – January 2008) and finally Head of the Chancellery (February 2008 – February 2009) after his retirement from government Bendukidze focused on educational project setting up two private universities: Free University of Tbilisi and Agricultural University of Georgia.

private capital – with a particular focus on attracting foreign direct investment – to replace state funds as the provider of key services and driver of the national economy. Across the different sectors that were transformed by the extensive privatization fostered by the new government, real estate became the most visible index of the revolutions taking place in the country. "Spatial renewal" – as Laszczkowski argues – "appealed to leaders of the newly independent post-Soviet states as an attractive way to perform statehood, promote new national identities and induce new political-economic relations". (2016:8, see also Grant 2014 for Baku). In line with this trend, architectural metamorphoses became at once a showcase of Georgia's ambition and a painful signal of the heavy toll paid by local populations for the mushrooming hyperbuildings that came to populate the country (Grant 2013; Manning 2012; Hatherley 2015; Wheeler 2015; Gogishvili and Harris-Brands 2019; Khalavshi 2015; cf Ong 2011).

In the architectural timeline reported below (*fig 10*), architects and activists Levan Asabashvili and Rusudan Mirzikashvili outline the changes to the urban texture of Tbilisi in relation to the geopolitical transformations that marked the country's recent history. In the ten years of Saakashvili's presidency, projects of "beautification" invested the areas of the country that were deemed to have tourist potential, exemplary is the case of Sighnaghi, a small village in the Eastern region of Kakheti that was completely rebuilt into a picturesque, yet comfortable tourist destination from which to explore the country's wine region. Larger cities such as Tbilisi and Batumi were invested by a frenzied urban renovation: with an impressive speed, former state property was sold to private investors (Frederiksen 2011), squares were cleared to host new monumental architectures (Wheeler 2015) and entirely new neighbourhoods emerged, changing the topography of the cities that hosted them (Khalvashi 2015). In parallel with these rapid and dramatic urban and architectural changes, a network of soft infrastructures – reforms, incentives, and the creation of new public and private institutions – was established to support the transition away from the remnants of state socialism into a modern capitalist democracy. A new constitution was written sanctioning the country's commitment to the facilitation of private enterprise (Japaridze 2018). A new tax system was established sanctioning a flat tax at 20% for all citizens and the country's bureaucratic system was streamlined, allowing new businesses to be created in a single day. In a further bid to eliminate the bureaucratic maze impressed in the collective imaginary as a distinctive feature of experience of Soviet life[29], a giant building, designed by Italian starchitect Massimiliano Fuksas, was erected at the centre of Tbilisi to host in one place all public services. Private banks flourished thanks to government incentives and the absence of interest caps for private loans and mortgages (Khalvashi and Gilbreath 2013). All of these material and immaterial elements are the infrastructures sustaining what Mikheil Saakashvili himself declared to be the "Singaporization" of the country (Asabashvili and Mirzikashvili 2012).

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[29] The Soviet film "Blue Mountains" (1983) by Georgian director Edgard Shengelaia depicts in a comedy of errors the frustrating maze of Soviet bureaucracy. A cinematic classic, the film is often quoted to this day by Georgians reminiscing about the late Soviet period.

# Urban Process in Georgia 1985 - 2013

*Figure 10 Timeline of urban transformation in Tbilisi. Source Urban Reactor, authors Levan Asabashvili, Rusudan Mirzikhashvili*

The pursuit of the Singaporization of the Georgian space is driven along converging and contradicting spatio-temporal paths, similar to those that, as we will see, underwrite the futuristic project set to transform Anaklia. On one side, through its infrastructures of deregulation and the algorithmically generated designs of the buildings mushrooming on the Georgian soil, Saakashvili aimed to connect Georgia's reforms to a transnational ecology of expertise, credited for the success of the island state of Singapore and exported as a recipe for fast growth for other small states lacking in exploitable resources (Ong 2007:337; Olds 2007; Chua 2019). Simultaneously, the post-revolutionary effort sought to mould and solidify Georgia's newfound national sovereignty and to place this small, and previously little known, Caucasian Republic on a global stage (Heathershaw 2014). This form of "state building through building work" (Laszczkowski 2014:150), Laszczkowski has shown, deploys buildings as concrete material loci of state identification (ibid). As constructions become fetishes of the state (Taussig 1992), the timescapes of architecture mimic "the state's expansion and growth" (Laszczkowski 2014:164). However, and crucially, as we will see in the last section of this chapter, "the materiality of building and the incongruence of building practices can reveal or perform the fragility of a state, just as fragile as the built forms" (ibid:165). As Grant, following Ong, has argued across the republics that emerged in the space of the former USSR, intensive political desires for world recognition are rendered concrete through state-led real estate speculation and spectacular buildings (Grant 2013; Ong 2011:206; cf Buchli and Humphrey 2007:21-25). "In the conditions of uncertainty" – that dominated the aftermath of Soviet collapse – "these spaces of spectacle animate an anticipatory logic of valorisation, that is speculations that anticipate economic aesthetic and political gains though circulation and interconnection (Ong 2011:209). It is this multifaceted forecasting of value – geo-political, national, aesthetic, economic – that the projects planned in Anaklia were set to, finally, materialise. Throughout Saakashvili's presidency, the cycles of uncertainty, speculation and "doubtful hope" (Weszkalnys 2016) put in circulation by the government aggressive interventions, were repeatedly broken by global geo-political events such as the 2008 war and the financial crisis, exposing the fragile foundations of speculative growth. In many ways – as anthropologists Frederiksen and Gotfredsen argue – the vision of Lazika and its Special Economic Region was the ultimate peak of the kind of millennialism that had characterised Saakashvili's government for a long time and that now had come to its last, and ultimately ridiculous, resort (2017:131).

## 4.2 Future zone



*Figure 11 Still from Anaklia SER promo video*

In the promotional video released shortly after Misha's speech in Zugdidi, it is possible to see this radical city take shape. It emerges suddenly from the sea as a slim skyline of ultramodern skyscrapers, in an effect that at once fixes the aesthetic regime adopted by the future city and mocks the impressive speed of its development forecasted by Saakashvili[30]. The video, produced for an international audience in English with Chinese subtitles, presents over the course of five minutes what it defines: the Anaklia Special Economic Region (SER). Architect and theorist Keller Easterling describes the video as an example of an emergent genre of urban porn whose template is repeated in the promotional material of a variety of different and distant projects, only superficially adapting it to the location is seeks to describe.

> "A zoom from outer space locates a spot on the globe. Graphics indicating flight times to major cities argue that this spot, wherever it is, is the center of all global activity [...] A deep movie trailer voice describes the requisite infrastructure. As the zoom continues, clouds part to reveal multiple digital sun flares and a sparkling new skyscraper metropolis." (Easterling 2014:70)

The adaptable global aesthetic showcased in the Anaklia SER video seeks to activate what Jansoon and Lagerkvist have described as a "future gaze" (2009: 26). Such gaze, that is at once a political, socio-technical and emotive timescape, seeks to materialise a lived space of the future into the present (ibid:29; Jasanoff 2015). Since the 1930s panoramas such as the one depicted at the inception of the Anaklia SER video, would guide the gaze of their spectators onto a horizon of shiny and modern urban development, New York City being the prototype for such *metropolis of the future* (ibid: 34-38, emphasis in the original). A sense of travel and conjunctional panoramas are deployed to sustain a sense of futurity (ibid: 38), approaching the metropolis

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[30]According to his speech the city should be ready and functional by 2020.

from the sea allows the observer to be 'flown into' the future depicted on the shore, pre-empting the connectivity which will characterise this zone.

The SER, freely inspired by the example set by the success of Chinese Special Economic Zones such as Shenzhen (Frederiksen and Gotfredsen 2017: 126), was set to include a variety of different yet interlinked spaces: oriented towards international trade, the SER would be catered by a commercial port and container terminal, a developed network of inland transportation and an international airport easily connecting its inhabitants to a range of destinations including Moscow, Tel Aviv and The Gulf. The region's inhabitants would benefit from a range of leisure spaces – activities such as golf are suggested as an option – and would be able to choose from a scale of housing options, starting from rows of terraced houses up to luxury villas surrounded by greenery. Moreover, the region would include and preserve the natural assets of the territory on which it emerges, granting access to the neighbouring Kholketi national park, while Anaklia itself would become a beach resort. Finally, each section of the SER was to be connected to the others through a network of hyper modern infrastructures.

By the time of Saakashvili's launch of the Anaklia SER, no master plan had been developed for the city or its surroundings, however a private legal firm had been put in charge of crafting the region's legislation (Giradot: 2013). Misha's vision was to establish Lazika and its territory as partially autonomous from the Georgian state, within it, operations would allegedly be governed according to "British commercial law" deemed to be the most business friendly legislation. While the statute of the territory was never drafted, a constitutional amendment was passed in parliament in June 2012 to register Lazika's *special* status; this, in turn was defined in the approved amendment as a "special form of governance, special jurisdiction for civil adjudications in order to make this place especially attractive for investments"[31]. Exactly what such "speciality" entailed was not specified.

The work of Keller Easterling has long been devoted to tracing the novel spatial dislocation of power embodied in architectural forms. In *Enduring Innocence* (2005), Easterling reflects on the emergence of an archipelago of novel architectural spaces, what she terms "spatial products", whose functionalities and image channel a particular kind of socio-political power. Shifting between different examples, including, shopping malls, golf courses and container terminals, she details how through "their hilarious and dangerous masquerades of retail, business, or trade" these "real estate cocktails are also critical materialisations of digital capitalism" (Easterling 2005:1). Owned by private corporations, and responding to the needs of clients, rather than citizens, the expansions of these territorial objects escapes the constrictions of centrally planned spaces: networked proliferation, rather than planned growth is their method of growth. In her later volume, *Extrastatecraft* (2014), Easterling charts the expansion of such spatio-political forms onto a larger and more powerful territories, "zones" encompassing a wide range of lifeforms, spaces, and subjects. She presents processes of zonification as central to the establishment of a new territorial rationality that recasts sovereignty to favour the global and

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[31] Speech reported in Civil.ge (2012)

seamless movement of commodities, capital and people. Similarly to Lazika, operations within the zone are constantly bending to adapt to the developing needs of capital. Uncertainty is built into the zone's constitution and its protected through a range of forms of violence. Private firms are deployed to fulfil duties traditionally controlled by the state apparatus, such as policing or the arbitration of legal conflicts. Despite an apparent withering away of state power, however,

"sovereignty is not simply erased or effaced by the overwhelming power of capital, but is reconfigured through a variety of processes and practices whose outcomes cannot be determined a priori or separate from the singular situated moments of particular forms of entanglement" (Ong 2011: 206).

The quick demise of Saakashvili and the consequent failure of his "special region" prevents us from observing "the variegated governmentality" (ibid) taking shape within Lazika, however, even in its embryonic form, a fundamental friction appears to be at the core of its planning, if on one side, the zone was set to become a space of unbound experimentation lead by the market, and an "exportable commodity, leading to the production of replicas around the globe" (Günel 2019:49) and, on the other the Georgian state was committed to protect capital flows against all potential interferences, manufacturing the favourable conditions for a form of *in vitro accumulation*. Rather than absent, state power, and the forms of violence it commands was set to remain the condition of existence for this "exceptional" space, guaranteeing the artificial environment for the market to operate smoothly (Bruff 2019).
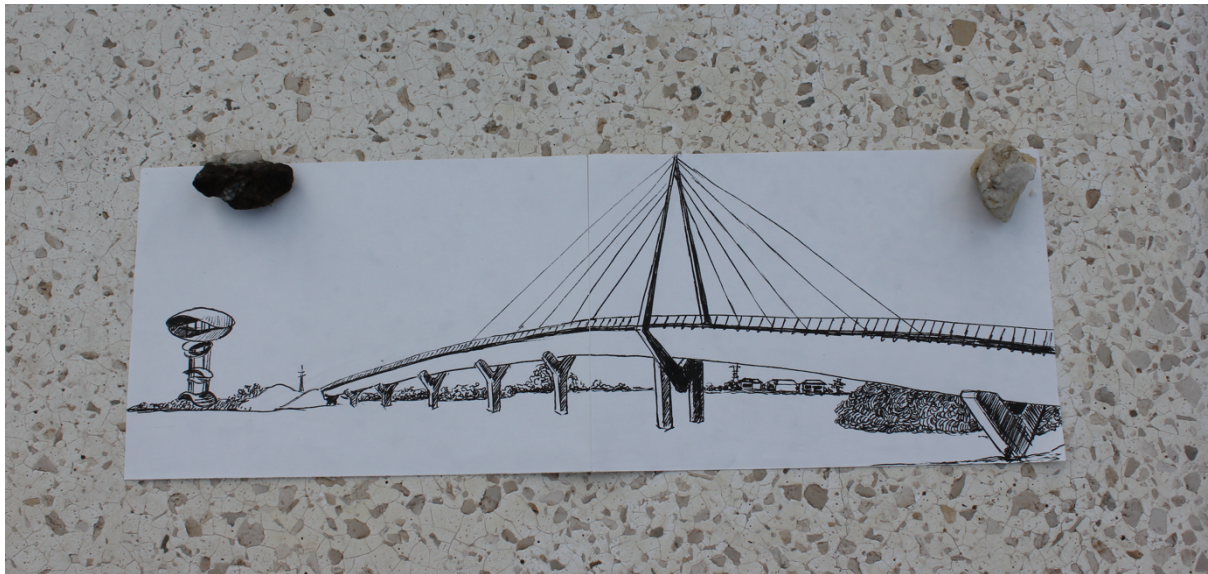


*Figure 12 Sketch of the Ganmukhuri skybridge, Anaklia, May 2017*

## 4.3 Border spectacle

This account of the unfinished story of Lazika, given by Saakashvili and Bendukidze in their assessment of their most radical reforms, only highlights one side of the logic informing the investment. As well as the apotheosis of the decennial commitment to privatization made by the former president and his key allies, Lazika was also set to be the final and most expansive step towards the geo-economic strategy crafted by Saakashvili to regain control over the separatist regions of Abkhazia. The strategy broadly consisted in luring back the breakaway territories through a showcase of economic wealth and opportunities (Toal 2017: 144-145). To

this end, the architectures of the future zone to be built in Anaklia played a key, yet very simple, role: namely *to be visible from across the border* (cf Adams 2010; Heathershaw 2013). Skyscrapers and sculptures would reach into the sky and stretch out onto the sea so that they could be seen from the bordering region, extending a fluid invitation to partake in the economic abundance of the "New Georgia" (Saakashvili 2012), an invitation, that according to Bendukidze would attract Abkhazian citizens "like a magnet" (Bendukidze in Giradot 2013). Similarly, the noise of future beach bars and holiday activities, just a few steps from the border was thought to travel across to the deprived shore of Abkhazia, suggesting landscapes of pleasure in close proximity.

Saakashvili's geoeconomic strategy appears to be strikingly similar to the slogans that years later would be placed at the centre of the Belt and Road effort by Chinese President Xi Jinping. As I noted earlier, Jinping summarised the BRI by saying that "exchange will replace estrangement, mutual learning will replace clashes and coexistence will replace a sense of superiority" (Jinping in Frankopan 2018:133). Beyond the Belt and Road, significantly, the attempt to foster an infrastructural peace, through the construction of roads, bridges and airports has been observed across the globe. As Austin Zeiderman argues in the context of Colombia and as many critical logistics scholars have noted, these repeated attempts at peacebuilding through building work are the materialisation of the centuries long imbrication of infrastructure and security (Zeiderman 2019a; see also Cowen 2014; Khalili 2017; Cowen and Smith 2009). In the case of Lazika, as I will outline in this section, rather than providing an alternative to, or being the representation of the overcoming of geopolitical discourses of dominance and territorial control that have shaped cross-border relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Derluguian 2007; Toal 2017; Bessinger 2004; Therborn 2007), Saakashvili and Bedukidze's geo-economic ploy, rests on the same expansionist discourses that informs the geopolitics it claims to overcome (cf Toal 2017).

According to Gerard Toal, since its first election after the Rose Revolution, Saakashvili displayed a contradictory, and ultimately disastrous, strategy towards the reintegration of breakaway territories into Georgia.

> "On the one hand, he saw the problem as a challenge to rebuild the coercive capacity of the Georgian state so it was strong enough to take back the breakaway regions. This was the heroic stance, the hard power option. On the other hand, he recognized that it was important for Georgia to try to appeal to ordinary people in the de facto states. This was liberal idealism, the soft power path" (Toal 2017: 144).

It is effectively impossible to balance these two approaches, as the power flexing of the former cancels the soft invitations of the latter, by alienating the populations and denying their claims to self-determination (cf Tabidze 2020). Saakashvili's own commitment to one or the other, moreover, seems to fluctuate over the years or even across different speeches within the same year, and no coherent strategy seems to lay behind the geo-economic attempt at economic leverage that went hand in hand with a tenfold increase in military spending (ibid:145-46).

Notably, since 2007, on the opposite edge of Abkhazia, at its border with the Russian Federation in the coastal town of Sochi, a similar, albeit much larger process of development and beautification to the one planned in Anaklia had been taking place. In view of the 2014

Winter Olympics, the town was being turned into a phantasmagorical resort[32]. As Georgi Derluguian argues, "in the face of the investment boom associated with Olympic preparations, the Abkhaz elites and many enterprising citizens are scrambling to secure their share of the profits" (2007:79). Such a process, very much similar to the one envisaged by Saakashvili and Bendukidze in Anaklia, at the time was perceived to provide a further push for Abkhazians to be fully integrated into Russia. Writing months before the six day war, Derluguian argues that "it seems there will be another war because Georgia cannot be expected to simply stand by and witness Abkhazia being further developed into an extension of the Sochi tourist complex (ibid). As we know, Derluguian was sadly proven right. The intertwining of economic showcasing and geopolitical flexing did not stop after the war. The further inclusion of Abkhazia into Russian influence that followed the war, in fact, was met by Saakashvili and his government with an intensification of their geo-economic effort.

While the works in Anaklia were taking place, the Georgian government launched a campaign to discredit the Sochi Olympics. As Corso argues (2011) Georgia's contestation of the winter games hinged on two conflicts, one recent and one dating back to the 19th century: the Abkhazian conflict and the genocide of the Circassians that took place in Sochi during the Russian Empire (Corso 2011:5). According to Saakashvili, the participation of Abkazians in the preparations for the games, either as labourers or investors and the deployment of Abkhazian resources and infrastructures constituted a direct violation of Georgian sovereignty and ought to be condemned. Interestingly, Putin's refusal to honour the genocide of the Circassian during the games sparked a small controversy that was promptly championed by Saakashvili, who sought to draw connection between Georgia's contemporary oppression and Russia's historical violence. In 2011 Georgia became the first country to recognise the genocide[33] and that same year a statue was erected near Anaklia municipality commemorating the Circassian tragedy.

Despite the tenuous connection between the plea of the Circassian and the Abkhazian conflict[34], and no link between Anaklia and the Circassians, Saakashvili's vehement identification with the 19th century genocide fits in with the longstanding characterization of Georgia's fight against Russian oppression as a heroic struggle between David and Goliath (Toal 2017:101). By accentuating Georgia's good will and commitment to liberal values – both in the present and retroactively – as Toal argues – "Saakashvili sought to push emotional

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[32] In his initial announcement Putin pledged to invest twelve billion USD on Sochi's redevelopment (Derluguian 2007: 79). As Müller notes the Sochi Olympics have been "the most expensive Olympics in terms of cost per event. With a public share of 96.5% of funding, the Sochi Games had the highest proportion of public money for any Olympic Games on record. The benefit from this high cost, however, is limited. Extensive construction of hotels has led to overcapacities, investors have defaulted on state-backed loans and there is no coherent plan for the after-use of venues and some of the largest infrastructure projects" (2015: 628).
[33] Circassian activists of multiple nationlaities have campaigned for the recognition of the Circassian genocide, to date, Georgia is the only country to have officially recognised the genocide, in the past decade (see Catic 2015). In contrast, despite having an Armenian community of over 200000 people, Georgia has never officially recognised the Armenian genocide.
[34] the link is provided by the ethnic cleansing to which both Georgian and Circassians were subjected, however it is hard to make a comparison between the actions of imperial Russia and the violent consequences of the post-Soviet conflict over Abkhazia. For a detailed and critical explanation of the actors involved in the ethnic cleansing of Georgian Abkhazians see Derluguian 2007.

buttons, to trigger and amplify a range of negative affects (outrage and anger at Russia) and positive affects (identification and support for freedom-loving countries like Georgia)" (Toal 2017:176). The highly performative solidarity with the Circassians displayed by Saakashvili, was thus a tesserae of a much larger and longstanding depiction of Georgia as a freedom fighter and "beacon of democracy"[35] amongst brutal empires (Batiashvili 2017). The small sculpture on the Anaklian boulevard, less conspicuous than the spectacular architectures set to compose the SER, nevertheless, materialises this struggle in the city of the future.



*Figure 13 Monument to the Circassian genocide in Anaklia*

The same struggle is at the centre of Saakashvili's address to European Parliament in November 2010 as part of the ongoing negotiation between Georgia and the EU[36]. Here Anaklia is placed at the core of Georgia's soft power strategy towards the reintegration of the breakaway territories. Moreover, the developments taking place in the village are presented as a sign of Georgia's inherent creativity and Christian response to the wrongdoings of its oppressors.

> "We are, Ladies and gentlemen, building a democracy at a gunpoint. In front of the Iron Curtain that the occupation forces have built around the region of Abkhazia, in the small seaside town of Anaklia, a new tourism resort is being built as we speak, with beautiful hotels and sand beaches [...] A great poet and a famous Russian dissident, Alexander Galich, one of these 8 heroes

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[35] As George W. Bush described it in 2005

[36] To date, Georgia does not have any official status as a candidate for future enlargement of the European Union, however the country is preparing to apply for EU membership in 2024. Mikheil Saakashvili worked to strengthen the Georgia's relations with both EU and NATO. During his government as a performative gesture, EU flags were placed outside every institutional building. They largely remain in place to this day. Under Georgian Dream, in 2016 Georgia stipulated a comprehensive Association Agreement with the EU that regulates economic and political cooperation.

that demonstrated on the Red Square in 68 against the invasion of Prague, wrote about Georgia: "Splendid and proud country / You respond to mud-slinging by a smile".

"Last time I visited Anaklia I saw a row of discotheques as lively as you can see anywhere in Europe, where young people danced just like they would do in Ibiza or Saint-Tropez. The only difference was that after the last disco on the beach there is a wall that the occupying army has erected.

Let me ask you: what is more absurd than a New Berlin Wall on a sandy beach?

But-in order to prove that Georgia is definitively committed to a peaceful resolution of its conflict with the Russian Federation - we take today the unilateral initiative to declare that Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty, that it will only resort to peaceful means in its quest for de-occupation and reunification." (Saakashvili 2010)

These statements, contain a mixture of entitlement − expressed through the recurrent claims to exceptionality − and innocence (Easterling 2005:190) − arising from the opposition of Georgia's quest for fun and its naturally gentle disposition with Russia's imperial gimmicks. Crucially, Georgia, in its opposition to the backward oppressor, who is portrayed to be stubbornly stuck in the past ("what is more absurd than a New Berlin Wall on a sandy beach?"), is placed within an essentially European horizon ("Last time I visited Anaklia I saw a row of discotheques as lively as you can see anywhere in Europe").



*Figure 14 Still from the Lazika video ( the text says: Lazika, we build the new city0*

The "enduring innocence" (Easterling 2005) of the national discourse surrounding Anaklia, reaches its peaks in another video released some months after the first one (2012). This video, unlike the SER promo discussed above, is addressed to a Georgian audience and depicts a very different scene from the generic global cues deployed in the first video. It opens on a family scene: a child wearing a traditional dress, "the choka", is drawing on the meadow adjacent to a vernacular Megrelian house[37], on the porch an old man, also in traditional dress is amiably conversing with a woman. The child and the woman are Saakashvili's Dutch wife, Sandra Roelofs and their son. The old man shows the child a traditional Georgian wooden instrument, "the chonguri", and the trio starts singing a polyphonic melody. To the sound of this traditional

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[37] From Samegrelo, the region where Anaklia is located.

music the child builds a miniature plastic skyscraper, that he transports, accompanied by the old man to Anaklia. The two cross the new bridge and stroll on the boulevard, and once he arrives on the beach, Misha's son plants the miniature building, toppled by a Georgian flag and declares: "here the new city of Lazika will be built!". Storms of children now enter the scene putting up festive decorations and drawing all together the new city's skyline. A child in a wooden boat arriving from the direction of Abkhazia brings with him some papers and joins the crowd. All the drawings coming together magically merge into a 3D rendering of the city "yet to come" (Simone 2011; Jazeel 2015). The video ends with the old man looking at the new city from the bridge, a perspective suggestive of the one of Abkhazians overlooking the development from across the border.

This patchwork horizon of development, appears different from the sleek future gaze overlooking the algorithmically generated silhouette of the deterritorialised zone of Anaklia SER. Here, Anaklia is no longer a point on a map seen from out of space and pointing out to all manners of directions – including Moscow. Conversely, it is observed by real individuals, and the generic architectural cues of the future metropolis are accompanied by a mixture of real places and vernacular references as different generations coexisting in contemporary Georgia march towards the site where Lazika will appear. Here, the SER appears thus as a region whose "European" ambitions, outlined in Misha's speech, and techno-futurist horizon depicted in the other video are portrayed to be rooted in the country's historical past. This is a different kind of future gaze, one that speaks to and amplifies the national and geopolitical concerns shaping Georgia's present in the aftermath of the August war.

In the last two sections I have explored two ostensibly clashing sets of relations informing the construction of Lazika. Firstly, starting from the promo video of Anaklia SER, I have analysed Misha's ambition to turn this border village into what Keller Easterling has named "the zone": extra-state territorial formation plugged in global seamless circuits of capital. As a future zone, Lazika would be the culmination of Saakashvili's geoeconomics strategy to lure back the separatist region of Abkhazia under Georgian influence. According to this description, Lazika seems to respond to the imperatives of global logistics, embodying an early manifestation of the win-win strategy for global connectivity that would later be posed at the core of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, this narrative of smooth connectivity is troubled by the, hardly hidden, nationalist and geopolitical discourses that are simultaneously channelled in the construction of Lazika. Summarised in another promo video for the city yet to come, Saakashvili's nationalist horizons reveal the making of Lazika as a patchwork of, at times contradicting, visions. Furthermore, by unpacking these parallel rationales, rather than an entirely novel space, Lazika appears as a site where a sedimented Occidentalist imaginary places this contested borderland as a gateway to a European future. In the next section, I will isolate the multiple threads that compose this future promise.

## 4.4 Occidentalist horizons

> "Just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed . . . they . . . conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries, and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language." (Marx (1976[1852]: 9 in Grant 2014: 501)

Occidentalist imagination in the present, as Meltem Ahiska argues in relation to Turkey, rests on specific geographical-temporal representations of history (2003: 353). For Ahiska, Occidentalism is a heterogeneous formation that nevertheless acts as a framework for a variety of mechanisms employed by "oriental elites" to define their subject status vis a vis the West, in a process of continuous projection. It is, in other words "a common sky that structures different horizons" (ibid:360). Various elements are thus at play in this spatio-temporal horizon, amongst them, a feeling of urgency, geared at mobilizing vast amounts of labour power and resources in the making of national projects, an uncomplicated relation to the past, that is rendered mythical in its seemingly eternal recurrence in the form of a desirable future in the present, and a legitimation of the hegemony of those in power (ibid 360-67). As discussed previously, in his study of 19th century Georgian intelligentsia, Paul Manning (2012) places the birth of Georgian nationalism within and against the Occidentalist socio-technical imaginaries of the Russian empire. Occidentalism, he argues, is at once spatial and temporal orientation towards a mythicized Europe: "Europe, quite unlike all the other categories of the Orientalist imaginative geography, is a narrative category of time, labour, and progress, while Asia belongs only to space and obduracy" (Manning 2012: 13, cf Buck-Morss 2002; Hall 1992). As Khalvashi argues in reference to the Black Sea coast of today's Georgia, "the Russian Empire used a network of European technologies to produce "senses of civility" (Larkin 2008; Larkin 2013) through a spectrum of infrastructural developments and a complex set of spatial restructurings" (Khalavshi 2015:72). Travelling across new material and immaterial infrastructures that connected the centre of the Russian Empire with its southern provinces, a sense of Georgian Europeanness came into existence, remaining central to the "grammar of the nation" (Anderson 2003) of post-Soviet Georgia.

Going back to the very beginning of this chapter, it is possible to read the "small story" (Lorimer 2003)[38] told by the shirtless Misha on the beach for the cameras of Rustavi2[39] as a nudge to Georgia's imagined Europeanness. The events recounted serve as a genesis story of sorts, that wraps the development of Anaklia, and its first contemporary initiator, the president, inside a number of imaginative tropes and mythological cosmologies, tesserae of the Occidentalist

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[38] Similarly to Lorimer's formulation, Mikheil Saakashvili is telling a seemingly mundane story that has however a greater significance in so far as it positions the event within an existing cosmological order. In turns, dissecting this ostensibly small story provides an analytical insight not only into Saakashvili's political discourses but into the multiple strands of meaning converging in the space of Anaklia.

[39] I heard the story of Misha's shipwreck for the first time from one of my interlocutors, a coastal management specialist based in Tbilisi, who told me that he had read the report of the accident and the President's commitment to develop Anaklia into a tourist resort in the paper and that he had thought to himself that that was "the beginning of the end for the Anaklian coast". During my fieldwork in Anaklia, as I describe in chapter xx, I visited the family that hosted Misha on that first night and they shared with me their fond memories of their encounter with the young president.

narrative of independent Georgia (Manning 2012, Khalvashi 2018, Batiashvili 2017, Andronikashvili 2011). Central to this narrative are a series of tensions between Europe and Asia, modernity and backwardness, freedom and captivity (Grant 2009), autochthony and worldliness, amongst others. As Tamta Khalvashi argues (2018), these tensions are given a mythical form in the many re-elaborations and daily life re-tellings of the Greek mythology of the golden fleece and the tragedy of Medea.[40]

Focusing on the figure of Medea, Khalvashi shows how the Colchian princess has become what following Crapanzano she terms an "imaginative horizon […] a connotative character that creates horizons, opens up possibilities, imaginative ones, that in turn enrich the depicted reality" (Khalvashi 2018:4, Crapanzano 2004: 24). As such, the meaning of Medea is not fixed and can at different times come to embody opposite tensions[41], merging spatio-temporal orientations with affective cues. Since his rise to power, the leader of the Rose Revolution has resorted to the figure of Medea to lay stakes over his native Republic's European-ness, turning her contested figure into a pivot of for a hegemonic Occidentalist horizon[42].

In light of the pervasiveness of this mythical imaginary, it is possible to read cues to the legend of Medea also in the account of Misha's fortuitous arrival on the quasi pristine shores of Anaklia. Saakashvili's accidental landing can be recognised as echoing the mythical arrival of Jason. Similarly to Jason, Misha arrives from the sea and in a moment of crisis is rescued by local people[43], like the local princess Medea, are an essential aid to the struggling

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[40]The story is centred around the actions of Jason, the orphaned son of Aeson and legitimate heir to the throne of Lolcos, who is sent by his uncle and the killer of his father to embark in a treacherous journey to the Colchis with the mission to retrieve the golden fleece. Upon arrival, after overcoming innumerable obstacles, Jason succeeds in retrieving the fleece thanks to the help of Medea, the daughter of local King Aetees and powerful enchantress, who falls in love with him after being charmed by Aprodite. Betraying her own father and people, Medea follows Jason to Greece. Once there she helps Jason kill his uncle Pelias. However, Jason betrays her marrying Glauce, the daughter of Creon the king of Corinth. As an act of revenge Medea kills the bride by giving her a cursed dress that suffocates her on the day of her wedding. After the murder she kills hers and Jason children, before fleeing on a golden chariot lead by dragons. This broad summary merges together different formulations of the tragedy, starting from the Argonautica attributed to Apollonious from Rodes, to the later elaboration by Euripides. The narrative reported above retraces the myth as commonly told in contemporary Georgian contexts.

[41] Central to these tension is Medea's betrayal of her fatherland, the ancient Colchis that is understood to coincide with contemporary North-Western Georgia. It is through such betrayal however, that Medea established an unbreakable link to the Greek hero, a representative of what would become European civilization.

[42] As Khalvashi notes, the former president had translated Medea into most media, from discourse to sculpture, as a means to symbolise Georgia's new, European, beginning (Khalvashi 2018:1-2). In one of the examples reported by Khalvashi, President Saakashvili refers to Medea in a conversation with Hilary Clinton:

*President Mikheil Saakashvili*: There are two things that come from Georgia – medicine and wine. Medicine comes from Queen Medea, who was the queen of this place a few millenniums ago. She fled with the Greek sailors and actually, she took all the Georgian treasures.
*Secretary Hillary Clinton*: OK, Medea?!
*President Saakashvili*: Yes, Medea from Argonauts . . . the Golden Fleece.[42]
(Khalvashi 2018:1)
Despite Clinton's underwhelming response, Khalvashi argues, that the reference to Medea serves here as a way to position Georgia within a shared, European, cultural history[42] of which wine and medicine are signifiers.

[43] In order to gain access to this treasure, Jason is confronted with a series of almost insurmountable challenges which he manages to overcome only with the assistance of Medea, the King's daughter (Lang 1966: 64).

president/hero. By placing his "discovery" of Anaklia within the imaginative horizon of Medea, Saakashvili links his small story to the broader Occidentalist cosmology of Georgia's independence, locating within its territory the final push towards Georgia's recognition as a European nation – at once modern, Western, fully independent and prosperous (cf Manning 2012:13). The disclosure, years later, of the president's plans to develop Lazika also spoke to this Occidentalist trajectory. The name Lazika, is indeed a direct reference to the ancient geographies of the myth of Medea as the Cholchis, the kingdom that corresponds with today's Georgia's Black Sea coast, was known in Latin as Lazica. Lazika's silhouette, approached from the sea in the promotional video for Anaklia SER, therefore, does not just channel the standardised view of futuristic urban panoramas described by Easterling and Jansoon and Lagerkvist, conversely, it resonates with a different kind of gaze, that of the legendary Greek hero approaching the shore of the land of the Golden Fleece. Converging in the hypermodern project of the special economic region, these ancient affective imaginative horizons of Europeanness speak of the constructed-ness and heterogeneity of the future cast upon this borderland on the Black Sea.

While the myth of Medea serves to place Georgia as the cradle of western civilization, as Manning notes, the Occidentalist pull towards Europe, so central to Georgian nationalism, acquires its contemporary form in relation to the domination by the Russian Empire (2012: 10-27). In a contradictory fashion, thus, despite, placing contemporary Russia as the synthesis of Orientalist tropes, as we have seen in Saakashvili's speech to the European Commission, the European horizon that the president so decisively cast over Anaklia can only be fully grasped in relation to, and not beyond or purely against, the "imaginary West" (Yurchak 2005:158-207) longed for and materialised during the Russian Empire and its successor, the Soviet Union. In his cultural history of late Socialism, Alexei Yurchak describes the composite production of what he terms the "imaginary West" (2005:157-205). Such imaginary spacetime, Yurchak argues, was

> "simultaneously knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic. This concept was disconnected from any "real" abroad and located in some unspecified place—over there (tam), with them (u nikh), as opposed to with us (u nas)—and although references to it were ubiquitous, its real existence became dubious." (2005:160).

It was an "elsewhere" that was nevertheless produced locally and came to life through the multiple and diverging cultural, socio-economic, affective and material practices that populated the Soviet Union. The Rose Revolution and the reforms that reshaped Georgia in its aftermath were specifically aimed at erasing the legacy of the USSR in order to create a new, democratic and Western democracy. The business-friendly, deregulated, order that took the place of state socialism claimed no kinship to what came before, yet, as we will further explore throughout this thesis, multiple threads of social and material relationships, imaginaries and timescapes that existed during Communism, remained as the – often invisibilised, yet still solid – infrastructures structing the lives of the populations that survived the fall (Collier 2011; Tichindeleanu 2010a, cf Williams 1958). Despite Saakashvili's disdain for anything Soviet, moreover, his quest for Europeanness, indeed, both belongs to the "imaginary West" while also reworking aspects of the Soviet past in a neoliberal and nationalist idiom. Off course, looking

at the multiple threads that this chapter has outlined so far, it would be wrong to reduce the Presidents Occidentalism exclusively to the imaginary of a "Soviet elsewhere", as the horizons mobilised by Saakashvili speak of and are informed by a much larger heterogeneity of elements. However, exactly in the way in which the "imaginary West" sat awkwardly within and against the complexities of late Socialism, what underwrites the "zone" waiting to be built in Anaklia is a host of different elsewhere(s), intermixing the country's past, with vernacular practices, global socio-technical imaginaries, ancient mythologies, their reinventions and more.

Notably, the multiple Occidentalist horizons I have outlined in this section will remain a feature of the later attempt to turn Anaklia into a logistics hub. As we will see in the next chapters, rather than claiming Europeanness through myth, for those engaged in building Anaklia Port, claims to an imagined West are instead articulated through compliance with global state of the art in technical standards, cutting edge technologies and a kinship with the great private corporations that transformed Georgia's socio-technical landscapes at the wake of Soviet collapse (Barry 2013). No longer populated by the heroes of Greek mythology, the new Occidentalist horizon is a project sustained by large machinery and health and safety manuals (cf Glissant 1989).

