American University of Armenia

Social Protests in Armenia: Econometric Analysis and Theoretical Interpretation

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Abstract

One of the main causes of recent social protests in different countries is supposed to be the social factor. The latter includes the level of inequality and poverty in a specific state. The purpose of this research is to illustrate the picture of the generators of Armenian social movements. It aims to indicate that the uprisings are triggered by the causes other than the social ones in Armenia.

For that purpose we conduct a mixed research based on the content analysis and expert interviews. Aside from the primary data we used secondary one on the political, social and economic factors to find out the types of relations between the protests and the independent variables through regression analysis. In all cases the social factors registered very insignificant relations with the protests. Moreover, the latter also has no relations with the social factors but the qualitative research underlines some indirect link between them.

Content

List of Abbreviations

Cor	Correlation
Cov	Covariance
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
FE	Fixed Effects
NA	National Assembly
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PC	Per capita
PHD	Doctor of Philosophy
RA	Republic of Armenia
SP	Spatial
UNDHR	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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1. Introduction

While looking at the recent academic literature of the social sciences and other disciplines one may witness the attempts of different authors to delve deeper in the explanations of the social protests. The latter may be considered as a common phenomenon of the socio-political life of any country. Different researches have been conducted to approach this issue from various angles. Moreover, several theories have been advanced to describe, define and predict the dynamics of social uprisings in general.

As a part of this story Armenia has also registered the examples of those movements starting from the last years of the Soviet epoch. However, the independent Republic of Armenia is not isolated from the protests either. Certainly the content of the protests is not the same and their variability has been increased. That change greatly depends on the causes and reasons of social mobilizations.

The triggers of the uprisings may come from different spheres. The recent ones in the developed world were generated by the high level of inequality. The latter is considered to be a social factor. The examples of Latin American countries have the same applications to the poverty and inequality as decisive factors for the protests

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate that this approach fails in the case of Armenia. The social factors like poverty and inequality create some social exclusion and mitigate the possibility of protests. One thing should be clarified that in the frames of this research the social protests, movements and uprisings refer only to the ones which have been expressed in the form of demonstrations.

So, the first hypothesis developed refers to the connections between the social factors (poverty, inequality) and the number of the social protests. So, we argue that:

H₁: Social factors do not have a decisive influence on the social protests in Armenia from 2004 to 2010.

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To test the hypothesis several research questions may be moved forward. Firstly, we need to find out the trends of the social movements in Armenia for that period of time. Furthermore, it is important to see the relations between the social protests and the indicators of the social factors. Moreover, other factors (economic, political) should also be encountered which may have some influence on the number of the movements. Departing from that assumption the next hypothesis is the following:

H₂: Political factors have an impact on the social protests in Armenia.

Here again the relations between the dependent variable and the independent ones should be observed. It will indicate whether there are correlations or causal relations among them.

Then we tried also to dig into the analysis of the reverse causality between the mentioned variables. For that purpose we formulate our hypothesis which states that:

H₃: Social protests have an impact on the social factors.

This interpretation of the issue requires again to get the answers to some questions. It will be necessary, firstly to clarify the place of the social movements in the state-society relations in Armenia but this time we take a longer period to observe (2004-2012). Secondly, we need to find out the general functions that the protests exercise in Armenia. Eventually, it is important to explore the channels through which the social protests may have the impact on the social factors.

As it may be observed, the whole work can be separated into two main parts. It begins with a review of the articles and books that have been published in this sphere and may to some extent contribute to the current study. Next the dynamics of the social protests in Armenia are described in a precise way. Then the part on the methodology comes which we used for our research. Particularly it touches upon the data gathering and analyzing processes. The latter is followed by the description of our data through the correlation analysis. Finally the first part ends with the findings which are reflected in the regression analysis. The second section of the work is divided into three scenarios (More optimistic, More pessimistic and the Armenian one)

to indicate the impact of the social protests on the social factors and find out the possibility of the reverse causality.

1.1 Short overview of the main streams of mass demonstrations in Armenia from 2004 to 2012

The overall review of the protests in Armenia for the period of 2004-2012 indicates the specificities of the contents of social uprisings. As it was mentioned above though there are different ways of expressing protests this work focuses only on the ones which have been exercising through the demonstrations. The data gathering process identified that there were years when the variety of the triggers and reasons of the protests were high. However, starting from 2008 the mass demonstrations began to rise not only because the causes of the protests were increasing but also due to the frequency of the mass meetings. In this framework, the role of the pre-electoral activeness may not be ignored as the latter is one the main determinants of the protests in Armenia. So, the small description of the social climate for each year starting from 2004 may be useful for getting the picture of the reasons behind the uprisings.

The streams of protests of 2004 were probed due to some political reasons as it was a post electoral period. The new born oppositional parties organized different meetings and rallies which were covering also the Armenian districts. However, the protests were particularly concentrated in the capital of the country. One of the rationales behind it is the fact that the top protesting people of that year were also the population who lost their houses because of the construction of the Northern Avenue. As they stated they were struggling for a proper compensation. Their struggle is an ongoing one. Moreover, there was another group of people who started their movement for the preservation of Dalma Gardens. Most of those protests were also continuing during the coming years.

The basic lines of the protests since 2005 were not so much different from the previous years. In line with the claims on Dalma Gardens, Northern Avenue and the political motives, the new issue was raised. The latter pertained to the usage of social identification cards. Some

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pensioners were claiming that they would meet difficulties while getting their pensions. The target group also consisted of some religious people who refused to use those cards as they were against their views.

Comparing with the previous two years the year of 2006 did not give a rise to a new longitudinal mass meetings like for example the movement of Dalma Gardens or people who were fighting for the areas which were going to be used for the state interests. The main streams mentioned above were in progress also in 2006 along with some small-volume ones.

The environmental movements became slightly visible in 2007. Their activeness increased during further consecutive years. The previous landowners of the area of Northern Avenue were still gathering in front of Presidential office or the Government to reach their goal during that year. Nevertheless, the top parts of the protests were organized by the political opposition which held meetings headed by the first president of Armenia. Being a pre-election year 2007 registered a high number of protests comparing with the previous ones.

The trend of the volume and frequency of the demonstrations in Armenia during the given years was an increasing one. 2008 was a turbulent year in that sense. After the presidential election the oppositional rallies were culminated in the violence on March 1. Several people died. March 1 triggered different types of protests. The latter were being organized by the young oppositionists, usually in the form of pickets. The parents and relatives of people dead on March 1 became another group of protesting people. Eventually, the wives and children of people who were jailed in post-electoral period because of some political reasons were gathering once a week in front of the courts. Another group includes the parents of the soldiers who died in army in peaceful conditions. This year was also a crucial one for the green activists. One of their initiatives was the protection of Teghut which was demonstrated in different mass meetings. Finally, the taxi drivers were actively protesting against the usage of the yellow number plates. Indeed, these were the most active groups but not the only ones. Almost all these meetings were continuing during 2009 -2012 with greater frequency.

In 2010 a new wave of mass demonstrations emerged related to the educational issues. Particularly, they refer to the opening of the schools where the subjects were going to be taught in foreign languages. As to the environmentalists they made the scope and frequency of the protests greater.

Another stream of protests consisted of people who were engaged in open air trade. The reason of their protest was the decree that did not allow them to continue their trade in those places .Their protests were mainly implemented in 2011.As to the year of 2012 it was a peak of environmental movements in Armenia with the success stories in Trchkan and the garden on Mashtoc Street.

1.2 Literature Review

There are different examples of social protests in the world history starting from the abolition of slavery to the Arab uprisings. Though not all of them had success, they are valuable cases for the researchers to explore the causes and consequences of social movements. One of the many triggers of social mobilization is an inequality which has brought many waves of protests in different period of time. The inequality in line with the poverty is vulnerable issues in many post Soviet countries as well. Armenia is not an exception. Nevertheless, there is a difficulty with Armenia in observing the social protests generated from social factors, as sometimes the cause and initial goal of the movement may not coincide with the final one. So, it is important to delve deeper into the essence of the protests and find out their generators.

Generally, most of the researchers use Gini coefficient to measure the level of inequality in a country. This index is based on the Lorentz curve which reflects the distribution of any quantity among people of a certain region. The quantity may refer to the income, wealth, food, etc. Graphically, the percentages of the households are presented in the x-axes of the curve .The y-axes stands for the cumulative percentage of the wealth or income. The Gini coefficient underlines the level of inequality in the distribution of the resources (Farris, 2010). The high Gini coefficient may generate a protest in the society.

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There are many definitions of the concept of social protests in the literature but they have almost the same applications. The social protests are caused by the dissatisfaction of people regarding the policies of the government or other institutions. They are usually organized by the part of the population which is adversely influenced by those programs but does not have an access to the legitimate channels to express their dissatisfaction. One of the guarantees of the successful protests is the reason behind them. The latter should be a concern for the majority of the society about which nobody or a few people have spoken up yet (Boulding, 1967). Referring to the work of De la Porte and Diani, Jonathan Christiansen mentioned that the social protests "are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; [and they] share a distinct collective identity" (Christiansen, 2009). The protesting group gets autonomy and becomes the main source of the demands. In this context sometimes the state automatically may turn into the external body as it was in the case of Egyptian uprisings in Tahrir square (El-Ghobashy, 2011).

In the literature scientists advanced different theories on the models of policy making (rational choice, institutional, group). Probably, in the context of social protests the group theory may be applicable. It assumes that the public policy is the result or the consequence of the movements and actions of different interest groups. In contrast of the elite theory the proponents of this approach claim that the groups are the ones who control the situation (Kraft, 2010). So, they somehow theoretically approve the decisive role of the social movements in the state policy.

Economists themselves tried to interpret the social protests. They argue that the societal perceptions of the reasons of the social uprisings are wrong. People tend to believe that the social movements are motivated by the genuine grievance. This approach does not coincide with the result of their analysis on this issue. The main peculiarity of their approach is the fact that they accepted the protests as the organized crimes. Their economic theory of the conflict is primarily based on the perceptions of the grievances. They distinguish between objective grievances and the subjective ones. The latter is considered as a trigger of a social conflict. It covers the

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economic indicators like the amount of the wages, economic growth (Collier, 2006). The objective ones refer to the "inequality, political repression, and ethnic and religious divisions" (Collier, 2006, p. 22). Economists argue that there are many countries with relatively low income and objective grievances but they lack social protests (Collier, 2006).

The above mentioned definitions identify that regardless of the economic reasons of the movements they may have some political implications as they are mostly addressed to the governments. Their policies may generate social exclusion of some people from the political and economic aspects of the country. One of the main indicators of the exclusion is the level of inequality and poverty. The research was conducted to find out the link between the inequality and politics. It was aimed to clarify whether the inequality leads to the political instability in terms of probing social protests. The findings underline that though all eighteen countries of the research faced high levels of social exclusion, only two of them have experienced social protests and political instability (Côte D'Ivoire and Pakistan) (Hartman, 2012). In both cases the main generator of the unrests was the unequal distribution of wealth. The other components of social exclusion, like the social safety, played only a little role in triggering social movements. There may be two crucial reasons for the lack of the social movements in the rest of the observed states. Firstly, it may refer to the pressure of the ruling elites in these countries (China, Uzbekistan, etc.). Secondly, probably, the protest is seen as a democratic challenge. As it was mentioned in the research that phenomenon was obvious in the Arab world where the authorities "are swept away by a wave of demonstrations triggered not solely by socioeconomic demands, but by calls for democratization and better governance" (Hartman, 2012, para 44).

