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Beyond the Deficit Model: Social Welfare in Post-Soviet Georgia

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Beyond the Deficit Model: Social Welfare in Post-Soviet Georgia

Stephen J. Collier and Lucan Way[1]

Abstract: Two researchers examine several crucial features of the transformation of Soviet welfare provision in post-Soviet Georgia. Institutional analysis and household surveys in two industrial cities in Georgia are used to identify determinants of distribution and access to three sectors of social welfare: water, heat, and education. The data are used to develop a multidimensional conceptional framework for change.

In his classic study of welfare regimes in Western Europe, Gøsta Esping-Andersen notes that literature on the welfare state is characterized by a surprising "lack of much genuine interest in the welfare state as such." "Welfare state studies," he argues, "have been motivated by theoretical concerns with other phenomena, such as power, industrialization, or capitalist contradictions" with the consequence that "the welfare state itself has generally received scant conceptual attention" (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 18). A similar tendency can be observed in studies of social welfare in the post-Communist world. Most studies have focused on the "political economy" of reform—that is, the alignments of political factors that either allow reforms to proceed or block them (cf. Cook, 2000; Shleifer and Treisman, 2000). These discussions have been grounded in a binary distinction between "reformed" and "unreformed" regimes. "Reformed" regimes

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are assumed to be characterized by the predominance of market mechanisms, allocative efficiency, and effective social protection. By contrast, "unreformed" Soviet-style regimes of social welfare are understood through what Michael Burawoy (1999) has called "deficit models." Deficit models emphasize what post-Soviet social welfare regimes *lack*—namely, the predicates of "reformed" welfare systems. Thus, the dominant characteristics of unreformed or partially reformed regimes are, in this view, understood to be inefficiency, waste, and ample opportunities for rent-seeking behavior.

This focus on the political economy of reform has diverted analytic attention from the problem of conceptualizing the diverse trajectories of change that are defining new logics of distribution and patterns of enfranchisement or disenfranchisement in post-Soviet welfare systems. This article seeks to contribute to such a conceptualization through the lens of research conducted in the post-Soviet Republic of Georgia. It examines transformations that do not fit easily into the binary picture that is standard in the literature. On the one hand, in the social welfare systems under consideration, marketization and reform are not always associated with higher levels of enfranchisement or more efficient service delivery. Marketization also may not be a product of reform efforts. Rather, "marketization" of access is frequently the product of systemic breakdowns, and is associated with patterns of broad exclusion from basic services. On the other hand, the important characteristics of "unreformed" and inefficient systems are not only corruption or the prevalence of rent-seeking, although these features certainly deserve practical and analytical attention. "Unreformed" or "partially reformed" systems are often relatively inclusive precisely because they preserve impersonal logics of service delivery that were characteristic of the Soviet system of social welfare.

In order to better capture the specific transformations of post-Soviet welfare regimes, and to better understand their implications for enfranchisement, this article develops a multidimensional conceptual framework for welfare state change. It does so by defining and applying two concepts to the Georgian case. First, it examines *logics of distribution*—whether market, bureaucratic, infrastructural, rent-seeking, or householding—that define general principles of valuation and distribution of welfare state goods and services. Second, it examines the *regimes of access* through which such logics are articulated in material structures, institutional routines, and household behaviors to determine actual levels of access.

This article proceeds through three steps. First, it lays out the background of the Soviet welfare regimes and the challenges posed to them in the post-Soviet period. Second, it develops the concepts of logics of distribution and regimes of access. Third, it applies these concepts to welfare state change in the Georgian case, analyzing data from a study that examined two industrial cities and three sectors of social welfare: water, household heating, and education.

SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET WELFARE REGIMES

Through much of the 20th century, advanced industrial countries consolidated regimes of social welfare that extended a range of social goods and services in an increasingly uniform manner across national populations. Institutions of social welfare did not, of course, take the same form in all cases. Basic differences in institutions of social welfare provisioning were found in the advanced industrial states, ranging, in the terms of Esping-Andersen, from relatively marketized to highly decommodified.[2]

The Soviet social welfare system can be roughly mapped onto this conceptual distinction between marketized and decommodified forms of provisioning. In the Anglo-American cases—the most "marketized"—social welfare institutions tend to be targeted in the sense that they provide select groups of the population with subsidized access to certain goods and services on the basis of some criterion of need (income, for instance). A relatively limited range of services—including primary education—was decommodified. Market forces have served as the dominant mechanism for allocation in many other areas. Soviet social welfare institutions, by contrast, promoted a general decommodification of access to a remarkable range of goods and services basic to subsistence.[3] The result was virtually total enfranchisement of the population—or at least certain broad segments of the population—into systems of social welfare provisioning in an undifferentiated manner. Following the distinction of Richard Titmuss, we refer to this latter pattern of social welfare as one of *universalism* as opposed to the "residual" logic of targeted welfare benefits (Titmuss, 1969; Standing, 1996).

Important exceptions to this universalistic system of provisioning were found in the Soviet period—evident in particular in differences between rural and urban areas. More broadly, however, the late Soviet period was marked by the emergence of social welfare institutions that were extended across urban industrial settlements and across Soviet republics with increasing uniformity (Bahry, 1987; Way, 2001; Osborne, 1970). The tendency led George Breslauer to label the late-Soviet state a case of "welfare state authoritarianism" (Breslauer, 1978; Cook, 1993).

Since 1991, this system of social welfare has been challenged in all post-Soviet states. The regime of full employment has collapsed precipitously. Those functions of social welfare that are the responsibility of public-sector budgets—many of which were transferred from enterprises to local

[2]Esping-Andersen's work has focused on labor regimes. For the most part, his core categories are usefully applied to other sectors of social welfare provisioning. But other dimensions of a conceptualization would have to be added, including the focus on material features of infrastructural regimes we propose here.

[3]The system of social welfare that consolidated in the late Soviet period included: universal primary education; free health care; housing; guaranteed retirement income; centralized communal services (water, heat, and sanitation); and full employment, organized primarily through industrial enterprises and secondarily through public-sector employment.

governments after Soviet breakup (Healey et al., 1999)—have been placed under tremendous fiscal pressure.

The Republic of Georgia has faced particularly acute collapse in the past ten years, even when compared to the hard-hit Slavic core of the former Soviet Union. As of 2002, Georgian GDP was 35 percent of its 1989 level. By contrast, Russian GDP never fell below 55 percent of its 1989 level. Moreover, government expenditure as a percentage of GDP has collapsed. In Russia and Ukraine, government expenditure in 2001 was equal to 16 percent and 19 percent of GDP, respectively, whereas Georgian government amounted to just under 10 percent of GDP (World Bank Group, 2003).

CONCEPTUALIZING WELFARE STATE TRANSFORMATION

Just as the rise of welfare regimes in the Soviet Union and other industrial countries mirrored one another, their crises also follow a parallel general pattern. In most industrial countries, the growth of entitlements and of other social welfare programs encountered constraints during the fiscal crises of national and local governments that took place from the 1970s to the 1990s. In the post-Soviet cases (as elsewhere), the technocratic response to the crises of social welfare regimes—particularly as it has been formulated by the multilateral development agencies—has been a basic program of reform that seeks to bring social welfare commitments into balance with state fiscal capacity by making social welfare systems more efficient. In this context, reform efforts have sought to replace universalistic programs of social welfare with targeted programs, and to marketize certain elements of social welfare delivery. Standard elements of reform proposals, thus, include means-tested subsidies, increasing user fees to reflect real costs of service provision, the installation of meters to measure use, and marketization of some elements of production and distribution of social welfare benefits. Efficiency and targeting have been identified in technocratic discussions as important goals for reform of Socialist institutions characterized by extraordinary waste in a context of deep fiscal crisis.