## 4.5 A feasible utopia?

> "Few places could have been less suitable for the metropolis of Europe's largest state […] When Peter's soldiers dug into the ground they found water a metre or so below." (Figes 2003: 55)

The speculative, Occidentalist, horizons that Misha had cast over the last few kilometres of the Georgian Black Sea coast, however, found its first obstacle in the very landscapes and ecologies of the places they were expected to transform (cf Gustafson 2020, Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020). The planned city was set to lay its foundations on the territory adjacent to the village of Anaklia however, this area, partially covered by the northern section of the Kholketi National Park[44], is occupied by a large wetland, providing an unstable and potentially dangerous terrain for a new city. Similarly to Saint Petersburg – the Russian Empire's most European city, that was known as the city built on water – the wetland stood in the way of the materialisation of the new metropolis, and informed the short life of Lazika from the very first steps of its attempted construction. In this final section I turn my attention to the architectures of the special zone, locating it within the natural environment of this stretch of the Black Sea coast. In some ways, observing the architectural form of the future city, it is possible to see them as a synthesis of the different timescapes converging into Lazika's horizon: the buildings' fluid design is inspired by the globalised aesthetics ubiquitous in the promotional videos of similar developments worldwide, however it simultaneously seeks to mimic vernacular styles and respond to the geopolitical imperatives of Georgia's architect in chief. Beyond this crowding of architectural intentions populating the few buildings now scattered on Anaklia's shore, the violent clash, between them and their surroundings – especially visible today, almost a decade

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[44] Saakashvili had preventively stripped part of the protected area from its status in view of the city's construction. Subsequently it has been restored.

after their construction and subsequent abandonment – reveals  both the forms of violence underwriting the speculative future set to begin on Anaklia's shore and the fragility of these conspicuous constructions (cf Laszczkowski 2014:164).



*Figure 15 Pier Sculpture by Jürgen Mayer (source JürgenMayer.de)*



*Figure 16 A rustier version of the sculpture, Anaklia spring 2018*

A week before the elections of October 2012, that lead to Misha's demise, another inauguration took place, this time the first constructions of the future zone were revealed. Two kilometres south of village of Anaklia a bumpy road converges onto a three-hundred-metre-long boulevard adorned by palms on both sides. Bizarrely, this avenue emerges behind a mountain of giant concrete tetrapods only to end abruptly, shortly after, in the scrubs and swamps which compose most of Anaklia's current topography. Behind the palms, on the right-hand side of the street, a futuristic structure emerges: massive glass volumes, carried by steel columns, are floating in space, as if they were trying to escape each other and the ground. Despite gesturing performatively towards lightness – by crafting empty spaces through their architectural acrobatics and rising vertically, away from the swampy grounds – the structures weigh heavy on the landscape surrounding: massive glass and metal volumes are suspended in space by chunky steel columns. This is the Lazika Justice House designed by Georgian architecture studio 'Architects of Invention'. Nearby, on the sea at the end of a small pier, on the other side of tetrapod mountain is a composition of intersecting laser cut metal slates forming a vertical white cloud: a recognizable example of algorithmic generated blob-architecture, designed by German architect Jürgen Mayer. This is the Pier Sculpture, extending onto the sea and visible as a silhouette from a great distance. Algorithms of advanced design software have perfectly curved its white metallic body, creating a structure which was, at the time of its construction, at once ephemeral and imposing.

While the failure of the Lazika project is bound up with Misha's fall from power, the problems of the project were also material and environmental (cf Barry and Gambino 2020). As Rezo Getiashvili, the environmental project coordinator of CENN[45] observed in the initial stages of Lazika's attempted construction:

> "on the coast of the Black Sea, all buildings are constructed on top of a 150-metre-wide dune. Lying just inland from there is a marshy area which lies almost at sea level. This space is highly permeable to water and covered in a thick peat between 4 and 7 metres deep. […] This creates a situation where any structure is at risk of collapse." (Getiashvili in Giradot 2013).

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[45] CENN is one of the largest environmental NGOs based in Georgia.

*Figure 17 The Justice House, Lazika*

Getiashvili's criticisms were acknowledged by some of those involved. In an interview for the documentary film "Algorithmic island" (2020) by Georgian artist Tekla Aslanishvili, Nika Japaridze, the architect leading the team behind the construction of the justice house recounts the story of the building.

> "One thing that no one knows", he says, "is that the building is almost as deep underground as it is tall, this is because of the condition of the soil, it's is so unstable and wet that normal foundations would not suffice […] the timings did not help, our project was originally not selected and we thought we didn't win and just stopped thinking about it, however later we were notified that we indeed had won the competition and that we only had few months to complete the project […] at the time we were notified we only had sketches […] we had to rush through everything".

Despite these challenging circumstances and the explicit difficulties of crafting a building that would both be able to exist in such a difficult environment and to meet the timescale imposed by the President, the justice house was ready for its inauguration in 2012. From the official description of the project (Architects of Invention 2012) we learn that the building is inspired by Yona Friedman's concept of the "spatial city". Friedman, a proponent of "mobile architecture", had envisaged the "spatial city" as the materialisation of his quest for a mode of architecture able to adapt to its inhabitants needs: the mobility of structure, according to the architect is geared to "enable people a trial-and-error planning process where nothing is completely fixed or fixed very minimally" (Friedman in Belogolovsky 2020). Not an aesthetic nor an accessory, the capacity of a building to respond to its inhabitant's inputs, expanding or shrinking according to demand, was for Friedman a core feature of its architectural epistemology: "I insist that I introduced a new idea in architecture; it is called improvisation. The idea of architecture is to build for eternity… No! you have to improvise" (ibid). The

architect's commitment to malleability, notably, resonates with experimental strain of cybernetics described by Andy Pickering in his inquiry of post-war techno-future visions (Pickering 2011), and is rooted in a critique of the constrictions of modernist mass architecture and of the monumentalism of post-war constructions. The adaptability implied in Friedman's conception entails a commitment to the use of low impact building materials, such as recycled structures and resilient natural materials like bamboo or hemp and an attention to the incorporation of vernacular knowledges. Finally, the aesthetic impact of the spatial city would have to be measured to and in dialogue with its surrounding environment. The eco-utopian vision behind Friedman's spatial city was one of grassroots democratic governance of spaces either personal or collective. What Friedman themes a "feasible utopia" is the belief that shifting the relation between the built environment and its inhabitants would enable a more sustainable form of existence within the eco-systems that we inhabit.[46]



*Figure 18 A traditional Megrelian Oda in the village of Orsantia, near Anaklia*

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[46] The comparison between Lazika's justice house and the spatial city, is thus revealing of a tendency that has become central to the discourses on smart cities and artificial intelligence (Rossiter and Neilson 2019). Namely the depoliticization of techniques of optimization and the deployment of smart technologies for streamlining processes – productive as well as reproductive. As many critical scholars have argued the development of such techniques has enhanced corporate capacity of control of bodies, spaces and subjects creating new regimes of exploitation and discrimination.

Translating Friedman's quest for environmental adaptation onto challenges presented by Anaklia's wetland, the justice house is allegedly designed to resemble a traditional house from Samegrelo, the "Oda". Despite not being the invention of a world renowned architect, the vernacular Oda, seems to embody many of the desired features of Friedman's spatial city. These wooden habitations are usually built on stilts to respond to the frequent flooding of the soil, easily movable − crafted to facilitate their assembly and disassembly − moreover, these small architectures are designed in dialogue with the humid environments within which they rise. Following, in the description of the justice house however, the superficiality of the architecture's engagement with its territory it is revealed. "The ambition of this project was to make a building as a sculpture made out of one material. The suspended volumes create public spaces, separated from each other, forming a monument, and saliently, a benchmark for the new architecture of new futuristic city." (Architects of Invention 2012). Rather than attempting to materialise the possibilities and the openness of the spatial city, thus, Architects of Invention constructed a "monument" to its perceived aesthetic principles. As Friedman himself stated, such an approach is not uncommon: "the architecture of Frank Gehry or Zaha Hadid only looks free. They are creating architecture as sculpture. But a mediocre sculpture is not necessarily good architecture" (Friedman in Belogolovsky 2020).

The structures on Anaklia's shore, rather than feasible utopias are an example of the "hyperbuildings" (Ong 2011), that have come to be the landmarks of aspiring global cities, from Bilbao to Shanghai. These are not adversarial structures, "rather they accommodate an economic system based on speculation, edifying its gross excesses with a glass-and-steel shroud of haughty benevolence" (Cocotas 2016; cf Ong 2011: 206).The building's mimicry of the Oda, moreover, it's a further element of such hegemonic architectural language. In his book *Dubai, the City as Corporation* (2011), anthropologist Ahmed Kanna argues that international architecture offices routinely channel flattened understandings of culture and history as a background for their projects. According to Kanna, these superficial evocations of vernacular styles in contemporary architectural eventually serve the state's political ambition. Reproducing local culture as apolitical, these references to the past provide solid historical grounding for project's that reify the state's expectations of the built environment, and its vision of the country's future (Kanna 2011:94-104, cf Günel 2019:52; Abu-Lughod 1987). Rather than elevating the ecological practices of vernacular architecture into the contemporary mainstream, the Lazika justice house, is a "Potemkin structure, using the image of ecological desire as its tenuous base" (Sze 2015:18). Like many other buildings across the globe, it only mocks the democratic spatial possibilities conferred by improvisation, and mimics a dialogue with its surrounding environments, imposing instead an alien structure on the landscape and fixing it deep into the soil, foreclosing any possibility of change. In its embryonic life, therefore, Lazika has been indeed a global city. Amongst its global features, however, rather than the seamless and speedy flows of capital it sought to attract, we can count its social and environmental recklessness, the techno-chauvinist performance it sought to materialise, and, finally but crucially the frictions and accidents that converge in their making (cf Boyer 2018, Chua 2018, Tsing 2004).

## Conclusion: the making of a frontier

In the spring of 2018, during the first days of my fieldwork, I walk[47] on the shore of Anaklia, it's the evening and in the distance the bridge flashes with multiple colours, the words "Welcome to Ganmukhuri" appear intermittently in Georgian and English. The sun its setting and against its light, at once pink, orange and grey, a host of different silhouettes loom. I am walking on a concrete boulevard stretching along the seashore, on each side short palms echo familiar images of the American West Coast. On the beach a small marina hosts one single boat, floating back and forth, here the water from the sea is mixed with fresh water from the river's estuary and the enclosed corners of the marina are covered by algae and inhabited by frogs. The frogs are so loud I struggle to think. Difficult to spot, beyond an occasional jump caught with the corner of my eye, they are nevertheless so present: a wall of crackling sounds, separating the shore form the water. This muddy scene contrasts sharply with the hotel behind me: a triangle shaped glass building with a see-through cylindrical dome at the top and decorative palms nestled on each balustrade: it's the "Golden Fleece" hotel, one of the first estate developments to mark the transformation of Anaklia into a tourist resort. Currently, it's open only for one month a year, in August and it stands now closed, except for the occasional wedding or corporate event. Across the skybridge on the last strip of sand framing the estuary of the Enguri river a ten metre tall outlandish building stands alone. This white structure made of concave disks that meet in pairs erected on a vertical pole resembles a cartoon version of a UFO. Years of exposure to the salty winds from the sea and the debris from the river have covered the structure in rust and minuscule lichens, rendering its comical shape eerie, yet uncannily merged with the sub-tropical coastal landscape that surrounds it. On the opposite shore, beyond the marina a large gazebo-like structure, freely inspired by the architectures composing Beijing's "Forbidden City" was originally planned to host a Chinese restaurant and now provides shelter for the odd fisherman, seeking to make the most of the rich waters of the estuary. Walking south for other ten minutes, I finally reach the site where the justice house and the pier sculpture were built, today locals just call it Lazika. As I reach them, the buildings of the new city lie empty. Despite being less than a decade old, they look decrepit. Their daring forms have not responded well to the salty winds and the high humidity of the Black Sea shore and their curved bodies are rusting and rotting. The frequent rains have rusted their edges, and the metal coatings has started to peel off due to the salty air and winds. Such a capitulation to the elements, however, does not result in the structures merging with their surroundings, on the contrary their alien-ness seems accentuated. The profound, almost stubborn, clash between these futuristic blobs and the ecosystems that encompass them is condensed in a single image visible to anyone who comes close to Mayer's abandoned Pier Sculpture: a host of broken wings appear scattered on the floor below it, as marine birds confused by its uneven shapes crash into its edges and become trapped into its labyrinthic cage, eventually falling into the ground to die mutilated.

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[47] The act of walking amidst the ruins of projected futures also frames Martin Demant Frederiksen's fieldwork in Batumi (2013)

*Figure 19  The Golden Fleece hotel*


*Figure 20 Alien sculpture on the northern shore of the Enguri River*

*Figure 21 Abandoned Chinese-inspired restaurant in Anaklia*



*Figure 22 Broken wings under the Pier Sculpture*

The landscape I am crossing has been permanently transformed since the first arrival of Saakashvili on these shores. The bridge, the boulevards, the hotels, the restaurants and finally, Lazika, none of these developments were here before the former President embarked on the task of turning this borderland into the most spectacular territory of the new Georgia. In the immediate aftermath of Saakashvili's demise, as Khalvashi reports, the new Speaker of Parliament, Davit Usupashvili, from the coalition Georgia Dream who defeated Misha's United National Movement addressed the legacy of the former government's architectural frenzy:

> "These buildings are like monuments installed by Misha Saakashvili. It shows how one should not rule the country and therefore, it has to remain like that. I think our public has to know and understand that these kinds of things should not be done in this country and city, and this is an important signal [to our society]." (Usupashvili in Khalvashi 2015:100)

The ruins of the former president's unfinished projects, in Lazika as well as other sites across the country, therefore, were left by the new rulers as a *memento mori* for the population and the government alike[48]. As we will see in the remaining chapters of this thesis, this attempt to *make Lazika past* (Frederiksen 2013: 73), this blanket rejection of Saakashvili's "state building through building work" (Laszczkowski 2014:150) in favour of what promised to be a less monumental but more pervasive politics of reforms that would mend the damage done by years of unbound privatization and pillage of public goods, unfortunately never became a reality. Rather than a "clean break", what I have observed throughout my fieldwork is the enduring legacy of the projects initiated under Saakashvili.

Seeking to transform the former coastal village into a space of speculation and *in vitro* capital accumulation, Saakashvili turned the borderland of Anaklia into a frontier (cf Reeves 2014). As Günel argues in her study of the futuristic city of Masdar in the UAE,

> "the term *frontier*, originally meaning border or borderline, took on new resonance during the settlement of the American West in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this narrative, heroic pioneers headed to an unknown geography full of unpredictable dangers as well as antagonistic competitors, where they would make use of self-control, self-reliance, and humility to open up a new frontier." (Günel 2019:48)

Rather than just defining a space at the border, the term frontier, embodies a sense of "undiscovered potential" (ibid), as I discussed in relation to the Russian Empire's narrations of the South Caucasus, "frontiers are not just edges; they are particular kinds of edges where the expansive nature of extraction comes into its own" (Tsing: 2004: 20). Despite its failure, notably, the project to turn Anaklia into a site where potential futures could be materialised still permeates its territory (cf Günel 2019:56). As we will see in the rest of the thesis, the ruins – material and non – of Saakashvili's state building, rather than intransigent reminders of the failures of the previous government, survived as much more complex and multifaceted objects,

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[48] A remarkably different behaviour from that of Misha himself who, upon gaining power embarked in an unprecedented architectural cleansing of the country, destroying a vast array of monuments and signs from the Soviet era. A sad example is the destruction of the WW2 memorial in Kutaisi in 2009. As the forty-six-metre-high structure was being blown up, two people were killed by flying debris and several others injured.

at once stubborn infrastructures preventing radical change, symbols of past trauma, accretions and hauntings, materialisation of endless uncertainty as well as of persistent affective dispositions towards the future (cf Navaro Yashin 2012:14; Weszkanys 2016; Pelkmans 2006; Frederiksen 2013).

Beyond Saakashvili moreover, Anaklia and the clashing horizons it has come to embody, has survived as a pivot around which another wave of imaginations, investment, speculation, policy, conflicts and hope have converged. It has, in substance remained a frontier. Though the strange landscape of the abandoned Lazika is mostly desolate, too far from the centre of the village to be frequently crossed by people on their daily errands, nevertheless it has developed a life of its own, the traces of which are scattered across its architectural elements. The building is monitored twenty-four hours a day by security personnel, but at night local boys use the unfinished boulevard as a racetrack,  the words "start" and "finish" are chalked in English on the tarmac; and despite being regularly erased by street sweeper, they always reappear in time for the next race.

Crucially, as Gupta has argued, in so far as these ruins are still an integral part of the unfinished project of turning Anaklia into a worldly hub

> "this is a form of ruination with a very particular temporal structure: they are the ruins not of the past, but of the future. a temporary zone between the start of projects and their completion. Ruination is not about the fall from past glory but this property of in-between-ness, between the hopes of modernity and progress embodied in the start of construction, and the suspension of those hopes in the half-built structure. Rubble here stands neither for senescence nor for anticipation, but for the suspension between what was promised and what will actually be delivered. We should think of this suspension, rather, […] as its own condition, its own end" (Gupta 2018:70).

As I have noted in the introduction to this chapter, coming to terms with this pervasive material ruination and with the multiple horizons that populated the Lazika project as Hannah Appel argues bring us to see capitalism *itself* as spectral (2019:33). In this sense, the suspension perceived by Gupta is indeed, rather than an accident, a temporality central to the iteration of large infrastructural projects, one, as we will see across the different chapters that is domesticated in different ways by and for the various publics that surround the Anaklia projects.

Many scholars have noted how large capitalist projects, despite claiming homogeneity and smoothness, actively feed off and incorporate the heterogeneous forces, practices, ethics and desires that they encounter on the way (Tsing 2009; 2004 Bear et al 2015; Yanagisako, Rofel & Segre 2018; Gibson Graham 1996). Similarly, in this chapter I have sketched the recent history of the developments taking place around the village of Anaklia during the last years of Saakashvili's government. In doing so I have introduced some of the frictions and contrasting projects populating the planned special city of Lazika. These belonged to three converging and clashing sets of relations materialised in Anaklia casting it at once as a planned zone of unbound financial experimentation, a spectacle of economic and geopolitical success, an ancient shore marked by a mythical destiny and finally, the last tesserae of Georgia's quest to Europeanness. Rather than just a collection of different imaginaries, these are concrete spatiotemporal, social and economic relations that still haunt the village to this day. Despite Saakashvili's demise, and

the exposure of his abuses by the opposition party that took his place, his latest project was given a new life, under a slightly different coating but maintaining essentially the same connotations. It is within this – only partially new – phase of Anaklia's development that my fieldwork took place between 2017 and 2019. Throughout the chapters that follow, therefore, a similar, more in depth exercise of unpacking and exposing will take place: focusing on present day Anaklia, I excavate the sediments of past infrastructural histories and visions, economies, timescapes and competing socio-technical imaginaries that intersect in this frontier and shape the infrastructural project that, once more, is set to radically transform it shores.



*Figure 23 Chalked words on the abandoned boulevard of Lazika*

**PART 3: LOGISTICS AND ITS FUTURE(S): ANAKLIA DEEP SEA PORT**

After the demise of Saakashvili, the plans to develop Lazika came to an abrupt halt. In the aftermath of his election as Prime Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, the leader of Georgian Dream, the party that ousted Saakashvili in 2012, declared that the different projects composing Lazika were "jokes that no one was taking seriously" (FactCheck 2014). While such a sentiment, as argued by Frederiksen and Gotfredsen seems to have been shared by many of those observing Saakashvili's hyperbolic performances towards the end of his mandate (Frederiksen and Gotfredsen 2017), almost a decade after Saakashvili's first attempt to build a logistics hub on the shores of Anaklia, those "jokes" seem to be still on everyone's lips. Yet only a year after his damning indictment of the project, Bidzina[49] announced a tender for the construction of "the largest port in the country", in Anaklia (Ivanishvili 2013); indeed the new project, he declared, was to be even larger than the one envisaged by Misha, reaching an annual capacity of a hundred million tons of cargo over nine phases of development (ADC 2017). Following a scoping report, a tender was announced in 2014. Of the twelve international companies that expressed interest in the project, the Anaklia Development Consortium (ADC), composed of the U.S. construction company Conti International and TBC Holding, a company related to Georgia's biggest private bank, TBC, was announced as the winner of the tender in February 2016. The corporation was then awarded a fifty two-year concession to build and later operate the deep seaport. Alongside this infrastructure, ADC was awarded the freehold of five hundred and fifty hectares of land adjacent to the port territory to develop a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the zone, as specified in the Consortium's website "will support the Port's operations and trade and be home to local and international entrepreneurship. It will be administered with a tax-free regime to incentivize shipping companies, manufacturers, businesses and employees to relocate and use the Port." (ADC 2017). A few months after winning the tender, in the spring of 2017, ADC announced the construction of Anaklia City a business town to be built within the SEZ territory. In the words of its newly appointed CEO, Keti Bochorishvili, the development set out to become "a future economic city […] where modern technologies will be maximally integrated. It will be based on smart city principles and will be sustainable and ecologically clean" (Bochorishvili in Forbes 2017). The final project for Anaklia, thus, comprising of nine phases, was set to include: a deep seaport with an ultimate capacity of one hundred million tons; the "City of the Future" (Forbes 2017) with its Special Economic Zone and a highway and railway connection, to be provided by the state. In the summer of 2017 the operations to prepare the site begun, including the removal of houses and cultivated plots of lands that occupied the space and the resettlement and compensation of those who lived there[50]. Finally, in December 2017 a ground breaking ceremony was held where the then Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili cut the ribbon of the port territory, officially sanctioning the start of the works.

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[49] Ivanishvili, similarly to Saakashvili, is commonly referred to with his first name.
[50] A more detailed description of the village and the relocation and compensation process can be found in the following section.

The port project, surrounded by the planned smart city, can be seen, to be "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1984:136 cf Barry and Thrift 2007; Jazeel 2019) as the previous development. In the previous chapter I have sketched how the promise of the imaginative horizon of Lazika emerged within and against the geo-strategic visions, infrastructural efforts towards deregulation and Occidentalist desires that have dominated Georgia's recent past. The construction of a mega infrastructure in Anaklia, I have argued came to be central to the final materialisation of Saakashvili's millenarian vision, restructuring the country since the Rose Revolution. During the ground breaking ceremony held in December 2017 to mark the beginning of the works in the port territory, the then Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili defined Anaklia port as "the project of the century" and remarked, "This is a place where Europe meets Asia and this is the main thing. Georgia will be shown throughout the world as a country of international cooperation, stability and peace. […] I would like to congratulate Georgia on the day […] as a new Georgia starts here. It is no exaggeration." (Kvirikasvili 2017). Despite the rejection of Misha's vision by the new government, in emphatically naming the port, the "project of the century", Kvirikashvili has renewed Anaklia's positioning at the core of the country's futuristic developmental strategy (cf Pels et al 2015).

Despite these important parallels, there are substantial differences. It is with these differences that the next two chapters are concerned, showing, in turn, how they intersect and recast pre-existing relations and their repetitions (Thrift 2006). It is these intersections, I argue, that sustain the (re)production of Anaklia's new projects, working to materialise within its space a logistical future connected to the Belt and Road Initiative. Throughout the next two chapters, the labour these intersections do is understood primarily in temporal terms as "work in and of time" (Bear 2016). What other times are necessary to sustain the futuristic promise of Anaklia port? What is the relationship between these different temporalities? Who are the subjects involved in making and unmaking these timescapes? And, finally, what are their tools?

In the literature review I have introduced some of the temporal disjunctions surrounding Anaklia port by means of a comment of a young anthropologist who defined the projects taking place in the village as similar to a carrot leading a hungry donkey further and further away without ever allowing to be eaten. Rather than the agents of a linear transition to progress, infrastructural projects in Anaklia are "a device for stretching forward the passage of time, an apparatus for the creation of a delay" (Mitchell 2020). In chapter five I look into this production of delay, exploring the financial conditions of existence of the port. Unlike Saakashvili's fantastic city that was to be built with state funding, Anaklia Port is a public private partnership. The first phase of its development, set to terminate in late 2020 and with an estimate cost of six hundred million is to be financed through a thirty five/sixty five equity to debt structure, meaning that the consortium was in charge of finding enough investors to cover sixty five percent of the phase's cost. Building on Timothy Mitchell's recent work, I place the necessity to secure investors' profit at the core of a specific relation to the future: capitalisation (Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016). Transit infrastructures, according to Mitchell, are not just capable to *connect* distant locations, rather by harnessing their material and political durability they can become vehicles to *return* future profit into the present (Mitchell 2020). My contention is that this temporal movement, from the future into the present, is fundamental to

understand the making of logistics in Anaklia. What follows is thus an analysis of the different strategies deployed to engender the temporal displacement that is capitalisation and its relation to other future-orientations that converge in the port. What I expose is that all manner of actors, imaginaries and relations are put to work *in the present* in order to bring into existence a future of profit. Seen through the prism of capitalisation, in turn, standards and corporate ethics are shown to be crucial rituals in the materialised bet over the durability of capital accumulation that characterised the development of debt-financed infrastructure (Chua 2018).

During the second half of my fieldwork and throughout the writing process, moreover, the port development has come to be at the centre of a multi-layered public controversy that in January 2020 has resulted in the abrogation of the contract between the state and ADC and the halting of the works until a new developer is found. It is not within the scope, nor it is the aim of the thesis, to produce an investigative report on the controversies surrounding the port, nor to find out the "truth" about the claims of opposing parties. At the end of this chapter, conversely, I discuss this still unresolved controversy as a key moment in the struggle over the ports ability to secure the temporal gap necessary to capitalisation. The contested interruption of the project allows to observe the geometries of power – between the private company, the Georgian state and private investors (cf Hibou 2004) - necessary to orchestrate the successful capitalisation of the future.

In chapter six I take up another aspect of the future promise enveloping the Anaklia Port project under ADC's management: corporate sustainability. Building on ADC's commitment to transparency and international standards that I detail at the end of the previous chapter, here I zoom inside the company to show not just that standards are laboured – as it's my concern in chapter five – but, crucially, that the implementation of standards performs labour of different kinds: sorting subjectivities within the company, establishing new and old borders between ADC and its exterior and finally, obscuring the persistence of old forms of exploitation. These "acts of labour" (Bear 2014:18) are indeed temporal in that they position ADC and some of its subjects on a temporal horizon od progress, while leaving others in a timespace defined by its obduracy to modernity (Manning 2012).  Across both chapters, I observe the ways in which ADC brought into existence its own performative space/time by literally embedding different kinds of future within Anaklia (Callon 1987; Mitchell 2002, 2005; Barry 2013:24, Harvey and Knox 2015:87-89; Tsing 2000a). Such embedding requires great amounts of reproductive labour. Stretching the many folds of this space/time, these two chapters follow Hannah Appel, in treating logistics "*as a project*, rather than as a context" (2019: 2 my emphasis). As such, its apparent seamlessness is constantly reproduced through different acts of work and negotiations with the repetitions that populate our worlds (Thrift 2005:3; Bear 2014).

- 2005 Misha Saakashvili's shipwreck in Anaklia.
- 2006-2007 large scale redevelopment of the village as a tourist resort.
- 2008 1-12 August, Russo-Georgian War also known as the August War.
- 2009-2011 completion of tourist regeneration – bridge, boulevard, Golden fleece hotel and more.
- 2011 Lazika is announced.
- 2012 Justice House and Pier Sculpture are inaugurated.
- 2012 October, 2nd Misha loses the Presidential elections.
- 2013 "Georgian Dream" wins parliamentary elections.
- 2014 tender for Anaklia development.
- 2015 seven companies shortlisted.
- 2016 Anaklia Development Consortium wins the tender.
- 2107 November, 26-27 Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum.
- 2017 December, beginning of the works for Anaklia Deep Sea Port.
- 2018 December the inquiry against Khazaradze and Japaridze becomes public.
- 2019 Khazaradze steps from TBC bank.
- 2019 February Poti port announces expansion.
- 2019 April Minister of Infrastructure Maia Tskitishvili announces that ADC has not met funding deadlines.
- 2019 May Poti Port is granted expansion and ADC threatens to interrupt the development of Anaklia. The situation is solved by an intervention from Minister of the Economy Natia Turnava reversing Poti Port's expansion permit.
- 2019 June Ministry publishes the 8 demands of major investors to back Anaklia. The ministry announces that it will not concede on traffic guarantees.
- 2019 June Mamuka Khazaradze steps down from ADC.
- 2019 July Mamuka Khazaradze announces creation of a political movement.
- 2019 July Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze are charged with money laundering.
- 2019 July the government grants ADC an extension for complying with funding requirements.
- 2019 August, Conti Group leaves ADC.
- 2019 September 12th Lelo, Mamuka Khazaradze's political party, is born.
- 2019 December deadline for securing investments.
- 2020 January 9th the Georgian Government cancels the contract with ADC due to the company's failure to secure investments.

CHAPTER 5: CAPITALISING THE LOGISTICAL FUTURE

The chapter is divided in two parts. In the first, I outline the socio-technical imaginary that surrounds the project to build a deep sea port on this corner of the Georgian Black Sea coast. The pursuit of connectivity sanctioned by the BRI is conjured by ADC and the Georgian government alike in the form of an enticing horizon of development waging a promise of progress. Throughout my fieldwork I have observed the Consortium describing their actions as motivated by specific idea of capitalist time/space: *calculability, competitiveness*, and *expertise* are its key pillars. It is this logistical temporal accounting that ADC ostensibly pitches against Saakashvili's megalomania and the failed projects it engendered[51]. A different picture, however, emerges from my engagement with the materials produced by the company, not the natural outcome of rational economic accounting behind the development of the port there is instead "a relational performance of productive powers that exceed formal economic models, practices, boundaries, and market devices" (Bear et al 2015) conjuring the future infrastructure as a competitive, reliable and durable asset.

In the second part of this chapter, drawing from critical ethnographies of finance and expertise I explore the bodily, gendered efforts that sustain the capitalisation of Anaklia Port (Ho 2009; 2015; Hart and Ortiz 2014; Harvey et al 2015; Bear 2013). Far from being the effortless materialization of market efficiency or space/time compression (Hart and Ortiz 2014), as I will show, the capitalisation of this infrastructure, or attempts towards it, "is engineered as a heterogenous mix of technical, material, legal, political", bodily and discursive elements geared at capturing the future in the present (Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016:741; Mitchell 2020). Exploring the masculine performance of economic efficiency and calculability addressed to the port's publics and potential investors, I document the labour necessary to sustain the promised future(s), the imaginaries it seeks to embed itself within, and the contradicting timescapes it mobilises. What I show is crucial to my overall analysis: namely that the infrastructural future waged by Anaklia is (re)produced, through all manners of efforts in the present.

## 5.1 Infrastructure and capitalisation

The 19th century French word, *logistique*, used under Napoleon to describe the art of sustaining an army in the field, derives from the Geek term "logistikos" indicating mathematical reasoning, rationality and calculation (Cowen 2014:27). In her seminal genealogy of contemporary logistical networks, Deborah Cowen focuses on the imbrication of war and trade that this etymology and the subsequent history of logistics expansion demonstrates (2014). Conversely, I want to reflect upon the aspect of "calculation", and on a specific techno-politics

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[51] Marylin Strathern highlights the dual credentials in moral reasoning and in the methods and precepts of financial accounting" (2000).

of rationality that has constituted the backbone of expanding logistical networks across the world alongside and instrumental to the practices of warfare, extraction and to the submission of lands and people (cf Mitchell 2002). The rise of logistics as a central element of contemporary global capitalism has been tightly linked to the production of new forms of the spatio-temporal organization of global space, which in turn feed off, and are contested by, multiple and localized landscapes. Logistics as we commonly understand it today "was made possible by new practices (of development, management, and government, to name a few), new claims to expertise, new equivalences, and new silences" (Mitchell 2002:83). Through these novel practices, the rise of "logistics" as the chief component of contemporary capitalism has constituted a new socio-technical imaginary to gloss over the messiness and violence of the operations at stake in the reproduction of global processes accumulation. Words like "streamlined production" and "seamless flows" have entered daily language obscuring trough their accent on efficiency and velocity the processes necessary to deliver a fast and responsive production, distribution and circulation (Chua et al 2018 cf Bear et al 2015). Within this imaginary the vital functions and needs of workers engaged and the vast and diverse ecosystems that must be crossed to secure speedy distribution are reduced to obstacles to be overcome through better algorithms and faster transit infrastructure (Rossiter 2016; Rossiter and Neilson 2019). Notably, this new regime of networked operations across wide spaces did not necessarily produce a more connected world, it did not annihilate space through time as some commentators have suggested (Harvey 2001; Virillo 1986; cf Tsing 2000b, 2009; Bear et al 2015; Mitchell 2014), but it elevated the realm of movement into a site of power, recasting struggles over control of space around a new axis: circulation (Cowen 2014). Contemporary logistics, therefore can be defined as "an enormous organisation of things and powers" across space/time (Simmel 1950). A stretching atlas of topographies, ethics and spatio-temporal relations organised and put in circulation by a sociotechnical imaginary based on technological advancements, calculability and seamlessness. Within this new era, resources are not to be extracted only in specific sites but reside in the network itself. Infrastructures, therefore are not just the means through which resources are made accessible, they are resources themselves: durable structures that can generate the potential for income over the long term and as such generators of profit in the present:

> "Large infrastructure projects move investment paper, in the form of bonds, bank loans, and share certificates. They are built not to transport these financial instruments across space, but to provide the means to create them and carry them through time." (Mitchell 2020)

In his most recent work, Timothy Mitchell introduces his analysis of the notion of capitalisation (Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca[52] 2016, Mitchell 2020). A common term in the financial world, capitalisation for Mitchell provides a way to address a particular relation to the future that he deems to be defining of contemporary financialised capitalism. Building on the work of political economists Jonathan Nitzan and Simon Bichler, Mitchell, describes capitalisation as a "particular way of rendering the future available in the present" in order to

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[52] In this long interview with Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca, Timothy Mitchell outlines his conceptualisation of the relation between infrastructures and time mediated by capitalisation (2016).

extract profits from it (Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016: 740, Nitzan and Bichler 2009:212). Specifically, by building long lasting structures, such as infrastructures, companies are able to tax their future use by selling future profits to present shareholders. Companies are, thus, able to operate in virtue of their promise to deliver profits to the investors that support them. What Mitchell notes however is important on two accounts: firstly he casts the history of capitalisation – and of financial speculation – within a set of very material relations and secondly, he delineates its temporality and the relation to the future it engenders as the central collateral to the practice of capitalisation. The materiality of the infrastructures around which capitalisation emerged is at the centre of Mitchell's account. The joint stock company was first created in the nineteenth century as a way to manage the construction of large infrastructural projects such as railway lines. These arduous engineering efforts feature in multiple scholarly accounts as the vital networks around which nation states and their subjects took shape (Bear 2007; Schram 1997). These accounts, notably, tend to focus on the impressive reach of modern railroads and the complexity of their operations that allowed to become the vector of the technical, organizational and affective practices of nation states. Mitchell, however, focuses on a different aspect: the railroad's durability. What he highlights, in substance, is how large infrastructures such as the railroads were not only stretching across space but across time

> "railroad entrepreneurs were building a structure that could promise a revenue not just for, say, one to five years as other enterprises might, but for 10, 20 or 50 years. The entrepreneurs could take the durability of that revenue and sell shares in it in the present. That is the process known as capitalisation." (Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary Salamanca 2016: 741)

The capacity of railroads to last in time allowed contemporary investors to claim a degree of control over the future into which the infrastructure's durability stretched, in other words it allowed them to harvest into a time that was not yet there producing very material earning for present investors. The joint stock companies that gather together all of the investors claiming their earnings across the infrastructure's duration, thus, can be seen as a time machine of sorts. One that *brings the future into the present* in the form of profits, but that also *brings the present into the future* in the form of a machine of capture. Mitchell notes that by speculating on the future earnings of infrastructure, present shareholders are taxing future citizens who will have to use and operate the infrastructure. Following this trajectory, Mitchell claims that: "the joint-stock company has captured the future" (ibid: 243).

As I have noted at the beginning Anaklia Deep Sea Port was set to be developed through a public private partnership between the Georgian state and Anaklia Development Consortium (cf Barry 2016). The state granted a fifty two year concession to the company and has been in charge of providing the land on which the infrastructure will arise, this included dealing with the relocation of the population and its compensation, as well as building the road and railway connection between the port and existing transit network in Zugdidi, thirty kilometres away. ADC, in turns, is in charge of securing the capital necessary to build the infrastructure, selecting contractors for each phase of the construction and once the port will be functioning, managing its operations and locating clients and tenants for its Free Industrial Zone and warehouse area, from which the Consortium would extract rent until eventually returning the port to the state

at the end of its contract. The capital necessary to build the port, moreover, is divided between 35% of equity, provided by the Partnership Fund, an arms-length institution created by the government to fund large infrastructural projects in the country and 65% of external investment that should be supplied by international banks such EBRD, OPIC, ADB, AIIB, all of which showed interest in financing the project.