The case of India also best fits in this context. The observations indicate that the numerous civil unrests in fourteen Indian states were due to the inequality among the people. Eventually, they deteriorated the social political stability of the country. The redistribution approach was advanced as a solution to this case (Justino, 2004). It may have both short term and long term implications. The former will be reflected in the prevention of the social protests in

India. As to the long term effects this policy may change the allocation of money in favor of the education or other social services, therefore providing the base for future economic development. However, while using redistribution policies the governments should do a cost-benefit analysis. It refers particularly to the developing countries as the mentioned policy may lead here to the implicit investments and taxes. The latter will boost poverty and inequality, therefore giving room for new protests (Ibid).

The issue of social factors was a reason of social movements also in Latin America at the end of 1990s. It was a period of neoliberal political changes and the liberalization of the economy. The latter was done through the regressive distribution of the resources. It was considered that if the rich people would get more they would make more investments by providing an economic growth. However, it boosted inequality as the rich get more than the poor. The population was mobilized to protest against privatization and other reforms. The deep inequality and economic crisis made the trade unions to become the new crucial actors of social protests. However, they had some short term effects. It should be mentioned also, that in the case of these countries the social protests became more severe because of the political conflicts (Petras, 2009) .

However, the interrelations between the inequality and social protests are not only the phenomenon of the developing world. The research of the OECD countries demonstrates the negative influence of neoliberalism and open markets on the inequality level in the respective states. It was explained by the emerging of the new social strata called "Precariat". However, the stratum was so underdeveloped that it cannot be considered as a social class. The latter is the consequence of the market economy. The representatives of the Precariat are mainly migrants and locals who work precariously to get money. So, from the Marxist perspectives they comprised the exploited layers of the society who does not have representation in the political arena. So, being ignored, they may be more prone to follow the leader who is protesting against the government. Consequently, in the developed capitalist world there is a high probability of

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political instability triggered by the social mobilization of vulnerable groups who live in bad social conditions. To overcome this problem, the countries with liberal markets should create deliberative democracies. (Standing, 2011). One of the current examples of it may be considered the 2011 unrests in England on job losses and government cut. The observation of the riots underlines that the reasons of the social mobilization of the people have been different. It argues that just the economic causes in terms of inequality and unemployment are not enough. People gathered in the English cities mainly because they had been treated in an unfair way (Grover, 2011).In line with those riots, the peak of the inequality based social protests was the famous "Occupy Wall Street" movement in New York in 2011. Here, the activists were struggling against the banks and multinational corporations. Their slogan was "We are 99%" (Van Gelder, 2011, p. 3). The main causes of the movement were income inequality along with other economic reasons. This example summarizes the main features of social protests. As to some researchers, it has three pillars: firstly it was inequality-driven. Though some scientists think that the inequality is normal for the US, it becomes a top issue because of the second pillar. The latter regards the social injustice as in case of British riots which are considered as the byproduct of OWS. Finally, the participants of the movement were fighting for the horizontal power and against that 1 percent of rich people (Van Gelder, 2011). The horizontal power is close to the concept of the deliberative democracy. The activists themselves exercised the model of democracy as their decisions were made through reaching a consensus.

The above mentioned examples raise the issue of the inclusive and extractive institutions. The inclusive ones refer to the countries with the system which create equal opportunities for everybody to save, invest, and get educated. The extractive one is more close to the nepotism as only people who stand closest to the elites may get those opportunities. According to the book "Why nations fall" by Acemoglu and Robinson the US is an example of an inclusive system (Daron Acemoglu, 2012). Nevertheless, it may be assumed that the OWS and the other social protests in the European countries have had extractive roots. The activists were fighting for

equality which was deteriorated by the institutions. So, the latter has a decisive role in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor (Ibid)

The issue of inequality and poverty has its peculiarities in transitional countries. Besides the distributional issues here many other intervening factors, such as corruption or shadow economy, determine the level of those social factors. The observation of 16 transition countries confirmed that the higher the degree of the inequality in the country the more is the share of informal economy (Rosser, 2000). During different levels of transitions the countries may have different degrees of inequality. Some countries, for example Russia, have registered an increasing trend for Gini coefficient of income. In case of Slovakia the level of income distribution almost has not changed (Ibid). However, it is also important to identify the factors which have an impact on the distribution of income among the people. They may be divided into five groups: economic growth, aggregate macroeconomic indicators, and political, cultural and demographic conditions. These general indicators refer to both developed countries and the ones in transition. Nevertheless, the observations of almost all countries which were in transition from 1990 to 1998 indicated that not all factors had equal impact on the income inequality level of the developing world (Ibid). The general economic growth and creation of human capital have highly reduced the degree of inequality in those countries during that period. However, the correlation between the other indicators with income inequality level had almost no significance but they should be accounted for the thorough research. Moreover, the income inequality is considered to be reduced if the governments implement policies in favor of creation of human capital (Kaasa, 2003). For example, in case of former Soviet Union countries the income inequality level measured by Gini coefficient was increasing. The reasons behind that trend might be the hyperinflation (macroeconomic indicator), the privatization of public belongings which were bought by the insiders, therefore making barriers for others to enter the market. Moreover, the liberalization of the Post Soviet market generated many rent seekers who adversely influenced on the distributional policies. They had resources to influence on the

government to adopt the programs which would provide benefits and profits for their businesses (Slay, 2009). That trend definitely had its negative effect on the social efficiency of the market operations, economic development and finally the social justice.

Nevertheless, there is another approach to inequality-economic growth relations in the literature. The political economist Bourguignon has proven when people are rich they have a more marginal propensity to save than the poor ones. So, the higher the gap the more saving will be accumulated (Bourguignon, 2003). The key point is that poor people cannot borrow as "they lack collateral, face imperfect credit markets, or their poverty prevents them from seizing investment opportunities that would benefit both themselves and society" (Bourguignon, 2003, p. 17).

One of the researchers attempted to apply the mentioned argument to the transitional countries (Iradian, 2005). The regression analysis proved that the tendency had worked but for the short term. The level of income inequality first had increased in those countries than had decreased. So, the inequality might have some positive consequences (Ibid). Notwithstanding, the further study by the same author confirmed that the positive implication could not be applicable to the Armenian case taking into account 2003 data on the economic indicators. The research demonstrates that the economic development is more positively correlated with the poverty reduction. The relation between the economic development and inequality was not significant. Moreover, the fiscal policy had different influences on the inequality and growth. If the government cuts its expenditure it led to the economic growth but simultaneously would generate high inequality in Armenia (Iradian, 2005).

Another attempt to see the relations between the inequality and growth was done in 2012 (Grigoryan, 2012). The peculiarity of this study was the fact that the researchers tried to look through the factors of the inequality in Armenia by analyzing the industry structure of the country on marz level. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Armenia stepped into the phase of adoption of the rules of a market economy. The institutional changes and economic reforms have

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advanced the frames of a liberal market (Grigoryan, 2012). During the last decade the Armenian economy has experienced an essential development. The macroeconomic indicators from 2000 to 2008 have registered a high growth rate in the country in terms of the Gini coefficient and economic progress (Ibid).

However, after the 2008 financial crisis the inequality rate became very volatile. The inequality levels among the households were measured by income and expenditure. By saying industry structure they mean the share of the agriculture, services, construction and industry in GDP. Furthermore, they have accounted also the employment in these areas. So, having the data from 2004 to 2010 for all marzes 77 observations were made. The purpose of the study was to determine the causality between industry structure and inequality level. As to the influence of the GDP shares of industries on the inequality level, the data analyses showed the following results: "The employment in agriculture, developed in rural areas, sustains high poverty" (Grigoryan, 2012, p. 5). Then the service expansion leads to higher inequality. It may be due to very unequal productivities in the branches of services. The latter includes financial services, health, education and restaurants (productivities and wages are higher), and transportation retail and food (low wages). So, when the services expand, the distribution of them becomes more dominant in the average income distribution, resulting in higher inequality. If looking the problem from the inequality to the industry share the statistics demonstrated the Gini coefficients do not almost correlates with the GDP shares of the industry (Ibid). The only positive correlation is got between Gini coefficient per expenditure and service share. So, if the 2003 data showed that the economic growth in Armenia did not influence on the inequality level, the analysis of the statistics from 2004 to 2010 indicate that the growth per household reduces inequality and poverty (Ibid).

One of the general conclusions from the above mentioned researches on the inequality level of the Post Soviet countries, particularly in Armenia, will be that the distribution of the resources in those countries deteriorates the social justice. The international experience

demonstrates that usually the following cases end with social protests. As to Armenia, the literature lacks the analysis of the inequality based social protests in the country. The only source of getting information on the Armenian protests is mass media. Moreover, there is a difficulty regarding the identification of the triggers and goals of the Armenian social movements. As the practice of the developed world shows the inequality or poverty may mobilize people for the social response. In Armenia the triggers and reasons of the protests may be mixed. The very example of that was the movement for the independence in the end of the 1980s which initially started as an environmental protest against the exploitation of Nairit factory and Metzamor power station then turned into the national movement for the liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the achievement of Armenian Independence (Malkasian, 1996). So, the objective and the final goal of the protest did not coincide. It means that it might be possible that even the social movements which initially were not based on the unequal distribution of resources might refer to the inequality in their different stages.

In theory different scholars gave different names to the stages of the social movements. However, many of them have distinguished four of them. In the contemporary literature they are the following: "Emergence, Coalescence, Bureaucratization, and Decline" (Christiansen, 2009, p. 2)

Respectively, the first stage applies to the general dissatisfaction about some issues by the potential participants of the future protests. However, sometimes people may just discuss the issue with their relatives or friends and may not initiate any mobilization of people. So, the discontent will not lead to the protest. In the opposite cases the next stage comes. During it the issue is being observed by the activists to find the ones who are responsible for the dissatisfaction. The movement becomes more collective, structured in terms of the leadership and advances demands. If the protest succeeds in this stage it turned to the formalizations. It means that the participants managed to spread the information about the base of the protests. It is the time when the movement should be less emotional and more professional. So whenever the

leaders have legitimate power in their hands they should act professionally to gain the goals because they have legitimate power in their hands. Finally, the movements enter into the stage of decline. It does not necessarily mean the failure. This concept may apply also to the repression of the movement or its success. Moreover, the protest may decline if its leader is dependent on the central authorities (Christiansen, 2009). Another approach to the stages of the social protests proclaims that the movement is not a spontaneous process. According to Bill Moyer the successful one should have eight stages. Each one consists of "the roles of the movement, power holders, and the public, and movement goals appropriate to that stage" (Moyer 1987, para 2). The stage one is called "Normal times" (Moyer 1987, para4). This phase is described by the general unawareness of the society about the existing concern, That is why, they continue to support the ones who are in power. As the author mentions only 10-15 percent of the entire population is informed about the issue (Moyer, 1987). Next the second stage comes: "Efforts to Change the Problem Demonstrate the Failure of Official Remedies" (Moyer 1987, para 8). It refers to the situation when the small group of the society who is aware of the issue begins to inform the rest of the population about the concern. They indicate that the existing system or the parts of the system do not handle the problem. The percentage of the awareness increases by 5 to 10 percent (Ibid). The third stage also known as "Ripening Conditions" leads to the expansion of the concerns (Moyer 1987, para11). The number of the activist grows. Different representatives of the civil society provide their support to the upcoming protest (Moyer, 1987).The latter, usually, is probed by some crucial event like "the killing of Matthew Sheppard in 2000;" (the fourth stage) (Moyer, 1987, para 14).Different people join the movement in different stages. Those who do it, starting from the fourth stage, expect the success of the protest. If they do not see it, they may leave the movement. A negative attitude towards the movement will emerge in the society. This will trigger the failure of the social mobilization. So, the goal of the fifth stage ("Movement Identity Crisis — A Sense of Failure and Powerlessness") is to do every possible thing to prevent such failure (Moyer, 1987, para 17). In case of success the movement will

continue spreading by entering into the sixth stage ("Winning Majority Public Opinion") (Mayor, 1987, para 20). The purpose of the stage is to keep the issue on the agenda as a priority, and include more people into the protests (Mayor, 1987). The seventh stage focuses on the design of the alternatives of the current policies. Also, the protest tries to speak up about other concerns which become obvious during the first six stages. This phase is called "Accomplishing Alternatives" (Moyer, para 23). Eventually, as to Mayor during the final stage of the successful social movement the struggle should not be canceled. The opponents should fight for more democratic changes. As to the power holders, they, probably, will accept the victory of the movement. On that base, the shift will be made in their policies (Mayor, 1987).

