

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BELONGING: NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES IN THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY OF BERLIN

ANNA HARUTYUNYAN
harutyunyan_anna@yahoo.com

*"Ai mard, inch karevor a ourdeghits es,
karevore` bolors hai enq"¹
"Tsnoghqd urdeghits e?"²*

INTRODUCTION

You enter the Armenian community and the first question asked to you is "Hai es?"³ immediately followed by the question "Ur deghits es?"⁴ pronounced with a livelier curiosity than the tone of the first question. With the second question is expected to begin an interesting dialogue about who you are, where you come from and what you represent, knowledge of which helps to construct the first image of you. "Ah, you are from Armenia?" re-asks a sweet old lady with an Iranian-Armenian accent. "Yes, but my ancestors were from Kars and Van, and they survived the Genocide by fleeing to Tehran", you answer. "So, you are almost Parskahay?"⁵ replies she softly smiling with the expectation of a positive answer from you....

Armenians in the Diaspora are diverse in many ways. While holding on to a strong Armenian ethnicity, at the same time they represent a hybrid diversity of cultures accumulated and brought with them to their communities from different places of migration and re-migration. This paper talks about one Diaspora community, the Armenian Community of Berlin, and the processes of identity negotiation driven by the internal cultural diversity of its members.

The aim of this paper is to question the classic understanding of the Armenian Diaspora as a homogeneous entity with a fixed identity, common memory, shared self-imagination and imagination of the Diaspora among its members.

One of those "commonly shared" aspects of the Armenian Diaspora is the issue of belonging, which, as this paper argues, often remains overused, uncontested, undertheorised and taken for granted in scholarly and public discourses on the Diaspora.⁶ This paper discusses the issue of belonging as a part of cultural identity and by focusing on Berlin

Armenians shows how *belonging to a place* is manifested and negotiated in one community space.

Quite often the Diaspora-homeland relationship is seen from the perspective of the so called Solar System,⁷ where Diaspora is viewed as a “periphery” connected and belonging to one “Center”, The Homeland. One of the criteria of the classic definition of the Diaspora is “the group of people being dispersed from that original Center to at least two peripheral places”⁸ who maintains the sense of belonging to the homeland along with a ‘homing desire’, a myth of return to the Homeland.⁹ In this regard, a critique to the classic theory of the Diaspora is that it draws attention to the *dispersal of people from the Center* without challenging the notion of The Center and questioning how life before the migration was: how and where did people live? And, what did they take with them through the journeys of migration? What is more, for many Armenians, as in the case of Berlin Armenians, “the journey” may become “multiple journeys”. They migrated and re-migrated, dispersed and re-dispersed from different centers to many destinations. In that respect, the paper refers to the definition of the Diaspora as “multiple complicated processes of positioning in relation to a sense of belonging vis-à-vis the creation of psychic, symbolic, and material communities and “home(s)” in the sites of settlement”.¹⁰

One of the main concepts used in the paper is *cultural diversity*. By cultural diversity the paper means the cultural baggage that, apart from their strong Armenian ethnic identity, the community members have brought with them from the countries of migration. By country of migration is meant the country from which the community members migrated to Germany: in the case of Berlin these are mainly Turkey, Iran, Lebanon and Armenia.

The issue of *belonging* is another cornerstone concept for the paper. According to Floya Anthias, belonging denominates how people feel about their location in the social world or how they define their attachment to that world. Anthias asserts that the sense of being located or attached is constructed by social and emotional bonds, as well as by the identifications and membership that the person has in relation to given group(s) or people (Anthias, 2006). On one hand, it is prompted by a range of places, locales, experiences, memories and identities. On the other hand, the sense of belonging is a multi-dimensional and, as many postmodernist scholars of Diaspora studies call it, hybrid construction. The dimensions of belonging can be traced from global and public places, locales and identities to more local and intimate ones, which cross, merge and overlap. Therefore, a single Diaspora community, like the Berlin Armenian community,

becomes a territory where all these overlapping and hybrid dimensions of belonging are brought, shown and contested.

