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## THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACE OF POST-SOVIET YEREVAN: THE CASE OF NORTHERN AVENUE

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The modern public life is urban in its nature. The city bears the code of development and transformation of modern societies or as Tilly puts it, "*the quintessential history of modernity is the history of the city*"<sup>1</sup>. Exploring the city, we understand the society. Urban space is a social product, a complex social construction, with the space serving as a tool of thought and of action<sup>2</sup>. The space of the city or the urban space is the combination of private and public spaces. While urban private spaces represent the narratives of *security, neighborhood, inaccessibility, and community*, the public spaces represent *freedom, individuality and accessibility*<sup>3</sup>. If private spaces are naturally conservative, public spaces tend to change, expressing the social relations of the given period. Concentrating on the explanation of current transformations of urban public spaces, the paper discusses the general role of the street as the synthesis of all the other types of public spaces (squares, cafes, bus stations, parks, etc.)<sup>4</sup>. From this perspective, the article reveals the transformations of urban public space in Yerevan, based on the case of Northern Avenue.

**Background information:** Since 1919, Tamanyan had been highlighting the development of urban principles and strategies of Yerevan, in the context of independent statehood formation. In 1924, he designed the General Plan of Yerevan, where he insisted on two key elements: "Theatrical Square" (current Opera house with "Liberty Square") and "Lenin Square" (current "Republic Square"). These two were to be conjoined in perhaps the most important part of the "Northern Beam", which Tamanyan called "Northern Avenue"<sup>5</sup>. Despite the value of urban development, in the later years of the USSR, Northern Avenue became a component of urban discourse rather than the real urban space. The problem of Northern Avenue construction gained significance in the 1960-80

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<sup>1</sup> Delanty G., Isin E. F. "Handbook of Historical Sociology", US, 2003, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre H., "The Production of Space". Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> See Tonnelat S. "The sociology of urban public space." In Wang Hongyang, SAVY Nichel and ZHAI Guofang (eds.), Territorial evolution and planning Solution: Experiences from China and France, Paris: Atlantis Press, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Mehta V. "The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space". London & New York: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> See Sargsyan A. A., Hovsepyan E. V., Martirosyan M. V., "A. Tamanyan "The collection of documents and materials"". RA SCI; Science, Yerevan, 2000, source: National Archives of Armenia, (in Armenian).

but was implemented only in the post-Soviet period. The Northern Avenue was the first large-scale construction project in the territory of Armenia after the collapse of the USSR, which symbolized the further logic of urban space development in Yerevan, especially, the downtown. Along with the value of urban development, the construction of Northern Avenue has also brought new emphasis to public representations in Yerevan, forming new urban practices.

***The theoretical and methodological approach:*** The transformation of urban public space, as discussed in this paper, should be considered mainly as the transformation of urban ideology complementary to the current social and/or political ideologies. Every urban space has its specific ideological background, and these ideologies are the main shifting points visible within urban transformations.

Urban ideologies are generally divided into four influential types. *Green urbanism* is the oldest urban ideology, widely spread in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even Tamanyan used this ideology while designing the layout of Yerevan. The accent here is the city center surrounded by main squares, theatres, museums, and hospitals<sup>6</sup>.

Chronologically, the second ideology is *modernist urbanism*. The classic example of a city designed within modernist urbanism is the New York development and modification project by Robert Moses<sup>7</sup>. Another valuable architect of this school is Le Corbusier, who based his main concept of city design on rationality and functionality, distinguishing five points of urban space construction: *growth, work, residence, circulation and differential functionality*<sup>8</sup>. These are the characteristics of modern urbanism: *density, speed, circulation, conversion of pedestrian zones into highways, skyscrapers, crowds, over-concentration of human and material goods, and elimination of inner-city communities and weakening of neighborhoods*.

