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THE REVEAL AND USE OF THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA YOUTH POTENTIAL:
TOOLS AND MECHANISMS

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Introduction

The history of Armenian Diaspora dates back to the middle Ages. The main factors influencing the establishment of the Armenian Diaspora were of political, economic and religious nature. Since 1920 these communities all over the world are commonly known as “Armenian Diaspora” (Concept on Armenia-Diaspora partnership development). Nowadays there are Armenian communities in more than 120 countries of Europe, Middle East and the Americas where Armenians are so alike and diverse at the same time.

When Armenia was part of the Soviet Union, no appropriate attention was paid to the Armenian Diaspora. The only project towards the Armenian Diaspora carried out by the soviet rulers was the organization of repatriation of Armenians from various parts of the world.

The establishment of the Ministry of Diaspora by the President of Armenia in 2008 was aimed at strengthening the relationship between Armenia and its Diaspora. The main objective of the Armenia-Diaspora partnership is to protect the fundamental rights, liberties and legal interests of Armenians in the historical Homeland or abroad, including Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora within the framework of international law and to defend the qualities of Armenian national identity, that is, preservation of Armenian identity. The Ministry, being created by the decree of RA President, stands for a special link between Armenia and is tasked by the RA Government to carry out the following objectives: preservation of Armenian identity, promotion of repatriation, reveal and use of Armenian Diaspora potential. (www.mindiaspora.am)

The purpose of this work is to study the tools and mechanisms of the Armenian Diaspora youth potential reveal and the ways where this potential can be used both in Armenia and abroad.

Historical Background and Definition

Armenia has a wealthy and worldwide Diaspora organized around centuries old institutions and capable of mobilizing large resources. Its constituent communities include communities in Russia (nearly 2 million), the United States (800,000), Georgia (400,000), France (250,000), the Ukraine (150,000), Lebanon (105,000), Iran (ca. 100,000), Syria (70,000), Argentina (60,000), Turkey (60,000), Canada (40,000), and Australia (30,000). There are some twenty other communities with smaller populations, ranging from 25,000 down to 3,000, in Britain, Greece, Germany, Brazil, Sweden, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, the Gulf Emirates, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Venezuela, Hungary, Uzbekistan, and Ethiopia. (Tololyan, 2001)

Diaspora did not have many links with Armenia during Soviet times. This however changed after WWII when, for various political and social reasons, the Stalin regime began a huge repatriation campaign, promising Diasporan Armenians land and beneficial social and political conditions in their homeland. By the end of the 1940s about 200.000 Armenians from the Middle East and some Western countries, attracted by Stalin's campaign, repatriated to Soviet Armenia. However, the soviet ideology and the severe political and economic conditions did little to welcome and help integrate the repatriates into their new environment. Not surprisingly at the end of the 1940s, the Armenian re-settlers found themselves under the restrictive and repressive control of the authorities. In addition to the fear of punishment for having relations with these "strange" people, the visible cultural differences naturally formed a hostile relationship between the locals and the newcomers. The repatriates were not seen as worthy of social solidarity; on the contrary they were condemned to the category of a hostile "Diaspora" with a

foreign bourgeois background. They were considered exotic and dangerous foreigners. In fact, after their arrival to Soviet Armenia many repatriates were arrested and deported to Siberia. Because of these political and social hardships, a large number of the repatriates emigrated from Armenia in the 60s - 70s. After this unsuccessful attempt at repatriation, returning to the homeland became a dream for diasporans, which turned into reality following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Independent Republic of Armenia. Today the Armenia- Diaspora relationship is stronger than ever, and with each year more diasporans come to their homeland, as tourists, as businessmen, as students or simply as repatriates. (www.brightarmenia.org)

Due to some internal and external factors, synergies between Armenia and its Diaspora have not developed to the extent necessary to ensure that the Diaspora's assistance efficiently addresses the sustainable development challenges confronting Armenia. (Gyulumyan, 2008) These synergies appeared only in late 1980's, and in the wake of the catastrophic Armenian earthquake of 1988, all the Diasporan organizations and many individuals hastened to assist and provide relief to the victims of that tragedy. Again, after re-establishment of the independent Republic of Armenia, the Diaspora extended enormous assistance to alleviate the acute social-economic crisis in Armenia and Artsakh, re-building hospitals, schools, paving new roads, establishing joint ventures and restarting industrial enterprises. This assistance has been extended by organizations, including the AGBU, Lincy Foundation that donated 200 mln USD for road construction and repair programs throughout Armenia , Fund for Armenian Relief, Armenian Relief Society, Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, Aznavour pour l'Armenie, and by countless individual benefactors. As the first decade of Armenia 's independence drew to a close, the Armenian government put forth an initiative to reinvigorate, deepen, and make more effective

the relations between Armenia and the Diaspora. Three Forums on Armenia-Diaspora relations were held in Yerevan in 1999, 2002 and 2006. Also, Armenia hosted Pan-Armenian Olympic Games in 1999, 2001, and 2003 that brought together athletic teams from all the communities of the Diaspora. Besides, several TV marathons and business forums were jointly organized by the Diaspora and the authorities of Armenia.

