

Migration and its Impact on Armenia

A field practice



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Migration and its Impact on Armenia

Introduction

Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek

Displacement and migration play an important role in the memory and lived experience of Armenians. For centuries, they have been forced to leave their places of residence because of political and religious persecution, difficult economic conditions, and natural disasters. Although massacres, flight, and deportations had been recurrent events in Armenian history, it was in particular during the last decades of Ottoman rule that Armenians became the victims of massive persecution.¹ The most tragic blow to the Armenian communities occurred in 1915, when Talat Pasha and the ruling Committee for Union and Progress ordered the deportation of millions of Armenians. Massacres, atrocities, and starvation resulted in the annihilation of an estimated 1.5 million of an assumed pre-war population of 2.5 million Ottoman Armenians (cf. Gust 2005: 519 et seq. quoted in Poghosyan 2009: 62 and 78).² Those who were able to escape the genocide resettled in Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Russia (including the current territory of the Republic of Armenia, among them also some Yezidi, cf. Six-Hohenbalken, this volume), Europe (in particular France), and the Americas.

Armenians residing on the territory of the newly established Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic remained exposed to forced migration and resettlement. During the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, thousands of Armenians were deported to Siberia and Central Asia (cf. Matossian 1962; Hovannisian 1996).

Following World War II, new waves of migration and resettlement took place. Compensating for Armenian male labor force losses during World War II, the Armenian government invited diaspora Armenians to immigrate and settle in Armenia (cf. Poghosyan 2009: 62 et seq. and 78).³ At the same time, the Soviet government restricted their freedom of movement, especially

1 E.g., in the early 17th century, Iranian rulers depopulated parts of the Armenian Highlands by marching their population to Iran and resettling the survivors in different areas of Iran (cf. Koutcharian 1989: 239 et seq. quoted in Poghosyan 2009: 62). According to Dadrian 1995 and Lepsius 1897, some 300,000 Armenians perished in local massacres (1894-96) as well as from starvation and disease in their aftermath, another 100,000 fled their settlement areas and found refuge in the Balkans, Iran, and the Russian Empire (quoted in Poghosyan 2009: 62).

2 The figures are contested. Regarding the genocide, cf. Dadrian (1995), Suny (2015), Kevorkian (2011) and Gust (2005).

3 According to Poghosyan (2009: 63), some 100,000 ethnic Armenians immigrated in the few years between 1946 and 1949, many from the Balkans (Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece) and from the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iran), but also from France and the United States of America. After 1965 the influx of Armenians from outside the Soviet Union decreased. Yet, further Armenians immigrated from other Soviet republics. "In all, the number of immigrants to Soviet Armenia between 1965 and 1985 was as high as 178,000 persons" (Poghosyan 2009: 63).

in terms of out-migration. Nevertheless, some permanent and seasonal labor migration, in particular to the "virgin lands" in the southeastern region, evolved and Armenians became one of the most mobile population groups of the Soviet Union (cf. Poghosyan 2009: 63; Mitchneck and Plane 1995; Navoyan in this volume).

It was, however, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that large-scale processes of migration gained new momentum in the Republic of Armenia. Military confrontations with Azerbaijan (1991–1994) led to the influx of several hundred thousand of Armenians that had been expelled from Azerbaijan.⁴ Later on, other yet smaller groups of Armenian refugees from Syria and Iraq were accommodated.⁵

The first wave of out-migration started in the aftermath of the earthquake of December 7, 1988 when a total of approximately 200,000 people were evacuated to other Soviet republics, where most of them settled permanently (cf. UNDP Human Development Report Armenia 2009: 36; Johannson 2008: 4, and Navoyan in this volume).

Even more dramatic was the out-migration of Armenians in the early 1990s. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia—similar to many other of the former Soviet republics—plunged into a severe economic crisis that triggered large-scale emigration.

Until the end of the 1990s, nearly a million Armenians—that is roughly one third of the current population—had left the country, mostly for the Russian Federation (approximately 620,000), but also for the United States (approximately 100,000), other former Soviet republics (e.g., Ukraine around 80,000), and western Europe (20,000) (Savvidis 2009: 37).⁶ Emigration peaked between 1991 and 1994, when some 600,000 Armenians left (Savvidis 2009: 37).

In the late 1990s, Armenia's political and economic situation somehow stabilized and the country's economy recovered somewhat.⁷ Permanent emigration slowed down, while seasonal labor migration—mainly to Russia—remained high (cf. Minasyan et al 2007: 25; ILO 2009: 5; IOM 2012: 29; and Navoyan in this volume).⁸

⁴ The numbers of Armenians expelled from Azerbaijan vary considerably, ranging from some 360,000 to about 500,000 individuals (cf. Poghosyan 2009: 63 and 66). According to UNHCR (2011) figures, 264,339 found refuge in Armenia (quoted in Poghosyan 2009: 63).

⁵ No exact figures are available. According to the MPC (2013: 2), 4,449 Armenians fleeing the civil war in Syria arrived in Armenia in 2011. Another 1,986 individuals arrived during the first six months of 2012; 851 Iraqi Armenians arrived between 2005 and 2011. Ghahriyan (in this volume)—referring to UNHCR statistics for 2015—mentions the arrival of 17,000 Syrian Armenians since the beginning of the war in Syria.

⁶ No exact numbers are available on permanent and seasonal labor migration flows. For details on the problem, cf. Savvidis (2009:31); Poghosyan (2009: 67 et seq.); ILO (2009); Minasyan and Hancilova (2005); Minasyan et al (2007), and Heliak (2008).

⁷ However, even in the mid-2000s, the economic situation was difficult. Only 25 percent of adult Armenians were permanently employed. An estimated 34.6 percent of the population was living below the poverty line (Johannson 2008: 4 et seq.).

⁸ Compared to the period between 1988 and 2001, when 1 to 1.1 million Armenians emigrated, only 150,000 individuals emigrated between 2002 and 2007. Between 2007 and 2013, only approx. 35,000 people emigrated

Seasonal labor migration has constituted a crucial survival strategy for many Armenian households to this day (cf. contributions by Zelinka, Atoyan, Navoyan, and Six-Hohenbalken in this volume). Around one quarter to one third of all households depend on financial remittances to cover their basic needs.⁹ Nevertheless, detailed national statistics on the volume of seasonal migration in Armenia are rare. Several studies based on nationally representative data offer estimations of seasonal migration rates in the country (e.g., Gender Barometer Survey 2014; cf. contribution of Sinara Navoyan in this volume; ILO 2009; Minasyan and Hancilova 2005; Minasyan et al. 2007).

According to a study conducted by the ILO (2009: 7), approximately 14.5 percent of all Armenian households were involved in labor migration between 2005 and 2007. The vast majority of Armenian labor migrants are employed in the Russian Federation, around 43 percent of them in Moscow (cf. ILO 2009: 5; Savvidis 2009: 40, and IOM 2012: 32).

As of today, only a small number of Armenians—some 3.2 million (IOM 2014: 78) reside in the Republic of Armenia, while the majority of Armenians—an estimated 7 to 9 million (IOM 2014: 78; Savvidis 2009: 30, and Poghosyan 2009: 63) live outside the residential areas of their ancestors—that is the territory of the former Ottoman Empire, Czarist Russia, and Iran. Centuries of persecution and labor migration have led to the formation of a rather heterogeneous Armenian diaspora (cf. Mkrtichyan 2015; Walker 1990).

Next to descendants of earlier waves of Armenian refugees and traders that had left their home area since medieval times when Armenia lost its statehood in 1045, the initial Armenian diaspora consisted mainly of the survivors of the genocide of 1915. Most of them live in Western countries (in the U.S. 1.4 million, most prominently in the greater Los Angeles area; in France 400,000, in Argentina 130,000) or in the Middle East (in Lebanon 234,000, Syria 150,000. Most of the latter have, however, meanwhile left the country due to the ongoing war, and Iran 80,000) (cf. Manaseryan 2014). Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, these diaspora communities constituted the majority of all diaspora Armenians.

Another diaspora group is comprised by labor migrants from Armenia who migrated before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, mainly to other places within the Soviet Union (e.g., Moscow, Leningrad) (cf. Savvidis 2009: 38-50; Osadchaya and Yudina 2009: 109-128; Navoyan in this volume).

from Armenia every year. Most of them are male, 82.1 percent, only 17.9 percent are female (cf. IOM 2014: 17 and 63).

9 Armenia is still highly dependent on the transfer of remittances from abroad. "From 2003 to 2007 remittances accounted for 17 per cent to 24 per cent of [the] GDP, and some 36 per cent of all households in the country are said to have received remittances (ILO)." (IOM 2014: 109); for details, cf. World Bank Group Migration and Remittance Factbook 2016; Armenian Remittances 2004-2017. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/armenia/remittances> [accesses January 30, 2017].

The most recent diaspora group emerged with the economic downturn following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which forced large numbers of Armenians to emigrate, or at least to find short-term seasonal employment, mostly within the Russian Federation. With an estimated number of 2,250,000 individuals currently living in Russian cities—in particular in Moscow (around 40 to 43 percent of all Armenian migrants)—this group represents by far the largest Armenian diaspora today (cf. Manaseryan 2014). Other yet much smaller communities of labor migrants and asylum seekers exist in western European countries.¹⁰ An estimated 7,000 labor migrants—mostly specialists with university degrees—are assumed to have migrated to Europe between 2002 and 2005 (Minasyan and Hancilova 2005 quoted in Johannsson 2008: 7). In addition, some 40,000 Armenians lodged asylum claims between 1998 and 2003 (Johannsson 2008: 7).¹¹ And even in Turkey, some 50,000 to 70,000 Armenian labor migrants are supposed to be residing (Ozinian 2009: 4; Grigoryan and Hayratpetyan 2011).

In general, Armenians make a distinction between these different diaspora communities. Those that left before the collapse of the Soviet Union are often labelled as "old diaspora", while those that have settled outside the Republic of Armenia since 1991 are referred to as "new diaspora" (cf. IOM 2014:77 and ILO 2009: 4 and 72).

However, this "old diaspora" is itself not uniform at all, when it comes to language, perception of home, connections to the Republic of Armenia etc.

Many members of the "old diaspora" are descendants of people who had been forced to flee from their former home area in the Ottoman Empire (Anatolia and other parts of the Middle East). They speak Western Armenian and consider their ancestors' original settlement area as their "homeland" and Istanbul or "polis"—as they call the city—as the center of Armenian culture. For most of them, the Republic of Armenia—often promoted by organizations within Armenia as well as by some Armenian diaspora organizations (e.g., *Birthright Armenia*) as the "homeland" of all Armenians—only constitutes, if at all, a rather "fictive homeland" (cf. Biassetto in this volume).

In contrast, members of Armenian diaspora communities (old and new) that emerged during the Soviet and post-Soviet period stem from the territory of Armenia itself and speak Eastern Armenian. Many of them still have family members and relatives residing in their place of origin. Next to linguistic differences and diverse notions of "homeland" and "roots", it is in particular the manner in which these various diaspora groups are connected to today's Republic of Armenia that sets them apart.

10 According to Johannsson (2008: 6), only few reliable numbers on the migration of Armenians to Western Europe are available.

11 Since 2002 there has been a sharp decline in asylum claims by Armenian citizens (IOM 2003 quoted in Johannsson 2008:6).

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While labor migrants from the Soviet and post-Soviet era are usually connected in a rather personal way through visits of relatives and by sending remittances to Armenia, this is not the case for most members of the "old diaspora". Here it is, above all, "diaspora tourism" and in more recent years the activities of a host of different organizations (in Armenia and within the diaspora) that connects members of the "old" Armenian diaspora with the "homeland".

Several diaspora organizations, such as *Birthright* or *Repat Armenia*, try to get diaspora Armenians—mainly those belonging to the "old diaspora communities" in Western countries—acquainted with the "homeland" or to convince them to contribute via direct investment, voluntary work and/or "return migration" ("root migration") to the development of the homeland (cf. Jakoubek; Mautner, and Biasetto in this volume).

Migration issues are an extremely sensitive, highly politicized, and widely debated topic in Armenia. Migration and in particular emigration-related issues (e.g., brain drain) are constantly under scrutiny by the Armenian mass media (for details, cf. Chobanyan 2013). Political opposition parties often use the topic of migration to criticize federal authorities for their bad government practices (e.g., clientilism, corruption etc.) (cf. Makaryan 2013: 6).

The relevance of migration and diaspora issues is also reflected in Armenian politics leading, amongst others, to legislative reforms in order to facilitate labor migration and the establishment of a number of state institutions, such as the Ministry of Diaspora (founded in 2008) and the State Migration Service (established in 2010) (cf. IOM 2010: 49, 109; MPC 2013: 10).

Migration issues also became an important topic in Armenian academia. A number of research institutions (e.g., the Department of Contemporary Anthropology, and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian Academy of Sciences) as well as university departments (e.g., Migration Competence Center, and the Center for Gender and Applied Sociology at the Faculty of Sociology at Yerevan State University) are involved in studying a wide range of migration-related topics, such as poverty in Armenia, migration as a way of life, migration and gender issues.¹²

The magnitude of emigration of Armenians also prompted several international organizations (e.g. ILO, IOM, OSCE and UNDP) to study migration trends and their impacts and to offer policy recommendations.¹³ Other organizations, e.g. Caritas, *Repat Armenia*, *People in Need* (cf. contributions by Mautner; Biasetto, and Jakoubek in this volume) established support programs to facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants.

This brief outline of related Armenian diaspora and labor migration issues as well as the abundance of already existing studies illustrate that Armenia is an excellent case in point to study a number of aspects currently debated in migration and diaspora studies—such as e.g.,

12 Cf. Kharatyan (2007), Tadevosyan 2014 and Gender Barometer Survey (2014)

13 ILO (2009), Minasyan and Hancilova (2005), Minasyan et al (2007), UNDP (2009).

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the role of returning migrants and/ or migrant remittances for the national development of the home country, the links between transnationals and their home country, senses of belonging of transnationals and diaspora communities, diaspora organizations and their socio-political agendas.

Moreover, Armenia—exhibiting one of the world’s highest emigration rates in comparison to its overall population—offers ample opportunities to study the impact of long-term and short-term labor migration on the sending communities and households as well as the effect of neo-liberalism in a post-Soviet country (e.g., the collapse of the economy, the end of state support structures, corruption, clientilism, and an increasing gap between the rich and the poor. All this convinced Maria Anna Six-Hohenbalken and myself to organize a guided field trip for our students to Armenia.¹⁴

In preparation of the latter we established contacts with a number of research institutions in Armenia, most notably the Armenian Academy of Sciences and Yerevan State University and organized a seminar in which our students revised field methods, developed their particular research questions and established first contacts with NGOs, colleagues and key persons via internet.

The field trip itself was partly funded by the University of Vienna and took place from late May to mid-June 2015. While in Armenia, the students worked on their research projects that covered a wide range of topics, such as the impact of labor migration on households, return migration, diaspora tourism etc. In order to acquire more in-depth knowledge on migration issues and to get acquainted with the research focus of our colleagues in Armenia, we visited several research institutions and university departments. A lecture by Prof. Aram Vartikyan at the Migration Competence Center of Yerevan State University and a presentation of research results organized by Prof. Aghashi Tadevosyan and his students at the Anthropology Department of the Armenian Academy of Sciences offered us valuable insights into migration and diaspora studies in Armenia. These contacts not only offered a formal backing for our students’ field research projects but also allowed them to establish contacts with their Armenian fellow colleagues. Several of the latter were particularly supportive, acting as interpreters and facilitators for our students’ research endeavors. An invitation by Prof. Hranush Kharatyan to accompany her students on a field trip to several villages provided us with first-hand insight into the research approaches and methods of our colleagues.

14 Guided field trips are part of the MA curriculum at the Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna. Students are requested to develop a research question, draft a research design, and apply earlier acquired skills in anthropological research methods (e.g., participant observation, qualitative interviewing techniques) in the course of their field research.

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Last but not least, several weekend trips to different parts of Armenia gave us a chance to get to know the beautiful nature of Armenia. The comprehensive information offered by our tour guides introduced us to the history of the country and its current challenges.

This special issue of ASSA brings together several papers that emerged from our field research in Armenia. All research results were presented at an exhibition, which was officially inaugurated on January 28, 2016 at the Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna.

Unfortunately and due to various reasons, not all students initially participating in the field trip were ultimately willing to submit a final paper for the volume.¹⁵ This was outweighed by contributions of three young Armenian colleagues—Anna Atoyan, Shushan Ghahriyan, and Sinara Navoyan—who were more than willing to share their research results with us, and by a paper submitted by Maria Anna Six-Hohenbalken offering insights into her long-standing research on Yezidi communities in Armenia and elsewhere.

One of the main topics still discussed in migration studies is the impact of long-term and short-term migration on the sending context—that is the country of origin as well as the communities and households of migrants.

Several papers in this volume focus on the effects of short-term labor migration on migrant households. Based on an empirical study conducted in the city of Gyumri (one of Armenia's main migrant sending communities), Anna Atoyan highlights the connection between labor migration and alienation of family members. Her research illustrates that family alienation may either result from seasonal migration or be the cause for deciding to migrate in order to escape from an unbearable socio-cultural background.

Social alienation is, however, not only the result of labor migration, but can also be caused by forced migration. Studying the situation of Armenian refugees that fled from the war in Syria, Shushan Ghahriyan demonstrates that a plethora of socio-cultural, legal, and economic problems many of these refugees are confronted with may lead to social alienation, feeling of powerlessness, social pessimism, and meaninglessness.

15 Topics of students not included in this volume focused a wide range of issues, e.g. experiences of foreign students (e.g., India and Iran) migrating to Armenia to proceed their studies (Johannes Julius Pehlgrimm), experiences of Armenian students studying abroad and their return options (Katrin König), diaspora tourism and issues of identity (Iris Marko). Several topics were studied in teams; however, not all team members submitted their research results for this volume. Both Cornelia Mosser and Cristina Biassetto worked on "Birthright Armenia", its activities and impact, but in the end only Biassetto's research paper could be included. Similarly, Bernhard Begemann collaborated with Andreea Zelinka in a project titled "Circular Short-Term Migration from Armenia to Russia – A Male-Dominated Phenomenon?" Due to time constraints, Begemann could not co-author the paper included in this volume. However, he allowed us to include the German transcript of an interview he conducted in Russian with Hranush Kharatyan.

Andreea Zelinka's paper also focuses on family relations in households where the migration of male members has become a way of life. She shows how the repeated absence and presence of a migrating family member has a huge impact on relations within the family, leading not only to alienation but also to a dynamization of individual family life experiences.

Following a brief outline of labor migration trends in Armenia, Sinara Navoyan summarizes labor-migration related findings from the Gender Barometer Survey (GBS) she helped to conduct in 2014 (for details on the Survey, see her contribution). This nationwide survey analyzed the perception of gender roles in the Armenian society. According to Navoyan, the results of the GBS illustrate that men and women exhibit rather gendered attitudes towards migration and its consequences, and that the latter are loaded with rather conservative and stereotypical notions.

Maria Anna Six-Hohenbalken's contribution approaches the impact of migration from a different, less studied angle. She focuses on burial practices and socio-religious obligations in Yezidi communities in Armenia, and how the latter are affected by large-scale labor migration. Similarly to many other Armenians, many Yezidi—descendants of several waves of forced immigration to Armenia—rely on labor migration of household members as a survival strategy. The absence of large numbers of community members makes the performance of religious rituals (e.g., connection with the clergymen) rather difficult, leading to new forms of communication (e.g., counseling via email and skype, or short-term visits to the migrant's place of residence). The migrants' remittances also play an important role in fulfilling religious obligations, in particular with regard to the requirements connected with burial rituals and the commemoration ceremonies for deceased ancestors. As these rituals are rather costly, their performance would not be possible without these contributions. Performing these rituals in proper manner, however, not only demonstrates the willingness to fulfill socio-religious obligations, it also serves—as Six-Hohenbalken emphasizes—as proof of the individual Yezidi's commitment to his/ her community and religion.

Another often debated topic in diaspora and migration studies is the link between transnationals and their places of origin. In particular, two aspects have been discussed in recent years: the connection between migration and development, and the senses of belonging and identity of labor migrants and diaspora persons.

Regarding the nexus of migration and development, current research is dedicated to the impact of financial commitments (transfer of remittances to family members, direct investments in the home country, donations to NGOs and/or state agencies in the home country) and the impact of returning migrants (brain gain) to promote development in the country of origin.¹⁶ In addition, the agenda of diaspora organizations (e.g., hometown organizations)—in particular their socio-

¹⁶ For details, see Dewind and Holdaway 2008; Special Issue of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 2010; Skeldon 2008; Faist 2008; Kapur 2004; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013; Cohen 2011; UNCTAD 2013.

economic and/or political activities—and the latter's impact on the development of the home country/home community are studied (cf. Portes et al 2007; Sahoo 2014; Patterson 2006).

Concerning the senses of belonging and identity of transnationals, the main research focus rests on how second or third-generation migrants and long-term diaspora communities sustain or regenerate emotional links to the "homeland" and, more generally, how their identities are constituted. Next to "diaspora tourism" and "roots migration", the role of diaspora organizations in promoting and reviving senses of belonging are major research topics in this respect.¹⁷

Armenia and its highly diverse diaspora offer ample material to study these issues. Due to the long existence of Armenian diaspora communities, a vast range of different diaspora organizations has evolved. Regarding their agendas, they focus on diverse issues, such as preserving Armenian identity and traditions within the Armenian diaspora, promoting cohesion among the diaspora itself, and establishing and/or regenerating links between the diaspora and its "homeland", lobbying governments in the countries of current residence to advance Armenian interests (e.g., recognition of the genocide of 1915, political support for the Republic of Armenia in its conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh etc.), or taking an active part in the socio-economic and political development of the Republic of Armenia.¹⁸

This last aspect has received increasing attention since Armenia gained its independence. By sponsoring a broad range of cultural, developmental, and large-scale infrastructural projects, or by initiating their own programs (e.g., *Repat Armenia*, cf. Jakoubek in this volume), Armenian diaspora organizations demonstrate their commitment to the economic, socio-political, and cultural development of the country (cf. ILO 2009: 71f).

In contrast to other diaspora groups (e.g., Turkish labor migrants), who are often connected with their home communities through so-called "hometown associations", the latter practically do not exist in the Armenian diaspora.¹⁹

"This is most likely due to the fact that Armenian Diaspora members have often no personal or heritage links to specific places in today's Armenia. There are some single cases of wealthy businessmen investing in a specific village or district because they have ties with them" (ILO 2009: 72).

The Armenian government is itself highly interested in the engagement of the diaspora, in particular its economic support in form of donations to NGOs and governmental institutions as well as direct investments in the country (cf. ILO 2009: 70; Manaseryan 2014). In order to facilitate the cooperation with the diaspora and its organizations, the Ministry of Diaspora was

17 Cf. Huang et al. 2013; Basu and Bang 2004; Darieva 2011; King and Christou 2011; Christou and King 2010; Wessendorf 2007; King and Kilinc 2014; Anthias 2008; Safran 1991; Teerling 2011.

18 ILO 2009:70f.; Johannsson 2008:3. According to Sanamyan (November 14, 2016), a part of the Armenian diaspora is calling for a greater political involvement of diaspora Armenians in the Republic of Armenia in order to promote the country's democratic development.

19 Cf. ILO (2009:72); see hometown organizations, Fliche 2005; Hersant 2005; Toumarkine and Hersant 2005.

established in 2008 (cf. ILO 2009: 70; IOM 2010: 49; cf. contribution of Biassetto in this volume).

Several papers in this volume deal with the economic contributions of labor migrants, individual diaspora Armenians as well as diaspora organizations and their role as drivers of development.

Regarding economic contributions, there is—as Paredes highlights in this volume—a difference between the members of the various diaspora groups in Vienna. While members of the "new diaspora" (that is people who migrated from the Republic of Armenia, for details on the distinction see above) send remittances and gifts to family members in Armenia, the "old diaspora"—devoid of personal links—mainly contributes to the development of Armenia via donations and volunteer work in NGOs or by cooperating directly with state organizations in Armenia.

One additional aspect, often highlighted in studies on the "migration–development–nexus", is the role of returnees, in particular highly skilled ones, as drivers of development. This "brain gain" is often perceived as providing more sustainability than financial contributions in form of remittances or donations. Two papers in this volume tackle this issue.

Anna Mautner's study portrays the goals and programs of several NGOs, such as *Repat Armenia* (for more details, see contribution of J. Jakoubek), IOM, Caritas Armenia, Hope and Help, People in Need) to support returning labor migrants and diaspora emigrants in their process of reintegration or getting acquainted with the situation in Armenia, specifically the labor market. Aside from offering short term accommodation, medical support as well as language and orientation courses, some of the NGOs, in particular *Repat Armenia* and People in Need, advocate for the foundation of small businesses as a sustainable way of integration/reintegration. In line with the strategy, some NGOs offer their clientele courses that provide training in how to establish and manage a small enterprise or draw up a business plan. In some cases, even small start-up grants are doled out. Nevertheless, Mautner's interviews with several returnees and emigrants illustrate that expertise in business administration is not sufficient to be economically successful in Armenia. Her interview partners rather emphasize the importance of social networks to promote individual wellbeing and economic success upon return and emigration to Armenia.

While Mautner covers a wide range of NGOs and agendas, Juliane Jakoubek primarily focuses on *Repat Armenia*, an organization that was co-founded in 2012 by several migrant returnees and diaspora emigrants. This organization works with and for highly skilled people that have acquired additional knowledge abroad and possess both capital and connections. *Repat Armenia* perceives itself—as Jakoubek argues—as a facilitator to boost Armenian economic development. By inspiring young highly skilled emigrant and diaspora Armenians to try their luck in Armenia and by providing connections for them in the country, the organization aims to secure a "brain drain" for Armenia. Both interviewed representatives of *Repat Armenia* as well as returnees and diaspora emigrants voiced the opinion that changes for a brighter life of

Armenia's citizens and towards a sustainable economic development would not come from governmental institutions, but rather depend on the commitment of trained returnees.

Another major agenda of Armenian diaspora organizations is the strengthening of ties between a widely dispersed diaspora, and in doing so to secure and/or enhance a common Armenian identity, and to preserve Armenian culture and traditions in the diaspora. By trying to establish and/or regenerate links between the diaspora and the Republic of Armenia, these organizations also seek to instigate a sense of belonging to the Republic of Armenia. Thereby, the latter is often portrayed as the "natural" homeland of all Armenians, even of those Armenians whose roots are located outside the territory of Armenia (e.g., in Western Armenia, see above).

Using *Birthright Armenia*, an NGO founded in 2003 by a diaspora Armenian residing in the United States of America, Cristina Biassetto's contribution analyzes the impact of these efforts.²⁰ *Birthright Armenia* offers young diaspora Armenians an opportunity to reconnect with the "homeland". Through internships in Armenian companies and NGOs, the attendance in language courses and other events, and by being accommodated in Armenian host families, these youngsters are expected to explore their Armenian "roots" and to develop a "renewed sense of identity and belonging". In her paper, Biassetto illustrates that many of the participants in their programs have difficulties in perceiving Armenia as their "homeland". Several of them underlined their differences with regard to language (Western versus Eastern Armenian), attitudes (e.g., towards women), and performance of rituals. On the other hand many citizens of the Republic of Armenia have—as Biassetto mentions—prejudices against diaspora Armenians and perceive them as different from themselves.²¹ Summarizing her research results, Biassetto concludes that despite all efforts by *Birthright Armenia*, most participants in the program do not develop a deep sense of belonging to the Republic of Armenia and, although some alterations may take place, their Armenian identity remains "thin" as compared to other aspects of their diaspora identity (e.g., being American).

20 Details on the activities of *Birthright Armenia* had been analyzed by Cornelia Mosser in her field research project, but are unfortunately not included in this volume.

21 This observation was also made by other students participating in the field research, e.g. by Iris Marko who studied diaspora tourism (not included in this volume).

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Family Alienation and Labor Migration: A Case Study from Gyumri

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the issue of alienation in the context of labor migration. The empirical focus is on families and the specific challenges of migration. The study has been conducted in the city of Gyumri, which has the highest rate of emigration in Armenia. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of labor migration on family relationships, thus analyzing the phenomenon of alienation based on theoretical concepts of social alienation. Family alienation can play a key role in the decision-making phase of migration on the one hand, while potentially occurring and deepening in the absence of one family member from the household on the other, thus threatening the family from functioning as a unit. Family alienation can either occur as a result of seasonal migration or as a push factor leading to migration, depending on the complex sociocultural background of the dominant family values in the community. This research was conducted within the framework of a master's thesis in spring 2016.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag wird die Frage der Entfremdung im Kontext der Arbeitsmigration analysiert. Der empirische Fokus liegt auf Familien und den spezifischen Herausforderungen der Migration. Die Forschung wurde in der Stadt Gyumri durchgeführt, die die höchste Emigrationsrate in Armenien aufweist. Ziel der Forschung war es, den Einfluss der Migration auf Familienbeziehungen zu untersuchen, um das Phänomen der Entfremdung zu analysieren – basierend auf theoretischen Konzepten der sozialen Entfremdung. Familiäre Entfremdung kann einerseits eine Schlüsselrolle im Entscheidungsfindungsprozess der Migration spielen, andererseits wird diese durch die Absenz von Familienmitglieder vertieft und beeinträchtigt die Einheit der Familie. Familiäre Entfremdung kann aufgrund der saisonalen Migration entstehen, andererseits ist sie aber auch ein Push-Faktor, der zur Migration führt, abhängig von dem soziokulturellen Hintergrund der dominierenden Wertvorstellungen über Familie in der Gesellschaft. Diese Forschung wurde im Zuge einer Masterarbeit im Frühling 2016 durchgeführt.

Introduction

Statistics have shown that migration is still one of the biggest issues to NGO's, independent researchers, and policy makers in the Republic of Armenia. As quantitative data reflects, the main direction of the external migration flow is Russia, while the main type of migration is labor migration. In fact, 71 percent of permanent migrants pick Russia as a direction, 9.1 percent Ukraine, 8.1 percent Europe, and only 4.6 percent the United States of America. Yet, when it comes to temporary migration, the picture is quite different: 96.2 percent of labor migrants pick Russia as their destination, 2.0 percent Ukraine, 0.6 percent Europe, and 0.5 percent USA (Migration and Development 2009)

Today's researchers and policy makers mainly highlight the demographic, socio-economic impacts of migration flows. However, the growing number of migrants in Armenia, especially in the region of Shirak, has led to structural transformations not only on the macro-levels of society, but also on micro-levels, more specifically on group levels (community, family).

Referring to the historical background of migration practice in Armenia, it should be noted that such factors as the earthquake in Spitak (Shirak region) in 1988, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have affected the socio-economic sustainability of the country. As a result, migration seemed to be a short-term solution for the uncertainty created due to the socio-economic crisis. We should also keep in mind, however, that the city of Gyumri has been marked by a deep-rooted tradition of seasonal migration since the times of the Soviet Union. In fact, this phenomenon explains why the main direction for seasonal (labor) migration is Russia. Concerning the recent situation, more attention should be directed towards seasonal migration with a main emphasis on the phenomena of family alienation (Neal, Ivoska & Groat 1976). The analytical approach will allow us to take a closer look at the preconditions of family alienation by reflecting the impact of the socio-cultural background on its manifestations in both migrant and non-migrant families.

Methodology

Gyumri is the second-largest city of Armenia (population: 118,000) located in the northern region of Shirak, which is marked by having the highest rates of migration flows with a corresponding 18.5 percent of migrants having migrated and never returned, and 10.3 percent of migrants having migrated and returned (The Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2016).

This research was conducted considering certain developments affecting the economy—as recent studies have shown, the city has the highest of all poverty rates (45.3 percent)—as well as the social and political sustainability of the region Shirak, such as the earthquake crisis (after 1988) and the major impact on the transformation of the economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991).

For research purposes, 20 in-depth interviews have been conducted, ten with individuals from migrant families and, accordingly, ten with individuals from non-migrant families. The specific case of female migrants was revealed during the fieldwork. The main criteria for respondents were gender and being from either a migrant or non-migrant family. The average duration of each interview was an hour and a half.

The socio-cultural background as a cause of family alienation

Before exploring the manifestations of family alienation, a short theoretical overview is necessary. Based on the theoretical analysis of Seeman (1959), major variants of alienation—such as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement—have been identified. In sociology, alienation is described as the separation of individuals from control and direction of their social life. The term alienation was put in practice during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In sociology the concept is based on the ideas of Karl Marx—alienation of man from his personal activity and labor, alienation of the worker from his work in a capitalistic system leading to a lack of control over the production process (Iqbal Shah 2015).

Referring to the socio-cultural background of family alienation, it should be noted that gender inequality plays a vital role in the functioning of a family. As the respondents claim, there is a clear gender-based difference when it comes to primary socialization. Girls in Gyumri are educated based on ethical and moral values—for example, they are taught to value patience and obedience. Being socialized in a society where the daughters obey the head of the house, the father, they have limited freedom of choice even concerning such serious issues as marriage. This is an important aspect, as it affects family relationships, especially in a community marked by transformation.

As the research data shows, marriage is not the bride's personal decision. In most cases, women still complain that they did not even know their husband before their marriage, and did not have any feelings for him, thus asserting that they just followed their father's will. Therefore, these can be observed as forms of forced marriages. It should be highlighted that in these cases, the opinion of friends, relatives and neighbors of the head of the house—the father of the bride—is generally taken under consideration. Any potential husband of the daughter must thus be someone whose family is personally known.

The preconditions of family alienation can be found in the early stages of marriage, when the brides marry someone they barely know, and sometimes do not even like. Against this backdrop, we should not forget that the groom is free to choose as he wishes. For this reason, the continuation of gender-based inequality in the new family forces the wife to remain in an unhappy marriage.

The wives claim that certain factors are taken into consideration when they decide to maintain their marriage. In some cases, the wives are influenced from public opinion. "*I thought of*

getting divorced but then I also thought about what will people say and how they will react on that, they will definitely blame me" (wife, 51 years old, non-migrant family). Another woman was more worried about the future of her children. "*I don't want my kids to be stigmatized as children of divorced parents*" (wife of migrant, 50 years old). An interesting finding was the women's feeling of powerlessness with regard to changing the situation. "*Well, I don't think that getting divorced will help me to change my life into better*" (wife, 54 years old, non-migrant family). Finally, financial dependency of the migrant (their husband) was also marked as an important factor affecting their decision. "*I don't have a job and I have two kids to take care of. If I put my happiness in priority, who will guarantee good living conditions for my kids?*" (wife of migrant, 49 years old).

The gender inequalities within families explain the low degree of participation of the housewife in family planning. The main issue in this case is the fact that the wife in the household has an expressive²² role (Parsons 1956 quoted in Crano/Aronoff 1978: 463-471), while the husband has an instrumental²³ role. He is the bread earner while, she has a limited role when it comes to decision-making and family planning. The situation is more complex when talking about extended families, in which a conflict usually occurs within two or more generations. Once again, the main issue is the fact that in traditional Armenian families, the head of the house is the father-in-law—thus the husband's father—and after his death, this role is inherited by the mother-in-law. "*When I got married, the head of the house was my father-in-law, and we were all to obey him, but when he died, my mother-in-law took over all his responsibilities*" (wife of migrant, 52 years old). Even after their marriage, women have no independence, especially in extended families. They mainly rely on the opinion of their father or mother-in-law. This complex situation creates the impression that women can and should do nothing more than fulfilling certain chores, including child caring, cooking etc. As a result, women have no feeling of importance in the family besides their role as care-givers. Only when they are older and after their husbands' death, they can take over the role as the head of the family.

Summing up the issues mentioned above, we can conclude that family alienation and its manifestations need to be observed with regard to the socio-cultural background of the families. The aim of this approach is focused on examining the existence, perpetuation, and repercussions of family alienation due to migration. Against this backdrop, it has to be questioned whether or not family alienation only occurs as a result of being away from the family for a certain period of time.

²² Expressive family role, originally defined by T. Parsons, ascribed to boys, the role of the bread-winner, the person whose main responsibility is to go out and work to earn money.

²³ Instrumental family role, originally defined by T. Parsons, ascribed to girls, the role of the care-giver, the person who needs to take care of the household and children.

As the data has shown in the case of Gyumri, the dominance of "authoritarian families"²⁴ (Baumrind 2003) lays the foundation for the formation of normlessness²⁵ families in the future. *"I married a man whom I didn't love, I married just because my parents forced me to do so ... After so many years, I still blame them for doing that, that is why I always tell my kids: Do whatever you want, whatever you think is right for you, don't ask me"* (wife of a migrant, 48 years old). This implies their inability to decide who to marry, women keep telling their children to refrain from considering the opinion of others—even if that means their own parents—when thinking about marriage. *"No one asked for my opinion, I'll never forgive my parents for that. I always say that to my kids, telling them how important it is to do what you want in this life without considering other people's opinion"* (wife of a migrant, 54 years old). Being in an unhappy marriage and blaming their parents for their misery, these women tell their children to disobey their rules with regard to making such important decision.

A comparative analysis of both cases may help us to understand whether migration offers a way of overcoming alienation, or if it is just a way of solving financial problems that lead to alienation in the family. In this context, a family with the wife emigrating seems to be an interesting case. As the study has shown in such cases, the husband's inability to provide financial sustainability combined with the wife's opportunity to work and earn money abroad legitimizes the wife's role transformation. The women thus assume the responsibilities of their husbands. Although this approach contradicts to community rules and established role expectations, the fact that it might be the only solution for the economic sustainability of the family makes it acceptable for everyone. According to the statistics, however, only about 1.7 percent of migrant from Armenia are female, which is still very low (Migration and Development 2009).

Impact of Labor Migration on Family Relationships

As the research has shown, there is a connection between family alienation and labor migration. Interestingly, the data proves that in alienated families with a lack of communication and a low degree of family cohesion, migration turned out to be an alternative way to justify the wish to be away from home. By providing financial support and participating in decision-making processes, the migrant maintains his formal role as bread-winner in the family, while avoiding intensive contact with his family members.

"We got married because my father decided so. He knew my future husband very well and he decided that he was the best choice for me. I didn't want to marry him. I cried and cried but

²⁴ These families are characterized by their authoritarian parenting style. Authoritarian parents expect their children to unconditionally obey strict rules; parents are obedience and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation.

²⁵ Normlessness in families—when children deceive their parents, keep secrets from them, and the family life lacks organization.

had no other choice than to stay. ... He moved to Russia to work due to what our living conditions improved, what else may a woman want, if not to being happy and her kids to living in good conditions" (wife of migrant, 55 years old).

It should be noted that from the migrant's point of view, the situation is quite similar. "*You are away from your family for a long time, and you are in a place that is completely different from your home country. It is normal that you want to try new things" (migrant, 35 years old.)*

Also, migrants claim that by the time they start accepting the lifestyle and traditions of their host country, it directly affects their daily life. "*Of course, you go there and you see your friends date Russian women, while they have a wife and kids left in Armenia. In time you get used to that, you may even consider it to be normal. This is the freedom that we are talking about. There are no restrictions and you can do whatever you want" (migrant/male 45 years old).* Some of them also admit that this new way of life occasionally leads to new relationships in the host country. "*I know people who have a legal family in Armenia and one in Russia, half of the year they stay with the family in Russia and the other half, they visit their family back home. There are many of them who live like that" (migrant, 40 years old).*

As for the perception of the migrants' children, it should be mentioned that they have certain problems to speak about this topic. In the course of collecting data, cases were revealed where the migrant was already living abroad for ten or even twenty years. Some of the respondents seemed to blame their father for leaving them for so many years. "*There are so many families that decided to stay together, even if they did not have enough money for living" (daughter of migrant, 22 years old).* Providing financial support does not justify the absence of one parent. "*When I get married, I'll never let my husband go to another country without me, it's not normal" (daughter of migrant, 20 years old).* This is an example of how the children of migrants blame their parents for not being with them, and consider their family to be incomplete.

The migrant's children also claimed that, as the years passed, they started to see the role of their father as the one sending money and providing financial support. They also added that when the father returned, there were many conflicts with their mother, and for them it was better when the father lived in Russia. "*I grew up with my mom, and I'm used to communicate with him only on the phone. It is strange to think that we might be living together again" (son of migrant, 24).* The return of the parent is just as traumatic as the absence itself for the children, while the spouse conceives it as marked by conflict. "*It is strange; when I speak about my family, I usually think of the ones who actually live with me, sharing the same apartment. Even more strange is the thought that after all this time, he might come back and I have to get used to his physical presence" (daughter of migrant, 20 years old).* In a nutshell, children experience the situation quite differently: they do not try to justify their parent's decision to migrate and claim that it was one of the most traumatic experiences of their lives. Referring to the idea of the migrant's return, the children rather see it as a bad decision that could potentially risk their family's stability.

Facing Return Migration in Alienated Families

In order to explore alienation within migrant families, and to fully understand its manifestations, it was necessary to apply a more analytical approach. The first and primary goal was to create a research tool that would enable a deep exploration of the phenomena. It was, therefore, necessary to list the characteristics of such families, and to look for corresponding interview partners based on: years of migration experience, gender of the migrant, and the type of migrant family, thus either nuclear or extended (Yorgburg 1975).

As the research data illustrates, the type of migrant family does not really affect the degree of manifestation of family alienation. However, in both cases, nuclear and extended families, the fact that one person is away affects the relationships in that family. Another variable that was distinguished during the data collection was the type and the frequency of communicating with the family left behind.

In such cases where the migrant was frequently communicating with the family, the perception of the situation turned out to be more positive for the family members. "*Of course, it is hard when the person you love and care about is far away, but luckily, we have internet and we talk every day, and that creates the impression that he is here with us*" (wife of migrant, 55 years old). According to the respondents, online communication (Skype or other video calls) helps them to keep in contact and be aware of what is going on in the life of their family member. "*We communicate on Skype all the time; I know what he's eating, how he is, what his plans are for the day, basically everything. I cannot imagine how people used to live when there was no Internet*" (wife of migrant, 65 years old).

Furthermore, a certain kind of communication quality is fundamental, including the topics of discussion and the presence of family members participating in the discussion. "*It depends on what we are talking about. Of course, when it comes to household planning, then it is very important for everyone to participate*" (wife of migrant, 58 years old).

It should be especially pointed out that the perceptions of husband and wife might differ within in the same family. In a nuclear family, for example, where the migrant lived abroad for about ten years and claimed that sometimes his participation would not make any sense: "*They are the ones in Armenia and they know what and how to do something better than me. Of course, we can talk and discuss certain things, but I think the main thing that I can and should do is to provide financial support.*" (wife of migrant, 58 years old)

In some cases, when the migrant was confronted with a financial crisis in the host country—weak currency, loss of salary etc.—the wife forced him to come back, explaining that the risks they were facing were not worth the income. Referring to such a situation, there must be a clear explanation of the time factor: on one hand, if the migrant was facing financial issues in the host country during his first stay, family members would force him to return home as soon as possible. On the other hand, if that happened after three to five years of him being away, no one

would probably ask him to immediately come back. "*I told him to come back, not only because we spent a lot of money on helping him to move to Russia and he barely covered those expenses but also because afterwards, he couldn't send enough money because they didn't pay him well. So I told him to come back, it's not worth it*" (wife of migrant who stayed in Russia for a year, 55 years old). Children of migrants also seem to agree that it was best for their parent to stay abroad after so many years of absence. "*He claims that it's hard to make money now in Russia because there is a crisis in the country, but what he will do when he comes back? I cannot imagine us living all together again. I don't see any point of his return*" (daughter of the migrant who lives in Russia for ten years now, 22 years old).

Again, the picture is somewhat different when observing families with the wife migrating. In all these cases, the wife returns home after a short stay. As for the communication, it should be noted that both migrant and family members communicate more frequently. Short-term migrant women usually work in the trade market, while trying to figure out possible variants of family reunion. "*She always speaks about how she wants us to be with her, she hopes that she can collect enough money to rent a new apartment where we can all live together*" (husband of migrant woman, 48 years old). Even if the wife wants to stay for a longer period of time, the husbands claimed that was not possible due to household responsibilities the men could not take care of. "*When she is not here, it's very hard for me because I have to do the rest of the domestic tasks which for an Armenian man it's both unusual and hard. So we know that this can't be a long-lasting solution*" (husband of migrant woman, 48 years old). Therefore, there are no recorded manifestations of social alienation within families where the wife is the migrant. This is explained by the fact that the wife appears as a short-term migrant or either decides to return back or convinces her family to move in with her.

Another difficult and very specific phase is the migrant's return after months or even years of being away. This is a stressful situation for both sides—the migrant and the family—as respondents claim to have a hard time getting back to their old way of living after such a long period of separation. As respondents claim, the hardest struggle for them is the distribution of family responsibilities. "*I'm used to do everything all by myself, after he left I am the head of the house, and now I have to reorganize our daily life. I think most of our conflicts come from that*" (wife of migrant, 50 years old). This situation is perceived as particularly difficult for the family, especially husband and wife. "*It was very hard for me when he left because I took all the responsibilities that he had in the house, and I had no idea how to deal with that. After a while, I got used to everything but now he came back and we I don't know how to deal with this situation. It was easier when he was sending the money and we were planning our actions, now not only don't we have enough money but we also have the problem of family planning*" (wife of the returned migrant, 51 years old).

As for the perception of the children of returned migrants, the situation is even more complex. They argue that the return of their father brings forward new conflicts in the family. First of all, they point out that their relationship has changed, and it is hard to make up for the time that was

lost. Secondly, they claim that the migrant family member has changed by accepting values and behaviors that are specific to the migrant's host country. Although this condition paves the way for further conflict, the distance was the main factor that respondents highlighted as a barrier affecting their relationship with family members. Being away from the migrant, the family's ties become loose and put the family's cohesion at risk (Tucker & Miller 2012). When the migrant returns, the family has troubles communicating with him/her. In some cases, the best solution might even seem for the migrant to return to the host country. "*When my father came back, I realized that he was like a stranger, a guest for us, how to explain ... even the smell of his cigarette was annoying for me. The only thing I was thinking about was when he'll finally leave*" (daughter of migrant, 20 years old). Children claim that they are used to living with only one parent, and that it is strange for them to see their two parents together. "*After a couple days of my return, my son asked me when I would be going back to Russia. It worries me a lot because I realize that my children don't consider me to be a family member any longer*" (migrant 50 years old). Migration thus directly affects family relationships, which is most eminently noticed after the return of the migrant. In time, the only responsibility ascribed to the migrant is the one of providing financial support. Therefore, any other intervention is seen as very strange for the other family members, especially children, and not acceptable. Consequently, the return of the migrant appears as undesirable for the family.

Conclusion

In referring to migration researchers and scholars, they usually highlight the economic impact of the phenomenon of migration. Nevertheless, there are many other aspects of migration that need to be discussed within the framework of social sciences. One of the main and most problematic influences of today's migration appears to be the transformation of family relationships. This is interlinked with the social effects of migration, more specifically labor migration. Although labor migration is an option to overcoming financial obstacles, certain risks concerning the stability of the family as a unit are inherent. As the research data on migration as an alternative to overcoming the uncertainty created due to the economic, political and social instability of a transit country such as Armenia moreover justifies, migration can lead to the manifestation of such phenomena as alienation.

Otherwise, the cyclic form of labor migration appears to be a way to handle alienation in the family. The legitimization of families living apart leads to growing numbers of such families. Aside from the demographic and economic impacts of migration, there is also the issue of social transformation, which leads to reproduction of new and acceptable models of family relationships in the community. Moreover, the return of the migrant brings up new issues and conflicts that negatively affect family relationships. It thus seems necessary to conduct more long-term research to tackle the various phases of migration and its impacts.

Other factors such as the financial dependency of women from their husbands as well as the importance of public opinion and social control also have a direct effect on the lack of agency

in changing the marital situation, which forces women to remain in an unhappy marriage. By examining alienation as both a cause and consequence of migration, we can conclude that alienation appears to be a cause of short-term migration in the first case, while it appears to be a consequence of long-term migration in the second case. In both cases, however, the model of living together but staying apart (Levin 2004) seems to be a temporary solution due to the fact that the social network and the values, well-appropriated by community members, do not allow women to take essential decisions by applying drastic measures.