The wave of modernist urbanism not only played an essential role in urban planning but also caused several social problems: *rise of capitalistic relations and private property brought to the deepening of stratification between the rich and the poor, privatization of space led to restrictions on rights demonstrations in the public space*<sup>9</sup>. In the 60-s, Jacobs headed a new ideological approach - *new urbanism*<sup>10</sup> - which countered to the modernist urbanism. It emphasized the reproduction of justice and equality by urban planning. Jacobs was for short streets and neighborhoods, and the decentralization of functions among districts

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<sup>6</sup> **Khan-Magmedov S.** "Architecture of Soviet vanguard", book N2. "Social Problems". Moscow, 1996, p. 360 (in Russian); **Bunin A. V. Savarentskaya T. F.** "City planning of the XX century in the capitalist countries". Moscow, 1979, p. 278 (in Russian)

<sup>7</sup> **Ballon H., Jackson K. T.** "Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York". Journal Of Regional Science, vol. 48 (5), 2008, p. 1012

<sup>8</sup> **Fishman R.**, "Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier". Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982, p. 231

<sup>9</sup> **Harvey D.** "The right to the city", Logos 3 (66), 2008, p. 88-91 (in Russian)

<sup>10</sup> **Jacobs J.** "The Death And Life Of Great American Cities", Vintage Books; A Division of Random House, NY, 1961

in urban planning. The main function of the city was to be a space for living<sup>11</sup>. Lefebvre was another representative of this school of thought, and he introduced the term “*left urbanism*”<sup>12</sup> in order to describe the ideology. He defined six principles of left urbanism: *accessibility, interdependence between districts, the increase of density, ecological sustainability, multifunctionality and diversity*<sup>13</sup>.

The fourth ideology was *hipster urbanism*. According to Jan Gehl – a journalist, architect and one of the modern urban designers who investigated new principles of planning the city, “*Architects are taught to work with buildings, not with space, but if there’s nothing happening between them, then it is not architecture, it is sculpture*”<sup>14</sup>. His topic of research was Copenhagen, the capital city of Denmark, which he turned into a city of bicycles. He introduced three types of activities: *necessary, optional and social*<sup>15</sup>. Every type of activity is aimed at amusement and leisure<sup>16</sup>. Being born in between two contradictory ideologies (modernist and left)<sup>17</sup>, hipster urbanism claimed that the main importance of space was its ability to amuse and entertain citizens. In this case, everything in the city becomes the space of events<sup>18</sup>. While the ideal types of spaces were *yards, parks, and communities* in new urbanism, *offices, factories and business centers* in modernist urbanism, for hipster urbanism they were *stages, pubs and parties*, with high level of engagement<sup>19</sup>.

Urban ideologies are conditioned by the social structure of a given society, and their manifestations are visualized and materialized in spatial, especially in public spatial relations. What happens in public life is confirmed and actualized in spatial and temporal structures, which are materialized in the physical space, distinguishing and assigning places. Urban space is a social circle that connects and interprets urban places with physical boundaries. At the same time, the reproduction of urban space takes place at the expense of the formation and operation of specific places<sup>20</sup>. In general, in order to understand the city, it is necessary to study the structural features of local urban places. Lefebvre’s three-dimensional scheme of the study of urban space is more relevant for under-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp. 143-238

<sup>12</sup> **Lefebvre H.** “Ideas for the concept of New urbanism”. Jour. Sociological education, Vol. 2(3); National Research University “Higher School of Economics”, 2002, (in Russian)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 19-26

<sup>14</sup> See **Gehl J.**, “Not the buildings, but the space between them is the point”. Interview of Alexandr Ostrogorskiy [Watched: 18.02.2019], Source: <https://daily.afisha.ru/archive/gorod/archive/jan-gehl/>. (in Russian)

<sup>15</sup> See **Gehl J.**, “Life between Buildings: Using Public Space”, ISLAND PRESS, NW, Washington, 2011. pp. 9-14

<sup>16</sup> See **Gehl J., Gemzøe L.** “Public Spaces, Public Life, Copenhagen”, Danish Architectural Press & the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture Publishers, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> “**Vakhshain V.; Interview**”, 2016, [Watched 17.04.2019]: Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFPTPkLOPY&feature=youtu.be>. (in Russian)

<sup>18</sup> See **Gehl J., Gemzøe L.** “Public Spaces, Public Life, Copenhagen”.

<sup>19</sup> **Vakhshain V.** “Reassembly of the city: between language and space”. Jour. Sociology of power, Vol. 2, 2014, p. 22-34 (in Russian)

<sup>20</sup> See **Tuan Y.F.** “Space and Place: The perspective of experience”. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

standing such a complex and comprehensive phenomenon: he defines three aspects of social space: *conceived, perceived and lived* distinguishing following three components of space:

1. *Representations of space or conceived space* - conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, social engineers, certain type of artist with a scientific bent - all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived. This is the dominant space in any society.

