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Speed, Vitality and Innovation in the Reinvention of Georgian Planning Aspects of Integration and Role Formation

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Speed, Vitality and Innovation in the Reinvention of Georgian Planning Aspects of Integration and Role Formation‡

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Abstract *In this paper, we investigate the influence of speedy reform in a transitional country on the reinvention of spatial planning. For the country of Georgia, we briefly outline the evolution of the planning system since communism, and then analyse through two case studies how the specific transitional pathway of Georgia manifests itself in the reorganization of spatial governance in city (Tbilisi) and natural areas (Borjomi). It is argued that role formation and transformation play a crucial role in such processes, roles being catalysts and modifiers of further reform. We analyse and argue that the mixed results of reform speed and re-centralization of power enable fast change of formal institutions but simultaneously raise obstacles for the crystallization of roles necessary to implement those formal reforms. Our analysis incorporates key concepts derived from institutional economics (in the line of Douglass North) and social systems theory, in Niklas Luhmann's version.*

Introduction

The modern Georgia has been under tremendous internal and external political and economic pressures (Coppieters & Legvold, 2005; Wheatly, 2005; Bader, 2008). Spatial planning policy and practice reveal many facets of these pressures on various scales. Under spatial planning we understand the coordination of policies and practices with regard to spatial organization. In Georgia, like in the rest of the ex-USSR, planning had

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to be quickly reinvented after a socialism that pretended scientific and centralized planning but offered residents and discerning international observers a more confusing picture of competition between state actors and various forms of corruption (Andrusz, 1984; French, 1995; Van Assche *et al*., 2010; Taubman, 1973). That image, we argue, influenced the process of innovation in spatial governance (cf Ruble, 1995).

We investigate that reinvention of spatial planning as an innovation process, in two case studies, one in the sphere of urban planning (planning for Georgian's capital Tbilisi) and one in the rural area (planning for Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and its surroundings). In and through these case studies, we attempt to reconstruct the causes of pressure on the innovation process, and the responses to these pressures in the spatial governance system. It will be argued that speed and centralization have contradictory consequences, felt differently in city and countryside, on the one hand forcing innovation, on the other hand rendering it less stable, jeopardizing its institutionalization. Theoretically, we frame our analysis by means of concepts borrowed from social systems theory, in the version of Niklas Luhmann (1990, 1995), and institutional economics, in the line of Douglass North (North, 1990, 2005; Greif, 2007). Luhmann and North enable us to reconstruct the evolution of planning institutions in terms of changing rules, organizations, and professional roles. Roles are seen as catalysts of further change, and modifiers of further innovation (cf Seidl, 2005).

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Method

The Tbilisi case relies on fieldwork in the summers of 2006, 2007 and 2009, and telephone interviews in 2008, while the case on protected area planning is based on fieldwork in 2009 and telephone interviews in 2008. Each fieldwork episode consisted of observation, interviews, gathering of documents. For Tbilisi, interviews, semi-structured, with topics list, were conducted in offices, public spaces, cafes and restaurants, and took between 1 and 3 hours each. We returned every year to a number of key informants, while adding new ones as well. We also observed the reconstruction and development of the city, by returning to a number of dynamic and iconic sites. Interviewees included policy-makers, academic experts, journalists, critical intellectuals, NGO representatives and foreign expert- observers.

For the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park case, we interviewed NGO and government representatives, as well as business leaders from Tbilisi, local experts, administrators and entrepreneurs in the town of Borjomi and Borjomi municipality, and local residents in the village of Marelisi, in Kharagauli municipality, on the other side of the national park. In Kharagauli municipality we also conducted a concluding focus group. We made observations on three sides of the park (south, east and west) and interviewed people still living within the present park boundaries. Interviews and documents were coded for emerging narratives, and a Foucaultian inspired discourse analysis followed, in the search for latent assumptions and discursive patterning.

Planning in Post-Soviet Georgia

Planning in Georgia started well with the Russian takeover in 1801 (Suny, 1994), but accelerated after the establishment of the Soviet regime. Planning became centralized, with a formal hierarchy cascading down from Moscow to the most minute settlement.

It became comprehensive, with the planning system allegedly giving place to, and taking care of all necessary aspects of human life (Van Assche *et al*., 2009). As has been alluded to, paper and reality, formal and informal institutions differed markedly, and the planners were usually among the least powerful actors on the Soviet stage. Industrial ministries, capital cities, well-connected individuals and in some areas state farms could subvert many plans and policies (Huzinec, 1978; Jaoshvili, 1978; Hahn & Friedgut, 1994). Innovation of spatial governance in Georgia, as in other post-socialist places, has to be understood against that background.