Another important concept used in the paper is the *identity negotiation*, which is understood as a process of manifestation, contestation and compromise between difference and sameness, Armenian ethnicity and numerous cultural identities, between emotional and political, private and public, global and local dimensions of belonging.

The paper is also using the concept of *space* to define the community center, the insitution, where a number of Berlin Armenians gather, meet and get to know each other. The concept of *space* is used for the physical place of the community center (the community venue), which assembles and recreates the symbolical geography or map of all those mental places that the community members have brought with them from their countries of (re-)migration.

This paper is targeting "Hay Dun" (Armenian House) of the Berlin Armenian Church Community¹¹, where up to 80-100 people (members and non-members) come for different cultural, educational, religious and other purposes. The target group of the paper are both members and non-members of the community. The paper is based on the data of one and a half years of field work and includes citations from 15 interviews. The average age of the interviewees, who are mostly first generation migrants to Germany, is 40 years, and they represent a very distinctive range of social, educational and cultural background.

This paper not only talks about manifestations and negotiations of individual experiences, but also tackles the collective identity of the community space and the linkage of the individual and the collective identities.

The Berlin "Hay Dun" is unique in the range of people who gather there. It consists of Turkish, Iranian, Lebanese and Armenia Armenians. The Armenian Community of Berlin Center was established in 1966,¹² when many ethnic Armenians arrived in Germany from Turkey in the throngs of Turkish labor migrants. Those Turkish Armenians and their descendants constitute the core of today's communities in many cities of Germany. At the end of the 1970s, the Armenian communities in Germany, among them the Berlin one, were enlarged by the arrival of Iranian and Lebanese Armenians¹³ and were followed by constant flows of post-Soviet Armenians in the 1990s.

PUBLIC HOMELAND VS. EMOTIONAL PLACES

It is important to discuss what role the concept of "Homeland" plays for the diverse Armenians. The fieldwork in the Armenian community of

Berlin has shown that there is a division between the concepts “Homeland” and *places*, those locations where the community members were born, raised and spent significant periods of their lives before coming to Germany. The “Homeland” is more often referred to in the singular and denotes the Republic of Armenia in contrast to the *places* of memories, of childhood, of their life experiences in Iran, Turkey and Lebanon before migration to Germany.

The Homeland or the Republic of Armenia

Susan Pattie in her article “New Homeland for Old Diaspora” mentions that “until recently there has been no center-periphery to Armenian life. The state of Armenia, under Soviet rule until 1991, was not acknowledged by all as “the” or even “a” homeland”.¹⁴ With time the center-periphery to Armenian life becomes more visible thanks to the permanent construction of the image of one unified Homeland, which is the Republic of Armenia, and Berlin Armenian community is an illustration of this process.

There is a certain shift in imagination in what and where the real Homeland is for many Diaspora Armenians now. Thus, Tölölyan’s statement that “with the passage of time, the inherent importance of territory was weakened, which in turn resulted in an increased value of the homeland as an imagined and symbolic space, in the identity-making process of the diasporas”¹⁵ can now already be considered as a part of the history of Diaspora experiences. The real presence of a territory has a renewed importance for Armenians.

The term “Haireniq” (“Homeland” in Armenian) and its image becomes for the diverse Diaspora Armenians in the community more nationalized and at the same time more politicized. Speaking about “Haireniq,” community members are speaking about the Republic of Armenia, and by talking about Armenia, they underline the political, economic and historical developments of Armenia as a state and as a society.

“Our Homeland is today’s Armenia. We need to build a new Homeland. We have been dreaming of having a nation-state of Armenians so long” [N.G, community member, Berlin, November, 2007]

“I am very worried about what is going on in Armenia in political terms and concerning the coming elections.” [J.K., community member, Berlin, November, 2007]

Conversations about the Republic of Armenia show not only their interest towards the country but also their knowledge about the Homeland.

Armenia is a concrete and tangible place, which finally enables people to feel the reality of the existence of a long-expected imagined "Haireniq".

