

Neoliberal Globalization in Post-Soviet Georgia: Protests Against the Nenskra Dam in Svaneti

Ketevan Tadiashvili

A thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree in International Development and Globalization

School of International Development and Global Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

© **Ketevan Tadiashvili, Ottawa, Canada, 2018**

Abstract

Hydropower development is a threat to many communities around the world, especially in developing countries, where the interests of private capital dominate often at the expense of exploiting the local people. This thesis presents a case study of anti-Nenskra dam activism in Chuberi and Nakra, two villages located in the Upper Svaneti region, Georgia. Through a lens of postsocialism, this analysis assesses the anti-dam activism within its systemic and historical context, arguing that the Nenskra dam is a product of Georgia's post-Soviet neoliberalism and the Svan protests signify a rejection of this model of development.

Acknowledgements

“What intelligent things you say sometimes! One would think you had studied.”
-*Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes.

მზვიდობა და სიყვარული დაამკვიდროს უფალმა საქართველოში, და მთელს მსოფლიოში.

Thank you, clan (deda, mama, murada, papa-babo, giga-daro-tedo, lasha-tako-gio-vachunia, mama toma and nini) for your support, love and faith in my endeavours.

I am thankful for my undergraduate professors, especially Nhung Tuyet Tran, and my graduate professors, especially my supervisor Susan Spronk. In teaching me to think critically about why our world is represented and constructed in Eurocentric forms, Professor Tran has laid the foundation of my analytical thinking. In pushing me to be clear, concise and rigorous in my argumentation, Susan has taught me to better express myself in writing, which I realize is a critical (and perhaps the most lethal) tool at my disposal. Larisa Kurtovic, thank you for inspiring me to analyze and relay stories of the present through a lens of postsocialism. This is something I wish to be better at in the future. And Paul Robinson, thank you for your help, support and attention.

I am sincerely grateful to the individuals who informed and participated in my research and showed me there is heroic courage and dedication when people come together. Georgia is a resilient country and the Georgian people are survivalists. I know the country will rebuild from the ground-up, from the people-up, starting from the inspiring communities I encountered in Svaneti and the youth I made friends with in cities, who have an enduring zeal and complex visions to transform Georgia into a country where everyone can live with dignity and security.

Writing and thinking about my thesis has been an emotional, didactic experience which has taught me that *people united, are the only true agents of change*. A true lesson I have learned while reflecting is that strength is in unity (*ძალა ერთობაშია*). Ideas and concepts, and in the case of Svaneti, the shared traditions and history that bind people rather than divide, are the ones that triumph.

In believing in people, there is hope for a better future.

P.S.: The hours I spent thinking, reading and writing, were always accompanied by Perestroika-era music. I wish to note my deep appreciation of Victor Tsoi and Vyacheslav Butusov who have (anachronistically) composed my youthful sentiments into music and lyrics.

*“После красно-желтых дней
Начнется и кончится зима.
Горе ты мое от ума,
Не печалься, гляди веселей.
И я вернусь домой
Со щитом, а, может быть, на щите,
В серебре, а, может быть, в нищете,
Но как можно скорей.”*

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Svan Protests are a Spark of Hope.....	1
1. <i>Motivations and Objectives</i>	1
2. <i>Outline of Chapters</i>	4
Chapter 1: Georgia: Between the East and the West	5
1. <i>Sakartvelo: The Land of the Kartveli People</i>	5
1.1 <i>Premodern History, 2BCE to 1800</i>	6
1.2 <i>Georgia Under Imperial Russia, 1801 to 1917</i>	7
1.3 <i>The Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, 1917 to 1991</i>	8
1.4 <i>Post-Soviet Independence, 1991 to Present</i>	10
2. <i>Svaneti</i>	10
2.1 <i>Svaneti Under the Soviet Union: The Project of Modernization</i>	13
3. <i>Conclusion</i>	14
Chapter 2: Research Design: Methods and Postsocialism as an Analytical Framework	15
1. <i>Research Methods: Participant Observation and Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	15
2. <i>Postsocialism as an Analytical Framework</i>	16
2.1 <i>The Soviet versus the Post-Soviet System</i>	17
2.2 <i>The Rose Revolution “Shock Therapy”</i>	19
2.3 <i>Socialist versus Postsocialist Energy Politics</i>	20
3. <i>Conclusion</i>	23
Chapter 3: The Fight for the Nenskra River: “A Source of Life” vs. “the Most Libertarian Market in Europe”	24
1. <i>Encountering Svaneti: The Chuberi and Nakra Communities</i>	24
1.1 <i>The Nenskra Dam</i>	27
1.2 <i>Chuberi and Nakra Experiences Under the Soviet System</i>	29
1.3 <i>NGO-ization</i>	31
2. <i>My interactions with the Georgian Government</i>	34
3. <i>Conclusion</i>	37
Chapter IV: Beyond Neoliberalism	38
1. <i>Alternatives to Neoliberal Development: Emerging Visions in Svaneti</i>	38
2. <i>Alternatives to Neoliberal Energy Policy: The Example of Costa Rica</i>	40
Chapter V: Conclusion: The Svans are Pushing History.....	43

References.....	45
Annex I: Svaneti Through My Camera	52
Annex II: Ethics Approval Notice.....	61
Annex III: Recruitment Text	62
Annex IV: Consent Form in English and Georgian	63
Annex V: Participant Interviews	67

Introduction: The Svan Protests are a Spark of Hope

1. *Motivations and Objectives*

There has been a high presence of development institutions in most post-communist countries since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In general, these institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have promoted the ideals of the ‘free’ market and liberal-democratic governance. While during the Cold War the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc were classified as the “Second World” (Westad 2007), at present, these countries are largely conceptualized as part of the developing world (as an example of this representation, see Ghedrovici and Ostapenko 2013). This conceptualization is especially relevant to the Caucasian countries, which are conflict-ridden and are farther away from the Euro-Atlantic space, both physically and in geopolitical imagination, compared to the Central and Eastern European countries (see Derluguian 2005). The setting of this thesis is Georgia.



Georgia marked on the globe. Areas marked in lighter green represent Georgian territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) that are presently outside of Georgia’s control.

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_\(country\)#/media/File:Georgia_\(orthographic_projection_with_inset\).svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_(country)#/media/File:Georgia_(orthographic_projection_with_inset).svg)

Georgia, an independent country located in South Caucasus with a population of 3.7 million people, has been shaped by several key events that have taken place in the core: the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and consequently, a short-lived independent nationhood from 1918-1921, incorporation into the Soviet Union from 1921 until its dissolution in 1991, and

finally, a shift to the market economy. Within the past 100 years, Georgia has been at the forefront of two major transformational (and opposing) regional experiments in recent history: first the Soviet socialist experiment and subsequently, the postsocialist ultra-libertarian market experiment. The topic of this thesis is unfolding within the context of the latter experiment. The “shock therapy” that ushered in Georgia’s market transition from 1991 onwards has transformed the country in every sense, affecting politics, social relations, cultural fabric and alongside it all, the physical landscape, including cities and rural areas.¹

In 2011, Georgia’s Western-oriented, reformist government commissioned a mega hydropower plant on the Nenskra River in Svaneti, without any prior consultations with the local population, that is, the residents of Chuberi and Nakra, the two villages that the dam will directly impact. According to the government’s plan, the 280 megawatts and 135 meters-high dam will be constructed just 10 kilometers upstream from the village Chuberi. In addition, a 13-meter dam and 12.4-kilometer diversion tunnel will be built in the neighbouring village Nakra, to supply additional water from the Nakra River to the Nenskra dam reservoir. The dam will significantly impact the local environment and in turn, the 300 and 80 families in Chuberi and Nakra, respectively. Two households in Chuberi will need to be resettled and the damming will cause the Nenskra River to be reduced to 5% of its current flow and Nakra to 10% (Semán 2017). It is predicted that the construction work and the blockage of water will be destructive to biodiversity in the rivers (Ansar et al. 2014; Cummings 1995), threatening the unique spotted trout (*Salmo trutta*) among other species, and reduce the quality of the waters. Biodiversity experts note that the dam will disturb the habitats of endangered species, including the Eurasian lynx, brown bear, Persian leopard and booted eagle (Semán 2017). The mega hydropower project will impede Chuberi and Nakra communities’ access to the rivers and flood 400 hectares of pastures and forests that the two villages use for their livelihoods, including for agriculture and cattle grazing (“Nenskra Hydropower Plant, Georgia” n.d.).

Since it was first announced, the Nenskra dam has incited ongoing protests in Chuberi and Nakra communities. Earlier protests have ranged from addressing national authorities and international financiers through media interviews (Green Fist 2016), writing letters and petitions (Chipashvili 2016) and blocking roads to bar access to the dam construction site, which led to the arrest of 8 activists in spring 2016 (Cagara 2016). Throughout this period, demonstrations have been held both locally in Svaneti, as well as in the capital city Tbilisi (Horner 2017; Georgian Broadcaster 2016), where local activists hoped that concerned voices from a peripheral region would better reach the politicians, media and the general public. Recently, protests have escalated and amassed greater support with Svan communities uniting to oppose the proposed destructive projects in the region. Apart from the Nenskra dam, there are 53 planned hydropower plants in Svaneti and there is a growing realization that the obsession with dams (*hesomania*, as Svans have been referring to it) is a larger Svan problem that is not confined to individual

¹ “Shock therapy” refers to the market transition model that was adopted in post-Soviet countries, which entailed a sudden release of price and currency controls, immediate trade liberalization and large-scale privatization of state assets. See Stiglitz 2002 for more information.

villages like Chuberi and Nakra. In March 2018, the Svans revived a traditional representative body called *Lalkhor*, which unites all 17 communities of Upper Svaneti. They released a joint statement addressed to the Georgian government and international financial institutions and demanded that the Svans' customary land rights be recognized. Additionally, the *Lalkhor* has declared that:

From here on, we categorically forbid the construction of hydro power plants, gold mining and all activities that may harm nature and human livelihood, as pertaining to material and non-material cultural heritage in all of Svaneti. From now on, hydropower plants in Svaneti will no longer be constructed, including: Khudoni dam, Nenskra dam, Mestiachala dam and the remaining more than 50 planned dams in Svaneti! (Amiranashvili 2018).

The united struggle of Svan communities presents a glimmer of hope for wider social mobilization and solidarity in a country where deregulated capital has had the right of way for decades. In Racha, another west Georgian region with planned hydropower projects, Svan unity is being used as an example to mobilize protesters (“ონის ჰესების კასკადი და მოსახლეობის პროტესტი” 2018). As Davit Gulbani, a member of the *Lalkhor* notes, the Svan protests have impacted and lit a spark in all of Georgia, which the Svans take as a “great honour and responsibility” (რეალური სივრცე - სვანეთი - რატომ დადგა ერთმანეთის საპირწონედ ეკოლოგია და ეკონომიკა 2018). Gulbani thinks the Svan actions have woken an instinct in Georgian people to protect their ancestral lands from being exploited for short-term private profits.

This study is based on the following research questions: Why are the Svans protesting the Nenskra dam? How do the Svans recall their experiences under the Soviet regime, a different type of governing system? What alternatives do the protesters propose to the Nenskra dam?

My primary motivation to research and write about the anti-Nenskra dam protests was to explore the contradictions of market-driven development in Georgia, and to investigate the social, political, environmental and cultural impacts of large dam construction as part of the postsocialist political economy. While hydropower development is the dominant energy policy in Georgia and there are multiple cases of contested dams, including the Dariali dam (Tsotsoria 2015), Shuakhevi dam (“Georgian Ministry of Energy Orders Use of Force Against Local Protesters Who Fear Landslides from Hydro Construction” 2014) and more, I chose to study the struggles against dam development in Svaneti because it is a historically isolated region where people adhere to a strong sense of traditions and maintain tightly knit communities. In short, a case study of Svan activism provides a unique perspective into how people perceive and react to the current model of development. In my thesis, I argue that the Nenskra dam is a product of

Georgia's post-Soviet neoliberalism and the Svan protests signify a rejection of this model of development.

2. Outline of Chapters

The thesis is structured in the following way: Chapter 1 introduces Georgia, the setting of this analysis, and provides a glimpse of the country's history from 2BCE up to the present post-Soviet period. Chapter 2 outlines my personal positions and discusses the research methods along with postsocialism, the analytical framework of this analysis. Chapter 3 is comprised of the analysis of my field research of the protests in Svaneti and the Georgian government's positionality with regards to the Nenskra dam project. Lastly, Chapter 4 reflects on the alternatives to the current neoliberal model of development, including the possibilities of an alternative energy policy. At the end of the thesis, Annex I contains some photographs I took in Svaneti during my visit in 2016. I think these photographs add another layer to the analysis presented here, because one is able to see Svaneti and its defenders.

Chapter 1: Georgia: Between the East and the West

This brief glance at the history of Georgia aims to provide the reader with some familiarity with the country and brings to light key themes, namely the regional imperial power struggles that have gone on for centuries and influenced the experiences of the Georgian people, helping to create a unique, dynamic and resilient local culture.

1. *Sakartvelo: The Land of the Kartveli People*

Georgia is often referred to as the “crossroads” where East and West and North and South meet. The country is formed by the Greater and the Lesser Caucasus ranges (the highest point is Shkhara at 5068 meters above sea level), and the South Georgian volcanic uplands. Intermountain valleys and lowlands such as Colchis, Shida Kartli, Alazani and more, are fertile lands where favourable natural conditions allowed for human civilization to flourish early on. Numerous archaeological sites dating back to the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic ages reveal that the Georgian territory has long been settled and was one of the centers of metallurgy of bronze and iron. More than 81.3% of the territory of Georgia is located above 400 meters and the west of the country is bordered by the Black Sea (Bondyrev 2015).

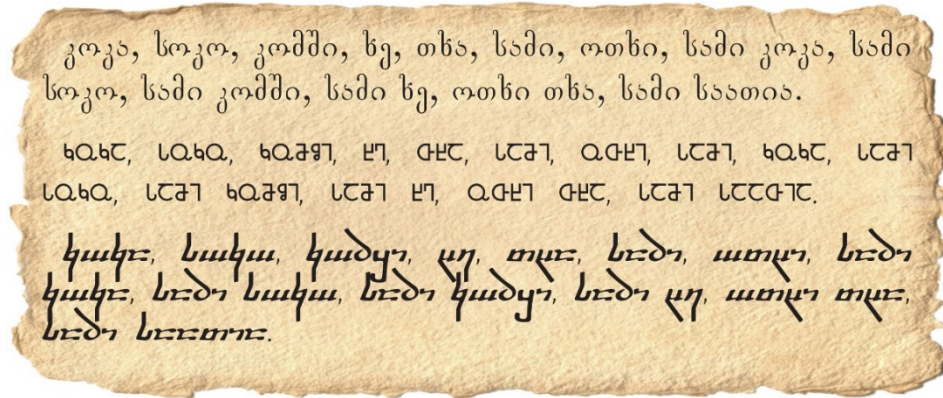


A physical map of Georgia.

Source: <http://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/georgia/map.html>

Georgia is home to three sub-ethnic groups, the Karts, Zans (Mingrelians and Lazs) and Svans. The Karts are the largest ethnic group of the three, occupying most of Georgia, while Lazs currently inhabit northeastern part of present-day Turkey. The Mingrelians, Lazs and Svans have their own spoken languages, which are part of the Kartvelian language tree. All Georgian languages use the same writing system dating back to the 5th century CE that has evolved in

several styles, Asomtavruli, Nuskhuri and Mkhedruli, respectively. Moreover, all Georgian ethnic groups communicate in the common Georgian (Kartvelian) language. The Kartvelian languages are generally accepted by linguists to be an isolated language group, different from all others (Boeder 2005).



From top to bottom, Mkhedruli, Asomtavruli and Nuskhuri scripts are variations of the Kartvelian writing system that is only used in Georgia.

Source: http://karibche.ambebi.ge/images/stories/article/2008/1_ianvari/qartuli_anbani - 2m.jpg

1.1 *Premodern History, 2BCE to 1800*

Given Georgia's strategic location at the intersection of Asia and Europe (amidst the Eastern and Western civilizations), the country has long been at the forefront of geopolitical interests of major empires. Early Georgian history is a good illustration of this dynamic. Starting in 2nd century BCE, the first kingdoms on Georgian territory, Kartli and Colchis, were conquered by the Persian Empire and subsequently in 1st century BCE, by the Roman Empire. Colchis was incorporated into Rome and Kartli became a vassal of Rome. In the 3rd century CE, Kartli was separated from Rome and became the vassal of Iran. In 4th century, Christianity was declared as the state religion in Kartli, which broke it away from Iran and united eastern Georgia with Byzantium. The territory of Georgia became a scene of confrontation between two competing empires, Byzantium and Iran. In the 7th century, the Arab invasion resulted in the territory of eastern Georgia becoming the Emirate of Tbilisi, and western Georgia becoming a vassal of the Arabs.