After Georgia's independence in 1991 and even faster after its Rose Revolution in 2003, the country renovated its system of spatial governance. Innovation in planning implies changing roles (Van Assche *et al*., 2010) and in some cases it implies inventing roles. Private firms, including private developers did not exist in the Soviet Union and had to be created, while lawyers in the western sense had no place in the system and were included in the system. In the other direction, the scientific planning ambitions that dominated Soviet rhetoric were dumped very quickly after independence. People that describe themselves as "planners", and believe in a scientifically optimal organization of space, hardly exist anymore. All roles had to be reinvented in a new set of institutions, formally adhering to democratic and free market principles (Gachechiladze, 1995; Salukvadze, 1999).

With new institutions and new roles in spatial organization came a new function of documents, written and graphic. The blue print plans that once marked Soviet planning became suspicious in the eyes of the new elite, especially after the Rose Revolution (Van Assche *et al*., 2009; cf Ruble, 1995; Higley & Lengyel, 2000). New forms of knowledge became relevant, and power structures transformed. Roles acquire and deploy knowledge and power, and legitimize themselves partly by the knowledge they embody. Transformation of roles is therefore transformation of knowledge and power distribution in the governance system (Elster *et al*., 1998; Forester, 1999). In very general terms, we can say that the legal system became more prominent in spatial organization, which can be interpreted as a sign of preference for the American model of planning. Planning as visioning, by means of visually oriented plans, moved to the background. Engineers, bureaucrats, and scientists lost power, while lawyers, developers and the wider circle of the economic elite, gained power (Shavishvili, 2003; Ziegler, 2006; Gallina, 2010).

In Georgia, the regime change after the Rose Revolution introduced a cult of youth in the leadership, a strong sense of urgency, a strong orientation towards the West, mostly the US (Nodia & Scholtbach, 2006). In terms of spatial governance, the Saakashvili government opted clearly for a pro-development approach, trying to clear the physical, legal, economic and political hurdles left by the communist regime and a chaotic transition (Van Assche *et al*., 2009). While privatization already took place on the watch of previous governments, the impact could not be felt much, because ownership often did not have real implications, could not be enforced, and land registration was ambiguous and laborious (Salukvadze, 1999; Gachechiladze & Salukvadze, 2003). Since 2004, the land registration process has been disambiguated and simplified, the conditions for buying and selling land and real estate rendered transparent and safe, and the banking system has stabilized (at least until the 2009 crisis), spurring a mortgage industry and hence real estate development (Sulukhia in Van Assche *et al*., 2009; World Bank, 2010). In the following section, we investigate how this general environment affected planning for Tbilisi.

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Planning for Tbilisi

In Georgia, planning in the past was mostly planning for Tbilisi (Lang, 1966). For centuries Tbilisi was the seat of the Georgian kingdom, and always had a strong local identity, a city culture distinct from any of the constituting ethnicities (Suny, 1994; Vardosanidze, 2000). Georgians, Armenians, Russians, Kurds, Azeris, and to a lesser extent Greeks, Jews and Germans made up the social and economic fabric of the city, and for most of its history, people called themselves first of all Tbilisian, next Armenian or Georgian. With that, Tbilisi can be called a cultural exception in Georgia, where the countryside traditionally has been populated by Georgians. In Tbilisi, over the years, despite changing regimes, capital and knowledge accumulated, turning it into the economic and intellectual capital of the Caucasus in various periods. Tbilisi was and is the pride of the country. As it is the pride of the president. Virtually all relevant decision makers and economic interests are concentrated in the capital, and the political leadership cannot and does not wish to ignore the capital. On the one hand the concentration of power in Tbilisi makes change harder to initiate (the obstacles being larger) and on the other hand, any change in the rest of the country will have to come from there. And, in the same vein, change is also more likely to come from the capital, since the sources of both ideas and power are located there.

With regard to planning, Tbilisi has been marked by very ambiguous attitudes during the transition. Government rhetoric had a strong free-market orientation since the Rose Revolution, and that rhetoric was turned into implemented policies on many fronts (AMCHAM, 2007; Gallina, 2010). We referred to land registration policies and the banking industry; we can add contract law, relatively low taxes, easy conditions to start a business, and privatization of city services (United Nations, 2007; World Bank, 2010). At the same time, an analysis of planning practice shows that not every element of the classic neo-liberal package is adopted. There is clearly a detailed scrutiny of Tbilisi development by the president and his circle, with both the municipal planning department and the private developers being sidelined or reprimanded regularly, because of a presumed lack of attention to beautiful Tbilisi. Also property rights were sometimes dismissed in government interventions with aesthetic intent (cf Darchiashvili, 2005; Corso, 2007). Another ambiguity is that at the national level, planning and development were moved to the ministry of economy, while for Tbilisi, new planning initiatives abounded.

How does the planning game work in Tbilisi? *De facto*, development is initiated by developers, like in the US. Those developers often have an architectural background, academic or not, and teamed up with elements of the new elite granting access to capital and resources—a practice becoming less significant with the recent development of the banking system. Land use and zoning ordinances now exist for the whole city (Ziegler, 2006; Van Assche *et al*., 2009), but do not seem to have much effect outside the historic downtown, "old Tbilisi", for which a separate, detailed and thoroughly researched plan exists. No equivalent of subdivision ordinances exists however, regulating how much can be built in a certain category of land use, where and how. This, in combination with the lax enforcement of the zoning law, leads to chaotic high-density development in the neighbourhoods attractive for developers, e.g. Vera and Vake (cf Gachechiladze & Salukvadze, 2003; Shavishvili, 2003).

