

ARMENIA 2018: REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Panel 1. Society in Change

Moderator: ASHOT VOSKANYAN

SUREN ZOLYAN

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On the models of description of the post-Soviet societies

“All happy families resemble one another,
each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Leo Tolstoy

1. Most of the existing models of descriptions of post-Soviet societies are based on a certain a priori ideological pattern, which is justified by the same descriptions as an a posteriori fact. In general, they originated from the archaic chiliastic scheme, which was expressed in the most explicit and straightforward way in F. Fukayam's article “The End of History?,” where instead of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth—as it was presupposed by the original conception—a universal liberal society is established. Afterwards, the motto of a great Russian satirist of the nineteenth century is used: “history has stopped its flow” (Saltykov-Shchedrin, *A History of a City*). Even the more sophisticated researchers have not gone past this pure scheme. Despite the differences, all of these approaches are based on the conceptual metaphor of “transit,” which later yields its primacy to another concept of “hybridity”. An analysis of these metaphors will clarify why the descriptions based on these concepts don't correspond to the realities of post-Soviet states.
2. The metaphor of *transit* presupposes a dynamic change from the “bad” socialist Soviet past to the ideal state of affairs, which is embodied in a certain mental construct, and conditionally can be named as a “liberal Western democracy.” This ought to replace the discredited, previous construct: “communism.” At the same time, in the spirit of Fukayama, it was assumed that this ideal had already existed in the neighboring states (USA, Europe, Japan, etc.). It is not difficult to see that in a number of post-Soviet societies “a transit” was reduced merely to the change of labels.
3. The concept of the “hybrid regime” arose to adjust the metaphor of *transit*. It preserves the opposition between *the bad past* and *the beautiful future*, but instead of the idea of the irreversible annihilation of the institutions of the past and their gradual replacement by the westernized institutions, the concept of hybrid regimes leaves a possibility of their co-existence. These theories pretend they take into account the specifics of various states and offer different models for describing political regimes, for instance, in the case of Estonia and Tajikistan. Hybrid theories attribute to the political realities those characteristics which are derived from the corresponding models of description, (e.g., if one uses a car as a model to describe a cart, it will inevitably lead to the consideration of a cart as a hybrid car). These models are borrowed from the concept of *transit*, and are doomed to create phantom mixtures, such as “hybrid democracies” and “democratorships.”

4. Meanwhile, the transformations that took place can be viewed not as a result of leading toward a desirable future, but as a result of the annihilation of the characteristics conditioned by the political regime of the USSR, and the restoration of those institutions, which were inherent to the new states before they were included in the USSR or the Russian Empire. These processes may be similar to the so called *post-democracy* (Crouch) or *re-feudalization* (Supiot)—phenomena that characterize the departure from democratic principles of governance in Western societies. This circumstance facilitates the process of disguising authoritarian regimes as democratic and creates an opportunity for effective cooperation between Eurasian post-Soviet authoritarian and Western post-democratic ruling elites. In addition to the accepted distinction between authoritarianism and democracy and their subsequent blending in the concept of hybrid democracies, it seems to be more fruitful to turn to M. Ilyin's idea, according to which, all political regimes are based on authoritarian institutions and differ only in the degree of application of democratic or anti-democratic practices, (compare with the institutional political regimes of such monarchies as Great Britain, Sweden and Saudi Arabia).

5. With regard to Armenia, the neutralization of the “socialist” characteristics did not lead to essential positive results, since it was not accompanied by any modernization project. Instead of the strategy of the post-industrial breakthrough that was outlined in the last two decades of Soviet Armenia, a kind of traditionalistic ideology of post-colonial “national revival” arose. The political regime is determined by the amalgamation of power and property. Phenomena, such as market economy without competition, parliamentary republic in the absence of political parties and elections without the possibility of a change of government, came into existence. The most acceptable characteristic of this regime seems to be the term “electoral feudalism”—it is used in regard to countries combining feudal institutions with the mechanism of elections (India, Pakistan, and Liechtenstein). However, this term is more adequate with respect to Armenia and other post-Soviet countries: in this case feudal institutions are legitimized not by the origin of a person but through elections. The most important feature of democracy—the formation of the government through elections— becomes a ritual, which has to legitimize the already established formal and informal hierarchy. The vicious circle that emerged back in the 1990s is increasingly gaining more inertial force and influence: the electoral feudalism breeds the feudal electorate, and, at the same time, the feudal electorate regularly reproduces the electoral feudalism (the rule of elected lords). This causes the archaic reinterpretation of borrowed modern political institutions, (a president, or now, a prime-minister, as a head of a family, the State as a mother, a governor as a prince, grandmother's parables as a basis for legislation, elections as a festival, etc.).

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HARUTYUN MARUTYAN

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The main characteristics of the first and second Armenian Revolutions: preliminary observations

The presentation discusses and compares the titles, organizational and operational structures, slogans, social components, manifestations of dialogues, iconographies, ambience of demonstrations, forms of self-organization, ways of overcoming fear, activity centers, and types of behavior in connection with law during the two Armenian revolutions. It also deals with the questions of staff utilization.

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VAHRAM SOGHOMONYAN

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The agenda of the Revolution

Armenia's revolutionary movement was a stark example of civil self-organization. It involved numerous elements of direct democracy—rapidly mobilizing crowds, self-organizing diverse groups, and participatory decision-making. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand how post-revolutionary agenda and ideological orientations are formed and what forces contribute to this process. To date, Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly stated that pursuing a political ideology is not the first item on his agenda. Instead, he will be focusing on eliminating poverty, establishing a legal state, and ensuring a competitive market.

Being the logical next stage of the quantitative and qualitative growth of the civic movements of the past decade (2008-2018), the Armenian revolution was also a counteraction against the neoliberal course of “privatization, liberalization, and deregulation” of the past 30 years. The theme of social justice was prevalent among the previous grassroots social movements in Armenia. For example, the “Save Teghut” civic initiative addressed the issue of fair management of natural resources. Other movements were about preserving public spaces, maintaining fair rates for public services, opposing privatization of the pension system and disintegration of public education, and disallowing the private sector from making super profits at the expense of the public sector.

Today's economic discussions are still dominated by neoliberal narratives of the 1990s, which are being questioned in the rest of the world. The only way to replace the existing neoliberal economic policies with new policies is to overcome the external (WB, IMF, EEU, etc.) and internal resistances and to build a distinctive political base. This will also dispel the existing belief, according to which inequality is the acceptable state of the society. The previously ruling Republican Party had a clear ideological orientation. It was operating on two principles—neoliberalism, which was aimed towards international organizations, and the nationalist “Nation-Army” concept, which was directed towards the subaltern classes to keep them from preventing practices that intend to extort the already impoverished population.

The agenda and ideological orientation of the new ruling force also depend upon the new political basis. While the driving forces of the revolution involved a wide cross-section of classes and backgrounds, including the middle class, student groups, leftists, human rights activists and critical intellectuals, the impoverished rural population and the working class of the suburbs of Yerevan played an indispensable role. Currently they lack political infrastructures for self-organizing and are at the risk of being “lumpenized.” Therefore, it is necessary for the new government that is trying to build a "new political center" to pursue

one of the main slogans of the revolution—love and solidarity. In other words, the new government should form a broad coalition centered around social justice and solidarity that will unite the middle class and the impoverished population around a single agenda. This will unite people not around xenophobia and the militaristic "Nation-Army" concept, but around individual freedom and fair management of public goods—positive core values to build our public life.

If the new government fails to overcome the “nationalist” and “neoliberal” narratives or adopts them, it will face a threat of social explosion caused by an exacerbated social polarization. The new agenda on social policy should involve new forms of community organizing, pursuing social justice in the education field, and reevaluating economic democracy and the public sphere.

VAHRAM SOGHOMONYAN is an Armenian political scientist from Yerevan-based think-tank Political Discourse (diskurs.am), which was founded in 2013 by a group of Armenian social scientists and representatives of civic groups. He studied German Language at the Yerevan State University. From 2002 to 2006 he worked at the Philipps University of Marburg as a member of the “European Integration” research group. His studies are focused on South Caucasus and European integration, changes in the system of values in Armenia and the Karabakh issue. Since 2010 he has been actively involved in civic initiatives in Armenia (including Mashtots Park Movement). Vahram Soghomonian is a member of Civic Initiative for Education.

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Social solidarity agenda

The movement that declared for the revolution of love and solidarity in Armenia starting from April, 2018, first of all, needs to define the central concepts lying at the basis of its politics. Sociological concept of solidarity has two main traditions distinguished by the main motive underlying the social solidarity: either negative or positive. The first tradition is based on the approach developed by French sociologist Émile Durkheim, the second one by Russian scientist, Peter Kropotkin. Depending on the type of society, Durkheim proposed two types of solidarity. The first type of solidarity is mechanical, being a consequence of the similarity of individuals: similar life style, religion, educational environment. In this case absence of solidarity means also absence of solidarity within anyone. This is an automatic solidarity not thought and defined by those who share the solidarity, for most of the cases. It is typical for small and traditional societies. The second type of solidarity was named organic by Durkheim. He thought that organic solidarity progresses in more complex, contemporary societies where the growing and narrowing labor specialization makes the representatives of society more and more different. In those societies people show solidarity toward each other because of their interconnections: each social practice depends on the simultaneous work of different specialists making it necessary to maintain solidarity. Both types of solidarity by Durkheim explain the phenomenon of solidarity as something derived from the negative: people behave solidarity since they have to, in order to ensure their existence.

Parallely, almost in the meantime, Russian scientist Kropotkin wrote that mutual support is the basis for the progress. A glimpse into the human history will show that the role of the mutual support cannot be underestimated. Solidarity has a positive background: people have natural demand for mutual support and assistance. Society is progressing through the realization of this natural demand even in those periods when it seems that everyone is on their own and the state should take care about everyone. Moreover, Kropotkin stated the need for social and economic systems which should operate on the basis of voluntary horizontal networks.