On the other hand, the term "Homeland" becomes more public and a significant part of the community's collective identity. Being in the community requires the community member to talk about the Homeland or the Republic of Armenia and show his/her connectedness to it. This strengthens the abovementioned solar system of Diaspora – the Homeland (e.g. Armenia) relationships. It can be observed in cultural events organized by different Diaspora Armenians who, having visited Armenia, show films and photos, share impressions and tell stories about how interesting the new Homeland is.

Emotional Places

Entering the community space and interacting with people, with their experiences and feelings, and hearing their life histories, one can understand there is something beyond the national, public, political and tangible Homeland for the Diaspora Armenians. There is an intimate and emotional attachment to a place connected with their personal and family (hi-)stories of life before Germany. *That is the sense of belonging to places where they come from.* Coming, for instance, from Anatolian cities, Istanbul or Tehran, they feel themselves emotionally attached and intimately belonging to that geography. One important point to take into account is that for every member of the community, independently from the cultural, social and other backgrounds, it is of utmost importance to represent his/her own *belonging to a place*. *"There are different Armenians in the community; they all represent very different places."* You can often hear this sentence during the interviews.

"Belonging to a place" is taken as an alternative to the "Homeland". First of all, there is the place of their birth and childhood as well as their maturity. The memory of Polis/Istanbul, Musaler/Vakifli, Dikranagerd/Diarberkir, Kharpert/Elazig, Adana, Van, Beirut, Tehran, Urmia, Isfahan is still alive, and it continues in family stories from one generation to another. Those family or personal memories sparkle during the interviews, mentally taking the speakers to the places which might seem "insignificant", yet, raise questions: what does yesterday's and today's Turkey or other country of immigration mean for today's Armenians living in Germany? And, should we take these emotions into consideration while researching their place in today's community space?

"This is a book on Armenian churches in Istanbul", Tikin¹⁶
Sargisian, a Turkish Armenian woman tells me, "Wait a second, I will find my Church when I was a little girl.. oh, this

is the one. Have a look at its doors, walls. Is it not beautiful? I helped the priest when I was a little girl... I would be very happy to take you to Polis to show you the city, the Grand Bazar, the Armenian community, my Church. Would you like to come?..." [E.S., community member, Berlin, November 2007]

"You know, if not for the Iranian revolution, I would never have left Iran", says an Iranian Armenian woman in the interview [V., Community Member, Berlin, April, 2007]

"I was in Armenia a few years ago. I was trying to understand what Armenia means for me. I had been looking for the "truth" many years. Surely, before going to Armenia I had a fear of disappointment. You know, it is like being in love with someone you never met. So, I went to see my "beloved" I had never known before. I met "him". I would not say I was disappointed with Armenia. But, I understood our paths are different. I am very happy it exists, but my heart is somewhere else.... Last year I was in Beirut, and I cried like a little girl. I missed it so much. Now I know that that is where my Armenian home is" [G.T., Berlin, October 2007]

First of all, those places from people's micro histories have become different *lieux de memoire*, to use Pierre Nora's term,¹⁷ which constitute their today's cultural memory. The cultural memory, as Assmann notes, is called up to ensure cultural continuity through memory, culture and relation to the shared past.¹⁸ In the case of the Berlin Armenians, in spite of their strong ethnic consciousness, there are different "cultural continuities" as people have different memories and attachments to different places. Moreover, those places are not mapping just the locations of the Armenian churches, monuments, schools and community centers. They themselves have turned into diverse Armenian mileux. For my Lebanese Armenian interviewee, Beirut is not only the Mesrobian high school, but it is also the whole of Bourj Hamoud, Arax Street and other Armenian places, where a whole Armenian environment has been created and developed.

Secondly, detaching the terms Homeland and *places* from their memories gives individuals more space for self-expression in front of fellow Armenians: in other words, to reveal who they are in a more specific way and to tell about their *own* story. It gives a sort of a stance,

standpoint, which enables them to have their own position in the community, to be somehow “original” or “different” among their own people. People not only identify themselves as Armenians generally and Turkish, Lebanese, Iranian or Armenian Armenians particularly, but they go further to the “origin,” remembering the exact place where they come from: there are Polsahay, Musalerci, Tehrantsi, Kharpertsi and other Armenians.