In 2009, after years of negotiations, a new comprehensive master plan for the whole city was adopted, but as of present, its impact is unclear. As soon as it was adopted, the archi-

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tectural community noticed that a new highway project utterly disregarded the new plan. For the developers, the lack of planning is a curse and a blessing. Few formal restrictions on development exist, and those existing are rarely enforced. At the same time, they are also selectively enforced. Unclear procedures and unpredictable behaviour of governmental actors increase uncertainty, thus making larger projects revolve around elite support (cf Chiaberashvili & Tevzadze, 2005; Papava, 2008). Many developers realize that a lack of open space and green space planning affect property values in the longer run, and more and more of them develop such a long-term perspective, hinging on reputation and trust, rather than relying on hit-and-run strategies (Greif, 2007).

In city government, the knowledge base regarding planning has been eroded since the end of the communist era: experts were removed, moved to the private sector or were immobilized. Interventions by the national government tend to undermine the confidence of and trust in local government. Planning education is virtually gone from the education system, while it was already scarce under centralized Soviet education, with planning restricted to post-graduate training at a few Russian universities (Van Assche *et al.*, 2009). Architects took over some of the functions of planning, and a jump from architecture to urban design, taken by the architects and selectively encouraged by the political elite, can be observed. In the cases when architects or engineers get the green light for planning or design projects, the procedures and expectations are often unclear, making it less likely that ideas and practice of larger scale spatial planning and design will spread soon, that they will be institutionalized in the short term.

A different reason for that is the still existing corruption. According to most experts, and our own observations and deductions, the small-scale corruption, including in the field of construction and planning, has been successfully tackled by the present administration. Simply buying a building permit, or overriding the property rights of your neighbour, is becoming a very rare occurrence. Property is registered well, property rights are enforced, and the same goes for the permitting system. What can still be called corruption is that larger projects require a different style of negotiation, with more "input" of politics (Jokhadze, 2005). The fact that city architects (until recently the most senior officials in planning and development) were changed very frequently is generally interpreted by Georgian experts in the same light: either the person enabled himself too much, or he did not enable more senior actors enough. In other words, exceptions to rules are still possible for some (TraCCC, 2006; Tabatadze *et al.*, 2007; Transparency International Georgia, 2009; Way, 2009).

Another obstacle for the re-institutionalization of planning—in addition to unclear procedures, ambiguous attitudes and corruption—is simply "speed". Planning logically involves a long-term perspective, even if that perspective shifts regularly (Forester, 1999; Allmendinger, 2002). Long-term vision enhances coordination between various policies affecting spatial organization, while high levels of coordination facilitate the development of longer term visions (Luhmann, 1990, 1995; Healy, 2007). Planning in Western Europe traditionally served two goals: protection of property values and furthering of public goods (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Allmendinger, 2002). These goals can be contradictory, but both involve forward looking and coordination of policies. Clear procedures, circumscribed roles of actors stabilize the expectations in a planning process, and can foster the trust levels that are needed to rely on visions of the future in daily calculations (cf Greif, 2007). They enable the production of and adherence to longer-term perspectives. According to Luhmann, these factors, and the simple fact of being used to planning, of a history of

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planning, make the improbable more probable (Luhmann, 1995). Planning by itself is an improbably endeavour, since the future, future interests and power relations cannot be predicted, but a history of crystallizing roles, trust and institutions makes it possible for planning to work as a coordination mechanism that inspires the idea of gains for all the relevant players (cf Andrusz *et al*., 1996; Healy, 2007; Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008).

Procedures slow down a planning process, but simultaneously establish the trust necessary for coordination (North, 1990, 2005), and in and through this coordination can materialize the value added by long-term perspectives (Greif, 2007). These added values can again be regarded in terms of gained security, more stable property values, lower costs of conflicts (including legal conflicts) and even higher property values, because of the amenities introduced in the long-term plan and the overall attraction of the resulting design. Apparently higher transaction costs can then appear low in a long-term perspective and the gains higher (North, 1990; Elster *et al.*, 1998).

Planning tends to frustrate actors with short time horizons (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Van Assche, 2007), and actors with less interest in public goods, in whatever definition (Forester, 1999; Gunder & Hillier, 2009). For the business community, spatial planning can work, we argue, if it is generalized and predictable, candid and clear, and consistently enforced (this is in line with North (1990, 2005), Greif (2007) and the neo-institutional approach). This takes a long-term perspective first of all with the governmental actors and the political will to involve all players into that perspective. In Georgia, and best exemplified in Tbilisi planning, the rules are often unclear, and the roles of actors are not well defined (Wheatly, 2008; Gallina, 2010; Van Assche *et al*., 2010). Governmental actors can behave unpredictably. Rules are not enforced consistently. A long-term perspective is sometimes present, but can disappear any moment when elite interests are touched or when the topic moves down the agenda (Chiaberashvili & Tevzadze, 2005; Gurgenidze, 2006; Hikari Cecire, 2010).