To which of these solidarities does the movement of love and solidarity in Armenia refer? Firstly, it seems that solidarity operates at the positive basis at least from the emotional side. But it is enclosed: it operates only for the groups who activated the same social practices and shared the street and the square. Inclusion of all society is possible only as organic solidarity on negative basis. A significant part of the society, which didn't occupy the streets, can fit in the frames of that solidarity only through its continuing silence. The mechanisms of solidarity in this context should be the essential means which will make the positive solidarity inclusive.

ZHANNA ANDREASYAN, Ph.D. candidate, sociologist, **born in 1981**, is a graduate of the Faculty of Sociology at the Yerevan State University. Her research includes societal issues of Post-Soviet Armenia, as well as the study of adequacy of sociological methodology and qualitative features of social networks. She is a lecturer at the Yerevan State University (<http://www.y-su.am/faculties/en/Sociology>).

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STEPAN DANIELYAN

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Pre-revolution moods vs post-revolution expectations

Government and power in general are considered legitimate when they are formed according to law, with respect to all legal procedures, however, the legitimacy, as a concept, is far too complex phenomenon. Power can be legitimate when it is based on any particular idea, which is acceptable and recognized by the society. Public legitimacy can also be called "the right of power," which the public grants to the government.

In this report, an attempt is made to consider all ideologies, since 1988, which legitimized the power and authorities of those years, as well as to understand, at which point the Government/power lost its legitimacy, which in turn led to mass protests.

The topic is relevant primarily in the context of current events in Armenia. In the report, an attempt is made to analyze why and how, just a year ago, in conditions of full public apathy and indifference, the Republican Party managed to form a majority in the Parliament, as well as understand why and how it was crushed within a very short period of time, as a result of mass protests.

It is important to discuss what are the expectations of Armenian society from the current political authorities. It is vital to analyze whether these expectations have been clearly formulated (if formulated at all), or Armenia is still on the verge of instability until a new formula for "public legitimacy" is developed.

The report will highlight the positions of various social and political groups.

STEPAN DANIELYAN is Chairman of the Collaboration for Democracy Centre. From 2009 to 2013 he was Editor in Chief of the journal *Religion and Society* and now is the Editor in Chief of the website *Religions in Armenia* (www.religions.am) since 2010.

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Armenia's civil society through the prism of the Revolution

For many years Armenia's civil society has been the subject of both local research projects and of self-reflection within itself, within the scope of the activist circles and NGOs. At different stages of the country's political life, the perceptions of the civil society representatives regarding their role and activities in public life, as well as conditions and perspectives for public activities have changed. Since February 2018, Socioscope NGO in partnership with Professor Armine Ishkanian (London School of Economics) has been conducting a project aimed at responding to the outcry of many human rights NGOs and public rights defender activists about Armenia's shrinking civil society space.

24 focused interviews, conducted in March, with the representatives of the civil society and other key informants, indicated anxiety, concerns and analyses that contained no possibility for the process of regime change. Whereas, the political life of Armenia since mid-April until May underwent intensive structural changes in which, along with other social groups, civil society groups played a primary role. With a retrospective reading of our interviews, now we can observe which socio-political conditions and what perceptions of those conditions did allow the NGO leaders and activists to mobilize around a process initiated by a political force with low level of trust at that moment. These groups had their input in the process, eventually becoming one of the layers of the society that won in this revolutionary regime change.

In this piece we primarily discuss the acknowledgement of a situation of pressures and attempts of cooptation, under the conditions of which the civil society of Armenia had to operate (more specifically, the resistance groups) in the pre-revolutionary period, as well as civil society's attempts to find ways to react to that situation. Our analysis addresses the interplay between the evaluation of this experience, the overall feelings of mistrust and hopelessness toward the incumbent authorities, political opposition, one's own strengths and the revolution.

The research focuses on the internal tensions within the civil society that arise in the complex relations between activism and institutionalized NGOs on the one hand, and in the contradictions of one's own agenda and the policies offered by donors, on the other.

In this analysis we study how the revolution as an event enabled the full integration and flow of the civil society and its experiences of failures and half-victories of resistance struggles into the process. We view this situation as one of the important preconditions thanks to which the various, previously active groups intersected and involved new social groups, which were previously passive, thus making the movement a people's movement. In

this process we observe how the civic groups, as pioneers of self-organized movements, enabled the augmentation of the wave of the resistance through their actions based on the precedent ones and their domino effect. At the same time, we focus on the examples of civic groups that highlighted their own agendas in the revolutionary processes.

Finally, our work summarizes one of the phases (yet incomplete) of the civil society experience in the revolution and poses questions for the future.

ANNA ZHAMAKOCHYAN is a sociologist, co-founder of Socioscope research NGO. The scope of her professional interests includes analysis of ideological discourses and practices in media texts and public processes. Her approach to critical analysis is that of a mechanism of social change, wherein the research activity intersects with public struggles. Zhamakochyan has authored many articles on media analysis in national scientific journals. Her analysis of the ideological aspects of the discourse responses of civil society groups in Armenia was published in *Quest for Change (Socioscope, 2016)* collection of research essays.

Zhamakochyan is the editor of one of Socioscope's research collection and three additional research reports. In addition, another sphere of Anna's professional interest is Armenia's contemporary art. Anna has an experience of acting as a curator of contemporary art.

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ARTUR MKRTICHYAN

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The concept of “neither war nor peace society” as a sociological model of post-Soviet Armenian society¹

Wars in South Caucasian region as such are not over, though there has been a long-term cease-fire. In such conditions South Caucasian societies maintain a certain level of militarization on the one hand, while trying to peacefully solve social-economic development and democratization problems on the other. However, in “neither war nor peace societies,” both liberalization of the economy and democratization of policy are subject to militarization requirements. Consequently, the privatization of production sources has not led to the establishment of a free, competitive antimonopoly regime, and the institutionalization of democratic form of government has not eliminated the authoritarian regime.

The application of such enforcement measures for solving the social problems results in militarization of social mentality and formation of a state command system. Therefore, in the conditions of “neither war nor peace society” the social mentality links the elimination of instability and threat to the myth of “strong-arm authorities”, which causes the formation of an authoritarian democracy.

Militarization of social life is expressed not only in relatively big amount of military expenses, but also in trying to adjust the economy, science, education and youth upbringing, propaganda of mass media, political institutions and practices to the military requirements. It turns out that the present of the people is being sacrificed for an uncertain future.

ARTUR MKRTICHYAN, Ph.D., is the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology in YSU and Professor of Sociology. The scope of his professional interests includes theoretical sociology (system theory and chaos, sociology of knowledge), examination of ethnic political conflicts, migration and diaspora, social change and political transformation in Armenia. He is an author of 3 monographs and more than 70 articles, published in 5 languages. As an expert, Mkrtichyan has been involved in the UN and CSCE programs.

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¹ Of course, the theoretical model of that implementation should be developed by specialists of social sciences. The development of such a model will not only have important applicable but also significant theoretical meaning, as many Asian, African and South American countries essentially are “neither war nor peace societies” and they solve their development issues in identical conditions, (a vivid example is Israel).

HAMAZASP DANIELIAN

Researcher

The establishment of party system in Armenia: shall we try again?

The importance of the strengthening the party system was at the center of political discourse for at least the last two decades, endorsed by both the opposition and the ruling political forces. Many formal regulations were adopted and revised during this process, including the most recent constitutional amendments of 2015. These amendments envisaged greater role for the legislative body, increased role of party factions, essentially limited the participation of nonpartisan candidates not only in the national elections but also in the local self-governing bodies in the largest communities.

Along with these regulations, however, Armenia's party system increasingly became consolidated around a single dominant party, the Republican Party of Armenia. That political party was able to ensure enough votes during the last two legislative elections to ensure the majority in the parliament, which was an unprecedented result in the history of the independent Armenia. All other political parties, regardless of their nature (ideology, position in the government, party discipline, resources, etc.,) became increasingly marginalized in spite of and in some cases because of these formal regulations.

Some of these regulations (mandatory stable majority in parliament, bonus system in seat allocation, limitation on the number of parties that can form a coalition) were specifically designed to ensure single party dominance. They cannot be found in any other polity, and served to their narrow political purpose at the expense of basic rules of representative democracy. Such artificial regulations failed to translate the political preference of the society into proper representation of political parties, resulting in political crisis. The so called "Velvet Revolution" came to prove this, forcing the dominant political party to cede the executive branch to the leader of popular movement: the head of an opposition party, only marginally represented in the parliament.

It is yet to be seen whether the Republican Party will be able to sustain its control over the parliament and postpone the snap elections. However, regardless of the schedule of the elections, the existing regulations of the political parties are to be seriously reconsidered: a priority task declared also by the minority government.

My presentation/research paper will focus on two major goals: (a) to present the existing formal institutional framework of political parties in Armenia and discuss how it failed to create more inclusive political institutions on the national level, (b) to present and test some ideas on how to reform that legal framework with the aim of overcoming existing shortcomings. Related to the former, a greater attention will be paid not only to electoral

rules but also to the issue of regulation of political party funding with an emphasis on improved control over private funding and strengthening of public funding mechanisms.

HAMAZASP DANIELIAN holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Yerevan State University, where he also teaches. The areas of his academic interest are state building and governance in Armenia with focus on elections and party systems. In addition to his research and teaching Danielyan has over 10 years of practical experience in implementing projects in the fields of democracy and governance, civil society and civic education. Since 2016 he serves as Programs Adviser for Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Armenia.