WHERE DOES THE COMMUNITY SPACE “BELONG”?

In order to understand how community members manifest and negotiate their belonging to the Homeland and to those emotional places, it is also important to ask what role the community space itself plays in those processes nowadays.

Avtar Brah in her book *Cartographies of Diasporas*¹⁹ inserts the term “Diaspora space”, which she explains as a place where “multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed”. Brah argues that this is a space where boundaries of inclusion and exclusion meet, where belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ are contested (Brah, 1996). The Berlin Armenian community is not a mere Diaspora space only, where different identities are brought and contested. This is a multi-layered space which has its own agency and is able to influence the contestation of identities of the members from within. It carries the collective identity of the community, which is publicly represented by and, if needed, transformed by the community leadership. This collective identity of the community space can be constructed and influenced through the connection and interaction with the Homeland (Republic of Armenia), as well as through the national (other communities in Germany) and transnational (other communities at the European or even larger level) network.

Besides, the interior design, decorations and furnishing play a big role in the construction of the image of the Homeland. The whole interior of the community center is filled with portrayals of the Republic of Armenia. When entering the main room of the community center, one sees on the wall a big Armenian flag and embroidered map of the Republic of Armenia with Nagorno Karabakh, a painting of Khor Virap with Mount Ararat behind, and the portrait of Garegin II, His Holiness, the Catholicos of All Armenians. Those elements on the interior walls, put there a few years ago, have been an important transformation in the symbolic “belonging” of the Berlin community: they were designed and built up with the efforts of the Turkish Armenians, and further contributed to by Iranian and Lebanese Armenians, since recently the community center has

begun to be a space nurturing the centrality of the new Homeland, the Republic of Armenia. In the Berlin Community the presence of the Armenian Apostolic Church plays an important role in leading and making a shift in the belonging of the community space (i.e. from Turkish Armenian to Armenia Armenian), as well as in affecting the internal environment of the community. The interior decor is not only a representation of the Armenian Church and Armenia, but also it represents Armenia as the Homeland and as the Center. The Church representative, has been continuously attracting Armenia Armenians, especially young *Hayastantsis*,²⁰ to the community space for different cultural and educational programs. A number of young Armenia Armenians play a significant role in the community life by conducting educational and cultural programs, such as weekly lessons of the Armenian language, dance, performances in different events, etc.

Besides, more students, intellectual and artistic elite are coming from Armenia to the Berlin community. Some of them enter the community not only as attendees of different events, but already as members of the communities. More connection is established with the Republic of Armenia through people's travel, satellite TV, and internet; also more Eastern Armenian can be heard in the community and more news from Armenia is discussed within the community.

By bringing Armenia to the public space of the community with the slogan "Bolors el hay enq. Mi haireniq unenq, mi Hayastan" (We all are Armenians. We have one Fatherland, one Armenia.) and, hence, strengthening the centrality and veracity of the new Homeland for the Berlin Armenians through different visual, musical, informative and other elements, the community space attempts to bring the cultural differences among community members into one homogenous stance.

Yet, negotiating their belonging to different places can be considered as a response to this homogenization and an alternative way of manifesting their cultural diversity. Also, it should be mentioned that negotiating their belongingness has a tendency to be a situational tool. As Alba says, "it is not only that individuals can choose to identify or not, and choose also precisely which elements in an ancestry mixture to emphasize and how important and ethnic identity should be for them, but they also have a wide latitude of choice when it comes to the manifestations or expressions of ethnicity".²¹ The following sections of the paper will discuss how these patterns of negotiation of belongingness take place in the Armenian Community of Berlin.

MANIFESTING AND NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES IN THE COMMUNITY SPACE

Negotiation of the diverse identities in the community space means bringing the internal diversity to a compromise between being *Armenian* and being a *different Armenian*. By negotiating their diverse cultural identities, Berlin community members show how different they are by the language they speak, the traditions they follow, and the diverse life histories they have from before migration to Germany. But, at the same time, along with negotiating *difference* they also negotiate *sameness*. In what follows I explore different patterns of negotiation of belongingness among different Armenians.

