Introduction

My fascination with universities started in early childhood when my grandmother would describe to me the educational biographies of our family, friends, and acquaintances. This was my favourite pastime and those stories initiated my thinking about higher education. In my own academic pursuits, I have been exceptionally fortunate for someone who was born in the Soviet Union and lived through the hardship and destruction of the 1990s. I was 10 years old in 1991 when the Soviet empire collapsed and the world around me changed dramatically. This was the year when I started my secondary schooling. As someone who enjoyed stories of other people's educational upbringing, I very much looked forward to my own secondary education, especially learning chemistry, biology, and physics. But my secondary education reality was nothing like what I had imagined. The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to severe shortages and disruption across all aspects of life. I never actually witnessed a practical chemistry experiment in my secondary school, nor can I remember a single winter's day when we did not have to wear coats in the classroom, due to a lack of heating caused by energy shortages and equipment failure. School teachers were chronically anxious and visibly unhappy; their salary payments were delayed and whatever they were paid had very limited purchasing power due to hyperinflation. I can remember teachers bursting into tears in class for reasons that were not known to us. At home, learning and living conditions were not very much different. In the evenings, I would do homework by the light of an oil lamp light which smoked badly whilst warming my hands over an equally smoky kerosene heater.

It was through hard work in secondary school, some private tutoring, and my family support that I successfully gained entry to Tbilisi State University in 1998. My alma mater—Tbilisi State University—is one of 69 former Soviet universities that I examine in this book. It was the institution where I spent most of my formative years and where I received what I would now describe as an excellent education and where I made some lifelong friends. It was the place that shaped the rest of my life—my aspirations, motivation, work ethic, and ability to focus on what matters. I owe much to Tbilisi State University.

Another important formative experience for me was a year spent at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, better known among the alumni as HGSE. I arrived at HGSE after several years of working in higher education and

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the non-profit sector in my native Georgia. HGSE placed a great deal of emphasis on teaching and I have benefited enormously from Harvard's teaching traditions. Through teaching I was introduced to social science research, with a focus on research rigour and an assumption that while we may err, we shall try to explain the social reality. My scholarly engagement with the study of higher education in the former Soviet countries started at Harvard and continued at Cambridge and Oxford where my epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning social research expanded and diversified.

I realise that most of what is published about higher education in post-Soviet countries perpetuates the deficit thinking about universities. The existing academic literature revolves around challenges, shortages, corrupt practices, and path dependence on Soviet (often seen as deficient) traditions. While there is no lack of evidence for various predicaments, there is a need for a sympathetic engagement with universities in this region. I have approached the writing of this book from a standpoint that comparative educationalist Michael Sadler would refer to as a 'sympathetic spirit' which combines the specialist knowledge and lived experience (Bereday, 1964). The Sadlerian sympathetic spirit involves a mixture of insider and outsider perspectives, and this is the approach I have taken in my writing. Sympathetic engagement rejects altogether the deficit thinking that is prevalent in academic writing on the former Soviet countries. Instead of focusing on what's 'wrong' with universities, academics, students, and policymakers, this book offers a holistic understanding of how universities and the systems that they are part of transformed in the three decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Sympathetic engagement is a foundational assumption in the field of comparative and international education. I use the word 'foundational' here to denote the origin of this assumption, dating back to the foundation of the field in the nineteenth century. This book is positioned at the intersection of two fields of study—higher education and comparative and international education. Literature in the field of higher education explains and explores education and research practices within higher education institutions, as well as the ways in which higher education institutions, policies, and systems have been shaped and perpetuated by various socioeconomic and political realities, the ways in which higher education has influenced the development of societies, and the ways in which future transformations of higher education can be imagined. Comparative and international education, on the other hand, studies education across different contexts and uses comparative knowledge for the explicit purpose of educational improvement in particular contexts. This book also builds on knowledge from history, sociology, pedagogy, economics, philosophy, politics, policy, and organisational studies to combine breadth with nuance in examining what happened to the Soviet university.

Post-Soviet Transformations

The break-up of the Soviet Union gave rise to vibrant new scholarship and international development discourses and activities on the topic of post-communist transitions. Social theorists and those trained in the area studies tradition wrote about all things post-socialist and post-communist in the 1990s and early 2000s (see e.g. Burawoy & Verdery, 1999; Fraser, 1997; Fukuyama, 1992; Hann, 2002; Jameson, 1994; Sakwa, 1999; Spivak, 1999; Stark & Bruszt, 1998; Verdery, 1996; Žižek, 2001). At the same time, certain key international development agents, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, worked closely with newly independent states to champion liberalisation, privatisation, and democratisation policies in the region. The so-called Washington Consensus promoted the idea of shock therapy which involved a sharp cut to state subsidies, trade liberalisation, privatisation of public services and public assets, introduction of private property rights, and limited price and currency controls. It was hoped that the shock therapy would be the most effective way of transitioning from planned to market economy. Transitology became the dominant approach in international development and social scientific scholarship; the first became known as practical transitology and the second as academic transitology (Gans-Morse, 2004; Kubik, 2013). Transitology was mostly preoccupied with economics (transition from planned to market economy) and politics (transition from totalitarian to democratic governance). Normative assumptions of transitology have been underpinned by modernisation theory, assuming that Western economic and political traditions of free markets and a democratic political culture would be the most appropriate for all countries in the region. Transitology has been universalist, focusing on sameness, convergence, and simplification. This approach has also been known for its anti-structuralist emphasis on agency, as it focused on the agency of elite actors in leading marketisation, democratisation, and, overall, modernisation of societies.