On one level, academic literature has had a very different focus from this technocratic emphasis on efficiency and means-testing. Most scholarship on welfare state transformation has examined the "political economy of reform." It has investigated resistance to or support for reform by various actors—including political actors or bureaucrats (Cook, 2000; Shleifer and Treisman, 2000) and the recipients of benefits (Whitefield, 2002)—who stand to lose or gain if reform proposals succeed.[4] On another level, in focusing on the politics of welfare state reform, scholarly literature has taken largely at face value the technocratic conceptualization of welfare state transformation. Contemporary welfare state systems in the post-Soviet cases are described primarily in terms of the extent to which elements of reform—marketization, means-testing, and other efficiency-enhancing measures—have been adopted.

In their narrow focus on the politics of reform, these studies have neglected to examine many crucial features of welfare state transformation. Questions of distribution, the level of service provision, and the specific institutional set-up of welfare state systems receive little if any attention. Particularly problematic is the treatment in this scholarly literature of welfare state systems that have not undergone transformation in the direction of marketizing reforms. The (usually implicit) conceptualization of "unreformed" or "partially reformed" welfare state systems follows the pattern of what Michel Burawoy (1999) calls "deficit models" of transformation—so called because they conceptualize diverse systems largely in terms of what they *lack* rather than in terms of a positive description of the logics through which they function. Accordingly, "unreformed" or "partially reformed" welfare states are characterized primarily by the *absence* of features associated with reformed welfare states.

"Deficit" models are based on two important confusions that have prejudiced conceptualization of post-Soviet welfare states. First, they assume that there is an agreed-upon normative model of social welfare provisioning. However, the interactions between social provisioning and economic efficiency are very much in dispute in theoretical, empirical, and policy discussions of the welfare state in the richest industrial countries today (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996; Haggard and Kaufman, 2001; Rosanvallon, 2000). It is, in other words, by no means obvious that we can speak of a single model of a reformed welfare state.

A second important confusion associated with deficit models, central to the present analysis, concerns the characterization of "unreformed" or "partially reformed" social welfare regimes. "Deficit" terms such as "unreformed," "inefficient," or "corrupt" mask a great diversity of logics and patterns of social provisioning. On the one hand, the post-socialist cases present many examples of systems in which "efficiency," "marketization," "reform," and effective social protection do not coincide. On the other hand, "unreformed" systems are not always characterized by widespread corruption and rent-seeking. Some may have important elements of bureaucratic impersonalism and some may also play an important role in social protection.

[4] Thus, for example, Linda Cook has emphasized "obstacles" to restructuring (such as political opposition and economic stagnation that prevent the labor market from taking over some tasks previously managed by the welfare state). Restructuring is understood to mean "eliminating broad subsidies, targeting benefits to the poor, and adapting the social sector to a market model" (Cook, 2000). Similarly, Shleifer and Treisman (2000) have examined the transformation of fiscal federal systems with an idealized model of reform in view; the current system is seen largely in terms of rent-seeking and corruption rather than in terms of its very important welfare functions (see also Treisman, 1998). Whitefield (2002), meanwhile, has analyzed broader social attitudes to reform of social benefits in Ukraine to understand whether efforts at increasing means-testing might be met with support or resistance. For a perspective on post-socialist welfare state change that diverges from the dominant literature, see Haney (1999).

Thus, for example, our prior research in Ukraine and Russia has shown that local governments have responded to fiscal crisis through what we call "preservationist" measures (Collier and Way, 1999; Way, 2001; Woodruff, 1999). Rather than marketizing social service delivery or substantially cutting back on social welfare guarantees, actors in the public sector—particularly local governments—have sought to maintain existing social welfare institutions and existing social welfare commitments, defined by impersonal bureaucratic norms that still have deep institutional (and social) legitimacy. In Georgia, we see a different pattern, one that does not fit any more comfortably with deficit models of reform. Here, preservationist tendencies have been weak. A great deal of marketization of social welfare regimes has taken place, at least in the sense that markets have become the critical mechanism for valuing and allocating many goods and services that were once distributed according to a universalistic logic. But marketization has not generally been associated with improvements in efficiency. Indeed, in some sectors we studied, marketization has been associated with a dramatic breakdown of centralized networks of social service delivery. Further, marketization has not generally been the product of reform but instead has been the outgrowth of systemic breakdown.

Bearing in mind these diverse trajectories of welfare transformation, we may summarize the problem with deficit models of welfare state transformation in the following way: they take for granted precisely what should be under investigation—the specific forms of social welfare and their relationships to various principles of social allocation and patterns of enfranchisement. They develop models that are teleological at the expense of being analytic. Whether or not they provide good guides for policy—and they often do not (Way, 2002)—the result is under-conceptualized social analysis.

LOGICS OF DISTRIBUTION AND REGIMES OF ACCESS

Various analytic responses to these conceptual difficulties are possible. One, proposed by Burawoy and Verdery (1999), is to replace models that posit a single *telos* of transformation with the study of multiple specific "transitions" in various situations. Another response, which is pursued here, is to use the detailed analysis of specific cases to build a broader yet carefully limited set of analytic terms that can contribute to a more flexible and complex conceptual framework in one specific domain of post-Soviet transformation—that of the social welfare regime.

The following discussion introduces two elements of such a framework: *logics of distribution* and *regimes of access.* Logics of distribution are abstract principles through which social welfare goods and services are valued and allocated. A regime of access is the concrete form taken by logics of distribution in a certain sector of social welfare provisioning. It is at the level of a regime of access that it is possible to examine both patterns of distribution and the quality and quantity of services provided in a given sector and geographical location.

Logics of Distribution

Logics of distribution are principles of valuation and allocation of resources in systems of social welfare. A logic of distribution implies a *criterion of inclusion* that determines which households are provided with, and which denied, access to concrete goods and services. For the purposes of this discussion, six such logics may be distinguished.

(a) Bureaucratic logics follow impersonal "rules of office" (Weber, 1978, pp. 957–958), which define various principles of valuation and distribution. These range from universalistic to highly differentiated, including meritocratic criteria, universalistic criteria, and means-tested criteria. Distribution depends on the repeated decisions of bureaucrats to execute the functions of their office according to these rules.

(b) In ***market logics,*** production, distribution, and consumption decisions are driven by the calculative choices of formally free actors.[5] The criterion of access is the ability and willingness to pay for goods and services—that is, effective demand.

(c) In ***rent-seeking logics,*** bureaucrats use their position in administrative structures to determine access through informal payments. The resulting criterion of access bears a certain affinity to a market criterion in that effective demand (the means and desire to pay) drives allocation but is distinguished from market logics in that bureaucratic limitations on provision of services are imposed, and these limitations provide the condition for the extraction of rents. Rent-seeking logics are distinguished from bureaucratic logics in that formal rules of office are corrupted, and the privileges of bureaucratic position (the power to grant grades, to collect fees, to control service shutoffs) are used to extract illegal payments.[6]

(d) In ***personalistic logics*** of access, individual or group identity drives allocations. The criterion of access in this case is membership in such a group or association with such an identity.