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Panel 2. Armenia – Diaspora

Moderator: KHACHIG TÖLÖLYAN

KHACHIG TÖLÖLYAN

Professor of the Humanities, College of Letters, Wesleyan University

Rethinking the Armenian trans-nation

How will we rethink Armenia as the most important node of the global network of all Armenians, not a “center” but the most important switching point of their thoughts, feelings and activities? Hitherto, the Diaspora’s thought and psychology have been understandably dominated by Armenian national sentiment, which must undergo change. Since 1988, the issues that have engaged the Diaspora have been the war, the economy, emigration, and perhaps also Armenia’s position towards Turkey concerning the Genocide. However, Armenia as a political and social entity composed of citizens, as a site and space of mutual rights and obligations, has not had a pre-eminent role in the world-view of the Western Diaspora. Today, after the events of April 13-May 8th, all Armenians in Hayastan, Artsakh and Diaspora communities must ask how we will revise our world view, how we will shake off from our Armenianness the domination of a sentimental nationalism, how we will rethink Armenianness itself. How will diaspora Armenians learn to view and understand Armenia not as a state entity responsible to all Armenians, but first and above all as responsible to and for the people of Armenia as a social and political collective? Our future demands not just a changing Armenia but also a changing Diaspora, indeed an entire and changing Armenian trans-nation.

KHACHIG TÖLÖLYAN was first trained in science (BA, Harvard, in molecular biology), then in comparative literature, at Brown University, from which he received his Ph.D., specializing in narratology and the modern novel. He is the author of articles on several 20th Century American novelists, especially Thomas Pynchon; he was also the co-founder and co-editor of a journal devoted to the study of his work, *Pynchon Notes*, published from 1979 to 2009. Tölölyan also published numerous articles on cultural and social issues of the Armenian diaspora in the Paris newspaper *Haratch*, some of which were published in 1980 as a book, *Spyurki Mej*. In the 1980s, Tölölyan published a number of articles on Armenian terrorism committed by diaspora Armenians, and in 1991 he was the founding editor of a periodical titled *Diaspora: a journal of transnational studies*, which is generally considered the foundational publication for the emerging discipline of diaspora studies, launched by the Oxford University Press and, since 1996, published by the University of Toronto Press. The journal publishes articles on both classical and newly emergent diasporas, as well as on the theoretical issues pertaining to diaspora studies and, finally, on the relations of diasporas with ethnicity, nationalism, migration and postcolonialism.

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VAHE SAHAKYAN

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Diaspora, ethnicity, the concept of “Armenian trans-nation,” and some observations on Diaspora research methodologies

What are the relations between the concepts ‘diaspora’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘transnation’? Does ethnicity provide the methodologically impartial basis for defining diasporas, and is it possible to conceptualize the Armenian diasporic realities within the ethnic realm? Based on the critical examination of the concept ‘diaspora’ in theoretical and comparative perspectives, and relying on the extensive research of Armenian diasporic experiences, the paper argues that the diverse realities of diasporas can be more objectively interpreted when analyzed in trans-ethnic, trans-linguistic and trans-cultural domains.

Diasporas, in the classical perception, are often defined as collections of dispersed ethnic minority communities in different countries, which maintain some kind of relations with their countries of origin. Proponents of this school of thought examine diasporas as developing between host-countries and homelands. They emphasize (and often essentialize) the shared ethnic traits among various dispersed communities. Most contemporary scholars, however, emphasize diasporic diversities and hybridity of diasporic identities. In the process of diaspora formation, the descendants of once dispersed peoples often develop mixed and hybrid identities as full-fledged citizens and members of their societies who at the same time constantly negotiate different expressions of identities (religious, linguistic, cultural, and other) and maintain transnational connections, which collectively make them different from the rest of their societies.

Diasporas in the contemporary perception, including the Armenian Diaspora, do not and cannot have fixed boundaries. Diasporic boundaries are flexible as the individuals and groups participating in diasporic organizations or contributing to the (re)production of diasporic cultures operate in several cultural spaces. In the case of the Armenian Diaspora, the Diaspora-born generations sometimes act as Armenians in certain contexts, they act as citizens of their countries in other situations, and they may also act as citizens or former citizens of third countries in other contexts. Armenians from Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Turkey in America, for example, often operate in three cultural-linguistic spaces: Armenian, American and Lebanese/Syrian/Arabic, Iranian or Turkish, respectively. Recent Armenian immigrants or refugees (from Azerbaijan) in America or France and their descendants also often operate in three cultural-linguistic domains: Armenian, American/French and Russian/post-Soviet. With the time, the expressions and definitions of Armenianness also change under changing conditions and other influences locally and transnationally.

The theoretically informed and research-based perception of the Armenian Diaspora problematizes the possibilities of the “Armenian transnation,” as expressed in Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora triad. Studies of transnational migration use the term ‘transnation’ to denote the transnational bonds between dispersed migrant communities and their compatriots in the homeland. In this sense, recent Armenian immigrants in different countries can be considered as part of the ‘Armenian transnation.’

The concept of ‘transnation’, however, does not involve those diasporics, who live and operate in multiple ethno-linguistic fields, who have mixed and diverse identities. It implies that the descendants of once dispersed Armenian genocide survivors or migrants are necessarily Armenian, with exclusively Armenian identities and loyalties, who are necessarily connected with the rest of the “nation” in Armenia and Artsakh. In such a perception, significant segments of the Diaspora, who regularly participate in the activities of diasporic organizations, who contribute to the (re)production of diasporic cultures, who may display different identities and loyalties in various situations, are connected to several nations and ‘transnations’, cannot be objectively analyzed within the concept of a singular ‘transnation’.

In order to record diasporic diversities, the varying perceptions of homeland and Armenianness more objectively, there is much need to develop new methodologies. Methodologically speaking, it is important to understand which methods and language(s) will help to reduce the influence of research organizations and researchers on survey results, interviews, observations, and other sociological and ethnographic studies of diasporas. The theoretically informed and research-based practices will enable developing informed policies for engaging diverse diasporic communities and organizations, for mobilizing Diaspora resources and for effective Diaspora development projects.

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SYUZANNA BARSEGHYAN, SONA NERSISYAN, LUSINE TANAJYAN

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Homeland perception in the Diaspora

The clarification of the definition of homeland has a great importance in defining the phenomenon of diaspora. In the literature of diaspora studies we can find a number of approaches of the definition of diaspora, where the component of homeland has an important place. According to those approaches, regardless whether the perception of homeland is one of an imagined, historical or lost motherland or of a nation state, the essential point for diasporic identity is the presence of the homeland, its perception, and physical or spiritual tie with it. The important relationships of diaspora–home country, diaspora–host country and between different parts of the diaspora are also conditioned by the perception of homeland.

There are differences in the perception of homeland in multilayered Armenian Diaspora. In spite of this diversity, the existence of the nation state puts forward the idea of the real or rational homeland centering it around Armenia.

To understand the concept of homeland in Diaspora the results of a research conducted in armenian communities (Tehran, Beirut, Los Angeles and Moscow) have been analysed.² The research has been carried out by the following methods: standardized interviews with the members of communities, in-depth interviews with representatives of main community organizations, observation of community life, content analysis of the diasporic press.

In this report the following issues will be presented through comparative analysis of the materials:

- Diasporan commonalities and community differences in the apprehension of the homeland;
- The attitude towards Armenia in various levels of community;
- The view on Diaspora involvement in Armenia, and suggestions on Armenia-Diaspora relations and activities of the Ministry of Diaspora;
- Specificities of the representation of homeland in diasporic press.

SYUZANNA BARSEGHYAN received her B.A. and M.A. in Sociology from the State Engineering University of Armenia in 2003 and 2005, respectively. Currently she is working

² The research was conducted by the Department of Diaspora Studies of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS RA within the framework of the program “The main directions of comparative studies of the Armenians in their own and foreign environments: the problems and the perspectives of the study,” with the financial support of the State Committee of Science MES RA in 2011-2015. The program’s author and supervisor is Dr. Ruben Karapetyan.

on her Ph.D. at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS RA. Since 2004, she has worked as sociologist, analyst, coordinator of research, head of department, and lecturer in various academic and research institutions (Armenian Center for National and International Studies, Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, Armenian State Pedagogical University, State Engineering University of Armenia, etc.) Since 2011, she is a researcher at the Department of Diaspora Studies in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography. She is also an associate expert at the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs.

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SONA NERSISYAN received a Bachelor's degree in sociology in 2010 and the Master's degree in sociology in 2012. In 2012-2013, she worked as a leading specialist in the National Institute of Labor and Social Research at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs RA. Since 2012 she works as a junior researcher at the Department of Diaspora Studies in the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences RA. Since 2014 she is a Ph.D. student in the same department.

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LUSINE TANAJYAN holds a Master's degree in sociology. Currently she is a Ph.D. student in ethnography. Lusine is a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS RA. She has participated in the international and state research projects. Also she has conducted fieldwork and analytical work on comparative studies among Armenians in Diaspora, Syrian-Armenians in Armenia etc. She has participated in researches of Armenian communities of Los Angeles, Tehran, Beirut, Paris, Tbilisi.

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NONA SHAHNAZARYAN

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Urbanites in rural space: electoral frauds in Masis district

This study makes an attempt to fill the gap in a profound research of reactive migration. It examines one of the Armenian cases of a state project pertaining to refugees in independent Armenia and explains why and how it can be described as a failed case. In its early years of independence Armenia inherited mostly Soviet political styles of approaches to social problems and acted as a welfare state. This study focuses on the consequences of that policy in today's Armenia (such as citizenship policy, land owning and social welfare policies) and examines its negative effect on electoral behavior, as its shortcomings have been abused by the predatory feudal type governance on the local scale. As a model I will scrutinize the case-study of the village head election in one of the Masis district trans-border villages, on March 3, 2018. As a result of that historical election the population has managed to dismiss the village head, who was in office since 1988, securing the victory of its own candidate.

