Yerevan RBF Field notes

**List of interviewees**

YN1 Davit   
YN2 Narek   
YN3 Gevorg  
YN4 Milena   
YN5 Narine

YN6 Lilit   
**YN7 Gayane**YN8 Mari   
YN9 Tigran   
YN10 Samvel  
YN11 Hayk   
YN12 Erik

**Interview Guide Yerevan**

***Intro questions***

1. Would you describe yourself as an activist?
2. How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?
3. On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?
4. Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? Or in the past two years? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?

***About the movements***

1. What were the main slogans of the movement?
2. What would you say the high point of the movement was?
3. What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?
4. What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?
5. Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than Armenian?

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

1. How involved were formal organizations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?
2. We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries ,are there social solidarity projects in Armenia they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?
3. That do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?
4. Have new leaders emerged from these movements?
5. Police violence, has it increased with the rise of these movements?
6. Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

1. Do you see what you are part of as a Yerevan movement, an Armenian movement, or a European or global movement?
2. Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones?
3. Do you think there unique things about the Armenia movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?

***Targets and aspirations***

1. What does democracy mean to you?
2. Who would you demand democracy from?
3. What would you describe as democratic practices?
4. Is/are the movements themselves democratic?
5. Who would you demand social justice from?
6. Does the word dignity have resonance in the Armenian context ? How about indignation?
7. Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?
8. In the context of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ versus dependence on the state? What would you say to that??/
9. How inclusive were the demonstrations  in terms of  participation and decision-making? Was there discrimination based on gender, sexuality, and class ?

***YN1, Davit***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

Yes. The main issue while being an activist is that you are trying to make changes in your own life, in others' lives, to affect, to make lasting changes in what you don't like, in your environment, in the planet.

*Q2*

Probably it was at the age of 11 or 12. I joined as a political scientist simply as it is my profession. One way or another, you get informed about processes going on while doing political analysis. At second, being a representative of an NGO sector you get to do these processes as well. In other words, as a representative of this sector you get to initiate, for example, in protection of public territory near to Cascade in 2006-2007 or in policy making of PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategic Policy). You become a part of the process, you do everything on volunteer bases; and we did it on volunteer bases before last two years as well.

*Q3*

My own experience starts from my school years, but the main experience I got was in [NAME] so basically it is my job in NGO. For others there are personal reasons; from one side it is interest, they see there are processes going on and they want to take part, from another side there is a social-economic reason, as some institutions, which were meant to manage public life, get discredited: government, local self-government bodies, political parties; well in my opinion it has been long time that individual, group, not institutional movements are the results of it. In some sense there are several seasons: one is the situation of the state and parties which showed that they’re not able to do anything, and the other one is NGO sector, which has slackened already. But it is important due to the fact that before that period, NGOs brought new skills and abilities. And the existing activism nowadays is using the tools developed by NGOs. If you look at the activism, those people, who have been in NGO sector, work more professionally, than people who were out and joined after. Maybe there are enthusiastic and they have a concern, but they do not have those skills.

*Q4*

Yes. I do consider myself a part of a wider movement. For me it is a movement of state-building, which can include democracy, not in the context of management, but more deeply: values, in the context of culture. It is now transforming into a bigger movement: realization of human rights, the establishment of rights, respect towards human dignity, making creative, making people happy. It is your guideline. It is related to other movements ideologically, in the context of values. For me the important thing about the movements is due to the fact for it to be based on human rights, democracy, so that it would not harm state interests, so that it creates statehood, society. In all this, the important thing is how a person gets developed, how he/she can create his/her person. I do not identify myself with any specific movement here, it is more general, and it is the civic stream, in which I am. In deep sense I don't find myself anywhere specific, I'm always thinking of what new things can be created.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

''Constitution, establishment of constitutional order, establishment of the rights, clean, green Armenia, we are the owners of this country''- these are the slogans that I like more, but there are also some like '' struggle against the regime, authorities is bad, we must change it, improve''.

There are two groups; one is seeking for a more systemic change, and the other one sees the systemic change only by changing the regime in that system, and what will happen later, they don't know. One side is seeking for more deep changes, changes of values in systemic change. They think that if it won't be in its deep sense, then it will be short-termed. The other side thinks that if there is an alternative system, it will change, but you don't change anything in means of values. I identify myself with values ​​change. Generally, models and systems given to Armenia and to the world have totally exhausted themselves, they have been destroyed. It's time to have a new one. I cannot specify what the new one is, but when I do something, I always think that a newer, more creative way can be created. Gradually I became that way.

*Q6*

From all the movements I would mention the environmental movement. For all the civic movements, there's a stage, which is important to me, when they go farther from their specific issues and while solving their specific issue, when they start to formulate a real public interest and present it to public, they try to look deeper into the problem, in public and state level. It started from the movement of Trchkan and the peak was in Teghut, then Mashtots Park, until the fall of 2012, when the presidential elections started. After that, in my opinion, these processes cut down and got weaker. From one side the core struggle is weakened: when different groups were doing something more consistently over an issue, are not doing the same now, they took the political issue now and they see the change of authorities in a narrow political sense, which makes the process weaker. I think it all got weaker now and when it reached its peak, it was not possible to make it ongoing.

*Q7*

I think they're trying to form a common agenda, which doesn't get success and I think that it won't succeed for a long time from now, until there are some changes done in thoughts. The peak is broken, because i think there should be something to subsist from, to arise. There are no such thoughts, such prospects in Armenia. When there is some prospect, it reaches to it, and then it cuts down again, until there are new prospects getting elaborated. The whole problem is that you can’t go on with your prospects and create. It’s a matter of ability, our strength is still not enough for that.

*Q8*

Mainly they are social networks, besides meetings and phone calls.

*Q9*

Yes, mainly in English. That’s what I recently do.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

The political parties are not completely involved, but they’re just trying to use it. The civic groups that do it, it is somewhat the function of political parties. The political parties must formulate the problem. Moreover, when the civic groups formulate the problem, they don’t even try to take them and make it into their agenda. The political parties use civic groups just as a resource, as a human quantity and they always try to ascribe it as a result of their work. All the political parties are the same, the difference is just in the way they act, one is doing it more in a gentle way, the other one does it more intelligently.

If the NGOs could formulate public interest before, make it go forward, later they couldn't do that function anymore. Some NGOs tried to stay in the processes, and they will stay, but others will be confining it their specialized circles.

*Q11*

I can probably mention only the environmental movement, as they tried to help when there were problems in villages, for example the sale of honey.

*Q12*

They've created something important, which must be continued. People try to get out of the schemes created, they make efforts to establish the rule of law, people try to live a more collective life, they try to establish democratic culture. The collective life means that when I do something, it affects to others' as well. The existing roots are important. People realize that they are the owners of this country. It is a change of values for me. At this moment the movements are in the stage of reinterpretation, it is stuck in the stage of creating thoughts. We don’t get to move on yet. Visions must be created among the society, so they understand to what the things you do is contributing to. Things reached to a point, when people define what they want and in what sequence. There are some things that are a part of the vision, which is more of a project for activists and wider society. One side does not realize what the vision is, but they see democracy, human rights, but they don’t picture its realization in life. One side thinks, that it is the regime change, the other one thinks of it as of systemic change process, another one thinks that it is the creation of alternative system, for example, Pre-Parliament, but they all don’t know what will be created.

*Q13*

Yes.

*Q14*

No. It remains the same. It depends on how you work with it, so it will react accordingly. But it didn’t stop using violent forces. We must accept, that it doesn't serve to law, and it does whatever it is told. Police is not independent, that's why we should act in a way, so we don't get to the point to deal with police. I think that civic groups should also be attentive, so they pull back when they feel that they play with police. It is very hard, because it creates euphoria, because when you see that you can oppose to police, it shows that you can oppose the regime as well. But it is just a temporary victory. The maximum you can do is make them fear there to tell police what to do.

*Q15*

I don't think so, but in some extent they almost move equally. They didn't arise as groups, their number didn't increase. The ones that exist got consolidated, but ordinary people's beliefs got more ascertained and increased, which is the most difficult thing to change. For example, when they published manifesto, well, some nationalistic groups did not react strongly, but if you look at the comments, you understand, that regime has nothing to do with it, that people lived their lives for 30, 40 years with a different system of values and you hit their system of values with it. Nationalistic groups are discredited. For example, when the Republicans took Nzhdeh as a national value, it spoils the whole national value, because it is also disgraced.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

For everywhere it is like this to me: no matter if you’re local and do a state movement, you also communicate with other people and get to know what developments are taking place. I mean, even if human rights are related to Africa for you or you only protect the rights of Armenians, it doesn’t generally matter to me, but if circumstances take me to live in other country, I will get involved the processes.

*Q17*

Yes. There was some contact with people from “Occupy”. There is also a European network.

*Q18*

In Armenia there is the absence of the context. There is no reference point in Armenia, that is, you do not have a reference point in past to carry out a democratic struggle. Concerning Armenia we should understand, that it didn’t have statehood and so we act in an empty space. For example, comparing to the movements in Czech, Serbia, which are similar in nature, but there is a difference that they had a statehood chain, they had wishes, there were partisan movements in these countries during World War 2, in Armenia this context is zero. This fact has an influence on movements in a way, that there is no working experience with the society for them to not be mistaken. This means, that you take something from abroad, but you don’t know whether it will work in Armenia or not. You collect everything from zero. That is why, when the international experience doesn’t work here, it’s not because it is not universal, but because it had a relevant context there. The international experience can be studied to understand, how the human being is transformed, and at second to study the methods and tools. But when mixing it altogether and to start a process, you have to do it from zero. For instance, I’m not quite sure if it was in Latvia or Lithuania, there was a civic group which cleaned up the garbage in the whole country in one a day. When the “Let’s do it Armenia” started, they took the techniques from the above-mentioned movement, but it didn’t work, it didn’t succeed, because, before doing it in Armenia, you have to do educational stuff, you have to teach that garbage is a bad thing. In Armenia, until you mobilize people, you have to explain, which benefit they have, and after it will get mobilized or not. The problem is that you consume resources on mobilization and you can’t add new resources.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

The rule of law, freedom.

*Q20*

First of all from myself, then from my milieu, and then from wider society.

*Q21*

A person is a master of himself/herself and tries to realize his/her rights. For me the right is dignity.

*Q22*

Comparatively they are, but in the sense of the democracy I imagine, they’re not. Not in the meaning of vision. In Armenia, comparing to political parties, NGOs, other movements, they are the most democratic, but there is an issue of tolerance, cooperation, a matter of putting personal things aside and creating a more collective result. They keep the forms, but they don't go deep into that.

*Q23*

In some extent from me again, but I would demand from a wider society, as well as from international community to not hinder us here.

*Q24*

It does, but in the lowest level, in the level of personal ''I'' and honor. For me, dignity is not just a matter of own self-esteem. In my opinion, in emotional level the right is dignity. So, when your right is violated and it is a dignity, it is not an issue in Armenia. It is more like a degraded understanding.

*Q25*

Too much, and in the worst forms, and anger which has not yet been formulated, that is just in the emotional level. It can be a source of mobilization, but I wouldn't want it to be. In Armenia, for the last 17 years, that was the source and it didn't give any results. Starting from 1996, especially in 2007-2008, the nationwide movement was formed of people's anger and frustrations, which didn't give its results. That result will happen with the price of victims, which nobody dares to do, and when the mobilization happens with anger and doesn't make results, a profound disappointment occurs. In Armenia everyone knows what they don't want, but nobody knows what they want.

*Q26*

Unfortunately, in Armenia it is not like that, it's the fault of the state in Armenia. In Armenia people think that the institution exists itself in an abstract way. A person creates the institution, that's why the person is important. If you want to change the institution, then you have to change a person.

*Q27*

I think it was inclusive for 90% from what was possible. It could be more, but the person should want it to happen for it. I noticed, that when people see that someone is doing it, they don't do it anymore; it's a matter of responsibility. When they start to trust someone, his/her participation is not being important anymore. It's not like you put limits for a person, but he/she doesn't want it himself/herself.

In that sense, the movements are different. For example, the ''Trchkan'' group was more discriminative. In different stages the relationships of men and women would differ. But in general movements there is no difference on men and women. In some context, males were more dominant, but it's not because men did it that way, but because women also limitated themselves. I mean both for actions and decision making, where men had always a pivotal role. For instance, in Mashtots park I noticed, when there was a need for public speech, men did it more often. When there should have been a press conference or something, girls would always refuse to take part. So there was an impression that you bring girls just to ensure the contrast. I don't know what's the reason. There is still a need for maturity.

In some environmental groups a discrimination exists towards sexual minorities, but in the civic groups it doesn't. Inwardly it exists, but when the activities are clearly being carried out, and there are principles, nobody dares to express, but inwardly, in personal level they are too discriminatory.

There’s no discrimination between poor and rich, nobody cares on how one is being dressed, whether they have much money or not, but there is discrimination towards richer people, but again, it exists but doesn’t get expressed.YN 2, ***Narek***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

I wouldn't say so; to be honest, I don't like that word so much. Activist turns out to be someone who doesn't have anything else to do and is doing some activism. But I guess I am being perceived to be one in a large sense of that word by others. Civil society is an objective reality, so I don't choose either to be one or not. By saying civil society I don't mean those civilly active, but I mean that nowadays civil society is something existing in the world.

*Q2*

I was civilly active since school years. I was arguing over political topics with my teachers. I have talked against many Soviet things, I didn't learn poems about Lenin, I've always said that Soviet Union is going to collapse and I was punished for all that. In 86-87 I made some anti-Soviet things and disseminated them in the city at night. In that sense I have always been politically active, but more practically I dealt with it probably starting from 2003-2004, not mentioning demonstrations in 1996 as they were transitory, they happened and passed quickly. In 2003 there were demonstrations of Demirchyan; in 2004 the cases of April happened. At that time it was only few of us, young ones in demonstrations, and after those clashes, when the political political parties somehow disapeared, we decided to try do something on our own. There were political prisoners at that time and we tried to deal with these issues, so we organized a youth demonstration and we gathered few thouthands of people. There was even a march to X street, which was led by me, but there were also (Activist Names) . Then we were active with the same group; we were distributing leaflets, going to courts. Once we even went to police station voluntarily (at that time there was a trial of a guy, saying that he hit to the head of a police officer with bottle. ACTIVIST NAMES and I went to the police station and wrote that we also hit him and asked to arrest us, but, of course they didn't). We were organizing rock concerts, discussions. From all this a youth [DELETED] in 2008. After the movement I was still active for another year, then in 2006 I got involved in [NAME], which had a political format.

*Q3*

They are both connected and new. Of course they are rather new. It were only 20 of us, starting from 2009 this new civic stage began and starting from that time many new initiatives were grown since 2011. Starting from 2012 until now they bacame more passive in my opinion.

To be honest, I don't like group identifications. I identify me with myself only and I act on behalf of my own interests, because it’s profitable for me to live in a safe country, and for that reason human rights should be protected in the country. Therefore, I act in this sphere on behalf of my own interests. Recently I have joined one of the political parties, so my second identification, we can say, is my political identification.