At the end of the 10th century, the Abkhazian and Kartvelian Kingdoms unified, and as a result, a strong monarchy with a literary language, official state church and other institutions was formed. At this time, the unified Georgian kingdoms fended off the Byzantine Empire and subsequently, the newly established Seljuk Empire. At the beginning of the 12th century, King David the Builder (*Davit Aghmashenebeli*) expelled the Turks from Georgia, acceded Kakheti-Hereti and Tbilisi, and created a powerful state that occupied the entire Caucasus region. This period is referred to as the Golden Era in Georgian history. David the Builder's granddaughter

Tamar, who interestingly held the title of a king (*Tamar Mepe*), succeeded in turning Georgia into a great power in the Eurasian region.

In the 13th century, the Mongols plundered the country and divided Georgia into western and eastern kingdoms, while the southern kingdom of Georgia, Meskheta, was directly ruled by the Mongols. By the 1460s, a unified Georgia no longer existed, the country was divided in the east into the Kingdoms of Kartli, Kakheti, and in the west the Kingdom of Imereti (which also included the Principalities of Mingrelia, Guria, Abkhazia and Svaneti), and in the south the Principality of Samtskhe-Saatabago (Meskheta). By the 16th century, in place of a united Georgia, eight political entities arose. In the early 17th century, Georgia became an object of dispute of two empires, Turkey and Iran. The Iran-Ottoman treaty divided Georgia with Kartli and Kakheti becoming protectorates of Iran and Imereti and western Georgian principalities that of the Ottoman Empire. Southern Georgia Samtskhe-Saatabago (Meskheta) lost its independence and was annexed by Turkey, becoming Eyalet of Akhaltsikhe.

Finally, in mid 18th century, King Erekle II unified the Kartli and Kakheti Kingdoms and gained independence from Iran. To protect the country from an encroaching Ottoman Empire, Erekle II signed a treaty with Russia in 1783, known as the Georgievsk Tract, by which the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom became a protectorate of Russia (Ronald Grigor Suny 1988; Lang 1966; Bondyrev 2015). This marks the start of Russian imperial influence over Georgia. The complex premodern history of Georgia illustrates that the Georgian culture has been shaped by a mixture of Western influences, as exemplified by Christianity as state religion, and Eastern influences on architecture, cultural practices and more. Georgian history has been impacted by regional imperial power struggles and often, the different territories within Georgia had to contend with being subsumed into different empires (i.e.: in the first century, west Georgia was under the Roman sphere of influence while east Georgia was under Persia). Given a long history of physical division, the common spoken and written Georgian language and Christianity were two unifying elements for the Georgian people.

1.2 *Georgia Under Imperial Russia, 1801 to 1917*

Georgia was a part of the Russian Empire from 1801 until its collapse in 1917. First, eastern Georgia, and by 1878, most of Georgia was integrated into the Empire (Bondyrev 2015). Georgian experiences were similar to other countries that were ruled by Russia, or other imperial entities at this time. The political centre established in St. Petersburg and headed by a Romanov monarch, drew wealth and resources from the colonies for its own use through a hierarchical imperial governing structure. The imperial authorities revoked the traditional Georgian taxation system, which was paid on an in-kind basis of portions of the harvest, animals from the flock, or service. In its place, taxation through cash was established and larger geographic units were created for collection, which placed greater burdens on average citizens. Moreover, the Russian rule was accompanied with what Alexander I proclaimed to be a “civilizing” mission, to bring

the principles of Enlightenment and modernity to the “backwards” Georgian people (Gvosdev 2000, 102).

The imperial rule completely restructured the traditional Georgian system. Alexander I abolished the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which held major economic and political power, and subsumed it under the Russian Orthodox Church by creating a Georgian eparchy. The Georgian language was no longer the state language and Russian styles of worship and singing were introduced in churches. The Russian administration abolished all internal taxes and custom duties on trade, the revenues of which were traditionally handed over to the Church to support its pastoral and charitable activities. The imperial authorities passed decrees and changed the basis for land tenure, altered the composition of the nobility and created new clerical and state peasant classes (Gvosdev 2000). Ultimately, the Russian rule abolished the traditional feudal system and replaced it with a colonial system of governance.

In the latter half of the 19th century, like in other parts of the Russian Empire, various Marxist movements emerged in Georgia that focused on socio-economic liberation and national self-determination. In late 19th century, industrialization and urbanization gained ground in Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi and formed a new urban working class (the proletariat), who became the target base of Georgian Marxist ideologues. The 1890s-1900s were marked by frequent strikes throughout Georgia.

In 1903, in Guria, the local population started disregarding the appointed governor and official courts and carried out public works projects on their own. The Tsarist authorities lost control in 1905, and the peasant leaders proclaimed the establishment of the Gurian Republic that was run by village committees and defended by peasant detachments. The Tsarist authorities crushed the self-proclaimed republic in 1906, but it presented an important precedent for socialists throughout the Russian Empire. Already by 1905, a Menshevik Social Democratic faction headed by Noe Zhordania gained a mass following in Georgia, while the Bolsheviks remained less popular.

In 1917, in the midst of the First World War, the Bolsheviks took power in St. Petersburg through the October Revolution. At this time, the Caucasus was left to fend for itself, which resulted in the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Georgia under the presidency of Noe Zhordania and his Social Democratic Party. The Republic lasted a mere three years, until the Red Army, against Lenin’s advice but under Stalin’s urging, annexed and incorporated the country into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (TSFSR). The TSFSR lasted until 1936 when Georgia was officially established as a constituent unit of the Soviet Union (Olson, Pappas, and Pappas 1994; Ronald Grigor Suny 1988).

1.3 The Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, 1917 to 1991

The Soviet era marks a period of modernization in Georgia with bold industrial and

human development endeavours. Already in the initial decade of the Bolshevik rule, new ports and ferry lines emerged on the Black Sea and new roads, tunnels, railroad tracks and transmission lines were built to connect the different parts of Georgia to each other, and to connect the country with the rest of the Soviet Union. This system of governance premised on resource redistribution across the Soviet Union, as opposed to drawing resources from the peripheries to the centre, as was the case during the Russian Imperial rule, established a different relationship between the Kremlin and Georgia.

In his book *Familiar Strangers: the Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire*, the historian Erik Scott (2016) notes that the Soviet Union positioned itself as an anti-imperialist entity with an internationalist vision. Therefore, the Soviet *mission civilisatrice* was “not about turning Uzbeks into Russians, but rather about making both better communists” (16). The endeavour to create new Soviet citizens across a vast territory of the Union, was not led by Russians from Moscow but by multiethnic communists, where Georgians held prominent roles.² Armenia and Georgia, followed by Belarus and Ukraine, comprised the largest proportion of natives in the highest echelons of the Bolshevik party and state institutions. In 1939, Georgians accounted for 67% of the leaders of Bolshevik Party organizations, state and cooperation institutions. As Grigor Suny (1988) notes, the Soviet rule brought the periphery to the centre of politics. The multiethnic concentration in the ruling echelons and a centrally-planned redistributive economy, complicates classifying the USSR as a typical empire. The Soviet Union was not characterized by the centre and periphery, the colonized and colonizer in the same sense as the Russian Empire, or any other empire throughout history.

Under the Soviet rule, Georgia experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization. By 1970, industry formed 40% of Georgia’s gross national production and the population more than doubled. Half of Georgian industry was devoted to food processing and the rest to the production of iron, steel, rolled metal, machinery, and hydroelectric power. Agriculture accounted for a significant part of the labour force and consisted of production of tea, citrus fruits, cereals, and grapes for manufacturing of wines and cognacs. At this time, schools, universities, lyceums and other educational institutions were established. Cultural production in film, music and literature flourished and significant advancements were made in medicine and housing development. Simple measures such as mosquito control and draining of swamps in west Georgia improved health and increased the amount of soil for cultivation, therefore drastically changing the region and improving living conditions (Olson, Pappas, and Pappas 1994).

The Soviet policies provided universal access to resources and effectively raised general living standards. As Collier and Way (2004) note, while the Western marketized forms of welfare provisioning provide a select groups of the population with subsidized access to certain goods and services, the Soviet system offered decommodified, universalized access to a great

² By the early 1930s, Georgians held important positions in the Party structures. Stalin, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, surrounded himself with other Caucasians, including Sergo Orjonikidze, the Commissar of Heavy Industry, Abel Enukidze, the Secretary of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, as well as the ethnic Armenian Anastas Mikoian (Scott 2016).

range of goods and services. The Soviet infrastructural universalism is a good example, where communal-sphere services were delivered practically free of charge to all households, and devices such as shutoff valves and meters were not used.

The Georgian Soviet period marks a time of high human development with unprecedented levels of literacy and rich cultural production. Despite the harsh restriction of political freedoms and repressive measures, the Soviet political economic system provided universal access to basic resources.

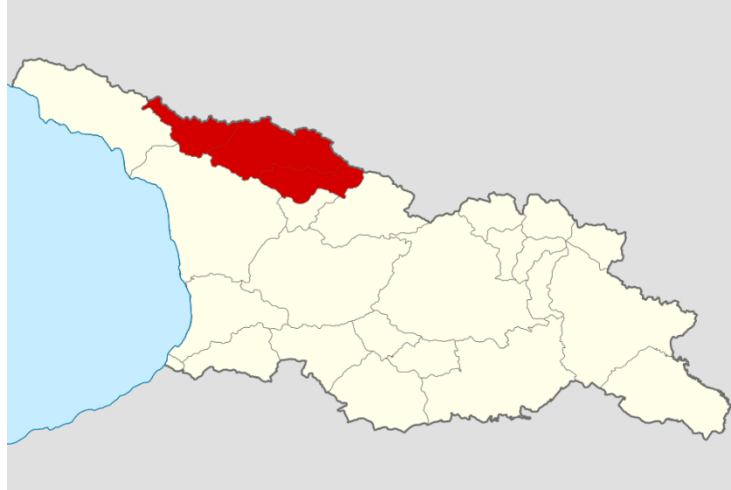
1.4 Post-Soviet Independence, 1991 to Present

The end of the Soviet period was marked by a series of wars and revolutions. The ethno-nationalist politics under Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first democratically elected post-Soviet president, led to a series of civil wars in the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The wars displaced 200, 000 ethnic Georgians. At this time, in winter 1992, Gamsakhurdia's opposition under the leadership of Jaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani, launched a brutal coup d'état. Subsequently, Eduard Shevardnadze, who was a prominent politician during the Soviet period, serving in the posts of the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, was invited to serve as the next president of Georgia. Shevardnadze's presidency lasted from 1992 to 2003, when he was forced to retire following the Rose Revolution, which brought to power Mikheil Saakashvili. The post-Rose Revolution period will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, as part of an overview of the postsocialist reforms, which is the analytical framework of my thesis. Since 2012, the Georgian Dream Party, which was founded by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire philanthropist, and united a coalition of parties in opposition to Saakashvili's regime, is in power.

The post-Soviet period is a time of chaos, marked by economic collapse and an abrupt transformation of the institution of state. While during socialism the state oversaw production, enacted regulations and allocated social services, the postsocialist retreat of the state has resulted in the collapse of the physical infrastructure and an end of production and employment. Georgia's postsocialist period is a time of unregulated, wild capitalism, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

2. Svaneti

Svaneti, the region where the Nenskra dam is planned to be built, is located in northwestern part of Georgia. It is characterized by steep slopes, rocky and erosive mountains, meadows, coniferous forests and wild rivers. The region is inhabited from 500 to 2000 meters above sea level. Svaneti's proximity to the Black Sea influences the humid alpine climate and high year-round precipitation ("Upper Svaneti's Adaptation Strategy to the Climate Change" 2014).



Svaneti marked on the map of Georgia.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svaneti#/media/File:Historical_Svaneti_in_modern_international_borders_of_Georgia.svg

The first written identification of the Svans comes from Strabo's *Geographica*, written sometime around the beginning of the Common Era. Strabo notes that "Among the tribes which come together at Dioscurias ... are the Soanes, who are ... superior ... in power ... and hold possession of the heights of the Caucasus above Dioscurias". Strabo also describes "gold carried down by the mountain torrents", which the Svans obtain with "perforated troughs and fleecy skins", and he identifies Svaneti as the "origin of the myth of the golden fleece" (1961, 18–19).

The Svan spoken language, customs, traditions and social structures developed differently than the rest of Georgia due to mountainous isolation and inaccessibility. The natural landscape has been a shield for Svaneti from both foreign invaders and internal state influence. Historically, the Svans organized into tightly knit extended families and clans, where each extended family had a large house with a defense tower (*koshki*). Often a single clan made up an entire hamlet or village, which held assemblies to elect clan leaders and discuss local problems. Regional or national assemblies, involving representatives from most or all clans, met to deal with broader issues of internal peace and external security. The Svans adopted Christianity between 6th and 9th centuries but the Eastern Orthodox Church did not have episcopal organization in Svaneti and therefore Christianity developed with a strong mix of traditional customs. In fact, small family or clan chapels were common in Svaneti, where Christian feast days were used to reconcile blood feuds and other clan disputes (Kemkes 2015; Olson, Pappas, and Pappas 1994).

Geographically, Svaneti is divided into two by the Enguri River, the Lower and Upper Svaneti. Upper Svaneti has had minimal outside influence and is also referred to as the Free Svaneti. Throughout centuries, Upper Svaneti was used as a sanctuary to preserve Georgian national treasures from foreign invaders and pillagers. In 1869, Lower Svaneti and some parts of Upper Svaneti were annexed by the Russian Empire. The imperial officials sought to weaken the Upper Svaneti clan system by appointing clan and village leaders. Additionally, numbers of

Svans were resettled in other territories such as Abkhazia, to lessen their resistance to the Russian government.



Village Chazhashi with a view of the defense towers and river streams in 1890s.

Source: <https://georgiaabout.com/2014/03/18/photographs-of-19th-century-svaneti/>



A Svan family in 1890s.

Source: <https://www.georgianjournal.ge/discover-georgia/31726-one-of-the-first-photos-of-svaneti-captured-by-famous-italian-photographer.html>

2.1 *Svaneti Under the Soviet Union: The Project of Modernization*

During the Russian Revolution, some Svans became minor communist cadres but the majority of Svaneti opposed the Soviet rule with multiple uprisings in 1921-22 and 1924. The Red Army ultimately pacified the region, purged the Svan leadership and gradually collectivized their lands and flocks. Since Svaneti was a very traditionalist region, the Soviets endeavoured to turn it into a model of their modernizing project. In 1930, Mikheil Kalatozov, who later became a famous Soviet-Georgian filmmaker, directed a propaganda documentary film *Salt for Svanetia*. The documentary portrays the backwards life of the Svan people in Ushguli, the highest settlement in Svaneti. The Svans are depicted as poor people lacking basic resources such as salt, with animals licking human sweat and urine to receive the mineral intake. When a group of workers are shown to be bringing salt to Ushguli on foot, most die from an avalanche on the

way. Ultimately, with the arrival of the Soviets in Ushguli, a road is built to connect the isolated village to the rest of the Soviet civilization.

As part of their modernizing project, the communist authorities established air service and constructed the first ever access road through Svaneti in 1932. Mining, gold prospecting and lumbering was developed, agriculture and livestock breeding were collectivized, electricity was introduced, and modern homes were constructed without defense towers to wean the Svans off traditional ways of life. Late Soviet modernization continued with the construction of paved automobile roads, establishment of tourism and the introduction of new machinery and techniques for highland agriculture. Svaneti also received free electricity after the Enguri Hydroelectric Power Plant went into service. These developments physically, materialistically and culturally connected and assimilated Svaneti with the rest of Georgia, especially due to the use of the common Georgian dialect as the official and literary language (Judy 2000; Larmer 2014; Olson, Pappas, and Pappas 1994).



A still from *Salt for Svanetia* depicting the Soviet arrival and the construction of the first road in 1930s.

Source: https://youtu.be/SP-zhXt_zLM

3. Conclusion

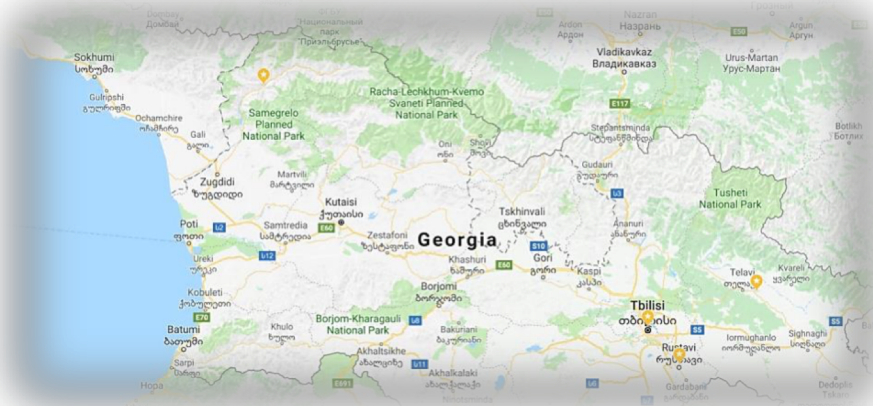
Georgia's history complicates attempts to characterize the country exclusively as "European" or "Asian". Georgian culture has been shaped and influenced by various factors, including the physical geography and climate, and various developments, including the expansion of the Roman, Mongolian, Persian, Turkish, Russian, and the most recently, the American sphere of influence in the South Caucasus region. As will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters (especially chapter 3), the post-Soviet development model, which has the goal of Westernization at its core, is rejected by the Svans and the larger Georgian people, because it does not reflect the country's unique context and cultural identities that have been formed over millennia.