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Syrian-Armenian Immigrants in Armenia: A Sociological Analysis of Social Alienation

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Abstract

In the past few years Armenia has faced the challenge of Syrian-Armenian immigrants who escaped from the civil war in Syria. In Armenia they faced a plethora of problems that have formed barriers for integration and resulted in a complex and multilevel phenomenon such as social alienation. Thus, this article focuses on the reasons of alienation of Syrian-Armenians who actually form a new subgroup in the Armenian society. For the purposes of this research, the typology of social alienation introduced by M. Seeman and R. Middleton has been used. The method of in-depth interviews was applied to identify the main issues and expressions of social alienation among Syrian-Armenians. Overall 24 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted taking into consideration age and gender of respondents. According to the research findings Syrian-Armenians mainly face socio-cultural, legal and economic problems in Armenia. These problems are causing social alienation.

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten Jahren war Armenien mit den Herausforderungen der Immigration von syrisch-armenischen Flüchtlingen konfrontiert. Die Flüchtlinge sind in Armenien mit einer Vielzahl von Problemen konfrontiert, die Barrieren für die Integration sind und zu vielen mehrschichtigen, komplexen Problemen führen wie beispielsweise der "sozialen Entfremdung". Dieser Beitrag bezieht sich auf die Gründe der Entfremdung von syrischen ArmenierInnen, die eine neue Gruppe innerhalb der armenischen Gesellschaft bilden. Diese Forschung basiert auf der Typologie der Sozialen Entfremdung, die von M. Seeman und R. Middleton verwendet wurde. Es wurden 24 semi-strukturelle Tiefeninterviews geführt, um die Gründe und Ausdrucksformen sozialer Entfremdung zu erheben. Die Studie ergab, dass syrische ArmenierInnen soziokulturelle, legale und wirtschaftliche Probleme erfahren, die zu sozialer Entfremdung führen.

Introduction

The Syrian crisis that started in 2011 has forced many Syrian-Armenians to leave Syria and to move to Armenia. The inflow of Syrian-Armenian immigrants is the second largest one in Armenia since the 1990s, when Armenia sheltered about 360,000 refugees from Azerbaijan (Yeganyan 2013).

Prior to the civil war, the number of Armenians living in Syria was between 80,000 and 100,000, the majority of them residing in Aleppo (Zolyan 2015). Since the beginning of the war

Armenia has accepted about 17,000 Syrian-Armenians (UNHCR 2015). For some of them Armenia has been a transit point to western countries. In Armenia, these people are facing a lot of problems with finding employment, accommodation, communication difficulties etc., which all form barriers for integration²⁶. Moreover, it should also be mentioned that these people came from a war-torn country, faced violence and have to cope with their experiences of war aside from adapting in the Armenian society.

Commonly, people who are forced to leave their homes and appear in a totally new environment with a different culture sometimes lose their ability of social orientation. They have a feeling of relative deprivation, and perceive themselves as marginalized. These feelings may be more intense in the case of Syrian-Armenians. They arrived in the Armenian society that has undergone dramatic social changes consequences of which the country has not been able to overcome so far.

These changes occurred as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), the inflow of refugees from Azerbaijan (1988–1991), the war in Nagorno-Karabakh (1991–1994), and the declaration of independence of Armenia (1991). Due to the inability of the Armenian government and the people to deal with the rapid transformation, the country faces challenges such as a high rate of corruption (Transparency International 2015), a high rate of poverty (30%) (National Statistical Service of RA, 2016a), unemployment (National Statistical Service of RA, 2016b), a lack of democracy (Freedom House 2016) and a growing rate of emigration from Armenia (National Statistical Service of RA, 2016c) among others. Along with the abovementioned issues, Armenia is currently facing the challenges of Syrian-Armenian immigrants who seem to be more alienated than integrated.

This article focuses on the reasons of alienation of Syrian-Armenians who actually form a new subgroup in the Armenian society. It is based on the theoretical concepts of social alienation (Seeman 1959; Middleton 1963). The empirical research identifies the causes of social alienation, the interlinkage to further socio-economic issues and the consequences. The research questions are: how social alienation among Syrian-Armenian immigrants in Armenia is expressed, which dimension of social alienation dominates, and how social alienation affects the expectations for the future?

²⁶ The majority of Syrian-Armenians settled in Armenia were granted Armenian citizenship, and only a few of them have refugee status. That is why the term immigrant is more appropriate.

Methodology

This research was conducted for a MA thesis in April-May 2016. The qualitative methodology was chosen for this study. Overall 24 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Syrian-Armenians taking into consideration different age groups (18–35, 36–55, 56+) and the gender of the respondents.

The method of in-depth interviews was chosen as it enables embracing a broad context, explores new fields and allows bringing in the individual orientations and strategies. The average duration of interviews was an hour and more. All respondents live in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

The problems of Syrian-Armenian immigrants in Armenia

The challenges of Syrian-Armenians in Armenia can be grouped to problems that are specifically faced by Syrian-Armenians only and others that affect both locals and immigrants.

The most obvious problems experienced by Syrian-Armenians are accommodation, education, communication, cultural adaptation, differences in Syrian and Armenian legislations.

The problem of accommodation is one of the most urgent ones. Nearly all immigrants rent a flat. Besides the fact of renting itself, the main problem is the high rents. Most Syrian-Armenian immigrants came to Armenia with the expectation that they would return to their homes after a few weeks or a month. Therefore, they did not take most of their property and savings with them. As the war is still going on, these people are enforced to remain in Armenia. Within a few months they spent all the money they had, and they could not pay their rents. Some organizations (Mission Armenia, Caritas Armenia) jointly with UNHCR elaborated programs, helping Syrian-Armenians with accommodation for six months but these programs do not provide a long-term solution.

With regard to education, the problems are basically linked to the language of teaching. The Armenian communities in Syria have their own community schools and Armenian children attend only those schools. In these schools the language of teaching was Arabic and only Armenian language classes and religious education were in Armenian. It should be noted that the Armenian language has two branches, Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian. In the Republic of Armenia, the official language is Eastern Armenian, while in the Armenian Diaspora people speak and write in Western Armenian. These two branches of the Armenian language have different pronunciations, spelling, grammar and words. Syrian-Armenian children and students experience difficulties to keep up with the local students.

One of the respondents participating in our research mentioned that her daughter's teacher said that Syrian-Armenian children cannot keep up with the local students as they don't understand Eastern Armenian well. That was why her daughter did not get high grades for that course at

school. Here is a kind of discrimination towards Syrian-Armenians concerning language differences. In addition, Syrian-Armenian students do not speak Russian, which is a mandatory subject in the schools in Armenia. Another problem concerning education is that newcomers do not know their rights and therefore they sometimes face disadvantages.

Communication is another problem, and respondents mentioned that initially locals sometimes had difficulties understanding them because of the different dialects they speak. The Syrian-Armenians also often do not understand locals because of the plethora of Russian words they use in everyday speech. But as they continue to live in Armenia, locals as well as Syrian-Armenians start understanding each other's dialects.

The abovementioned problem of communication is part of a wider cultural adaptation issue. Apart from communication, there are differences in the ways of thinking and worldviews. Almost all respondents complained that locals look gloomy, which is one of the things they do not like in Armenia. *"The other thing is that we are integrated more with the East and you (locals) with Russia. Russian influence is noticeable"*, one of the respondents (male, 24 years old) said when talking about differences.

Another problem worth discussing are the differences in Armenian and Syrian laws, particularly the ones concerning the tax system. The tax legislation in Syria was laxer than in Armenia, and Syrian-Armenians face hardship in starting a business. Respondents who ran their own businesses in Syria mentioned that they were exempted from taxes for a few years in order to get to the point that they could ensure economic sustainability. In Armenia one starts paying taxes from the very first day of setting up a business. Syrian-Armenians, who lost most of their property because of the war, cannot afford investing money in their own business and paying taxes at the same time. Besides the tax system, the other difference between the Armenian and Syrian business environments is the size of markets. The Syrian market was several times larger than the Armenian market and it was easier to start a business there.

Actually, it can be stated that the problem of taxes concerns locals as well. But unlike the locals, the Syrian-Armenians are not used to such regulations. Not only people are not exempted from taxes in the beginning, but also the taxes are rather high. This problem affects both groups.

In the light of the aforementioned, the foremost issue is unemployment. The unemployment rate in Armenia is 18.1% (National Statistical Service of RA, 2016), which is very high compared to other countries in the region. Syrian-Armenians have a disadvantage compared with the locals as they do not speak Russian, the main foreign language spoken in Armenia. Besides, their skills and competences sometimes do not match the demands of the Armenian market. Unemployment, like in the case of the locals, has forced many Syrian-Armenians to migrate to western countries, especially Sweden, Netherlands, Canada and also Lebanon (Hakobyan 2016).

Thus, the problems affecting both groups can be classified as legal and socio-economic.

The analysis of the phenomenon of social alienation among Syrian-Armenians

In order to analyze the phenomenon of social alienation among Syrian-Armenian immigrants this article is based on Melvin Seeman's approach to social alienation. Seeman (1959) defines alienation in terms of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Later isolation was divided into social isolation and cultural isolation (Middleton 1963). In Seeman's definition, powerlessness is "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes or reinforcements he seeks" (Seeman 1959: 784). Meaninglessness is "when the individual is unclear what he ought to believe – when the individual's standards for clarity in decision-making are not met" (Seeman 1959: 786). The next dimension is normlessness, which is derived from Durkheim's concept of anomie (Durkheim 1984) and is defined as a "high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals" (Seeman 1959: 787). Self-estrangement means to be something less than one might ideally be if the circumstances in society were otherwise (Seeman 1959: 789). With social isolation one understands the feeling of loneliness and social exclusion. In the case of cultural estrangement, a person does not identify himself with the mainstream culture of society (Middleton 1963: 974).

As mentioned above, Syrian-Armenians have sociocultural, economic and legal problems that tend to lead to social alienation if the problems are not solved properly. With regard to the Syrian-Armenians, powerlessness above all refers to their socio-political situation. Respondents mainly mentioned that they could not change anything in Armenia and they could not improve their conditions because, in their opinion, everything depends on the government and changes should be instigated by the government. *"I think we don't have an organization through which to raise questions. Actually, everyone is isolated, we don't have so much power or we have it but we are not organized"*, said one of the respondents (male, 23 years old). They see the locals as mediators between them and the government who should point to the issues and seek for their solutions. *"We (Syrian-Armenians) see that even locals cannot bring changes, what can they do?"* said one of respondents (female, 30 years old). This belief that even the locals cannot improve their condition can deepen the feeling of powerlessness among Syrian-Armenians. This feeling of powerlessness can be further connected to the factor of disintegration that Syrian-Armenians do not yet consider themselves as part of the Armenian society. *"Let's suppose that I take part in a demonstration in Yerevan and the police checks my ID card and sees that I'm not an Armenian citizen, they will say why I am protesting, and that I should go and live in my country"*, (male, 27 years old).

Powerlessness is closely related to the other dimension of social alienation - the social isolation. Based on the information collected through the interviews, we may say that social isolation causes the feeling of powerlessness. When talking about social isolation we need to take into account the factor of age. According to the research results, social isolation is more obvious among older Syrian-Armenians than among the younger ones. This is explained by the fact that

younger Syrian-Armenians study in universities, go to schools, have jobs, communicate with locals and have larger social networks than the older people. *"The older Syrian-Armenians try to live their life as they used to in Syria, but Armenia is not Syria and communicating with only Syrians-Armenians makes them even more isolated"*, a young Syrian-Armenian said (female, 24 years old). And there is one more peculiarity concerning the former hometowns of Syrian-Armenians: the respondents were mainly from Aleppo and Qamishli. The latter is a small town where community ties are stronger than in larger cities, such as Aleppo, therefore people from Qamishli may feel more isolated as they do not have their former ties and relations, and the community life they used to have.

As for customs and traditions, Syrian-Armenians used to celebrate all Armenian religious and non-religious holidays solemnly with special rituals in Syria. This was very important in Syria from the perspective of preserving their Armenian identity. In Armenia people are not even aware of the existence of most holidays and they do not celebrate them comparatively. This is one of the factors that Syrian-Armenians no longer celebrate most of the holidays and even if they do, they do not do it as solemnly, as they used to in Syria. As they are now in a new environment where they miss most of their former friends, neighbors, relatives they do not have the social networks of relatives and friends with whom to celebrate. This may further contribute to social and cultural estrangements.

Cultural estrangement results from differences in the values as well. Syrian-Armenians are more business-minded as one of the respondents mentioned, Armenians, on the contrary, are not. For example, as it was already mentioned above, Syrian-Armenians, especially the young generations is more active and that is a reason that they have a different outlook to the world and hence different behavior in certain situations. *"Locals say that they have experienced the devastating earthquake of Spitak in 1988, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, and they don't think and care much about the future, but for the new life we all need to be changed"*, mentioned a Syrian-Armenian (female, 45 years old). *"There in Syria, for example, if one swore in the presence of girls, no one would take it seriously, but here in Armenia it could become a huge problem and even a fight might start"*, said another respondent (male, 24 years old). From this point of view, local Armenians are more conservative and traditional than Syrian-Armenians and these cultural differences may sometimes cause conflicts.

It has to be mentioned that a 'cultural dialogue' has occurred between the two groups. Syrian-Armenians and locals exchange their customs and traditions. An exchange is already happening via food consumption and cooking, and also some migrants have opened their restaurants in Yerevan. Syrian-Armenians have brought with them their spices and dishes that are now very common in Armenia.

The next dimension of social alienation is normlessness, which affects different aspects of social life. Usually, problems in Armenia are being solved through "mediators", people who are considered as informal problem solvers. These mediators can be relatives, friends and acquaintances. This way of problem solving is very common in the Armenian reality. People

often tend to ask their relative to help them to solve a problem rather than to turn to the relevant agencies: the police, the courts, ministries etc. This demonstrates that sometimes people do not trust the government agencies as they do not believe they will receive any relevant response from them. Therefore, they prefer informal ways of problem solving. Aside from this, another common way of problem solving is offering bribes. Hence, we may say that this institution of "mediators" is a kind of a social capital in the Armenian society. Thus, in this context normlessness occurs when norms are not effective and people seek to find alternative ways of problem solving. From this point of view, normlessness is not as obvious as other dimensions among Syrian-Armenians. Syrian-Armenians do not have the relevant social networks through which it would be possible to solve problems in Armenia accordingly. Therefore, they have to rely only on formal and legal regulations that do not always function properly. "*Syria was even more corrupt than Armenia and with bribes people could easily get what they wanted and many people in Syria made use of that. But here, in Armenia when you want to offer a bribe, you have to have connections and apart from that, there are many laws as well. The problems that were small in Syria can be complicated in Armenia. It was easier in Syria*", mentioned one of the respondents (male, 50 years old).

The other dimension of analysis is meaninglessness, which is closely connected to a person's past experience in different aspects. The notions of meaninglessness can be divided into two spheres which seem to be ambivalent and for the individual decision contradictory and difficult to deal with. The first is that it is meaningful to start a new initiative in Armenia and to have long-term prospects. This is determined by the fact that Armenia is the desired and sweet homeland for Syrian-Armenians as they were raised with the belief that their homeland is a paradise and they still think that it is worth connecting their future with Armenia. The second understanding is that there is uncertainty in Armenia and one cannot predict what will happen in the near future. That's why they can hardly see long-lasting perspective and thus give a meaning to initiating, creating and planning something. "*Armenia is a good country to live after retiring, but if you have dreams and want to fulfill them, Armenia is not a good choice*", said one of the respondents (male, 23 years old). When speaking of meaninglessness, social pessimism (Lytkina, Nemirovsaya, 2014: 48-60) should be taken into consideration as well. The future is uncertain, and no one knows what will happen both in a short and long-term perspective. This can be explained by the fact that Syrian-Armenians escaped from war, and initially they did not expect and plan to stay in Armenia more than a month. Aside from this, they have difficulties to adapt to the Armenian reality. So, these two factors result in social pessimism.

Social pessimism is connected to the feeling of powerlessness and vice versa. When Syrian-Armenians feel that they cannot control their future outcomes and improve their lives in Armenia, it leads to social pessimism. This uncertainty aggravates to the feeling of powerlessness.

The last dimension of social alienation is self-estrangement. It mainly refers to the situation when Syrian-Armenians "lose" something from their self. In this context this loss is mainly expressed through the loss of prestige, respect etc. they used to enjoy in Syria. Most Syrian-Armenian immigrants cannot self-actualize in Armenia as they used to in Syria. When talking about self-estrangement we should first of all mention the loss of recognition related to their occupation, e.g. as an artisan, craftsmen, producer etc. "*I was a well-known and respectable woman in Aleppo. Everyone knew that I was a good cook and everyone loved my dishes. But in Armenia I don't have that and no one knows me*", said one of the respondents (female, 48 years old).

Apart from the abovementioned dimensions that describe social alienation, there are also other factors that influence and cause a feeling of alienation. We have already discussed social pessimism and its relation to powerlessness and meaninglessness. Another important factor is trust. Trust can be defined as desired expectations which are related to other people's actions and intentions (Möllering 2001: 403-420). When talking about trust in the context of social alienation we usually mean distrust which includes negative expectations from other people's actions. When speaking about the trust of Syrian-Armenians in the local population, government agencies, social institutions, NGO's or charitable organizations, we cannot clearly state that they either trust or distrust them. As for the local population, Syrian-Armenians mentioned that they had positive as well as negative experiences with them. Those living a more isolated life do not communicate much with locals and so trust them less. In the case of government agencies, there is more distrust than trust due to the past negative experience. "*We were in need a few months ago. My father needed medical care and we decided to ask government agencies for help as they had programs of assistance to Syrian-Armenians but they refused and we had to do everything by ourselves. How can we trust and rely on them from then on?*" said a young woman (26 years old). Another respondent (male, 23 years old) who is a university student was surprised that he was not treated equally like the native Armenians: "*There was a training abroad for which I applied and I needed financial aid. I called the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked for financial aid but they replied rudely that I am a Syrian-Armenian and they do not provide financial aid to Syrian-Armenians*". Besides inequality, other interlocutors are aware of programs for Syrian-Armenians but are not sure whether these programs are on paper or real. "*Government agencies are very well aware of the problems of Syrian-Armenians, and they have very good programs on integration but they are only on paper and are not being implemented. And if they implement those programs they will not succeed because they don't have any past experience of working with immigrants and do not take the problem seriously*". (female, 26 years old).

As to different NGO's and charitable organizations (Caritas Armenia, Mission Armenia, Aleppo NGO, Center for Coordination of SyrArmenians Issues etc.), we can say that they are the only organizations Syrian-Armenians trust rather than distrust, as they always get assistance when needed. They have mainly had positive experience.

Furthermore, trust can be linked to discrimination. Respondents complained of some kind of discrimination against Syrian-Armenians. It can be observed in the educational system, in the healthcare system, when seeking a job or during everyday interaction etc. But they also mentioned that over time people's attitudes have changed, and many things have changed since the first months of their stay in Armenia: there is more tolerance than discrimination.

When talking about the social alienation of Syrian-Armenian immigrants it is important to reveal their intentions about their future as this is directly linked to the problem of social pessimism. When they cannot find a job in Armenia, and pay their rent and support their families, they consider migrating to other countries where they will have more opportunities than in Armenia. And though their homeland is lovely and appreciated, the dilemma is that they cannot make a living in Armenia. "*If I knew that I could find a job and self-actualize in Armenia I would stay, but I'm not sure*", said a student who is going to graduate from a university (male, 23 years old). "*In Sweden refugees receive benefits until they learn the language and find a job. My brother is in Sweden and he says that it is better there than in Armenia*", said another respondent who could not find a job (male, 50 years old). For others, not only European countries are an option but due to the wide spread Armenian diaspora going overseas might be a strategy. "*We intend to migrate to Canada as we can live a dignified life there*", mentioned a respondent who has a job in Armenia (female, 26 years old).

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war (2011) Armenia has received around 17.000 Syrian-Armenians. In Armenia this was the second flow of such a big number of migrants after the arrival of refugees from Azerbaijan between 1988 and 1991. This was a new challenge for the Armenian society and the Armenian government, which requires appropriate solutions and action. The actions which were undertaken to assist and integrate Syrian-Armenians do not work or are inefficient as these people are increasingly leaving for other countries. The question is how important is it for Armenia to prevent the outflow of Syrian-Armenians from Armenia, and what should be done in order to create conditions for a better living in Armenia.

Research revealed the primary problems that Syrian-Armenians face in Armenia can be classified into sociocultural, economic and legal challenges. The sociocultural issues include educational, healthcare and communication aspects while economic issues are mostly linked to employment. As for legal issues, the main distress is the lack of knowledge of their rights and laws. This problem can be solved by way of organizing trainings for Syrian-Armenians in order to raise their legal awareness. All of these problems are significant, but unemployment is the most urgent one. If Syrian-Armenians have jobs, they are eager to stay in Armenia. Otherwise, they intend to migrate to other countries and even go back to Syria.

The abovementioned problems create the background for social alienation. As long as they are not solved, the tendency of alienation tends to deepen. Every dimension of alienation is

interlinked with one another and a multitude of social factors, such as the feelings of powerlessness lead to inactivity. Overall, Syrian-Armenians do not feel that they can change their lives for better in Armenia. This feeling of powerlessness, besides others, is a consequence of insufficient interaction with locals and a lack of self-identification with Armenian society. The lack of communication causes further social isolation. Social isolation means the absence of a social network which is important in the Armenian social setting in general. Moreover, if one wants to reach her/his goals and succeed in Armenia, she/he needs that social network. Aside from this, the low level of social capital corresponds with the low level of trust as well. Trust is connected to the past experiences of Syrian-Armenians in their environment. When the past experiences are negative, the level of trust is low.

When people feel isolated and powerless, nothing seems to make sense to them. These all evoke social pessimism, which is the "final stage" of social alienation.

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Circular Short-Term Labor Migration from Armenia to Russia: The Issue of Time and Socio-Economic Effects on Family Life in Armenia

Andreea Zelinka

Abstract

In many parts of Armenia, labor migration to Russia has become a "way of life" and evolves a transformative impact on the high-valued family life in Armenian society. This article addresses organizational aspects of circular short-term labor migration from Armenia to Russia in order to examine its impact on family life in a second step. It demonstrates that the majority of labor migrants are male and the heads of their families. The repeated absence and presence of the migrating family member has a crucial impact on the relations within the family and poses new challenges for the family. In order to maintain strong family relations, its members are forced to live a highly mobile lifestyle—thus family life experiences a certain degree of dynamization. Long-term negative effects as alienation are possible as well. An ethnographic example shows that labor migration presents an opportunity for migrants to leave their family responsibilities behind, while officially maintaining their role based on their financial support.

Zusammenfassung

In Armenien ist Arbeitsmigration nach Russland vielerorts eine den Alltag bestimmende Lebensweise geworden und bedeutet beobachtbare Auswirkungen auf das Familienleben, welches einen wichtigen Stellenwert in der armenischen Gesellschaft einnimmt. Dieser Artikel beschreibt die organisatorischen Hintergründe der zirkulären Kurzzeitmigration von Armenien nach Russland und zeigt deren Auswirkungen auf das Familienleben. Die Mehrheit der ArbeitsmigrantInnen sind männlich und Familienoberhäupter. Deren sich wiederholende Ab- und Anwesenheit wirkt sich langfristig auf Familienbeziehungen aus und stellt Familienmitglieder vor neue Herausforderungen. Diese haben häufig einen sehr mobilen Lebensstil, um nahe Beziehungen aufrechtzuerhalten. Das Familienleben erfährt eine Dynamisierung, um langfristig negativen Auswirkungen wie Entfremdung entgegenzuwirken. Ein ethnographisches Beispiel illustriert, wie Arbeitsmigranten alltägliche familiäre Verpflichtungen hinter sich lassen und gleichzeitig ihre offizielle Rolle als Familienoberhaupt durch finanzielle Unterstützung aufrechterhalten.

Introduction

In the last few decades, Armenia suffered from natural disasters, economic decline, and political difficulties (cf. Kharatyan 2007: 11f). Historically, the country has been an adversary of its surrounding states, such as Turkey and Azerbaijan (cf. ibid.). In consequence, a 2007 study asserted that the majority of the Armenian population lives under conditions of severe poverty (ibid.: 12). These natural, social, and political circumstances forced a lot of Armenian families throughout the country to search for other ways of ensuring their livelihood. Thus, families find themselves in the involuntary situation of having to separate temporarily, as at least one family member goes abroad for work. In most cases, the family members left at home are wives and kids, in extended families also brothers, uncles etc. The absence of the migrating family head has an impact on the role of the woman as a mother and wife within family relations.

In Armenia, migration is a defining factor in peoples' cultural and social understanding of themselves. From a historical perspective, there is an old Armenian diaspora (see Paredes in this volume) that experienced an impetus as well as various changes due to socio-economic transformations influenced by an earthquake in 1988, and increased by the collapse of the Soviet Union (see Jakoubek as well as Atoyan in this volume; Kharatyan 2007: 11). Today's diaspora is still growing due to economic and political circumstances, which are results of the "unbalanced policy of socio-economic changes following the independence process in Armenia" (Kharatyan 2007: 12). The social phenomenon of migration is a significant characteristic of Armenian society and was also practiced, when the country was still a part of the Soviet Union. As the importance of relations to Russia has not decreased since the USSR collapsed, most Armenians prefer to go to Russia with regard to short-term labor migration (cf. Bellak 2014: 350). Legal regulations make this exchange of work force additionally easy. Therefore, most of the remittances flowing back to Armenia come from Russia (approx. 77 percent; ibid.), which is further evidence to the significance of migration movements between precisely these two countries.

In this paper, I will concentrate on organizational aspects and how the factor of time, manifesting in the absence of the migrant from the family, has an impact on the relations between family members. When I talked to Armenian families, I was informed that most labor migrants going to Russia were male and the heads of their families. Therefore, I also adopted a gender perspective concerning the subject. I will provide information on organizational aspects of short-term labor migration and then turn to its economic and social impact on families in Armenia. Based on an ethnographic example, I will also offer a closer look on an individual case.

Concerning my access to the field and methodological approach, my research colleague²⁷ and I were lucky enough to benefit from an amazing organization and team spirit, which resulted in a snowball effect and enabled us to meet a lot of different people who were willing to share their experiences with us. Especially the lecturers and students of Yerevan State University were extremely helpful. On a trip to Gyumri, which was organized for us by fellow Armenian sociology students, we visited four families in the second largest city in northern Armenia. Spending time at their homes enabled us to carry out participant observations, which enlarged our methods applied in the field. A total of 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with an average time of 30 minutes were conducted throughout our two-week research in Armenia in June 2015. In this paper, I specifically draw on twelve of these interviews, in which we encountered eight women and two men who were between 23 and 53 years old. In addition, we engaged in expert interviews with sociologists and ethnographers, such as Dr. Hranush Kharatyan, Dr. Aghasi Tadevosyan, and Sinara Navoyan, a PhD student at the Center for Gender and Leadership Studies at Yerevan State University.

Organization of short-term migration

"Nothing was planned, I mean, they didn't plan, I am sure. Or maybe they didn't think about this very hard to understand what they are going to do". (Interview with L., 14:14)

Circular Short-Term Migration (STM)²⁸ to Russia is mostly characterized by a spontaneous decision, which I will describe in a first step. By reflecting on the organizational approaches, it demonstrates how important social networks are and what kind of risks migrants might have to take. Regarding the period of time and duration of stay, I will show that STM adopts different forms that significantly influence the impact of labor migration on Armenian families.

As there seems to be no alternative in some regions, STM is practiced every year and has already become a kind of lifestyle. As a migrant-to-be, there are various ways of approaching STM to Russia, but they all come down to one point: personal connections. The planning process depends on the opportunities—such as social capital—that an individual migrant has. Thus, there are different ways to organize migration to Russia. During a conversation with Hranush Kharatyan, she emphasized that Armenians join so-called brigades that are commuting to Russia as a closed group of up to 15 people. These groups always migrate to the same place in order to work—e.g., on construction sites.²⁹ Another strategy (in Yerevan) involves people

27 As the research took place within the framework of a university seminar, I teamed up with my colleague Bernhard Begemann who was interested in the same issues. We conducted most of our interviews together, of which one can be found in this volume. I would like to thank everyone who supported this research. Special thanks and appreciation go to Shushan Ghahriyan and Anna Atoyan for their motivated dedication and help in the field and beyond.

28 In the course of this article I will use the abbreviation STM to refer to circular short-term migration.

29 Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 12:49.

migrating to the first place of their stay abroad in individual and self-organized fashion.³⁰ In this regard, I was told by a woman in Gyumri that her son was "*going all alone*" and "*he just bought the ticket and organized it on his own.*"³¹ So when it comes to organizing STM, the migrating family members may choose between either joining already existing groups of people or going all by themselves.

Both ways depend on networks of friends and relatives and are, therefore, also dependent on social capital. According to Kharatyan, Armenians willing to join a group usually ask friends already working in a brigade for any vacancies. In some regions, it is also a custom for fathers to take their sons with them as soon as they are old enough.³² Nevertheless, almost all our interview partners told us that the migrating family member was primarily introduced to work in Russia by relatives and friends.³³ Sometimes migrants go to Russia without knowing what kind of work they are going to do, and their families help them to find a job once they have arrived.³⁴ Most of the time, however, the person is offered a specific job beforehand. L., for instance, told us that her uncle in Russia invited her father to come to work for his business.³⁵ The parents of J. and K. found work in the family business of her uncle, an Armenian restaurant³⁶, and a woman in Gyumri explained that her son had found work with the help of a friend who had already been employed as a seasonal bartender in Sochi.³⁷ Another example of strong transnational family ties is a family member of B. who "*[he] went to Moscow and became the owner of factories, businesses, managing this kind of stuff. And then he invited other relatives to come there, he arranged actually everything for him [her brother – AZ], so he went to earn money there.*"³⁸ Family ties and networks of relatives play a crucial role in the organization of STM. Relationships between employers and employees, who know each other before, are seen as more trustworthy and thus are diminishing the risks inherent in the migratory endeavor.³⁹

Generally speaking, no procurement fees are paid to third parties because STM is overall organized by the migrants themselves. In addition, Kharatyan mentioned that there are even bank loans for short-term migrants, so they can pay their travel expenses. Formally, banks support migrants for business projects, but in reality the loan is used to purchase the plane ticket.⁴⁰ As STM is a self-organized phenomenon and people are migrating voluntarily, it does not usually entail the risk of falling prey to human trafficking networks.⁴¹ Nevertheless, some experience

30 Interview with A., 04:50; Interview with C., 04:15 and 04:48.

31 Interview with C., 04:15 and 04:48.

32 Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 12:49.

33 Interview with L., 23:00; Interview with J. and K., 04:35; Interview with C., 03:23; Interview with B., 04:20, Interview with A., 04:15; Interview with F., 03:27; Interview with H., 01:45.

34 Interview with A., 04:15.

35 Interview with L., 23:35.

36 Interview with J. and K., 17:21.

37 Interview with C., 03:23 and 03:51.

38 Interview with B., 04:20.

39 Interview with Aghasi Tadevosyan, 15:00.

40 Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 16:30.

41 Interview with Aghasi Tadevosyan, 19:35.

the abuse of their trust—as they don't have strong workers' rights—and, for example, come back to Armenia without having received a salary. It also occurs that migrants are not able to return at all, as they are prevented from leaving by their employers in Russia, and wives have to pay a ransom for them.⁴² Overall, STM can be described as a business project for the people migrating as well as for the employers rather than for third parties.

STM is often a rather spontaneous reaction to the immediate existential and financial needs of the family. This spontaneous character is illustrated by the period of time migrants are staying and working in Russia. It is mostly unpredictable to say for how long s/he will be working abroad, as it also depends on external factors, such as how long additional financial support is necessary. What starts as STM at the beginning might transform into more permanent forms of migration or even full-scale emigration. In the following section, I will therefore render visible how personal, social, and economic contexts have an impact on migration organization. We will be able to see how long-lasting STM can develop both a distinct dynamic and pulling effects, which blur the boundaries between STM and other forms of migration. The duration of staying in Russia can also be related to, for example, the social situation within the respective family and home country. In consequence, it does not make sense to consider STM as an isolated form of migration, as it is rather embedded in a fluid field within which the diverse forms of migration are interwoven with each other. In this paper, I provide a rough classification of three different kinds of periods of labor migration, also taking personal relations into account: 1) seasonal short-term labor migrants who stay between three and six months in Russia, return to Armenia, but are sure to go back in the following year; 2) migrants who have mainly worked and lived in Russia for several years or over a decade, visiting Armenia regularly and maybe having the intention to return; 3) former migrants who have had their main residence in Russia for over two decades and return to Armenia only for visits, thus, do not plan to reunite with their family in Armenia.

The first group consists of migrants as seasonal workers, for instance, a young man working as a bartender in Sochi. Due to visa regulations, he stays there for three months and, as his mother told us, is sure to go there again for the next season.⁴³ Another example is the father of H., who works on a construction site in Russia. For four years, he has been leaving Armenia in May and returned in October.⁴⁴ This constitutes the classic form of circular migration, as it is mostly based on seasonal labor.

The second group of migrants are those who have already worked in Russia for several years, some of which have even established a place of residence there. L. told us, for example, that her father left for the first time 14 years ago. Moreover, it is legally possible to obtain Russian citizenship after living in Russia for over a decade. At first, he stayed for periods of about two

⁴² Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, starting 17:00, 30:21.

⁴³ Interview with C., 13:45.

⁴⁴ Interview with H., 02:00, 03:10.

years, interrupted only by a few months of vacation at home in Armenia. When he returned for the first time, it was already clear that he would not return to his family in Armenia for good. After a while, L.'s mother joined him in Russia. Still, both of L.'s parents are trying to find a solution for a successful return without damaging the financial situation of the family. Meanwhile, "*they are imagining themselves here*,"⁴⁵ as their wish to return home has not vanished yet. A further example of the second group of migrants is M.'s father, who founded an IT company in Armenia in the late 90s and went to Russia in order to expand his company. He has been in Russia for two or three years now and visits Armenia every two or three months. According to M., "*it's not far and the airlines are very cheap.*"⁴⁶ The latter case was an exception in the interviews conducted. His father migrates based on a business decision; as he is the owner of a company, he will probably return to Armenia after establishing it abroad, or they may join him in Russia.

The third group comprises, for example, the father of J. and K., who went to Russia in 2003. After about six years, their mother joined him and now they live and work there together. They only come back to Armenia for visits, sometimes for several weeks or months, but do not plan to return. Instead they would like their daughters to move to Russia, which they refuse to do, though.⁴⁷

The kind of STM that turns into long-term migration goes along with a growing separation between the migrants and their families. During fieldwork in Gyumri, a woman told us that her husband had been working in Russia for 20 years, was visiting the family for ten days per year, but was not going to return for good.⁴⁸ This example, which I will examine more closely in the next chapter, shows how personal factors influence the way STM is practiced.

The duration of stay is strongly intertwined with the personal relations that are maintained within the migrant's family. The length of the period abroad has a great influence on the creation of a sentiment of home among family members. In this context, I use the term 'sentiment of home' to refer to a sense of belonging and connection to a specific environment one wants to participate in actively. Therefore, time and personal engagement seem to be important factors, when it comes to migration. Thus, further questions that will be answered in the next chapter are: Which are the economic and social impact of STM on Armenian families? How is the money earned abroad transferred and what is it used for? How is the use of remittances decided upon? How is the communication between family members in Armenia and Russia maintained? Finally, which effects of the absence of the migrating family member on family relations can be distinguished?

45 Interview with L, 00:25, 02:46, 03:05, 20:40.

46 Interview with M, 03:15, 00:25.

47 Interview with J and K, 03:20, 12:58, 02:03.

48 Interview with F, 01:35.

The impact of short-term migration on families

STM has an impact on the economic as well as on the social situation of Armenian families. In the following, I discuss the economic repercussions that STM induces as well as the ways and forms of communication that influence the social lives of families. Finally, I provide further insights on how variations of time affect the family life and sentiments of home.

Economic effects

Money is the first and foremost reason for labor migration to take place. One of my research foci was on the ways families receive remittances, their use, and the underlying decision-making process. A common practice among the families is to send money via bank transfer.⁴⁹ Kharatyan also mentioned the possibility that the migrants bring money with them when they return home. Whether it is transferred regularly or not depends on the character of the migrant and custom of the respective family.⁵⁰ In the case of M., his father would send it with a colleague, relative or friend that could be trusted and was traveling to Armenia, for example, by car.⁵¹

The use of the money is strongly connected to the reasons deciding to work abroad. It is used to meet immediate everyday needs, such as buying food, clothes, and paying for heating in winter. Furthermore, the money is invested into the education of their children.⁵² The latter is an investment that, according to Aghasi Tadevosyan, transforms economic capital into the cultural and educational capital of children.⁵³ Living in Yerevan in order to provide a proper education also means higher living costs, as it is more expensive to live in the capital than in the countryside.⁵⁴

However, using money for existential needs is the foremost reason.⁵⁵ For some families, even the money earned by way of STM is not sufficient to cover the costs of living.⁵⁶ Supplying the family with food is an issue that is discussed every single day within certain families: "*They talk about buying food, because it's the main issue. They don't have enough time to think about other things, the only concern is to get food, to take care about their families and also there are no places to go to walk, to have fun, so...*".⁵⁷

Food supply is an existential concern and part of their everyday life. During the same interview, our interviewee was joking about it by saying: "*We are living like animals, we just think of our*

49 Interview with F., 11:57; G, 07:11; Interview with A., 20:15; Interview with B., 18:36.

50 Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 16:28.

51 Interview with M., 16:02.

52 Interview with Aghasi Tadevosyan, 30:37.

53 Interview with Aghasi Tadevosyan, 30:37.

54 Interview with L., 02:25; Interview with H., 00:49.

55 Interview with G., 07:36; Interview with A., 20:40; Interview with C., 08:11.

56 Interview with F., 15:47; Interview with G., 07:59.

57 Interview with G., 07:59.

*daily food,*⁵⁸ as the remittances do not provide for special needs or any luxury. If the family wants to buy something in addition, they are often forced to borrow money from relatives and friends. These debts will then be paid back as soon as money arrives from abroad.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, we could also make contrasting observations during our visits and interviews in the houses of families in Gyumri. Although we were told that the money was first and foremost used to pay for living expenses etc., we could see that every household owned a flat screen TV, notebooks and/or smartphones (iPhone™). In the course of the interviews, we did not ask how they were able to afford these technical devices, as we considered this question to be inappropriate. Still, informal conversations revealed that many families borrow money or take loans in order to acquire prestigious items, and to be able to show them in public. Moreover, some people would claim to have only little money, although their financial situation is quite secure. Finally, the money can be used for exceptional, unpredictable expenses, as medical costs due to the sudden illness of a family member.⁶⁰ Generally, all of the family members know what the money is required for, especially when it comes to big acquisitions, as a refrigerator or upcoming events, such as a wedding.⁶¹

As STM is a male-dominated social phenomenon, I also took a closer look at the decision-making processes around the spending of remittances. According to Sinara Navoyan, the woman in a nuclear family (resp. wife or mother) is in charge of receiving and spending the money. In extended families, the father or mother-in-law as well as other male family members, such as brothers, assume these responsibilities.⁶² Kharatyan explained that women usually decide on what the money is used for. However, this concerns especially petty expenses such as clothes etc. It was also stated by male family members that there was no reason to discuss small amounts, as women knew best what the money was needed for.⁶³ This means that the expenses concerned with the needs of everyday life are independently decided by women.

In general, Armenian families tend to have a common budget with family members deciding in the family circle on how the money is used for extraordinary expenses.⁶⁴ To what extent each family member is equally entitled to the decision-making process depends on the respective families. In an average Armenian family with a newly-married couple, it is unlikely that the newly-married wife will be able to autonomously decide on spending the money which her migrating husband is earning abroad.⁶⁵ Also worth mentioning is the case of the siblings J. and K., as they are living almost on their own in Yerevan, and can decide what they use the money for themselves. Still, they have to tell their parents roughly about their expenses.⁶⁶

58 Ibid., 08:29.

59 Interview with F., 12:54, 14:29.

60 Interview with B., 25:35.

61 Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 28:26.

62 Interview with Sinara Navoyan, 07:08.

63 Interview with A., 20:40.

64 Interview with M., 19:40.

65 Interview with B., 19:36.

66 Interview with J. and K., 12:07.

Social effects

In order to be able to discuss the use of the remittances and other family matters, regular communication has to be maintained between family members staying put and the migrants. This is mainly done by phone⁶⁷ as well as via Skype™.⁶⁸ How often family members communicate varies and also depends on the personal interests of the migrant. Some talk "several times a day," "every day," or "every five days."⁶⁹ The intervals of communication differ heavily amongst the various families, but it can generally be said that interaction is maintained in a regular manner. Among the family members, it occurs that there are preferences of who is talking to whom. Thus, there was one daughter in Armenia who talked to her father in Russia more often than her mother respectively his wife would do,⁷⁰ or the father may prefer to talk to the child among his children who seems more mature to him.⁷¹ But if the family relations are good, everybody will be talking to the migrating family member without restrictions.

The quality of the conversations is also highly dependent on the nature of the relationship. In some families, the members left at home know a lot of details about the working place and the life of the migrant in Russia.⁷² In other families, family members have only basic information because the migrant is not very talkative and only talks briefly about his day, work, and accommodation without showing real interest in sharing his experiences with his family in Armenia.⁷³

Family life with a member abroad seems to be rather dynamic. Looking at it more closely, it is not only the migrant who is travelling. If it is possible based on the financial and working situation, family members will travel and visit each other. This is the case in L.'s family, where father and mother are travelling back and forth between Moscow and Yerevan. She sees her parents often, which leads to a sentiment of closeness. Nevertheless, L. claims that there is a lack of intimacy. Although the communication between her and her father has become more mature and close, she experiences a loss of physical proximity. L.: "*It's like, you have a father and mother, but you don't actually, you don't feel them near you every time.*"⁷⁴ Accordingly, when family members live nearby, it constitutes a static way of life which often creates more intimate relationships through regular interaction. Families with migrating family members thus experience a dynamization of family life, because the family members are compelled to move

67 Interview with G., 01:52, F, 06:39, C., 12:25; Interview with A., 25:50; Interview with L., 05:35.

68 Interview with J. and K., 08:10, 08:33; Interview with C., 12:33; Interview with B., 11:25.

69 Interview with J. and K., 07:25; Interview with A., 25:50; Interview with F., 06:39.

70 Interview with F., 19:25.

71 Interview with J. and K., 07:50.

72 Interview with C., 11:43; Interview with J. and K., 17:21; Interview with L., 06:25; Interview with B., 11:30; Interview with H., 04:30.

73 Interview with F., 16:52, 02:37.

74 Interview with L., 00:42, 05:58, 05:07.

and travel a lot in order to maintain strong family relations and remain full members of the family.

This does not necessarily mean that the ones ‘left at home’ begin to consider the residence of the migrating family member in Russia also as their ‘home’. As L. explains, “*You know, it’s very strange for me to say, we have, because I always say, my parents have. And I don’t identify myself there, with that home. But I identify myself with the house we have in my village.*”⁷⁵

Within this framework, the absence of labor migrants in family life evokes the effect of alienation. This is especially true for young children in families, who are not able to grow up with their fathers and then feel estranged from them. As L. tells, “*It was awful. I remember the first time. I was really – we were children, me and my sister and my brother, and I remember when he came back for the first time, he was someone, I had a feeling as he is someone not from my family, he is a stranger.*”⁷⁶ H. shares this experience as well: “*It was difficult for us, and it got more difficult when my little brother was born. He grew up and he didn’t see my father. When he came back, my brother wouldn’t recognize my father, so we told him he shouldn’t go there anymore, because my brother needs him.*”⁷⁷ This aspect results in adversarial behavior as, for instance, H.’s little brother did not want to obey the rules of his father anymore, “*because he was here for so little time.*”⁷⁸ Slowly, the family left at home may evolve habits that are contrary to the views of the migrating head of family depending on the duration of migration, which then becomes a source of conflict.⁷⁹ At the very end of this alienation process, the migrant is perceived as solely a *guest*, although he is formally still the head of the family.⁸⁰ The impact STM has on family life may result in changed relationships between all family members and, furthermore, in the renegotiation of roles within a family.

When it comes to the social roles of female family members within the family—as the wife of the migrant or the sister—STM can either have no impact at all (as in extended families other male family members or the father or mother-in-law will be in charge of the decision making), or lead to major changes. These changes go hand in hand with a readjustment of responsibilities within the family. Thus, the younger sister can be seen as a “*second mother*” because she is more organized and knows how to cook, and how to handle money.⁸¹ Or the eldest daughter becomes confidant of her father, like in H.’s case.⁸² In nuclear families, where no male family member is present to replace the absence of the head of family, the role of the woman respectively wife and mother can substantially change. They will then take responsibilities in

⁷⁵ Ibid., 15:10.

⁷⁶ Interview with L., 04:25.

⁷⁷ Interview with H., 07:15.

⁷⁸ Interview with H., 42:15.

⁷⁹ Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 16:28.

⁸⁰ Interview with Sinara Navoyan, 04:40, 05:30.

⁸¹ Interview with J. and K., 15:28.

⁸² Interview with H., 27:05.

all areas concerning not only the raising of the children, but also the tasks of their husbands.⁸³ Still, they will not entirely adopt the status of the male head of family, but will instead experience restrictions as soon as there is, for example, another (elder) male family member present, or when the migrating family member returns.

After this overview of different areas of STM impact, I will examine a specific case more closely and take a look at STM with regard to its possibilities of transforming into long-term migration, particularly taking into account that circular labor migration can be a means for men to ‘flee from home’.

When short-term becomes long-term migration: an ethnographic example

During our fieldwork in Gyumri, we were invited into the house of an Armenian family in one of the poorer districts of the city. My three research colleagues and I are sitting in the living room of a rather small house which is a longish room that is divided into a living room area and a kitchen unit. The living room is comfortably furnished with carpets on the floor and walls, a big couch, and a few armchairs. There is also a flat screen TV with DVD player. From our perspective, the kitchen unit is located on the other side of the room. The furnishings do not look very special, but there is a very big and new looking refrigerator. So we are sitting on the couch and armchairs with our interviewee, a woman in her fifties. She serves Armenian coffee and seems to be a very positive person, as she is smiling and laughing a lot.

After a brief introduction about what we are doing and why we are there, she tells us more about her family. She has two unmarried children and lives together with her daughter and grandmother, while her son is currently serving in the army in Karabagh. The migrating family member is her husband who is 52 years old and has been working in Russia for 20 years. "*Every year he comes back for about 10 days and then he goes again,*" she tells us.⁸⁴ He returns to Armenia for vacation or to do some bureaucratic paperwork. Initially, he was invited to work in Russia by his brother who has an Armenian restaurant in Moscow. He left when they were married for three years and their daughter was three months old. After a while, he left his brother's restaurant and worked all over the country. Now he has returned to the restaurant of his brother.

We are struck by the time her husband has already been working abroad and the fact that he returns to his family only for several days a year. As she explains, "*the first time when he left, he was planning to work there for a year, so he can help his family. But when he came back, he came actually back and he found a job here, again in a restaurant and it was a pretty good job, but his lifestyle has been changed and he couldn't stay here. [...] there were some family issues, there were needs from the kids and costs that he had to deal with and discuss some issues,*

83 Interview with Sinara Navoyan, 04:18.

84 Interview with F., 01:35.

family issues, so he had a hard time, because he got used to just send the money and not know what's going on. So his life was quite easier in Russia, because his responsibilities were much more here".⁸⁵

In the beginning, she wanted to join him in Russia, but he always refused and claimed there was no space for them to live together. The first years were emotionally difficult—she was still looking forward to seeing him and the children were upset because they missed their father. After a while, however, a family reunion was no option anymore because she did not want to take the children out of school and their surroundings. As time passed, they got used to the situation and the fact that the father was not there. As she explains, the family members are still in contact. They talk on the phone about every five days, and mainly the daughter talks to him. But if it weren't for them to call, he would not even bother contacting them. Also, he is not very talkative, does not say a lot about his day, and only asks a few questions. When it comes to the monetary situation, she states, they got used to getting the money, even if it is not enough and sometimes they have to borrow money from relatives or friends. So, regarding his visits, now "*it's even better if he would stay and work extra money.*"⁸⁶

It was already discussed that STM can extend to long-term migration, if migrants can find suitable housing as well as regular work with a satisfying income in Russia. Under these conditions, they are likely to apply for Russian citizenship and try to stabilize their lives there. Then, the formerly dynamized family life becomes static again. This is due to the wish of family members to reunite.