Only one thing is clear: power in Georgia is with the president and his circle. This enables the speedy reforms that marked his rule, but under the conditions just described, that speed, and the sheer number of new policy initiatives, makes the re-emergence of planning unlikely.

In the local government, the rebirth of planning is difficult because of the unpredictable interventions from higher up. This not only immobilizes the remaining experts, but it also makes it difficult for a new core expert group and a new role to crystallize at the municipal level. Indeed, a reinvention of planning entails a revision of roles at all levels of governance (Putnam, 1993; Andrusz *et al*., 1996; Grzymala-Busse & Jones Luong, 2002; Allina-Pisano, 2008), and the revision of one level should not be left entirely to that level itself. In addition, experts should not be the single judge of their own transformation. But an environment of high uncertainty and contradictory expectations cannot foster a re-definition of the municipal planning role according to new, democratic and capitalist ground rules (Kornai & Rose-Ackerman, 2004). Re-specialization is difficult. In systems terms (Luhmann, 1990): differentiation of a municipal planning organization, that can then maintain itself in changing environments, is unlikely in this environment. This is yet another reason why coordination of spatial policies is unlikely to return. The dependence on an unpredictable, sometimes rash and volatile small circle makes planning ineffective and reduces its potential benefits (Ruble, 1995; Suny, 1995; cf Ledeneva, 2006). Besides, the benefits of a free market model are not fully reaped either. Also this requires differentiation, with private firms being able to rely on an institutional

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environment that does not force them to think and act as politicians or as aesthetic observers (King & Thornhill, 2003; Seidl, 2005; Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008).

Even when the people in the elite circle are highly gifted, dynamic and communicative, and even with the intentions to envisage some common good, the stimulus-response nature of this type of elite governance does not create favourable conditions for some necessary features of effective governance to materialize (Suny, 1995; Wilson, 2005; Way, 2009). "Speed" then becomes the catalyst for some inherent flaws in the governance style and institutional structure to become apparent: crystallization of roles is difficult, stabilizing procedures for coordination do not appear and, with that, viable long-term perspectives. Paper plans declaring to represent a long-term perspective can only be effective and can only play a substantial role in coordinating decision-making if they represent an accurate picture of the current power structure (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Gunder & Hillier, 2009) and if they incorporate present possibilities for coordination (Greif, 2007). Their chances are much better if they can rely on existing roles, rules, interests and values (Van Assche, 2007), on trust in the enforcement of the plan, and in the rule of law in general (Waters, 2005; Transparency International Georgia, 2009).

Let us analyse this further in the context of planning in and around protected areas.

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Planning of Protected Areas in Georgia

Protected areas (nature refuges) have a long history in Georgia, dating probably back to royal hunting reserves, and in a more formal sense, to the Russian tsarist period. Lagodekhi, in eastern Georgia's Greater Caucasus range, was established in 1912 (Weiner, 1999, 2000; Shtilmark, 2003). Under the USSR, Georgia became famous among Soviet scientists for its extreme bio-diversity, and more preservations (zapovedniki) were established, in the varied regions and climates of the country. Equally interesting for tsarist and Soviet Russians was Georgia's recreational potential (Suny, 1994). Sometimes vacations in Georgia were veiled as cures, medicinal treatments for various illnesses, and sometimes they were directly promoted as deserved leisure time for the hard working Soviet man (Weiner, 1999). Better contacts or a higher position in the state machinery meant better places and times at better resorts in nicer areas. Recreation and nature protection did not officially go together in the Soviet perspective, since at least on paper, and it seems mostly in practice, the zapovedniki had very restrictive access. Later, more recreational natural areas were designated, closer to the American concept of national parks, predicated on mass access and enjoyment of scenery, rather than study and protection of rare species or ecosystems (Shtilmark, 2003).

After independence, the chaos of the 1990s brought an end to the effective protection granted by zapovednik status (Chikladze, 2003). Closer to cities, the damage was worst, and large-scale logging, hunting, poaching and other forms of plunder of natural resources could be observed easily. In the more remote refuges, where direct habitat destruction was less likely, trophy hunters, mostly foreign, posed a distinct threat. Some scenic areas at driving distance from Tbilisi suffered rather random recreational development. When the economy stabilized, and the energy security more or less guaranteed, logging and hunting became less necessary for survival, and with the strengthening of the rule of law in recent years, controls seem to be more effective again. The results however can still be felt. Many deforested areas are not replanted, and many protected species decreased in

number and areal (interviews at Protected areas administration, IUCN, WWF and own observations).

