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POLICING AS SPECTACLE IN GEORGIA: THE CREATION OF BOUNDARIES IN A POST-REVOLUTIONARY COUNTRY

The paper contributes new perspectives to the study of post-communist reforms by highlighting the limits of the transition paradigm in the analysis of reform processes in the post-Soviet space. It examines Georgia's police reform and argues that the more repressive aspects of the reform should not be viewed as "setbacks" on a transition path, but as integral to the goal of constructing a new Georgian state through the creation of symbolic divides between two different "Georgias". This symbolic work of emphasising contrasts between different domains by casting light on and obscuring social phenomena is analysed through the lens of the "spectacle of policing" (Comaroffs 2004; Wacquant 2009).

Keywords: police reform, transition paradigm, spectacle of policing, creation of boundaries, Georgia, (in)visibility of corruption

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Introduction

As a small-sized former Soviet republic situated in the Caucasus region, Georgia has managed to attract the attention of the international community in the years after the Rose Revolution of November 2003. It has presented itself as an example of a rapidly modernising country and one of the few post-Soviet states to have effectively succeeded to tackle corruption in various sectors. Georgia has become associated with such labels as a "world's top reformer", a champion of anti-corruption reforms and a "success story" in the post-Soviet space. This image change is all the more impressive since the country was considered a failed state and an example of systemic corruption during the 1990s, under the presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze. Georgia has sought to promote the image of a Westernising society, able to turn the back to a Soviet past characterised by corruption and illicit practices.

The police reform took centre stage in the ambitious reform programme launched by the government under the United National Movement party of President Mikheil Saakashvili (2003-2012). In particular, the replacement of the old traffic police with a brand-new and non-corrupt patrol police in 2004 was widely hailed as a "success story" and an example of the quick changes that could be achieved through the implementation of bold and radical measures. However, the bright image of the young patrol policeman that has marked the immediate aftermath of the revolution and that symbolised the country's Westernisation was gradually replaced by revelations regarding the surveillance and control practices of law-enforcement agencies (Huter and Andguladze 2012) as well as the scandal of police abuse in prisons. The scandal that broke out in 2012 after videos were released showing acts of torture against prisoners brought to light an entirely different set of practices employed by the law-enforcement agencies than the ones promoted by the community-friendly patrol police. The post-revolutionary period presents us with different sets of practices and registers of behaviour stemming from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the core organ in the Saakashvili's administration that has been described as its "spine" (International Crisis Group 2012: 16).

The article argues that the transition paradigm, which sees the more repressive aspects in Georgia's police reform as "deviations" from a fully democratic transition path, fails to understand how they are integral to the Georgian government's project of reforming the

country and building a "success story" in the post-Soviet space. In order to understand the central role of law-enforcement organs in sustaining this image of success, the gaze needs to be directed not only at the creation of the patrol police - the flagship reform of the Saakashvili's era -, but also at more repressive practices deployed by the police, in particular in the fight against crime. These two aspects of the police reform, that appear at first glance to indicate different trajectories, can be seen as connected if we analyse the reform by focusing on the symbolic and performative dimension of the construction of a new Georgian state. The reform of law-enforcement organs is thus instrumental in projecting the image of a new Georgian state and integral to the particular mode of governance favoured by the Saakashvili's administration that relies on showcasing certain areas of progress, while concealing other social phenomena (Di Puppo 2015).

The celebration of the construction of a new and efficient state and the association of certain figures and practices to a past Georgia rely on a particular dramaturgy. In the spectacle of law-enforcement agencies fighting against criminals, the efficiency of the state and its capacity to achieve tangible results are accentuated. In their reference to the "spectacle of policing" in post-Apartheid South Africa, Jean and John Comaroff note that the drama that is so integral to policing is "evidence of a desire to condense disperse power in order to make it visible, tangible, accountable, effective" (Comaroffs 2004: 805). Wacquant (2010) further refers to the "law-and-order guignol" and the dimension of spectacle that appear inherent to policing in the 21st century as an effort to reaffirm state sovereignty through the privileged and limited domain of law-enforcement. He says: "Everywhere the law-and-order guignol has become a core civic theater onto whose stage elected officials prance to dramatize moral norms and display their professed capacity for decisive action, thereby reaffirming the political relevance of Leviathan at the very moment when they organize its powerlessness with regard to the market" (Wacquant 2010: 206). Wacquant (2009, 2010) further draws the attention to the role of the penal state in the creation of social boundaries. He suggests studying the punitive or coercive arm of the state by recourse to the notion of production, instead of the technical prism of repression. He remarks: "The police, courts and prison are not mere technical implements whereby the authorities respond to crime – as in the commonsensical view fostered by law and criminology – but a core political capacity through

which the state both produces and manages inequality, identity and marginality" (Wacquant 2008: 13).

Drawing on these observations about the role of policing in the 21st century and of the punitive arm of the state as a producer of social domains and boundaries, I will analyse the police reform through the lens of the creation of symbolic divides between "two Georgias". I will ask the question of how to reconcile the success story of the creation of the patrol police with more repressive practices employed by police officers by focusing on the particular effects of the reform in terms of drawing boundaries and emphasising contrasts.