Ever since Armenia achieved its independence and sovereign status on September 21, 1991, a new cornerstone was opened for Armenia-Diaspora relations. The large Armenian Diaspora, widely dispersed throughout the 5 continents, had successfully preserved the nation's independence aspirations across generations born far from the homeland. This nationalistic tradition along with a strong sense of Pan-Armenian solidarity helped to mobilize an unprecedented amount of Diaspora support to the newly constituted state. Over more than a decade, the Armenian Diaspora excelled in generating international political support for Armenia, in the development, funding, and implementation of humanitarian aid programs, as well as in mobilizing private transfers to the Armenian population. There has been a broad consensus that the Diaspora is an invaluable and fundamental resource for the economic, social and political development of Armenia. At the same time, it is accepted that there is a considerable gap between the massive humanitarian contribution of the Diaspora and its much more modest participation in Armenia's economic life (Freinkman 2001, Samuelian et al. 2003, Manasaryan 2004). In short, the Diaspora's contribution to Armenia's long-term development agenda is considered to be much below its potential. This includes the low level of Diaspora investments and business participation, as well as the limited role of the Diaspora's organizations in the ongoing debate on Armenian development policies. (Minoian, 2008)

Before concentrating on the main factors that influenced the appearance of the worldwide Diaspora, there is a need to determine the meaning and the appearance of the word Diaspora. In Ancient Greece the term διασπορά (*diaspora*) meant "scattering" and was used to refer to citizens of a dominant city-state who immigrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonization, to assimilate the territory into the empire. (Dyatlov, 2009)

Journal of Transnational Studies defines the term Diaspora as the condition of a geographically dispersed people who had settled in different political entities but who maintained, in spite of this dispersion, some form of unity and solidarity. Several other terms are used, such as ethnic migrants, expatriates, exiles, refugees, etc. which, however, do not fully convey the meaning attached to the term Diaspora. As per the above definition, Diaspora has a hybrid identity, preserving distinctive features of ethnic identity while belonging to a local community. Thus, a Diaspora is an important knot in the triangle of relationships between a home-country and a host-country. The interaction between the Diaspora and its former home-country nation can lead to the formation of a transnational community. (Oussatcheva, 2009)

There are different other definitions and explanations for Diaspora. It has also multiple affiliations, such as a) independence to act on its own behalf, b) heterogeneity in terms of social belonging and diversity of visions regarding the solutions for particular problems, and c) capacity to capture leadership "power" in transnational institutions. Khachig Tölölyan considers Diaspora as the semantic domain that includes such diverse terms as immigrant, expatriate, refugee, exile community, and even ethnic community in general. Such definitions are too general; they do not define Diaspora as a specific phenomenon among other phenomena. (Tölölyan, 2001)

For centuries the Armenian language has had a number of words for migrants and their dispersed communities, as well as concepts and structures of feeling associated with migrancy. The relations among them are a topic for a separate philological article, but the proliferation is worth noting. In addition to *spurk* (diaspora), the most noteworthy is *gaghut* (from Hebrew *galut*, meaning settlement or colony outside the homeland), whence the verb *gaghtel*, to migrate, *gaghtagan*, migrant, and *gaghtashkhar*, literally “*galut*-world” or diaspora. There is also the more recent *arderkir*, “outside the homeland,” used with a particular political inflection for “diaspora”; the highcultural *tz’ronk*, the “scattering,” which is descriptive, privileging no particular cause of the dispersion; and, finally, *gharib*, which refers specifically to peasants migrating to urban areas as laborers. The lexical proliferation is one mark of the diachronically layered complexity of thought and feeling concerning coerced and voluntary migration in the Diaspora. In some communities, few of the listed terms were used for self-description. It is worth noting that what was for a couple of centuries the largest and most important Armenian diasporic community, that of Istanbul, rarely thought of itself as diasporic; except when persecuted by the Turkish state, it regarded itself as “at home” in an ancient, superbly organized, and institutionally saturated community (*hamaynk*) that was accommodated by the composite society of Istanbul. (Tololyan, 2001)

The classic theory establishes the Diaspora by 1) the fact of dispersal from one to many locations, the existence of the triadic relationship between original and all shared Homeland (defined as the Center), ethnic community and host-land, 2) the everlasting feeling of longing for the Homeland and collective knowledge of the ethnic community about its history, identity and the Homeland, 3) a continuous cherish of return to and idealization of the Homeland, 4) the process of transnationalization and networking among the communities of a given ethnic group,