Under the late president Shevarnadze, and under Saakashvili, a new system of protection was established, largely overlapping with the old zapovedniki, but under the aegis of an imported national parks ideology (imported from the US, with a IUCN twist). In recent years, several new parks have been designated and others have been enlarged and properly delimitated. Protected areas and protected area policy and capacity development received substantial support from foreign governments (Germany, the US, the Netherlands), from foreign businesses (BP, the oil company) and international NGO's (WWF, IUCN Bird Life International) and agencies (e.g. the World Bank). That support took different forms: initiatives were taken to improve legislation, to reinstate effective protection, to educate the new reservation guards and their audience. Efforts were undertaken to sensitively delineate the new or renovated parks, to manage them, develop infrastructure, come up with comprehensive visions, allowing for real protection and some continuation of traditional land uses. Right now, after the flood of support, many national parks have well-trained staff with good equipment. They are often well-researched, well-planned, provided of routing, some tourism infrastructure, and instructive promotional materials.

Sometimes projects collapse when foreign donors leave, but many do not. Some donors also stay involved and show a long-term commitment to nature protection in Georgia. The national government in 2009 increased the budget of the protected areas administration, made them more independent from the ministry of environment (and therefore hopefully more untouchable) and gave them high quality and stable staffing (interviews at the Protected areas administration, and at IUCN, WWF and Nacres, an NGO specialized in mammal protection).

The reasons for this are manifold, we argue. With many Georgian actors, there is a real pride of Georgian nature and the Georgian landscape, even when they do not intend to go there too often. Georgia traditionally saw itself as a rural country (Lang, 1966; Suny, 1994; Vardosanidze, 2000), as a place of idyllic countrysides framed by sublime natures that offered plenty of resources and plenty of places to enjoy those resources. ("This is an excellent shashlik place!") An extra incentive was the clear recognition of Georgia's exceptional ecological and landscape heritage by foreign observers and donors, the recognition moreover of its potential for eco-tourism. Especially the Saakashvili government understood the possibilities of national park formation for economic development. Nature protection could also be part of an international charm offensive. In addition, the basics of park planning look simple, easy to coordinate and enforce: just draw a line, hold it, promote it and the national park is there.

By giving a role to IUCN and WWF in the development of management plans, however, more sophisticated perspectives on park planning entered the picture, and their involvement allowed the Georgians to take advantage of some of the painful lessons those organizations learned elsewhere, especially when it comes to combining nature protection, ecotourism and traditional livelihoods. Hence, the management plans for the new style of national parks can truly be called comprehensive plans, offering a vision of the future, a combination of land use and a level of integration of policies that far exceeds the old distinction of protection versus use.

Is this a resounding success? Many positives seem real and are appreciated by a variety of actors, including those not involved in nature protection. We will investigate the effects

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of the new policy arrangement more in detail when looking at the case of National Park Borjomi, Georgia's largest national park.

Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and Its Surroundings

Borjomi is known for the mineral water with a distinct sulphuric taste. The history of the present park, located in the western part of Georgia, in subalpine to alpine terrain, is intimately connected with the history of the water, and that history in turn is part of the Russian imperial history of health and recreation spa's. In the late nineteenth century, Borjomi, the water, the landscape, the climate, were discovered by Russian aristocrats (following in the footsteps of soldiers), turning the place into a spa and the water into a prized commodity, leaving a legacy of eclectic architecture that can still be observed in the area. The history of the spa and the water continued under communism, with remainders of Soviet era recreational facilities (for workers, musicians, the writer's guild) still dotting the surroundings of Borjomi city. Borjomi's forest were renowned, and while forestry as a science was introduced with the Russian takeover, and the need for forest management and planning discussed since 1810, the first forest inventory and management plan dates back to 1854 and concerns the Borjomi forests (Metreveli, 2003). In 1894, Georgia's first tourist train started running, from Tbilisi to the Borjomi gorge, famous for its misty forest landscapes and mountain scenery (Gorshkov & Bagaturia, 2000).

Borjomi bottling started in the nineteenth century, but the systematic geologic exploration of the aquifer currently used, started well in 1927 (Borjomi Cie site). The Borjomi water company, with its headquarters in Tbilisi, now operates 11 wells, pumping 540 m^3/day of the mineral rich water (containing sodium, hydro carbonates, CO_2, magnesium, sulphur) from deep in the volcanic bedrock, that is, from one contained aquifer passing carbon-rich rocks at a depth varying from 300 to 1500 m (Bagdavadze *et al.*, 2008; Borjomi Cie site; interviews with Borjomi management and at Borjomi plant). Those quantities do not seem to pose a problem for long-term exploitation (Bagdavadze *et al.*, 2008; interviews with management). The immediate surroundings of those wells were and are strictly protected, with some unfortunate exceptions in the 1990s, where gas stations represented a risk of seepage into the deeper and prized aquifers. Since 2000, the protection of these pumping areas has effectively been increased by the establishment of a national park, now surrounding most of the wells, under the name Borjomi-Kharagauli.

