



**Politecnico
di Torino**

Honors Thesis

Master's Degree Architecture for Sustainability.

Abstract

COURTYARDS OF TBILISI

**Tracing Architectural, Communal, and Perceptual Transformations through the
Socio-Political Maelstrom.**

Tutor/Correlator

Filippo De Pieri

Candidate

Anano Simonia

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Tbilisi has undergone and continues to experience palimpsest transformation shaped by diverse political forces and cultural shifts. The city bears an enduring imprint of the ideology of many empires and political forces. Historical traces are evident, from the whole city to its individual buildings. This thesis aims to analyze political dynamics and their influence on social and spatial changes using the typology of Tbilisi-style courtyard houses as a primary lens to explore how these transformations unfolded over time.

The way Tbilisi style courtyard houses came to us today is a result of three centuries of political turmoil. We see the historical shift from authoritarian tsarist regime to the authoritarian communist regime and finally to capitalist democracy. The Tbilisi style-courtyard houses emerged in the nineteenth century as single - family bourgeois houses, and were later converted into Soviet communal apartments, following the Post-soviet period with its privatization, which further fragmented these spaces and provoked improvised resident-driven adaptations. In this continuous socio-political maelstrom, a completely unique way of life was born, creating the courtyard living as a cultural phenomenon today infused with nostalgic narratives and tales of neighborly bonds. Notwithstanding its symbolic significance, their physical state conveys a contrasting narrative. Many of them endure inadequate conservation due to political neglect and informal adaptation.

The thesis aims to tell the story of courtyard houses and contextualize them as both an architectural type and a lived social space, and tries analyze them as "assemblages", heterogeneous and complex systems of architectural modifications, everyday practices, and collective memory embedded in daily habits that continuously reassemble over time. Through research on the urban and political history of Tbilisi, the sequence of transformations was reconstructed which provided a basis for further narrowed analysis of the selected houses. Ultimately, thesis advocates that Tbilisi-style courtyard houses are more than just historical backdrops, they represent layered narratives of resilience and nostalgia and become the main protagonists of the story. Through the methodology of everyday observations, documentation of the houses and speculative, interpretative sketching it seeks to bridge the reality and perceptions, and explore the contradictions between nostalgic narratives and lived experiences.

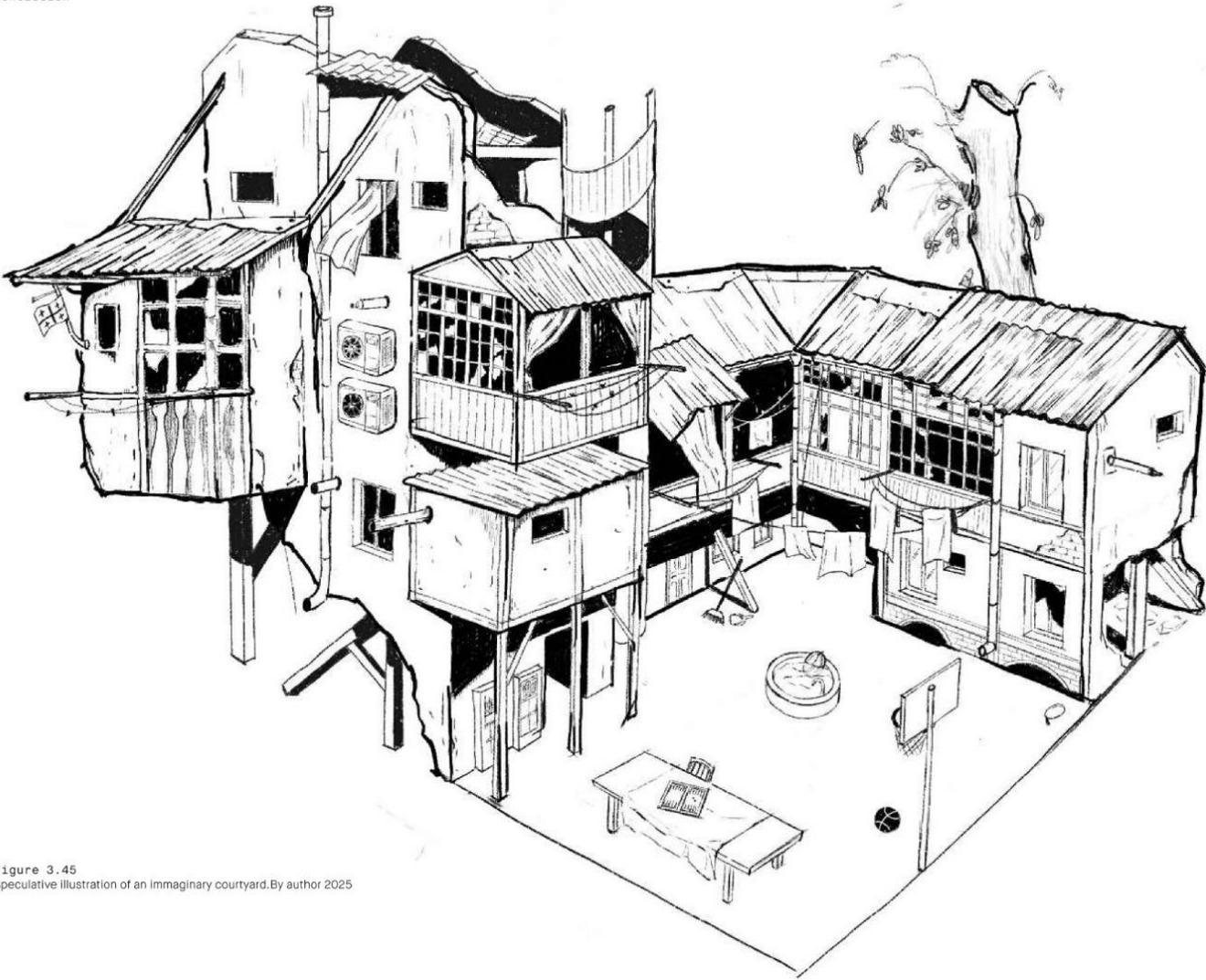
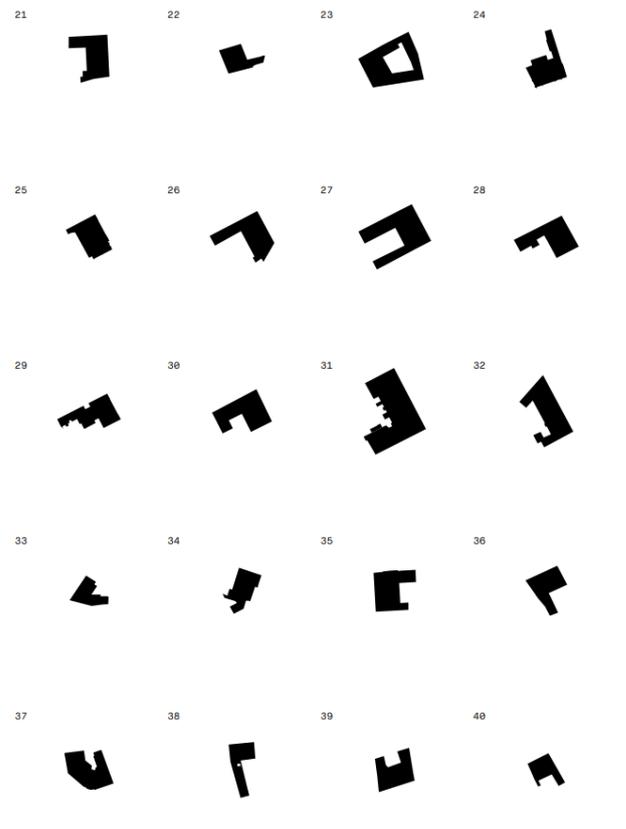
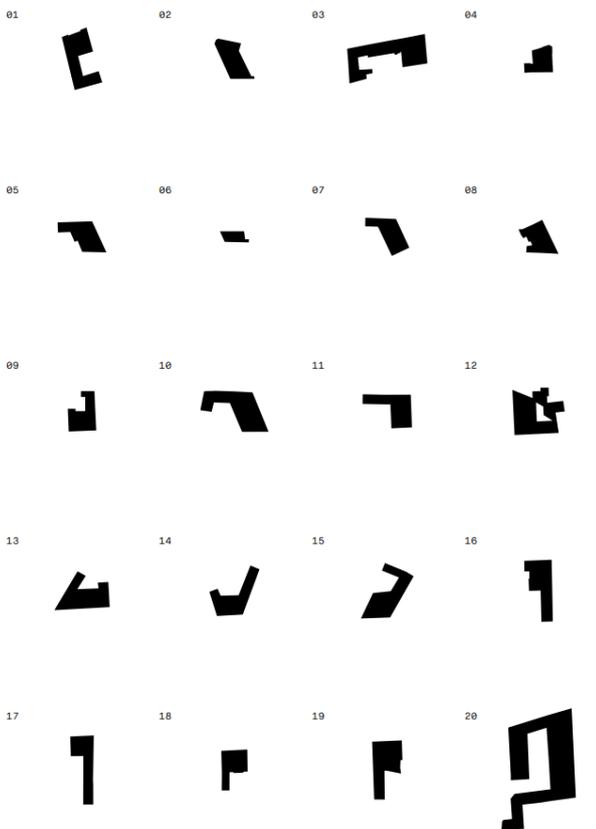


Figure 3.45
Speculative illustration of an imaginary courtyard. By author 2025



For info:

anano.simonia20@gmail.com