“We Are One of You”: Negotiating Sameness

The first pattern, which I entitled “we are one of you,” is the negotiation of a *common identity*: for Diaspora Armenians it is striving to be a part of the Homeland; for Armenia Armenians it is being a part of the Diaspora.

“Armenia was a beautiful dream for us, the Diaspora, for a very long time. Now we have Armenia, and visiting Armenia is like the end of that dream, - a Lebanese Armenian tells me - We (Diaspora Armenians) wish to be closer to you, to help you to build a new Armenia, to be a part of that reality, and we would like to show that we are one of you” [N.G., Berlin, December 2007]

The Diaspora Armenian wishes to be “one of you.” He shows his knowledge, emotional interest and recognition of the existence of his dream-come-true and manifests his relationship and closeness to the new Homeland with me, an Armenia Armenian. Interestingly, the reference to and interest towards the Republic of Armenia is particularly articulated by a Diaspora Armenian in front of an Armenia Armenian.

Tikin Sargisian is a Turkish Armenian married to a German. She always tries to attend events organized at both community centers in Berlin. In 2007 she and her husband, together with another Armenian couple from the community, visited Armenia. She was overwhelmed by their trip and now she is already planning another trip to Armenia next summer:

“Armenia is so beautiful. We went everywhere there last summer, and not only in Yerevan. We liked it very much. We will travel to Armenia every year, on and on” [E.S., community member, December 2007]

In Armenia Tikin Sargisian's husband made a video of sightseeing places in Yerevan and Armenia. When they were back in Berlin, they organized an evening in the Cultural Community to screen the video. The film had been made with a regular video camera, though edited with music and visual effects. The screening was a great success in the Cultural Community; it was attended by many community members. Shortly after that, the Church Community members asked Tikin Sargisian to repeat the screening of the film about Armenia in their community center.

On the other hand, the community space is attended not only by the Diaspora Armenians, but also Armenia Armenians, *Hayastantsis*. For this part of the community the notion of Homeland is uncontestable: wherever they are, whatever citizenship they have, they remain *Hayastantsi*, which literary means "Armenian" belonging to the Republic of Armenia. For Armenians from Armenia both *Homeland* and *Belonging to a Place* are intertwined. The Community is imagined as a point of linkage with the Homeland. Nevertheless, both for most of the *Hayastantsis* and for Diaspora Armenians, it is an accepted opinion that the Community space is supposed to serve the Diaspora Armenians first of all.

"You will return home to Armenia sooner or later. But, the community will stay; so will we" [A.B., community young member, Berlin, May 2007]

"Armenia Armenians do not come here (i.e. Community) as they have Armenia. This little place is needed by the Diaspora Armenian since they did not have a homeland, and it is like a substitute for a homeland." [S.B., community member, Berlin, April 2007]

"But, tell me as a specialist of Diaspora, do you really think Armenia Armenians can ever become Diaspora?" [an Armenia Armenian community member, November 2007]

"Why do you [Armenia Armenians] want to be a Diaspora? It is a painful experience. Besides, you will not be able to be so, since you always had Armenia" (R.M., community attendee, Berlin, November 2007)

In spite of being decorated with numerous elements representing the Republic of Armenia, the community remains a Diaspora space. In other words, the community space has been transformed into Armenia Armenian in form, yet, stays mostly Diaspora Armenian in content.

Nevertheless, Armenia Armenians attempt entering that space and negotiate their “becoming a Diaspora”. In a seminar focused on the theory of Diaspora, conducted by this author in the community in November 2007, one of the attention grabbing aspects of the discussion after the lecture was the debate among Armenia Armenians on the question “where is your Homeland?” held in front of the rest of the community. One of the Armenia Armenians asked me:

“You were talking about homeland in the theory of diaspora. Where is your own Homeland?”

“As a person born and raised up there and as a current citizen of that country, my homeland is the Republic of Armenia...”, I replied.