2. *Representational space or perceived space* - space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of “inhabitants” and “users”. This is the dominated and passively experienced space, which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space and makes symbolic use of its objects.

3. *Spatial practice or lived space* - the spatial practice of a society keeps that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction; produces it slowly and surely, masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is perceived through the deciphering of its space<sup>21</sup>.

Spatial practices are reproduced in the ideological narratives and cultural attributes of the spatial experience. Life experience always has time and space boundaries and local manifestations. At the expense of the actual spatial experiences, the narrative definitions are given by generalizing the temporal and spatial boundaries. To understand space, it is necessary to identify the narratives of local sites and the life experience of spatial agents. Lefebvre claimed that symbols and codes that space consists of are consequences of historical processes and those who construct it are not always the ones who use it for social reproduction<sup>22</sup>. As spatial experience is structured over time, at least two questions need to be addressed: what causes it and what is it targeting? To answer these questions, the methodology of narrative semiotics comes to the rescue, with the aim of reconstructing deep structures of meaningful text<sup>23</sup>.

Semiotics argues that separate, divided signs or expressions can convey common meanings because they fall into the common range of fundamental values. This suggests that value can only be explained in relation to its logical contradictions<sup>24</sup>. Narrative semiotics is another type of model that refers to a narrative or a group of narratives as a sign system. Greimas's methodology is based on a semiotic understanding of communication<sup>25</sup>. Its purpose is to reveal how narrative components come together to convey a meaning through text. With this methodology, it has been possible to reveal the ideological foundations of the

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<sup>21</sup> See Lefebvre H. “The production of Space”. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, pp. 39-40, 245-247.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 61

<sup>23</sup> See Ticher S., Meyer M., Vodak R., Vetter E., “Methods of text and discourse analysis”, Sage 200, p. 128-131.

<sup>24</sup> See Clandinin D.J., Rosiek J., Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry, Borderland Spaces and Tensions, in Handbook of Narrative Inquiry. Mapping a Methodology, Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 173.

formation of urban space and the reproduction respective ideologies.

**Research methods:** In the first phase of the research, all the *archival documents* were explored concerning the North Avenue issued between 1924 and 2010 and available at the National Archives of Armenia. Due to this, the principles of Northern Avenue space formation and transformation have been identified. Following this, the *protocols* published on the website of Yerevan Municipality were analyzed concerning events and actions that took place on Northern Avenue. The number of total and observed protocols was 93. Simultaneously *observations* were conducted on Northern Avenue to develop basic understanding of day-to-day spatial practices on and targeting of "actively involved" users for in-depth interviews. With *in-depth interviews*, data was collected on practices, spatial transformation and usage of Northern Avenue, since the times it was built. The key informants were categorized into two types. 1) *Urban space specialists*: chosen by the snowball sampling method (the number of observed urban space specialists was three); 2) "*actively involved*" users of Northern Avenue space: chosen within people who worked at Northern Avenue public space who were divided into two groups: experience of up to 5 years, as well as 6 years and more, with 4 respondents in each group. These criteria were selected after initial observations, which showed the probability of transformations since 2013. Initial studies also showed, that workers inside the private space (workers of cafes and stores) are not much competent about public space transformation, resulting the research to target those, who worked immediately on the street; *singers, musicians, painters*.

**Representations of urban space of Northern Avenue.** Northern Avenue is a space that for a long time was rather an ideology, than an actual place. By analysis of documents and interviews with key informants, the following four phases of ideological transformation of Northern Avenue were identified.

1. *Tamanyan's period of formation of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1924-1936)*

"The General Plan of Yerevan" designed by Alexandr Tamanyan in 1924, contained the number of systematic and innovative solutions. The plan organized the city center through three squares system: "Freedom Square", "Republic Square" and "Shahumyan Square". Tamanyan designed the city as a whole united system. The ideology he emphasized by Republic Square was the Armenian independence. The next important building was the Opera House, symbolizing the Armenian national-cultural revival after the Genocide<sup>26</sup> of 1915. Tamanyan intended to connect Freedom Square to Republic Square with Northern Avenue, making it the most important link between the city center and its northern sections<sup>27</sup>; the plan was to create an open view on Mount Ararat as

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<sup>26</sup> See **Mirzoyan T.** "Interview with Karen Balyan": [Watched: 14.04.2019]; Source: <http://golosarmenii.am/article/61227/glavnaya-funkciya-severnogo-prospekta-ne-reshena->. (in Russian)

<sup>27</sup> See **Sargsyan A. A., Hovsepyan E. V., Martirosyan M. V.,** "A. Tamanyan "The collection of documents and materials"". RA SCI; Science, Yerevan, 2000, source: National

well<sup>28</sup>. However, Tamanyan did not finish the work on Northern Avenue; it remained in “The General Plan” alone.

### *2. Exclusion period of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1937-1953)*

After Armenia became part of the Soviet Union, it was not possible to bring Tamanyan’s ideas to life; the plan did not correspond to Stalin’s totalitarian regime, so Northern Avenue was removed from the city’s project. In 1937, within the new plan of the city, Mashtots Avenue (called Stalin’s Avenue in 1937) became the main axis of Yerevan “looking” at the Stalin’s statue\*. This was a serious ideological change.

In any case, Armenian architects continued their work on Northern Avenue and the further development of Yerevan, but it significantly differed from Tamanyan’s idea, due to the population growth and industrial development of the city after the 1940s<sup>29</sup>.

### *3. Rethinking period of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1953-1991)*

After Stalin’s death a range of expelled intellectuals returned to ASSR. Many ideas that were neglected during the Stalinian period had an opportunity to be expressed again, and new ideas (especially coming from Germany and the UK in 1960-70s) about city planning started to spread over USSR. Architects and urbanists highly value Michael Mazmnyan’s plan on Northern Avenue during the 1960-70s, as it perfectly highlights modern ideas of urban planning and design by combination of three cross-sectional squares, surrounded by public areas only, leading to development of open public platforms, diversity and leveling of space, and emphasizing pedestrian areas.

It is important to also mention the Artsakh movement during this period since it considerably transformed the meaning and functions of several significant spaces. During the Artsakh movement, as the Republic Square was still a space that held the function of protecting the state, the area of Opera House became a place, where the meetings were held. After a while, the movement moved to the Republic Square as well, changing the latter’s meaning to a space of protest and struggle.

This subsequently helped to make Northern Avenue a more liberal, non-politicized space of self-expression by being at the center of two distinctly politicized ones.

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Archives of Armenia, pp. 318-417. (in Armenian)

<sup>28</sup> **Vermishyan H. R., Balasanyan S. A., Grigoryan O. G., Qerobyan S. N.** “Local identities in Yerevan. Urban space structures: Collective monograph”. YSU press, Yerevan, 2015, p. 71. (in Armenian)

\* Watch at the archive of National Museum-Institute of Architecture after Alexander Tamanyan.

<sup>29</sup> **Baghshinyan Z. T., Azibekyan P. B., Markaryan O. C., Arutunyan B. M., Babayan L. M.**, “Architecture of Soviet Armenia”. Architecture and urban planning press, Moscow, 1951, p. 40 (in Russian); **Arutunyan B. M., Asatryan M. M., Melikyan A. A.** “Yerevan”. Construction literature press: Moscow, 1968, p. 302 (in Russian); **Grigoryan A. G., Tovmasyan M. L.**, “Architecture of Soviet Armenia”. Stroyizdat: Moscow, 1986, p. 320. (in Russian)

#### 4. Northern Avenue as an existing space (from 1991 up to present)

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenia stepped into a new economic and political system but ended up in an economic blockade<sup>30</sup>. After 1998, the level of foreign investments rose and the economic conditions improved. The challenge of Northern Avenue once again became urgent.

First of all, the area of Northern Avenue, (“Old Yerevan” space, which was located in the heart of the city) was in poor sanitary conditions and needed to be improved. Secondly, the new government needed to get rid of the old by giving the capital a breath of new Armenia.

Ten architectural groups started working on the construction of Northern Avenue; the area was divided into ten lots. The chief architect was Narek Sargsyan, but every part of Northern Avenue had its co-authors. On November 16, 2007, North Avenue was officially opened. With a total length of 450m and width of 27m, the Northern Avenue has four squares, 11 buildings with nine floors in average<sup>31</sup>. During the opening ceremony, president Robert Kocharyan held a speech, where Northern Avenue was noted as the most popular leisure space and a symbol of modern Yerevan<sup>32</sup>.

Still there was another side of Northern Avenue; the area was a private living space for citizens and most of them have not received compensation until now. Space was perceived as *strange, cold and frightening*<sup>33</sup>. Thus, to offset appeals of residents, the government raised the idea of Tamanyan’s project on Northern Avenue as a plan of national union.

***Northern Avenue as a representational space and spatial practice:*** As the narrative of Northern Avenue urban space formation and transformation has been split, it is relevant to switch to the comparison of each part. According to the analysis of key informants’ interviews and documents, three aspects of North Avenue space usage were identified: organization of space by brand stores, organization of space by cafes, organization of pure public space itself.

Until 2012, Northern Avenue was a place where brand culture and elite cafes found their expressions. Main cafe-restaurants had strong dress code, and stores were expensive, so not everybody could attend them, but after 2012, cafe-entertainment culture emerged at Northern Avenue. We saw that space was privatized and transformed by the owners. A great example of this is the opening of Tashir Street Shopping Centre. The transformation of the private-public space of Northern Avenue is shown in the following graph:

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<sup>30</sup> Minasyan E. “The twenty-five-year path of the independent Republic of Armenia”. Jour. “A quarter-century of modern Armenian Republic”: RA SCI Science, Yerevan 2017, p. 16. (in Armenian)

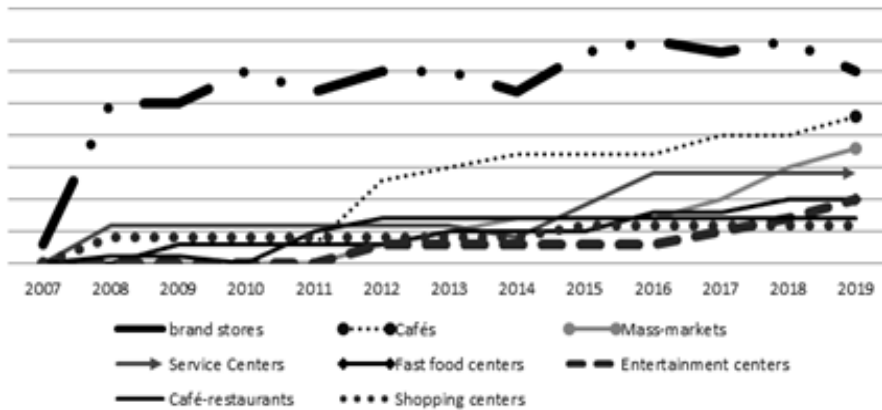
<sup>31</sup> See National Archives of Armenia, case 240/7, case 556-564, 240/7, case 240, 240/5, 240/7, case 1, 5.

<sup>32</sup> See “Kocharyan’s times 1998-2008 film”, 2014, [Watched: 02.05.2019], 00:42:24; Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GiZqqAutNM\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GiZqqAutNM_) (in Armenian)

<sup>33</sup> See Vermishyan H. R., Balasanyan S. A., Grigoryan O. G., Qerobyan S. N. “Local identities in Yerevan. Urban space structures: Collective monograph”. YSU press, Yerevan, 2015, pp. 108-109. (in Armenian)

*Graph 1*

**Transformation of public-private space**



As seen on the graph, the most common practices on Northern Avenue are brand shops and cafes. Moreover, cafes or entertainment venues are being opened instead of brand shops. In the third place is the axis of mass-markets that have also been actively evolving since 2013-2014.

We see the picture of Northern Avenue public space practices presented beneath:

*Table 1*

(based on protocols' content analysis)

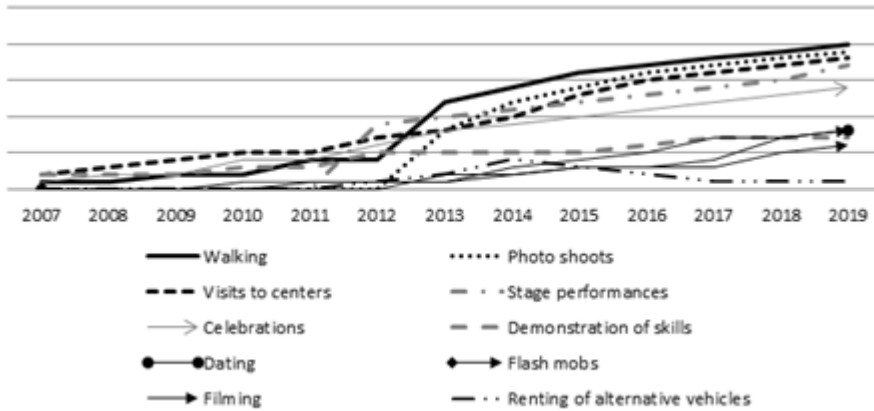
Entertainment event		National holidays and exhibitions	
Women's Month	14	Military-patriotic holidays	7
Events dedicated to youth	13	Erebuni-Yerevan holidays	5
Valentine's day	7	"Tarazfest" exhibition	4
Christmas fests and exhibitions	6	<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>
Yerevan-summer fest	5	Other	
Musical fests	5	Festival exhibition-sales	6
Book-day	1	Book exhibition-Sales	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>

The table shows that most of the events held on Northern Avenue are entertaining and scenic. They especially are dedicated to holidays and celebrations. Thus, the graph of transformations of spatial practices of Northern Avenue public space is shown below.



*Graph 2*

**Spatial practices transformations of Northern Avenue public space**

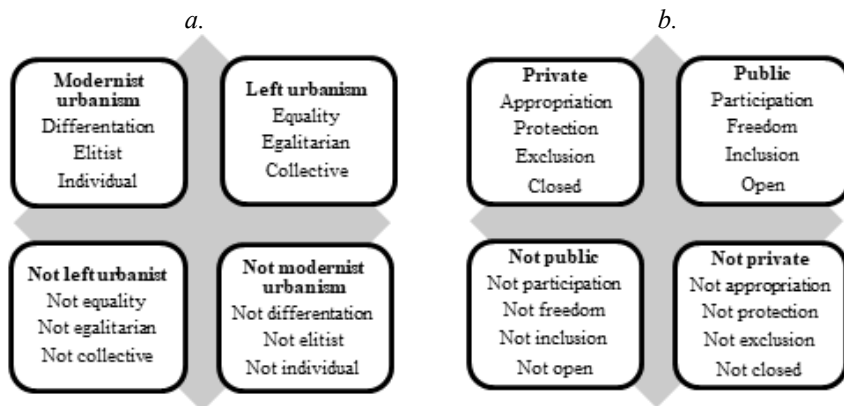


We can notice from the graph that Northern Avenue offers a wide variety of opportunities for both passive and active leisure. Besides this, passive entertainment is more frequent. And the most frequent form of active entertainment are stage performances.

To understand the ideological basis of the transformation of the post-Soviet Yerevan public space, we grouped spatial codes of Northern Avenue using semiotic squares<sup>34</sup>. The opponent and adjuvant forces of the space transformation are arranged in two groups: the ideological opposition level and the spatial realization level.

*Chart 1*

**Semiotic squares: a. Level of Ideologies; b. Level of Spatial Realization**



The research showcased that the relationship between the opposite pairs of deep structure of Northern Avenue public space are similar to the ones of Soviet phase, so they were observed collectively comparing with post-Soviet phase. Research shows that until the last phase, perceptions and expectations on North-

<sup>34</sup> See Ticher S., Meyer M., Vodak R., Vetter E., “Methods of text and discourse analysis”, p. 128-131.

ern Avenue are closer to the left urbanist ideology on a cognitive level (See table3). The same can be observed on a pragmatic level. As for the spatial realization, the difference between public and private levels is small (See table4). Space is perceived as public and private at the same time, since the Northern Avenue area is still a community-space.

Table 3

Phase*	Ideological level							
	Modernist urbanism		Left urbanism		Not left urbanism		Not modernist urbanism	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
<i>I</i>	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0
<i>II</i>	0	3	6	3	0	2	0	1
<i>III</i>	0	1	2	6	1	0	3	0
<i>IV a</i>	3	12	1	3	3	0	3	1
<i>IV b</i>	5	7	4	0	6	9	8	5

As seen in the table, the last stage of transformations is separated into two sub-phases: between “1991-2012” and from 2013 until now. At the ideological level of phase 4.1, in both cognitive and pragmatic levels Northern Avenue is distinguished as actively emerging modernist ideological space: tall buildings and basic services are being accumulated.

In general, observations show differences in methods of spatial practice depending on how long the key informants have worked there. The ones, who began working there before 2013, mostly understand space as a place for income. They use “**working**”, “**tourists place**”, “**customer**” and other codes of this kind in their speeches. Others, who have been working here for no more than 3-4 years, use “**hang out**”, “**pleasure**”, “**audience**” codes that links to an entertainment function of space and self-expression.

Table 4

Phase	Right realization level							
	Private		Public		Not public		Not private	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
<i>I</i>	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
<i>II</i>	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	2
<i>III</i>	2	3	4	0	1	1	0	1
<i>IV a</i>	6	14	0	0	9	4	8	3
<i>IV b</i>	3	11	10	7	5	8	5	9

At the right realization level, space is represented with complementary "non-public" and "non-private" pairs at the cognitive level. At the pragmatic level, space is perceived as private. Furthermore, the dissonance between private and public levels is strongly expressed in the protection-freedom relationship.

\* Phase I - Tamanyan's period of formation of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1924-1936); Phase II - Exclusion period of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1937-1953); Phase III - Rethinking period of Northern Avenue as a spatial ideology (1953-1991); Phase IV - Northern Avenue as an existing space (1991- till nowadays); Phase IV a - 1991-2012, Phase IV b - from 2013 up to nowadays.

At stage IV a, the dissonance between cognitive and pragmatic levels is compensated through the usage of Tamanyan's ideological approaches by the government. This forms symbolic and historically significant space at the cognitive level, which leads to disagreement with the pragmatic level.

Turning to an ideological level of stage IV b and comparing it with the stage IV a, it can be observed that Northern Avenue is not perceived as pure modernist or pure left urbanist space. It is complementary to the non-modernism and non-left urbanism on both cognitive and pragmatic levels. Here we come to hipster urbanism, which appears between the contradiction of modern and left urbanism ideologies. It does not contradict to modernist urbanism or left urbanism, but does not identify with either as well. This brings us to the last transformation of Northern Avenue public space, which is not finished yet, and here it is perceived mostly as space of entertainment, self-expression, shows and fun.

If in the phase IV a Northern Avenue was perceived as a space for “others”, excluding several groups in both pragmatic and cognitive levels, then in the phase IV b cognitive and pragmatic levels start to contradict, because cognitive level expresses elements of public space (walkways, festivals, shows, entertainment), which belongs to users, but pragmatic level mostly expresses private space elements (cafés, restaurants, brand shops). We notice the realization process of the right to a city, which is important for urban space transformation. While the right to a city, which is realized in cognitive level, is not implemented in pragmatic one, as space reproduces contradictory spatial practices. For this reason, space becomes elite and egalitarian at once, valuing the uniqueness and differentiation as well as public availability. Here, Northern Avenue starts to express heterotopic qualities<sup>35</sup>.

**Conclusion:** The transformation of the public space of Northern Avenue is best illustrated by the logic of the transformation of the post-Soviet Yerevan's urban ideologies. As early as the late 2000s, practices began to emerge in space that targeted not only the elite but also other social groups. It leads spatial practices to the realization of right to public space. In fact, space continues to be filled with private-public structures that raise the level of security, but at the cognitive level, it is expressed as public space, increasing the level of freedom. This leads to a struggle against the dominance of economic relations on the one hand expressed by modernist ideology, and on the other hand goes against the rule of equality and justice expressed by the left-wing urbanist ideology.

Thus, it creates a negative attitude towards the two ideologies, on the basis of which space begins to produce spatial practices typical of the hysterical ideology, emphasizing its entertainment and popularity, in fact making the problems of inequality and injustice secondary. Northern Avenue is beginning to

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<sup>35</sup> See **Lefebvre H.** “The Urban Revolution”, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis; London, 2003, p. 38.

show its heterotopic qualities more vividly, producing at the same time elite and egalitarian spaces, both including and excluding, raising both the levels of freedom and security. The result is the formation of a utopian space on a cognitive level, an activation of the mindset (awareness of the possibility of the realization of the right), which is a key precondition for the transition of the urban revolution and the production of differentiated space.