Beside material durability, notably, large infrastructure as Mitchell suggests have historically relied on another type of durability: "a form of political or legal guarantee" (Mitchell 2020). Within the logic of free market competition that ostensibly organises the logistical corridors part of the Belt and Road Initiative (Grappi 2016; cf Akhter 2018), the risks for the investors could be very high. A deep sea port on one of the possible routes of the New Silk Road does not just need to exist and be able to last in order to be used: it needs to be able to secure cargo traffic – through exclusive contracts with logistical operators, clients to populate its berths – and to become a cog in a much bigger logistical network by establishing agreements with other infrastructures, governments and transnational institutions. Building a material infrastructure, in substance is only one part of the labour of making it profitable, the rest depends on the establishment *of an infrastructure of a different kind*, one made of the agreements, regulations, quality certifications, diplomatic and corporate relations necessary to assemble logistical connectivity. As Nitzan and Bichler insist, "in society, the future contains an element of novelty, and novelty cannot be pre-assigned a probability: it is unique and therefore inherently *uncertain*." (Nitzan and Bichler 2009:197) one, therefore, must not only be able to construct a durable system of revenue through steel and iron, but also secure "political control" over the infrastructure and its networks (Nitzan and Bichler 2009: 180, Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016:742).

In its bid to capitalise Anaklia Port, ADC, therefore needed to prove its ability to build the material infrastructure *and* to be able to turn it into a *durable structure of accumulation*. They needed, in substance, to prove they were experts in their field and that they had the capacity to politically, economically and *logistically* control the future. As we will see below, in order to vouch for it, the future must be casted as something that can be predicted through calculations and projections, *even when it cannot be*. Capitalising the future relies on the mobilisation of a variety of "performative agencies" (Butler 2010). Through the rest of this section I examine the Consortium's written statements and technical language showing it to be a patchwork that brings together the socio-technical imaginary of global logistics with the prophetic utterances of Georgia's greatness. These heterogeneous statements, I contend are performative of the very logistical future they seek to describe.

### 5.1.1 A language for capturing the future

As I outlined in the introduction, the 2017 Belt and Road Forum was the largest showcase of Georgia's commitment to logistical connectivity. Significantly the Forum was a working space: an event where potential investors, national and international government officials and institutions of different kinds could meet and negotiate deals. Therefore, in outlining the futuristic promise of logistics as a dominant socio-technical imaginary for Georgia's

development, the Georgian government was also sanctioning its political commitment to sustain it in front of large financial institutions potential private investors, foreign government officials and the press (Pels et al 2015; Jasanoff 2004). A sociotechnical imaginary is "a collectively imagined form of social life and social order reflected in the design and fulfilment of specific scientific and/or technological projects" (Jasanoff and Kim 2015: 20). What was apparent at the Forum, significantly, is that the logistical socio-technical imaginary cannot be understood without reference to its financial conditions of existence: the successful capitalisation of debt-financed infrastructures. Reinstating the same commitment to market deregulation and foreign direct investment that defined Saakashvili's governance (Khelaia 2019), a key element of Georgia's logistical socio-technical imaginary is a commitment to ease in any way possible the seamless flow of private capital. This is made explicit by the different institutional speakers at the Forum, for instance as stated by Dimitri Kumisishvili, then Minister for Economic Development, thanks to recent reforms: "Georgia is a country where private investors can take their money back without any fear of penalty or repercussion" (my notes). As the developers of different large infrastructures presented their projects throughout the event, one by one members of the Georgian government declared their commitment to support these mega projects, vouching for the durability of the future that potential investors would buy into.

As Jasanoff notes "the languages, metaphors, and symbols of official political talk can be mined for framings and visions of technologically mediated progress" (2015:23). Throughout my fieldwork in Anaklia and the time I spent with different members of ADC, I observed a new and highly technical language enter the shared vocabulary not just of those involved in the project but of the many people who observed and commented on it. The language of logistics is made of measuring units unknown to the lay observer, such as the TEU – the measure of container's capacity – references to faraway places and processes, such as the one implied by the name "post-Panamax" – used to describe a type of vessels so big that it did not fit into the original canal locks of the Panama Canal – and shared fetishes, such as the widespread appreciation for the simple object that is the shipping container, all element of a larger techno-political imaginary that ostensibly foresees "space/time compression" (Harvey 2001) as an achievable and desirable goal. This language that is usually encountered in tedious technical publications or in the control room of a logistics facility, came to be featured in Facebook posts and press releases from the company but also magazines, government speeches, popular films (Magradze 2018) and the many formal and informal conversations I became engaged in in and around the developing port. Examining official communications around Anaklia Port it is possible to observe how despite their claims to be guided by technical calculations, their statements refer to different yet intersecting future promises: one that places the port as a gateway to progress for the nation and another one that depicts a calculable future of profits, both of these are put to work in multifaceted effort to capitalise the not-yet-built infrastructures.

Anaklia is presented by its developers and the government alike as the jewel of Georgia's infrastructural portfolio, and a gateway to an infinite range of trade connections and opportunities, finally concretising Georgia's century long calling to become a corridor uniting East and West. By promoting its infrastructure at once in portentous terms as "the project of

the century" and as a technical object geared at the pursuit of seamless connectivity, ADC brought into existence its own performative space/time by literally embedding both a developmental and profitable future within Anaklia (Callon 1998; Tsing 2000a; Mitchell 2002; 2005; Butler 2010; Barry 2013: 24; Harvey and Knox 2015 87-89). As Callon notes, economic theory is itself one of the processes that performatively bring about the market, or what he defines as 'the market presumption' (Callon 1998; Butler 2011:148). Crucially in the performative space/time of Anaklia's capitalisation, contradictory elements are intermixed: calculations of cargo volumes are followed by appreciations of Georgia's natural greatness, measures of the number of berths of the future port, presented next to geo-strategic considerations of its proximity to Abkhazia, the seamless vision of global logistics is justified in terms of previous attempts at infrastructural development under Soviet rule. Rather than being presented as predictions, dependent on the conjuncture of a variety of factors that cannot be estimated yet, ADC's claims are turned into exact calculations by the very logistical socio-technical imaginary they themselves have contributed to assemble. As we will see below the language describing Anaklia port is a patchwork of old and new, local and global speech acts and narrative references geared at presenting the infrastructure as a pillar of Georgia's logistics future[ism] (cf Tsing 2009; Pels et al 2015). I will now turn to a close reading of the Consortium's own description of the first phase of the port's development in order to show the workings of this logistical language, showing how the construction of a logistical socio-technical imaginary sustaining the capitalisation of Anaklia's infrastructures rests on performative elements that exceed the abstraction of technical expertise (Harvey and Knox 2015:10). Indeed it is through intermixing with evocative images, nudges to national imaginations and custom, speculation and other elements, that logistical language comes to be performative of the profitable future it seeks to create.

**PHASE 1 - CHARACTERISTICS**



Phase 1: The port set to have a capacity of 9.3 million tons – construction complete within 3 years of the creation of the "groundbreaking" port , which is capable of accommodating Post-Panamax vessels.

**Phase 1** Characteristics
Total Quay Wall Length – 825 meters
Depth – 16 meters
Berths – 3
STS Cranes – 4 ramped up to 6
RTGs – 12 ramped up to 18
Breakwater – 1,600 meters
95% + uptime of the port operations
Intermodal Yard – 10 Tracks, 800 meters each

ADC has completed a conceptual design for Anaklia Port and has submitted a master plan for all 9 phases. The design of the port will surpass its competitors in the region with its superior connections to existing rail and road infrastructure, state-of-the-art equipment and communications infrastructure. Anaklia Port will have an ability to dock container vessels with a capacity of 10,000 TEUs. During phase 1, 60 ha of land will be used for the construction of the container terminal with the capacity of up to 900,000 TEUs and dry bulk cargo facility with the capacity of 1.5 million tons.

Reported above is the description of "phase 1" of the port construction to be found on the ADC website[53]. Placed in the section dedicated to the deep sea port project, the description of phase 1 is arranged like a data sheet, measuring the different components of the first phase of the development, next to a rendering of its future appearance, it includes a short description where the numbers are intermixed with speculations and qualitative statements that depart from the technical accounting provided by the ciphers. The port firstly is described as "ground-breaking", the adjective, in brackets in the original, however, is not substantiated by any evidence to what grounds it is supposed to break, nor it is specified if the brackets indicate it as a quote from someone. Is it the statement of a high ranking official perhaps? Or merely a self-aggrandising effort by the company? Whatever, it is not for the reader to know. In the later part of the description it is stated that "the design of the port will surpass its competitors in the region with superior connections to existing rail and road infrastructure, state-of-the-art equipment and communication infrastructure". Such a statement is particularly interesting as it reports what at best is a wishful outcome, and, at worst, a lie about the reality of infrastructural connections in Georgia, in the same assertive language used to count the number of berths and cranes. Anaklia port is a greenfield project and as such it is not connected to any existing infrastructure. As part of the agreement between the Consortium and the state, the latter has committed to the construction of a rail and road link between the site of the port and the existing Soviet-built railway in Zugdidi and the main highway (ADC 2017). As part of his "spatial plan" Kvirikashvili announced the construction of 800 kilometres of highway and the refurbishment of existing infrastructure. However, at present the territory is only reachable through a single lane asphalt road on the north side and a bumpy dirt and asphalt road on its south side. While it is indeed true that West Georgia benefits from a developed network of railway connections, a key infrastructure of Soviet and Russian Empire's trade, the railway has plunged into decay after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the steep terrain on which it rises has proven extremely challenging for engineers who have attempted to address its challenges over the course of the past century (ADB 2014). Currently a railway modernization project is on the way, aimed at tackling critical sections in West Georgia such as the steep Kharagauli pass. After the completion of these works, the speed achievable on Georgian Railways is 80 km/h for freight trains and 120km/h for passengers, hundreds of kilometres lower than the speed of fast trains in Europe[54]. In light of this, the choice of the adjective "superior" to describe the not yet existing connection between the port and the country's existing infrastructure, seems at best misplaced.

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[53] The website, available both in English and Georgian is the main online portal of the corporation, collecting documents surrounding the port's construction, such as the EIA and ESMS, news and announcements regarding the Consortium's activities and descriptions of their various projects as well as an overview of the investment environment in Georgia. The website is addressed to a mixed audience, including potential investors, affected publics, journalists and researchers like me and others interested in following the development of the various infrastructures managed by ADC. As of January 2021, the website has been redesigned and the description I am analysing here has been removed.

[54] The fastest trains in Europe are: AGV Italo (360km/h), Siemens Velaro E (350 km/h), Talgo 350 (350 km/h), ICE 3 (330 km/h), SNCF TGV (320 km/h).

Regarding the reference to Anaklia's "competitors in the region", we are left to wonder which infrastructures are counted as competitors: the nearest major international port to Anaklia is the Russian port of Novorossiysk located north of Abkhazia. This is one of the major European transit nodes and in 2017 it secured 883,000 TEU in container cargo currently handling 20% of total cargo turnover in Russia connected to the Transiberian Railway and currently part of a number of international corridors such as TRACECA, North South Transport Corridors and Pan European International Transport Corridor N9. Anaklia port's first phase is set to reach a maximum capacity of 900.000 TEU, to outcompete Novorossiysk, therefore the new port would have to operate at capacity from its outset and while this prediction obviously does not take in account possible enlargements of the competitor port, this is already setting a very high threshold for a not-yet-built infrastructure.

### 5.1.2 Project(ed) competition

> "Prior to the emergence of modern, large-scale infrastructure, there was little value to a claim to revenue that lay far in the future. With the exception of real estate, or the state itself, there was no apparatus for generating revenue that was reliable enough that it might be profitably delayed and discounted over several years". (Mitchell 2020)

The success of the port's developmental promise, however, at least in this specific phase, under the management of ADC, is predicated on the consortium's ability to attract enough capital to pay for the construction. In the context of ADC's search for investment, therefore, the "doability" of the project is inextricably connected with its projected ability to deliver profits over the medium term: in short, "harbour making" is at once a result and an instrument of capitalisation (Khalili 2020). Describing the spectacular rise and dramatic fall of the transnational extraction company Bre-X, Anna Tsing observes the role of calculations in assembling what she themes: "an economy of appearances" geared at attracting investment capital (2000a). Within this ephemeral economy, stability is performed rather than ascertained. The type of performance Tsing is describing, moreover, operates on a dual level as an "economic performance and dramatic performance" (2000a:118) that intersect in the making of a spectacle luring in investors with the prospects of unprecedented profits. Before proving to the nation its ability to transform the future, therefore Anaklia port must demonstrate its "investability".

Once developed, a large port is not dissimilar in its revenue model from a large real estate project as the developers acquire their profits from different forms of rent (cf Christophers 2019). These vary from the "route making" contracts that need to be stipulated with shipping companies (Khalili 2020) to the lease on berths, storage and office facilities, to a range of collateral activities that need to take place within the bounds of the port, such as ticket offices, insurance companies, food joins and others. A thriving port is a variegated enclave of lifeworlds all of which need to slot into place in order to turn the space into a competitive hub amidst the myriads of logistics routes that cross any given region.

In this respect, the issue of competition bears some reflection. In the introduction, I have stated that one of the goals of this thesis is, following Appel, to show how logistics is a project, not a context and how, consequently it is reproduced through all manner of efforts (Appel 2019:2).

Merging this aim with critiques of economic rationality (Callon 1998; Mitchell 1999, 2002; Butler 2010), I have proposed that logistical connectivity might be understood as *performative* in the sense that it brings into being its own reality and timescapes. Observing how the issue of competition is treated by the proponents of logistics in Georgia, as well as globally, it becomes apparent how competition is not simply a reality within which capitalist projects come to take place, but rather is at once a project that needs to be realised through all sorts of means and something that is projected into the future, giving it the desirable shape to sustain projects in the present. Throughout the description of "phase 1" the port's competitors are conjured as a measure against which the new infrastructure is pitched; yet, as I have shown no information is given on who exactly these competitors are. As I have described in chapter one, the Belt and Road Initiative places fair competition as the chief mechanism through which cargo mobilities are set to be distributed across global space. This, in Xi Jinping's discourse is pitched against the scramble for the control of territory and resources that has characterised geopolitics before the new logistical era the BRI is set to kickstart (National Development and Reform Commission 2015). Notably, as different scholars have argued the management of competition and the achievement of competitiveness has become a vital goal not just for private companies but for states and their governments, it is towards this aim that "logistical corridors" are created as multinational assemblages of public and private entities (Grappi 2018 178-182, Kuaka and Carruthers. 2014). Despite its elevation as the hegemonic organising principle of global space/time, competition remains an extremely vague terrain. The steps considered necessary to achieve competitiveness are shared across the globe thanks to what Ong defines as "a travelling ecology of expertise" (2007) prescribing deregulation, privatization of key services and restructuring that is credited for the success of states like Singapore (cf Easterling 2014), but beyond these repeated formulas, who exactly is supposed to compete with who is often left unprescribed.[55] In the case of Anaklia this is a question I have often addressed to my interlocutors in government and in the company. For instance, is Anaklia competing with other Georgian ports such the neighbouring port of Poti[56] and Batumi? Or is it competing with the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line that has recently been inaugurated and that connects Azerbaijan with Turkey passing through the town of Akhalkalaki in South West Georgia? I have never managed to obtain a straightforward answer.

Rather than specific to the Georgian case, competition's constructed and projected character has been observed across global supply chains. In her article on mega ships and speculation,

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[55] As I mentioned earlier, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, becoming 'competitive' has become a unchallenged goal for consecutive Georgian governments. In this quest, international rankings such as Ease of Doing Business indexes, have come to be worshipped by legislators and shown as proof of the country's success.

[56] The question of the competition between Poti port and Anaklia became really pressing in 2019 when Maersk, who manages Poti Port announced the enlargement of their infrastructure to include a deep-sea harbour. The publication of these plans, through a press conference in early 2019, provoked outrage from ADC who published a note on their Facebook describing the authorization granted by the government as an act of boycott against the Consortium and announcing that in case the enlargement would go through, ADC would have to interrupt their works on Anaklia Port (ACD 2019). Days after this bellicose post the minister of the economy Natia Turnava announced the revocation of the permit to enlarge Poti Port, citing a bureaucratic mistake as the reason behind the initial approval. The Director of Poti Port, in turns, responded to the u-turn by the government by bringing the matter to international court where is currently awaiting arbitration.

Charmaine Chua brilliantly exposes competitiveness as a "materialised bet over the durability of capital accumulation" (2018: 142). The largest shipping companies, Chua observes, are locked in an arms race of monstrous proportions, each releasing year on year a bigger ship, in a bid to outcompete their rivals. Such exponential growth however does not respond to increase in demand: "in the last few years – Chua notes – companies have supplied so many vessels that hundreds of behemoth ships have come into service at the same time, making it difficult for carriers to match demand with burgeoning supply" (2018:6). Despite the evident losses that this race is causing, it keeps going. For instance, Chua reports her interview with Maersk network designer Nils Madsen, where she asked: "how do you know that your Triple-E ships will eventually be filled if the global economy is bad and trade volumes haven't been going up?" Madsen responded: "Well, you don't know. You hope. There's a bit of hope in it. Of course we try to read the economic numbers, and well, the world economy seems to be growing, *no matter what happens*. If it grows 2%, then in principle, you need to grow your fleet by 4% to grow the company. So we keep building bigger ships"[57] (Chua 2018:143 emphasis in the original; cf Gustafson 2020: 12). Competitiveness, according to this official is a "project, a constant ongoing experiment, a desire, a haunted hope" (Appel 2019: 26). As such, as Chua goes on to explain, it is sustained by affects that exceed the bounds of technical knowledge and market rationality, as the managers' irrational beliefs in the economy's promise of progress, as well as their greed, cockiness and gamble are all mixed up in the companies" investment in ever larger ships.

If, as Chua demonstrates, competition is reconstituted as an autonomous reality through a series of discursive and non-discursive practices and, indeed, erratic bets (cf Butler 2010: 148), reading about "phase 1" of the project, one is tempted to forget that what is being described is an object that is not yet there, and that at the stage of writing the description of the state of the project in 2017 still applies, as it is likely to never exist (cf Günel 2019:71). Commenting on this materialisation of the "not-yet" engineered by different kinds of capitalist futurisms Peter Pels has argued that "paradoxically the modern times that seem committed to open and empty futures sometimes also show an overpowering cultural addiction to being certain about events that have not yet happened—a kind of futurist positivism" (Pels et al 2015:786). A positivism, crucially, that is nevertheless sustained by hyperboles and that, poignantly is constantly brokering failure, whether or not projects actually fail (Butler 2010:152). Observing ADC's communications it becomes clear how every claim to calculability is sustained by something beyond the abstraction of technical expertise (Harvey and Knox 2015:10). While competitiveness appears to be paramount to Anaklia's success and its presented in their communications as the necessary and banal condition of the market, it is simply not calculable through the metrics ADC conjures in its description of the future port. Those utterances are instead performative powers, that "effect reality" by intermixing the haunted hope in the sustainability of profit making with the hustle of a gang of managers seeking to look the part, (Mitchell 1999. In this way, the materialised bet over the durability of capital accumulation is

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[57] A very similar account can be found in Seth Gustafson's recent article on port dredging and the environmental and social risks it engenders (2020: 12): "We build bigger ships with no [supply] guarantees. Yes, it is going to be a risk [for Port Otago] but businesses have to reinvest in themselves" said Maersk New Zealand managing director Julian Bevis (Hartley, 2011).

disguised as an accurate estimate of future profits and progress. Through their informative materials, communications and practices Anaklia Development Consortium are attaching Anaklia to the global sociotechnical imaginary of logistics marking the distance between the current developments and their flamboyant precedent, while simultaneously pitching to very similar collective imaginations of Georgia's success. The logistical future within which the construction of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port situates itself, moreover, encloses Anaklia's transformation in an aura that is at once mystical and technical, bringing into existence the project as a repository of converging desires and a solution to the problems of the Georgian economy.

Beyond the sociotechnical imaginary materialised by the company's informative materials, as we will see, the performance of Anaklia port's "investability" is embodied by the different members of ADC. In what follows I will show how capitalisation is not just conjured and evoked through written communications, instead it is (re)produced through the sweat, emotions and effort of the members of ADC themselves (cf McDowell 1994). In the next section I zoom in on this reproduction and the willing and unwilling actors it enlists. The international banks that ADC seeks to secure as its main investors and the foreign experts, technicians and random observers that are embroiled in ADC's bid for capital, while standards, events and random encounters are all sites within which the infrastructure's capitalisation is negotiated.

## 5.2 The messy and embodied reproduction of capitalisation

Anthropologist Karen Ho defines finance as

> "a constellation of priorities, practices, and ideologies that, in the context of a market economy, are mobilized to search for and convert assets (including both tangible possessions, such as corporations and real estate, and personal attributes and status markers, such as educational background and credentials) into income streams, investments, or immediate profits." (Ho 2015a:171).

For too long, she argues, the world of finance has been coated by a veil of mystery and treated as a realm ruled by abstraction and impenetrable technicalities (cf Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016:74). "Such an approach not only lets finance off the hook, it also falls prey to the rule of expertise whereupon the architects of unsustainable financial leverage are precisely those charged with diagnosing, explaining, and fixing its failures – because they are 'the smartest guys in the room'" (Ho 2015:172). Engaging with the ethnographic and critical analyses of finance and expertise, in the second part of this chapter I present a picture of ADC's efforts to capitalise the future infrastructure in practice. As Butler argues, "to say that [logistics] is performatively produced is not to say that it is produced *ex nihilo* at every instant, but only that its apparently seamless regeneration brings about a naturalized effect. Of course, sometimes the seams and fissures do show" (Butler 2010:149). Attracting investment rather than being predicated on the ability to engage in efficient market exchanges (Hart and Ortiz 2014:44-46), is dependent on the (re)production of political relations, the performance of trust, the mastering of languages of global expertise and the affective and gendered codes that are attached to them. These elements together inform the labour of capitalisation. Showing the deeply corporeal and exhausting labour of endurance sustained by ADC's various members, in

this section, I go beyond Mitchell's account of infrastructural future durability to ask what kind of labour is necessary for an infrastructure to be able to place Georgia's future further away? What kind of *seams* are stitched together to make logistics look seamless? While I do not deny the importance of the infrastructure's material properties in ensuring its durability into the future, here I show the precarious and exhausting negotiations though which such durability is conjured in the present. Reproduction, as Cindy Katz has argued "is a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production, with which it is mutually constitutive and in tension. Social reproduction encompasses daily and long term reproduction, both of the means of production and the labour power to make them work" (2001b:711). It is an unusual move to cast the labour of managers and CEOs attempting to capitalise an infrastructure in terms of social reproduction, as feminist Marxist scholarship has traditionally located social reproduction amongst the labouring classes, rather than the capitalist themselves (Bhattacharya 2018). However, as I will show, the fleshy, messy and indeterminate stuff of everyday life, is central to the project of logistical capitalism at all its levels.

### 5.2.1 Crowded swamp: bodies, expertise and performance



*Figure 24 Giorgi Mirtskhulava explaining the project to the DS3 students*

October 2018, it's a warm morning in Anaklia and a group of architecture student from Oxford Brookes University and I are busy fitting the health and safety equipment to enter the building site of Anaklia Port. We all look slightly ridiculous with oversized high-visibility vests, hard hats slouched on our heads, and boots so heavy that some of the shorter students struggle to lift their

feet. The deputy CEO of the port, Giorgi Mirtskhulava is waiting for us on the balcony of the company's office, unlike ours, his protective gear is custom made, with his name written on the different pieces. The students, alongside their two tutors are here to complete a project on the port and city, their task is to design the future development, thinking about the possible needs of its inhabitants and the topographical and design challenges that might incur. The project, that has been initiated by me and two coordinators of the studio: Charlotte Grace and Maria Alexandrescu. We have no formal connection to the port construction and we approached the consortium independently to set up a series of visits and interviews. To our surprise[58], during the trip, that stretches over a week, we have been granted exceptional access to the activity of the Anaklia Development Consortium and all of their top managers, including the CEOs who have met us and dedicated a fair amount of their time to explain to us the workings of the project.

Today, Mirtskhulava is about to lead us into the port territory, but first we need to complete the health and safety (H&S) training with one of the two officers always on site.  We gather in front of a screen and we watch a short video, detailing all of the different hazards that we might encounter. At the end, the H&S manager adds some further details and explains to us that health and safety is an absolute priority for the company and that in many respects their practices are above the standards required by the Georgian government. For instance – he proudly specifies – ADC is one of the only companies in Georgia that recycles its waste. Recycling is currently not practiced in Georgia and they deploy a specialised contractor to ship all of their rubbish to a private disposal facility in Tbilisi (cf Martinez and Beilmann 2020). At this point, Mirtskhulava, who has entered the room, declares:

> "That's a lot of money, that's a lot of effort and lot of additional hours! But we do not shy away from that! Because that's not what ADC is about – we are about building a sustainable future and Anaklia Deep Sea Port is necessary to build a sustainable future for Georgia"

We all follow Mirtskhulava on the balcony of the office from which we can observe the whole port territory stretching from the edge of Anaklia village until the pier sculpture and the Lazika Justice House. The deputy CEO speaks loudly, his English is fluent and the Georgian cadence is intermixed with an American accent. Ultimately, he declares, once the port will be built, "logistics in Georgia will become faster, cheaper and more efficient for everyone, from the local winemaker from Kakheti[59] to large shipping companies everything will be accessible and streamlined. Sky will be the limit!"

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[58] As stated in the Sage research methods manual, "elites can pose considerable problems of access for scholars even in relatively open milieux" (2006). As I embarked in the study of one of the largest Georgian corporations, I prepared myself to encounter several obstacles in the access to their senior staff as among its managers are some of the most influential people in Georgia. ADC's openness and the time they devoted to this group as well as my individual interviews vastly exceeded my expectations. In the section "making the future public" I discuss this issue in depth.

[59] Region in South-East Georgia famous for its wineries

*Figure 25 DS3 studio in Anaklia (pic by Tekla Aslanishvili)*

We walk slowly across the port territory, a small fluorescent gang headed by Mirtskhulava. Ten months have passed since the inauguration and the territory's landscape has undergone a total makeover. A gigantic sea dredger is stationed in the sea just opposite where we are walking. It is the Athena One from the Dutch company Van Oord, one of the largest marine contractor companies in the world, responsible, amongst others, for the construction of Dubai's Palm Island and the second Suez Canal – a fact that we are told on every occasion by different members of the ADC staff[60]. The current stage of the works entails dredging considerable amount of sand from the sea-bed to deposit on the land. The territory on which the port is set to rise, as we saw in the previous chapter, is a wetland. The soil, unstable and porous is not suitable to hold large construction, three metres of sands are thus deposited and pressed on the existing surface to strengthen it and reduce its malleability (cf Gustafson 2020, Chua 2019, Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020). The soil we walk on is black and shiny, dotted by tall mountains of sand and soil: a lunar landscape slowly crossed by excavators and other machinery. We stop

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[60] As Seth Gustafson has commented in a recent paper European and especially Dutch companies are the uncontested leaders of the dredging world, contributing to the renewal of an uneven geography of dredging whereby "[a]lthough 70% of dredging operations take place outside Europe, 90% of the returns flow back to Europe" (European Dredging Association, 2013, 14 in Gustafson 2020: 13).

on top of one of these small plateaus with the deputy CEO as he explains to us the progression of the works. Once the dredging and depositing has terminated, the land will be left to rest for up to six months, after which the construction works will begin.



*Figure 26 The Athena 1. Still from Tekla Aslanishvili's documentary Scenes from Trial and Error (2020)*

The current port territory terminates few hundred metres before the site where Lazika was partly erected, the boulevard and the two structures still lie there guarded by private security but otherwise abandoned. During our tour I ask the Deputy CEO what is their plan for the buildings and the territory on which they rise. He tells me that initially they had planned to use the building as their office, as it stands under their jurisdiction, but they performed some tests and they found out that the building is extremely expensive to run and not at all suited to the environment on which it rises:  the glass is making the building either too hot or too cold and the materials used for the construction are not responding well to the climate. They found out that it costs 5000GEL monthly only to cover the maintenance expenses, more than double what they currently spend for their office. "We are not a non-profit company" – he states as a conclusive remark – "we cannot spend money just for fun, we have to be practical to make a profit!" (cf Hart and Ortiz 2014)

### 5.2.2 Men with a calculator

> "Economics has become the science of the future, and when human beings are seen as having a future, the key-words such as wants, needs, expectations, calculations, have become hardwired into the discourse of economics. In a word […] the economic actor is a person of the future." (Appadurai: 2013: 216)

Throughout this long vignette, it is possible to observe how ADC, here represented by Mirtskhulava and the H&S officer, articulates its intervention in Anaklia in terms of an economic logic of rationality, calculability, sustainability and compliance with state of the art practice (Hart and Ortiz 2014; Mitchell 1999). This logic. according to them, shapes the

consortium's actions at 360 degrees: from the project's vision to the management of its waste, informing their future orientation as well as their relation to the past.

Mirtskhulava embodies ADC's logistical futurism as a way to qualify the project and to recast the relation between the current development and its hyperbolic and failed predecessor. Crucially, observing him is possible to see how the performance of the "economy"[61] is achieved not just through calculation (Mitchell 2002) but also corporeally: Mirtskhulava's demeanour and posture is one of a man of action and economic calculation (cf Zaloom 2006). Similar to the epithets of the Homeric works, attached to different characters to remind the readers about their characteristics and place them within the cosmology of the narration, the Deputy CEO attaches "economics" to all of the consortium's actions. In a rhythmic litany he repeats the sentence: "it's time, it's economics!" to qualify the company's actions, thus placing it, and himself, as a rational actor within the broader narrative of Anaklia's development. Such posture is not unique to Mirtskhulava, rather it's the personification of the transnational script "of a rational knowledge-based economy at the heart of the new financial hegemony"(McDowell 2011:198). At the centre of such hegemony are the masculine subjectivities of the "bright young men whose mathematical skills were part of the development of the complex and innovatory new tools that allowed them to model markets, develop swaps as an instrument and predict risks" (ibid). It was these men that Kakha Bendukidze wanted to see (re)populating the "New Georgia" him and Misha Saakashvili were committed to build. In an interview from 2010, the former Minister of the Economy sarcastically stated: "I'm told that in Georgia it's shameful for men to use a calculator. Weapons are good, cigarettes are ok, but a calculator is shameful. Shallowness is acceptable, while depth is not… Guys! Let's take a calculator, it's useful, we can count something" (Bendukidze 2010). Short of showing us a calculator, the deputy CEO depicted to us a "clean, cerebral world" (McDowell 2011:199) where men – like him – operate to calculate risk and ensure profit. In his manly, confident presence Mirtskhulava sought to embody of the port's future profitability.

Yet, his speech is filled with grandiose statements: "sky is the limit!", he declares depicting the future fortunes of humble winemakers from Kakheti. As Lancaster notes, however, hyperbole serve to sustain the rationality of the market, placing its handlers as a class of "priests of the financial industry" (2010:13), in possession of a higher knowledge. Even through these hyperbolic predictions, ADC's work, therefore, is portrayed to be driven by the same linear relation between time and profit that is taken as the rationale of logistical expansion (Harvey 2001, Virillo 1986, cf Gibson-Graham 1996, Tsing 2000a, Mitchell 2002: 80-122). Such linear logic, however, does not explain why one of the most prominent managers of a multi-billion project is standing on a muddy mound spending the best part of his very well remunerated day talking with a group of students. Observing him waving his arms to explain to us how precious

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[61] The naturalisation of this rationality, as Mitchell argues (1999:77) is the result of a particular political technique based on a separation between the state and the economy and the consequent de-politicization and naturalisation of the assumptions sustaining the latter (cf Barry 2013:42). The following chapter shall discuss more in dept the consequences of such renewed separation.

the time of his company is, I can't help but wonder what kind of "value" can he attach to the time spent with us?

### 5.2.3 Reproducing the future, publicly

> "They work themselves and each other into a constant state of masculine anxiety, forever talking deals, opportunities, and prices in the sped-up time of the chase. They forget daycycles, lifecycles, and seasons. They talk back and forth and challenge each other to greater efforts." (Tsing 2004:39)

Reflecting upon the extraordinary reception that the students and I received – comprising a meeting with the Anaklia Magazine editor in chief, a two hour long private presentation of the Anaklia City development by its CEO and former Deputy Minister of the Economy, Keti Bochorishvili, and the private tour of the port development with Mirtskhulava – what becomes apparent is the titanic and collective effort in which the members of ADC, at all levels, are involved in the attempt to publicise the development and attract investments. This effort is comprehensive and it involves submitting to the requests of unusual actors, such as me and the small crew of MA students I was tutoring, turning in the bat of an eye the heads of the Consortium from posturing as mathematical gods of finance to working as glorified babysitters for the company's publics. Despite not being investors, the students and I are thus taken as an index of the very global connections the port managers' were hoping to conjure into being.

As I mentioned above, their target investors were international banks, more specifically, as it became known towards the later stages of my fieldwork: EBRD, OPIC, ADB, AIIB. Their potential involvement provides a clue to another crucial aspect of the capitalisation of Anaklia Deep Sea Port. Aside from material durability and political control, the company needed to demonstrate its command of the global expertise promoted by international donor banks. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development[62] – one the banks potentially interested in financing the port states:

> "a clearly defined set of standards governs all our work at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). We seek to develop a sound investment climate based on an effective legal and regulatory framework which promotes corporate governance, including sound management practices, a firm stance against corrupt practices, disclosure of information, and clear and consistent accounting and auditing practices." (EBRD 2019).

In describing the new politics of calculation emerging in 20th century Egypt, Timothy Mitchell notes that "what characterized this new statistical process, was not the collecting of such information so much as the act of making it public [...] a new kind of user [emerged], the Public" (Mitchell 2002:116). The development of Anaklia Port has, since its inception been happening under the public eye. The rise of public relations around mega projects has been analysed by a number of scholars as generating "productive romances and performative utterances that bring into being neoliberal aesthetics and economic forms" (Bear 2015:108; Thrift 2001; Ghertner 2010). The public of infrastructures, as many have argued, is by no

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[62] It is not incidental that EBRD has been the chief organ through which Post-Soviet transition to a market economy has been conceived and implemented in the aftermath of Soviet collapse (cf EBRD 1991).

means a single entity, rather a number of disparate and converging publics that come into place in relation to different situations occurring around the infrastructure (Harvey et al 2013: 305; Barry 2013 57-74; Harvey and Knox 2015; De Boeck 2011). It is to address these variegated interlocutors that the communication of the company intermix apparently contrasting discursive regimes, interweaving technicalities to mythical suggestions.



*Figure 27 The President of Anaklia Development Consortium Mamuka Khazaradze awarding the winners of the traditional horse race held in Anaklia in the autumn of 2018.*

Conversely, relations with the public, rather than an accessory to the infrastructure's development has been an integral – at once productive and performative – part of the condition of its existence[63]. Faced with the unexpected openness of various high ranking members of ADC to spend what seemed countless hours with both me and my confused students, what I did not initially grasp was how we had been enlisted into ADC's relentless "capitalisation machine" (cf Mitchell in Abourahme and Jabary-Salamanca 2016, Bear 2015:122). At the centre of this titanic effort was the company's claim to be in compliance with "state of the art", global, procedures and their accent on transparency.

Writing several years after Tsing's account of the Bre-x global debacle mentioned earlier, Andrew Barry observes the making of another transnational project. In his discussion of the knowledge practices mobilised in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Barry pictures a critical moment in the history of transnational infrastructural projects, one in which

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[63] And vice versa, as Latour has argued in "Making Things Public", objects are integral to politics as around them public controversies unfold and grow (Latour and Weibel 2005; Barry 2013).

"ethical performance" and "transparency" come to occupy a central position in the operations of large multinational corporations such as BP[64] (2013) and a crucial requirement for securing financial capital from international banks. The construction of the pipeline took place across the South Caucasus and it interested a number of localities in South Eastern Georgia. As Barry demonstrates, the process was punctuated by the production of a copious amount of documentation, detailing the infinite interactions at play in the making of what then was the largest infrastructural project in the world (Barry 2013). Such a sheer abundance of information and the commitment of the company to be open to external scrutiny in all of its actions didn't just produce the pipeline as a transparent and intelligible object, but it also acted as an ordering device organising people, knowledges and objects in ways that stretched far beyond the infrastructure. Through public meetings, assessments of various kinds, auditing practices and targeted interventions publics were constituted, competencies were demarcated, expertise was demonstrated beyond doubt and property relations redrawn.

Talking about this shift in corporate practice, Barry argues that "the growing interest in ethics and corporate responsibility has indeed derived in part from a desire to manage the domain of the political" (Barry 2013:76). In their quest for transparency and ethics, modern corporations as Barry continues, aim "to manage, channel and translate 'the immaterial labour' (Lazzarato 1996) of criticism both by recognising its value, and by turning it productively into a source of value, as reputation" (Barry 2013:80). Crucially, appropriating and channelling the immaterial labour of others, requires copious amount of further (im)material labour from the company. Our multiple encounters, the inquiring questions and technical answers, the tours and demonstrations we took part in where all parts of what Harvey, Reeves and Ruppert name "transparency devices" (2013)[65]. These are "purposeful apparatuses devised to enact transparency and provide a space of moral certainty about what constitutes good governance or harmonious social relations." (ibid: 296). Throughout our multiple interactions with the company we were turned into – albeit unlikely – witnesses to the company, helping them bring their corporate infrastructure into existence (ibid 305, cf Barry 2013:57).