The woman did not wait until I ended, “How come only Republic of Armenia?”, and turning to the audience she said with enthusiasm, “What about Van, Mush, Ardahan²², the rest of Western Armenia, and finally Artsakh²³? That is also our Homeland! How can you divide it?”, which was enthusiastically supported by a number of Armenia Armenians.

The Diaspora Armenians display their closeness and being-a-part of the new Homeland, while Armenia Armenians contest membership in the Diaspora space by adopting and articulating experiences of Diaspora Armenians. It is also essential to mention that, interestingly, similar discussions between two Armenia Armenians would take place in front of the Diaspora Community audience.

For both Diaspora and Armenia Armenians negotiation of common identities and the fact of being a part of each other gives them a chance to possess the whole Armenian “ethnic capital” and obtain membership in a bigger collectivity.

NEGOTIATING A DIFFERENT ARMENIANNES

Negotiation means also recognition of the other’s difference by claiming they are themselves *the Other* and manifesting their cultural knowledge of being a Turkish Armenian, Iranian Armenian, Lebanese Armenian, etc.

One of the examples of the Turkish Armenian identity manifestation and negotiation is related to the memory and commemoration of Hrant Dink²⁴ in Berlin. Hrant Dink had always been an advocate for Turkish Armenians both in Turkey and in the Diaspora. Since Dink’s assassination in January 2007, the Berlin Armenian Community, whose core is composed of Turkish Armenians, has been raising and highlighting a number of topics related to Armenians in Turkey.

“Hrant Dink was making us (Turkish Armenians) visible. He was talking to us not only about the past, but the present first of all. He was saying that there are Armenians in Turkey... Turkish Armenians and they have their own Armenian realities” [J.C., Community member, Berlin, November 2007]

A discussion started about the memory and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide along with a number of other topics related to Turkish Armenians in particular and Turkey in general, such as, current minority issues of Turkey, the urgency of protection of the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey, etc. Those topics are thus, establishing a bridge between the past and present of Armenians and Turks. Moreover, they become grounds for manifestation of identities among Turkish Armenians and the rest in the community. The process of connecting the past with the present means making the Turkish Armenian cultural content more visible in the community, giving people a larger and, what is more important, a more open space to talk about their lives before migration to Germany, which has been almost hidden until recently.

“Many Turkish Armenians do not speak Armenian, but it is because they were not allowed to do so.... I did not have a childhood like all other (Turkish) kids. I never played in the yard like normal children. In Anatolia we grew up closed in the (Armenian) family. I was born already a grown up person.... Turkish Armenians used to live in very severe conditions in Turkey unlike other Armenians. Nevertheless we managed to preserve our Armenianness, and this is why we are more Armenian than anybody else.” [E.S., community member, Berlin, November 2007].

For Armenians from Lebanon maintaining Lebanese Armenian identity is connected with education, religious traditions and possession of ethnic knowledge (the language, history and culture). In a seminar on the history and future of the Community, where community members were disputing the question how to attract young people to the community, how to make them interested in learning the Armenian language and participating in community activities, one of the leading community members said:

“To be Armenian in Lebanon meant first of all to know the Armenian language and history, to know religious traditions, to know the Bible in Armenian. There was nobody who did not know the Armenian language. To be Armenian meant to have the knowledge. Unfortunately, not all Armenian Diaspora

communities followed the same road as the Lebanese Diaspora. Lebanese Armenians are a bit different in that respect" [S.A., a community leader, Berlin, March 2007]

or, a statement in an interview:

"There is a wrong idea and lack of knowledge about what Armenian means. In Lebanon in Mesrobian school in Beirut the first thing we learnt was the sense of loving and knowing what Armenian means" [N.G., Berlin, December 2007]

The manifestation of *Armenian Otherness* has different aspects: on the one hand people manifest their being Armenian with difference in origin; on the other hand, while manifesting being another type of Armenian, they are stressing their "pure" Armenianness. Manifesting the difference among community members, in the meantime, they contest the question of who preserved "*true Armenianness*".