Georgia: from the corrupt state to the "reformer"

The Republic of Georgia in the period of the 1990s under the presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze (1992-2003) was typically seen as a failed state characterised by weak state institutions and endemic corruption. This period began with a coup against the first democratically elected President and former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia in January 1992. A heteroclite alliance composed of members of the old nomenklatura, the Soviet intelligentsia and criminal groups precipitated the fall of the Gamsakhurdia's government. Indicators such as low tax collection, cross-border smuggling, the lack of territorial control on the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the presence of illegal militia groups in cross-border zones concurred to produce an image of Georgia as a "failed state". Yet at the same time, Georgia was also regarded for many years as a promising transition country in the post-Soviet space. King captured the country's contradicting image as being simultaneously one of the most corrupt and reform-prone countries with the term "potemkin democracy" (King 2001).

In 2003, falsified elections gave the impulse for street protests led by opposition figures including Mikheil Saakashvili that culminated in the Rose Revolution and the ousting of power of Shevardnadze. Mikheil Saakashvili was elected President in January 2004 with 96 percent of the vote, providing him with a strong mandate to launch wide-ranging reforms in the country. The radical and bold measures adopted by the new, young team in power rapidly won Georgia international support. Its progress was rapid as shown in a sharp increase in

public revenues as a result of improved tax collection. While the tax-take was of 1.19 billion Georgian laris in 2003 accounting for 13.9% of the GDP, it rose to 4.75 billion Georgian laris in 2009 which amount to 24.9% of the GDP (Transparency International Georgia 2010a). The Saakashvili's period was further characterised by a concentration of power in executive organs. Soon after his election, constitutional amendments were introduced in February 2004 that gave increased powers to the President. The new government also engaged in a series of economic reforms with the aim to liberalise the economy and attract foreign investments. The number of licences was dramatically reduced, it fall from 909 to 137 in 2003-2011. The tax code and the labour law were also reformed to create a favourable investment climate, while major sectors of the economy were privatised including the railways. Georgia's rapid reforms propelled the country at the top of international rankings, most notably the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index with a rise from 112th in 2005 to 16th in 2012. Further, it ranked 64th out of 183 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index of 2011 with perceived corruption being lower than in several EU member states including Slovakia, Italy, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. By contrast, it ranked 85th out of 102 countries in 2002. As a result of its improved image, Georgia succeeded in tripling its volume of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows between 2004 and 2007. By 2007, it attracted 1.6 billion US dollars, but FDI dropped again with the war and the global financial crisis of 2008.

Georgia's rapid progress on the Doing Business Index did not translate, however, in declining poverty and reduced unemployment levels. The government chose the slogan "Georgia without poverty" following demonstrations in November 2007 when protesters were violently dispersed by policemen and a state of emergency was declared. In spite of these official goals, the economic liberal policies favoured by the new government did not result in a decrease in unemployment. Data from the Caucasus Barometer reveal a sharp increase in the number of Georgian citizens viewing unemployment "as the most important issue facing Georgia" from 14% in 2008 to 54% in 2013. The number of employed decreased from 40% in 2007 to 30% in 2010.[2] From 2008 to 2010 the number of respondents having enough money for food, but not for clothes rose from 34% to 42% (Pearce 2011). The government has been driven by a belief in the market system as a solution to employment instead of direct public intervention.

2 Source: Caucasus Research Resource Centers: "Caucasus Barometer" 2010, http://crrc.ge/caucasusbarometer/datasets/, cited in Pearce (2011).

However, those fired from public jobs after the revolution have had difficulties finding employment in the private sector (Gugushvili 2011). Georgia's economic growth did not create jobs as it was driven mainly by trade services and construction. Further, the agricultural sector suffered as a result of the war with Russia and the loss of a substantial market (Gugushvili 2011).

Georgia in the years after the revolution thus presented a contradictory image. Hence, the period of my field research in 2007 and 2008 revealed different facets of the mode of governance under the Saakashvili's government.[3] In the same year of 2007, Georgia was named a "world's top reformer" by the World Bank and was promoted to the status of a successful example of anti-corruption reforms in the former Soviet Union, while at the same time police reacted with violence to a wave of demonstrations. Further, the year of 2008 was marked by the war between Georgia and Russia in August that had negative repercussions on the country's economic growth and its capacity to attract foreign investments.

My field research also revealed the heterogeneity of anti-corruption measures adopted by the government. In the course of my interviews with state officials, I met with high-level employees at the Office of the State Minister for Reform Coordination, an agency in charge of coordinating the government's measures to liberalise the economy that included the fight against corruption. These officials explained to me the rationale behind the abolition of diverse inefficient regulatory agencies and praised the market as a solution to the corruption problem. On another occasion, I conducted interviews with officials in the Interior Ministry who narrated the creation of the patrol police as a quasi-mythical tale of the country's transformation as well as the formidable war that had been waged against the Soviet-era criminals, the "thieves-in-law" or "*vory v zakone*" in Russian. In these two sides of the fight against corruption, the ideal of the state was at the same time the one of a minimal and of a strong state.

3 The article draws on my field research on anti-corruption activities in Georgia conducted over a period of two years and a half from 2006 to 2008 and additional research in November 2012 on the police reform. Furthermore, I have analysed official reports on the police reform and the government's fight against corruption by international organisations and the Georgian government, media coverage of the police reform and Internet material (the Interior Ministry's website and official speeches, including of Mikheil Saakashvili during his presidency).