If one thing can be said about the employees and managers of Anaklia Development Consortium it is that they were *present*. Indeed, through their presence, indeed, ADC's managers, workers and guest, were present(ing) the logistical future in Anaklia. Whether on the shores of Anaklia, or at international business meetings, public ceremonies, corporate social responsibility events and more, their presence was always well documented and shared with the public on a variety of platforms. What they needed was to embody the worldliness, busyness and success of the port by peopling the place with official emissaries, worldly renowned

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[64] In the next chapter I will explore the place of BP within Georgian and especially ADC's cosmology of expertise.
[65] On the embodied and materialised efforts to perform transparency and interesting parallel can be made with Saakashvili's efforts. A much commented on architectural feat of Misha's first presential term has been to rebuild all police stations in the country. Police corruption under Shevardnadze had been a key factor in propelling the citizens' dissent that lead to the Rose Revolution, upon taking power, Saakashvili pledged to disband and rebuilt a modern, efficient and *transparent* police force (Light 2014). A key visual signal of the swift police reforms that were implemented have been the police stations themselves. Across the different Georgian municipalities, fully see-through stations, made of blue glass and steel, were erected to signify the transparent nature of policing in the country (Curro et al 2015).

contractors, curious visitors, potential investors to materialise in the present their promised future (cf Bear 2013). Creating a permanent showcase of their important connections and their reach, the members of ADC were busy conjuring the political power needed to succeed in the capitalisation of their not-yet-built infrastructure. Observing this overabundance of bodies on the Anaklian shore, capitalisation, appears not just a result of the infrastructure's durability and the technical expertise it mobilises, but it is shown to rests of the *physical endurance and "emotional labour"* of the members of ADC (cf Horshchild 1983; Mcdowell and Dyson 2011). Before being able to actually capture future revenue into the present through their durable infrastructure, ADC members, and, indeed, their witnesses like us, were engaged in an incessant present(ing) of their capitalisation abilities, reproducing capitalisation in the present through their messy, bodily, affective labour.

The proponents of transparency as Barry suggests, consider its implementation to provide the basis on which the information necessary for the proper function of free markets would become readily available (Barry 2013:58). Mastering transparency, therefore within ADC had become at once and index of and a precondition for the port's "investability". In the titanic effort to capitalise Anaklia Port, overpaid "supermanagers" (cf Ho 2015b; Piketty 2014) turn themselves into the patient host of a range of unlikely publics. Their communications and behaviours exceed the realm of economic calculation to include "a complex set of procedures and technical, moral, and political justifications" to vouch for the port (Hart and Ortiz 2014:46; Collier and Ong 2005). The materiality of financial practices, as it appears is not solely given by the tangible infrastructures sustaining future speculations but by a range of embodied reproductive activities and exchanges needed to achieve the necessary level of political and socio-technical control of the future. Indeed, as Mitchell suggests, the logistical future that Anaklia Development Consortium sets out to build rests on their ability to mine future profits. The uncertain present in which such future is transported, however, is sustained by "productive powers that exceed formal economic models, practices, boundaries, and market devices" (Bear et al 2015). Observing the seemingly "rational" and "economic" performance at stake in the making of Anaklia Port, I discovered an array of reproductive, communicative, relational and creative practices blotched together in the pursuit of capital accumulation.

### Epilogue: return to uncertain futures

> "Our theory would be altogether too happy if we thought that theories always make and build what they prefigure or explain. They do sometimes fail, and they are always brokering failure, whether or not they do actually fail. And this means that fallibility is built into the account of performativity." (Butler 2010:152)

*Figure 28 The launch of Lelo in Anaklia, September 2019 (pic by Civil..ge)*

It's the 12 of September 2019, on the beach in Anaklia a small group of people is gathered. They are waiting, sat on plywood benches purposefully positioned on the pebbles a few steps from the sea. Today is the day of the official launch of "Lelo" the political movement initiated by Mamuka Khazaradze, former head of TBC bank and former CEO of Anaklia Development Consortium. Towards the end of my fieldwork ADC became embroiled in a major scandal that eventually led to the fragmentation of the company and revocation of the contract between the Consortium and the Georgian state for the development of Anaklia's logistics hub. In the concluding sections of this chapter, I will sketch out the multi-layered political situation that led to ADC's demise, reflecting on its significance not just for the immediate fate of Anaklia Port and its capitalisation, but for the logistical future that rested on this infrastructure's development. In doing so, I follow Andrew Barry in understanding a "political situation" as a space of analysis whose boundaries remain indeterminate and shrink or expand in relation to different actors and events (2013:10). Still unfolding and opaque ADC's crisis left many observers worrying about the state of Georgia's democracy (De Waal 2019), rather than engaging in conjectures and potential conspiracies about what might have *really* incurred, in my analysis I seek to highlight the geometries of power (Massey 1993), unquantifiable relations and opaque timescapes that sustain the futuristic promise of logistical connectivity.

**Mamuka Khazaradze, useful friendships and the political control of the future**

ADC's showcase of expertise, worldliness and reliability has been very successful in convincing a number of high profile observers of the project's importance for Georgia's development, including foreign diplomats (US ambassador, John Kerry), renowned scholars of the area (De Waal 2019), and others who have expressed their support of the infrastructure, showed interest in investing in it and praised the company's work in materialising the socio-technical imaginary of logistical connectivity. Such shows of support, while certainly important, however do not

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signify the company's achievement of the "political control of the future" necessary for the capitalisation of Anaklia Port. For even in the logistical futurist dreamscape of free market competition and global connectivity, "political control" comes from an engagement with the political rulers of the country within which that future is set to materialise (Ho 2009). In her ethnography of the Hoogly Port in Kolkata, Laura Bear, describes the practice of "jogajog kora" – the creation of useful friendships – as a vital node in the creation of new productive, entrepreneurial and bureaucratic activity in and around the port" (2015:101; Bear and Mathur 2015). Similarly, in the case of the attempted capitalisation of the Port of Anaklia, the abrupt dissolution of an important "useful friendship" came to radically undermine ADC's bid towards the political control of the future.

In August 2018 an inquiry against the co-founders of TBC bank and Anaklia Development Consortium, Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, was launched by the General Prosecutor Office of Georgia. The duo was accused of money laundering and embezzling funds through TBC bank for a total of 17 million USD. Mamuka Khazaradze is one of the richest men in Georgia and besides TBC, the most profitable private investment bank in the country, and one of two Georgian banks listed on the London Stock Exchange, he owns a tv channel, Artarea TV, the most famous and widely exported of Georgia's mineral waters, Borjomi Water, the largest national tea company, Georgian Tea and through his fund he finances several high profile cultural events and activities in the country. Before founding ADC, Khazaradze and Japaridze had no experience in building a large logistics infrastructure. The alleged criminal transaction happened in 2008 and involved the bank and a number of smaller firms that were reportedly deployed to divert loaned funds into the private accounts of the two CEOs. Following the inquiry's launch, Khazaradze and Japaridze presented themselves in court in December 2018. In January 2019 the inquiry was made public and since then it dominated Georgian news. As it progressed, Khazaradze's case was deemed by T.I. and others to be a politically motivated attack at the hands of billionaire and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, the richest and most powerful man in the country (Transparency International 2019).

In a timeline of the prosecution, Transparency International (T.I.) notes that the inquiry started only months after a major change in Georgian government. In May 2018 Bidzina Ivanishvili, who had stepped down from his post of Prime Minister a year after defeating Saakashvili in the 2012 elections announced his return to politics as the chair of Georgian Dream. A month later, in June 2018, Kvirikashvili, then Prime Minister and fierce proponent of the Anaklia project and of the country's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, stepped down from his position, citing disagreements with Bidzina Ivanishvili as a motivation. As outlined earlier, the PM, who had been in power since 2015, had placed Anaklia Port and the logistical future it was set to unlock as a centrepiece to his governmental strategy. At the beginning of this chapter I have described the socio-technical imaginary that sustains logistical investments in Georgia, indicating how during the Belt and Road Forum the then Georgian Government vouched for this imaginary and for the financial conditions of its existence. Significantly, removing Kvirikashvili, Georgian Dream's chair, also undermined the Government's earlier vision of the country's development.

In the aftermath of the change of power, Transparency International reports a revealing comment from Ivanishvili: "I often reminded former Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili that two banks have devoured the whole country, people cannot pay back their bank loans and this is not normal." (Transparency International 2019). The banks the new head of Georgian Dream is referring to are TBC and Bank of Georgia. In the decade and a half since the Rose Revolution, commercial banks have benefitted from the lack of regulation on loan interests and a fiscal policy oriented towards facilitating business and attracting foreign investment (Khalvashi 2015; Gvinjilia 2018; Khundadze 2018; cf Streeck 2014; Davies 2016; Shields 2020). In the lead-up to the 2012 elections that saw the defeat of Mikhail Saakashvili, Georgian Dream had promised to solve the issue of loan indebtedness in the country[66] (Khalvashi and Gilbreath 2013). Over five years late, after only marginal governmental action on the issue[67], in June 2018 the newly assigned Prime Minister, Mamuka Bakhtadze announced a new set of economic reforms aimed at tackling the growth of bad loans amongst the population. Amongst these were a cap on effective interest rates set at 50% for banks and microfinance loans and a limitation imposed on late fees penalties (Lomsadze 2018). This sudden intervention and Bidzina's public rebuttal of private banks and the disastrous toll their growth has taken on Georgia's population, have been connected by a number of commentators to the subsequent fate of ADC's CEOs Khazaradze and Japaridze (Transparency International 2019).

At the time of the power reshuffle in government, as T.I reports, preliminary investigations around TBC's behaviour had already been underway and were soon followed by the announcement of the money laundering inquiry regarding a series of transactions that had occurred over a decade earlier. In Transparency International's timeline a perfect storm is depicted, portraying Bidzina on a mission to discredit successful private bankers in Georgia by all means necessary. In the article it is suggested, furthermore, that a power struggle over the construction of the port of Anaklia would be at the centre of what is defined as an "orchestrated attack" against Khazaradze and TBC Bank (Transparency International 2019a). The seemingly abrupt resurfacing of a decade old unlawful transaction would be, according to T.I., a ploy to dismantle the "useful friendship" between Khazaradze and Kvirikashvili at the core of the development of Anaklia Port under the lead of ADC. In accordance with the analysis advanced by the NGO, a number of international diplomats have voiced their concerns over the legitimacy of the ongoing investigations, amongst them the French ambassador to Georgia has reportedly stated that:

> "in recent months, there have been negative signals coming from Georgia concerning justice… The events that have unfolded around TBC Bank are strange… Something incorrect may have happened more than 10 years ago but it is unclear to us why this issue has come to the light now, after such a long time, and not before." (Transparency International 2019)

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[66] A recent World Bank report details the exponential growth of household bank borrowing in Georgia, noting that between 2011 and 2016 it had almost doubled. On a macroeconomic scale according to the World Development Indicators, credit to households and other sectors reached 62.05 percent of GDP in 2016 compared to 35.52 percent of GDP in 2011 (World Bank 2018: 4). Such dramatic increase has reportedly being met with a steep fall in public trust for banks, with reportedly only 26% of the population trusting these institutions (ibid:3).
[67] The year before another round of reforms imposed a 100% cap on loan interests (Lomsadze 2018).

The significance of these events was not confined to Georgia. The US Chargé d'Affaires, Ross Wilson stated that the US embassy was also closely following the proceedings as the fate of US investors involved in TBC and the future of the port, where a US company is involved, were a priority (ibid). Despite these international concerns, the case proceeded throughout the spring and beginning of the summer of 2019. In February 2019, the CEOs of TBC stepped down from their position in the bank, remaining nevertheless at the head of Anaklia Development Consortium. Finally, almost a year from the beginning of the inquiry, in July 2019, Japaridze and Khazaradze were charged with money laundering. A trial is pending and if found guilty the two could face up to twelve years in prison.

Crucially, the sudden removal of political guarantees from under the Anaklia Port project, exposed the fragility of the performances at the core of its projected capitalisation. As I have outlined in the previous section, competitiveness, that appears to be paramount to Anaklia's success, is simply not calculable through the rational metrics ADC conjures in its description of the future port. Moreover, in the spring of 2019 the Georgian government made in public that ADC had missed several deadlines to secure the necessary investments to fund the port construction and was, therefore, at risk of breaching its contract. In order to resolve the situation, potential investors, including EBRD, AIB and OPIC, met with the Consortium and the government in order to attempt to reach an agreement. After several meetings at which no agreement was reached, the Minister of Infrastructure Maia Tskitishvili held a press conference to clarify the government's position. The investors had listed eight preconditions to their involvement, ranging from the compliance with 'state of the art' environmental regulations to financial agreements. After the prolonged negotiations the government had accepted most of these preconditions, however a critical one remained unaddressed: ADC and the banks demanded that the government would act as a guarantor of the infrastructure's profits in case of the port's inability to attract sufficient cargo flows, in other words: if market competition failed, state intervention was required to protect the investors' profits. This demand, according to Tskitishvili could not be met by the government as it would imply that the entire risk of the project would fall on the state's shoulders: "what is the point of private entrepreneurship if all the risk falls om the taxpayers?" Tskitishvili sensibly asked during her press conference. In response to these statements, ADC accused the state of boycotting Anaklia Port. The issue remained unresolved and eventually in January 2020, the state rescinded its contract with ADC, putting the project to a halt pending the search for a new developer.

If the question is: was the Georgian state deliberately abandoning ADC as a means to take back control over a key infrastructural project? A definite answer is difficult to provide. Recently an independent inquiry found that the charges against ADC's CEOs might be less than solid (Public Defender of Georgia 2020). Notwithstanding this, even before being adjudicated in court the allegations have definitely contributed to establishing a climate of insecurity around the development of Anaklia port: as the CEO of another major port in Georgia told me "who would want to invest in a project whose two CEO's are currently being investigated for money laundering?" It is not, however, in the scope of this thesis to provide an investigative account of the money laundering charges filed against Khazaradze and his partner. What this multi-layered and still unfolding situation exposes, nevertheless, is the complex geometry sustaining

the bid for capitalisation of a mega infrastructure such as the port of Anaklia. The reliable material durability of the infrastructure itself, which is not assured, is set against a number of *even less stable relations*. In particular, the delicate balance of powers between the nation state and private corporations the shifting line that marks the distinction between "the state" and "the economy" was unstable (Mitchell 1999). Multiple accounts of transnational capitalist venture have documented how political stability is pivotal to guarantee steady profits (Tsing 2004; Easterling 2014). Indeed, investors' pursuit of political stability *at all costs*, is the basis of what Tsing defines "franchise cronyism, whereby, in exchange for supplying the money to support national leaders who can make the state secure, investors are offered the certainties of the contract, which ensures titles to mineral deposits, fixes taxation rates, and permits export of profit". Ironically, this time, it seems that the investors and developers of Anaklia Port have clashed with a different kind of cronyism, one not so attuned with the global flows of financial capital (Tsing 2004: 69, Appel 2019:147). The useful friendship between Kvirikashvili and Khazaradze, that only months before the scandal unfolded had provided ADC with a solid claim of political control of the near future, was shattered by the powerful will of someone with greater political purchase. The shared sociotechnical imaginary that had brought together government and the private consortium was brought into question by the exposure of Khazaradze as a rootless banker responsible for the country's misery. While the jury is still out on Khazaradze's fate and, as reported above many commentators have questioned the government's motives behind the inquiry, it appears that the conflict between Ivanishvili and Kvirikashvili and the latter's demise radically disrupted the power alliance that had given rise to Anaklia Port, exposing not only the inherent "uncertainty of the future" (Nitzan and Bichler 2009: 179), but also the constructed-ness of the "rational calculations" and "market rationality" behind ADC's logistical vision (cf Mitchell 2002, Bear et al 2015).

**Conclusion**

Transit infrastructures, according to Mitchell, do not just have the capacity to connect distant locations. At the same time, their material durability and political purchase makes it possible for them to become vehicles to transport future profit into the present (Mitchell 2020). In contradiction with the popular view that logistical connectivity engenders space/time compression (Harvey 2001), throughout this chapter I have detailed ADC's gruelling attempt to stretch the present into the future and *vice versa*. I have analysed the different strategies deployed by ADC to engender the profitable temporal displacement that is capitalisation. Capitalisation, as I have shown is at once a condition of existence and a desired achievement for this not-yet build infrastructure, looking at the attempts to capitalise Anaklia port, I was thus able to argue that logistical connectivity is performative of the very reality in which it seeks to root itself. What I expose, significantly, is that all manner of actors and relations are put to work *in the present* in order to effect a future of profit. Throughout my fieldwork I have come to realise how the different people employed by ADC were engaged in a restless quest to meet investors' requirements and secure the capital necessary to complete their infrastructure. The tools of this quest are varied and include transnational standards, gendered performances and transparency devices of different sorts. The boundaries of this quest, in turn, stretched far beyond the realm of economic calculation or market transactions, involving embodied

performances, useful friendship, political consensus and more. It is exactly the unexpected rupture of the political consensus surrounding the Anaklia Deep Sea Port project, that has put an end to the restless labour of its members, bringing the project to halt, at least momentarily. Another failure looms over the village adding a layer of political instability to the unstable sediments that shape this marked territory. In the next chapter, I look into another aspect of the future promise waged by Anaklia's developers: their commitment to state of the art standards. Addressing some of the unsustainable practices that have characterised the past decades in Georgia, I question the different performative boundaries that criss-cross ADC's futuristic promise, showing how they are worked from different agents within and beyond the company.

**CHAPTER 6: LABOUR IN AND OF THE LOGISTICAL FUTURE**

> "It is not only the explicit speech act that exercises performative power; other exercises include (a) the mundane and repeated acts of delimitation that seek to maintain a separation among economic, social and political spheres, (b) modes of prediction and anticipation that constitute part of economic activity itself, and (c) organizations of human and non-human networks, including technology, that enter into specific economic activities" (Butler 2010:151).

Towards the conclusion of chapter five, I discussed ADC's public positioning as an ethical and transparent company in relation to the "travelling ecology of expertise" (Ong 2007:337) of much bigger multinational companies such as BP and *vis-à-vis* potential investors. My point, then, was to show how ADC's belonging to that circuit of expertise is performed by different actors and reproduced through all kinds of efforts and how, in turn, that performance is pivotal to the company's attempt to capitalise their infrastructure. Building on these insights from the previous chapter, here I question the relation between labour rights and the effort(s) to comply with "state of the art" regulations as I have observed it inside ADC and in relation to Georgia's present struggles around workers' protection. Central to this chapter is the question: what kind of labour do these regulations perform *for* and *within* the company?

In what follows, I unpack the relation between labour, state regulations and corporate managerialism as it is reflected through the prism of Georgia's attempt to become a logistical corridor. What I find is a series of boundary making exercises constituting what can be considered as a worker's right, casting the port as a threshold between the past and a West-facing, logistical future and, finally, arranging people within ADC in accordance to their suitability for that future. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the tensions around care provision and labour standards that have informed public debates in Georgia in recent years. The struggle for workers' safety that has taken shape in the country throughout the past decades of economic deregulation has recently resulted in the establishment of long overdue provisions, put in place by the government in response to the sustained pressure of workers' organisations, media and NGOs, however, the capitalisation of the country's future is dependent on the continued availability of cheap labour in the present. Against this background, in the second part, I focus on Anaklia Development Consortium's practice of health and safety and the complex dislocations of power and imagination that it generates both within the company and *vis-à-vis* other local and transnational enterprises. In what ways does the promise of logistical connectivity speak to the claim for better provisions made by Georgian workers and their allies? How do ADC's efforts to build a state-of-the-art logistical infrastructure *work* to reorganise labour relations in the present? By zooming in on the bleak working conditions of a "forgotten" section of the ADC workforce, I demonstrate how, when subsumed to a commitment to seamless accumulation and an unquestioned market rationality, the international standards of which ADC prides itself, rather than erasing unsustainable practices, help materialise a border, against which violations of labour rights can take place (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). Such borders, between those who belong and those who are left out from the state-of-the-art regulations that ADC seeks to uphold, in turn, rather than exceptions, are performative elements within Georgia's attempt to entice foreign capital. An "insatiable appetitive for cheap labour" is pivotal to the geometries of global logistics (Zeiderman 2020) underwriting the promise of connectivity in ways akin to the labour performed by material infrastructures

(Gambino 2018). In its attempt to build a world competitive infrastructure with a global reach, ADC places the cheapness of the country's human capital as an asset to be exploited.

**6.1 "No Year Without Deaths"**



*Figure 29 Solidarity protest with miners in Chiatura 1st of May 2015*

In August 2019 the international NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) released its report on workers safety in Georgia. The title of the document is indicative of its damming assessment: *No Year without Deaths: A decade of deregulation puts Georgian Miners at Risk.* The report is based on six months of field research and in depth interviews across the principal sites of extraction in Georgia: Tqibuli and Chiatura, both in West Georgia. From its beginning the report sketches the daily threat under which workers in these two sites are forced to exist. Entire families are torn apart by the frequent deaths and life-changing injuries.

> "Mikhail a miner for 35 years, died along with three other miners on July 16, 2018, in an underground explosion in the Tqibuli coal mine. He was 54 years old and left behind his wife and his son, also a miner. Mikheil's nephew, Pavle, only 25 years old, died with five others in another accident only two months before." (Human Rights Watch 2019: 1[68])

The report exposes the appalling and dangerous conditions in which the miners are forced to work, from rusty wagons with missing brakes to absent sanitary facilities and lengthy shifts, some extending over twenty four hours, that leave the workers exhausted and unable to conduct their tasks. Moving beyond the specific faults of the industries observed, the document, moreover, targets the shortcomings of Georgian labour legislation, placing the extensive deregulation undergone by the country since the Rose Revolution behind these cumulative tragedies.

In 2006, Mikhail Saakashvili's government abolished the country's labour inspectorate in line with its commitment to promote business interests. As outlined in the chapter on the planned construction of Lazika, Misha and its key advisor and former minister of the economy Kakha Bendukidze embarked on a program of deregulation under the slogan: "we will sell everything, except our morals" (Saakashvili and Bendukidze 2014:161). The effects of such deregulation, unmatched in the post-Soviet space (Gabitsinashvili 2019), were quick to manifest and workers have been the first to suffer. According to a recent study[69] deaths at work have soared by 74 percent since 2006 (Tchanturidze 2018). Between 2007 and 2017, the report states, the average number of deaths at work per year in Georgia was 41, compared to 24 between 2002-2005. (ibid: 2). The death and injury toll, according to data obtained by Human Rights Watch from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has exceeded one thousand three hundred workers between 2010 and 2017, a number that keeps rising.

Beyond mining, where the highest number of accidents take place, construction workers are the second most affected category (Chkareuli 2018). In April 2019, two workers died after a collapse in a building site in central Tbilisi, causing a large demonstration to block a portion of one of the capital's central arteries, Chavchavadze's avenue. Equally, infrastructural projects, such as the upgrade of the railway network in West Georgia, a key part of the government's ambitious plan to potentiate its cargo capacity (Pertaia 2018), have come under the spotlight for the frequent accidents that plague them. The railway modernisation process is currently operated by a subsidiary company of China Railway Construction Corporation, the 23rd Bureau Group. Across their construction sites incidents in 2017 and 2018 lead to a wave of strikes by the workers, protesting low salaries and lax health safety conditions and environmental hazards.

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[68] In the aftermath of the 1833 factory act in Britain, factory inspections became a routinised – albeit voluntary - effort to ensure compliance with the limits of age and working hours for children in the cotton industry. These inspections were pivotal to Marx's understand of labour and his analysis of surplus labour and value in *Capital* (Barry 2013: 172). At present, NGOs such as Human Rights Watch have to an extent taken up the role of state inspectors in labour relations within logistical networks.

[69] Funded by the Friederich Ebert Foundation, a German institute connected to the Social Democratic Party.

*Figure 30 "Hell" written at the entrance of a building site in West Georgia, pic by Luka Pertaia*

Only in February 2019, after years of continuing high deaths and pressures from unions, activists, local NGOs and a small section of the media[70] (EMC 2018), the Georgian Dream government finalised a labour code that expanded the powers of the Labour Inspectorate and instated harsh penalties for health and safety breeches. However, as HRW notes the current legislation still does not comply with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards and international best practices (Human Rights Watch 2019: 9; cf Bagnardi 2015). The new labour code leaves unattended matters such as mandatory weekly rest, night work, overtime hours and pay, or breaks during shifts. Speaking to HRW about the dangerous porosity of the new labour code, labour rights expert Zakaria Shvelidze states:

> "As legislation does not provide the regulation of statutory daily rest break and minimum rest period for a work week, hypothetically one is allowed to work seven days a week with 12-hour working days, which adds up to 84 hours of maximum statutory weekly working hours." (HRW 2019: 12)

Further absences in the amended law, as the report continues, include provisions of "a minimum wage, a specific rate for overtime pay or pay for work during holidays, no limit on night work, and no requirement that employers provide workers with copies of contracts" (ibid).

In a recent media interview, the Georgian MP Beka Natvstilsvili, head of the small Social Democratic Party, complained that "the only time labour issues come up in the media is when a worker dies on the job", adding that "[the press is] crazy for blood" (Natvstilsvili in Kuchera

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[70] On the role of civil society in environmental and social justice in the former Soviet Union see also Agyeman and Ogneva-Himmelberger 2009.

2019). What is omitted by the morbid media accounts of working conditions across Georgian industries, with a few exceptions such as recent reportages by the independent outlet OC Media and European.ge and foreign sites such as Eurasianet (Solidarity Network 2019; Chkareuli 2018, 2020, Kuchera 2019, Jardine 2018), is a discussion of the systematic labour exploitation plaguing all industries in the country. While the long overdue introduction of penalties for the health and safety violations that have been threatening the lives of workers across all industries in Georgia is an important achievement of the latest labour code, the gaps in this provision are indicative not only of a narrow definition of health and safety, one that only takes in account visible threats such as the presence of outdated machinery or the lack of appropriate services, but more poignantly of a fundamental disregard for workers as subjects whose needs must be protected and whose rights defended. Lack of proper rest, stress, precarious employment and, more crucially, the value of workers' time (cf Marx 1990: 569-578) might not be visible obstacles to the workers' wellbeing, but they are the source of incalculable mental, and physical damage to employees and the communities to which they belong. The implementation of safety inspections might have reversed what can be understood as a "necropolitical order" that ruled over industrial sites across the country where it was assumed that work necessarily entailed exposure to death (Mbembe: 2003). However, the refusal of the state to recognise the management of time – whether free time or the duration of the working day – as integral to the safeguard of the workforce, speaks of a renewed commitment to disregarding workers most basic needs in favour of the needs of businesses (cf Marx 1990: 569-578, Thompson 1967 56-97).

### 6.1.1 Working boundaries

This situation bears two questions: firstly, regarding what is considered as a workers' *right* and what, instead, can be discounted and, secondly, regarding what agencies are intertwined in shaping this definition in present day Georgia[71]. In *Border as Method* (2013) Mezzadra and Neilson argue that:

> "the development of capitalism as a world system has given shape to successive forms of articulation between the demarcations generated by economic processes and the borders of the state. One of our central points is that contemporary capital, characterized by processes of financialization and the combination of heterogeneous labor and accumulation regimes, negotiates the expansion of its frontiers with much more complex assemblages of power and law"(2013:6)

The relations between and within these assemblages are regulated through the proliferation of multiple borders that have "several functions of demarcation and territorialization: between distinct social exchanges or flows, between distinct rights, and so forth" (Balibar 2002:79;

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[71] Similar questions – albeit with a different focus – have been raised by Andrew Barry in reference to the operations of BP in Georgia during the construction of the BTC pipeline. In particular Barry notes the unbalanced equation between the value of labour and the value of land in shaping the conflicts over the pipeline (2013 172-175) arguing that "for whereas both the oil company and international NGOs published extensive accounts of the social and environmental impact of the pipeline, these organisations showed little interest in inspecting the operation of construction work. Outside of Georgia, Azerbaijan and eastern Turkey, the labour of local workers – primarily employed in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs for subcontractors – remained largely invisible (ibid: 172).

Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:6). In the previous chapter I have described how, by deploying a technical language intermixed with affective resonances to describe their not-yet-built project, ADC sought to sustain their attempt to capitalise the port by attaching their claims and actions to an unquestionable market rationality (cf Mitchell 2002, 2020). That performance of calculation, as Mitchell has argued, is based on "a redistribution of forms of knowledge and ignorance, of what is to be considered normal and what to classed as abnormal" (2002:92). Notably one of the powers of such performance of calculability when applied to the operations of the market through the discipline of economics is that to constitute "an apparent border between the market and the nonmarket" (Mitchell 2005:248). Such a border, significantly, is not "a boundary between two distinct entities but a line drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which the social and political order is maintained" (Mitchell 1999:77). This division, recast and re-energised by different actors across multiple scales, is crucial to understand the Georgian Government's attempts to mediate the relation between private capital – local, but especially, transnational – and its citizens who work.

As we will see in the analysis of some ethnographic material in the next section, what is at stake in mediating this complex relation, indeed, is an offshoring of sorts. In her study of petrocapitalism in Equatorial Guinea, Hannah Appel explores the rise of offshoring as a crucial moment in the century-long attempt of the oil industry to disentangle its workings from the localities within which its operations take place (Appel 2019:59-63; Barry 2006, 246). Notably, rather than a clean break with previous forms of organisation, the relocating of most of the activities related to oil extraction on rigs, is "better understood to enable certain forms of *continuity"* (Appel 2019:59 emphasis in the original). This disentanglement between the logic of profit and the logic of place – including the material and ecosystemic dynamics that shape localities – as Mitchell concurs, is a pivot around which capitalism itself, as a logic and a set of material relations is constantly animated. It is part of a set of boundary making projects – between what is real and what is fictional, who is an expert and who a peasant, who can be exploited and who protected and more – that define capitalism, as we know it. The question of what are constituted as a workers' rights in the context of Georgia's attempt to become a logistics corridor is thus a question about the borders put in place to balance the necessary levels of inclusion and exclusion – or as Mezzadra and Neilson put it inclusion *through* exclusion – necessary to attract investment in the country (Mezzadra and Neilson 2010, 2013). As the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, it is through the work of these boundaries that certain realities are effected (cf De Genova 2005). Amongst others that of the "benevolent corporation that proffers *liberalism*: market rationality in the face of corruption, standardization in the face of irregularity, and universal environmental standards in the face of ignorance" (Appel 2019: 25 emphasis in the original).

Keti Bochorishvili has been appointed in 2017 as the CEO of Anaklia City, the futuristic city planned by ADC to surround the deep sea port. A strong believer in deregulation, Bochorishvili has joined the private sector after occupying different government roles. Under Saakashvili, she served as the head of the Georgian National Investment Agency between 2010 and 2012 and joined the Ministry of the Economy in 2012, maintaining her role after the victory of Georgian Dream, until her move to ADC. A few days before our meeting with Mirtskhulava

and tour of the port, the students and local filmmakers Tekla Aslanishvili and Nikoloz Tabukashvili and I are all invited for a private meeting with the Anaklia City CEO. During her presentation she introduces Georgia's economic strategy:

> "Georgia has no oil and gas so it had to be creative! That is why it sought to turn itself into a hub where companies could base their activities. A top reformer in the region [the country is] committed to facilitate companies" operations, develop a business-friendly environment, attract foreign direct investment and in the past years has stipulated free trade agreements with key countries […]".

A Power Point behind her shows pictures of different indices: from the "Ease of Doing Business Index" to coefficients measuring corruption and criminality, both very low, that prove the success of the reforms undertaken in the past two decades. In this short introduction to the country, a specific ecology of expertise emerges (Ong 2005:339), strikingly similar to the one materialised by Misha Saakashvili through his extensive effort of "state building through building work", discussed in chapter four (Lazczkowski 2016). Bochorishvili places Georgia as a nation committed to overcoming its "natural disadvantages" such as the lack of resources or its relative isolation, through a technopolitics made of transnational expert knowledge, and the establishment of soft and hard infrastructures sustaining the flow of private capital into the country. Such a strategy – as she states – is inspired by the success of places such as Singapore, a similarly disadvantaged nation who managed to turn itself not only into a leader in global logistics but also into a model of governance to be exported internationally. The "Singaporization" of this South Caucasian republic, that I have detailed in the chapter on Lazika, therefore, far from being over with the former President's demise, rather continues to remain a target in the present. In this sense Bochorishvili herself, as a foreign educated, high profile Georgian businesswoman, is both an index and an agent of the successful translation of the travelling ecology of expertise into the national context and into a form of economic governance that has managed to survive through different elected legislations, despite their declared differences.

At the end of the presentation, one of the students asks a question to Keti regarding the impact of de-regulation and the absence of restrictions on the potential workers employed in Anaklia Port and its Free Industrial Zone. Breaking from her previous conciliatory tone, Keti interrupts the student in the middle of the sentence.

> "I know, I know, let me answer.." – she states, visibly annoyed – "We always get these questions, by the many, many – she sighs – organisations , especially the labour driven organisations that we meet. Today I am no longer the Vice Minister of the Economy so I can respond openly.  Every regulation creates loopholes, and creates additional barriers and its usually better to create demand [rather than hinder it]. The truth is that if you are qualified everyone is going to pay you. Maybe for some people, what is minimal for you is not minimal for them and they are happy to work. One thing is child abuse, child work and some harsh, you know, working conditions, and again Georgia is very successful in preventing all of that, but minimum wage is just a bureaucracy […] As soon as you start regulations you never stop. You are not just going to do minimum wage you are going to have many more regulations that create so many obstacles for the companies, that they are not going to come here. Sometimes you know, people don't have the skills and just want to land on high salaries and become directors!"

For Bochorishvili, a fair pay is not a right: at best, is nothing more than a tedious bureaucracy and at worst a gateway to a world where regulations would cripple the country's economy. While is no surprise that the CEO of a multinational logistics' corporation should argue for the

removal of all barriers to how little workers can be paid, Keti Bochorishvili's vehement response to the student's question is nevertheless revealing of the productive boundaries that organise the relation between labour, capital and the state in contemporary Georgia. As it is expressed by the HRW report, through its revision of national regulations for worker's protection, the Georgian government has come to safeguard the *workers' right to survive* their jobs, however, it has left questions such as pay and the length of the working day unattended, thus discounting their status as workers' rights. Currently, the minimum wage in Georgia is legally set at twenty Georgian Lari per month, a little more than five Pounds Sterling, a sum that would not cover an individual's monthly bread consumption and that has not been changed since 1999. Effectively, therefore, the country has no minimum wage regulation and no intention to establish one anytime soon (Human Rights Watch 2019:11; Kuchera 2019). However, this lack of a real minimum wage is not merely an indicator of neglect on the part of government. On the contrary, the government's foreign investment agency, *Invest in Georgia*, advertises the lack of minimum wage regulations on its website where it describes the workforce as "competitively priced"(Invest in Georgia 2019; Poti Port 2017). Low wages and an exploitable workforce are not incidental to, but an integral part of the effort of capitalising Georgia's logistical future that binds together the government and private corporations. What is produced by leaving pay and time outside the realm of workers' rights, is thus a differentiation that shapes the lives of those who are labouring to construct the Georgian logistical future. One, that, in Georgia as well as elsewhere is readily translated by companies into their corporate practice. As Rajak argues in the context of her research in South-African mines practices of corporate care are geared towards the protection of human capital for the labour-intensive business of mining, such concern, historically and now, combines the moral imperative of protecting workers' lives with, as Mauss put it "the cold reasoning of the business, banker or capitalist" (Mauss 1967:73 in Rajak 2016:9). Crucially, as Mezzadra and Neilson have pointed out, borders are at once productive and performative of the realities they crisscross (see also De Genova 2005). In what remains of this chapter, I will look inside ADC to highlight some of the ways in which boundaries are worked within and by the company employees.

## 6.2 Health and safety

Anaklia Development Consortium's health and safety standards have emerged from my fieldwork as polysemic devices at once central to the protection of workers' lives while simultaneously responsible for the creation of a corporate taxonomy of labour through which labour relations could be organised within the company as well as *vis a' vis* other corporations. In their ethnography of road building in South America, Harvey and Knox note that

> "of all the many people we spent time with on the road construction project, none were as obsessive or as overtly passionate about their work as the health and safety officers. This attitude was one they openly talked about and took pride in. They loved their work, and they were fascinated" (2015:130).

Upon reading this sentence I was struck by how closely it matched my experience. During the time I spent in Anaklia, I often found myself in the company of the health and safety officers,

David and Lado[72]. They were put in charge of coordinating my official visits to the site and often took me with them on tours, or picked me up when I became stuck on the wrong side of the port territory. Both of them were formerly employed by BP and worked on the construction of the BTC and the SCP pipelines. Lado, a native of Akhalkalaki, one of the municipalities crossed by the pipelines, had started working for the British corporation at the age of twenty as an on-site liaison officer and spent over a decade in the company before joining ADC. Both of the officers were proud of their job and considered their presence in the consortium to be a mark of the ADC's fundamental difference from other similar companies operating in the country as well as a mark of its lineage with "superior" international companies such as BP[73].

The first time I met them, in April 2018, the deadly accident that killed six miners in Tqibuli had just taken place and large protests were happening in Tbilisi and in the proximity of the coal mine. In the aftermath of the accident many reports emerged on the appalling conditions in the mine, where workers were forced to urinate in the same tunnels where they were working and where carriages were so faulty that breaks were replaced with wooden sticks. The accident was still in the news in my first days in Anaklia and a topic of conversation with many of my interlocutors. As we discussed it with the two H&S officers, they remarked how ADC was committed to the highest standards, whereas in most of the country not even the most basic human needs were protected. As I mentioned above, amidst the necropolitics that had come to govern labour across post-soviet Georgia, ADC's implementation of standards indeed set them apart from the operations of other companies and is without a doubt an urgent and necessary step to prevent further deaths. However, observing the implementation of H&S measures on the site and hearing the rhetoric embodied by the two officers form ADC, H&S emerges both as a mechanism to protect workers while at work, but also as a key practice in justifying the boundaries to the company's limited "care" *vis a vis* their employees. As I will show, the standards themselves are "working the boundaries" of the company vis a vis various subjects (De Genova 2005).