Nevertheless, the selected ethnographic example presents quite a different case. As STM induced changes in lifestyle expectations, the father soon felt alienated from his family and his role of being a father. Although he had found a good job in Armenia that would have covered family expenses, he decided to return to Russia for personal reasons. He was not eager to arrange the conditions for his family to follow him. Furthermore, he did not try to visit them as often as possible in order to remain a full member of the family and maintain family relations. Therefore, family life did not experience any dynamization, but can be rather characterized by separation and distance. This results in alienation, disinterest, and a mere formal relation between wife and husband. The husband is ultimately turning into a 'guest', and often an unwellcome guest, too, as his stay at 'home' means less remittances. In this regard, the importance of his participation in family matters decreased significantly and he is accepted solely in his role to send money.

Regarding the situation of women being raised in rural Armenia, they are traditionally taught to be obedient towards male family members (cf. CGLS 2015: 18; see Atoyan in this volume). The female role is strongly defined by the upbringing of the children.⁸⁷ Moreover, the wives in

85 Interview with F., 05:16.

86 Ibid., 17:53.

87 Interview with Sinara Navoyan, 14:42.

families with a migrating family member, who become the intermediary head of family during his absence, are even financially more dependent on their husbands than wives in families without a migrant (cf. Navoyan 2015: 26). These are reasons why many women do not have as much autonomy as their husbands in terms of making decisions. This is also why a gender perspective needs to be applied, as the rendering of STM and its implications on family life in Armenia shows that this kind of migration does not enhance the situation of women in general. On the contrary, the empowerment of women is a rare consequence of STM and sure enough connected to certain limitations. Instead, what is rendered visible is the social and economic network of dependencies Armenian women are embedded in. Left at home, they often spend their time as housewives with their children and neighbors.⁸⁸ Even though a woman is informally separated from her spouse, she will still be formally married to him. As she is surrounded by relatives and friends, and due to social control, she will be not able to (officially) look for a new partner (see also Atoyan in this volume).

Concerning these aspects, I argue that STM is not only regarded as a necessity to support one's family, but can also constitute a possibility for men to leave their families and their home country without losing face in front of their families or social networks. STM gives especially men the opportunity to 'flee from home'. In this manner, they can live on their own terms and lead a different life and lifestyle in Russia. Formally, they are still married and support their family financially, but they are not likely to return to Armenia and their domestic responsibilities. In many cases, migrants who stay in Russia for a very long time even start another family there.⁸⁹

Conclusion

Short-term labor migration is a social phenomenon which is not new in Armenia, but practiced since Soviet times. Today's migration has become a way of life or even a tradition to many of the, first and foremost, male Armenian migrants to Russia as well as their families left at home. From an organizational perspective, migrants form groups (brigades) or leave individually and self-organized. Both ways—family ties and networks—are crucial starting points of migration that make STM possible and facilitate a rather spontaneous manner of migration. Furthermore, the migration period is determined by the social situation or further needs of the family. Thus, circular short-term migration primarily has economic and social effects, which are significantly dependent on the length of the migrant's absence. Economically, the money provides for the livelihood of the family, the education of the children, or any special acquisitions. Socially, circular short-term migration over a foreseeable time frame has manageable effects, whereas a prolongation of the absence of the migrating family member can lead to negative outcomes, such as alienation within the family, and intergenerational conflicts between the parental

⁸⁸ Interview with Sinara Navoyan, 14:59.

⁸⁹ Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, 00:31.

generation and their children. Thus, economic and social effects—namely the prospect of permanent remittances for their livelihood as well as the possible outcome of alienation and estrangement within the migrant's family and social nexus—initiate the creation of a certain kind of dynamic which accelerates the development of societal transformations. Even though circular short-term labor migration is expected to be practiced for a foreseeable amount of time, this is not the case more often than not. With every year passing by, it becomes increasingly uncertain if, and when there is going to be an end of the family's ordeal. This is due to the fact that families become more and more dependent on the financial outcome of STM, and it is rather easy to organize the working stay abroad.

Overall, STM has a huge impact on Armenian lifestyle. Due to the continuous absence and presence of the person—the circular character of labor migration—the family life experiences a certain dynamization. Instead of a steady everyday life, the migrant and family members are either forced to live a highly mobile life, or their family life is continuously torn apart. The period abroad evokes questions of belonging as well as a re-positioning of family members within the family setting. Family members may find themselves confronted with the question of where they would rather like to live—in Armenia, their home country, or in Russia, where better social and economic prospects await. This is when different understandings of home emerge, such as the home connected to the locality of the family members or the home bound to territorial and linguistic factors. However, it is possible that the migrant does not want his family to join him abroad. As shown in the ethnographic example, staying in Russia and providing for their family in Armenia enables male migrants to depart from their social responsibilities as the head of the family. Thereby, their wives are often put into a structurally disadvantaged position. As family and marriage represent important values in everyday social life in Armenia, labor migration to Russia has a transformative impact on Armenian society. In line with the growing concern for what these transformations may mean for Armenian society in general, anthropological research is able to offer crucial insights into its cultural and social implications. Nevertheless, the country needs substantial structural changes and new, powerful government policies to adequately tackle these transformations.

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Interviews

Interviewee	Place & date	Duration	Household member left behind	Relation and age of migrant	Duration of migration	Evidence of socio-economic effects
A	Yerevan, May 29, 2015	41 min. 15 sec.	Son of short-term labor migrant and short-term labor migrant himself, 32 years	Father, 64 years	5 months, return because of the sickness of his daughter	Cover of existential needs
B	Yerevan, June 3, 2015	45 min. 23 sec.	Student of ethnography, sister of short-term migrant, 27 years	Brother, 25 years	seasonal, from end of April to early December for the third time	Cover of medical expenses
C	Gyumri, June 4, 2017	19 min. 44 sec.	Mother of short-term migrant, 50 years	Son, 24 years	3 months, seasonal, first time, wants to go again	Cover of existential needs, buy prestigious items
F	Gyumri, June 4, 2017	23 min. 24 sec.	Wife of labor migrant, 53 years	Husband/ Head of family, 52 years	20 years, no return/ no joining, visits 10 days/year	Cover of existential needs, buy prestigious items, alienation
G	Gyumri, June 4, 2017	18 min. 27 sec.	Wife of a migrant, 47 years	Husband, 48 years	Three years, hasn't returned yet	Cover of existential needs, buy prestigious items, little info about working/ life of migrant, intergenerational conflict

Interviewee	Place & date	Duration	Household member left behind	Relation and age of migrant	Duration of migration	Evidence of socio-economic effects
H	Yerevan, June 9, 2015	45 min. 25 sec.	Daughter of short-term migrant	Father, 55 years	6 months, seasonal, for 4 years	Alienation, inter-generational conflict, since she is older, she became confidant of father
J+K	Yerevan, June 10, 2015	21 min. 29 sec.	Daughters of short-term migrant, 23 and 26 years	Father first, then also mother	Father went to Russia in 2003, after 6 months mother joins; they visit regularly for weeks and months, do not have return plans	Dynamic family life, parents travel back and forth, reversed roles among sisters, younger sister like mother for bigger sister
L	Yerevan, June 10, 2015	24 min. 29 sec.	Daughter of a short-term migrant, 26 years	Father, 60 years	Went for the first time 14 years ago, vacation in Armenia in the first two years, then mother joined, wish to return	Dynamic family life, alienation as a child, intergenerational conflict, as adult now very close with parents
M	Yerevan, June 10, 2015	64 min. 14 sec.	Son of short-term migrant, 28 years	Father, 57 years	3 years, founded IT business in Russia, visits Armenia every 2-3 months	Dynamic family life, financial stabilization, career decision

Expert Interviews

Interview with Aghasi Tadevosyan, Armenian ethnographer, recorded on June 2 in Yerevan; duration: 55 min. 43 sec.

Interview with Hranush Kharatyan, Armenian ethnographer, recorded on June 2 in Yerevan; duration: 57 min. 1 sec.

Interview with Sinara Navoyan, Center for Gender and Leadership Studies, recorded on June 5 in Yerevan; duration: 20 min. 38 sec.

Perceived Effects of Men's and Women's Migration on Values, Attitudes and Roles

Sinara Navoyan

Abstract

A lot of Armenian men, especially from rural areas, migrate abroad seasonally, in search of better living conditions for themselves and their families. This article focuses on gendered attitudes toward migration and its consequences. Data for this article comes from a quantitative sociological survey (the Gender Barometer Survey or GBS) on 'The attitudes of Armenian society toward men's and women's rights and gender equality'. One of the topics of the survey was to study gendered attitudes toward migration and its consequences – I am the author of that part of the survey. The survey was implemented from September to December 2014 by the Yerevan State University Center for Gender and Leadership Studies (CGLS).

Zusammenfassung

Saisonale Migration wird von vielen armenischen Männern aus ländlichen Gebieten praktiziert, um für sich und ihre Familien bessere Lebensbedingungen zu schaffen. Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit den geschlechtsspezifisch unterschiedlichen Einstellungen zu Migration und ihren Konsequenzen. Der Artikel basiert auf dem Datenmaterial einer quantitativen soziologischen Studie (Gender Barometer Survey GBS) über die Einstellung der armenischen Gesellschaft zu Männer- und Frauenrechten und Geschlechtergleichstellung. Den Themenbereich über geschlechtsspezifische Einstellungen zu Migration und deren Folgen habe ich als Mitautorin bearbeitet. Die Studie wurde von September bis Dezember 2014 von der Yerevan State University, Center for Gender and Leadership Studies (CGLS) durchgeführt.

Background and context

Migration trends in Armenia

Armenia has a population of 3,018,854 residents⁹⁰, of which over 95 per cent are ethnic Armenians, the majority of whom belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenia gained independence after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The change in the dimensions and patterns of migration in Armenia has over time been determined by various socio-political and economic processes in the country. Armenians have traditionally migrated to other countries in search of economic opportunities. Like in several other former Soviet Republics, men's

⁹⁰ Results of 2011 population census of the Republic of Armenia. Accessed: 20th of May 2017

seasonal labor migration, primarily to Russia, popularly known in Armenia as *khopan*⁹¹, had been an important part of Armenian rural life under Soviet rule for decades (Agadjanian and Sevoyan 2014: 32). The seasonal labor for Armenian men during this period mostly involved work on the "virgin lands" in the southeastern region of the former Soviet Region. Armenians were among the ethnic groups in the USSR who had the highest mobility rates (Mitchneck and Plane 1995). However, the earthquake of 1988, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the war with neighboring Azerbaijan have significantly changed the migration trends in this country.

The first wave of mass emigration started as a result of the earthquake of 1988. In its aftermath, a total of about 200,000 people were evacuated to other republics of the former USSR. The vast majority of this group—about 160,000 people—were evacuated through a state-organized process, while the rest left on their initiative, normally at the invitation of relatives and friends (UNDP 2009:36). The collapse of the Soviet Union which was followed by the war with Azerbaijan caused severe socio-economic depression in the country, resulting in the second large wave of migration (Yeganyan and Shahnazaryan, 2004). It is estimated that since the breakdown of the USSR 15 percent of the Armenian population have left the country permanently (Heleniak 2008: 34).

In the late 1990s Armenia's political situation stabilized and economic growth started to perk up. Permanent emigration subsided and seasonal labor migration began to regain its predominance in the migration flow (Agadjanian and Sevoyan 2014: 32). National statistics on the scope of seasonal migration in Armenia are rare. A few studies (Gender Barometer Survey 2014; ILO 2009; Minasyan et al. 2007; Minasyan et al. 2005) based on nationally representative data provide estimations of seasonal migration rates. Between 2005 and 2006, approximately 14.5 percent of Armenian households were involved in labor migration. In the overwhelming majority of cases (four out of five), one member of the family left to work abroad; the rest of the families mainly had two labor migrants while the number of families with three migrants is statistically insignificant. The actual labor migration rate, i.e. percentage of population involved in labor migration, was 3.4 percent and the absolute number of labor migrants was between 96,000 and 122,000 (ILO 2009). According to the Gender Barometer Survey (2014) there is at least one migrant in 567 (26.7 percent) out of 2,131 households. This survey shows that in the Armenian society it is mostly men who migrate. The number of women migrants is 60 (9 percent) out of 679 migrants.

The Russian Federation is by far the most popular country of destination for Armenian labor migrants. The percentage of migrants working in Russia has increased from 88 percent between 2002 and 2004 to 93 percent in the years 2005 and 2006 (Minasyan et al. 2007: 25). There is a

⁹¹ The Armenian word *khopan* literally means "virgin land," an allusion to the Khrushchev-era state-sponsored migration mainly to the Kazakh Steppe to promote agricultural and industrial development of that vast and sparsely inhabited area (Agadjanian and Sevoyan, 2014:43).

well-developed seasonal pattern of migration, mostly to Russia, because people leave from January to August for seasonal work in construction and agriculture and return between the months of September and December (Heleniak 2008). The main reasons why the overwhelming majority of the migrants choose to go to Russia, is the presence of friends and relatives, and the fact that the job search there seems easier than in other countries. Other reasons include knowledge of the language spoken in the country of their destination⁹², low barriers for entering the country, absence of visa requirements and a large Armenian Diaspora. With the overwhelming majority of Armenian labor migrants looking for jobs in Russia, mapping the labor migration flow meant reformulating the key question of "to which country" to "where in Russia" (Minasyan et al. 2007).

Contextualizing power and social relations within households in Armenian history

The following is a description of the principle characteristics of Armenia and its culture in the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the characteristics of the Armenian culture at this time survived up to the time of Sovietization and even during the period of Soviet rule. The analysis of Armenian culture given here is the point of reference for the discussion of changes that followed.

In rural Armenia, the family was a monogamous kin group, issuing from one father by the descending line and its branches, and living together under one roof or in neighboring houses. In the nineteenth century, a rural family might have been made up of twenty to fifty members. The head, or patriarch, of the Armenian family was usually its eldest male member. The members of the family included the patriarch, his wife, their sons, the wives of married sons, and all unmarried daughters (Matossian 1962: 3). All family income was at the disposal of the patriarch. He supervised the work of the family and handled its economic transactions.

The wife of the patriarch was in charge of all work within the house and administered the activities of all its female members. The patriarch could give orders to the women only through his wife. Although she was subordinate to her husband, the wife of the patriarch in her own way could exert influence in settling conflicts within the family, arranging marriages for the children, and other matters (Matossian 1962).

Marriages were usually arranged by the adults of the families concerned, and romantic attraction, if any, was a secondary consideration. Once a girl married she was considered a member of her husband's family. For some time, she could not speak to the men or older women of the house, and not even to her husband when in public. Her status was raised when she grew older, when she gave birth to a son, and when a bride newer than herself entered the household. Divorces were rare among rural Armenians (Matossian 1962). Within the family there was a

⁹² Russian as a foreign language is compulsory at schools in Armenia

hierarchy of status based on the principle of the superiority of age and gender. Sons were allowed greater freedom, given more care, and their wishes were more often heeded than those of daughters (Raffi 1980: 11).

The productive activity of the family was divided into two spheres: that of the men, and that of the women. The women prepared meals, made the clothing for the family, attended to dairy animals and poultry, and made rugs, mats, bedding, soap, candles, and pottery for the household. Men were in charge of all the field work, the milling of grain, the construction of houses and furniture, and the treatment of leather (Matossian 1962).

The leaders of the new Soviet state who came to power in 1917 promised a radical reconstitution of society, which would fundamentally transform economic, social, and political institutions and relations. The few Communist Party leaders who had given some consideration to the role of women under socialism believed that the alteration of women's roles in society was a function of the economic and political reconstitution of the larger society (Lapidus 1978: 55).

In Armenia, these efforts at transforming the family began in the early 1920s as the Communist Party identified the traditional rural Armenian family as a 'backward' institution and sought to transform it by dismantling family loyalties. In order to stimulate this transformation, the Soviet government adopted a new legislation during the early 1920s, establishing civil marriage and enabling easy divorce, abortion services, maternity allowance, and providing childcare facilities. Laws were adopted that gave women equal rights to hold land, to act as heads of households, to participate as full members in rural communes, and finally women were paid for collective farm labor individually rather than as a part of a household (Ishkanian 2003: 479).

The Communists sponsored a number of secondary institutions (Women's Division of the Communist Party; The Commission for the Improvement of the Way of Life of Women) which helped to popularize and to put into effect the new social legislation with the aim of emancipating Armenian women by educating them, by encouraging them to take jobs outside the home and by drawing them into the arena of public life (Matossian 1962: 65-67).

In 1930, with Stalin's consolidation of power within the Party nearly complete, he ordered a general reorganization of the Central Committee. This led to the declaration that the "woman question" had been solved. Over the next twenty years serious discussion about women's issues was largely silenced, and discourse about production and output displaced the earlier topics of liberation, equality, and domestic labor. As a result of this shift in state ideology, women were portrayed as virtuous, self-sacrificing, "shock workers"⁹³, who overfulfilled production quotas as part of the Soviet project of constructing socialism in the 1930s and 1940s (Ishkanian 2003: 480-481). Until 1932 women took little part in the productive work of the kolkhozes: they were

⁹³ Soviet workers who exceeded their production quotas were designated as 'shock workers'[udarniki] and given special incentives and awards.

credited, on the average, with only fifty work days a year.⁹⁴ But by 1934 the work days credited to women began to increase. Women began to perform some of the most complicated agricultural tasks, such as pruning, planting grapevines, and running tractors (Matossian 1962: 134).

This absence of a debate about women's roles in society lasted until the mid-1950s, when, during the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev expressed regret for the relative absence of women from prominent positions in the state and the Communist party. He supported the creation of women's organizations to cater to the needs and interests of women. In general, these organizations failed to produce female leaders in the Communist party, even though they acted as autonomous consciousness raising groups among women (Ishkanian 2003: 480-481).

In general, the Soviet period had had a considerable effect upon life within the peasant family. Collectivization had destroyed the larger landholdings necessary to maintain the traditional extended peasant family⁹⁵. Older people had lost a great deal of their former authority. It was no longer customary for parents to arrange the marriage of a child. In most cases young brides no longer maintained silence in the presence of elders. On the other hand, it was still customary for peasant girls to be quiet and restrained at home in the presence of older men, and especially guests. But the great majority of Armenian women worked in the kolkhozes, where they were remunerated for agricultural labor separately from their husbands.⁹⁶

However, while the Soviet regime modernized the Armenian family at the micro level it did not alter some of its basic dynamics: patriarchal relations, the primary role of women as homemakers and its 'national character' (Panossian 2006: 272). Throughout the Soviet period, the family continued to be the site for cultural and national reproduction (Ishkanian 2008: 92).

Women in the former Soviet Union had entered the working world in vast numbers after Sovietization and enjoyed the benefits of a socioeconomic safety net. In the post-Soviet period, they suffered most from the difficult economic transition. The transition to a market economy has been costly in terms of real income and output decline, disproportional unemployment and

⁹⁴ The labor day is the unit used for measuring the amount of work and skill required to complete a specific job. Thus, a day's work on one job may be rated at less than a labor day, while a day's work on another job may be rated at more than a labor day. On February 28, 1933, the Commissariat of Agriculture issued a model scale of payments, which rated different types of farming tasks into seven grades, with different payments for each. According to this scale, the person who completed the daily norm of accomplishment for a task in grade seven received a credit of two labor days. The person who completed the daily norm of accomplishment for a task in grade one received only a half day's credit (Moore 1951: 338-340).

⁹⁵ The Communists also facilitated the fragmentation of such families by their methods of distributing household plots among the collective farmers. Since these plots were evidently distributed according to family units, without regard to the number of members in a unit, the more ambitious collective farmer had an added incentive to "go off on his own" (Matossian 1962:183)

⁹⁶ Soviet policies encouraged individual competition between family members. Since the early 1940ies there had been a strong tendency to organize collective farm labor in such a way that the members of a given family scattered among various brigades. Men, women, and children were separately remunerated for kolkhoz work; this gave peasant wives and children an unprecedented economic independence (Matossian 1962: 184-185).

underemployment among women, widespread impoverishment, a rapid deterioration of living standards and social safety nets and the loss of maternal and childcare benefits and has deepened gender inequalities (Ishkanian 2003:482-483). In terms of gender inequality, while men are expected to be leaders and decision makers in the political and economic realms, women are expected to be the self-sacrificing nurturers and supporters of their families as well as the nation (Ishkanian 2008:91). Currently, women in Armenia are the majority of the unemployed and the poor (Shahnazaryan, Navoyan and Hovhannisyan 2016).

Gender Barometer Survey

Research methodology

From September to December 2014, the Yerevan State University Center for Gender and Leadership Studies (CGLS) implemented a sociological survey (the so-called Gender Barometer Survey or GBS) aimed at studying gender attitudes in Armenian society. The Gender Barometer Survey (GBS) is the first nationwide survey. Data from the Gender Barometer Survey is used to analyze the perception of the roles of men and women in Armenian families, in the labor market and workplace as well as in political and civic life in Armenian society. In the framework of this research Armenians attitudes toward labor migration and its consequences have been studied. The results have significant implications for politics and will give CGLS an opportunity to develop realistic recommendations in protecting women's rights and gender equality. Additionally, CGLS is planning to use the methodology and results of this survey to develop a comprehensive research tool in order to monitor the changing attitudes of the Armenian population to gender issues.

The sampling size is calculated as 2,134 units, taking into account the limiting sampling error of no more than three percent for a confidence probability of 0.95 and the design effect equal to two. The study has been implemented in all ten regions of Armenia and in Yerevan.

Survey results

As mentioned above the percentage of women labor migrants is very low in Armenia but in the framework of this research the attitudes toward both male and female labor migration have been studied.

A high percentage of both men and women (83.4 percent of men and 82.9 percent of women) agree that women labor migration promotes the increase of divorce rates in Armenia. 69 percent of male and 78.1 percent of female respondents think that men labor migration promotes the increase of divorce rates in Armenian society. It is interesting that 11.5 percent of men versus 6.8 percent of women fully disagree with the notion that men labor migration promotes the increase of divorce rates.

42.7 percent of men and 56.1 percent of women think that women labor migration has a positive effect on family wealth. 20.4 percent of men versus 12.4 percent of women completely disagree with the notion that women labor migration has a positive effect on family wealth. 87.5 percent men and 82.5 percent of women think that men labor migration has a positive effect on family wealth. 3.5 percent of men and 2.2 percent of women entirely disagree that male labor migration has a positive effect on family wealth. It is striking that in the Armenian patriarchal society 42.7 percent of men agree with the notion that women labor migration has a positive effect on family wealth.

According to the perception of the respondents, women migrants have more difficulties in adapting upon returning. 54.2 percent of men totally agree that women labor migrants have an adaption problem within the family when coming back while 31.1 percent of men totally agree with the notion that men labor migrants have adaption problems. Interestingly, the same tendency is noticed when analyzing women's opinions concerning these statements: 49.8 percent of women totally agree with the notion that women labor migrants have an adaption problem within the family while 38.6 percent of them fully agree to the notion that male labor migrants have adaption problems with their family members.

67.1 percent of men completely agree with the conception that the absence of wives creates psychological tension and anxiety for husbands and 53.6 percent of them agree that the absence of husbands creates psychological tension and anxiety for wives. 56.8 percent of women respondents claim that the absence of wives creates psychological tension and anxiety for husbands and 64.1 percent of them claim that the absence of husbands creates psychological tension and anxiety for wives.

The majority of male respondents (79.3 percent) state that women left behind assume greater responsibilities for household tasks, and 69.9 percent of them state that men left behind assume greater responsibilities for household tasks. 82.3 percent of women said that women left behind assume greater responsibilities but 63.9 percent of them said that men left behind assume greater responsibilities for household tasks.

66.8 percent of the interviewed men are of the opinion that there is a negative impact on the upbringing of children caused by the absence of migrant men and 76.9 percent believe the same is true for the absence of women. 72.2 percent of women fully agree with the negative impact of the absence of migrant men on the upbringing of children, and 74.5 percent of them agree with the negative impact of migrant women on the upbringing of children.

56.7 percent of men respondents claimed that the labor migration of men promotes the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and 52 percent of them stated that labor migration of women promotes the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. 68.7 percent of women believe that labor migration of men promotes the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and 45.4 percent of them agree with the notion that labor migration of women promotes the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

84.4 percent of men think that women are deprived of their sexual life in case their husbands migrate and 55.5 percent of them think that men are deprived of their sexual life when their wives migrate. 88.5 percent of women agree that women are deprived of their sexual life as long as their husbands are abroad whereas 47 percent of them agree that men are deprived of their sexual life while their wives are working abroad.

Conclusion

The research results show that the respondents' gendered attitudes toward migration and its consequences are very stereotypical and conservative. The above discussed patriarchal characteristics of social and power relations within Armenian households are reflected in the attitudes of respondents toward migration and its consequences.

Labor migration of women is perceived as more threatening than that of men in terms of promoting the increase of divorce rates.

The respondents shared the opinion that men are the main breadwinners in the Armenian society. Therefore, it is interesting that in the Armenian patriarchal society 42.7 percent of men agree with the notion that labor migration of women has a positive effect on family wealth.

According to the perception of the respondents, women migrants have more difficulties in adapting upon returning than men migrants.

There is no big gender gap about the notion that the absence of a labor migrant, regardless of gender, creates psychological tension and anxiety for a left behind spouse. More than half of the respondents thought that the absence of one of the spouses creates psychological tension and anxiety for a left behind spouse and has a negative impact on the upbringing of children.

The majority of male respondents thought that women left behind assume greater responsibilities for household tasks than men left behind.

Women's migration is perceived as less threatening than men's migration when it comes to sexually transmitted diseases.

Men are also less likely than women to be deprived of their sexual life in case their wives migrate.

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Remittances for the Ancestors – Influence of Migration on the Yezidi Ethno-Religious Community

Maria Six-Hohenbalken

Abstract

As their Armenian neighbors, the Yezidis were also victims of the genocidal policy in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. They sought refuge in Western Armenia and established one of the oldest Yezidi diasporas. Due to the socio-economic transformations after the fall of the Soviet Union, the minorities in Armenia have been just as affected as the majority population. Thus, various forms and patterns of migration can be noticed. This article documents the funeral practices of the demographically largest ethnic minority in Armenia: the Yezidis. Aside from the general impact of emigration and transnational groups on the community, this contribution shows how the highly dynamic forms of migration influence the ethno-religious community in its orientation, ritual practices, and socio-religious obligations. Of specific concerns are burials, funeral rites, and obligations of commemoration within today's Armenian Yezidi community today. In a final step, this Armenian example is compared to funeral rites within traditional Yezidi communities in the Middle East as well as the new transnational communities in Europe.

Zusammenfassung

Wie ihre armenischen Nachbarn waren auch die YezidInnen von den genozidalen Verfolgungen im Osmanischen Reich während des Ersten Weltkrieges betroffen. Sie flüchteten nach Westarmenien und etablierten dort eine der ältesten yezidischen Ausprägungen der Diaspora. Aufgrund der sozioökonomischen Transformationsprozesse nach dem Fall der Sowjetunion waren die ethnischen Minderheiten ebenso betroffen wie die Mehrheitsbevölkerung. Es können unterschiedliche Formen und Muster von Migrationsbewegungen festgestellt werden. In diesem Artikel werden die Begräbnispraktiken der demographisch größten ethnischen Minderheit Armeniens dokumentiert. Neben den allgemeinen Einflüssen der Emigration und der transnationalen Gemeinden auf die Kommunität wird gezeigt, wie die äußerst dynamischen Migrationsformen die ethnoreligiöse Gemeinschaft in ihrer Orientierung, in rituellen Praktiken und sozioreligiösen Verpflichtungen beeinflussen. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird den Begräbnissen, den Riten und Verpflichtungen zur Erinnerung heute geschenkt. In vergleichender Perspektive werden die Begräbnisrituale in den traditionellen yezidischen Gemeinschaften des Nahen Ostens und in den transnationalen Gemeinschaften in Europa dargestellt.

Introduction

Driving across the country of Armenia, one is amazed by the very diverse and fertile regions. Within a comparatively small space, one can observe various methods of cultivation—e.g., horticulture and grain farming close to the capital of Yerevan and in the fertile Ararat plains, or animal husbandry in the regions farther north to the second-largest city of Gyumri with its high plateaus and pastures. Approaching villages from afar, the impacts of emigration are visible almost everywhere. Farming households, shut down in some remote areas, and virtually abandoned villages are the silent remnants of an economic crisis. The economic transformation Armenia experienced after the fall of the Soviet Union is also visible in the country's urban centers. Industrial enterprises were closed down, infrastructural changes delayed, and a variety of international non-governmental organizations, specialized on the effects of migration, established their headquarters in Yerevan or Gyumri. The rebuilding of entire streets with exclusive offices, apartments, and shops with expensive brands reflects a new wealth, deriving from migration movements and remittances as well as influential diasporic organizations and their economic interest in the homeland. These superficial observations are no obstacle to remaining attentive to the deep impacts of the socio-economic transformations in the last two decades as well as the repercussions of migration on all levels of society, especially on ethnic and religious minorities in Armenia.

In the course of co-organizing the field trip to Armenia, and through the support of the Migration Competence Center, Yerevan State University, and the Institute for Archeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, I was also able to establish first contacts for my later field research in the Yezidi community in Armenia.⁹⁷ Roman Hovsepyan, project director, Hamlet Melkumyan and Lili Harutyunyan, researchers at that Institute for Archeology and Ethnography invited me to accompany them on a few days of field research in Yezidi villages close to the Turkish border.⁹⁸ The following outlines are based on my succeeding fieldwork in autumn 2015 and spring 2016, where I examined aspects of my research questions⁹⁹ in several villages with the support of my co-researcher, Dr. Tereza Amryan of the Department of Iranian Studies, Yerevan State University.

Armenia is one of the world's countries with high emigration rates, characterized by various forms of short-term and long-term migration. Not only national agencies but also the International Organization of Migration tries to elaborate on statistical data and demographic trends

⁹⁷ I am very grateful to the colleagues at the Institute for Archeology and Ethnography, to the Institute for Migration Studies, and above all to the staff of the Institute for Iranian Studies at Yerevan State University (especially to the head of the institute, Prof. Vartan Voskanian, and Assistant Professor Dr. Tereza Amryan), who offered incredible support and showed a lot of interest during the course of my fieldwork. The follow up research was funded by the FWF, Elise Richter Programm project 'Memoryscapes in Multiple Modernities'.

⁹⁸ Ethnobotanical research project on the knowledge and usage of wild plants in Yezidi and Kurdish communities (see Hovsepyan and Stepanyan 2016).

⁹⁹ Research project: Memoryscapes in Multiple Modernities, funded by the Austrian Science Funds (FWF).

(cf. IOM 2010, 2012) to grasp these highly dynamic migration movements. In 2005 the number of emigrants was indicated at 26.9 percent of the population. In an *ad hoc* migration survey of 2007, almost 25 percent of all households had at least one member living abroad, with a strong tendency of men emigrating. About 40 percent of the migrants were oriented towards a short-term migration (less than 12 months), while 60 percent left for long-term migration. More than 60 percent had sent remittances to their relatives at home (IOM 2007: 27). In 2006 the World Bank calculated that the share of remittances within the GDP was 18.3 percent (IOM 2008: 19). Although the statistics are diverging, a rough estimation of people having left the country since 1991, when Armenia gained its independence, amounts to about one million (cf. Barsoumian 2013).

In the today's Republic of Armenia, more than 95 percent of the population has Armenian roots. There are several acknowledged ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Yezidi, the Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, Ukrainians, or Russians (Asatryan and Arakelova 2002). Emigration affects almost all social levels and ethnic groups, thus also the largest ethno-religious minority, the Yezidi.¹⁰⁰

Today's Yezidi villagers and city dwellers in Armenia are members of the so-called "old diaspora", a community which has been influenced by the Soviet system and shaped in Armenia within the last one hundred years. Even in the 19th century—e.g., in the course of the Russian-Turkish War (1828-29)—a small number of Kurds and Yezidi from the Ottoman Empire emigrated to today's Armenia. The second large wave of immigration resulted from genocidal persecutions in the Ottoman Empire (1915-1916), when the Yezidi together with Armenians sought refuge in eastern Armenia (today the Republic of Armenia).¹⁰¹

Today it is estimated that more than 30 percent of the Yezidi worldwide live in exile or diasporic communities (see Tagay and Ortac 2016: 31). As for the "new diasporas" in Europe, there are some studies dealing with the fateful past of Yezidi refugees from Turkey in Germany and their coping strategies (Kizilhan 1997) as well as the challenges of adaptation in France (Guenet 2013) and in Germany (Ackermann 2003). Philipp Kreyenbroek (2009) has convincingly shown how different generations in these diasporic communities experience and practice their religion in Europe. One of their main challenges is the orality of the religion and religious provisions, such as the marriage rules, which are difficult to realize.

In this paper, I will give an insight to how the highly dynamic forms of migration influence the ethno-religious community of the Yezidi in its orientation and ritual practices. Against this backdrop, I focus on the impact of emigration and transnational communities on the community of origin in general, and on the socio-religious obligations of the households in particular. My

¹⁰⁰ According to the 2001 Armenian National Census, 40,620 Yezidi lived in Armenia. In contrast to the Russians, of whom a large part left after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Yezidi seem to show similar emigration patterns as the majority population, the Armenians.

¹⁰¹ See Amy de la Bretèque 2013: 30.

specific concerns are burials, funeral rites, and obligations to remember the ancestors, resulting in questions of if and how migration affects both ritual practice and material manifestations (cemeteries, graveyards).

History and identity

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, Yezidi communities were scattered in the east and southeast of the Ottoman Empire, in the territories of what is today Turkey, Syria, and Iraq (Guest 1993). The main marker of their identity and belonging is their denomination, a religious system peculiar to the Yezidis.¹⁰² Yezidism is a monotheist religion with interlinkages to Christianity, Judaism, Islam (especially Sufism), and elements incorporated from Zoroastrianism. The oral transmission of the faith¹⁰³, a strong angelology, the holy center Lalish in northern Iraq, and especially the caste-like socio-religious structure of the clergy caste (Sheikhs and Pirs) and laymen (Murids) are main characteristics. Holy places, often connected to the graves of important clergymen, are sites of pilgrimage. Also the houses of Sheikhs and Pirs, where sometimes holy relics are stored, are places to visit, pay tribute, ask for special support, or show gratefulness. Kreyenbroek associates these holy places with the practice of transhumance of the Yezidi cattle breeders, in which a semi-nomadic life was practiced during the spring and summer months. He argues that these are movable holy places, where the protective spirits of the clan are hosted (Kreyenbroek 2009 in Schulze, and Schulze 2016).

Characteristic of the religion is its orality and orthopraxy, thus keeping the rules in everyday life. Strict marriage rules, which comprise not only group endogamy but also the provision to marry within the religious caste, means that the membership to the community is possible only by birth.¹⁰⁴

As a non-Islamic denomination, the Yezidi were often persecuted in line with their Christian neighbors. In the last centuries of the Ottoman Empire, the Yezidis were one of the most vulnerable groups. At the end of the 19th century, they did not live in coherent settlement areas in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire anymore. Politics of persecution, expulsion, and forced conversion in previous centuries had resulted in the displacement and scattering across the southeastern and eastern Ottoman provinces. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Yezidi lived in own or mixed villages, mostly in remote areas in the provinces of Kars, Iğdır, Van, Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Bitlis (see Açıkyıldız 2010). The persecution in the shadow of WWI meant a deep break for the Yezidi community. There are hardly any reliable sources on the

¹⁰² Studies focusing on the religion, language, identity, and history of the Yezidi are, e.g., Allison 2001; Açıkyıldız 2014; Andrews 1989; Guest 1993; Kreyenbroek 1995; Kreyenbroek and Allison 1996; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005, 2009; Kızılhan 1997.

¹⁰³ There are only a few written texts (single religious hymns) were documented by European scholars. These written texts (prayers and recitations) are not used by Yezidi Sheikhs and Pirs.

¹⁰⁴ See Guest 1993; Lescot 1938; Bois 1966; Allison 2001.

number of victims of the genocidal policy, but estimations say that about 200,000 Yezidi could have been assassinated. A century ago, the Yezidis managed to establish a diasporic community due to their refuge to the Caucasus region. According to official statistics, in 1830 about 324 Yezidi were counted in the territory of Armenia, mostly in border villages to Turkey. This number grew to 12,237 people by 1926 (Mkrtumyan 2000: 28ff).

This means that about 12,000 people managed to escape from the frontier Ottoman regions Kars and İğdir, but also from remote districts, like Van, during WWI. They were able to establish a Yezidi community in about 40 villages, solely inhabited by Yezidis, and further villages, where they lived side by side with their Armenian neighbors, as well as urban centers. The survivors' efforts to build up and secure livelihoods and thus reestablish a highly complex social caste-like system took the whole inter-war period. So in the 1960s, Yezidi villages could be found in the districts of Aparan, Astarat, Zangibazar, Talin, Hoktemberjan, and Vagaršapat, where they had forged *kolkhozes*, some of them with an ethnically mixed population (Bennigsen 1960: 515).

The escape to the territory of Armenia enabled the formation of a diasporic community. After the First World War, the border between Turkey and Armenia was hermetically closed, and this community was cut off from the Yezidis in the former homeland(s). The founding of new nation states in western Asia—thus Turkey, Syria, and Iraq—and the dispersal of the Yezidis in these countries presented a further impediment for (re)establishing a Yezidi identity. In the Soviet Republic of Armenia, this diasporic community could reestablish a way of life based on animal husbandry. Yezidis were granted cultural rights, such as the operation of a radio station, a newspaper and other print media, and teaching in the mother tongue. In post-Soviet times, they gained official recognition as an ethno-religious community in Armenia (Langer 2010: 399).

The shaping of the diaspora community was marked by ambivalences. As the core of the reestablishment of the Yezidi community was the reconstruction of the socio-religious system yet within the Soviet system, the religious factor had to be underemphasized in public. The Yezidi refugees in Armenia came mostly from rural areas in the Ottoman Empire, where they had made their living from livestock breeding. In Soviet times, they could apply their skills and knowledge in this domain, but within the system of *sovchozy* and *kolkhozy*. Most of the Yezidi villagers were and still are specialized in animal husbandry and practice transhumance.

Thus, the Yezidis were caught in between the Soviet identity constructions and national ideologies, mostly based on linguistic belongings, thus the Kurdish language. The inter/intra ethnic boundary construction, and the question of belonging to and being a Yezidi or being a Kurd was shifting during Soviet times and even gained momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union (see Dalalyan 2012). For the Yezidi communities, this meant an impediment to negotiating the belonging and constructing an identity based solely on their denomination. For several decades, their freedom of cultural expression in their mother tongue had been path-breaking for all the Kurdish communities in the neighboring countries—thus Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. While these countries had banned the Kurdish language, Soviet Armenia had

established, for example, a radio program in Kurdish, which was also accessible in the neighboring states. Several educational and academic programs—to express the Kurdish language and culture—were mostly based on this Yezidi diaspora in Armenia, and gradually permeated to Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Any international face-to-face relations of this diasporic group were limited to communities in Georgia and Russia. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this old Yezidi diaspora slowly came into contact with transnational Yezidi and Kurdish communities.

The Yezidi in Armenia speak Ezdikî, a sociolect of the Kurdish dialect Kurmancî. Outside of the Armenian territory, the relationship with the Kurdish Muslim majority population is marked by ambivalence. The main difference to Sunni Muslim Kurds is the own denomination and the belonging to a distinct social structure based on the caste-like socio-religious structure and tribal affiliation. Concerning the inter/intra ethnic boundaries, an ambivalent relationship to the encompassment and exclusion from the Kurdish Sunni majority over the past decades must be mentioned. The Yezidis were mostly positioned at the fringes of Kurdish national identity, while some stressed Yezidism as the original Kurdish religion. Due to extremely violent persecutions of the Yezidi in Iraq (2007, 2015) as well as the socio-economic and political transformation in the Caucasus region, discourses about the belonging, ethnicity, and identity arose (see Dalalyan 2012). Negotiating the ethnic boundaries to Kurdish ethnicity differed in the communities in Iraq and Armenia.

Extremely violent developments against the Yezidi in Iraq in 2007, and genocidal processes in Shingal in 2014, evoked an ethnicization of this religious community and identity constructions to differ themselves from the Kurdish ethnic group (Brizic et al. 2016).

Yezidi villages today

If one approaches a village in Armenia and recognizes the large flocks of cattle and sheep grazing on rich pastures, as well as the four-wheel drive cars and off-road vehicles for going to the summer pastures high up into the mountains, one can be sure to have approached a Yezidi village.¹⁰⁵ In Soviet times, these villages consisted of about one hundred households and more; they ran their own bilingually taught schools—in Armenian and the mother tongue. The Armenian-Yezidi relationship has been marked by mutual respect, appreciation, and acknowledgement of the other's history and fate. These social relations on the local level were often sealed, for example, through co-parenthood relations, although intermarriage between the groups was forbidden due to the strict Yezidi marriage rules.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ People use the four-wheel drive cars to travel to the summer pastures, the shepherds follow walking with the flocks.

¹⁰⁶ Several authors have stressed the marriage rules, marked not only by religious endogamy but also by provisions for marrying within the specific caste and its sub-groups (see, e.g., Lescot 1938, Bois 1966, Guest 1993, Kreyenbroek 1995).

As indicated above, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socio-economic crises, the Yezidis were forced to emigrate just as their Armenian neighbors; target countries were Russia (above all, to the big cities like Moscow, Petersburg, Novosibirsk), Ukraine, Germany (with large communities in Cologne, Celle, Oldenburg), Belgium, or France.¹⁰⁷ Germany already had diasporic Yezidi communities established by the Yezidi from Turkey. Due to religious discrimination and persecution, almost all the Yezidi in Turkey were forced to leave the country in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁸

Ilona Schulze and Wolfgang Schulze (2016) provide us with exact numbers and demographic developments. They undertook a comprehensive survey and qualitative research to document the situation of the minorities in Armenia. Comparing the population census of 2001 and 2011, the Yezidi population declined by about 14 percent in that decade. This development, caused by emigration, had already started in the late 1980s and is still continuing (Schulze and Schulze 2016: 378). The authors emphasize that emigration processes to Russia were accelerated due to the easy acquisition of Russian citizenship for citizens from the former Soviet Union (*ibid.* 383). Migrating to Russia is easier to manage than emigrating to countries of the European Union. Due to provisions relating to residence and working permits as well as naturalization procedures, there are various patterns of emigration, ranging from short-term or seasonal migration to Moscow or Petersburg to long-term migration to Siberia, or permanent emigration to Russia. As many Yezidi households are fragmented, they often consist of three to four generations, and have an average of seven household members (Schulz and Schulz 2016: 383 ff.).

Based on decades of research in Yezidi villages in Armenia, the researchers and siblings Jalile Jalil, Ordekhane Jalil, and Jamila Jalil documented the village life, oral history, and folklore between the 1950s and 1990s (see e.g., Jalil and Jalil 2014; 2015; 2016). Compared to these documentations of a very vivid, reestablished prosperous village life, one is struck by the enormous socio-economic changes observed today. A few Yezidi villages are totally abandoned, while only ten percent of the former households are still maintained in other remote villages with poor infrastructure.

Remarkable are the transnational connections in such more remote villages. Village households rely on remittances from abroad. In several families, the village household seems to have an "expiry date", as villagers are ready for emigration and are sometimes in an in-between state, waiting for a proper opportunity to travel abroad. For some villagers, short-term migration to earn a certain amount of money, while upholding the village business is an option. For others, the dissolution of the village household and subsequent emigration is the only solution. Such orientations and decisions depend on the structure and composition of households (married or

¹⁰⁷ It is estimated that about 100,000 Yezidi from Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Armenia live in Germany. The same number is given for the Yezidi in Russia, Georgia, and Armenia (Tagay and Ortaç 2016: 30).

¹⁰⁸ Only a few hundred Yezidi remained in Turkey; see Tagay and Ortaç 2016: 31.

unmarried children, visions for their future, elderly people to care for relatives, wealth or poverty of the respective household, alternatives for an occupation in Armenia).

During my field research, I could document various forms of transnationally expanded households. There are families where the active male members live abroad, while the female members, the elderly, and the children stay put and hold up the village household. In other households, the parents' generation has already emigrated and only one married son is staying behind with the grandparents and running the farm. In other families, the children are already gone and married partners in European countries, with the parents considering to follow them in the near future. Even in the most remote villages, Skype, Viber, and WhatsApp allow them to stay in contact with their children and grandchildren, some of whom they have never seen in person, on a daily basis. Some of the households seem to be well-off, and in one of them the grandmother explained that their children in Switzerland 'had sent them wealth', meaning that the household was receiving remittances, which are invested into the house and the farm. In some remote areas, there are abandoned households where even the grandparent generation has already moved to Russia or Europe. However, there are also single households where elderly people stubbornly refrain from following their migrated children. In a few villages, the young farmers seem to have adjusted to the neoliberal economy; they are establishing larger enterprises with several farms taking care of their animal husbandry together.

Migration is always a topic in conversations and in occasional meetings. The decisions of villagers to emigrate are discussed every day, and especially those staying are sometimes rather critical of the willingness to leave the country.¹⁰⁹

The primary occupation of both clergy castes (Sheikhs and Pirs) as well as the lay caste has been animal husbandry, and both have adapted to the transnational life. Each Yezidi is obliged to have his/her Sheikh and his/her Pir, who are responsible for accompanying the individual during his/her *rites de passage* or in difficult times. Today's Sheikhs offer religious services via modern media; they can be contacted via Skype and are invited to in the countries of emigration for short-term stays and religious services.

Some Yezidi are economically successful after migration. They not only support their family members with regular remittances, but also contribute to establishing modern community structures and religious institutions. In 2013 a temple and cultural center in Aknalich, close to Yerevan, was opened, financed by Mirza Sloyan, a successful Yezidi entrepreneur in Russia. The *ziyaret*, the temple, is built after the model of the holy center in Lalish (North Iraq). The establishment of the new community center is not the only "investment" for upholding the denomination. Houses of worship, such as churches, did not exist in the Yezidi religious tradition. Instead the homes of Sheikhs and Pirs, the *ocaks*¹¹⁰, have become centers of faith and

¹⁰⁹ Based on my field research in 2015 and 2016.

¹¹⁰ *Ocak* probably from Ottoman Turkish (*ojak*) means fireplace, oven—thus the center in the family household.

pilgrimage. Nevertheless, Sheikhs also migrated, and it is highly criticized by those staying put that some have also taken the holy relics with them. Therefore, such institutionalization in form of a new community center not only compensates for the loss of the clergymen, it is also a new self-determined way of organizing the community as well as celebrating annual feasts and *rites de passage*—all of which was made possible through financial means earned in migration.

Rites de passage in transition

Several traditions of Yezidi *rites de passage* differ according to the peoples' region of origin (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Armenia), as there are regional practices. They all share the religious concept of an afterlife, thus the idea of the transmigration of souls. For the moment of the death, the funeral and transgression into another state of being, every Yezidi has to have the support of people in this world.¹¹¹ So at quite an early stage, Yezidis are obliged to choose a "brother of the hereafter"¹¹² and/or a "sister of the hereafter"¹¹³ belonging to the Sheikh caste. They are intermediaries and accompany the dead into the life of the hereafter. They take over a moral responsibility for the deeds of the deceased person and have specific obligations during the funeral. The siblings of the hereafter prepare the body, thus performing ablution, clothing the corpse with a white vest, wrapping the body in white sheets, closing the eyes and mouth, and covering the face with clay balls called *berat*.¹¹⁴ After the mourning ceremonies, the body is accompanied to the graveyard, where Sheikhs, Pirs, and the Yezidi community should be present to observe as the body is buried.¹¹⁵ There are regional differences¹¹⁶ in the rituals that need to be performed before the body is buried and after the funeral, which are once again transformed and modified through migration in the transnational communities.¹¹⁷

The days before and after the funeral, mourners visit the family to show their respect and offer their sympathy. The family members are obliged to fulfill all the expectations and provisions in the initial mourning period, in the first year after the death and in the upcoming years, which means to care for the honored remembrance of their ancestors, Yezidi feel obliged to attend funerals¹¹⁸, thus often several hundred people pay their last respect to the deceased. When a

¹¹¹ For a detailed description of funeral rites, see Amy de la Bretèque (2013), Benninghaus (2005), Affolderbach and Geisler (2007: 12 f).

¹¹² bira - yê a-khretê

¹¹³ khushka- a - khretê

¹¹⁴ Made of the clay from the holy district and water of the holy spring in Lalish. The Sheikhs bring the clay balls to their Murids and keep them close to their bodies (see Ankermann n.d. referring to Yalkut-Breddermann 2001: 45, Fn. 81). In the diaspora, the *berat* represents the holy place.

¹¹⁵ Sheikhs have various tasks and functions in the spiritual life of their Murids. Aside from preserving the belief, the rituals, and the performance of religious provisions, many of them are also traditional healers (see Arakelova 2001).

¹¹⁶ Respectively in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Armenia; see e.g. Maisel 2005: 297 on the duty to visit the bereaved family within three weeks after death.

¹¹⁷ Benninghaus 2005: 258.

¹¹⁸ This holds also true for the communities in the diaspora (see Benninghaus 2005 for Germany).

person has died in migration, the corpse is brought back home to the village and buried at a Yezidi graveyard, only in recent years the first graveyards were established in Russia and in Germany (see below).

My co-researcher Tereza Amryan informed me about the social obligations one family has in the Armenian Yezidi community, when an old member of the family dies. Traditionally the family organizes several funeral banquets to serve the mourners. On the day of the death, up to hundred people visited the home of the deceased person and an animal was sacrificed. Besides serving the respective traditional food, *Hashlama* (boiled meat), several other dishes are served, like *Basturma*¹¹⁹ (sausage) and fruits. The following day about 200 people visited the bereaved family, who were also hosted with the same dishes. On the third day, the day of the burial, a banquet is organized at the graveyard. Therefore, in all Yezidi graveyards one can find long iron tables to organize the funeral banquets. Two days after the burial another banquet, called *Xer* (offering, gift) is prepared, again with *Hashlama* and rice¹²⁰. All those who could not attend the burial can do the visit of condolence then. Again on the seventh day (after the burial) and on the 40th day, which is called *Cil* in some Yezidi communities a *Xer* is organized. Almost similar with Armenian funeral rites are the days when ceremonies of mourning and commemoration during the 40 days after the death of a person are organized¹²¹.

Approaching a village in Armenia, one may recognize from afar whether it is an Armenian or a Yezidi village by taking a closer look at the graveyard. In comparison to graveyards in Austria, for example, where one tombstone is erected for all deceased family members, gravestones in Armenia are dedicated to individual relatives lying side by side to other family members.

There are a few documentations of the extraordinary funeral and graveyard culture in Yezidi communities in Armenia¹²², in northern Iraq, and in Syria¹²³. In contrast to other Yezidi communities, there is hardly an elaborated anthropological study available on the various past forms of mourning rituals of Yezidis in Turkey. Philip Kreyenbroek's (1995) very important work on Yezidism and its textual tradition is based on fieldwork in northern Iraq (1995), where he analyzed the traditions of *rites des passage*.¹²⁴ Birgül Açıkyıldız (2006) undertook a first comprehensive architectural documentation of funerary monuments in Kurdistan Iraq, Turkey,

¹¹⁹ Due to the information of my co-researcher Dr. Tereza Amryan, the offering of *Basturma* (the only sausage not made of pork) is the result of influences during Soviet times. *Basturma* was not a traditional food.

¹²⁰ The food for the banquet is almost the same as it is for wedding parties.

¹²¹ See e.g., <http://www.stgregoryarmenian.org/faq1/> [Accessed 1 February 2017]

¹²² Bois 1966: 83.

¹²³ Lescot, 1938: 154ff; Bois 1966.

¹²⁴ Kreyenbroek's informants were Yezidi clergymen. Pîr Khidr Silêman outlined the funerary customs, which vary locally, but have some characteristics in common (Kreyenbroek 1995: 160f.). The Sheikh or Pir of the deceased person has to be present to wash and prepare the body for the burial (wrapping in white linen, putting the berat on the face). Once the corpse is laid into the grave, the brother or sister of the hereafter is responsible for "opening the shroud so as to expose the face" (1995:160). Food is left on the grave as an offer to the angels. "The initial period of mourning lasts three days" (1995: 161), and there are commemorations and obligations during the first year after the death.

and Armenia. She also analyzed the animal figures in stone (horses, lions), of which remnants can still be found in Yezidi graveyards in Armenia.

In Yezidi cemeteries, the tombstones on family spaces are often fenced and covered by a roof frame. One can recognize various historical types—in a few graveyards very old tombstones in the form of horse¹²⁵ figures are still to be seen—of graves with pillar-like stones or inspired by the shapes of *ziggurats*, or mausoleum-like tombs. Schulze and Schulze (2016: 390) also stressed that the old tombstones showing zoomorphic representations are in decay, while recent tombstones follow new influences.

The modern forms of gravestones are life-sized in height, and sometimes even larger than life. Often they show an engraving, which pictures the deceased person in its everyday life—e.g., civil servants on their office desks or soldiers in their uniforms. Some argue that these are influences from Soviet times were graves were overly decorated, or of Armenian influence. In general, Hamlet Petrosyan argues that in Soviet times, many of the old cemeteries were turned into arable land, while the imagery of the new graves followed certain ideological symbols (a star, hammer and sickle, portraits). In the 1960s, Armenian graveyard culture experienced a rather general change, when cross stones were produced once again and the first influences of money earned abroad were recognized.¹²⁶ In Yezidi graveyards as well as in Armenian cemeteries, the size of the tombstones and, sometimes, the obviously expensive workmanship of the entire grave are apparent.

According to my informant, erecting a proper grave with such a tombstone costs between EUR 3,000 and 15,000. In addition, people had spent approximately EUR 15,000 on organizing the burial processes, the funeral, and the banquets. According to the Armenia Statistical Service in 2015, the average monthly income in Armenia is about USD 360—the income of civil servants is bit more than USD 300. Related to the average annual income in Armenia, the amount spent for the funeral and graveyard corresponds to the average Armenian annual income of at least five years.

Every year, each village celebrate the day of *roja mezela* (the day of the graveyard)—a day of remembrance, when the *xer* (offer, donation) is organized for all the deceased persons. A common banquet is set up on the iron tables each Yezidi graveyard is equipped with. All the villagers as well as relatives from outside and abroad attend the banquet. People visit the graves

¹²⁵ The horse has an important meaning in daily life, and also for transgressing to the hereafter. Allison (2001) mentions a specific tradition in northern Iraq, where the horse of the deceased was packed with his belongings and integrated into the funeral rite with specific recitations. Today just the recitations are practiced.

¹²⁶ Characteristic in Armenian graveyards is the extraordinary craftsmanship of huge stone crosses, sculptured reliefs of cross stones, and headstones: "For example, in some of the villages of Gegharkunik region, where seasonal works outside the country are widely spread and the men spend only a few months back home, cemeteries became sanctuaries of a kind, that are mostly sumptuous constructions, sometimes even mausoleums." Cemeteries are now a space to show and "reaffirm the social status and prestige of those alive and a specific arena of competition," Hamlet Petrosyan: The Cemetery Landscape of Armenia: Tradition and Modernity. <http://www.independentlandscape.am/en/story/16> [Accessed 1 February 2017]

and share the meal, for which special dishes are prepared—e.g., *Hashlama*¹²⁷. When I was in Armenia in 2009, I was invited to accompany my guest family in Yerevan to the village where their ancestors are buried for the day of *roja mezela*. The daughter in law prepared a lot of food: *Hashlama* was cooked and brought in big vessels next to several other dishes, beverages, and table cloths. The family rented a small bus for the occasion, so that everybody could come. The family members visited the graves, the women cleaned the earth from weeds, and some decorated the graves with flowers. The families remained besides their graves in silent remembrance for a while, and then visited graves of extended relatives and friends. Then all the families sat down together, and one family after the other shared their food and beverages on the long iron tables. The participants were very careful that not a single bad word was said and no hostility in and between the families was shown. During this annual ritual, family members who died within the last year are particularly remembered, but the aim of getting together is to commemorate all the deceased ancestors in the family. The date for organizing *roja mezela* differs from one village to the other, mostly in spring or autumn, taking into account the time when families take their flocks to the summer pastures. Those who have migrated often return home for their annual holidays to participate in *roja mezela*.

Aside from the annual meeting at the day of *roja mezela* and preparing the *xer*, every family has the obligation to arrange the funeral and subsequent banquets to honor the deceased. If a family is not eager to fulfill their obligations, they will lose respect in the community. People would say, "shame on you" if the bereaved family will not fulfill these expectations.

My interview partner stressed that families have to be economically prepared for death in the family. Remittances sent from abroad are a prerequisite to have these savings and meet all the demands related to a funeral. For many families, it is indispensable that its members save the necessary finances by migrating either for short terms or permanently.

Next to organizing luxury weddings, funerals are the most essential *rites de passage*, where the family is obliged to fulfill the community expectations. Such funerals are not only accompanied by various religious provisions and rites, but also go hand in hand with socio-religious obligations that reflect many other social aspects. The funeral rites and commemorations express one's commitment of belonging—belonging not only to a family and clan, but also to the Yezidi denomination. Honoring the ancestors is a vital expression of showing and reproducing one's position in the Yezidi socio-religious structure. It reflects the relatedness of people to their village of origin, even if they have spent several years in migration, and thus both confirms and reaffirms the position of the individual in society.

Visiting Yezidi villages together with my co-researcher during my fieldwork in 2015 and 2016, we were often asked whether we wanted to visit the village graveyard. People who had shared with us the memories of their family's fate during WWI later accompanied us to the graveyard

¹²⁷ A traditional boiled beef or lamb dish

to show us the tombstones of their parents and grandparents, and to lead us to the graves of their ancestors who had managed the refuge from the genocidal persecution. These are the silent witnesses of the genocidal processes, which were not made a public issue during the Stalin era and beyond.

Memorials or commemorative events, reminding the people of the fateful past a centennial ago, are a rather young development in the Yezidi society of Armenia—the first memorials were only erected in the last few years. Graveyards are an important manifestation of the Yezidi creed and the violent history. Aside from the holy district of Lalish (Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq) and certain holy places in the natural environment, Yezidi villages do not have any other places of worship, such as churches. For this reason, graveyards are fundamental manifestations of the Yezidi denomination.¹²⁸

Rites and lamentations

Based on extensive field research, the ethnomusicologist Estelle Amy de la Bretèque recorded and analyzed the tradition of lamentations in Armenian Yezidi society. These lamentations are a melodized speech, called *kilamê ser*. Unlike songs, they are a form of recitation, an improvised, sung narrative which "is performed mostly at funerals or graveyard feasts (*roja mezela*) and may also be inserted into daily conversations when the topic evokes sad memories (Amy de la Bretèque 2012: 132). *Kilamê ser* (the words about something) are expressions of sad feelings and "(...) freer in its semantic, melodic and rhythmic content (...) considered speech" (Amy de la Bretèque 2012: 137). This tradition is practiced at funerals, when women express their mourning and direct their words either towards the person deceased or the audience. This allows the mourning person to refer to the life story and relationships of the dead person. It creates a shared space of sadness and reflects the complex construction of social relations in both the village and the clan, Amy de la Bretèque analyzes. A perpetual topic of reference in the *Kilamê ser* is exile, which tackles at least three different spheres. In an earlier work, Amy de la Bretèque (2008) shows how two of these three spheres are addressed in lamentations during funerals. The exile or foreign place, *xerib*, is referred to, if people died in migration (in Russia, Germany). Furthermore, those who died in migration before the most recent family member are named as well. The exile is seen as cursed and tragic. The second type bears reference to the flight about a centennial ago, when Yezidis were expelled and persecuted from their homes in eastern Anatolia. The third type of exile refers to brides who have to leave the parents' home and stay in the (foreign) household of their husband's family (Amy de la Bretèque 2008: 63 f.). The female mourners assemble around the dead body in the house of the deceased to recite and express their *qalam* almost all day long until the person is buried.

¹²⁸ While several homes were abandoned in some remote villages, the tombs at the graveyards were often well-kept. The cemeteries were often positioned at a very high point, with the graves overlooking the entire village.

In contrast, the prayers and holy songs (*qewl* and *beyt*) are recited by the Sheikhs and Pirs during the lowering of the body into the grave.

Christine Allison studied the Yezidi oral traditions in Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s and also analyzed the lamentations recited during funerals (2001: 167 ff.). As in Armenia, lamentations are solely practiced by the women, either in personal or semi-professional ways. They are performed on Wednesdays and Fridays within the 40 days of mourning (2001: 178). Comparing her findings to the results of Margaret Rudenko who conducted her research in Yezidi communities in Soviet Armenia (1982), Allison stresses the commonalities and differences in the ritual practice between Yezidi communities in northern Iraq and Armenia. One feature they share is that there are also male mourners, although they rather concentrate on heroes, battles, and valor. In both regions, the reference to *xerîbî*—to the strangeness and exile—is made, while only Rudenko explains the practice of lamentation in Armenia also with regard to the bride's leaving of the father's household.

Death and burial in the new diasporas

In his study of Yezidi refugees in France, Guenet explains

"Lorsqu'un villageois yézidi meurt en exil, tout est fait pour que son corps soit enterré dans le cimetière du village. Le retour du corps est célébré comme un retour d'exil, qui est immédiatement suivi par un départ vers un nouvel exil. (...) les funérailles entraînent parfois le retour des membres exilés de la communauté qui viennent assister à la cérémonie, l'enterrement étant le rituel que les Yézidis relient le plus au village d'origine" (Guenet 2013 : 20).

Depending on the country of origin, people cannot always realize their wishes concerning their final resting place. In Turkey, for example, almost all the Yezidi have left the country; several of them were asylum seekers in Germany. Many could not return to their places of origin, such as the cities of Mosul in Iraq or villages around Batman, Mardin, and Nuseybin in Turkey that were constantly ravaged by war or turmoil. The most recent genocidal persecution of the Yezidi in Shingal in 2014 has shown that their holy places, *ziyarets* and cemeteries were the targets of destruction by ISIS.

Aside from safer places in northern Iraq, it is primarily Armenia where people can choose their final resting place. In general, the transfer of a deceased person, accompanied by several relatives, is a very expensive task. Since the highest member of the Sheikh caste and secular representative of the Yezidis, Mir Tahsin Beg, gave his approval to be buried in exile (Benninghaus 2005: 254, referring to Tolan and Tolan 2001), Yezidi diaspora communities have begun establishing Yezidi graveyards or special sections at communal graveyards in Germany and Russia. The place of burial depends, amongst other factors, on the age of the deceased person.¹²⁹ Younger people born abroad are rather buried in the diaspora than in their

¹²⁹ According to my co-researcher Tereza Amryan.

country of origin. In consequence, almost all the Yezidi from Turkey have permanently left their country of origin,¹³⁰ many applied for asylum and could hardly return. As the villages are abandoned, there is hardly anybody left who could look after the graveyard or fulfill the annual rituals.

In Armenia, several people have left, some for a short term migration, others permanently and a few as refugees, thus only two, three villages are totally abandoned. Herein the intention to be returned after a person is deceased is still upheld and a factor in which the community is strengthened, the position of the bereaved family and their role in the community is confirmed.

Rüdiger Benninghaus convincingly explains the transformation in burial cultures and traditions within Yezidi communities in Germany, such as in Celle, Oldenburg, Hannover, Bremen, or Berlin (Benninghaus 2005: 250ff.). With regard to the various Yezidi associations in Germany based on the respective country of origin (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, and Georgia) as well as their political orientation and self-identification, several Yezidi associations were established. An umbrella organization was founded, but the establishment of institutions—such as cemeteries—is mainly organized in regional associations and in accordance with the legal provisions of the federal provinces, city administrations, or cemetery administrations. In some cities, for example, Hannover and Bielefeld,¹³¹ separate burial grounds were established for Yezidis in municipal cemeteries, some even equipped for the ritual ablutions. They are organized along the caste structure and some have stricter provisions for the design of single graves (e.g., Hannover) than others (e.g., Oldenburg, see Benninghaus 2005: 258). Several cemeteries comply with the written guidelines issued by the German communities for funerals, ranging from the positioning of the graves (facing east) to the number of gravestones of men (two; above the head and above the feet) and women (one; above the head). Furthermore, they outline the depths of tombs, mourning rituals, and the tradition to share food and drinks at the graveyard. These provisions, however, required a certain structure in the religious community to define the core elements of the denomination, or to certify the affiliation of its members (Lang 2010: 399).

Benninghaus has shown that Yezidi gravestones in Germany reflect symbols of faith (sun, *Melek Taws* as a peacock figurine). The identification as Yezidi is often written together with the name, which could have emerged only in the diaspora and had never been possible in Turkey (2005: 263). Yezidi families from the Caucasus region refrain from such inscriptions. Above

¹³⁰ See Andrews 1989:119ff; Kizilhan 1997, Tagay and Ortac 2016.

¹³¹ See, for example, the homepage of the municipal graveyard in Hannover at <http://www.hannover.de/Kultur-Freizeit/Naherholung/G%C3%A4erten-genie%C3%9Fen/Friedh%C3%B6fe-in-Hannover/Friedhofsverwaltung-in-Hannover/Grabarten-und-Grabpflege/Multikulturelle-Bestattungen-auf-den-Friedh%C3%B6fen-der-Stadt-Hannover> as well as Bielefeld <https://www.bielefeld.de/de/un/fried/gub/religion/> [both accessed February 13, 2017].

all, Benninghaus argues that in Armenia, Yezidis have adopted traditions in grave maintenance deriving from the country's Christian majorities.

According to Andreas Ackerman, people connect to holy places back at home, above all to the holy center in Lalish, during the feasts and ceremonies organized in the German diaspora. They display *berat* balls, made from the earth and water of the holy center, which then represent the holy place. Aside from visual documents (photos of holy places and videos of annual feasts in Lalish), the *berat* balls are essential objects to relate to their 'home' (Ackermann 2003: 166).

Conclusion

Migration endeavors within the Yezidi community demonstrated that remittances are not only invested into the maintenance of the household or business enterprise. The money earned abroad is essential for the continuity of ritual practice. Remittances spent for *rites de passage* are thus a necessary contribution to uphold social obligations, and indicate a commitment to show one's position within the Yezidi community. In general, the tradition of worshipping the ancestors is not a new development evoked by migration. Remembering the ancestors has always been an obligation within Yezidi communities. Due to remittances and income opportunities abroad, the expenses in the course of such *rites de passage* seem to have increased. Even in the Soviet system of *sovkhозy* and *kolkhozy*, Yezidi cattle breeders were able to have a small, additional (private) flock. This extra income was also spent for ritual expenditures.¹³²

Aside from fulfilling the ritual obligations, funerals and also marriages are important events to show and reinforce the reputation of a family in society, and to show one's commitment to the Yezidi community. While the obligations for the marriage or birth of a family member are predictable, the obligations and related expenses for a funeral may apply quite unexpectedly. Therefore, the families have to be prepared for such cases: they need to have enough money either saved or accessible for the unforeseeable. In the Yezidi case, remittances are saved and accumulated as preparation for sudden obligations where the family's reputation is on display.

¹³² Informal talk with my co-researcher Tereza Amryan.

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Caring for the Homeland from a Distance: The Armenian Diaspora in Vienna and Transnational Engagements

Daniela Paredes Grijalva

Abstract

The Armenian diaspora, one of the oldest and largest in the world, engages in different ways with the homeland. Following global trends, the Armenian state reaches out to diasporas across the globe for social, political and economic participation to contribute to the development of the country. At the same time, individuals and community associations establish particular networks and arrangements to do their share of caring for the homeland. Ethnographic fieldwork in Vienna revealed two major trends: while Western Armenians donate for, volunteer for or cooperate with the state or institutions, whereas Eastern Armenians send financial and social remittances directly to kin.

Zusammenfassung

Die armenische Diaspora zählt zu den ältesten und größten Diaspora-Gruppen der Welt. Ihre Mitglieder engagieren sich auf vielfältige Weise in der einstigen Heimat. Globalen Trends folgend, versucht der armenische Staat die weltweiten Diaspora-Gemeinden durch soziale, politische und wirtschaftliche Partizipation stärker in die Belange der Nation einzubinden, um zur Entwicklung des Landes beizutragen. Gleichzeitig gründeten Gemeinschaftsverbände und Privatpersonen unterschiedliche Netzwerke und trafen ihrerseits Vorkehrungen, um selbständig einen Dienst an der Heimat zu leisten. Eine ethnographische Feldforschung in Wien hat zwei große Trends aufgezeigt: Während die West-Armenier entweder spenden, Freiwilligenarbeit leisten oder direkt mit dem armenischen Staat und etablierten Institutionen zusammenarbeiten, zeichnet sich bei den Ost-Armeniern eine klare Tendenz dahingehend ab, die Verwandten auf direkte Weise finanziell oder sozial zu unterstützen.

Introduction

Berjouhi was born in Armenia, grew up in Germany, lived in France and now makes Vienna her home. When she travels to Armenia her bags carry not only souvenirs such as European cosmetics, but also clothes and medicines for her family and that of others. Back in Vienna, she sends daily WhatsApp messages to her niece in Armenia practicing German with her, in preparation for a future migration. Her grandparents do not have a retirement pension. Instead, the family members in Europe contribute monthly to their subsistence.

This paper investigates how Armenians in the diaspora in Vienna articulate their engagements and sense of caring for their homeland or relatives in their homeland. How do individuals in Vienna connect with Armenia? What channels do they use and which ones are the most important ones? To begin with, this project explores the transnational ties between Armenians *here* and their connections *there*. The notions of transnational migration will serve as a theoretical framework, contributing to the understanding of lives rather actually lived across borders than lives confined to nation-states that resemble closed containers.

Through a combination of literature reviews, participant-observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews, this paper looks into personal strategies of individuals, emphasizing their agency and contextualizing it within the wider framework of diaspora engagements and state-led initiatives, in order to attract diasporas as part of a global trend in transnational practices. Emphasis is laid on the relations between people, which in this case generally took place along kinship lines. Additionally, the term diaspora was reflected upon and used both as a self-ascribing category used by research partners and a migration studies concept¹³³.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews with a narrative touch encouraged speakers to express their thoughts extensively (Bernard 2000). They were done in-depth to foster the expression of participant's interpretations and the way they connected different phenomena (Mack et al 2005). It was also clear, through explorative interviewing, that questions imagining the future and a possible return were important. These sessions also revealed the gap between Armenians in Vienna. Six in-depth interviews were conducted with mostly Eastern Armenians; however, information was also gathered from Western Armenians. Half of the participants were male and the other half female. Two of them were above their 40s and the rest under 35. Transcriptions were made and interviews were analyzed, highlighted and coded.

This research project is limited in time and space, whereby much is left unaddressed. The fieldwork took place during March and June 2015. Events in Vienna during this period revolved around the remembrance of the 1915 Genocide Centennial, they were frequent and of a larger scope than weekly social or religious gatherings. They attracted public attention, gathered thousands and because they were so recent resulted in a strong feeling of unity of an "Armenian collective" in Vienna. Interview partners often referenced the events, the importance of the recognition of an act of genocide, and how inspiring it was to see so many Armenians united for one cause. In depth interviews revealed that this seeming unity sometimes was underscored by other divisive factors such as class, gender, region or religion. The scope of this project did not allow an in-depth analysis of the Armenian State and organizational initiatives to link the diaspora to the homeland.

Despite references to a united Armenian collective in Vienna, there is evidence for differentiations among those whose ancestors left the Armenian provinces (thus western Armenia) in

¹³³ All partners felt they were part of the diaspora except for one participant.

the Ottoman Empire in the genocide times and have grown up and lived outside the Armenian territory, and those who left the republic of Armenia (thus eastern Armenia¹³⁴) as the USSR collapsed. In Vienna itself there are evidently other aspects that bring people together or apart. One of my key contact places was the Armenian Apostolic Parish of St. Hripsime in Vienna, therefore references in this paper to religiosity are linked only to the Apostolic tradition, which does not reflect the religious identity of all the Armenian diaspora in Vienna. However, to put it in the words of one interview partner "*in Church we all speak the same language¹³⁵ and pray under the same roof*". Initial talks with interview partners have made evident the connection with a) the genocide, flight and West Armenia and on the other hand b) the fall of the USSR and Eastern Armenia. Western Armenians, whose ancestors had to seek refuge following the genocide, have a longer history of migration, including other countries such as Syria or Iran. Consequently, they can count on better established networks, which generally translate into a higher socio-economic status in Vienna.¹³⁶ In comparison, this is not true for Eastern Armenians who have arrived more recently. They too left to escape, yet in this case economic and social hardship in post-Soviet Armenia.

The Armenian diaspora in Vienna

Although the term diaspora has Greek roots, and initially referred to the spread of the Greeks in the ancient world, it denotes the forced exile of the Jewish community around the world as well. It was later on also used to refer to departures from the homeland marked by violence and war such as the Armenians leaving as a consequence of the 1915 genocide¹³⁷ or Africans being enslaved during colonialism and moved around the world. In the mid-1990s the use of the term was extended to include displacements without violence. The term has to a certain degree been emptied of meaning as social-constructivist critique attempted to challenge the categories "homeland" and "ethnic/religious community". For many it then became a synonym for any migrant or displaced collective, although it does remain a controversial term in migration scholarship. Cohen (2008) refers to four key phases in the development of a diaspora and after including some key points made by the social-constructivist critique, returns to the importance of place (real or imagined) and establishes some criteria to delineate a diaspora. In Vienna, the majority of the interview partners ascribed themselves to the notion of the Armenian diaspora.

¹³⁴ Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia roughly refer to the separation of Greater Armenia into what is now the Armenian republic and the provinces which remained under the Ottoman Empire's control. Today this distinction is still in use to refer to differences of people's origin and language.

¹³⁵ There are significant differences in language. This citation evidently refers to what church-goers have in common be it in religious terms, or cultural ones considering the post-church gatherings.

¹³⁶ The history of Armenians in Vienna deserves much more attention. For this paper let it suffice to point out that there was an important Armenian diaspora established in the Middle East since the fall of a part of Armenia in the 10th and 12th century. In Vienna, a strong Armenian presence has been registered since the 17th century.

¹³⁷ This is an extremely relevant issue considering that 2015 was the 100th anniversary of the 1915 genocide, and particularly in Vienna there were a series of events organized around it which account for an intensified sense of unity.

Only one of them identified with the early meaning of the term, namely being forcibly displaced by violence in large groups. Second, the time dimension is key and only after time has passed can the concept diaspora be tagged on to a group of people. This is also the case with the Armenian displacement of 1915. Following Cohen, the Armenian diaspora would fit into the prototypical diaspora of victimhood being forcibly displaced.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Migration Policy Institute define diaspora as: "Emigrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain affective and material ties to their countries of origin" (IOM/MPI in IOM 2013). In this sense, the term Armenian diaspora refers to people who sought refuge, as well as those leaving the decaying USSR and the contemporary republic of Armenia. In other words, the Armenian diaspora denotes a complex mix of historical, ethnic, economic and political oppressions.

In 2015, Statistics Austria registered 3,371 people holding an Armenian citizenship in Austria, 871 of them residing in Vienna. As with most statistics dealing with groups in mobility there are plenty of blind spots and grey areas: people with irregular migratory status, nationalized citizens, citizens holding multiple nationalities, Austrian citizens with no official Armenian citizenship but self-identifying as Armenian. According to the Armenian Apostolic Church Parish St. Hripsime¹³⁸, there are around 3,000 Armenians in Vienna (AAKG 2015), and for other civil organizations who lie more emphasis on shared heritage, there are up to 7,000. On the internet, there is a very active community with several organizations categorized by religion, age and interests. Vienna stands out with an Armenian Embassy, a religious community with at least two centers, the Armenian Student Association and the Austrian-Armenian Cultural Society, to name just a few. There are for example several student groups, including a Young Professionals' group meeting once a month. Sports, as for many diaspora communities, is also a cohesive factor and as can be seen in Vienna, which features the Ararat Football Club. The Armenian Apostolic Church holds services on Sundays and is thus also a very important social center since besides providing a place for celebrating the ritual mass together, it also offers a community room where people gather afterwards. It is a place for social exchange, for new arrivals to start building their network, for youth to meet dates arranged by their parents, or simply a place for having coffee with Armenian sweets.

The term "Armenian" inevitably categorizes and both includes and excludes people. To some extent, it homogenizes a diverse group of people; diverse in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, generation, location, and very different migration trajectories including a series of migration waves spanning at least 300 years. The label therefore comes with its own problems. One component, however, is of significant importance in bringing people together and leading them

¹³⁸ It is also important to mention that an Armenian Catholic Church of the Mekhitarist order was established in Vienna in 1810 when its base in Venice became part of the Austrian Empire. This was key in shaping the Armenian diaspora in Vienna, although the numbers of churchgoers are very few.

to identify themselves as Armenian: the link with Christianity. This is true for Armenians in the diaspora as well (Hofmann 2002). To all interview partners a shared religious tradition is an important, if not the first and foremost, shared trait among Armenians.

Another way to think about Armenian belonging is in terms of citizenship and nationality. Armenia is a nation-state and issues citizenship for people born both within and outside its territory, with at least one parent holding Armenian citizenship—applying the *jus sanguinis* principle. There are no restrictions on double nationality; this was recently approved in 2007 (Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). However, this legal framework still is limited, consider for instance the self-adscription and recognition by others of belonging to the collective. How Armenian is an Armenian with a document, but no recognition of his Armenianness by the collective? This, Eriksen points out, is key to determining ethnicity, which is fluid and constructed at the borders; nationhood just like ethnicity is dynamic, negotiable, and, shares the processual character of ethnicity (2001). This clearly does not mean that the state is not important (Vertovec 2009), but rather the contrary. Yet nation-states as an analytical category might not grasp enough of the phenomena at stake here. It is the ability to look across and beyond nation-states that *transnational migration* is all about. Therefore, the label Armenian, which makes reference to the nation-state but is not limited to its territory or citizenship, will be used to look at the interactions which themselves question and transgress nation-states and their borders. People's life trajectories and migration experience may include living certain parts of their life within different nation-states. At times, this could take place in the country where they hold citizenship, and at times their citizenship may change. In this study I have been frequently referred to many compound adjectives: Western Armenian, Syrian Armenian, Diaspora Armenian, Austro-Armenian, Austrian with Armenian roots, Apostolic, Turkish citizen but Armenian, French-German-Armenian becoming Austrian, just to mention some. I cherish these examples, because it encourages us and, more accurately, it challenges me to think of the category Armenian in multiple ways. It reminds me of the importance of self-adscription and of fluidity. Moreover, whenever I might find myself with the task of "defining the subject of study" and play along with certain established categories, these examples come as a refreshing breeze. People are born at a given place, but their trajectories in or outside that place may include other identities which, as anthropologists, we need to acknowledge and be sensible to.

Therefore, for this research project the participants are those who describe themselves as Armenian—regardless of their nationality or passport, regardless of distance or proximity to Mount Ararat¹³⁹—and who engage in transnational interactions and networks.

During the Soviet era, Armenia was supported by a strong centralized state and became a highly developed Soviet republic. When the USSR collapsed, so did the foundations of the Armenian economy. Currently, it is a country with few resources to develop income-generating activities

¹³⁹ Mount Ararat is a powerful symbol of Armenian identity, although it is presently in Turkish territory.

such as tourism or communication industries. More than half of the Republic of Armenia's population lives outside its borders. Financial remittances play a key role to support relatives directly or for entrepreneurial ventures. In the period of 2005-2015, financial support received accounted for an average of 17 percent of Armenia's GDP (World Bank 2016). These reasons, in combination with others, and with an existing trend around the world, account for the creation of policies and programs that reach out to diaspora communities (IOM 2013).

Across the globe, some states are taking steps to engage with their populations abroad in a different scope and nature: in India, a special category has been established for non-resident Indians; the Philippines have a contributory health insurance system for insuring migrant workers abroad; Ecuador has established migrant members of parliament to voice the needs of Ecuadorian migrants. The call for diasporas has different intentions, and it is likely that the need for financial resources for subsistence and local development are key motives behind the Armenian state's diaspora outreach strategies. In Armenia, the Ministry of Diaspora manages a number of programs and affairs, including but not limited to dual citizenship, education, culture, language, Armenian studies, tradition, sport, health, and some development work. The Department of Pan-Armenian Programs is primarily in charge of coordinating the implementation of such programs with other instances, such as Armenian diaspora organizations as well as international and domestic organizations (Ministry of Diaspora 2016). On a general level, there is a strong emphasis on cultivating and preserving Armenian identity abroad. In this sense, this official state channel serves a more symbolic engagement among diaspora Armenians and the homeland.

One of the most significant ways in which the diaspora in Vienna—a wealthy city in comparison to Armenia in general—engages with the homeland is through remittances, including financial as well as *social remittances* (Levitt 1998). Financial remittances are sums of money intended to directly cover subsistence needs of relatives in Armenia, or towards supporting the source of income of relatives such as businesses. Social remittances, which can go in both directions, refer to the spread of mindsets and ideas on how things ought to be done, such as the notions of development and modernity. Appadurai (1996) terms these ideoscapes, as part of a dimension of "modernity at large". Looking at it this way, it is possible to consider that the dominant manifestations of linkages with the homeland are financial transactions. Below the surface, however, and perhaps in intrinsic interconnection with the financial aspect, lies the affective connection towards the people in Armenia. In short, although the motivations to engage in a transnational relation with Armenia are many, financial reasons play a dominant role for state-led initiatives (Levitt 2003). However, affection and the responsibility to care are the reasons behind why individual people send remittances.

The case of Armenian migration evidences clear and multiple instances of transnational ties, namely "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders" (Vertovec 2009). The existing transnational ties among Armenians "here and there" include the intense flow of volunteers and diaspora tourism from around the world, as

well as financial remittances, co-development projects, and cultural ventures. All of these display the complex multi-directional flow of cultural influences in the (re)making of ethnic identity as well as the challenges of providing care for relatives "back home". Additionally, the low cost of phone calls and the availability of internet allows an intensified daily communication between migrants and non-migrants, related by kinship or other ties. Relations such as these reveal the interconnectedness of local, national, and global spheres. Moreover, they invite us to think of different ways of (re)making citizenship across national borders, and of the idea of family as single-sited.

Family

The emic term for family refers to an extended family in this context. Several participants proudly stated how far back they can trace their genealogy and how well they know their aunts, uncles, cousins etc. Ties along kinship lines are tight and rarely broken, even in spite of distances. Social ties across borders are kept alive by a series of exchanges done voluntarily as well as those responding to familial obligations. In general, children and grand-children have an obligation to provide for their elderly in Armenia when required. Extended families include uncles, aunts and cousins, for which better-off relatives have a moral obligation to "help out". Health and maintenance costs are seen as the most fundamental aspects for which relatives abroad should provide, if required. Financial remittances for maintaining or supporting income-generating activities come in second. But it is not only money that circulates from Vienna into Armenia. Social remittances, such as how to take care of one's health, how to speak German, or ideas of the welfare state flow in both directions as well. Parents' affection toward their children and their "sacrifices"—investing in children's education instead of in parent's health, for instance—result in a reciprocal feeling from the children. After young participants narrated how their parents provided for their own parents in Armenia, I asked if they could imagine a similar pattern in the future. All of them answered positively and the word "naturally" was omnipresent. Although this feeling of reciprocity was sometimes referred to as an obligation or responsibility, interview partners highlighted that this was meant in terms of love and recognition of sacrifices made by parents. Similarly, the feeling of helping or supporting other relatives, or in some cases, to very close childhood friends was explained in terms of naturalness and normality.

It comes from the roots; it comes from how you are raised. Since you are a child you learn to give and to receive, you feel required to. For me, it is obvious that a son or daughter is obliged to support his or her parents as best they can. It does not matter in what regard. If it means having them move in with you, or if you have the possibility to support them financially or make time for them, parents or grandparents. One is raised that way. (Berjouhi II002, 2015)

We come from different places, but pray under the same roof

Is there one Armenian community in Vienna? A difficult question to answer, and possibly not the most decisive one. Instead, I have paid attention to how Armenians in Vienna articulate their social networks with other Armenians, keeping in mind that it is also important to let go of the so-called "ethnic lens" (Çağlar, Glick Schiller and Guldbrandsen 2006) and consider migrants' life trajectories in relation to the particularities of the place of settlement, in this case a European capital: Vienna. This aspect has been limited in this research, since the narrowed focus was the impact of migration in today's Republic of Armenia. Therefore, I inquired on how Armenians in Vienna connected to people in Armenia. I am careful to notice that this is the bias of the selection of the topic as well as space and time limitations. Armenians are by no means only relating to Armenians, and their personal as well as collective initiatives cannot be explained by ethnic interaction alone. Keeping this in mind, I return to the idea of an Armenian community¹⁴⁰, and often people referred to it in German as *Gemeinde*, which can be translated as community but also congregation.

Most participants referred to themselves as part of the diaspora, and despite recognizing splits within the collective, maintained that above all they were Armenians abroad. Only Poghos, a young Armenian who arrived in Lower Austria at age seven and now lives in Vienna, made a clear distinction of why he is not a member of the diaspora.

"Diaspora refers to what happened after the genocide. Many Armenians fled to the neighboring countries and established themselves there. They had children and families. Many fled to the United States. Others did not flee, but moved to the United States around ten years ago. [...] Diaspora Armenians are Armenians that were not born in the current Armenia, that did not grow up there. I think that my children will be called diaspora children. But me, well not really, because I was born in Armenia, just like my parents. But the second, or third generation will be seen as diaspora." (Poghos II05, 2015)

In this case, Poghos gives a very personal interpretation of what diaspora means. For him, being born in Armenia is a clear characteristic of being Armenian, and denies the possibility of becoming a diaspora Armenian. Although, as we have seen, the concept of diaspora has varied meanings, the place of birth is not an exclusionary criterion. Poghos also expressed that younger generations born in Austria would not only be diaspora Armenians, but also Austro-Armenians.

The clear distinguishing elements are language and origin, mostly referred to as West Armenians and East Armenians, or Armenian Armenians. Multiple nationalities are also common, such as Syrian-Armenian, Turkish-Armenian and Austro-Armenian, to name a few. For my interviewee Lucineh, national and linguistic belongings are only the background of what really differentiates these groups, namely class. Western Armenians have a much longer trajectory in Vienna; therefore, better established networks, and knowledge of the place and language. Many are owners of flourishing businesses, and have an affluent economic situation. Eastern

¹⁴⁰ In German *Gemeinschaft*.

Armenians, who mostly began migrating as the USSR collapsed, do not all yet have the necessary linguistic and cultural competencies, as well as the social capital of Western Armenians. It is interesting to point out that for the children of those who migrated this will not be necessarily true. This was always mentioned tangentially and as a rather tense subject. From informal conversations with Western Armenians, I could not gather information to cross-check this. Although Lucineh identifies material differences as part of the existing differentiations within Armenians in Vienna, she ascribes herself to the diaspora and refers to the differences and similarities of the collective as follows: "*We are all Armenians. We come from different countries, but in church we speak the same language and pray under the same roof.*" (Lucineh II003, 2015) As with many collectives, feelings and expressions around a single collectivity are ambivalent: there are differences, yet there is a sense of unity.

Channels of engagement

There are as many ways to engage with the homeland as there are individuals that comprise this heterogeneous diaspora. In general terms, Western Armenians¹⁴¹ directly interviewed, and references of Western Armenian practices have a more symbolic and cultural connection, as they are part of the old diasporic community. They were referred as the "best" Armenians, and keepers of tradition and history. They engage in pushing political and human rights causes, such as the recognition of the 1915 genocide. If means are available, they often travel to Armenia within organized tours, frequently arranged by diaspora organizations; part of these are the volunteer programs which link diaspora Armenians to people and projects in Armenia (see Biassetto, Mautner and Jakoubek in this volume). Eastern Armenians who still have relatives and friends in Armenia do not make use of these channels and rather communicate directly within their already existing social networks and kinship ties. This is primarily done via communication technologies such as Skype, WhatsApp, Viber and Facebook. The Armenian diaspora, not only in the German-speaking world but all around the world, is very active online and there are several hundred groups aligned with Armenian topics such as music, folklore, news, sports, diaspora, and international programs. All interview partners made reference to these virtual channels to connect with people in Armenia. For Berjouhi, the communication is a daily practice and includes German-language training for younger relatives via WhatsApp—an example of social remittances. Both Eastern and Western Armenians, but mostly the former, engage with events in Armenia by listening to or watching the news in Armenian either via websites or Armenian television and radio. For both the recognition of their identity and practice of their faith is a sign for their constant engagement with the homeland at a distance.

¹⁴¹ Given the limited span and scope of this study I am not differentiating within Western Armenians those who have recently arrived, from Turkey for instance, or those who have a longer history in Vienna. Although important and problematic, there is no space to make all the distinctions in this article.

Almost one fifth of the Republic of Armenia's GDP comes from financial remittances (World Bank 2014; 2016). The amount of foreign investment actually carried out by the Armenian diaspora is uncertain. The money is directed towards several sectors: East Armenians' remittances tend to cover basic needs or health emergencies, at times small-scale businesses such as a taxi cab or a home businesses. Western Armenian's funds are often channeled via charity diaspora organizations and go to development projects as well as incentives to cover basic needs, too, and to fight poverty. It is also important to notice that diaspora Armenians invest in regular businesses in Armenia, such as real estate and supermarkets and, therefore, also have financial benefits of this kind of relation with the homeland. Zhirayr is rather critically of how some of the money channeled by organizations is invested: "*They collect money, lots of it, and build new churches in Armenia. Although there is no running water in the very same village, although people live in poverty. So, they could invest that money better, for instance in small businesses and think more sustainably.*" (Zhirayr II001, 2015)

Conclusion

Based on my fieldwork in Vienna, there is definitely an articulation of Armenians of different origins who identify themselves and recognize each other as diaspora Armenians. As most collectives, they do not agree on every front and cannot be easily generalized into a single category. They belong to different national, social, economic, political, and even religious groups, but still can find something in common: being Armenian. In the recent past, differences among Eastern and Western Armenians have not brought about any significant conflict and remain underneath the surface. It is clear that for new generations the differences are fewer and fewer, consequently Western or Eastern Armenian becomes a less relevant category and makes way for Austro-Armenian identification.

However, this study focused on how (predominantly Eastern) Armenians engage and care for the homeland. In this regard, it was evident that the use of Armenian formal channels (institutions) was almost non-existent. The feelings of distrust in the state and its institutions is strong, and not without reason. For the informants, it is clear that the best way to guarantee the social protection of those they care for is to take the responsibility into their own hands: to send money directly, to bring medicine and other goods in their own suitcase, or to send them with family members or friends. Also of importance is the lived experience most East Armenians have with Armenian identity and culture, which can explain why they do not need a formal channel to symbolically connect with Armenia. The frequent referral of the naturalness and obviousness of the children's and grand-children's responsibility for the well-being and social protection of parents and elders serves as clear evidence of this notion. Overall, Eastern Armenians have direct kinship links with Armenia and send material goods as well as financial and social remittances to sustain or improve the living conditions of their loved ones. Ancestors of Western Armenians, having left the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire over a century ago, rarely hold direct kinship ties within todays Republic of Armenia, which is why

formal institutions, such as faith-based organizations, NGOs, or state channels, function as mediators in facilitating this collective's engagement in caring for Armenia. Thus, both formal and informal channels of engagement are used to guarantee the social protection of people in Armenia. At times, this is facilitated by the state. Nevertheless, they are primarily funded, coordinated, and implemented by individuals and collectives of civil society. Following neo-liberal shifts in governance, the state is retreating from some responsibilities and making way for individual self-organization and responsibility.

The scope of this project did not allow an in-depth analysis of the Armenian state and organizational initiatives to link the diaspora with the homeland. These initiatives are indeed taking place and are an interesting line to continue research to contrast with individual strategies.

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Interviews

Names and other details have been adapted to guarantee the anonymity of informants who requested it.

Bedros. Male. 46. Vienna, 2015. (KI001)

Berjouhi. Female. 36. Vienna, 2015. (II002)

Lucineh. Female. 23. Vienna, 2015. (II003)

Mariam. Female. 55. Vienna, 2015. (II004)

Poghos. Male. 24. Vienna, 2015. (II005)

Zhirayr. Male. 25. Vienna, 2015. (II006)

Integration in die "Heimatgesellschaft" nach der Remigration: Hilfsorganisationen und Fallanalysen in Yerevan

Anna Mautner

Abstract

The return of emigrants or diaspora Armenians to the so called "homeland" were the key issue of a two weeks' field research in Yerevan. High emigration - especially to Russia or the US - cause problems for this small country. But many so-called returnees, who come back and try a restart in their former "homeland" are hopeful and positive. Various NGOs and NPOs in Armenia provide this support. Using different strategies many relief agencies attempt to assist voluntary returnees to realize a successful (re-) integration. Simultaneously they try to counter the high emigration rates from Armenia. Based on interviews and informal conversations with representatives of different relief agencies and with returnees, the mission statements of these organisations, their support programmes as well as the experiences of returnees were analysed. This research shows that a social network is of tremendous importance both for one's well-being and for the successful establishment of one's own business.

Zusammenfassung

Die Rückkehr von EmigrantInnen oder ArmenierInnen aus der Diaspora in das sogenannte "Heimatland" stand im Fokus einer zweiwöchigen Feldforschung in Yerevan. Eine hohe Auswanderung vor allem nach Russland und in die USA stellen große Probleme für das kleine Land dar. RückkehrerInnen, die in ihrer "Heimat" (wieder) einen Neustart wagen, zeigen sich hoffnungsvoll und positiv. Unterstützt wird eine nachhaltige (Re-)Integration durch diverse NGOs und NPOs. Nachfolgender Beitrag ist das Ergebnis von Interviews und informellen Gespräche mit VertreterInnen verschiedener Hilfsorganisationen und RückkehrerInnen. Einzelne Erfahrungsberichte, Organisationsleitbilder sowie Rückkehr-Hilfsprojekte wurden analysiert. Diese Forschung zeigt, dass ein soziales Netzwerk sowohl für das eigene Wohlbefinden als auch die Etablierung einer eigenen Firma von großer Bedeutung ist.

Einleitung

"There may be over 250 people leaving a day, but I am most definitely not one of them. I have come home to stay."¹⁴²

¹⁴² <http://repatarmenia.org/en/engage/inspiration/a/tamar-najarian>

Tamar Najarian ist eine aufgeweckte und fröhliche junge Frau, die in Kanada geboren und im Jahr 2013 aus der dortigen armenischen Diaspora in ihr "Heimatland" Armenien zurückgekehrt ist. Tamars Beitrag auf der *Repat Armenia* Webseite klingt euphorisch. Repat Armenia ist eine Organisation in Yerevan, die es sich nicht nur zur Aufgabe gemacht hat, Diaspora-ArmenierInnen zurück zu holen, sondern jegliche RückkehrerInnen nach Armenien zu unterstützen (vgl. Interview A.) Sie veröffentlicht auf der internen Homepage zahlreiche positive Beispiele über das Leben in Armenien, die Rückkehr in das "Mutterland" von Diaspora-ArmenierInnen und das oft lang ersehnte Zugehörigkeitsgefühl, welches in der armenischen "Heimat" entsteht. Zugleich ist es allerdings auch ein wenig verwirrend, ist man doch bereits nach kurzer Recherche über Armenien mit den hohen Emigrationszahlen, den schwierigen ökonomischen Bedingungen des armenischen Staates und den Konfliktbeziehungen zu den Nachbarstaaten Aserbaidschan und Türkei konfrontiert (vgl. Johansson 2008: 3ff). "*...it's mostly a kind of black and rosy picture of Armenia. Either a lot of bad news from Armenia or a lot of super positive (...) So our task is to develop realistic expectations of Armenia (...).*" (Interview A.)

Diese Kontroverse zwischen positiven und negativen Bildern von, in und über Armenien ist nicht nur klar im Land erkennbar, sondern wird auch in mehreren Artikeln dieses Sammelbandes diskutiert. Der Hauptfokus dieser Arbeit liegt auf der Remigration nach Armenien und den diversen Unterstützungsangeboten, welche die (neu) Angekommenen im Land beim (Re-)Integrationsprozess unterstützen. Da die hier diskutierten Unterstützungsangebote für Remigration nur für sogenannte freiwillige RückkehrerInnen gelten, werden abgeschobene AsylwerberInnen, die wieder nach Armenien kommen, nicht näher thematisiert.

Im Zuge dieser Forschung wurden folgende Fragen aufgeworfen: Welche Herangehensweisen werden im Bereich der Rückkehrhilfe nach Armenien von diversen Organisationen gewählt? Wie gestalten sich ideelle und materielle Hilfen? Welche direkten Auswirkungen haben diese auf RückkehrerInnen?

Anhand verschiedener (Re-)Integrationsbeispiele, basierend auf Recherchen und Interviews mit betroffenen RückkehrerInnen sowie den Organisationen selbst, konnte eine Fallanalyse erstellt werden. Nach einer kurzen Darlegung der Forschungsmethoden werden die verwendeten Begrifflichkeiten kurz definiert. Der derzeitige wissenschaftliche Forschungsstand wird dargestellt und in einem empirischen Hauptteil, in welchem Hilfsorganisationen und RückkehrerInnen kurz vorgestellt werden, wird die Forschungsfrage abgehandelt und das empirische Material entsprechend analysiert.

In der Vorbereitungsphase für dieses Feldpraktikum wurde zunächst Literatur zum Thema Remigration/ Rückmigration und sozioökonomische Transformationsprozesse in Armenien recherchiert. Auch einige Feldstudien und statistische Auswertungen hinsichtlich der zurück-führenden Migrationsströme wurden für diese Arbeit herangezogen (vgl. Johansson 2008; Tadevosyan 2014 und IOM 2009). So gelang es, einen guten Überblick über Forschungsansätze einerseits und mögliche Anlaufstellen für die empirische Datenerhebung in Armenien

andererseits zu erhalten. Die Informationen aus besagter Literatur waren eine wichtige Grundlage für die Formulierung der Forschungsfrage und die Erstellung des Forschungsdesigns.

Im Zuge der empirischen Datenerhebung in Yerevan wurden leitfadenorientierte ExpertInnen-interviews mit Organisationen sowie Interviews mit RückkehrerInnen durchgeführt. Neben Verantwortlichen und MitarbeiterInnen der Organisationen *Repat Armenia*, IOM (Internationale Organisation für Migration), *Armenian Caritas*, PIN (*People in Need*) und *Hope & Help*, welche zahlreiche Auskünfte zu (Rück-)Migration in Armenien und den Unterstützungsleistungen gaben, konnten auch vier RückkehrerInnen zu ihren Erfahrungen befragt werden. Insgesamt wurden acht Interviews mit fünfzehn Personen geführt. Die Interviewsprache war Englisch. Lediglich bei drei Organisationen (*Armenian Caritas*, *People In Need*, *Hope & Help*) wurden wichtige Informationen von einzelnen MitarbeiterInnen in Armenisch weitergegeben. Aufgrund fehlender armenischer Sprachkenntnisse, waren wir auf die jeweils organisationsintern zur Verfügung gestellten Übersetzerinnen angewiesen¹⁴³. Für den Analyseprozess wurden wichtige Interviewstellen aufnahmegerettet transkribiert, Themenkategorien erstellt und analysiert. Im Zuge der Kategorisierung der empirischen Daten war stets eine Rückkoppelung mit der Theorie und der Fragestellung gegeben. Anhand dieser Kategorien konnten auch Inhaltsschwerpunkte herausgearbeitet werden, welche unter anderem mit informellen Gesprächen oder persönlichen Eindrücken verglichen und in der späteren Verschriftlichung hervorgehoben werden konnten (vgl. Mayring 2002).

Definitionen und Verankerung der Forschung

Der Hauptfokus dieses Beitrags liegt auf der sogenannten Rückmigration nach Armenien. ExpertInnen der Internationale Organisation für Migration (IOM) verstehen unter RemigrantInnen sowohl diejenigen ArmenierInnen, welche aufgrund von ökonomischen, medizinischen, sozialen oder anderen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen das Land zunächst verlassen haben und schließlich wieder permanent nach Armenien zurückkommen, als auch ZuwanderInnen, welche in der Diaspora geboren wurden, zum Teil dort aufgewachsen sind und in das "Heimatland" (zurück-) migrieren. (Siehe auch Paredes und Biassetto in diesem Band). Im nachfolgenden Beitrag werden beide Personengruppen als RückkehrerInnen bezeichnet.

Der Begriff "RückkehrerInnen" beziehen sich auf alle Personengruppen, welche freiwillig aus dem Ausland nach Armenien (zurück-)kehren. Der Begriff (Re-)Integration wird in vorliegender Form verwendet, da nur ein Teil der RückkehrerInnen tatsächlich zurückkommen, während Diaspora-ArmenierInnen, vor allem jene der zweiten oder dritten Generation, ihren Lebensmittelpunkt stets außerhalb Armeniens hatten und ihre Rückkehr ins "Heimatland" als

¹⁴³ An dieser Stelle geht ein großes Dankeschön an meine Kollegin Jakoubek, welche mit mir zusammen Gesprächsleitfäden erstellt und Interviews durchgeführt hat sowie an die GesprächspartnerInnen selbst, welche sich viel Zeit für unsere Fragen genommen und uns damit eine Vielzahl an Informationen zur Verfügung gestellt haben.

eher symbolisch angesehen werden muss. Die in diesem Artikel untersuchten Unterstützungsprogramme seitens diverser Organisationen in Armenien fokussieren auf die Freiwilligkeit der Rückkehr.¹⁴⁴

Neben der im Beitrag behandelten "freiwilligen" Rückkehr gibt es auch eine sogenannte "unfreiwillige" Rückkehr. Die Grundlage für die Unterscheidung beider Kategorien orientiert sich hier an den Aussagen der Internationalen Organisation für Migration (IOM). Somit gelten alle Personen als freiwillige RückkehrerInnen, welche nicht mit Flüchtlingsstatus einreisen oder von anderen Ländern abgeschoben wurden. Eben jener Zielgruppe der freiwilligen RückkehrerInnen widmet sich die nachfolgende Analyse. Für unfreiwillig Zurückgekehrte greifen sowohl im Ausland wie auch in Armenien selbst andere, hier nicht diskutierte Hilfsmaßnahmen für eine (Re-)Integration (vgl. Interview B.).

Im Rahmen einer kleinen Forschung wie dieser und mit lediglich kurzem Aufenthalt im Feld ist es nicht möglich, alle Aspekte des komplexen Gefüges der Rückkehr abzudecken. Dieser Artikel soll und kann lediglich unterschiedliche Herangehensweisen von ausgewählten und kooperationsbereiten Hilfsorganisationen in Yerevan aufzeigen sowie individuelle Rückkehrerfahrungen einzelner RückkehrerInnen analysieren.

Forschungsstand und ausgewählte Zugänge

Weder Remigration nach Armenien noch Armenien als Emigrationsland sind Forschungsdesiderata. Zahlreiche Studien und Projektevaluierungen, zumeist aus dem europäischen Raum, sowie wissenschaftliche Beiträge bezüglich Migration, Rückkehr, Eingliederung und Integration sind als Printmedien und vor allem online verfügbar. Dennoch ist es schwierig, aktuelle und verlässliche Daten über Immigration und Emigration in Armenien zu erhalten. Dieses Manko wird sowohl in diverser Literatur wie auch in ExpertInneninterviews kritisch diskutiert und als ein Versäumnis der Regierung dargestellt. Weder in der Vergangenheit noch gegenwärtig werden ausreichende Erhebungen durchgeführt, beziehungsweise Daten hierzu veröffentlicht (vgl. Johansson 2008: 1ff und Interview B.). Dies erschwert eine genaue Analyse und Evaluierung der angebotenen (Re-) Integrationshilfen.

Migrationsorientierte Einrichten wie CARIM EAST (Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration), IOM (Internationale Organisation für Migration) oder C.R.I.S (Cross-Regional Information System on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin) bieten mithilfe von EU-geförderten Projekten Datenerhebungen und darauf basierende Unterstützungskonzepte für nachhaltige Rückkehr sowie Prävention der erneuten Emigration aus Armenien in ein anderes Land an (vgl. Chobanyan 2013 und Fleischer 2012). "(...)" an

¹⁴⁴Nur in seltenen Fällen können Organisationen wie die Internationale Organisation für Migration (IOM) oder People in Need (PIN) Unterstützung für "unfreiwillige" RückkehrerInnen anbieten (vgl. Interview B. und H.)

estimated 7000 people have migrated to Europe between 2002 and 2005. The majority are specialists with university degrees, between 21 and 50 years (...)" (Johansson 2008: 8).

Der armenische Wissenschaftler Aghasi Tadevosyan stellt in einer seiner Publikationen statistisches Datenmaterial zur Verfügung, welches für die vorliegende Forschungsarbeit von hoher Relevanz ist:

"According to some studies, more than 106,000 people have left Armenia in only the last two years, which is 4% of the country's population (Mikaelyan 2013). Migration has dual significance for Armenia. The negative side of migration is that it deprives the country of its more able and employable demographic. More than 82% of migrants are 20–54 years old (Minasyan & Poghosyan 2008, 13). The vast majority of these, approximately three quarters, are men. Among the migrants, 55.7% have received general secondary school education, 16.1% have received specialized secondary education, and 18.7% have received a higher education." (Tadevosyan 2014: 15f)

Diese drastische Abwanderung ist hauptsächlich ökonomisch bedingt. Eine schwache Wirtschaft und fehlendes Vertrauen in die Regierung veranlasst zur Emigration - so auch im vergangenen Jahrzehnt. Eine derart hohe Abwanderung lässt nicht nur große Probleme innerhalb einer Gesellschaft entstehen, sondern zeigt auch auf, wo nachhaltige Unterstützung ansetzen muss, vor allem auch hinsichtlich jener ArmenierInnen, welche aus dem Ausland zurück nach Armenien kommen (vgl. Chobanyan 2012, Johansson 2008: 3ff und Tadevosyan 2014:15ff). Wieder angekommen in Armenien, sehen sich die RückkehrerInnen zunächst verstärkt mit den wirtschaftlichen Problemen des Landes, vor allem mit der hohen Arbeitslosigkeit konfrontiert. Bereiche wie Unterkunft, medizinische Versorgung sowie (sprachliche) Aus- und Weiterbildung unter anderem für Kinder, oder die Beschaffung gültiger Dokumente stellt RückkehrerInnen, bleiben sie auf sich alleine gestellt, zudem vor schier unüberwindbare Aufgaben (vgl. Yeganyan 2013: 3ff). Hier setzen diverse Hilfsorganisation an und versuchen eine nachhaltige Wiedereingliederung zu gestalten (vgl. Johansson 2008: 1ff). Als Grundlage dieses Beitrags dienen theoretische Ansätze zu nachhaltiger (Re-)Integration, insbesondere die Ausführungen von Alice Johansson (2008). Sie spricht von einem drei-Stufen-Modell, entlang welchem sich erfolgreiche und nachhaltige Rückkehrhilfe und (Re-)Integrationsarbeit idealerweise zu orientieren hat.

Laut Johansson (2008: 14ff) stellt die wirtschaftliche Integration den wichtigsten Faktor für eine erfolgreiche und nachhaltige Wiedereingliederung dar. Um diese wirtschaftliche Integration zu ermöglichen, muss eine eigenständige Versorgung durch gerechtes, ausreichendes und beständiges Einkommen für RückkehrerInnen gewährleistet werden, wodurch zwangsläufig ein besserer Zugang zu medizinischen oder bildungsorientierten Angeboten in Armenien entsteht.

Als zweitwichtigste Stufe sieht Johansson die sozialen Kontakte. Die Autorin spricht hier die Bedeutung eines Netzwerks an lokal verankerten UnterstützerInnen an, welche auch als InformantInnen im Hinblick auf (Re-)Integration dienen können. FreundInnen in unmittelbarer

Umgebung sind sowohl für den sozialen Austausch als auch für die Freizeitgestaltung und Erholung wichtig (vgl. Johansson 2008: 19ff).

Als dritte Stufe der (Re-)Integration wird die psychosoziale Ebene genannt. Die Grundbedürfnisse wie beispielsweise eine Wohnung und Nahrung gewährleistet zu wissen hilft, Ängsten und Unsicherheiten entgegenzuwirken. Eine weitere Entlastung des psychischen Drucks, zumeist ausgelöst durch die Rückkehrerfahrung, stellt die weitreichende Beratung und Betreuung, sowohl seitens der Organisationen, als auch des sozialen Netzwerks dar. RückkehrerInnen könnten sich mithilfe breitgreifender und vielschichtiger Unterstützung im Remigrationsprozess sicher, zu Hause angekommen und angenommen fühlen (vgl. Johansson 2008: 22ff).

Letztendlich findet nachhaltige (Re-)Integration der zurückgekehrten ArmenierInnen nur statt, wenn der Staat und die Gesellschaft es schaffen, die wirtschaftliche Lage zu stabilisieren um einerseits eine gute Grundlage für JungunternehmerInnen zu bilden und andererseits durch ökonomisches Wachstum Arbeitsplätze zu sichern (siehe Jakoubek in diesem Band). Davon profitieren sowohl die RückkehrerInnen aus dem Ausland, als auch die lokale Bevölkerung, wodurch einer (erneuten) Emigration aktiv entgegengewirkt werden kann (vgl. Chobanyan 2013; Johansson 2008).

Hilfsorganisationen und RückkehrerInnen in Yerevan

Im Zuge der empirischen Erhebungen wurden VertreterInnen von fünf Hilfsorganisationen mit Sitz in Yerevan interviewt. Diese führten Projekte durch, die eine nachhaltige Wiedereingliederung von RückkehrerInnen unterstützen. Schon in der Vorbereitungsphase dieser empirischen Forschung wurden zahlreiche Hilfsorganisationen kontaktiert.

Der vorliegende Beitrag soll sowohl Konzepte und Schwerpunkte der Hilfe seitens der Organisationen darlegen, als auch die interviewten ArmenierInnen mit Rückkehrerfahrung vorstellen. Ziel ist es aufzuzeigen, wer Unterstützung geben kann, wo diese ansetzt, wie weit sie reicht und wie diese von den zu unterstützenden Personen tatsächlich an- und wahrgenommen wurde und wird. Der zeitlich begrenzte Feldaufenthalt ermöglichte es nur einen Teil eines breit gefächerten Spektrums von Altersgruppen, Bildungsschichten sowie Emigrationsmotiven abzudecken. So konnten ausschließlich junge (ca. 25-35 Jahre), gut ausgebildete, freiwillige RückkehrerInnen interviewt werden. Dieser erste Einblick und die darauf zurückgehenden Erkenntnisse können allerdings als erste Ansätze für weitere Forschungen verwendet werden.

Repat Armenia

Seit 2012 bietet *Repat Armenia* als NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) und NPO (Non-Profit Organisation) RückkehrerInnen Unterstützung im (Re-)Integrationsprozess an. Die Hilfe basiert hier nicht, wie bei vielen anderen Organisationen, auf finanziellen Mitteln oder der

Unterstützung zur Sicherung der grundlegenden Bedürfnisse (Wohnung, medizinische Versorgung et cetera, vgl. Interview B.), sondern auf einem breiten Netz an "know how". Das heißt, Informationen über Armenien werden weitergegeben, die vorherrschenden Rechtsgrundlagen und die Arbeitsmarktsituation werden erklärt und ein breites soziales Netzwerk wird angeboten, worüber sich Zurückgekehrte intern vernetzen können. Die eingerichtete Vernetzungsplattform kann auch zum Bewerben der eigene Start-ups genutzt werden. Den Prozess der (Re-)Integration nennt die Organisation selbst "repatriation", die RückkehrerInnen "repatriots" (vgl. Interview A.).

Die gut strukturierte Website von *Repat Armenia* hebt drei wichtige Prinzipien der Unterstützungsarbeit bei Rückmigration nach Armenien hervor: "*At Repat Armenia, we concentrate on three major principles revolving around promoting the concept of repatriation, providing individual integration support and influencing government policies to develop a pro-repatriation environment in Armenia*"¹⁴⁵.

Der Zuspruch und die Annahme dieser Angebote ist immens (vgl. Interviews C., D., F.). Es entwickelten sich laut Aussagen zweier Interviewpartnerinnen sogar enge freundschaftliche Beziehungen untereinander (vgl. Interview C.).

IOM in Yerevan

Auch die Internationale Organisation für Migration (IOM) betreibt ein Büro in Yerevan. Gerade in Armenien, wo Migrationsströme sowohl in das Land, also auch aus dem Land heraus besonders stark sind, wird diese Einrichtung benötigt. Im Interview werden die fehlenden offiziellen statistischen Daten im Hinblick auf Ein- und Auswanderungszahlen betont und auf die Regierungsebene verwiesen, welche zukünftig dahingehend eine Veränderung veranlassen sollte (vgl. Interview B.). Diese Aussagen decken sich mit dem in der Literatur angesprochenen Versäumnis speziell der Regierung in Armenien, Daten zur Migration (Emigration, Immigration, Remigration et cetera) zur Verfügung zu stellen (vgl. Fleischer 2012). IOM erhebt allerdings selbst Daten zur Rückmigration, welche sich aus den diversen internen sowie länderübergreifenden Rückkehr-Angeboten und Förderungen ergeben haben.

"Since 1994 IOM missions in West and Central European states have assisted more than 5,000 migrants who returned to Armenia. Typically, potential returnees are referred to IOM by authorities of the host country, such as the immigration service, local asylum centres, or NGOs. The assistance provided to returnees ranges from return assistance which includes pre-departure information and counselling and the organization of voluntary return, to schemes that include help with long-term reintegration and economic viability of the migrants once they are back in their countries of origin." (IOM 2009: 2)

Neben diesen angesprochenen Unterstützungen kann IOM auch finanzielle Aushilfen, diverse Weiterbildungen und ein breites Vernetzungsangebot zur Verfügung stellen. Der Anspruch auf

¹⁴⁵<http://repatarmenia.org/en/home>

Ersteres wird im Einzelnen geprüft. Die Hilfe bei der Rückmigration wurde im sogenannten Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) Programm als nur eine von zahlreichen Aufgaben der IOM festgeschrieben (vgl. IOM 2009 und Interview B.).

Caritas Armenia in Yerevan

Gegründet wurde die Einrichtung der *Caritas Armenia* im Jahr 1995 in Gyumri, der zweitgrößten Stadt Armeniens im Nordwesten des Landes. Mittlerweile existieren mehrere Zweigstellen im Land, so auch eine in Yerevan. Die *Caritas Armenia* verfügt über ein sehr breites Spektrum an Hilfsprogrammen, welche sich auch an RückkehrerInnen richten. Sie versucht alle Bereiche der Rückkehr, von Unterkunft über Möbel, medizinische Versorgung, Sprachkurse oder Arbeitsplätze mit ihrem Betreuungsangebot sowie mit finanziellen Aushilfen abzudecken und berät RückkehrerInnen über Immigration, Emigration sowie den damit verbundenen Folgen. Finanziert werden die diversen (Re-)Integrationsprojekte der *Caritas Armenia* von verschiedenen internationalen Caritaseinrichtungen und auch Regierungen einzelner europäischer Länder wie beispielsweise Liechtenstein und Belgien (vgl. Interview E.).

Hope & Help

Maria Shatvoryan, eine langjährige Mitarbeiterin der Non-Profit-Organisation *Hope & Help* stellte zu Beginn des Interviews die Einrichtung vor. *"The organisation was started in 1998 with a group of doctors and physicians. (...) We started to work with sex workers first. (...) Then since 2003, the human trafficking issue started in the country. (...) And then, of course, we started to work with the Germans - the "Heimatgarten" project."* (Interview G.);

Mit dem angesprochenen Projekt "Heimatgarten" (2006-2012), welches von der Europäischen Kommission finanziert wurde, konnte die Organisation, die sich ansonsten hauptsächlich auf von Menschenhandel betroffene Personen und Gewaltpatienten konzentriert, insgesamt 20 Parteien bei der Beschaffung gültiger Dokumente, der Unterbringung und grundlegenden Wohnausstattung, bei der medizinischen Versorgung sowie bei Sprach- und Berufstrainings unterstützen. Vereinzelt wurden sogar finanzielle Unterstützungen für Firmengründungen ermöglicht (vgl. Interview G.).

People in Need (PIN)

Die tschechische humanitäre Organisation *People in Need (PIN)* wurde bereits 1992 gegründet und existiert in 18 Ländern weltweit (vgl. Interview H.). *"The very beginning of humanitarian assistance provided by the Czech Republic and specifically by People in Need was in Armenia. In 1988, the northwest of the country was hit by a devastating earthquake that killed tens of thousands of people. As a result, a group of students in Prague organized a public collection that stirred up a huge public response. Fifty tonnes of materials were shipped to Armenia and"*

a core group of people was created whose members were later present at the birth of People in Need." ¹⁴⁶

2003 wurde dann, ausgehend von dieser humanitären Bewegung der späten 1980er Jahre, der Standort der Organisation PIN in Armenien gegründet. Die damalige Arbeit gestaltete sich ebenfalls primär entlang humanitärer Katastrophenhilfe in Armenien. Bis heute ist dieser Bereich, neben der Dokumentation von Menschenrechtsverletzungen sowie der Integrationsarbeit ein Hauptfokus der Organisation. Seit 2009 gibt es auch Projekte, welche die Rückkehr und Etablierung der als ArbeitsmigrantInnen ins Ausland abgewanderten RückkehrerInnen in den armenischen Arbeitsmarkt fördern. *People in Need* bietet Orientierungsveranstaltungen, Kurse für Unternehmensgründungen und -führungen sowie vereinzelt sogar Zuschüsse als Startguthaben für den Aufbau einer eigenen Firma an. Gefördert werden diese Maßnahmen in erster Linie von der Europäischen Union (vgl. Interview H.).

RückkehrerInnen und deren Geschichte

Während der Feldforschung in Yerevan wurden nicht nur Hilfsorganisationen im Bereich der (Re-)Integration von RückkehrerInnen befragt, sondern auch einzelne Personen mit eigener Rückkehrerfahrung. Nachfolgende Inhalte setzen sich aus Informationen aus den geführten Interviews und Gesprächen sowie der Selbstdarstellung einzelner InterviewpartnerInnen¹⁴⁷ auf der *Repat Armenia*-Webseite zusammen¹⁴⁸.

Vartan Marashlyan

ist einer der Mitbegründer von *Repat Armenia*. Zu Beginn unseres Interviews stellte er sich selbst wie folgt vor:

"My name is Vartan Marashlyan. I moved to Armenia 2010 from Moscow. So I was born in Armenia but raised in Moscow. I've spent almost 13 years living there and it's my second attempt to move back. (...) And after moving in 2010 I joined the Ministry of Diaspora for two and a half years as a deputy minister. But then, with a group of people (...) we decided to establish an organisation, which is supposed to work on a personal level with potential repatriates. So - both with former citizens of Armenia who left the country and spent quite a lot of time outside, got integrated, became successful and now decided to move back. And those Armenians who never lived in Armenia (...)" (Interview A.).

¹⁴⁶<https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/en/humanitarian-aid/country/armenia> accessed 01.09.2016

¹⁴⁷ Da die betreffenden Personen in diesen Webseiten nicht anonymisiert sind, wird hier auch auf die Anonymisierung verzichtet, beziehungsweise waren alle interviewten Personen mit der Nennung ihres vollen Namens einverstanden.

¹⁴⁸ <http://repatarmenia.org/en/home>

Vartan lebt vor, was er als Erfolgsrezept für eine gelungene und nachhaltige Rückkehr nach Armenien betrachtet: nämlich eigene Ideen umsetzen, stets Neues lernen, Mut beweisen und hart für das angestrebte Ziel arbeiten (vgl. Interview A.).

Tamar Najarian

ist in Kanada geboren und aufgewachsen, als junge Erwachsene mithilfe der Organisation *Birthright Armenia* erstmals in das "Heimatland" ihrer Familie gereist und als aufstrebende, neugierige und offene Person schließlich nach Yerevan gezogen. Seither ist sie in Armenien zu Hause und laut eigenen Angaben auch beruflich erfolgreich (vgl. Interview A.).

*"I'm still in love with the country. (...) I won't say there are no problems. I won't say there are jobs galore. And then I think of Canada. [In Canada] I spent forever looking for a low-paying job to tide me over (...)."*¹⁴⁹

Anna Avagyan

Bereits vor dem Interview konnten wichtige Informationen über die junge Frau auf der *Repat Armenia*-Website eingeholt werden. Dort wird Anna als eine von zahlreichen RückkehreInnen vorgestellt. *"Anna Avagyan was born in the Syunik region of Armenia and grew up in Yerevan. In 2010 she graduated the Armenian State Pedagogical University and soon after moved to Sochi, Russia. The decision to move was voluntary, as was her return to Armenia."*¹⁵⁰

Annas Auswanderungs- und Rückkehrgeschichte ähnelt der von so vielen anderen RückkehreInnen, welche von *Repat Armenia* betreut und vernetzt werden. Sie beschreibt einen zum Teil beschwerlichen, aber stets erfolgreichen Weg zurück ins "Heimatland Armenien". In einem Interview nennt sie berufliche Probleme, die zunächst ihre Mutter und nach dem Schulabschluss sie selbst zu einem Umzug nach Russland bewegten. Nach vier Jahren kehrte sie zurück. Jetzt arbeitet sie als TouristInnenführerin und finanziert damit den Aufbau ihrer eigene "Aravan Travel Agency". Durch *Repat Armenia*, die die eigene Webseite auch als Werbeplattform für Annas Travel Agency zur Verfügung stellt, konnte sie zudem Freundschaften knüpfen, welche ihr mit Ideen für ihre Firma zur Seite stehen (vgl. Interview C.).

Peno Mishoyan und Aramazt Kalayjian

In Syrien geboren, kam Peno im Jahr 2003 zum ersten Mal nach Armenien. 2005 besuchte er Armenien nochmals, bevor er sich 2009 dazu entschloss, die armenische Staatsbürgerschaft zu beantragen und nach Yerevan zu ziehen.¹⁵¹ Da er bereits internationale Erfahrung im Bereich

¹⁴⁹<http://repatarmenia.org/en/engage/community/a/tamar-najarian> accessed 01.05.2015

¹⁵⁰<http://repatarmenia.org/en/engage/community/a/anna-avagyan> accessed 01.05.2015

¹⁵¹nach Aussagen der IOM-MitarbeiterInnen ist es für BürgerInnen jeglicher Staaten sehr leicht, die armenische Staatsbürgerschaft zu erhalten. Nach Einreichung des Antrags dauert es maximal 6-10 Monate. Für Diaspora-ArmenierInnen, deren Eltern armenische Staatsbürger waren oder sind, ist das Verfahren nochmals vereinfacht. Einwanderung und Einbürgerung wird in Armenien stark gefördert.

"creative design" gesammelt hatte, gründete er 2013, zusammen mit einem weiteren Zuwanderer aus der armenischen Diaspora – Herrn Aramazt Kalayjian – eine eigene Firma namens *Jarakite* und schaffte es so, endgültig in Yerevan "anzukommen" und sich zu verankern (vgl. Interview D.).

Der New Yorker Aramazt Kalayjian, ein guter Freund von Peno Mishoyan und Mitbegründer der Firma Jarakite kam erstmals 2001 nach Armenien. Eigenen Aussagen zufolge, sah er sich bereits in seiner Kindheit mit Vorstellungen vom "Mutterland Armenien" konfrontiert. Diese kamen sowohl von den Eltern, welche selbst noch in Armenien gelebt hatten, als auch von der großen armenischen community in New York, welche ihre Wurzeln und den anhaltenden Bezug zum "Heimatland" stets pflegten und feierten. 2012 zog er schließlich mit seiner Lebenspartnerin nach Yerevan, seinem momentanen Wunsch-Wohnort.

Obwohl beide Männer noch viele Orte auf der Welt erkunden wollen, sehen sie Armenien nicht nur als Teil ihrer Vergangenheit, sondern auch ihrer Zukunft (vgl. Interview D.).

Armenuhi Hakopyan

Armenuhi traf die Entscheidung Armenien zu verlassen nicht selbst. Sie war gerade einmal acht Jahre alt, als ihr Vater als Arbeitsmigrant die Familie nach Russland brachte. Erst nach ihrem Masterabschluss, den sie in Großbritannien absolvierte, kam sie nach Armenien zurück. Obwohl es immer schon ihr Wunsch gewesen war, irgendwann in ihr "Heimatland" zurückzukehren, traf sie die Entscheidung zur Rückkehr dann doch spontan. In Yerevan arbeitet sie nun an einer Universität und einem privaten College als Sprachtrainerin für Englisch und versucht zugleich ihr kleines *talk2me English Caf* zur Anlaufstelle von ArmenierInnen und TouristInnen zu machen. Unterstützt wird sie dabei von *Repat Armenia*, die nicht nur als Team und FreundInnen des Öfteren vorbeikommen, sondern das Café auch online auf ihrer Webseite bewerben (vgl. Interview F.).

RückkehrerInnen und Organisationen

Diese, anhand der geführten Interviews und mithilfe der Webseiten erstellten Kurzprofile zeigen klare gemeinsame Orientierungspunkte auf, welche für eine nachhaltige Wiedereingliederung relevant sind. Durch die persönlichen Gespräche mit Verantwortlichen von (Re-)Integrationsprojekten, den RückkehrerInnen selbst sowie den Hinweisen in der Literatur, lässt sich feststellen, dass es in Armenien durchaus zahlreiche Unterstützungsangebote gibt, vor allem im Hinblick auf ökonomische Faktoren wie Arbeitsplatzbeschaffung und Einkommenssicherung. Die angestrebte Nachhaltigkeit in der Wiedereingliederungsarbeit steigt und fällt demnach primär mit der wirtschaftlichen und finanziellen Stabilisierung der RückkehrerInnen, da fehlende Arbeitsplätze sowie geringe Einkommen als Hauptgründe für eine starke Abwanderung aus Armenien gelten. Mit Ausnahme der von Rückkehrer Vartan Marashlyan gegründeten NGO *Repat Armenia*, welche lediglich Informations- und Vernetzungsarbeit

betreibt, können alle anderen interviewten Organisationen den zu betreuenden Parteien nach eingehender Prüfung des erstellten Firmenkonzepts unterschiedlich hohe Geldsummen für Unternehmensgründungen zur Verfügung stellen. Durch das angeregte und geförderte Wirtschaftswachstum entstehen auch Arbeitsplätze für sowohl weitere RückkehrerInnen, wie auch für die lokale armenische Bevölkerung. Einer erneuten Abwanderung aufgrund wirtschaftlicher Faktoren kann so nachhaltig entgegenwirkt werden.

Die tschechische Organisation *People in Need* (PIN)¹⁵² bietet ausgewählten RückkehrerInnen nach detaillierter Evaluation der Konzepte zur Unternehmensgründung zwischen 3000€ und 10000€ für eine Firmengründung an. Im abgeschlossenen "Reinforcement of Management of Migratory Flows in Armenia Projekt" (2009–2012) konnten dadurch insgesamt 23 Unternehmen gegründet werden (vgl. Interview H.). Laut Aussage der Organisationen existieren viele dieser neu gegründeten Firmen nach wie vor und expandieren zum Teil sogar.

Daten über den Erfolg und die Nachhaltigkeit der (Re-) Integrationshilfen seitens IOM sind nicht öffentlich, sondern nur intern für GeldgeberInnen einzusehen (vgl. Interview B.). Die Organisation *Hope & Help* zog mit ihrem Projekt "Heimatgarten" (2006–2012) eine sehr positive Bilanz hinsichtlich Nachhaltigkeit. Insgesamt konnten 20 nach Armenien zurück migrierte Parteien (Einzelpersonen und Familien) unterstützt und umgerechnet je 2000€ für den Aufbau einer eigenen Firma zur Verfügung gestellt werden (vgl. Interview G.). Diese Tatsachen lassen ein Bild der Nachhaltigkeit in diesem Bereich der Rückkehrförderung und -integration entstehen. Andere Organisationen können hingegen lediglich mit Krediten unterstützen: so kann *Caritas Armenia* für eine Unternehmensgründung zwischen 2000 und 4000 Euro anbieten (vgl. Interview E.). Die angesprochenen Zuschüsse, egal welcher Organisation, sind allerdings nicht für alle BewerberInnen möglich. Darauf wurde in den Gesprächen mehrfach verwiesen. Vor einer Genehmigung der jeweiligen Gelder müssen Unternehmenskonzepte ausgearbeitet werden. Je nach vorhandenem Budget entscheidet ein organisationsinternes Gremium oder Verantwortliche der Förderinstanzen (beispielsweise EU-Länder wie Belgien (*Armenian Caritas*) und Deutschland (*Hope & Help*)) über die Gewährung und Verteilung dieser finanziellen Hilfen. Genau da zeigt sich bereits eine weitere wichtige Frage in Bezug auf die Rückmigration, nämlich wer diese angesprochene Unternehmensförderung finanziert.

Obwohl die Organisation *People In Need* eng mit den vom Staat errichteten regionalen Migration Resource Centers (MRS) zusammenarbeitet, werden die untersuchten Rückkehrprojekte ausschließlich von Europa aus finanziert. Dies ist auch bei den anderen hier vorgestellten finanziell unterstützten (Re-)Integrationsprojekten der Fall.

Für die (interviewten) Hilfsorganisationen ist die Gründung von neuen Firmen lediglich der wünschenswerteste Ausgang der Unterstützung und aufgrund von fehlenden Fördergeldern

¹⁵² <https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/en/humanitarian-aid/country/armenia> accessed 01.09.2016

kann dies nicht allen RückkehrerInnen möglich gemacht werden (vgl. Interview B.). Angebotene Hilfestellung bei der Jobvermittlung oder durch das Bewerbungstraining kommen jedoch allen zu Gute. Selbst wenn RückkehrerInnen die Zuschüsse der Hilfsorganisation für eine eigene Unternehmensgründung nicht erhalten, kann später vom Wissen über den lokalen Arbeitsmarkt und von den erlernten Bewerbungsfähigkeiten profitiert werden (vgl. Interview A. und Interview E.).

Die Unterstützung hinsichtlich ökonomischer Aspekte ist nicht die einzige Art von Hilfestellung, die RückkehrerInnen von Hilfsorganisationen in Armenien erwarten können. Caritas Armenia, Hope and Help wie auch IOM Armenia verfügen über finanzielle Kapazitäten, um bei Mietzahlungen, medizinischer Versorgung, Sprach-, Aus- und Weiterbildung zu unterstützen. Aus den Interviews geht allerdings auch hervor, dass finanzielle Hilfen für Unterkunft und Miete weniger oft benötigt werden, als beispielsweise für Bildung und Sprachförderung. Vor allem diejenigen, welche lange Zeit im Ausland gelebt haben oder gar dort geboren wurden benötigen bei Letzterem vermehrt Unterstützung. Der schlechtere medizinische Standard in Armenien im Vergleich zu beispielsweise Europa ist laut IOM oft sogar der Hauptgrund für eine (oftmals wiederholte) Abwanderung. Aus diesem Grund werden finanzielle Hilfen auch bei medizinischem Versorgungsbedarf gewährleistet (vgl. Interview G.).

Bemerkenswert ist auch die Unterstützung der RückkehrerInnen durch Beratung und Informationsweitergabe bezüglich öffentlich-rechtlichen Gegebenheiten in Armenien, sowie die Vermittlung und Hilfe bei der Herstellung von sozialen Netzwerken (vgl. Interview A.). Letzteres ist die Hauptaufgabe der Organisation *Repat Armenia*, welche RückkehrerInnen nicht mit Geld unterstützt, sondern lediglich Information über Armenien, über rechtliche Grundlagen sowie über Berufs- und Bildungsmöglichkeiten anbietet. *Repat Armenia* kann Interessierten die nötigen Kontakte zu beispielsweise anderen RückkehrerInnen vermitteln, um sich über Probleme oder auch Job- beziehungsweise Firmengründungsmöglichkeiten auszutauschen. Somit können sie das für eine nachhaltige (Re-)Integration nötige soziale Netzwerk zur Verfügung stellen, welches sich auch auf eine verbesserte psychologische Integration auswirken kann (vgl. Interview A.). Die Hilfe bei der Beschaffung gültiger Dokumente ist ebenfalls Teil des *Repat Armenia* Angebots, sowohl vor wie auch nach der Einreise nach Armenien (vgl. Interview G.).

Kritische Reflexionen

Dass die ökonomische (Re-)Integrationsarbeit, speziell die angebotenen Geldleistungen für Unternehmensgründungen nur vereinzelten Zurückgekehrten zu Gute kommen, bietet Anlass zur Kritik am vorherrschenden (Re-)Integrationsmodell in Armenien. Allerdings kann hierfür die fehlende innerstaatliche Kooperation und Inaktivität verantwortlich gemacht werden. Die in diesem Beitrag aufgezeigten finanziellen Unterstützungen bei der Remigration werden vom europäischen Ausland gefördert und sind daher nicht ausreichend für alle Zurückgekehrten. Fehlende offizielle Daten zu Emigration, Rückkehr, erneuter Abwanderung und Nachhaltigkeit

erschweren zudem die Arbeit in diesem Bereich (vgl. Interview B. und Interview G.). Statistiken über die Integration in den armenischen Arbeitsmarkt ohne finanzielle Unterstützung für Unternehmensgründung sind entweder nicht öffentlich zugänglich (siehe IOM) oder existieren nicht. Nach Beendigung eines (Re-)Integrationsprojektes, wie zum Beispiel dem der Organisation *Hope & Help* gibt es oftmals auch keinerlei weiterführende Informationen über den Verbleib der unterstützten Parteien (vgl. Interview G.).

Von sowohl den interviewten VertreterInnen von Organisationen wie IOM, wie auch von den RückkehrerInnen selbst wurden auch die Geldsendungen aus dem Ausland, die sogenannten *remittances*, angesprochen und zum Teil stark kritisiert. Jene Zahlungen, welche für Neubauten – primär für Kirchen und religiöse Zentren – verwendet werden, könnten sinnvoller im Bereich der (Re-)Integrationsarbeit eingesetzt werden. Eine wirtschaftliche Wiedereingliederung und Entwicklung der armenischen Gesellschaft wäre laut Aussagen diverser InterviewpartnerInnen nachhaltiger, wenn Geldsendungen nicht direkt an verwandte Personen gingen, sondern direkt in bestehende Jungunternehmen oder deren Gründung investiert werden würden (vgl. Interview B. und Interview C.).

Ein weiterer Blick auf die gesammelten Interviewdaten zeigt auch, dass es nicht nur Gemeinsamkeiten innerhalb der diversen Aussagen gibt, sondern durchaus auch Widersprüche zu erkennen sind. Anna Avagyan, die junge Armenierin, die vier Jahre in Russland lebte, zurück nach Yerevan kam und nun versucht ihr eigenes Tourismusunternehmen weiter aufzubauen, betont während des gesamten Interviews, dass in Armenien quasi alles möglich sei. Man müsse dafür lediglich hart arbeiten. Laut eigener Aussage investiert sie Ersparnisse und Einkommen zur Gänze in ihre Firma. Somit bleibt wenig Zeit oder Geld für Freizeit und FreundInnen (vgl. Interview C.). Auch Tamar Najarian benötigt mehrere Jobs, um genügend Geld für ihren Lebensunterhalt zu verdienen (vgl. Interview A. und Interview C.). Eben dieser Punkt wird während des Interviews mit Vartan Marashlyan überhaupt nicht angesprochen. Er zeichnet ein äußerst positives Bild der armenischen Lebensverhältnisse für motivierte, arbeitende Menschen. Im Vergleich zur Arbeit in Russland habe man in Armenien einen besseren Lebenskomfort und mehr Zeit, welche man seinen Kindern widmen könne (vgl. Interview A.)

Hier entsteht der Eindruck einer Diskrepanz zwischen den offen angesprochenen Vorteilen eines Lebens in Armenien und dem für viele harten Arbeits- und Lebensalltag, welcher oft nur mit mehreren Einkommensquellen zu meistern ist. Meiner Meinung nach wird auch der Punkt der sozialen Integration in die armenische Gesellschaft von Rückkehr-Hilfsprogrammen vernachlässigt. Soziales Wohlbefinden, zu welchem Freundschaften, Beziehungen, Bekanntschaften und Kontakte gehören, können nicht nur motivierend wirken, die eigenen Ziele und Pläne, auch in wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht durchzuziehen, sondern bieten stets die Möglichkeit, durch Kommunikation und Unterstützung sich selbst und somit ebenso die Umwelt weiter zu entwickeln. Von dieser sozialen und psychosozialen Ebene ist auch in der Literatur zu lesen (vgl. Johansson 2008). Lediglich die Organisation *Repat Armenia* nimmt sich dieser beiden (Re-) Integrationsstufen (vor allem der sozialen und psychologischen Ebene) an.

Repat Armenia ist in Yerevan längst eine etablierte Rückkehr-Hilfsorganisation, welche bereits viele ArmenierInnen, die in ihre "Heimat" zurückgekehrt sind, durch Kontakte und Netzwerke unterstützen konnte. Die zahlreichen Erfolgsgeschichten auf ihrer Webseite sowie die Lobesreden der interviewten RückkehrerInnen (vgl. Interviews C., D., F.) sind Zeugnis dafür. So lobte beispielsweise Aramazt Kalayjian auf der *Repat Armenia*-Webseite die auf Informationen und Vernetzung basierte Unterstützung: "*Those organizations which invite or inspire diasporans [diaspora Armenians] to come to Armenia are imperative. When people have positive experiences in Armenia, it stays with them for a lifetime. (...) We would not be here without such organizations, nor would we be in committed relationships or have a business. (...) [T]he value of relationships created through such organizations and connections is priceless.*"¹⁵³ Andere InterviewpartnerInnen haben den zu Beginn angesprochenen beiden letzten (Re-) Integrationsstufen weitaus weniger Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt.

Conclusio und Ausblick

Die geführten Interviews, sowohl mit Organisationen wie auch mit RückkehrerInnen zeigen, dass durch die neu entstehenden Unternehmen und ausgebildeten beziehungsweise geschulten Arbeitskräfte eine dauerhafte Remigration nach Armenien wirtschaftliche Vorteile für das Land bringen kann. (Re-)Integrationsprojekte, gestützt von EU-Fördermitteln, versuchen auch die hohe Abwanderung aufgrund unter anderem wirtschaftlicher Probleme in Armenien abzubauen. Eine finanzielle Absicherung durch einen Arbeitsplatz und soziale Kontakte beispielsweise zu anderen RückkehrerInnen sind essentielle Faktoren in der nachhaltigen (Wieder-)Eingliederung in die sogenannte "Heimatgesellschaft".

Man könnte zahlreiche angesprochene Punkte noch genauer analysieren und reflektieren. Sowohl die Darstellung Armeniens als "Mutterland" seitens einiger InterviewpartnerInnen sowie der Anspruch an die lokale Bevölkerung, motiviert und hart zu arbeiten, oder der Punkt der Macht- und Entscheidungsfrage (Armenien - EU) hinsichtlich wirtschaftlicher Zuschüsse für JungunternehmerInnen zeigen großes Forschungspotential auf und könnten Anreiz für weitere Projekte sein. Auch die vergleichbar schlechtere medizinische Versorgung in Armenien wird als Abwanderungsgrund vor allem von IOM hervorgehoben und bedarf genauerer Recherche, wenn von Nachhaltigkeit in der (Re-)Integrationsarbeit gesprochen werden soll (vgl. Interview B.).

Dass in den letzten Jahren Unterstützungsprojekte im Bereich der Remigration/Rückmigration sowohl innerhalb der europäischen Gemeinschaft sowie der armenischen Gesellschaft thematisiert und ein verstärkter Fokus auf (Re-)Integrationsarbeit gelegt wurde, zeigen die zahlreichen Projekte, welche von europäischen Ländern oder der EU selbst gefördert wurden. Humanitäre Organisation wie *Hope & Help* oder *People In Need* haben sich zusätzlich zu ihren

¹⁵³<http://repatarmenia.org/en/engage/inspiration/a/aramazt-kalayjian-and-peno-mishoyan> accessed 01.09.2016

Hauptaufgaben auch mit Unterstützungsleistungen bei einer Rückkehr nach Armenien auseinandersetzt und somit auf den wohl steigenden Bedarf in diesem Bereich reagiert.

Im Hinblick auf das Thema Rückmigration und Nachhaltigkeit wäre es sehr interessant, mit den interviewten Personen in fünf bis zehn Jahren nochmals zu sprechen, um herauszufinden, wer tatsächlich noch in Armenien wohnhaft ist, wie sich ihr Bild von Armenien dann darstellt und vor allem natürlich ob und wenn ja, zu welchem Grad sie beruflich oder mit den gegründeten Firmen Erfolg haben. Aber auch die armenische Gesellschaft wird sich weiter formen und neue Ansatzpunkte für Fragen zu, Vorstellungen von und wissenschaftliche Forschungen über Armenien liefern.

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Interviews (geführt von Anna Mautner und Juliane Jakoubek)

Interview A.: *Repat Armenia*-Büro (29.05.2015) mit Executive Producer Vartan Marashlyan und Tamar Najarian.

Interview B.: *IOM Armenia*-Büro (01.06.2015) mit MED Project Coordinator Khachatuz Kagagyan, Project Coordinator Nune Asatryan and Programme Assistant Amen Badiryan.

Interview C.: Restaurant at Cascades, Central Yerevan (02.06.2015) mit Anna Avagyan, returnee.

Interview D.: Büro *Jarakite Creative Partners* (03.06.2015) mit Peno Mishoyan, returnee und Aramazt Kalayjian, returnee.

Interview E.: *Caritas Armenia*-Büro (04.06.2015) mit zwei Sozialarbeiterinnen.

Interview F.: "Talk2me" English Cafe (04.06.2015) mit Armenuh Hakobyan, returnee.

Interview G.: Organisation *Hope & Help*-Büro (05.06.2015) mit Maria Shatvoryan und Project Coordinator Nora Mnatsakanyan; allein geführt von Mautner.

Interview H.: Organisation *People in Need*-Büro (08.06.2015) mit Project Manager Tatevik Bezhanyan und Marine Hambarzumyan - mit Übersetzerin; Begemann und Zelinka anwesend.

Return Migration to Armenia: Motivations and prospects guiding return and the role of different organizations

Juliane Jakoubek

Abstract

While Armenia is typically a country marked by emigration, there have been many cases of emigrants deciding to return. The last ten years, in particular, have seen many non-profit and non-governmental organizations acknowledging the actual and potential impact of young trained returnees on the development of Armenia. The following research paper focuses on those people who moved back to a country they refer to as their homeland, along with organizations who support returnees during their integration process. The results highlight that both activists and members of non-profit and non-governmental organizations, as well as returnees, refrain from relying on any changes through governmental institutions. All of them believe that foreign-educated returnees could improve the development of Armenia due to the education they received abroad.

Zusammenfassung

Obwohl Armenien ein Land ist, das von Auswanderung geprägt ist, entschließen sich immer mehr Menschen dazu, dorthin zurückzukehren. Insbesondere in den letzten zehn Jahren haben viele Nichtregierungsorganisationen und Nonprofit-Organisationen den Wert und die Bedeutung von jungen, gebildeten Rückwanderern für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung des Landes hervorgehoben. Die vorliegende Forschungsarbeit beschäftigt sich mit jenen Menschen, die sich dazu entschlossen haben, in ein Land zurückzukehren, das sie als ihr Heimatland bezeichnen sowie mit Organisationen, die diese Menschen während ihrer Integrationsprozesse begleiten. Die Resultate verdeutlichen, dass sowohl AktivistInnen und Mitglieder von NGOs und Nonprofit-Organisationen als auch RückkehrerInnen nicht an Verbesserungen von Seiten der Regierung oder staatlichen Institutionen glauben. Vielmehr vertreten die Befragten die Meinung, dass RückkehrerInnen durch ihre im Ausland erworbene Ausbildung die Entwicklung des Landes vorantreiben können.

Introduction

"When the whole family moved to Russia, it was always in our family that one day we would be going to come back to Armenia." (Woman A, returnee)

This statement of a young Armenian woman, now living in Yerevan, reflects the complex emotions of returnees. Many Armenians are deeply connected to their country of origin, although the country is struggling with socio-economic problems, corruption, and various other difficulties that have turned Armenia into a typical emigration country. Emigration has shaped not only the country's demography but also its socio-political life. Especially after Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union, many Armenians were forced to leave their country due to socio-economic upheavals (Johansson 2008: 1; cf. Bachmann et al. 2004). According to Johansson (2008: 1), "poor socio-economic conditions are [still] a basis for emigration from Armenia, mainly to Russia, but also to Europe and elsewhere".

Due to the global financial and economic crisis, the migration situation changed between 2008 and 2009. This crisis predominately affected different sectors of the economy and evoked a revision of the migration policy in the Russian Federation, which is the primary recipient country of Armenian migrants. Consequently, emigration and return migration flows decreased in 2009. As a result of the global financial and economic crisis, the migration situation changed between 2008 and 2009. This crisis affected different sectors of the economy and evoked a revision of the migration policy in the Russian Federation, the primary recipient country of Armenian migrants. Although both emigration and return migration flows decreased in 2009, the anticipated mass return migration did not occur (Chobanyan 2013: 3).

Nevertheless, there is a growing interest in return flows and profiles of return migrants. Especially sociological studies have analysed the phenomenon of return migration in Armenia and revealed some insights into the motivations and prospects guiding return as well as new information on the profiles of return migrants. According to a survey conducted between 2002 and 2007, the return to Armenia was predominately "affected by 'push'¹⁵⁴ factors in host countries, rather than 'pull' factors in Armenia" (Chobanyan 2013: 4). A vast majority of returnees decided to return to their country of origin because of "worsening living and working conditions abroad, increased xenophobia and/or unacceptable social values (particularly in Russia)" (*ibid.*). The incentives for returning vary greatly from personal issues such as poor health, death of a relative, etc. to involuntary return or even the "inability to adapt to the local climate" (*ibid.*). Pull factors can be "homesickness, and inability or unwillingness to reunite with the family abroad, as well as desire to raise children in Armenia. The three most common reasons for any return to Armenia included family reunion (40 percent), expiration of employment contract (12 percent) and low income (8 percent)" (Chobanyan 2013: 4; cf. ETF 2012: 68). Not only the reasons for returning vary but also the socio-economic backgrounds and migration experiences of returnees are quite heterogeneous. Among returning migrants are "students, labor migrants (high-skilled, low-skilled, seasonal), migrants that moved with the

¹⁵⁴ "The reasons for return can be expressed in 'pull' factors of the country of origin and 'push' factors of the host country. 'Pull' factors include the improvement of the social-economic and political situation in the country of origin, while 'push' factors can include difficulties and obstacles for integration that arise in the host country" (Chobanyan 2013: 4; cf. King 2000: 13f.).

intention of permanent residence, rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants, retired persons etc." (Chobanyan 2013: 4).

The focus of this research was on young returnees (between the age of 25 and 35) that received either formal education abroad, e.g. university degrees or other valuable experiences such as from work on the one hand, and on examining their motivations and prospects guiding such returns on the other. Many scholars have acknowledged the impact skilled returnees can have on the development of a country and pay special attention to "the human capital that migrants bring back in terms of foreign education, training and work experience" (Ammassari 2003: 134). In general, highly-skilled migrants "have a greater development potential than [unskilled returnees] because they are more willing to consider change and return better equipped with different forms of capital" (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, skilled migrants frequently work in key positions in the private or public sector, "from where they can significantly affect the course of events due to their high level of responsibility, authority and power" (*ibid.*).

Considering this context, various non-profit and non-governmental organizations, such as *Repat Armenia*, recognized the significance of supporting returnees both in returning and building up a new existence. The numbers of return and re-integration projects is, therefore, growing all over Europe as well as in Armenia (Johansson 2008: 1). As indicated earlier the aim of this research was on the one side to examine the motivations and prospects that guide returnees and on the other side to scrutinize the role of different organizations during this process, and their projects to support returnees in the long run.

The paper will start with an investigation of the reasons for leaving and for coming back to Armenia. In a next step the individual perspectives on the migration experience is analysed. Subsequently, the projects of non-profit and non-governmental organizations are highlighted. Especially the organizations *Repat Armenia* and *People in Need* will be examined in more detail to understand how and, more importantly, with whom they are working. The last section concentrates on reasons why the return of young educated people is seen as very important for the development of Armenia. In this context it is crucial to underline that the focus is not only on education but also on other experiences gained abroad.

Methodology and relevant definitions

The following research paper is the result of my ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Yerevan, Armenia, in May and June 2015. The analyses are based on three narrative interviews with four returnees as well as five expert interviews with eight experts. All interviews were conducted in English, except for two expert interviews, which were conducted in Armenian and Russian and translated into English. The group of returnees is conceptually divided into returnees and diaspora returnees. The two female returnees were both born in Yerevan and moved to the Russian Federation for a period of time, whereas the male returnees were born in the United States and Syria, and are therefore referred to as diaspora returnees. Both male diaspora

returnees and female returnees belonged to the age group of 25 to 35. All of the returnees were contacted through the network of *Repat Armenia*. This organization predominately works with academics or people who have higher education. Thus, asylum seekers or people that did not return voluntarily to Armenia are excluded.

The expert interviews were predominantly conducted with activists or members of non-governmental and non-profit organizations, many of which are either returnees or diaspora returnees themselves. Within this context it is crucial to highlight that these two groups of respondents, returnees on the one side of the argument and experts on the other side, are significantly different from each other in their experiences and opinions. Furthermore, it is important to accentuate that both the quantity and selection of the target group are by no means representative and generalizations are therefore avoided.

Additionally, it seems important to define the term return migration so as to eliminate any confusion. According to the IOM Glossary return migration is "the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary. Return migration includes voluntary repatriation" (IOM 2004: 56). In this specific research all four returnees voluntarily returned to Armenia.

Reasons for leaving and returning

The majority of the respondents left Armenia due to economic reasons. International studies confirm that political, social and environmental difficulties are the primary reasons for migration (Dayton-Johnson et al. 2009: 149). As a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia's independence went hand in hand with a collapsing economy, which led to the biggest emigration wave in the country's history. Armenia had a solid industry as part of the Soviet Union, but lost much of its industrial capacity after independence. Furthermore, the hyperinflation of 1993 weakened the population's real income and private savings. In just a couple of years, Armenia's industry shrank to the pre-industrial age, which resulted in a significant deterioration of living standards for Armenian citizens. These political, environmental, and socio-economic changes led to the need of finding income outside the country and the Caucasus region: nearly a quarter of Armenia's citizens emigrated between 1991 and 2001. The vast majority migrated to different former Soviet states, usually to Russia and Ukraine, but also to Western Europe and the United States (Johansson 2008: 3f; cf. Bachmann et al. 2004). According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), there is unfortunately "no reliable tool for measuring migration, which in itself is a serious problem for a country like Armenia, with its high level of emigration" (Barsoumian 2013: 1). At the same time, there is no exact data about the number of Armenian returnees, "the duration of their stay abroad, the reason for return or their situation after re-entering Armenia" (Fleischer 2012: 3).

Some of the interviewees left Armenia because of the fundamental developments mentioned above. A young woman explained that it had been impossible for her parents to continue working in the same core areas of activity after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"When I left Armenia, I was actually eight years old. So it wasn't my decision. [...] It was the decision of my parents, and the reason was that my parents had difficulty to find a job here, because after the collapse of the UDSSR. They couldn't continue to work in the same field. So they did their best to stay in Armenia as long as possible. [...] My father changed a couple of jobs, but then he realized it was [...] complicated for him to earn enough money for the family. So he left for Russia alone." (Woman A, returnee)

The father left for Russia to find employment and reunite with his family after settling down in Russia. Eight months later, the family was able to join him in Moscow.

In line with a comprehensive national study on return migration to Armenia, there are various ways of leaving a country. A common form is that one member of the family leaves first, usually the father of a family. They then try to find employment and accommodation. As soon as they succeed, the family reunites in the host country (Minasyan et al. 2008: 27f.).

Another female respondent experienced similar challenges before leaving Armenia. As this young woman could not find employment after graduating from university, she decided to reunite with her mother in Russia. Woman B had left without the intention of staying abroad for a long period of time. Her primary goal was to find employment and solve her immediate financial problems. During her time in Russia, however, she was offered a job she could not refuse.

"First we decided to live there for a year until we finish all these issues concerning with money. But it so happened that I stayed there for four years. Four years without coming back." (Woman B, returnee) She was working for the Winter Olympics in Sochi and moved back to Armenia when the Olympics ended. The primary reason for her decision to return was that everything there seemed meaningless to her. Most of the respondents assert that when they were leaving Armenia, they had in mind to return to their country of origin. Both female interviewees had the wish to return to their home country and reunite with their family members. *"When the whole family moved to Russia, it was always in our family that one day we would be going to come back to Armenia. [...] I just had the wish to come back connected with my extended family here or just the idea of living in the morrow land."* (Woman A, returnee)

Most of the returnees never considered staying abroad permanently. As the interviews revealed, the returnees also had different expectations, when they moved back to Armenia. Most of them had a positive determination considering their return. From their perspective, Armenia represented a save place with various opportunities. All of the returnees had the vision in mind to establish their own small business. Moreover, they had the idea of doing something meaningful that would have a positive impact on their county.

"I decided, if I am going to start something from zero with nothing, I would rather do that in my country - not there. Because I don't know what will happen there. [...] I know that I am protected in my country. That's why we moved back." (Woman B, returnee)

"I just had the wish to come back to Armenia and to try to make it here [...] and later to say like, 'Okay, I tried in Armenia so maybe it didn't work out. So now I continue my way in Moscow'." (Woman A, returnee)

Woman A explained that she was well aware of the problems in Armenia. Especially the labor market was quite unpredictable. Nevertheless, both of the interviewed returnees were able to establish their own businesses in Yerevan. But this was only possible because of their unique migration experience, which will be examined, in the following section.

Evaluation of the migration experience

"So I think [...] whatever I have done so far was on purpose and I am not regretting for whatever I have done. Even for leaving and, moreover, for coming back." (Woman B, returnee). Woman B describes her migration experience in a positive way. As indicated earlier, she was working for the Winter Olympics in Sochi 2014. During this time, she had undergone some fundamental personal changes. Before she had left Armenia, she described herself as a complicated person. Woman B was neither open nor would she have dared to speak to any foreigner. At work she met a lot of different people from all over the world. This experience led to essential changes. It helped her to open up and played a vital role in her integration process into Russian society. In the beginning, she was confronted with difficulties, because she was seen as a foreigner. When locals found out that she was not originally from Russia, they did not treat her well. Today, she knows many Armenians that made similar, bad experiences in Russia.

Considering a study on return migration to Armenia conducted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) between 2002-2008, many Armenians were facing problems with nationalists or skinheads in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Minasyan et. al., 2008: 40). Returnees reported that they felt a constant tension and that this was one of the main reasons for their return (*Ibid.*: 40).

Apart from her early difficulties, Woman B evaluates her migration experience as a positive one. While she did not receive any formal education abroad and did not attend university or any other further education, she gained other experiences that helped her back in Armenia. She believes that the mentioned personal changes improved her life in her homeland and helped her to start her own business. Woman B established her own tourist agency in Yerevan. Especially her language skills, Armenian, Russian and English helped her on her guided tours.

Woman A returned to Armenia together with her sister, while the rest of her family remained in Moscow. After Woman A had completed her master's degree in the United Kingdom, she

and her sister decided to return to Armenia. Woman A had some ideas in mind about prospective work she could do once they were back in Armenia, but she was uncertain how everything would work out. In the end, she did not face any problems to find employment in Armenia because the language teaching skills she had acquired in both London and Moscow were highly valued, as were her language skills.

"I got in the UK and Russia [some] kinds of skills which are really appreciated here." (Woman A, returnee). In addition to her valuable skills, her migratory experience had given her a deeper understanding of the overall competition in the labor market, and had convinced her that hard work was necessary to become better. Particularly, her university experience had taught her that the development of her skills is an on-going process. In her opinion the "*[...] most important thing are skills.*" (Woman A, returnee)

Woman A was as well able to establish her own business in Yerevan. She opened an English café next to one of the most touristic streets in Yerevan. In this place, people from all over the world were able to connect, read English literature, or play games. She was convinced that her university experience abroad was a key factor in opening a business.

Neither of the female respondents received any financial support from an institution or the government to establish their businesses. Both did, however, benefit from the network of the non-governmental organization *Repat Armenia*, which will be analyzed in the following section.

The importance of formal education combined with individual migration experiences is an omnipresent theme in all interviews conducted. Various members of non-profit and non-governmental organizations mentioned education especially in the context of setting up a sustainable development in Armenia. The following section will focus on that subject.

Intentions for supporting returnees

According to Dayton-Johnson et al. (2009: 157), the return of emigrants to their country of origin supports both economic development and employment creation, if expatriates possess capital and knowledge. International studies highlight that return migrants often have better employment possibilities compared to people who did not migrate. Furthermore, expatriates are more often "self-employed, thus potentially contributing to employment generation and economic growth" (Dayton-Johnson et al. 2009: 157). In many cases, however, specific skills of returnees decreased while spending time abroad. As a result they might face difficulties while the re-integration process into their country of origin's labor market. This is often "the experience of skilled migrants whose qualifications are not recognized when they migrate. After a period of working in a low-skilled job, they may find upon their return home that they are unable to find employment even in the field in which they were employed" (Ibid.).

The *Repat Armenia* Foundation acknowledges and deals with the issues of return migration (see Mautner in this volume). *Repat Armenia* is a non-governmental and non-profit organization, established in August 2012. There are twelve main founders, half of which are returnees and the other half diaspora returnees. The organization works with a specific category of people, namely those with knowledge, capital, and connections. It does not work with asylum seekers or people who were forced to return. All their activities and projects are placed around three main objectives, ranging from brain gain through repatriation to integration and sustainable development. The first one is to promote repatriation in Armenia. Despite the fact that Armenia struggles with a lot of difficulties, it is according to the executive director of *Repat Armenia*, Vartan Marashlyan, a country with a lot of opportunities and potential for development. *Repat Armenia*'s first task is to develop realistic expectations of Armenia and to connect people with the country.

"So we kind of create this [...] connection with the real Armenia today." (Vartan, executive director of Repat Armenia and returnee¹⁵⁵)

Each year, *Repat Armenia* representatives visit different Armenian communities around the world. The main purpose of these visits is to share their personal experience, but also to inform diaspora Armenians of the prospects of a returning, the professions which are most needed in the long run.

"They won't have opportunities here, if they have specific professions which are not needed on the local market." (Vartan, returnee)

If highly educated people return to their country of origin and their professional knowledge is not put to use, the result would be a "brain waste". Experiences from other countries, like Hendow (2010) who studied the temporary return migration to Iraq, confirms this issue.

Furthermore, Vartan exemplarily stressed that returnees with a higher level of education, such as a university degree from a Western country, have fewer difficulties in finding employment on the local market: at that time (2015), around 50 to 60 local companies were permanently asking him for CVs of repatriates, mainly focusing on their education and skills. When it comes to the specific education or skills needed on the local market, he referred to sectors and industries, such as the IT or the tourist sector, which are underdeveloped and would need highly educated people. He did not mention any specific education or skills that were particularly needed on the local market.

Repat Armenia's second objective is support the integration of returnees. As soon as somebody has decided to move to Armenia, they are connecting him or her with repatriates. The organization is able to connect newcomers with over 600 integrated repatriates. All of them

¹⁵⁵ Vartan Marashlyan was born in Armenia but lived for over 25 years in Moscow. He returned together with his family from Moscow in 2010. It is his second attempt to move back to Armenia.

went through the integration process as well, thus they are able to support newcomers and offer advice. The major aspects of integration are employment assistance, business support, and networking. There are a lot of problems concerning unemployment on the local market, but at the same time, there are a lot of sectors that are completely underdeveloped as mentioned above, for example, the tourist sector, the marketing sector, or the IT sector among others. The aim of *Repat Armenia* is to connect potential repatriates with competent employers. Furthermore, if somebody has an interesting idea to implement, *Repat Armenia* establishes connections to repatriates who are working on similar projects. The latter can offer further insight into the problems, difficulties and opportunities they might face. The next step is to support the person with professional legal advice, which is for free at the first consultation. As soon as somebody establishes his or her own business, repatriates help him or her in promoting it, for example, by sending a journalist to make a report.

The third main objective of the organization is to support the development of a broad repatriation environment. They seek to promote repatriation that it becomes a key priority on the agenda of Armenian diaspora organizations and in governmental institutions. *Repat Armenia* acknowledges the importance of repatriation both for the Armenian country and the diaspora.

The organization does not demand any specific skills to participate in their projects, but requests a positive attitude towards Armenia. Moreover, they do not work with people that failed in their business efforts abroad or were somehow forced to come back.

"If you talk with a migrant about moving back to Armenia [...] you may hear a lot of negative things about Armenia, maybe because he is on a different stage. [...] He is now on the stage where he just left Armenia in difficult conditions because of no employment or not readiness to spend all his efforts on become successful in his own country. And we don't work with that category. So as soon as he becomes integrated and thinks about assimilation, the quality of life, making a difference in his own country, [...] connecting Armenia with the bigger world, keeping Armenian language, thinking about his children's future and many other things. When he starts thinking of that only in that case we can start working with them because the initiative should be from his side." (Vartan, returnee)

As indicated in the beginning, *Repat Armenia* works with a specific group of people, whereas other organizations, such as IOM or Caritas Armenia, also work with rejected asylum seekers and people who were forced to return to Armenia. In most cases, the latter do not possess any capital, knowledge, or connections necessary to find employment, or start their own business. IOM offers special programs for the reintegration of such migrants and provides training, micro business assistance, and sometimes even micro credits. Their main goal is to make the return as sustainable as possible.

Another non-profit organization is *People in Need*, which is working in the sector of reintegrating returning migrants as well. *People in Need* supports returnees in starting their own businesses in Armenia. They provide special trainings based on the basic requirements that

people participating in their trainings should have worked for at least six months in another country, and need to have returned within the last one year. The purpose of these trainings is to enable returnees to gain knowledge about writing business plans, starting their own business, and to manage it in long-term perspective. The businesses are in different fields, such as agriculture, service, hairdressing, baking, or furniture making besides other.

Furthermore, *People in Need* projects include further training for finding a job or establishing their own business. A total of 204 returnees have already passed those trainings and about 60 percent of them have already found employment. Asked about the challenges, the interviewees referred to problems in the Armenian education system. The main difficulty is that many graduates from colleges or universities are not able to find a job in the local market, even though it seems that they are highly trained. This problem can be traced back to a large gap between university education and the demands of the labor market. Many Armenians with an academic degree need to undergo additional training. Therefore, re-qualification courses are considered as very important for *People in Need*. (see Mautner in this volume)

Aspirations in returnees

Remittances usually have a considerable effect "on poverty reduction and economic activity, with an indirect impact on employment" (Dayton-Johnson et. al 2009:167). However, the return of human capital, especially of educated migrants, has recently become of special interest to scholars. Numerous empirical studies have uncovered the positive effects highly skilled returnees can have on the development of a country, such as Saloutos (1956) who studied Greek returnees from the United States. According to him, these people not only brought financial and social benefits to Greece but also "new values and ideas on democracy, health standards and social behaviour" (Ammassari 2003: 134; cf. Saloutos 1956). Another region where positive effects of return migrants have been observed is the Caribbean. People returned with "changed values and beliefs, and contributed to the strengthening of political and racial awareness in their home communities [...]; their transfer of both financial and human capital has significantly contributed to their island's development" (Ammassari 2003: 134).

The positive impact that skilled returnees can have on Armenia's development has also been mentioned in various interviews, for instance with Man A and Man B. Both are diaspora Armenians; while Man B was born in Aleppo, Man A was born in New York. They founded Jarakite Creative Partners, which is "established on the idea of symbiosis, mutually beneficial relationships that help one another thrive" (URL 1). Specifically, they did a project on giving women voices in Armenia, and another one about social media awareness and how people can use social media in a better way.

Both of them talked about diaspora organizations: these organizations help Armenia with financial aid, for example, they collect money in order to build a road. Although it supports the country to a certain degree, the actual help starts when people decide to live in Armenia.

"Being here makes you see things [...] that giving money from the Diaspora wouldn't." (Man A, diaspora returnee)

This leads to the assumption that only when people return and live in Armenia, they will get an insight into the real needs, challenges, and problems. Further respondents mentioned the importance to invest knowledge and skills in the country of origin. The inherent goal of skilled returnees should be to contribute something meaningful in Armenia; that could be, for instance, a small enterprise, or to encourage people to start a business in order to sustainably support the economy and the society of the country in a long term. Especially Woman B highlighted this in the conducted interview.

"Wherever they are gaining skills [or] experience it is only good in your homeland – not there. It is not appreciated there. No one will appreciate it! It is good here in your homeland, in your country and for your country." (Woman B, returnee)

Within this context, Armenian nationalism and the political ideology behind it becomes clear. In anthropological terms, nationalism is in any case constructed by 'identity entrepreneurs' and formed by political context (Gellner 1983: 169). Following Anderson (1991: 6) a nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". In the course of the entire research, Armenian nationalism was an omnipresent topic. Especially since 2015, marked the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the number of nationalist endeavors has increased. Most of the respondents mentioned the importance of keeping this imagined political community alive to form a unity, and in Anderson words, a fellowship. Woman B continued to emphasize the vital role of bringing skills back to Armenia.

"Whatever you gain, what experience you have, you should share it with your homeland. [...] Do anything! Invest your mind in your country. [...] The point is to work [...] to start, to do something and to work on [...] global items. [...] That's why I want to leave and to come back, and to bring everything back, and to show: Yes, we can do that." (Woman B, returnee)

Man B acknowledged the significance of people moving back as well. In this case, it is particularly interesting that he wants people from the diaspora to move to Armenia. Most of these individuals have never been to Armenia or do not even consider it as 'their country'.

"I really want two million young diaspora Armenians to move here and start living here [...] because they will bring their own motivation, their own energy to start for long-term support for their country." (Man B, diaspora returnee)

During the conducted interviews the female returnees and the diaspora returnees as well as Vartan, the executive director of *Repat Armenia*, mentioned the overall importance of people moving back. This leads to the assumption that the return of human capital is seen to be more significant for the country's development than just sending money. Vartan, believes that the best promoters who seek to bring companies to Armenia are either repatriates or diaspora Armenians. This group of returnees is especially valuable for the country because they do not

only bring a higher education to Armenia but also have connections and networks, which is essential to compete on the market,

"[...] a lot at the top management areas are repatriates because they are coming with the skills and connections and network." (Vartan, returnee)

All the interviewees rather pin their hopes in repatriates, especially skilled young one, than in the government. This is particularly intriguing, considering that many of these repatriates have grown up in a different country and, in some cases, have never been to Armenia. Interestingly, these people should be able to solve the country's problems rather than the government or Armenian citizens who have lived their entire life in that country.

Conclusion

This paper is the output of two weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in May and June 2015. The goal was to examine the motivations and prospects guiding returnees, the role of different organizations in this process, and their projects to support returnees. Within these two weeks of fieldwork four returnees and five different organizations were interviewed. Herein it is crucial to indicate that the selection as well as the quantity of the target group are most certainly not representative and general statements and conclusions are therefore avoided.

In this specific context the major result of this research was nevertheless the insight that migration goes hand in hand with certain skills, formal education and experiences, which enable potential returnees to successfully organize their return and integration in Armenia. The importance of education was an omnipresent topic in the interviews, especially in the context of the long-term return and reintegration, thus facilitating and promoting the sustainable development of Armenia. However, it appears crucial to mention that there is a clear disparity between "potential" and "real" impact. Highly skilled returnees most certainly have the potential to become development actors, but this does not necessarily mean that they are able to put their potential into practice. As indicated earlier by Vartan, the executive director of *Repat Armenia*, his organization is trying to inform diaspora Armenians about the prospects of return and the professions most needed in the long run to avoid "brain waste". Development cooperation programs along with certain NGOs try to position highly skilled returnees in key positions in which they can make a difference for the country's development. Nevertheless, not everybody gets the opportunity to return and take over a key position. Returnees from different socio-economic backgrounds can face difficulties to find adequate employment after their return, because they do not have the necessary professional networks in their country of origin after an extended period abroad. The return of emigrants can support economic development and the creation of employment, but only if specific conditions allow the emigrants to apply this capital and knowledge.

Again this backdrop, the four interviewees, male and female returnees, established their own small businesses with the inherent goal of enhancing their economic development and to some extent, also of creating new employment opportunities. None of the respondents received any financial support from the government or any other non-governmental organization. The returnees used their financial savings. According to a different research on reintegration and development, self-financing is the main source for funding a small business in Armenia (Cassarino 2014: 38).

Another interesting aspect in this target group of interviews was that the return of people was seen as more sustainable for the development of the country than remittances. Nevertheless, money could support the development of a country, but a sustainable development could only set in when people decided to live in Armenia. This would enable the returnees to get an insider view of the countries' needs, and establish both experience and know-how. Both returnees and experts from *Repat Armenia* and *People in Need* emphasized the importance of people returning to Armenia, especially with regard to the young generation. A particularly interesting aspect is the trust of most interviewees in the country's returnees rather than in changes through governmental institutions. In other words, people from outside should support the development of the country rather than people that spend their entire live in Armenia. In this context, it is particularly intriguing to elaborate on the role of the state as well as the legal framework to support returnees and their reintegration. Thus one issue in the action Plan for the Implementation of the Policy concept for the state regulation of migration in the Republic of Armenia (RA) in 2012-2016 is dedicated to the support of the return of Armenian citizens to the Republic of Armenia, as well as their further re-integration process.

A crucial action of this concept is to establish "legal grounds for integration and improvement of various info[formation] systems containing info[formation] of interests for RA citizens living abroad and intending to return home [further to study] the professional capacities and business interests of returning migrants, labour force demand in the labour market, as well as causes of hindering reintegration into the RA labour market".¹⁵⁶

Another aspect of this concept includes the "development and implementation of reintegration programs for reintegration of returning migrants into the labour market and other types of assistance"¹⁵⁷. According to this action plan the Republic of Armenia is strongly interested in supporting returnees and facilitating easy integration especially concerning the labour market to enhance the economic sector. As for how far this action plan is already implemented in practice would be an interesting aspect for further research.

¹⁵⁶ The action Plan for the Implementation of the Policy concept for the policy of state regulation of migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016.

¹⁵⁷ (Ibid.)

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Interviews

Interview with Vartan Marashlyan (executive director) and Tamar Najarian-Isajanyan (employee), Repat Armenia, recorded on May 29, in Yerevan; duration: 01:06:03

Interview with Khachatuz Kagagyan (MED project coordinator), Nune Asatryan (project coordinator), and Armen Badiryan (program assistant), International Organisation of Migration (IOM), recorded on June 1 in Yerevan; duration: 00:51:24

Interview with Woman B, Returnee, recorded on June 2 in Yerevan; duration: 02:03:13

Interview with Man A, Man B, diaspora returnee, recorded on June 3; duration: 01:03:25

Interview with Nune Grigoryan, Caritas, recorded on June 4; duration: 01:39:27

Interview with Woman A, Returnee, recorded on June 4; duration: 00:52:59

Interview with employees of Hope and Help, recorded on June 5; duration: 00:54:11

Interview with Tatevik Bezhanyan (project manager), People in Need, recorded on June 8, duration: 00:56:28

"I am an Armenian living in a non-Armenian country". Diaspora-Identität am Beispiel von *Birthright Armenia*

Cristina Biasetto

Abstract

Birthright Armenia is a volunteering program that aims to offer young Armenian Diaspora members the opportunity to meet the "true" Armenia through an internship. Many of the program participant's ancestors have left Armenia several generations ago, thus their imaginations of the country are marginal or unrealistic. *Birthright Armenia* wants the volunteers to create a more realistic view and new relations with the Republic of Armenia, thereby strengthening the Armenian part of their identity. However, various factors influence that process: the participants initial reason to participate in the program, the influence of an Armenian community on the volunteers in the respective resident countries, as well as the image that *Birthright Armenia* tries to convey to the participants. All these factors are crucial in how the people's relationship with Armenia changes. The participants will then return with new perspectives which they spread in their respective communities around the world.

Zusammenfassung

Birthright Armenia ist ein Volunteering-Programm in Yerevan mit dem Ziel, jungen Mitgliedern der armenischen Diaspora die Möglichkeit zu bieten, das "wahre" Armenien im Zuge eines Praktikums kennenzulernen. Bei vielen der Programm-TeilnehmerInnen sind die Vorfahren bereits vor mehreren Generationen emigriert, sie haben daher wenig oder unrealistische Vorstellungen über das Herkunftsland. *Birthright Armenia* unterstützt die Volunteers dabei, eine realistische Sicht zu entwickeln, eine neue Bindung zur Republik Armenien aufzubauen, und damit auch den armenischen Teil ihrer Identität zu stärken. Dies ist jedoch aufgrund verschiedener Einflussfaktoren nicht unproblematisch. Beweggründe am Programm teilzunehmen, der Einfluss einer armenischen Community auf die Volunteers in den jeweiligen Ländern und auch das Bild, das *Birthright Armenia* den TeilnehmerInnen zu vermitteln versucht, sind ausschlaggebend, wie sich der Bezug der Menschen zu Armenien verändert. Neu entstandene Narrative über Armenien werden in Folge in den jeweiligen Nationen und Communities der Volunteers verbreitet.

Einleitung

"The common idiom in regards to the location of the wealth in the South Caucasus region states that Azerbaijan has its oil, Georgia has its sea, and Armenia has its diaspora" (Crowley 2013: 6)

In sozialwissenschaftlichen Arbeiten zu Armenien sind Studien über deren Diaspora ein häufig behandeltes Thema. Die armenische Diaspora gehört neben der jüdischen zu den als "klassisch" definierten Formen von Diaspora¹⁵⁸. Der mit circa 11 Millionen Menschen weltweit geschätzten Mitgliedern dieser Diaspora, steht eine verhältnismäßig kleine Bevölkerung von drei Millionen EinwohnerInnen innerhalb der heutigen Republik Armenien gegenüber. Dabei umfassen die im Ausland lebenden ArmenierInnen nicht nur die Nachkommen jener, die aus den ehemaligen armenischen Gebieten aufgrund der Verfolgung um 1915 ihr Land verlassen mussten, sondern auch jene Personen und deren Nachfahren, die während und nach dem Fall der Sowjetunion das Land verließen¹⁵⁹. Die hohe Anzahl an im Ausland lebenden ArmenierInnen - auch wenn sie schon seit mehreren Generationen in der Diaspora leben - stellen ein bedeutendes Einflusspotential dar, sei es innerhalb der neuen Heimat oder auch gegenüber ihrem Ursprungsland. Es stellt sich dabei die Frage, wie sich ein solcher Einfluss gestaltet¹⁶⁰. Dabei wird die junge Diasporageneration zum wichtigen Untersuchungsgegenstand. Die Selbst-Identifizierung der untersuchten Personen als ArmenierInnen, spielt dabei eine wichtige Rolle. So untersuchten bereits Crowley (2013) oder Darieva (2011) wie sich die Bedeutung und die Identifizierung mit dem sogenannten Heimatland in den nachfolgenden Diasporagenerationen verändern kann. Dies reicht von der graduellen Verringerung bis zum gänzlichen Bedeutungsverlust ebendieser. Safran bezeichnet diesen Verlustprozess als „de-diasporizing“:

"Many Jews and Armenians are de-diasporizing as their identities are gradually merged with those of the majority of the host societies of the United States and Western Europe among whom they live, especially as the marker of uniqueness – language, religion, lifestyle, and even collective memory – weaken" (Safran 2004: 16).

Ankündigend an diese Studien, wird in dem vorliegenden Beitrag daher auch die Rolle der Diaspora für die armenische Republik thematisiert, weil es auch für diese von sozioökonomischer und entwicklungsfördernder Wichtigkeit sein kann, dass die Menschen in der Diaspora weiterhin Interesse an ihrer ehemaligen Heimat zeigen (vgl. Kuznetsov 2006: 131). Dies wird anhand des Beispiels einer konkreten Einrichtung, die sich mit der jungen Diasporageneration beschäftigt, gezeigt. Verschiedene NGOs, aber auch staatliche Einrichtungen wie das *Ministry of Diaspora*¹⁶¹ sind nur einige Institutionen, die durch verschiedene Programme, Aktionen und Förderungen versuchen den Kontakt der Republik zur Diaspora aufrecht zu erhalten. Damit erhofft sich die Republik Armenien vor allem weitere materielle und immaterielle Investitionen

¹⁵⁸ Zu der „klassischen“ Diaspora zählen sie aufgrund unter anderem folgender Kriterien, die Safran (2004) nennt:
a) Vertreibung aus ihrem Heimatland und b) Orientierung am Heimatland.

¹⁵⁹ Für das *Ministry of Diaspora* (Interview 2015) kommen zwei weitere Kategorien hinzu, (c) die Diaspora des 19. Jahrhunderts und (d) jene aus der Zeit während der Sowjetunion.

¹⁶⁰ Es gibt bereits viele existente Studien die zeigen, dass die armenische Diaspora maßgeblich Einfluss auf die Republik Armenien nimmt, siehe beispielsweise Kuznetsov (2006).

¹⁶¹ Institutionen wie jene des *Ministry of Diaspora* haben das Ziel, die Verbindung zwischen der Republik Armenien und der Diaspora aufrecht zu erhalten, sowie den Erhalt armenischer Identität (vgl. Interview 2015). Dies geschieht auf verschiedensten Wegen wie beispielsweise über „summer schools“ oder „festivals“, sowie durch Ausbildung von Personen, die in verschiedenste Nationen in denen sich ArmenierInnen befinden, reisen um den jungen Menschen dort Werte und Traditionen beizubringen (vgl. *Ministry of Diaspora* 2015).

im Land (vgl. Crowley 2013: 6). Eine dieser Einrichtungen ist *Birthright Armenia* (BA), eine in den U.S.A gegründete Organisation, die vor allem Volontariate in verschiedenen Einrichtungen in Armenien anbietet. Dadurch sollen speziell junge Nachfahren der Diaspora dazu bewegt werden, sich durch einen Besuch in Armenien wieder mit ihren Wurzeln auseinanderzusetzen, indem sie die junge Republik aktiv durch Volontariate unterstützen. Dadurch können sie laut BA nicht nur zur Entwicklung des Landes beitragen, sondern es zugleich mit: "[...] a renewed sense of identity" wieder verlassen (URL 1).

Der Schwerpunkt dieses Beitrages liegt dabei weniger in der Erklärung dieses Programmes selbst, sondern in der Erläuterung der Auswirkungen auf die (Eigen)Wahrnehmung der TeilnehmerInnen aufgrund eines solchen Aufenthalts im "Heimatland". Wie bereits Crowley (2013) feststellt, kann oft erst ein Aufenthalt in und eine Beschäftigung mit den eigenen Wurzeln eine neue Wahrnehmung des Landes und eine eigene Identifikation generieren:

"... the homeland challenges preconceived notions of what the understanding of national identity among diasporans is and inherently is the catalyst of the construction of the new identity with more rigorous homeland-orientation, which propagates a transnational tie that allows the homeland to surpass state borders" (Crowley 2013: 21f.).

Das Beschreiben einer veränderten Selbstwahrnehmung der TeilnehmerInnen liefert nicht nur einen Beitrag zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Identitätsforschung, sondern beschäftigt sich auch mit den daraus entstehenden materiellen Konsequenzen, wie die von Kuznetsov (2006) beschriebenen ökonomischen Rückzahlungen. Eine veränderte Selbstwahrnehmung kann weitere Auswirkungen auf ideologischer Ebene haben: Crowley (2013) argumentiert, dass Personen aufgrund ihres Aufenthaltes in Armenien zu wichtigen AkteurInnen in ihren Diaspora-Gemeinschaften werden. Durch ihren Aufenthalt im Ursprungsland, werden ihre Narrative als authentischer verstanden, können bereits vorhandene konterkarieren und somit ein neues Bild Armeniens verbreiten (vgl. Crowley 2013: 15). Um festzuhalten, welches Bild die TeilnehmerInnen zurück in ihre verschiedenen *Hostlands*¹⁶² nehmen, fokussiert dieser Beitrag auf die Selbstreflexion der TeilnehmerInnen von *Birthright Armenia* und der geänderten Wahrnehmung von Armenien.

Zuerst bedarf es jedoch einer Erläuterung zweier für diese Arbeit wichtiger, aber nur schwer fassbarer Begriffe, jenem der Diaspora und der Identität. In sozialwissenschaftlichen Debatten wird Diaspora oft als "[...] a community of people united by ethnicity and living outside their ethnic state, having a common ethnic culture and a common collective memory" definiert (Mkrtichyan 2015: 15). Eine klare Definition des Konzepts ist jedoch nicht nur schwierig,

¹⁶² Die Termini *Hostland* und *Homeland* werden in verschiedenster Literatur verwendet, wenn man von Diaspora spricht. Mit dem Wort *Homeland* wird zumeist das Geburtsland der ersten Generation von EmigrantInnen bezeichnet, das Wort *Hostland* als das Land in welches die Menschen ausgewandert sind. Diese Begriffe werden, auch wenn nicht mehr passend, manchmal sogar für die darauffolgenden Generationen der Ausgewanderten verwendet. Hostland ist gleichzusetzen in diesem Text mit dem Wort Heimat, Homeland mit dem Wort Ursprungsland.

sondern auch umstritten. Lange Zeit gültige Kriterien, wie jene der erzwungenen Vertreibung aus dem Heimatland, eine sogenannte *Homeland-Orientation* sowie eine verklärte Vorstellung des Ursprungslandes sind nicht mehr ausreichend, da diese zu restriktiv erscheinen (vgl. Safran 2004: 12). Vertovec (2004) bietet dazu eine umfassendere Definition an: "[...] populations of migrant origin who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which there develop multivarious links involving flows and exchanges of people and resources" (Vertovec 2004: 3). Im Zusammenhang mit ArmenierInnen im Ausland wird zumeist von Diaspora und nicht von MigrantInnen gesprochen.

Die Identität der Menschen wird aus einer Vielzahl von Quellen gebildet und ist weder statisch, noch lässt sie sich einfach festhalten. In ihrer Untersuchung zu/r Identität(en) von Mitgliedern der Diaspora, beschreiben Cornell und Hartmann (2007), dass zwischen "thick" und "thin" identity unterschieden werden muss: "Thick identity informs social life and action, whereas the "thin" identity is a less core designation" (Cornell;Hartmann 2007 zit. In Crowley 2013: 14). Unter "thick" identity kann in diesem Zusammenhang auch die Nationalität verstanden werden, mit der sich die Mitglieder der Diaspora identifizieren und unter "thin" jene nationale Zugehörigkeit, die zwar für die eigene Identität ebenfalls eine wichtige, aber weniger zentrale Rolle spielt.

Gilroy (1993) operiert mit dem Begriff "double consciousness"¹⁶³, womit er ausdrückt, dass Menschen auch zwei Identitäten zur selben Zeit besitzen können. Er verwendet den Begriff, um die bewusste und unbewusste Identifizierung der Diasporabevölkerung zum *Homecountry* und zum *Hostcountry* zu untersuchen. "Thin" und "thick" identity sind jedoch nicht statisch und können sich mit der Zeit ändern.

Keupp stellt fest, dass Identität von inneren und äußeren Faktoren beeinflusst wird. Letztere können beispielsweise die verschiedenen sozialen Räume sein, in welchen man sich bewegt. Durch den Prozess der Auseinandersetzung zwischen dem Selbst und der Umgebung entsteht ein direkter Einfluss auf die Identität (vgl. Keupp 2009: 291ff). Durch ein Programm wie BA, erfahren die TeilnehmerInnen eine Fülle an neuen Kontakten, (Sozial)Räumen und Situationen, wodurch sich ihre Identität neu gestalten kann.

Birthright Armenia (BA) ist eine NGO, die 2003 von der in den USA lebenden Armenierin Edele Hovnanian gegründet wurde. Das Programm bietet jungen Menschen im Alter zwischen 20 und 32 Jahren die Möglichkeit, ein Praktikum in Armenien zu absolvieren, das eine Mindestdauer von 100 Tagen hat und bis zu einem ganzen Jahr verlängert werden kann. Ziel des Programmes ist es unter anderem "[...] to strengthen ties between the homeland and Diasporan youth, by affording them an opportunity to be a part of Armenia's daily life and to contribute to Armenia's development through work, study and volunteer experiences, while

¹⁶³ Dies erlaubt den Menschen auf zwei unterschiedliche ‚Kulturelle Kapitalien‘(hier verweist Crowley auf Bourdieu 2013: 15) zuzugreifen.

developing life-long personal ties and a renewed sense of Armenian identity" (URL 1). Teilnehmen dürfen alle Personen mit nachweislich armenischer Abstammung – das bedeutet, dass zumindest ein Großelternteil armenische Wurzeln haben muss. Auch dürfen Personen, die vor ihrem zwölften Lebensjahr die Republik Armenien verlassen haben und nun im Ausland leben, teilnehmen. Die AnwärterInnen müssen während ihres Aufenthaltes ein unbezahltes Praktikum im Ausmaß von 30 Wochenstunden absolvieren. Es wird ihnen nahegelegt, in dieser Zeit bei einer Gastfamilie zu wohnen. Zusätzlich zu den Praktika sind die Volunteers aufgefordert an Sprachkursen teilzunehmen. Wöchentlich finden mehrere unterschiedliche Veranstaltungen in Form von Vorträgen oder ähnlichem statt, an welchen die TeilnehmerInnen verpflichtet sind mindestens 50 Prozent der Zeit anwesend zu sein, sowie an den samstäglichen Ausflügen außerhalb von Yerevan teilzunehmen (vgl. Diana 2015).

Durchführung der Forschung

Eine Erhebung relevanter Daten zu einem schwer greifbaren Thema wie Identität erschien nur durch Methoden sinnvoll, die direkte Gespräche und Beobachtungen innerhalb der Organisation BA involvierten. Besonders durch teilstrukturierte Interviews konnte die Selbstreflexion und Selbstwahrnehmung der TeilnehmerInnen eruiert werden. Informelle Gespräche sowie teilnehmende Beobachtung waren zusätzlich Teil der Untersuchung. Weiter wurde die Facebook-Aktivität (Text- und Bildbeiträge) auf der BA Seite innerhalb des Zeitraumes 01.01.2015 bis 15.06.2015, sowie die englischsprachigen Einträge des BA-Blogs¹⁶⁴ verfasst von ehemalige TeilnehmerInnen bis ins Jahr 2010 gesichtet, kodiert und besonders forschungsrelevante Beiträge ehemaliger TeilnehmerInnen am Programm analysiert.

Zentral für die Datenerhebung waren jedoch die Interviews, die gemeinsam mit Cornelia Mosser während des Aufenthaltes in Yerevan durchgeführt wurden. Es wurden sowohl TeilnehmerInnen als auch MitarbeiterInnen von BA befragt. Ein weiterer Interviewpartner kam aus dem *Ministry of Diaspora*. Insgesamt wurden 13 Personen befragt, drei Interviews wurden mit Personen aus der Organisation BA, ein Interview mit der Repräsentantin der Nord-Amerika Abteilung vom *Ministry of Diaspora* (mit Übersetzerin), vier Interviews mit TeilnehmerInnen am Programm sowie ein Gruppeninterview mit vier Volunteers, durchgeführt.

¹⁶⁴ Es gab verhältnismäßig wenige Einträge im Vergleich zu jenen auf Facebook.

Identifizierung mit Armenien

Die Annahme, dass es bereits im Vorfeld eine Auseinandersetzung und Identifizierung (wenn auch vielleicht nur in geringer Form) der TeilnehmerInnen mit Armenien gab, ist aus mehreren Gründen naheliegend. Zum einen aufgrund der Vermutung, dass insbesondere Menschen, die sich als aktiver Teil einer transnationalen armenischen Gemeinschaft sehen, teilnehmen. Weiters wird in der Literatur berichtet, dass es eine starke Verbindung zwischen dem Land Armenien und seiner Diaspora gibt. Der Auffassung von Safran (2004) über eine schwache bis verloren gegangene Identifizierung migrierter ArmenierInnen späterer Generation, stehen die Annahmen von Cohen (1997) oder Dreuese (2008) gegenüber. Diese beschreiben die armenische Diaspora als eine über ein starkes ethnisches Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein verfügende Gruppe, in dem eine kollektive Identität mit den Mitgliedern derselben ethnischen Gemeinschaft prävalent ist (vgl. Cohen 1997: 54f, Dreuese 2008: 62f). Auch im Blog von *Birthright Armenia* lassen sich Einträge finden, in welchen Menschen ihre armenische Identität ansprechen: "*I am an Armenian living in a non-Armenian country*" (Blog-Eintrag 24.09.2013) oder "*It is an unexplainable connection that I have within me; a connection I have heard many others refer to, and for them, it is also sometimes unexplainable. Sometimes it is simpler just to say, "It is THE homeland."*" (Blog-Eintrag 28.2.2014).

Die ersten Ergebnisse unserer Untersuchung bestärkten jedoch bald die Annahme von Safran (2004). Viele TeilnehmerInnen späterer Diasporagenerationen hatten vor dem Aufenthalt Schwierigkeiten sich mit ihrer armenischen Herkunft zu identifizieren und dies daher als Teil ihrer Identität anzuerkennen, weiters hatte diese nur wenig Bedeutung in ihrem Alltag. In formellen und informellen Gesprächen mit Volunteers stellte sich heraus, dass nur für ein Drittel der TeilnehmerInnen vor dem Programmaufenthalt die Identifikation mit Armenien Teil einer bewussten Identität mit entsprechenden Aktionen im Alltag war. Die überwiegende Mehrheit sagte jedoch aus, dass sie keine wichtige Verbundenheit zwischen sich, und der Republik Armenien sehen.

"Yeah I mean yes, my grandparents are from Armenia, but I never had someone else to talk to about it ... growing up, Armenia form e was just a faraway country, but I never thought of it as my homeland" (Gruppeninterview 2015).

Dies scheint vor allem an zwei Gründen zu liegen, vornehmlich am mangelnden direkten Kontakt zum Land Armenien in Form von Urlaub, verwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen oder einer aktiven armenischen Gemeinschaft im jeweiligen Wohnland; der zweite Grund liegt in der geopolitischen Ursache, dass viele der Vorfahren der TeilnehmerInnen ihre Herkunft in Gebieten außerhalb der heutigen Republik wissen¹⁶⁵. Diese mangelnde Identifizierung mit der heutigen Republik wurde in einem Gespräch mit dem *Ministry of Diaspora* bestätigt, welches

¹⁶⁵ Die meisten Vorfahren stammten aus Gebieten, welche heute nicht mehr Teil der Republik Armeniens sind.

auch seine Aufgabe darin versteht, eine fehlende Verbindung wieder aufzubauen und den bedauernswerten Verlust der armenischen Identität zu verhindern (vgl. Ministry of Diaspora 2015).

Samuelian (2003) zeigt auf, dass zwar in theoretischen Ansätzen den Gemeinschaften der Diaspora auf theoretischer Ebene viel Bedeutung zum Erhalt einer persönlichen Orientierung am Ursprungsland beigemessen wird (siehe auch Cohen 1997). In der sozialen Realität sind diese jedoch eher marginal vorhanden: "A large majority of Armenians live outside the organized community in an institutional vacuum which provides little sustenance for Armenian identity" (Samuelian et al. 2003: 11). Dies trifft auch auf viele TeilnehmerInnen von BA zu, welche davon sprachen, dass sie ohne Kontakt zu einer armenischen Community aufgewachsen, beziehungsweise diese demographisch gesehen nur sehr klein war. Auch sei durch den Aufenthalt über mehrere Generationen in der Diaspora kein verwandtschaftlicher Bezug zu Armenien mehr gegeben. Auf theoretischer Ebene lässt sich dies mit dem "law of gravitation" von Zaslavskays (2015) erklären, welches besagt, das je kleiner die Gruppe verglichen zur Mehrheit der neuen Heimat, desto größer die Chance der Angleichung an diese Mehrheit ist (vgl. Zaslavskaya 2015: 42).

Gibt es zusätzlich gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Druck von Seiten der neuen Umgebung zur Anpassung an die lokale Kultur, so wird der Prozess der Angleichung beschleunigt. Der Interviewpartner Vanoush, ein in Deutschland lebender Armenier zweiter Generation, gab eine geringe Identifizierung mit Armenien an und sah dies mitunter in der – von ihm als konservativ wahrgenommene – Integrationspolitik Deutschlands begründet (vgl. Vanoush 2015). Zusätzlich verstärkt wird dies durch den wenigen Kontakt zu einer sehr kleinen armenischen Gemeinschaft in seiner Wahlheimat.

Die Relevanz einer aktiven Gemeinschaft zeigt sich vor allem in Erzählungen der TeilnehmerInnen aus den USA, dem Staat, in welchem sich nach Russland der zahlenmäßig größte Teil der armenischen Diaspora befindet. Eine wichtige Stadt ist diesbezüglich Los Angeles, in welcher auch mehrere Interviewpartner aufgewachsen sind und welche eine große und aktive armenische Community aufweist. Ein Mitglied dieser Gemeinschaft, Hovanes, sprach von einem stark vorherrschenden Gemeinschaftsgefühl zwischen den jungen Menschen in seiner Gemeinschaft, die auch einen distinktiven Stolz für die armenische Kultur an den Tag legen und, dass bei den Menschen eine Identifizierung mit Armenien wahrnehmbar ist (vgl. Interview Hovanes 2015). Diese Erkenntnis ist nicht neu und wurde bereits in Arbeiten wie jenen von Safran genannt, der zeigt, dass es Menschen der Diaspora leichter fällt, in größeren Gemeinschaften mit bestimmten Einrichtungen wie Kulturvereinen oder ähnlichem, einen Bezug zum Ursprungsland aufrecht zu erhalten (vgl. Safran 2004: 17). Hovanes ist in diesem jedoch eher die Ausnahme als die Regel, da es weltweit gesehen nicht viele solcher großen Gemeinschaften gibt und Einzelpersonen oder -familien eher in kleineren oder isolierten Gegenden wohnen. "*Growing up, I had on [the] one hand Armenian summer camps, [the] Armenian Sunday School (where I learned a little about the language and a lot about the genocide), and*

Armenian family gatherings. On the other hand, I had my completely American school and social life, where homogeneity and ‘American-ness’ is kind of key to fitting in. In the end, my American reality won the cultural tug-of-war and once I grew old enough to make decisions for myself about how I spent my time outside of school, Armenian-related activities and events faded into the distance” (Blog-Eintrag 18.9.2013)

Zusätzlich zur fehlenden Beziehung zu einer Gemeinschaft und damit einhergehend eines kulturellen Referenzpunktes außerhalb der Familie, spielen mangelnde Bezugspunkte zur aktuellen Republik Armenien eine Rolle. Wie sich daher in der Literatur bereits gezeigt und durch die empirische Erhebung innerhalb von *Birthright Armenia* bestätigt wurde, haben die meisten ihre familiären und kulturellen Wurzeln außerhalb des Gebietes der heutigen Republik Armenien.

Von den neun VoluntärInnen, mit denen wir gesprochen haben, hatten nur zwei ihre ethnischen Wurzeln im Gebiet der heutigen Republik; alle anderen führen ihre Herkunft überwiegend auf die Regionen des ehemals westarmenischen Gebietes (d.h. die Ostprovinz des Osmanischen Reiches) zurück. Die Unterscheidung in West- und Ostarmenien ist weniger geographisch, als kulturell bedingt. Sie unterscheiden sich in vielerlei Hinsicht: unter anderem durch Sprache, Traditionen, sowie Riten und Speisen. Das heißt, die Volunteers – selbst wenn sie ein verstärktes Bewusstsein für ihre armenische Identität haben, haben sie den kulturellen Referenzpunkt bezüglich ihrer Herkunft außerhalb der heutigen Republik Armenien. Sie können sich mit vielen Traditionen oder Riten nur bedingt identifizieren, da viele TeilnehmerInnen aus den ehemaligen Gebieten Westarmeniens stammen¹⁶⁶. "There are a lot of differences between East and West ... different language ... a different culture in general. So nothing there were few things that I knew from back home, ah, well at least few things, I could find here, because my family came from western Armenia" (Interview Vanoush 2015). Crowley beschreibt jedoch, dass BA diese Differenz zu überwinden versucht, indem beispielsweise das heutige Gebiet der Republik als eine Kontinuität des ursprünglichen Territoriums dargestellt wird (vgl. Crowley 2013: 23). Dies spiegelt sich nur teilweise in den Meinungen der TeilnehmerInnen wieder, wie noch näher ausgeführt wird. Andererseits wird in den Blog Beiträgen immer wieder von einer Rückkehr in ein Heimatland gesprochen wird (siehe Blog-Eintrag 18.2.2015).

Das Ursprungsland als Vorwand

Durch die in sozialwissenschaftlichen Arbeiten oft sehr gegensätzlich dargestellten Verhältnisse der Diaspora zur Republik Armenien, stellt sich die Frage warum die Menschen an einem Programm wie BA teilnehmen, wenn sich doch nur wenige der TeilnehmerInnen mit dem sogenannten Ursprungsland verbunden fühlen. Die von Birthright Armenia in den Vordergrund gerückte Stärkung der armenischen Identität (siehe Website) bei den TeilnehmerInnen, schien

¹⁶⁶ Ähnliches beschreibt Dreußer (2008: 65).

für diese nur von zweitrangiger Bedeutung. Denn selbst wenn die Stärkung einer marginaler werdenden Identifizierung mit der Republik Armenien in beispielsweise einigen Facebook-Einträgen als wichtiger Grund angegeben wurde, so stand für viele andere der Aspekt der Praktikumsmöglichkeit und die Gelegenheit durch die Teilnahme einen Entwicklungsbeitrag zu leisten, vielfach im Vordergrund. "*I feel like it is my duty to return to my homeland and share my skills and talents with my own people*" (Blog-Eintrag 24.09.2013). Darieva thematisiert dies ähnlich: Volunteers nehmen nicht aus Gründen der Vergangenheitsnostalgie, Re-patriation, oder ähnlichem an solchen Programmen teil, sondern: "[...] these acts of 'return' are becoming a civic 'journey to the future' inspired by the ideal of a cosmopolitan Weltverbesserer (world improver) from below" (Darieva 2011: 492). Dadurch tragen die TeilnehmerInnen nicht nur zur Entwicklung des Landes bei, sondern auch zur aktuellen Debatte einer global interessierten und involvierten Gesellschaft.¹⁶⁷ Befragte InterviewpartnerInnen erwähnten den philanthropischen Hintergrund ihres Aufenthaltes, dessen Ziel es auch sei, ein sozial und volkswirtschaftlich angeschlagenes Land durch ihre Arbeit zu unterstützen (vgl. Interview Vanoush, Hovanes 2015).

Allerdings erschien die Begründung für die Teilnahme nicht allein aus Nächstenliebe entstanden zu sein. Der Aufenthalt hat erfüllt für diese Personen auch oft einen eher praktischen als emotionalen Zweck, etwa in Form von Prestige und beispielsweise der Erwähnung der Teilnahme im eigenen Lebenslauf. Die Organisation steht in Kooperation mit einer Vielzahl von Institutionen in den verschiedensten Berufsbereichen. Die TeilnehmerInnen von BA können diese in Form eines Praktikums näher kennenlernen. Die Plätze werden vor allem in renommierten Institutionen (Museen, Ministerien, Kanzleien, usw.) angeboten, welche für Außenstehende ansonsten nur schwer zugänglich gewesen wären. InterviewteilnehmerInnen ist dies sehr wohl bewusst. Da sie Praktikumsplätze in wichtigen Einrichtungen haben, sind sich auch motivierter daran teilzunehmen. "*I mean I work in one of the biggest Museums in this city, even though there would be a lot of other people that would want to work there ... or have a job at all*" (Stefanie 2015). Deshalb ist das Interesse an einer Teilnahme an Birthright Armenia nicht immer aus der Motivation die "Welt zu verbessern" (wie sie Darieva beschreibt) entstanden, vielmehr ziehen die TeilnehmerInnen aus dem Aufenthalt und dem Praktikum in diesen Institutionen auch einen persönlichen Profit, den sie auch in ihrer neuen Heimat nützen können.

¹⁶⁷ Crowley versucht damit auch zu erklären, warum so viele Menschen aus dem amerikanischen Raum und westeuropäischen Ländern teilnehmen, wohingegen das Konzept des Volunteerings in Ex-Sowjetländern zum Beispiel wenig Verständnis findet (vgl. Crowley 2013: 12).

Die Veränderungen durch den Aufenthalt

Das Verhältnis zwischen den ArmenierInnen in der Diaspora und ihrer persönlichen Identifizierung damit, ist ambivalent und tendenziell eher von einem Gefühl der Fremde anstatt von Nähe geprägt. Dies sollte sich nach Ansicht von BA durch den Aufenthalt in Armenien ändern. Tatsächlich stellt sich heraus, dass sich die Befragten erst durch den Aufenthalt weitreichend mit ihrer armenischen Identität auseinandersetzen mussten und sich das auf die Wahrnehmung der eigenen Person auswirkt, wie auch auf die Vorstellungen über das Land. Sie gelangten zur Erkenntnis, dass sie sich mehr von der lokalen Bevölkerung differenzieren, als sie angenommen hatten und sich dadurch auch ihrer Identität als "AusländerInnen" bewusst wurden. Ebenso lernten viele der TeilnehmerInnen erst durch den Aufenthalt zu verstehen, was Diaspora für sie, aber auch für die Republik Armenien bedeutet.

Das Aufeinandertreffen von Vorstellung und Realität

In den Gesprächen mit den InterviewpartnerInnen wurde eine klare Unterscheidung zwischen den Freiwilligen und den TouristInnen mit armenischen Hintergrund gemacht und es schien für alle fest zu stehen, dass man daher zwischen den beiden von außen kommenden temporären BesucherInnen unterscheiden müsse (vgl. Interview Diana, Nina, 2015). Für Diana, eine der Verantwortlichen des Programms BA, liegt der Unterschied zwischen den beiden darin, dass die VolontärInnen das "wahre" Armenien kennen lernen und nicht nur die schönen Seiten Armeniens, wie dies die TouristInnen erleben (vgl. Interview Diana 2015). Sowohl TeilnehmerInnen als auch die VertreterInnen der Organisation Birthright Armenia sind der Meinung, dass die Erfahrungen und das Wissen, welches die Freiwilligen während des Aufenthalts, des Lebens und Arbeitens, gesammelt und erworben haben, von authentischer Natur sind und sie dadurch die Realitäten des Landes besser erfassen als es andere können¹⁶⁸.

BA hat die Erfahrung gemacht, dass viele TeilnehmerInnen eine völlig falsche Vorstellung von der Republik Armenien hatten, bevor sie ankamen: "*It is important for them [Volunteers] to see the local life as well, because they live in a very made-up world. And there is not so much connection to the actual Armenia*" (vgl. Interview Diana, 2015).

Es kursieren nicht nur viele falsche Vorstellungen in der Diaspora von dem, was als armenisch gilt, sondern auch sehr viele negative Vorurteile gegenüber Armenien und vor allem deren BewohnerInnen. Davon zeugen die verschiedenen Aussagen der InterviewpartnerInnen (laut Interviews mit Hovanes, 2015 und Vican 2015; sowie Blogeneinträge 06.2012) welche verschiedene, in ihren verschiedenen Heimaten kursierende Vorurteile beschreiben, unter anderem Armut, Patriotismus, Faulheit oder Kriminalität, also Attribute, die einem *Third World*

¹⁶⁸ Selbiges konnte auch Crowley (2013: 48) feststellen.

Country entsprechen.¹⁶⁹ Diese Vorstellungen korrespondieren jedoch schlussendlich nicht mit dem, was die TeilnehmerInnen vorgefunden haben, denn so gut wie alle InterviewpartnerInnen zeichneten ein sehr positives Bild von Armenien und betonten dabei auch immer wieder, dass sie ihre Ansicht über das Land revidieren mussten. Unter dem Motto "If you want to make it here, you can" wurde eine optimistische Einstellung gegenüber dem momentanen Zustand und der Zukunft der Republik geäußert, beispielsweise was die Entwicklung und die Etablierung von Firmen betrifft (vgl. Interview Hovanes; Lori; Diana; Shant). Auch in verschiedenen Blogseinträgen zeigt sich Verwunderung über ökonomische und soziale Entwicklungen und Herausforderungen des Landes. *"These people, our people, aren't lazy, scared of oligarchs, against change, against societal evolution, modernization...essentially, a fresh start. When you search beyond the facade of their daily lives, and look past the leaking pipes of their apartment, broken roads to their village, simple meals of bread and cheese, you see that there hangs a heavy burden on our people"* (Blog-Eintrag 15.5.2012)

Birthright Armenia ist nicht unwesentlich an dieser Meinungsänderung und der Entstehung eines neuen Narratives beteiligt. Nicht nur, dass die TeilnehmerInnen durch BA vor allem in bereits etablierten und renommierten Institutionen arbeiten, die Organisation lädt an diversen Abenden im Monat auch "Repats"¹⁷⁰ oder VertreterInnen von erfolgreichen Firmen oder Organisationen zu Vorträgen ein, die von ihren eigenen Erfolgsgeschichte in der Republik berichten (ähnliches beschreibt Crowley 2013: 53). Dabei scheinen die Probleme des Landes, wie die große Diskrepanz des Lebensstandards zwischen der Stadt und in peripheren Regionen sowie die enorme Arbeitslosigkeit und Abwanderung (vgl. Kuznetsov 2006) von den positiven Narrativen welche BA bot, überlagert. Die TeilnehmerInnen schienen in den Gesprächen zu dieser Thematik kaum informiert, beziehungsweise wurden diese Bereiche aus eigener Initiative in Gesprächen und Interviews auch nicht von ihrer Seite thematisiert. Die mangelnde Auseinandersetzung mit den sozialpolitischen und ökonomischen Problemen des Landes könnte auch dadurch begründet werden, dass die TeilnehmerInnen während ihres Aufenthaltes nur wenig mit Menschen außerhalb der Mitglieder und Partnerfirmen von Birthright Armenia in Kontakt kamen. Vor allem durch den von BA vorgeschriebenen Arbeitsaufwand bleibt wenig Spielraum, sich außerhalb des gewohnten Radius zu begeben. Dies bedeutet, dass der Kontakt zu den Menschen vor Ort auf die ArbeitskollegInnen und die Gastfamilien beschränkt bleibt. Dies erkennen nur einige Volunteers wie Rachel, Lori und Stefanie, die für sich feststellen mussten, dass sich innerhalb von BA und Yerevan die Realität Armeniens nicht erkennen lässt – nur auf den Ausflügen am Samstag könne man einen anderweitigen Einblick gewinnen.

Crowley ist der Überzeugung, dass dieses positiv gezeichnete Bild mehr als Absicht von Seiten Birthright Armenias ist (siehe Crowley 2013). Ein von BA geschaffenes Narrativ über

¹⁶⁹ Grund dafür kann sein, dass besonders Familien, die kurz nach oder während der Sowjetzeit das Land verlassen haben, sehr schlecht vom Land geredet haben, ein Phänomen, das auch Zaslavskaya feststellen konnte (2015: 30). Dieses in der Diaspora verbreitete Bild konnte auch Darieva (2011) in einer Studie festhalten.

¹⁷⁰ Mitglieder der Diaspora die wieder aus dem Ausland zurück nach Armenien gezogen sind.

Armenien, welches vordergründig auf die Vermittlung positiver Bilder und Erzählungen zurückzuführen ist, hat laut Crowley (2013) zwei wichtige Folgen für die armenische Identität der Volunteers. Zum einen lässt es das oft stark vorherrschende Thema, nämlich den 1915 geschehenen Genozid etwas in den Hintergrund treten. Die Mitglieder der Diaspora sollen sich nicht nur an den Genozid erinnern und sich nicht nur darüber mit ihrem armenischen Erbe identifizieren, sondern an ein sich zum Positiven entwickelnden Land denken, das eine blühende Kultur hervorgebracht hat, in die es weiter zu investieren gilt (Crowley 2013: 59). *"Had I left Hayastan without experiencing Birthright Armenia, I would have no doubt left to never return. Why you ask? Well, it's easy to see a backward country without even the vision of progress when you're not involved with a civil society of dedicated progressive people. Through BR I participated in protests, educational forums, visited new developing schools. It was through the direction and guidance of BR that I was able to see hope and truly experience positive progress in the new Republic"* (Blog-Eintrag 24.12.2012). Es ist wichtiger für BA, und in einem nächsten Schritt auch für Armenien, dass die TeilnehmerInnen nach der Rückkehr in ihre sogenannte Wahlheimat ein Land (Armenien) unterstützen, das sich in eine positive Richtung entwickelt und als aufstrebend angesehen wird, anstatt sich auf die Opferrolle, als Folgeerscheinung des Genozids, zu fokussieren (vgl. Interview Diana 2015). Eine Identifikation der eigenen Person mit einem positiv konnotierten Land stärkt die armenische Seite ihrer Identität.

Deshalb ist dieses positive Bild der armenischen Realität in weiterführender Folge für die diasporischen Gemeinschaft generell wichtig, wie Darieva (2011) und auch Crowley (2013) dies darstellen. Demnach verbreiten (ehemalige) TeilnehmerInnen in ihren heimischen armenischen Gemeinschaften die Bilder und Narrative, welche sie von Armenien mitgebracht haben. Birthright ist sich des Potentials bewusst, wie dies auch ihrer eigenen Homepage illustriert: *"The development of future leaders of the Diaspora with a better understanding of and strong ties with the homeland, promoting the importance of participation in Armenia's development within their local Communities worldwide"* (URL1)¹⁷¹. Dass dieses Ziel aber nur begrenzt erreicht werden kann, ergibt sich aus der bereits gewonnenen Erkenntnis, dass der größte Teil der TeilnehmerInnen in keine größere armenische Gemeinschaft außerhalb des Landes integriert ist. Dementsprechend liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass die Reichweite ihres neu erworbenen Wissens und die potentiell erworbenen Führungsqualitäten nur beschränkt weiten Anklang finden.

¹⁷¹ Crowley beschreibt auch, dass BA den TeilnehmerInnen den Eindruck vermittelt, in welcher sie den persönlichen Besuch in Armenien als einzige Möglichkeit sehen, die wahre Kultur kennen zu lernen, die durch keine in den Communities befindlichen Kultur-Institutionen vermittelt werden kann (vgl. Crowley 2013: 48).

Fremdsein im eigenen Land

"The first thing I learned in Armenia was that, though I'm ethnically 100% Armenian, for all intents and purposes I identify as 100% American. I felt very American, even among Armenian-Americans"(Blog-Eintrag 15.7.2013). Das Narrativ, dass Armenien ein Bezugsort der armenischen Diaspora sei, wird zwar durch Institutionen wie dem Ministry of Diaspora oder auch durch Programme und NGOs wie Birthright Armenian, versucht zu fördern, schafft es aber dennoch nicht immer eine Beziehung zwischen den Menschen der Diaspora und der Republik in einer Weise herzustellen, die das Gefühl des Fremdseins aufheben kann. Die Freiwilligen wiesen in ihren Gesprächen immer wieder auf Situationen und Momente hin, in denen sie sich fremd fühlten – trotz des Umstandes, dass sie sich in ihrem Ursprungsland befanden. Diese Divergenzen zwischen sich und der Bevölkerung der armenischen Republik, eröffneten sich in verschiedenen Aspekten, angefangen von verschiedenen unbekannten alltäglichen und religiösen Ritualen (vgl. Interview Vanoush 2015), die auch einen gewissen Grad von Unverständnis bei den TeilnehmerInnen hervorrufen (vgl. Interview Rachel 2015). Dazu gehörte unter anderem auch der erfahrene Alltagssexismus der vielen der befragten TeilnehmerInnen auffiel und welcher mit dem eigenen Verständnis von Geschlechterrollen und Unterschieden nicht zusammenpasst. Auch das unflexible konservative Bild dieser Geschlechterrollen sei eine unüberwindbare Differenz zwischen den Menschen der Diaspora und der armenischen Bevölkerung (vgl. Gruppeninterview mit Stefanie; Lori; Vanoush 2015). Weitere Differenzen wurden in anderen Alltags- und Lebensaspekten erkannt, wie beispielsweise der in Armenien vorgefundenen Arbeitsmoral, die nur bedingt mit der eigenen vereinbar ist (vgl. Interview Stefanie 2015, Gruppeninterview 2015). Vor allem durch den direkten Kontakt mit der einheimischen Bevölkerung realisieren die Freiwilligen bestimmte Differenzen zwischen sich und den "anderen" (wie die TeilnehmerInnen von BA im Gespräch die armenische Bevölkerung bezeichnen). Dass diese Differenzen aufkommen, ist Birthright Armenia bewusst, aber für die Organisation sei dies der einzige richtige Weg für Menschen der Diaspora auch zu verstehen, das 'echte' Armenien kennen und verstehen zu lernen, auch wenn man nicht immer damit einverstanden ist (vgl. Interview Diana 2015; Shant 2015).

Durch den Einfluss anderer Kulturen in den anderen Ländern, habe sich der Lebensstil und die Ansichtsweise der Menschen der Diaspora verändert und sich auch den jeweils lokalen Gepflogenheiten angepasst (vgl. Interview mit Nina 2015; Interview mit Diana 2015). Dadurch entwickelt sich die weiter oben bereits erwähnte zweifache Identität (*double consciousness*) der Diaspora, die in den Momenten ihres Aufenthaltes und im Erkennen frappanter Unterschiede im Sozialverhalten etc. bewusst wird. Die TeilnehmerInnen bemerken, wie sehr sie auch durch ihr Heimatland beeinflusst sind und wie sie sich auch diesem verbunden fühlen (vgl. Interview Vican 2015). *"Process of identity formation never occur outside a socio-political and cultural context. They are no mere reflection of a free play of independent actor – they always acquire an opposite, the 'other' on to which the 'self' is projected"* (Kokot et al. 2004: 7). Die Volunteers können durch den Aufenthalt also Elemente finden, mit denen sie sich identifizieren

können, auf der anderen Seite wird ihnen aber bewusst, dass es Unterschiede in Verhaltensmustern gibt, die unüberwindbar bleiben.

Dies scheint aber nicht nur auf die TeilnehmerInnen zuzutreffen, sondern auch auf die lokale Bevölkerung. Die Freiwilligen berichten auch von umgekehrten Szenarien, dass die ArmenierInnen der Republik selbst oft wenig Berührungspunkte mit den Mitgliedern der Diaspora finden und diese nicht als Teil einer armenischen Kultur sehen. Stefanie, Armenierin dritter Generation in Italien lebend, bemerkt in ihrem Interview das mangelnde Verständnis der Einheimischen für die Menschen der Diaspora "*They [locals] don't really understand what Diaspora is. (...) So many people do not understand, they say: 'Oh your parents are Armenian'. I say they are Italian-Armenian, (...) I'm third generation. Only when I say I am third generation they kind of understand why I don't speak the language, but otherwise it is just black and white*"(Interview Stefanie 2015). Auch Nina, gebürtige Armenierin, gibt zu, dass sie sich bis zu ihrer Arbeit bei BA nicht wirklich mit dem Thema der Diaspora auseinandergesetzt hat. Dies ging auch soweit, dass ArmenierInnen der Republik auch nur wenig Verständnis für das unterschiedliche Verhalten in den diasporischen Gemeinschaften haben, beziehungsweise diese nicht als Teil Armeniens und somit keine persönliche Verbindung dazu sehen (vgl. Interview Shant 2015).

Dies konnten auch die TeilnehmerInnen von BA während ihres Aufenthaltes spüren, wenn sie von Erlebnissen berichten, welche darauf schließen ließen, dass ArmenierInnen der Diaspora nicht als gleichwertig "armenisch" wahrgenommen oder behandelt werden (vgl. Interview Talin, Gruppeninterview 2015). Dies offenbarte sich in geäußerten Beleidigungen, aber auch in banalen Alltagssituationen wie in Taxis oder am Marktständen höher verlangten Preisen. Als Beispiel dafür erzählte der Deutsch-Armenier Vanoush davon, wie ihn seine weiblichen Mitarbeiterinnen im Gespräch und Umgang meiden, da es nicht gern gesehen wird, wenn armenische Frauen mit ausländischen Männern sprechen (vgl. Interview Vanoush 2015). Obwohl das Programm hilft, dass sich die Diaspora und die lokale Bevölkerung näherkommen, bleibt in den Augen der armenischen Bevölkerung die Diaspora immer noch teilweise fremd (vgl. Interview Shant 2015). Studien wie beispielsweise jene von Darieva (2011) kamen zum selbigen Schluss, indem sie feststellte, dass ArmenierInnen der Republik die Mitglieder der Diaspora zumeist als "Fremde" wahrnehmen und nicht als Teil eines erweiterten Armeniens (vgl. Darieva 2011: 503). Auch das "Migration Center", ein Institut das sich der Erforschung der Migrationsbewegung und auch der Diaspora Armeniens widmet, kam zu einer ähnlichen Erkenntnis: Menschen in der Republik Armenien differenzieren sich von der Diaspora. Es kommt zu Diskriminierung und es herrschen einige Vorurteile gegenüber den Diaspora-ArmenierInnen, die von den Einheimischen oft als "*akhbars*"¹⁷², oder übersetzt Bruder, bezeichnet werden, was ein mit Abwertung konnotierter Begriff ist¹⁷³.

¹⁷² „Aghbar“ kommt vom armenischen Wort „yeghbayr“ (Յ ղ բ այր) was übersetzt Bruder bedeutet.

¹⁷³ Wurde in einem Gespräch im Migration Center, Mai 2015, angesprochen.

Der Einfluss der Diaspora

"I think the Diaspora is very important for Armenia (...) it is a huge potential because there are so many Armenians in the US and Europe that have the possibility to help Armenia in any way, just to pull up the country (...)" (Interview Vanoush 2015).

Dass die Diaspora ein wichtiger Einflussfaktor auf die Republik Armenien ist, wurde sowohl in der bereits erwähnten Literatur dargestellt und war ein Ergebnis der empirischen Erhebung mit den Freiwilligen. Die Annahme, dass die Diaspora einen gewissen Stellenwert zumindest auf institutioneller Ebene hat, zeigt sich nicht zuletzt in der Größe und Wichtigkeit des Diaspora Ministeriums. MitarbeiterInnen des Ministeriums waren in dieser Forschung ebenfalls wichtige Gesprächspartner. Im Interview mit einer Vertreterin dieses Ministeriums erklärte diese, dass die Diaspora ist nicht nur eine große ökonomische Hilfe sei, sondern auch eine wichtige Rolle dabei spiele, sich international für die Interessen Armeniens einzusetzen (vgl. Interview *Ministry of Diaspora* 2015). Crowley bespricht diesen Aspekt ebenfalls unter dem Stichwort Lobbying (vgl. Crowley 2013: 33). Dreuße sieht die Wichtigkeit der Diaspora in der Einführung und dem Importieren von innovativen Ideen und wichtigem Know-how nach Armenien, wodurch wesentlicher geistiger Input geleistet wird (vgl. Dreuße 2008: 68).

Birthright Armenia ist sich der Wichtigkeit der Diaspora bewusst; Shant, ein Mitgestalter des Programms, spricht beispielsweise darüber, wie bedeutsam der Beitrag von Mitgliedern der Diaspora für Armenien sei, besonders finanziell in Form von Investitionen in Organisationen, Infrastruktur und Förderungen – dazu gehöre auch BA (vgl. Interview Shant 2015). Auch die TeilnehmerInnen sind bis zu einem gewissen Grad darüber informiert: in Blogeinträgen und Aussagen von Freiwilligen wurde die Erkenntnis geäußert, wie viel die Diaspora sowohl durch ihre Anwesenheit als auch in anderer Weise zum Land beitragen kann und dass man sich nachhaltig als Mitglied der Diaspora für Armenien einsetzen sollte (vgl. Blog-Eintrag 03.2012, vgl. Interview Hovanes 2015). Dieser Einsatz für Armenien geschieht jedoch nur, wenn sich die Menschen verantwortlich für die Republik fühlen, was vor allem dann der Fall ist, wenn die TeilnehmerInnen sich damit identifizieren können und Einsatz dafür zeigen möchten (vgl. Interview Shant 2015). *"...at the end of the day we are all Armenian, it does not matter where we come from or which dialect we speak. We need to all fight the same fight"* (Blog-Eintrag 20.9.2012).

Folglich kann daraus geschlossen werden, dass eine gestärkte Identifizierung und innere Verbindung zur Republik Armenien nach der Rückkehr in die verschiedensten Nationen der Welt ein wichtiger Einflussfaktor für zukünftige Investitionen in das Land der Vorfahren sein kann. Wie bereits dargestellt, zeigt sich, dass viele Mitglieder der Diaspora wenig bis keine Verbindung zur Republik haben und Armenien auch nicht als ein Land sehen, mit dem sie sich identifizieren können. Programme wie BA sollen dies ändern und folgt man den Blogeinträgen, so scheint dieses Vorhaben auch zu fruchten. *"By making new friends and family, establishing a regular routine for a short while, meeting other diasporans who have repatriated to Armenia*

"and rooted their lives in the homeland, you really begin to think of Armenia as your homeland, your nation, your responsibility" (Blog-Eintrag 2.4.2012).

Manche TeilnehmerInnen schaffen es nicht immer eine persönliche Verbindung zum Land aufzubauen und seien deshalb teilweise auch sehr enttäuscht. Die Ergebnisse in der durchgeführten Forschung zeigen keine eindeutige Tendenz. In den Gesprächen wurde immer wieder darüber diskutiert, dass sich manche der TeilnehmerInnen dem Land gegenüber weder besonders emotional noch kulturell verbunden fühlten. So haben vier TeilnehmerInnen explizit geäußert, dass sich - trotz des Aufenthaltes - an ihrer emotionalen Verbundenheit zum Land wenig geändert, beziehungsweise sich ein verstärktes Distanzgefühl breitgemacht habe. Es sei schon zu viel Zeit vergangen, als dass diese Fülle von Divergenzen, bedingt durch das Leben im Ausland, überbrückbar wäre (vgl. Interview Diana 2015).

Andererseits sprach sich die andere Hälfte der befragten Freiwilligen dafür aus, dass der Aufenthalt ihnen geholfen habe, eine persönliche Verbundenheit zu Armenien aufzubauen, die es vor ihrer Ankunft nicht gegeben hat. Beispielsweise meinte eine der TeilnehmerInnen des Gruppengesprächs, dass sie sich in Armenien zu Hause fühle, dass sie sich nun verstärkt armenisch fühle und in Zukunft auch mehr Zeit in ihre armenische Identität "investieren" wolle (vgl. Interview Talin 2015). Eine weitere Befragte fühle sich ebenfalls nun mehr verbunden zu einem Land "*where she comes from*", das zuvor nur das Land ihrer Vorfahren war, aber keine persönliche Bedeutung hatte (vgl. Interview Shushan 2015). Eine wichtige persönliche Verbindung, die viele der TeilnehmerInnen zu Armenien aufgebaut haben, sei durch das Leben in einer Gastfamilie entstanden. Auch zu anderen ProgrammteilnehmerInnen, die aus der Diaspora stammen sind besondere Kontakte geknüpft worden, da sie ähnliche Erfahrungen sei es zu Hause, als auch während ihres Aufenthaltes gemacht haben.

Conclusio

Eine Beschäftigung mit der neuen Generation der armenischen Diaspora ermöglicht eine Vielzahl von Einblicken über die Beziehung zwischen der Diaspora und der Republik Armenien und deren BewohnerInnen. Durch die Kontakte mit anderen ArmenierInnen und Menschen der Diaspora, müssen sich die TeilnehmerInnen mit ihrer Identität und der Mitgliedschaft in einer globalen armenischen Gemeinschaft auseinandersetzen. Manchen TeilnehmerInnen wurde bewusst, dass aufgrund soziokultureller Umständen wenig Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen ihnen und den Menschen in Armenien existieren.

Wie sich feststellen ließ, war oft eher das Gegenteil der Fall: Die TeilnehmerInnen von BA sahen sich oft mit einem befremdlichen Gefühl gegenüber der einheimischen Bevölkerung konfrontiert. Grund dafür könnte die Erkenntnis sein, dass die meisten der Befragten vor ihrem Aufenthalt in Armenien wenig mit dem Land selbst oder in einer armenischen Gemeinschaft involviert waren und der Bezug zu einem Ursprungsland in ihrem Alltag keine immanente Rolle spielte. Deshalb gehörte die armenische Seite ihrer Identität von vornherein zu dem, was

Cornell als "*thin identity*" beschreibt, und die somit nur eine verhältnismäßig untergeordnete Rolle spielt. Deshalb war das Ergebnis keine Überraschung: eine Rückkehr zum Ursprungsland war nicht der primäre Beweggrund, am Programm von BA teilzunehmen. Praktika und Prestige schien für die TeilnehmerInnen ein weitaus wichtigerer Ansporn dazu gewesen zu sein, zeitweise nach Armenien zu ziehen. So wie es Birthright Armenia mehrfach in sozialen Medien erläutert hat, sollten die VolontärInnen nach ihrer Abreise mit einer "gestärkten armenischen Identität" wieder in ihre Heimatorte zurückkehren. Wie sich gezeigt hat, ist BA dabei nicht unwesentlich beteiligt, welche Art von Erfahrung die TeilnehmerInnen machen. Auf verschiedenen Ebenen trägt BA dazu bei, ein positives Narrativ des Landes zu fördern, welches die Freiwilligen in einem weiteren Schritt in ihre armenischen Gemeinschaften außerhalb der Republik verbreiten könnten. Doch trotz der fast gänzlich positiven Feedbacks der TeilnehmerInnen an BA und ihrer positiven Einstellung dem Land gegenüber, scheint eine längerfristige Beschäftigung mit der Republik oder einer armenischen Gemeinschaft in ihrem Heimatort nur von sekundärer Wichtigkeit, weshalb auch die Reichweite dieser positiven Narrative eher zu bezweifeln ist. Dafür spricht, dass die TeilnehmerInnen erst während des Aufenthalt merkten, wie sehr ihre Identität mit dem Heimatland verknüpft ist und wie weit sich die eigene armenische Identität vom 'Armenischsein' der lokalen Bevölkerung unterscheidet.

Jedoch sind die Freiwilligen davon überzeugt, durch ihren Aufenthalt einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten zu können und sehen in ihrer Rolle als Mitglied der Diaspora darin ein großes Potential. BA trug auch hier nicht unwesentlich dazu bei, eben dieses Potential der weltweit verstreuten Diaspora den TeilnehmerInnen näher zu bringen. Doch es bleibt fraglich, wie weit die TeilnehmerInnen nach dem Verlassen von Armenien dieses Potential nutzen werden, da BA nur wenig Auskunft darüber hatte, wie sich das Leben der ehemaligen Freiwilligen und ihre aufgebaute Bindung zum Land Armenien weiter gestaltet. Es ist zu vermuten, dass viele der Freiwilligen Armenien verlassen werden, mit dem armenischen Teil ihrer Identität immer noch als einer "*thin identity*", welche vielleicht in gewisser Hinsicht gestärkt wurde, aber weiterhin keine primäre Rolle im Alltag der Menschen spielen wird. Die Narrative jedoch, welche die Menschen mit sich bringen, beinhalten ein völlig neues Bild im Gegensatz zu jenen Bildern, welche sie zuvor mitbrachten. Es wäre deshalb für eine weitere Studie von großem Interesse, ob und welche Verbreitung diese Narrative in den verschiedenen Heimatländern haben.

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Mit Prof. Hranush Kharatyan im Gespräch.

Ein ExpertInneninterview

Bernhard Begemann

Hranush Kharatyan, 63, ist Forscherin am Institut für Archäologie und Ethnographie an der National Academy of Sciences of Armenian in Yerevan. Das Interview wurde am 2. Juni 2015 von Bernhard Begemann auf Russisch geführt und im Anschluss übersetzt. Nach etwa 30 Minuten wurden im Gespräch Themen angeschnitten, die weit über das eigentliche Forschungsthema der Gruppe von Bernhard Begemann und Andreea Zelinka "Circular Short-Term Migration From Armenia to Russia – A Male Dominated Phenomenon?" hinausgingen. Deshalb wurden manche Stellen in dem Interviewtranskript nur paraphrasiert wiedergegeben

Hranush Kharatyan, 63 is a researcher at the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenian in Yerevan. Bernhard Begemann conducted the interview in Russian, on June 2, 2015 and translated the interview afterwards into German. After about 30 minutes of the interview, topics were raised which did not focus on the research of the sub-group (Bernhard Begemann und Andreea Zelinka) "Circular Short-Term Migration From Armenia to Russia – A Male Dominated Phenomenon?". Therefore, some of the passages of the interview were not translated but only paraphrased.

- BB: Einleitende Erklärung zum Forschungsprojekt ,Circular Short Term Migration‘
- BB: Was die Entscheidungsfindung betrifft: Also, wir haben bereits mit einem Menschen gesprochen, und er hat uns gesagt, dass nur er //
- HK: // als Kopf der Familie //
- BB: // als Kopf der Familie entscheidet, und nur er. Was haben Sie dazu für eine Meinung?
- HK: Gut. Also, ich glaube, es wäre nicht schlecht, wenn ich einige Minuten Ihre Aufmerksamkeit auf das lenke, dass das zeitweilige, saisonale Reisen nach Armenien (sic! Vermutlich gemeint: nach Russland) um zu arbeiten, Tradition hat. Es ist kein neues Phänomen. Sogar während der Sowjetzeit, im sowjetischen Alltag, sind eine größere Anzahl an armenischen Männern sind üblicherweise zu saisonalen Arbeiten weggefahren. Zum Großteil war dies im Baugewerbe. Deswegen... und zum Großteil nach Russland. Äh, deswegen...da, sie in kalte Regionen gefahren sind, fand das meistens in der Saison von Februar bis ...bis November statt. Äh, sogar als... Also man sagt, es ist die Entscheidung des Mannes eigentlich ... aber im Prinzip ist es ...wie... die Lebensform (*orig: склад жизни, idiomatisch für "so, wie das*

Leben eben von statthen geht", "way of life", vermutlich Betonung des strukturellen Charakters – BB). Das heißtt, sogar eine Frau, die heiratet, weiß, dass sie einen Mann heiratet, der die Familie dadurch hauptsächlich ernährt, indem er saisonal wegfährt, um saisonal zu arbeiten. Und...es stellt sich heraus, dass es die allgemeine Wahl ist. Das heißtt, die Lebensform, die... Armenien ist ein flächenarmes Land. Zu Sowjetzeiten war vor allem die Stadt Yerevan geschlossen. ... Yerevan war geschlossen, um die Zahl der Landbevölkerung, die nach Yerevan zieht, zu mindern. ... Man konnte seinen Wohnort im Pass also nicht in Yerevan registrieren, und zu Sowjetzeiten konnte man ohne diese Registrierung nicht wohnen/leben. Und deshalb, weil man sie hier nicht registrieren konnte, sind die Leute nicht nach Yerevan gezogen, sondern... weil das Land auch flächenarm ist und Landwirtschaft zu betreiben nicht sehr lukrativ war, oder schwer war ... es ist ein sehr bergiges Land. Einzig die Araratebene, die mehr oder minder produktiv ist. Aus den Gebirgen und bergigen Gebieten gab es eine große Abwanderung. Und... diese Lebensform war... wie die Lebensnorm. Und deshalb,... und auch die Frauen, haben auch teilweise, recht aktiv, zum Beispiel ihre Söhne mit den Männern mit fortgeschickt, damit sie sich gewöhnen und sich aneignen, wie man in einem fremden Land arbeitet. Das war ein Einkommen für die Familie, das war eine Erfahrung für die Familie... und ... das ergab Möglichkeiten... und zudem...gab es keine... erstens gab es keinen Widerstand. Zweitens war es sogar begünstigt, und Frauen haben ihre Männer dazu ermutigt. Ich kenne eine Vielzahl von Fällen, als Ethnograph kenn ich diese Fälle, d.h. ich habe in diesen Familien gearbeitet, wenn die Frauen ihre nahen Verwandten baten, ihre Männer mitzunehmen, wenn sie "auf Saisonarbeit" fahren. Das heißtt sie haben das für ihre Männer...arrangiert. So denke ich, dass man die Frage nicht so klarstellen kann: Fragt der Mann die Frau oder nicht? Beraten sie sich zusammen oder nicht? Vielleicht in seltenen Fällen kommt der Mann heim und fragt seine Frau: vielleicht sollte ich fahren? (lacht) Er kommt einfach und teilt mit: Ich fahre. Und die Frau nimmt das als nötig und normal. Aber ich denke, ... in der Kommunikationskultur von Mann und Frau ist das eine gemeinsame Entscheidung. Es ist genau so eine gemeinsame Entscheidung, nicht nur in der Horizontalen, sondern auch in der Vertikalen: Also auch der Eltern und der Kinder. Also, die älter gewordenen Eltern...ja haben meistens ihren Söhnen geholten wegzufahren, und haben eine bestimmte Verantwortung für die Familien ihrer Söhne übernommen. Das kann das Schauen nach den Kindern sein, das Schauen nach dem Garten... der Frau bei der Familienführung zu helfen, dass wenn der Mann für einige Zeit wegfuhrt, die Familie mehr oder minder geregelt ihr Leben leben konnte. Ohne Zweifel hatte das, auch bereits zu Sowjetzeiten, verschiedene negative Auswirkungen. Unter anderem ... die lange abwesenden Männer haben...manchmal...eine neue Familie in Russland gegründet. Das heißtt sie hatten Parallelfamilien: eine russische und armenische. Und nicht immer so, dass die Frau nichts über die Existenz dieser Familie wusste. Ja, das hat zu einigen Konflikten geführt, aber ich denke, meistens, haben sie sich damit abgefunden, ausgehend davon, dass man in Armenien schlecht verdient. Also besser sich damit abfinden, also einfach zu streiten. Nun, so eine Kultur, sagen wir es so. Damit abgefunden. Ich kenne sogar einige Fälle, das sind aber schon die lustigsten, in denen die Männer ihre russischen Frauen mitgebracht haben und sozusagen in Polygamie gelebt

haben (lacht). Aber das sind schon Ausnahmen...sehr große Ausnahmen. Und natürlich ging das schon weit über den Rahmen der Familie, den Rahmen der Gesellschaft hinaus. Aber prinzipiell gab es das.

BB: Wir haben auch gelesen, dass Erkrankungen, v.a. sexuelle, sehr viel häufiger auftreten, wegen der Migration.

HK: Das denke ich auch. Manche Ärzte empfohlen sogar, gleich am Flughafen die Männer zu testen, sozusagen mit "was sie gekommen sind". Aber es ist wie ein offenes Geheimnis, dass die Frauen erkranken, und nicht einmal zum Arzt gehen, damit leben. Viele haben gar nicht den Verdacht, dass sie krank sind. ...

BB: Sie haben bereits auf alles geantwortet, was ich dazu noch zur Entscheidungsfindung fragen wollte. Ähm... die Migration ist nichts Einmaliges im Leben... //

HK: //nein, nein, das ist das ganze Leben. Ich kenne Leute, die ihr Leben so, ausschließlich auf diese Weise bestreiten. Ich kenne Familien, die nur von Einkommen aus Abwanderung lebten. Nennen wir das Abwanderung.

BB: Und was denken Sie... ist das Teil ... äh wie sagt man das ... wenn ein junger Mann erwachsen wird, um ein richtiger Mann zu werden ... //

HK: // nein, nein, ich denke nicht, dass das ein Initiationsritus ist ... dass es Teil einer Erziehung ist. In Armenien galt es eher, dass Jungen durch die Armee zum Mann werden. Die Bedeutung dessen ist viel größer, als etwa die Arbeitserfahrung.//

BB: //bis heute?

HK: Ja, auch heute noch. Aber es ist nicht mehr so weit verbreitet. Aber sehr lange...achja und auch die Hochzeit war Teil davon. Also der Junge kommt von der Armee zurück und heiratet, dann ist er ein Mann. Also, das Mannwerden wurde vielmehr mit der Armee verknüpft, als mit der Abwanderung. Im Gegenteil: Die Abwanderung verzögert den Prozess eher. Ich denke, dass ist nicht Teil einer Initiation...

BB: Ok, d.h., Sie denken nicht, dass das Ziel der Kurzzeit-Migration eine langfristige Migration ist? Und die Leute manchmal dort bleiben //

HK: //Ja...ich verstehe, was Sie fragen möchten. Nein, ich denke nicht, dass das Ziel von Kurzzeitmigration eine Stabilisierung des Lebens an einem ganz anderen Ort und dann die Übersiedelung, allein oder mit der Familie, ist. Aber das kommt natürlich vor. D.h. das ist nicht das Ziel, aber es entwickelt sich. Also es kommt vor.

BB: Ok, und wie organisieren sie sich? Sind sie ein Teil vom sog. "Human Trafficking" oder sind//

HK: //äh...nein. Es gibt jetzt auch solche Dinge, aber am häufigsten...also das was überhaupt gesetzmäßig (im Sinne von "in der Regel") ist...üblicherweise gibt es zwei Varianten... überlicherweise, wenn es um Russland geht: in Russland gibt es schon niedergelassene Arbeitgeber aus Armenien; die sammeln Arbeitskräfte für die Saison aus dem Kreis ihrer Verwandten, Bekannten, Landsmännern. D.h. aus ihrem Dorf oder einem Nachbardorf meistens. Die Anzahl von Arbeitskräften die sie brauchen, sei es für den Bau einer Straße, eines Gebäudes etc. Sie suchen sich aus den Handwerkern die aus, die sie brauchen, zahlen selbst die Fahrkosten, meistens,

und dann organisieren sie ...das ist jetzt so... in gewisser Weise war das auch zu Sowjetzeiten so... Es gab Dörfer, die praktisch.... zum Beispiel das Dorf Azatan, nicht weit von der Stadt Gyumri, die in Jakutien sogar schon ihre Dörfer haben. So viele sind dann dahin übersiedelt. Also kleine Siedlungen, in denen hauptsächlich Leute aus diesem Dorf leben. Es gab sogar den Fall...erzähle ich als kleine Anekdoten...//

BB: //entschuldigen Sie, ich habe das nicht ganz...//

HK: A-za-tan. Das Dorf Azatan... Es gibt natürlich mehrere...von diesem Dorf gibt es einige kleine Siedlungen in Jakutien. Das war der Hauptort ihrer Migration.

BB: Translokalisierung//

HK: // (lacht) Translokalisierung, sagen wir er so. Äh, aber bis heute, aus diesem Dorf, fahren etwa 2000 Menschen zur saisonalen Arbeit fort. Bis heute. Außerdem, zum Beispiel nach dem Erdbeben in Gyumri, gab es so viele aus Azatan in Jakutien, dass sie ein ganzes Flugzeug gemietet haben, um nach Gyumri zur Hilfe zu kommen. Das waren vor allem initiative Leute, vor allem Männer... Wenn junge Männer dort bleiben und dort ihre Familie gründen, das sind nicht die (vermutlich sind Kurzzeitmigranten gemeint). Sie leben einfach dort ihr Leben, aber von dort aus laden sie ihre Verwandten, Landsmänner zur Arbeit ein. Das war auch zu Sowjetzeiten auch so, aber jetzt ist es überall verbreitet. Genau so gibt es Gruppen, sogenannte Brigaden, Brigaden von Abwanderern, aus 3 bis 10, vielleicht 15 Menschen, die über Jahre hinweg an ein und denselben Ort fahren, um zu arbeiten. Andere, die auch fahren wollen, um etwas zu verdienen, fragen üblicherweise diese Brigaden, ob sie mitfahren können. D.h. es kommen neue Leute, es ist immer dieselbe Konstellation an Leuten. Oft nehmen die Eltern ihre Söhne mit, genauso aber fragen Bekannte ob sie mitfahren können und Teil der Brigade werden können. Das wird in der Familie an die nächste Generation weitergegeben, genauso aber horizontal.

BB: Wir haben auch...schon ein Interview geführt...und dieser Mensch hat uns gesagt, dass vielleicht ein einer Woche, vielleicht in einem Monat, vielleicht fährt er dieses Jahr gar nicht. Aber im Prinzip ist es immer...kann er jeden Tag aufstehen und//

HK: //...nu, er bekommt noch kein attraktives Angebot, vielleicht. Vielleicht ist das alte Angebot...//

BB: Wir haben erfahren, dass das etwas Alltägliches ist, aber nichts lange im Voraus zu planende...

HK: Also, das hängt davon ab... Manchmal ist das seit dem vergangenen Jahr geplant. Sie sind zurückgekommen und wissen schon wann sie wieder fahren. Aber das kann sich hinausziehen, aus verschiedensten Gründen. Der Arbeitgeber kann sagen: wartet noch einen Monat, ich sag's Euch dann. Und er muss warten, bis er gerufen wird. Und wenn nicht...wenn es eine schwierige Situation ist, kann er auch versuchen andere Möglichkeiten zu finden und mit ihnen fahren. Aber es kommt auch vor, dass es eine dringende Situation gibt, einen Notfall und man sofort Arbeit

finden muss. Dann fahren manche manchmal einfach los, an bekannte Orte, geografisch-sozial bekannte Orte und versuchen dort eine Möglichkeit zu finden. Aber, meistens ist es schon seit dem Vorjahr geplant.

BB: Nun, endlich, ...was machen die Familien hier, wenn es keine Männer gibt? Wir haben gehört, dass es Dörfer gibt, in denen im Sommer keine Männer zwischen 15 und 60 leben...//

HK: //Im vorletzten Jahr waren wir mit einer Expedition in so einem Dorf, indem der einzige Mann der Vorsitzende des Dorfrats war. Und eine meiner Informandinnen sagte mir: Wenn du willst, geh einfach nackt auf die Straße und bade dich, es gibt eh keine... Das waren auch recht wohlhabende Leute und die Familie, in der wir wohnten zum arbeiten, besaß eine riesige Garage, in der drei ausländische Autos standen, gute Autos, die über Monate nicht gefahren werden. Und viele, vielleicht ein Drittel des Dorfes hatte solche Möglichkeiten (finanziell): gute Häuser, schön renovierte Häuser, Garagen... Ich erinnere mich, während unseres Aufenthalts dort, gab es einen Unglücksfall mit einem Kind. Und bevor man auf den Notarzt wartet, musste man das Kind besser schnell dorthin bringen. Ich habe es dorthin gefahren. Und ich, hat sich herausgestellt, war die einzige, die bei einer so großen Anzahl von Autos, in diesem Dorf einen Führerschein hatte. Ich war ja nur zufällig da. Die standen da monatelang. Es gibt solche Fälle, zweifellos. Diese Geschichten erzähle ich Ihnen halb im Scherz. In Wirklichkeit, aus meiner Sicht, wirkt sich das ziemlich tödlich auf die sozialen Beziehungen, und wenn Sie wollen, auch auf die ökonomischen Beziehungen aus. Was passiert? Jetzt ist das Land angeblich privatisiert, die Leute besitzen ihr eigenes Land, angeblich. Formal ist das so. Aber aufgrund der Abwesenheit der Männer ist es sehr schwer dieses Land zu bearbeiten. Dort gibt es Technik, erstens. Die Technik...üblicherweise...es gilt als männliche Arbeit. Vor allem in den bergigen Gebieten. Ich weiß nicht, ob sie das bergige Armenien kennen. Die Erde dort ist sehr schwer zu bearbeiten. Das ist nicht die Araratenebene, wo man einfach mit dem Traktor fahren kann. Dort kann man nur mit sehr schwerer Technik das Land bearbeiten. Äh,... und die Abwesenheit der Männer bedeutet das Nichterledigen dieser Arbeiten. Soviel zu erstens. Zweitens: es macht auch keinen Sinn diese Arbeiten zu machen, das Land zu bearbeiten. Denn von diesem Land bekommt man viel weniger Gewinn, wie wenn der Mann fährt und eine bestimmme...außerdem schon Geld bringt, und keine Ware, die man erst noch verkaufen muss. D.h. noch die Organisation dieser Sachen. In Armenien geben die Banken den Kurzzeitmigranten Geld für die Tickets. Das wird aber formal als Business verbucht. Die Leute bekommen den Kredit für ein Businessprojekt, die Bank hat eine große Anzahl an neuen Businessprojekten. Eigentlich sind das aber Fahrtkosten. Die Leute fahren weg, kommen im Herbst zurück und geben das Geld der Bank mit Prozenten zurück. Der Bank ist das von Vorteil, den Leuten auch. Alle spekulieren auf die Entwicklung der Wirtschaft, da das ja neue Businessprojekte sind. In Wirklichkeit ist die Wirtschaft am Abgrund. Dieser Teufelskreis dreht sich weiter. Alle wissen alles. Alle wissen, dass das falsche Rechnungen sind, dass das Land brach liegt und verkommt. Alle verstehen, dass die Landwirtschaft zu Grunde geht, dass durch die Viehweide, fruchtbare Boden verloren geht. Für das Ökosystem ist das schlecht. Außerdem ist es nicht lukrativ heute Landwirtschaft zu betreiben, weil es keine Versicherung gibt. Die Versicherung gibt es

auch nicht, weil Armenien kein sehr stabiles Klima hat. Es kann Hagel, Dürre geben. Das alles verleitet die Leute dazu, neue Verdienstmöglichkeiten zu suchen. Das Land bleibt brach. Das erstens. Und die gesamte wirtschaftliche Initiative verlässt das Land, sie ist nicht interessiert hier zu arbeiten. Äh, ich werde nicht über solch bekannte Dinge sprechen, dass Kinder männliche und weibliche Erziehungspersonen brauchen, nicht nur im direkten Sinne der Erziehung, auch im Sinne eines Verständnisses, wie sich diese Beziehungen entwickeln. Das heißt, der Mann ist zwei, drei Monate zu Hause. Das birgt verschiedene Schocks für die Kinder. Die Kinder gewöhnen sich daran, lange in Abwesenheit der Männer zu leben. Jetzt kommt der Vater, der Bruder oder Sohn. Sie haben schon ihre eigenen Vorstellungen vom Leben. Viele Konflikte, alle halten einander nur aus. Das ist ein sehr schlechtes Wort, wenn in der Familie alle immer nur aushalten. Aber das ist ein massiv auftretendes Phänomen. Ich werde schon nicht mehr über so augenscheinlich banale Dinge sprechen, dass das Familienleben auch ein geschlechtliches Leben ist. Und was soll ich sagen, es ist alles schlecht. Jeder schaut, verfolgt, schaut hinter dem anderen her, hinter der Moral. Eine Masse an unnützen, kranken Gerüchten, Plauschen, Masse an Hysterien. Die Leute entwöhnen sich voneinander. Während der Abwesenheit bildet jeder neue Gewohnheiten, neue Beziehungsformen. Dann kollidieren diese Beziehungen in beidseitigem Unverständnis. Ich werde schon nicht mehr darüber sprechen, dass die Männer, die lange Arbeitstage haben, natürlich ermüden. Denn dorthin fährt man nicht für einen 8-Stunden-Tag, dorthin fährt man auch für einen 20-Stundentag. Sie trinken, kommen hierher, lassen sich gehen. Also, auf das Familienleben wirkt sich das meistens sehr traurig aus. Das Geld. Das Geld schicken sie entweder, oder bringen es mit. Wenn sie es regelmäßig schicken... es ist sehr unterschiedlich. Das hängt von der Familie, von der Tradition, von der Persönlichkeit ab. Unterschiedlich. Wenn sie es regelmäßig schicken, lebt die Familie ein mehr oder weniger maßvolles Leben, im materiellen Sinne. Wenn sie es mitbringen, oder noch schlimmer nichts mitbringen, das ist dann sowieso tödlich traurig. Aber wenn sie es mitbringen, dann kommt alles im Herbst. Dann kauft man im Herbst alles für den Winter. Dann fährt der Mann wieder weg und man muss wehmüdig die nächste Rückkehr erwarten. Alles das erschwert den Menschen natürlich das Leben. In den Familien...in den Familien von Kurzzeitmigranten (HK verwendet das Wort für Abwanderer, wie oben erklärt sind jedoch Kurzzeitmigranten gemeint) richtet sich das ganze Leben auf diese Zeit aus: Wenn der Papa kommt im Herbst, machen wir das und das. Aber jetzt müssen wir warten. Auf der anderen Seite, geht das Leben natürlich weiter. Die Männer sind weg und die Frauen werden so oder so ihre eigenen Formen und Ansichten entwickeln, sei es die Kindererziehung, sei es im politischen Sinne. Der Mann kommt zurück und natürlich gefällt ihm nicht alles in dieser Familie. Der Mann hat inzwischen, vielleicht eine andere Weltsicht...vielleicht sogar mit weiterem Horizont, vielleicht mit engerem, ich weiß es nicht, unterschiedlich. Das führt auch zu einigen Konflikten, nicht nur im Haus, sondern auch in dem, was man in Europa üblicherweise Gemeinde nennt. Das heißt, dass die Gemeinde hier keine Gemeinde ist, ein Teil, noch dazu der initiativste, stärkste Teil fehlt. Die Gemeinde, also eine bestimmte Anzahl von Leuten in einem bestimmten geografischen Gebiet, lebt einfach unter der Diktatur der örtlichen Machthaber (orig: местные власти), die niemandem rechenschaftspflichtig sind. Sie sind nur die Machtvertreter. Es sind

gewählte Vertreter, das wissen sie, aber im Endeffekt, sind es von der Macht eingesetzte und nur ihr verpflichtete, meistens, Männer. Also das gibt es auch. Warum soll sich ein Mann vor einer so großen Menge von Frauen rechtfertigen? Das wird er nicht tun. Und diese Beziehungen in der Gemeinde bringen auch viele Konflikte hervor.

- BB: Sagen Sie, Sie haben über Alkoholismus gesprochen, aber nur bei Männern. Tritt das bei Frauen nicht auf?
- HK: Das ist mir nicht bekannt. Das ist ein Gewohnheitsrecht, kennen Sie das? Also kein ökonomisches Recht, sondern das Recht, das zwischen den Menschen ist. Man könnte auch sagen, gesellschaftliche Beziehungen, aber die können auch erzwungen, etc. sein. Aber das Gewohnheitsrecht ist das Recht, das sich zwischen Menschen entwickelt, über Generationen weitergibt, natürlich auch transformiert, aber recht streng. Das Gewohnheitsrecht....also ich kenne keine Fälle, wo Frauen dem Alkoholismus verfallen wären. Es gibt sicher Fälle und die Gemeinde weiß das sicher auch. Aber das sind Ausnahmen, Einzelfälle und sogar: mit diesen Menschen, will niemand was zu tun haben. Nein, die Frauen trinken nicht. Zudem gibt es einige Fälle, gibt es die traurigen Fälle, dass die Frauen zuhause selbst Schnaps brennen, damit wenn die Männer kommen, sie was zu trinken haben (lacht). Üblicherweise machen die Leute das, damit es erstens eine Verköstigung gibt, wenn die Leute kommen. Vor allem für diesen Zweck, aber natürlich auch, damit der Mann was zu trinken hat, wenn er zu Hause ist.
- BB: Und das Geld, das in Russland verdient wurde, wer entscheidet, für was das ausgegeben wird?
- HK: Das ist eine gute Frage. Im Schnitt, sagen wir, sind das eindeutig die Frauen, die das entscheiden. Aber erstens, über das Jahr sammeln sich Probleme an und die Ehefrauen wissen, wofür Geld benötigt wird. Die Ehefrauen wissen, im Herbst kommt der Papa und dann muss man, wenn genug Geld da ist, einen Kühlschrank, ein Auto kaufen, oder dem Sohn oder der Tochter die Hochzeit ausrichten. Oder andere größere Ausgaben. Aber ansonsten sind es vor allem Sachen für den Winter und Kleidung für das ganze Jahr. Und Gemeindeausgaben. Das sind tägliche, alltägliche Ausgaben, und jedem in der Familie bekannte nötige, Großausgaben. Aber ungefähr 80%, aber das ist keine soziologische Erhebung, aber meines Erachtens 80% des Geldes bekommt die Frau. Also kleinere Ausgaben... kleinere Ausgaben tätigt eigentlich immer die Frau. Und die großen, es ist nicht so, dass man sich zusammensetzt und plant wofür das Geld ist, sondern alle wissen von Beginn an, welche größeren Anschaffungen in diesem Jahr anstehen. Darüber gibt es Konflikte, ab zu gibt der Mann das Geld weiter, leihst es, zahlt Schulden zurück, es reicht nicht für die Ausgabe. Dann fangen meistens die Frauen an zu streiten. Warum hast Du das gemacht? Du wusstest doch, dass wir dieses Problem haben. Im Wesentlichen, geht der Konflikt von der Frau aus.
- BB: Das ist auch sehr wichtig: was passiert, wenn der Mann nichts mehr verdienen kann?
- HK: Eine sehr wichtige Frage//
- BB: //und kann er zurückkommen ohne Geld?

- HK: Ja. Das kommt oft vor. Noch mehr sogar. Manchmal kann der Mann gar nicht mehr zurückkehren. Und dann findet die Frau Wege, ihm Geld zu schicken, damit er zurückkehren kann. Was soll man machen? Das kommt vor....//
- BB: Und verliert er Autorität?
- HK: Vor wem? Vor der Frau oder in der Gemeinde?
- BB: Beides.
- HK: Die Rede geht selten über Autorität. Die Autorität in der Kurzzeitmigration hängt nicht immer von dem Geld ab, dass der Mann mitbringt. Das kann von der Aufmerksamkeit abhängen, die der Mann gegenüber der Familie zeigt, vom Charakter und der Ausgeglichenheit. Aber in den Beziehungen ist es eigentlich immer so, dass die Frau auf den Mann hören muss. Schlau oder dumm, mit Geld oder ohne Geld. Meistens werden die Frauen so erzogen, dass sie dem Mann gehorchen.
- HK: paraphrasiert: Wenn ein Mann sehr viel verdient, hat er immer einen hohen Status. Wenn wir aber von einem Gehalt reden, dass nur für die Grundversorgung der Familie reicht, dann hängt der Status nicht nur vom Geld ab, sondern auch vom Charakter und anderen Faktoren. ... Wenn ein Mann nicht mehr arbeiten kann (invalid), hilft die gesamte Familie natürlich, um seinen fehlenden Verdienst auszugleichen. Wenn der Mann aber faul ist und kein Geld nach Hause bringt, kann es genau so gut sein, dass die Familie ihn los wird. Wenn der Mann aber altersschwach wird, so versucht die Familie, bei Zeiten einen Arbeitsnachfolger zu finden.
- HK paraphrasiert: ad Heimatbegriff/Narrativ und seine Veränderung im Laufe des Lebens: 50% der Bevölkerung Armeniens in den 1920er Jahren waren Genozidüberlebende – für sie war "Heimat" Westarmenien, das ganze Sowjetleben hat alles dafür getan, damit sie diese Heimat vergessen. Die Stalinistischen Repressionen waren auch auf diese Leute ausgerichtet (die z.B. ihre Kinder nach Ortsnamen der früheren Heimat benannt haben), mit Argumenten, wie: "Gefällt Euch das sowjetische Paradies etwa nicht?" Auch im Moskauer Vertrag, verpflichtet sich Moskau/die SU keine Gebietsansprüche mehr an die Türkei zu stellen. Die Vertriebenen haben aber geglaubt, diese Regelung wäre nur auf 20 Jahre beschränkt und würde dann neu verhandelt. Der o.g. "Heimatbegriff" wurde dann inoffiziell in den Familien sehr lange und sehr stark weitergegeben. In einigen Grenzregionen Armeniens ist das bis heute vorhanden, sie haben sogar ein eigenes Wort für dieses "Heimat". In der armenischen Republik, im Volk wird der Heimatbegriff auch weiterhin sehr stark weitergegeben, sowohl in der Literatur, als auch in der Erziehung. Heute ist das v.a. die Schulerziehung, aber auch in Familien. Seit der Unabhängigkeit Armeniens, haben die Leute eine Wut entwickelt gegen Leute, die heute ihre Heimat usurpierten – normalerweise sind das die Leute an der Macht. Früher war das die AOT-Partei, heute die Republikaner, aber die Partei an sich ist unwichtig, es sind immer die Leute an der Macht. Sie usurpierten die Heimat, aber sie dienen ihr nicht. Das Volk glaubt, dass alle Ressourcen des Landes (Verkehr, Rohstoffe, ...) in den Händen einiger weniger sind. Es kommt z.B. oft vor, dass Leute quasi enteignet werden – und das mittels offizieller Kanäle. Dieser "Staatsdienst" ist das Business einiger Leute. Das hat sehr auf den Begriff der Heimat eingewirkt. Die Macht-Leute usurpierten also den Heimatbegriff, die Heimat und alle ihre Besitze. Aber der Heimatbegriff ist natürlich vielschichtig. Für die meisten beinhaltet, er

- den Armeedienst, Steuern zu zahlen, über die sie keine Kontrolle mehr haben. Die Einfluss(nahmemöglichkeit) der Leute wird zurückgedrängt und damit verlieren sie auch das Gefühl einer Verpflichtung gegenüber der Heimat. Es gibt also den historischen Heimatbegriff und den jetzigen. Gegen den jetzigen von der macht geprägten Heimatbegriff fühlen viele Armenier Widerstände.
- HK paraphrasiert: Teilweise kann Russland natürlich für die Kurzzeitmigranten auch ein Teil der Heimat werden. "Westarmenier" (Nachfahren der Genozidflüchlinge aus der heutigen Türkei) integrieren sich tendenziell weniger in Russland als "Ost-armenier", die schon zu Sowjetzeiten mit der russischen Kultur in Verbindung traten und sich leichter assimilieren wollen.
- HK paraphrasiert: ad Forschungstipps für den Aufenthalt in Armenien: In Azatan kann man viel von dem sehen, was Hranush Kharatyan gesagt hat: "Vererbung" der Migration, ein männerloses Dorf, getrennte Familien. Azatan ist ca. 120 Kilometer von Jerewan entfernt.
- HK paraphrasiert: In Armenien werden "männliche Eigenschaften" stark anerzogen – v.a. auch von Frauen, also sog. "dem Mann gehorchen, das "Erstrecht des Mannes", z.B. die weiblichen Politiker bemühen sich sehr ein "männliches" Ideal zu sein, was die Bevölkerung als "nötig und normal" ansieht.
- HK paraphrasiert: Es gibt kein "negatives Bild" der Diaspora, der Migranten, es gibt sogar viel Verständnis (weil alle die Situation in Armenien kennen – niedrige Gehälter, hohe Korruption, ...), manchmal Respekt für sie, aber keine negativen Gefühle. Manchmal kann man in der Zeitung lesen, die Migranten wären egoistische Menschen, aber das setzt sich nicht durch. Das Verhältnis zur permanenten Diaspora verändert sich aber grade! Zu Sowjetzeiten, gab es gar keinen Kontakt. Die Diaspora ist mit einigen Rückkehrern zum Teil auch "wieder heim" gekommen. In der armenischen Geschichte gab es immer großen und positiven Einfluss von außen (z.B. Perser). Grundsätzlich gibt es ein gutes Verhältnis zur Diaspora. Früher, nach dem Zusammenbruch der SU, war die Diaspora nur der Goldesel, heute werden die Machthabenden manchmal dafür angegriffen, wenn sie die Diaspora um Geld bitten. Viele Diaspora-Mitglieder, die zurückkommen profitieren auch von Korruption und machen mit, was teilweise zu negativem Image führt.
- HK ad Fall von Vage: Ich glaube, dass ist ein Einzelfall, ich glaube nicht, dass jeder Arbeitgeber einverstanden ist, dass sein Angestellter für 7 bis 8 Monate weggeht und danach einfach wieder eingestellt wird. Das kann vorkommen, ist aber wohl nicht die Regel.
- BB Vielen Dank, Sie haben uns unendlich viel geholfen!
- HK Aber gerne! Wenn Sie noch etwas brauchen, rufen Sie mich an.

Abkürzungen:

BB: Bernhard Begemann, Interviewer

HK: Hranush Kharatyan

... Pause, länger als eine Sekunde,

//: Unterbrechung, bzw. Anschluss an das Gesagte

Migration and its Impact on Armenia

Migration and its Impact on Armenia

Photo Exhibition 2015

Eine Fotoausstellung

Als ein Nachfolgeprojekt des Feldpraktikums in Armenien 2015 werden die Forschungsergebnisse in Form einer Fotoausstellung am Institut für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie der Universität Wien präsentiert.

Die Ausstellungstexte und eine Auswahl der Fotos sollen einen Einblick in die Ergebnisse und Arbeitsweisen während des Feldaufenthaltes vermitteln. Eine Vielzahl von Fotos, die im Laufe des Praktikums auf einer gemeinsamen Internetplattform geteilt wurden, machten eine Auswahl und auch eine Zuordnung der PhotographInnen im Nachhinein schwierig.

Als VerfasserInnen gelten daher die FeldpraktikumsteilnehmerInnen Bernhard Begeman, Cristina Biasetto Julian Jakoubek, Katrin König, Iris Marko, Anna Mautner, Cornelia Mosser Johannes Pehlgrimm, und Andreea Zelinka. Daniela Paredes hat zeitgleich eine Forschung in der armenischen Diaspora in Wien durchgeführt.



A Photo Exhibition

As a follow up project of the field practice seminar in Armenia 2015, the results are displayed in a photo exhibition at the Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna.

The texts of the exhibition and a selection of the photographs give an insight in the results and research methods applied in the field. A variety of photos, collected during the field practice and stored on an internet platform, made a selection and an assignment to the photographer almost impossible.

The authors are thus the participants of the field practice seminar Bernhard Begeman, Cristina Biasetto Julian Jakoubek, Katrin König, Iris Marko, Anna Mautner, Cornelia Mosser Johannes Pehlgrimm and Andreea Zelinka. Concurrently Daniela Paredes did her research in Armenian diasporic communities in Vienna.



Das Feldpraktikum – Eine Einführung

Im Rahmen des Forschungspraktikums “Migration and its Impact on Armenia” reisten wir Studierende der Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie vom 28. Mai bis 13. Juni 2015 in die armenische Hauptstadt Jerewan. Im Vorfeld konkretisierten wir die Themen unserer Forschungsarbeiten, die anhand unterschiedlicher Fragestellungen alle die Migration in Armenien und deren Einflüsse untersuchen sollten.

An Wochentagen nutzten wir die Zeit für unsere individuelle Forschungsarbeit. Wir vernetzten uns mit unterschiedlichen regionalen und internationalen Organisationen, trafen uns mit RückkehrerInnen, armenischen StudentInnen und anderen Personen, die für unsere Untersuchungen relevant und hilfreich waren. Die meiste Zeit forschten wir in Jerewan, wobei manche von uns auch die Gelegenheit hatten, ihre Forschung in ländlichen Gebieten zu intensivieren. An den Wochenenden unternahmen wir verschiedene Bildungsausflüge in der näheren Umgebung zur Besichtigung von Sehenswürdigkeiten.

Durch unseren Aufenthalt in Yerevan konnten wir nicht nur unterschiedliche Forschungsfragen beantworten, sondern erhielten auch einen vielschichtigen Einblick in die armenische Kultur.



Fieldwork - Introduction

The field practice “Migration and its Impact on Armenia” took place in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia from the 28th of March to the 13th of June 2015. Before leaving, particular topics and questions investigating the influences of migration were developed.

On weekdays time was dedicated to individual research topics. We met Armenian students, international and local organizations, returnees and other relevant individuals. Our research took place in Yerevan most of the time, but some of us had the opportunity to travel to rural areas as well.

On weekends we made excursions to historic sites.

Through our time in Yerevan we could not only answer different research questions, we also gained a multilayered insight into the Armenian culture (or into lived experiences in Armenia).



Armenien: eine Migrationsgeschichte

Migrationsbewegungen sind in Armenien kein neuartiges Phänomen, sondern im Gegenteil ein impliziter Bestandteil der armenischen Staatsgeschichte seit seiner Gründung im 3. Jahrhundert n.d.Z.. Einen traurigen Höhepunkt erreichte diese Geschichte am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges, als der Genozid an den ArmenierInnen im Jahr 1915 rund 500.000 Menschen in die Flucht trieb. Seither entwickelten sich zahlreich armenische Diaspora-Gemeinschaften rund um den Globus. In der rezenten Migrationsgeschichte Armeniens spielt insbesondere der Zerfall der ehemaligen Sowjetunion (UdSSR) in den 1990er eine wichtige Rolle, der starke Emigrationsbewegungen auslöste. Obwohl der Trend zur Auswanderung in den letzten Jahren abschwächte, zeigen sich politische Entscheidungsträger angesichts der Stagnation des Bevölkerungswachstums in den letzten zehn Jahren weiterhin besorgt.

Es ist schwer, exakte Aussagen über die weltweite Bevölkerungszahl von ArmenierInnen zu treffen; Schätzungen zufolge identifizieren sich aber mehr als 10 Millionen Menschen als ArmenierInnen. Die zahlenmäßig größten armenischen Bevölkerungsgruppen finden wir heute in Russland (ca. 1,5 bis 3,0 Millionen), den Vereinigten Staaten (ca. 1,0 bis 1,5 Millionen), Frankreich (ca. 300.000), Georgien (ca. 250.000), der Ukraine (ca. 100.000 bis 150.000) und dem Iran (ca. 70.000 bis 120.000). In Österreich leben offiziell 3.000 Personen mit armenischer Staatsbürgerschaft, die armenische Diaspora als solche zählt geschätzte 7.000 Personen.

Für das heutige Armenien hat die enorme Dimension der Migrationsbewegungen weiterhin signifikante Auswirkungen. So wird zum Beispiel das lokale Bruttoinlandsprodukt zu insgesamt 17 Prozent aus den Rücküberweisungen (Remissen) der globalen Diaspora gespeist. Ebenfalls engagieren sich weltweit mehrere hundert Diaspora-Vereine sowohl in wie auch außerhalb Armeniens, in einer Fülle von Betätigungsfelder, mitunter im Bildungsbereich, der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und/oder der Kulturförderung. Nicht zuletzt aufgrund dieser wichtigen Rolle der MigrantInnen für den armenischen Staat hat die Regierung u.a. ein Ministerium für Diasporaangelegenheiten gegründet und gewährt sofortige Staatsbürgerschaften für Personen, die zumindest einen Großelternteil armenischer Herkunft nachweisen können.

Armenia: a migration story

Migration is not particularly a new phenomenon, in fact people have been moving out of what we know now as Armenia since the state's early days in the third century a.D.. However, events towards the end of World War I ended in the 1915 Armenian Genocide when an approximate 500,000 people fled the country for safety. Since then, Armenian diaspora communities have developed around the world. Another crucial moment in Armenian migration is without a doubt the decline of the USSR which prompted strong emigration since the 1990's. This trend has reduced in the last years, however policy makers are confronted with a stagnation of population growth for ten years.

Precise numbers on Armenian diaspora are difficult to detect, but it is estimated that ten million people in the world identify themselves as Armenians. Countries hosting a considerable share of Armenians (including citizens with Armenian self-identification) are Russia (~1.5 to 3 million), the United States (~ 1.0 to 1.5 million), France (~300,000), Georgia (~250,000), Ukraine (~100,000 to 150,000) and Iran (~70,000 to 120,000) just to mention a few. In Austria there are 3,000 residents with Armenian citizenship, but an estimated 7,000 diaspora members.

The sheer dimension of migration for today's Armenia is significant. Received remittances account for approximately 17 percent of the country's GDP. Several hundred diaspora associations operate worldwide and in Armenia in a range of fields such as education, development and culture. The Armenian government has established a Ministry for Diaspora affairs and grants citizenship based on at least one quarter of Armenian descent.

Genozid

Im Jahr 2015 genoss Armenien eine vergleichsweise hohe mediale Präsenz. Grund dafür war das Jubiläum eines Ereignisses, welches das Land nach wie vor prägt und dessen Gedenktag sich am 24. April 2015 zum hundertsten Mal jährte: Der Genozid an der armenischen Bevölkerung auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Osttürkei durch das Osmanische Reich. Gedacht wird der zwei Millionen in der Türkei lebenden ArmenierInnen, welche durch eine Vielzahl an Zwangsdeportationen und Massakern zwischen 1915 und 1922 aus ihrer Heimat vertrieben wurden oder ums Leben kamen. Die Ereignisse der Jahre zwischen 1915 und 1922 in Armenien wurden im Laufe der 80er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts vom ständigen Tribunal der Völker, vom europäischen Parlament sowie auch von den Vereinten Nationen als Völkermord, das heißt als Genozid, anerkannt. Doch der armenische Genozid ist auch hundert Jahre später ein politisch kontroversielles sowie auch emotional höchst aufgeladenes Thema. Die ArmenierInnen kämpfen nach wie vor um die Anerkennung der Vorkommnisse als Völkermord, denn bis zum Gedenkjahr 2015 wurde der armenische Völkermord insgesamt von lediglich 20 Staaten anerkannt; zu diesen gehören seit April 2015 auch Österreich und Deutschland.



Genocide Memorial Yerevan

Genocide

In 2015 Armenia has had a high media coverage. This is due to the hundredth anniversary of the Armenian genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire, commemorated on the 24th of April 2015. It is the commemoration of the two million Armenians living in Turkey who were expelled from their homes through forced deportations and massacres between 1915 and 1922. In the 1980s the Permanent People's Tribunal, the European Parliament as well as the United Nations have recognized the events in Eastern Turkey between 1918 and 1922 as a genocide. The topic of the Armenian genocide is still, a hundred years later, a politically very difficult and controversial issue as well as emotionally charged. Armenians are still fighting for the acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide, by April 2015 only 20 states had done so. Austria and Germany have since been added to this list.



Genocide Memorial Yerevan

Postsozialismus

Der Vorgängerstaat des heutigen Armeniens, die Armenische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik, war von 1920/22 bis 1991 Teilrepublik der Sowjetunion. Vieles in Armenien weist heute noch auf die sozialistische Vergangenheit hin. Das Stadtbild der Hauptstadt Jerewan etwa, mit breiten Prachtalleen im Zentrum und großen Plattenbauvierteln an den Stadträndern, ist geprägt vom sowjetischen Architekturideal und erlangte einen Großteil seiner heutigen Form in sowjetischer Zeit. Die starke Präsenz der russischen Sprache, die starken Migrationsbewegungen nach Russland, eine große Menge an Ladas, Wolgas und anderen sowjetischen Automarken, sowie die russischen Militärbasen und Grenzsoldaten in Armenien sind nur einige Hinweise auf die bis heute merkliche Wirkmächtigkeit (post-) sowjetischer Machtstrukturen.



Postsocialism

Today's Republic of Armenia used to be a part of the Soviet Union between 1920/22 and 1991, called the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The impacts of Armenia's socialist past can still be seen today. Yerevan's architecture for instance is strongly influenced by the Soviet style, with its grand avenues in the centre and big prefabricated buildings in the outskirts. Likewise, the strong presence of the Russian language, significant migration flows toward Russia, a large amount of Ladas, Wolgas and other Soviet car brands, Russian military bases and border patrols in Armenia point to the potency of (post) Soviet power structures, still evident today.



Armenische Identität

Armenien hat sich im Laufe der Geschichte territorial sehr verändert. Dieser Umstand hat die Bevölkerung des Landes stark geprägt. So umfasst das heutige Armenien nur mehr etwa ein Zehntel der Fläche des einstigen Großarmenien, das in seinen Glanzzeiten an drei Meere grenzte: das Mittelmeer, das Schwarze Meer und das Kaspische Meer. Armenien wurde mehrfach unter fremder Herrschaft in verschiedene Reiche eingegliedert, zuletzt als Teil der Sowjetunion. Nach der Unabhängigkeitserklärung wurde 1991 die Republik Armenien gegründet, wobei aufgrund historischer Verträge ein großer Teil ihres ehemaligen Siedlungsgebietes weiterhin zur Türkei gehört. Aus diesem Grund liegt auch das Nationalsymbol, der Berg Ararat, zum Leidwesen vieler ArmenierInnen heute auf türkischem Staatsgebiet.

Aufgrund der Kriege in der Vergangenheit einerseits, des Genozids von 1915 und der schwachen armenischen Wirtschaft andererseits haben heute viele das Land verlassen, weshalb weltweit eine sehr bedeutende Diaspora existiert. Deren Vielfältigkeit hat ein starkes nationales Zugehörigkeitsgefühl hervorgerufen. Auch die armenisch-apostolische Kirche, welcher über 90 Prozent der ArmenierInnen angehören, ist von großer Bedeutung. Eine weitere Besonderheit ist die armenische Sprache, welche zu der indogermanischen Sprachfamilie zählt. Das armenische Alphabet wurde im 5. Jahrhundert entwickelt und besteht aus ursprünglich 36 Schriftzeichen. Ihre eigene Sprache ist den ArmenierInnen sehr wichtig und deren Erhaltung nimmt einen hohen Stellenwert ein. Die andere Seite der Medaille zeigt jedoch, dass aufgrund vieler Mängel in der Führung des Landes durch die Regierung ein starkes Misstrauen der Bevölkerung gegen diese vorhanden ist, und viele Menschen sich davon distanzieren möchten.



Armenian Identity

Armenia's territory faced major changes throughout history. This circumstance has greatly influenced the country's population. Today Armenia comprises only about one-tenth of the surface of the former Greater Armenia, which bordered on its heydays three seas: the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Armenia has been repeatedly incorporated under foreign rule to different forms of political organization, most recently as part of the Soviet Union. After the declaration of independence in 1991, the Republic of Armenia was founded, and due to the recent agreements, a large portion of the former settlement area became part of Turkey. For this reason the national symbol of Mount Ararat is found on Turkish territory today, much to the chagrin of many Armenians. Due to former wars, the genocide of 1915 and the weak Armenian economy today, many Armenians had to leave the country. Thus very large diaspora spread is all over the world. This circumstances has given rise to a strong national sense of belonging.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is of great importance, shown by the fact, that 90 percent of Armenians belong to it. Another special feature is the Armenian language, which belongs to the Indo-European family. The Armenian alphabet was developed in the 5th century and consists of originally 36 characters. Their own language is very important to Armenians and the preservation of it plays an important role. But: the other side of the coin shows that due to many shortcomings in the country's leadership, a strong distrust towards the government exists and many people want to distance themselves from it.



Diaspora Investitionen

Migration, Diaspora und andere Phänomene, welche diese Themen begleiten, wie etwa Remittances, Diaspora-Tourismus sowie auch Diaspora-Investitionen spielen in Armenien eine große Rolle. Dies machen auch folgende Zahlen eindrucksvoll klar: Die in Armenien lebende Bevölkerung besteht derzeit aus circa drei Millionen Menschen. Die Anzahl jener ArmenierInnen, welche in der Diaspora, also außerhalb des armenischen Staatsgebietes lebt, übersteigt mit mehr als zehn Millionen Menschen diese Zahl jedoch um ein Vielfaches. Die tatsächliche Größe der armenischen Diaspora bleibt jedoch stets eine Schätzung, da der Begriff der Diaspora nicht genau genug definiert werden kann, um eine exakte Zahl angeben zu können. Die Gründe dieser enormen Emigration sind verschiedener Natur; zwei davon, welche im Rahmen unserer Forschung jedoch besonders hervortraten, sind einerseits die geringen Zukunftsperspektiven und die stagnierende Wirtschaft in Armenien selbst, andererseits die große Anzahl an armenischen EmigrantInnen während der Zeit des armenischen Genozids.

Die Beziehungen zwischen der Diaspora und der armenischen Republik sind jedoch nach wie vor stark. Dies wird etwa durch das Beispiel der zahlreichen Investments, welche von der Diaspora in Armenien getätigten werden, deutlich. Diese Investments prägen unter anderem auch das Stadtbild, was anhand der folgenden Fotos verdeutlicht werden soll.



Diaspora Investments

Migration, diaspora and other phenomena related to this topic such as remittances, diaspora tourism and many more have a very important role in Armenia. If we look at numbers, it becomes clear at once: Armenia's population currently consists of about three million inhabitants. The number of Armenians living in diaspora surmounts this number by far. A little more than ten million people of Armenian origin live dispersed all around the globe. These numbers are of course an estimation, since it is not possible to have an accurate account of all Armenians living in diaspora. It suggests however the importance of migration for the state and the people of Armenia. The origins of this enormous emigration from Armenia can be accounted to a number of reasons; two of the main ones are the pursuit of better job opportunities and wages to countries like Russia and the migration of Western Armenians (which is now a part of Turkey) during the Armenian genocide.

However, the relationships between the Armenian diaspora and the "homeland" are still strong. Diaspora investments, for instance, shape life in the cityscape.



Jerewan: Gegensätze in der Stadt

Als eine der ältesten Städte der Welt bildet Jerewan mit mehr als einer Millionen EinwohnerInnen den wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Brennpunkt Armeniens. Die Hauptstadt besteht aus 12 Distrikten, die sich in ihrem Erscheinungsbild unterscheiden. Im Zentrum Jerewans ist die Armut der armenischen Bevölkerung kaum zu erkennen. So bietet der 24-Stunden-Supermarkt um die Ecke alle vorstellbaren Produkte an und dies, da es sich meist um Importware handelt, zu horrenden Preisen. Zudem präsentiert sich das Zentrum der Stadt gepflegt und sauber. Hier kommt man in den Genuss von Kunst und Kultur sowie der groß angelegten Bauten wie z.B. der Nationaloper oder der Kaskaden, die das *Cafesjian Center for the Arts* beherbergen. Durch breit angelegte, geschäftige Einkaufsstraßen erhält die Stadt ihr modernes und jugendliches Gesicht. Sobald man sich ein wenig außerhalb des Stadtkerns bewegt, sieht man jedoch auch andere Seiten Jerewans, wie z.B. enge Gäßchen, Graffiti und niedrige Häuser. Noch größere Gegensätze lassen sich erfahren, wenn man sich mit einer *Marshrutka* (Kleinbus) in einen der Randbezirke begibt. Einer davon wird im Volksmund 'Bangladesh' genannt, weil er sich weit außerhalb, entfernt von der Innenstadt, befindet. Der Weg dorthin dauert eine Weile und, angekommen, sieht man hauptsächlich Plattenbauten, abgenutzte Fassaden, und auch die Straßen scheinen verstaubter und unebener zu sein. Es herrscht Trubel auf dem großen Markt, der seine Ware zu sehr günstigen Preisen anbietet. Abseits dessen bewegt man sich vornehmlich durch Wohnbauanlagen. Es herrscht eine ruhige, vormittägliche Stimmung, nur hier und da sieht man Kinder spielen.



Yerevan: A city of contrasts

Yerevan with its 1.2 million inhabitants is one of the oldest cities in the world and Armenia's economic and cultural centre. The capital consists of twelve districts which are very different in size, architecture and appearance. Being in the centre of Yerevan you can hardly see the poverty which only becomes visible when you enter the outskirts of Armenia's capital. The centre is shaped by supermarkets which offer an incredible range of imported products as well as huge buildings representing Armenian art and culture: the National Opera, the Cascades or the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts. The streets are welcoming, new and clean as well as surrounded with boutiques, cafes and restaurants. In contrast to this modern, young side of Yerevan however is the part of the city you see when you leave the main streets and explore the narrow alleys with their graffiti and small houses. Even more so if you get on one of the many Marshrutkas which bring you to Yerevan's outskirts. One of these outer districts is colloquially called "Bangladesh", a reference to its remoteness as well as to the poor state of its buildings and infrastructure. Products here are not sold in supermarkets for a disproportionate price, but rather on the street or in large, crowded markets. Markets aside, the atmosphere in "Bangladesh" is calm and peaceful, well, apart from a few children playing you might spot as you're wandering through the district's apartment blocks.



Verlassenen Dörfer

Armenien ist ein Land mit etwas mehr als drei Millionen EinwohnerInnen auf insgesamt 29.743 Quadratkilometern. Davon leben über eine Million Menschen in Jerewan, der armenischen Hauptstadt. Andere Städte wie beispielsweise Gjumri oder Wanadsor zählen in etwa je 100.000 EinwohnerInnen. Abgesehen jedoch von einigen wenigen größeren Städten, fällt die Besiedlung des Landes nur sehr spärlich aus.

Bereits ein Ausflug zu den viel besichtigten Denkmälern, Kirchen und Museen, nur wenige Kilometer von der Hauptstadt entfernt, bestätigt erste Annahmen zur Bevölkerungsverteilung in Armenien. Ganze Streckenabschnitte sind geziert von sehr alten, oft baufällig wirkenden Häusern und schlechter Infrastruktur. Aufgrund der hohen Arbeitslosigkeit kehren (hauptsächlich) Männer, aber auch ganze Familien ihrem Wohnort vor allem in entlegeneren Gebieten Armeniens den Rücken, um in Jerewan oder sogar im Ausland Arbeit zu finden. Die seit langem andauernde Abwanderung wirkt sich auch auf viele Dörfer und Wohngebiete außerhalb der Hauptstadtmetropole aus. Da in Armenien finanzielle Mittel ohnehin meist knapp sind, verfallen Häuser, und tiefe Schlaglöcher zieren oftmals die Straßen. Manche Haushalte müssen auf einen Anschluss an die Wasser- oder Stromversorgung verzichten, ganze Dörfer wirken trostlos und zurückgelassen.



Abandoned villages

Armenia is a country with a population of about 3 million in an area of 29,743km². Over one million of these inhabitants live in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia. Other cities like Gyumri or Vanadzor host approximately 100,000 people. However, apart from a few major cities, the population in the countryside is rather sparse.

A trip to the capital's surrounding and popular monuments, churches and museums confirms first assumptions about the distribution of the population of Armenia. Entire areas show very old and run down buildings as well as poor infrastructure. Due to a high rate of unemployment (mainly) men, but also entire families, turn their backs on their homes, especially when situated in rural areas, in order to find work in Yerevan or even abroad. This long lasting out-migration affects several villages and residential areas outside of the capital. Due to Armenia's chronic lack of financial resources, buildings crumble and streets are covered in potholes. Some households have no running water or electricity; entire villages seem dreary and left behind.



Tourismus und Bildungsausflüge

Armenien bietet eine breite Palette von Sehenswürdigkeiten, die von zahlreichen TouristInnen aufgesucht werden. Sowohl innerhalb der Stadtgrenzen Jerewans als auch abseits von Städten und Dörfern werden diese von Reisenden als wertvolle und prominente Destinationen wahrgenommen. Besonders hervorzuheben sind dabei Museen und Klosteranlagen. Zentrale Ziele in der Umgebung von Jerewan umfassen (ehemalige) Klosteranlagen wie Geghard (Գեղարդ), Norawank (Նորավանք) oder Chor Virap (Խոր Վիրապ). Die Bedeutung dieser Sehenswürdigkeiten liegt nicht zuletzt in der wirtschaftlich wachsenden Branche des Tourismus sowie der identitätsstiftenden Funktion für die Bevölkerung.

Auch innerhalb von Jerewan lassen sich wichtige Orte wie beispielsweise das Handschriftenmuseum Matenadaran oder das Erebuni-Museum (Էրեբունի թանգարան) ausfindig machen. Sie dienen nicht nur der Bildung fremder BesucherInnen, sondern auch der Stärkung des Geschichtsbewusstseins der ArmenierInnen sowohl im In- wie auch im Ausland.

Schließlich gehört der unweit von Jerewan auf über 1800 Metern Seehöhe befindliche Sevan-See zu einem beliebten Ausflugs- und Badegebiet der armenischen Bevölkerung. Viele Hotelanlagen und Oligarchenresidenzen in der Umgebung zeugen davon.



Lake Sevan

Tourism and educational excursions

Armenia offers a wide range of attractions that are visited by a large number of tourists. Both within the city limits of Yerevan as well as from towns and villages they are perceived by travelers as valuable and prominent destinations. Of particular note are museums and monasteries. The key destinations around Yerevan include (former) monastery complexes as Geghard (Գեղարդ), Noravank (Նորավանք) or Khor Virap (Խոր Վիրապ). Their importance is not only relevant financially for the growing tourism industry , but lies also in the identity-forming function for the population.

But also within Yerevan touristically important places such as the manuscript museum of Matenadaran or the Museum Erebuni- (Էրեբունի թանգարան) can be found. They do not only serve as a place of formation for foreign visitors, but also as a part of the strengthening of historical consciousness of Armenians, either living in the country as well as abroad.

Finally, located not far from Yerevan, at more than 1800m above sea level lays Lake Sevan, which is a popular resort for the Armenian population. Many hotels and oligarch residences in the area make this evident.



Die YezidInnen in Armenien

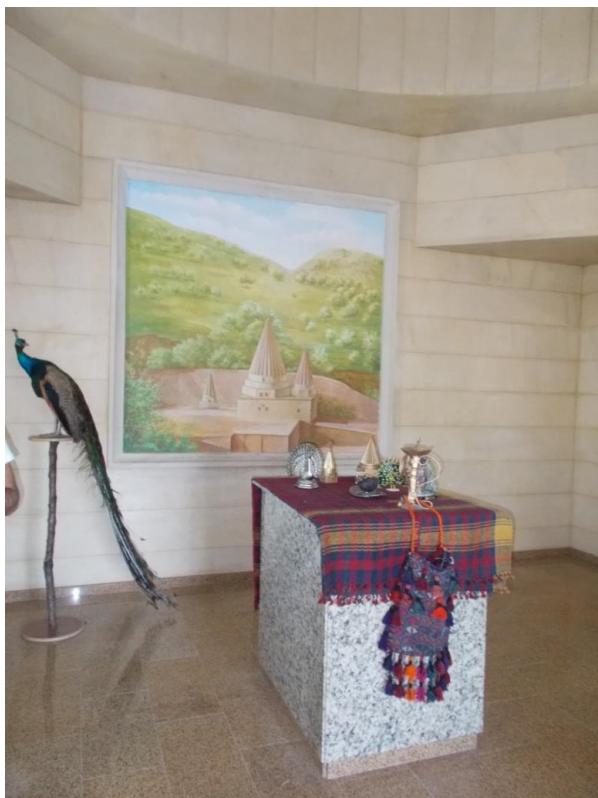
Aufgrund genozidaler Verfolgungen während des Ersten Weltkrieges im Osmanischen Reich flüchteten etwa 12.000 YezidInnen. Sie siedelten in etwa 40 Dörfern, in Yerevan und Gyumri (Leninakan). Traditioneller Haupterwerb war die Viehzucht (während der Sowjetzeit als Kollchos-/Sowchosewirtschaft). Diese Religionsgemeinschaft weist ein kastenähnliches sozi-religiöses System auf, religiöser Inhalte und sozio-kulturelle Themen wurden vor allem oral tradiert. In der Sowjetrepublik Armenien wurden kulturelle Freiheiten gewährt (Radiostation, Zeitung [Rya Teze], muttersprachlicher Schulunterricht, kulturwissenschaftliche Studien).

Nach dem Zerfall der Sowjetunion und der sozioökonomischen Krisen waren auch YezidInnen von der Emigration betroffen. Zielländer sind Russland (Moskau, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk), Deutschland (u.a. Köln, Celle, Oldenburg), Belgien und Frankreich. Manche yezidischen Dörfer, sind daher bereits gänzlich aufgelassen, in anderen sind vielleicht noch 10 Prozent der Haushalte aufrecht. Die Infrastruktur fehlt, die Dorfhaushalte sind heute geprägt durch transnationale Verbindungen (Remittenzen, Sheiks bieten religiösen Beistand über moderne Medien an, tägliche Skype-Chats mit den Kindern in der Emigration) wie auch das religiöse Leben (ein Tempel und ein Kulturzentrum wurde von reichen YezidInnen in Russland gestiftet).



The Yezidis in Armenia

Due to genocidal persecution during WWI in the Ottoman Empire, about 12.000 Yezidis sought refuge in Armenia. They settled in about 40 villages, in Yerevan and Gyumri (Leninakan). The traditional main occupation was animal husbandry (during Soviet Times in collective farmings). This religious community is organized along cast-like socio-religious structures, religious matters and socio-cultural topics were transmitted orally. In the Soviet Republic of Armenia cultural rights were gained (radio station, newspaper, instruction in the mother tongue, cultural studies). After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socio-economic crises also the Yezidis were enforced to migrate. Target countries are Russia (Moscow, Petersburg, Novosibirsk), Germany (Cologne, Celle, Oldenburg), Belgium or France. Some Yezidi villages are today totally abandoned, in others only ten per cent of the former households are still maintained. Crucial are the lacking infrastructure and the transnational connections, thus in village households (remittances, sheikhs offer religious service via modern media, daily skype chats with family members abroad) and in the religious life. The first temple and cultural centre was financed by rich Yezidis from Russia.



Ziyaret Interior

Kontakte und Kooperationen

Während unseres Feldpraktikums in Armenien besuchten wir eine Reihe von Forschungseinrichtungen: darunter das *Migration Competence Center* der *Yerevan State University*, wo uns Prof. Aram R. Vartikyan einen umfassenden Einblick in die lokale Migrationsforschung bot. Prof. Aghasi Z. Tadevosyan, sowie seine KollegInnen und seine Studierenden vom Department of Social Anthropology, Archaeology and Ethnography der National Academy of Sciences, Armenia standen uns als InterviewpartnInnen und ÜbersetzerInnen zur Verfügung. Die Teilnahme an einem von Prof. Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan für ihre Studierenden geleiteten Feldpraktikum ermöglichte es uns, die Arbeitsweise unserer armenischen KollegInnen kennenzulernen.



Yerevan State University

Contacts and Cooperations

During our fieldwork in Armenia we visited a number of research institutions: among others the *Migration Competence Center* at *Yerevan State University* where Prof. Aram R. Vartikyan provided detailed insights into local migration research. Prof. Aghasi Z. Tadevosyan and his colleagues and students from the Department of Social Anthropology, Archaeology and Ethnography at the Armenian National Academy of Sciences acted as interview partners and translators. Accompanying Prof. Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan and her students on one of their field site visits offered us the possibility to get acquainted with the methodological approaches of our Armenian colleagues.



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