Borjomi-Kharagauli, with 75,000 ha Georgia's largest national park, is marked by different micro-climates, with the southern part, west of Borjomi proper, enjoying more Mediterranean conditions, the central mountain zone an alpine colder climate and the northeastern flank a wet, subtropical one, typical for the Kolkheti region (Jaoshvili & Japoshvili, 2010). That side, full of springs and streams frequently moving their beds, is hard to reach from Borjomi, where the park headquarters is situated, because of the mountainous terrain and the lack of road connections even around the mountains. After independence, hunting and logging were real problems according to all the actors involved (and Nadiradze, 2005). Another bone of contention was/is the BP oil pipeline crossing the park, even though the pipeline zone is officially exempted from the park regulations, not in the park. (Barry, 2006, explains how the Borjomi route for the pipeline was largely the result of American concerns regarding Russian bases and potentially unstable minority areas, both to be avoided as much as possible. However, during the

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Georgian–Russian war of August 2008, Russian aviation made an attempt to damage the pipeline by inflaming hundreds of hectares of the park, seriously damaging the environment but not the pipeline.)

The management plan for the new national park was largely written by WWF, with consultancy from IUCN and local experts. WWF proposed the idea to the Georgian government in 1994, it was accepted in 1995, and in 2000, implementation began (Chikladze, 2003). Funding came from WWF, and most substantially, from BP and KfW, the German development bank (Germany spent well over 10 million Euro supporting the park and local development projects; Chikladze, 2003; interview with KfW management). Some people were moved out of the most sensitive areas, but for the most, the scarce population living in the new park boundaries was allowed to remain in place. One settlement on the north-eastern side of the park near Marelisi for most of the year can be labelled a village, established by a Russian agronomist in the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition, there are several summer camps for the herdsmen, higher up in the mountains.

In the management plan, implemented for the most part, zoning was instated, with core zones, buffer zones and economic activity zones; a new network of attractive routes was designed as well as the necessary accompanying infrastructure—such as sleeping huts, basic camp sites, wells, campfire sites and a hostel in Marelisi. Borjomi received the Pan Park designation and was thus included in WWF's network of sustainably managed national parks. Attention has been paid to capacity building: training for the management, guides and park rangers targeted not only nature protection, but also ecological knowledge and understanding of local needs (interviews at WWF, IUCN and with park rangers). Rangers were recruited locally as far as possible, to improve the local embedding of and support for the park, and to reduce tensions with the local population subjected to new use restrictions. With the same aim, but also to foster local economic development, and to enable the functioning of the park as a tourist draw, KfW and BP also supported infrastructure projects, like the construction of roads, water and sewer systems, recreational facilities, signage and even schools, in the surrounding villages, mostly on the southern flank. Within Georgia, Borjomi National Park has become a household name, and also internationally recognition is growing, thanks to the promotional efforts of WWF and IUCN. The Georgian government, via its administration of protected areas, offered support to the park development and maintenance, enabling smooth planning, permitting and implementation procedures, sometimes overriding local concerns about livelihoods.

So far, it has been a success story. What are the drawbacks of the chosen path of park planning?

The pipeline story is hard to assess for external observers. Up to this date, no significant leaks have been found and no damage to the mineral water reserves or the local ecology reported (interviews with park management, at IUCN, Nacres, WWF, local governments). Many players considered the geo-political importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline extremely high, high enough not to trust its implementation under Georgian law (Waters, 2004). The agreement reached under Shevarnadze between a consortium of oil companies, led by BP, the three national governments involved, and an American delegation, was a contract between three parties that ignored the legal context of the three countries involved. Waters (2003) argued that the poor state of law in Georgia and Azerbaijan was sufficient reason not to entrust the pipeline to the Georgian legal system, and not to allow Georgian environmental regulation, prone to

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local clan politicking and corruption, to decide on its fate. Cherp (2001), while not speaking directly about Georgia, in his assessment of Environmental Assessment procedures, their use, abuse and efficiency in post-communist states, seems to be on the same side of the argument. Barry (2006) showed that the new Saakashvili government in 2004 took a great risk, upsetting the Americans, by allowing local and environmental concerns, which were partly framed in terms of lacking environmental assessment, to stop the construction temporarily. In the end, construction continued, but the pipes were put in deeper, in a better casing, and millions of BP dollars (ca 45 million overall) were diverted to environmental protection and local economic development initiatives (see below). While the Georgian press reported furiously on the pipeline crossing the Borjomi area in the years 2000–2005, recently the debate has calmed down, and also locally, most environmental concerns regarding the pipeline seem to be alleviated.

A debate that did not die, is that on the governance of the park and surrounding villages. There is still a democratic deficit, despite the prevalent rhetoric of sustainable use of the parks and attention to local livelihoods. According to virtually all actors interviewed, including park rangers and officials as well as local government representatives, locals were and are rarely included in decision-making and planning. The park boundary has become very real for the neighbouring villages, and especially for the villages farthest from the incipient tourist stream (Marelisi and the south western settlements), the promised benefits of the park, like tourism income, did not materialize yet, while the restrictions, mostly with regard to logging, made themselves felt from the start.