The phase of construction that I have observed has been one where hazards have been relatively low. These works, that came after the removal of the houses and cultivated plots previously occupying the port territory, mainly consisted in excavating drainage tunnels and removing existing canals in order to extinguish the wetland before flattening the soil and preparing it to be strengthened by the layers of sand reclaimed from the seabed. While this work involved large machinery and a variety of potential hazards, it cannot be compared with the dangers of mining or even with the ones that would have characterised the later phases of construction where elevated structures would be built and cranes and other machinery introduced. As the initial phase of construction, however, the works have been exposed to public scrutiny: official visits from Government members, foreign diplomats, potential investors

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[72] The names have been changed

[73] As discussed in chapter four, BP, whose presence in Georgia dates back to the construction of the Baku-Supsa pipeline, has had a great impact on the development of corporate practices in the country, setting the bar for the standards – ethical, professional and technological – as well as directly training hundreds of workers. Since the beginning of the Anaklia project, ADC has sought to mark their kinship to BP in different, more or less explicit, ways.

and contractors have been frequent and the employees busy fulfilling their tasks have often had external eyes on them. In these circumstances, rather than just internal, the role of the Health and Safety Officers has been one of managing public relations and safeguarding non-professionals visiting the site.

### 6.2.1 Infrastructure, standards and occidentalism

In multiple occasions I have sat in a 4x4 vehicle wearing a hard hat slouched on my head, being stewarded around the site. During the time I spent in and around the port territory I have frequently witnessed either David or Lado reproach workers for incorrect behaviour and, in even more occasions, I witnessed small groups of workers running to their booths to quickly retrieve their protective gear before the arrival of the officers only to discard them after their passage. Notably, unlike the sites where Harvey and Knox conducted their research in Peru, no serious accidents have taken place in Anaklia during the time I have been researching the development and all of the violations I have witnessed or accidentally perpetuated have been small. However, what became apparent is that for many workers the demands of the H&S officers seemed to belong to a realm of technical expertise that did not concern them. Unable to understand the need for such strict regulations, such as why it was necessary to wear a hard hat while working on a sandy plane where no objects risked falling on one's head, many of the unskilled workers just quietly ignored the prescriptions. More than as a form of protection, in many cases health and safety gear seemed – together with other "accessories" such as customised workwear, or the type of vehicle driven – to act as a marker of distinction amongst workers of a different kind.

Such distinction has direct monetary implications, indeed, as outlined in chapter five, compliance with international standards is an essential requirement to secure investment from international funding institutions (EBRD 2019, EIB 2019). As I have showed earlier, the goal of capitalisation is sustained by all sorts of other relations and embodied practices. It is these relations that materialise the future promise made by ADC in the present. The fact that the standards followed by the company exceed the ones prescribed by the Georgian government matters in this regard. The company's compliance with the transnational "state of the art" practice places the Consortium within a community of values superior to the one existing within the country, framing Anaklia as an "international project" (Bear 2013: 390). By placing ADC within the same "technological zone" (Barry 2006) as worldly companies such as Van Oord or BP, standards and regulations place the company and its projects within an "imagined West" of infrastructural modernity (Yurchack 2005:158). The post-colonial scholar Eduard Glissant (1989) has argued that "the West" is a project, rather than place. Building on this critique Hannah Appel has noted that capitalism has indeed been central to the project of the West (Appel 2019:2). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that "the West" is conjured as a critical interlocutor of the attempted capitalisation of Anaklia Port, and that the long-standing project of (re)producing Georgia's European-ness through infrastructural undertakings is reanimated by the individuals and collectives building this logistics hub (cf Manning 2012).

This post-Soviet infrastructural trajectory towards the West can be traced back to the construction of the BTC pipeline. As Barry argues, the pipeline was not only a pivotal point in the development and implementation of a largely new set of corporate practices, but also, in Georgia it represented a constituent moment for the re-assembling of society in the aftermath of Soviet collapse. This reassembling was at once geopolitical, civic and economic, marking on one side the beginning of the country's West facing trajectory and consolidating the power of civil society and the non-governmental organisations who represent it as an interlocutor for the country's governance. Over a decade after its completion, many of the practices experimented around the BTC have ostensibly become routinised amongst corporations across the world and, crucially, have become condition sine qua non for investment by international donors (Thompson 2005, 2012, Harvey et al 2013, Bear 2013). In Georgia, where local enterprises are few, and corporate culture is still largely underdeveloped (ADB 2014), BP holds a special place in local taxonomies of expertise, best-practice and authority. After BP's intervention in Georgia ethical codes, corporate social responsibility, standards and regulations have been placed as key signifiers not just of good practice but of a company's worldliness and distinction from the backwards firms operating in the country. Anaklia Development Consortium emerges within this context, as a *hybrid corporation*, rooted in a local context shaped by the construction of BP's Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline[74]. In the context of the intersection between the global assemblages informing the politics of expertise (Collier and Ong 2005) with local infrastructural histories (Barry 2013) transparency and commitment to "state of the art" technologies are occupy at once the core of ADC's performance of investability and its claim to embody the futuristic promise of national progress attached to it by Kvirikashvili during the opening ceremony of the port.

Claiming a belonging to this Occidentalist technological zone for ADC is thus an aspirational project that makes order within the company through the performative labour of standards. The contractor company in charge of the preparation works, that lasted around six months, starting in April 2018, was amongst the largest Georgian engineering companies, that operated on of a number of high profile infrastructural developments across the country. While they worked on the site they brought their own H&S managers that were nevertheless subjected to the scrutiny of the ADC's team. The members of the latter often commented on the generalised malpractice of the former and the inefficiency of their officers. The comments often strayed from the immediate breech or situation that was observed on site, to a much broader judgment on the company. The contractors, as was explained to me by some of ADC's employees , were not a respectable corporation and they did not take their duty of care seriously, they did not respect any international guidelines, and the only reason why they won the tender is because they owned a superior amount of machines compared to the competition. Jokingly, ADC's

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[74] Unlike BP, however, that as Barry attested, produced and published thousands of documentation on every aspect of the pipeline development making them accessible to its audiences from its website (Barry 2013:4) ADC's website hosts very few documents. The only technical documents available on the website are the EIA and ESMS report. Moreover, in consrast with BP which had numerous versions of each report and listed the different challenges and queries from public and expersts alike, on ADC's website we find only one copy of each reports without amendments.

employees mocked the other company's workers for being "savages" and their managers for being spoiled brats[75], who had reached their positions only as a result of being the sons of one or other successful managers. While this enterprise might indeed lack professional standards, what these comments suggest is that, unlike other companies that surround it, or even the state in which they operate – that is portrayed as plagued by inefficiency and cronyism – ADC belongs to an international community of best practitioners and experts that operate on a different plane (cf Mitchell 1999). The imagined West and the hegemonic logic of the market are conjoined in the present through the mediating labour in/of time that is carried out by the individuals in charge of the company state of the art expertise.

If the relation between ADC and other companies is defined by the competing claims of belonging to the transnational community of standards and by the silences and exposures necessary to sustain those claims (Barry 2013; Dunn 2005; De Neve 2009), amongst those employed by ADC on different levels, health and safety compliance seemed to mark a different kind of distinction, one travelling across class and skill lines. More than just a form of class hierarchy, however, within the port territory, different temporal regimes were implemented as workers were at once cast as belonging to a different time, less developed, and made to respond to different temporal imperatives (Bear 2014, 2015; cf Mitchell 2002:123-153; Barak 2013; Fabian 1983) . The local men employed to monitor the site were often reproached for their lack of correct gear, this would mainly happen when the H&S officers would cruise in their 4x4 at the edges of the territory. Unlike the skilled workers and managers that were assigned matching cars branded with the company's name, the local guards were not given a 4x4, and instead they roamed the territory on their horses named Ilia and Papuna. These workers spent their days patrolling the grounds and smoking cigarettes, and when reproached, would adjust their behaviour, drop their cigarette and comply with the orders imparted to them. I observed this happening on several occasions, however what always struck me during these interactions were not the minor breaches I was witnessed but what seemed to be an elephant in the room: the incommensurability of the workers position vis a vis their bosses. The difference between the two sets of workers was such that the vehicle used by the unskilled labourers was powered by hay and that of their managers by petrol. They existed, in substance in different timescapes, the latter representative of a modernity yet to be fully achieved in the rest of the country and the former stuck in ancient ways of the village and in need to be tamed through a set of standards they could not fully translate to their occupation (cf Fabian 1983). In the face of such a difference, the repeated reproaches by the officers worked rather than as a form of protection as a mark of further authority, a form of domestication rather than an act of care.

Commenting on ethical regimes in the Indian garment industry, De Neve (2009, 2016) has argued that different types of standards and ethical targets, produce new hierarchies of value. Within these, "certain products, places and people are brought under centralized metrics, while

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[75] Notably, this distinction operates regardless of the accuracy of the statements, something I came to realise upon meeting the son of Mamuka Khazaradze, who is currently employed in the company as one of the top managers, despite counting amongst his previous experiences only an "internship at Ernst and Young Tbilisi Office", a company that Khazaradze has helped set up in Georgia (cf Strathern 2005; Ho 2015).

others remain on the excluded margins unconnected to global circuits of production within an unregulated grey economy" (De Neve 2009:67, Bear 2013). In accordance, compliance with H&S standards in ADC is an element of a broader corporate moral economy, structuring the company's interior as well as generating its external image as a "state of the art" corporation. Inside ADC, the levels of distinction were multiple and they intermix elements of class distinction between the skilled and unskilled workers, of geographical distinction between locals, employed for so called "black labour", a colloquial term defining low skilled work, and workers from elsewhere and of professional status such as the distinction between ADC workers and those employed by the Georgian contractor companies. Together these elements blend into a form of corporate habitus that orients the relations of those whose lives revolve around the company[76] ( Bourdieu 1984; Bear 2013; Dunn 2005). Such habitus, in turn, is derived by mastering the transnational standards and codes of health and safety, leaving behind those who are unable to make them theirs. H&S standards, thus, acted within the company as what Bowker and Star call a "boundary object", these are "objects transferred from one community of practice to another, which have profoundly transformative effects without being transformed themselves" (Bowker and Star 2000 in Dunn 2005: 177). In the context of Anaklia, the technical authority conferred to the knowledge of health and safety acted as a distinguishing mechanism through which expertise, and thus, worldliness and superiority could be asserted.



*Figure 31 Levan and his horse Ilia roaming the port territory*

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[76] This is a heterogeneous and expanding group including: the white collar and technical workers employed in ADC but also local labourers and the participants to the CSR activities and trainings organised by the consortium.

### 6.2.3 Risks *at* work

> "Millions of men and women who are […] remaining sedentary, have borders cross them" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:6)

The topography of hazards and subjects inscribed by H&S standards, in some cases, helped naturalised exploitation and, even, illegal practices committed within the company (cf Mitchell 2002: 177). Similarly to Deputy CEO Giorgi Mirtskhulava who, dressed in his custom-made high visibility vest, explained to me and the student the smooth economic logic governing ADC's calculations, placing himself as an "economic man" (Zaloom 2006); the English-speaking, former BP employees now at the head of the company's H&S strategy are placed by their command of international standards in a separate realm from the Georgian low skilled workers whose breaches they have to monitor and reprimand. Hidden behind high-visibility gear and the virtuous claims of the company, are zones of obscurity, as corporate managerialism entrenches the inequalities that have propelled capitalist development from its outset (Rajak 2016:16).

During the latest part of my fieldwork, the port territory had become fully inaccessible, its soil having been turned upside down and awaiting to be compacted with dredged sand (cf Gustafson 2020, Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020). During this period, I was no longer allowed to enter the site, even if escorted by health and safety officers. As a result, I spent a larger portion of my time with the security guards employed to monitor the different parts of the consortium's property: the port territory on its different sides and the area where Lazika was once supposed to rise. Seven workers were covering this role, all of them coming from Anaklia and its neighbouring municipalities. As they were not directly engaged in construction they didn't have to wear any of the protective gear, their cars were allowed to cross the port territory to go back and forth from the gates they patrol, the same journey done by other workers, however none of their cars is a 4x4 and they are not required to wear hard hats during their transit. Their days spent at the edge of the spaces they were tasked to monitor movements, chatting with each other or with the rare passers-by, smoking cigarettes and sitting in their cars listening to music. It was, indeed, an extremely tedious job, as I got to experience the times I accidentally got stuck on the wrong side of the port territory and had to wait for hours for someone authorised to pick me up. The passing of time dilated into endless hours of waiting (cf Frederiksen 2013, 2018; Ozolina-Fitzgerald 2016). From the standpoint of my limited experience, however, I could not imagine exactly how endless, how unsustainable, these hours were. When I eventually asked the workers, about the length of their working days and the pay they received, their response startled me. Two of the younger workers were operating on shifts of forty-eight consecutive hours followed by a break of twenty four hours, the other workers instead would *only* alternate between twenty four hours of work and the following twenty four of rest. The pay for over one hundred hours of work performed by the security guards each week is four hundred and thirty Georgian Lari per month (£116). Even by the poor standards of Georgia's current legislation these shifts are illegal. In the small tin shed at the side of the port territory's gate there is a makeshift bed where the guards sleep during their endless shifts, underneath it they keep a portable stove, some snacks and the tools to make Turkish coffee which they drink often to keep awake and to pass the time. When I asked one of the workers how was it possible that the

company was demanding these shifts he told me he didn't know, but he was told that it was because they could not find many people to take the job.

I cannot confirm whether or not it is in fact true that the company has failed to find enough workers, but it seems unlikely given the high offer of low skilled work in the region, an abundance that was often commented upon by different members of the Consortium. During the summer of 2017, an Information Centre was established in Anaklia to address the inquiries for the local populations and from potential investors regarding the port project. Quickly, in response to the many inquiries about future employment, the company decided to collect the CVs of potential workers and create a database that they would eventually share with the contractor companies that will conduct the various phases of the construction and later operate the different spaces of the infrastructure. One of ADC's employees, Sophio, was in charge of the office and in less than six months she collected over 4000 CVs from people all across the region.  During our interview in April 2018, Sophio shared with me her concern that most of the CVs collected were for unskilled work. The reason for this lack of skilled labourers were different: on the one hand, the many workers who had held technical jobs during the Soviet Union, were now old and their training was not updated; on the other hand, the younger generation that had lived through the chaos of the 90s had not been able to access proper education as a result. While during my interview with Sophio we did not discuss specifically about the security jobs offered by ADC, her own assessment of the overabundance of unskilled workers looking for a job in the future port makes it unlikely that the company would have struggled to find suitable candidates to relieve the guards from their inhumane shifts. What is striking, furthermore, is that the alleged lack of ability on the part of the company to source labourers is translated into an increase in the exploitation of the few workers that have indeed accepted the job.

During an interview with CEO of Anaklia Development Consortium Levan Akhvlediani conducted in June 2018, he explained how, upon developing the master plan for Anaklia Port, the consortium had decided to limit the level of automation of the infrastructure in order to generate as many jobs as possible for the local population. The company, moreover, pledged to employ 90% of its labour force amongst Georgian workers (ADC 2017). While this commitment has been praised  by many of those observing the project, looking at the actual condition of labour of some of those employed during the port's construction, and unearthing the multiple symbolic and effective barriers to their full inclusion in the company, reveals another type of calculation behind what is presented as the ADC's attentiveness to the needs of the population. As many critical scholars have commented (Bear 2013: 385; cf De Genova 2005, Mezzadra and Nielson 2013, Gambino 2017) all over global supply chains the imperative to automate productive processes is counteracted by the availability of large pools of exploitable labour power. For a country like Georgia where youth unemployment remains between 30 and 40 % (UNDP 2017) and, as we have seen, no effective regulations exist to protect the workforce, hiring low skilled labour is much more reliable and profitable than investing in expensive foreign machinery. Against this background, it is plausible that rather than being unable to locate more workers, the company might instead have known that it would indeed be able to find people needy enough to bargain down on their own needs in exchange for work.

The local security workers, employed by ADC and spending most of their time in the port territory, nevertheless occupy the bottom level in the labour hierarchy within the company. Despite being related to their extreme working conditions, the possible risks to their physical and mental health caused by their uninterrupted shifts are not considered as part of the company's state of the art duty of care. Rather, these *other* threats seem to be naturalised in terms of the hierarchical taxonomy produced by its own H&S regulations. As Laura Bear has argued in relation to audit practices

> "inspections and standards are the mechanisms by which risk is devolved to workers, while simultaneously denying responsibility for the difficult and dangerous conditions of labour that might produce obstacles to the realization of the work. These practices are a denial of the rights to legal protection, fair conditions and wages that should accrue to workers as a result of their labour" (2013:390 cf Harvey and Knox 2015: 133).

The hierarchical sorting of subjects, hazards and timescapes produced by the application of health and safety standards within ADC, moreover, is not an aberration to the quest of a state of the art provision guiding the company. As I have outlined earlier, corporate sustainability feeds from the boundary-making exercises that allow capitalism to appear smooth and disentangled from any place-bound logic. While branded high-visibility vests, hard hats and boots were abundant on site, the company's safety standards does not seem to be apply to threats to workers' wellbeing that do not involve the possibility of being crashed by heavy machinery or electrocuted by a loose cable.

## Conclusion

Our infrastructural present "could not have come into being without the subjugation of bodies that worked to minds that planned the digging of pits, the laying of rails, and the ruling of continents" (Jasanoff 2015: 327; see also Günel 2019:64). Throughout this chapter I have observed the polysemic boundaries that aid this subjugation and the intersections between the Georgian state, private companies and workers across which these boundaries are produced and operate. The implementation of state of the art provisions operates through what Bear has called a series of "acts of work" through which "techniques, knowledges, and ethics of time conjoin in the mediating labour in/of time that is carried out by individuals and collectivities" (Bear 2016: 496). Observing the workings of health and safety within ADC what emerges is that, rather than solely geared at the protection of workers, standards and regulation operate to protect the company's investment and, similarly to the reproductive activities described in chapter five, to attract capital from international investors. They are therefore key pieces in the fragile puzzle of capitalisation that ADC is engaged in suturing together. Within the Georgian context, as I have shown, the reckless exploitation of resources, spaces and labour that shaped the post-Soviet era has had deadly consequences for workers and ecosystems alike (cf Swann-Quinn 2019). A move to less reckless business practices is thus, not just a welcome but urgent measure to prevent the depletion of ecosystems and the killing of workers that has characterised the past decades. However, efforts to create a more sustainable labour environment are intermixed with the commitment to materialise the seamless connectivity required by contemporary logistics. Significantly, such commitment relies on the intermixing with pre-existing histories and repetitions. The company's claim to belong to "technological zone" of

global state of the art practices activates ideas of Georgia's belonging to an "imagined West" of progress and contributes to the creation of the company's habitus by organising workers and naturalising their differential inclusion and exploitation. Reflected through the prism of corporate managerialism (Rajak 2016:2), therefore, ADC's practices of care and safeguarding act as mechanisms of sorting subjects and hazards geared at sustaining logistical capitalism.

**PART 4: FUTURE DUST**



*Figure 32 The border between the port territory and the village*

Its September 2019 and my research assistant, Sophio Tskhvariashvili and I are walking along the stretch of road that precedes the entrance to the port territory. This is a large dirt path with houses and allotments on each side. Roughly five hundred metres from the junction that links this path with the central part of the village the sequence of houses is interrupted abruptly by a four metre tall wall of black sand, preceded by a metal fence marking the edge of the port's building site. The mass of dark sand has been dredged from the sea to strengthen the existing soil, too humid to provide strong foundations for the future port, and it is now resting there, waiting to be compacted into the ground. The dredging operations were taking place during the site visit lead by Giorgi Mirtskhulava. Back then in November 2018, the dredger Athena 1, owned by the Dutch company Van Oord and renowned as one of the largest vessels of its kind in the world, was operating day and night to extract large quantities of sand from the seabed, turning its waves black (Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020; cf Gustafson 2020; Chua 2019). Following the end of the soil reclamation, the territory was set to rest for six months in order to allow the new layer to solidify before moving on to the next phase of the works. Nine months have passed, however, and the next phase still has not started. This is due to the crisis into which ADC and its CEO Mamuka Khazaradze have plunged since the beginning of 2019. At the time of our trip to Anaklia, the last of my fieldwork, the crisis was looming over the village as a thick coat of uncertainty and doubt over the future of the development and the accomplishment of its promise of prosperity.

The sand mound is so tall that nothing beyond can be seen. Staring at it from below I remember the words of Keti Bochorishvili, CEO of Anaklia City describing to me the current state of the port's development during our interview in October 2018: "We are making mountains!" – she said. I can now see it was an apt description. Rather than terrestrial mountains, these tall plateaus are more reminiscent of lunar landscapes, smooth and lifeless. It is as if an inverted process of terraforming has taken place, remodelling the earth to look like an alien planet, rather than vice-versa (Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020). Apparently immovable, however these extra-terrestrial mounds have been interacting with their surroundings, infiltrating their environment. Towards the end of the summer of 2019[77] strong winds arrived in the village lifting the loose sand lying on the top of these alien heaps, and for days on end the houses rising in the proximity of the territory were inundated by thick dust, infiltrating every corner and spoiling the immaculate bedsheets of the guesthouses awaiting tourists (see also Mah 2017).

In speaking about dust, media theorist, Jussi Parikka, has noted that is

> "not quite an object, not in the intuitive sense that objects are supposed to be easily graspable. It does not fit the hand, even if it covers vast terrains. It is more environmental and better characterized as a milieu […]Each particle of dust carries with it a unique vision of matter, movement, collectivity, interaction, affect, differentiation, composition and infinite darkness – a crystallized data-base or a plot ready to combine and react, to be narrated on and through something. There is no line of narration more concrete than a stream of dust particles." (2013:1)

The last part of this thesis is composed of two chapters. Thus far I have investigated the accretion of logistical futures that were casted upon Anaklia by those engaged in the different infrastructural attempts that marked this territory. I observed different temporal orientations converging under a single sky. What I have shown is that the production of a logistical future is sustained by a great deal of reproductive activities, performed by a multitude of subjects. In the next two chapters I maintain my commitment to show the imbrication of different timescapes in the (re)production of Anaklia, but now I shift my focus on a different milieu, those people, spaces, and other human and non-human agents that have inhabited the territory amidst the repeated promises of a logistical future and throughout their recurrent failures. Zooming in on the milieus left behind by yet one more development in Anaklia, I ask, following Morten Nielsen what does the collapsed future do in the present? (Nielsen 2014 :216). From the village, the (logistical) future appears to be exhausting (cf Appel 2018: 52). Interestingly, Parikka's materialist concern with dust milieus places labour at its core: "I want to remind that dust is something that attaches to lungs and expresses a relation of labour"(ibid:7). In centring what is leftover and, crucially, left behind by the futuristic pull investing Anaklia, these chapters

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[77] Over a year later, in October 2020, the sand was still plaguing Anaklia, carried by the strong seasonal winds all over the town, into the houses.

go deeper in the exploration of how logistics and its futures are (re)produced, showing the exhausting work necessary to suture together a present that is *ready for the future* and the different efforts and timescapes that are woven together to make logistical capitalism look coherent

In the first chapter, I show how sediments of past relations and the "other" logistics within which they were inserted are reactivated by the promise of logistical development. On the one side, memories of the substantive socio-economic organisation that sustained people life during Soviet times and that survived as a logic of mutuality amidst the ruins of Soviet collapse remain today as embodied sediments and may be seen to constitute a silenced challenge to the promise of capitalist accumulation waged by the port's construction. On the other however, those same memories are leveraged by ADC's president in his bid to present himself as a worthy and caring patron for the Anaklian logistical future. At the same time as promoting the port as a futuristic vehicle of progress and profit ADC deploys references to submerged substantive pasts in order to sustain its promise of inclusive development. In the second chapter I explore the multiple ways in which the mundane pace of Anaklia's life has been altered by the subsequent futuristic promises of development. As ethnographies of similar developments have shown, the promise of infrastructure foregrounds a particular idea of the present as a space of desire and modernity (Anand et al 2018: 27, Gupta 2018, Bear 2007). Even before its completion – and indeed despite its effective failure – the construction of the port rests on a radical transformation of Anaklia's topography, from the arrangement of its urban settlement to the ecosystems that thrive on its terrain, this spatial transformation, at once promised and imposed, entails also a radical reshuffling of the "rhythms and striations of social life" (Anand et al 2018:5). By tracing these new rhythms, focusing especially on the timescapes connected to tourism, in this final chapter I map the new socio-economic regimes that are now organising the life of Anaklia. My observations here link directly to my earlier insights on the gruelling reproductive work necessary to sustain the logistical future. As I have noted, I consider reproduction to include the labour necessary to suture together different social, temporal, affective regimes at the service of capitalist projects. By focusing on the home as a site from which the village's relations to "vagabond capitalism" are negotiated and rendered domestic (cf Katz 2001a, 2001b), what I observe here is thus that reproduction is at once a substrate and an in-between of future logistical space.

## CHAPTER 7: SUBSTANTIVE ECONOMIES AND FUTURE PASTS

> "Capitalism has no singular logic, no essence. It survives parasitically, taking up residence in human bodies and minds, or in sugarcane or private property, drawing its energies from the chemistry of others, its force from other fields, its momentum from others' desires. Such desires, such forces, such other logics, are presented as something exterior to capitalism. They appear as a non-capitalist excess that derails capitalism from its course. Yet this outside, these excesses, are at the same time vital to capitalism. They are a source of its energies, the condition of its success, the possibility of its power to reproduce. They are a heterogeneity that makes possible the logic of capital, and thus ensures both its powers and its failures." (Mitchell 2002: 303)

During a meeting with Keti Bochorishvili, the CEO of Anaklia City, the smart metropolis and business centre planned to surround the port, she shared with me her excitement for the boundless experimentation that is set to give life to this "city yet to come" (Simone 2012; Jazeel 2015). As a space of experiment, Keti remarked: "Anaklia is perfect!" This is because, unlike the rest of the country  "we do not risk to destroy anything! There is simply *nothing* there!" As we have seen in previous chapters the future projected on Anaklia by ADC contains a promise of newness and progress. This chapter looks instead at the multiple ways in which the past – and the visions of the future that populated it – interacts with the present activities in Anaklia, at different scales. What I have observed is that Anaklia's past is at once reactivated and rendered abject by the construction of Anaklia port, in ways that are not always obvious. Like all places, contemporary Anaklia is a site where multiple layers of relation and powers intersect. In particular, unlike Bochorishvili's appreciation of this territory as an open frontier where experiments could take place unbound by a concern for existing lifeworlds, as I will show, the construction of Anaklia port reactivates a layer of sedimented and embodied logistical practices stemming from Soviet infrastructural planning and from the painful conflicts and negotiations that marked the savage 90's in the newly formed republic of Georgia. Interestingly, the idea of an empty frontier to provide the ground for novel forms of capital accumulation and life (Tsing 2004) also points out to the coexistence of multiple historical legacies that cannot be reduced to capitalism.  As Mateusz Laszczkowski argues in relation to the Soviet "Virgin Lands Campaign", the major agro-logistical effort initiated by Khrushchev to boost the Soviet Union's agricultural output, the *topos* of the conquering of "nature" is invoked and leveraged to gather the necessary forces for the productive effort. Similarly, as I have discussed in chapter three, the tropes of "emptiness", "bareness" or "barrenness" of the land have been persistently invoked "colonizing" narratives  of the Russian Empire's borderlands since the time of tsarist colonization (Laszczkowski 2016: 9; Buchli 2007: 47–48). These histories resonate with the contemporary effort of frontierization taking place in Anaklia. Despite efforts to portray this borderland as an autonomous and "international" location, the singularity of Anaklia's history is reactivated by contemporary infrastructural efforts (Jazeel 2019, 2015).

Anand has suggested that "infrastructures accrete. They gather and crumble incrementally and slowly, over time, through labour that is at once ideological and material" (2015:1). The contemporary promise of seamless connectivity, as I will show, is based on a simultaneous disavowal and dependency on the (re)productive nexus that sustains the lifeworlds it seeks to envelop. In order to uncover these relations rendered *other* by official narratives of logistical development in Anaklia, the first part of this chapter is devoted to a brief archaeology of the

village's recent past. Outlining its organisation before the large scale investments of the past decade, I reflect upon certain elements of Soviet planning and "actually existing socialism" during and after the Soviet collapse (Tichindeleanu 2010b). Soviet economies placed the intersection between production and reproductive needs at their core (Collier 2011; Clarke 1992) . This (re)productive nexus, explicit in the accounts of Anaklia's rural economy, I argue, has been driven to the ground by the decades of wild accumulation and chaos that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Collapsed futures such as the ones powering the USSR, as Morten Neilsen argues "are 'unhinged' from their fixed temporal location on a linear scale and reappear as nonlinear and 'trixster-like' figurations that threaten the stability of any temporal configuration." (2014:217, cf Verdery 1999). Like the particles of dust that invaded the village, "other logistical" connections are at once suspended and sedimented on Anaklia's territory. As elsewhere in the former Soviet space, throughout the years of infrastructural and social collapse, people in Anaklia survived through the establishment of dense informal networks of subsistence. It is against this background that current developments are taking place. Rather than a clean break, moreover, practices, traumas and tactics that shaped the *savage* 90's, themselves carried over from the previous Soviet era still inform the lives of Anaklians in different ways (cf Humphrey 2002).

As the material structures through which the logistical organisation of the Soviet Union have been left to ruin for almost three decades, in the second part of the chapter I reflect on the ways in which sedimented logistics and future pasts are reactivated by the construction of the port in the form of nostalgia. Building on two examples, I depict different versions of nostalgia intertwined with the specific capitalist project that is Anaklia port. Firstly, I introduce Neno, one of those who received a substantial compensation to vacate her house to make space for the attempted construction of the port. Listening to Neno's traumatic experience of relocation, her longing for a more substantive social organisation appears as an embodied challenge to the socio-economic organisation engendered by the logistical future. Secondly, I show how despite being ostensibly rejected by the logistical visions that converge in the making of Anaklia port, a nostalgia for a fairer time is appropriated in Mamuka Khazaradze's bid to present himself as a worthy and *real* patron of the logistical future produced in Anaklia. Discussions of nostalgia have been abundant in the analysis of the post-Soviet space (Boym 2001; Boyer 2010; Gotfredsen 2014; Laszczkowski 2016). Moreover, beyond the post-Soviet milieu Yael Navaro has brilliantly captured the conjuncture of affects and materialities in post-conflict scenario, one comparable to Anaklia's recent history as a contested borderland. While these works detail the constellations of affects that populate the liminal realities of these different "posts", here my concern is specifically with how the relation between capitalism and its outside is *mediated by nostalgia*. Thus, I consider nostalgia rather than just a longing for the past, to be a specific tool of socio-economic organisation that links capitalism to its outsides and vice versa.

## 7.1 Infrastructural pasts: "*meurneoba* / substantive economy"



*Figure 33 Former Guesthouse for the tea plantation of Ergeta, now abandoned and occupied by internally displaced people (IDP) from Abkhazia*

The first formal development of Anaklia took place in the aftermath of the second world war, when around 350 people were living in the area, working small plots of land that were cultivated with corn and keeping water buffalos that thrived in the humid climate of the Black Sea coast. The Anaklian diet at the time was mainly based on corn products such as *ghomi* (cornmeal), *mchadi* (corn bread) and on *matsoni* (yogurt) and cheeses made from buffalos' milk. Not much else was available and Nia[78], one of my interlocutors and owner of a large mini-market in town, remembers that when she was a child in the late 40s people had to go all the way to Poti[79] on foot to fetch the flour necessary to make bread. In the fifties the economic organisation of Anaklia was re-organised and its population grew as the quality of life was improved. Large buffalo farms were established and, a decade after, in order to exploit Georgia's climate, warmer and sunnier in comparison to the rest of the Soviet Union, citrus plantations were set up producing fruits that were exported across the entire USSR. Alongside the establishment of organised farming, the village was equipped with a school, a hospital with fifty rooms and a

[78] All of the names have been changed.
[79] 20 kilometres south of Anaklia.

cinema. Such organisation of life stayed in place until the collapse of the Soviet system in the 90's.

Outside, Anaklia, on the road that connects it with the regional capital of Zugdidi, several large tea plantations operated, employing hundreds of workers each. The cultivation of tea has been practiced in the region since the late 19th century and during the Soviet Union was developed into large-scale industrial production destined for different corners of the socialist federation[80] (Khundadze and Avaliani 2018). During the Soviet Union, the agricultural economy of Anaklia was integrated within a larger and very productive industrial circuit which it partially served. In Zugdidi, a paper factory employing up to 30.000 workers was established in the late 1950's. Twenty kilometres south of Anaklia, moreover, Poti port had since the second half of the 19th century been Georgia's largest industrial port, connected through the railway line built during the Russian Empire with the oil fields of Baku and the manganese and coal mines of Chiatura and Zestafoni. It is from the integration with these large productive spaces that tourism emerged in the area, as some of the neighbouring factories set up their summer leisure camps in and around Anaklia. The camps were hosting workers and their families as well as colonies of children coming from different parts of the USSR. In looking back at the previous organisation of Anaklia, it is important to note how "Socialist planning was not concerned with the separate management of distinct enterprises of the national economy." Rather, it was concerned with "the region as a whole, in its mutual relationship with other regions that influence its structure" (Collier 2011:70). Even before being described as a promised logistics hub, therefore, Anaklia, should not be understood as a contained space with its own specific economy, rather it must be looked at one element of "a unified network of settlement of an economic region" (ibid). Even as a rural and not particularly developed settlement, Soviet Anaklia, thus, must still be understood to be part of a larger, logistical, system.

Dotting the road between Anaklia and Zugdidi traces of this district's extensive Soviet era logistical infrastructure are still visible. Large abandoned buildings lie on the sides of the broken roads: these are the remains of former tea plantations, covered in reliefs portraying the – imagined and romanticised – collective effort at the core of the life of the plantations and the plentiful harvests they generated. Old buildings, now mostly occupied by internally displaced people from the Abkhazian war, are the remnants of communal farms employing thousands of people. "After the Soviet breakup", as Collier argues, "the landscape of half-built enterprises, crumbling apartments, and deteriorating parks stood as stark reminders of a vision of the future a mode of relating the present to a possible future that was now past" (Collier 2011:6, Gotfredsen 2016, cf Mah 2017). Speaking about the previous organisation of life in Anaklia, my interlocutors often would start their recollection by saying: "ადრე როცა აქ იყო მეურნეობა/adre rotsa aq iko meurneoba" (before when here there was a rural economy). The Georgian word "meurneoba" (მეურნეობა) can indicate the organisation of any kind of

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[80] As Khundadze and Avaliani account in their short history of Georgian industry (2018), Georgian tea production grew steadily during the Soviet period from a total area of 1,300 hectares in 1925 to 70.000 hectares in the late 1980s. (2018: 89-90)

substantive economy, from the household and agriculture to "virtually any nexus of production and need fulfilment" (cf Collier 2011:81). The term is related to the noun "meurne" that means: guardian/manager and in some cases "carer" (Garnett Comprehensive Georgian-English Dictionary 2006). "Meurneoba" groups together all of the activities geared at the production and reproduction of a determinate space – from the household to the factory/plantation to regional organization. As such, it is used in combination with others to indicate a wide variety of organisational forms: msoflio (world) meurneoba, for instance, indicates "the global economy", while it is also deployed to refer to the local administration of villages and towns across the country. Mostly, however, it is used in reference to the activities composing the "rural economy". During the Soviet Union it was often deployed with the prefix "kol", a shortening of "collective", "kolmeurneoba", to indicate the collectivised agricultural production around which Soviet rural economy was structured. The composite noun "soflis-meurneoba", preceded by the word "sofeli", village, literarily, village-economy, instead, means agriculture. Nowadays, this last meaning is most common, even when the term is used on its own it in intended as "agriculture"[81]. Reducing this complex noun exclusively to agriculture, however, risks erasing the lifeworlds and epistemologies that converge within it. The socio-economic activities taking place in and around Anaklia during the Soviet Union are all described by my informants as contained within a "meurneoba". Such rural activities, however, are inclusive of industrial relations, reproductive practices and an organisational sense of place that is lost by translating their description simply as agriculture.

According to Timothy Mitchell's at the core of the creation of "the economy" in the early twentieth century is a process of bordering. Distancing himself from Karl Polanyi's seminal account of the 19th century's "great transformation" from substantive socio-economics to the national economy (Polany 1944)[82], Mitchell places the creation of a separate realm of economic calculation some decades later. "Between the 1930s and 1950s – he argues – economists, sociologists, national statistical agencies, international and corporate organizations, and government programs formulated the concept of the economy, meaning the totality of monetarized exchanges within a defined space" (Mitchell 2002:4). Rather than just a different way to account for things that were already happening, Mitchell argues, "the economy was made" (ibid:5), and it is in this process that "boundaries between the monetary and the nonmonetary, national and foreign, consumption and investment, public and private, nature and technology, tangible and intangible, owner and nonowner" (ibid:9; cf Callon 1998) were set as the borders of what belonged to the economic realm and what was external to it or, in many cases, an aberration.

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[81] During my fieldwork, I asked multiple people from different backgrounds for the meaning of the word "meurneoba", in most cases the first answer would be: agriculture. Only after a more in depth discussion, most of the interlocutors would explain that it could indicate different economic organisations. The Garrison English-Georgian dictionary translates the noun as simply: "economy".