5) and finally strengthening connections with and involvement into the Homeland (Armstrong, 1976; Safran, 1991). According to Safran (1991), Diasporas are expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral', or foreign, regions; 2) They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland - its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) They believe they are not - and perhaps cannot be - fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) They regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return - when conditions are appropriate; 5) They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and its safety and prosperity; and they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such relationship. (Safran, 1991)

Thus, it is possible to distinguish three components of the notion of Diaspora. First, the term 'Diaspora' is used with regard to the ethnic community of people dispersed from their homeland to two or more foreign territories (Van Hear, 1998). This dispersal is the initial attribute without which the phenomenon simply would not exist. Second, a Diaspora is not just a part of one nation living among the representatives of another nation. It is an ethnic community that has its own national characteristics (language, culture, consciousness), preserves them and maintains and contributes to their development. It would be wrong to define Diaspora in terms of a group of people of certain nationality if this group has been totally assimilated into its host-state. Third, a Diaspora has certain organizational forms of its existence. It seems that this is the

one point absent from the majority of the concepts of Diaspora: the emphasis is mostly put on the “subjective” core of Diasporic existence (collective memories, religious beliefs, national traditions etc.). The tendency to be preoccupied only with “Diaspora as type of consciousness” (Vertovec, 1997) leaves out the consideration of the “objective” (organizational, institutional) forms of Diasporic existence. Diaspora as a social form remains under-analyzed. Institutions and agents occupy a much less prominent position in the theoretical debate about diaspora than do cultural aspects of Diaspora and the concept of Diaspora as a form of consciousness (Cohen, 1981, Cohen 1997, Sokefeld and Schwalgin, 2000).

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that institutions are the core of a Diaspora community. It is via institutions that a Diaspora discourse, which creates the image of community, Diasporan culture and consciousness, is produced and disseminated. Beside discourses of identity, institutions uphold different kinds of practices in which individuals can express and enhance their identification with a community. (Sokefeld and Schwalgin, 2000) However, while the uniting and preserving force of national ideas, historic memory, or religious beliefs causes the very possibility of Diaspora, the stability of this existence is achieved through the institutionalization of Diaspora (mechanisms of self management, educational, cultural, political, and economic organizations). It is impossible for an ethnic community to be considered a Diaspora if there are the internal drive and need for self-definition but there are no organizational forms for the maintenance of its uniqueness.

The variety of functions that Diasporas fulfill has to be considered. It has to be taken into account that members of a Diaspora are occupied not only with cultural tasks, such as support of their ethnic culture, cultivation of traditions, etc., but also with certain social tasks (defense of social rights of an ethnic group, regulation of migration, employment, dealing with problems of

citizenship, of racial discrimination and xenophobia etc.), political tasks (influence on the political life in the homeland and in the host-state, lobbying etc.), and economic tasks (creation of different industries where representatives of Diaspora can work, realization of such economic functions as the right of trade etc.). Armenians have created language courses, Sunday schools for children and adults, and secondary schools. They have built chapels and churches, and published newspapers, magazines, and books. There are many worldwide famous Diaspora Armenians among them Alek Manukian- a famous Armenian businessman and philanthropist, Nubar Pasha- Egyptian politician and the first Prime Minister of Egypt, Creg Mooradian – producer of The Twilight Saga (film series), Mark Vahradian- Executive Producer of Transformers (film) and Salt (2010 film); Serj Tankian – (born 1967) USA, vocals, keyboards; Mikael Tariverdiev – (1931–1996) USSR, composer; Atom Egoyan – (born 1960) film director, Cheryl Sarkisian LaPiere - a.k.a. Cher - singer, actress, Karen Shakhnazarov - filmmaker, producer and head of the Mosfilm studios, Sergei Parajanov – filmmaker, and a lot of other prominent representatives of art and other spheres of human life.

The Appearance of the Diaspora.

Among the main factors that influenced the appearance of the Diaspora was first of all Armenia's geopolitical position. It has always served as an Apple of Discord for the main powers of the Western Asia, i. e. Byzantine Empire and Persia. The 387 can be considered the starting point for the long lasting process of emigration from Armenia because in 387 Armenia first lost its statehood and was divided between the above mentioned empires.

Another period of the Armenian emigration from the homeland can be considered the timeline between seventh and fourteenth centuries. This period is remarkable for the formation of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Although a great number of Armenians migrated from

Cilicia to Italy, Syria, France, and elsewhere after the fall of the Armenian kingdom in 1375, Cilicia would remain home to a significant portion of the Armenian people until late 1921 as well as an important part of the Armenian polity and integral part of the homeland for the Armenians.(Melkonian).

The centuries-long continuous emigration of the Armenians from their homeland predetermined their view of the outside world. Increasingly, a unique philosophical perception grew hold that viewed living in foreign countries as a less than desirable but, at the same time, a pre-ordained and providential outcome. Continuous life in foreign countries led Armenians to develop traits and traditions that accommodated the societies and cultures while preserving their ethnic and cultural identity.