Both in Borjomi and Marelisi, local officials and citizens generally understand and appreciate the idea of a national park, but deplore the lack of inclusion of local perspectives and practices, either directly, through participatory governance, or indirectly, through collaboration with local governments. Both park administration and local governments feel their hands tied however by Tbilisi, by the central government. Both actors lack the autonomy to truly engage with each other, either because of direct orders from Tbilisi to the park administration, for even minute management decisions, or because of lacking resources and questionable representativeness—in the case of the local governments. Both park administration and local governments indicate the weak economic position of the villages, and see this as a risk for the future of the park's resources and of the park itself. Both parties appreciate the KfW and BP initiatives for economic development, but indicate it is not enough. Local government representatives, in Borjomi and Marelisi, add that the strategies for economic development they could launch, are structurally handicapped by, again, the lack of local autonomy, in this case, the lack of real local taxing ability, and the unpredictability, year to year, of the funding received from Tbilisi. With that, long-term strategies are out of the question, economic development cannot be stimulated and the local support for the park is destined to remain weak, unless the tourist stream dramatically increased.

Even in years the funding received from Tbilisi is deemed sufficient, planning is low on the agenda of local governments, because of the unpredictability mentioned and also because of unclear property delineation and registration. Here, the land registry does not function at the level of Tbilisi. Furthermore, one can speak of a generally low level of functioning, low levels of trust, modest powers of coordination and integration of policies. Minimalist and unstable local governments, we argue, are particularly harmful in communities where a long-term perspective on shared goals is essential, where spatial planning is essential, e.g. around protected areas like the Borjomi region.

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If there is development and some form of spatial planning to be observed in the rural areas, it is fuelled less by developers, but by either the central government (selecting model projects, e.g. Sighnagi) or by a politically and financially strong local leadership (an exception). Foreign organizations, like the American Urban Institute, intend to foster planning, but divergent planning models undermine trust in planning with local residents. WWF's implicit planning approach, mostly felt in and around protected areas, is decidedly western-European (planning as visioning and design), while the Urban Institute's approach and that of some other American organizations is inspired by American ideas of planning as enhancing local deliberation to boost economic development. In this situation of structural instability and ideological confusion, very few players in the rural areas espouse a long-term perspective. Especially around protected areas, this is harmful, since protection only means something if it can be enforced, and this in turn relies on local support. In the Borjomi area, we could also observe that there is an absence of meaningful dialogue between local governments and park authorities. Their non-recognition of mutual dependence diminishes the chances for stabilization and diminishes the capacity for identifying and working towards synergies.

We believe that the long-term success of protected area planning hinges on the planning for surrounding communities. Eco-based NGO and foreign development projects cannot replace local government and its planning and development potential. Some of the problems to re-establish local planning, are carried over from Soviet times: problematic autonomy of local decision-making (Hahn & Friedgut, 1994; Hahn, 1988). Some problems are new: distrust in Tbilisi of local governments as independent actors. Local governments are, in the center, associated with Soviet mentalities, with general backwardness, corruption, clans. In 2009, local governments were consolidated. This generated the potential for pooling resources, and for speeding up of centrally imposed innovation in governance (since the number of actors is limited). At present, it is still unclear what the effects of this administrative reorganization on the planning capacities of local governments will be. With regards to innovation in governance, we have to add that the actual grip of the central government on the countryside is uneven; this creates room for variation in governance style, opening up possibilities for either old-fashioned clan politics, or a use of that autonomy to create democratic and prosperous islands. Unfortunately, the last scenario is still the exception. And planning seems low on the agenda virtually everywhere.

Summarizing the situation, we can say that the central government (with some help) created assets (protected areas), but by disallowing local power, creates instabilities around them. Planning is more necessary around protected areas than elsewhere, but centralization of power makes it hard for the local players (governments and park) to engage in a meaningful planning dialogue. Local revenues would boost local power and autonomy, increasing the risk of park violation, but simultaneously creating the conditions for a form of planning that can integrate the park in its surroundings, allowing these villages to capitalize better on the park, and thus ensuring its protection in the long run.

Speed, Vitality and Innovation?

The three factors do exist and planning has been reinvented, albeit selectively. Spatial planning is currently restricted to Tbilisi, a couple of selected cities (especially their central parts) and towns, a few tourist areas, and national parks. The speed and vitality of centrally initiated reform do boost spatial governance innovation, selectively. The

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same properties of Georgian reform simultaneously counteract local planning innovation. Planning can create and protect value in a community, but choices have to be made, choices in property rights regimes and registration policies (cf North, 1990; Allina-Pisano, 2008), and choices too in planning policies, defining the rules for land use, subdivision, possibly comprehensive plans. In all these areas, different systems can work, as long as there is consistency in the ground rules.