[82] Not just Polanyi (1944) but Tribe (1978), Dumont (1977), Buck-Morss (1995), and others have argued that the economy became a distinct sphere of social practice and intellectual knowledge in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Instead, when the word "meurneoba" is used to describe organisational forms that took place during the Soviet Union, what emerges is a conjunction between the reproductive nexus of rural lifeworlds and large scale logistical planning. As some have noted, this intersection is at the core of Soviet"s conceptions of production (Smith 1999:144–5). As Simon Clarke argues:

> "The Soviet enterprise is not simply an economic institution but is the primary unit of Soviet society, and the ultimate base of social and political power. The basis of the Soviet enterprise was not capital, but the productive activity of the labor collective. The public measure of its success was not its profit, but the size of its labor force and the numbers of tons they produced, the houses it had built, the number of places for children in its kindergartens and in summer camps, the sporting, medical, and cultural facilities it provided, the number of pensioners it supported.... This was not just rhetoric, it was an ideological expression of the social relations of production and forms of surplus appropriation on which the Soviet system was based." (Clarke 1992:7)



*Figure 34 a relief portraying the life in the tea plantation, in Ergeta on the road to Anaklia*

Therefore, within Soviet "meurneoba", similarly to earlier rural organisations, what is expressed is not just a series of located productive activities, but the socio-economic life-worlds they were embedded within and the logistics that kept them alive. What this terms describes is, thus, the total of the operations necessary to the reproduction of a specific community: a logistical effort in the most basic, bodily, of the senses, that connected people's most reproductive needs to logistical networks of transcontinental scope.

In his study of post-soviet biopolitics Stephen Collier (2011) describes the infrastructural networks that composed that gigantic system that was the Soviet Union. Focusing on mundane

structures such as the pipes of the heating systems in a medium sized industrial city, Collier argues that the Soviet System was assembled through a form of infrastructural biopolitics where processes of production were inextricably linked to the provision of life of Soviet citizens and of the Union as a whole. The complex intersection of elements at the core of Soviet provision was summarised by the word *khoziaistvo* (ibid:7). Deriving from the peasant's household (Watts 2002: 67), this term is a near equivalent to "meurneoba" in describing "socio-economic operations as a substantive nexus of (re)productive activities to be managed by Soviet internal organisation". Focusing specifically on the organisation of the city, Collier lists the different elements that were considered to pertain to the city's *khoziaistvo*, these varied from factory works to housing and related services (heat, light, water supply, etc) to medical and food supplies, to theatres and school, reaching up to the organisations for the "rational use of free time", namely clubs, restaurants, parks (Collier 2011:95). Within the Soviet system, the linking of *reproductive needs* to the *productive elements* of the economy was thus at the basis of an effort of total planning rendered possible through infrastructural biopolitics, providing the pulsating veins of the Soviet Union (see also Mandel and Humphrey 2002: 11-12, Humphrey 2005). Far from glorifying the USSR and its often brutal planned economy, Collier nevertheless shows how behind the elaboration of the infrastructural networks necessary to guarantee production and administer life across the vast space of the union there was an "effectively pastoral" element of attention towards the material needs of the human beings populating the Union (2011:107).

Interestingly, as different scholars argue, the substantive nexus that Collier describes to be at the heart of Soviet infrastructural biopolitics was also the point of departure for the myriad of logistical underworlds that constituted the Soviet "second economy" (Bockman 2006, Rekhviashvili 2017, Mars and Altman 1983). Often misrepresented as a latent form of "market economy" the informal networks that provided Soviet citizens with a lifeline of supplies and activities that were prohibited by the state planning was instead moved by creative practices of needs fulfilment, reciprocity, exchange and more (Tichndeleanu 2001b, Rekhviashvili 2017). The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, radically upset the workings and representation of these interwoven systems.

## "Areouloba" (არეოულობა) and the dispossession of meurneoba.

My words cannot do justice to the devastation and the pain that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. The geopolitical event of Soviet Collapse and its aftermaths hit populations as a "contingent shock" of monumental proportions (Ingram 2019: 33, see Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Nazpary 2001; Humphrey 2002; Montgomery 2007). In the border region where Anaklia is located, "the chaos" (არეოულობა/areouloba) as its commonly referred to in Georgia, was felt with heightened intensity as the population was caught between the breakage of all infrastructural provisions and the outbreak of the conflict with Abkhazia in 1993 (Gvinjilia 2019). As Tamta Khalvashi notes what "characterised this period was a total injustice or *ganukitkhaoba* (განუკითხაობა), a word that was widely used in Georgia to connote the complete lack of any shared or visible rules or laws under the rhetoric of transition" (2015: 82).

Injustice, chaos and violence are what emerges from many of my discussions with the Anaklians who are old enough to remember these times vividly:

> "[in the 90s in Anaklia] people could not go out after 8, everything was closed.[...]Shevardnadze's time was the worst, from 93 till 2003. It was terrible, everyone got arms. There were 8 armed people in our village, they were saying they support Zviad [Gamsakhurdia, first president of independent Georgia] but they were doing whatever they wanted. That's where the hatred was born. Then Mkhedrioni[83] came. Overall, all the sides were just robbers. [...]" – says Lasha, one of the men currently employed as a guard to the port territory.

Everyone in Anaklia has dramatic stories of what happened during that near past, some people, like Neno, one of the villagers that has been relocated in view of the port's construction, were robbed multiple times:

> "During the war Mkhedrioni came, at that time we still had a huge citrus garden and a huge meurneoba, but they took all the money we had saved for winter […] Another time, in 2004 he [my husband] was going to work and robbers met him on the way and tied him to a tree. We were searching for him when he didn't come back from work. In the evening he came with three thieves, we didn't have money but I had some jewellery – old things from the Soviet Union, my engagement ring, necklace ... when I saw the thieves and my children and my husband in that kind of condition, I gave them everything that I had and I was asking them to take everything they liked just to leave us as soon as possible!!"

"Areouloba" had a disastrous effect on the socio-economic networks that were composing the previous system:

> "When the turmoil began, everything fell apart: there was no more centralized financing, no more supply chain, and the citrus plantations froze. People started seizing public property, factories scrapped and people selling their bits for metal. All the tea factories were deconstructed and sold. The trees burned for fuel and many of the animals eaten or stolen. People were desperate and only few people got very rich.' – Giorgi, a man in his sixties tells me - Shevardnadze's time was simply a fight for survival, [we had] no welfare or anything else, only survival: we were trying not to die of starvation."

During this protracted period of chaos what took place, as Sassen argue, was "a savage sorting of winners and losers" (2010) that would set the basis for the socio-political and economic organisation of present day Georgia. The wealth of most of those who are in power today, in Georgia as in many former Soviet republics, can be traced back to those years and to the primitive accumulation that took place (Sassen 1989, 2010; cf Federici 2004). In many cases, moreover, the former Party and state nomenklatura pillaged state resources. As Humphrey and Mandel note, across the former Soviet Union, "this practice has been cynically termed *prikhvatizatsia* (from the Russian word *prikhvatit* 'to grab'), a play on the Russian word for privatization, *privatizatsia*" (2002: 9). Whether old party bureaucrats staying afloat by grabbing onto public goods, or new hustlers whose trajectories to richness are obscure as much as they are mythicized, moreover, what took place in the 90s was an infrastructural grab of unprecedented scale.

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[83] An armed militia headed by famous thief-in-law (Soviet Mafia) Jaba Ioseliani. The group ravaged the region on the way to fight in the Abkhazian War.
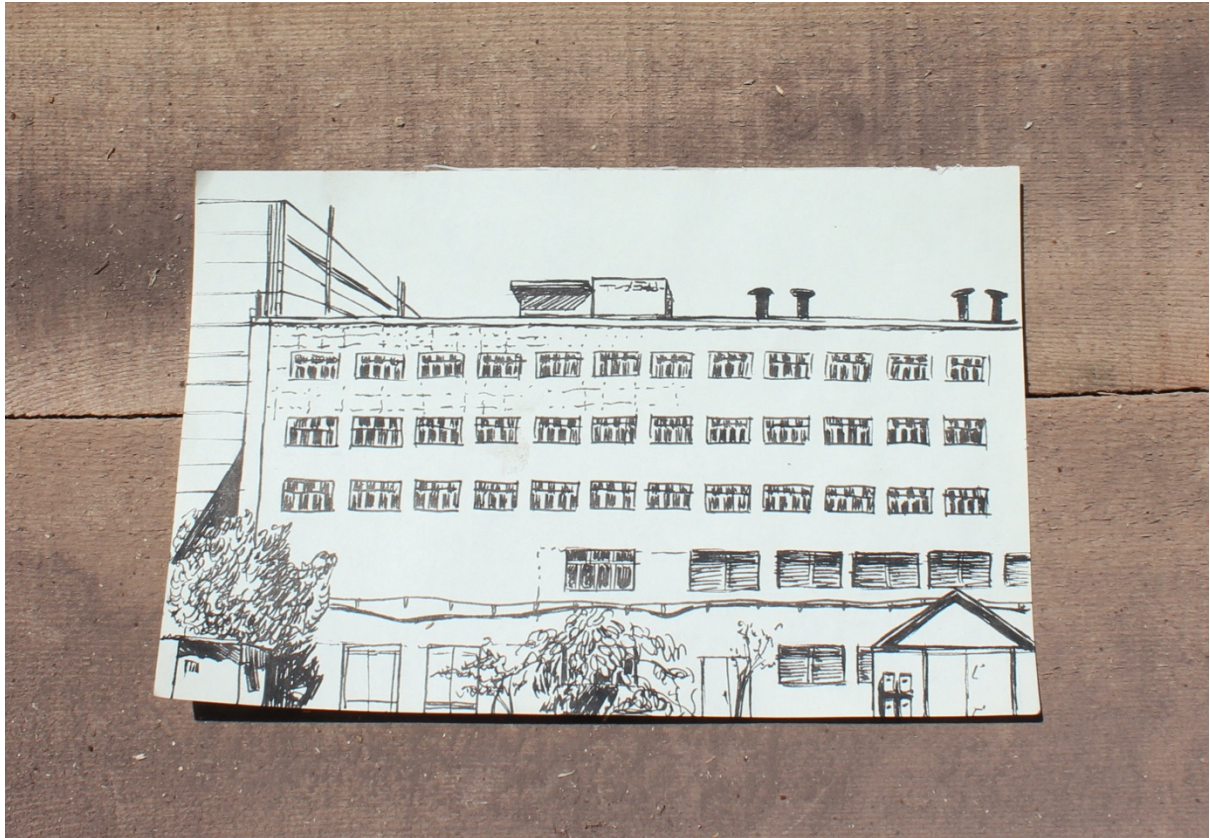
*Figure 35 The former car factory in Kutaisi, now a crumbling building inside the HuaLing Free Industrial Zone. Sketch from May 2017.*

## 7.2 The (substantive) economy in ruin

> "Ruins, rust, dust, and garbage are not material sui generis. They do not just emerge on their own. Rather, they are generated through specific social relations between people, materialities, and the built and natural environment" (Navaro-Yashin2012: 152)

What was kickstarted by the conjunctural shock of areouloba was also a process of ruination, of unimaginable scale that enveloped the social, material and indeed economic infrastructure that sustained Soviet life (Humphrey 2002). As we will see in what follows this large scale ruination became an integral and productive component of the new world created in the aftermath of Soviet collapse (cf Navaro-Yashin 2012: 157).

Indeed, the flipside of the capture of public assets and ascents to power of old and new elites is the plunging into dispossession of swathes of former Soviet citizens. In her study of the "unmaking of Soviet life" Caroline Humphrey describes a new figure that was to become endemic to the post-Soviet condition: the dispossessed (2002: 20). "The dispossessed are people who have been deprived of property, work, and entitlements, but we can also understand them as people who are themselves no longer possessed, [as they] have fallen outside the primary unit of society" (ibid). In the aftermath of Soviet collapse, almost overnight *millions were turned*

*into the dispossessed[84].* This is a serious and terrible deprivation that embroiled different categories of people, including, as Humphrey lists: "refugees coming into Russia from the successor states of the CIS; the unemployed; economic migrants; demobilized soldiers, abandoned pensioners, invalids, and single-parent families; vagrants and the homeless and people living in various illegal ways, such as contract laborers without residence permits in large cities" (ibid: 21). Not unique to the post-Soviet space, as it has been noted by scholars in different fields, dispossession has become a global phenomenon in recent decades, characterising what David Harvey describes as novel forms of accumulation underpinning contemporary imperialism (Harvey 2003, Humphrey 2002:21). In depicting post-Socialist dispossession, however, Humphrey highlights how beyond being trampled by the wheels of savage accumulation, "the events and decisions that create the dispossessed are also deeds in fields of semiological battle, where myth-making faces its enemies, prosaic recitals and narrative accounts" (ibid).

Notably, the collapse of the Soviet Union provided a new terrain for the strengthening of an "economic rationality" based on the promotion of the market as sphere of profit making, separate and above the reproduction of life.

> "In the closing decade of the century, after the collapse of state socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the authority of economic science seemed stronger than ever. Employing the language and authority of neoclassical economics, the programs of economic reform and structural adjustment advocated in Washington by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States government could judge the condition of a nation and its collective well-being by simply measuring its monetary and fiscal balances." (Mitchell 2002: 272)

What came to be "dispossessed", therefore was not just a very large number of individuals but *a mode of knowing and organizing the (re)production of life* that had animated Soviet life. The substantive nexus at the core of meurneoba/khoziaistvo was *dispossessed* by the official calculations of "market economy", and the reproduction of life no longer featured as a measure of success of this new economy (cf Thompson 1963), as it's made very clear by Misha Saakashvili:

> "No single state body will treat you badly. The rest is up to people. The government is not able to feed its citizens the way they were fed, and everybody has to accept this fact, since it's a normal market relationship. The important thing is that if somebody believes in their own power, in their own talent, if they think they are stronger than others and can go forward, then they should compete in free competition." (The Administration of The President of Georgia, Press Office, Annual Report, 2005, cited in Rekhviashvili 2017:28).

In the aftermath of Soviet collapse, the traditional regional specialization in production of tea, lemons, and other subtropical crops has shifted to edible crops – soy, corn, and beans that individual households cultivated for their own subsistence and that circulated along informal networks (Gacheciladze and Staddon 2007:63). Dispossession, however, as Collier so convincingly shows, does not imply the disappearance of those biopolitical relations that made up the now abject lifeworld of Soviet logistics. The promotion of a "normal market

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[84] In Georgia reports chart a dramatic increase in suicides, alcoholism, and heart attacks. Significant youth outmigration has resulted in both a decline in locally-available labour and a rapid ageing of the remaining population (this is replicated elsewhere in the ex-communist rural regions (see Staddon, 1999).

relationship" of total competition, did not in turns, erase substantivity, rather it pushed it *into the ground*[85]. Undetected, despite still sustaining large portions of post-Soviet life (Rekhviashvili 2017; Gacheciladze and Staddon 2007: 63). Far from appearing out of nowhere, the sprawling "informal economy" that provided the principal means of survival for millions of inhabitants of the Eastern Bloc within and against the new regime of calculation, as some scholars have rightly pointed out, grew out of the pre-existing practices that populated the Soviet Union before its collapse (Tichindeleanu 2010a, 2010b, Rekhviashvili 2017).

> "The proliferating alternative universe of informal speculative markets (bazaar, black market, video market etc.), sustainable food and self-sufficient living systems, friendship economies, long-term savings and investments (house building and reparation, etc.), zero-interest borrowings, workplace solidarity, barter economies, collectible values, gift economies, and the list goes on" (Tichindeleanu 2010a: 5)

that had come into existence during Soviet years, came to the fore in the 90's. As Lela Rekhviashvili argues, the attitude of many Western observers towards these networks has been contradictory: if on one side, they had praised the entrepreneurial spirit of Soviet citizens who established alternatives forms of exchange, on the other after the collapse they had condemned the resistance of these alleged "entrepreneurs" to be included within the new market economy (Rekhviashvili 2017). Such contradictory attitude, according to Rekhviashvili, is based on a fundamentally wrong assumption: the underground networks, as Tichindeleanu beautifully captures, were not a form of burgeoning market economy, some were forms of market exchange, but they still moved *within* the socialist and pastoral economy of the Soviet Union (Tichindeleanu 2010a: Bockman 2011). In light of this, Rekhviashvili suggests that what has come to be known as "the informal economy" should be understood in substantive terms as a network of disparate forms of exchange rooted in the fundamental nexus between production and reproduction. The substantive logic at the core of meurneoba/khoziaistvo, therefore, rather than been wiped out by the "conjunctural shock" of post-Soviet areouloba, survived in sprawling and expanded form in the disparate practices that compose the informal networks sustaining the life of post-Soviet citizens.

Despite surviving, however, the *substantive nexus* at the heart of meurneoba has been ostensibly relegated to the margins of the new economic rationality that has taken hold in Georgia as in much of the post-Soviet space at the wave of the USSR's collapse. It has been "unhinged" from its fixed location and scattered at the margins (Nielsen 2014:2016). As stated in the quote that opens this chapter, the new economic rationality relegates other logics, as something exterior to capitalism, as a non-capitalist excess that derails capitalism from its course, yet this outside, these excesses, are at the same time vital to capitalism (Mitchell 2002:303). The misconstruction of the substantive practices of post-Soviet citizens as forms of wicked entrepreneurship, observed by Rekhviashvili, in this light, appears as no accident. Rather as the very process through which capitalist economics asserts its dominance, by "squatting on the ruins" of lifeworlds past (Boyer 2017:240). Not a blank slate for infinite experimentation as Keti Bochorishvili defined it, nor mythical landing for the resurgence of Georgian greatness, as

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[85] In the case of Collier's account quite literally as he describes the underground pipes providing heat to Soviet urban centres.

Saakashvili had it, the space of Anaklia is criss-crossed by converging infrastructural relations, all of which are mobilised by the construction of the port. In this light, moreover, the Anaklia City CEO's disregard for the logistical elsewhere populating Anaklia is no mistake, it rather speaks to "the capitalist challenge to eliminate pre-capitalist social relations in rural space, bringing them into line with the normative agenda of capital accumulation and economic growth that is now the hallmark of neo-liberal states" (Jazeel 2015: 3, cf Gidwani 2008).

## 7.3 What remains: ruins and nostalgia

"The past doesn't disappear rather it slowly decomposes" (Frederiksen 2013: 74)

Ethnography, as I have stated at the very beginning of this thesis, "works against the grain of paradigm setting" (Navaro-Yashin 2012:16). In this second part of the chapter I will present two examples that show how the submerged logistics of (post)Soviet meurneoba is reactivated by the attempted construction of the port. In her ethnography of post-conflict Cyprus, Yael Navaro-Yashin describes her ethnographic material as "ruins, shards, rubbles and debris" (2012: 14). Similarly, here I tease out how shards of previous social worlds and the future pasts that characterised them still pierce through the attempts to construct a logistical future.

A recurrent topic in post-socialist scholarship has been the issue of nostalgia (Berdahl 1999; Boym 2001; Boyer 2006; Flynn, Kosmarskaya and Sabirova 2014; Lazczkowski 2016:99). Anthropologist Katherine Gotfredsen draws on Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia (2001) to analyse the dissonance between past and present visions of the future in contemporary Georgia (2014). Restorative nostalgia – according to Boym – puts emphasis on *nostos* [homecoming] and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia, instead, dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance (Boym 2001:41; Gotfredsen 2014: 245-65). According to Gotfredsen, since the Rose Revolution a concerted operation has been in place to locate within Georgia's distant national past glorious projections of the country's future (cf Batiashvili 2017). This, she argues can be defined as a form restorative nostalgia. Saakashvili's nod to the mythical landing of Jason and the Argonauts in his performative account of his first encounter with Anaklia is one amongst the many examples of this pervasive strategy. The flipside of this distant past glorification, as Gotfredsen argues is a widespread erasure, deliberately or through neglect, of the near past, especially the one related to the Soviet Era (2014: 246; Verdery 1999:52). As a result of this double movement memories of that near past and longing for the timescapes that composed it are abject from public memory (Kristeva 1982). By questioning these marginal memories, as they are expressed by many of the Georgian elderly citizens who have lived through them, Godfredsen finds that in some cases the abject longing for a time of fairer socio-economic distribution and "may be seen as a means of *presencing* that which has been rendered absent" from the current socio-economic conjuncture, "an attempt" she continues "that is politically charged". (ibid 263 highlight in the original).

In what follows I will build on Boym's and Gotfredsen's analyses to discuss how these two types of nostalgia are *presented* in and around Anaklia and *projected* into the logistical future. In both these cases rather than generalised longing for the past – near or mythical – the nostalgic object

is a meurneoba of some sort. Significantly, in observing the behaviour of ADC's president, Mamuka Khazaradze, I have found a form of "restorative nostalgia" for meurneoba, mobilised to support his bid as a caring patron of the Georgian logistical future. A very different manifestation of nostalgia is embodied by Neno, one of the Anaklians who have been relocated to make space for the port's construction, very different from the performative nudges made by Khazaradze, Neno's experience speaks of a powerful abjection permeating the new economic organisation of the village (cf Navaro-Yashin 2012). In the previous section I have outlined the frictions and dependencies between capitalist economic rationality and the substantive economies of meurneoba. In what follows I will explore how different nostalgia – restorative and reflective – functions not just as affective disposition, but are indeed integral in mediating the relations between different modes of knowing and productions at the heart of contemporary logistical worlds.

## 7.4 Neighbourhood lost



*Figure 36 A house destroyed during the clearing of the port territory. Still from Tekla Aslanishvili's film Scenes from Trial and Error (2020)*

In the introduction to Part 3, I noted that in order to build the port a vast territory had to be cleared. In this process, more than twenty households resided on Asantia Street, the road that now ends abruptly with the building site, and were awarded generous compensation – in some cases in the millions of GEL – by the state to relocate. To many, the compensation received by some was a source of envy and desire for "a fortune coming out of nowhere" as one of my informants told me[86]. However, for those who were made to move, the relocation has also brought sorrow and a sense of alienation that some have been struggling to overcome. The new

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[86] In the next chapter I will analyse in depth the new economic relations that organise Anaklia's life amidst the construction of the future port.

comforts of the "millionaire" life have come at the expense of the hard fought for ecosystem of social, economic and affective relations within which those who have been displaced were previously living. Abandoning such an environment for some also echoed the traumas of the years of "areouloba", triggering painful memories and soliciting new anxieties.

> "Since the day I heard about it [the displacement] has been very hard. Because living in that house was very important for me and I went through an extremely difficult time while coming to terms with having to change my place of living".

I am sitting with Neno in her large living room, we are resting our elbows on her heavy glass table, our image faintly reflected in its shiny surface. The table is the only piece of furniture in the room leaving what feels like an expanse of freshly polished linoleum floors empty. In the absence of obstacles, our voices echo slightly. This is Neno's new guest-house, it has been built in 2018 after she received compensation for the land on which her previous house was erected and where now lies the port territory. Like most of the other "millionaires", Neno has invested a large sum of the money received in building a hotel in order to be able to participate in the tourism boom that is promised to hit Anaklia once the port will be in place. Now it's still early and not many travellers arrive to this coastal village, however her new business is already receiving raving reviews on Booking.com. Unlike many, moreover, who have focused exclusively on leisure tourism, she has been creative, equipping her house with special conference rooms to be able to hold workshops for NGOs and other professional visitors. She is herself a member of a local NGO and has been very active in collaborating with ADC to devise their corporate social responsibility strategy.

Despite her involvement with the company and the creative entrepreneurship she has shown in her new business, Neno is sharing with me the trauma connected to her experience of relocation, her reluctance to move and the struggle she has endured in seeing her house eventually destroyed. Her life now is much more comfortable than ever before: she has some money to spend, her daughters have been able to buy a flat in the capital and her new place is big enough to fit her family's guests plus the paying guests of the hotel. However, she is struggling to find her pace in this new situation: "I have been uprooted" – she states and, as she utters this sentence, tears come to her eyes. Where she was living before, the strip of land that stretches south from the centre of the village, parallel to the sea, hers and the other families lived as a community of neighbours.

> "I wanted all of us to re-settle on our street, I loved our street. Me and my children wanted to stay there so much. From a business point of view this place [where we are now] is better for sure. But for me that place had different value. Asantia street, that was the best place for me!"

In the two hours we spend together, Neno paints a picture of difficult but collective times. Her nostalgia does not, however, come from a romanticisation of the near past, on the contrary, she has not forgotten the multiple times her family had been robbed by the armed guerrillas ravaging the border and the seemingly infinite series of struggles they had to go through in order to survive. At the centre of her grief is the dismantling of "meurneoba" and the social and economic relation that it entailed, starting from the household. The former neighbours had all survived together the "dark years" that followed the end of the Soviet Union and the

long decade of war and dispossession that plagues this border region more than anywhere else in the country. Neno's family had a bit of land with "a big meurneoba" including a citrus fruit plantation and some buffalos. One buffalo in particular was her favourite: Tetra, a large female with a white patch on her nose. "She was the most beautiful buffalo in town! People were stopping to take pictures of her, and everyone knew how close I was to her, and having to let her go was a tragedy within a tragedy", Neno says, weeping.

> "You know, good life and welfare is everyone's desire but the memories that connected me to that house, the past with my children, it was for me very important and facing this decision was very hard really. Financial welfare one minute you have it and the next is gone."

When the time came to sign the relocation contract with the state and the company, Neno accepted on one condition: to stay in her house until the very end.

> "I didn't agree with the idea of "here is the money and you go", I said I cannot leave that place so quickly, I couldn't be happy just holding the money, for me each minute was very important, as long as I was able to stay there. We signed [the contract] in May and I was the last one who left that place on 1st of December. When I think about it now I realise what I was risking when I was absolutely alone […] we were slowly dismantling the house, I needed to bring everything with me - door, ceiling, all the items [in this new house] are from there, everything, the windows are also brought from there [...] Everything in my bedroom. There a photo of my house hanging right over my bed."

Securing the transfer of all her objects was mentally and physically exhausting:

> "Each moment for me was very important. I was living in the corridor on a couch. All the neighbours had left and around me it was a terrible landscape. Like the ones you have seen during the war in photos […] everything destroyed, abandoned, stray dogs roaming…" [When I finally moved] I felt very bad, I didn't want to live here [...] I was like in alien environment.. and that's how I went through this adaptation process. It was terrible. I was not interested in anything. We were constructing this but I never could imagine that I could love this house. And my elder daughter was also saying that she doesn't love this house, I love the old one. We went through all of this, it was very bad. And then, not everyone can understand you. […]lots of people 80% of people think that if you have money you are happy, but it is not like that. I had a totally different relation with each item. Whenever I have free time, when I am left alone with myself. I am living alone. Before I fall asleep I think about each item, each place, where there were situated, I am remembering and remembering, and which story is connected to which item."

Neno's account of loss and displacement, is at once affective and material: each object is charged with powerful memories of the near past[87] (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Miller 2008, Drazin 2011) Despite managing to carry most of her possessions into her new home, the place remains drenched with a sense of profound alienation derived from having abandoned a world she knew for the empty and largely unknown room in which we are sitting (Navaro-Yashin 2012: 6). Her new home is plagued by what Navaro-Yashin calls "the unhomely", that is a sense of pervasive uncanniness that permeated her habitation, without disrupting the mundane and even intimate activities that take place within it (ibid 184).

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[87] In his book "Home Possessions", athropologist Daniel Miller speaks of "the agency of the home itself" analyzing what houses, as material properties with agencies of their own, "do" to their inhabitants (2001).

Rather than solely a concern with the maintenance of memories and the loss of objects, hers is the mourning for an intimate logistics, now lost. Her pain derives from the appreciation of the inevitable disappearance of the socio-economic organisation that governed her life before the port's announcement, the rupture of the small scale substantive economy that was kept alive in her street through the efforts of those who inhabited it. One anecdote she relates to me is revealing of the embodied nature of meurneoba time/space: after completing the construction of the new house, the first guests arrived, a couple of girls from Germany. After welcoming them and showing them around they asked whether it was possible for her to make them dinner at the house. She panicked, it was after dark and it was too late to milk the buffalo! She started to worry, what would she do? It was only after some minutes that she realised that she no longer had a buffalo to milk and, more poignantly, that she no longer needed to have one in order to get milk – she could afford to go to the shop! Listening to Neno's story, I asked her whether this was a welcome realisation. She replied, that yes, off course, now things are much easier, but she feels disoriented: "when a nice cow is walking along the street sometimes I want to milk them" she tells me, now laughing "and my son in law is getting crazy about it, he says wish for something else! But somehow this wish is still there!".

By reporting this story, it is not my intention to glorify the poorer life lead by Neno before the compensation, as she herself states, those were times of suffering. Rather, in observing her disorientation at the loss of her previous work habits, "seasonal task-scapes" (Heintz 2005) and the almost bodily urges that this loss generates what became apparent to me was her embodied resistance to the new economic rationality imposed on her by the construction of the port, and to the timescapes this engenders. In the space of a few months she moved from a life dictated by the rhythms of agricultural production and the reproduction of hers and her family's life within a tight-knit community, to the life of a landlord, whose income is derived from tourist rent. In the switch a new temporality has taken over her life: the productive seasons to which she was bound have now been turned into a single season, the *tourist season*, of unpredictable length. For Neno's life, the cordoning of the territories that she once inhabited in order to build the port has signified a form of enclosure that is not just spatial but also social as the means of reproduction of her life have been seemingly permanently wiped out (cf Federici 2004: 84).

I believe that Gotfredsen's analysis of nostalgia is very relevant to understand the painful friction between the materially comfortable present and the *hand-made* past within which Neno is painfully caught. Neno's inclusion in the future promised by the port, in fact, is predicated by the erasure of the material, as well as social and affective meurneoba within which she had crafted her existence. The nostalgia that torments her and renders difficult going to sleep in her new house, is a form of reflective nostalgia that "calls into doubt" the absolute truth of the logistical futurism sustaining the construction of Anaklia port (Gotfredsen 2014:260). Similarly to Gotfredsen's description, moreover, Neno's nostalgia is politically charged as it's exposed the abjection sustaining the dominant reiteration of Anaklia's future. Listening to Neno's accounts, observing the tears she struggles to contain what is apparent is how alive and embodied her rejection is. In this sense, Neno's nostalgia can be further compared to the melancholia experienced by the dwellers of post-conflict divide Cyprus that populate Navaro-Yashin's

ethnography (2012). Neno's past is alive, at once abject and tormenting, but also exceedingly vital and refusing to disappear. In this context, Neno's painful nostalgia is more than just a longing for her past, but an integral part of her present, a sort of *abject within* (Navaro-Yashin 2012) that manifests an embodied, albeit non direct, resistance of the socio-economic futures promised by the port.

Sitting in Neno's *unhomely* new home, it appears that the developments that have taken place in Anaklia have not provided an anchor around which a sustained vision of the future can be built. As we will further see by entering the unhomely homes of other villagers in the next chapter, instead the long awaited development of the village has reinstated Anaklia's nature as a contested borderland feeding a sense of alienation that the villagers had struggled to overcome by constituting themselves as a community.

## 7.5 A modern Khoziain?

> "Rendering capitalism licit is, in part, about the ways we ethically partition responsibility for "others," and how those partitions are at once individually embodied *and* materialized in corporate, residential, and urban planning" (Appel 2019: 83)

In this final section, we return to a close analysis of the company's operations, this time interrogating Mamuka Khazaradze's bid to managerial authority. If previously I have unpacked different aspects of ADC's communication in terms of their construction of a worldly logistical expertise, here I turn to show how different elements of the dispossessed logistical past and its substantive economies are deployed to sustain Khazaradze's vision of development. While nominally rejected in the name of market efficiency and competitiveness, the substantive nexus that I have unpacked above is here deployed as a form of restorative nostalgia to sustain the logistical future (cf Boym 2001). As I will show, these nostalgic echoes, incorporated by Khazaradze's speeches, serve the logistical future by acting as a "a source of energies, the condition of success, the possibility of its power to reproduce" (Mitchell 2002: 303; cf Bear et al 2015). In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the operations gathered within the Russian term "khoziaistvo" and its Georgian counterpart "meurneoba". The Russian root "khoz" originally referred to the household, and is closely linked to problems of management, including connotation of hospitality and ownership (cf Watts 2002:62). In the Soviet Union, the responsibility for managing the operations of khoziaistvo was assigned in each district/enterprise to a general director the "Khoziain" (Collier 2011:121). Understanding this figure, and its repurposing at the wake of Soviet collapse, can help us unpack Khazaradze's claim as a patron of the Georgian future and expose how nostalgia for an idealised Soviet meurneoba/khoziaistvo still sustains visions of a post – and indeed anti – Soviet logistical future.

According to Collier after the collapse of the USSR, the fragmentation of Soviet khoziaistvo:

> "left unoccupied a crucial position in the moral economy of the Soviet and post-Soviet small city: the khoziain, that distinctive figure of Soviet neo-traditional authority. With the erosion of enterprise support for the "social" and "communal" spheres, the question was often raised (and still is raised): "kto v gorode khoziain?"—who in the city is the khoziain? This question means: Who will show concern for the health, welfare, and conditions of existence of each and every inhabitant of the city? Who will take care of our khoziaistvo?" (ibid).

Rather than just an uncomplicated attempt to reinstate Soviet organisational practices, however, Watts notes that evocation of *khoziain* as a missing provider of pastoral care has specifically late-Soviet roots (2002:62-69). The discourse of perestroika, in particular, contained a promise of the restoration of a longed-for substantive management of (re)production of the Soviet Union that had been lost in the years of thievery and incompetence that preceded *glastnost* (Watts 2002: 62; cf Ashwin 1999: 74–80). Real patrons were thus men who took pride in serving their community, opposed to the existing managers who stole from it. The fragmentation of the entire system that followed Gorbachev's reforms, however, left the hope for reinstating substantive management, as well as many others, frustrated. The post-Soviet longing for a *real khoziain*, therefore, emerges to a large extent from the transposition of a desire for an idealised figure of fair management from late state socialism to its successor: the market economy. The same "market economy" that, as is apparent in Saakashvili's quote reported above, expelled care and reproductive practices from the calculations at its core. As Collier notes it is indicative that "the question '*kto v gorode khoziain?*' is most often posed when those who ought to play the role of the *khoziain* are somehow failing" (Collier 2011:121). Rather than a specific person, therefore, often the search for a *khoziain* is the expression of a lack. Not necessarily antagonistic to the market, yet incorporating the productivist and pastoral ethics of Soviet planning, and, before, of pre-Soviet rural economies (Watts 2002: 67). The post-Soviet *khoziain*, therefore, emerges from an 'interesting polysemy' between the founding principles of market economy, private property and enterprise, and the qualities of wisdom, fairness and stewardship that had inspired the reforms of the late Soviet Union" (Watts 2002: 63). As such, as Watts notices, it became used both by the proponents of privatizations and by citizens hoping for fairer conditions.

> "all projects should serve the human and his well-being. First of all, [projects] must change the life of local people radically, by increasing their income, their qualifications, job, and guaranteeing the future of their children. If all of this becomes true, it means that the port works, and that a serious contribution to Georgia's economy has been made." (Khazaradze 2016)

With these words Khazaradze presented himself to ADC's Facebook followers in September 2016. By placing his private enterprise at the service of people's realisation and prosperity Mamuka showcases the stewardship and pastoral care ostensibly at the core of its private Consortium. It is within this ambiguity of the post-Soviet *khoziain* that Khazaradze positioned himself in his communications with different publics. Similarly to the performance of "the economic man" that the DS3 students and I witnessed during our encounter with ADC's deputy CEO Giorgi Mirtskhulava, Khazaradze's bid to rise to the ranks of *real* manager channels a specific kind of masculinity. By posing as the patron of Georgia's future development, Mamuka presents himself as a patriarchal figure of authority. unlike the masculine financial pragmatism, performed by Mirtskhulava, who placed calculations and economic rationality as the source of his authority, as I will show, the President's masculine energy feeds on Soviet memories and the desires left unrealised in the aftermath of Soviet collapse (Thelen 2007; cf Gotfredsen 2014).

Central to the idea of the *real* entrepreneur as "a man of honour" is an appreciation of "self-made men who through sheer endeavour had built up shipping lines or brick factories and

brought employment and benefit to their native region" (Watts 2002:63). These values, Watts argues, were transmitted through the romanticised stories of the entrepreneurs of the past, held as examples for the future class (ibid). Within the contemporary corporate world, as feminist geographers have highlighted, storytelling remains crucial in shaping the gendered subjectivities of financial managers and the organisational structures within which they move (McDowell 2011:194-95, Schoenberger 2011). Juggling between the capitalist corporate world and the legacy of past entrepreneurial practices that sustained logistical pasts, Khazaradze too has relied on a semi-mythical story to historicise his own fortune. Giorgi Gvinjilia, an activist and researcher originally from Abkhazia, recently published an ironic and piercing article (2019) playing with the mythologies surrounding the figure of Khazaradze and its success, starting from Mamuka's own narration of the first million he earned (2014). At the beginning of his piece, sarcastically titled "our Mamuka", Gvinjilia incites the readers to put "politics and analysis on the side and approach the story with humour" this, he states, "is the only way to come to terms with the acrobatics and the tricks that make up the businessman's account" (Gvinjilia 2019). By reporting snippets of the original account by Mamuka of his "big adventure", as the banker calls the story of how he made his first million, in an interview with a business website (BPN 2014), Gvinjilia locates the account within the broader context of Georgia's *areouloba*, showing the discrepancies and fantasy that fuels the entrepreneur's narrative. The story goes like this: we are in the 90s and a train loaded with beer mysteriously comes to be stuck in Tbilisi's rail station, the whole country is in chaos and no one seems to know what to do with it. The young Khazaradze and his cousin, then only twenty five years old, learn about this on the news and decide that this will be their big opportunity. They get together and after calling their friends in Saint Petersburg, they decide to travel to Russia to attempt to sell the beer. But once in Russia their cargo gets confiscated by the mafia after arriving to the port of St Petersburg. The two young cousins seem to have failed in their mission, however they meet a group of workers at the port who have been left without pay for months. Mamuka donates half of his last rubles to the workers and the workers help the pair retrieve the cargo and conclude the deal successfully.