*Q4*

I will name the current movements as civic. It's not like it remains in the same high level as few years ago. At some point maybe this format is even consuming itself. When it was going forward, one of the conditions was fast internet, and the other condition was that people were active, due to which those new formats started to be formed. It was new, fresh, people were inspired, and they were reaching some goals and failing some. Internet was the factor, and the civic activism had its influence; but now the politics are also passive. Gradually, civil society is also becoming fragmental. I don't see the same activism now, which existed some time ago. Though, exaggerated big hopes where put, different parties tried to use it politically, which devaluated it somehow and it became weaker at that sense. Of course, everyone is connected to each other. It's the same circle of people. In a broad sense, there's a problem that all the initiatives, movements don't get broader, they don't become national, they don't include wider society and remain for the group in a small circle. Of course they get a little broader over time, but there's a limit it can't pass, because these people can be engaged in it, who have free time, high income and high level of education, hence it cannot be very extensive, because sometimes people depend on the state system for their incomes. The level of consciousness is not so high in our society; local things are not taken very seriously. Even the National Assembly elections are not being taken seriously. That's the reason it has reached to a limit and doesn't get broader. Basically, that's because same people take part in it.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

''Politicize everything!''

*Q6*

2009-2012 years were the rise of the movements, and at some point Mashtots Park was the high point. Many people joined the movement, ones who didn't join before that and again, very high expectations were connected to that. And hopes were made, that a new form of political approach would be formed and many of them participated in presidential elections (as an observers – annotation by the interviewer), but get disappointed, as see have no result. They had big hopes, but it didn't work out. And after 2012 the movement did not grow anymore.

*Q7*

That is probably the most actual problem for now, because the demonstrations in the streets are good, but generally, only few things are being done besides it. This is the greatest issue, that the movements should pay more attention to its internal structural things, be more united and structural, because these street campaigns' effectiveness is very limited, if it does not coincide with others' interests. Due to this arises the problem of larger institutional construction. Even political parties are institutionally weak. In my opinion any format demands some work on its structures. The authorities’ side for example, if compared with the civic side or the opposition, is very organized in that sense. On the other hand in civic movements I do not see the consistent routine of work, what do we mean by saying Civic Activism. "Yes, there was a campaign so we went, but there is no everyday working condition and it is a weakness."

*Q8*

The main form of communication is, of course, internet. In fact, if internet is used more efficiently, many things will be organized and implemented faster and productively, than by arranging a meeting. The main form of communication is Facebook; it is always open while working.

*Q9*

I follow international news, I mainly read professional literature in English, Russian, but to be honest, I don't communicate with others in other languages.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

My impression is that they have a very little role. In fact, until 2007 the role of civil society was owned by NGOs. By saying civil society, it was understood as NGOs. Mostly they get financed from abroad, which can either coincide or not coincide with local needs. And if they get financed from the state, then it's clear that they are depending from the government. Since 2009, when people started to be more active, it all was based on their local interests and there were no NGOs there, because these topics of army and architectural stuff were not on the list of interests in abroad and in that sense the format of initiatives won NGOs. Of course it is not possible to always develop the format of initiatives. It is always done on volunteer bases, which is the first phase of each social activity, but it cannot continue forever. It is the first stage. And when the second stage starts, again the same problem occurs, from where to find resources. In Armenia there is one and a half way to find resources. The first one is the ruling party, and the other one is NGO. Actually, any civic initiative is opposition, but in contrast to the political opposition, which is a direct threat for the authorities, this opposition brings local issues, which require long-term solutions. In this sense, 2008 has brought a good thing. Of course from all sided there will be political speculation on civic initiatives, which is inevitable as opposition and governmental wings try to use it in their favor and the first more favorable image turns into a more complicated one.

*Q11*

Maybe there are some separate cases in Armenia that I didn’t hear about but I think that it doesn’t have an objective base here. It’s very hard, because the circle of those, who has an independent source of income, is very small. And for social solidarity projects there should be people, who have their independent income and can get self-organized to help others.

*Q12*

The achievement was that a lot of new people got involved in solving public issues. Many people got to know each other and groups were formed. I think that it is a great achievement. If new qualities of organizing are formed, we’ll achieve many things. There are of course some success stores like Trchkan waterfall, Mashtots Park, but in reality these are very local issues. The more global architectural and environmental issues, of course, remain not solved. It just turns out that authorities’ goals coincide with public demand, and in that case people have some practical success. Those movements reached to some level and can’t spread and get wider. For future, there’s a need to give meaning to existing experience and there comes a new structural and working issue for new situations. Since there cannot be a quantity growth, a growth of people, there’s a need to think about qualitative growth. There’s a need to ensure qualitative growth in order to keep the quantity, otherwise everything is destroyed.

*Q13*

The matter of leaders is a bit complicated, because many people ‘submit applications’. But there were no leaders in a large scale.

*Q14*

I cannot say that they have increased or vice versa. I think they remain the same. It depends on how much threat do they see on the topic, depending on a precept they can be very brutal. It depends on a level of danger for them. In case of Mashtots Park they didn’t do the same as for March 1st, because the scale was different and if they were the same, I think they would do the same.

*Q15*

There are many conversations about it. There was a tumult concerning the club some time ago. But mainly fascists are also not consistent in Armenia. If they have such a big problem with homosexuals and fight it, then we all know that there are homosexuals among senior officials in our country, and when you conditionally offer them to give those addresses, names, so they can go fight against them because they consider it important for Armenia, they just don't do it. They just avoid this question and I think that they are being controlled by the same authority, in which there is not a small number of homosexuals. Or if they say, that night clubs come and destroy our ancestral values, why don't they go bomb the clubs of officials. In Ejmiatsin, there is a night club right in front of the church, you can bomb it or do a public campaign, and if not, then that nationalism is imitative. In that sphere some positive things happened; nationalists follow and move on with unconstitutional, dictatorial and other pro-Russian ideas, and recently a group was formed among them, who find that things should be solved by law anyway. It is gratifying to me, that there are people, even among them, that follow civil society rules and that this discourse is also being changed.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

First of all I see myself as an individual. Of course, in my case it may sound inadequate, because I am a member of a party, but for me the primary thing is to be individual, and then a member of my group. I'm not afraid of being a member of some group, but in any case I'm individual and I do whatever is pleasant for me.

*Q17*

To be honest, no. When the Arabic movements started in Egypt, I got a little interested from my friends, but I don't have connections. In different countries various groups take part in the movements. In Islamist countries both radical Islamists and new youth wings participate. They're different and very interesting. However, unfortunately they're being analyzed in a superficial way or those sources are not available for me.

*Q18*

It is all a little exaggerated here. Before we thought that we are the world's best nation, the most cultural one, but then our eyes were open, and we saw that it's not so and the opposite extremeness begins. I don't think that there’s such thing in movements. The unique thing about it is probably the thing that the world pays less attention on us. If we were a different region, then the movement like the one in March 1st would get more reactions, dissertations would be written about it, and CNN would show it with live broadcasts. But in our case, people even outside of Armenia don't get to know about what's going on here. The other thing is being overly self-focused. Social instinct is very weak in Armenia. They don't recognize any other social institution outside of family. And the problem that there are no leaders; I've witnessed many times that a person developing before me, a person of great potential was not able to control his/her egocentrism and thus fail. First of all, it harms themselves and the society as well, who loses the opportunity to have such leader.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

It is a legal relationship if every element of politics will be held unilaterally. In any more or less developed societies there is a conflict of interest. Democracy is the mechanism to control those conflicts of interests, so that the society won’t go through civil wars all the time. Roughly said it is a rule of a game that we fight till the certain point. For me democracy is not a political ideology, as many people think.

*Q20*

From myself, family friends.

*Q22*

I didn’t study those civil society groups from inside. From what I’m seeing they seem to be democratic. I know political one from inside, but this one is very diverse. It’s more democratic than it seems to be from outside, but, of course, it is not a quite good example of democracy either.

*Q23*

Social justice is a very important public thing, but it stems from the mechanism I’m saying. If you set up a democratic mechanism, where different public conflicts of interests do not create separateness, but they get different solutions, in this case social justice becomes one of the conflict issues that it has to get a solution. It is not a problem to be solved in Armenia; it is world problem. It is a problem of capitalistic regime, like generally, is it possible to change capitalistic society or not. In this moment humans don't have an answer to it, which will show like it did Marxism, that I have a serious program, so that problem would not exist at all. Whatever we regulate now, I can't demand the solution of super-rich and super-poor from no one. Our generation is the unlucky one that has to be conformist, because there is no global program, otherwise I would fight against capitalism with great pleasure.

*Q24*

It has a resonance typical for only traditional society. The society, which is not used to operation of state and public institutions and the only institution it knows, is the family, where that dignity is inherited concept from something agrarian. When you say a life with dignity to Armenians, they will understand that there’s some money, like there was a lot in Soviet.

*Q25*

There is a lot of discontent in us. It seems that it is the same indignation for all of us, but if you look deeper, it will turn out that everyone is discontent about different things. It is a whining indignation, one that is not ready for creative and long-term activities. Our society is always ready for a short-term one, they think that they should go occupy a building and burn everyone, they don’t understand anything else. For example, after March 1st there was such big emotional indignation, which was also a resourceful. But it cannot be on the basis of long-term activities. In fact, because there’s no program developed against capitalism, it can consume everything that is directed against it and make it like some kind of a product, including indignation and anger.

*Q26*

In Armenia, first of all, there should be a more or less prosperous society, and only then people should think about such things. There’s no such consciousness even among the ones who are more or less active. And I also think that it is another global utopia. I have a bad attitude towards utopias. Many utopias were forged in the last 200 years, like “be close to the nature”, “live as happy as ancestors” etc; especially when half of the world is poor and lives with a saving regime. Some part of the world has reached to that level, but the other countries still need time to reach that level. After all, there's a disbalance. Eventually, people, of course, will reach to that point.

*Q27*

It is very rare, it almost doesn't exist. In small scale, it is natural that it will be like that automatically. When you gather 100 people, it's easy to make decisions, but when there are 1000 people, then the decisions should be appropriate for those people as well, so that you can make relevant decisions. There cannot be democracy, if you publicly make a decision and put it for voting, then you should present both sides. For instance, something like that happened during the rallies of Raffi, but of course, it seemed to be like a mockery to democracy; when you discuss whether to apply to The Constitutional Court or not, then you have to present in details all the possible options, so that way people can understand. Otherwise it is better to make decisions on your own.

There are such people in those movements that make me think that there won’t be obvious things in anyway. I don’t see serious problems, however, maybe in fact they accept equality in verbal level, but practically they don’t.

END

***YN2, Gevorg***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

Not anymore, because I'm thinking about leaving the country. After the cases that happened yesterday (during the opening ceremony /*matagh*/ of a church organized by one of the oligarchs, hungry people attacked the hospitality table) I already think that they are using the society in any way they want; hunger has become a way for authorities to use the society.

In fact I am still activist, and if I leave the country, wherever I go I will still be an activist. I just want to go away from the current culture.

Q2

In 1988, when Demirchyan was shot, I joined the struggle until now. And it became more active in 2008, after the case of March 1st.

*Q3*

X was established in 2007 and in political point of view we entered into the political sphere. The group dealS with [DELETED], which itself is a modern politics.

*Q4*

I do not consider myself a part of a wider Armenian movement, because there is no movement in Armenia, there are just political parties, but they are not movements.

Environmental and other movements are small civic revolt, but not movements. In one case it may be advantageous for the authorities and in the other case it may not, but in any case they fit in one game, one form. Movements will succeed if socialists come to struggle, and not the people who have national mentality. But nowadays, both the opposition and the authority are holders of national mentality.

Various civic initiatives and movements that exist are of course connected in civic terms, for example the environmentalists, “Army in Reality”, ANC youth, they are all connected because they all fight against the system. But in general, no one except for Armenian National Congress has ever talked about regime change, thus as much as they are connected, at the same time they are not.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

For the existing slogans nowadays are not relevant. I can only consider X slogans relevant, as they are calls for regime change.

*Q6*

We didn't reach the high point yet. The issue is how beneficial is the struggle for the authorities, for example Raffi Hovhannisyan's struggle was beneficial for them. He gathered people for a month after elections and then they could the people down. This was very beneficial for authorities. Therefore, we cannot say that they reached to some high point.

I can say that non-political parties also did not reach to a high point. If Serzh comes to the park and says '' Dear Taron, it’s not nice'', that doesn't mean that environmentalists reached to some point. They are using revolts, which are being made dogma by authorities to show Europe, that we are building a democratic state; I don't consider that we reached to the high point. There is no specific demand of changing regime. I'm not against them and I have always welcomed their struggle, but it should not become a tool for authorities.

*Q7*

We do protests, [DELETED].

*Q8*

Facebook is being very actively used, in forms of messages.

*Q9*

BBC, different, I used to watch ''Dozhd'' Russian TV channel, nothing else.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

Political parties realize/mobilize their business among the society, except for Armenian National Congress, but I didn't and still don't want such political parties to exist.

Armenian National Congress wants to always make the society understand, that the authorities are bad, we are good, but with such things there will be no results. The only salvation is the civil war, like in the example of Arabs.

There are so many non-governmental organizations. That fact is also being used by authorities. When they are looking for money, they obtain money… Any democratic step that is being done, that is being hunted by authorities, which tries to use it to show Europe; in that sense we are also being used. But in general I do not accept democratic steps. Steps should be made with fundamental socio-economic grounds, which can lead to issues, but these are not issues, these are democratic steps which are being hunted by authorities.

Q11

There are no such things here.

Q12

There are some kinds of movements, but at the same time such big masses leave Armenia. 1500 people a day emigrate from Armenia, which is a huge number. The part of the society that is rebellious is leaving. Only the impecunious masses stays and it is even uncomfortable to stay among them and the only way is revolution, but I really cannot find that way anymore.

*Q13*

Such people emerge sometimes, but they are not individuals I can give names.

*Q15*

They are ordinary institutions created by Serzh. For example ''Armenian Eagles'', the church, through which they are governing, they give you ideas, for instance ''believe, you can die hungry, but we have an enemy and we have God, and the nation''. This is how they control people. Nationalism gets added to religion and that is the worst part. The end.

A subculture needs to be created in order to overcome this, but it needs a lot of time, maybe in twenty-thirty years it will be created. There are some people now, but that is not enough.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q17*

We communicate online in Facebook. The video in which a German rock band was singing about March 1st was a result of online connections. It would be good if they could take a plane, come here and we could do a revolution. We communicated, talked with [NAME] and [NAME] groups online too, but we don’t know them.

*Q18*

The unique thing here is that we talk a lot about Constitution. Whoever comes, they want to solve their issues in constitutional ways, which is IMPOSSIBLE.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

Democracy is a made up thing, which is created by authorities, kings, in order to try to use that word to control the society.

*Q20*

I am anarchist. My understandings are anarchistic not only for Armenia, but also for the whole world. The authority and the system to control society should not exist. In a number of countries, such as Greece, Latin, America, Chile, Central Europe, there are anarchists’ large organizations, which create concrete problems for the authorities and the authorities are trying to reckon with them, and not political parties. We see it for example in Greece, London, we saw Liverpool was abolished…they burnt London in few days. Problems are not being resolved in with Constitutional issues, but problems are being resolved on the bases of concrete problems you create for the authorities.

