

## State of the research at the Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University

The broad research areas in which **Tbilisi State University** Human Geographers are active largely reflect the historic evolution of the subject in Georgia. However, they are also a response to what practitioners see as being relevant needs to the country today. Particular areas of research expertise amongst the Human Geographers at TSU include:

- *Population Geography and Urban Geography* – the former Soviet tradition of research in geodemography, population geography and urban settlement studies gradually have transformed into new research of sustainable settlements, urban planning, land use, and housing, as well as segregation of population in the big cities (e.g. Gachechiladze and Salukvadze, 2003. Social problems of Tbilisi and its metropolitan region (TMR); in: Gachechiladze, R. (ed.) *Socio-economic and Political Geography at the Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University. Collection of Articles Dedicated to the 80 Years of the Department*, Tbilisi: SANI. 2003; p. 7-24; Van Asche, Kristof, Joseph Salukvadze & Nick Shavishvili (editors). 2009. *Urban Culture and Urban Planning in Tbilisi: Where West and East Meet*. Lewiston, Queenston & Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press; Kristof Van Assche and Joseph Salukvadze. 2011. Tbilisi reinvented: planning, development and the unfinished project of democracy in Georgia. *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 1, January 2012, 1–24; Stefan Bouzarovski, Joseph Salukvadze and Michael Gentile. 2011. A Socially Resilient Urban Transition? The Contested Landscapes of Apartment building extensions in Two Post-communist Cities. *Urban Studies*. Volume 48, issue 13, year 2011, pp. 2689-2714. Gogsadze G. Population Geography (textbook), “*Saari*”, 2008. Currently the department is developing a research project “Coping with marginality and exclusion: can refugees communities successfully integrate into mainstream urban societies in Georgia?”, financed by Academic Swiss Caucasus Network (ASCN) (Team leader J.Salukvadze).
- *Political Geography/Geopolitics and Conflict Studies* – There is a long tradition amongst the university Human Geographers at the interface between the theory and practice of Geopolitics. Much of this research focuses on considerations of the geopolitical role of the transitional countries and Caucasus in general, and of Georgia in particular (see, for example, Gachechiladze, 1995. *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics*, London: UCL Press (in *Changing Eastern Europe* series edited by David M. Smith); Gachechiladze, 1997. National idea, state-building and boundaries in the post-Soviet space (the case of Georgia), *GeoJournal*, 43, 51-60; Gegeshidze, 2003. Georgia after a decade of independence, in: Gachechiladze, R. (ed.) *Socio-economic and Political Geography at the Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University. Collection of Articles Dedicated to the 80 Years of the Department*, Tbilisi: SANI, 64-75; Rondeli, 2003. Risks and opportunities in the Black/Caspian Sea region. *ibid*, 76-84). Gogsadze G., Salukvadze J., Chkheidze V., Sichinava D. 2008 Presidential Elections in Georgia: Regional Characteristics of Electoral Behavior. *Collection of Articles, Akhaltsikhe State University, 2008*. However, Human Geographers have also been prominent in political practice, serving as Ambassadors, and this experience has fed into some of their writings as well. Moreover, Geographers have played a wider role in the geopolitical field, serving as the President (Alex Rondeli) of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies.

- *Gender Studies* – The Department of Human Geography in Tbilisi State University has over 20 years of research experience in the field of gender related issues, and in the last 1990s played a key role in creating the Transition Gender Studies Centre. Its role is to increase gender issues awareness of students, media representatives, scholars, as well as executive authorities and decision-makers in the country. To achieve these aims it has held a range of workshops funded and supported by the Soros Foundation and USAID, has provided a forum for visiting scholars from the UK and USA to lecture in Georgia, conducted regular gender surveys, and has contributed to UNIFEM's text on *Conflict, Gender and Peacebuilding*.
- *Ethnic Geography* – Human Geographers have explored the ethnic diversity of people living within the boundaries of Georgia in a range of studies and papers (see, for example, Gachechiladze and Bradshaw, 1994. Changes in the ethnic structure of Tbilisi's population, *Post-Soviet Geography*, 35(1), 56-59; Davitashvili, 2003. Ethno-geographical and nationalistic roots of the Caucasian conflicts, in: Gachechiladze, R. (ed.) *Socio-economic and Political Geography at the Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University. Collection of Articles Dedicated to the 80 Years of the Department*, Tbilisi: SANI, 122-133; Gogsadze and Salukvadze, 2007. Georgia: ethnopolitical conflicts and statehood building. *Region and Regionalism, Regions in the Process of European Integration*. No 8, Vol.1, Łódź-Opole; p.103-108).
- *Application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in geographical research (e.g. Land Management and Electoral Geography)* – A particularly prominent arena for Human Geographers has been in the development of Georgia's land management, cadastre and register. This has necessitated the detailed survey of the country's land area, as well as sophisticated use of new digital monitoring and analysis techniques (see Salukvadze, 2006. Geoinformation Technologies in Land Management and Beyond: Case of Georgia. *Shaping the Change*. Proceedings of XXIII International FIG Congress, 8-13 October 2006, Munich, Germany). More recently GIS was extensively used in geographical study of 2008 the Presidential and the Parliament elections, funded by CRRC (The Caucasus Research Resource Center).
- *Tourism Geography* - the development of tourism in Georgia is seen as one of the main potential areas of economic vitality in the future, and some geographers are now therefore occupying themselves in this field. A Georgian language textbook on "Tourism Marketing" was produced by Joseph Khelashvili and printed by TSU press, as early as in 1990.

At its best, this research seeks to integrate Georgian empirical work with some of the wider currents of international geographical thought in these fields. It provides sufficient know-how, conceptual basis and empirical data for further development of the proposed topics of the proposed research project.