Khazaradze's "beer operation", as Gvinjilia comments, is a story of innocence and good will, where chance and shady deals are turned into the affirmative actions of two young, community minded entrepreneurs. "It is an utterly unbelievable story!" – exclaims Gvinjilia as he goes on to describe the war ridden, drug and arms fuelled, poverty stricken country where this "clean deal" is supposed to have taken place. Despite its improbability, however, Khazaradze's story *makes sense*. It contains all of the ingredients that constitute a "*real* khoziain". The young Khazaradze is depicted as a self-made man, who thanks to his "industriousness, skill and stewardship" (Watts 2002:64) manages to complete a very successful deal. Later, in the original interview, when asked about what motives him "our Mamuka" replies:

> "I have a desire to innovate. I was like that at school, I was always active, I was totally involved. When all this collapsed, I realized that every human being had to help himself. I was an adult already, with my mother's 130 rubles and my father's 180 rubles, it was unbelievable to do anything in that period, and hyperinflation began. I realized that business was a place where I would be my own boss and I liked it the most."

The individual creativity and drive that he places at the centre of his own success, however, would not be enough without his ability to interact with and care for others. In his story, indeed workers play a crucial role: it is thanks to these key allies, that he aptly rewards, that he manages to eventually take possession of his beer. Through this narrative, *our Mamuka*, acknowledges the importance of protecting workers (cf Watts 2002:63). However, the workers are never made part of the deal, what is shared with them, in a charitable act, is the youngsters' last rubles, not the profits they made from their "beer operation".

As a *real khoziain*, therefore, Khazaradze presents himself at once as an independent spirit and a man of the people. Projected into the future and in touch with the ethical infrastructures that sustained previous logistical lifeworlds. Notably the journey to Mamuka's first million is also a narrative about logistics. A story of how two youngsters managed to navigate the collapsing Union's former logistical system, avoiding chokepoints and blockades to operate cargo mobilities. Besides, it is a story about the ability to channel the ethical infrastructures that composed those systems into the logistical future. Similarly to the way in which Saakashvili's accidental kinship to Jason naturalised his bid to turn Georgia towards Europe, Khazaradze's ability to turn chaotic logistical network into profitable resources and to overcome obstacles by solid alliances, is also casted as "an epic struggle" (Schoenberger 2001:177) through which he has become the right man to lead Georgia's logistics revolution.

Despite not being directed at the restoration of great national narratives, such as the nostalgia described by Boym and Gotfredsen (2001; 2014), Khazaradze's performance as a *khoziain*, similarly shuns away from questioning the past references it presents, rather appropriating them for its own needs and turning them into convenient mythologies. In her Study of "veteran care" in East Germany after the collapse of the GDR, Tajana Thelen, describes the maintenance of certain superficial care provisions in companies undergoing the transition from socialist to market economy (2007). As the company she observed underwent a profound reshaping, certain care provisions for their retired workers, such as the annual trip for former employees, or New Year celebrations were kept in place. As Thelen's interlocutors within the new management related to her, keeping these activities was no longer a matter of providing holistic care to the company employees, such as it had been the case during Socialism, rather it was starting to be understood as a matter of publicity and corporate social responsibility (2007:43). Despite this shift, the limited care provision still in place, came to be valued by its recipients very highly, as "secular rituals that reassure their belonging to the enterprise" (ibid: 45) in the context of the crumbling social order within which most of their careers had developed. Such success amongst the retirees, Thelen concludes "is not based on the provision of better services, but rather on mimicking former state care, viewed as holistic and emotional" (ibid: 47). Khazaradze's claim to care is mobilised by a similar torsion of meaning and effective provision. Building on memories and desires for a substantivism ethos, it nevertheless distorts it through the prism of capitalist corporate managerialism (Rajak 2016:2). It is in this sense that we can talk about Khazaradze's conjuring of the (post) Soviet Khoziain in terms of restorative nostalgia.

Notably, the polysemy of figure of the *real* patron provides the space for ADC's President to mix together different types of masculinity that populate the Georgian public sphere into his own gendered corporate subjectivity. As Aia Beraia argues, within the context of post-Soviet Georgia it is possible to locate different forms of "hegemonic masculinity" that feed the national imaginary (Beraia 2019; Connell 2005:77). By highlighting his independent and entrepreneurial nature - "I would be my own boss and I liked it the most" – Khazaradze's speaks to what Beraia names "neoliberal masculinity", typified by powerful and idealised American entrepreneurs (ibid). On the other hand, by echoing the promises and demeanour of the post-Soviet *khoziain*, Mamuka channels a sedimented pastoral socio-technical imaginary that is at once local and transnational, turning the otherwise distant figures of American successful entrepreneurs into something familiar and trustworthy. Bringing together these different ethical performances, Khazaradze, the *khoziain*, casts himself as a paternal – and patriarchal[88] - figure able to satisfy the country's necessities by translating the heterogeneous and contradicting needs, hopes and desires of the population affected by the port's construction within a multifaceted prism of corporate managerialism.

As Boyer argues "nostalgia has no more to do with the past than with the future, no more to do with the desire to return to a remembered or idealised past than with the project of defining and claiming autonomy in the present (Boyer 2010: 25). Rather than just belonging to a forgotten infrastructural underworld, the socio-economic worlds of (post)Soviet substantivity are channelled even by those in charge of developing the logistical future. A form of restorative nostalgia, however, does not work to actually materialise substantivity through appropriate provisions, instead Khazaradze mimics a commitment to people's wellbeing by imbuing his communications with powerful echoes of the post-Soviet *khoziain*.

## Conclusion

"As gatherings, infrastructures are brought into being out of a multiplicity of historical forms and technopolitical relations that, while bound together, seldom fully cohere."(Anand 2015:1). Throughout this chapter I have explored this infrastructural "overwriting" (Frederiksen 2013:73), by looking at the sedimented world of meurneoba. Not a straightforward relation, the kinship of Georgia's logistical capitalism with these other infrastructural histories is instead

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[88] Months after this event, Khazaradze showed a glimpse of his own patriarchal attitude by claiming that the Minister of Infrastructure, Maia Tskitishvili "Maia Tskitishvili has no idea what infrastructure is or how it works. She might know how to bake a good Khachapuri, but I am not so sure about her having an adequate background to be trusted with billions." After being publicly criticised, he apologised. On her end, Tskitishvili answered that unlike Khazaradze, she bakes good khachapuri *and* does her job well. With this, the Minister encouraged young girls not to fear sexism, stand up for themselves and do their jobs to their utmost ability. The decision-making positions of the Georgian nation state are dominated by men – the institutional leaders of the nation, such as presidents and prime ministers have all been men. Parliament is dominated by men as well, as only 16% of the MPs are women. However, this is the highest percent in the history of post-Soviet Georgia. The representation of women in parliament was especially low in the first decade of the independence: 6.22% in 1992, 6.64% in 1995, and 7.17% in 1999 (Beraia 2019).

subjected to different layers of obfuscation, amnesia, straight forward denial and misrepresentations. Rather than exclusively a post-Soviet phenomenon, the erasure of incongruences and heterogeneities from the smooth narrative of capitalist development and its economic rationality is instead at the very core of the making of what we know as global capitalism (Bear et al 2015;  Gibson-Graham 1996; Qujiano 2000; Tichindeleanu 2010a, 2010b). In the context of post-Soviet Georgia, however, such erasure has targeted with particular vehemence the infrastructural, ethical and temporal lifeworlds that populated the Soviet Union. Yet, as I have shown, these worlds live on to shape the present, and indeed, the future, in ways that are not always obvious. In the first part of this chapter, therefore, I have tried to excavate these complex and heterogeneous worlds, detecting their current forms and material remains. Staring from the memories of elderly Anaklians I explore "meurneoba" as an organisational epistemology resting on the nexus between production and reproduction. Relegated to the realm of subsistence after the chaos of the Soviet collapse and ridiculed by the post-Soviet hegemonic market rationality, this nexus, remains foundational to the sprawling informal logistics that has sustained a large section of the population's lives in the past three decades. In the second part of the chapter, I discussed the ways in which the powerful space-time of meurneoba and the socio-economic entanglements that characterise it are remain alive in the present and inspire different powerful forms of nostalgia. In the first section, I have visited the house of one of the "new millionaires" of Anaklia, Neno, who relocated after receiving compensation for her land that now lies in the port territory. After moving, Neno has found herself stuck between her old life and her new status, despite having developed a successful business she is tormented by the memories of her old household and by nostalgia for the substantive socio-economic relations in which she used to be embedded. In this context, Neno's painful nostalgia for the meurneoba that organised her life is more than just a longing for her past, but an integral part of her present, a sort of *abject within* (Navaro-Yashin 2012) that manifests an embodied, albeit non direct, contestation of the socio-economic futures promised by the port. Following this, I turned back to the operations of Anaklia Development Consortium, here focusing once more on its president Mamuka Khazaradze. In chapter five we have explored the consortium's development of a futuristic "logistical horizon" as a means to sustain their bid to capitalise their infrastructure. By reading Khazaradze's gendered performance of corporate care in light of the Soviet and post-Soviet polysemic figure of the *khoziain,* I have shown how the futuristic promise that portrays Anaklia Port as a technological infrastructure of capitalist prosperity, is at least in part, sustained by a form of "restorative nostalgia" for the "other worlds" it seeks to overcome.  Rather than an epochal break, thus Anaklia's logistical future, is already always an afterlife (Zeiderman: 2020); a gathering of the accreted histories of the territories it seek to transform.

## CHAPTER 8: WHEN THE FUTURE HITS THE GROUND

"I am not just interested in what people are left *with*, but what they are left *to*" (Frederiksen 2013:16*)*



*Figure 37 Giorgi's chalet and the port territory*

During our most recent fieldwork trip, Sophio and I paid a visit to Giorgi and his family who live in the closest house to the building site, a beautiful wooden and golden chalet built after they have been relocated in view of the port's construction. The property includes their owners' new residence and a small hotel, both of which are right on the edge of the port territory. We are here to talk to the family about their experience after the relocation. While we wait for Giorgi[89] to start our interview, his wife Lela shows us around the house. It is not the first time I visit the place, but this time, rather than admiring the beautiful furniture and the creative decorations they have placed in the different rooms, what we are shown it's the dust. It is everywhere. The wooden floors are dark with soot and all of the surfaces of their southern facing rooms are covered by it: "I have had enough of cleaning this mess! – Lela says, visibly annoyed – "every time it just comes back!". Because of this dirt they could not receive guests in the past weeks. The damage to their new-born business however is not the worst of it, as we are later confirmed by the local doctor, the flying dust has reached the school building a few

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[89] Not his real name. All of the names of the villagers have been modified.

hundred metres down the road causing several children to contract allergies and experience eye problems[90].

Before the beginning of the works the dirt path that we have threaded to reach Giorgi's house lead all the way to the site where Lazika Municipality was erected, houses and small plots of land on both sides. In the autumn of 2017, when the preparations for the port's construction started, three quarters of this long boulevard was cleared, in less than a month everything that rose on it was removed and generous compensation was bestowed by the state to those who had to leave their houses. During the months that followed the terrain was cleared of the debris and fenced off to delimitate the edges of the future logistics hub. Even before its erection, the fence delimitating the edge of the port territory came to delineate more than the beginning of the building site, it came to be a border separating those who suddenly became rich by those who stayed poor. A seemingly arbitrary line cutting across the village emerged as a watershed between two new class formations as the building site was slowly been assembled. Along with the other border that contains the village, the inconspicuous, yet insurmountable territory line separating Georgia from the *de facto* state of Abkhazia, the establishment of this fencing has come to produce the reality that surrounds it (Reeves 2014a cf Lefebvre 1976). This shifting border transforms not just the landscape of Anaklia but the relations that take place here and the timescapes within which these relations have come to make sense (cf Navarro-Yashin 2002: 159-171).

Following the agitated Lela around every room of her sandy new house, the dust appears to me as an index of the deeper processes that have affected the life of the Anaklians since the beginning of the port's construction: pervasive, toxic and unexpected the soot pollutes newly built hotels and old structures alike, as a reminder of the unpredictability of the village's future, but also its fragile materiality, made of sedimented strata, amidst futuristic horizons and their attempted capitalisation by the mega project being assembled on this territory. As I have outlined in the introduction to this final section of the thesis, dust cannot be defined solely as an object; it is rather a milieu "an environmental and atmospheric quality through which a different spatial and temporal thinking emerges" (Parikka 2013:2). The dust that today we find everywhere in Lela's house, in its ubiquity, speaks of the porous border between human-made worlds and natural environments. Watching Lela clean the dusty surfaces, raises question regarding the labour necessary to work those porous boundaries or, as Parikka puts it "of who gets to work in clean spaces, and who cleans those spaces"(ibid). Parikka's emphasis on exhaustion, that I have introduced earlier is particularly relevant here, dust in fact is not only a sediment of sorts, but an exhausting milieu to inhabit and negotiate, one that has captured the lives of those living in the proximity of the future port. Giorgi and its family are amongst the ones that got lucky, they are amongst the "millionaires" (მილიონერები/milionerebi), as people in the town commonly call the several families that received the highest amounts of

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[90] A video from a local TV station shows that over a year after my last visit, in October 2019, the situation in Anaklia has remained identical. Upon the arrival of strong winds at the beginning of the Autum, the dust from the abandoned port territory invaded the town once more, turning surfaces black and infiltrating lungs and eyes of the villagers.

compensation from the relocation process. Looking at their dusty house, however, any clear-cut distinction between those who were lucky and those who weren't seems to come into question. With similar arbitrariness as to how it turned inhabitants into millionaires, the port development is showing its ability to change the fate of the village once more. The new relations set in motion by the border delimiting the port territory are not fixed, rather they are porous and precarious, leading on one hand to the speculations of those who hope to be cut a piece of the prosperity promised by the infrastructure, while on the other rendering ephemeral and contested some of the gains of those who have already been able to reap profits (cf Reeves 2014).

In his ethnography of Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan built at record speed by president Nazarbayev to embody his ideal of "the city of the future" (2016) Mateusz Laszczkowski notes that "the spectacular" is always complexly enmeshed with "the mundane", and it is these multiple relationships that condition the production, the meanings and the effects of spectacular forms" and visions (Laszczkowski 2016:181) . In light with this view, here I explore the multiple ways in which the mundane pace of Anaklia's life has been altered by the subsequent futuristic promises of development. As ethnographies of similar developments have shown, the promise of infrastructure foregrounds a particular idea of the present as a space of desire and modernity (Anand et al 2018: 27; Gupta 2018; Bear 2007). Even before its completion – and indeed despite its effective failure – the construction of the port rests on a radical transformation of Anaklia's geography, from the arrangement of its urban settlement to the ecosystems that thrive on its terrain, this spatial transformation, at once promised and imposed, entails also a radical reshuffling of the "rhythms and striations of social life" (Anand et al 2018:5). By tracing these new rhythms, focusing especially on the timescapes connected to tourism , in this chapter I map the new socio-economic regimes that are now organising the life of Anaklia. As we will see, the substantive logistics of meurneoba that we explored in the previous chapter, has been largely replaced by a new rentier economy, whereby formerly agricultural land is now been bought and sold as prized real estate and neighbours are competing to attract tourists.

As we have seen in chapter seven, in Anaklia the promise of infrastructure has configured time/space, enabling certain kinds of social time while disabling or rendering invisible others, resulting in the obscuring of possible alternatives (Barak 2013). Ethnographers of infrastructure have often centred their analyses around the affective landscapes produced by the promise of infrastructure (Weszkalnys 2016; Khalvashi 2015; Reeves 2016; Kleist and Jansen 2016), here, similarly I present hope, anticipation and fear as mediating forces orienting the Anaklians' lives in the shadow of the port (cf Navaro-Yashin 2012). However, my key aim has been to show how the promise of a logistical future "hits the ground" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). To do so, I consider these affective timescapes to be engendered by and inserted within complex relations of both labour and profit-seeking. The "infrastructural hope" (Reeves 2017) for the port's construction, as we will see, has been translated into a host of small and larger forms of speculation that are now governing the lives of the village, creating new class boundaries and entrenching old forms of dispossession. My observations in this chapter link directly to my earlier insights on the gruelling reproductive work necessary to sustain the logistical future, this time in a more classical sense I observe the social reproduction of a future logistical space, by

focusing on the home as a site from which the village's relations to "vagabond capitalism" are negotiated and rendered domestic (cf Katz 2001b)

This chapter is divided in three sections exploring different aspects of the mundane economies and class and social relations organising Anaklia's life during my fieldwork. The first section focuses on the subjectivities and socio-economic practices that populate the village presenting an initial account of the "winner" and "losers" emerging as a result of recent developments. Before the logistical horizon sustaining the port's development was foisted on the village, the promise investing Anaklia was centred around the creation of a thriving tourist industry. In the village we can thus observe how the tourist economy intersects with the promise of logistics. The generous compensation given by the state to villagers leaving on the port territory has greatly enriched a small number of Anaklians who have invested in property kickstarting a real estate boom, that has enveloped the whole town, exacerbating pre-existing divisions amongst its population. In the second section I detail how the village's new economies, in turn had material impacts in reshaping the organisation of private households, changing their exterior as well as their interior. Providing a panoramic view of the new architectural aesthetic of the village I then venture inside the houses to show how the imperative of being successful hosts for foreign tourists has disrupted the spatial intimacies of Anaklian homes, mediating domestic relations through entrepreneurial practices. In the third and final section, I set out to complicate the taxonomy of winners and losers introduced previously. The advent of commercial tourism, under Saakashvili's presidency, kickstarted a temporal shift in Anaklia whereby the entire year revolved around one pivotal period: the tourist season, that locally, is just referred to as "the season". Amidst the multiple crises that have affected the village's economy in the past decade, this profitable period has become ever more elusive, and the toll taken on the spatial intimacies of those who open their houses to tourists, ever more difficult to endure. This, crucially, does not spare the new millionaires. In the latter part of this section I return to the house of Giorgi and his family to analyse the ambivalent practices and the "doubtful hope" (Weszkalnys 2016) materialised in the construction of the family's new guesthouse adjacent to the port territory. Listening to Giorgi's concerns it appears how, similarly to the fortunes of other villagers, those who benefited from the relocation process are also sucked in a vortex of suspension and fear of another infrastructural failure.

## 8.1 Winners and losers and the time/space of the new tourist economy

It is an early evening of September 2019 and I am sitting with Nia on the porch of her mini market. During the time I have spent in Anaklia, I have often stopped here for a chat and an instant coffee or, lately, to catch a couple of minutes of the Italian nineties series "La Piovra" that is on every afternoon on a Georgian network, the dubbing slightly out of synch over the original audio, as is the case with most foreign tv programs in Georgia. Today Nia has brought her photo albums from home to show me her pictures of the time Misha came to Anaklia. Nia's neighbours are the fabled Anaklians who rescued Saakashvili in an evening of 2007, after the semi-shipwreck out in the Abkhazian sea that later provided the genesis story for the Lazika project and the spectacular beautification of the coast. The family are now owners of a seaside hotel and a travel company. Despite Misha's demise, they are still his supporters, and in May

2019 they hosted Sandra Roelofs, Saakashvili's Dutch wife during a visit she paid to the resort, alone, as her husband was (and remains) banned from entering the country. The night when the rescued President slept in Anaklia, a big feast (სუფრა/ supra) was organised for him and all the neighbours were in attendance. Looking at the pictures of the first fortuitous encounter between the former president and the future city yet to come, Saakashvili appears young and cheerful, surrounded by men and women who are hugging him, walking with them near the seaside or sat in the family's house on a sofa behind a table where a supra had been laid, surrounded by children. Mixed with the Kodak prints of such an unusual and memorable event are the pictures of past holidays, of the children's graduations, of young women, now grandmothers, looking hopeful in their best clothes. The President is made part of domestic life, as a temporary member of the family, sharing their same food, under their roof.

*Figure 38, 39, 40 Misha in Anaklia*

During his presidency Saakashvili embarked in several large-scale beautification projects, stretching from old Tbilisi to Anaklia passing by the mountainous regions in the north, aimed at turning the entire country into a tourist heaven. Crucially, such beautification pivoted around the extensive commodification of elements of Georgian life. These include Georgian traditions such as the renowned Georgian hospitality; entire villages, like in the case of the town of Sighnaghi in the eastern region of Kakheti that was almost entirely rebuilt to become a model village and, finally, nature, as large ecosystems were privatised and modified to fit new constructions[91](Curro 2020). In Misha's account[92] it was the night he was rescued by the Anaklians, as he was partaking in the feast they prepared for him, that he first noted Anaklia's special climate, and appreciated the hospitality of its inhabitant, deciding that it was a winning combination to turn this borderland into a tourism and business heaven. Finding its legendary inception in that fortuitous encounter between the president and the Anaklian fishermen, the futurist timescape of tourism is at once rooted in the intimate and mundane space of Anaklian homes and in the mythical narration crafted by Saakashvili and as such it continues to weight over Anaklia, shaping its present.

In chapter seven, I noted that Anaklia had already been a leisure destination during the Soviet Union. Local families such as Nia's[93], who today owns a small market, two restaurants and one hotel, have started working in tourism since the seventies, when resorts were opened in Anaklia to host the workers from neighbouring plantations and factories. Nia and her husband managed a restaurant, and in 1976, even Shevardnadze, then a high ranking member of the Communist Party, came to visit the resort and dined at Nia's place. Tourism at that time, as I argued earlier, has to be understood as a piece in the much larger puzzle of Soviet total planning. Not commodified, it was instead centrally managed and the infrastructure needed to develop it, including the restaurant, were owned by the state. Those who operated those structures were merely managers (მეურნე/meurne), not the owners. This is particularly important when comparing today's tourist economy to its Soviet counterpart. The arrival of tourism in the village cannot be understood in separation from its integration with and proximity to the large factories and plantations of the Megrelian hinterland. The resort in Anaklia, specifically, was an extension of the paper factory in Zugdidi. Each year more than four hundred children would spend their summer here, the sons and daughters of workers employed in paper factories all across the USSR. In the context of Soviet total planning, leisure was considered to be a basic need of the workers employed in the nearby industries and a holiday at the seaside thus was the planned fulfilment of such reproductive needs. Tourism, therefore was not something governed by risk, but the constant rhythms of Soviet infrastructural planning. Amidst the frenetic developments that took place throughout Misha's presidency, however, "the tourist" acquired a radically different meaning: no longer a worker enjoying leisure time, the tourist became the means to fulfil an economic necessity – at once a

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[91] Famous is Misha's attempt to cut the top of Mount Mtirala, the mountain that neighbours Batumi, in order to modify local weather and reduce humidity.

[92] Reported in the chapter on Lazika.

[93] Nia is also of the elderly Anaklians I have interviewed to reconstruct the village history reported in chapter 6.

client, a master and a guest. Detached from the circuits within which Soviet tourism operated, in places like Anaklia, now travellers needed to be attracted through different types of hustle, one as we will see below that upsets the boundaries between work and leisure, private and commercial space. The mass arrival of tourist, crucially, became moment to be waited for throughout the entire year.

Over a decade after this brief domestic incursion, the former president's wish to turn this last stretch of Georgian coast into a showcase of European-style leisure has transformed economic, social and domestic relations in Anaklia, turning living space into "business" and *vice versa*. In her ethnography of the affective landscapes of the Black Sea Coast, Tamta Khalvashi describes a similar shift taking place in the city of Batumi and its neighbouring seaside resorts in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution (Khalvashi 2015). During Saakashvili's presidency, Batumi went from being a medium sized port town to a futuristic estate bubble filled by skyscrapers of unusual shapes and a thriving gambling industry[94]. At the outset of Saakashvili's investment in the beautification of Anaklia, Batumi was hailed as a model of development. Crucially, the city's metamorphosis into a repository of transnational capital and suntanned bodies, took shape firstly within the bounds of local households: the changing value of land and the growing importance of new factors, first above all, location, recast the economic as well interpersonal relation between the villagers as well as the spatial relations within the households themselves. In what follows I will outline what these new relations are. The radical changes to land ownership and value brought by the planned construction of Anaklia Port have intersected with pre-existing patterns of land use and the tentative speculations that followed Saakashvili's spectacular refurbishment of this territory. The result, as we will see is a growing class distinction between those who got lucky and those who are still carrying the weight of decades of dispossession.

### 8.1.1 Millionaires

As we have seen previously, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave rise to the large-scale and unregulated privatization of what used to be collectivised or state property. The current patterns of land use and ownership in Georgia are a result of this extended period of enclosure and up to this day only 40% of land in Georgia has been thoroughly registered (Salukvadze 1999; Papava 2013). Outside large urban areas in particular, ownership of land and properties alike is often recognised only through means of agreement between two or more parties or by custom. While multiple efforts have been implemented by different governments to institutionalise land ownership, the process, here as in many other post-Soviet countries, is slow and rife with conflict (cf Verdery and Humphery 2004; Verdery 1999). According to the government ordinance which regulates property rights in agricultural units, citizens of Georgia who have been consistently using a piece of land since before 1994 are allowed to register it as their private property. However, as Andrew Barry details, the implementation of large

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[94] Mostly aimed at visitors from neighbouring Turkey as well as other majority Muslim countries where casinos are illegal.

infrastructural projects such as the BTC pipeline, has exposed the inaccuracy, or altogether absence, of documentation attesting to property rights (Barry 2013: 164).

In preparation for the Lazika project in 2011, the agricultural land occupying the area where now the Municipality and the boulevard lie abandoned, was taken away from its owners without compensation. This expropriation was justified by accusing the farmers themselves of expropriating state-owned land, and urging them to return it for the sake of the country as a whole (Aslanishvili and Halpern 2020). Expropriations of this kind were common during Saakashvili's presidency as it was documented in multiple reports from human rights NGOs such as Transparency International. At the time of the planning of Lazika, moreover, the president's approach to removing the obstacles to his vision of development, had come to be exposed by mass protest movements targeting the government's unlawful imprisonment of thousands of people and their appalling conditions within Georgian jails (Kabachnik 2013). In the aftermath of Misha's demise, Transparency International carried forward the cases of the individuals whose land had been appropriated. In 2017, these claims converged in the new process of compensation organised by the Georgian Dream government as established in the PPP contract with Anaklia Development Consortium. Upon assigning compensation, it emerged that some locals were not aware that their lands had previously fallen in Saakashvili's original plan and would therefore be expropriated, had the project been completed.

As a result of the compensation process, several families have been awarded repayment of one million Georgian Lari[95] or more, with others receiving smaller sums. The price of land in the rest of the town, especially in proximity of the sea, has grown threefold. Within the space of six months, neighbours who had shared very similar lifestyles have been separated by the invisible line of the future port, and the same people who had been harshly taught that their land was worthless by the previous government are now learning to become landlords. The abrupt changes in land value and use that have swept over the area of Anaklia have set the ground for new forms of social segregation and conflict in the village. Most of the new money has been invested in property, and the main street of Anaklia is now dotted with new constructions, built one next to the other due to the rising cost of land and the need to secure a position near the sea front. Most of these houses belong to the new millionaires, but not all. Other villagers have taken out loans to take part in the building frenzy that has overcome the Anaklian sea shore.

Before being abruptly halted, moreover, the project by ADC, foresaw nine phases of port development, not counting the connected creation of the smart city that was set to surround the logistical hub. The port territory that was initially sectioned and that now lies abandoned includes only the first of these phases and more relocations. More compensation was therefore foregrounded by the comprehensive plan and many in the village, as well as beyond it had set their hopes on these future money. During my fieldwork, rumours could be heard across the town regarding where the development was planning to expand. These rumours, in turn, have

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[95] one Gerogian Lari equals 0.22 British Pounds, or 0.30 US Dollars.

had already tangible effects on the land, as a few people have been constructing houses near the expanding port border, potentially in the hope of receiving more compensation.

### 8.1.2 Entrenched dispossession

The new border of the port territory, however, did not just produce new class relations and engendered a frenzied climate of speculation, it also entrenched some pre-existing divisions, giving new life to old processes of dispossession that stretch all the way back to the chaos of the 90s and the savage sorting of winners and losers described in chapter seven. At the edge of the village of Anaklia, a few hundred metres from the abandoned Justice House of Lazika, rises a former Soviet tourist resort, made of small wooden huts surrounded by gardens. Since the nineties the resort has been inhabited by internally displaced people (IDP) who have fled Abkhazia during the war. For over twenty years thirteen families have lived in these houses. There used to be more huts and a large restaurant, however the many were burned for firewood during the 90s and some were destroyed by coastal erosion, forcing some IDPs to move out. Many of the refugees who live here have relatives in other parts of the village, some of whom are also IDPs, while others are not. Being so close to Abkhazia, this part of Samegrelo is home to many families who have spent their lives before the war in between what today is Georgia and Abkhazia, it is thus common to find within the same extended family people who are IDPs and people who are full Georgian citizens who have lived geographically very similar lives before the war. This is the case of my host Tamuna who was born in Lower Svaneti and lived between Abkhazia and Samegrelo until she married a man from Anaklia and settled there, when fleeing from the war some of her family members moved to one of the houses in the abandoned resort, with the hope of returning to Abkhazia once the war was over. Unfortunately, they never managed to go back. The inhabitants of the tourist resort fully fit within Humphrey's category of "the dispossessed" that I have introduced in the previous chapter. They indeed are people who abruptly ceased to have a place in the societal order, leaving their expropriation as their only marker of status. Throughout the years this non-status remained without a doubt an important and mostly inescapable marker of these families' identity *vis-à-vis* institutions and formal society (Dunn 2012). However, in the small, tight-knit border village of Anaklia, I have observed many relations, as is the case with Tamuna's and her family's lifestories, where the border between IDP and Georgian citizen was less clear cut than it appears on paper. The construction of the port, unfortunately, marked a new chapter in entrenching the dispossession of Anaklia's IDP families.

When the port territory was delineated, its southern border was drawn right before the edge of the former tourist resort, effectively separating the IDP's houses from the rest of the village. While the area where the huts are located is part of the territory assigned to the Consortium, and would eventually have to be cleared out and its dwellers moved, the initial works on the territory did not include this area and it was thus left untouched. During the first nine months of the works, between January 2018 and September 2018, the life of the settlement was only marginally disrupted, as the IDPs could cross the building site that separated them from the centre of the village either walking or with the car. As the dredging works started, however, access to the port territory was no longer permitted, the IDPs were cut off. The only way to

reach the centre of the village is through a twenty five kilometre dirt road that bypasses the building site and that takes over one hour to cross. This is a major setback as the former resort doesn't have any shops and all of the children who live there go to school in Anaklia. ADC provided a free shuttle service to take the children to school, forcing them to wake up an hour earlier each morning, and a bi-weekly taxi service to take adults to Zugdidi for shopping or other necessities. By the time of my last visit to the site in September 2019, this situation had been going on for one year and people were exhausted.

Negotiations to arrange their relocation had also been ongoing for over a year. As is in the case of the other Anaklians who had been moved away from their houses to make space for the port territory, the IDP's relocation is managed by the state. However, unlike the others, IDPs do not own the houses in which they live, as they have occupied them when fleeing from the war. Following the Abkhazian conflict the president Shevardnadze issued a law that allowed ethnic Georgians fleeing Abkhazia to legally inhabit any empty dwelling they found: thousands settled in empty schools, hospitals, hotels and other abandoned buildings across the country (Manning 2009; Theordorou 2003). The provision was supposed to provide a fast solution for the profound crisis in which the young Georgian Republic had plunged in the aftermath of the war, however for many refugees it proved to be the only solution: to this day a majority has remained in those same places as government led plans to re-house those displaced by the conflict been poor and unsuccessful throughout the decades (Salukvadze, Sichinava and Gogishvili 2013; Ballard 2011). Despite being legal occupiers, however, IDP's did not automatically become owners of these dwellings. In view of their relocation to make room for the port, therefore, the state is providing cash compensation only for the plots of land that they cultivated, rather than for their houses, as they don't technically belong to them. Instead, it has committed to relocate the refugee in apartments. In September 2019, two families had been relocated in newly built apartments in Zugdidi, while the remaining eleven had demanded to remain in Anaklia, in the hope to find work in the port. Here the government had bought some flats in a large complex adjacent to the port territory originally built by Saakashvili. The flats are small, 40-50 square meters, and, although large families were assigned two in order to fit everyone, they do not have access to a plot of land, a feature that was fundamental for the household sustenance.

Speaking to the various IDP dwellers still awaiting their relocation, a sense of their entrenched dispossession starkly emerges (cf Dunn 2012; Kabachnik et al 2010). In some ways, the futurism of the port has already failed them: the long awaited activities – including training and language lessons – that the Consortium has organised as part of their CSR program are precluded to them as four kilometres of dishevelled earth separate them from their extended families, habitual interactions and even most basic means of reproduction. Moreover, they cannot partake in the hopeful speculation occupying other villagers. Theirs is a different timescape: one of reduced autonomy, as long waits for the minibus punctuate their daily lives and a new receding horizon governs their already decades old wait for public housing. As Humphrey notes, "we hear an endlessness in the narratives of the dispossessed, in their stories that keep starting up again each time they experience another disappointment or another rebuff" (Humphrey 2002:33). The IDPs dispossession started with the war, an abrupt, fatal, process,

however since that, now remote, moment, dispossession has stretched to become the foundation of their lives, grinding down their existence, shaping the timescapes within which they operate and sparking up again in friction with other horizons of possibility.

In this first section, I have zoomed in on the new subjectivities engendered by the early stages of the construction of the port of Anaklia and the socio-economic timescapes within which they are integrated. The sudden arrival of tens of new "millionaires" amongst the village population has given rise to frenzied speculations geared at securing a piece of the prosperous future promised by the port. As the village landscape changed thanks to the new flamboyant constructions that sprouted across its the three roads, some Anaklians found themselves physically cut off from their own village. Even in its embryonic state, therefore, the futurism connected with the port is proved to rest on and exacerbate already existing forms of dispossession.

## 8.2 Home worlds

Beyond land, it is the village's houses themselves that have become key indexes of the changes that have invested Anaklia and testimonies of the new class relations the past ten years of speculation have engendered. Crucially, different perspectives on these changes, can be gleaned from their outside than entering into the intimacy of their interiors. Over the next two sections I will explore the new home worlds that dot today's Anaklia, starting from their interior to then venture into the ruptured spatial intimacies that orient their interiors (Laszczkowski 2016:99). In many ways, the houses of Anaklia are the most explicit materialisation of how the past decade of spectacular and speculative failed developments has "hit the ground" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). In their aesthetics and in the materials they deploy, it is possible to observe a labour of translation of the powerful aesthetic cues that helped Misha's in his effort "nation building by building work" across the country (cf Laszczkowski 2016; Harvey 2010). Inside the houses, however, different stories are told, ones that speak of the efforts necessary to reproduce the new spatial requirements of the tourist economy and the toll these take on the intimacies that previously governed the house.

## 8.2.1 Vernacular Spectacular



*Fig 41 Some of the new spectacular buildings that populate Anaklia*

Over the two year period across which my fieldwork in Anaklia stretched, I witnessed dramatic changes to the architectural texture of the village. Besides the changes that I have described earlier, related to the enclosure of a large portion of the municipality within the port territory, and besides the profound transformation that invested the village during Saakashvili's presidency, described at the beginning of the section, another type of architectural metamorphosis took place under my eyes: tens of new buildings mushroomed on the sides of the two main roads that compose the village's core. These buildings, each of which is unique in its design, nevertheless share a common aesthetics that I have branded, in more or less serious conversations with my research assistant Sophio and others: "vernacular spectacular".

The exterior elements of vernacular spectacular are the following: low rise multi story buildings, large amounts of see-through panelling – often tinted in different colours such as shiny turquoise or amber – visible or external staircases – echoing the ones of vernacular housing in Samegrelo – and façade ornaments inspired by neo-classical style. The interior design of these newly built mansions can also be broadly defined by some of its elements, most of the houses I have visited feature two distinct elements: on one side they have polished marble effect laminate floors, grand antique replica furniture arranged in spacious and still mostly empty common

areas, whereas on the other side most buildings feature a separate part of the house where rows of simply decorated rooms, some including private bathrooms, are placed.