Chapter 2: Research Design: Methods and Postsocialism as an Analytical Framework

The research methodology, along with the analytical framework of this thesis, was chosen to enable the investigation of the post-Soviet market-driven development and its impacts, and to unlock the wider systemic context of the Nenskra dam project. Understanding the reactions of the local population to the project, is a necessary part of this investigation.

1. Research Methods: Participant Observation and Semi-Structured Interviews

This thesis is based on research conducted in Georgia from October to December 2016. I arrived in Georgia in early October and immediately departed for Kakheti, east Georgia, to visit my grandparents whom I had not seen in years. At the beginning of November, I left for Svaneti, my field research location, where I stayed for three weeks. I mostly stayed in Chuberi, the location of the planned dam, but also visited other areas in Svaneti, including Nakra (the other impacted village from the Nenskra dam), and Khaishi, which is a Svan village that has been resisting the Khudoni hydroelectric power plant since the 1980s to present. In Svaneti, I conducted non-participant observation in public spaces, including village gatherings, events and festivities, and as well in more private settings, such as the households that I was fortunate enough to visit. I also conducted five semi-structured interviews in Svaneti. I spent the rest of my stay, from the end of November through to mid-December in the capital city Tbilisi and on occasions, in Rustavi, my hometown, which is a former industrial city located some 30 kilometers from the capital. In Tbilisi, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. Throughout my thesis, some of my interviewees' names are disclosed with their permission and consent, while others', with their wish, are concealed. Those who consented and in fact wished for their names to be disclosed here, are public figures in the struggle against the Nenskra dam.



My locations marked on Google Maps.

I consider my entire two and a half-month trip as a research experience. Apart from field research in Svaneti and interviews with government representatives in the capital city, I actively attended cultural events and spent time in both rural and urban areas, to get a better sense of present-day Georgia. Since my analytical approach entails a contextual, historical lens, I made it a point to visit museums to note how the different experiences of the past are presently narrated and interpreted in Georgia. The reflections presented in this thesis are based on my attempts to situate what is happening in Svaneti with regards to the Nenskra dam in a larger country and systemic context.

My research and observations are shaped by my personal position as a Georgian immigrant to Canada. I was born and lived in Georgia until the age of 10 and immigrated to Canada with my family in 2002 due to economic reasons (sadly, a quarter of the Georgian population has left the country due to the same reason). My socialization in Georgia happened before Saakashvili's neoliberal Rose Revolution in 2003, which ushered in a second wave of the "shock therapy" through an ultra-libertarian governance regime, coupled with an aggressive sociocultural project to Westernize the population. My understanding of "Georgianness", including social norms, values and perceptions, is from before the Saakashvili period.

Over the years, I have maintained ties to Georgia with periodic visits and an active engagement with friends and family. Even though I have not lived in Georgia for more than half my life, my findings in this thesis are a result of my language skills and social networks that have allowed me to interact with people of different social strata. What is more, my undergraduate education in the history of colonialism, which subsequently shaped my views and approaches to the subject of international development in my graduate studies, is fundamental to my views and interpretations presented here.

2. Postsocialism as an Analytical Framework

This dissertation aims to analyze developments around the Nenskra dam from a historical and structural perspective, with the starting point of analysis being in 1991, when post-Soviet Georgia was integrated into the global market structure. The title of my thesis characterizes Georgia's post-Soviet governance system as neoliberal, which is described by David Harvey (2007) to mean "political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by ... strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (2). In this governance regime, the state solely functions to facilitate and safeguard market interests, and "beyond these tasks, the state should not venture" (ibid). Neoliberalism has a specific context in former communist countries and as Rogers (2010) notes, the analysis of this particular capitalism should be from the lens of postsocialism, "rather than abandoning it for a generalized neoliberalism" (15). Therefore, in this thesis, I adopt postsocialism as my analytical framework. For 70 years, the Georgian society was organized by a centrally planned economy and with the sudden shift to a market economy, the Georgian society is for more than two decades being reorganized in accordance to unregulated market rules. I consider postsocialism to be a pertinent

analytical approach due to the fact that Georgia was fundamentally shaped by the experiences of state socialism under the Soviet rule and subsequently, from 1991 to present, by the experiences to “de-Sovietize” the country.

Postsocialism as an analytical framework assesses how state socialism, as represented by one party rule and central planning system, has shaped production, consumption, identity and other social forms in former socialist countries. This framework offers a methodology to reflect critically on the enduring effects of socialist ideas about the role of the state and markets. Amongst many others, examples of postsocialist analyses includes Burawoy’s (2001) assessment of Russia’s switch to capitalism, which is not a socio-economically transformative order, but rather a type of “merchant capitalism”, where the spheres of information and services have advanced at the expense of production. Similarly, Woodruff’s (2000) observes that barter relations are prominent in post-Soviet Russia because of the “shock therapy” doctrine and the resulting failure of the state to build the administrative capacity and political support for monetary consolidation. These analyses offer an investigation of the postsocialist present, through critically evaluating the recent past (state socialism) and the systemic, institutional makeup on which the switch to capitalism occurred. I will first describe what Soviet state socialism entailed to then overview the main features of neoliberal postsocialism, most notably, mass privatization and the transformation of the institution of state from a guarantor of social programs to a guardian of private profit interests.

2.1 *The Soviet versus the Post-Soviet System*

The Soviet Union was premised on a redistributive structure, where all existing resources across the 15 republics were appropriated by a massive state bureaucracy and redistributed according to the political priorities set by the party (Konrád and Szelényi 1979). In this system of production, the state bureaucracy had a crucial role and firm managers were in a position of power as they oversaw raw materials that went into meeting production targets. At the most fundamental level, the Soviet system functioned with the aim of maximizing the state’s redistributive power. This systemically differentiated the Soviet Union from the capitalist West, where political economy is centered on maximizing and growing private profit, since the production of goods and services happens for profitable exchange (Meiksins Wood 2002). While capitalism operates on consumption, the socialist system operated on sacrificing consumption (in terms of the quality of goods and range of choices offered to consumers), in order to produce and redistribute all existing products, which the state guaranteed to people as a form of social contract. This fundamental systemic feature of always expanding the state’s redistributive power, spurred other characteristics that are commonly associated with the USSR, such as shortage of consumer goods, repressive state apparatus, “corruption” and more.³

³ The Soviet Union prioritized building heavy industry over light industry, since heavy industry *was* the means of production and heavy-industrial activities like steelmaking allowed for other types of production, such as buildings, infrastructure, ships, automobiles and more. In this system, the political apparatus had to own and enhance the heavy industry in order to ascertain and increase control.

If communism was premised on a centrally planned economy with state ownership and control of all resources, the market transition has been premised on unregulated private ownership and control of resources. This shift did not occur as smoothly as the term “transition” implies, but the process has been accompanied with uncertainty and utter chaos. Postsocialist scholars criticize the term “transition” due to its neo-evolutionist connotations which imply that the path to market capitalism is a universal, natural occurrence and the former socialist states will become just like their Western counterparts (P. K. Verdery 1996; K. Verdery 1991a; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Buyandelgeriyn 2008; Humphrey 2002).

The postsocialist switch to a market economy started with waves of mass privatization campaigns which unfolded differently in every country, but have broader shared tendencies. On the whole, the process of property restitution and privatization fundamentally transformed social relations by empowering and enriching a handful of people at the expense of leaving many vulnerable and impoverished (for country case studies, see Verdery 1996 on Romania; Kurtovic 2016 on Bosnia; Dunn 2008 and Manning 2009 on Georgia).

Privatization started during Gorbachev’s Perestroika period, or the last decade of the Soviet Union. At this time, cooperatives were formed and increasingly, private ownership was introduced. Firm managers, whom, as noted above, already had a powerful bargaining role within the socialist system, became more powerful as they were now allowed to lease the state enterprises they managed, therefore becoming quasi-owners of productive assets (Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Burawoy 2001; K. Verdery 1991b). Unregulated privatization became the foundation of the new market system after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In Georgia, the Law on Privatization of State Enterprises was passed in August 1991 and privatization began in August 1992 through similar methods used in Russia, including voucher schemes and auctions of state enterprises (Ronald G. Suny 1996).

The voucher scheme entailed issuing vouchers to every citizen, including children, enterprise workers and managers, with which they could acquire shares of specific companies. As Martha Lampland notes on Hungary’s experiences of voucher privatization, the process was easily manipulated since it was ambiguous to the participants and what is more, many did not participate as they principally opposed the process of decollectivization. Former managers of factories and collective farms who were socially well connected and powerful, and had a better understanding of the overall restitution process, grabbed most assets and land (C. Hann 2002). For example, in Russia, at the end of 1994, 70% of existing medium and large enterprises that employed close to two-thirds of the country’s labour force, were privatized, and half of the ownership ended up in the hands of the factory managers (Benevolenskaya and Budden 2010).

Therefore, as Campeanu and Vale explain (1988), the shortage of consumer goods and sacrificing light industry, repressive state apparatus striving to retain total control over the means of production, and the importance of personal ties to access limited resources (often characterized as “corruption”), stem from this basic structure.

In Georgia, during the 1990s, more than 10,500 small enterprises and more than 1,200 medium and large sized companies were either privatized or set up as joint stock companies (USA International Business Publications 2012). Comprehensive privatization and structural reforms were implemented following the Rose Revolution in 2003.

2.2 *The Rose Revolution “Shock Therapy”*

“We will sell everything, except our conscience.”

-Kakha Bendukidze, the Minister for Reform Coordination (Tskitishvili 2011)

In November 2003, the Rose Revolution occurred under the leadership of the United National Movement (UNM) party headed by Mikheil Saakashvili, a charismatic West-oriented politician.⁴ Subsequently, Georgia decidedly embarked on a pro-Western path, declaring Euro-Atlantic integration as its main foreign policy priority and liberalism and libertarianism as its cultural and political economic policies. Saakashvili’s Rose Revolution had significant foreign support, including from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as George Soros’ Open Society Institute and Western states, most notably the United States. The USAID provided technical aid and support to bring Saakashvili and his group to power. The Rose Revolution government fundamentally opened-up Georgia and ushered in a radical postsocialist restructuring.

From 2004, the UNM government denationalized the remaining state property, augmented the labour legislation to be only a few pages-long without much guarantees to the workers, and abolished anti-monopoly laws while simultaneously opening the economy to global markets and foreign investors. The UNM government’s austerity measures resulted in the elimination of 6 entire ministries and 18 agencies, therefore drastically reducing the role of the state in the economy and facilitating the reach of capital. Further, in 2005, in the name of “combatting corruption”, Saakashvili personally fired the entire police force of 30, 000 officers and built a new force from scratch with financial aid and training efforts of the United State’s Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law-Enforcement Affairs (Burakova and Lawson 2014). The newly reformed police force became central in consolidating Saakashvili’s repressive government that ruled with a disdained human rights record for 9 years (Slade et al.

⁴ Colour revolutions have taken place in several postsocialist countries since the early 2000s, including Yugoslavia’s Bulldozer Revolution, Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, Kirgizstan’s Tulip Revolution and most recently, Armenia’s Velvet Revolution. These revolutions are characterized by a Western political orientation, which in Eastern Europe geopolitically translates into having an anti-Russian foreign policy stance and adopting libertarian governing policies. These revolutions have had significant political and financial support from Western development institutions such as George Soros’ Open Society Foundation and USAID (Derluguian 2012).

2014; Fairbanks 2012; De Waal and Dolidze 2012).⁵

The UNM passed a major tax reform that abolished 14 taxes, including taxation on activities like pollution and gambling and only left 7 out of the initial 21 taxes in place. Progressive personal income tax rate (12-20%) was replaced with a flat rate tax at 20%, social security contribution tax was eliminated, corporate income tax was set at 15% and value-added tax was reduced from 20% to 18%. Moreover, import tax was placed to range from 0 to 12% and property tax at 1%. In 2010, Saakashvili added Paragraph 94 to the constitution, also known as the Liberty Act, which virtually makes it impossible to change the 2004 tax reform. The Liberty Act caps aggregate government spending at 30% of GDP, the annual deficits at 3% of GDP and limits national debt to 60% of GDP. While it allows a referendum on the issue of raising the flat tax rate, the constitutionally-enshrined law forbids a referendum on progressive taxation (Burakova and Lawson 2014). Saakashvili and Bendukidze, the mastermind behind his ultra-libertarian reforms, justified the Liberty Act with the following: “The idea was to design a straitjacket for the irreversibility of reforms carried out by the government during the previous period and to create the basis for the inviolability of the principles of economic freedom” (Djankov 2014, 159).

The post-Rose Revolution tax reform, which established one of the most libertarian tax regimes in the world and has been safeguarded in the state constitution through the Liberty Act, exemplifies the radical extent of market reforms in Georgia. The state budget is made up of income taxes contributed by Georgia’s poorest citizens due to the flat tax rate and a cap on expenditures, and the Georgian state is obstructed from intervening in an economy where unemployment, according to some calculations, is close to 50-60% (Wade 2016; Jones 2013).

Ultimately, Saakashvili’s neoliberal reforms that went hand-in-hand with the creation of a brutal police regime, led to popular revolts in 2007 and 2011 (both of which were violently disbanded by special forces), a constitutional crisis, and finally, a humiliating electoral defeat in 2012. The current government headed by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire philanthropist and his Georgian Dream Coalition, has a markedly improved human rights record compared to the UNM regime, but nevertheless, neoliberal politics remain the status quo, especially in the energy sector.

2.3 *Socialist versus Postsocialist Energy Politics*

“Communism is Soviet government plus the electrification of the whole country.”

⁵ In February 2006, Saakashvili announced a “Zero Tolerance Policy” towards petty crime, which shortly led to a 300% increase in the prison population and put Georgia fifth in the world in terms of per capita imprisonment (Slade et al. 2014). A thorough analysis has yet to be conducted on how Saakashvili’s radical libertarian market reforms relate to the Zero Tolerance Policy and the creation of a brutal police state, and vice-versa.

-V.I. Lenin, 1920.

In 1914, three years prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin already spoke of the transformational role of electrification, which would eradicate chasms between town and the countryside and improve the lives of millions. The Bolshevik leaders regarded electrification of all regions as a necessary precondition to fulfill their vision of communism, since the success of industrialization depended on a stable source of widely-available power and an interconnected energy infrastructure.

In 1920, Lenin initiated the GOELRO Plan for economic recovery and development, which became the prototype for subsequent Five-Year Plans and in general, a centrally planned economy.⁶ GOELRO was a massive undertaking that initially included constructing a network of 30 regional power plants, ten of which were hydroelectric plants, and numerous electric-powered large industrial enterprises. The electrification campaign reached Georgia in late 1920s and building energy infrastructure in rural areas lasted well into the 1970s (Lapin 2000). A newspaper clip from 1978 informs that the “mountainous regions of Svanetia and Khevsuretia have been plugged into the Unified Power System” (“Electric Power Lines Over the Greater Caucasus” 1978).

The Soviet leadership set up a united South Caucasian United Energy System, where Tbilisi served as the regional dispatch center for the three South Caucasian states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This integrated system lasted until the dissolution of the USSR. By 1990, 53% of Georgia’s electricity was being supplied by hydropower, while thermal power plants met the rest of the demand. To make up for shortfalls in Georgia’s power supply, the other Soviet republics provided standby power or supplied fossil fuel for the thermal plants. The national power system was run by Sakenergo, a state-owned, vertically integrated monopoly.

The first phase of postsocialist energy privatization started in 1996 when the government set up the legal and regulatory framework to issue credit for rehabilitating power plants and maintaining reserve stocks of fuel. The Law on Electricity was passed in 1997 and provided the basis for a market-driven power sector that separated ownership, commercialization and regulatory functions. Essentially, the Soviet-era Sakenergo was restructured and unbundled into three separate entities, one for managing power generation, another for power transmission and a total of 66 municipal companies were created for power dispatch and distribution (Asian Development Bank 2015).