Comparative educationist Robert Cowen placed education at the centre of transitology and described transitology as a 10-year-or-so process of an almost simultaneous collapse and reconstruction of state apparatuses, socioeconomic stratification systems, political visions of the future, and 'the deliberate use of the educational system to move such visions forward' (Cowen, 2018, p. 23). Cowen saw education's 'major symbolic and reconstructionist role in these a social processes of destroying the past and redefining the future' (Cowen, 2000, p. 338). This emphasis on education can be linked with discourses on modernisation and progress.

The idea of modernisation has been at the heart of transitology in the former Soviet countries (see e.g. Brunner & Tillett, 2007; Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, et al., 2021; Gounko & Smale, 2007; Huisman et al., 2018). These countries have been

aspiring to modernise for the last 30 years. This concept has been prominent in government, academic, media, and popular discourses. Most commonly, the idea of modernisation in former Soviet countries invokes references to the market economy and global competitiveness, although with significant variations across the region (Chankseliani & Silova, 2018b). As Tamtik & Sabzalieva (2018) explain, strategic documents in Kazakhstan and Estonia focus on market economy values and see education as a tool for modernisation. They note, for example, that Kazakhstan's 2011–20 State Programme of Education Development incorporates policies on education at all levels under the overarching goal of increasing competitiveness (Government of Kazakhstan, 2010). Similar to the Estonian Higher Education Strategy, the priority for higher education reform in Kazakhstan has been improving quality and integrating into the European Higher Education Area (Government of Kazakhstan, 2010). The focus on quality improvement has also been the main driver of educational modernisation in Russia.

There has been a significant amount of criticism of transitology. Simply put, theoretically and practically, transitology has failed to unpack the complexity of why the development paths of former Soviet countries diverged so dramatically and what is to be done in countries which retain authoritarian regimes and remain at low levels of economic development. Many scholars are not comfortable with the teleological perspective of transitology that assumes liberal democracy to be the single destination of historical progression (Gans-Morse, 2004).

The departure from the Soviet university tradition was triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a seismic event that was not anticipated by either politicians or academics. This event either was too complex to determine the exact causes or happened entirely by chance. Boudon (1986) notes that 'in the social sciences, chance is generally thought to be a very unwelcome guest, ubiquitous but studiously concealed, ignored and even denied the right to exist by virtually everyone' (p. 173). The dissolution of the Soviet Union created chaos which led to massive disruption in all sectors of society, and to all aspects of individuals' lives; it turned the existing order upside down, leading to revolutionary changes in higher education and the broader society. What I mean here by chaos is not only a state of disorder and confusion but also the inherent unpredictability that ensued. The framing of this period as chaotic and unpredictable also underscores the importance of initial conditions and rejects linearity. All Soviet universities were part of the same Soviet universe. Yet, each country had different initial conditions at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and most of these country-level differences still persist after three decades.

The linear thinking underpinning transitology cannot do justice to the turbulent processes of post-Soviet transformations. In contrast, dialectical thinking recognises chaotic, contradictory forces within institutions and societies. These forces are sometimes balanced and, at other times, in conflict. When old ways of doing things (thesis) are challenged (antithesis) in a struggle, a new state of

balance emerges (synthesis) and the tensions are temporarily resolved. Whenever old ways of doing things are challenged, the existing system tries to resist the change at any cost. Change and continuity, chaos and order, system breakdown/stagnation, and transformation are all dynamics of the dialectical process (Farazmand, 2003). The transformations of former Soviet universities have been dialectical with continuous tensions between the old Soviet and new ways of teaching and organising higher learning.

Universities have been operating in the context of substantial social, economic, and political transformations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These transformations have followed different paths in each country and today there exists great diversity in terms of where each nation state stands in terms of their human, economic, and political development, as measured by mainstream global indicators. What follows gives an idea of how the world sees the socioeconomic and political changes in these countries through certain mainstream global indicators.