**Key words:** *Post-Soviet, urban, public space, transformations, urban ideology, urban space structure.*

**ՀԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ՎԵՐՄԻՇՅԱՆ, ՍՐԲՈՒՀԻ ՄԻՉԻԿՅԱՆ – Հետխորհրդային Երևանի հանրային տարածության վերափոխումները. Հյուսիսային պողոտայի օրինակով** – Հետազոտությունը նվիրված է Հյուսիսային պողոտայի հանրային տարածության կառուցվածքային փոփոխությունների ախտորոշմանը՝ Ա. Լեֆևրի՝ տարածության արտադրության տեսական հայեցակարգի հիման վրա: Վերջինիս առաջարկած «տարածական տրիադը» (տարածության ներկայացումներ, ներկայացման տարածություն և տարածական պրակտիկաներ) կիրառվել է Հյուսիսային պողոտայի հանրային տարածության փոխակերպման սոցիալական ցուցիչների վերհանման նպատակով: Բացի այդ, հանրային կենսափորձում Հյուսիսային պողոտայի կառուցվածքային տարրերի ուսումնասիրման համար կիրառվել է նարատիվ սեմիոտիկայի մեթոդաբանության միջոցով կառուցված գործիք: Հետազոտական խնդիրների վերհանման համար կիրառվել են դիտարկման, արխիվային/վարչական փաստաթղթերի կոնտենտ ու ավանդական վերլուծության և առանցքային տեղեկատուների հետ հարցազրույցի մեթոդները: Հյուսիսային պողոտայի հանրային տարածության կառուցվածքի ախտորոշումը ցույց է տալիս հետխորհրդային Երևանի հանրային տարածության ձևավորման առանձնահատկություններն ու քաղաքային տարածության գաղափարախոսական փոխակերպումները:

**Բանալի բառեր** – *հետխորհրդային, քաղաքային, հանրային տարածություն, փոխակերպումներ, քաղաքային գաղափարախոսություն, քաղաքային տարածության կառուցվածք*

**АРУТИОН ВЕРМИШЯН, СРБУИ МИЧИКЯН – Трансформация городского общественного пространства постсоветского Еревана: на примере Северного проспекта** – Целью данного исследования является диагностика трансформации структуры общественного пространства Северного проспекта. Теоретической основой этого исследования является теория производства пространства А. Лefевра. Пространственная триада (представления пространства, репрезентативного пространства и пространственной практики) А. Лefевра была использована с целью выявления кодов социальной трансформации общественного пространства Северного проспекта. Исследование было проведено при помощи инструмента, разработанного в рамках методологии нарративной семиотики, позволившей выявить структурные элементы Северного проспекта, отраженные в

общественном опыте. Используемые методы включают наблюдение, контент-анализ и традиционный анализ архивных/административных документов и глубинные интервью с ключевыми информаторами. Диагностика структуры общественного пространства Северного проспекта демонстрирует особенности формирования общественного пространства и идеологические трансформации городского пространства постсоветского Еревана.

*Ключевые слова:* постсоветское пространство, городское пространство, общественное пространство, трансформации, городская идеология, структура городского пространства

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to diagnose the transformation of the structure of the public space of the Northern Avenue of Yerevan. The theoretical basis of this research is A. Lefebvre's theory of space production. The spatial triad (representations of space, representative space and spatial practice) by A. Lefebvre was used to identify the codes of social transformation of the public space of the Northern Avenue. The study was carried out using a tool developed within the framework of the methodology of narrative semiotics, which made it possible to identify the structural elements of the Northern Avenue, reflected in public experience. Methods used include observation, content analysis and traditional analysis of archival / administrative records and in-depth interviews with key informants. Diagnostics of the structure of the public space of Northern Avenue demonstrates the peculiarities of the formation of public space and the ideological transformations of the urban space of post-Soviet Yerevan.

**Keywords:** Post-Soviet, urban, public space, transformations, urban ideology, urban space structure

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