Studying the police reform in Georgia: Beyond the transition paradigm

The concept of transition in the scholarly and policy discourse on the post-Soviet space has the effect of offering a particular lens by which reforms are judged. Hence, certain benchmarks are set by which measures are evaluated in terms of their success in advancing the country nearer the normative ideal of a Western democracy and market economy. The concept of "transition to democracy" first appeared in an article by Dankwart A. Rustow asking about conditions that make democracy possible and thrive (Rustow 1970). The study of transitions began in the 1970s and 1980s with new democracies emerging in Latin America and Southern Europe, in particular in the book "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule" by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986). The concept of transition was also used to study changes in the former Soviet Union during the "colour revolutions" that included the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. Criticisms of the application of the transition paradigm to the study of post-communist societies have pointed to the problem of a teleological dimension that sees liberal democracy as an end point (Burawoy & Verdery 1999, Carothers 2002). Typically, the trajectories of post-communist states are more diverse. Georgia's success or failure in reforming state agencies has been depicted through the prism of the transition paradigm as the transformation from an authoritarian regime to the model of a market democracy. By contrast, in this paper, I argue that the transition paradigm fails to understand how the more repressive aspects of Georgia's police reform need to be understood as integral to the Georgian government's project of reforming the country and building a "success story" in the post-Soviet space.

The police reform in Georgia has been understood in terms of the transformation from an authoritarian to a democratic model of policing (Boda and Kakachia 2005) with international assistance being provided to help the country on this path. For example, the 2005 Police Development Strategy submitted by OSCE experts to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs states that "the main objective of the police reform is to transform the police from a formerly repressive organization, into an organization that will be wholly responsible for the safety of citizens" (Kubny 2009: 71). In this light, repressive practices of the Georgian law-enforcement agencies, for example the use of force against demonstrators in 2007 or cases of abuse in prisons, have been associated with an authoritarian mode of governance as well as

the lack of accountability mechanisms. For example, certain observers have viewed the use of violence by the Georgian police against demonstrators in 2007 as an indication of a "slide towards authoritarianism" (International Crisis Group 2007). The label "authoritarian" used to describe these practices has the effect of castigating them as being opposed to the normative ideals of a Western market democracy and as indicative of an incomplete transition towards this model. Parallels have been made between Georgia and Russia under the presidency of Vladimir Putin in reference to repressive practices in the police (Kupatadze 2012: 4-5). The central role of law-enforcement agencies or of "power ministries" - "*siloviki*" in Russian - is often understood through the prism of past Soviet legacies. The political opposition in Georgia has further described Saakashvili's top-down mode of governance as being reminiscent of Bolshevism and an undemocratic attempt of the United National Movement party (UNM) to retain power. Recent studies have also sought to highlight how Georgia's police reform needs to be understood in conjunction with the Georgian elite's major ambition to build a functioning state, sometimes at the expense of democratic principles (Kupatadze 2012, Light 2014, Kakachia and O'Shea 2012). Light (2014) has emphasised the foreign policy dimension of Georgia's state-building process and the necessity to create an efficient police force to guarantee the country's effective independence from its neighbour, Russia.

In what follows, I propose a different lens to study the Georgian police's transformation. I draw the attention to the particularities of the mode of governance favoured by the Georgian elite after the revolution by examining how the post-revolutionary period is characterised by the symbolic work of rendering certain objects and domains (in)visible. Frederiksen (2014) has sought to capture the way in which the new Georgian elite seeked to render certain issues unproblematic (and thus absent) in the present by projecting a future in which they cease to exist through the notion of "would-be-state". Certain phenomena that were associated with revoked times in the form of the Georgia of the 1990s were officially declared as having disappeared. Hence, corrupt police officers and the Soviet professional criminals, "thieves-in-law", suddenly disappeared from public view and this absence stood for the existence of a "new Georgia". The "new Georgia" was thus defined in opposition to certain figures and practices, by officially declaring them absent. The exercise of creating a new narrative of success in Georgia can thus be understood as relying on a symbolic distribution of light and

darkness, as an expression of the capacity of the new elite to cast light on areas of progress, while confining to "invisible spaces" other phenomena that distort this narrative (Di Puppo 2015). I analyse the high visibility of the police whose activities became an omnipresent sight on Georgian televisions in the aftermath of the revolution by referring to the notion of the "spectacle of policing" (Comaroffs 2004: Wacquant 2009) as a means of reasserting the role of the state as the guarantor of law-and-order.

"Light" and "darkness": An analytical tool to study the building of two Georgias

Like many other visitors in the years after the revolution, I typically came back to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi during a night flight. On my trip home from the airport with a taxi, I could see advertisements for Georgian wines, a brightly lit, new police station constructed with a glass exterior, until I reached the city centre where I was greeted by various illuminated buildings. The new architectural landscape of Tbilisi, where new fountains and government buildings, often with glass exteriors, were illuminated during the night, offered the spectacle of an inviting city. This rich spectacle thus hinted at a rupture with the "darkness" and the frequent electricity cuts that had characterised the 1990s.[4]

The city full of lights can be seen as the symbol of a new Georgia, offering a vivid contrast to the "darkness" of the 1990s. The metaphors of "light" and "darkness", that find materialisation in the architectural changes in the capital city, oppose "two Georgias": a bright, new Georgian nation against the Sovietised and corrupt Georgia of the 1990s. This contrast finds a particular echo in a new piece of architecture that was unveiled after the revolution. Shatirishvili (2009: 392) refers to the statue of Saint George that was erected on Freedom Square in Tbilisi in 2006 as incarnating the narrative of the Rose Revolution. In this visual representation, the dragon pierced by Saint George is a metaphor for the primordial chaos from which a new nation is created. Shatirishvili (2009: 392) observes: "in a certain sense, the Rose Revolution is a "cosmogony", narrating the birth of the new nation and "the mighty Georgian state" from Shevardnadze's chaos". The end of the Shevardnadze's presidency thus marks the act of birth of a "new Georgia". A boundary is drawn between two

4 The documentary "Power Trip" by director Paul Devlin shows the electricity crisis in the Georgia of the 1990s and provides vivid views of a dark Tbilisi where inhabitants used candles during daily electricity cuts. One of the first measures of the new administration was the restoration of 24 hours power supply.

periods that are associated with sets of opposites: “future” and “past”; “order” and “chaos”; “legality” and “illegality/corruption”. The new Georgian state is represented as oriented towards the future and defined by an “irrevocable” rupture with past legacies.

