

SCENARIO 1: RUSTAVI 2.0

Rustavi in 2050 in its character is simply a bigger version of “Fabrika” (Tbilisi) - a vibrant, revitalised post-industrial zone, which became hub for social gatherings, innovation, design and leisure.

This was possible because of two major developments. First, the city gained considerable autonomy, which allowed it to collect taxes and keep them locally, which in turn translated into better service delivery. Now, the city has both the resources and the knowledge necessary to be Georgian leader in social and industrial innovation. Second, the city is now managing a free economic zone which attracted big businesses and leading companies not only from the country, but also from the neighbouring states.

NGOs in Rustavi are very active - for decades they have been working closely with the municipality exploring new ways of public services funding and delivery. No matter if an organisation is working towards achieving environmental goals, social inclusion or solving any other local challenge - the underlying premise is that there are potential partners all across the arena. Based on these experiences, local NGOs became adept in all sorts of partnerships and are now advising their counterparts in cities all across Georgia.

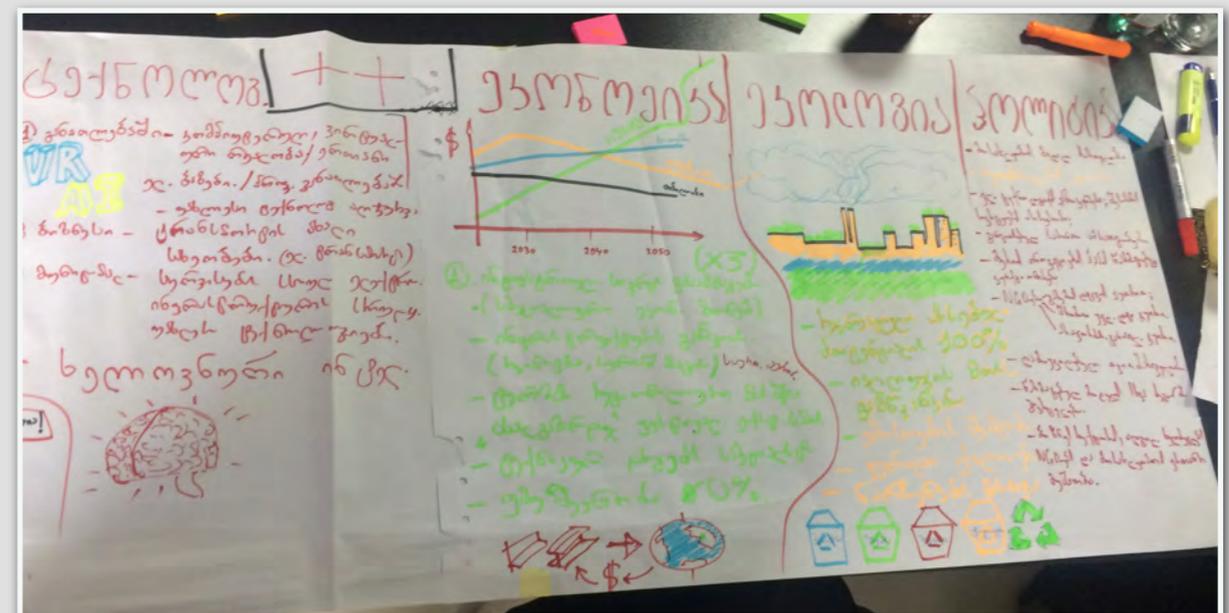
The city has undergone major reindustrialisation, benefiting from bringing in top-notch technologies and specialists in metallurgy and related businesses. Total population of Rustavi is now over 300 thousand citizens. Rapid population growth, however, has not caused spatial chaos in the city, as following the example of Helsinki, Rustavi used participatory foresight to plan their growth also from the infrastructural perspective.

Local economy requires many skilled workers. That is why, the municipality is actively engaging in promotion of vocational training and co-funds latest technologies allowing students to learn new things with the use of virtual

reality. Higher education is benefitting from the closeness of Tbilisi. New R&D labs provide space for testing not only to the affiliates of local universities but also schools from other cities, making these labs vibrant and attractive to experts from all around the country.

Very early on in the proces, the municipality understood that it is not only well-paid jobs that are necessary to make Rustavi a desired place to live. Given the industrial direction of Rustavi's development, the city put deliberate focus on green growth and made sure that the city had green areas that would both help clean the local environment and provide space for people to relax and spend quality time. The river bank is green and full of small cafes and restaurants. The mountain surrounding Rustavi has been successfully forested.

Major challenges in the city are traffic congestion and periodical shortages of workforce, which causes some companies to start looking elsewhere for their new destination. As for the traffic, even though the city has invested in



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ecological fleets of busses and pushed for a shift to public transportation, still many people from Tbilisi and other cities come to Rustavi by car. The city has built bufor parking spaces next to the main entry routes and transit spots.

Due to the growing number of people living and visiting Rustavi every day, waste management has at some point become a significant challenge. The municipality used it as an opportunity and turned waste management into profitable and green business, supported by smart technologies introduced both on the individual and city level.

Smart city solutions provides some ease to the heavily burdened municipality. Luckily, thanks to the image of Rustavi as the city of Innovation, many corporations providing smart solutions are willing to showcase their products and services there for a lower fee, if not sometimes free of charge.

Finally, following the message from the old proverb “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” the city became known from its festivals and weekend events targeting students, young professionals and families from the region and beyond. Industry expats in Rustavi get a chance to meet new people and build relationships that are key to their mental health and quality of life in Rustavi.

INSPIRATIONS FROM THE STUDY TOUR IN POLAND