I see Armenia in the level of the world, for example if we make good relations with Azerbaijan, Caucasus brotherhood will be established. No one does such steps in Armenia now. First of all the regime must be changed in Russia, reforms must be made, because we are very much are depending on them. It cannot happen so that socialists come here and liberals in Russia. Russia does not let us be connected with Europe, because they have economic interests. They don't let oligarchs to disappear. Though our authorities try to serve to Europe now, but Russia may get ''angry'' for that now.

*Q23*

The ideas of Kropotkin or Bakunin, or Lenin… I don't know.

*Q24*

There is such concept now, that a cool guy is the one to have dignity in criminal world. But besides that they say that a person who comes out against the state is the one to have dignity. I don't know, I didn't think much over that.

*Q25*

The indignation has transformed to a disease; the main society is in very bad social conditions, but it doesn't fight. They find it senseless to fight both in opposition or elsewhere.

It depends on a leader whether indignation will become a source of mobilization. There's a need for leader, even if they are not communists, but not the political parties existing now, so that they can use that indignation and bring them to a political field.

Authorities do a huge work to keep that indignation, for example through the church.

*Q26*

Of course the society should bring the change. The state should carry its activities, but an individual can develop better without the state.

*Q27*

In Mashtots Park we /our group/ went and with green letters wrote ''regime change'' on snow. We wrote and left, and there was no response to that; police came and filmed us and that was it.

It brought change in a sense that we have the park, but in a bad sense the change was that it became a tool in the hands of the Mayor.

The environmental movement is proceeding, they are active, but larger amounts of money are needed for doing green environmental protection. I am not aware of their inner affairs, I don't know details. I don't like it when they use tricolor /Armenian/ flags, sing national songs in their movement; I don't like these nationalistic things.

Vardan Azatyan said an important thing, that talking about nationalism they forget that the same Mashtots Park was once a Soviet area, but it is not stressed that it was made during Soviet times; I wish there was a slogan to remind about it. Nowadays authorities also try to do everything to remove old culture, old Yerevan. That's why I'm saying that besides being environmentalists, one should also protect the culture.

END

***YN 4, Milena***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

I don’t like the word ‘activist’, because when you define a person, it means that you put him/her into some cliché. And I try to break them or run away from them in my life, as it gives some form of understanding, to which you have to follow. I’m not a member of any NGO and I’ve never thought of formalizing that field for me. And also, when they call me a human rights defender or something else, I laugh at it, because in reality I’m not. I do the things I feel inside there’s a need to do. And I’m also changing through all this things. These changes in me are being made through social changes. Everything is a part of civil society; even the computer, therefore I’m also a member of civil society.

Q2

The first thing was the case related to Nairi Hunanyan in 1999, when the Council of Europe banned the death penalty.

It is the army, women issues, LGBT issues and prison issues at some extent; I just didn’t find many supporters in the latest field yet. In army I started my activities with the case of X in 2005-2006, when one of the soldiers went on hunger strike. I joined after that, even though we were active before as well; we have organized concerts, but it had more of a political motives. And in 2004, when the government forcibly made people leave, we did a lot of other things as well.

*Q4*

This is a matter of perception. There were wider movements in Armenia; the thing is that they’re using those names now. Communication has developed, and people started to agree on those definitions. Accordingly, now it is all being called a civil society and so on, but all this has always existed. By saying movement I understand that groups of some people, different initiatives, organizations, political parties, unions that act in the public sphere get together for a short period and for some concrete purpose. For instance, if I see some opposition movements (against Serzhik), but not united over a specific goal, by its values it can be said that all of them are opposition. Army in Reality initiative is related to other movements and initiatives in a way that it is consists of people, who are everywhere. The active ones are everywhere, and of course the problems are related as well, the system of values is connected as it reflects the same culture.

But, for example, issues related to gay rights are more marginalized. And the women’s movements as well. The activism over the women’s issues mainly started with grants. Mostly those Grant-Eaters: [NAMES DELETED] the women, who were transferring some grants from YCL (Young Communist League) to here. In reality they weren’t raising/reflecting all the issues that existed, they were not against patriarchy, they were not feminists, they were just women unions because they were receiving grants. Despite the thing that everyone deals with it and many things have been done, but in my opinion they were not leading to a change of values, or they were not against patriarchy, that’s why I consider that it is also marginalized.

A***bout the movements***

*Q5*

“No to violence and deaths in the army”, “Human beings are the supreme value”.

*Q6*

Probably the autumn of 2011. By saying boom I mean that many were talking about it, By the day (soldier’s) death and during 10 days three or four boys were killed and all of them were described with unbelievable versions.

*Q7*

Besides that we do some discussions in our group, for example we try to keep things in the center of attention of people, Mass Media and activists. And the second thing, which is more important, is that The Army in Reality is a kind of a platform and there are many different organizations, we try to keep all the interested people and organizations in the field of collaboration. They work with each other synergistically. For instance, if one organization is collecting cases in one region, the other one starts from another region. We all cooperate; we know which organizations with what deals more.

*Q8*

Mainly the communication is done online, through Facebook. We didn’t have meetings for a long time now. We have meetings over very important and fundamental issues, when there’s a need to discuss on what to do. But basically people know each other and we already know who is doing what and what he/she is going to deal with.

*Q9*

Yes, of course I read. Overall my profession is political scientist.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

I started my work with NGOs in about 2010. This is a very global and a hard issue. In means of mobilization, those who are active, they provide the place and the money for transportation. Or, when we do something for example around the issue of women, they will provide money for printing. In other words, besides their everyday work the organizations also support with resources. They are like a resource center that always exist and are very useful in this means. They are very important as a resource for mobilization. And also in those most important moments, when an announcement should be made, the organizations write it. I may call to mobilize them, but they do it mostly.

In my opinion the political parties are in such a failed condition in Armenia, that it is a little bit hard to say. They're not involved. Although, once we had to print out t-shirts and the political party of Demirchyan provided money in 2003. The problem I mentioned with political parties is that for example ANC (Armenian National Congress) and Heritage Party are like non-governmental organizations to me. I mean they have their political ambitions, but with their work methods they are like NGOs. I see a political party as one that has its values, that is either liberal or conservative, but it doesn't exist. For example [NAME] thinks, that being an MP she can change more things, so she goes and becomes MP, but that person is truly an activist.

*Q11*

No, there aren't any. And even if some things exist, they are not structural and they are periodic in nature.

*Q12*

The important achievement of ''Army in Reality'' is the breaking of a taboo, that people started to talk about this topic. In a post-war situation there was such a thing like ''yes, it is our army, let's keep silent for the sake of the army and independence'', but now the principle of ''Human life as a highest value'' works. It's not very common, but it exists. For me the most important thing is that we meet more in the army now, the thing that the soldier tries do something by law, which was impossible, as before the soldier went and only the ''wolf rules'' were operating, he tried to survive for 2 years, and now we hear that they are trying to do something by laws there. Of course, it is in the very beginning stage, but it exists. Even though they can be humiliated, people write reports to resolve the issues by law. Everything we do, the clamor is based on emotions. So we do emotional things, but they need to be studied. No researches are being done, because the army is a closed institution and for getting into there you have to find different ways, which are not legal.

*Q13*

I don’t like the word “leader”. There are active people. For me these are not leaders, but there are people like NAME ACTIVIST, who makes a strong emotional influence on people, -NAME-, who can move the issues forward with researches, or another one who knows everyone and can easily coordinate everyone. I see that everyone is acting at some point and they’re doing a pretty good job, and I like it.

*Q14*

No, I don’t think so, because I notice that it’s natural that a state tries to put activism in its agenda: “see how good we are, we are democratic”. You can scream as much as you want, any way they know you won’t hit and break the window. This is a kind of an “agreement” between each other. And in this situation the police try to act in frames of the laws and be nice. So both sides are more restrained.

*Q15*

Yes, definitely. Before, there was more of a left wing discourse. I distinguish it this way: if art is prevailing at some place, then it's a left-wing, and if it goes to ''no'', then there is a right-wing. The opposition field is becoming nationalistic now and it is going to continue, because the main slogans are ''for the homeland'', ''for the people''. I see it as a reflection of public mentality. This means that mainly the society is right-wing, mostly conservative and patriarchal. Naturally, if people start becoming active, they are definitely becoming a right-wing.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

Generally, I consider the personal form of change as an ideal one. If I change myself with public sphere, that is the most ideal way for me, when some values are being changed. I can also do it with some of my friends, when along with two or three friends we could do something for a change, then it is commendable.

For me it is less preferable to be in some initiative, because in that organization the personal transformation, which I, as a person find very important, is being more suppressed. Although, in that situation my work is getting more sonority, I’m leading forward more things, for that reason this less preferable. Being a part of a general movement is not preferable for me at all. If it did not occur by itself, for example, when –name- says that we must create a movement, that is totally not understandable and very alien for me; I see some kind of agenda there. I think that movement should be created automatically; otherwise it is not a movement. But if you gather specifically targeted people and talk something for that reason, I think that it won’t work. For me it is very important to do campaigns by my own will, because in that case it will succeed. But if I go there because I have to, then I think that it is a failed campaign and in that case oppositions notice many shortcomings and so on. In this sense I perceive myself as a person. I perceive myself separately, even though I know the movements from inside, but in any case I consider myself separately.

*Q17*

I know many people from Occupy New York, I follow anarchists from Italy. For example, last year when I went to Germany to a modern documentary art festival Kassel, which is something like the Oscars, there was a project called “and and and”, the point of which was that you live with your group, you create everything like food and other things for yourself, and famous philosophers, artists come to you. The point is to live together and create. It was a great experience for me. That was in 2012 and I had those connections anyway, but they got more strengthened there. Now there are considerable connections with Georgians, Poles, not much with Arabs and good connections with Turks.

*Q18*

Nothing comes to my mind. No, there are not.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19* and *Q21*

The ones who are more clamorous, they win. Active minority takes its wishes forward.

*Q20*

My demand is, if there’s a law then it functions for all. And if someone violates it, it should be restored by law. Basically, of course, the state violates it.

*Q22*

We try to be, but we still have many minuses. For example there are many things when you can’t be open because of confidentiality. I would want it to be more open, but the situation dictates. The communications inside the initiative are democratic.

*Q23*

I would demand social justice from human being; he/she must demand the protection of their rights.

*Does the word dignity have resonance in the Armenian context? How about indignation?*

Because it is a patriarchal society, the concept of dignity has many additional things with it, like what one should understand by saying dignity. Dignity is definitely a good thing; you have to meet some standards to talk with that term. I didn't use that word for hundred years; it does not exist in my lexicon.

*Q25*

Definitely it has. People need to have experience in order to have that indignation and be able to guide it in a constructive way. But in our society only few have confidence that they will succeed if they fight for something. This means that there is not a positive experience. I mean you don’t have to go break someone’s head, or leave the country, but besides these extreme decisions, you can mentally sort each person's cases and solve them.

*Q26*

The relationship between individual and the system is very intertwined here. Individual is not separated from the system here. Because of the Soviet system, we are very much into that system now. A person in Armenia thinks that he/she is a part of the planet, they don't see themselves apart, they don't see themselves as subject, that's why all that things differ a lot from others and the issues are different. If they should sit and think about the state taking care of them, about either they can be representative or not, either they can become an institution or not, how they should keep these horizontal relationships, so they are not split apart. These issues are a big deal abroad. Here for us the problem is the separation of from the system in individuals' thinking.

*Q27*

They are not inclusive. The film about March 1st was not screened in Mashtots Park. This discrimination's base is that people don't have that culture. It can be said that you don't have a culture to let your power go. Activists as well have something like seeking for power. By saying power I don't mean a state chair, but even the thing you want to gain attention, it is an expression of power for you. That is the important point of my personal transformation, the thing that you can leave that power. When you take part in some demonstration or you take a responsibility to do something, it is really hard to leave that power later.

Of course there is discrimination. For instance, one of the gay guys told me, that he hardly went to the demonstrations during March 1st, because they looked differently at him. It exists in initiatives as well. There is also discrimination on bases related to poverty, but of course it's not much, but still it exists. Anyway you spend some money during the campaigns and there are people who cannot participate in all campaigns. And gender discrimination also exists, like you're a girl and you'll make the posters, you'll make arrangements and guys will just come if it's convenient.

END

***YN 5, Narine***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

I wouldn't want to see myself in that position, but comparing to other people outside of my friends circle, I end up with that status automatically, while I absolutely don’t have such an intention or a wish, as I think that citizens should not differ with their activism and civic engagement. They should be equally active, interested, and fight not only for their personal rights, but also for the realization of their political rights. But in fact, vast masses in Armenia are very focused on their personal rights; so that there is a supermarket where they can trade, so that there is a transport and they can go for vacation, but they don’t care about the elections being falsified, corrupted officials, that someone dross is passing laws, a minister is becoming a billionaire during his tenure. And if all that matters to me, I inadvertently end up in the role of activist.

*Q2*

I cannot remember an exact day or event, after which it happened to me. Being among people, who are active, are developed as citizens, responsible, not indifferent, I personally… Basically it was in an NGO, as [NAME] is very open for all active citizens. It’s always helpful, supportive in various issues, and people here have the same attitudes, they share the same values. While being in this network, I also became that way.

I do not separate the movements from one another. In deep sense they are similar to each other as all the raised issues of movements are the result of this system, everybody has confronted with this system. One is raising social-economic issues, the other one raises the issues in the army, but in fact all these are political issues. I am focused on the issue of X; merely time is not enough to deal with other issues. I go and stand in other campaigns to express my solidarity that way. All of them are equally important.

*Q3*

I find the case of Mashtots Park very important. At the time, events were developing very quickly. There was an opportunity to observe the process from beginning till the end (conventional). It is important, because there are many civil initiatives in Armenia, which deal with issues that lasts for years, and it’s not possible to observe the beginning and the end. The image is not being completed. In case of Mashtots Park one was there both in the beginning and in the end, which helped me to understand how it all should be, helped to learn, helped me to become more independent now, more undertaking. The main thing was that it gave me an opportunity to be self-active. If anything illegal happens, I don’t have to be in the group of activists anymore to raise that. I can do it myself.

*Q4*

I do consider, as these waves being raised all over the world, in fact, are rising because of the problems caused by the existing economy system, and the unsparing use of mines, the privatization of public green territories, even the falsification of electoral processes are conditioned by economic system; I link it with capitalism. People are fascinated with consumption, with accumulating possessions. We are witnessing it all in all parts of the world, and it is natural, that the rebellion in different countries is against the same system. I would call our movements as ''citizens' rebellion for solution of political issues''. Our movements are a comprehensive network. Even in Facebook the network is more visible. When you see that each of your 600 friends is friends with your friends, you realize that it's a network that you're in a network. It is friendly based, cooperative, but I see it more as a friendly based rather than cooperative, which, in reality is bad. We help each other because we are friends, but the purely practical support is very little. For all this time, initiatives' connection was not managed to a collaborative level for any case. We all go to each others' campaigns because we are friends and we're concerned, but that's all.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

Mainly we relate it to people's economic rights, social justice, environmental protection, justice, because people’s right to property, the right to live in a healthy environment were violated. There is a clear social polarization for private interests. Of course that benefit is not in the hands of random people, the rights of community residents are being violated, and of course, there are environmental serious issues, which are equivalent to a disaster.