*Figure 42 the interior of one of the new houses*

Some of these buildings, are the habitations of the new millionaires, most of which contain also family run guest houses, while a few others have been constructed by investors from outside Anaklia and some Anaklians keen to take part in the tourist boom heralded by the construction of the port. While "vernacular spectacular" might not seem a serious term, I contend however, that it aptly captures the mixture of joy, ostentation, desire, hope, mimicry, practicality, fear, resignation and doubt that is contained in these eclectic structures dotting the village. These houses are more than just a new aesthetic feature of the village, they are the materialisation of a range of, at times contradicting and often painful, processes that have reshaped Anaklia in the two years since my first visit. In their spectacular appearance that in some cases mimics the daring curves of Saakashvili's failed constructions, they are at once sources of pride and sites of unprecedented disorientation: shiny and alien to the surrounding landscape they have become objects of muffled envy as well as repositories of collective hope. Made of glass, steel and concrete they mimic the evocative features of the cities of the future that dot an increasing large portion of the globe (Laszczkowski 2016; Ong 2011; Harvey 2010). Their vernacular aspects are not just derived from their reinterpretation of traditional architectural styles and spatial cultures, they are also the result of what Charlotte Grace and Maria Alexandrescu, the tutors of the architecture studio with whom I have collaborated throughout my fieldwork, have named a new kind of "global vernacular" made of cheap decorating materials mass produced

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in the special economic zones of China and resold in Georgia's wholesale markets: pre-fabricated replica columns, fluorescent tiles and plastic shower curtains. A final reference is also crucial to understand this architectural cocktail: as Krisztina Fehérváry (2002, 2011) has described the materiality of imagined Western-European and North American suburban houses defines the aspirations of upwardly mobile homemakers to "middle-class" and simultaneously "first-world" status in post-Socialist Hungary. In Anaklia too, cemented patios have replaced grassy gardens, post-boxes and fences are more reminiscent of a Western periphery than of the houses dotting the road to Zugdidi. Significantly, combining these apparently incommensurable styles into new daring forms, these architectures materialise the recent history of Anaklia, and the logistics that has supported its materialisation.

In the centre of Anaklia there are eleven new mansions belonging to the new millionaires, all of these, with the exception of one are set to become or have already stated working as guest houses, some of them are built very close to one another, as it's the case with the houses of Neno and Tuta, making for awkward geometries in the otherwise spacious arrangement of Anaklia's two only roads. The reason for such cramped-ness is the astronomical rise in the price of land that followed the enclosure of the port territory. Following the compensation process, new millionaires started looking to buy land to build their new houses, while many of them have bought flats in Tbilisi or Batumi, all families have maintained Anaklia as their main residence. The square metre prices they paid to relocate, however, are in many cases higher than the rates they received by the state for their original land. As Guri, one of the teachers at the local primary school and new millionaire tells me, as we sit underneath the large aquarium of tiny fluorescent fishes he has constructed in his new, empty living room, the state had given him $40 for each square metre of his old property that included a large house with an orchard and a small tangerine plantation for a total of 2700 square meters, for this new house, however, he was charged $50 a square metre "I could have bought land in England for that price" he jokes.

### 8.2.2 Blurred boundaries of the new household economy

Deals like this have enabled some of the wealth accumulated by the millionaires to circulate around the village. The inflated price of land, moreover, has incentivised other villagers to invest in their properties, either turning them into guest-houses or renovating them in order to be sold in the future. Walking through the Anaklian main street, aside from the fully new architectures, many older buildings have been extended or renovated, adding balconies or roof top cafes. The spectacular/vernacular housing that has cropped up on all corners of Anaklia, notably, is the main pivot around which the new economy of the village is constructed. Besides the four large hotels in Anaklia, most of which were built during Saakashvili's presidency, there are around twenty family-run hotels currently registered on booking sites, this number however fluctuates from season to season and does not include rooms rented through word of mouth. During the summer, moreover, virtually every household in the village has rooms for rent and everyone who has acquired some capital, either through compensation or through other activities, has invested in property. Through the multiple attempts at infrastructural investment "rentierization" (cf Christophers 2019) has taken hold of Anaklia's former meurneoba, turning

most people into tentative landlords. Strikingly, this shift has taken place within and is predicated on the most intimate of spaces: the house (cf Drazin 2011).

In describing the powerful visions of modernity channelled by concrete construction in South America, Penny Harvey notes that "the image of power that concrete affords is a compromised one, as the stability and predictability of this substance is secure only insofar as it is surrounded by and embedded in specific relationships of care."(2010:29). Looking inside the new vernacular spectacular guesthouses, the care necessary to sustain the promise of progress they ostensibly materialise is exposed. Catering to the needs of foreign tourists is a taxing effort, that drains the energies of the households' members and disrupts the intimacies that previously populated that space.

During Soviet times, as Khalvashi argues, home, while not owned, belonged to their inhabitants as an inalienable right (2015: 110), families who, often had to go through a number of bureaucratic or extra-bureaucratic hoops in order to get a flat assigned, were nevertheless able to transmit that habitation through the family line, allowing for the non-property to effectively be inherited (ibid). As a result this system, the materiality of the house, as Krisztina Fehérváry argued in the context of post Socialist Hungary, became highly idealized during state socialism: "as evidence of family permanence" and prestige (Fehérváry 2011:17). Not owned nor rented and yet inhabited, Socialist houses existed at once as a basic, inalienable right and as a manifestation of the family's own history and identity. While the collapse of the Soviet Union sanctioned the transition from collective to private ownership, it was only later that this distinction came to be experienced by dwellers. As I mentioned above, the construction of large infrastructure brought to the fore the inaccurate marking of property lines and uses of property, less abruptly, the touristification of different areas, and the rentier economy that emerged from it exploded the frictions between the way people saw their houses and their necessity to become generators of value: spaces of hustle, rather than refuge.

Khalvashi's account of these moments of friction between different experiences of the household is particularly relevant to understanding the situation in Anaklia. One of the interactions featured in Khalvashi's ethnography with the owner of a guesthouse in Gonio, who at the time of her encounter with the anthropologist was undergoing financial difficulties, struck me for its resemblance with several conversations I had during my fieldwork with the families and individuals who had opened their houses to tourists:

> "Eka: There are houses that have forty bathrooms and toilets. If tourism fails, what can one do with these forty bathrooms and toilets? No one is leaving dining rooms or halls; rooms, rooms, rooms everywhere. It's because everyone needs separate rooms. When a man is paying money, he wants to have his own bathroom.
>
> Tamta: Can you say that the notion of home has changed in Gonio?
>
> Eka: Yes, it's changed. Before there was really a warmth and love at home… For instance, you could put out flowers or whatever, wherever you wanted; I could hang a picture of my son anywhere; I could do anything. Now, this has changed." (Khalvashi 2015:118)

What emerges from this interaction is that all across the new tourist sites "the domestic space of houses became varied, differentiated and multiplied in the service of tourism" (ibid:217). The confusion that Khalvashi observes, and that I have seen enveloping Anaklian households, speaks of a specific socio-economic transformation connected to Georgia's emerging tourist economy and reproduced across the country's different projected tourist resorts. In Anaklia, just like the other resort towns of the Black Sea coast that experienced an intensification of real estate speculation during Saakashvili's presidency, the new vernacular/spectacular homes are materialisation of complex and changing attitudes derived from the friction between rent-seeking and daily life, domesticity and the necessity of profit making, between hospitality and a performance for the benefit of strangers (cf Curro 2020). They are *unhomely homes*, sites of a new, frictional, domesticity, such as the one so powerfully expressed by Neno in the previous chapter.



*Figure 43 a sign in English inside one of the new guest-houses*

The ongoing transformation of Anaklia into a post-Soviet tourist destination inserted the village's most intimate spaces into a new network. No longer the infrastructural and (re)productive system of the Soviet Union's meurneoba described in chapter seven, the households of Anaklia are now at once connected and in competition with the thousands of other households and commercial hotels that composed the emerging tourist infrastructure laid down during Saakashvili's presidency. Within this new network, the tourist season comes to occupy the pivotal period and an almost entirely new timescape around which the success of the entire year is predicated, and for which the entire village energy must be mobilised. This new tourist economy taking shape alongside the construction of the port ostensibly places

market relations at its core, turning households into hotels and their owners into landlords and entrepreneurs. However, those engaged in this transformation are torn in between a commercial mode of rent seeking and the intimacy of their homes. As Rekhviashvili argues in relation to the long process of transition to the market economy that has invested Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the brutal push towards marketisation clashed with and sought to suppress culturally specific and longstanding ways of social integration, social bonds and mutuality (Rekhviashvili 2017:20). The fact that tourism has been a business for Anaklians since Soviet times, and thus, on a surface level recent developments are building on a longstanding vocation, further complicates things as the emerging tourist industry mocks the embeddedness of previous socio-economic organisation turning it into a tool for (self)exploitation of household members and their intimate spaces. Ironically, the worldly connections promised by logistics, it's futures of infinite connectivity are making domesticity foreign.

## 8.3 Getting by in suspended times

In this final section, I want to return to a timescape that I have introduced at the end of chapter four, that of suspension. The failure of the port project, and indeed its literal turning into dust, have exacerbated Anaklia's suspension, plunging the village into yet another cycle of failure. Yet, as I will discuss below, suspension is not only cast on the village by infrastructural failures, rather it is a feature of the tourism and real estate economies established since Misha's first arrival on these shores. The entire village is immersed in an atmosphere of shame (Khalvashi 2015:45-68), hope for financial prosperity, practicality, speculation, hustle and nostalgia as people attempt to reap the long awaited fruits of the prosperous and modern future it was promised to them. In practice, as Laszczkowski has suggested "endurance rather than enthusiasm often turned out to be the key attitude instrumental […] in reproducing the promise of the material development of the capital city" (Laszczkowski 2016:54). To survive under the timescape of suspension, therefore requires a labour of endurance. As I have mentioned previously, the term timescape, as Laura Bear suggests, indicates the mutual interdependence of time and space (cf Massey 2005). "Within timescapes, techniques, knowledges, and ethics of time conjoin in the mediating labour in/of time that is carried out by individuals and collectivities" (Bear 2016: 496). Across the two sections that follow I will explore how this labour of endurance is carried out by different villagers, mediating their relationship with the tourist industry and what is left of the port project.

### 8.3.1 The festival

Since 2014, during the month of August, Anaklia has hosted an electronic music festival (cf Apter 2005, Pyzik 2014). The event, in the five years of its existence, has taken different shapes and operated under different names and managements. Between 2015-2018 the festival, moreover, received a substantial sponsorship from the government, reportedly over ten million Georgian Lari from the national budget (Guthrie 2018). The most awaited event of the season, for the villagers, this huge party has often defied the expectations of locals and organisers alike, failing to attract the spending crowds it promised. The 2017 edition was particularly underwhelming, promising to be the "longest festival in Europe", stretching over an entire

month, it was instead an extremely protracted fiasco, failing to sell a large parts of the tickets and ending up at the centre of a controversy following the drug-related death of one of the attendees.

For the duration of the festival, the area that stretches to the entrance of the sky-bridge, all the way to the border with Abkhazia is enclosed to contain the stages, bars and leisure spaces that make up the event of the year. In its different incarnations – form international productions such as Kaziantip, also known as the "Ukrainian Burning Man" to the Georgian government sponsored Gem Fest, to the latest one: Echowaves – each year the party brought thousands of visitors to Anaklia, flooding the site and filling up all available spaces, including people's gardens where tents are pitched in exchange for a few Lari.

In the anticipation of the port development, the festival became the only moment in the year where Anaklia matched the image of buzzing seaside resort over-imposed on it by Saakashvili and Georgian Dream alike. A temporary dream-world of the prosperity to come. During the week of concerts and twenty four hour party, young tourists from all over the region and beyond take over Anaklia. Markets, cafes and merry go rounds pop up on the main road and along the boulevards while the pumping sound of the festival can be heard all the way to the outskirts of the village. The money made during this busy week in August, for some, provides the only substantial income of the year, and maximising profit is a priority for most locals. All prices increase dramatically during the festival, rooms that in April are rented for 30 Lari (£9) are now 100 Lari (27£). One year, disgruntled Georgian tourists reported back that Khinkhali (Georgian dumplings) was sold for the staggering price of 4 Lari per piece, eight times higher than its price in Tbilisi. Anaklians are conscious of overcharging the festival dwellers, but many feel forced to "milk"[96] the tourists as much as possible as this is their only source of wealth. For many, moreover, the inflated prices are but a small token in exchange of the humiliation they are forced to go through during that week.

In September 2019 I am sitting in the house of my Anaklian neighbours, eating slices of fruit and chatting with them about this and that. After some time we reach the topic of the festival and I ask my neighbour, Tata, a woman in her late fifties how it went: "vaaaa – she burst – we had lots of them here!" She indicates the place where we are sat, then she brings her hands to her face and moans: "vaimeeee![97] They were drinking medicine (წამალი/tsamali)[98] at home and then they were becoming stupid!" At this point she brings her glass to her mouth and pretends to drink from it, then, rolling her eyes and flickering her eyelids dramatically, she stars moaning incomprehensible words and laughing. "They were going around like this!" She exclaims, emerging from her impression. Everyone around the table, including me, laughs, however, Tata, who has recomposed herself looks displeased: "if they were my children I would show them how to behave!" She says, raising her hand.

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[96] Different interlocutors have used the verb "to milk" to describe attitudes towards seasonal tourists.

[97] A typical Georgian expression, convening different emotions according to the context, in this case it denotes exasperation. Similar to "oh my! Or "wow"

[98] By medicine they refer to any time of chemical drug.

I had witnessed a very similar impression the day before when drinking coffee with Ana and Tamuna, who work at one of the cafes on the main road. They also have family guest-houses and working at the restaurant they are exposed to the young festival dwellers all day long. Youngsters, they say, were always coming to hang out in the café, putting their feet on the chairs and call with slurry voices: "Anaaaaa, Tamunaaaaaaa!!", some were so baked that they would fall asleep while still eating, others would drink "medicine" and then become hyperactive, as Ana shows me by weaving her cloth in the air and jumping around. Her and Tamuna giggle: "they were silly (სასაცილო/sasatsilo) … [they were] children, you know?! (ბაშვები რა?!/bashvebi ra?!)" – says Tamuna with a mixture of leniency and concern. One of Tamuna's relatives is a police officer and so I ask her, what do they do when witnessing all of these things happening into their home? "Nothing! – says Tamuna – what can we do? During the festival the police has to turn a blind eye to these things, what would we do otherwise?"

While the caricatures of high party dwellers are playful and light-hearted and in some cases even affectionate, having to open their houses to a host of drugged partygoers fills many locals with a mixture of shame and concern. When I first arrived home, during my last visit, Tina, Tamuna's daughter apologises to me for the broken mirror in my room. It was smashed by the tourists during the festival, they also destroyed some sheets and left the whole room in a mess, Tina tells me: "they are crazy! They were making all sorts of noises, I had to take Nikolozi[99] away." Similar tales of festival dwellers misbehaving and disrupting their hosts lives abound, these are accounts of people most intimate spaces being occupied by strangers whose requests and habits seem to mutate each year, making it difficult for their hosts to adapt or protect their domestic sphere from these unknown, yet extremely close, hordes.

Throughout the years, rumours have circulated beyond the boundaries of Anaklia of the many people who have lost their lives during the festival, in 2017 for instance, while the government and most media channels reported the death of one girl during Gem Fest (Guthrie 2018), voices circulated about the death of at least five more people due to a mysterious drug that was circulating at the party. While the rumours were never confirmed by the authorities, their circulation as a "public secret" (Taussig 1999; Barry 2013) marks the contained space/time of the festival as at once a site of desire, related to the fulfilment of economic hopes, and fear of the unknown activities and substances that populate it. Against this situation the role of the villagers is ambiguous, if on one side they are invested in the success of the festival and therefore responsible for facilitating its operations, including the suppression of excessive fears circulating around it, they are on the other side made to *endure* a profound rupture of their domestic space and face new humiliations to be accepted with one's eyes lowered.

In Anaklia, as is the case in a lot of tourist destinations across the world, the summer is commonly referred to simply as "the season" as a marker of the time in which the long awaited

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[99] Her four year old son.

customers finally come. Around this singular timescape, that each year seem to become a little shorter, a little more unpredictable, great efforts are condensed. While stories of the fabulous earnings made during the season are spread through the village, a sense of bitterness and alienation also permeates the hustle that people have to sustain in order to secure a bit of money. The futuristic promise of the port territory, in turns, constituted at once an expansion and an escape from this ambiguous timescape: once the port will be built "the season" will cease to dominate the lives of Anaklians as new and multiple opportunities for earning a living will arise; however, paradoxically, once the port will be built "the season" – and with it the stress and humiliation that the villagers are made to endure – will also be all year long as most Anaklians have invested in the hospitality sector and await the swathes of foreigners – tourists and workers alike – to populate the logistical hub to come.

As I will explore in the next and last section, the speculations connected with the port's construction are adding further layers to the exhaustion of many villagers, who are left to pick up the pieces of ADC's failure to gain political and material control of the future.

**8.3.2 Hope in the dust**

Going back to the first encounter described in this chapter, with Giorgi and his wife Lela, can help us to detect further intersecting elements composing Anaklia's new suspended household economy. Giorgi's house, that upon our visit described above is covered in the thick black sand reclaimed from the seabed, has been built right on the edge of the port's territory, less than a meter away from the fence separating the port from the village. With the help of his sons, Giorgi built an incredible construction: a two storey wooden chalet with carvings and golden finishing. Inside, moreover, the décor is breath-taking: the living room is a triumph of replica Louis XV furniture in white and gold, under a ceiling decorated like a blue sky with clouds. The guest rooms are decorated more simply, but the creative effort of the owners is still visible: each room is themed after a different global city, pictures of Moscow, New York and London printed on their walls. Channelling the global cues that have influenced Georgia's recent architectural refurbishment as well as the weaving together vernacular threads from multiple locations, this house is a wonderful example of Anaklia's vernacular spectacular. Upon its construction, many speculated that the chalet had been built so close to the building site in the hope to receive further compensation once the second phase of the infrastructure's expansion would be initiated. Admittedly, I had often wondered why would someone built a house so close to what today was a messy work-space and later was set to become a busy and polluting industrial site.

*Figure 44 Giorgi's living room*



*Figure 45 a picture of Moscow in one of the guest rooms*

*Figure 46, 47  the sand inside and outside*

Spending time with Giorgi and his family, however, a less straightforward explanation came to the fore. Touring around the house with them, it became apparent that every step of its construction was a labour of love. The living room, with its eccentric furnishings is like a scream of joy, the materialisation of a success to be celebrated and showed off. The rest of the house, moreover, is carefully planned to host different types of guests, from family members to paying customers, their different needs and status reflected in the arrangement of rooms and services. Nothing in the house suggests that it has been built in order to be soon destroyed and both of the owners describe with pride the time and care that went on its planning and construction. Such visible efforts however, do not necessarily signal that the rumours are wrong, rather they add multiple dimensions to the house's significance in the family's future plans and in the emerging household economy taking shape in Anaklia.

Similar to the houses described earlier, inside this chalet overlooking the port view, a new relation to the domestic space is being foregrounded. The building is an awkward synthesis between the previously separated spaces of business and private life. While, as mentioned earlier, numerous households in Anaklia were previously hosting tourists during the summer, the development of the port and the insertion of Anaklia on the tourist map, incentivised people to "up their game" to meet the ever-changing needs of tourists as well as the not yet defined population that will gather around the port after its completion. The chalet on the edge of the building site is thus a "materialised effort" (Asabashvili and Mirzikashvili 2012) to come to terms with this new understanding of home amidst the never ending spatial revolution taking place in Anaklia.

Speaking with Giorgi he appears to be aware of the rumours concerning the location of his new place. He dismisses them saying that firstly, the house has been built on a piece of land that already belonged to the family and as the prices all across the village had rose exponentially it didn't seem convenient to buy a new property. Moreover, the family reckoned that being close to the port would grant them a constant supply of customers, as people working in the port would need housing, obviously they didn't expect the construction to be halted and could not foresee the problems that are experiencing now. While rejecting that the house was built in order to cash in on further compensation, Giorgi is nevertheless explicit about the practical calculations that informed the decision to locate the house where it is.

Placing these profit-driven considerations – and the cynical speculation alleged by the rumours – against the materiality of the built house, with its exuberant décor and hand crafted surfaces, what we observe is a multiplicity of motives driving the construction. Some of these motives belong to separate ethical realms and assemble diverse timescapes but they nevertheless exist all together in the new house without however cancelling one another. This kind of multiplicity echoes Navaro-Yashin's description of the ambivalent beliefs of Turkish citizens in the falsities of their government: rather than either believing or not in the promises made by the state, Navaro-Yashin's interlocutors intermixed awareness of the lies they are subjected to with a "genuine belief" that ends up informing their daily actions (Navarro -Yashin 2002 159-71). In other words, Giorgi's house is at once a speculation, the attempt to maximise their business' success, a materialisation of a status claim, and the house of the family's dreams. The

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construction, with its golden chandeliers and strategic location is the manifestation of what Gisa Weszkalnys defines "a doubtful hope" (2016). The golden chalet in its practical extravagance is a "self-conscious form of expectation management" (ibid:3), an attempt from the family of coming to terms with the omni-present, yet elusive promise of wealth carried by the port development. Despite receiving substantial compensation, albeit, less than a million Georgian Lari, Giorgi and his relatives are busy preparing themselves for an uncertain future where great gains could come as unexpectedly as great losses. Their ability to cherish the compensation, mitigated by the necessity to keep up the hustle for survival in this territory that since the 90s has been crossed by so many dramatic changes.

Looking around the rooms covered in sand, Giorgi's multiple plans appear to have, at least temporarily, all collapsed. Not suitable for domestic life nor for hosting tourists, this example of vernacular/spectacular has momentarily become an alien structure. The alien-ness of the port's construction, in turns, that less than two year before had sanctioned the fortune of the household is now seemingly undermining its very own promise. In the extended suspension that surrounds the making of the port, people in Anaklia are left once more to try their luck, investing on a future that keeps changing and on which they seemingly have no control. As I mentioned at the very beginning of the chapter, the travelling sand is an index of the shaky promise of the port and of the ruination that is inevitably contained within it. As Akhil Gupta notes "the infrastructure's gesturing to the future seldom attends to the fact that infrastructures are always already on the way to becoming ruins" (2018: 62). Ruination, following Gupta, does not just affect failed or abandoned structures, on the contrary it is an ongoing process:

> "a temporary zone between the start of projects and their completion. Every pillar sticking out of the middle of a road marks the temporality of the now, between past and future, between potential and actualization. Ruination is not about the fall from past glory but this property of in-between-ness, between the hopes of modernity and progress embodied in the start of construction, and the suspension of those hopes in the half-built structure. Rubble here stands neither for senescence nor for anticipation, but for the suspension between what was promised and what will actually be delivered." (ibid 70)

In the case of Giorgi, the suspended ruins of the port are quite literally "hanging in the air" (Harvey 2018: 92) filling the future with a "toxic uncertainty" penetrating infecting dreams and bodies alike. Poised between the "no longer" of the (post)Soviet meurneoba and the "not yet" of logistical prosperity, different horizons of expectation and practices of life organisation are tentatively materialised in Anaklia. Leaving even those who seemingly have already benefited from the future under construction in a state of uncertainty infected by doubtful hope (Weszkalnys 2016).

"'Hope dies last' our ancestors were saying, but how long can we be like this? I don't know anymore" – Giorgi tells us as we are leaving his inundated house.

## Conclusion: enduring the future

> "We are adjusted to the future and they are oriented towards the past—the future will always prevail over the past. Good is on the future's side and evil on the side of the past." (Mikheil Saakashvili in Gotfredsen 2014: 246)

"The future is exhausting" (Appel 2018: 52)

In presenting his enquiry into marginal youth in Batumi, Martin Demant Frederiksen asked "what are people left *to*" amidst the multiple collapses that marked Georgia's recent past. In this chapter I have taken up this question by bringing to the fore the different ways in which Anaklians have been enduring and domesticating the developmental futures cast over their village in the past decade. In chapter seven, I have argued that, despite the futuristic push towards capitalist development embodied by the port, the present life of the village cannot be understood without acknowledging its recent infrastructural past and its permanence in the present timescapes governing the lives of Anaklians. In some regards, furthermore, the present experience of Giorgi and his family – that can indeed be compared to the powerful nostalgia experienced by Neno described in the previous chapter – suggests that, despite having been the subjects of a great economic fortune and entering as a consequence a new privileged class position within the socio-economic organisation of Anaklia, the new millionaires can be regarded as subjects to a specific kind of dispossession. While they certainly have gained in material possessions, they have been ejected from the former socio-affective and economic order to which they had belonged and they had crafted throughout the best part of their lives. Rather than assembling a smooth territory propaedeutic to support the seamless flows of commodities and cargo and rather than materialising a linear future governed by the rhythms of stock-markets and transnational trade, the making of Anaklia's logistics hub instead operates through frictional encounters with new and old forms of dispossession and intersects with various pre-existing regimes of (re)production, extractive relations and visions of development. These crucially produce their own economies and with them, new class relations. It is around these heterogeneous economies that the life of the small village is reproduced each day before the long awaited arrival of the future. In particular, a new rentier economy is born out of the land speculation that followed the port's attempted construction. This has grounded people into their unhomely homes, blurring the boundaries between intimacy and business and between commercial value and care. The failure of Anaklia Port is not exceptional, rather the world is punctuated by failed infrastructural projects, from the failed smart city of Neom in Saudi Arabia, to the disastrous speculations over Indonesian gold described by Anna Tsing over two decades ago, many failed projects rested on similar futuristic promises. In some ways, as Chua has shown in her account of the global shipping industry, global maritime trade is so infused by failure, that its likelihood provides a perverse kick for the companies locked in ever more excessive speculations. Accounts of failure are thus accounts of global capitalism. As Gupta argues, failure and ruination rather than solely marking destruction are the "afterlives of construction" (Gupta 2018: 68, cf Gordillo 2014). The thick black dust blowing from the abandoned port territory depositing itself on the shiny surfaces of new hotels, is but the last of the sediments mattering the present of this borderland, a nasty accretion of its past histories projected into the present. Toxic and out of control, however it appears to be at once a disruption of projected futures and an index of what is left behind by the collapsed promise of a logistical future and, crucially, on whose shoulders, eyes, lungs falls the duty to endure the coming difficulties.

## LOGISTICS WITHOUT PRODUCTION:
## REPRODUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TIME IN AND BEYOND ANAKLIA

The performance of global logistical connection as smooth, seamless and necessary requires work. In the course of this thesis I have shown how the futuristic visions of Georgia as a hub for logistical connectivity exist and are reproduced through a myriad of processes that precede and exceed logistical capitalism. Throughout the different chapters, I have shown the ways in which these efforts are translated and repurposed to make logistics look *smooth*. In making sense of such complex processes and in order to map their ramifications across different timespaces, I have developed several key conceptual insights that respond to the research questions I outlined in this thesis' introduction.

*The frictions that underwrite the pursuit of seamless connectivity are best captured through thick description and a topographic inquiry of specific sites and the connections between them. An ethnographic attention to logistical projects, thus, is pivotal to understand the forces at play in the making and unmaking of global connections.*

Locating myself in Anaklia, the worldly transit hub yet to come, I embedded myself within the daily life of the village. This allowed me to observe how a single, unfinished, space could be transformed, for a period, into a repository for vision(s) of Georgia's future and how simultaneously it could expose their kinship with very different developmental horizons. Therefore, what I have produced here is not another general theory of logistics, but a situated account of logistical development, one that spans across different temporalities and volumes and, crucially, one that has placed at its core an effort of grappling with the complexities and incongruences filling the spaces it seeks to narrate (cf Gibson-Graham 1996). Ethnography, as Yael Navaro notes "works against the grain of paradigm-setting; it asks for all scopes of the imagination to be kept on board" (2007:16). In this thesis, I have focused my ethnographic attention on a single infrastructural space, in order to trouble the global narrative of seamless connectivity powering logistical projects worldwide (Chua et al 2018) showing instead how logistical spaces come into existence and operate though an incessant and multi-layered labour of reproduction that is at once spatio-temporal, imaginative, material and embodied. Crucially, being in and coming to terms with one's research field entails a constant process of negotiation, rather than hiding this, at times painful and often unsettling process, I have woven my own struggle with(in) the field into this thesis. As such, and as many feminist ethnographers have argued before me, mine is a research that is situated on multiple accounts, as it simultaneously places itself "on the grounds" of global logistics (Katz 2001b) and grounds my own embodied experience within the account I present. Beyond these epistemological and methodological concerns, further conclusions follow:

*A complex conceptualization of temporality is necessary to the analysis of infrastructure.*

In the introduction I stated that one of my aims was to expose what other temporalities and relations are conjured up by the projections of a logistical future that populated the Belt and Road Forum. Building on ethnographic accounts of infrastructure and on Timothy Mitchell's recent conceptualisation of *capitalisation*, I have sought to highlight how even in the case of Anaklia and, I contend, of other logistical projects across the globe, a host of different temporalities are brought together and their relationships to one another are recast.

Capitalisation, as Mitchell argues is a specific device to bring the future into the present in order to extract profits from it. To be capitalised, the future thus needs to look durable and predictable. However, as I have detailed across the different chapters, what I term the logistical future, is by no means a coherent, linear horizon, rather it is a container for multiple temporal orientations sutured together through great efforts by all manners of actors. An examination of the making of Georgian "logistics revolution" in Anaklia from the perspective of multi-temporality, therefore helps show how "modern times are characterized by simultaneously existing, inimical, and contradictory forms of the future rather than by epochal breaks" (Pels 2015: 780).

One of the ways in which infrastructure mediates different temporalities is through what Anand has themed "accretion" (2015). Present infrastructures reactivate the past. I have shown how the attempt to turn Georgia into a logistical hub is linked through multiple threads to the sedimented histories, forms of territorial organisation and geopolitics that have marked the South Caucasus since the Russian Empire. Powerful forces such as Occidentalism, that are rooted in the pre-capitalist history of Georgia, become mediators of the prospect of capital accumulation, while nostalgia for a more substantive past is deployed to domesticate and at times resist the impacts of decades of failed speculations and privatization. In the post-Soviet space, existing infrastructures acquire material accretions, but they also acquire new immaterial accretions associated with finance and the law. Finally, across the different chapters, I have dwelled on a variety of "other" futures, that side-line, appropriate, sustain or channel the promise of a logistical future for different publics: these are the recurrent suspension that envelops Anaklia, the small-scale as well as large cycles of speculation that have punctuated different moments of its development and mediated its crises in the past decade, the heavy season of tourist prosperity, as well as the small acts of hope in which villagers have engage to hold on to a future a bit less uncertain. The shifting relations between these temporal dispositions and logistics have filled the pages of this thesis, *mattering* the complex lifeworlds of the failed hub I sought to observe. Notably, these are insights that I believe can be productively applied beyond the boundaries of Georgia, and of the post-Soviet space, to analyse complex global formations such as the Belt and Road Initiative and other global projects to foster logistical connectivity.

*Reproduction, rather than merely production, is necessary for the creation and maintenance of logistical networks. For this reason it should be at the core of critical studies of logistics.*

Coming to terms with the actually existing roughness and multivocality of the pursuit of seamless connectivity, crucially entails asking what are the intersections that allow logistics to seem smooth and what labour is necessary to suture them together (Appel 2019:2, Bear et al 2015). It is for this specific aim that I have sought to map the variegated efforts directed at sustaining and negotiating the logistical future. Feminist scholars across disciplines have shown how the circulation of capital and labour is sustained by a host of relations, exchanges and practices traditionally deemed outside the bounds of productive labour (Dalla Costa and James 1975, Hochschild 2012, Bhattacharya 2018, Peano 2019a). However, I have shown that reproductive labour exceeds "the social reproduction of the labour force", to include *the labour*

*necessary to suture together different social, temporal, affective regimes at the service of capitalist projects.*
Reproduction is crucial not just to propel capitalist projects, but to make them look smooth and coherent, despite their indebtedness to different lifeworlds. It is by looking at the reproductive activities that make up capitalist worlds that is possible to highlight the fragilities of capitalisation, showing it as a daring hustle that is nevertheless subjected to the instabilities of the environments and relations that sustain it (Chua 2018). Rather than resting exclusively on productive relations, extraction and the circulation of bodies, commodities and expertise, the making of global connections also depends on the incorporation of pre-existing structures, imaginations and repetitions. Mapping what these repetitions are is pivotal to assessing *why* and *how* logistics comes into being in practice. To this end, across the chapters, I have shown how gender and taxonomies of belonging and class are performative powers that organise and recast relations between the different actors involved in the making of logistics.

*A host of subjects and agencies are enlisted in logistical reproduction, upsetting traditional notions of class under capitalism.*

Throughout the thesis I have observed the variegated "acts of work" (Bear 2015) and performances at the heart of the attempt to turn Anaklia into a space where logistical futures could be materialised, significantly, I have highlighted how reproductive labour is performed by different classes of subjects, spanning to the highest ranking managers of the multinational company in charge of the development of Anaklia all the way to the most precarious workers. Tracing the reproductive nexus at the core of the development of Anaklia Port, thus, allows to sketch what Anna Tsing has named: "a polyglot language of class formation" (2009:173) through which is possible to describe the changing socio-economic relations populating logistical networks in Georgia and beyond. Ethnographic explorations of the relation between labour and capital, as Harvey and Krohn-Hansen have argued, "allows us to explore the diverse ways in which labour relations are experienced beyond the confines of the economic, bringing kinship, personhood, affect, politics, and sociality firmly back into the frame of capitalist value creation" (2018:10). The labour of and within logistics is composed of uneven dislocations it is though these that people and spaces are transformed by the movements of global capital (ibid). In this sense, the reconfiguration of Anaklia's local economy, inclusive of the recasting of domestic relations and engendering of new rentier subjectivities amongst the villagers, must be understood as integral to the project of logistical connectivity, rather than a side effect of its demise. Therefore, taken as a whole, the chapters respond to an imperative that is at once theoretical and practical "to reveal the constructed-ness – the messiness and hard work involved in making, translating, suturing, converting, and linking diverse capitalist projects—that enable capitalism to appear totalizing and coherent" (Bear et al 2015).

*Logistical capitalism is not just speculative, it is performative.*

Following Hannah Appel, my work has sought to treat logistics "*as a project*, rather than as a context" (2019:2, my emphasis). Indeed, similarly to other rationalities and structures, logistics is performative of the very reality it seeks to describe (Callon 1998; Mitchell 1999, 2002; Butler 2010). The pillars sustaining logistical rationality are diverse and borrow from the naturalised

operations of the market, to the entrenched separation of society and economic calculation, to the gender and class norms that shape the mundane existences of those who populate logistical words. Throughout the thesis, I have sought to disentangle these structures as they operate to sustain one specific project, looking through the cracks between one entanglement and the other. Seeing logistics through the lens of performativity complicates critical approaches to logistics that, similarly to the critiques of capitalism challenged by feminist geographers such as J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), risk reifying logistical power by portraying it as an all-encompassing and coherent force that strides across space phagocytizing lands and subjects. Rather, as chapter six and seven demonstrate, the promise of logistics is often sustained by a precarious hustle and it borrows from other regimes of differentiation and value-creation to establish the boundaries necessary to its workings. Seeing logistics as a gathering of "performative agencies" (Butler 2010), instead of a context, does not mean undermining its power in effectively reshaping relations and asserting new callous forms of domination over the spaces it crosses. Rather it is a commitment to undo the knots that hold its networks together, finding out how not just physical infrastructure but also the entanglements of power that uphold logistical expansion have their own fragilities and *chokepoints* we must put pressure on.

Finally, *rather than an aberration, failure is at once ubiquitous and integral to the making of global logistics.* Yet, as it was the case with ADC's failure, its occurrence is often portrayed by those in charge as well as different sections of the public, as unexpected or, even, as the result of a conspiracy. Instead of succumbing to these narratives, we must interrogate who is left to pick up the pieces of yet another failure of the future. This question, as Parikka, suggests, is at once about the specific materialities left behind, whose lungs, eyes, and bedrooms they infiltrate and whose paths they disrupt and finally of the forms of labour required to sort through the mess, one more time. A critique of logistical capitalism though a performative lens, I contend, is part of what Dominic Boyer has called "the process of of unmaking androleukoheteropetromodernity, of squatting in its ruins, of practicing subscendence rather than transcendence" (2018:239).

*Avenues for future research: towards a multi-temporal forecasting of logistical futures.*

The ongoing covid-19 pandemic has revealed the inevitability of major disruption to projected futures, highlighting the disastrous impact of that large projects of accumulation have already had on the precarious environments in which we live. The effects of the current pandemic on logistical connections across the globe are yet to be fully assessed, however large infrastructural project which were due to come to fruition and were dependent on the possibility of a secure future of profit are already starting to fail. I believe that research that locates itself on the grounds of the projects that sustain global logistical capitalism is more than ever urgent (Katz 2001b). Through this research I have shown that it is possible to map what repetitions are brought together in the effort to capture the future for the purpose of capital accumulation and crucially on whose shoulder does the labour of reproducing and sustaining these repetitions falls. The ultimate goal of this research has been, following Cindy Katz, to make the complex and murky operations of logistical capitalism more intelligible in order to build effective counter-narratives and start imagining new ways to organise the (re)production of our lives (Katz 1994:71). In a context where failure and crisis appear inevitably intertwined with

projected futures, this research has provided a grounded account of life waiting for and in the aftermath of logistics. In calling for further research to follow a similar path, my aim is to suggest that accounts like this thesis can act as a form of forecasting. The intersection of multiple temporalities in and around infrastructure allows us to expand the notion of forecasting to include a *reckoning with ruins* as well as an assessment of future trajectories. Rather than simply future oriented technocratic practice, in this way, an ethnographic forecasting of logistical future could lay the basis for a political reflection that works against the grain of the dominant temporalities put in circulation by infrastructure. Across the globe communities and individuals are domesticating this daunting task, I hope that many more future accounts, within and beyond academia, can contribute to efforts to make living with and within the Anthropocene a little more substantive, inclusive and, hopefully, joyful.

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