The Armenian case of the relations between the levels of inequality and poverty and social protests has its peculiarities. Given the fact that Armenia is in a transitional phase, it may be assumed that the social protests may be connected with developing civil society in the country .Generally; there may be two approaches to define the relations between the civil society and social protests. According to the one of them, the civil society has institutional and qualitative definitions. The first one mentions that "it consists of all the social groups and social relationships in which we are embedded: families, communities, religious organizations, social movements, ethnic identity groups, schools, neighborhoods, sports leagues, labor unions, PTAs and other voluntary associations, professional or occupational associations, clubs, support groups, coffee shops, barber shops, bridge groups, and so forth (Persell, 1997, p. 150). So, it means that the civil society is the institutionalization of the social movements. Moreover, the qualitative definition underlines that the goal of the civil society is the maintenance of social order. The latter refers to the provision of social justice (Persell, 1997).Unlike this interpretation of the issue; some scholars adhere to believe that it is not right to see all the protests in the light of civil society. The civil society itself is a democratic institution; however, not all the movements satisfy the principles of popular democracy. The movement based on the religious

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disagreements exemplifies the contradictions between the civil society and protests. (Esteves, 2009).

In Armenia the social movements and civil society are very interlinked. The recent environmental protests are seen as the progress for Armenia on that level (Shahnazaryan, 2011).However, the influence of the civil society on the level of the economic inequality of the country is very low. The analysis of Armenian civil society by the CIVICUS demonstrated that the only economic sphere where they have a positive impact was the poverty reduction. The main reason why they did not have any significant influence on the distribution of the resources was the lack of transparency in the fiscal policy of the country, particularly in the budget deliberations (CIVICUS, 2007)

It may be concluded that there is a crucial difference between the protests in developed and some developing countries and the ones in Armenia. The former ones are more earmarked and structured. That is why; the Armenian case will require the analysis of the generators of the social uprisings based on the different factors.

2. Methodology and Data Analysis

2.1 Methodology

The research is divided in two parts. The first one seems to reflect more quantitative analysis while the second piece is more qualitative. We emphasize "more" as the data gathering process for each analysis has some mixed structure.

To accept or reject our hypotheses and to answer the advanced research questions we need cross sectional data on different indicators. Firstly the statistics on the number and the dynamics of the social protests should be found. The only sources that may provide that information are the news agencies which have written about those demonstrations and made videos for their reportages, etc. While selecting the news agency we were based on several criteria. Firstly its archive should have covered the data on the social protests starting from 2004.

Secondly, it should have provided in depth information to get a picture about the protests. Thirdly, the agency needs to be comparably neutral. Based on these three criteria we choose an A1+ news agency. The website of the latter has the pertinent archive covering the necessary period of time. Secondly, in line with the text news it provides videos and photos in almost all news reports on the social protests. Thirdly, it was awarded "Fritt Ord Press 2011" in the Nobel Institute of Norway. The award is given for the demonstration of freedom while delivering the news. However, as far as there were times when the activity of this agency was prohibited we relied also on the news of Liberty Radio. The selection of the latter was made based on the fact that these two agencies sometimes refer to each other in their daily reports.

So, to gather the data on the social protests we had to do the content analysis of the corresponding news and articles. For that purpose, firstly we extracted the news on the social protests from the day to day news coverage of A1+ which comprised the period from 2004 to 2012. Then a model with several descriptors was created to get a numerical data of the protests. While doing the analysis our descriptors were the frequency, volume and the content of the protests conducted in Yerevan and in the districts. The frequency and volume together give the size of the protests. Those descriptors help to differentiate the movements by their size and to do some conditional categorization. In our model each category has its value which is the numerical interpretation of the protests. The categories and the corresponding values are the following:

- ✓ Small-1

Small repetitive

- ✓ Middle size-2

Middle size repetitive

- ✓ Large-3

Large repetitive

- ✓ Nationwide-4

Nationwide repetitive

The last one refers mainly to the oppositional protests or the ones which have conducted in one marz or Yerevan but have participants from the other districts of Armenia. For that purpose, in line with the size we describe the protests also by giving each marz a factor out of 1. For instance if there was a protest of taxi drivers in Shirak but there were people who come from Vanadzor to participate in it we divided the factor between these two districts accordingly. To have more valid data on the proportionality of that factors we also held 15 interviews with the activists of top 10 protests. It was done to clarify the marz-level participation in the demonstrations. However, the results of the interviews were mainly used for the second part of the work.

To check how much different factors influence or have relations with the social protests the correlation analysis was made. For the sake of our research we divided those factors into three groups. There are the economic, social and political ones. Respectively the first group includes data on the structure of the economy and wages. Namely the structure of the economy includes the nominal shares of the industry, construction, agriculture, service, trade. The social group consists of the measures of inequality and poverty. The first one was reflected in the Gini Coefficient both per income and per expenditure. Moreover, based on the study on "Inequality, growth and poverty: Evidence from Armenia" we included also the spatial variables (Grigoryan, 2012). Referring to the piece on the "Fundamental concepts used for Inequality, growth and industry structure: the case of Armenia" by Professor Grigoryan by spatial the authors mean "If there is high poverty in Aragatsotn, then some of the poor households may move to Shirak to find a job in Gyumri. Then at least a part of these families will not succeed to get workplace and in fact will transfer poverty from the neighboring marz to Shirak. This motivates to think about a variable, which may account for such effects, which is about spatial dependence" (Grigoryan, 2012, p 10). The panel data on these economic and social indicators were got from the Armenian National Statistical service. The social ones are based on the household surveys covering the period from 2004 to 2010.

As it was mentioned by saying political factor we mean the level of Transparency as an indicator. That is why; we depart from the Corruption Perception Index provided by the Transparency International. However, as far as the data is provided for the whole country we construct the statistics for marzes. The data gathering process indicated that 3 marz characteristics may matter: the distance of the marz center from Yerevan, the overall population of the marz and the urban one. These are three distinctive factors, the shares of which were taken into account while creating that data. So, it may be summed up in the following equation:

$$Transparency_{share} = \alpha \cdot distance_{share} \cdot CPI_{annual} + \beta \cdot Overall\ Population_{share} \cdot CPI_{annual} + \gamma \cdot Urban\ population_{share} \cdot CPI_{annual}$$

where α, β, γ are the factors of those variables again calculated out of 1. We divided them 0.3; 0.3 and 0.4 respectively because while collecting the data on the protests per marzes it becomes clear that most of them are conducted in the towns. That is why, that variable gets a higher factor. Another two have equal value in this study. The other components of this equation are the shares of the descriptors. They are not given either, so we need to compute them as well.

For the distance share we firstly compute the average distance of the marz centers from Yerevan. Then we divide the distance of each marz center by that average. For example if we compute the distance share for Ararat it will have the following structure:

$$Distance_{share(Ararat)} = \frac{Distance\ of\ Artashat\ from\ Yerevan}{Average\ distance}$$

Moreover, as the CPI index has been constructed in a way that the higher the index the better, we should divide 1 by the share of the distance and transform the variable. The same approach was used for getting the share of the overall population. Nevertheless, in this case the density was taken. For example:

$$Overall\ Population_{share(Syunik)} = \frac{Density\ of\ the Population\ of\ Syunik}{Average\ density\ of\ the\ population\ of\ marzes}$$

As to the urban population share we firstly find out the average share of the urban population out of the overall population and the one for each marz. Then the latter was divided by the average. In this case the shares were expressed by the percentage.

$$Urban\ Population_{share(Aragatsotn)} = \frac{urban\ population\ share\ of\ Aragatsotn\ \%}{average\ urban\ population\ share\ \%}$$

The data on the distance, population and the urban one was taken again from the Armenian Statistical Center.

Next to describe the relations between those variables and the social protests the correlation analysis was held. Furthermore we tried also to look to the covariance between them by drawing the scatter plots. Then for the purposes to explain how much the mentioned economic political and social factors influence on the number of the social protests and how much they explain them, the least square multiple regression analysis was made taking into account both the Random effects and the Fixed ones. The latter will be elaborated further. The whole analysis will be made for the 2004-2010 period as the data for 2011 and 2012 were not available. So, there are 11 marz (including Yerevan), 7 years and overall 77 observations. The analysis was done through Stata.

The second part of the study tries to illustrate the dynamics of the social protests in a more qualitative sense. For that purpose the increasing and decreasing trend of the social protests will be analyzed through the data gathered from the interviews. However, we will also apply to some documents for specific cases of protests. The documents are laws of RA on social protests, some articles of UNDHR and so on. In that Chapter the major insights and implications were got from the expert interviews with the activists.

2.1 Data Description

Using the above mentioned method of the data gathering our findings on the social protests per districts were concentrated in the below mentioned tables. A darker color stands for a higher number of the protests.
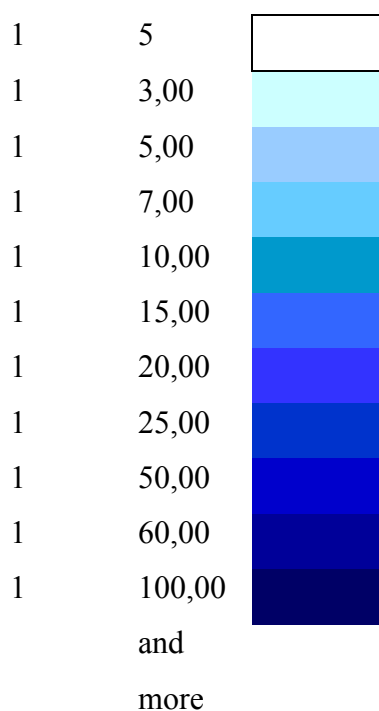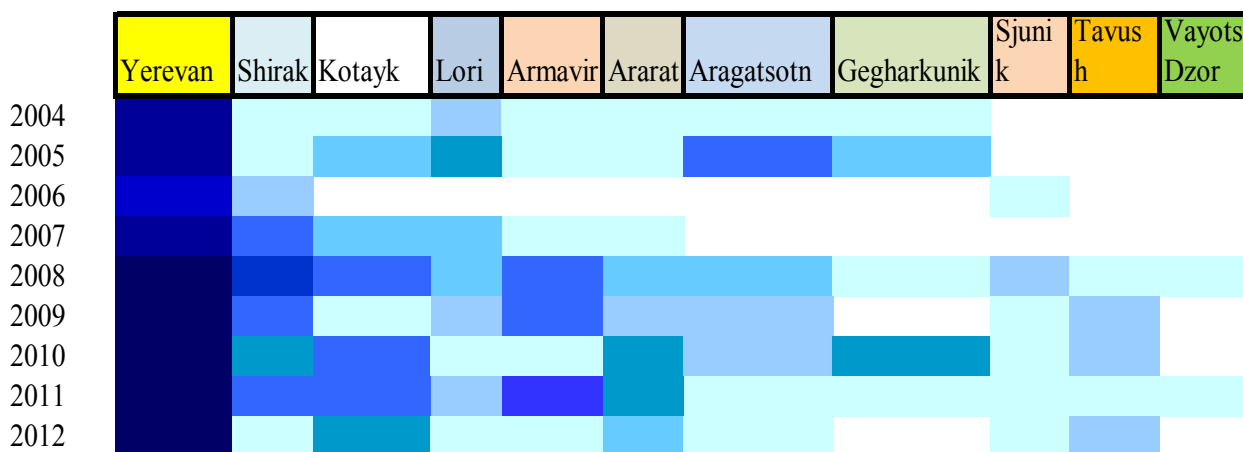
Table 2   Colors for the Intensity of the protests