*Q6*

I don’t think we reached to the high point yet. Though I do not want to underestimate the work that we do, especially there is a serious work done in legal sphere, we put efforts and time, we have results, at least the responses of [NAME] Committee. For us these are serious means, which will be used in future for sure, and if that documents' database would not exist, the movement could have been faded now. But now we have a chance to do something.

Q7

I find the work done with community residents very important. In past, both in means of objective and subjective reasons, we were avoiding the communication with them. The objective reasons were such: [NAME] is really far; our resources were never enough for us to always be there. From subjective reasons are those that people were reluctant to accept us, but now the situation is changed: people do not applaud to "Vallex"… I have an impression that the situation has changed among people. It was not us to change that situation, but time. The thing we predicted was proved. People are now convinced on their own experience. On our last visit people did kick us out anymore. This was a signal to me, meaning that I can easily enter the community, talk to people, to inform more, I take it as my duty no matter what the result will be. I will go to community and provide them with the information I have. I find it more important than public campaigns.

*Q8*

Now we are trying to find some technical means so that we can better organize our organizational activities, but it was inefficient. We stay at the place where we are used to, Facebook, which is not the best place for sure. More often, we meet in groups in some places. Besides, we became such friends that there are no formal things, we communicate with calls.

*Q9*

No, but I would really want to, I just don't have time. Because I am so much engaged into civil processes, I don't even have time to study the Occupy procedures of Spain, Arabic countries, even though I would like to. Until now, I want to understand what they have reached so far and in what stage they are. But I have an impression that they are having a serious crisis because they cannot change, it is almost impossible to change something.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

It seems to me that the phase of NGOs has passed in that sense. They are more in the role of supporter now, in role of providing basic information, scientific counseling, in the role of providing resources. They kind of were not able to, did not seek to demonstrate activeness in the street. The fact showed that some things are changed by young active citizens, who are more persistent, more mobile. They are free from documentation, from writing grants, reports; they are free.

There are no NGOs involved in the issue of Teghut, there are representatives from NGOs, but that is because of their own initiative.

Political parties are not engaged in it as well, they are not orientating in relationships with civic activists and vice versa. These relationships are not clear, they are uncertain, there is no cooperation. Civic activists do not trust to political parties, and those parties are that much trust-inspiring.

Political parties did not have any role in civic movements. For example, [NAME] is not a political party, but it is a political institution. Its attitude towards civic activism, towards the capital accumulated by civic activism is very consumer. For example, lately I’ve seen a video, where it says that the [NAME] has taken part in the developments of Mashtots Park and that it coordinates (that's the word they have used) some civic initiatives. Such an approach is just… And there are people in parts of the video that have nothing to do with ''Pre-parliament'' at all. If that's going to be the approach of political institutions, then…

*Q11*

I am sure that there are places, when the community residents were supported, but it was done just within the bases of charity, but in this case it was not a charity, and the point was that no one has to be a benefactor. This is just a model that can be taken and carried on, ensuring a sustainable income. When we were in [NAME], two people approached us and said: this year we are going to have honey, would you want it? I don't remember many of this kind of initiatives. There's a lot of charity, but I don't give much importance to them.

*Q12*

The legal one. Anyone conscious knows about [NAME]. A person, who has an opportunity to use technology and is not indifferent, who has more or less resources, who has free time to read, such people are informed both in Armenia and in diaspora. A job has been done for that.

I see the movement as an always developing organism. There have been ups and downs, various people joined and left. Now it’s probably in the stage of continuation. The thing that it is now constant is already an achievement.

We don’t have big hopes, but just for the idea… You cannot do something for a long time, believe it, make it important in your life and then say ok, couldn’t make it happen. That already becomes something of your personal care, issue.

*Q13*

Actually, I take out the importance of leaders, I don’t find it important, and I highlight the importance of initiativeness. I do not accept the leadership; I don’t want to make someone a hero or saint, who acts outside upon his personal interests.

I see many people, who are originators, independent; it became a lifestyle for them. Intolerance against illegalities became a lifestyle for them.

*Q14*

I think that the pressure of police has reduced apparently. In reality, if there's a very serious threat, they are ready to apply the same violence as on March 1st. And this new appearance, their calmness is just a result of training. It is just a superficial change. In deep sense they don't highlight the importance of human rights. Their role is to persuade, but not understand. They look at you with hatred. They do not want to go to confrontation; they've read only few laws.

*Q15*

Well, the lexicon of nationalism is only one, with which the followers of those who control the system counter you. When you want to stop the process in the polling station because the committee member does not check the conformity of the address in the passport to the polling station, the RPA proxy comes and starts to shout: ''are you not Armenian?, how can you make these people wait, this is the Armenian nation'' and so on. And you think: what you're saying and what he is replying makes no sense at all. So, the nationalism is the only lexicon they can counter you. Now, I think this has sharpened, because you start to use new words, and new words create new meanings, new perceptions, and they cannot bear that you make the framework of your perceptions and ideas wider with new words. The point of their lexicon is to repress, to limit in every possible way. In most cases people have clichés about enemy, Turk, Azeri, and that ideology is clear for people, but the language I use is sometimes misunderstood.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

In an unexplainable way I associate myself with people, who rolled pipes down the valley in Marts. I have neither been in Marts, nor have I seen those people, but their demand for justice, the way to make themselves to be heard, I associate it with me, because I also catch myself in that situation, that my word is not getting there and I have to move on to concrete action. And in the whole world, as I feel their steps are due to the fact that their voice is not heard.

*Q17*

There were opportunities to get acquainted with them, they've come here. There were two guys from Occupy Wall Street, who came to [NAME] camp. They were from Armenian diaspora. On this Yerevan City Council elections many diaspora Armenians came for observation. It was very interesting for me, because they came just because of elections. But I didn't keep in touch with these people.

*Q18*

I think that there are many similarities, because the same economic system prevails in the whole world: capitalism and its consequences are the same for everyone. But among those similarities i don't want to lose our social peculiarities. I cannot specifically mention, but I wouldn't want to mix us.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19* and *Q21*

I don’t particularly go too much into that, either it’s democracy or… Prior to democracy, people's legal consciousness is important for me. Before giving freedom to people, we need to be sure that people appreciate freedom and are ready to use it for the benefit of society. Maybe I'm saying something absurd, but we gave a right to participate in the elections to everyone and these people abuse their right, they sell their freedom.

*Q20*

At first I demand it from myself, if I do not let myself a dissimulation, bribe, illegality, human rights violation, also towards me, for me the first issue is that people could consider those rights as theirs.

*Q22*

It seems to me, that if not completely, at least those issues are on the agenda for the majority. I think that it’s not on the agenda of Armenian environmentalists, but in other movements I’ve witnessed that various people have always raised that issue for freedom of expression, decision-making.

*Q23*

I don’t really think that someone has to ensure it all, if you don’t require it. I'm generally avoiding using the word “authority”. For me there is a government, president, parliament etc. They are not authorities for me; they are formal institutions that should undertake functions. I should not wait and expect social justice from them; I should try myself to impose them to create conditions for social justice. To require means to expect, while it is useless to just expect, you have to make them, put a pressure on them so it becomes normal for them.

*Q24*

That dignity is very distorted especially after this observations. Let me make an interesting statement: I realized that we are quite detached from the people who are going to vote. It came clear, that the network in Facebook is much weaker than the network of community office, and maybe we suffer with elitism, because we don't take into account that people are different from us. We took a responsibility on us to take care of them, their future, kids, but they live quite a normal life. They have mechanisms to ensure their personal rights. And we reserved the right to save them, which is wrong. And it was obvious to me, that RPA and PAP talk in the language of those people. In the polling station where I was, there was no violation of procedure, a person came and gave his/her vote to RPA, which means that RPA talks with them in an understandable language. Dignity has a place, but in what way is it expressed? It is considered to be a shame for people to take a bribe and vote for other, but taking bribes is not being related to dignity. Let me not mention the issues of virginity, prostitution… Prostitution may be considered not a decent thing, but giving bribes has no connection with dignity. It all is totally distorted.

*Q25*

How can one get mad about electoral frauds if it is not considered to be a matter of dignity? Such waves of anger occur regularly and are being mobilized. For example, after the presidential elections 14 of us did observations and witnessed cases of ballot stuffing. We raised that issue, we talked about how can they throw mud on the dignity and in the result we mobilized 250 observers for the municipal elections. I think that each of them is incorruptible and persistent observer and they define a new standard of an observer, they don't ignore even small violations. It is a matter of dignity.

*Q27*

Considering [NAME] I can say, that we keep that principle. When we violate it, at least there’s someone among us to say that we have violated it and that we need to be more attentive.

That issue does not exist among us: people having different sexual orientation, or social… discrimination, it is not a problem. And I don’t think that it can ever be.

END

***YN 6, Lilit***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

No, I got already tired of these words. When I just joined, I got immediately labeled as environmental activist. Because starting from 2007 environmental issues are being raised and at that time [name] was active and got labeled as ''environmental activist'', after that anyone who was active and was raising some problems, they were all becoming ''environmental activists''. For some time I was identifying myself with ''environmental activist'', but I was mentioning, that it's not the environment that brought me to public life, but there are many political and civic issues that bother me. When introducing myself, I was mentioning that even though I carry out my main activities in the sphere of environment because there is an active excitement, but I’m not an environmental activist and I was introducing myself more as a civic activist. But I’m very tired of all these terms, and if I’m asked who am I, I’ll say nothing, I’m even tired of the term “citizen”. I’ll say that I’m just a person, who is concerned about some issues, and can go and raise them. When they say civil society, I don’t get it, how many people should be involved to be called civil society; it’s still a question for me. I’ve heard some lectures over this topic, I know that civic society is something in between of business and the state, but I don’t understand that term well to decide if I’m a part of it or not. I know that there are about 50 active people in the streets in Armenia and about 300 people in Facebook nowadays, I communicate with them. Because I don’t have a clear idea of what civil society is, I cannot say that I identify myself with it, but I know that there are people who are concerned about the same things as I do, and I can communicate with them online, and in the street, and in the office. Now I’m in that kind of a mental status.

*Q3*

There were different psychological stages for me; I've gone through several stages independently. My education in the University, the thing that I have travelled a lot and my working atmosphere, where there is a very legal consciousness atmosphere, it all has been very important for me and during years it contributed to my personal growth and the communication with abroad, the constant possibility of comparison was very constructive. That comparison has influenced in a positive way and I began to see the things that exist here and the things on which we can keep on working. However, I couldn't fight alone, and the struggle for ''[name]'' has become a consolidation for me, when I saw that a group of young people is able to solve some issues and I thought that I could also contribute some things myself. Afterwards I was in the group of “[name]”; I have participated in many campaigns outside, and then for a very long time I was in the 3-4 month struggle of Mashtots Park. Depending on situations, I have been in many things, but in chaotic way.

*Q4*

I think that it basically started from [name] struggle in 2007. From that independent civic small group slowly the social capital was accumulated. But mainly from ANC (Armenian National Congress) members and others abroad who were active I've heard many times that in 2004 the street life was more active. I cannot say, maybe there was no Facebook, and there were not many media and we didn't get to know about that activism. Anyway, in my opinion that activism was recognized from 2008, with Facebook. I received an invitation to join Facebook from [name] and I signed up and then I was periodically following what was going on in social life. I think that the recognition from public increased after there was Facebook, and slowly it established some capital, which is the army of supporters and those people, who got more active and started to act.

I find it an interesting experience that I don't identify myself with any group. I follow myself to see what developments are taking place. In the beginning I couldn't imagine me outside of these groups, because when you're new and don't have experience in that sphere, when you don't know anything, you take the old experience and rules of the group, you take part in groups' decision making as they are horizontal. If in few months from now I couldn't imagine myself outside of the group, now I can easily raise some issues, be alone in some place, but still fight for some rights. Now I fully accept, that I may not agree with some rules of the group, I can leave and even though group members are my friends, our points of views may not coincide over some things. Now I consider myself a part of those people, who share my ideas, who have the same values no matter if I know them or not. For me the important things now are the values, ideas and goals the team carries. Goals can change, but I can fight for Mashtots Park today and the next day I can fight for the electoral right if it is in the same sphere of ideology. I feel a part of all these things. I don't really know how all these things happening can be called. Even in the case of Mashtots Park we were discussing, whether it is a movement or not; some part was saying it is, and the others were saying that it is too small to be a movement. I cannot say what influence we make on Armenia from outside. Armenia from inside is closed; it is us, who always do some things and it seems to us that we are doing some kind of revolution. I know what's going on in reality, how many active people are there, but in fact there's a lack of research looks at these processes from outside. When you go out to outside Armenia, you end up in a different environment, and you realize that they are the majority and I mean that there’s a need of researches on what influence do we have on them.

Dissatisfaction with the system unites all these movements and the goal is the change. But the values they have and the wish to see “what kind of Armenia” are different. Different people have very different wishes, and if they start to establish something from zero, many activists may create such Armenia, where I would not want to live. That’s why I feel, that the common thing is the protest and the desire for changes, but in terms of values we are very different and I don’t even know if there will ever be a consolidation of common values.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

“Constitutionalism, rights, equal rights, the absence of any kind of discrimination, freedom”. I find constitutional values more important.

*Q6*

If we speak in terms of consolidation, organization, coordinated same actions and strategy, then in my opinion it was the case of Mashtots Park. In terms of the results as well, as you put a goal and partly reach its solution. After that some things happened as well, groups do some things separately. But I cannot say that the movements are having a breakdown now, because after Mashtots case I had a feeling that there's nothing else going on etc. But I guess it's a different experience, that groups could get separated and find their identities. In Mashtots park people gathered over the same goal, they were repeating some words, but they were not free in terms of their identity. After that, when situations like that occurred, everybody got to recognize themselves better and could better get orientated. In this sense, maybe it's not bad now; I cannot say that it's a breakdown period.

*Q7*

Many discussions are taking place around goals, values, ideas and activities. Attempts are being made to write a strategy. At some point there may be a reflection of old experience. After some discussions I also took part in them to understand what values we had in Mashtots Park, which helped us to succeed. It has helped me a lot and it was a part of reflection. In fact, a lot of things are being done besides/outside the streets, which may be not visible. You may have seen in Facebook, we want to develop a platform of Freedom, which is a place for those gathered around constitutional values, and anyone who shares these values can join and do whatever actions they want to. At the moment participants see their activity as making connections between different groups, to set the process outside of narrow frames. There are many people with different professions, who can somehow contribute to the process, so now we are trying to establish contacts.

*Q8*

The main working tool is Facebook; telephone communication can sometimes be used for spontaneous meetings.

*Q9*

Not much; in Russian or in English sometimes.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

Depends which NGOs, I assume that there are NGOs that are actively functioning in frames of their work and do many things, but they're not even visible and there are also NGOs that even in the frames of grant projects, they have a big contribution in this and are active, like [NAMES] who do some research, [NAME] also. Maybe it's because I know people who work in these NGOs, but that is also an indicator that these organizations are active in the movements. First of all I notice that civic active masses are more active than any political party. I’ve never seen a political party, which would raise a matter of public importance and solve it, which has conditioned my mistrust towards political parties.

Practically the experience shows, that issues are being solved by civic society. Their involvement is in a way that they take our terminology and start to speak and raise around issues we raise. So it turns up that you are the one to set agenda. About oppositional political parties I can say that they are competing with civic society. And sometimes they’re trying to use the capital and potential of civic society, to which I have a negative attitude. For example [NAMES].

*Q11*

[NAME] natural products’ sale is a typical example to that. It was a small precedent, but it was a good alternative. Attempts were made to develop a business project there, and [name] started the jam business there. Some things are being done within solidarity but not economy. For instance, when a problem occurs in some village and laws were violated, groups go and work, it’s something like a support, but it is has no economic element, which is very bad, because when you explain them that it is your rights, it’s nature, environment, they say ok, got it, but how can you help us to earn money? In any case the best thing to unite people is social-economic cooperation. I think that long-term working projects inside Armenia would be such social-economic projects, in frames of which you’ll be able to make contacts, so that people would be able to do a product circulation independently.

*Q12*

For the goal is to make serious systematic changes. We’ve achieved some changes in consciousness in some frames, more people are joining, and more supporter groups are being seen especially in Yerevan, which I don’t see in regions, for example, bicycling. When few years ago I was going home on bike, I was hearing many bad comments, but now I am more accepted by people. I know that [NAME] and others are doing bicycle nights on Facebook with people they don’t know, and I see that if ten meetings before there were 10 people, now it’s 250 of them getting together. It is an obvious change, which is happening among culture and it proves that you are doing some changes in the social and political circles, which are less measurable. As a girl I feel now more free as well, than few years ago. And in the political sense one has become more accepted, one can be taken into consideration while making decisions. There are many positive changes but I don’t see that influence capitalized, that’s why research is needed to understand the extent of influence.

*Q13*

I am against leaders, as I would want the movements to be horizontal and decentralized, without leaders. It is more important for me the things like how many independently thinking people joined, or how people who have joined before, have changed since. There are some people, who are perceived as leaders from public; even I may be perceived so, even though I’m not in the environmental movements anymore. Maybe [name], [name] would be perceived as leaders from public.

*Q14*

I didn’t have a big experience, thus it’s hard for me to answer this question. But in my impression it depends on the topic. If you’re fighting for public space protection, like in Mashtots Park, they were treating more softly. If you have a political direction or you fight against some specific official, then they would treat you more roughly. For example in the case of [name], or when there were protests in front of OSCE during the post-election developments, or in April 9 there were clashes too, and in these cases police is really brutal and violent. At times like that even people from criminal station came in civilian clothes, and they could even push you from the back, pull you. In any way the topic matters. If they think that the topic is inoffensive and doesn’t threaten authorities, they’re not brutal and vice versa. However, I want to add, that when I see videos of 2008, how they were treating ANC activists, there is a big difference now, starting from the lexicon and behavior; at least now they link their words to the laws while speaking. This is conditioned both with the topic and with the thing that civic society is being developed, so their lexicon is changing. There’s no civil society representative who would say like ANC activists did “hey, get your hands away”, “I have a right to stand here and you don’t have a write to make me leave”. Civil society has developed so much that the police have to at least formally go to trainings, come back and link their speeches to laws, speak in a language of laws.

*Q15*

I find it interesting that I never see those people in the street, they exist somewhere, they act and appear to be in crisis situations, maybe unconsciously they become tools of the authorities, but I never see them in the streets. I’ve never see these guys who just talk in any campaign, in first rows. But these groups appear in crisis situations, when the authorities want to change, to spoil public discourse.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

I feel myself long time outside of Yerevan, because for me the important thing is the idea for which I fight, I have the feeling of the world. I don’t have the limit of Armenian’s gene, blood; I even identify myself with people having the same ideas in Turkey. I feel a part of all this, I perceive myself broader.

*Q17*

Personally I don’t, but once [NAME] once organized training and a girl from the European movements came and was doing training. I was taking part in it; there is an indirect connection through [NAME].

*Q18*

I find it difficult to say, as I don’t know other movements very well and I cannot say which is unique.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

So that everyone takes part in decision making and have their role.

*Q20*

I won’t demand it from anyone; I am the one to bear it. That is my right, I feel it from inside, and I don’t have anything to demand.

*Q21*

It is probably the thing I’m doing now. Maybe the representative model of democracy does not work well, I do it participatory, but now I feel that democracy is what I am doing now.

*Q22*

They are a lot more democratic than the system that we have. I, personally try to be in the movements, in groups, which are overt, which give opportunities for everyone to discuss, to make collegial decisions. That’s why I’m saying that the values are important, as they condition your activities, impacts and the forms of decision making.

*Q23*

Depending on a problem people target from whom to demand justice and who is responsible for it. To be honest, now I don’t demand anything, because I’ve seen that the system is not working, that the oppositional political field is not working. I am just a bearer of it and I take it forward and it’s not important how much it resulting.

*Q24*

It doesn’t, it does more in guys’ talks, but that’s not about citizens’ life with dignity, but about guys’ dignity, the thing that he has to live in a correct way, with these laws, rules etc. and if you deviate from it, then your dignity is damaged. It is understood in a very narrow and criminal way.

*Q25*

As I’ve mentioned above, indignation unites movements, so we can state that that indignation exists in Armenia. But based on my experience I don’t find it a positive thing. When you do things based on anger, it has a different influence then if you do something with pleasure and with a creative attitude. When you do something in a creative way you get charged with positive energy and in a vice versa you get languished. Indignation may be a good thing for the start, but then you have to realize what you want and work in these waves.

*Q26*

I find everything under my individual responsibility. I find it important in the movements, that they develop the matter of people’s personal responsibility, but not only the thing to go talk about something you don’t like, because that way you can talk for a long time and change nothing. When you realize and take responsibility for even little things happening, you’ll feel those changes inside you and the movements are inside us, they’re not outside, they are related to our inside part. These movements develop the dignity inside a person and the skills of working voluntarily very quickly and you begin to hold personal responsibility for the actions of your life, it puts the issues of respect towards others and their opinions, democratic values, the multicultural environment, so you understand that besides yourself many other things can exist and they have a right to exist.

*Q27*

Not all of them, but in case of Mashtots Park they were pretty close to being inclusive. Discussions were open and anyone could come and take part. I’ve seen that there are also closed discussions being held and with their own sympathy they decide who can come and who cannot. In that kind of environments I don’t feel good and I leave that kind of places.

I don’t think that there would be discrimination based on class in Armenia, as there are no classes, just few oligarchs and the rest are the people. I can say that there is no obvious discrimination based on gender, but culturally I’ve felt that the most responsible roles before the public are taken by boys. For example, in Mashtots Park boys were using loudspeakers and [NAME] was making a film, and when we were talking, he was saying that he couldn’t find videos, where girls are speaking through loudspeakers. But no one has prohibited us to do so and sometimes there were suggestions from a limited number of people. But anyway, in conflict and responsible moments guys were the ones to speak, and it happened with women's silent consent, at some point we were taught that way. But I don’t have a good attitude to it, because it means that in responsible moments you don’t want to take a responsibility and you put it on boys. After the case of the park I analyzed and realized that it’s bad and now I’ll do it in many cases to solve gender issues, because you don’t only do a political revolution, but you also make changes in culture. And now I will not only do it, but I also tell my female friends to do so because as girls we have to overcome that issue. Even on discussions one can notice that few girls quietly listen to boys’ conversations, or the thing that boys talk more during discussions. At some point it happens subconsciously, I guess it’s because of habit strength.

Concerning LGBT people, again, if we look at the case of Mashtots Park, some participants of the movement had discrimination towards them. But in small groups where I am involved, there is no such thing and cannot be, because when you go to fight for rights, you don’t have a right to violate the right of others.

END

***YN7, Gayane***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*Yes, I do, but there are different types of activists. There are so called ''screamers'', though generally the job of activists is job of ''screamers'', because unlike the professional NGOs, they raise problems, and professional NGOs sit and work on projects. There are also whistle blowers, there are ones who create communication and I probably belong to those creating communication. I prefer to not only raise noise about the issue, but also to link the issue beneficiaries or victims to relevant public institutions. It is due to the fact that I trust the state institutions much less. Whistle blowers are the same screamers, but lower, or they're the same ones who create communication, but they deal less with communication.

*Q2*

I consider myself a part of civil society; I can't consider myself a part of something else. There's no civil society as such, but there is a civil community, which, unfortunately, is a minority in our country. We don't have a civil society yet; otherwise the elections wouldn't have passed in such a shameful way.

*Q3*

The massive rise in 2007, determination to assert the rights and the struggle, then, unfortunately, the severe decline in 2008, which contributed more. If you remember, before that time I was working in [NAME] newspaper, I didn’t notice how I sunk into that and was stuck there, but the moral conscious in 2007, the civil upraise made me go out. It was clear that I was going to be among the activists' movement. But I was empowered by studying in the University, is a left-wing orientated university and it tends to critical science. You don't only get knowledge there, but you also get empowered with your convictions. It was there, when I made a final decision that being poor is not scary to me, that you should not compromise yourself to adhere to the true values etc. That was the time when the case of [NAME] happened and involuntarily it put me in the activism.

*Q4*

Definitely. In university I learnt to keep distance from social problems and not to blame the ordinary people that get corrupted, but to blame those who make things corrupted and to see the problems in general social context. Generally I look at everything in systemic context. Human rights violations are not rare cases… In ideal societies, cooperating completely with the government institutions, NGOs just try to show support to the victims, because state institutions are also are interested in preventing and eliminating such phenomena. In our case, unfortunately, the public has to fight against the state, because the state violates human rights the most.

Unfortunately, the movements are very weakly connected to each other. I remember during a meeting in New York there was in Italian communist, media activist [name], and we asked him why are the international institutions so racist towards Armenian nation (in a sense that they forgive the Armenian authorities such perversion that they wouldn't forgive to their own countries), and he said: ''who are you following, Schröder, who is Putin's ''dog'' now, or other European officials, when we don't even know each other''. And that really is a problem.

In these two days I got to know, that during the Eurovision in Baku last year, there was an alternative humorous Eurovision. Some political party of Netherlands had organized it as a gentrification protest that people were thrown out from their houses so that the hall could be built. So, the alternative Eurovision was a form of human rights advocacy, but we didn't get to know about it. It's a neighbor country, but we didn't even get to know about it. We have nothing to do with each other. There is no experience exchange between us. That's the reason why the international community says oh, Tahir Square is being cleaned every day, it was in 2011, and the same thing was happening here in Armenia in 2008.

I would call the movement as civic activists, activists groups, but not civil society.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

I'll talk about the movement of the Army, and I consider myself as a part of it at first. ''Save Our Soldiers'' (SOS), ''No death in armed forces at peaceful conditions''.

*Q6*

I would say the high point of the movement was during the protest campaigns of ''Harsnakar'' case. Why? Because it was a very important moment, which I think we're losing now, but I hope we don't. Before that civic forces had a strange phobia towards political forces. And there was also mistrust from political forces against the civic ones. I mean those political forces, which were blaming civic groups for obeying to the authorities. Of course, there are people put in civic groups that play the role of authority, but on the other hand the civic groups were careful to challenge authorities, fearing that it could become a political movement, while the whole world says “political activists”. And during the case of “Harsnakar”, for the first time the blossoms of cooperation occurred, when members of various movements went to National Assembly and the opposition parties joined that movement. It seemed that finally it was clear, which one is political, which one is parties, and which one civic. And the civic groups accepted that their struggle is political, and has nothing to do with parties.

*Q7*

To be honest, it is another problem. People think that if there are no campaigns, then nothing is being done. And sometimes it reaches to the point, that when there they don’t do a protest, they don't do anything else. For our group I can say, that at the current period we try to outsource NGOs’ resources, we create communications. And there’s another problem, that civic movements are not professional. Some try and some don’t even try to organize everything the way that they know clearly the scope of their activities.

*Q8*

We have an open group, where we regularly exchange information and have discussions on human rights violations in army. We have a page, which is not as active as the open group, where everyone can take part. We have a small group, where approximately 40 people are in; it is a closed group, because it’s a working group. That is our main way of communication. We also use group mail and have tete-a-tete meetings, which unfortunately do not happen very often. People’s involvement in different initiatives hampers to focus on one issue. The issue with the army is a tragic thing and people get tired of it, I understand it.

When the occupation of Mashtots Park happened, our work was paralyzed, and then there were elections, and then the case of Harsnakar. In autumn we gathered, tried to develop a strategy; we’re still in that stage. I want to say that the number of activists is so little, that when a problem is exploded in one group, then all the forces are peaking. Even the authorities use it; they put the dates of important court trials in the same days. This is not accidental. On these days the forces of activists and media are being scattered.

*Q9*

I read of some classic attempts. I don't communicate much; I was more in contact with Egyptians and until now I'm in their groups. There was a group called Libya and there were conversations circulating like don't talk much, you're not Libyan. So I suggested to create a separate group ''World citizens for Libya'', which would be more fair. It is all done online, but with Egyptians we were meeting near the White House, going to cafe. There is a slight contact with Georgian NGOs. There are two students from Azerbaijan, but I try to not go much into it, because it can be perceived differently.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

When we have a problem, we apply to NGOs, because they can be in touch with state institutions. And when they have a need, we raise noise around the issue. There’s another thing that they sign announcements related to different issues.

Because ANC (Armenian National Congress) was not a political party, it had a huge role in consolidation process of people. ANC was holding a negative campaign, a campaign, which main point was that its opponent is bad. The positive one is that you’re good. Consolidation efforts are being done, but there is no actual result, or maybe there is no need. I believe that if you give a right message to people, you can bring them together and if it’s not right or is deficient and not honest, and then the chances are high that people will not gather.

*Q11*

The one I said for “Army in Reality”, though we do not pursue charitable purposes, but when we see someone, who is in need, we help. We did donations for several times. Youth living in Yerevan are more likely to go to villages and support villagers.

*Q12*

So far they are the successes of public awareness. And the other factor is that they could set agenda for the mainstream media like the social networks do, as well as activists set agenda for political platforms. Putting it in political agenda is still in a developing stage. The movement is in the stage to take it to political agenda.

*Q13*

Yes, definitely. A new kind of leader occurred, who are in favor of a more horizontal management, and they are collaborative and inclusive. So, almost everyone in activist groups are leaders. The only problem is that they have a phobia from leadership that it will make them similar to NGOs or to political parties, but its solution is in distribution of roles.

*Q14*

Police can behave once and it will seem that something has changed, but the next time, when they see a serious threat … For instance, for the campaign against Russian flag, organized by [name], in which 10 people took part, they sent a police squad, who took the campaign participants to police station and used force against them. They saw a serious threat there and brought their forces.

*Q15*

I think they have been strengthened, and by the way, they were strengthened by authorities. For instance, a very important thing happened in 2012, during diversity march. If before that time the authorities would directly hit the opposition and those having opposition protest, this time they did it through nationalistic groups and it came and separated both sides and became a peacemaker. For “Army in Reality” announcements were spread for several times and then no one got to know about those initiatives anymore. From a formal side those fascist forces are not related to authorities, but from the other side they became the tools of authorities.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

I cannot say; our movement is local. It would be good to contact, but they don’t, it’s local. They say Occupy Mashtots Park, but it doesn’t get localized, it doesn’t get understood, at least there is a language barrier. There’s also another problem, that when connections are made, the authorities start to blame that you serve to international organizations.

*Q18*

When I read about other movements, everything is mostly very similar. A little bit of joy is missing in our movements, we do everything very serious, formal, and a bit of humor is needed. But that humor recently was raised through demotivator, by doing Mukuchyan’s press conference’s flash mob.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

I see democracy as a public setting, where everyone’s interest, rights are taken into account, where a full opportunity is given for self-realization, using the country's natural resources, air and all other wealth and where a person has an opportunity to live his/her life with dignity, to care for his/her family, for others. By saying general welfare I also mean the respected rights of minorities.

*Q20*

I think it is a provocative question. How can I demand democracy from Serzh? What is concerning to demand democracy from someone like me, it’s a little bit unfair, because they also want to demand democracy. From Yerevan’s political opposition. But they say that we only target them, but it’s because they are the promise of democracy. I would not demand, but say, those elites are responsible. That would be political, intelligent, intellectual, etc. Elites are responsible for the country's culture.

*Q22*

They are democratic for sure. During some research interviews I was asked, why there are no women’s movements being formed. My guess was that women activists feel very comfortable in their own groups, so they don’t get subjected to gender discrimination. And sometimes they are way too democratic in a sense, that they cannot get organized normally. A decision can take a century to be made because the idea of ​​consensus in being taken into consideration.

*Q23*

Of course from state institutions. It is a matter of state management, so that resources are distributed the way there are no people that have nothing, so that people can live their lives with dignity.

*Q24*

Unfortunately it doesn’t. It doesn’t get coverage at all. People lie to themselves that they take care of family, that an honored guy should be able to take care of family, but people avoid this word because when they face it, they realize how violated their rights are. People don't understand that the result of taking 10.000 drams is today the gas price increas.

*Q25*

Armenians are more culturally moderate in that sense, than the other nations. For instance, when you see how they clean the streets with breaking and burning cars in European countries, nothing like that happens here. After the case of March 1st, there are no such protests happening again. They remain calm.

*Q26*

I think it's the only thing that can become a source of mobilization. After the increase of gas price I think that there should be a social protest. But then I saw, that around 100 people gathered near the government. They were all familiar faces. I'm afraid that wage slavery always wins here.

I think that it happens in more or less normal countries, the democratic ones, after which the critical thinking is being developed in people, then their own responsibility, we still need to reach to the point we have democracy. Personal responsibility is a very important thing. Personal issue is a political issue. Each person is a historical person. Until we get everyone to the point they realize that each of them is creating a history... it's hard, everything is hard to do. I can put that responsibility on people, who already fight for justice and freedom.

*Q27*

In terms of classical involvement they were not inclusive, because mainly they are young people or people aged less than middle age who are healthier physically, more proficient technically… There was no discrimination. There was no issue concerning gender. I didn’t see a problem concerning sexual minorities in our group. But I know that in Mashtots Park there was an aggressive attitude towards sexual minorities.

END

**YN8, Mari**

***Intro questions***

*Q1*I perceive myself exactly as an activist, because I don't perceive myself as politician. I'm into politics of communities, which is activism. I believe that the informative society is being expressed in politics of communities. And social networks, where all the people can express themselves and social movements are movements with no leaders, they have atavistic nature. I am a member of these movements. I imagine political activities right in those movements. I also consider myself a part of civil society, because accents are put in the civic one. The problem is not to reach the authorities, but to reframe questions, which the society has. The problem with authorities is derivative.

*Q2*

Everything started after 2008, when the case of March 1st happened. I realized that it is becoming impossible to change something with political tools, because political parties are applying authoritative mechanisms anyway. After 2008 it was clear, that the concept of leader is exhausted and the society has the tools for solving problems: society raises various problems and combat against them.

And in the sphere of politics those tools are in the hands of authorities. The experience shows that the change of regime can last years, and these problems can go deeper and the civic nature assumes that the problem should be solved in a short period. For example in the case of Mashtots case: it doesn’t matter if there will be a regime change or not, there just should not be a boutique!

*Q3*

For me it is the experience of 2008. In fact, there was a very strong movement, where huge masses went out, but we can say that they didn’t achieve anything. There was only a manifestation of violence and no emphasis on whether that person would be elected or not, nothing else happened until today, although it created a fertile field for civil activism. I always say that I was born in 2008. I have some experience on forming movements and putting accents on them. The strongest experience was the movement of “[name],”, where I was from the very beginning until now and I monitor what influence it had, how it was transformed, what it achieved. It is a very big institute for me.

*Q4*

The movement of [name], was very much connected with post-election crisis. In 2012 there were Parliamentary elections; there was an opposition which was taking part in elections. And they (ANC) entered Parliament with minimal votes, and it did not get appealed and post-election process was not formed. A kind of atmosphere was created, who didn't have a leader. People wanted to appeal, they wanted to go out. There was no political force to say ''what's going on?''. Everybody agreed, they took mandates, went to Parliament and that atmosphere/energy remained unsettled. And that case of violence with doctors happened related with Republic Party member, oligarch…. There were a couple of connections. For the first time all sectors of political and civic movements got involved in this movement. There was no such case before. I connect it with the absence of post-election process.

All the movements are connected, because they all speak in terms of the rights. They are also connected to Occupy movements at some point. For instance, in Mashtots Park, where the main accent was put in public territory, it had a left-wing direction and there were things connected to social problems, monopoly. It was pretty much the same here as well. Consciousness was not that much strong here. And besides, the economy is not liberal yet for us to move on to socialistic accents.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

Subject to criminal responsibility…You put concrete accents. The main accent is being against the culture of violence. ARP (Armenian Republican Party) is a holder of culture of violence in political field.

*Q6*

The peak was the demand for putting down the mandate, which he did with his own decision. They could break the wave with such approach. That pathetic letter that he wrote to public…

And it was the case of Mashtots Park that achieved something; it was a very consistent movement. But again it didn't have a legal procedure again connected with the eve of elections, but in any case the problem got resolved.

*Q7*

Non-governmental organizations help a lot, which are carrying out more institutional activities, where office work is shaped, where they collect all the information and have legal services. For example, human rights defenders help the initiative [NAME] a lot. Civic activists don't have enough income to deal with those issues, which is a public work.

It cannot hold institutional activities, that's why NGOs help a lot. They are carrying out professional activities. [NAMES] help a lot. Our mmain mission is to form and emphasize things. I am also a publicist, I make public speeches. It also has its infulence on moving issues to public field.

*Q8*

The main forms of communication are social networks. And also many statements on TV, which help to spread your point of view. Many public speeches are also happening. NGOs also help and provide their spaces.

*Q9*

Definitely. Even during the case of Mashtots Park there were many parallels with Occupy movements, which were taking place in Europe and USA... It cannot happen in one place and not get spread in the world, it is a matter of a change in the public consciousness. I am also published in analytical [NAME] magazine and I have articles there about community policies and the simulation of the post-election process.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

Political parties have a greater opportunities, because they have institutions in the means of members, region institutions and also big opportunitites to be presented to public. NGOs do not have such tools of course. But the latest experience showed, that in the means of changing people'sconsciousness the activities of political parties are less effective than the activities of NGOs. Environemental movements work in a very efficient way, they study the main/target points with the help of NGOs and they do legal emphases.

*Q11*

It didn't reach to that point yet to be solidarity projects in public field.

*Q12*

One of the issues of [name] movement was solved as with the president's order he put down his mandate, but it didn't get solved in legal sphere. There are problems in the sphere of football as well, because the president of the federation is a criminal, it doesn't have a public support anymore. It cannot have zero influence on the activities of the sphere.

They are no in judicial stage. There are four judicial processes going on now. The first one is the case of [name], the case of doctors' being beaten and Vahe Avetyan's death, the other one is that lawyers have sued the investigating body as the incompletecase was sent to the court, and [names]. These cases are in judicial stages now, they're in coursts which are being controled by the authorites. Our control mechanisms are too weak. The only thing that we have are two attorneys. Generally said it's not in a good stage.

*Q13*

Well, because the civic movement does not require leaders, it is a movement of equals, I wouldn't say that leaders have emerged. There are new active members, but there's no such issue, none of us claim to be leaders. Although we receive different prizes in frames of our activities which stress us out as being in the leading roles. [NAME] gave me a prize. So people are being stressed out, but not in the means of leadership.

*Q14*

No, it hasn't increased, because the authorities do not see a threat. In a particular case of [name] they thought that there's a threat. The more groups join together, the police violence increases. Whatever is related to politics, the violence happens, and in case of those movements that are more calm, they do nothing at all.

*Q15*

In the post-election process the activists were targeted by fascists, which were motivated by authoritites. That was the case of DIY explosion, around which we raised our voices, because it was a manifestation of violence. And now we've opened a Solidarity group in facebook related with the recent cases in Turkey and there were also serious questions raising against us. There were posts in the group like ''if you go out with the Turkish flag for support, we'll burn you as well''.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

I am a citizen of the world. I consider myself a part of a free struggle. That's why I received a prize for [NAME] in the sphere of of human rights as I am perceived that way.

*Q17*

There are contacts from Turkey. We exchange information to know what is the inner situation. I want to obtain that information from the activists, to know what groups are involved, and what they are emphasizing. That is an information exchangeyet.

*Q18*

I cannot say so, because I don't know their experience quite well. I need to study their experience well to draw parallels.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

First of all electoral right, so you have a free choice to vote, a freedom of speech and free economic management right and the right to create. It's a matter of rights.

*Q20*

From me, from a citizen. If a citizen does not demand, no one will give it to them.

*Q22*

Depends on the movement. The one I am a part, it is democratic, because there's a big team, and everything is being discussed and the decisions are made by consensus.

*Q23*

Who can you demand it from if state institutions do not function? The first one is electoral system, which does not funcion well, who can you demand it from? Who can you demand justice from if the electoral right is being distorted and there's no legitimacy?

*Q24*

It's not clear what the borders of dignity are and until which point things can be not tolerant.

*Q25*

I cannot say that the indignation is being a source of mobilization because everyone is complaining, but only few make organized actions. There's a matter of consciousness, that you have to do something, to change something, there's a problem to reach to that level of consciousness. The indignation itself is not enough source for mobilizing.

*Q26*

Tha'ts what I'm saying, I said that I would demand justice from myself, because the institutitons do not work properly and it is useless to demand anything from them

*Q27*

Citizens were quite inclusive, political ones are completely deprived of it. They have pyramid structure, decisions are being made by one or a group and they are being imposed to the society.

Both the issues of LGBT and women were highlighted, because women's participation in political sphere is very low. Not in the civic one, there’s equal participation there. There is no discrimination towards women. There is discrimination towards LGBT people; there are movemtns where they say that LGBT peoplw would better not take part. There's no discrimination based on class.

END

**YN 9, *Tigran***

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

Of course, I consider myself an activist and it began since 2008 when my world outlook changed in some ways, because I lived mostly by my reactions, and always waited for the situation to be created so that I would be able to give a proper answer, but there comes a time when you realize that you are the one who creates the situation. This is the change that takes place. At this point we deal with a citizen who perceives the reality, who is led not by reactions but by actions. In this sense 2008 was an awakening.

I see myself as a part of civil society. It seems like there isn’t such field in Armenia, which has no problems. Any field has a structural problem, for which reason an active citizen has to get busy with many things: on one hand you are an environmental activist and on the other hand you protect the rights of vulnerable groups, also politics, and there comes a point when you realize that you are involved in too many things but there is no alternative way, since resources are increasingly depleting, people are leaving the country, especially intellectuals, and you are left with a small group of people.

*Q2*

My citizenship is related to the year 2008. For a moment, I came to realize that only being a citizen you cannot change much and you become more politicized and I understand that the supreme objective is the democratic Armenia, which does not leave you an alternative rather to change the power structure, and the political parties are the authority. Now I am a member of National Congress Party and a member of the Board.

*Q4*

If you are a citizen of the world, especially in these days, you cannot separate yourself, thinking that you are only a part of local place such as Armenia, on the other hand Turkey which is our neighbor, you realize and understand that your involvement is symbolic, it’s simply on Facebook, or you may sign some kind of petition or make public speeches not more. On this emotional level all problems are also yours. But on the other hand [name], is a very narrow ecological movement, which cannot become a global environmental movement: you're here to have a success story, to make the worldwide things to come and participate.

The movements are linked here, because people are the same. If you want to see a civil society, go to the post-election opposition gatherings in Liberty Square, all we have is 300-500 people.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

The only thing that we can do is to keep up the spirit of struggle. It is a small fire that can die out any moment. And that is the reason why the “Struggle, struggle till the end” is an eternal slogan for us coming all the way from the 90s. It can’t be specified against who the whole struggle is actually, but it can be clearly understood that it’s all about a free and independent Armenia.

*Q6*

There are small victories that the civil society has “booked” for me. The Mashtots Park is considered a small, but somehow an achievement of civil society. But this is not the highest point because if we’re talking about a final culmination, then some radical changes took place afterwards. These are current harbors occurring on the way, accomplishments, but to take them as paramount would be senseless. That’s just solves a tiny issue, but has not brought up a change in the system.

*Q7*

First of all, it’s not like there are many demonstrations out there in the street, it’s not like it’s satisfying. Compared to the whole cluster of problems that exists in Armenia all these events cover only the 0.1 % of the whole thing. With all these problems you would’ve seen different groups out in the streets all day. The thing is that the majority of people go for a compromise because the government has created a myth that it’s unbreakable. Just for instance, in the underground pass ways there was a book fair. They privatized the pass way and threw those people out. And they compromised. When I asked them if they wanted me to come with different writers to interfere the matter, they refused because each of them had already come to an agreement and because they see that all the other groups standing in front of the government building don’t attain anything. At any rate this is how it’s presented to the society by social media. All I am saying is that the long anticipated social boom will never take place in Armenia. The outburst of the poor and oppressed people will never happen. The middle class will keep leading, holding hand by hand. When we say “bourgeois-democratic revolution «using old terms, part of the civil society falls into a swoon. As in what kind of revolution can ever happen with oligarchs, but it’s true. Just the activists are not enough; the villagers should also join them. Like in the case of Teghout. There should be the intellectuals, the small and medium entrepreneurs, as well as the 3rd component. Business should separate from the government, which happens to the hardest in the matter.

*Q8*

For a little while counseling was common, as well as discussions and meetings, but with the activation of social network usage this format somehow got left behind. That was really a good thing as all the meetings were closed meetings and could never release any resonance for a spread-out. Now many Facebook pages have been created which is a more open format and it’s much easier for people to get involved. There is also the negative side that fake pages are increasing, so do the talks and the actual work is getting cut down. But this is the only realistic way that they stay connected to because if there is any environment that smells like freedom is the virtual environment.

*Q9*

Mainly English and Russian, of course. I turned out to be a member of the [NAME] which is a big network. There are also different mail groups. The big part of the activists is in constant connection with NGOs. There are also regional networks such as Armenia-Georgia-Azerbaijan, there are certain connections in the CIS framework. Before there were more connections with Russians but now they have been pushed back to the second plan. Back then, when the Soviet Union had just collapsed, there were still some bits of friendship between human rights activists, but into this new generation the component of the diaspora has added. When those people came all the way from the West the aura somehow here changed a little. From the old generation whoever remained there got roughly discredited. People like [name], who got qualified as national betrayers and they literally buried the activists of the older generation.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

To tell the truth, 99% percent of the whole work is done by NGOs. When you see some kind of a protest here in Armenia, you are almost completely sure that it’s been organized by a certain NGO or a GONGO. That is a result of the cooperation of two settled or newly beginning NGOs. The initiative does not necessarily need to be registered in the state registry, but basically they have the role.

Political parties generally remain in the framework of those initiatives or events in order to have their own profit. Except Armenian National Congress, I have not yet seen any other party that has undertaken that amount of social events. We organize peaceful protests for the political prisoner Tigran Arakelyan for over 2 years but seems like no one notices it.

Among the NGOs, [NAME] does a high level job. The late [name] in [name],has made huge changes in the tone of everything. Or [name] from [name], who has also made big changes.

*Q11*

Yes, they are numerous. In general, the concept of charity or benevolence in Armenia is very insecurely touched upon. They might go and take care of the elderly or people in need. The same can be seen on Facebook as well, that someone needs a refrigerator. They come together and buy them a fridge. Social networks in this case play an important role. But in my opinion the most successful try was the jam sale of [name] . It was really unbelievable, some sort of an environmental business. In terms of the law, however, we had a gap there. There is no such option that would allow you to both run entrepreneurship and provide 40-50% of the income to social or ecological issues. That is very actual in many countries. In Armenia the first manifestations are appearing, the first of which was the cans of [name] . Besides, nowadays the number of international grants has been decreasing in Armenia and the sectors will soon have to be able to find means in order to save its existence.

*Q12*

First of all, the most essential part is to find areas for cooperation between the youth. In case it is the kind of issue that requires urgent solution, it’s easy for everybody to come together. In terms of this our country is rapidly growing. The movement is in a dilemma at the moment. The system has a very filthy ability to absorb all the good, enlightened and active young people into it. In one case they get involved in being a single-party (Republican Party) and in the second case they marginalize people, socially discrediting them.

*Q13*

Yes, [name], for instance. There are many journalists. I can see that there are lots of women, deliberated women, who are raising up their voice. But in terms of the elections the most impressive one was [name] and [name] conversation in the Bangladesh election unit.

*Q14*

The police have become all clerical. No violence. They’re an institution attached to the church. God will never forgive them. This is not police. They’ve become moral now. They do not undertake violence because they do not see any kind of danger for the system in these events.

Q15

Not really. There is no fascism in Armenia and cannot be. That is something artificial. For so many years they kept posting on the walls “Beware of Levon”, but when Levon actually came in 2008 everybody started to follow him and that means that all those pieces of paper glued on the walls do not work. That is a small thing fed by the system, which they use as a tool to scare off. There are no true fascists in Armenia.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16*

The thing is that I’m not deeply familiar with the movements in other countries, but in Armenia there are some specific things that can be singled out. The interaction between the new generation and the generation experiencing dissident fun in soviet times. There are certain issues, such as homosexuals, that activism can tear from the middle. The events of Turkey are a bright example: There were so many people who feared that they were [NAME] and that it was going to end up very bad for them. This means that are double standards in activism, too. LGBT is basically the sphere that runs fearfully. Because ecology is inoffensive, everybody likes trees.

***Targets and aspirations***

Q19

Democracy is our huge fund. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Kharabagh problem burst out and we started to ruminate on what is it that is going to keep this country alive. We have no oil, no entrance to the sea, all blocked in. Weren’t there those meaningless talks that Jermuk will keep us or that they were creating an IT Armenia, or that the minister was forming an agricultural Armenia. None of that is working. We’ve started off on a firm base, back when Bagratyan was deliberating the economy and when the first president was forming the fundament for democracy. People call it “the cold and dark years”, while the rest of the world would call it a cradle of democracy. This is the potential base on which this country should continue to grow.

Q20

From myself, from you and everybody else. In the long run this battle is for the resonation of democracy.

Q21

The most important element for me is the tolerance. Free speech is very important, because we never had a chance of it. There was only once we did have it in 90s, but they Qocharyan appeared with goebbels theories, occupied the whole media and left.

Q22

Not in terms of decision-making, it isn’t, as it is really complicated in a country that has no culture of democracy. When a movement becomes structural, it has no choice other than to acquire the model of management inside the country. If you’ve not been given a specific structure from the outer side or a grant, which presupposes a certain set of procedures, being based only on the inner side does not guarantee a result. It’s really a hard time pushing forward the process of decision-making coming from the below. The same thing is happening on Facebook- there are page administrators that whoever they do not like, they just kick them out. It’s obvious that there’s also the instinct of self-defense, as all the movements keep demolishing and bringing so many fake people, that sometimes you clearly comprehend that if you’re 4 people and if they add 6 more to it, in case of actual equality you will not be the one to win. Often the roots of the initiatives are purely democratic, but others sometimes can’t take them as democratic because they don’t have enough trust for that.

Q23

If democracy is something that we are supposed to build altogether, then social justice is something to be demanded from respective social institutions, from state institutions, to be specific. If your country is drowning in poverty, that is either the minister’s fault, or the guilt is on state institutions and so on. In this case there’s no need to mix up and say we’re all guilty. They kill our boys in the army and declare that it all our fault and that we’ve not brought them up in a proper way. No way. It’s all your fault and you’re the one who’s made this mess.

Q24

I don't know. We probably should go out in the street and scream ''dignity'' for several times and see what reaction do people give. At first it is a long-winded word in armenian: dignity /arzhanapatvutyun/. Those ''honor'' and the ''value'' are a bit in contradiction. The honor is related to tradition, esteem /namus/, conservatism, like the honor of armenian, girl's honor or someone else's honor. These things sometime become valus that make a pressure. When you say '' dignified life'' to people, most of them will take it in a positive way, but I don't understand what it is. I see it as a good, prosperous life, but the word dignity is very subjective.

*Q25*

Yes, social rebellion cannot just appear itself so that hail-stricken people from [name] could go out and break the head of the Prime Minister. We saw that there are no such people; there were just poor villagers, who were expecting support from the state. There will be no righteous indignation outburst in Armenia, movement is not chaotic, but it is a conscious daily work. Of course it has emotional moments, a wave, but you cannot say that it is an outburst. After all, in any movement which is considered to be spontaneous there are a group of people who take the movement forward.

*Q26*

The problem is that you fight for a particular issue occured in the state. That state did not disappoint 99 percent of its population: it gave education, healthcare and so on, but the consciousness of these people developed so much that they understood that the states lies and they must make the state do what they want. This state continuously disappinted 99.9 percent of its people. In other words, we cannot put a rely on them. It is totally unreliable, that’s why people just leave. That’s the reason we cannot compare these two situations at all. You have totally an unreliable state and sometimes you have to implement its functions yourself. But you cannot take the protection on you; the army has more of a "mafiosi" structure, that's why you have to demand from the state. In other countries people can fight against McDonalds or some capitalistic monster, which have some internal connections with the authorities, but here there are no such connections and it is obvious, that everything is theirs.

*Q27*

At first, the understanding of gender is a bit shadowy in our society, but in the movements people understood what equality is from the very beginning. Women are equal to men, they are more active, they push the movements forward… Women startedthe movement of the army. All the movements in Armenia have women in first rows. No patriarchal thing exists.

It is also funny, because there cannot be rich people in the movements. Mainly middle class people with salary range between 150-350.000 drams are involved in the movements and freelance professionals, but there are also unemployed people and students involved. Also there are no very poor people, villagers involved… they can be supporters.

END

**YN 10, Samvel**

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

Yes, I would. I believe that being an activist means being interested in what is happening in your country and your city, and in the issues that concern the society.

*Q2*

I definitely consider our organization to be part of the civil society.

*Q3*

I suppose that my political activities began in March of 2008, when the well-known events took place, and I showed active participation in protests, demonstrations, and pickets. I wouldn't say that I identify myself with any particular movement; I identify myself more with the activism, which has its civil side, its angle. In our [name] , in particular, all that is shown through art, exhibitions, and performances.

*Q4*

Yes, besides [name] and other artistic groups, I am also very interested in participating in different pickets and demonstrations.

***II. About the movements.***

*Q5*

We mostly work on specific pressing cases, which are present, no matter whether they are political or public. After all, they are all interconnected and we can give them one slogan and name it "Activism".

*Q6*

The high point was Vahe Avetyan's case. It was the high point because it was neither the first nor the last murder case connected to the oligarchs, but up until then the civil activists were afraid of making a big fuss, and this case raised such a wave of complaint among people that the current regime had never before encountered. And this circumstance, I believe, stems from the year 2008, when the elections were once again fraudulent and the public gathered, requesting to stop fabricating their votes. I believe that the base of all this civil rebirth, including smaller local movements such as the one in Mashtots park, was March 1st.

*Q7*

Besides that, for example, when there were convicts in Armenia, we would go out to the streets at night and would spray posters on the walls. One of the requests on these posters, for example, was freedom for political prisoners. The activism was in danger because we were not allowed to do such things, so we would do our job at night, in order to attract people's attention to murders in the army, political prisoners, and other issues. Most of the time, the life of those posters was short-live, until the police would discover and get rid of them in the mornings; but now there is Facebook: we take pictures and post them to social space right away.

*Q8*

Since we are mostly close friends within our group, our communication takes place daily. With other activist groups we mostly communicate during discussions or if there is an issue of great importance. Our activities are mostly in the field of art, and if other active groups need something to be painted on the walls or anything else, our communication usually takes place this way.

*Q9*

I mostly read in Russian, but I am also interested in what is happening in Turkey, Cairo, and so on.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

NGOs have a primary role because most of the activeness comes from the members of NGOs. The political parties are mostly passive, or are involved to the extent that is beneficiary to them at the particular moment. I, particularly, have never seen a political party whose involvement would not stem from specific narrow benefits and would not be altruistic. For example, among NGOs [NAME] are very active; there was also other groups similar to ours.

*Q11*

I have not encountered any, because in Armenia often times those groups themselves need assistance, much less are they able to provide assistance. I would be very happy if there were such a thing in Armenia.

*Q12*

The main achievement is that the civil society that was formed after the events of March 1, 2008 will not allow for all that to be disappeared. Today, I believe, there is a sort of idle, sad situation, with the summer on the other hand; I think that if there will be any activeness, it will begin in September, mostly connected to projects from [NAME]. But if we talk about the months of June and July, then everything is in a standstill.

*Q13*

I have not seen any; there is no need for a leader. Our bitter experience has shown that within our national mentality people always prefer to see the solutions to their problems in someone else - a certain divine person, who is often times weaker when it comes to making decisions.

*Q14*

It has decreased: now it is practically incomparable to the violence of 2008. Let alone the murders and even visual demonstration of force. I consider the fact that the police no longer use force to that extent to be another achievement of the civil society.

*Q15*

I have not noticed a significant strengthening; these are controlled by some forces. The bombing of DIY pub was preceded by parliamentary elections, and it was performed in order to distract people's attention, since the society is very sensitive toward LGBT issues. These movements, I believe, are governed by other individuals and are not consistent in their thought process. They only come out of their holes from time to time and then return back.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks.***

*Q16 / Q17*

At the moment, no. Recently there was an Irish rock band that had a song about March 1st. They were the ones who found us, if I'm not mistaken, but that was the only cooperation we had.

*Q18*

Today we have a lack of experience. Often times people do not know what to do, how to behave during demonstrations and pickets; this was also noticeable on the part of the police in 2008. Step by step people were moving towards establishing a contact between the police and the society. Now five years have passed, and when you go out to a picket there are usually the same people and the same police officers, and they have established some unwritten rules of communication between each other, so, if there is nothing extraordinary, there are certain rules of conduct.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

It means that a person has the right to freely express his/her thoughts and will.

*Q20*

From the government, or from me and my friends, so that we are in charge of our rights.

*Q21 & Q22*

After all they have formed because of that need, although there are also some authoritarian elements to it, which stem from Soviet times and from the upbringing: they are in our blood. These are also present in the fields of opposition and governing bodies.

*Q23*

Social justice has to be an issue addressed by the government. However, in our country everything is governed by oligarchy, and the government is also intertwined with that oligarchy.

*Q24*

This is a difficult question, since dignity and decent living have different interpretations in our society. For some it is some kind of gang relationship, for others it is a decent financial situation, and for some it is the satisfaction of their sexual life; but for me decent living living mainly means that a person has some financial stability and the possibility to think not only about household problems, but also about the creative aspect of his/her life. Within our society the main problems are household-related.

*Q25*

Of course there has been indignation in 2008, as well as in 1998 and 2003. I have been part of all those demonstration; the indignation has been decreasing year after year, and it is partially the fault of the opposition, to which we can also add the problem of emigration: nowadays there is simply a lack of population in Armenia. In order to unite the people, we need a slogan similar to France's "Fraternity, Equality, Liberty", which can lead us to some victories; but since we have constantly been defeated during these ten years, it is very difficult to maintain that spirit within us.

*Q26*

This, of course, is an individual decision: each person can either think that it is his/her own responsibility, or pass that responsibility to someone else. On the other hand, of course, when a person takes the path of self-sacrifice, it can lead to that individual's destruction. You get filled with a certain energy and ideology, and when all that is exhausted everything ends; it is necessary to appreciate that energy, but if for years people are constantly defeated, they begin to lose that energy.

*Q27*

I personally have not participated in the movements. From time to time I would try to express my opinion to the decision-makers of these movements about certain things, but in them I have encountered the same problem that they are trying to fight against. Something that needs to be decided by everyone ends up being decided by a small group, and in the end these movements turn into smaller, local movements. The human interaction within these groups is very difficult, which influences the functioning of the groups.

The positive side of these movements was the fact that women were actively involved in all of them. There is also no discrimination based on sexuality; however, it is certainly present in the society.

END

**YN11, Hayk**

***Intro questions***

*Q1*

Yes, being activist means to provide time for issues concerning to all.

*Q2*

Of course I consider myself a member of civil society.

*Q3*

The term civil society has been put into circulation recently, I consider myself a political figure, which involves activism as well. For me, the two of them are into one concept.

*Q4*

The most interesting movements are the opposition movements, with the help of which we'll be able to undermine this occupational pyramid and build a new one parallel by solving conceptual and human resources issue with the help of civic activism. In a larger sense, we have a problem to become an exemplary country in the level of the region, and not only to solve the issues inside the country.

I would call this activism as an outburst period of new generation, which has not been born and raised in the Soviet times, is more open-minded than the previous generation, and obviously that generation is going to have an outburst.

***About the movements***

*Q5*

The prior issue is to have a country of a new quality. We think that whatever we have now cannot be considered a state, though the form exists, but its content is nought. We are the ones to think about building a new government, I won’t hesitate to say for the creation of a national state for Armenians, for the Armenia's population, and all our slogans are about it.

The national element should not be separated from universal and civic; these all is part of our imagined national state. Today different circles want to implement this separation artificially, but our youth must realize that there is no contradiction in all of this.

*Q6*

The cases of Trchkan and Mashtots Park were the high point of the movement. It can be said that the latter one didn’t get its real appraisal yet, because there were pretty interesting phenomena in the operation of Mashtots Park. I estimate highly the form of the struggle in Mashtots Park and I think that the form of the struggle must be chosen to be able to reach our main goal, as we want to reach to the change of the regime.

And the last victory was the one that happened recently (the prices of the buses and minibuses were reduced). In parallel with those small victories we have to build the authority we want. Our movement deals with eliminating the reasons of this situation and simultaneously it helps such fair movements. We help with whatever we can and sometimes we play a big role.

*Q7*

We can divide the general struggle into two parts: one of it is busy with making pressure on the system, and the other one is busy with creating a new system. The points of the campaigns are diverse: a new generation is being formed; we try to make other people active, because if there is no critical amount of people present, then it all would not make sense. These all has its influence very quickly as we live in internet times; if these all would be done ten years back from now, maybe it would not have the same result. The opposition is almost surrendered; however, unlike other countries (for example in the case of Egypt) we need to be more intelligent. We should not do concrete changes before there is an alternative thing. Our country cannot handle periodic shocks.

*Q8*

The majority of members of [NAME] represent various movements mentioned by me. Social networks have a big role in organizing our work. At this time our only resource is the Internet. I would not say that we use it completely, but day-by-day we become more skilled, and the resources are getting more. Our issue is not making active those living in Armenia, but also the whole community of Armenians, and I can state that we have results during these two years. I can see their involvement in all ways: in means of informational and campaigns, financial, professional and also their presence physically.

*Q9*

Yes, English and Arabic.

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

*Q10*

The political organizations have zero involvement as there is no political field: the king dictates and the others obey. Yes, there are people from different political parties, who are involved in various civic movements, but that has nothing to do with the party. The political parties are dead in Armenia.

Non-governmental organizations have both positive and negative role. We try to act against the negative one. The positive ones are the NGOs which are created spontaneous and the negative ones are the NGOs who get financed from abroad and who work for abroad, which serve in interests of some geopolitical center. Because we consider ourselves as the future authority of our country, we have to assuredly fight against it as much as we can. Pre-parliament needs to transform into a founding parliament, which needs to go to legitimization with a planned map.

When the time comes for the authorities to leave, in this transitional period, then new elections should take place the way we imagine: with the expression of free will. At that time it will be clear what our movement should be like.

We have a clear idea of ​​what our country should be like, but nice ideas are not enough. We need specialists and now we are in the process of forming it all.

*Q11*

No.

*Q12*

All kinds of activism only benefit our work. I have already mentioned, that we have representatives in all active groups. We benefit from these movements, and most of all I appreciate human resources and conceptual benefits. If some group is fighting against the regime, it means that those people carry some ideas and ideologies. So people with ideologies are being formed, who should be involved in future government of the Armenia.

The main achievement is the activation of youth and the funeral of political arena. Because of civic activism the political parties cannot mislead our people anymore. I also highly appreciate the search for new lifestyle and better life which our youth do. We've gone through a big part and there's not much left to go.

*Q13*

Of course there are interesting people among youth, but the interesting thing is that in recent years the thing is put into circulation by us and the youth that we don't need leaders, and that we need a leading group instead.

*Q14*

We can see it has decreased after the cases of March 1st. If we compare it to time period in 2010, 2011, before the cases of March 1st, we can state that it has decreased as well. It has also something to do with the development of youtube so this system cannot demonstrate the same violence anymore; there cannot be another March 1st. This regime is not like the one in North Korea; they cannot do anything they want to. They have ability and arsenal, but they don’t have resources to act, because in that case it would be their end.

*Q15*

There are no fascist movements in our country. There are some small groups, which are created by National Security, which discredit our country. At first national and nationalistic should be separated, and generally there is no growth in that sense and I think that balanced things will always prevail.

***Movement and wider world/prior networks***

*Q16 / Q17*

Of course, if we look for it, we’ll find such experience; every country and every nation have their peculiarities for sure. CIA had developed several forms of civil disobedience in 1976 and that list can be found on the Internet nowadays. I am sure that more improved things can be found now. They are universal and other countries’ experience can be used.

*Q18*

I don’t remember at the moment, but maybe there were some indirect contacts. We find the movements abroad very important as we live in the same planet. For example, the struggle of Arabic youth is very valuable. Yet its outcome is not visible because it all has been done in not-well organized situation, but there are groups formed among youth, who have their ideologies, who know clearly what their country should be like, who have higher education, which will have its positive influence. We would like to make contacts with those groups with a pleasure.

***Targets and aspirations***

*Q19*

It is a form of governing and it should never be identified with the goal. Especially in the west democracy is often led as overarching goal. However, it is a possible form of fair governing.

*Q20*

We do accept the principles of democracy and we try to implement them in our activities as much as possible. But it should not become an end in itself and every nation can find the best model of democracy for them. For instance, we imagine one model in our future Armenia, which may not exist in other places of the world; it is the model of hybrid. It is more effective. We’re going to follow more the direct form of democracy. I think the whole world will follow the way for direct democracy. And I also think that there should be more professionals, specialists in order to make that model more effective. From now on, we’re going to work on this and when our founding parliament is formed, we’ll put it into circulation.

*Q22*

We, of course, invest that culture in us, so that we will not become the next monsters for people in the future. I think this trend exists everywhere now. We consider collegial decision-making as one of our most important principles and we follow it.

*Q23*

This is the most important issue that needs to be solved in our country. Unlike other countries, we are a mono-ethnic country and those polarizations should be logical and in right amount. When it happens too much, it violates the security of the country, just like it happens now. Because of social injustice many things concerning security are being violated, for example the institute of army, which consists of impudent lieutenants and soldiers from poor families, cannot fight now. We have already endangered our security issue; our army should become volunteerly; we cannot have obedient soldiers like in empires. We have to create a new one virtually, and inside of us, which will later be used in public.

*Q24*

Fortunately it has a big role. One of the main reasons of migration is the matter of dignity and many people leave the country because they cannot have a dignified life here. If there is dignity, then we have future.

*Q25*

Of course it does. The case is that there is no more patience. But unlike other places, in our country it is not possible to get political results with spontaneous outrage. Unfortunately migration for armenian person has become a form of outrage. That is probably another peculiarity of our people. I don't worry about it, because our people are ready to be mobilized now, and we are busy with mobilizing active people.

*Q26*

It is more emphasized here because we don't have a state; more or less it exists abroad. A conscious youth has nothing to expect from this regime, they can impose some questions but they clearly realize that the one in front is not a state. Day by day the involvement increases. Maybe social networks also contribute to it: thoughts are being raised and developed. In [NAME] we try to be as open as possible. There are no members there, but only participants, who decide the amount of their participation on their own. We try to involve supporters in everything as much as possible, however, there is also an issue of promptness. Democracy is a mean to reach to goal and this needs to be remembered, and not to become a hostage of that democracy.

*Q27*

These issues are artificially put into circulation by forces from abroad and also by the existing regime. Such issues exist in the whole world and they need to be approached very seriously. Our opinion is that it is not the time for such imporatant issues. At first a new system needs to be created, which will serve to people in state level and then those concerns will become subjects to be studied.

END

**YN12, Erik**

*Before the interview started he said*

“I am not speaking to you as a member of the [name] staff. I actually got into a little bit of trouble for writing that article [ an article about social movements which was published in [name] ] because they don’t want to tie .. to the things that are happening. “

*Q1*

Yes, but I would even go a little bit further. There is activist and there is organiser. Which is also an activist, which is someone that is active in whatever issue. Then there is organiser that does everything an activist does but also tries to make sure that everyone around them joins in what is happening. I like that definition a little bit more. I think all activists should also be organisers.

*Q2*

I mean when was I born? When I was a toddler, my dad took me to rallies and stuff – you know Karabakh is Ours! In all honesty, my political consciousness started with the 2000 Bush election. Three or four things happened in a row, which escalated and moved me along really quickly. One was that election, then it was September 11th which happened right after and it changed everything. The third was the invasion of Iraq. The invasion of a Iraq was a huge, huge perspective changing thing for me. And then after that I would also say the defeat of Howard Dean in 2004. I would say that made the structural problems of the system apparent to me. I realised that we can’t get what we are asking for through the system. For the first time that became apparent to me at the fall of the Howard Dean campaign. All throughout university I was organising and we re-founded the [NAME] in 2006. It became over 200 chapters almost within a few months and within the next few years that was basically where I was getting my education in.

*Q3*I am doing my part. I am not taking as much as a leadership role as much as I’d like to or as I have in the past. But I see places where I can be an added value and that is where I am spending most of my energy. A lot of the people are my age and I met them in 2010 when I was doing an internship at the [NAME]. And then over the years I did my MSc at [name university] and I wrote my dissertation on social movements and civil society development in Armenia. I actually used your book extensively on that. Then when I came back [to Armenia] and I have been here a little over a year now, but the first year was really just getting myself grounded in living here. Slowly getting myself acquainted with the NGO landscape. So I knew all these kids [NAMES] and after Mashtots Park they were trying to figure out what is to be done next. I really see what is happening now as the next step, because I see a lot of the same people, using a lot of the same tactics. A lot of the lessons they learned from Mashtots Park are being useful.

*Q4*I would call it the movement of values. It’s about redefining what it means to be a citizen. One of my friends [name] said, the biggest problem in Armenia is that the average citizen doesn’t see the solutions to today’s problems within themselves. So whatever is happening now, the core of it is taking responsibility for the problems and saying here on out I am going to maximize my agency as a citizen and do whatever I possibly can to make sure that this bad thing doesn’t happen. And you see it in the language of the movement. The two biggest values are solidarity and self-organization. Those are the two things that are pointed out in every single meeting, in every single action. Its all about solidarity and its all about self organisation.

*Q5*

We’re just beginning. I think it will wax and wane, but it’s a long-term process. I think Mashtots Park in a lot of ways was the foundation for what we’re seeing now. Of course there were other things, which laid the foundation for Mashtots, but I think Mashtots is sort of a distinct event, but this is the next found of that. What comes next will be the next round, but only if it stays a movement of values.

*Q6*

I think it’s starting but its not at that level yet. I spent a couple of nights at the sit-in front of city hall and almost on the hour, random citizens were bringing us bags of food and candy and coffee. Even at 3 o’clock in the morning people were bringing things. I think that is a point of solidarity. And during the 100 Dram Movement, the Free Car initiative that sprung up, that was another point of solidarity.

*Q7*

Officially I would say there is no contact. But individuals who work in foundations or NGOs are part of the movement, but on an individual capacity. From a foundation perspective, the tricky thing is figuring out how do you support a social movement.

As for political parties, another reason why we are seeing what we are seeing in Armenia today is because all the activists involved share consensus around the fact that the formal political structures are completely discredited from top to bottom. Even the when the [NAME] wanted us to send a representative. First we said we don’t have a mechanism for choosing representatives. But we didn’t even want to engage with them. We told them that we meet everyday at 8pm at Mashtots Park, if you want to join this public discussion, you are welcome to come. To their credit they did come. And I think it was a little bit of a PR stunt.

*Q8*

Yes, I do see new leadership. The “leaders” I met in 2010 are still active. But you see a new generation also learning from them and picking up. Also, another value of this revolution is that there are no leaders. We’re all leaders and we’re all followers. Again that is about taking that responsibility on. In Armenia another part of the problem is that everyone wants to be a leader, so the average citizen in Armenia says “it’s the leader’s problem, its not mine”. So the movement is very conscious of not using the word ‘leader’, its almost a taboo word. But there is a new generation of activists and organisers.

*Q9*

It’s a little hard for me to have a sense of what the tendency for that is because I am not from here. For the most part, I see the police force in Armenia as basically western trained. Like for example, during the inauguration protest, which is not part of this movement but just as an example the police deployment looked just like Washington DC. The methods they were using weren’t aggressive at all, they were rattling their shield, they were out in number, you could tell, they were told ‘do not engage with the crowd’. You could see the impact of the Western training that has been done by OSCE.

*Q10*

They were present at the 100 dram movement, I questioned to what extent they are an autonomous force? I think it behooves the administration to sort of support the growth of those kind of things. It’s the same thing they did against LGBT activists.

*Q11*

I mean a lot of the people who organised Occupy Wall Street were a lot of the same people I used to organise with in [NAME] and they are good friends of mine. So I have been in personal contact with them. We’ve translated some of the resources that they’ve come up with for use here. It’s not quite where it needs to be. But on Saturday there was a conference Skype call with activists from Brazil and the activist here. That was the sort of first step. There wasn’t much interest in it here, but little by little efforts are being made.

*Q12*I don’t see that discourse explicitly, but my personal opinion is that people are conscious of that issue. Even me personally I am always worried that I don’t want to overstep what I’m doing. [DELETED PERSONAL REFERENCES] So me personally I try as much as possible to be conscious of that.

*Q13*

Democracy to means that people make decisions to the degree that it effects them. So sort of self-management, but it doesn’t mean everyone gets to vote on what colour my socks should be. But on things that affect the public, then the public should be able to decide. But I should say we’re not talking about democracy. It’s like before you even get to democracy there are things that need to be addressed and that is what we are trying to address. First of all, the change in values within society. More specifically, the change of the entire social structure in Armenia and a big part of that is breaking the grip of the oligarchy.

We’re practicing democracy, everyday at Mashtots Park with our group we have a General Assembly and everyone is free to speak and we make decisions based on consensus. So we practice democracy. But we are not here to make the next elections legitimate.

*Q14*

Yes, it comes back to that consciousness of not having leaders.

*Q15*

Gender-wise it is fairly equal. There are a lot of strong women involved and leading this thing. But in terms of class, I am not so sure. As one of the only diasporans that does feel different.

*Q16*

Absolutely, we don’t talk about democracy, but we talk about justice and the rule of law and that is one of the foundations of things. The activists make a point to use the crosswalk. And for me, having lived in LA and London, I generally don’t use crosswalks, they told me “Why are you supporting the environment of impunity by not using the crosswalk?” so it is about the rule of law and justice.

*Q17*

We demand it from anyone. We demand it from ourselves. The point of this movement is to demand from ourselves what a citizen should demand. To make sure we become citizens of this country and not subjects.

*Q18*

Um, I don’t really hear it talked about. It’s not up there with solidarity and self-organization. But when it came to the 100 Dram movement, that was talking about the dignity of the transport system. And we demand a to be treated as dignified citizens. You [names] can’t make a decision on Wednesday and put it into effect on Saturday after you’ve told us in your campaign speech two months prior that you aren’t going to do that. I see that as dignity.

*Q19*

Everyone feel indignant, but they don’t use that discourse.

*Q20*

Neoliberalism in Armenia manifests itself in a slightly different way than traditionally. The private interest is also your oligarch interest which translates into political power which translates into state power. So for example they’ve just put up red lines all over the city and starting in September there is going to be a system for metered parking. And we had a discussion about that a couple of days ago and the competing discussions around that were whether the public space which is the street, should have any private gains at all? Should it be free or paid? A lot of people were saying it doesn’t matter if the money goes to a private entity or the state, because it all goes into the same pocket. And there isn’t consensus around that, the opposing view is that the money needs to go to the city budget because the city budget is our budget and we can demand accountability and transparency. People are demanding things from the state, they want it to function as a state. That is the ultimate thing. That is why there is so much focus on rule of law. Because when there is proper rule of law, the state functions as a state and ‘yerkiry yerkir a tarnum’ [the country becomes a proper country].

END