In December 1998, the American company AES bought 75% of the shares of JSC Telasi, the distribution company in Tbilisi, for \$25 million. This marked the first major precedent of privatization in the power sector. Telasi significantly raised rates and was the first company to introduce metering, billing and a collection system. A documentary film titled “Power Trip”

⁶ GOELRO is a Russian abbreviation that stands for State Commission for Electrification of Russia (Государственная комиссия по электрификации России).

(Devlin 2003) on AES taking ownership of the Tbilisi grid from 1998 to 2000, offers an insight into how this process unfolded. The film is narrated by an American employee who headed the acquisition process in Tbilisi and remarks throughout the film that the company needs to “revolutionize” and acculturate the population to capitalism by teaching them to pay for basic services. The documentary is an insight into the sweeping and chaotic socio-cultural transformations the Georgian population experienced with the sudden switch to a market political economic system. Energy, an essential component of modern life and moreover, a foundational symbol of the Soviet redistribution system, has been at the forefront of postsocialist privatization campaigns.

Similar to privatization in other sectors, energy privatization has been guided by international development institutions. On recommendation by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a World Bank group, Georgia’s regional distribution companies were merged into a single entity, the United Electricity Distribution Company, to be large enough to attract foreign investments. In 2003, the management of this entity was transferred to an USAID contractor company. The post-Rose Revolution reforms accelerated the privatization process by introducing wheeling charges and undertaking a new multiple-buyer model that allowed power generators, distribution companies, customers and exporters to enter into direct contracts. From 2006, the government raised consumer tariffs to cost-recovery levels, abolished import-export licenses for companies, reduced export tariffs and imposed capped import tariffs (Asian Development Bank 2015). The UNM government removed all barriers for foreign investors to enter and operate on the Georgian market and laid the groundwork for an ultra-libertarian energy policy, which, as seen with the Nenskra dam, occurs at the expense of the local population. The subsequent Georgian Dream Coalition government has only retained and deepened the libertarian energy reforms.

At present, hydropower development is the dominant energy policy in Georgia. The government offers a “liberalized and deregulated” energy market that operates by a Build-Own-Operate (BOO) principle, where investors do not pay tariffs for newly built energy plants and have the liberty to choose which market they supply, as well as the power to negotiate the price. In addition to value added tax exemptions for generation and export activities, foreign investors also benefit from “no fee for the connection to the transmission grid and no license required to export” (“Energy,” n.d.; “საქართველოს ენერჯეტიკის სამინისტრო,” n.d.). To date, the Georgian government does not have a strategic environmental assessment plan to evaluate domestic energy needs and the country’s capacity to produce energy from alternative sources (Green Alternative 2016).⁷ Therefore, the Georgian government, under the advice of international institutions, promotes hydropower development primarily as a foreign direct

⁷ The World Commission on Dams (WCD), set up from 1997-2001, in the context of growing social and environmental devastations caused by large dams, established comprehensive guidelines related to hydropower development. The final report issued by the WCD stresses on the importance of a national energy strategy that assesses hydropower development against the domestic demand and all energy potentials of a country (World Commission on Dams 2000).

investment strategy as opposed to an energy strategy to meet domestic demand. In this light, the cumulative environmental, social and economic impacts of large dam development are not assessed, since fulfilling companies' capital interests is the political priority. This ad hoc hydropower development, lacking strategic planning and state regulations, exposes the local population to foreign capital exploitation. The Nenskra dam is a part of this political economic environment.

The Nenskra hydropower plant is jointly funded by Korea Water Resources Corporation (K Water) and the state-owned Georgian Partnership Fund, which is under the advisory services of the IFC. The Georgian Partnership Fund contributed \$40 million while K Water has invested \$800 million in the project. The Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) contract stipulates that the private Korean company will operate the dam for 35 years to then transfer it to the Georgian government. The hydroelectric plant is also funded by various banks, including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Export-Import Bank of Korea, International Finance Corporation and Asian Development Bank. An Italian company Salini Impregilo has secured a \$575 million tender as the design-build contractor for the dam. The total project cost is estimated to be \$1 billion ("MENR – Nenskra Hydroelectric Power Plant 280 MW – Svaneti" n.d.).

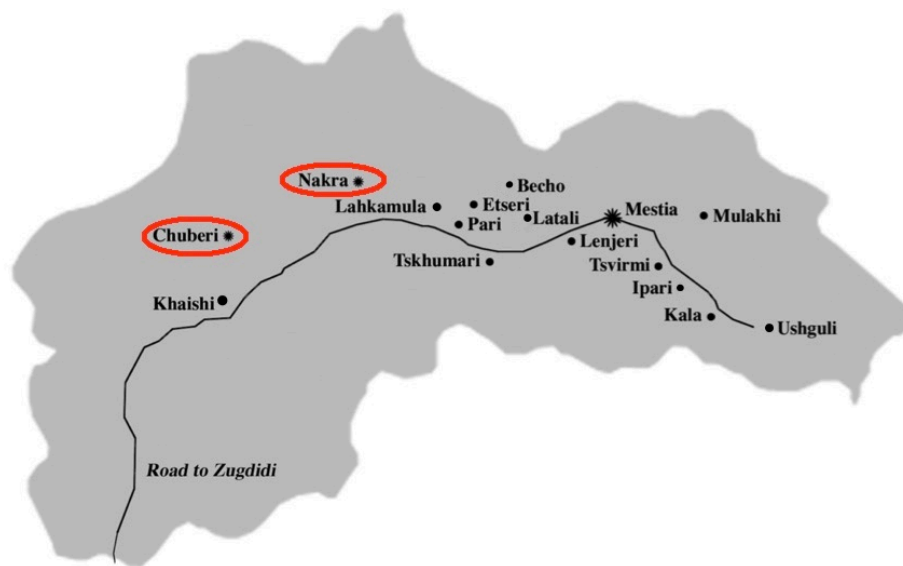
3. Conclusion

The radical extent of the postsocialist restructuring in Georgia, especially following the Rose Revolution, and particularly in the energy sector, is central to understanding how the Nenskra dam project materialized. The next chapter will discuss the Svan reactions and the government's positionality regarding the Nenskra dam.

Chapter 3: The Fight for the Nenskra River: “A Source of Life” vs. “the Most Libertarian Market in Europe”

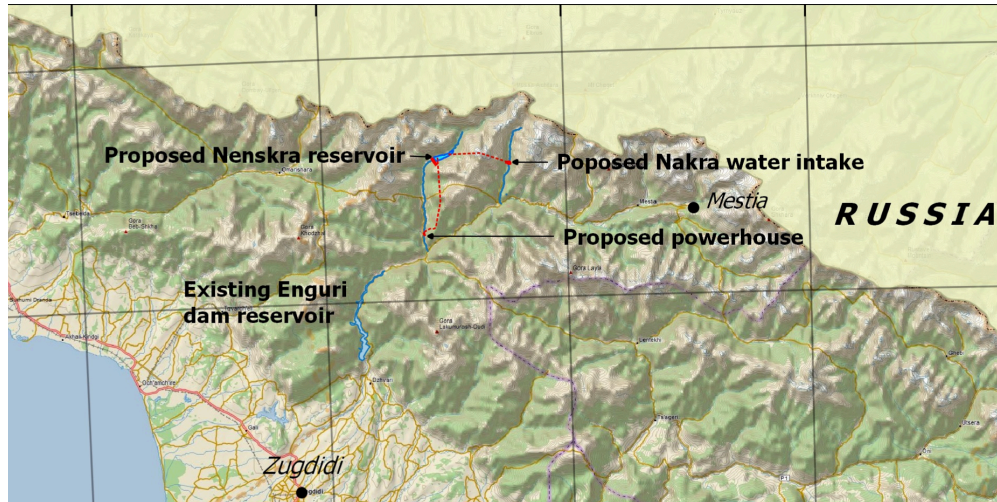
This chapter presents the analysis of the field research conducted in Svaneti with the Chuberi and Nakra communities, and in Tbilisi with the representatives of the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection. This is the third layer of the analysis, which started with introducing the country context, delved into the postsocialist political economy, and has arrived at the Nenskra dam, – presents this dam as a contested project that has created conflict between the Svan communities and the government’s energy development goals.

1. Encountering Svaneti: The Chuberi and Nakra Communities



Chuberi and Nakra marked on the map of the Upper Svaneti region.

Historically, Chuberi was settled until the expulsion of the Persians in the 6th century and was then uninhabited until the mid-19th century, when the ancestors of the current residents relocated from the mountains, cleared the forests and built houses near the Nenskra River, which guaranteed agricultural prosperity. The story is the same with Nakra, as their ancestors descended from the nearby mountains to live by the Nakra River. At present, 300 families live in Chuberi and 80 in Nakra (N. Subari 2016a). These two rivers are integral to the Nenskra project, with a 135 meters-tall dam planned to be built on Nenskra River and a 13 meters-tall dam, along with a 12.4 km diversion tunnel, on the Nakra River. However, these rivers are also historically fundamental to the two Svan communities, which results in the struggle to advance and fulfill the interests of foreign capital versus the continuation of life as is in Chuberi and Nakra. The Nenskra dam is a manifestation of neoliberal globalization in Svaneti and the protests signify a rejection of this model of development.



The Nenskra hydroelectric power plant project.

Source: www.nenskra.ge

On November 10, 2016, my first ever entry into Svaneti was marked by physical elevation, winding roads and a clear sight of the Greater Caucasus Mountain peaks. The drive from Tbilisi to Chuberi took some 9 hours and it was already evening when I arrived at my host's house. That evening was the first time I met Nato Subari and the only reason she hosted me was because my family friend in Toronto, Nato's relative, had asked her to, since I was interested in researching the anti-dam protests.

After I settled in, we sat by a Svan wood stove and had a brief chat on why I was in Chuberi and what my research interests were. In Svaneti, every household has a wood stove which is typically placed in the living room for everyone's accessibility and functionality. The Svan wood stove has two compartments where wood is placed in one and the other is for preparing food. The first thing I noticed about my new surroundings was the discernibly different rhythm of life and the peace and serenity that came with it. Nato spoke slowly and quietly with long pauses and although this would have seemed unnatural in a fast-paced urban setting like Tbilisi, it was natural and fit for the setting where I had arrived.

Nato Subari is the principal of Chuberi Public School. She studied philology in Tbilisi and moved back to Svaneti in the 1990s, in the post-Soviet period. This is a turbulent period marked by a complete unraveling of the economic system and ethnic conflicts and social crises. The war in Georgia's breakaway region Abkhazia from 1992-1993 internally displaced around 200, 000 Georgians, who passed through Chuberi as they fled the war. At this time, Nato's school was turned into a refugee centre and Chuberi residents fed and sheltered tens of thousands of internally displaced people. At present, approximately 100 students attend the Chuberi Public School, which has a reputation of excelling in various national competitions. The school graduates have a high record of passing exams and getting into university.

My other host was Lile Chkhetiani, a lively woman in her 30s who teaches English at the public school. During my stay in Chuberi, I alternated between Nato's and Lile's houses. Lile is Svan but was born and raised in Abkhazia until the age of 10, when her family had to flee the war and move back to their ancestral home in Chuberi. Nato and Lile are respected women of their communities and stand at the forefront of the struggle against Nenskra dam.

Chuberi has a flat, spread-out landscape and is at a lower elevation than some other Svan villages, which makes it fit for prosperous agricultural production and cattle grazing. This is unique in Upper Svaneti that has a total area of 3,045 square kilometers, of which only 7% is arable land (Engel et al. 2006). Because of accessible, flatter terrains, both Chuberi and Nakra were historically strategic villages and locals proudly tell stories from as far back as the 6th century, when the Romans used the two villages to pass into present day-Russian territories. Since the two villages are located close to the Russian border, they see themselves as "civilian strongholds" of Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty (N. Subari 2016a; G. Chkhvimiani 2016; L. Chkhetiani, 2016). More importantly, while most Georgian mountainous villages suffer from out-migration, including some Svan villages, Chuberi and Nakra remain sustainably populated.⁸ Most of my interviewees, including Nato, Lile and Gari, received their education elsewhere but all of them returned to Chuberi to contribute their acquired skills and knowledge to the community.

Avalanches are a common occurrence in Svaneti and the worst happened in 1987, when over 70 people died and the Soviet government relocated about 4000 affected individuals to eastern Georgia. Some of those who were relocated in the 1980s still own property in Chuberi and have temporarily returned to be employed by the dam company. They represent the bulk of the dam supporters in Chuberi. The majority of Chuberi, around 80%, oppose the construction of the hydroelectric power plant ("A Collective Letter from the Chuberi Community" n.d.). Nakra represents a more unified resistance, with typically close to 100% of the inhabitants signing their names on petitions to oppose the dam.

Chuberi is a subsistence economy and locals take pride in its fertile land, where they are "able to grow everything" (E. Aprasidze 2016). The Svans have practiced grazing and farming for millennia and excess potato yields are often sold in markets down-valley as cash crop. As Eteri remarked: "if we are no longer able to grow food here, we will have to leave", since buying the amount of food they grow would simply be unaffordable (2016). In fall 2016, the Chuberi residents constantly talked about an unusual infestation of birds in their fields and many are convinced the preconstruction work for the dam has already significantly impacted the local environment (E. Aprasidze 2016; L. Chkhetiani 2016; N. Subari 2016b).

The commissioning of the Nenskra dam has completely disrupted life in Chuberi. The dam has brought a sense of approaching annihilation of Chuberi and an entire Svan way of life in

⁸ From 1989 to 2002, Upper Svaneti village populations declined by 6.8% and Lower Svaneti has seen a population loss of 40% since 1986 (Ministry of Environment Protection 2009; Rowland 2006).

the village, and those engaged in opposing the project see their struggle as fighting for survival. As seen in chapter 2, the Svan culture is historically connected with a militant defence of their territories and lifestyles. Gari Chkhvimiani remarked that resisting the Nenskra dam is “a war. Come what may, we are ready to fight” (2016). While Svaneti, especially Upper Svaneti, has historically managed to fend off invaders and avoid colonial subordination to the Russian Empire and subsequently, to the Soviet government, Nato Subari has described the Nenskra dam as an “invasion of foreign investors” in Svaneti (2016a). The use of the word “invasion” recurred in a few conversations, with Eteri Aprasidze, for example, noting that “Chuberi stood strong during the Turkish invasion in the past” but now it is being “sold to foreigners” (2016). The sense of both statements was that, while Chuberi had experienced many hardships in the past, what is currently happening, - something inherently connected to a monetary exchange of the village, - is novel. There is a widespread perception that this struggle, equivalent to a “war”, is an entirely new frontline, which, in my analysis, has come about with the political economic accessibility of the previously-sheltered Svaneti.

A practice signifying social mobilization, 40 men in Chuberi have given oath to a church icon that they will defend the village from the dam. Similarly, all men residing in Khaishi, another Svan village resisting the building of the Khudoni dam since the 1980s to present, have pledged to an icon that they will fight with all means to oppose the construction of the Khudoni plant (N. Subari, 2016b). The ancient Svan practice of men taking oath by icons is regarded as a sacred act that must be upheld as it is equivalent to giving a word to God. Similarly, other practices of unity and social pressure that could only be effective in tightly-knit societies like Chuberi, has included creating a book of shame, where locals record names of those complying with the dam company and acting against the shared Svan interests.

1.1 The Nenskra Dam

While the Svan people have always had agency in their region, now a different process is driving a fundamental transformation of their communities. The Nenskra dam, commissioned and underway without Svan consent or engagement, will result in the relocation of two families in Chuberi and threaten the biophysical environment through deforestation and flooding of 400 hectares of land. The damming of the river will alter the microclimate of Chuberi, affecting species survival both in the river and on land, and agricultural production (Zarfl et al. 2015). Remarkably, every person I interacted with described the Nenskra River with the same words: “a source of life.” Chkhvimiani elaborated on the interconnectedness of the river and its surroundings, saying: “it is yet to be determined if a tree gives life to the Nenskra River, or if Nenskra gives life to a tree” (2016). Everyone engaged in the anti-dam activism are certain the village will become uninhabited and lifeless if the river flow stops. Nato and Lile think the parents of their students will surely relocate the kids from Chuberi, just out of mere threat of having a mega dam hanging over the village (L. Chkhetiani 2016; N. Subari 2016a).

When government authorities downplay the impacts of large dams, Chuberi and Nakra residents are quick to reference experiences with the Enguri dam, which is also located in Upper Svaneti. The Enguri dam, the second highest arched dam in the world, was constructed from 1961 until 1986 and it contributes 40% of Georgia's hydro-generated power. The Svans recall that people were healthier and stronger before the Enguri plant, but with the alteration of the microclimate, there emerged new widespread diseases such as rheumatism (Amonashvili 1990). Subari recalls there was significantly less humidity before the Enguri hydropower plant and they were able to hang and dry laundry overnight. Now, "laundry will be as wet in the morning as it was the previous evening, when we hung it out to dry" (2016b). The practical and historical examples the Svans use to rationalize and explain their protests signify a communal life that is intrinsically tied to the biophysical world, where knowledge and experiences are shared among different communities and passed down onto generations.

The impacts of the dam project already reach into the social fabric of Chuberi, starting with affecting the very livelihood of the village. In 2015, in the backdrop of anti-dam protests escalating, the Georgian government banned and started cracking down on logging with the claim of forest conservation. Logging has always been practiced in Svaneti and it is the main source of income for Chuberi residents since the fall of the Soviet Union. The valuable Svan timber is sold in the capital city and from there on, mainly exported to Turkey. Chuberi residents see this as a pressure tactic to accept employment with the dam company, which is the only alternative livelihood to be found in the village (L. Chkhetiani 2016; G. Chkhvimiani 2016; N. Subari 2016a; E. Aprasidze 2016). Moreover, Svans commonly note the hypocrisy of this measure, given the fact that foreign investors and the Georgian government itself destroy a great amount of forests in Georgia, including for the Nenskra dam, where 400 hectares of forest coverage is set to be cleared.⁹

Pressure tactics have also reached those employed in civic positions. Nakra protesters noted instances of village activists being dismissed from their municipal jobs and withholding of social security imbursements (G. Tsindeliani 2016). Similarly, Nato Subari has been warned a few times of dismissal from her job due to vocal activism against the Nenskra dam. However, Nato noted that if she is dismissed from her job at the school, "there will then be one more field worker in the village," referring to the option of subsistence agriculture if she is denied access to wage labour (N. Subari 2016b). This alternative economic means of survival that the countryside, especially a traditional countryside like Svaneti offers, explains the resilience and unity of Svan protestors who have been able to withstand intimidation and "economic blockades" (G. Tsindeliani 2016). The Svans recognize that threats and economic coercion, which is especially evident with the government banning lumbering, is to "instill hunger and to socially and economically destroy the village" (G. Chkhvimiani 2016). However, Chkhvimiani

⁹ From 2015 to 2018, with the permission of the Georgian government, 63 companies have cut 12,332,360 cubic meters of forests ("2015-2018 წლებში სახელმწიფოს ნებართვით 12 332 360 კუბური მეტრი ტყე გაჩეხეს" 2018).

believes that as long as the Svans retain their traditional organization and lifestyles, they will not die of hunger.

1.2 *Chuberi and Nakra Experiences Under the Soviet System*

When I asked those old enough to have experienced the Soviet system about the differences between the two governing regimes, all of them acknowledged the same detail, that even though the Soviet authorities were ruthless, they had more regard for human life and wellbeing than any government following the postsocialist independence. The Khudoni dam that was planned to be built in 1986 met with large protests principally from Khaishi, a village of 300 families that would be resettled, but also by many other Svans, including my interlocutors. Ultimately, in 1988, the Soviets suspended the plan to build Khudoni and many interpret it as a success of the protest movement.¹⁰ Chkhvimiani sees it as a signifier of the communist government “hearing and considering people’s opinions” (2016). Similarly, Subari recalls a large symposium was held at Tbilisi State University where scientists presented evidence on why the Khudoni project would be unsustainable and destructive for Svaneti, of which the Council of Ministers of Georgia took note (2016a).

Interestingly, Chkhvimiani followed up on his response about the experiences of anti-dam protests under the Soviet regime by sharing examples of how the previous system had a higher regard of human wellbeing. He shared a story of a man from Chuberi who fixed a motorcycle with a part he had himself invented and when the authorities found out about it, they sent him a brand-new part as a reward for his initiative. In another example, Chkhvimiani’s relative invented a piece for a car that improved its performance, which was then incorporated into the production of these cars in Russian factories. This digression was another indicator that the Svan protests are not confined to the Nenskra dam project, but are inherently linked with demanding a system that offers more dignity and respect to the people. The examples Chkhvimiani relayed to me describe a reciprocal system where people, especially common people, were able to contribute to their societies and in return, the government noticed and rewarded their hard work. He concluded that “it is not right that the peasant is nowadays regarded as uneducated and useless” (G. Chkhvimiani 2016).

Tsindeliani, an interviewee from Nakra, noted there was more economic prosperity and social protection under the Soviet Union as the government regulated forestry, created jobs and built schools and basic infrastructure. Decrepit Soviet-era tourism booths still stand in Nakra, recalling a time when the village was a touristic destination for sightseers from all over the USSR (G. Tsindeliani 2016). In Chuberi, in addition to regulated timber harvesting, small-scale

¹⁰ Under the advice of the World Bank, the Khudoni hydroelectric plant was resurrected during the Saakashvili administration in 2009 and a memorandum of understanding was signed between Trans Electra Ltd. and the Georgian government for the construction of the dam on a BOO basis. The anti-Khudoni protests were renewed in Khaishi with a great zeal due to the fact that the government secretly handed over 1500 hectares of land to Trans Electra Ltd. at a symbolic price of US\$1 (“Khudoni Hydropower Plant, Georgia” n.d.)

marble extraction and processing also took place (L. Chkhetiani 2016). More importantly, even though academic research was limited to state-dictated ideology, it is significant that the Soviet government allocated resources to researching Svan language, culture and history. For example, archeological discoveries greatly expanded the locals' knowledge about their villages, which they often made references to when priding on the historical significance of Chuberi and Nakra (i.e.: they made references to Bronze Era artefacts).

Chuberi residents repeatedly refer to a study conducted under the communists in 1973, which determined a dam could not be built on the Nenskra River given the erosive, young mountains and their inability to sustain a concrete structure. This greatly contrasts with present-day unsubstantiated policy-making, including the government's approval of the Nenskra dam, where a review of the project's Environmental and Social Impact Assessment has indicated that the area of influence, geological hazards and impacts on the local community, have not been sufficiently assessed ("Nenskra Hydropower Plant, Georgia" n.d.).¹¹

The shared sense of the post-Soviet governments disregarding the local people has been exacerbated by a lack of communication on the dam project, both from the Saakashvili administration and the current government. The government officials ignore questions posed by the locals and the Italian company currently carrying out preconstruction work has blocked access to the dam site. The company trucks and equipment go in and out of the village and conceal what they carry. The secrecy has sparked various conspiracies about the project. All of my interviewees suspect the government is in cahoots with the investor, and the Nenskra dam is in fact a guise for gold or uranium mining. There are also suspicions the Korean company (K Water) may be planning to use the river for bottled water production. So far, the hypothesis about gold mining is the most prevalent. Chuberi locals know there is gold in Svaneti (in fact, everyone does, since the legend of Jason and the Golden Fleece is set in Svaneti) and they have heard from their ancestors that there are deposits in Chuberi.

Subari noted that during the Soviet period, there were many geological studies conducted in Svaneti and discoveries of mineral deposits were marked. The Nenskra dam range, including the derivation tunnel from Chuberi to Nakra through the Shdavleri Mountain, is precisely the area where there were Soviet-era marks about gold deposits. When I asked Nato why the Soviets did not exploit the valuable minerals they discovered, she replied that gold and uranium mining would "ruin Svaneti and they withheld from exploitation" (2016b). She also suspects patriotic Georgian geologists may have hidden troubling information about the findings in Svaneti to their counterparts in Moscow. I later found out from speaking with my friend that there are similar Soviet-era marks all over Georgia to indicate valuable mineral deposits, many of which were never exploited, including a small amount of oil reserves discovered in my friend's village in

¹¹ Presented in part 2 of this chapter, the interview with the representative of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia illuminates that the government's inability to undertake thorough social and environmental impact studies result from the radical extent of the postsocialist austerity measures.

Guria. Nato's notion that the authorities may have withheld from resource exploitation to avoid causing damage, is something people do not expect from the current government. Despite the ecological destruction under the Soviet system, a command economy allowed greater resource conservation because production targets were planned, which contrasts with a market economy, where indefinite production for capital gains is the foundation of the economic system. In this systemic context, Georgia's post-Soviet, unregulated political economy does not offer any protection or a possibility of resource conservation.¹²

Apart from my lens of analysis being postsocialism, my aim in asking about the experiences under the Soviet Union was not to romanticize or idealize the communist regime, but to observe how two systems that fundamentally differ in materialistic organization, have impacted Svaneti. Although active comparisons or positive references with the Soviet experience has not been voiced as a part of Svan activism, I believe the struggle to preserve Svaneti from exploitation, "invasions" and physical destruction that is warranted by an unregulated market system, will at some point entail a thorough analysis of the socialist experience. Although the Soviet authorities imposed outside cultural norms, the socialist system structurally allowed the physical and cultural preservation of Svaneti. Moreover, the socialist system supplied modern technology, including basic infrastructure, to a peripheral region and allocated resources for education and human development. In contrast, as Chkhvimiani noted about "governments in power since the 1990s", as far as the officials are concerned, "America is closer to Tbilisi than Svaneti" (2016).

1.3 *NGO-ization*

NGOs are abundant in Georgia and some are also engaged with Svan communities on dams. Green Alternative, a Tbilisi-based NGO that is part of the Central and Eastern Europe Bankwatch Network, is the main NGO working with Chuberi and Nakra activists. Green Alternative helps Svans draft letters and petitions and raises awareness about the anti-Nenskra dam struggle by making videos and attending energy policy-related events, both in Georgia and internationally. Many activists express gratitude for the NGO's services, especially for its engagement with international financiers of the dam, which is something the Svan communities could not easily do on their own. I had a chance to observe and interact with the NGO representatives who certainly provide important services to the Svan communities and give a voice to their struggle on an international level. However, interestingly, Green Alternative's criticism is mostly confined to the actions of the Georgian government and does not extend to international actors, including, for example, the IFC, a World Bank group that plays an essential role in shaping Georgia's neoliberal energy policy and is directly involved in the Nenskra dam

¹² See Gille 2007 for a case study of waste management under Hungarian state socialism versus the postsocialist system, where the author challenges the conventional wisdom that state socialism was inherently wasteful, while a market system is more efficient and sustainable. For example, the study presents that the socialist waste regime promoted reuse and recycling, while the market regime encourages dumping and waste incineration.

project. Multiple Svan activists noted they are aware that the NGO operates out of its own monetary and donor interests, but nevertheless, they find their services necessary and valuable.

Another encounter I witnessed was with a west Georgia-based NGO that came to Chuberi Public School to conduct a training session on petition-making for teachers and students. The NGO representatives described that a petition could be used as a tool to bring change on a local level and proposed to do a mock draft with the attendees. When asking for examples of issues that the village would want to address through a petition to the local governing body, answers varied from setting up proper garbage disposal services (trash is not taken out of the village and ends up in the river), to building a much-needed hospital (the nearest hospital is in Zugdidi, more than an hour drive away), or at least, fixing the village roads. The NGO representative had to remark multiple times that such requests exceed the scope of a petition and at the end, they settled on drafting a request to install lights at the village stadium to allow kids to play in the dark. This somewhat comical incident, where people raised serious problems affecting their quality of life but were told, out of technicality, to limit the scope of their concerns and focus on lesser issues such as stadium lighting, was an insight into how international development functions in Georgia. While in the past the state had built basic infrastructure in Chuberi, including the very school where the training session was conducted, now state services to citizens and its role in development has become nonexistent. The vacuum is filled with foreign-funded NGOs that are tasked with instilling Western liberal knowledge (i.e.: petition-making) and cultural values into citizens. Moreover, given that the NGOs are accountable to their Western donors, any activism they undertake is always limited to usually criticizing the Georgian state when, in fact, as noted above, global actors, notably the very donors of these NGOs, exert significant influence and drive many political economic processes in Georgia. Interestingly, the women at the school gave a friendly warning to the NGO representatives upon arrival that they would not hear any training on feminism, since they feel the liberal discourse on the role of women is inapplicable and insulting to the Svan culture. I also encountered women similarly cautioning the Green Alternative representatives on conducting a gender-based analysis of the impacts of the dam.

The teachers at Chuberi Public School also shared information on the rapid changes happening in the education system, with the Ministry of Education reshaping school programmes, especially since after the Rose Revolution, to fulfil European Union (EU) directives and introduce culturally foreign concepts in the curriculum, such as gender identity. Like many other Georgian people, the Chuberi pedagogues see this process as a threat to Georgian values and unique cultural identity. Nato Subari shared an example of while she was taught at school that Georgia was at the crossroads of both Europe and Asia, a country of diverse cultural influences, now some school textbooks place Georgia exclusively within the European geography, and with that, exclusively within the European culture (2016a).

This process of NGO-ization, or non-governmental organizations becoming central institutions in a country and drivers of political processes, has a distinct context in postsocialist

states.¹³ While in traditional development thinking democracy was considered to be an outcome of economic development, by the 1990s, democracy came to be seen as the precursor of economic progress. The development industry started operating in the former socialist sphere by setting up civil society organizations to fundamentally transform cultures and enable a successful market transition (Leftwich 1993). The significance given to establishing NGOs in postsocialist countries also stemmed from the fact that civil society in the Western sense did not exist under socialism since the state owned and allocated all resources, and social activity outside the political sphere did not take place (K. Verdery 1996). NGOs importing Western cultural values and mentality was, and continues to be seen, as the foundation on which functional market societies will emerge in postsocialist countries (C. M. Hann and Dunn 1996; Mendelson and Glenn 2002).

West-funded civil societies are a non-state structure, but exert a strong influence on the weak postsocialist states. In some cases, civil society takes on state functions in areas where public services have collapsed, but these services are limited in scope and time, given the temporariness and limited reach of NGOs versus that of a state. Moreover, often these states' access to credit, World Bank loans and international political legitimacy depends on the approval and endorsement by local NGOs. Project proposals that do not fit in the Western liberal value system, for example religious-themed proposals, go unfunded. Ruth Mandel notes that NGO is in fact a misnomer because organizations like USAID are under the Congress and therefore governmental, operating to fulfil foreign policy interests of donor countries like the United States (C. Hann 2002). This has been especially visible in Georgia's case as West-funded NGOs have been decisive for the success of the Rose Revolution and the subsequent institutionalization of liberal and libertarian politics. The USAID alone dedicates approximately \$40 million annually to its Georgia program to support "democratic, free-market, Western orientation" since 1992 ("Georgia | U.S. Agency for International Development" n.d.).

Although Svaneti is a remote region and remains more inaccessible than other parts of Georgia, NGOization is a visible process. The Svans live in traditional, hierarchically-organized societies, where Christian Orthodox religious customs are integral to their way of life and self-expression. As such, NGOs that directly communicate with the Svans, as well as those that simply influence state structures which then impact Georgian citizens, such as the education system, are part of the neoliberal development model that is threatening to the local population and their socio-cultural identities. Lile Chkhetiani relayed that the Nenskra dam company had set up its own NGO, Objective Eye, which intended to work in Chuberi to promote the dam project and essentially do the opposite work of Green Alternative. She mentioned the Chuberi residents rejected the NGO and did not allow it to operate in the village. Georgia's unprotected, neoliberal political economy enables privately-funded NGOs to be a mechanism of social influence, like in the case of the Nenskra dam and Objective Eye. Perhaps it is due to this reason that only 4.8% of

¹³ See Roy 2014 for a discussion on the NGO-ization of resistance movements in India. Similarly, Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2016 discuss this process in postsocialist Central and Eastern European countries.

Georgian citizens engage with NGOs and they are regarded as the least understood and transparent of all public institutions (Lutsevych 2013).

2. My interactions with the Georgian Government

After my return to the city in December, I had an opportunity to speak with representatives from the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia regarding the Nenskra dam.

The Ministry of Energy is headquartered on the fourth floor of the Public Service Hall in Tbilisi, which was set up during Saakashvili's administration and houses several government departments, including the Ministry of Justice, Energy and even the National Bank of Georgia. The aim was to make administrative services swift and efficient.¹⁴ The mushroom-shaped modernist building accommodating most bureaucratic functions epitomizes the small, modern state that postsocialist Georgian governments position themselves as.

The representative I spoke to started with introducing the tenets of the energy policy in Georgia and then focused on the Nenskra dam. 80% of Georgia's energy is supplied by hydro, while 20% comes from thermal power stations operating on imported gas. The government's main goal in the energy policy is to achieve "energy independence" and "security", both of which relate to Georgia's interconnectedness to the Greater Caucasus transmission line with Russia and essentially, achieving independence from relying on this network for energy imports. It was also noted that locally produced energy is more commercially viable as opposed to imported. His focus on national security and energy independence then led to a market discussion of energy, as he affirmed that "hydropower is a business" and it is important to attract investors into the energy sector by creating "favourable investment conditions".

Explaining the strategies to attract investors into the energy sector, the interviewee noted that while other countries mostly use BOT (build-operate-transfer) schemes for hydropower plants, Georgia uses BOO (build-operate-own). The only exception is the Nenskra dam that is to be transferred back to the government in 35 years. Ultimately, the ministry's aim was identified to make Georgia the "most libertarian market in Europe" for energy. The government is working towards this goal by fulfilling various international directives, including those from European Energy Community. In fact, during my visit in October 2016, Georgia was accepted as a member state in the Energy Community after holding an observer status since 2007.¹⁵ The Energy

¹⁴ In December 2017, as a measure to further optimize government functions, the Ministry of Energy was merged with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia.

¹⁵ This political development is related to Georgia's Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU, signed in 2015, according to which the country must adopt major EU directives to "deepen political and economic relations" ("EU-Georgia Association Agreement Fully Enters into Force" 2016). Under the EU Association framework, Georgia and Energy Community started negotiations in 2014 and Georgia's efforts in energy reforms have been deemed as satisfactory and on the right path to be accepted as a member state.

Community serves to establish a pan-European market by incorporating neighbouring countries into the EU energy market. Under the Energy Community directives, Georgia will further deregulate its energy market, including revoking fixed regulatory tariffs on existing hydropower plants and subsidies to distribution companies. At the time of the interview, the department was working towards unbundling energy production and distribution, “like it is in Europe”, and on the whole, undertaking greater market liberalization.

According to the department spokesperson in December 2016, the government had signed 110 memoranda of understanding on hydropower plants. Georgia has 26 000 rivers and 300 of them, mostly located in Svaneti and Racha (west Georgian regions), were acknowledged to have immense energy potential. The Nenskra dam that was negotiated under a BOT scheme, is considered to be a strategic plant as it connects to the existing Enguri dam and will serve the purpose of preserving water for winter-time release. When I asked about the protests in Svaneti, the interviewee noted “the biggest protests are against the Khudoni dam in Khaishi”, while the Chuberi protests involve “only the two families” that will need to be resettled from the project. He finished by acknowledging that while “there are small protests”, “when we explain the importance of the hydropower plant, many of them understand”, and that a “consensus on the Nenskra dam has been reached with Chuberi”. The protests in Nakra were not mentioned at all (Ministry of Energy Representative, 2016).

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (MENRP) is not located at the Public Service Hall, but at another location in Tbilisi. The ministry representative explained the hydropower plants and thermal power plants undergo environmental impact assessment carried out by the investor, which then the government department should reassess, but often there are not sufficient resources for a detailed review of the investor’s evaluation. Under the EU directives the ministry had to adopt, the interviewee thinks that the government now brings greater awareness and information to citizens on the environment, but the department still does not have sufficient resources for tangible work. For example, cost-benefit analysis of projects like the Nenskra dam are not conducted due to a lack of funds. She noted that there is “a need to conduct scientific studies, as law itself is not enough to protect the environment.” She further mentioned the added difficulty of “we no longer have specialists,” referring to the brain drain that has occurred in post-Soviet Georgia and the discontinuation of scientific studies in post-secondary institutions.

Regarding the Nenskra dam, the MENRP spokesperson emphasized the difficulty of the project since “there is significant territory that will be flooded,” but that, however, “specialists have concurred the project should be carried out.” She also incorrectly remarked that relocation is not required and “the Nenskra project will not socially impact the village,” when in fact, two families will need to be resettled and the dam is just 10 kilometers from Chuberi.

Noticeably, the MENRP representative referred to the unfamiliarity with the physical environment in Georgia, saying “in the past, the government used to study the flora and fauna,

and now we do not know”. Similarly, when talking about dams, she mentioned that every river was monitored and studied during the USSR, especially the Enguri area following the building of the dam, to monitor its impacts. In this context, it was also noted that the hardest time for the department (she was employed since 2005) was during the Saakashvili period when there were drastic initiatives, such the privatization of rivers, and even efforts to disband the ministry altogether. Significantly, the representative did not withhold from saying that the government should make more use of alternative energy in order to find “a balance”, since “we may get bad results from intense hydro exploitation, as we do not know how the melting of glaciers and other processes will impact these projects, or how these projects will exacerbate the changing climate on a local level” (2016).

The interviews illuminated that the Georgian government is unaware of the situation in Svaneti, both with regards to the details of the dam and its impacts on the Svan villages, as well as the reactions to the Nenskra project (i.e.: the MENRP representative mistakenly stated no one would need to be relocated and the dam would not directly impact the village, and similarly, the Ministry of Energy representative remarked that a consensus had been reached with Chuberi on the Nenskra dam). Clearly, the lack of information is not only because of the physical distance of 400 km between Tbilisi and Svaneti, but more so due to a detachment of the political centre from the rest of the country. Tbilisi, the centre of Georgian politics, makes decisions under the advice and directives of international institutions, but is unaware of how these decisions impact people like the Svans. The idealization of Europe that is reflected in post-Soviet governments and elites aspiring to be a part of the Euro-Atlantic space at any cost, was detectable in every reference both ministry representatives evoked. For example, when remarking that by fulfilling the EU directives Georgia would transition into a European market, which is a “free market, everyone is equal”, the Energy Ministry interviewee echoed an ongoing erroneous assumption that market rules operate the same in postsocialist Georgia, as in the West. Similarly, the representative from the MENRP noted that “Europe learned from its mistakes with regards to environmental degradation. Now they are teaching us to not do the same.” This characterization of Europe as a benevolent entity that will guide Georgia to development, appears to be the basis for uninformed policy-making that is premised not on the context of Svaneti or larger Georgian society, but on development ideals supplied by the West.

My overall sense from interacting with the ministry representatives was that libertarian policies, which are clearly a source of conflict in the Georgian society, are externally imposed on the government as the only “right” policies of development. In this context, Adrian Smith characterizes the European enlargement process as neocolonial, given that the EU imposes a specific “market-led capitalist transitions” on former socialist countries and assumes the role of a guide to a “correct” path of capitalism (Smith 2002, 666). The Ministry of Energy representative identified an ambitious goal of being the most libertarian energy market in Europe, which does not call to mind a typical Western European state, many of which have complex market regulations in place. Instead, it illustrates a neoliberal illusion of progress and development that are deeply entrenched in Georgia’s postsocialist political culture.

3. Conclusion

The Nenskra dam has created a conflict between two visions of “development”: on the one hand, the local population aims to preserve the Chuberi and Nakra environment, lifestyles, customs and traditions, while on the other hand, the Georgian government aspires to create the most liberal energy market in Europe. A close look at the conflict, and especially at the government’s energy policy, reveals that the neoliberal restructuring of the Georgian state institutions is externally influenced by international development directives. Therefore, the Svan protests represent a struggle against the larger, globalized neoliberalism that has arrived to their setting as part of the postsocialist political economy. Envisioning and articulating local alternatives to neoliberal development is at the heart of this struggle.

Chapter IV: Beyond Neoliberalism

“დღეს ამ ფორბსის სიამ სულ გააგიჟა ხალხი. მეტი ფული მინდა, ხალხის დედაც ვატირე, - ფაქტიურად ასეთი ცხოვრებაა.”
-გარი ჩხვიმიანი (2016)¹⁶

The postsocialist neoliberal development at work in Georgia, guided and shaped by international institutions, is fundamentally premised on liberalization, privatization and Eurocentrism (more correctly, EU-centrism). In this political-economic context, the postsocialist government has pushed the building of a dam on the Nenskra River – a project primarily driven by foreign capital interests as opposed to local energy needs – in spite of fierce opposition by Chuberi and Nakra, the directly-affected communities. For the first time in history, Svaneti is vulnerable to physical destruction due to the current system, where “competition and profit-maximization are the fundamental rules of life” (Meiksins Wood 2002, 2). The Chuberi and Nakra communities, as well as the wider *Lalkhor*-led Svan movement mentioned in chapter 1, are conceiving their own alternative, local visions of development.

1. *Alternatives to Neoliberal Development: Emerging Visions in Svaneti*

In place of the Nenskra dam, the Chuberi and Nakra communities principally propose alternative economic development, as opposed to merely alternative energy development. I think this relates to the fact that the government’s language and communications regarding the dam is primarily in economic terms, always emphasizing on the importance of the investment the Nenskra dam project brings to the Georgian economy, while the energy-focused arguments remain secondary. As well, the Svans do not conceive of any future in Chuberi if the dam is built, therefore the alternatives they propose is to ensure a fundamentally different development process which excludes the possibility of the Nenskra dam altogether and places Svan interests at the forefront. The main alternative all interviewees noted is developing local production capabilities in Chuberi and Nakra. Chkhvimiani remarked the people are fed with “loans and grants” but no one cares to create livelihoods for their survival (2016). The communities see a viable potential in sustainable timber harvesting and the development of wood manufacturing, which would employ the villagers and also provide the potential of selling, perhaps even exporting the locally-produced products (L. Chkhetiani 2016; G. Chkhvimiani 2016; G. Tsindeliani 2016).

One Chuberi resident noted that the valuable lumber is currently exported to Turkey as a primary resource, when it is fully possible to develop local manufacturing capabilities and, for example, start producing furniture in Chuberi. Similarly, Chuberi has a potential for agricultural

¹⁶ “The Forbes List has made people crazy. I need more money so screw the people, - is basically our present life.”
-Gari Chkhvimiani (2016).

production and cattle farming, since “anything can grow in Chuberi” (L. Chkhetiani 2016). One activist from Khaishi noted agricultural production from villages like Chuberi and Khaishi could be used to supply the touristic areas in Georgia in place of the current fresh food imports from Turkey. This particular vision of development also proposes economically connecting the different regions of Georgia, with the fertile countryside supplying the touristic urban areas.

Both Chuberi and Nakra communities are positive their villages’ unique landscape and history could attract tourism. Even though the Saakashvili government planned to turn Svaneti into a “Switzerland of the Caucasus” by making it a prominent tourist attraction, the state’s attention has mostly been confined to just Mestia, the capital city of the Upper Svaneti region (Corso 2010). Therefore, non-touristic destinations such as Chuberi and Nakra receive little priority and resources. Nevertheless, both villages are proud of their rich heritage and believe it will be of interest to outsiders, too. Many have suggested the Georgian government should sponsor and promote archeological studies since valuable artefacts have been recovered in village territories in the past. Promoting academic and cultural importance of the two Svan villages is certainly another alternative vision, since at present, Svaneti is merely regarded as a region of extractive prospects, including gold mining and hydro development (it is important to recall that the government plans that an additional 53 dams be built in Svaneti).

The Svan communities wish to live as they always have by relying on their lands for subsistence and upholding customs and traditions. Chkhetiani expressed this by saying: “we live as is fit for Georgian and Christian people” (2016). In this light, the postdevelopment anthropologist Arturo Escobar notes the central role of antidevelopment or alternative development struggles for the formation of novel cultural production.¹⁷ Escobar provides the example of Latin America in the 1980s, when the region endured the debt crisis, SAPs and radical neoliberal reforms that culminated in the harshest social and economic conditions since the Conquest. However, the hardships and struggles led to unprecedented “collective mobilization and theoretical renewal” (Escobar 2012, 222). Similarly, from how I view Georgia, the country was protected by the Soviet system from imperial interventions that other Third World countries, including those of Latin America, experienced in the 1980s. But since the dissolution of the USSR in the 1990s to present, the Georgian experience is comparable to other developing countries as it is subjected to similar structural processes. The Svan struggle resembles the structural realities many traditional communities face in developing countries, and the Svan demands echo those of others’ who are also fighting destructive hydropower projects, like the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organization of Honduras, or the Kachin Public Youth Organization in Myanmar. The relatively recent antidevelopment, or alternative

¹⁷ Escobar in this context refers to what the concept and practice of development, guided by Western interventions, entails since its inception after WWII, chiefly the imposed libertarian structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and radical marginalization of non-liberal, non-European cultural worldviews and lifestyles. Accordingly, antidevelopment struggles represent a rejection of this interventionism in the name of development.

development struggles emerging in Georgia, are starting to formulate local visions for the country, which are in line with Georgian cultural values and history.

As Garcia Canclini observes about Latin America, Georgia, too, is a setting “where the traditions have not yet left and modernity has not settled in”, and people doubt whether “to modernize ourselves should be our principal objective, as politicians, economists and the publicists of the new technologies do not cease to tell us” (Canclini 2005, 13). In this light, the alternative to neoliberal development and all it entails, from destructive economic transformations to cultural disruptions, is perhaps to maintain what already exists in Svaneti and other Third World settings. Escobar points out that “cultural difference is one of the key political facts of our times” (223), which allows minority cultures such as the Svans to unite, organize and resist unregulated capitalism and the notions of modernity in their hegemonic form, including the centrality of economic growth, Eurocentrism and more. The defense of the Svan cultural difference, or rather the preservation of their cultural distinctiveness, can be a transformative force in and of itself.

The Svans and all Georgians would like to live in a country with much greater material prosperity and social development. After all, this is the primary reason why a quarter of the Georgian population, my family included, has emigrated. However, if the local political system, which lacks sovereignty and is subjected to neoliberalism as per policy prescriptions of development (described extensively in Chapters 2 and 3), and cannot deliver alternative forms of development, such as reviving and growing local industrial production, then perhaps retaining what already exists and protecting it against further destructions of an unregulated market system, is what is left and pertinent.

2. Alternatives to Neoliberal Energy Policy: The Example of Costa Rica

In recent years, climate change, deepening socio-economic injustices and the need for universal access to energy as a basic resource, has spurred grass-roots organizing around the concept of energy democracy. The energy democracy movement emerged from the German climate justice movement in 2012, that is premised on universal access, collective ownership, democratic control and decarbonization (Angel 2016b, 2016a; Kunze and Becker 2014). Essentially, energy democracy entails public control, as opposed to individual or corporate ownership, of the entire energy sector, including production, distribution and supply.

So far, the energy democracy movement has been confined to the Global North, which is a fundamentally different context than the Global South. An obvious illustration of this difference is the fact that 1.2 billion people in developing countries do not have access to modern electricity (“IEA - Energy Access Database” n.d.). Developing countries have a significantly lower share of global emissions, as per capita energy use is only 30% of consumption in OECD countries. Therefore, the alarmist discourse on climate change, which has become a part of the Western culture and is also found in the energy democracy movement, does not resonate with

many people living in developing countries. Furthermore, developing countries do not face the same need for degrowth and downscaling of production and consumption, since mass consumption is nonexistent in economies where the majority of people struggle for day-to-day existence (Bello 2007). I also think the political economic system allows for more successful battles at the civil society level in the Global North and the successes of the energy democracy movements in Northern Europe represent an example of this. However, in most developing countries, civil society organizations encounter a lot of roadblocks due to the retreat of the state as a regulatory institution and the entrenched control and power of transnational corporations.¹⁸

While civil society-level organizing for the concept of energy democracy is certainly something to strive for, I think true alternatives to Georgia's current energy policy are to be found in other developing countries that are subject to similar structural experiences. For example, Costa Rica's cooperative energy system is a viable alternative for Georgia. Costa Rica's current energy system is a result of external pressures to adopt marketized forms of energy, a policy prescription that is also imposed on Georgia, as discussed at length in chapters 2 and 3. However, the energy system is in many ways also a result of social resistance to the prescribed SAPs. Initially, Costa Rica had a socialized energy system under the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE), established in 1949 with full monopoly over electricity generations, distribution and transmission. While the IMF demands in late 1970s for unbundling ICE were met with opposition and did not succeed, the SAPs in 1980s and 1990s resulted in the restructuring of ICE. The policy prescriptions were similar to how Sakenergo was unbundled as part of post-Soviet market reforms, including establishing a politically independent regulator for ICE, increasing public utility charges and the privatization of the energy sector. Although ICE was corporatized and re-organized, however, unlike in Georgia's case, the fierce opposition from Costa Rican union and civil society groups allowed for ICE to maintain its regulatory functions (McDonald, Tolley, and Baron 2014).

At present, the Costa Rican energy sector allows regulated private participation in generation and distribution of electricity, but the electricity sector is largely dominated by public companies. ICE is responsible for approximately 80% of generation and 38% of local distribution, while its regional subsidiary, Light and Power Company is responsible for 41% of distribution. Two public municipal enterprises distribute 12% of power and four rural electrification cooperatives, active since the 1960s, distribute the remaining 9%. The cooperatives are largely autonomous from the centralized ICE apparatus, aside from the fact that they cannot dictate pricing. They also hold annual public meetings to keep citizens informed and collectively make important decisions regarding re-investment and future projects. In recent years, the cooperatives have become progressive spaces for decentralized and locally owned investment in renewable energy projects. More importantly, these self-sufficient, not-for-profit

¹⁸ A report issued by Global Witness has determined that with a death toll of at least 207 people, all of them occurring in developing countries, 2017 was the deadliest year for environmental defenders (Global Witness 2018). Not surprisingly, it is becoming increasingly dangerous and life-threatening to be an environmental defender in countries where the capital has a greater reach and power.

cooperatives have expanded the scope of their operations into other sectors, such as telecommunications, retail, media and insurance services (Chavez 2016).

Naturally, Costa Rica's more regulated energy sector is not perfect. 65% of the country's energy is generated from hydroelectric power plants and Costa Rica's environmental organizations have warned that most rivers might already be overexploited (Federación Ecologista 2013). Moreover, there have been cases of long-contested dams that ICE has commissioned, such as the Buruca Dam contested by the Brunca indigenous peoples in partnership with various civil society organizations for decades, until the project was finally overturned by the Supreme Court in 2011 (McPhaul 2017; World Rainforest Movement 2001). However, the Costa Rican energy system structure, both the retained regulatory capacity of ICE as well as the cooperatives, clearly allows for greater market protection and citizen participation and influence, as opposed to the Georgian energy system that is fundamentally being restructured to facilitate the access of capital and to safeguard profits. An example of this greater flexibility and citizen engagement is that COOPELESCA, one of the cooperatives, is already exploring new projects to start transitioning away from hydro to ease the environmental impacts and to also adapt to climate change and the fluctuating weather and precipitation patterns. Instead, the cooperative is planning to expand solar and wind capacity (Chavez 2016). Ultimately, it is this different power structure that, even in a marketized system, allows for greater citizen engagement and decision-making and presents an alternative to Georgia's fundamentally neoliberal energy policy.

3. Conclusion

Neoliberal development is a relatively recent phenomenon in Georgia (compared to places such as Chile) and the local visions for "alternative development" are just emerging. While no other country experience is directly applicable to Georgia, or to the Svan communities, the worldwide struggles rejecting the externally-imposed development model and pushing local visions, present important lessons about the nature of development and what local populations can do to resist. Georgia is a country of its own context, and ultimately, of its own destiny, but the nascent social movements have ample lessons to draw from others' experiences under similar structural circumstances.

Chapter V: Conclusion: The Svans are Pushing History

My trip to Svaneti in November 2016 started with my father and relatives seeing me off to the *marshrutka*, a minibus and a prominent form of public transportation in post-Soviet countries. One of the *marshrutka* lines from Tbilisi to Chuberi is owned by my relative and as a form of respect to our family relations, she paid her driver to make the trip just to take me to Svaneti, my field trip destination. My first time this deep in western Georgia was marked by encountering sites of decrepit and looted factories and a haunting presence of the recent past at every step. Western Georgia was the primary producer of tea within the Soviet Union and in addition to industrial agricultural production, there were automobile and aircraft factories employing the region. All along our route, it was not only decrepit factories but also dilapidated educational institutions and “clubs”, which were centres for creative activity and culture. These ruins were visible because nothing had been built in their place. Since I showed interest, the driver pointed out and described the decrepit buildings one-by-one as we passed them.

In Samegrelo, the region before Svaneti, a couple of tourists stopped the *marshrutka* and the driver picked them up with the hope of making a bit more money. They got off in Svaneti without paying, which really angered the driver since the tourists never indicated they were hitchhiking rather than hiring the *marshrutka* to their destination. He disclosed to me that he could not get into an argument with the tourists or complain to the local police about the incident, because the authorities would uphold their rights and privilege over his. Therefore, my drive to Svaneti was an insight into the new power relations of Georgia’s post-Soviet, post-industrial economy, where tourism, the primary strategy for economic development, has left the once-wealthier countryside dysfunctional and the population economically dependent on the goodwill of foreign tourists. This loomed in contrast with the literal ruins of the recent past, which to common people like my *marshrutka* driver represented employment, greater social security and a more dignified socio-economic life.

The struggle I was fortunate to observe in Svaneti, presents hope amidst the postsocialist despair in Georgia, where, due to many reasons such as the libertarian Rose Revolution, people have not been able to escape the decrepit past and build anew. The Svan people coming together to resist, strategize and more importantly, to endure the present, is a source of hope for the rest of the country. As described in chapter 2, Georgia’s history and experiences may be shaped by global events, but I believe communities such as Chuberi and Nakra are the ones pushing history of what will become of Georgia, a tiny country that has overcome many ordeals to survive to this day. What is more, the anti-Nenskra dam struggle belongs in the larger global fight, indisputably driven by communities like the Svans all over the world, to preserve our environment and cultures, - the true wealth of humanity, - for future generations.

Antonio Gramsci wrote in his *Prison Notebooks* that “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an

inventory.” (1971, 324). Writing and reflecting on my thesis has been my attempt to interpret Georgia’s recent history and how the current events, chiefly the Svan rejection of neoliberal development, fit into the wider context of the country. In other words, this thesis has been my attempt to find an inventory to understand the realities the Georgian people face, myself included. In this process, I have also found a source of optimism and faith for the future.

References

- “2015-2018 წლებში სახელმწიფოს ნებართვით 12 332 360 კუბური მეტრი ტყე გაჩეხეს.” *Commersant.Ge*. August 13, 2018. <https://commersant.ge/img/adv/06.2018/binadari/710x100.html>.
- “A Collective Letter from the Chuberi Community.” n.d. Accessed May 9, 2018. http://greenalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/mimarTva_chuberidan_2016.pdf.
- Amonashvili, Paata. 1990. “Perestroika and New Pressure Groups in Georgia: A Successful Ecological Movement.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 14 (2): 322–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1990.tb00676.x>.
- Angel, James. 2016a. “Strategies of Energy Democracy.” Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung. https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/sonst_publicationen/strategies_of_energy_democracy_Angel_engl.pdf.
- . 2016b. “Towards Energy Democracy: Discussions and Outcomes from an International Workshop.” Workshop Report. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/towards-energy-democracy>.
- Asian Development Bank. 2015. *Assessment of Power Sector Reforms in Georgia: Country Report*. Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/documents/assessment-power-sector-reforms-georgia-country-report>.
- Bello, Walden. 2007. “The Environmental Movement in the Global South.” Transnational Institute. October 12, 2007. <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-environmental-movement-in-the-global-south>.
- Benevolenskaya, Zlata, and Curtis Budden. 2010. “Trust Management as a Legal Form of Managing State Property in Russia.” *Review of Central and East European Law* 35 (1): 59–76. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157303510X12650378239991>.
- Boeder, Winfried. 2005. “The South Caucasian Languages.” *Lingua* 115 (1–2): 5–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2003.06.002>.
- Bondyrev, Igor V. 2015a. *The Geography of Georgia: Problems and Perspectives*. World Regional Geography Book Series. Cham: Springer.
- . 2015b. *The Geography of Georgia: Problems and Perspectives*. Cham: Imprint: Springer. <http://myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/springer/2015-07-09/1/9783319054131>.
- Burakova, Larisa, and Robert Lawson. 2014. “Georgia’s Rose Revolution: How One Country Beat the Odds, Transformed Its Economy, and Provided a Model for Reformers Everywhere.” The Antigua Forum. <https://www.amazon.com/Georgia%C2%B4s-Rose-Revolution-Transformed-Everywhere-ebook/dp/B00HUMMTVO>.

- Burawoy, Michael. 2001. "Transition Without Transformation: Russia's Involuntary Road to Capitalism." *East European Politics and Societies* 15 (2): 269–290.
- Burawoy, Michael, and Katherine Verdery, eds. 1999. *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Buyandelgeriyn, Manduhai. 2008. "Post-Post-Transition Theories: Walking on Multiple Paths." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 37: 235–250.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.37.081407.085214>.
- Campeanu, Pavel, and Michel Vale. 1988. "The Genesis of the Stalinist Social Order." *International Journal of Sociology* 18 (1/2): 1–165.
- Canclini, Nestor Garcia. 2005. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez. University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/hybrid-cultures>.
- Chavez, Daniel. 2016. "COOPELESCA, Costa Rica." *Energy Democracy* (blog). December 12, 2016. <http://www.energy-democracy.net/?p=367>.
- Collier, Stephen J., and Lucan Way. 2004. "Beyond the Deficit Model: Social Welfare in Post-Soviet Georgia." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 20 (3): 258–84. <https://doi.org/10.2747/1060-586X.20.3.258>.
- Corso, Molly. 2010. "Georgia: Tbilisi Tries to Make a Switzerland Out of Svaneti." October 13, 2010. <https://eurasianet.org/s/georgia-tbilisi-tries-to-make-a-switzerland-out-of-svaneti>.
- De Waal, Thomas, and Anna Dolidze. 2012. "A Truth Commission for Georgia." *Carnegie Europe* (blog). December 5, 2012. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2012/12/05/truth-commission-for-georgia-pub-50249>.
- Derluguian, Georgi. 2012. "The Color Revolutions Betrayed." *PonarsEurasia - Policy Memos*, July. <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/color-revolutions-betrayed>.
- Devlin, Paul. 2003. *Power Trip*. Documentary. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0358647/>.
- Djankov, Simeon. 2014. *The Great Rebirth: Lessons from the Victory of Capitalism over Communism*. Columbia University Press.
- "Electric Power Lines Over the Greater Caucasus." 1978. *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 30 (21): 21–21. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13630575>.
- "Energy." n.d. Invest in Georgia. Accessed September 14, 2016.
<http://www.investingeorgia.org/en/keysectors/energy>.
- Engel, Erik, Henrica von der Behrens, Dorian Frieden, Karen Mohring, Constanze Schaaff, Philipp Tepper, Rusudan Barkalaia, and Giorgi Gigauri. 2006. "Strategic Options towards Sustainable Development in Mountainous Regions A Case Study on Zemo Svaneti,

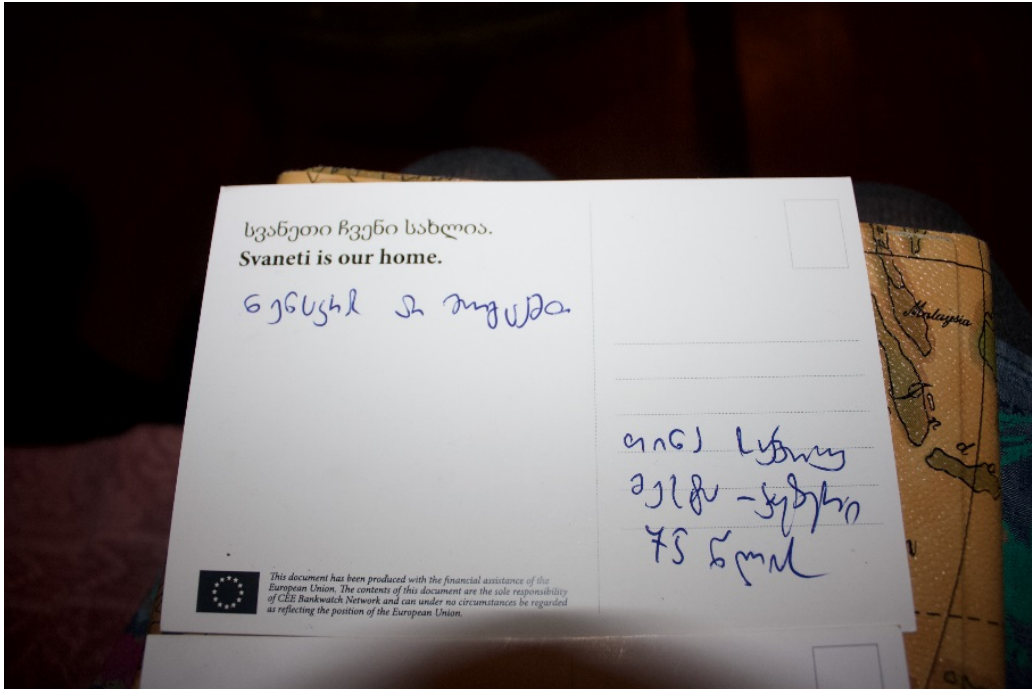
- Georgia.” Berlin: Centre for Advanced Training in Rural Development.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2012. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
<http://myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/login?url=http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.31025.0001.001>.
- “EU-Georgia Association Agreement Fully Enters into Force.” 2016. European Commission Press Release Database. July 1, 2016. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2369_en.htm.
- Fairbanks, Charles. 2012. “Georgia’s Prison Rape Scandal—and What It Says About the Rose Revolution.” *The Atlantic*. September 24, 2012.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/georgias-prison-rape-scandal-and-what-it-says-about-the-rose-revolution/262720/>.
- Federación Ecologista. 2013. “Declaratoria Del Encuentro de Comunidades Afectadas Por Represas.” March 18, 2013.
http://www.feconcr.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2163.
- “Georgia | U.S. Agency for International Development.” n.d. Accessed August 13, 2018.
<https://www.usaid.gov/georgia>.
- Gille, Zsuzsa. 2007. *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary*. ACLS Humanities E-Book. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32480>.
- Global Witness. 2018. “At What Cost? Irresponsible Business and the Murder of Land and Environmental Defenders in 2017.” London: Global Witness.
<https://www.globalwitness.org/en-gb/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost/>.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated by Geoffrey N. Smith and Quintin Hoare. New York: International Publishers.
- Green Alternative. 2016. “The Progress in Implementation of EU Georgia Association Agreement Environment and Sustainable Development.” Tbilisi: Green Alternative.
http://greenalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Association_Agreement_Environment_and_Sustainable_Development_2016.pdf.
- Gvosdev, Nikolas K. 2000. *Imperial Policies and Perspectives Towards Georgia, 1760-1819*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Hann, C. M., and Elizabeth Dunn, eds. 1996. *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*. London: Routledge.
http://link.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources__ID=763529&T=F.

- Hann, Chris, ed. 2002. *Postsocialism Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*. London; New York: Routledge.
<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=ebooks/ebooks2/taylorandfrancis/2013-03-14/2/9780203428115>.
- Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford ; New York, New York: Oxford University Press.
<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=ebooks/ebooks0/oxford/2010-04-27/1/0199283273>.
- Humphrey, Caroline. 2002. *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies after Socialism / Caroline Humphrey*. Culture and Society after Socialism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- “IEA - Energy Access Database.” n.d. Accessed September 12, 2016.
<http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/resources/energydevelopment/energyaccessdatabase/>
- Jacobsson, Kerstin, and Steven Saxonberg. 2016. *Beyond NGO-ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. Mobilization Series on Social Movements, Protest, and Culture. London: Routledge, 2016.
<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781317174615>.
- Jones, S.F. 2013. *Georgian: A Political History since Independence*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Judy, Mary Kay. 2000. “The Village of Chazhashi: Georgian Svannish Vernacular Architecture.” *APT Bulletin* 31 (2/3): 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504660>.
- Kemkes, Robin J. 2015. “The Role of Natural Capital in Sustaining Livelihoods in Remote Mountainous Regions: The Case of Upper Svaneti, Republic of Georgia.” *Ecological Economics* 117: 22–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.05.002>.
- “Khudoni Hydropower Plant, Georgia.” n.d. CEE Bankwatch Network. Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://bankwatch.org/project/khudoni-hydropower-plant-georgia>.
- Konrád, György, and Iván Szelényi. 1979. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Kunze, Conrad, and Sören Becker. 2014. *Energy Democracy in Europe: A Survey and Outlook*.
- Lang, David Marshall. 1966. *The Georgians*. Ancient Peoples and Places, v. 51. London: Thames & Hudson, Thames and Hudson.
- Lapin, G. 2000. “70 Years of Hidroproekt and Hydroelectric Power in Russia.” *Hydrotechnical Construction* 34 (8): 374–379. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004107617449>.
- Larmer, Brook. 2014. “Medieval Mountain Hideaway: In Svaneti, High in Georgia’s Caucasus Mountains, Centuries Old Defensive Towers Loom Over Remote Villages.” *National Geographic* 226 (4): 74.

- Leftwich, Adrian. 1993. "Governance, Democracy and Development in the Third World." *Third World Quarterly* 14 (3): 605–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599308420345>.
- Lutsevych, Orysia. 2013. "How to Finish a Revolution: Civil Society and Democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine." London: Chatham House.
https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0113bp_lutsevych.pdf.
- McDonald, David A., Stuart Tolley, and Catherine Baron. 2014. *Rethinking Corporatization and Public Services in the Global South*. London, England: Zed Books.
<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=1665608>.
- McPhaul, John. 2017. "Costa Rica's Supreme Court Stops Hydroelectric Project for Failing to Consult Indigenous Peoples." *Cultural Survival*. January 2, 2017.
<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/costa-ricas-supreme-court-stops-hydroelectric-project-failing-consult-indigenous-peoples>.
- Meiksins Wood, Ellen. 2002. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. London: Verso.
- Mendelson, Sarah E., and John K. Glenn, eds. 2002. *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. Columbia University Press.
- "MENR – Nenskra Hydroelectric Power Plant 280 MW – Svaneti." n.d. Construction Intelligence Center. Accessed August 14, 2016. http://www.construction-intelligence.com/HomePage/Projects?ReturnUrl=%2FProjects%2FOverview%2F154300%3Futm_source%3Dworldconstructionnetwork%26utm_medium%3DReferral%26utm_campaign%3DMENR%2B%25E2%2580%2593%2BNenskra%2BHydroelectric%2BPower%2BPlant%2B280%2BMW%2B%25E2%2580%2593%2BSvaneti&utm_source=worldconstructionnetwork&utm_medium=Referral&utm_campaign=MENR%20%E2%80%93%20Nenskra%20Hydroelectric%20Power%20Plant%20280%20MW%20%E2%80%93%20Svaneti#.
- Ministry of Environment Protection. 2009. "Georgia's Second National Communication to the UNFCCC." Tbilisi, Georgia: Ministry of Environment Protection.
- "Nenskra Hydropower Plant, Georgia." n.d. Bankwatch. Accessed August 15, 2016.
<http://bankwatch.org/our-work/projects/nenskra-hydropower-plant-georgia>.
- Olson, James Stuart, Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas Charles Pappas. 1994. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Rogers, Douglas. 2010. "Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons." *Slavic Review* 69 (1): 1–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25621726>.
- Rowland, Richard. 2006. "National and Regional Population Trends in Georgia, 1989-2002: Results from the 2002 Census." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 47 (2): 221–242.

- Wade, Robert. 2016. "Neoliberalism and Industrial Policy in Georgia." *LSE International Development* (blog). May 12, 2016. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/2016/05/12/neoliberalism-and-industrial-policy-in-georgia-professor-robert-wade/>.
- Woodruff, David. 2000. *Money Unmade: Barter and the Fate of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- World Commission on Dams. 2000. *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making*. London: Earthscan.
- World Rainforest Movement. 2001. "Costa Rica: Opposition to Hydroelectric Dam." World Rainforest Movement. November 27, 2001. <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/costa-rica-opposition-to-hydroelectric-dam/>.
- Zarfl, Christiane, Alexander Lumsdon, Jürgen Berlekamp, Laura Tydecks, and Klement Tockner. 2015. "A Global Boom in Hydropower Dam Construction." *Aquatic Sciences* 77 (1): 161–170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00027-014-0377-0>.
- “საქართველოს ენერჯეტიკის სამინისტრო.” n.d. Accessed September 14, 2016. http://www.energy.gov.ge/energy.php?lang=eng&id_pages=54.

Annex I: Svaneti Through My Camera



Tina Subari, 75-year-old Chuberi resident signed a card provided by CEE Bankwatch Network to be sent to the international sponsors of the Nenskra dam with the following message: “We will not give you Nenskra”.



Stickers on Lile Chkhetiani’s car mark her clear position with regards to the dam(s).



“No to Nenskra dam” - written on the road that leads to the dam site in Chuberi.



“Nenskra is life.” – Eteri Aprasidze.



Chuberi community meets with Green Alternative NGO representatives to discuss protest strategies. The village has turned this building into a dedicated space to organize around the anti-Nenskra dam campaign.



Taken from my drive from Tbilisi to Chuberi, lumber carried by the Enguri River accumulates near where the Enguri dam (built in 1986) reservoir starts.



The point where the Nenskra River joins the Enguri River.



The free-flowing Nenskra River.



Students attend the Chuberi Public School.



The cattle graze in Chuberi.



The landscape of Chuberi in late fall.



The Nakra community congregates to voice their rejection of the Nenskra dam to Italian documentary film-makers.



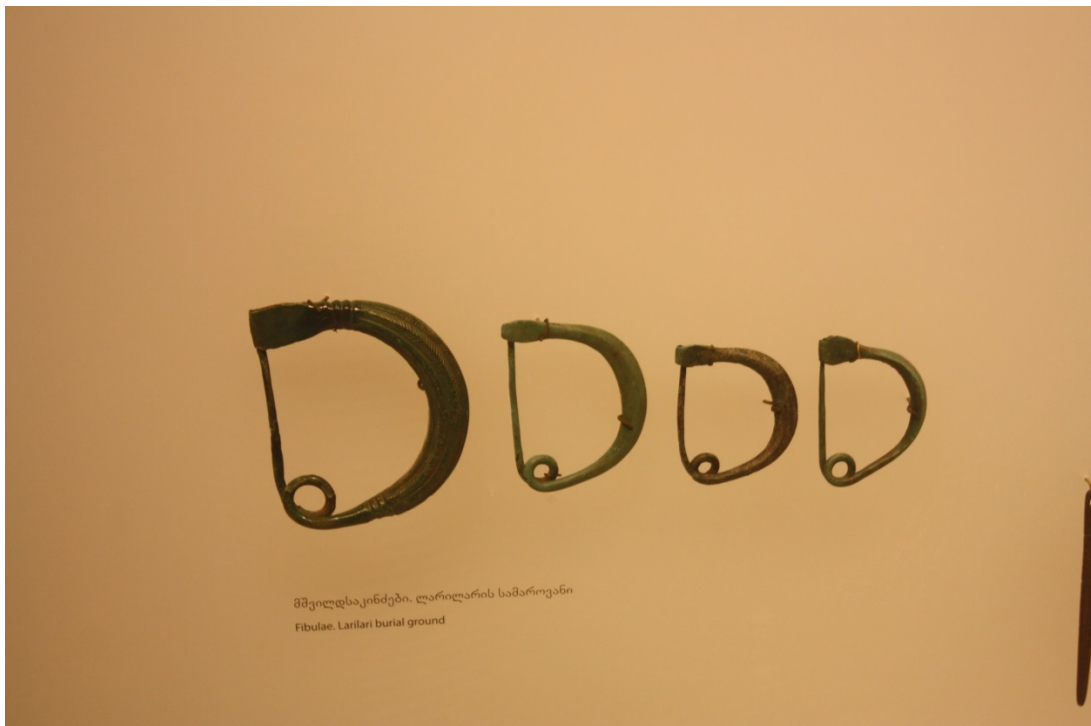
The deforested site with marks of heavy equipment in Nakra, where a reservoir and a tunnel passing through the Shdavleri Mountain are planned to be built as part of the Nenskra dam project.



A landslide (a common occurrence in Svaneti) in Nakra, near the dam site.



The rightful inhabitants of the Nakra land conspire for a grand takeover of the planned dam territory.



Artefacts from Chuberi territories displayed at the Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography in Mestia, the capital city of Upper Svaneti.



**Some symbols of this thesis:
Transmission lines, *koshki* (a medieval Svan defence tower), and the Tetnuldi mountain
peak as seen from Mestia.**

Annex II: Ethics Approval Notice

File Number: 10-16-08

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/18/2016



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Sciences and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Susan	Spronk	Social Sciences / Others	Supervisor
Ketevan	Tadiashvili	Social Sciences / Others	Student Researcher

File Number: 10-16-08

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Anti-Dam Protests: The Political Ecology of Energy Development in the Upper Svaneti Region, Georgia

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
11/18/2016	11/17/2017	Approved

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

Annex III: Recruitment Text

Recruitment In-Person/Over the Telephone Script

English:

"Hello, my name is Ketevan Tadiashvili. I am a Master's student at the University of Ottawa, studying Development. I am conducting a Master's thesis research on local activism in Nakra and Chuberi against the government-commissioned Nenskra dam (my research questions is: why are the Svans protesting against the Nenskra dam, and what alternatives do they offer?). If possible, I would like to recruit you to be my research participant for a semi-structured interview of 40-60 minutes. Participation is strictly voluntary and you can withdraw at any moment. If you choose to withdraw from the study, information you have provided will not be used in the research. During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, you are under no obligation to answer them. All information will be kept confidential, and at your request, your anonymity will be guaranteed. If I am provided with your consent, the interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of ensuring proper recording and transcription of data."

Georgian:

“გამარჯობა, მე ვარ ქეთევან თადიაშვილი, ოტავას უნივერსიტეტის მაგისტრანტი, სადაც ვსწავლობ საერთაშორისო განვითარებას. სამაგისტრო ნაშრომისთვის, ვაწარმოებ კვლევას ნენსკრა ჰესის წინააღმდეგ ადგილობრივ პროტესტებზე, სოფელ ნაკრაში და ჭუბერში. ჩემი კვლევის კითხვები შემდეგია: რატომ აპროტესტებენ სვანები ნენსკრა ჰესის მშენებლობას? რა ალტერნატივას გვთავაზობენ ისინი? თუ შესაძლებელია, სურვილი მაქვს ჩემს კვლევაში მიიღოთ მონაწილეობა, რომელიც 40-60 წუთიანი ინტერვიუთი შედგება. მონაწილეობა აბსოლუტურად ნებაყოფლობითია და შეგიძლიათ ნებისმიერ დროს დატოვოთ კვლევა. თუ დატოვებთ კვლევას, თქვენგან გაცემული ინფორმაცია გამოყენებული არ იქნება. ინტერვიუს დროს, თუ არაკომფორტულად იგრძნობთ თავს, უფლება გაქვთ ნებისმიერ კითხვაზე არ გამცეთ პასუხი. კვლევის დროს მოპოვებული ყველა ინფორმაცია იქნება კონფიდენციალური და თქვენი მოთხოვნით, თქვენი ანონიმურობა გარანტირებული იქნება. აგრეთვე, თუ მომცემთ ნებართვას, ჩავიწერ თქვენი ინტერვიუს აუდიო ვერსიას, რათა შემდეგ კორექტული ტრანსკრიფცია შევძლო.”

Annex IV: Consent Form in English and Georgian



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

École du développement international et mondialisation | School of International Development and Global Studies

Faculté des sciences sociales | Faculty of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of the study: Anti-Dam Protests: The Political Ecology of Energy Development in the Upper Svaneti Region, Georgia

Principal Investigator: Ketevan Tadiashvili

Research Supervisor: Susan Spronk

School of International Development & Global Studies

Faculty of Social Science

University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

E-mail: sidgs@uottawa.ca

Phone: 613-562-5680

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above-mentioned Master's thesis research study, conducted by Ketevan Tadiashvili.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to explore the policy of hydropower development in Georgia, specifically in Upper Svaneti, and to determine the views of the local residents.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of giving a 40-60 minute semi-structured interview to provide an overview of my opinions regarding hydropower development in Svaneti, Georgia. It is possible that I will participate in a follow-up interview.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help contribute to the scholarly understanding of hydropolitics in Svaneti, Georgia, and help a Master's student with her thesis.

Confidentiality and anonymity: While there are no perceived risks to participating in this study, I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purposes of writing a Master's thesis and will not be shared with other researchers or organisations.

I consent to recording this interview:

- Yes
- No

For the purposes of this investigation, I wish to be identified in the following manner:

- By name, title and organization
- As an anonymous participant (by organization only)

Data: Electronic data will be kept on principal investigator laptop which is password protected, the field notebook will be kept in a locker, located at the investigator's residence. Data will be destroyed

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

five years after expected completion of the project (December 2021).

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions before July 2017, when the project is expected to be completed. If I decide to withdraw from the study, any data will be destroyed.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the principal investigator and her research supervisor through contact information attached to this form.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON Canada K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-53875841
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

A copy of this statement is available for me to keep for my records.

თანხმობის ფორმა

კვლევის დასახელება: “პროტესტი ჰიდროელექტრო სადგურების წინააღმდეგ: ენერჯო განვითარების პოლიტიკური ეკოლოგია ზემო სვანეთში”

მთავარი მკვლევარი: ქეთევან თადიაშვილი
სამეცნიერო ხელმძღვანელი: სუზან სპრონკი

საერთაშორისო განვითარების და გლობალური კვლევების სკოლა

სოციალური მეცნიერების ფაკულტეტი
ოტავას უნივერსიტეტი, ოტავა, ონტარიო, კანადა
ელექტრონული ფოსტა: sidgs@uottawa.ca
ტელეფონი: 613-562-5680

მოწვევა მონაწილეობისთვის: მონაწილეობა ეხება ზემოთ-აღნიშნულ სამაგისტრო ნაშრომის კვლევაში, რომელსაც უძღვება ქეთევან თადიაშვილი.

კვლევის მიზანი: ამ კვლევის მიზანია საქართველოს, კერძოდ კი ზემო სვანეთის ჰიდრო პოლიტიკის აკადემიურად შესწავლა. კვლევის აქცენტი იქნება ადგილობრივი მოსახლეობის შეხედულებები ჰიდრო პოლიტიკაზე.

მონაწილეობა: კვლევაში მონაწილეობა შედგება 40-60 წუთიანი ნახევრად სტრუქტურირებული ინტერვიუთი, რომელშიც დაფიქსირებული იქნება პირადული შეხედულებები სვანეთში ჰიდრო ელექტრო ენერჯის განვითარების შესახებ.

მონაწილეობის დადებითი მხარეები: ამ კვლევაში მონაწილეობა წაადგება სვანეთში ჰიდრო პოლიტიკის აკადემიურ მიმოხილვას. აგრეთვე, დაეხმარება მაგისტრატურის მოსწავლეს სადიპლომო ნაშრომის დაწერაში.

კონფიდენციალურობა და ანონიმურობა: მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ არ არსებობს სავარაუდო რისკები ამ კვლევაში მონაწილეობისთვის, მონაწილეებს აქვთ იმის გარანტია, რომ გაზიარებული ინფორმაცია დარჩება კონფიდენციალური. ინფორმაციის შინაარსი გამოყენებული იქნება მხოლოდ სამაგისტრო ნაშრომისთვის და არ იქნება გაზიარებული სხვა მკვლევარებთან, ან ორგანიზაციებთან.

თანახმა ვარ, ჩაიწეროს ინტერვიუ აუდიოს სახით:

- კი
- არა

კვლევის ფარგლებში მოხსენიებული ვიქნები შემდეგნაირად:

- ჩემი სახელით და ორგანიზაციით
- როგორც ანონიმური მონაწილე

მონაცემები: ელექტრონული მონაცემები დაცული და შენახული იქნება ძირითადი მკვლევარის პერსონალურ კომპიუტერში. სავსე ჩანაწერები იქნება საიმედოდ დაცული მკვლევარის რეზიდენციაში. პროექტის დასრულებიდან ხუთი წლის შემდეგ (2021 წელის დეკემბერი), ყველა მონაცემი განადგურდება.

ნებაყოფლობითი მონაწილეობა: მონაწილეობა არ არის სავალდებულო და

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

მონაწილეობის მიღების შემთხვევაშიც, კვლევიდან გასვლა შესაძლებელია პროექტის დასრულების ვადამდე, 2017 წლის ივლისამდე. კვლევიდან გასვლის შემთხვევაში, ყველა მონაცემი განადგურდება.

კითხვების შემთხვევაში, გთხოვთ მიმართეთ მთავარ მკვლევარს და მის ხელმძღვანელს.

კვლევის ეთიკურობასთან დაკავშირებული კითხვებით, გთხოვთ მიმართეთ ოტავას უნივერსიტეტის კვლევის ეთიკის ოფიცერს:

The Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550
Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON Canada K1N 6N5

ტელეფონი.: (613) 562-53875841

ელექტრონული ფოსტა: ethics@uottawa.ca

ამ განცხადების ასლი გადმოგეცემათ თქვენი ცნობისთვის და ინფორმაციისთვის.

Annex V: Participant Interviews

Aprasidze, Eteri. 2016. Resident, Chuberi.

Chkhetiani, Lile. 2016. Activist, Chuberi.

Chkhvimiani, Gari. 2016. Activist, Chuberi.

Subari, Nato. 2016a. Activist, Chuberi.

Subari, Nato. 2016b. Activist, Chuberi, Continued.

Tsindeliani, Gioni. 2016. Activist, Nakra.

Representative. 2016. Ministry of Energy, Tbilisi.

Representative. 2016. Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, Tbilisi.

Preliminary Interview Questions to Chuberi and Nakra Activists/Residents:

1. What do you use Nenskra and Nakra Rivers for?
2. What does having an undammed river mean to you? How is it valuable for Svanetians?
3. What are the specific reasons why you are contesting the building of the Nenskra dam?
4. What alternative do you propose in place of the Nenskra dam?
5. What have been the effects of the Enguri dam (second highest concrete arch dam in the world, built in Upper Svaneti in the 1980s) on the environment and Svan communities?

Preliminary Interview Questions to a representative of the Ministry of Energy:

1. Please describe Georgia's energy policy.
2. Within Georgia's energy policy, what place does hydropower development hold?
3. What is the importance of the rivers in Svaneti for Georgia's hydropower development?
4. What is the importance of the Nenskra dam?
5. How is the Ministry of Energy responding to the anti-dam protests in Svaneti, specifically with regards to the Nenskra hydropower plant?

Preliminary Interview Questions to a representative of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia:

1. How does the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection undertake environmental impact assessment on large hydropower plants like the Nenskra dam?

2. How does the ministry mitigate social and environmental impacts of large hydropower projects?
3. How is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection responding to the anti-dam protests in Svaneti, specifically with regards to the Nenskra hydropower plant?