NONA SHAHNAZARYAN is a social anthropologist who is a Senior Research Fellow at The Institute of Archeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia. She is also affiliated with the Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg, Russia. In 2017, she was a Visiting Carnegie Fellow at the University of Stanford. She has published extensively on the issues of gender, war, migration, memory and Diaspora in the Caucasus, including a monograph in Russian, *In the Tight Embrace of Tradition: War and Patriarchy* (2011).

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EVIYA HOVHANNISYAN

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Armenian communities of Russia in the context of the colonial policy

My research is focused on the political and social processes affecting migration dynamics between Armenia and Russia after the collapse of the USSR, and the issues of identity and nationalism in the post-Soviet Armenian Diaspora communities. I am going to apply "postcolonial" research methodology and modeling in order to analyze these issues. According to a number of studies (Ashcroft B. 2001, Suny R. 2001, Oushakine S. 2017,) nationalism and identity are two major components, which are formed as a result of colonial expansion.

In order to shorten the fairly broad topic and make it more meaningful, the report will address the Armenian communities of Stavropol Krai. These communities and their recent developments are interesting from several perspectives. First of all, it is necessary to take into consideration the colonial past of the formation and growth of these communities: from where and when did Armenians migrate, what migration groups were formed during those migrations, how did the integration processes take place in the host societies? Then, it is necessary to understand the current situation of these communities: what changes have occurred in those communities after the collapse of the USSR, what institutions (secular and religious) are functioning in those communities, how is the homeland–Diaspora–host country relationship established and shaped?

The post-Soviet Armenian communities perfectly reflect the multilayeredness of the postcolonial discourse.³ It reflects the links between the Diaspora community and the metropolis, as well as the Diaspora community and the homeland. These links shed light on the formulation of national and civic identities and the various aspects of everyday life. This approach will help us to look at the proposed topic both from the micro and macro points of view to understand how the colonial past influenced the formation of Armenia–Armenian communities of Russia–Russian Federation relations.

EVIYA HOVHANNISYAN is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Anthropology at the European University at Saint-Petersburg (title of her thesis: "Armenians from Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic: Diaspora, Homeland, Transnationalism"). Her research interests include Diaspora and Migration studies, Identity and Nationalism studies, Anthropology of the Caucasus. She is an author of several papers, in particular "*Elitism among Refugees in the*

³ The phenomenon of "postcolonialism" implies the multiplicity of political, ideological and social approaches and practices: formation of nationalistic (pseudo-nationalist) ideology based on the denial of colonial past; latent continuation of colonialism under the guise of other political ideologies; etc.

Rural Environment: Authority, Kinship, Social Networks and Economic Survival in Elites and “Elites”: Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia (2016);
“Phantom settlements”: Study of the abandoned village Old Harzhis in From Private to Public - Transformation of Social Spaces in the South Caucasus (2015).

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Panel 3. The Changing Soviet. History, Philosophy, Art

Moderator: SIRANUSH DVOYAN

RUZANNA GRIGORYAN

Researcher at Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in the Humanities

Tracing a leaflet: the unfinished trial of Sargis Kasyan

According to a copy of a document from the National Archive of Armenia dated September 20, 1920, the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party instructed the Bolshevik communists to propagate antimilitary actions with the aim of contributing to the defeat of republican Armenia against Soviet Russia's ally Kemalist Turkey and establishing the Soviet rule in the Caucasus and the East. During the last years of the Soviet power and in the beginning of Armenia's independence, the text of this document occasionally appeared in the pages of self-published periodicals, as well as in Soviet and newly independent Armenia's official press leading to hot debates around the validity and content of this document. When in 2017 the "Yelq" alliance of the Yerevan City Council offered to rename the street after Sargis Kasyan based on Kasyan's signature beneath this text, the controversy reemerged in the press and social media. In the context of public discussions, the lack of archival research regarding the authenticity of this copy once again has become evident. Tracing the copy of the document, this small investigation reveals facts in support of the fabrication of the document, problematizing the approaches of dealing with the Soviet past and of rethinking its legacy.

RUZANNA GRIGORYAN is a researcher at the Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute of the Humanities. She graduated from the School of General Medicine of the Yerevan State Medical University in 2005; additionally, she received a Master's degree in Public Health from the American University of Armenia. From 2008 to 2015 she was a Research Associate and Project Coordinator at the Public Health School at the American University of Armenia. She has published her public health research in peer-reviewed journals and participated in various international conferences. Since 2011 she has been involved in various civic initiatives. In 2016 she completed a Master's degree in Political Theory at the London School of Economics and Political Science. R. Grigoryan is the editor of Armenian translation of "The City of Orphans" by Nora Necessian (Yerevan, 2018).

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ASHOT GRIGORYAN

Independent researcher

Missak Khostikian and the establishment of Soviet-Armenian historiography of philosophy: the problem of David Anhaght

At present, the Armenian edition of Missak Khostikian's doctoral dissertation, *David der Philosoph*, first published in 1907, is being prepared for publication. This is an excellent occasion to re-evaluate the importance of this investigation and acquaint ourselves with the history of its reception. In modern Armenian reality the dissertation is the first definitive endeavour to approach David Anhaght from simultaneously philological and philosophical perspective. This work, which is carried out with the latest scientific methodology of its time, heavily criticises the Armenian tradition on David Anhaght: it points out factual inaccuracies occurring all the way through the manuscripts on which the tradition is based, and, at the same time, attacks it for glorifying David's philosophy only to push forward national and ecclesiastical interests. The overall heavy critical approach of the dissertation, based on multilateral scientific enquiry, had been fully shared by famous Armenologists Galoust Ter-Mkrtschyan, Hagob Manandyan and Garegin Hovsepyan: scientists whose works, in their turn, often criticised the established conceptions of Armenian tradition.

This line of critical scientific investigations, based on solid historical and philological study, has been encouraged and continued in the early Soviet Armenia. Khostikian, who was not a member of Communist party, actively participated in the establishment of Soviet-Armenian institutions dealing with problems and historiography of philosophy, while being himself a founding member of 'Armenian philosophical society,' which cooperated with 'The institute of Marxism-Leninism.' It was again in the first years of Soviet Armenia that Manandyan's pivotal study *The Greek-speaking school and its phases of development* was carried out, where the abovementioned critical approach toward David's Armenian tradition has been further developed and an attempt has been made to establish the specific circumstances under which the tradition took shape.

However, the historical chain of Stalin's Repressions, the Second World War and the advent of Cold War fundamentally altered the principal attitude of Soviet science, including Armenology. Stalin's regime, which tried to mobilize all of its inner forces against outer enemies, felt necessary to incite the patriotic passions and animate national emotions. The scientific criticism of the objects of national pride, particularly the criticism of the Armenian tradition which pictured David as the greatest national philosopher, conflicted with the political imperatives of the time and thus was no longer acceptable. Consequently, in the postwar period, Khostikian's dissertation, the most striking piece of such critical research, saw exclusively negative responses. Later it became gradually marginalized and forgotten in the works of the next generation of Soviet-Armenian historians of philosophy. As a result, it

was not only and was not so much a single study on David Anhaght that faded into oblivion, but an entire scientific tradition, which sincerely endeavored to face and to deal with the uncomfortable sides of the national tradition.

Therefore the careful re-reading of Khostikian's dissertation and the historical exposition of its reception allows us to view our legacy of Soviet-Armenian historiography of philosophy from the perspective of a scientific direction, the neutralization of whose critical methodology was one of its prerequisites. Thus, from this viewpoint, the cracks of the self-evidence of established historiography of philosophy become more visible, while the history of its complex development incorporates itself into our historic-philosophical legacy.

ASHOT GRIGORYAN, born in 1993, Yerevan, studied at Physmath school. From 2009 to 2013 studied at the Physics Department of Yerevan State University (YSU), obtaining bachelor's degree. Here in 2011 along with his classmate Valery Vardanyan he organized a conference-seminar on philosophy of science. After graduating from YSU he entered Physics Department at the University of Heidelberg (Germany), additionally taking courses in philosophy. In 2015, after obtaining a Master's degree, Grigoryan became a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Applied Problems of Physics, (Yerevan). In the same year Grigoryan, under the supervision of Peter McLaughlin, the chair of Philosophy of Science at the University of Heidelberg started a research project concerning causality in David Hume's philosophy. In April of 2018, he defended his physics doctoral thesis "*Some phenomena of quantum theory in condensed matter physics*" at YSU. Grigoryan translated from German Werner Heisenberg's *Physik und Philosophie* and supplemented it with a historicophilosophical study. During 2017-2018 he conducted a research on Missak Khostikian and his doctoral dissertation *David der Philosoph*, which will be added to the Armenian publication of the dissertation in the summer of 2018.

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IRINA SHAKHNAZARYAN

Researcher at Ashot Johannisyan Research Institute in The Humanities, art historian

The new station of “Armenian style” and the origins of Soviet-Armenian art

In 1921, after the establishment of Soviet rule, the first exhibition of fine arts opened in Yerevan. In fact, it was the 5th exhibition of Armenian Artists Union founded in Tbilisi in 1916. The organization of this first Soviet-Armenian exhibition was greatly determined by the official position of Soviet government regarding current artistic problems of Armenia. The administration was concerned with the problems of artistic inheritance and stylistic peculiarities of Armenian art. From this perspective the exhibition should be thought of as a turning point for the formulation and further development of Soviet-Armenian art of 1920s. The organization of the 5th exhibition of Armenian Artists Union in the circumstances of newly established Soviet state exposes the relevance of the recreation of “Armenian style” of 1910s: a problem which definitely was on the Union’s agenda.

The establishment of Soviet-Armenian art of the first half of the 1920s, determined by the historicization of local art, at the same time is viewable from the perspective of 1910s’ complex attempts to uncover the national style. In the Armenian Artists Union’s constitution of 1916, “recreating Armenian style” and “coming closer to the Armenian spirit and manners in works of fine art,” has been marked as a priority. The scrutiny of these priorities at its turn makes evident the pivotal significance of the recreation of “Armenian style,” as well as 1920s’ attempts of its redefinition.

Certainly, the new Soviet state, where proletariat took the power, demanded new proletarian art. But the question—what kind of art it must be, made the artistic life after revolution contradictory and ambiguous from the beginning of 1920s. Naturally it must be mentioned that Armenia, being a part of Soviet Union and sharing its common agenda, nevertheless gave at the same time “local” solutions to the urgent problems in the sphere of art. It may well be that it is in this specific orbit of local solutions that the attempts of redefinition and reconsideration of “Armenian style” became visible in the broad context of the foundation of proletarian art.

The fact that the Soviet government organized the exhibitions of Armenian Artists Union itself testifies that this administration defended the continuation of an artistic tradition, the foundations of which has been laid in the same Union during the 1910s. Thus, it must be said that the Armenian Artists Union’s defense of “Armenian style” in the context of the programmatic definition of proletarian art found its new station in the Soviet state.

IRINA SHAKHNAZARYAN was born in Yerevan. She is an art historian who received her BA and MA from the Department of Art History and Theory at Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts. In 2014 she defended her MA thesis on the artistic debates around realism in 1920s in Armenia. In 2014 Shakhnazaryan participated in the summer program on Armenian art and culture held at the American University of Armenia. Currently she works as a researcher at Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in The Humanities and is also responsible for library and archives. Since 2016 she is researching sexuality in the Soviet-Armenian press of the 1920s in partnership with Socioscope NGO. Her research interests include the interrelations of art and politics, avant-garde and realism, women's liberation projects, gender and politics.

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NARE SAHAKYAN

Researcher at Ashot Johannisyan Research Institute in the Humanities, curator

The first manifestations of conceptual art in newly independent Armenia: the beginning of post-Soviet condition

As an immediate result of the politics of Reconstruction in 1987, an art movement named 3rd Floor started its public activity. The main desire of the artists in the movement, generally speaking, was the possibility of making *free art*. “Invited were all those who were for the change of the old system, and who wanted Painters Union and Painters House to convert from aesthetic propagandist of the state bureaucratic apparatus to a union of free artists and a house of free [artistic] creation.”⁴

Taking the free art as its ideal and evolving on the edge of being elemental, this movement at the same time was possible in the specific historical phase of Soviet system—the politics of Reconstruction. In 1990 within this already massive movement among artists diverging perception of art were popping out, which was crystallized in the exhibition titled “3rd Floor +-”. Both the name and the structure of this exhibition indicated the emergence of its inner contradictions: the works of the artists were exposed in separate halls sorted by their varying artistic problems.

The exhibition “Object” can be seen as a continuation of this process. It opened in 1991 at the Artists Union, and the participants, while being members of the 3rd Floor movement, for the first time did not consider the exhibition as a part of the movement. The exhibition “Object,” initiated by nine artists, who had a framework of conceptual questions regarding the redefinition of art in their minds, had some peculiar differences from the 3rd Floor. These differences applied to the principle of the exhibition organization, the dynamics of the working group, as well as the specificity of the question about art. This exhibition with its approach can be considered as a turning point in the background of late Soviet avant-garde artistic directions in Armenian context, especially of 3rd Floor movement.

Our research takes as a starting point the theses according to which the formulation of contemporary art in Armenia went hand in hand with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and that art and politics can be seen as parts of the same juncture of complex and contradictory but in the same time tight interconnections.⁵ The focal point of the speech is a specific station of this movement of disintegration and progress—the emergence of conceptual art in the independent Armenia as a conventional starting point of the post-Soviet condition.

⁴ Arman Grigoryan, “3rd Floor”, Inkagir literary magazine, 07.05.2008.

<http://www.inknagir.org/?p=1968#sthash.MaezrFK6.dpuf>, last visit: 25.05.2018.

⁵ Vardan Azatyan, “Disintegrating Progress: Bolshevism, National Modernism, and the Emergence of Contemporary Art Practices in Armenia”, ARTMargins, Volume 1, Issue 1, February 2012, p.62-87.

NARE SAHAKYAN is a researcher and curator, works at Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in the Humanities. She studied history and theory of contemporary art at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Yerevan. Her interests include avant-garde art practices, translation as a cultural act and the means and possibilities of friendship. She graduated from the Yerevan State University's Department of Journalism and previously worked as a journalist. She is currently studying for a master's degree in the Art History and Curating at the American University of Beirut.

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Panel 4. Science and Education

Moderator: SIRANUSH DVOYAN

SEROB KHACHATRYAN

Professor at YSU, Department of Philosophy and Psychology

The conceptual analysis of school reforms in Armenia

The presentation will analyze school education reforms in Armenia in 1998–2018. The reforms were not designed and implemented based on thorough discussions and studies, but “imported.” As a result of reform import the programs were not implemented consistently. There were good ideas, but bad implementation.

Another shortcoming of the reform was mechanical approach. Some elements of the system were changed without taking into account the influence on the other parts of the system. For example, the transition towards 12 year schooling was made without considering how it will influence the tertiary education. In the presentation a replacement of mechanical model with ecological model will be suggested.

During reform implementation new social realities are not taken into consideration. Specifically, many industries today are grabbing students’ attention in order to make them participants in consumerist culture. Aestheticization of our surroundings and marketing technologies are making traditional ways of teaching/learning non-effective. Effective communication between teachers and learners is essentially damaged. Schools have to compete with these industries in order to survive in 21st century. In the presentation several steps of school survival will be suggested.

SEROB KHACHATRYAN is a Professor at Yerevan State University, Department of Philosophy and Psychology since 1997. From 2010 to 2013 he was the CEO of Children of Armenia Fund (COAF). From 2009 to 2010 he was the Head of Programs, and from 2008 to 2009 was the Manager of Education Programs at COAF. Currently he is the Chairman of COAF Board. From 1997 to 2005 he was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Education. From 2006 to 2008 he worked at the National Institute of Education.

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ATOM MKHITARYAN

Deputy Head of the Supreme Certifying Committee of RA

About enhancing the learning effectiveness and quality assurance in the third level of Higher Education

After being included in the Bologna process, the Republic of Armenia can't stay indifferent toward the processes that take place in the European Higher Education Area. The RA government program included reforming the systems of Higher Education and Academic degree awarding comparable to Europe. The issue of creating appropriate conditions for young scientists is highlighted in the current Government program.

The doctorate educational approaches are presented in the work, touching upon the issues of academic freedom and autonomy, sources of doctoral financing, the connection with the production and innovative investment, ethical norms of science and issues of intellectual property protection in the third level of higher education.

Issues of mobility, effective management of science and internationalization, interdisciplinary research, as well as effective involvement of diaspora's scientific and educational potential are also being discussed. Based on the Salzburg principles of doctoral education, conceptual provisions for development of the third level higher education, as well as the improvement of the system of awarding of academic degrees which can serve as a basis for the elaboration and adaptation of legislative reforms and sub-legislative acts in the RA are suggested. Those reforms should transform the old "aspirantura" into a new doctorate, making the awarded academic degrees in Armenia recognized in the world.

ATOM MKHITARYAN, Ph.D. Candidate in Physics, graduated from YSU Faculty of Physics in 1993. He received a Master's Degree in Law from the Public Administration Academy of RA in 2007. Worked at the State Committee of Science as a Head of Division since 2008, and as the Head of Department at the RA Ministry of Diaspora since 2010. Since 2014 he is the Deputy Head of the Supreme Certifying Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of RA, (Supreme Certifying Committee since April 2018). Since 2006 he teaches at the International Scientific Educational Centre of NAS RA. He graduated from John Smith international Political Science Course in 2013 (UK). He is an expert in Higher Education and Science management sector. Mkhitarian was awarded the RA President's Letter of Gratitude.

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SUREN VOSKANYAN

Founder and Board Member of HS&A LLC

Information technologies as science, technology and business. The role of government and unions in the development of information technologies

Change is the main factor for the development of information technologies.

Currently institutions with long term planning methodologies are being transformed to new modern models, based on dynamic and permanent changes of external environment. Thus, traditional models of project management like PMI and Prince2 no longer relevant in their pure forms. These models in their pure forms are being replaced with more dynamic models based on Agile framework, which allows governments and organisations to become leaders in the infinite technological marathon.

Armenian governments accepted this challenge and reflected it in their all-time programmes.

It is important to separate three main components of IT:

- Scientific development,
- E-government development,
- Practice and business.

Mentioned areas are strictly interconnected, but require totally different approach and include totally different challenges in managerial aspect.

Science

The main mission of the Armenian Ministry of Science and Education is to define solutions for the first component listed above. Thus, the Ministry of Science and Education is accountable for development of Information technology in its scientific and fundamental aspect by providing best quality elementary, secondary and higher education.

The role of private schools and educational institutions should not be ignored, but this kind of private schools should be originated entirely on commercial or charitable bases.

It is important to multiply efficiency of existing resources by implementing permanent effective changes. Maybe it is a hard and, in some cases, contradictory process but our society is ready to such reforms.

E-government

Clear tasks have to be formalized to insure technological progress within governmental infrastructure. Moreover, these tasks should be formalized by Armenian government for each ministry or state department. In parallel with collecting, summarizing and defining governmental needs it is important to study also international experience and best practices.

Based on the measures described above EKENG is responsible to create a roadmap for Armenian E-government and E-society formation.

Since Armenian local companies are the main contractors for the Government, permanent technological growth of governmental structure directly reinforces local commercial companies and creates a motivation for the creation of new companies.

Practice and business

Where to search the role of the Government in this area, and what can we expect from the Government?

There is no direct governmental function in this area. There is no direct step or action that can be effective. Business is better aware about steps it needs and is more productive here.

In order to force business development in a private IT sector, Government can perform a list of indirect actions such as creating tax benefits, favourable incubation conditions, appropriate legislation changes etc.

The role of the Government

Today Armenian Government created several structures that govern IT sector and one ministry. The role and meaning of these structures for sure need to be clarified based on free market concepts and by the dictate of permanent changes.

Unions

Taking to the account these challenges and contradictions the role of different unions in IT sector is very valuable. Moreover, since IT is a complicated and multisectoral industry, there is a high necessity to have different types of unions with different structures, which will bring diverse approaches for problem solving based on their current targets and challenges.

Approaches of unions should be clear, pragmatic and based on their members' business needs, but should not be based on the fair goal of global IT industry and macroeconomic development.

Only in the case of such conflict of interests it will be possible to build an optimal governance model for IT industry that will be permanently changed and improved.

SUREN VOSKANYAN, Ph.D. Candidate, is the Founder and Board Member of HS&A LLC (2013-present). From 2014 he is the President's Advisor at EasyPay LLC. Voskanyan was born in 1980, in Yerevan, studied and graduated from the Yerevan State University. From 2002 to 2005 worked at Internal Audit Department at Converse Bank. From 2005 to 2008 worked as a Branch Manager and Chief of Settlement Department, from 2008 to 2011 worked as a Head of Project Management Department at Converse Bank. Founder of cio.am: IT news portal for including local news and events (2010-2012). From 2011 to 2013 worked at Smart Tech as a Deputy Director of Project Management.

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ARA SANJIAN

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The challenges of perceiving and presenting history through research and teaching: a part-insider's observations from outside

Most historians in Armenia today proclaim themselves content with the end of the state-imposed, Soviet-era Marxist ideology. In practice, however, the latter has been replaced by the return of primordial nationalism which dominated world historiography until the early twentieth century, but is being increasingly questioned today. Post-Soviet Armenian historiography has not benefited enough from the fall of the “Iron Curtain,” and, unfortunately, it remains largely cut off from the contemporary schools of historical theory and methodology deliberated and practiced across the globe. The conflicts with Azerbaijan and Turkey have also further politicized history writing. Educators have been enjoined, through officially approved textbooks and other means, to highlight that historic Armenia was a large country and the Armenians are one of the most ancient peoples in the world. Recent textbooks also assert categorically that Armenians were autochthonous to and the sole inhabitants of the Armenian Highland after the disintegration of the Indo-European protolanguage. Moreover, they argue, more forcefully than before, that Armenians had a quasi-continuous statehood from the 28th century B.C.E. to the Mongol invasions. It has been widely asserted that if such beliefs are inculcated among the youth, this will increase their patriotic resolve to fight for their homeland and reclaim its historical borders. While there is, of course, some truth in these historical assertions, the categorical manner in which they have usually been presented makes it very challenging to defend them according to modern, international criteria for evaluating historical evidence. Moreover, post-Soviet textbooks have expanded political history at the expense of social history, contrary to international trends. They have sought to project a concept of Armenian national unity—overriding regional, class and religious divides—and have downplayed, and sometimes altogether dismissed all forms of intra-Armenian social conflict, including medieval religious-sectarian, peasant and modern workers’ movements.

The “Velvet Revolution” has encouraged various individuals and groups in Armenia to come up with radical suggestions to improve many aspects of social life, including education and science. Within this context, it is expected that the relatively small alternative circles of writing history, which were readier to embrace these recent international practices but played a marginal role in the discipline under the *ancien régime*, will also come forward with suggestions and actions to improve the research and teaching of Armenian history. This presentation will present some ideas in this regard. Its aim is to make history-writing in Armenia attain a respected place in the modern world. It will call for the improvement of

teaching foreign languages to aspiring historians so that they can keep abreast of the growing historical literature, both in theory and methodology and in the comparative aspects of the topics which they want to research. It will suggest the widening of the study of historiography in college classrooms, especially the evolution of historical theory and methodology. It will propose making students acquainted with certain genres of writing history rarely practiced in Armenia to date. It will also request a new generation of history textbooks which will encourage analytical skills, critical thinking, adopt multi-perspectivity, and make more direct use of primary sources in classrooms.

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SONA BALASANYAN

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The teacher, a woman: fused personal and contested professional biographies

The article follows a phenomenological study of women teachers' biographies. The research topic is discussed from the sociological perspective on professionalization through analyzing life trajectories of women teachers in family-centered environments. The research reflects on the case of Armenian society with strong feminization pattern of teaching profession in the context of male-dominated social structures. It is argued that current school reformation in Armenia conceals numerous obstacles strongly preconditioned by tensions between personal and professional selves of teachers. Biographies reported in the article portray value-based features of schooling dictated from within conservative social structures. Analysis of data shows the primary importance of understanding teachers' biographies as bases for quality teaching before moving towards formal (and more institutionalized forms of) school reformation schemes. The methodology and findings of the research may be useful for understanding feminine teaching environments and associated pitfalls in school reformation.

SONA BALASANYAN holds MA (2009) and Ph.D. (2012) degrees in Sociology from the Yerevan State University (YSU), as well as MSc in Education (Research Design and Methodology) from the University of Oxford, Department of Education, UK (2015). Since august 2016, she is the research director at CRRCA-Armenia. Dr. Balasanyan has designed and teaches series of courses (including Sociology of Education, Media Text Analysis, Evaluation Methodologies, and Mixed Methods Research) at the YSU, Faculty of Sociology. She was a Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung scholarship holder, an AGBU scholar and is a Luys alumna. She has authored three books, articles, essays and analytical reports.

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Panel 5. The Economic and Social Structure of the Society

Moderator: STEPAN DANIELYAN

YULIA ANTONYAN

Associate Professor of the Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of History, YSU

The end of “the oligarchs?” Pre and post-revolutionary realities and the Armenian economic and political elites

The presentation addresses the new post-Soviet elite of Armenia, which is known under the cumulative and integrative name of “oligarchy.” This term in its academic and non-academic implications is largely used at the whole post-Soviet space, though in different countries it may have slight differences in meanings. The Armenian oligarchy could be described as a neo-feudal type of elite because of several important characteristics: informally negotiated and strongly competing division of spheres of activities and economic monopolies; personal control of territories and communities with absolute local power and influence; legitimation of power and capitals through symbolic forms and practices like religion, prestigious economy and matrimonial strategies; creation of power networks through clans, extended families and large circles of “vassals”; patrimonial relationships with their “subjects” (meaning members of clans and communities under control); specific lifestyle and social, ethical, communicational and esthetic codes of the “oligarchic” culture.

The paper discusses what it meant to be an “oligarch” in Armenia before the Velvet Revolution of 2018 and what it means immediately after it. The relationships between oligarchs and people inhabiting their “patrimonies” began to change during the Revolution, even before Nikol Pashinyan was elected as the Prime minister. Local riots and resentment indicated the process of destroying power pyramids erected in the regions. The change of the authorities and the anticorruption campaign that started after the revolutionary politicians came to power, have made obvious the evidence of the neo-feudal structure of “patrons” and “vassals,” based on the mutual obligations and criminal support. In parallel with the structural changes, the transformation of the system of symbols and values of the oligarchic culture has started. In the presentation I will try to discuss the preliminary results of the globally transformed situation.

YULIA ANTONYAN is an Associate Professor of the Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of History, at Yerevan State University. She teaches Cultural Anthropology, Anthropology of Religions, Anthropology of Social structures, and Cultural History of Modernity. Her fields of interest are anthropology of religion, religion and power, anthropology of elites. Yulia Antonyan has more than 40 academic publications in Armenian, Russian and English. A selection of her publications can be found at:

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ARMEN GHAZARYAN

Research Fellow at Caucasus Institute; Adjunct Lecturer at AUA, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Archaism in the political system of Armenia

The past few months saw significant changes in the political life of Armenia, which also affected the expression of archaism and the strife for modernization in the political system of Armenia. This report/article will reveal the main components of the political system that are archaic and also will stress the modernization processes.

The transition of the state governance system in Armenia from semi-presidential to parliamentary was not a random occasion. It was a part of the modernization trend established in the post-Soviet space. It's not a coincidence that some of the countries of the post-Soviet space, where the societies are relatively more open and where there are some signs of public politics with the engagement of civil society, made a transition toward a parliamentary system in one way or another (e.g. Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan). The curious aspect about the Armenian case though, was the fact that the political-economic system—that has been built by the ruling Republican party—didn't survive this transition, showing apparent signs of archaism.

It was clear that the Armenian case of the modernization involved more participatory approach. The very fact that the Republican Party was building a system of exclusion made that system archaic. According to Weberian logic, the modern is something that is rational, structured and not personalized. The political-economic system in Armenia was the very opposite of those principles, albeit it had developed its own rationality. These modern principles all have their foundation in the formal type of relationship, while the system mainly operated outside the formal structures and through informal means, thus resembling some form of feudal relationship without formalization. Inclusiveness and participatory nature of institutions and practices are the main tools that the Armenian society has used and most probably will continue to use to overcome the archaic institutions and practices of the political system that still endure.

ARMEN GHAZARYAN is a researcher and lecturer. Main areas of his interest include migration studies, European studies, European migration policies, communication studies and populism at large. He defended his Ph.D. thesis on the issue of migration and security in Armenia. He studied Public policy and public administration at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. In 2016 Ghazaryan did a fellowship at the University of Fribourg on migration and security. Currently he is a Research Fellow at Caucasus Institute and Adjunct Lecturer of College of Humanities and Social Sciences at American University of Armenia.

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YULIANA MELKUMYAN

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Middle class dynamics in contemporary Armenian society

Middle class is usually considered as a “spine” of the society, which is performing the functions of social stabilization and harmonization. The idea to study the middle class in Armenia was mostly challenged by the widespread opinion that there is no middle class in Armenia. An attempt to analyze the characteristics of the formation of middle class in Armenia, its basic features, main functions, existence indicators and identification of exclusion risks, was made by the author, in 2013.

The neo-Weberian approach to the middle class is based on the criteria of education, employment, and property, which promote the development of human capital, as well as on the criterion of self-identification in the context of market economy. According to the research results, the middle class in contemporary Armenia corresponds the basic economic characteristics and performs the functions assigned to itself, but it is not consolidated and is not aware of the importance of its participation in decision-making in the country, does not identify the perspectives for its future with the future of the country, and the biggest concern is that the vast majority of the middle class is willing to emigrate from Armenia.

Next, the increase of economic potential of the middle class was observed, but that didn't result in setting up the cultural potential of the middle class, which could consolidate it and stimulate the further development. The cultural potential is considered here in the broad sociological meaning, including social values, patterns of normality, attitudes towards the state and the country, social interactions, as well as the perception of their own role within the social system and perspectives of its development, self-representation and changes in lifestyle and leisure content.

YULIANA MELKUMYAN holds Ph.D. in Sociology with an emphasis on Social Stratification. She is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social Work and Social Technologies at YSU. She teaches at Social Work, Public Relations and Public Administration Bachelor's and Master's Programs since 1998. Her publications are about social stratification, education, gender, child protection, refugees and inclusion issues. Besides teaching and scientific research, she is actively involved in qualitative and quantitative studies and project evaluation. She has successfully managed the research and evaluation projects conducted in collaboration with UNISEF, UNHCR, All-Armenian Fund, Bridge of Hope, CSI and other organizations.

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HARUTYUN VERMISHYAN

Chair of the Department of Theory and History of Sociology, YSU

The crisis of rurality in post-Soviet Armenia: semiotic analysis of villagers' experience

Post-Soviet Armenia has undergone through serious social, political and economic transformations, the impact of which is vivid in every sphere of public life. In the circumstance of shortcomings in formal mechanisms of social order regulation and social control, non-formal local mechanisms are formed and institutionalized which are illustrated in the valuation of the social capital, emergence of migration networks, etc. As a result, social tension is formed demonstrated at both personal/intrapersonal, group and institutional levels, leading to crises of legitimacy and identity. Presently, the problems are more highlighted at rural areas. The village and the rural lifestyle have become non-attractive, contributing to the weakening of ties of the villagers with their places, to the crisis of rural identity. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the “importation” of democratic and liberal ideologies in line with fundamental social and political transformations led to the change in the discourse on the Armenian rural lifestyle, in the place/local identities and in self-governing systems. The reforms directed to the development of self-government system in the post-Soviet Armenia, the social programs aiming to overcome the social issues of the Armenian rural communities, formed a new geopolitical situation, simultaneously, tremendously changing local realities of rurality. Contemporary discourse of rurality is more significant in the context of refusal to perform agricultural activity. Based on the findings from narrative interviews conducted in Armenian rural communities during 2017-2018, life histories explicating villagers' experience are subjected to semiotic analysis. The discrepancy of cognitive and pragmatic foundations of the reproduction of rurality will be discussed through the summary of the research findings.

HARUTYUN VERMISHYAN was born in 1983 in Yerevan. He is a Candidate of Sociological Sciences. He has thirteen years of work experience at national and international organizations. Since 2005, he is a member of the Yerevan State University, Faculty of Sociology, Department of Theory and History of Sociology. Starting from 2017, he chairs the department. His research interests lie in the fields of the history and theory of sociology, identity research, rural and urban sociology. Vermishyan is an author of fifteen articles, three monographs and a textbook of the history of Armenian sociology.

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HASMIK GEVORGYAN

Professor of Sociology at YSU

The implication of oral history approach in the study of changing societies

This article examines the practice of using oral histories for understanding everyday life of an individual within its social, political and historic context.

In fact, social and political rapid changes in post-Soviet Armenia brought issues of interpretation of newly created realities.

Nowadays, Armenia is situated in the crossroad of the different cultural contemplations, where representatives of the same ethnicity are categorized in a specific way. This classification is more horizontal than vertical and it's trying rather to simplify than to interpret the perception of "Armenians on Armenians" from all over the world, and consequently this practice is playing a significant role in differentiating them rather than unifying.

Oral histories methodological approach is an excellent tool for analyzing individual narratives of participants' life in relation to a larger cultural matrix of the society, where each individual experience signifies discrepancies between social realities and well learned template of "how things should be."

Another strength of this approach lies in preserving stories of and giving voice to those who have been typically unseen in the society. Particularly, this approach is applicable for analyzing women's life stories and their experience in masculine context of the society.

The presentation will incorporate the findings from "Women's Oral Histories" within "The Rhythms of Twentieth Century" (2004) research, which was done in phenomenological tradition and tells about life experience of women in historically critical situations. The study particularly demonstrates life experience, adaptation peculiarities of refugees from Azerbaijan. Sampling frame for this study includes over 100 Armenian women over 50 years old, by the time of the interview. The contemporary research (2017) includes Armenian migrants' life experience in Armenia. The sampling frame of the second research includes interviews specifically with Armenian migrants or/and refugees. This research aimed to picture the life experience and the process of adaptation in Armenia.

The importance of revisiting historical events and explaining current occurrence through the lens of personal experience in the study is trifold:

1. To reevaluate history in modern context through the eyes of individuals—the past cannot exist by itself,
2. To describe and evaluate history and current events as seen and experienced by “ordinary” individuals,
3. Evaluation of life journey as a social therapy. Reliving the experience is not only the opportunity for self-analyses, but the analyses of collective self.

HASMIK GEVORGYAN is a Professor of Sociology at YSU, an author of number of books and publications, including “The art of Being: rhythms of the 20th century” (2004), based on an oral history research and “Gender Issues: Problems and Solutions” (2001, 2014), which discusses approaches for gender research and gender education. Dr. Gevorgyan received her Master’s degree from Yerevan State University, and her Ph.D. in Sociology from Tbilisi State University. She studied at and worked in a number of academic institutions, including London School of Economics, University of Wurzburg, The Carvinus University of Budapest, Russian Science Academy’s Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the University of South Carolina.

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Panel 6. Discourses

Moderator: STEPAN DANIELYAN

NAIRA MKRTCHYAN

Lecturer at YSU

Between local experience and Western discursive practices: on some research strategies

The question whether it is possible to use the theories created on the basis of Western experience, and the concepts, principles and methods they provide, for the purposes of research of a non-Western experience, is actually not novel. This issue made itself felt much more acutely both in colonial and postcolonial periods of non-Western societies and it even fixed the tendency to divide the sciences of society, history and culture into the social sciences and humanities, when the former were to investigate predominantly Western, so-called already modern societies, and the latter—especially anthropology—non-Western societies, which still have not reached modernity.

Naturally, after the collapse of the USSR, the Western research models (this concerns not only empirical researches) were widely to enter into corresponding institutions of post-Soviet societies, including Armenian institutions. What at least part of the researchers were to experience was a certain ‘gap,’ ‘rupture’ between social reality and its research means. Moreover, that ‘gap,’ ‘rupture’ makes itself occasionally felt parallel to continual changes in progress (in particular, it is also about the Armenian events, called ‘velvet revolution’) and forces to decide on how, nevertheless, to deal with (Armenian) social reality from a research perspective. In this case, a question is raised, whether the non-Western research experiences, which have basically confronted with the aforementioned problem, are useful to make sense of this ‘gap’ or ‘rupture,’ to find way out(s) of it. If this ‘rupture’ or ‘gap’ is unavoidable, and the so-called local academic practices are underdeveloped and still conceptually unproductive, then what kind of strategies can the aforementioned non-Western experiences propose? The paper will be reflecting on such an experience present in the well-known essay ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ by G. Ch. Spivak. In it, the author is guided by a certain, poststructuralistically oriented strategy, when she examines a local Indian matter with the Western research means. Taking the use of the latter also as a translation act in case of non-Western experiences, which bears all consequences of such an act, in the paper, the post-Marxist theory of radical democracy by E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe is used in one Armenian case, aiming to manifest one way out of the aforementioned ‘rupture’ or ‘gap.’

Further, another strategy is also going to be considered, which is inspired by Paul Gilroy’s reflection on the Black experience of liberation from slavery and which can be called ‘selective use of Western research means.’ The latter discerns and affirms a unique relationship between the Western and non-Western, ‘the inside and outside,’ the particular and universal.

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OLGA MOLYARENKO

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Conceptual and methodological limitations of state optics

From the moment of the foundation of official statistics and the beginning of its use as an information base for decision-making, the issues of its quality, reliability, timeliness and completeness have become relevant. According to current professional and research literature the request for identifying, describing and, if possible, eliminating of methodological, conceptual and other limitations of official statistics is marked as important by the governments of different countries. Moreover, the authorities of developed countries pay high attention to the improvement of the reliability of the quantitative data used by state, as they understand its latent potential.

The basic problems of official statistics could be defined as timeless for Russia. Both the Imperial and Soviet government systems of aggregating quantitative data suffered from large-scale duplication of indicators, incompatibility of methods (for example, between municipal, regional and central statistics in the pre-revolutionary period, or interdepartmental incompatibility in the Soviet period), politicization of the results of statistical activities and so on.

Nowadays the issues of reliability and completeness of the official statistics become urgent also because of chronic deterioration of the actual effectiveness of state programmes and policies, because of the rising public criticism of statistical data for its inadequacy and isolation from real life.

It became clear already at the stage of setting goals and objectives that the research, limited by standard statistical tools, is not able to resolve the posed questions. Traditional statistical methodology would keep us in conceptual and methodological blinkers and would let us reveal only some technical mistakes and distortions. In order to achieve the goal in-depth interviews and participant observations were chosen.

The research (more than 200 interviews with state and municipal servants, employees of state and municipal enterprises in 11 regions of the Russian Federation in 2013-2018) revealed 3 blocks of distortions in official statistics (low quality, unreliability, incompleteness) reasons (3 basic groups of restrictions). The first contains an unavoidable but often over-simplified state representation of the socio-economic processes for the sake of its registrability. A number of other conceptual and methodological factors also form the group. The second includes the problems caused by the systemic mismatch of the actual and formal methodologies for initial data collection, as well as the technological and technical deviations

related to the specificity of the administrative-territorial system structure of the information gathering. In other words, the technological distortions are accumulated in the second section. In the third group are aggregated the deliberate falsification of indicators to improve the assessment of authorities' efficiency and other distortions of socio-psychological origin arising due to the fact that statistics is not a neutral tool.

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VARDAN JALOYAN

Independent researcher

The critical analysis of political communication and mass media discourses

According to Jacob Torfing's definition, discourse is a result of hegemonic expressions which aims to establish both political and moral-intellectual leadership in society. Mass media with their news media, talk shows, entertaining programs, reproduce the notions about the world and impose a certain value structure. Messages of mass communications are seen as social action, as the most significant form of authority/influence and the most important area of the manifestation of ideology.

The presence of significant changes in the political discourse in the last decade (2007-2017) is accepted by almost all researchers. First of all, they relate to the political communication, to the interaction between political entrepreneurs (professionals) and citizens. One of the most important factors is the crisis of party system, in particular, the formation of "all-inclusive" parties, such as HHK (Republican Party of Armenia) or Russian "Edinaya Rossia" (United Russia).

The crisis of political communication and discourse is vividly illustrated by the example of Armenian liberal ideology and liberal parties: all liberal parties failed the latest elections. Though it is not hard to notice that the main element of liberal ideology—the rhetoric of the right and legitimacy—is shared both by the authorities and opposition, non-governmental organizations and, partially, by political activists.

As a result of the crisis of liberalism, populist/anti-elitist sentiments increase in the society. The influence of activist movements for de-systemetization and anti-systematization increases as well. The report analyzes these new political movements in the light of the theory of Radical Democracy of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. In particular it analyses K'aghak'aciakan paymanagir (Civil contract) party and the work of its leader, Nikol Pashinyan. The political discourses of one of the Russian opposition leaders, Alexei Navalny, and Nikol Pashinyan will be compared.

VARDAN JALOYAN is a Member of the International Association of Art Critics, AICA-Armenia, and an Independent Researcher. The subjects of his publications include contemporary art, culture, history of religion, nationalism, and politics. Jaloyan's works were published in *Garun*, *Kron ev hasarakutyun*, *Bnagir*, *Inqnagir* magazines, and among other print and digital news media and websites, in *Shrjan*, *Lragir*, *Hetq*, *Haykakan jamanak*, *Jamanak*. He is a member of ArtLab political art group.

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MARIA I. ZASLAVSKAYA

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The conceptual basis of the political discourse of contemporary public protests in Armenia: comparative discourse analysis

Over the last decades, special theoretical approaches of investigations of society have been emerging in the field of sociological science, focusing on the profound phenomena in society expressed in specific models of language communication, in other words, focusing on the specificities of social discourse. Through discourse investigations, it is possible to identify common prototypical, often latent, patterns of textual fixation of communication processes. The relationship between politics and language has deep historical roots; the social reality is constructed and perceived within the framework of certain models that are expressed in verbal communicative models, or in texts (broadly understood).

In the report, an attempt has been made to combine different models of discourse analysis developed in modern sociology, by which it is possible to identify a number of features of social context and perceptions within the framework of the analysis of the political discourse of public protests in Armenia. The basis of the empirical research was the information on the political movements available on the Internet, the verbal recordings and the video clips from the web media sites, as well as information from some social networks (in particular, Facebook). Materials regarding "Pay 100 Drams," "Electric-Yerevan" and "Velvet Revolution" were analyzed.

The description of the textual levels, the interpretation of generalization of discourse practices and text, as well as the genre analysis of social and discursive practices are revealed within the framework of the three-dimensional model of critical discourse-analysis by the help of interdiscursivity and intertextuality. The method of socially-historical discourse-analysis is related to the cognitive approach and refers to the "friend-or-foe" dichotomy, to the logic of the creation of group borders, through which the verbal practices are constructed on the notion of social identity. In this case, the analytical scheme includes the context of text creation, argumentation strategies, and linguistic forms. In the framework of the postmodern theory of discourse, an approach was developed, aiding to reveal the collection of signs and the whole system of connections between the signs, to model the structure of the political discourse of public protest actions and to identify the mechanisms of consolidation of the identities of different groups within the movement. By means of the discursive frame-analysis, it is possible to reveal the general ideas, symbols, meanings, and stereotypes that form the collective identity of the subjects of political activity, and are the motives for collective actions and political activity.

A comparative discourse-analysis has been carried out, as a result of which have been identified the network of the main formed meanings, the meaningful relationships between the meaningful units, as well as the meaning weights of the concepts in certain social context, which conditioned the process and results of the mentioned actions.

MARIA ZASLAVSKAYA is a Professor at Yerevan State University, where she has been working at the Department of Sociology and later at the Faculty of Sociology, since 1995. In 1986 she graduated from the Yerevan State University, specializing in functional analysis. In 1996 she defended her thesis in the field of functional analysis, receiving the degree of Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences (Ph.D. in Mathematics). In 1984 she graduated with honors from the Faculty of Social Sciences, YSU, with a degree in Psychology. In 2011 she defended her doctoral dissertation on sociology and received the degree of Doctor of Sociology. In 2016 she received the academic title of the Professor in Sociology. She is an author and co-author of more than 70 scientific works, including 7 monographs.

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IVAN FOMIN

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Two faces of Armenian nationalism: cleavages and coalitions in the discourses on Sasna Tsrer

The paper is devoted to the analysis of the Armenian political discourse in the period of *Sasna Tsrer* attack. 316 mass media messages are analyzed to map the groups of speakers who used one of the three major discursive strategies of representation of *Sasna Tsrer*: *approval*, *justification* or *condemnation*. The *Sasna Tsrer approval* “coalition” was dominant in the studied discourse and included human rights activists and liberal opposition leaders (including Raffi Hovannisian), influential artists and diaspora opinion leaders, Nagorno-Karabakh warlords (like Razmik Petrosyan) and other militant fedayi-nationalists (like Alec Yenikomshian). Interestingly, Dashnaktsutyun chose the intermediate strategy of *justification* and did not openly approve the actions of *Sasna Tsrer*. This can be explained by the fact that the party was a part of the ruling coalition. The *condemners* of *Sasna Tsrer* were Gagik Tsarukyan’s confidants and ex-president Ter-Petrosyan, president Sargsyan and other public officials. One can notice that most of the holders of symbolic power in Armenia were among the *Sasna Tsrer* supporters, while the group of condemners mostly included those who possess political and economic power. This disposition is illustrative, as it highlights the cleavage that hinders Armenia from becoming a consolidated nation state. There are two co-existing and in some occasions confronting Armenian nationalisms: the counter-state nationalism and the state-framed one. These two frames directly correspond to two types of nationalist doctrines and movements, the state-framed and counter-state, as R. Brubaker suggested. The paradox is that in this case both types of nationalisms refer to the same nation—Armenian. Though B. Anderson drew the attention to the ambivalent nature of nationalism as a force that can foster both revolutionary processes and stabilization of the regime, in case of Armenia this ambivalence is also accompanied by specific constellation of different types of capital (P. Bourdieu). *Sasna Tsrer* discourse analysis shows that those who hold political and economic capital cannot convert it to symbolic capital since it is hampered by the weakness of statist frame on nation. But symbolic capital holders who position themselves discursively through the counter-statist frame are deprived from the political and economic capital.

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The discourse of inequality and the problem of poverty reduction in Armenia

According to the official data, one out of every three inhabitants in Armenia lives below the poverty line. But independent experts think that the real picture of poverty is worse. Although the Government of Armenia has implemented some poverty reduction projects since 2004, in comparison to 2008, the level of poverty not only did not decrease, but on the contrary, increased.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Health Care and Social Affairs of the National Assembly, Republican MP Hakob Hakobyan, made a sensational statement to the journalists only few months ago, according to which the statistical picture of poverty in Armenia is actually exaggerated and a significant part of the people considered poor actually live in normal conditions. Related to the rise of prices for consumer goods he noticed that the rise affects the high quality and nutritious types of food and it will not affect the poor, because they do not use quality foods anyway. This view was severely criticized and evaluated as cynicism. The ruling Republican Party of Armenia, instead of implementing a poverty oriented policy, tried to "mitigate" the picture of poverty blaming the poor for their poverty.

Last year, my qualitative research data allow me to say that one of the main reasons behind the failure of the poverty sector policy in Armenia is the ruling discourses of poverty and inequality. They are successfully lowered down from the ruling "upper" strata to "down" shaping the discourse of "normalization" of poverty, which weakens the mood of the protest in the poor strata.

These discourses are related to three main topics: "interpretation of poverty as normal or normalization of poverty", "the poor themselves are guilty of their poverty," "it is a shame to be poor".

It turns out that the discourses of "normalization" of poverty and "the normalization" of the practices shaping poverty by the ruling reach elites play a great role in current Armenian society, which create a "favorable" field for making acceptable among society the populist policy of the Government to "overcome" poverty.

This report will discuss the discourses promoting poverty reproduction, their power and class character and their negative influence on the poverty reduction policy.

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