Speed at the centre, and continuous pressure on the local governments can work as an incentive for innovation. Adaptation is needed locally, responses are required, and in this process of local interpretation of central directives, new ideas can come up. On the other hand, speed and pressure can undermine stability and the slow self-organization of local governments (Elster *et al.*, 1998; King & Thornhill, 2003). Local government, more than central government, had to be reinvented in Georgia, and local government can only function as a form of self-organization. Self-organization in turn relies on autonomy, creating a decision-space where crystallizing local consensus on ground rules forms the basis for increased coordination and integration of those decisions (Luhmann, 1990; Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008). Then, local planning that is inclusive of local concerns and circumstances becomes possible (Van Assche, 2007; Gunder & Hillier, 2009). Right now, the autonomy of the local government in Georgia is still weak, hampering self-organization and thus locally adaptive spatial planning.

In Georgian planning, innovation occurs at several speeds. And the effects of the dynamic centre are spread unevenly. In Tbilisi, the existence of a community of real estate developers, architecturally skilled and often interested in planning, helps. Developers there are reinventing planning on the basis of architecture and on the basis of foreign urban design models. In the process, they have to adapt to the rough neo-capitalist environment, and play the games necessary (Van Assche *et al.*, 2010).

When it comes to planning procedures, innovation is slow even in Tbilisi. Several models are vying for power: formal versus informal planning, centralized versus localized, American property rights-based versus European visioning-led planning (Forester, 1999; Allmendinger, 2002). The discussion as to the preferable intensity of visioning, the desirable level of legal steering, is still ongoing. Choices are coming about slowly, and the prevailing opacity is useful to some and harmful to others. In this arena, the quick succession of policy initiatives by the central power (Papava, 2008; Mitchell, 2009), the limited differentiation of local government, and the weak state of civil society (Gurgenidze, 2006) make it difficult to stabilize expectations and make a plan work (Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008). Here, in the field of planning procedures, we have change but little innovation.

We found the most consistent planning and most comprehensive vision in the protected areas, thanks to the central government, and foreign organizations offering support. But here the potential benefits for the larger community are undermined by more general issues with local power in the surrounding villages. Here, a functioning free market is still absent, while democracy is weak, and the rule of law more absent than in the capital (Tabatadze *et al.*, 2007). In Tbilisi, knowledge, resources and power are concentrated, and enabled the rise of developers, their critical observers, and a vibrant press discussing urban issues (Lomjaria *et al.*, 2006; Van Assche *et al.*, 2009). These crystallized roles made it possible for a form of planning and a level of spatial quality to emerge, despite the institutional weaknesses. In the countryside, the institutional weakness is as harmful for trust in planning as the one in Tbilisi, with less economic benefits, and less incentives for quality development.

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Conclusions

There is no such thing as a perfect legal system, a perfect market or an ideal democracy (Putnam, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Anderson, 1999; Kornai & Rose-Ackerman, 2004). Politics, economy and legal system can relate to each other in various, equally functional ways (Luhmann, 1990, 1995). One aspect of this contingency is that markets can be embedded in other institutions in various ways and that those institutions co-create markets in many different ways (North, 2005; Greif, 2007). This implies right away that there can not be such a thing as a perfect system of spatial planning, since coordination of decision-making on spatial organization hinges on the way politics, economy and legal system relate (Van Assche, 2007; Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008).

But a planning system can only make sense if the choices for legal, economic and political systems are crystallized, if trust in government, in law, in the markets is restored (Luhmann, 1997; Kornai & Rose-Ackerman, 2004; Van Assche *et al*., 2010); if people trust that there is a long-term worth caring for (Gunder & Hillier, 2009). It takes clearly defined actors, roles, with incentives to further stability (North, 1990, 2005; Wilson, 2005; Ledeneva, 2006). These actors can also stimulate innovation in spatial governance, by means of competition and/or government intervention. A re-emergence of spatial planning, in other words, can only take place if the basic social systems stabilize in their relations (Luhmann, 1995), if this is expressed in stable roles and in trust relations that make a long-term perspective attractive—making profits or advantages in the future part of decision-making now (Putnam, 1993; Greif, 2007).

In Tbilisi, we saw a critical and ambitious central government, a dynamic guild of developers and an open discussion on planning and development issues. In the protected areas, we saw only central government and foreign NGO's dominating the scene. What is missing most sorely in the picture, we argue, is local government. Local government has to play a key role in the reinvention of Georgia and Georgian planning, before any planning system can truly protect value and encourage innovation (to create value). This entails a greater risk on the part of the central government in the short run, but it cannot be avoided. Postponing only further entrenches current informal institutions and positions of power; it aggravates the obstacles for a re-crystallization of the local roles that could coordinate locally adaptive spatial planning. Right now, the priorities of local governments appear to be survival strategies, hit-and-run strategies, or networking with players in Tbilisi. This can only change if there is a consistent unambiguous pressure but also a long-term commitment to rule-bound local autonomy by the central government, to reinforce the notions of interdependency and mutual gain.

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