The particularity of the building of a new Georgia is the quick pace of changes and the notion that a new and modern state is not a vision on the horizon, but already exists. The existence of this new Georgia is communicated through rapid reforms that produce immediate results. The illumination of government buildings that is typical of post-revolutionary Georgia can be understood both as a means of drawing contrasts and as a manifestation of power in the government’s capacity to illuminate certain domains, while obscuring others. Frederiksen (2013: 157) thus notes on the act of illuminating certain buildings that they signify the ability “to switch on and off and thereby illuminate one building rather than another, as a decision on what should be seen and what should be kept in the shadows”. This ability to illuminate or obscure domains and objects can be seen as a central feature of the mode of governance in the post-revolutionary period and a means through which the new elite sought to construct the image of a new Georgia. In the following, I will examine various aspects of the reform of law-enforcement organs – the fight against crime, the creation of the patrol police and zero-tolerance and penal policies – by focusing on their effects in terms of drawing contrasts as well as casting light on certain objects and figures, while obscuring others.

The spectacle of law-and-order: the new state against criminals

In the period following the revolution, Georgian citizens suddenly saw images showing a battle between the state and criminals appear on their television screens. The fight against corruption and crime became an everyday reality through the spectacle of corrupt officials and criminals being arrested on live television. In interviews that I conducted with Georgian representatives of non-governmental organisations engaged in the fight against corruption, interviewees often referred to the broadcasting of arrests and expressed some ambivalent feelings towards them. One Georgian NGO representative related this period in these terms: “It started with various measures, which were part of anti-corruption initiatives: they were very, how to say, sharp or hard, because they started to put people in prison, to arrest them. Taking away their property and that kind of thing, they took very aggressive steps. A part of

the population liked it, a part was a bit disappointed, because we watched every day how the police arrested former government members and how they put them in prison, all of them. Each day: two or three big arrests. It was like… In the first couple of months, "oh-oh they are doing something, it's good". But then it continued, and people began to be worried about it."[5] Another Georgian NGO official expressed the same ambivalence: "It is really very stressful when you watch television and you expect every day, oh, who will be arrested? […] We had cases of tax inspection in different institutions and in different restaurants. For example, they arrested employees of cafes live on television. This was terrible because if you ask Georgian society, I'm sure that everybody will remember how two years ago, if you remember café Nicola on Rustaveli. […] One evening at six or seven pm, guards with masks […], they enter the café; arrest the cashier, its administrator, cooks, at the time when clients were having dinner."[6] In the same period, a serial with the name "Patrol" was also broadcasted on the television channel Rustavi 2 that showed daily raids of policemen cracking down on corruption and organised crime. A World Bank report of 2012 further describes the fight against criminals: "With television cameras rolling, truckloads of heavily armed police in ski masks rounded up high-profile crime bosses. They were no half measures. If a person resisted arrest, he could be shot, according to a 2005 internal ministry decree" (World Bank 2012: 15).

The broadcasting of arrests live on television after the revolution can be seen as a means of communicating to the wide public the existence of a new Georgian state that is able to punish corrupt officials and criminals and by doing so, clearly draw the lines between a civic community and new "outlaws". This new dramaturgy that opposes law-enforcement organs and criminals can be understood through the prism of the "spectacle of policing" (Comaroffs 2004) as an effort to stage and enhance state authority and accentuate its effectiveness.

The spectacle of policing allows for the fictional entity that is the state to become visible and tangible as well as endowing it with some mythical qualities of omnipresence. The fear of punishment became an everyday reality for a number of Georgian citizens. As a Georgian expert, who also held a public position in the Saakashvili's administration, explained on the arrests: "It works. I understand that some people complain that it is a violation of human rights, cameras filming punishment. […] But in a Soviet style society, very traditional society,

5 Interview with Georgian NGO representative, Tbilisi, 2008.
6 Interview with Georgian NGO representative, Tbilisi, 2008.

sometimes this kind of steps has some cultural effects, or should have. […] It's like social advertising: you say to the population that if you take a bribe, something like this will happen to you."[7] A former representative of an international organisation further observed, when commenting on the message that the government wanted to communicate through the police reform: "Georgia is back. We are a state and we can enforce things".[8] The omnipresence and omnipotence of the new Georgian state was conveyed through the unexpectedness of arrests. For example, a news article relates the arrest of an official in 2008 in these terms: "Georgian TV stations showed Soso Topuridze, the deputy chief of the Department for Constitutional Security at the Interior Ministry, accompanied by TV crews, marching into Koplatadze's office and telling him that he was being arrested for taking a bribe. Scenes of this type – featuring Topuridze telling alleged corrupt officials that they were being arrested – were common on Georgian TV stations up to several months ago" (Civil Georgia 2008). Soso Topuridze, the former acting head of the Constitutional Security Department (CSD), an agency within the Interior Ministry charged with fighting corruption, can be seen as personifying a new Georgian state and making the image of this omnipresent state more tangible. Comments by a high official in the Interior Ministry shows how the fictional image of an "almighty state", having at its disposal wide-ranging powers of surveillance, was a welcome effect of the wave of arrests after the revolution. He says: "The new government started to arrest its members too. People are getting arrested for corruption. The government is almighty and can listen to telephones, this myth helped too."[9]