Before the outbreak of World War I, the Armenians living in foreign lands, such as Egypt, Iran, Lebanon-Syria, India, Russia, France, Bulgaria, the U.S., engaged in activism facilitated by a host of community institutions, including religious, charity, educational, cultural and compatriotic groups. Of particular importance were the Armenian communities of Constantinople (Istanbul) and Tiflis (Tbilisi) that had evolved into cultural, political, and financial centers of the Western and Eastern Armenians, respectively. Other prominent communities where cultural life boomed were Smyrna , Moscow , the Mekhitarian Monastery in Venice , Baku , and Calcutta.

It is important to note three main characteristics of the Armenian migratory patterns in this period. First, despite the permanent and mass migration of Armenians from their homeland, the absolute majority nevertheless continued to live in their ancestral lands, Western Armenia, Armenian Cilicia, and Eastern Armenia. Second, the emigration flows had largely been of forced or involuntary nature, and on only few occasions were the Armenians deliberately deported from

their homeland. Third, the émigrés and their immediate offsprings almost always had an opportunity to return to their homeland.

The years 1915-1922 marked a new era for the Armenian people when, for the first time in their history, the Armenian population of the larger part of the historically Armenian territories ceased to exist. Furthermore, the majority of the Armenians began to live outside of the remaining Armenian lands in Eastern Armenia (where the three Armenian republics were to be established successively). Finally, the deported population and their descendants would no longer have an opportunity to return to their ancestral lands in Western Armenia.

The Armenian deportees, barred from returning home, were forced to establish a permanent home in different countries of the world thus giving birth to the modern-day Diaspora. The very use of the Armenian term for Diaspora, *Spyurk*, became indicative of the realization by the people of the cataclysmic importance of this historical change: this term had never before been applied to describe the Armenian dispersion and Armenian communities in foreign lands established in previous centuries.

Already during the First World War various Armenian communities around the world hastened to assist their ethnic brethren from the homeland. It was therefore natural that the new deportees would settle primarily in the countries with some Armenian population, hoping for support from their compatriots. In the years to come, the migration of the Armenians established many more Armenian communities in greater number of countries. Today, more than 60 countries host significant Armenian communities although the bulk of the Diasporan Armenians reside in two countries only, Russia and the United States . (Melkonian)

The living conditions of the Armenian Diasporan communities – like those of any ethnic minority – are a function of the host country's social, political, economic, and cultural attributes.

Thus, the Armenian communities can be classified – by the general characteristics of those countries – into four large groups: communities living in the Orient [Middle East], the West, South America, and the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union (NIS). The general classification can hardly express the situation of each individual community in a member of the group of countries since they are conditioned by the distinct nature of each country.

Distinct and heterogeneous as these communities are, however, three generalizations can be ventured about them and the global Diaspora they constitute. First, communal elites, along with the diasporic institutions, organizations, and associations they lead, have been playing an unprecedented role for them for a very long time. These institutions and elites have always done work that is simultaneously philanthropic, cultural, and political. This work has required material resources and communal hierarchies, and has combined selfless voluntarism with socially coerced participation, all in the name of the nation-in-exile. Second, this Diaspora is undergoing an accelerating transition from exilic nationalism to Diasporic transnationalism. And, third, this transition is challenging the agendas, discourses, and resources of existing institutions, causing changes and occasionally leading to the creation of new organizations. These institutions are as follows: The Armenian Church through its branches abroad, is the oldest diasporic institution. It plays various roles in the transnational environment, including mobilization of humanitarian assistance and coordination of charitable activities. It works through its own channels.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) is one of the largest single philanthropic institutions with an admirable history going back to the early 1900s. After the earthquake of 1988, most of the philanthropic organizations operating in the US integrated their efforts by creating the United Armenian Fund (UAF), which provided about half a billion USD in humanitarian assistance to Armenia since its inception in 1989. There are also three major

traditional Diaspora-based political parties, which along with their political agenda are intensively involved in philanthropy and charitable activities. The All Armenia Fund is another big fundraiser for social and physical infrastructure rehabilitation. This is primarily an Armenia-based, quasi-public organization with branches in about 32 countries. Donations primarily from the Diaspora to the All Armenia Fund throughout its 15 years of existence have exceeded 165 mln USD at the end of 2006.

In the wake of the contemporary transformation, which is framed by and within globalization, the Armenian Diaspora no longer consists of a series of exile communities, fragments of the nation awaiting real or even symbolic repatriation. Rather, Diaspora is, and is regarded by an ever larger majority of its members and of its contentious leadership as, a permanent phenomenon. This global Armenian Diaspora is made up of communities that have necessarily and inevitably developed local, host country-specific, “ethnic” features. Each is organized, though not to an equal degree, and each develops institutions to address local needs. While largely locally oriented, a few of these institutions—religious, philanthropic, political—also retain explicitly transnational agendas and seek to foster shared, multi-local, and therefore properly “diasporic” values, discourses, ideologies, orientations, and practices. Individually or taken together, these formations encompass multiple social, cultural, and, on more rare but disproportionately important occasions, political identities that coexist, clash, seek accommodation and consensus. When they succeed in achieving these goals, success rarely proves sustainable over long periods of time, except where ghettoized Diasporic forms prevail. In a sense, then, the Diasporic community sustains a paradoxical combination of both ethnic and Diasporic cultural identities and political practices; the struggle between them strains but also helps define the Diaspora as such. Some of these identities are traditional, purist, and parochial,

while others include cosmopolitan commitments that entail not a wholesale but, rather, a selective relinquishing of the national (nation in exile) imaginary. In each of these heterogeneous communities, the specifically Diasporic faction of the economic, political, and cultural elites shares a commitment to maintain institutionalized, transnational connections and exchanges with other segments of the Diaspora and with the homeland: money and political advice, books and newspapers, disks and videotapes, paintings and films, information and propaganda, priests and party activists circulate through the Armenian trans-nation. In all but a few communities, there is division, competition, and struggle, conducted across a range of forms of semiotic and political representation. Competition occurs at all levels: to control institutions and funds; to recruit loyal constituencies; to attract cultural producers to one vision or another of Diasporic identity (each entailing specific cultural and political commitments of both the local and transnational varieties); and to deal with the challenges produced anew at the margin, where new identities are continually elaborated as older ones are criticized or abandoned. Such elaboration takes place in verbal, musical, and visual media, as well as through new modes of display, consumption, even philanthropy. (Tololyan, 2001)

In a Diaspora such as the Armenian, as within nation-states, the (re)production of culture and of contesting visions of collective identity is a persistent, and costly activity, conducted not just by a few individual aesthetic producers but also by larger groups of journalists, intellectuals, teachers, scholars, activists, artists, performers, and entertainers, some of whom are associated with—or, in the case of most teachers, dependent upon—organizations and institutions that offer material support and make ideological claims. These institutions constitute a Diasporic civil society that nurtures and sustains the public sphere of debate and cultural production.

Like any long-lived social formation, the Armenian Diaspora is best understood as composed of those who passionately share the conflicts that divide it about the nature of their local, national, and transnational commitments and identities. The institutions of Diasporic civil society provide material support to (and often try to censor or guide or ‘direct,’ in the public sphere that conducts these debates and conflicts, engaging in a range of cultural productions and political practices, defining, reproducing, and producing the Diaspora in the process. Such conflict—usually, though not in all circumstances, nonviolent—involves the exercise of power: discursive, social, cultural, economic, and sometimes explicitly political. Scholars of diasporas have been reluctant to admit the existence of “stateless power” (Tololyan, 2001), a form of power that is both productive and prohibitive and that operates even in those Diasporic social formations where personal voluntarism and not communal compulsion is, or appears to be, the general rule. Such reluctance has been common in some of the best—and perhaps especially in some of the most influential—theorizing about diasporas. “Power,” like “nationalism,” is a phenomenon from which the scholarly celebration of the Diasporic has averted its gaze. Instead, scholarship has come to imagine diasporas as anti-state, and innocent of the exercises of power that stain so many national histories. Diasporas have been idealized as open, porous, circuit-based exemplary communities of the transnational moment, and therefore capable of offering—not of ascribing to or imposing upon, as nation-states do to their citizen-subjects—flexible, multiple identities.

More than ever, institutions aspiring to leadership now use globalization—with its efficiencies of communication, travel, funds –transfer, and the exchange of data, ideas, and cultural products—to stay in touch with like-minded groups elsewhere in Diaspora and in the homeland, to recruit new constituencies and contributors to their discursive practices, and to

adapt and sustain shared transnational agendas. But their agendas differ significantly from their predecessors'. The latter had regarded their Diaspora as a nation in exile, awaiting return to the homeland, whose culture they labored to preserve in local enclaves wherever these were available or could be sustained. *Azkaahbanoum*, literally nation-preservation, was a key slogan (Tololyan, 2001) A few organizations functioned transnationally, to the degree that finances and technology permitted: chiefly the Church, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktzutiun (ARF), the Armenian Democratic-Liberal Party (ADL), and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). The journals they supported sustained a literature that was multi-communal and multi-local, though some communities did not produce but only consumed such works.

Today, Diasporic elites have begun to view the totality of Diasporic communities as the permanent Armenian trans-nation, in which the watchwords are, simultaneously, greater engagement with (1) the "host nation," in the older parlance of Diasporic discourse, in which the diasporas were still regarded as temporary and tolerated guests; (2) the homeland, easily accessible after the collapse of the Soviet Union; and (3) the global, be it in the form of the UN or NGOs or the Internet and satellite TV. Empowered by the 'bourgeoisification' of the majority of the Western Armenian Diaspora communities and the consequent institutional prosperity, as well as by technology, and motivated by a steady shift of ideology and representational practices, the trans-nation can sustain many of these endeavors. Along with new forms of involvement with the local, and some aspects of the global, commitment to a concept of the nation endures: even as an exilic nationalism has lost ground to Diasporic trans-nationalism, the "nation" concept, like the word itself, still exists. The concept and the word exist but they gradually start to change their meaning for the upcoming generation of Armenians some of whom don't understand even a

word in Armenian: the language that was the mother tongue for their ancestors. However, a tremendous work is being done by the Armenian government, specifically by the Ministry of Diaspora via various programs directed to help the younger generation to more closely recognize their homeland from within. Among such programs are: “Ari Tun” (Come Home) which seeks to host over 800 Diaspora Armenians from 13 to 20. It aims at providing opportunities to the Diaspora young Armenians to get acquainted to the history, culture, civil life and to the customs of Armenia. It also seeks to shape strong links between Armenia and Diaspora by strengthening the friendly relationship among the youth of Armenia and the Diaspora.

As it is seen the history of the Armenian Diaspora has deep roots in mankind history because of various reasons. The lasting period of time and the process of gradual assimilation are the cornerstone reasons that Armenian communities settling in a country absorb the peculiarities, customs, traditions and other norms of behavior of the country of residence. This study is meant to find out whether the coming generations of young foreign Armenians that are born and live outside of the borders of Armenia have willingness to support Armenia with their potential.

Methodology

The methodology proposed for the study is the following. The Worldwide Armenian Youth Organizations, NGOs and individuals, aged from 17 to 30 and who are the representatives of Armenian Diaspora are offered to complete an online questionnaire which is composed of questions that are directed to get answers to the questions which are important to test the hypothesis and the research questions. The survey is created on the webpage www.surveymonkey.com. The immediate link to the survey named “Diaspora” is: ***http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/37KNX8R***

The hypothesis and the research questions are the followings:

H. Armenian Diaspora youth has a great potential and willingness to support Armenia.

RQ1. How can the Armenian Diaspora Youth potential be used for Armenia?

RQ2. What can be improved by involving Armenian Diaspora Youth in projects aimed at developing Armenia- Diaspora relationship?

For the purpose of the study Armenian Diaspora Youth will be defined as the young Armenians aged from 17 to 35 who live in different regions of the Diaspora.

In the framework of the study the “potential” is defined as intellectual, financial, social, political, ability of the Armenian Youth living in the Diaspora. The “ability” is differentiated in the following way for the purpose of the study:

Intellectual ability embraces such factors as education, profession; published works; innovations and art pieces (music, film, paintings, plays), while *financial ability* is determined by the business owned and a permanent workplace. *Social ability* includes such components as volunteer work, events organized for the Armenian community, charity donations and actions taken toward the preservation of Armenian-ness. *Political ability* contains the following elements: influence made on the political decisions of the country of residence, demonstrations made, expression of agreement and disagreement on political issues by petitions. All the elements and components that are used to conceptualize the variable ‘potential’: intellectual, social, political and financial ability were turned into measures and included into the questionnaire.

The second variable: ‘willingness to support’ is conceptualized as *intellectual willingness*, *financial willingness*, *social willingness* and *political willingness*. The first one is measured by willingness to give free taught courses or master classes twice a year on a voluntary basis , willingness to give lectures twice a year on a voluntary basis and willingness to present any

writings, innovations, art pieces in Armenia. *Financial willingness is measured by* willingness to have business in Armenia, willingness to allocate money for Armenian funds and willingness to work in Armenia. The measures for the social willingness are: willingness to be a volunteer of social projects in Armenia, willingness to make Youth projects in Armenia directed to free service to handicapped people, willingness to live in Armenia, willingness to get married to an Armenian national in the meaning of “Hayastanci.” And the *Political willingness* is measured by the willingness to represent the Armenian community of the country of residence in Armenia, willingness to establish pan-Armenian Youth party and willingness to take part in the decision-making process in Armenia.

Analysis

The tables presented below are the results of survey which was answered by 140 Diaspora Armenians from different regions of the world where these Armenian communities are located.

So, the hypothesis that is: “Armenian Diaspora youth has a great potential and willingness to support Armenia” has the following picture: firstly there will be presented results for the existence of the potential and secondly the existence of the willingness to support Armenia.

Potential		%
Educational	University degree	76
Financial	Permanent workplace	77
Political	Affected the political decisions of the country of residence	57
Social	Volunteer work, events created for the preservation of Armenian-ness	89

Table 1. Potential

Willingness to support: Intellectual	Very willing	Somewhat willing
to present any writings, innovations, art pieces in Armenia.	47.1%	17.6%
to give free taught courses or master classes twice a year on a voluntary basis	43.8 %	37.5 %
to give lectures twice a year on a voluntary basis	37.5%	50%

Table 2. Willingness: Intellectual

Willingness to support: Financial	Very willing	Somewhat willing
Have business in Armenia	35.3 %	29.4 %
Allocate money for Armenian funds	50.0 %	25.4 %
Work in Armenia	31.3 %	50 %

Table 3. Willingness: Financial

Willingness to support: Social	Very willing	Somewhat willing
willingness to be a volunteer of social projects in Armenia	43.8 %	25.4 %
willingness to make Youth projects in Armenia directed to free service to handicapped people	41.2 %	52.9 %
willingness to live in Armenia	11.8 %	47.1 %
willingness to get married to an Armenian national in the meaning of “Hayastanci”	50.0 %	18.8 %

Table 4. Willingness: Social

Willingness to support: Political	Very willing	Somewhat willing
willingness to represent the Armenian community of the country of residence in Armenia	56.3 %	25.0 %
willingness to establish pan-Armenian Youth party	23.5 %	5.9 %
willingness to take part in the decision-making process in Armenia	50.0 %	31.3 %

Table 5. Willingness: Political

As it can be seen from Table 1., 76 % of the respondents have university degree. A big part of them actively functions as researchers, musicians, workers in the banking system. Most of them, have achievements in various professional fields such as music, art and science. They either work or own their own business. 77 % of the respondents have permanent work or own business. As to the political and social ability the figures are also very interesting and fascinating: 57 % said that they managed to influence the political decisions of the country of their residence. The youth is active socially as well, e.g. 89 % said that it created events for the Armenian community of the country of their residence, besides 100% of the youth said that they organized events for the preservation of Armenian-ness and done volunteer work. (Table 1)

The picture is much more interesting with regards to the willingness of the youth to support Armenia. There is very low percentage of the activities that the youth is very unwilling to carry out. In most of the cases they are either very willing or somewhat willing to get in contact with Armenia, e.g. most of them, 43.8 % (Table 4) is very willing to be a volunteer of social projects in Armenia and make Youth projects in Armenia directed to free service for handicapped people. About 40 % (Table 2) of them are somewhat willing to give free taught courses or master classes twice a year on a voluntary basis in Armenia and give lectures twice a year on a voluntary basis in Armenia, while 50.0 % (Tables 5 and 3) are very willing to take part in the decision-making process in Armenia and allocate money for Armenian funds. And one of the most important things to be mentioned is that 47.1 % of the respondents are somewhat willing to live in Armenia while 50.0 % of them are very willing to get married to an Armenian national. So, the figures for the Armenian youth to support Armenia are very convincing because as it can be seen a large part of them has the ability and willingness to be a benefit to

Armenia. The hypothesis is supported as there is a huge percent of ability and willingness to support Armenia on different issues.

RQ1. How can the Armenian Diaspora Youth potential be used for Armenia?

There is a great difference between revealing the potential and revealing the willingness to support because potential may exist while there may a huge lack of willingness to support. Fortunately, the study reveals the link between these two variables proving that the young generation of foreign Armenians residing outside of their country of origin is quite straight and firm in their will to support their Homeland.

First of all the respondents themselves pointed out many spheres where they would like to cooperate with Armenia. There is a variety of channels this potential can be used to have positive outcomes for both sides. A very good tool is education and all kinds of exchange programs. Educational Programs always have direct influence on youth, both on their intellectual as well as cultural development. Another one is the involvement of the Diaspora youth in different projects where they will be able to work/cooperate with the youth in the Homeland. This type of involvement will positively affect to the rising of mutual awareness of the young people's lifestyle and vision. In order the projects to be successful; they need to be in the field of IT, Marketing, Business, Banking system and of course Diplomacy and Foreign Policy.

RQ2. What can be improved by involving Armenian Diaspora Youth in projects aimed at developing Armenia- Diaspora relationship?

The second research question may be considered of more importance than the hypothesis and the RQ1 as RQ2 since it aims at finding solutions to various types of problems connected with misunderstanding of the system of values and norms of behavior that exist in the culture of different peoples. The issue of concern here is not only youth related problems but also different

types of relationship existing between Armenia and the resident countries of Diaspora Armenians. This relationship is very important from the point of view of policymaking, business, trade, economy and the overall level of development of the society.

The first and foremost task of the Armenian authorities is to ensure the Armenian Diaspora youth that Armenia exists as an important entity in their cultural survival. There is a need for the young ‘foreign’ Armenians to realize that Armenia is their home where they can find shelter and support at any time. The relationship between Armenia and the Diaspora Armenians must be like a relationship of a mother and a child who is sure that he will be protected by his mother in case of any danger. The involvement of the Diaspora youth in projects aimed at the development of the relationship between Armenia and the Diaspora will have its positive influence on the following items.

First of all it will help the young generation to rediscover Armenia from a new light that will eliminate the so called problem ‘oblivion of the roots’ which means that they will not forget and betray what their ancestors have accumulated for centuries. This will bring them to a more in-depth connection with Armenia so they will feel themselves as part of Armenia and not just being Armenians.