1	5	
1	3,00	
1	5,00	
1	7,00	
1	10,00	
1	15,00	
1	20,00	
1	25,00	
1	50,00	
1	60,00	
1	100,00 and more	

Table 2 Absolute Intensity of Protests

|	Yerevan	Shirak	Kotayk	Lori	Armavir	Ararat	Aragatsotn	Gegharkunik	Sjunik	Tavush	Vayots Dzor
2004											
2005											
2006											
2007											
2008											
2009											
2010											
2011											
2012											

Several things are obvious in this picture. Firstly, the table illustrates that there was a general increasing trend in the social protests. The increase, however, fails to be uniform – there are marzes, such as Gegharkunik, Syunik and Vayots Dzor, which do not report a gradual increase in protests. 2004 and 2005 have registered slightly higher numbers. As it may be witnessed starting from 2008 the number of the protests has drastically grown up. The least number of the protest was noticeable in 2006. This variance of the numbers of the social protests

among the years may be interpreted by the fact that the crucial years of the protests coincide with the electoral ones. We will elaborate on it deeper in the next chapter.

The second visible component of the table indicates the distribution of the protests among the marzes. As it may be observed there is an extremely uneven dispersal of the demonstrations. Yerevan has several times higher estimations than any other districts. To be on a safe side we compare our data with the annual reports of the Armenian Ombudsman where the numbers of the written complaints were mentioned. The Table with the aggregated data may be found in the Appendix 2 (Table 6). Those reports identify the same uneven distribution between Yerevan and marzes. There also, the data of Yerevan is much greater than the ones in other districts. Shirak is the second by absolute numbers. Lori and Kotayq share the third place with each other. Having this in mind we try to construct another picture which will show the distribution of the protests depending on the share of each marz in the total number of the protests for each year. In other words for each year we divide the values of each marz by the annual total value of the protests. The results are demonstrated in this table. The latter is designed with the same principle (mentioned above) meaning the higher the number the darker the color is

Table 3 Relative Intensity of Protests
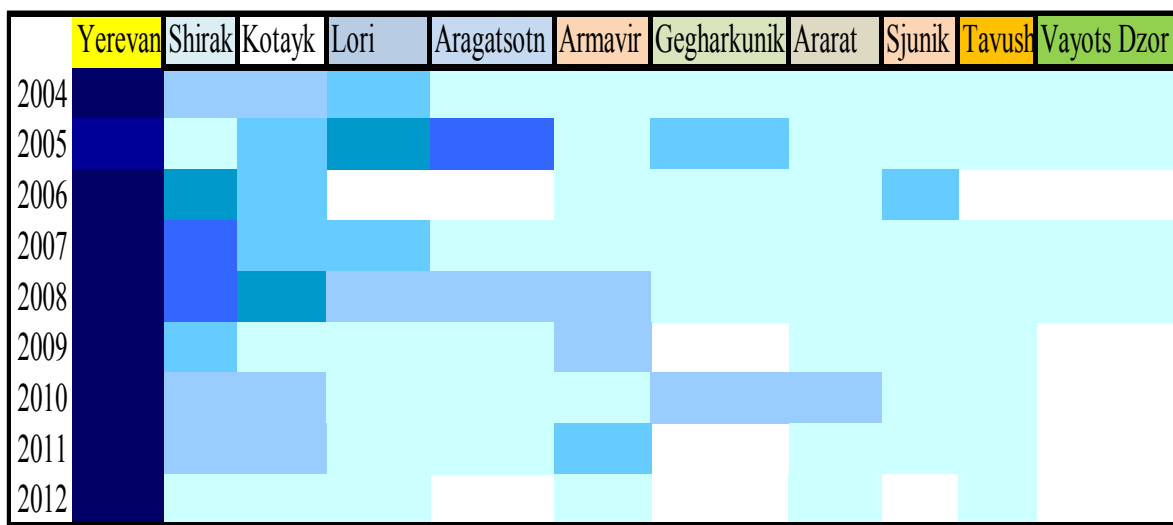
As we can witness the scores for Yerevan are still incomparably higher .However, the colors for other regions become lighter, indicating that protests are more concentrated in Yerevan (again, in terms of shares). In general, social protests in marzes do not constitute a big proportion in the overall number. Moreover, Ararat and Armavir have higher scores with their absolute values in the previous picture than here. More in depth explanations will be discussed in the qualitative part of the work.

As it was mentioned above one of the descriptors we followed while data gathering was the content of the protests. It somehow gives the insights which factors may have an influence on the social protests or may trigger them. In line with those statistics and the pertinent literature particularly those dynamics in the developing world we try to distinguish three groups of reasons or causes of the social protests and test how they are relevant to Armenian picture. They are the economic, social and political ones. It was stated that in the frames of this research the group of the economic factors includes the cross-sectional data on the wages, nominal shares of the agriculture, construction, trade, service, and industry in the structure of the Armenian economy. The social one refers to data on   poverty and inequality. Both variables were used also with their spatial values. Transparency defines the political one

For the first stage the main focus will be on the fact whether there is any correlation between the above mentioned variables and the social protests. To that end the unconditional correlation analysis will be made. However, the analysis indicates that it is not a solid way to make implications about the relations among the variables as we are working with the panel data. So, along with that the covariance between the variables has been observed by taking into account the fixed effects, capturing unobserved, systematic differences among marzes. Technically, fixed effects allow to retrieve common trend between the variables of interest, while accounting for region-specific factors, which do not change over time.

Here, we will try to express whether there are differences between unconditional correlation analysis and the analysis with the FE model.

*Economic factors and the protests***:** The first couple of variables consists of the protests and

wages. The table of the results of the simple correlation is in the Appendix 1, Table 4.

So, it may be easily assumed from this table that there is a significant positive correlation

between the wages of the population and the number of the social protests. Before trying to

explain that phenomenon we will observe the relations between these variables if the FE is taken

into account. The scatter plot below will visualize the picture .

**Graph 1 Protests and Wages when controlling for marz differences**
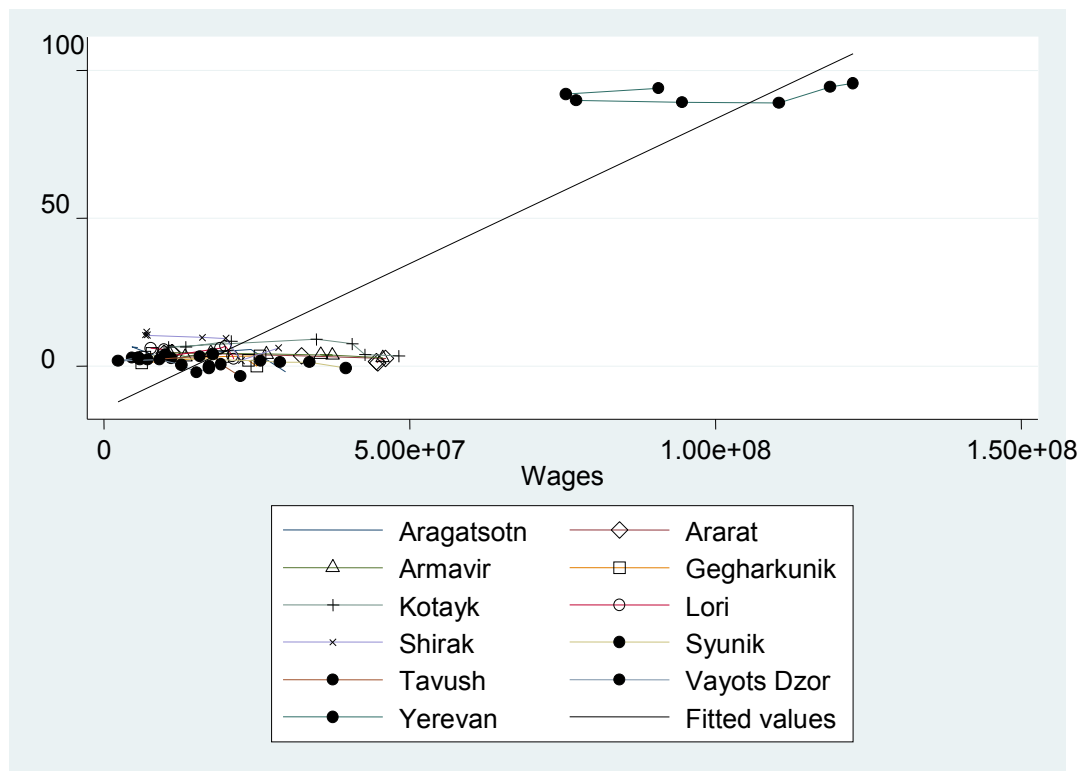
Recalling that Corr (X, Y) = Cov (X, Y) /sqrt (Var (X) Var (Y)), while the slope of the

coefficient b, from Y=a+bX, is b=Cov (X, Y) /Var (X). After controlling marz specific effects,

we identify that the positive relationship is not that strong, if any. The same story regards the

relations between the protests and the nominal share of trade in the overall industry structure. A

strong positive correlation is observed with the unconditional model but while controlling the

characteristics of each marzes there is no marz where two variables vary in relation to each other.

As to the nominal share of the agriculture it registered significant negative correlation

without encountering the fixed effects but with FE, again the story repeats. Unlike the relations

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between the agriculture-protests, the protest-service share has positive significant relations in the unconditional correlation model. The latter, nevertheless fails to be proved while using a fixed effect approach. As to the industry share it has absolutely no relations in both cases.

We get more contradicting results when comparing the findings of the unconditional correlation of the nominal shares of construction with the FE model .The table 4 in Appendix 1 indicates the insignificant positive correlation between these two variables. However, the Graph below demonstrates that with the positively sloping regression line the predicted values of marzes identify insignificant negative relations between the number of the protests and the nominal share of the construction.