The spectacle of a battle between the new state and criminals also served to give a face to the old Georgia of the 1990s as embodying corrupt practices that did not belong to a new society. The "thieves-in-law" as professional criminals with roots in Soviet Georgia became a quasi-mythical figure and a new privileged target as the face of the old Georgia. As noted by Slade (2013) in his study of the fight against organised crime after the revolution, the organisation of the "thieves-in-law" was vulnerable and disorganised and had already lost its power of resistance prior to the state attacks launched by the Saakashvili's government. Frederiksen (2015) further refers to the "thieves-in-law" as "scapegoats" and notes about a former thief: "Levan and his kind became scapegoats for a principle that could only be eradicated

7 Interview with Georgian expert, Tbilisi, 2008.
8 Interview with representative of international organisation, 2012.
9 Interview with high official in the Interior Ministry, Tbilisi, 2008.

figuratively" (Frederiksen 2015: 166). The thieves' "disappearance" thus stood for the elimination of corruption and criminality and for the consolidation of a symbolic divide between the state as the guarantor of law-and-order and the criminal world even if, as observed by Frederiksen (2015), the practices they represented may have persisted. This "disappearance" of professional criminals was made visible in architectural changes that signified their lost influence. Thus, wealthy properties of criminal bosses were transformed into police stations. The law on organised crime rackets of 2005 further criminalised the very membership in the organisation of the "thieves-in-law" and allowed for the confiscation of properties of illicit origin.[10] The professional criminals became associated with the notion of "ethical other" (Jobard 2012) against whom a new civic and moral community was built.

"You are the bricks": the new Georgia in the spotlight

In a speech on July 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili tells new graduates of the Police Academy: "Georgia should be built brick by brick and you are one of the most important bricks of this building" (Krunic and Siradze 2005: 5). The creation of the patrol police in 2004 is a potent representation of the cosmogony referred to by Shatirishvili (2009) of the new nation being born out of the disorder of post-Soviet times. The changes that characterised the police reform after the revolution had a direct visual quality. The brand new patrol police that replaced the old and corrupt traffic police of Shevardnadze's times comprised young, thinner and better educated policemen who did not possess the "big bellies" of the former policemen. The young policemen were given brand new uniforms and new cars and they became the public face of the police reform. As an indication of the central importance of the revamped police in Georgia's state-building project, a Police Day was declared on 6 May after the revolution that coincided with the traditional Saint George celebration or Saint George's Day.

The old traffic police was dismantled and about 16.000 policemen were fired in a short period of time. The rapid dismantlement of the traffic police and the appearance almost overnight of new policemen, visually different from old officers, illustrate the symbolism of letting the old Georgia disappear to signify the appearance of a new everyday reality. The old traffic police was suddenly erased as were other agencies such as the Antimonopoly Service, the Food

10 The new criminal legislation after the revolution draws on the Italian anti-mafia laws as well as the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act of the United States.

Quality and Control Service and the agency responsible for motor vehicle inspections. A World Bank report (2012: 54) refers to the term "guillotine" to describe the process of shutting down entire government agencies, echoing the French Revolution and the destruction of the "ancien régime". Similarly to the "disappearance" of the "thieves-in-law" as standing for the elimination of criminality, the removal of these agencies, particularly the traffic police, were presented as signifying the end of bribery practices.

The dismissal of personnel from government agencies was also presented as a rupture with the past and as signifying the creation of a new society, of new role models.[11] A high official in the Civil Registry explained that 80% of the staff was changed and commented on the reform: "In governmental agencies, mostly young people are working and this people came with a new mentality. Of course, it's a big problem for Georgia that elder people, they are not employed, they are not wanted anymore. It's a big problem, but otherwise it was impossible to change the mentality. […] If 5 years ago, in Georgian *supra* [traditional Georgian table], the best person was the most corrupted person in the country with big money, today, the best person at the same table is a person who works really well and whose work is really effective for people. Because the Georgian table is something like a place for discussions about different things and different achievements. There is a big difference between these two tables."[12] The two tables illustrate the divide between two Georgias that also correspond to the line between "future" and "past" with past practices being already declared non-existent in the present. The fact that corruption ceased to be a problem in the official discourse was illustrated in discussions with high officials in the new administration. A high official in a governmental agency in charge of fighting corruption remarked during an interview: "I can state and we can claim that in the last four years, corruption has decreased significantly. […] Of course, we are not fully free from corruption. But corruption as a problem does not dominate. […] In independent surveys, […] people don't name corruption as one of the top ten problems. Which was quite the opposite four years ago."[13] Another high official in a public agency observed: "We have already finished this battle with corruption. […] You can

11 A quote by former parliamentary speaker David Bakradze of the United National Movement party emphasises the contrast between new models and "criminal others": "We wanted to create new role models […] Before the Revolution, a survey of school kids revealed that the majority wanted to be thieves-in-law when they grew up. The change in attitude would start by destroying the symbol that the thief-in-law is a respected man who owns the best property and whose word matters. We demonstrated that he is not a respected man, that his words do not matter; he does not own property, and his place is in jail" (World Bank 2012: 18).
12 Interview with high official at Civil Registry, Tbilisi, 2008.
13 Interview with high official in governmental agency in charge of anti-corruption policies, Tbilisi, 2008.