The projects directed to the development of Armenia-Diaspora relationship in which the Diaspora youth is involved will also solve another problem which will conditionally be called as ‘growing familiar with each other.’ It is important that Diaspora youth be engaged with local Hayastantsi youth through various projects so that the next generation grows up more familiar with each other. This will result in the lessening of the gap of misunderstanding and the gap of awareness about each other. They have much to learn from the local Hayastantsis, just as the locals have much to learn from different Diaspora youth. Both sides have developed traditions

and customs peculiar to the country of their residence. It will be mutually beneficial experience for Armenia and Diaspora youth to embrace and utilize all the positive outcomes of the customs and traditions.

Another sphere that will benefit from the projects aimed at Diaspora-Armenia relationship development is Armenia's foreign policy and diplomatic relations building with other countries. As it is known a country's foreign policy is built on various kinds of relationships with other countries among which are trade, business, marketing and other spheres. Taking into consideration of the growing possible interest and interaction between Armenia and the countries of residence of the Diaspora youth the mentioned spheres will be enhanced and developed greatly. There will surely be a lot of Diaspora representatives from different countries that have the appropriate knowledge and experience in the mentioned spheres and who would like to invest in Armenia (as Table 3 shows). These people may get involved in various types of relationship starting from the local ordinary citizens up to the different instances of the Armenian government. In case of finding the appropriate support from the mentioned layers of the society they will be longing to expand their business relations to overseas countries and attract foreigners to start their business in Armenia. The importance of the issue is enclosed in the fact that besides the development of external relations an internal issue of filling the state budget will benefit from the existing situation. By paying taxes to the Armenian government these people will willingly or unwillingly support the enrichment of the Armenian state budget. However, the main benefit from the process will be in the acceleration of building new business partnerships between local and new business partnerships between local and international companies to advance transfer of skills and technologies. This will accelerate building new business partnerships between local and international companies to advance transfer of skills and technologies. This will be a great

help to the governments of home countries in the form of advice since it will be provided with respect to improvement of the investment climate and deregulation.

The problem here is that according to some views expressed by the participants of the survey Armenian government lacks democracy and the rule of law. It has to take steps to fight corruption and establish democratic forms of governance. According to an opinion of one of the asked, a lasting way to attract and retain involvement of Diasporans in the life of Armenia is to show genuine effort by the people to fight corruption in the government. As he points it out it is incredibly disheartening when a Diasporan, full of hope and commitment, comes to Armenia for a couple of months and realizes that the parliament, the government and the civil service are all in conflict with each other. This, according to him, is a direct answer to the business interest of the country.

Recommendations

As the findings propose Armenian Diaspora youth definitely has potential and willingness to support Armenia in different spheres. This potential may be used in the sphere of economics, foreign policy, culture, education, etc.

Hence, the main recommendations refer to the following directions:

- Leverage the educated young professionals to bring them to Armenia as tourists or for longer periods to teach and coach Armenians in such areas as banking, customer service, business communication in a more Western context to in a way push the country forward by introducing advanced technologies and pointing out the ways will best suit to have the maximum utility.
- Make volunteer and/or paid programs or jobs where the Diaspora Youth will work with local youth

- Hire or invite young professionals of the sphere to give master classes to the actors, singers and musicians
- Invite young researchers and scientists to present and share the knowledge, innovations and articles they make in different spheres in Armenia
- Organize periodic conferences via internet about e.g. economics, sociology, marketing, management and other fields. This will eliminate the travel costs and will attract more people in Armenia. The conferences might be held by the youth organizations and might be called “WorldArmenianOnlineSummit.” The name suggests that the presentations, responses, remarks and suggestions are aggregated and reported to the appropriate bodies of Armenia and to those of the countries of the residence of the Diaspora youth.
- Short-term internship for new business owners in foreign firms—instead of traditional undergraduate training in the United States.

Conclusion

As international migration and market liberalization expand globally Armenia may find itself in a situation where it can benefit from the situation it is in, since it has a Diaspora that counts about seven million all over the world and can be considered as a competitive advantage of Armenia and the Armenian nation.

The cooperation in the above mention fields will raise mutual recognition between young leaders and tie them to the homeland. This will serve as a means of better understanding of the structures and regulations of the governing processes in Armenia by the Diaspora youth. This in its case will serve as a prerequisite and will entail the appearance of new ideas for cooperation and further development and open opportunities for Armenia to use its Diaspora youth potential.

As Albert Hirschman (1958) once noted development is not so much about allocation of existing resources but rather about mobilizing resources that are hidden, scattered or badly utilized. The traditional practice of the relationship between Diasporas and their countries of origin strongly supports this idea. Therefore, the main task of the Armenian authorities is to find leverages to use the potential that definitely exists and not to let the process ‘foreignization’ to entirely absorb and assimilate the Armenian-ness of the existing young and coming generations of Armenians.

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