Graph 2 Protests and Construction when controlling for marz differences
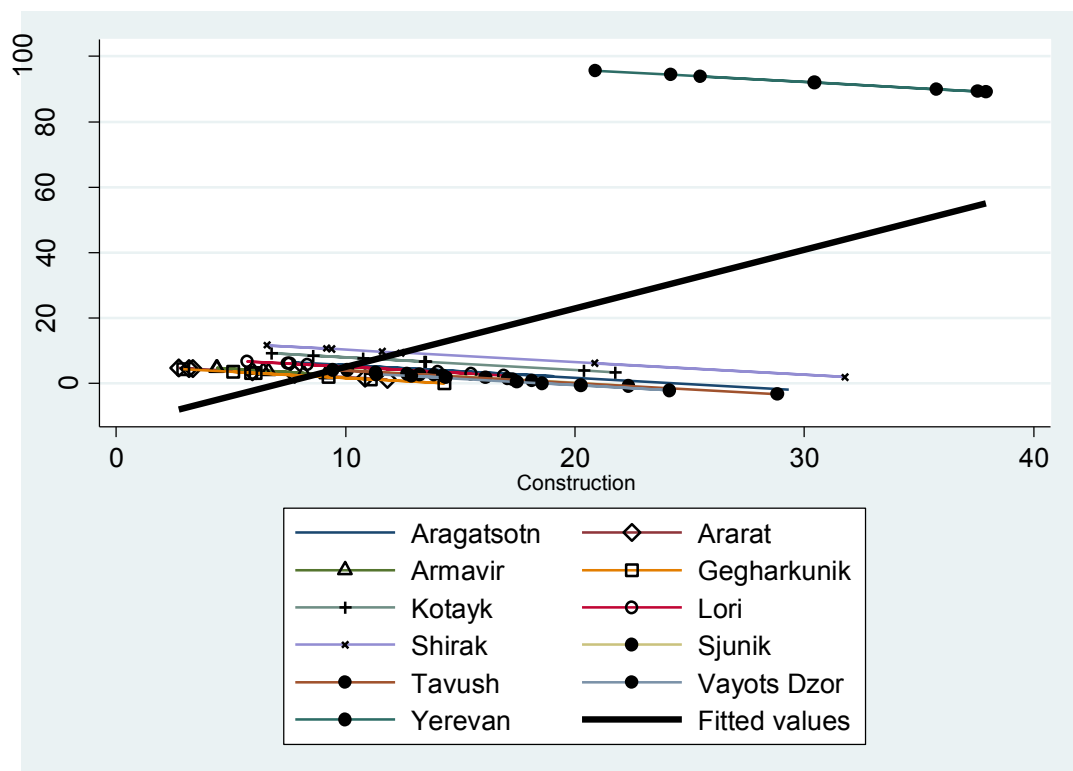
Social factors: Unlike the economic factors which may demonstrate some strong or weak correlations the social ones (Gini per capita, Gini spatial, Poverty, Poverty Spatial) have no or very insignificant relations with the variable of the social protests in the unconditional model (Appendix 1, Table4)

As in case of the economic factors here also the marzes separately influence on the predictor variable, so those effects should be controlled. As a result of a FE model we have got the following scatter plot expressing again no relation between these two variables.

Graph3 Protests and Gini Index PC when controlling for marz differences
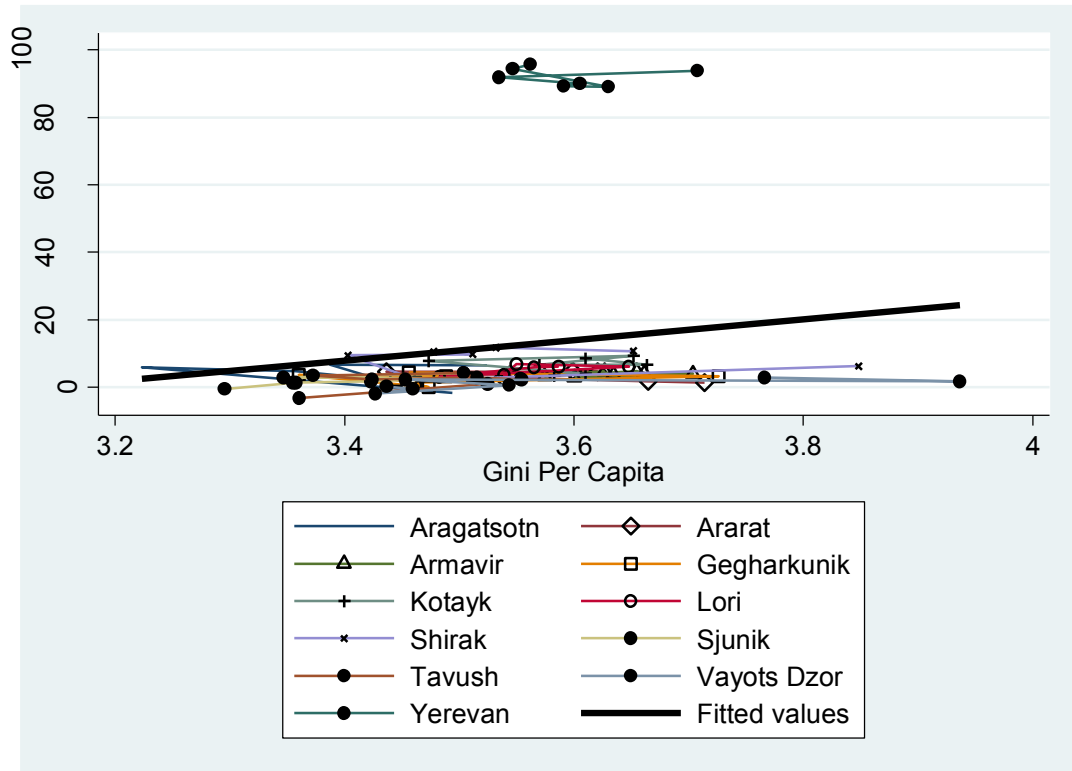
As to the other inequality measures they registered absolutely no relations both with the simple correlation model and with the condition of Fixed effects. The same relates to the measures of poverty. So, in case of the social factors there were not many contradictions between their characteristics of the relations of the pertinent variables and the social protests if we try to approach from different angles.

Political factor. The correlation between the Transparency and the number of the social protests has the highest significance among all tested variables (Appendix 1, Table4)

So, according to the unconditional correlation the higher is the transparency level the greater is the number of the protests. However, it is not a reliable interpretation of the reality as the conditions of some effects are not encountered. In the next part of data analysis it will be witnessed that the transparency as an explanatory variable may have some strong negative causal

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impact on the social protests while controlling for fixed and random effects. As to the scatter plot of the relations between transparency and the protests, it presents not so much understandable picture. That is why, we tried to see those relations both without Yerevan (70 observations) and only for Yerevan. Respectively, the first case is illustrated in the Graph below.

Graph 4 Protests and Transparency when controlling for marz differences (without Yerevan
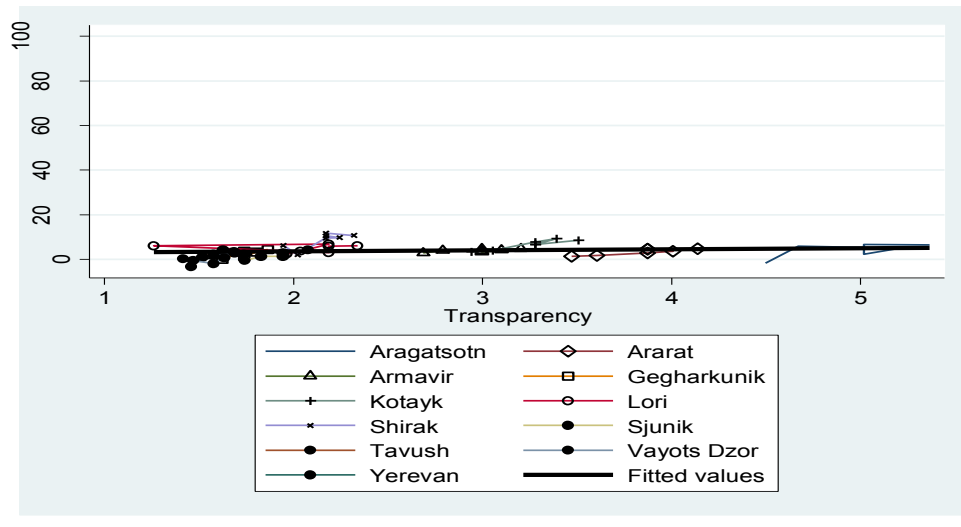
Here, we may see very weak non significant relations between these variables. However, if we do the same analysis only with Yerevan we will see that there is a strong negative relationship between these two variables. In Graph 5 below the regression line illustrates that the higher the transparency is less social protests are conducted.

Graph 5 Protests and Transparency only for Yerevan

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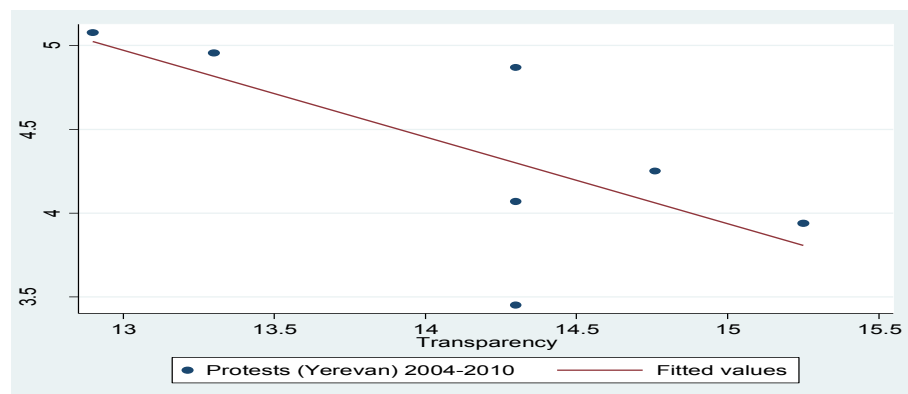
So, taking into account the fact that different ways and models of the analysis gives different results it will not be acceptable to make implications by looking only at the correlations or covariance between the variables. However, one thing is undeniable that the social factors illustrate the lowest correlations and covariance with the protests.

So, despite the correlation, the causation should also be taken into account. For that purpose we will try to create a regression model based on this analysis and some theoretical evidences. The latter may give a clearer picture.

2.3 Regression Analysis:

In this part we will try to focus on the causal relations among the variables. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis will be done using the cross sectional data per marzes and Yerevan. We rely on multiple regression to determine if the inclusion of more explanatory variables may lead to a higher prediction of the number of the social protest. So, we need to create some model for making specifications. For the purposes of this study we consider that the number of the social protests is a function of the political, economic and social factors. The components of each group have been elaborated above. Here is the expression of the model:

Social Protests=F (Political factors, Social factors, Economic factors)

The model indicates that the number of the social protest is the dependent variable while the components of each group of the factor are the predictors. We tried several specifications to find out the one which best explains the model. As it is mentioned in the methodology we will try to make one stage least square multiple regression analysis which encounters both the Fixed and Random effects making the model more reliable.

Therefore several specifications have been made but we will present 3 of them and then find out which one corresponds best to our study. The predictor variables are chosen based on different factors. We try to choose the variables which have more or less linear relationship with the dependent variable. The results of the regression analysis for all three specifications are summarized in the Table 5, Appendix 2 .

In the first model we consider Wages and one of the components of the industry structure as an economic predictor. The nominal share of the construction was selected as in the FE model it has demonstrated insignificant relations with negative slope though the regression line was sloping upward. The transparency was included as in the frames of this study it is considered as the political factor which is a part of our model. As to the social factors they do not have any relations with the number of the social protests, so we will try several specifications to clarify which component may be included in the final model. The Stata graph on the regression analysis gives the following results for the first specification.

The model determines that only the nominal shares of construction (economic factor) and transparency (political factor) have a p value smaller than 0.05. The latter indicates a strong significant causal impact of the nominal share of construction on number of protests.

The coefficients of both predictors are negative which means that according to this model the higher are the transparency and the construction share the less protests are caused. Due to the significant causal relations with the dependent variable these two explanatory ones will be included also in the next specifications. As to the Gini Index Per capita it does not have a significant influence on the protests. The results indicate that one unit change in the construction share brings 25 unit changes in the protests. A unit decrease in construction causes one protest. The coefficient of the inequality index is 1.25 with no significance in relations with the dependent variable. As to the overall model the R-sq within 55 per cent. It is the R-squared from the mean-deviated regression which shows the relative predictive power of the model. Not surprisingly the inequality measure per income has registered no significant relation.

The next specification includes more variables and eliminates Gini per capita. We exchange it with the Gini spatial variable. As in case of the previous model previous model the changes that may be predicted by per capita inequality measure can be explained by other variables of that model.

So, comparing with the specification mentioned above here we added a new component of industry structure. Moreover, the indicator of the social factor was changed. The regression analysis gives the following results:

The model is significant by 57 percent. The R square is increased partially because the number of predictors has been raised. However, the new variable, namely, the service share and the Gina spatial have not registered significant relations with the protests. Having no significant relations with the protest respectively, the first one predicts 1.18 unit changes in a number of protests for every 1 unit change of its value. As to the inequality it explains 15.56 unit changes in protest. Construction Coefficient indicates that the number of the protest will be decreased by 0.85 units if the its nominal share increase by 1. The same negative causation is identified by the transparency but with higher coefficient. This time it predicts 21 unit changes in protests. Having that in mind we added more variables for the final specification:

We do not eliminate wages as without them the model registers even lower R square. Despite it we add the nominal shares of Trade and Service as far as the industry structure has indicated higher impact on the overall social index.

For the third and final specification we get a higher R square. This model is more predictable. The construction share and the transparency continue to remain the most significant ones. However, we may witness that the p value of the service share is close to the 0.05. So, it may be assumed that there are non-significant positive causal relations between them. Overall, as to this model, each one unit change in construction will bring 0.96 unit change in the protests. Likewise one unit   increase in transparency level will turn to the 19.87 unit decrease in the number of the protests. As to the next somehow significant predictor, the positive change in the nominal share of the services by one will be reflected in 1.72 more protests. The explanatory variable trade predicts approximately 3 point change in the protests in case of its transformation by 1 unit. As to the social component it influenced on the number of the protests only by 0, 4. So, based on this model we may make some assumption. In 62 per cent cases the change in the political factor

may cause more protests than the economic factors. However, it should be also mentioned that the impact of the industry structure on the number of the protests is also obvious, mainly when comparing with the social ones. This model also illustrates how insignificant changes in the social protest may cause the transformation of the poverty level. We consider that the third model may be more applicable for understanding the relations among the pertinent regressors and the dependent variable.

The findings of the regression analysis underline that the components of our model have different predicting strength. The most significant relations were registered by the political component in all three models. Then comes the economic one out of which the nominal construction share and somehow the service share have their impact on the dependent variable. Eventually, the specifications outline that the social factors do not have a determining impact on the social protests if considering our model. The fact that Transparency has so decisive role may be a basis to think that the Armenian society respond to the demonstrations of corruption in a very active way.

This picture may be understood by the concept of the social exclusion which was mentioned in the literature review. One of the studies based on the case of Croatia argues that the latter mainly conditioned by three factors:" there are the social isolation, unemployment and poverty" (UNDP, Croatia, 2006). The rationale behind this is explained by the hypothetical causal relations among these three. The author argues that when a person loses a job, it undermines the living standards of a person. Sometimes it may be ended by the long term unemployment which increases the risk of poverty. The latter means also the lack of money because of which "social ties are weakened, increasing the probability of social isolation :"(UNDP, Croatia, 2006, p. 12). This cycle fits in the results of our regression model. The lower explanatory potential of the social factors may be explained by the higher social exclusion of people. This trend is obvious, particularly in marzes. That is why, the number of the social protests is low there.

As to this approach the poverty is caused by the unemployment which may be overcome through the education. So, it may mean that higher education may lead to less social exclusion, therefore higher social activeness. For that purpose we may take tertiary as a predicting variable and plot a scatter to find out whether there is a relation between people with higher education and the number of the social protest. The FE model (Graph 6 Appendix 2) demonstrates the following relations for marzes excluding Yerevan.

The line is sloping upwardly but the significance is too weak. There is almost no relation between these variables if considering for marzes. The absence of any relation is applicable also the case of Yerevan.

We tried to test also the reverse causality while approaching the social protests as an independent variable. The same specifications were used. However, no reverse causality was got through the regression. As far as in the literature these connections have been discussed mainly from the qualitative perspectives we will try to approach it in that way.

3. **Discussion of the Armenian Social Protests in the frames of the Theories of Political Science**

Per marzes data on a number of the social protests in Armenia have registered an increasing trend from 2004 to 2012. The table 2 identifies how the color is getting darker as a sign of the intensity of the protests. Moreover, it is clear from the image that the top parts of the protests are conducted in Yerevan. The latter can be conditioned by different factors: for example, a high level of urbanization, economic and social development. So, the protests also identify the great differences between the center and the peripheries but this time based on the criterion of the social activeness.

In spite of that uneven distribution of the protests in Armenia in the given period, one thing is obvious that the protests were slightly growing in 2004, 2005. Unlike those years, they drastically decreased in 2006. Then, starting from the 2008 to 2012 the protests were becoming more and more rare. That trend may be explained by the fact that the most of the protests were politically motivated. The latter was conducted particularly during the election and post election

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periods. It will become more obvious if we compare the data of the protests of the year 2004 (electoral) with 2006 (non electoral). According to our statistics that relation is 69.96 to 39.3 respectively. The difference is even greater if we compare the number of the protests in 2006 (39.3) with the one in 2008 (193.39, election year). Indeed, this high variability is also explained by the violence on March 1 and the number of jailed people which brought another wave of the protests having high frequency. So, it may be deduced that the elections are great triggers for the social uprisings in Armenia. Though 2008 was the year of global financial crises and it was reflected in the developed world by the economically and socially driven demonstrations, Armenia was not active in terms of specific protests resulted from the crises.

Generally, we consider that the social protests may be approached in two ways to find out its place in the state-society relations. Firstly, they may be seen as a part of civil society. In this context, one may argue that the more protests mean the more developed civil society. However, in this work we do not touch upon the issue whether it is a democratic change or not because it is another research topic.

Nevertheless, from the other side, the protests may be treated as the signals of the dissatisfaction of the people. In this framework, they are the consequences of the existing gap between the political system and its inputs from the society. Unlike the former interpretation of the social protests, the latter underlines the inability or ineffectiveness of the implementation of the function of the civil society or its absence. We will try to elaborate on each approach.

3.1 More Optimistic Scenario

In this scenario we will firstly apply to the Antonio Gramsci's interpretation of the concept of 'civil society' which gets a high resonance in the social science. Though this term was initially used by different authors like Hegel, Weber, Gramsci gave a new interpretation of it. The author presents the state as a power which implements a coercive control over the society through law making and enforcement (Bulligieg, 1995). Nevertheless, the exercise of that control should not violate the freedoms of the private sphere (society). In case of such violations, the

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private sphere should be ready to respond. One of the components of so called "private" area is the civil society (Ibid). So, the private arena is the place where those freedoms find their expression through the creation of consent. This means that the state is a carrier of the political power (coercion), while the power of consent-making belongs to the civil society. Therefore, the one whose power is prevailing should have the dominance over the other. Nonetheless, having in mind that Gramsci presents the state as a potential threat to the freedoms of people; we may assume that the possibility of transition is higher when the power of consent has dominance (Ibid, 1995).

In this context, the social protests may be seen as a part of the civil society. Firstly, through social movements people exercise their civil liberties, particularly, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly. Secondly, the mass demonstrations are the result of the consensus amongst its members on a single issue. The latter also fits into the Gramcia's requirements of the private sector. Overall, the social protests satisfy these two prerequisites to be considered as a part of the civil society.

Now we will try to use this approach to analyze the Armenian reality of the social protests from 2004 to 2012. The growth in the number of the protests may indicate that the power of consent of the private sector is increasing. However, the latter is considered to be the result of the intervention of the state or the political system, in Gramscian terms, into the private freedoms. Moreover, they turn to be more intensive during the electoral period as it gives a birth to some leaders which may get the consensus or consent of the population more easily. Then, during that period people become more aware of the social-political situation of the country which makes them more vulnerable than they usually are.

Many protests may be explained in the frames of the state intervention into the freedoms of the society. So, here we will make an attempt to identify the motives of the top types of the mass demonstrations in Armenia in a given period departing from the fundamental freedoms stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR, 1948).

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Since 2004 one of the main waves of the protests in Armenia consists of the people who moved from their apartments as the latter were going to be used for the state interests. The interviews with them indicate that initially they were fighting against the destruction of their houses. However, when their struggle on that issue somehow failed they started to seek a "proper" compensation. This very case may be interpreted as an intervention to the people's freedoms by the Article 17 of the UNDHR: "(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property" (UNHDR, Article 17, (2))

According to our data during the same year the students of the Armenian universities gathered to express their opposition against the amendments to the Law on the Compulsory Military Service. Those amendments aimed to reduce the priorities possessed by the PHD students and others who had an academic degree. This case may be interpreted as the interference of political system to the freedom of the private sector to get an education. The latter is also stated in the Declaration of the Human Rights which indicates that "Everyone has the right to education…… Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (UNDHR, Article, 26).

The same Article also may be applied to elaborate on the demonstrations of the parents in 2010 against the schools where the classes would be taught in the foreign languages. More specifically the Article claims that the "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (Ibid, Article 26).

Another example in this context may be the protests held in 2005 against the usage of the social identification cards. One of the targets of that demonstration was the representatives of some religious groups whose beliefs were against the exercising of that practice in social life. The latter may be considered as the intervention to another freedom which claims that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in

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public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance"
(UNDHR, Article 18)

These are some examples to show that the Gramscian model may be applicable to the Armenian reality of the social protests. Moreover, the cases emphasize that those social movements may be assumed as the part of the new growing Armenian civil society (in a sense that movements by itself satisfy Gramsci's model of the civil society). So, the picture identifies that the intervention of the state into the freedoms of the society probes their protests and gives an opportunity to demonstrate the power of consent.

However, even if their power of consent was growing it was not so big to prevail the state's one. The system continued to implement its power through law making and the enforcement of those laws. It means that the 'political system" has also the power to change and sometimes "manipulate" those fundamental freedoms to reduce the power of the "private sector". The very example of the above mentioned arguments may be the adoption of the laws pertaining to the organizing protests which somehow change the power balance between the state and society in favor of the former one. If we compare the amendments made in that law with the data on the number of the social protests, some connections may be found.

The Law on Conducting Meetings, Gatherings, Rallies, and Demonstrations was adopted in 2004 (Law on Conducting Meetings, Gatherings, Rallies, and Demonstrations, 2004). This year was an important period for the demonstrations in Armenia as people witnessed for example some oppositional marches, other demonstrations which previously did not have such volumes and frequency. That social activeness, in terms of mass meetings, continued also in coming 2005. During the same year some additions were made to the pertinent law. They mainly may be interpreted as the restrictions regarding the places where the demonstrations may be held (Changes and Additions to the Law on Conducting Meetings, Gatherings, Rallies, and Demonstration, 2005)

Another crucial year for the protests was 2008. As the data shows there was a strong growth both in the size and the variety of the protests. The number of the protests was almost doubled from 96.23 in 2007 to 193.39 in 2008.Another additions to the above mentioned law was made that year. Those additions were somehow concurrent with the number of the protests. Only in 2008 5 additions and/or changes was made to the law until it replaced by another one in 2011 (NA, 2013).

The law enacted in 2011 was about the Freedom of Assembly. The year of the adoption coincides with the year in the data which has registered the highest number of the protests. So, voluntarily or involuntarily the main changes in the laws regulating the organizing and conducting procedures of the different kinds of assemblies were made in the same years which can be considered as the crucial ones in the Armenian history of the social protests from 2004 to 2012.

To sum up, from the perspectives of the Gramscian concept of civil society the power of the political system in Armenia is much higher than the one that the components of the private sector (protests) possesses. It may be considered, that it was also the reason why, even the most radical protests held in the given period were not turned to the revolutions. However, from the other side some of the groups of protesting people were institutionalized and turned into the NGOs, public interest groups, therefore becoming the ideal part of the civil society, e.g. the "Hakaharvats movement, "The civil initiative of saving Teghut", etc.. The interviews with the activists of the social movements underlined that not all people who participated in the protests initially had been aware about the legal frames of the demand. The demonstrations made them dig into the recognition and the acquirement of the knowledge on their rights and freedoms. Moreover, as the key informants mentioned the protests created precedents and have high resonance because of the media. Through these channels they may also increase the awareness of others who are not the direct participants of the movements. Hence in Armenia the protests are the sources of the growing social awareness on some issues.

3.2 More Pessimistic scenario

In this part of the work the social protests are going to be treated as the detrimental phenomena. For that purpose we will depart from David Easton's interpretations of the system theory in the political science. As it was cited in Sara Joseph's book, the author claims that "In general, system analysis… takes it departure from the notion of political life as boundary maintaining set of interactions embedded in and surrounded by social systems to the influence of which it is constantly exposed. As such, it is helpful to interpret political phenomena as constituting as an open system, one that must cope with the problems generated by its exposure to influences from these environmental systems' (Joseph, p 42). He excluded somehow the notion of power of the political system, replacing it with the term authority. To sum, the system is an open structure which gets the influence from the environment where it is situated and responds to those signals by making decisions. The latter is called the outputs whereas the signals stay as the inputs. Moreover, the outputs influence on the input creation by the channels of the feedback. One of the characteristics of this model is that it is about the continuity of the existence of political systems rather than the quality. We consider that this theory may be applicable to the understandings of the Armenian case of the social movements in the pessimistic scenario which is viewing them as the results of the weak practice of the political system. The graphical interpretation of the Easton's theory may make the picture more digestible. (Appendix 3, Picture 1)

In Easton's terms the political system is a black box which aggregates the demands and the supports held by the society and coverts them into the decisions. In this sense, the mass demonstrations may be the source of those inputs. We will try to illustrate it in some major examples of Armenian social protests: (1) Demonstrations of people who have been living in the areas (particularly Northern Avenue) which are used in the area of the state interests, (2) The case of Teghut, and finally the oppositional ones which cover the period from 2008 to 2012 (3).

(1) As the main documents proclaiming the aim of the building of the Northern Avenue are confidential, we will try to interpret this case having in mind the initial goal of the avenue stated by the key informants. So, hypothetically we may suppose that the goal is based on the demands. Departing from that point the input of these relations will be the demand of creating road which would connect the Government with the Opera House. Based on that demand the Government authorized the decision. The decision was the output of this program. As soon as the decision was made, the social demonstrations by the landowners of that area began. The latter may be considered as the feedback of the government's decree. It gave a rise to a new demand advanced by the previous landowners. It was about higher compensation for their previous houses. So, the demand of the second cycle was a pure embodiment of the dissatisfaction towards the system. The fact is that according to the data, one may witness that the protests of those people were an inseparable part of the statistics for each year from 2004 to 2012.The continuity of the dissatisfaction may mean either the existence of the gap in the instruments and ways of the communications between the society and the states or the authoritative nature of the government.

(2) The case of Teghut is full of dilemmas. According to the interviews with the stakeholders of this issue and the document analysis their claims were the following: From the one side the Greens claim that the exploitation of the mines will have an adversarial effect on the environment. From the other side, there is a need of new jobs in that district. In the realm of this model we may divide them between its structural parts. It may be considered that, based on the demands of new job places, revenues to the budget, the Armenian Government granted a License to the pertinent company to develop the mining industry and to guarantee some benefits (AEN, 2012). So, the demand was a low unemployment in that area and the need of revenues. The decision made by the political system was the exploitation of Teghut. The latter in this case is an output. However, the Easton's model does not ignore the feedback of the process. In this very case the uprisings of the Greens may fit into this context. So, the feedback of governmental decision did not satisfy some group of people. That dissatisfaction may be assumed a decisive

source of the mass gathering. Moreover, it creates a new demand to preserve the ecosystem of Teghut.

(3) Eventually, the oppositional protests may also be conditionally presented by the Easton's model. In this case the model will be a little bit modified in order to present the elections as a part of this structure. In the initial model, however, it was not encountered. So, if the first two cases were the instances of expressing the signals to the political system through the demands, we will try to observe this case (at least the first cycle before the feedback) as a support driven decision making procedure. So, through the elections of 2008 the population demonstrates their support to some candidates by casting ballots and voting. Then the results were announced and ratified which in this case may be treated as the output of the process. The population who did not agree, therefore were not satisfied with the final decision, initiated a new wave of ongoing protests. In this case, the new demand was formulated in a more radical form. The demand of the demonstrators addressed to a newly elected President, was claiming to leave his post. Another option (demand) was to conduct a new election. Like in the first case, these protests also have a high frequency which proclaims the same problems of weak state-society relation in those periods.

Based on the above mentioned model and the three cases of the mass demonstrations we may draw some implications. Firstly, as the descriptions of the cases state, the mass demonstrations are kind of the feedbacks of the governmental decisions which designate the new inputs for the system. As to the initial inputs, one of the shortcomings of the Armenian case may be deduced. The latter refers to the fact, that in all three cases, the demands (inputs) were advanced by the government rather than the society. This notion puts the society in some distance towards the system by creating those gaps in communication which was obvious mainly in the first and the second cases. This shortcoming may be a character of some authoritative essence of the government as the latter ignores the real societal signals.

Secondly, in contrast to the optimistic scenario, the growing volume and frequency of the mass demonstrations in the premises of this model are the determinants of the ineffective state-society relations.

Thirdly, there is another thing that was not mentioned in the examples but it is worthy to state. The Republic of Armenia is not an isolated country in terms of its memberships to different international organizations. There are several cases, where the inputs to the political system may come from those bodies. In many instances (for example Teghut), the demonstrators themselves apply to those institutions. So, the existence of comparatively better state-society communication may partially be explained by the role of those bodies.

To sum up the advanced two scenarios, several things may be mentioned. In both cases we approached the Armenian social movements deductively, trying to apply the theories to the social protests. Furthermore, the theories are a little bit modified or in other words they are interpreted for the given case. The analysis observes that the role of the number of the mass demonstrations in Armenia is not a black or white case. There are many grey points which probably underline the transitional nature of the Armenian system. In the first case it was witnessed that even if the social movements may not sometimes be viewed as the actors of the civil society, they can be a step forward to it. The latter is validated by the creation of new NGOs which were the byproduct of the social protests.

However, the pessimistic scenario connects the increasing number of the protests with more authoritative nature of the Armenian political system. So, the protests indicate the lack of the effectiveness in decision making procedure. Taking into account the Armenian picture of the protests, we will try to create some theoretical conclusions.

3.3 Armenian scenario

In the realms of this scenario we will try to base our analysis on several criteria *vis-a-vis* the growing number of the mass demonstrations. There are the distribution of the protests, their frequency and the variety of their content.

While observing the dynamics of the social protests in Armenia, one thing becomes clear that the increasing trend of the protests is greatly conditioned by the spillover effect. Unfortunately or fortunately that spillover does not refer to the districts. As the findings show the top part of the demonstrations are condensed in Yerevan. Comparing with other districts Shirak, Lori and Kotayq have also demonstrated some activeness.

The uneven distribution of the social protests among the capital and the marzes is more obvious if we look into the findings based on the relative rankings. In this case the proportionality of the marz level participation in the mass demonstrations is much lower.

Another key criterion for the analysis is the frequency of the protests. It does not register any strong trends. For example, in 2006 when the numbers of the protests were the lowest one, the frequency of the protests was higher, than in 2010 where the highest frequency of the protests was 5 days. At the same time the years 2008. 2011, 2012 had higher ranks both for the number and the frequency of the protests.

Eventually, one of the interesting trends pertains to the types of the protests. In this case there is a strong positive connection between the quantity of the protests and its variety. In this sense the principle of the above mentioned spillover may be advanced. By saying spillover we mean the new waves of the demonstrations which were generated as a result of some protests. As we have already mentioned the contents of the top protests by years, here the attention will be greatly taken into that principle which has been witnessed particularly since 2008. That is why, one of the examples may be the oppositional meetings in 2008. It can be considered that the periodical protests of the young activists even after the election period, the demonstrations of the wives of the people who were jailed in those circumstances and the protests of the parents and relatives of the people who died during the March 1 violence were the expressions of the spillover.

The same may refer to the environmental movements. The initiative to save Trchkan Waterfall, Teghut and the garden on Mashtoc Street happened one after another. The next

example may refer to the movements against the destroying of the cultural monuments like it was in the cases of the buildings on Aram 3 street, "the closed market", etc..

The overall conclusion based on this spillover effect may be the following. In almost all cases, the protests which were the spillovers of some movements were organized by some groups which manage to mobilize people to react the problems in a quick way . Moreover, as it was mentioned in the optimistic scenario, those groups were derived from the pertinent demonstrations. For instance, "The Civil Initiative to save Teghut", "Counter Attack" (Hakaharvats", etc.). It may be assumed that due to the organized nature of those protests and the high number of the protests in the specific fields, the social awareness of the overall population is increasing in the concurrent areas.

Relying on the statistics, inequality, poverty or economically driven protests have low rate both in the distribution per marzes and in the frequency. In most of the cases they are one-time demonstrations, strikes. (Miners in Syunik, the employers of Nairit). Indeed some of them may be repeated after some period of time but it is not sufficient to call them the periodic cases. As to the third criterion it may be helpful to understand one of the reasons of the low number of those protests in comparison with more popular types of the demonstrations in Armenia. From that perspective, probably the lack of the Trade Unions matter. As it was mentioned above, the frequency of the protests in the specific areas are provided by the organized actives, unions, NGOs.

These criteria based analysis of the social protests gives some background to mull over the role of the mass demonstrations in the development of the civil society in Armenia. For that purpose we should define that concept once again. As there are different definitions of it we will refer to the one by Paffenholts and Spurk who have tried to aggregate them in three bullets:

- "Civil society is the sector of voluntary action within institutional forms that are distinct from those of the state, family and market, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred" (Paffenholtz, p. 3)

- "It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations, often competing with each other and oriented to specific interests. It comprises non-state actors and associations that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organized, and interact in the public sphere" (Ibid, 4)

- ''Civil society is independent from the state, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with the state and the political sphere"(Ibid, p. 4)

As far as the social protest are in some cases the cradle for the establishments of new voluntary institutions in terms of Ngos, the social protests may not be approached as totally destructive phenomena. Certainly, the institutionalization of the protests does not refer to all cases but the top examples (with high volume and frequency) may become the precedents for that practice. The latter may be the primary added value of the mass demonstrations in Armenia in the transitional periods. Supposedly, the self-organized society will become the consequence of those protests. However, it does not mean that the social protests are the ideal part of Armenian civil society because one of the reasons that they are conducted may be the inability of the civil society agents to frame the inputs for the political system which fit in the needs of the overall population. So, the major functions of the social protests were the precedent making from one side (which particularly was expressed in the spillovers) and the increasing social awareness from the other side.

Though the social movements may be considered as the revolutionary actions per se, they have had an evolutionary nature in Armenia. At the same time it may be assumed that the society voluntarily or involuntarily mobilizes some latent power (in terms of growing awareness) which in some period of time may overcome the state's power and be exercised in the revolutionary way.

In general, our argument in the Armenian scenario of the social protests relies on the following assumption. The social protests "nurture" the society by increasing their awareness. It proves by the data that over the years more and more people engage in the demonstrations. If

they join them it means they recognize their civil rights and freedoms, becomes more familiar with the Constitution. In other words, it makes them realize that they are the source of state power. When that recognition will reach a critical mass, it will probably be expressed in a form of demonstrations. It is illustrated also in the Picture 2 in the Appendix.

So, the direction of the movements of the state and the social protests are the opposite ones. However, during the processing, the social protests may cultivate power (awareness-based) which will contribute to the overall power of the civil society expressed in the growing revolution. Hence movements are close to the civil society but not the ideal part of it.

As it was discussed in the previous chapter the social factors does not have an influence on the number of the social protests. Based on our literature review we have connected it with the social exclusion .This approach tries to demonstrate whether the social protests may have an influence on the social factors. Relying on the interviews we may conclude that the uprisings have an indirect impact on the social factors. As far as they increase the social awareness they, therefore reduce somehow the social isolation which has the connection with the social factors. However, this point needs some further research.

Conclusion: Main Implications and Recommendations for further studies

The whole analysis underlines that unlike some developing and developed countries Armenian people are not responding to the changes in the social and economic indices so actively. Therefore, we may consider that our first hypothesis was confirmed as far as the social factors like poverty and inequality registered no causal relations with the social protests. Moreover, the specifications indicate that the political factor (Transparency) has the most significant causal relations with the protests which mean that the second hypothesis is accepted as well.

The analysis of the reverse causality identifies no relations between the social protests and social factors when using the same specifications. However, the qualitative approach based on the results of the interviews with the activists of the protests gives a more comprehensive picture.

While observing the functions of the social protests in Armenia we found out that they may have indirect relations with the social factors. The latter cause social exclusion while the protests increase the awareness of the society. Therefore they are in indirect relations with each other. However, this argument requires more thorough observation which is a task for further studies in this field.

Aside with these implications, one of the main insights of the study was about the frequency and volume of the protests. The research demonstrated that the movements which are institutionalized have more volume and frequency. Departing from this point we may assume that the lack of inequality, poverty or economically driven protests is conditioned by the scarcity of Trade Unions in Armenia.

The work, however, has some limitations. Firstly, the data on the social and economic factors are not available for 2011 and 2012.Secondly, there may be more variables to be included in the study which again were unavailable.

Based on those limitations there are several recommendations for further studies in this field. It will be probably informative to look through the relations between the protests and the migration rate as far as people mainly migrate because of the socioeconomic reasons. Then, poverty and inequality are intrinsically endogenous variables. To control that endogeneity it may be useful to make a two stage regression analysis. The first stage will refer to those factors while the protests will become a dependent variable in the second stage.

Finally, the finding indicates that the interpretations of the social movements in Armenia are more close to the one advanced by the economists. As it is mentioned in the literature they argue that there are many countries with bad social and economic conditions but they lack a high number of protests. Probably, the coming years will register another picture of the uprisings in Armenia.

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Media Sources

Main: http://www.a1plus.am/am

Additional: http://www.azatutyun.am/

Appendix 1

Table 4 Unconditional Correlation

	Protest	Transparency	Wages	Construction	Agriculture	Service	Trade
Protest	1.0000						
Transparency	0.8040	1.0000					
Wages	0.8700	0.8431	1.0000				
Construction	0.5034	0.5614	0.5931	1.0000			
Agriculture	-0.6406	-0.6667	-0.7289	-0.7035	1.0000		
Service	0.8796	0.8464	0.8325	0.6227	-0.7193	1.0000	
Trade	0.7978	0.7926	0.8182	0.5834	-0.6478	0.9006	1.0000
Industry	-0.1418	-0.1058	-0.0430	-0.1258	-0.4461	-0.2048	-0.2630
Inequality PC	0.1308	0.1470	0.1498	-0.0485	-0.0871	0.1912	0.2119
Inequality SP	0.0452	0.2349	-0.0371	-0.2275	0.1426	0.0101	-0.0518
Poverty	-0.1905	-0.1955	-0.1619	-0.2187	0.0808	-0.0784	-0.1979
Poverty SP	0.1155	0.1392	0.1013	0.1698	-0.1092	0.2638	0.1781

	Industry	Inequality PC	Inequality SP	Poverty	Poverty SP
Industry	1.0000				
Inequality PC	-0.0240	1.0000			
Inequality SP	-0.0589	0.0919	1.0000		
Poverty	0.1070	0.3440	0.0315	1.0000	
Poverty SP	-0.1879	0.2129	0.2290	0.5507	1.0000

Graph 6 Protests and Tertiary when controlling for marz differences (without Yerevan)
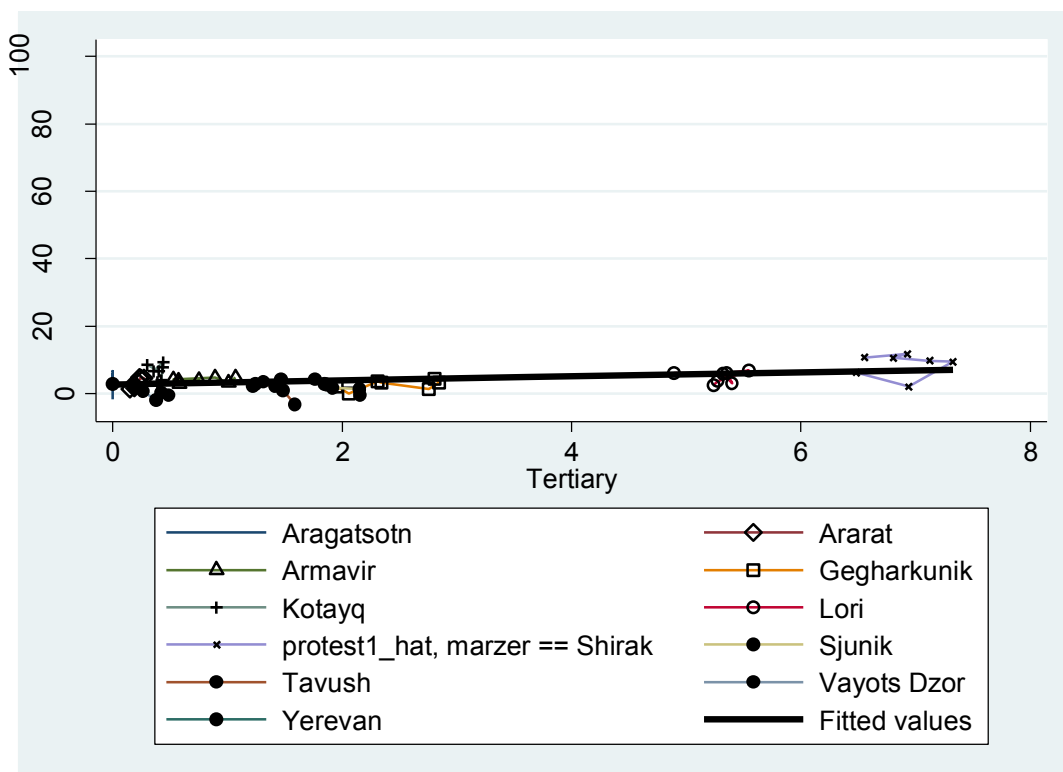
Appendix 2

Table 5 Regression Results for Protests

| Dependent: Protests	(1)	(2)	(3)
Transparency	-24.969***	-20.56**	-20.46**
	(5.58)	(4.99)	(5.94)
Wages	4.67e-07	4.57e-07	6.20e-07
	(3.30e-07)	(2.87e-07)	(3.85e-07)
Industry			
Construction	-.905*	-.854**	-.928*
	(.31)	(.24)	(.41)
Trade			-2.767
			(2.219)
Service		1,18	1.687
		(.76)	(.92)
Poverty			.22
			(.436)
Poverty-sp			-.598
			(.593)
Gini Index PC	1,25		1.199
	(10.06)		(5.87)
Gini Index SP		15.56	12,46
		(12.73)	(11.007)
N	77	77	77
R^2: within	0.55	0.57	0.62

Table 6 Written Complaints to the Human Rights Defender of Armenia (2004-2012)

Year/Marz	Yerevan	Aragatsotn	Ararat	Armavir	Gegharqunik	Lori	Kotayq	Shirak	Syunik	Vayots Dzor	Tavush
2004	982	43	47	53	61	75	59	97	32	12	22
2005	978	21	66	58	64	104	67	106	34	22	31
2006	798	20	57	46	54	93	56	94	29	19	27
2007	725	22	41	21	29	75	59	48	23	11	19
2008	795	23	37	42	45	49	67	68	23	13	22
2009	704	21	41	35	34	77	63	61	16	16	31
2010	786	20	39	35	41	94	79	50	22	12	33
2011	958	39	58	49	57	88	103	88	44	17	37
2012	1157	37	85	45	175	282	117	272	85	51	73

Source: www.ombuds.am Annual reports from 2004 to 2012

Appendix 3

Picture 1 Easton's theory on Political System

Feedback

Inputs
- Demands
- Supports

Political System

Outputs

Authoritive decisions
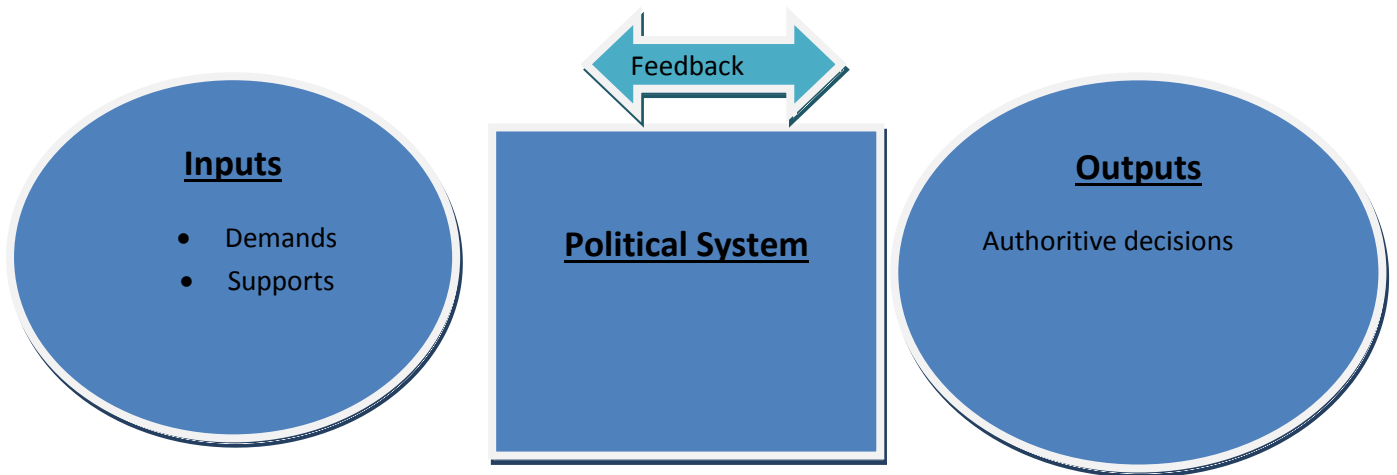
Picture 2 The relations of Social Protests, State and Civil Society

State

Social Protests

civil so