(e) In ***infrastructural logics,*** access is determined by the specific features of a common apparatus of service delivery (most obviously pipes and wires, but also other infrastructures such as roads). An infrastructural logic implies that a household's access to a service cannot be directly restricted by the decisions of market, government, or other actors (for example, through valves or metering devices) to provide differentiated access for households on a

[5] This definition of market allocation is borrowed from Nikolas Rose (1996).

[6] Rent-seeking should not be confused with personalistic criteria of access (below). Rent-seeking *may* be associated with impersonal criteria of access: if rent-seeking is based purely on size of payment and not on personal connections of various types (family, friends).

given network. Instead, access is determined by specific features of the apparatus of service delivery as a whole (e.g., the quality of distribution infrastructures, the level of delivery on the network as a whole).

(f) Finally, in ***householding*** logics, households produce goods for the consumption of members of the household (Polanyi, 1977).

Regimes of Access

Regimes of access are the concrete systems through which a logic of distribution is articulated—through which social welfare goods and services in a given sector are actually delivered. A regime of access includes material, spatial, administrative, and social structures that determine, along with the logic of distribution, the actual pattern of enfranchisement and levels of service delivery in a given sector of social welfare and geographic location. The importance of drawing a conceptual distinction between logics of distribution and regimes of access is twofold. First, more than one logic of distribution may be at work in any given regime of access. Second, and more crucially for our argument, any *given* logic of distribution may correspond to various patterns of enfranchisement and various levels of service delivery.

Thus, for example, market logics of distribution may lead to highly inclusive outcomes if prices are affordable to households *or* if a market logic of distribution is combined with some means-tested subsidy, allocated according to a bureaucratic logic of distribution. But markets may also be associated with highly exclusionary regimes of access, in which a majority of households are deprived of a critical good or service.

Another example is found in the case of infrastructural logics of distribution. The most important factors shaping access are the availability of material inputs (i.e., water, energy), household connectedness to a common apparatus of service delivery, and the quality of that apparatus, including its extensiveness and material condition. Where material inputs are widely available, the infrastructure is in good condition, and households are connected, infrastructural logics produce highly inclusive and undifferentiated—i.e., universalistic—regimes of access. Where few households are connected, material inputs are scarce, or the quality of the apparatus, is poor, infrastructural logics of distribution lead to highly exclusionary regimes of access. For example, as we see below, problems in energy supply in Tbilisi have severely limited water access to those who live on higher floors of particular buildings because of low levels of pressure in the system.

Similar variations in the actual level and patterns of access are associated with other logics of distribution. For example, bureaucratic logics of distribution may define criteria that are highly inclusive or highly exclusive (in the case of meritocratic or means-tested criteria of access in bureaucratic logics of distribution). Thus, bureaucratic logics of distribution may be

associated with diverse regimes of access. Similarly, householding may correspond to highly equal levels of access across a population, in cases where household endowments—geographic, organizational, or social—are relatively equal. They may also, however, be highly differentiated.

The Study and Key Findings

Our study used institutional analysis and household surveys in two cities to examine regimes of access in three sectors of social welfare provisioning in Georgia: water, heat, and education. The reason for focusing on these sectors was both their diversity—they are based on very different material and institutional mechanisms—and their importance to the fulfillment of daily needs. The cities in which the studies were conducted—Zestafony and Tbilisi—were also selected for their relative diversity, standing at opposite ends of the post-Soviet experience in Georgia.[7] Tbilisi is the national capital and the center of political and economic power. Zestafony is a small industrial city in the western part of Georgia that has been particularly hard hit by post-Soviet transformation.

In combining institutional analysis with household surveys, the study was designed to isolate determinants of access at a number of levels, some of which are often not distinguished in analyses of social welfare regimes and, more broadly, in household surveys in the former Soviet Union. First, attention was paid to the material apparatus of service delivery and to specific features of the type of housing in which a household resides (apartments versus individual houses, high versus low floors). Second, by combining household surveys and institutional analysis in two carefully selected cities, the study was able to isolate forms of *intra-urban* and *inter-urban* differentiation. Finally, more conventionally, the study sought to examine the relationship between household wealth and access by use of

[7] Nine hundred households were surveyed in Tbilisi; 800 in Zestafony. Survey research in Georgia is severely hampered by the absence of reliable sampling frames. Jane Zavisca, of the University of California, Berkeley, assisted us in designing a multi-stage probability sample. Sampling design and quality control procedures were modeled after the protocols for the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, developed by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences. For each city, census tracts were randomly selected using the method of probability proportionate to size (PPS). Size estimates were based on the number of households in each tract recorded in the most recent census. The number of census tracts sampled in each city depended on the proportion of the sample allocated to that city. With sample sizes of 900 (Tbilisi) and 800 (Zestafony), 30 and 27 census tracts respectively were selected—for a target sample of 30 households in each tract. For each of these 57 tracts, an enumerator walked the neighborhood and made a list of all residential addresses. This method substantially improves quality control over the more usual random walk method employed in the region, because interviewers could be assigned specific addresses to visit, rather than be relied on to randomly select addresses themselves. In most cases, a single household lived at each address. In the case of multiple households residing at one address, the kish method was used to randomly select a household. Before analysis, the data were weighted to correct for discrepancies between the census estimates of number of households and the total number of addresses enumerated in each tract.

a "poverty" variable that combined responses from three questions in the survey on household income and consumption.[8]

The results of the study are summarized in Table 1. The summary presentation of results underscores an important product of our approach. We were able to identify regimes of access not only by sector but by the different principles through which they are delimited: some organized in a manner that apparently pertains in a roughly equal manner to all cities (education); some organized on the level of individual cities and differing substantially between cities (water, in which entirely different regimes of access were discovered for Tbilisi and Zestafony); some organized on a more micrological level—for example, on the level of a specific infrastructural network within a city (heat).

Relating these new forms of differentiation to the sectors studied, we may summarize the results as follows. First, despite the abundance of water in Georgia, the water system has suffered significant deterioration. Differentiation in access is found to depend primarily on the material organization of the system of service delivery, and only secondarily on income. In relatively wealthy Tbilisi, a system of infrastructural differentiation has emerged. While virtually all residents continue to rely on the centralized water system despite frequent shutoffs, those living on higher floors suffer significantly greater shortages than do those living on lower floors. In Zestafony, by contrast, much more severe system breakdown has forced most residents to opt out of the networked system and rely instead on householding. The centralized system of heat in both cities—which in the Soviet period worked on an infrastructural universalist regime—has completely broken down. It has been replaced by an exclusionary market regime. Finally, education encompasses multiple regimes of access. Access to general education in primary schools (grades 1–11) continues to be based on bureaucratic universalism. Simultaneously, access to better teaching—in the form of tutoring—operates under an exclusionary market regime. At the same time, access to better grades is often determined by rent-seeking.

[8]The three questions concerned consumption of meat, general consumption, and per capita total income. On the basis of these responses, households were assigned a binary score if they belonged to the poorest third of respondents in each case (i.e., the third of the respondents who reported lower consumption/income). For meat consumption: those who answered that they had not had meat in the last month or had it only once in the last month (about a third of all respondents); for general consumption: those who answered they had difficulty buying food (about a third of respondents); for income: the third of respondents with the lowest reported income among the respondents of their city. These scores were aggregated into a composite poverty score for each respondent (0–3). Thus, a score of 3 means that respondents were poorest, reporting lowest consumption on these three questions. A score of 0 means that the respondents did not report low income/consumption on any of these questions.

Table 1. Regimes of Access and Logics of Distribution in Georgia

	Social welfare system	Logic or logics of distribution	Regime of access: Inclusive/exclusionary	Regime of access: Dominant feature of regime of access
Water	Water in Tbilisi	Infrastructural	Partially exclusionary	Moderate overall deprivation; access highly differentiated by floor of residence.
	Water in Zestafony	Householding	Partially exclusionary	Moderate overall deprivation; households with greater assets have marginally increased access to water.
Education	Primary school enrollment	Bureaucratic	Highly inclusive	Universal access for citizens/residents.
	Grading in primary schools	Bureaucratic and rent-seeking	Partially exclusionary	Dual system in which grades are distributed by *either* merit *or* ability to pay bribes; differentiation by merit and income.
	Tutoring (access to quality education)	Market	Highly exclusionary	Access determined by ability to pay; differentiation based on household income.
Heat	Heat for those reliant on network inputs (electricity and gas)	Market and infrastructural	Highly exclusionary	High overall deprivation; differentiation based on household income.
	Heat for those reliant on non-network inputs (primarily wood)	Market	Highly exclusionary	Moderate overall deprivation; differentiation based on household income.

COMMUNAL SERVICES: HEAT AND WATER

The first two sectors of social welfare we consider—heat and water—are elements of what was referred to in the Soviet period (and still is today in many places) as the "communal sphere," which included the material basis of a city and the infrastructures that service it. Because the transformation of regimes of access to heat and water depends on the more general dynamics of the communal sphere, a few short notes on the latter are necessary.

During the Soviet period, communal-sphere services were delivered basically free of charge to households. For all households whose communal services were connected to dedicated material networks (including all apartments and some individual houses), the Soviet regime of access was one of an infrastructural universalism. In most cases the very nature of the

apparatus of delivery itself—which generally did not have metering devices or shutoff valves—meant that universalism was literally inscribed in the material structure of these systems (Collier, 2004).

Today, communal services impose massive burdens on public-sector budgets across the post-Soviet cases. Input prices have risen, and constraints on input delivery have hardened. Governments, meanwhile, are often unwilling to impose hard constraints on end users, either in the form of tariffs that more realistically reflect the prices of services delivered or in the form of shutoffs in cases of non-payment. In this context, secondary producers (local heat and water utilities in particular) are caught in a kind of low-efficiency trap (Hoff, 2000) characterized by: (1) low levels of cost recovery; (2) technical or political limitations on the imposition of hard constraints; (3) production and/or distribution networks that are much too large given current demands on the system and, thus, require high levels of expenditure on system maintenance; and (4) pervasive corruption or rent-seeking that takes advantage of weaknesses in institutional set-up.

Notwithstanding these common features of communal-sphere change, dynamics have varied substantially across post-Soviet cases. Excluding the Baltics, the main axis of variation is not reformist versus non-reformist trajectories of change. Rather, the crucial difference seems to be found between, on the one hand, those states that are "strong" enough to preserve at least some aspects of the Soviet system of communal service delivery and, on the other hand, those states whose weakness has forced them into what might be called a "disorganized" exit from the delivery of communal services. Thus, in energy-rich Russia, central and local governments can use price controls over domestically produced energy to cross-subsidize both industry and the communal sphere (Woodruff, 1999). The result has been important "preservationist" tendencies in existing patterns of communal-sphere provisioning (Collier, 2001, 2004). In Georgia, by contrast, dependence on foreign suppliers of primary inputs to the communal sphere has resulted in precipitous collapse. In sharp contrast to Russia or Ukraine, important dimensions of the communal sphere—the upkeep of housing, the delivery of communal services—have been transformed from an affair of the state, maintained more or less universally for urban populations, to an affair of households or private entrepreneurs.

Water: Infrastructural Differentiation and Householding

In Georgia, all residents of apartment blocks and many residents of individual houses in urban areas enjoyed access to centralized piped water delivery during the Soviet period. The regime of access to piped water is characterized by an infrastructural universalism, characterized by nominal tariffs and a lack of constraints in cases of non-payment. Because water is abundant and need not be transported long distances, water systems in Georgia are technically simple. They are organized on the local level and generally rely on electric pumps that maintain pressure in urban distribution networks. After Soviet breakup, urban water systems in Georgia were

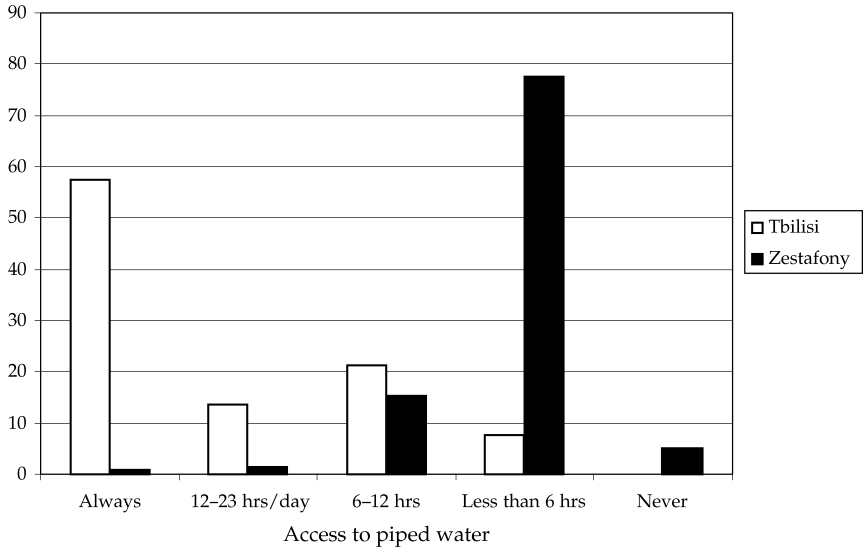

Fig. 1. Access to water among households with water pipes. Based on data from authors' fieldwork. Zestafony: $N = 484$; Tbilisi: $N = 890$.

transformed into semi-public limited liability companies with 100 percent state ownership. In some respects, the institutional set-up of water delivery remains unchanged. Household use of water is not metered, a flat tariff is applied to all users, and shutoffs for non-payment appear to be rare.

On one level, the regime of access is characterized by an infrastructural universalism, in which delivery to all users on a given material network operates in the same way. But the universalistic regime of access of the Soviet period has broken down in important respects. Urban water systems are racked by cascading debts that begin with non-paying consumers and tariffs that are too low to cover costs, extend through the organizations responsible for maintenance of water systems, and end with the accumulation of massive debts for electricity deliveries upon which water systems depend. Deficits in electricity, in turn, mean low or sporadic pressure in urban distribution networks. In this context of underfunding and sporadic usage, local water production and distribution systems are badly squeezed, their physical condition is rapidly deteriorating, and leakage in the extensive transport systems is high.[9] The results include deteriorating water

[9]Physical deterioration is exacerbated by underutilization of the material apparatus for production and delivery of water Alongside economic inefficiencies inherent in running systems under capacity, low and inconsistent levels of use decrease the lifetime of pumps, place strain on transport pipes, thus increasing water loss, and decrease water quality (since materials from outside the system may be sucked into the system during periods of reduced pressure).

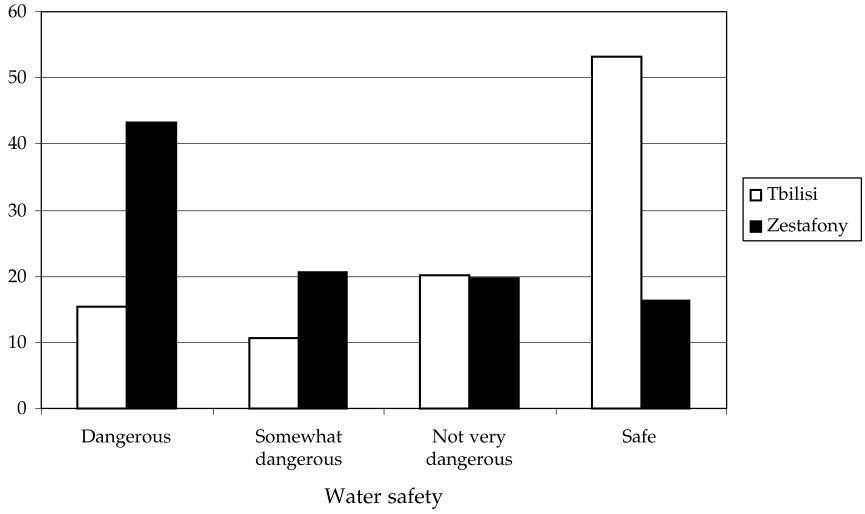

Fig. 2. Perceived safety of centralized piped water for drinking. Based on data from authors' fieldwork. Zestafony: $N = 542$; Tbilisi: $N = 884$.

quality, low or nonexistent pressure in some households, and frequent system-wide shutoffs.

The most striking finding of the survey concerned the emergence of *inter-urban* differentiation in the quality and reliability of the centralized system of piped water, dramatically illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Both the frequency of access to water from the centralized network and perceived quality of water was dramatically lower in Zestafony than in Tbilisi.

The prevalence of inter-urban differentiation—a function of Tbilisi's greater wealth and administrative power—is the product of a critical material feature of Georgian water systems. Namely, water systems are materially organized at the *city* level, as is administrative responsibility for payment for electricity deliveries. Shortages of energy to run pumps thus vary with the capacity of *local* governments or *local* water utilities to pay their bills. Hard constraints are not imposed on a supra-urban level—national shutoffs, for instance—or on a household level, in the form of shutoffs for non-payment. The city is the unit of constraint.

What are the implications for regimes of access—i.e., the distribution and level of service provision—in each city? In Tbilisi, the survey did not find substantial income-based differentiation. This result is expected, given that no obvious mechanism of differentiation exists on the centralized system of piped water upon which most households in Tbilisi depend (again, there are no meters, and no evidence was found that hard constraints for non-payment are imposed). However, substantial intra-urban differentiation was found, associated with the floor of residence in an apartment block on which a given household resides. Figure 3 illustrates

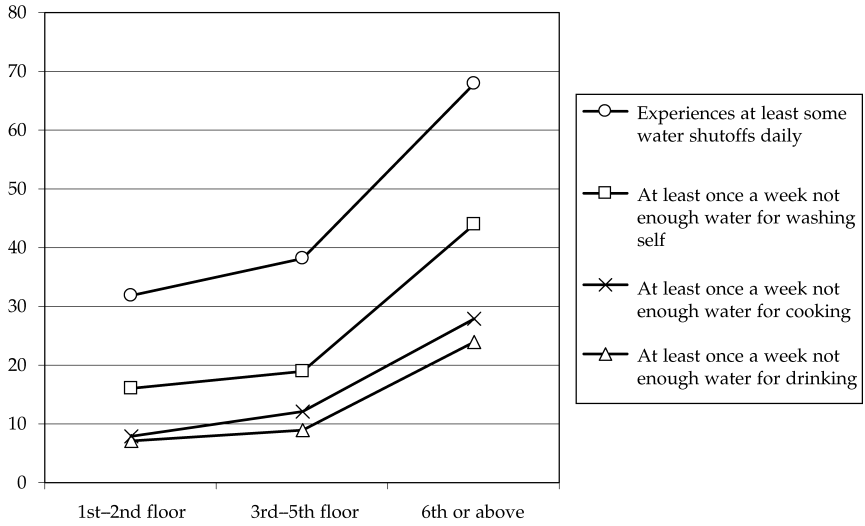

Fig. 3. Water deprivation by floor in Tbilisi. Based on data from authors' fieldwork; $N = 882$.

the dramatically greater deprivation found among households residing on higher floors.[10]

This result is explained by shortages of electricity that prevent pumping stations from operating at levels adequate to provide water to those living on higher floors in multi-story apartment blocks. The survey found that households in upper floors adapt to these shutoffs by storing water. Thus, almost all residents (85 percent) living on the sixth floor or above report storing extra water—as compared to 59 percent of those living on the first or second floor ($N = 892$). Although this strategy may mitigate some differentiation in access, the data show that it is far from entirely successful in eliminating the deprivation effects of living on a higher floor. In sum, the regime of access in Tbilisi seems best characterized not by an infrastructural universalism but by infrastructural differentiation.

In Zestafony a very different picture emerges from the data. The system of centralized water has broken down almost entirely, and we find a much broader range of adaptations through which households make use of other sources of water. Households not only store piped water for times of low pressure or shutoff but often rely primarily on sources completely outside the centralized network, such as wells, springs, and streams. Thus,

[10]In Zestafony, a statistically significant but much more moderate relationship was found between the level of access to water and residence in higher stories of apartment blocks, a fact that may be an artifact of the survey instrument. In Zestafony answers were concentrated in the lowest part of the scale (corresponding to the lowest possible level of access, thus not accurately reflecting differentiation among households).

over 90 percent households (versus only 7 percent in Tbilisi) depend on sources of water other than a piped central supply. Two-thirds of households report that alternative sources are their *most* important source of water. Overall, the most important sources for households were piped water (30.2 percent), a private well (24.6 percent), a public well (24.9 percent), and natural springs (19 percent) ($N = 796$).

In this context two notable forms of differentiation have emerged in Zestafony. First, those who rely primarily on these non-piped water sources have better access than those who rely only or primarily on piped water.[11] In fact, those households that do not have *any* access to centralized piped water tend to have *greater* access to water for drinking, cooking, and washing.[12] This result may be partially explained by the fact that people living in separate homes, which generally lack centralized plumbing, tend to have easier access to alternative sources of water.

A second dimension of differentiation in access to water in Zestafony is household income, measured by the poverty variable (see footnote 8). The survey suggested moderate but statistically significant income-based stratification. For example, three times more respondents from the poorest category of households report not having access to drinking, cooking, washing, and showering water at least once a week than in the richest category (14 percent versus 4 percent of households; N =786). As has been noted, the centralized water system itself does not suggest a mechanism of wealth-based differentiation. But those households with greater resources (such as access to a car or truck to transport water, or money to invest in a private or neighborhood well) may be better able to exploit alternative sources of water.

The regimes of access to water in Tbilisi and Zestafony are now dramatically different. What level of enfranchisement is ultimately provided by each regime? The results suggested by the survey are surprising. On the one hand, residents of Zestafony do have somewhat higher levels of deprivation than those in Tbilisi—though the disparity in levels of deprivation is much less than the disparity in the level of breakdown of centralized water systems.[13] On the other hand, although the quality of piped water is perceived to be dramatically worse in Zestafony than in Tbilisi, 72 percent of Zestafony respondents think their *primary* water

[11]Sixty-five percent of those who rely primarily on non-piped water always have access to water for bathing, compared with 48 percent of those who rely primarily on centralized plumbing ($N = 796$).

[12]Among those with no piped water, 85 percent reported that they always had access to drinking water (versus 82 percent for those with piped water), 86 percent that they always had access to cooking water (versus 77 percent for those with piped water), and 80 percent reported that they always had access to water for washing (versus 50 percent for those with piped water) ($N = 800$).

[13]Eighty-three percent of respondents in Zestafony reported always having enough water for drinking, versus 88 percent in Tbilisi. Sixty-one percent of households in Zestafony reported always having enough water for washing, as against 74 perent in Tbilisi (Tbilisi $N = 900$; Zestafony $N = 800$).

source—whatever it is—is entirely safe (N = 781), as opposed to only 55 percent of respondents in Tbilisi (N = 884). The survey results suggest, thus, the surprising importance of another contingent feature of geography: the distinct advantages gained from living in a relatively peripheral city in which alternative sources of water are relatively accessible during periods when centralized distribution networks have broken down.

Heat: Collapse and Partial Marketization

During the Soviet period, the pattern of residential heat provision in urban industrial areas in Georgia was roughly the same as in other parts of the Soviet Union. For those who lived in apartment blocks, heat was delivered through networks of insulated pipes that extended from massive urban heating complexes. These complexes could serve entire cities the size of Zestafony or large sections of cities the size of Tbilisi. Urban residents living in individual houses used natural gas, electricity, wood, or coal as inputs for individual heating units.[14] The regime of access for those households with centralized heat was one of infrastructural universalism. The regime of access for those with individual stoves was one of either infrastructural universalism (for those whose individual stoves burned gas) or bureaucratic universalism (for those who took deliveries of subsidized wood or coal by truck).

In the first years of the post-Soviet period, the system of centralized heat in Georgia collapsed dramatically. Gas deliveries from Russia to centralized boilers in Georgian cities were cut off and the physical infrastructure of these systems was dismantled for scrap. In contrast to the situation with centralized water provision—which has been preserved, even if in much weakened form—the centralized system of heat provision simply ceased to exist, and all Georgian households were forced to acquire individual household heating systems as well as inputs for those systems. In this context, the key distinction in regimes of access is no longer between households reliant on centralized heating systems versus households reliant on individual heating systems. Rather, it is between households that rely on *networked* inputs, such as electricity and natural gas, and households that rely on *non-networked* inputs, such as wood and kerosene.

The regimes of access for households dependent on each of these categories of input provisioning have two marked characteristics. First, households relying on networked inputs tend to be richer, and tend to reside in apartment blocks (categories that substantially overlap in any case). This pattern may be explained both by the expense of acquiring electricity- or natural gas–based heating systems and by the inconvenience

[14]Thus, in parallel with the divergent composition of the housing stock, substantially different levels of centralized heat provision existed in Zestafony versus Tbilisi in the Soviet period. Among those respondents whose household had not changed residence since 1988, 31 percent in Zestafony (N = 527) and 87 percent in Tbilisi (N = 507) were provisioned by centralized heat during the Soviet period.

(in terms of both storage and smoke) of heating with wood or coal in apartments. Second, we find a dramatic difference between the two cities. Households in Zestafony rely *exclusively* on non-networked inputs—specifically wood—whereas the pattern in Tbilisi was mixed. Fifty-six percent of households in Tbilisi ($N = 894$) rely on networked inputs versus just over 1 percent of households in Zestafony ($N = 794$). The dominant reason for this difference in the dominant regime of access to input delivery is the non-continuous gas and electricity supply in Zestafony. Given the periodic shutoffs of electricity and the indefinite total shut-off of gas (as of summer 2003), heating with networked inputs may have become materially nonviable, even for that portion of the population that could afford to pay for it.

The following discussion examines these two regimes of access—based on networked (Tbilisi only) versus non-networked heat inputs (both cities)—in turn. In both cases we find evidence for hard constraints and evidence of differentiation, though the infrastructural features of networked input delivery have sometimes unexpected implications for regimes of access.

Among respondents from households in Tbilisi reliant on networked inputs, evidence of deprivation was widespread. Eighty-seven percent of respondents in such households reported that they were sometimes unable to heat their households because of gas or electricity shutoffs ($N = 521$). The level of deprivation was in some cases substantial. Of the 87 percent that reported shutoffs, 73 percent reported being unable to heat their home a quarter of the time or more ($N = 444$). Two reasons for such deprivation among those in Tbilisi reliant on networked inputs should be distinguished. On the one hand, as is the case with water delivery, a major reason for inadequate access to inputs is the systemic weakness (financial, material, or institutional) in the system of input delivery that results in shutoffs that affect all users connected to a given distribution infrastructure. 97 percent of respondents who use piped gas or electricity for heat in Tbilisi said they had experienced heating interruptions due to systemic shutoffs affecting an entire building or district ($N = 453$). But in stark contrast to the situation with centralized piped water delivery, the survey suggested that a system of hard constraints is in place for networked inputs used for heat.[15]

[15]Twenty-two percent of respondents who experienced shutoffs said that they had been cut off because of non-payment ($N = 453$) (against 5 percent in the case of water; $N = 884$). And the perception of hard constraint among users was dramatically higher than in the case of water (56 percent and 96 percent thought they would be shut off for nonpayment for gas [$N = 407$] and electricity [$N = 491$], respectively, compared to just 11 percent for water [$N = 810$]). The suggestions in these results of a harder payment regime for electricity than for gas are not surprising. By the late 1990s, electricity delivery in Tbilisi had been taken over by an American company that waged a very controversial and public campaign to impose hard constraints on electricity delivery to households. Notably, virtually none of the households that rely on gas and electricity for heat thought that these services could not be turned off because they are socially necessary, in contrast to 16 percent of water users who thought this was the case. In these areas, the moral economy of Soviet social welfare is dead.

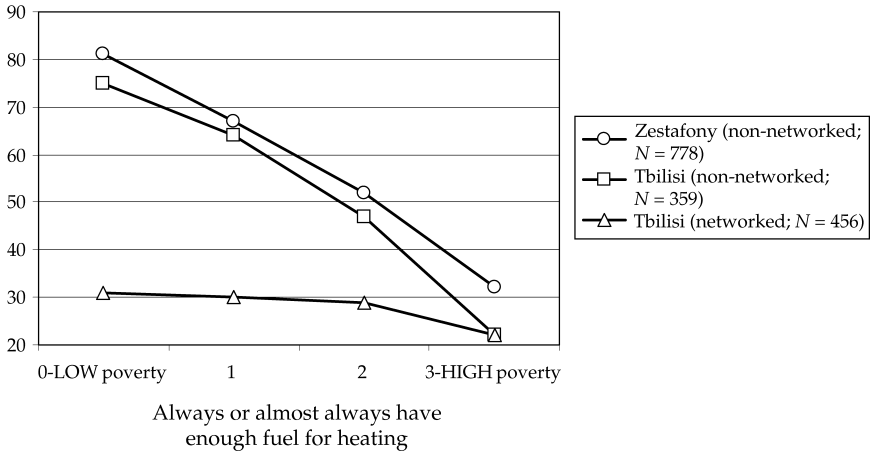

Fig. 4. Poverty and percentage of households reporting adequate access to heating fuels at all times. Based on data from authors' fieldwork.

In sum, in the case of networked inputs, we find a combination of infrastructural and market logics of distribution.

As in the case of networked inputs, households reliant on non-networked inputs—wood is by far the most important—experience substantial deprivation. The pattern of deprivation follows a market logic. Half of all Zestafony residents ($N = 797$) and 63 percent of non-networked Tbilisi respondents ($N = 330$) report not having enough heating fuel during winter because of an inability to pay. In contrast to the householding adaptations that have emerged amidst the breakdown of centralized delivery of water, non-networked heat inputs are for the most part acquired not through the labor of households (scavenging for wood, for example), but through a market mediated by entrepreneurs who bring wood or kerosene on trucks to residents. Thus, in the case of Zestafony, where all households rely on non-networked inputs, 85 percent acquire heat inputs from a private entrepreneur ($N = 774$).[16]

What patterns of inequality emerge in these two regimes of access? Overall, the marketization of heating has created stark differentiation between rich and poor. As can be seen in Figure 4, this differentiation is found in both cities and for both networked and non-networked inputs.

[16]In qualitative interviews, some households reported collecting their own wood. But this number is very small. It is noteworthy that wood-based heating has led to substantial deforestation in the area around Zestafony, a development that should be considered a major negative impact stemming from the collapse of infrastructural universalism in the city.

Figure 4 indicates that household income/consumption (see footnote 8) is a much less important determinant of access for households dependent on networked inputs than for households dependent on non-networked inputs. What is more, the overall level of deprivation is higher for households dependent on networked inputs. The latter result in particular is initially counterintuitive, given the correlation, noted above, between higher income and dependence on networked inputs. The explanation lies, once more, in the infrastructural determinants of the regime of access for these networked inputs. For those households dependent on networked inputs, the regime of access combines infrastructural features that affect all households equally with market features that are highly differentiating. These infrastructural features largely mute (at least in the survey) the effect of household income on access. As in the case of water, there appear to be distinct advantages to being off the centralized network, along with the obvious inconveniences and costs that entails.

EDUCATION: UNIVERSALISM, MARKETS, RENT-SEEKING, AND MERITOCRACY[17]

Education came closer than any other Soviet social program to meeting the ideal of equal and universal access. Education financing and student-teacher ratios were highly equalized across and within republican boundaries in the Soviet Union (Bahry, 1987; Way, 2001). The Soviet Union also managed to realize high levels of educational achievement for its population. Post-communist countries continue to have higher education levels than most developing countries at the same income level. But the system of education inherited from the Soviet period has come under severe strain. Financing for education experienced a historically unprecedented collapse in Georgia in the 1990s. In 1998, public expenditure on education in real terms was less than 10 percent of its level in 1990, leaving the public-sector commitment to education well below that of other developing countries.[18]

Georgian officials have responded to this fiscal crisis through a preservationist strategy that seeks to maintain the existing numbers of schools and teachers by curtailing teacher salaries and investment in school infrastructure.[19] This strategy has helped preserve bureaucratically determined universalistic access to the classroom. But the severe reduction in salaries has forced teachers to seek additional informal sources of income and thereby promoted the emergence of new forms of differentiation. First, access to better-quality teaching—in the form of increasingly widespread private tutoring—has become highly marketized. Second, there are now

[17]The results of this part of the survey are based on the responses of parents with school-aged and preschool aged children (ages 2–18)—425 in Tbilisi; 433 in Zestafony.

[18]The share of state spending on education declined from 7 percent of GDP to just over 1 percent in 1995–1998. As of the late 1990s, spending on education as a share of GDP was about 40 percent of the average in developing countries (3.9 percent) and a third of the average for developed countries (5.1 percent) (Perkins, 1998).

two parallel systems of grading—one based on bribes and the other based on merit.

Universalistic Access to the Classroom

The survey indicates that the universalistic regime of access to *some* (if not necessarily good-quality) education based on place of residence remains in place. We refer to this basic access as "access to the classroom" to distinguish it from questions of quality or criteria for grading. The survey did not suggest differentiation in access to the classroom. Only 4.3 percent of parents with children above four in Tbilisi (N = 318) and 1.5 percent of parents in Zestafony (N = 348) reported difficulties in placing a child in a school in the past year. Nor were any difficulties identified in attendance (as opposed to formal enrollment) related to income. Less than 1 percent of respondents in each city reported that their children did not attend school because of lack of money or clothing and no statistically significant correlation was found between household income/consumption (see footnote 8) and attendance levels in either city.

One might expect a somewhat different story with respect to preschool attendance, which was also examined in the survey. Preschool never achieved the universality of general education in the Soviet period, and, unlike general education, a formal system of fees for preschool attendance has been introduced in many post-Soviet cases, including Georgia. Official nationwide data suggest a dramatic decline in preschool attendance in the period 1990–2000, although the survey showed that a substantial portion of households still send children to preschool. Among households with preschool-age children (2–6), just above 40 percent in Tbilisi (N = 145) and about 60 percent in Zestafony (N = 123) reported sending at least one child to preschool.[20]

Notably, a significant correlation was not found between the current pattern of preschool attendance and household income/consumption. Most families we interviewed did not view preschool fees as a significant sum.[21] Overall, only 2–3 percent of parents reported that they had not sent at least one of their children to preschool because of high cost. Rather, the

[19]This effort has translated into a severe depression of official teacher salaries, which are about half of per capita Georgian GDP, much lower than the international norm of 1–2 times per capita GDP (Orivel, 1998). It has also led to significant problems in the quality of school infrastructure—including electricity and heat. In 1997, 18 percent of school buildings were in dangerous or unusable condition, while a further 55 percent needed significant capital repairs (Perkins, 1998). In addition, 30 percent and 45 percent of parents in Tbilisi and Zestafony, respectively, reported that heat was either poorly provided or nonexistent in their children's school. Helen Shahriari (1999) reported that "most schools" in Georgia reduce the class hour from 45 minutes to 30 or 35 minutes during the winter months.

[20]We were unable to identify the reason for the difference in preschool attendance rate in the two cities. It does not appear to be a function of differences in family structure or wealth.

[21]Fees are generally in the range of 8–12 Lari ($4–$6) a month (5 percent–7 percent of the reported average monthly household income in Tbilisi and 25 percent–35 percent of that in Zestafony).

major explanation for patterns of preschool attendance was the availability of home care.[22] This result is expected. Given rising unemployment and a marked increase in the number of multi-generational households, the number of available caregivers has increased.[23]

Marketization of Access to Quality

Basic access to the classroom has been maintained in Georgia; more problematic is the question of access to *high-quality* education. Although quality is difficult to measure in a household survey for various reasons, the survey did offer some evidence on education quality. About 60 percent of parents surveyed in each city felt that it is important to seek out extra tutoring for their children, suggesting broad dissatisfaction with the quality of public education.

While private tutoring existed in the Soviet era, it has become much more widespread in the post-Soviet period and has become an important source of income for many teachers, particularly teachers of foreign languages and math (Shahriari, 1999).[24] The cost of tutoring varies dramatically—ranging from a few Lari a month for extra attention after school for younger children to the equivalent of a year's income for tutoring for university entrance.[25]

Interviews with parents and teachers suggested that, with rare exceptions, the distribution of tutoring comes close to a pure market logic. On the supply side, there is relatively open entry for those who want to provide tutoring. Parents primarily choose tutors on the basis of the tutor's knowl-

[22] About 55 percent of parents in Tbilisi and 35 percent of parents in Zestafony reported that their children were not in preschool because an adult is always at home. These figures are for all parents with school-aged children ages 2–17 (Tbilisi $N = 339$; Zestafony $N = 405$). The question covered past experience of older children.

[23] According to the 1989 census, 28 percent of urban households were extended multi-generational households. In 1996, that number had increased to 50 percent (Dudwick, 1999). Similarly, single-parent households declined from 15 percent in 1989 to 2 percent in 1996 in urban areas. Our survey shows a robust correlation between the number of aunts and grandparents in the household and lower preschool attendance. At the same time, though we found no correlation between family poverty or income and preschool attendance, there was a small correlation between lower attendance and a higher share of unemployed adults in the family; unemployed adults are likely to have greater free time for child care than are employed adults.

[24] Tutoring for younger children is used to provide extra assistance in certain topics. For older students, tutoring is widely employed to prepare for the university entrance exam. Such tutoring is often extremely intensive and may replace public school for almost two years. One family in Zestafony reported that their eldest son had tutoring for 20 months before the entrance exam in four topics (English, German, math, and Georgian) three to four times a week.

[25] It should be noted that doing well on the university entrance exam is far from the only way of gaining university entrance. Although the question falls outside the scope of the study, in our interviews, we heard numerous reports of bribes for university entrance. At the same time, as with grades in general school, respondents felt that it was possible to gain entrance to university on the basis of merit alone.

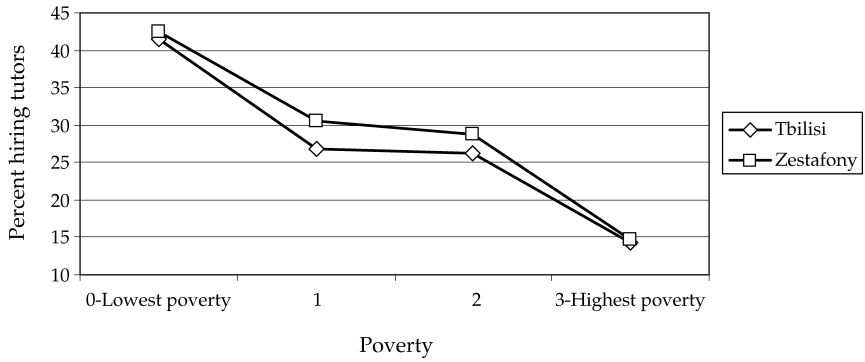

Fig. 5. Poverty and percent of families that hire tutors for their children. Based on authors' data. Tbilisi $N = 283$; Zestafony $N = 312$.

Table 2. Access to Tutoring Among Families with School-Aged Children (oldest and youngest child), in percent[a]

	Tbilisi	Zestafony
Received tutoring	30	32
Did not receive because unable to pay	32	30
Don't need tutoring	38	39
Total	100	100
N=	293	314

[a]Based on data from authors' fieldwork.

edge of the material. Demand for tutoring is generated by parents who want to secure better education for their children and who are able to pay for it—in other words, its distribution is determined by effective demand.

Two important patterns were found in the distribution of tutoring. First, in both cities parents with higher education (who are presumably more likely to think that education is important for their children) pay for tutoring for at least one of their children much more frequently than those parents with lower education.[26] Second, a strong correlation was found

[26]Among families in which no adults have higher education, about 24 percent hire tutors, in both cities. Among families in which more than half of all adults have higher education, about 40 percent hire tutors for their children in each city (Tbilisi $N = 285$; Zestafony $N = 314$).

Table 3. Determinants of Grades (parents of school-aged children), in percent[a]

	Tbilisi	Zestafony
Only knowledge	47	70
Mostly knowledge but some money and/or connections	37	18
About half and half	14	10
Mostly money and/or connections	2	2
Only money and/or connections	0	0
Total	100	100
N =	286	309

[a]Based on data from authors' fieldwork.

between the poverty variable (see footnote 8) and the hiring of tutors. As we see in Figure 5 above, about 41 percent of those with the lowest poverty score in both cities report hiring tutors—as compared to about 14 percent of those with the highest poverty score.

In contrast to the situation with access to the classroom, the marketized logic for the distribution of tutoring has led to highly differentiated access, as well as deprivation of tutoring in households that would like to provide it for their children. As we see in Table 2, *nearly half* of those respondents who felt that tutoring was necessary (just over 60 percent) were unable to provide tutoring to their children because of an inability to pay.

Grading: Meritocratic and Rent-Seeking Logics

A final question concerning the regime of access to education that was addressed by the study concerns the distribution of grades. Two parallel systems of grades exist in Georgian schools. One is based on the teacher's estimation of merit. The other is based on money and connections. As we see in Table 3, most students and parents agree that it is at least "mostly" possible to get a good grade if you work hard, suggesting a system of meritocracy in the distribution of grades. But the current system also provides opportunities for those who do not want to work hard, or are weak students, to receive a decent grade. Several parents in Tbilisi said in interviews that monetary payments could be used to secure a good grade if a student was not particularly interested in a topic. One parent in Zestafony reported that they bribed teachers to pass their 17-year-old child in topics not considered important for the university entrance exam.

Bought grades are a form of rent-seeking, in the sense that teachers extract rents from parents in exchange for something over which the teachers have privileged bureaucratic control. We found little evidence that rent-based distribution of grades was personalistic. Nor was there substantial evidence that payments for grades—or, for that matter, other kinds of payments and gifts that are frequently made to teachers and schools—are coerced. Only a very tiny percentage of parents felt their children had been treated poorly because of an inability to make payments or gifts to teachers or schools.[27] The fairly substantial differences in the frequency of payments in the two cities may tentatively be attributed to greater effective demand in the richer Tbilisi, due to both higher income and better-educated parents.

CONCLUSION: PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

The purpose of this article has been to move discussion of social welfare transformation in the post-Soviet area beyond the exclusive focus on the political economy of reform that has dominated the literature. It has argued that such analyses have generally relied—often implicitly—on "deficit models" that obscure the wide array of social welfare institutions emerging from the collapse of communism. The provision of water, heat, and general education in Georgia now involves a complex mixture of bureaucratic, rent-seeking, infrastructural, and market logics of distribution. The articulation of these logics into regimes of access that determine patterns of distribution and quality of social welfare services cannot be mapped onto measures for efficiency or commitment to reform in a simple way. Our goal, in this context, has been to introduce to the post-Soviet cases a more nuanced understanding of social welfare institutions that better reveals the diversity of emerging institutional forms.

In pointing to the conceptual blind spots of deficit models, we do not mean to underestimate problems of inefficiency. The simple fact of the matter is that Georgia—like much of the developing world—is far too poor to allow inefficient and wasteful systems of social provisioning to persist. We do mean, however, to encourage greater understanding of the very real benefits "unreformed" systems deliver and more serious thinking about the plausible alternatives to these inefficient systems. Eliminating an inefficient system that retains some elements of universalism is much easier than creating a viable new system. We should not assume that the most plausible alternative to the inefficient welfare systems in the region today is "successful" reform. Rather, in cases like Georgia, characterized by profound state weakness and fiscal crisis, the most plausible alternative to the present may be even further disintegration of the remnants of universalistic regimes of access and further disenfranchisement of vulnerable

[27] Three percent of parents in Tbilisi ($N = 310$) and less than 0.5 percent of parents in Zestafony ($N = 342$) report that they have suffered in some way because of an inability to pay either bribes directly to teachers or other kinds of formal or informal payments to schools.

populations. In such cases, the most pressing issue is to resurrect or protect some "social welfare" functions rather than to figure out how to achieve a fully "reformed" welfare state—even if we could reach consensus about what that is.

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