While numerically presented gains in human development have taken place at a more-or-less similar pace, economically and politically, these countries diverged significantly. The measure of human development used here is the United Nation's Human Development Index (HDI) which combines indicators on life expectancy, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, and gross national income per capita. These 15 countries had considerable differences in their HDI two decades ago (Figure 1). Subsequently, they all improved on the HDI indicators at a more or less similar pace. Based on the latest data, seven countries are categorised as having achieved Very High Human Development—Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Georgia. Six countries

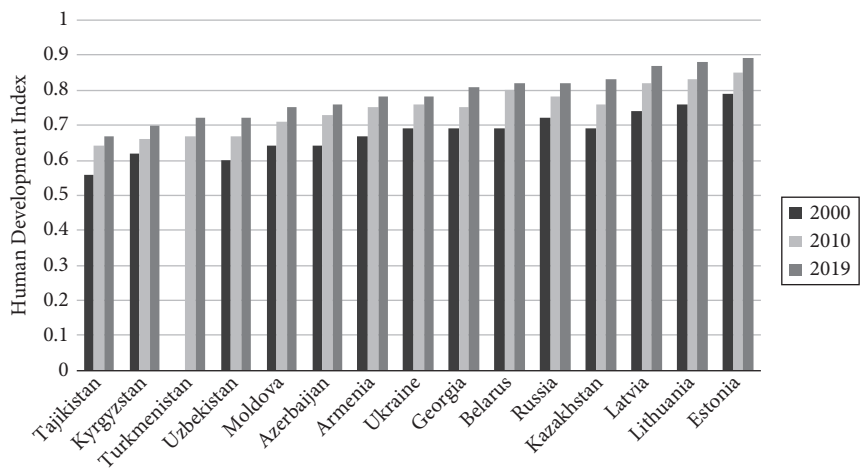

Figure 1. Human Development Index, by country and by year
Source: own calculations based on data from UNDP (2021).

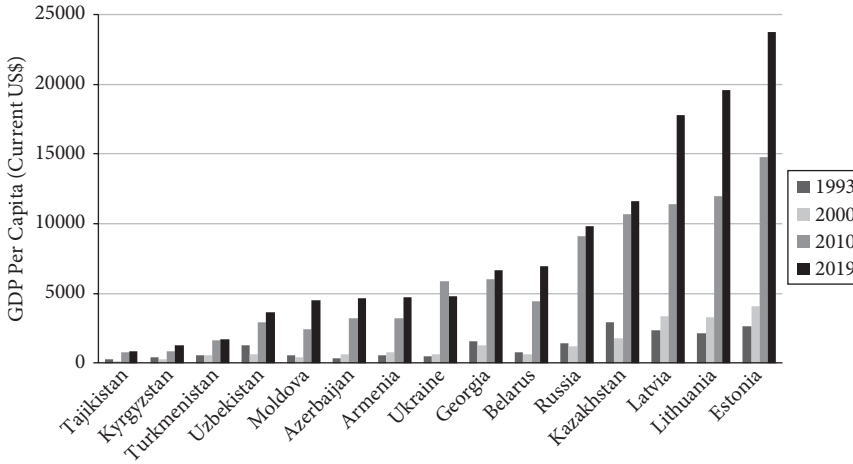

Figure 2. GDP per capita (current US$), by country and by year

Note: Data for Lithuania, Latvia, and Moldova for 1993 were not available. For these countries, the data from 1995 were used instead. Data for Turkmenistan for 2019 were not available and the data for 2018 were used instead.

Source: own calculations based on data from World Bank (2019a).

have High Human Development—Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Finally, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have Medium Human Development. Thus, while gains in human development have taken place at a similar pace, there exist significant differences in the extent of human development across the region.

When it comes to economic development, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, there are enormous variations between these countries (Figure 2). Their starting points in 1993 were already very different. In the subsequent decades, these countries occupied various global income groups. Three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are high income; the following seven countries are designated as upper middle income—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan; four countries are classified as lower middle income—Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan; and Tajikistan is low income (World Bank, 2021).

Changes in GDP per capita have not gone hand in hand with changes in political systems. Some scholars describe the societal transformation paths of some of these countries as 'authoritarian modernisation', that is, drastic socioeconomic reforms without full-scale democratisation (Gel'man & Starodubtsev, 2016). This happened most prominently in Russia but also in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan (Gel'man, 2016; Patalakh, 2018; Rust, 2018; Serafini et al., 2020). In other words, governments led economic development agendas and at the same time prevented the democratisation of political culture and institutions.

Political development is a more controversial concept than economic or human development. Not everyone agrees that the level of democracy can be used as a meaningful measure of political development. Definitions of democracy differ, as 'democracy is about plurality and difference, not identity and sameness' (Biesta, 2015, p. 120). Some view democracy as political liberalisation, others follow Immanuel Kant's individualistic conceptualisation of democracy; yet others adopt John Dewey's social conception of democracy whereby 'a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience' (1916, p. 87). Depending on the definition, interpretations of levels of attained democracy can be conflicting. For example, the Kazakhstani government calls its country 'the land of democracy' (Marat, 2009), while the measure adopted below categorises it as an authoritarian state.