And finally, manifestation and negotiation of people's belonging to different places is also held to manifest the value and significance of the internal diversity:

"I would be very happy if there were groups of Musaler or Marash or Ispahan people who would hold different seminars or cultural events to represent their cultural backgrounds. For instance, let Musaler people talk in their dialect and show the others their own heritage. Let Iranian Armenians talk about their cultural heritage. We should value that diversity" [V.B., community member, Berlin, April 2007].

CONCLUSION

This paper draws attention to the importance of observation of a Diaspora Community within the community center. The community center becomes a place where people gather, meet and manifest their cultural identities in front of and to each other. The Berlin Armenian Church community space is a place of cultural diversities. Observing those diversities against the background of the community space gives us a wider understanding of the experiences, memories and imaginations of different Armenians coming from diverse places. Being different, but wishing to be similar in the Diaspora community and the Homeland, and, on the contrary, holding to one ethnic identity and aspiring to show their original difference are the processes which this paper has aimed to analyze. The focus of this analysis is the issue of belonging: how do different Armenians imagine their belonging to The Homeland? Who belongs to the

Diaspora? How do they imagine the places where they have come from? Do they feel a belonging to those places? And shall we take these individual emotions into account while researching the Diaspora community?

Recently the Homeland has become a public and political Center and a concrete and tangible place, the centrality of which is led and promoted by the leadership of the community, including the Armenian Apostolic Church's representation in the community. Hence, the Solar System becomes strengthened, and Armenia receives the position of The Center.

On the other hand, on the more local and intimate level, the community members manifest their emotional attachments to those places where they were born, lived a considerable part of their lives and feel a belonging.

Seeing these different perspectives in one community space, one can observe a permanent circle of negotiation of identities. People negotiate their common identity and shared membership in the Homeland and in the global Diaspora space, as well as their individual imaginations of what "Armenian" means from the point of Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish or Armenia Armenians.

This negotiation also helps them to be more visible in the community space, to tell and to locate their own specific story in the common history of the community, to be somehow more important and attractive to their group of fellow Armenians, who are similar, but different at the same time. Negotiation of identities from the position of "where I come from" becomes very individual and very emotional. And every time, after having challenged their diversities in the community, one of them would definitely say: "Listen, it does not matter at all where you come from; we are all Armenians" and many others would confirm that statement. But, it would take only a short while until one would hear again: "Where are your parents from?"

ENDNOTES

¹ "Listen, it does not matter at all where you come from, we are all Armenians," taken from fieldwork notes, Berlin 2007.

² "Where are your parents from?", taken from fieldwork notes, Berlin, 2007.

³ "Are you Armenian?", translated from Armenian.

⁴ "Where are you from?", translated from Armenian.

⁵ Iranian Armenian, translated from Armenian.

⁶ Floya Anthias, "Belongings in a Globalising and Unequal World: Rethinking Translocations", in Yuval Davis et al, *Situating Contemporary Politics of Belonging*, London: Sage, 2006.