see it in our strategic plan, we have different goals."[14] Furthermore, discussions about the adoption of an anti-corruption strategy by Georgia following the Council of Europe's advice after the revolution revealed that the Georgian government was reluctant to take this step (Di Puppo 2014). A representative of an international organisation explained that government officials were in favour of naming the strategy a "good governance strategy": "The supporters of this idea were against using the term corruption, because if you are saying "anticorruption", it means that there is widespread corruption and there is no widespread corruption anymore, so it is better to call it "good governance strategy" from that point of view. Because "good governance" means also elimination of corruption. They [government officials] were against using "anti-corruption" as if corruption was as widespread as during the Shevardnadze's government."[15] The reluctance to adopt an anti-corruption strategy can be explained by the fact that it would contradict the notion that corruption had ceased to be a problem after the revolution.

The divide between "future" and "past" had as a consequence the representation of certain groups of the population such as the old intelligentsia and older employees in government agencies as belonging to revoked times.[16] Old public officials were seen as inherently corrupt in another comment by the high official in the Civil Registry: "It was just impossible to work with people who have a very different mentality and they were all the time looking for money, how to earn money, they were really corrupt; not only, they were mentally corrupt people."[17] Mikheil Saakashvili referred to the risk of exclusion for those not ready to embrace rapid changes by commenting on the opposition in 2007: "They want to catch the train, which has already departed and which is already so far away that it is even impossible to catch it even with a Formula 1 car" (Civil Georgia 2007).

The replacement of old policemen by new and younger ones allowed to metaphorically "clean" spaces that were directly in the public eye from corruption. The new Georgia became an everyday reality through the disappearance of visible, street-level corruption. A high official in the Interior Ministry commented in 2008 on the visibility of corruption in these

14 Interview with high official in governmental agency, Tbilisi, 2008.
15 Interview with representative of international organisation, Tbilisi, 2008.
16 See Shatirishvili (2003) on the divide between the "old" intelligentsia and the "new" intellectuals in Georgia. Mikheil Saakashvili used the offensive image of people being "flushed down the toilet" when referring to the old intelligentsia.
17 Interview with high official at Civil Registry, Tbilisi, 2008.

terms: “The thing with official corruption is that it has to be obvious. If I am corrupt and if I can provide some services for money, people should know that. So they can come to me to pay me a bribe. […] If you look from this perspective, it is really not that hard to fight against the most visible parts of corruption. Of course, they are more obscure deals; it is really much, much harder to do that [fight against them]. The easiest part is to fight against government officials who extract money from people. The policeman who is going in each shop and telling you that you should pay this and this money. Or the chief inspector who is taking money from drivers.”[18] The official makes a distinction between “visible” and “obscure” corruption, stressing that the visible, “obvious” parts of corruption are easier to address. A former high official in the Saakashvili’s administration also noted: “Everyone agreed that the traffic police were the most visible sign of corruption and so there was immediate consensus that it was an obvious thing to go after” (World Bank 2012: 15). A high official in charge of the fight against corruption in the Saakashvili’s administration further commented on changes in perceptions: “Public relations and awareness building is part of this [police reform]. An experienced organisation like Transparency International is measuring perceptions and not really how much money is going through corruption. Perceptions become reality. It is important to do hard and tangible things. But you have to make it also visible.”[19] A Georgian expert, close to government circles, noted the importance of advertising reforms: “Some companies produce good computers, one thing is how it is engineered and another thing how it is marketed, you need both. We need to sell all these policies, not just on the judgment of future scholars, we need to sell it to the decision makers who sit in Brussels.”[20] The removal of the old traffic police allowed achieving an immediate visibility of reforms by removing “obvious” signs of corruption. It can also be seen as a less costly reform. For example, the criminal police did not experience the same dramatic changes, as revamping the agency would have caused the loss of an invaluable knowledge of criminal networks.[21]

18 Interview with high official at Interior Ministry, Tbilisi, 2008.

19 Interview with high official in state agency fighting corruption, Tbilisi, 2008. Public attitudes towards the police in Georgia rapidly changed after the revolution. In an August 2003 survey, 70% of respondents stated that police officers are ‘most or almost all involved in corruption’ (the figure was 73% in 2001 and 70% in 2002). Police officers came second to customs officers (Georgian Opinion Research Business International, 2003). By contrast, a February 2007 survey of voters reveals that 66% had a favourable opinion on the police in February 2007 (70% in April 2006) and the police were the fourth most trusted institution after the church, the army and the Georgian media (IRI, et al., 2007).

20 Interview with Georgian expert, Tbilisi, 2008.

21 Interview with law-enforcement expert, Tbilisi, 2012.

“Cleaning the streets” and the inflation of the prison space

In a speech following prison riots in Tbilisi in March 2006, Mikheil Saakashvili announced the government’s goal to “clean the streets”: “Let everyone – criminals and their political and other kinds of supporters – know that whatever they do, we will anyway establish order and people will feel safe and business will be launched without any threat of racketeering… our streets will be cleansed of this criminal rubbish through the protection of all laws and principles of democracy” (Civil Georgia 2006). He outlined a new policy: “We have announced a policy of zero tolerance and we should continue this policy, we should put everyone in jail in accordance with the law and we should amend the criminal procedure code so that no one can be released through conditional sentences […] So we will amend this [criminal] code so as to put an end to petty crime once and for all […] There will be zero tolerance” (Civil Georgia 2006).

A sharp inflation in the prison population rapidly became an important feature of post-revolutionary Georgia. In 2011, Georgia was ranked in the fourth place of the countries in the world with the highest incarceration rates after the United States, Russia and Rwanda with a rate of 547 per 100.000 of the national population (Walmsley 2011). The prison population quadrupled in Georgia from 2003 to 2011.[22] This rapid rise can be linked to the zero-tolerance policy against crime that takes inspiration from the “broken windows” theory. The theory originates in the idea that if small crimes such as the breaking of windows go unpunished, they will plant the seeds for more serious crimes. Therefore, minor crimes need to be punished with harsh sentences. The theory was famously implemented by the New York police in the 1990s during which period a significant reduction of crimes was registered.[23] Zero-tolerance policies had similar effects in Georgia as a significant drop in crime rates was registered following the revolution, for example, car thefts almost disappeared. Levels of victimization decreased from 29.7% in 2006 to 16.8% in 2011.

22 Data from GeoStat indicate that the number of inmates rose from 6.119 in 2003 to 24.114 in 2011. Further data from the International Center for Prison Studies indicate an increase in the rate of prisoners per 100.000 of the national population from 182 in 2004 to 547 in 2011. The number of criminal court cases initiated in 2006 (13,602) was almost twice the number of cases initiated in 2005 (7,358) (Transparency International Georgia 2010b: 10).

23 It remains debatable whether this decrease can be attributed to the new policy as other socio-economic factors also need to be considered.

Crime fighting policies in Georgia emphasised punishment instead of prevention as a means to reduce crime rates, similarly to anti-corruption policies. As a NGO representative, familiar with the new team in power, observed when commenting on the government's strategy: "Misha [Mikheil Saakashvili] always viewed fighting corruption as punishment of corrupt people".[24] The plea-bargain process was also introduced in 2004 which allowed for a reduction of prison sentences in exchange for an admission of guilt and a transfer of money to the state. The extremely low rate of acquittals, which was 0.04% in 2010 according to figures released by the Tbilisi City Court, as well as long prison sentences and a low number of prisoners released on parole, rendered the system attractive.[25] Plea bargaining thus became an important source of revenues for the Georgian government. The anti-mafia policies allowed for the confiscation of properties which raised revenues for the state reaching up to 1 billion US dollars of confiscated money from criminal bosses and corrupt officials according to a World Bank report (World Bank 2012: 15). The logic of crime control and punishment of corrupt people had as an effect an indirect criminalisation of large segments of the population.

Penal policies also followed the logic of punishment in the absence of rehabilitation programmes. Slade (2012) notes on the government's philosophy: "bad people exist, the government cannot change them – all it can do is warehouse them and keep them out of sight." The strong wording used by Saakashvili when referring to petty crime - "criminal rubbish" - castigated prisoners as unworthy of rehabilitation. The prison space in post-revolutionary Georgia can thus be understood as an invisible realm where "remnants" of a past Georgia, "thieves-in-law" or drug traffickers, were confined and kept out of the public eye. This space also became a further realm where the government pursued its anti-mafia policies as the prison was traditionally ruled by an informal hierarchy enforced by the "thieves-in-law" as a mechanism to settle disputes. The incarceration of the "thieves-in-law" in an isolated prison in Tbilisi, prison No. 7, was aimed at destroying their influence.

The announcement of a zero-tolerance policy by Mikheil Saakashvili in 2006 shows how the process of "cleaning the streets" from traces of corruption and crime can be understood as the creation of new spaces and new divides. The reform of the traffic police, the crackdown on

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24 Interview with NGO representative, Tbilisi, 2008.

25 As regards the criminal justice system, 60% of respondents with personal experience of imprisonment in the past four years assessed the inmates' rights in Georgia in relation to a "just and fair trial" as "ill-protected" in a 2009 survey of the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research ([Proos and Petai 2009).

criminals and a zero-tolerance policy resulted in the disappearance of "obvious" signs of a past period in the form of street-level bribery, petty crime and "thieves-in-law". The space of the streets as the space of daily encounters between citizens and officials was cleared off of these practices. Saakashvili's speech shows how this process was concomitant with the creation of another space, the "invisible space of the prison", as he says "our streets will be cleansed of this criminal rubbish" and "we should put everyone in jail".

If we come back to the notion of the government's capacity to switch on and off the light on certain areas as an expression of power, we observe that reduced crime rates and the disappearance of police bribery and of "thieves-in-law" allowed showcasing a new Georgia. The light was instead switched off in areas such as the prison that became "invisible spaces". The strong language used by the government that had the effect of castigating prisoners as symbols of revoked times and as beyond rehabilitation rendered them vulnerable to potential extra-legal practices. The prison can be seen as a space that was isolated from society and where the notion of "legal lawlessness" (Jobard 2012) may be applied as witnessed in acts of abuse and torture against prisoners. Overcrowded prisons result in tensions, for example riots, and generate a violent environment where prison officers may resort to brutal coercion.[26] The notion of "legal lawlessness" can also be used in reference to the war rhetoric that has accompanied the fight against organised crime.[27] Tackling crime was presented as a matter of national security against the background of Russian pressures on the Saakashvili's government. Extra-legal practices were thus justified by invoking permanent threats to the country's national security. For example, the events of November 2007 when demonstrators were violently dispersed by the Georgian police were referred to as a coup attempt sponsored by an alliance between Russia and former influential criminals. A state of emergency was declared following these events. References to the notion of a "state of exception" were present in the post-revolutionary period in the context of a securitisation of policies.[28]

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26 43% of respondents with personal experience of imprisonment in the past four years assessed the prison inmates' situation in Georgia as "brutal" in a 2009 survey of the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research (Proos and Petai 2009).
27 The first Interior Minister after the revolution, Giorgi Baramidze, used a war-like rhetoric at the start of his mandate to describe the fight against criminals: "God has now given us this chance, to fight not on the frontline, but in sitting in warm offices. But we have to realize this is a real war" and "We should not wait until somebody invades us to prove we are patriots" (Stier 2003).
28 See Ditrych (2010) on the reference to the concept of "state of exception" in contemporary Georgian politics and under the Saakashvili's government.

The release of videos recording acts of police abuse against prisoners before the parliamentary elections of October 2012 eventually brought to light the "dark" space of the prison. The "invisible people" (Slade 2012) that had populated this space came back into view through the revelation of acts of torture, abuse and humiliation performed against them. The scandal and the pre-elections' period also revealed the widespread surveillance and control activities that were performed by the Interior Ministry's Constitutional Security Department and Special Operations Department (SOD) (Huter and Andguladze 2012). A logic of surveillance had increasingly pervaded the whole of Georgian society. The reliance on surveillance can be interpreted as an extension of the notion of "legal lawlessness" and of the space of prison itself to larger segments of the population under the justification of protecting the country's national security. As a further indication of the spread of the logic of crime control and surveillance to whole segments of society, approaches borrowed from the criminal justice sector were applied to the Georgian school environment (Slade and Tangiashvili 2013).

Conclusion

The study aimed to analyse the central role of the law-enforcement domain in the symbolic construction of a new Georgian state after the revolution. The question underlying the analysis was of how to reconcile different sets of practices used by law-enforcement organs: the non-corrupt and community-friendly patrol police and surveillance or more repressive methods employed by police officers. The study argues that the more problematic aspects of the police reform should not be viewed through the prism of the transition paradigm as "deficiencies" and "setbacks" in an overall success story of reform or as "deviances" on the path towards a Western market democracy. Instead, the mode of governance that underlies the reform can be understood as making use of and replicating the symbolic divides that are produced by the transition discourse. This discourse has the effect of associating Soviet practices with a past that needs to be overcome, thus castigating negative phenomena such as corruption as belonging exclusively to revoked times. In the transition language, corruption is systematically understood as a sign of incomplete or deficient transition, a failure to attain the promises of the Western democratic model. As noted by Kalb (2015: 20), corruption has been construed as a "local fact" and local failure, flaw or deficiency in the Western liberal

democratic discourse on post-communist states. The transition paradigm thus portrays the Western democratic model as being devoid of any "dysfunctions" and relegates to a problematic past phenomena such as bribery and weak state institutions unable to control crime. It enforces a strict divide between a dysfunctional past and a bright future with a period of transition understood as being potentially characterised by "setbacks".

In this light, the efforts of the new Georgian elite to "clean" spaces in the public eye from traces of crime and corruption as standing for a dysfunctional past can be interpreted as a forceful attempt to showcase how a new everyday reality is already taking shape. The need to attain immediate results and cast light on them can be understood precisely as espousing the transition discourse, whereby the Soviet past needs to be revoked and "disappear" in the dustbins of history in order to let emerge well-functioning institutions and a new reality in which old problems have ceased to exist. The fight against crime thus took the form of a battle against those figures that easily captured the imagination and could be immediately associated with the Georgia of the 1990s and the Soviet period in the form of "thieves-in-law". It allowed setting the stage for a dramatic battle against "outlaws" in order to communicate the image of an efficient state, results-driven and able to deliver safety to citizens. The reform of the traffic police further illustrates the symbolic work of letting disappear, almost overnight, agencies and public officials as the most "obvious" and "visible parts of corruption" as part of a further process of removing traces of the "past". The process of "cleaning" and the need for quick results motivated the adoption of crime control policies largely inspired by crime fighting tools in the United States such as the zero-tolerance policies, the plea bargaining system, anti-mafia policies, punishment and incarceration instead of prevention and rehabilitation. These measures adopted by the Saakashvili's administration were greeted in a World Bank report chronicling Georgia's reforms and published in 2012, where not only the creation of the patrol police, but also the fight against crime are given a prominent place as key pillars in Georgia's story of success (World Bank 2012).

The dramaturgy through which the Saakashvili's government strived to demonstrate the state's renewed ability to combat criminals further suggests that Georgia can be seen as part of a broader trend of contemporary states - in the post-colony (Comaroffs 2004) or in neo-

liberal economies (Wacquant 2009) – where the "spectacle of policing" serves to reassert state authority. The high visibility of the Georgian police following the revolution can be seen not as tangible evidence of the state's capacity to enforce laws, but through the lens of the role of the law-enforcement domain as a producer of symbolic representations and as instrumental in communicating the notion that a "new Georgia" already exists. As noted by Comaroffs (2004: 809), "where governance is seriously compromised law enforcement may provide a privileged site for staging efforts—the double entendre is crucial here— to summon the active presence of the state into being, to render it perceptible to the public eye, to produce both rulers and subjects who recognize its legitimacy." In conclusion, the Georgian case invites rethinking the transition paradigm in order to tread into new avenues of research about the central role of the law-enforcement domain in constructing symbolic representations of social order. It further invites us to analyse in more depth how the capacity to render figures and social phenomena highly visible or invisible lies at the core of these representations of state authority and how the strict dichotomies created by the transition discourse are used to promote "success stories" in the post-Soviet space.

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