Various democracy indices exist: Freedom House, Polity, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), and the Bertelsmann Democracy Index. Analysis of the indices from each of these sources for the former Soviet countries shows very high correlations between 0.89 and 0.98 (p=.000) (Chankseliani, 2018). The Democracy Index has been produced by the EIU since 2006. The index ranges from 0 to 10 globally and measures the following five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture (EIU, 2015). Based on their scores for a number of indicators within the five categories, each country is classified as a full democracy; a flawed democracy; a hybrid regime; or an authoritarian regime. According to this classification, not a single former Soviet state is currently considered to be a full democracy (i.e. a state that follows a set of practices and principles that institutionalise and thus ultimately protect freedom). There are three flawed democracies (Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia), five hybrid democracies (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia), and seven authoritarian regimes (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). As seen in Figure 3, the changes have been taking place in both downward and upward directions. Particularly noteworthy is the deterioration in democracy measures for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. In contrast, there was some improvement in these measures for Armenia and Uzbekistan.

Overall, the country-level differences in terms of attained democracy are stark. Some countries have established democratic political institutions, while in others democratic institutions are still fragile. In almost half of the countries, authoritarian governance structures remain in place (EIU, 2020). The university is a quintessential liberal democratic institution (Dewey, 1916; Perry, 2020; Shils, 1989) and authoritarianism is an enemy of universities (Antonov et al., 2021; Perry, 2020). As seen in Chapter 4, political culture has had significant implications for former Soviet universities' development or lack of development into autonomous institutions which respect academic freedom.

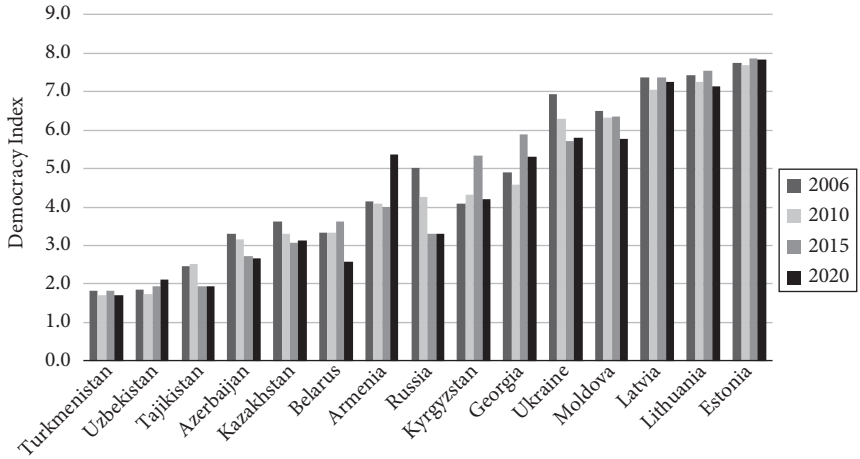

Figure 3. Democracy index, by country and by year
Source: own calculations based on data from EIU (2006, 2010, 2015, 2020).

Post-Soviet transformations have been accompanied by military conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, and Ukraine. These conflicts have had significant impact on the economic, social, and political conditions in the conflict-affected countries. Moreover, some of these conflicts have directly impacted selected former Soviet universities in Georgia and Ukraine. Three of these universities currently exist as six separate institutions—three in exile and three in the places where they were originally established. The next section of this chapter offers more detail on these institutions.

Russia is the single country with the most dramatic drop in the democracy index while also having the most active role in military conflicts is this region. Russia is also the country that has the most extensive higher education networks in the region. Bilateral relationships between Russia and other former Soviet countries are shaped by their respective political and economic interests, as well as the historical struggles and experiences of statehood. The former imperial and colonial power—the Russian Federation—uses a variety of partnership, diplomatic, and warfare tools to retain and strengthen its political power in the region (Cameron & Orenstein, 2012; Krickovic, 2014; Saari, 2014). Higher educational internationalisation can be viewed as one such tool to influence the youth in former Soviet countries (Fominykh, 2020). Russia and its former Soviet universities have remained active in the formation of regional higher education networks. Russia engages with mobile and immobile youth by providing support to study at universities in Russia (mobile youth) and at Russian university branches in their home countries (immobile youth) (Chankseliani, 2021). These links are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

There is one final point about post-Soviet transformations that is central for understanding what happened to the Soviet university, and this relates to the

transformation of the idea of socialism. For most of the twentieth century, socialism in this region used to be associated with redistribution, fair wages, gender equality, and social justice. Since the 1990s, socialism has ceased to be a unifying experience for people in these countries as other experiences, such as neoliberal marketisation, precariousness, migration and mobilities, populist authoritarianism, and politics of anger have 'overwritten' the experience of socialism (Müller, 2019, pp. 539–40). This overwriting has been supported by political elites who used the idea of state socialism as 'the ultimate bogeyman' and 'a disciplinary device' (Chelcea & Druță, 2016, p. 521). A 'ritualistic condemnation of the socialist period' has existed in response to demands for better public services or more equitable distribution of public funding (Müller, 2019, p. 545). Anyone with socially oriented ideas can expect to be labelled a socialist (i.e. someone who wants to return to the communist past). Thus, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was followed by 'the increased delegitimation […] of socialism in the broad sense' (Fraser, 1997, p. 1). This deligitimisation has created major tension as any serious discussion about social emancipation is forestalled. Martin Müller (2019), therefore, asks an important question: 'Is there socialism after postsocialism?' (p. 544). The prospects for social emancipation in this region are bleak.

The Soviet University: Pre-Soviet to Post-Soviet

Globally, institutions of higher learning have a long history; they have been shaped by the historical and cultural settings from which they emerged. Institutions of higher learning have played an important role in society by transmitting and creating knowledge in sciences and humanities. In most contexts, institutions of higher learning were for the elites, educating them for religious, professional, or administrative occupations. The Platonic Academy in Athens (fourth century BC), the Musaeum in old Alexandria (third century BC), the Imperial Academy in China (second century BC), the School of Rhetoric near Phasis (fourth century AD), and the Academy of Gondishapur (sixth century AD) are examples of such institutions. The first European universities emerged in medieval times and, despite being exclusive, supported the advancement of knowledge across the continent and beyond.

Since the emergence of the first European universities, the institutional model of a university has gone through enormous change. Yet, it remains one of the least changed of institutions (Kerr, 1995). Higher education studies recognise the existence of various models of university, such as medieval, Humboldtian, national flagship, global research/world-class, civic, corporate, engaged, socially responsible, enterprise, counter-majoritarian, (post-)developmental, global (research), nation-building, metaphysical, entrepreneurial, open, liquid, postmodern, multiversity, pragmatic, welfare, networked, therapeutic, digital, post-Confucian, Nordic, ecological, and transactional, among others.

Some of these models assume a close connection between university and local societal needs. The developmental university model is a good example and it is closely linked with the engaged university and civic university models. Developmental universities, most of them located in Africa and Latin America, are oriented to equipping students with skills and knowledge needed in the local context (Chankseliani, forthcoming). They conduct mostly applied research to find solutions to local challenges and engage with local communities in areas such as health clinics, adult education, and agro-tourism (McCowan, 2019). Their impact is mostly non-academic and they focus on the short term. Equity and the local needs of society and the economy are at the heart of developmental universities. The roots of contemporary developmental universities can be found in the US land grant universities, Japanese universities, and Soviet universities (Coleman, 1986). In the Soviet Union and other countries which implemented the Soviet university model, universities were expected to prepare the workforce in response to local manpower requirements and thus support the modernisation of society (Coleman, 1986). There was 'a forced transfer' of the Soviet model to a number of countries in Eastern Europe, such as the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Albania. The characteristics of this model included the organisational separation of research and teaching, the explicit use of Communist Party loyalty as a criterion for inclusion/promotion, and the 'rationalisation' of higher education for practical outcomes linked to manpower needs (B. R. Clark, 1983). In the 1950s, China started adopting the Soviet university model which it then abandoned half a century later to effectively compete with the United States and Japan (Oleksiyenko, 2014). A rapid massification of Chinese higher education commenced in 1999 (Hayhoe, 2011). Today, Chinese universities resemble Anglo-American universities in degree structure, curriculum, and internal organisation (Marginson & Yang, 2021). China has also been strategically supporting the development of Chinese global research universities.

A global research university is at the opposite end of the spectrum from a developmental university with a focus on the global nature of the institution. Global research universities are primarily preoccupied with generation and transmission of codified knowledge. Global universities undertake open-ended, curiosity-driven enquiry that may not be linked to immediate improvements in the material aspects of our lives; in their strategies and activities, they focus on the medium to long term. These are research universities with a well-developed global dimension. While the purpose of most other university models, which are focused on the needs of the nation state, is 'the nation as an end in itself', global universities' 'global dimension has no purpose. There the university is its own purpose' (Marginson, 2011, p. 412). Excellence is at the heart of global research universities. A number of former Soviet universities aspire to become global research universities.

Sixty-nine universities existed in the Soviet Union at the time of its dissolution. Out of these, 23 were pre-Soviet. The oldest universities date back to the sixteenth,

seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Two of the oldest universities in the former Soviet countries were established by the order of a monarch which transformed a Jesuit college into a university. Vilnius University in Lithuania was founded in 1579 and Ukraine's Ivan Franko National University of Lviv was founded in 1661. Both of these universities were under the control of the Jesuit Order until it was dissolved in 1773. Tartu University was established in Estonia in 1632 by the king of Sweden.

The eighteenth century saw the founding of two universities by Russian monarchs—Saint Petersburg State University (1724) and Lomonosov Moscow State University (1755). These two, similar to Vilnius, Tartu, and Lviv universities, were embedded in the European university tradition. One aspect that differentiated Saint Petersburg and Moscow universities from European universities was that they did not have theology faculties. Subsequently, Russian emperors founded Kazan (1804) and Tomsk (1878) universities. In the same period, four new universities emerged in Ukraine: V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (1804), Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (1834), Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University (1865), and Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University (1875).

A number of universities were founded in the early twentieth century, prior to these countries becoming part of the Soviet Union. In the Caucasus, three new universities were established in this period: Tbilisi State University (1918) in Georgia, Yerevan State University (1919) in Armenia, and Baku State University (1919) in Azerbaijan. University of Latvia started in 1919 and Oles Honchar Dnipro National University in Ukraine in 1918. Finally, seven new universities were established in Russia at the start of the twentieth century: Saratov State University (1909), Southern Federal University (1915), Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod (1916), Perm State University (1916), Voronezh State University (1918), Irkutsk State University (1918), and Samara University (1918).

The first universities in Central Asia emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, under Soviet rule. We know them as National University of Uzbekistan (1918), Kyrgyz National University (named after Yusuf Balasaghuni) (1925), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (1933), and Tajik National University (1947). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the first three were re-named after cultural/public leaders from medieval Central Asia—Mirzo Ulugbek, Yusuf Balasaghuni, and Al-Farabi. These names demonstrate that Central Asia had a vibrant cultural and philosophical environment long before the establishment of the first universities.

For most of the twentieth century, higher education in the former Soviet countries was moulded to follow the Soviet model of university which was oriented to match higher education output with the manpower requirements of the communist economy, as established in five-year economic plans. Higher education institutions also served as instruments for maintaining equal society and for socialising students into the communist ideology to prepare them for a life of

'socially useful labour' (Blumenthal & Benson, 1978). With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the penetration by Western culture as well as the revival of pre-Soviet traditions, higher education institutions in the region underwent substantial transformations. These were underpinned by the re-conceptualisation of the purposes of education, with the arrival of capitalist market economies and the departure from the exclusive focus on the needs of the communist state.

Universities in these countries share a lot of similarities as they used to be part of the same higher education system for several decades. At the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 946 higher education institutions were educating 5.1 million students (Smolentseva et al., 2018). Following independence, the former Soviet countries developed their own diverse landscapes of higher education institutions. Each of the national systems includes higher education institutions of various sizes, specialisations, and ownership status, ranging from large national universities to small specialised institutions of higher learning. There exist research-intensive universities and teaching-only institutions, and private and public universities. The majority of the former Soviet countries also host international branch campuses of foreign universities (Chankseliani, 2021). There are relatively few higher education institutions in these countries that follow the open university or community college models; research shows that academics see the need for such institutions (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, et al., 2021).

Former Soviet universities are unequally spread across the region. There are 40 former Soviet universities in Russia, 10 in Ukraine, three in Belarus, three in Uzbekistan, and two each in Georgia and Kazakhstan. The rest of the countries have one former Soviet university each. Military conflicts have led to the splitting of three former Soviet universities and the exile of parts of these three universities. In other words, currently there exist 72 former Soviet universities as three out of 69 are split into two parts. A full list of the 72 universities can be found in the Appendix.

The three universities that split into two parts were Abkhaz State University, Donetsk National University, and Vernadsky Taurida National University. Abkhaz State University, located in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic within the Georgian SSR, turned into the key intellectual and political battleground during the secessionist struggle in the second half of the 1980s (Toria, 2020). When the Russian-backed Abkhazian secessionist movement gained momentum, disagreements between ethnically Georgian and ethnically Abkhaz academics and students grew. In 1989, the Georgian section of the university split from the Abkhaz State University and established the Sokhumi branch of Tbilisi State University. The latter moved to Tbilisi after the end of the war in 1993 (Toria, 2020). In 2007, the Sokhumi Branch of Tbilisi State University was renamed Sokhumi State University which continues to exist in Tbilisi. Meanwhile, the Abkhaz State University has continued to operate in Sokhumi.

The other two universities are located in Ukraine. Donetsk National University was exiled from the Russian-occupied Donbas in 2014 and moved to Vinnytsia Oblast. In 2016, the exiled university was named after Vasyl Stus, poet, human rights activist, and one of the most prominent graduates of this university. Not all university personnel left Donbas. Those who remained continue to work in the original buildings of the Donetsk National University in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. Vernadsky Taurida National University split into V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University and V. I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University in 2016, with the former moving to Kyiv from Russia-occupied Crimea.

Some of the largest universities, in terms of student numbers, are located in Russia, most prominently: Ural Federal University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, and Kazan Federal University. Each of these enrol approximately 30,000 to 50,000 students. Approximately 25 former Soviet universities are relatively small in size and enrol less than 10,000 students. One of the smallest universities—Ivanovo State University in Russia—enrols around 3,000 students. The majority of former Soviet universities have between 10,000 and 30,000 students. With the largest student bodies in most national contexts, these universities remain national flagships with the largest concentration of physical infrastructure and human resources.

Methods, Evidence, Language, and Terminology

This book adopts a multi-method approach to engage the reader in a holistic interpretation of what happened to the Soviet university. Interpretation is a reflexive process that allows cognitive framing of the complex and chaotic processes of the Soviet university transformations. It requires inductive and deductive reasoning. This is a book written by a single author. Yet, it is the product of extensive synthesis of diverse sources of information, analyses, and discussions of the evidence for over a decade through engagement with communities working in the field.

The multi-method approach is one of the four approaches advocated by Cantwell (2020) as most suitable for explanatory accounts in comparative and international higher education research; the other three being a bounded case study, a mechanism-based approach, and a macro-social analysis. The multi-method approach can be effective in determining a share of the truth. Cantwell (2020) explains that a share of the truth refers to

> an account that is a plausible explanation for a social phenomenon within context but does not exclude the possibility that alternative explanations hold merit or claim that the explanation holds for all time in all contexts as a covering law.

> […] the term 'share of the truth' differs from the terms partial or half-truth. Partial or half-truths occur when facts are cherry-picked or misrepresented to advance a false and bad-faith explanation. (p. 6)

This book uses rich qualitative and quantitative evidence that I have been identifying, selecting, combining, and reflecting on since the late 2000s. In addition to the secondary literature and secondary data, the book incorporates analysis of data from primary research—an open-ended survey of academics conducted in 2021.

The secondary data include numeric and narrative evidence gathered from the web-pages of former Soviet universities. The web pages were hand-searched to extract information on the universities' history, their educational offerings, tuition fees, and enrolments. Website searches also generated evidence on internationalisation, university autonomy, and academic freedom.

The sources of data also include Soviet statistical bulletins, numeric data from government ministries and agencies in 15 countries, multi-country statistics from supranational agencies (e.g. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, World Bank), private corporations (e.g. Economist Intelligence Unit), and university associations (e.g. European University Association).

Additionally, the following sources were hand-searched and analysed: official documents produced by the USSR and the governments of 15 countries, including various reports and legislation; analytical reports produced by international and supranational agencies (e.g. Asian Development Bank, European Commission, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization); non-profits (e.g. Freedom House) and philanthropic organisations (e.g. Open Society Foundation); evidence from watchdogs (e.g. Scholars at Risk); local and international news outlet reports on higher education in the region (e.g. Asia-Plus, British Broadcasting Corporation, Eurasianet, Frankfurter Allgemeine); and specialised news outlets (e.g. PIE news, Times Higher Education).

Finally, the book builds on analysis of academic literature on higher education in the region, in English and Russian. The academic literature includes published work as well as unpublished doctoral theses. All of the data, evidence, and ideas from multiple sources were combined, analysed, integrated, and synthesised, often adopting a historical lens.

The book is written in English and relies on English terminology that would normally be used by scholars when describing education and research systems. Such usage may sometimes feel unnatural to a reader who speaks Russian or other vernacular languages of the region, and has a close familiarity with the Soviet system of education and research. For example, the noun 'an academic' in Russian and vernacular languages of the USSR means 'a member of the Academy of Sciences'. This book uses the word in its contemporary meaning of 'a member

of the academic personnel of a university', similar to the American usage of the term 'faculty'. Another example of this type of usage is 'research' which in Soviet times would be referred to as 'science'. To avoid potential confusion arising from different meanings of the word 'science' in English and Russian or other vernacular languages, this book follows the English language differentiation between 'research' (systematic investigation in any discipline) and 'science' (systematic investigation of the physical and natural world).

The book uses universities' present names when referring to them. As most universities changed their names throughout their existence, sometimes on multiple occasions, it is appropriate to use a single name for ease of reference and consistency.

Spaces, Times, and Places

This book was written during the global pandemic. Writing during the pandemic has been a unique temporal and spatial experience, not least because the pandemic has disrupted our perceptions of time, space, and place. I was physically based in England for the entire duration of writing this book which started in April 2020 and ended in December 2021. All aspects of human life have been impacted by the pandemic and universities are no exception. Experiences of teaching, learning, and researching online, isolation, and virtual socialisation have redefined the meaning of higher education and research. The pandemic has shown that it is possible to organise various online events for global audiences and to conduct research entirely online. To a certain extent, participation in global events has become easier and more inclusive than ever before. At the same time, experiences of isolation have re-affirmed what we had taken for granted—education and research are social activities and as academics and students we need social spaces to thrive.

Universities are unique spaces where we seek truths. They are the spaces of learning and creativity, critical argumentation and self-formation, subjectification and socialisation. They are spaces where knowledge is born, questioned, problematised, shaped, and sometimes discarded or re-created. This book is about universities. This book is about change. It is about the change of one particular type of university—the Soviet university—in the decades following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This book adopts a historical perspective to explore changes in the material and discursive worlds of former Soviet universities through time. The book is also deeply sociological, as it explores universities as embedded in societal transformations and how these transformations have influenced contemporary faces and spaces of former Soviet universities. Space is understood rather broadly here and positions first and foremost universities as spaces. My understanding of space also encompasses spaces as disciplinary and

methodological mindsets; spaces as national, regional, and global scales of analysis; and spaces as university functions of education, research, and societal engagement. All of these understandings of space are relevant to what follows.

At the same time, the book offers a place-based analysis. Place is understood here as the immediate location, nation state, and broader region. The Soviet universities were urban institutions and, to date, they remain in large urban areas, often capital cities. The urban location of universities situates them at the centre of the hustle and bustle, close to the elites, government, and international flows. However, the urban location also makes universities relatively less accessible to individuals from outside large urban areas. In the context of the marketisation of higher education and increasing inequalities, relocating to a city might be a major decision for someone who spent their childhood and adolescence in a rural area.

Universities are embedded within the policies and politics of their nation states. This is a universal rule and, while many universities might aspire to be global institutions, they cannot avoid being bound to the legislation of their nation states. This book demonstrates significant differences in the development of the Soviet university by nation states. Finally, nation states form regions. A vast territory of former Soviet Eurasia can be broken down into multiple regions, relatively prominent ones being the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). This book sheds some light on the regional peculiarities when it comes to the transformations of the Soviet university.

This book invites the reader to re-imagine time. When thinking about time, we normally use spatial metaphors, assuming that we leave the past behind as we move into the future. Time has normally been perceived as one-dimensional. In other words, we can travel only from the past to the future. Time flows and brings change. Change can be seen dialectically—as a destructive and a creative process of reinvention, redevelopment, reimagination, and reinvigoration.

The Aymara people living in the Andes structure time and see time's spatiality in a very different way, with the past lying ahead and the future lying behind. They face what has already passed and is known to them, leaving the unknown behind. The Aymara people see the past as fostering a sense of community and developing respect for people's experiences; these people do not, therefore, fixate on the future and do not try to forget and suppress the past. Tlostanova (2018) uses the imagery of the Amerindian tempo-local model to argue that in former Soviet countries 'it is crucial to reflect first on our uses of the troubled pasts if we intend to have any future' (p. 119). While the one-dimensional nature of time which flows in one direction is widely recognised, this book also invites the reader to occasionally adopt the Amerindian mode of thinking—facing the past and

having our backs to the future. Facing the past is integral to understanding and critically engaging with the present. This book hopes to remind the reader that we cannot move into the future by disregarding the past. It also assumes that the present is local and global at the same time. We are in a constant state of flux. Everything is and is not at the same time, in a *Heraclitian* sense. Universities examined in this book *are* Soviet universities and they *are no longer* Soviet universities at the same time.

My conceptualisation of the transformation of the Soviet university has also been influenced by Conrad's (2016) global history approach. While conventional social theories adopt an internalist paradigm and explain the change endogenously, within nation state boundaries, the global history approach focuses on cross-border influences and interactions. The global history approach encompasses the boundaries of individual nation states and ultimately looks beyond the dichotomy of internal and external (Conrad, 2016, p. 89). This approach is useful for this book as it examines the transformation of a well-established institution across different societies, under the influence of global forces of marketisation and internationalisation. The traditional internalist approach cannot grasp global systems and cross-border connections. Transformations described in this book are not autonomous processes; they are products of various processes of flows. The global history approach, therefore, rejects modernisation theory, that is, the conceptualisation that societies change from within and move from tradition to modernity (Conrad, 2016). Modernisation theory has been popular in the region, in academic and policy circles as well as in popular discourses. However, this theory holds little value in explaining what happened to the Soviet model of the university as the processes of transformation have not been linear. They have been chaotic and fluid.

This book is concerned with understanding the process rather than the state, becoming rather than being. I explore the transformations of the Soviet university as consisting of processes rather than things. 'Process is fundamental: The river is not an *object* but an ever-changing flow; the sun is not a *thing*, but a flaming fire. Everything in nature is a matter of process, of activity, of change' (Rescher, 1996). In the same spirit, this book sees the development of the Soviet university as an ever-changing flow, as a flaming fire. These are institutions that have been in a state of flux in the globalised world. Globalisation itself is a process,

> a logic of flows that pushes circulation while simultaneously creating obstacles along the way. So the same dynamic both interconnects and disrupts. […] the flows and the bumps are co-produced by the same process. I guess that indicates somewhat of a shift in my views on globalization – that it's neither just a hopeful process of flows, nor a dark exclusionary process, but a curious dynamic of co-production. (Appadurai, 2014, p. 486)

Similar to the Appaduraian process of globalisation, transformations of the Soviet university are seen in this book as neither a hopeful process nor a dark exclusionary process, but as a curious, complex, and chaotic dynamic of co-production. This ontological distinction between change consisting of things and change consisting of processes is important. To highlight the focus on process, the chapter titles of this book underscore the process aspect of transformation: marketisation, internationalisation, and liberation.