- ⁷ André Levy, "A Community that is Both a Center and a Diaspora: Jews in Late Twentieth Century Morocco," in *Homelands and Diasporas. Holy Lands and Other Places*, A. Levy and A. Weingrod (ed.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 69-96.
- ⁸ William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," in *Diaspora* 1(1), 1991, pp. 83-99.
- ⁹ Steven Vertovec, "Three Meanings of Diaspora: Exemplified Among South Asian Religions," In *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 7(2), 1999.
- ¹⁰ Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, J. Rutherford (ed.), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-37.
- ¹¹ Currently there are two Armenian registered community organizations, which carry the same name "Hay Dun" or "Armenian House" in Berlin. The first one, the Armenian Church and Cultural Community (referred to as "Church Community" in the text), is the hero of this paper. The Community is under the "patronage" of the Armenian Apostolic Church Diocese headquartered in Koeln. The other one, officially entitled "The Armenian Community of Berlin" (referred to as "Cultural Community" in the text), is a part of the Central Council of Armenians located in Frankfurt on Main.
- ¹² The first Armenian Community of Berlin was registered in 1923 by the genocide survivors and a number of students, as well as enlarged after WWII by the Prisoners of War, who soon re-moved from Germany to other countries, mostly to the USA. The Community association of 1923 was closed in 1955 and reopened in 1966.
- ¹³ Most of them escaped political instability in their countries.
- ¹⁴ Susan Pattie, "New Homeland for an Old Diaspora," in Levy and Weingrod.
- ¹⁵ Khatchig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment," *Diaspora* 5(1), 1996, pp. 3-36.
- ¹⁶ *Missis* in Armenian.
- ¹⁷ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", in *Representations*, No. 26 (Spring), *Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory*, University of California: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 7-24.
- ¹⁸ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in Frühen Hochkulturen*, München: Beck, 1992.
- ¹⁹ Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, border and transnational identities," in *Cartographies of Diasporas. Contesting Identities*, London, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 178-211.
- ²⁰ Armenians from Armenia, translated from Armenian.
- ²¹ Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- ²² Listing a number of cities from today's Eastern Turkey, territories where Armenians used to live before the Genocide organized by the Government of the Young Turks in 1915-1917.
- ²³ Armenian name of the Nagorno Karabakh.
- ²⁴ Hrant Dink was a Turkish journalist of Armenian origin, editor-in-chief of the *Agos* bilingual (Armenian and Turkish) weekly in Istanbul. Dink was well known not only among the Armenian minority of Turkey, but also in the whole of Turkish society for advocating Turkish-Armenian reconciliation, as well as minority rights in Turkey. He criticised Turkey's official politics concerning the question of the Armenian Genocide. Also, he was critical towards the Armenian Diaspora's international campaign for Genocide recognition. On January 19, 2007 Hrant Dink was assassinated by Turkish nationalists.

**ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ԱՅԼԱԶԱՆՈՒԹԻՒՆ ԵՒ ՊԱՏԿԱՆԵԼԻՈՒԹԻՒՆ
ԻՆՔՆՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐՈՒ ԱՐԾԱՐԾՈՒՄԸ ՊԵՐԼԻՆԻ ՀԱՅ ՀԱՄԱՅՆՔԻՆ ՄԷՋ
(Ամփոփում)**

ԱՆՆԱ ՅԱՐՈՒԹԻՒՆ ԵԱՆ

Յօդուածը կը քննարկէ պերլինահայ համայնքի «Հայ Տուն» համայնքային կեդրոնին մէջ առաջին անգամ իրար հանդիպող հայերու հաղորդակցութիւնը եւ թէ ինչպէս առաջին իսկ այդ խօսակցութեամբ կը սկսին հայկական ինքնութիւններ գոյացուիլ ու դրսեւորուիլ գրուցակիցներուն միջեւ:

Առաջին իսկ ուղղուող հարցումը կ'ըլլայ «ուրկէ ես»ը, որուն պատասխանը հայկական որոշ ինքնութեան մը հասկացութիւնը կը յառաջացնէ, նկատի առնելով անձին ծննդավայրին մէջ հայկական ինքնութեան բնոյթն ու խորքը: Ապա հարցում-պատասխանները կը ծաւալին ու տակաւ կը կազմուին տուեալ ինքնութեան առնչուող այլեայլ համոզումներ, հասկացութիւններ:

Հեղինակը կը հաւաստէ որ այս հարց-պատասխանները կը դրսեւորեն հաղորդակցութեան իւրայատուկ միջոց մը, որով անձերը իրենք զիրենք կը տեղաւորեն եւ կը տեղաւորուին համայնքի ընդհանուր խճանկարին մէջ: Ապա կը յառաջանան խօսակցութիւններ հայկական ինքնութեան սահմանումներուն, Սփիւռք հասկացութեան, հայրենիք ըմբռնումին եւ հոն վերադառնալու հարցերուն շուրջ, ուր արեւմտահայ-սփիւռքահայը եւ հայաստանցի-սփիւռքահայը հակառակ առկայ տարբերութիւններու կ'եզրակացնեն թէ ի վերջոյ բոլորն ալ եկած են մէկ տեղէ՝ Հայաստանէն՝ ժամանակային տարբերութիւն ունեցող ուղիով մը, եւ թէ իրենք կը դառնան ծայրամասերը Հայաստան կեդրոնին: