



CIVIL SOCIETY, DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN ARMENIA

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I am solely responsible for the content of this report and the views expressed are my own and do not in any way represent the views or the official position or policy of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation or the London School of Economics.

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Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the recent rise of social mobilisations by civil society groups around environmental issues in Armenia. It particularly focuses on civil society campaigns against mining in the country. Since 2000, mining has been a direction of priority for Armenia's economic development and by 2011, mining had become one of the main sectors of the Armenian economy, accounting for over half of the country's exports. Despite the reported production and revenue gains, the benefits of mining operations to Armenia's socio-economic development remain unclear. Instead, there is ample evidence that social exclusion, inequality and emigration persist and 35% of Armenians continue to live under the poverty line.

Through an examination of recent environmental activism in Armenia (2007-present), this report highlights the achievements as well as the challenges and obstacles facing civil society in Armenia. The objective of this report is to contribute to on-going debates within Armenia and in diaspora communities around the globe about mining in Armenia, but also about the wider socio-economic and political developments in the country.

The report addresses the following questions:

1. What factors have led to the rise of the civic initiatives in Armenia in the past 5 years? And what are environmental civic initiatives trying to achieve?
2. What direct and indirect impacts have environmental civic initiatives had in Armenia?
3. What lessons can be learned from global experience?

Until recently, Armenia, similar to many other post-socialist countries, has had a rather weak civil society characterised by high levels of anomie, apathy and cynicism. Civic initiatives, which began to emerge in 2007 and expanded in larger numbers in 2010-2011, have achieved important, albeit small victories on a diverse set of issues ranging from legislation on maternity pay to the preservation of historical buildings and urban green spaces. Until 2012, in the absence of political and policy level discussions, civil society activists, working through civic initiatives and formal, professionalised NGOs, played a key role in raising awareness about and campaigning against the potential dangers

posed by mining to the environment, public health and sustainable development in the country.

Despite these achievements, much remains to be done if a broader segment of the population is to be engaged. Civic initiatives face a gargantuan and highly unequal struggle in their campaign against the growth and expansion of mining in Armenia. But there are serious obstacles facing civil society organisations and activists in their efforts to ensure greater accountability, participation and transparency in policy making processes. It is unlikely that activists working in civic initiatives alone will be able to achieve this without scaling up their efforts and broadening participation and engagement. The latter in particular will not be easy, as civil society groups remain concentrated in Yerevan and they lack access to the mainstream media, in particular, television coverage. Moreover, their efforts are exacerbated by the apathy and fear existing in many communities across Armenia that involvement in civic activism may lead to negative repercussions including loss of employment, etc.

Since mining projects exist around the world, the report also situates the developments in Armenia within the broader global context in order to draw on lessons learned.

The report concludes that in Armenia, more robust environmental governance; greater accountability, transparency and participation in decision making; and the strengthening or reform of laws and regulatory frameworks to ensure that the interests of corporations and economic elites (i.e., oligarchs) are not placed above those of the people and the environment. These changes are required if the country is to prosper and embark on a path towards sustainable economic growth and development. To this end, it is important to spark a public debate to consider the real costs and benefits of mining, not just for a narrow set of elites and corporations, but for the country as a whole.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, mining has been a priority direction for Armenia's economic development and by 2011, mining had become one of the main sectors of the Armenian economy, accounting for over half of the country's exports (Armenian Development Agency 2011). The Government of Armenia has prioritised mining in order to promote economic growth and development and has made Armenia a "mining friendly country" (ADA 2011). There are currently 670 solid minerals mines, including 30¹ metal mines in Armenia (Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2013). While mining is described by the Armenian Government as a "key contributor to the national economy" (Ministry of Energy and Armenian Development Agency, 2011) and there are reports that there has been "significant production and revenue gains" from mining (Mining Journal, 2011, 5), there is ample evidence that social exclusion, inequality and emigration persist and are increasing in Armenia (Asbarez, 2013, Grigoryan, 2013, Harutunyan, 2013, Policy Forum Armenia, 2012, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2010) and 35% of Armenians continue to live under the poverty line (World Bank, 2013, Armenian Statistical Service, 2012).

Despite the fact that mining has become a priority in Armenia's developmental policy (Ministry of Energy and Armenian Development Agency, 2011), until 2012, there was little policy level debate or discussion around the issue. In the absence of political and policy level discussions, civil society activists working through formal, professionalised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Armenia and particularly through grassroots social movements, known locally as civic initiatives (*kakhakatsiakan nakhatsernutyunner*), have played a key role in raising awareness about the risks and campaigning against the dangers posed by mining to the environment, public health and sustainable development in Armenia. Mining exists in many countries around the world. Debates around the introduction of mining in a country often centre around human rights, environmental impact, development, governance, income inequality and democracy (Auty et al., 2000, Bebbington et al., 2008b, Pegg, 2006, Weinthal and Luong, 2006). Mobilisations

1. There is some discrepancy among official sources concerning the precise number of metal mines that have been granted exploitation rights. According to the website of the Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, as of October 2013, the number of metal mines was 30. According to the official data obtained from the Agency of the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia, the number of metal mines as of October 2013 was 26.

against mining can be understood as a response to threats that particular forms of economic development such as mining present or are perceived as presenting to people and the environment (Bebbington et al., 2008b, p. 2890) .

This report examines the rise of mobilisations by civil society groups, in particular civic initiatives, around environmental issues in Armenia. It builds on my previous and on-going research, dating back to 1996, on civil society in Armenia and the role that civil society plays in social transformation (Ishkanian, 2007a, Ishkanian, 2007b, Ishkanian, 2008/2012, Ishkanian, 2009, Ishkanian, Forthcoming, Ishkanian and Glasius, 2013). The questions addressed in this report are the following:

1. What factors have led to the rise of the civic initiatives in Armenia in the past 5 years? And what are environmental civic initiatives trying to achieve?
2. What direct and indirect impacts have environmental civic initiatives had in Armenia?
3. What lessons can be learned from global experience?

Until recently Armenia, similar to many other post-socialist countries, has had a rather weak civil society characterised by high levels of anomie, apathy and cynicism (Morjé Howard, 2003, Mandel, 2012, Hann, 2004). While there is much debate around its definition, I understand civil society to be “the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values” (LSE Centre for Civil Society, 2010). According to this definition, NGOs, civic initiatives, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, and business associations are all part of civil society.

Civic initiatives, which began to emerge in 2007 and expanded in larger numbers in 2010-2011, have achieved important, albeit small victories on a diverse set of issues ranging from legislation on maternity pay to the preservation of historical buildings and urban green spaces. Civic initiatives are grassroots, volunteer based, non-partisan groups of individuals, usually consisting of between twenty to several hundred (in rare instances) of individuals who come together to collectively raise awareness of and to address a particular issue. As will be discussed

later, civic initiatives are distinct from formal, professionalised NGOs in a number of key aspects including their organisational structures and forms of decision making; their strategies and repertoires of action; and their rejection of foreign funding and lack of reliance on foreign donors.

If we move away from what Manuel Castells calls a strictly productivist logic (Castells, 2012) in analysing the influence of social mobilisations, we find that there have been a number of impacts that have come about with the rise of civic initiatives in Armenia. In particular, around environmental issues, civic initiatives have achieved the following:

1. Awareness Raising

First, civic activists, working through civic initiatives and in collaboration with NGOs, have raised awareness around environmental issues. They have opened up the discussion around the dangers of mining to public scrutiny. Through such actions, they aim to hold policy makers and corporations to account.

2. Building Social Capital and Promoting Greater Participation

Second, civic initiatives have attracted and led to growing participation and civic engagement by young people. Although this has primarily been a Yerevan-based phenomenon, civic initiatives are also beginning to emerge in other cities including Gyumri and Vanadzor.

3. Active Citizenship

Third, civic initiatives have promoted a form of active and empowered citizenship, which links the rights of citizens to the responsibilities they should bear toward their communities and their country. Rejecting political parties, which are often perceived as corrupt or beholden to narrow interests, civic activists have chosen to work with like-minded NGOs to protest the environmental damage posed by mining as well as the violations of property rights and risks to public health. This has involved encouraging people to take greater ownership of the problems facing their communities and becoming active subjects who voice their concerns rather than remaining as passive and silent bystanders in society. One slogan used by the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative was “The Time of the Self-Determined Citizen” indicating that they are

citizens who are self-determined to fight against corruption, oligarchy and the prevalence of placing private interests over those of the broader public.

Despite these achievements, much remains to be done if a broader segment of the population is to be engaged. Civic initiatives face a gargantuan and highly unequal struggle in their campaign against the growth and expansion of mining in Armenia. If change is to happen at the level of policy making, this is only likely to happen over time and through the consistent and persistent efforts of civil society organisations and activists holding political leaders to account and demanding greater transparency and participation in decision and policy making processes. But there are serious obstacles facing civil society organisations and activists in their efforts to ensure greater accountability, participation and transparency in policy making processes. It is unlikely that activists working in civic initiatives alone will be able to achieve this without scaling up their efforts and broadening participation and engagement. The latter in particular will not be easy, as civil society groups remain concentrated in Yerevan and they lack access to the mainstream media, in particular, television coverage. Moreover, their efforts are exacerbated by the existing apathy and fear in many communities across Armenia that involvement in civic activism may lead to negative repercussions including loss of employment, etc.

Civil society provides the intellectual and associational space in which to “reflect openly and critically” and to challenge the status quo (Howell and Pearce, 2001, p. 237). Historically, social mobilisations and direct action campaigns have long been used by civil society organisations to draw public attention to and spark debate and action around social issues (Oliviero and Simmons, 2002 p. 137). Civil society organisations across the globe have effectively utilised the tactic of “naming and shaming” to highlight corporate abuses and bad practices both in national contexts and transnationally (Anheier and Hawkes, 2007, Ebrahim and Weisband, 2007). The lack of social and environmental accountability by multinational corporations in particular, has intensified civil society efforts to monitor and hold these actors to account (Winston, 2002). Globally and historically, an active civil society has been found to play an important role in creating inclusive political institu-

tions, which create virtuous circles of innovation, economic expansion and more widely-held wealth (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013).

This report highlights the achievements as well as the challenges and obstacles facing civil society in Armenia. Since mining is a global phenomenon occurring in countries in the global South and global North, the report also situates the developments in Armenia within the broader global context in order to draw on lessons learned. The objective of this report is to contribute to on-going debates within Armenia and in diaspora communities around the globe about mining in Armenia, but also about the wider socio-economic and political developments taking place in the country.

Methodology

This report is based on extensive qualitative research conducted in Armenia in 3 field visits: September 2011, May 2012 and October 2012. The findings in this report are based on 82 individual interviews, 16 focus groups, an extensive analysis of relevant publications and a survey of the Armenian media from 2007-2012.

a) Interviews

The individual interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders:

1. Local activists involved in civic initiatives.
2. Individuals from communities that are directly impacted by mining.
3. Representatives from local and international NGOs based in Armenia. These included environmental NGOs as well as human rights NGOs that work on environmental issues.
4. Diaspora activists who support environmental initiatives and campaigns in Armenia.
5. Journalists and bloggers.
6. Academics.
7. Representatives from donor organisations.
8. Representatives from political parties.

Despite numerous attempts, we were unable to secure an interview from an official from the Armenian Ministry of Nature Protection.

All the interviews with respondents were recorded and transcribed. The majority were conducted in Armenian, with the remainder in English. The interviews were analysed using NVivo software. The respondents were selected following a mapping of the organisations and movements. The interviews with diaspora activists and individuals who were not resident in Armenia were conducted via Skype. All interviews have been anonymised and are referred to in the report by the date of the interview. Where an individual's name appears, it was done through obtaining prior consent from the respondent.

b) Focus Groups

16 focus groups were held over the course of the research from 2011 and 2012. Nine focus groups were held in 2011 and seven in 2012. Of the sixteen focus groups, seven were held in different communities in Yerevan and the remaining nine were held in the following cities and villages in Armenia. The focus groups were organised according to age and gender. The focus groups were organised and conducted by the researchers from the Socioscope NGO as part of this research project.

- Cities [in alphabetical order]
 - Alaverdi (Lori region)
 - Gyumri (Shirak region)
 - Kapan (Syunik region)
 - Meghri (Syunik region)
 - Yerevan (seven separate focus groups with different communities)
- Villages [in alphabetical order]
 - Sayat Nova (Ararat region)
 - Shnogh (Lori region)
 - Tatev (Syunik region)
 - Teghut (Lori region)

c) Literature analysis

An extensive analysis of the relevant academic, NGO and think tank publications on civil society and ecology in Armenia was conducted. In addition, the self-published materials including blogs, websites and

press releases issued by civic initiatives and activists were also examined.

d) Media analysis

The Socioscope NGO conducted an analysis of media reports to assess the levels of coverage around Teghut.

Before discussing the current period of civic activism, below I provide a brief history of the environmental movement and civil society development in Armenia over the past three decades.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1986 – 2006: the first phase of civil society activism on environmental issues

Inspired by glasnost and perestroika and using Gorbachev's arguments and rationale, several popular movements emerged in the late 1980s in a number of Soviet republics including Armenia, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. Nearly all these movements began with calls for environmental policy reforms because, beginning in the mid-1980s, environmental movements had been partially tolerated in the Soviet Union. This, Levon Abrahamian maintains, was due to the fact that the Soviet authorities did not see environmental movements as posing any great danger to the regime (Abrahamian, 2006, p. 253). Whether these environmental movements played the role of "catalyst" or "herald", as Abrahamian argues the latter was the case in Armenia (Abrahamian, 2006, p. 255), it appears that many environmental movements throughout the Soviet republics became "surrogate movements" for more politically sensitive goals including ending the Communist Party's control and achieving independence (Henry, 2002, p. 186).

When the environmental activism began in Armenia in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Government did not immediately crush the demonstrations, but in the spirit of glasnost allowed for peaceful demonstrations to continue. The Soviet era Armenian environmental activists, which included progressive and liberal minded scientists, educators and writers, framed the issue in the language of a national life or death struggle, and addressed their concerns to government officials in both Yerevan and Moscow (Malkasian, 1996, p. 133). For instance, in March 1986, 350 prominent Armenian intellectuals sent an open letter to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev detailing the consequences of industrial pollution and environmental degradation from the mining, metal, chemical and service industries. For two years, from March 1986 – February 1988, the environmental movement continued to grow as a number of demonstrations were held to protest against the pollution caused by the Nayarit chemical plant in Yerevan and the Medzamor nuclear power plant which is located near Armenia's border with Turkey. The demonstrations eventually forced the closure of the Medzamor nuclear power plant as well as Nayarit.

By the middle of 1988, the environmental movement in Armenia, as those in the Baltic states, had transformed into movements that were

calling for increased national rights, political reforms and eventually independence. Once Armenia achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, environmental concerns took a backseat to more pressing issues including recovery from the devastating 1988 Spitak earthquake and the impact of the war and blockade with Azerbaijan. The economic decline brought about by the rapid disintegration of the command economy coupled with the “shock therapy” policies combined to create years of socio-economic hardship, which have collectively come to be called “The Years of Dark and Cold” (*mti tsrti tarinery*).

Armenian environmental organisations “suffered a blow in public opinion” in the early 1990s as they were blamed for their lack of foresight in pushing for the closures of the Nayarit chemical factory and Medzamor nuclear power plant (Counterpart International 2010, p. 8). This engendered distrust toward environmentalism in Armenia as the public and political leaders blamed the environmental activists for putting environmental concerns above economic development. Hence, for the first decade and a half following independence (1991-2005), there was very little activism in Armenia around environmental issues.

As, Karine Danielyan, leader of the NGO “For Sustainable Human Development” and former Minister of Nature Protection (1991-1994) said,

There was a huge disillusionment toward environmentalists [in the 1990s] and the people believed that environmentalists only bring harm to society. So the public turned against us because the socio-economic situation worsened in the country due to several reasons including the collapse of the economic system, the war, etc. For a time the name “ecolog” (environmentalist) became a bad name. Then the situation changed [in the 2000s], because the socio-economic situation became more stable and a new generation emerged and it began to see the worsening of the environmental situation in the country. They have a clear understanding of both the current ecological situation [in Armenia] as well as the implications of that for the future (Author interview 13 October 2012).

It was not until 2005, when the struggle around Shikahogh emerged, when environmental issues were once again part of the public agenda.

Shikahogh

The S.O.S Shikahogh campaign was a coalition of 40 civil society and academic organisations, both local and international, which came together in 2005 to oppose the construction of the highway through the Shikahogh Nature Reserve (Counterpart International, 2010b, Policy Forum Armenia, 2010). The campaign, which focused on awareness raising and the development of an alternative route for the proposed highway, succeeded in changing policy and leading to the construction of a route which bypassed the reserve. The success of the S.O.S. Shikahogh campaign re-energised many environmentalists and created momentum for other environmental campaigns.

Following the success of Shikahogh, a number of the environmental NGOs who had been involved in the coalition, turned their attention to the Teghut copper molybdenum mine in the Lori marz. The NGOs wrote letters to officials, engaged in dialog with government representatives and pursued efforts to raise public awareness. Unlike in the case of Shikahogh, the NGOs were unable to shift the policy on Teghut and some environmental NGOs, as I discovered through my interviews, have become reconciled to the fact that the mine will open shortly and have instead turned their attention to mitigating the damage rather than opposing the opening of the mine. In an interview with one environmental NGO in Armenia, the representative said,

We were against the Teghut mine and participated in the public hearings in 2007. And it was surprising to us that more NGOs didn't join or were reluctant to join in that process. At that time [in early 2007], there were no civic initiatives.

Today the youth is addressing the Teghut issue, not the environmental NGOs. One must be realistic however. I think it is better to do environmental monitoring at this point rather than to think you can stop the mine. We signed the letter to the President and Prime Minister urging them to commission an independent environmental impact assessment for Teghut to be done by an international organisation. We think at this point it is best to mitigate the damage. Enormous amounts of money have been spent and it will difficult to stop it [the Teghut mine] from going forward.

The civic initiatives are freer [than NGOs]. We can't make such radical statements as they do. We are a serious NGO and we must act in a sensible manner. They are freer to express themselves they often do so rather "boldly and crudely" (aveli hamartsak yev kobid) (author interview 14 October 2012).

When I asked whether their reserved stance and caution was due to fear of possible repercussions, he replied,

We are not afraid that they will punish us, but that they will obstruct our work (k khangaren). And we must work with and not against the Government to preserve the environment (author interview 14 October 2012).

It remains to be seen whether the "bold" or the "sensible" approaches will be more effective in the long run.

2007 – Present: the second wave of civil society and environmental activism

While environmental activism was put on the backburner in the 1990s, this was the same period of time when there was very rapid, indeed spectacular, growth in the number of NGOs in Armenia. Promoting a market economy and democracy were the two main aims of the transition agenda, which was implemented following the collapse of the socialist regimes in Central East Europe and the former Soviet Union. Within the context of the transition, civil society building was considered both as a means as well as an end to achieving democracy and the development of a free market economy through the implementation of neoliberal reforms which included, among other things, the shrinking of the socialist welfare states; cutting state subsidies; privatising state owned assets and lands; and transferring welfare provision to non-state actors (including NGOs and private corporations). During the 1990s, a great deal of financial and human resources were invested in building and strengthening civil society through grants and trainings, as well as capacity building and exchange programs. Across the former socialist countries, the immense amount of foreign aid invested in promoting civil society and democracy led to the "explosive growth

of local NGOs” (US Agency for International Development, 1999). For instance, in 1994 there were only 44 NGOs registered with the Armenian Ministry of Justice. Two years later, in 1996, the number of registered NGOs had grown to over 1500 largely due to the growing availability of foreign grants as well as the opening of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded NGO Resource and Training Centre in 1995, whose sole purpose was to help build an NGO sector in Armenia (Ishkanian, 2008). By 2010, there were over 3300 registered NGOs in Armenia, (Civitas Foundation, 2011) but many recognise that this number does not reflect the true level of participation and activism (Counterpart International, 2010a, Ishkanian, 2008/2012, Transparency International Anticorruption Center, 2011) and while a small number of active NGOs have been instrumental in addressing problems facing society, many more remain organisations on paper.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

CIVIC INITIATIVES

What are civic initiatives?

The current wave of civic activism has been referred to as a new “awakening” (*zartonk*) which began in 2008 and greatly expanded in 2011 and which continues today. It is characterised by the emergence and growth of grassroots movements locally known as “civic initiatives” (*kakhakatsiakan nakhatsernutyunner*). To be clear, civic initiatives are distinct from formal, professionalised NGOs in a number of key aspects including their organisational structures and forms of decision making; their strategies and repertoires of action; and their rejection of foreign funding and lack of reliance on foreign donors. However, these distinctions do not mean that there are no connections with NGOs. On the contrary, individuals who are employed by NGOs often join civic initiatives in their personal capacity and in certain instances, as I discuss later, NGOs subsequently provide advice and support to help scale-up and widen impact. Civic activists who are employed by NGOs describe their participation in civic initiatives as a matter of personal choice and expression of their citizenship. Others argue that by working in NGOs, rather than in the private or public sector, this provides them with greater freedom to participate in civic initiatives without the fear that they would be penalised for their activism.

Civic initiatives are grassroots, volunteer based, non-partisan groups usually consisting of between twenty to a couple hundred (in rare instances) individuals, who come together to collectively raise awareness of and to address a particular issue. The vast majority of civic initiatives are either based in Yerevan or include the active participation of Yerevan-based activists. The age range of the participants is between 20 – 45 years of age, with the most active participants being in their mid-20s – mid- 30s. Most civic initiatives consist of core groups of activists, and there is informal leadership without hierarchy. Civic initiatives are structured horizontally and decision-making is consensus-based with discussions taking place in person or in closed Facebook groups. Horizontality is valued and active participation of all members is encouraged.

Civic initiatives tend to have more online supporters and concerns remain of how to get people from participating solely by “liking” something on Facebook to actually attending an event or direct action in person. Civic initiatives have been important for building social capital,

primarily “bonding” social capital. “Bonding” social capital refers to the links that exist between members of a group whereas “bridging” and “linking” social capital refer to the links that are created between individuals from different groups (Putnam, 2000, Szreter, 2002). In recent years civic activists in Armenia are attempting to “bridge” and “link” with others beyond the primary group and network.

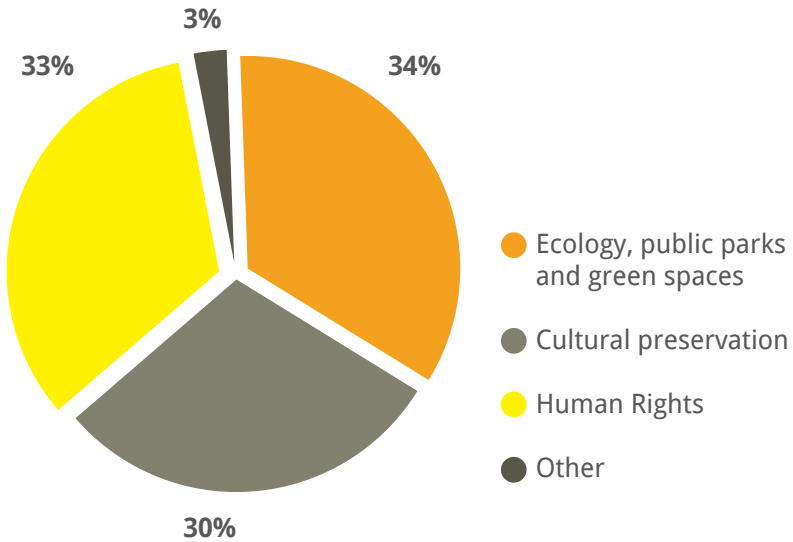
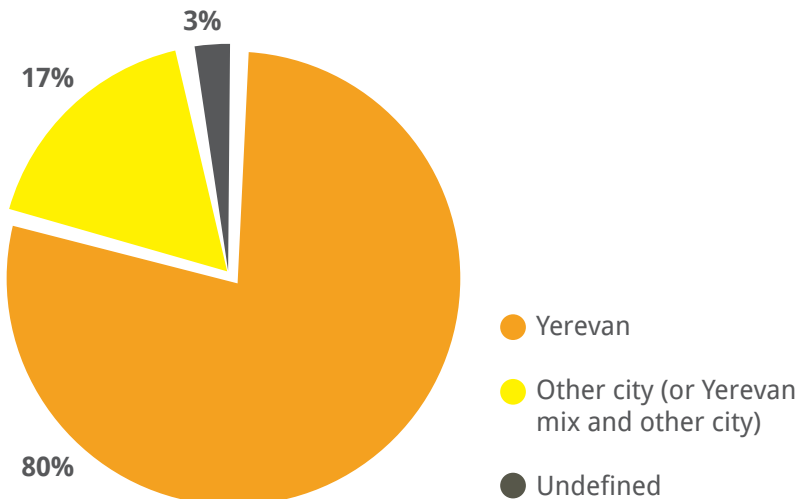
Civic initiatives address a very wide range of issues spanning from the protection of forests; defending maternity pay; as well as fighting for the preservation of historical buildings and green spaces. Below is a list of civic initiatives that have been established from 2007 – 2013.

Table 1: Civic Initiatives in Armenia 2007 - 2013

Name	Issues addressed	Start Date	Location	Status
Save Teghut Civic Initiative	Ecology	November 2007	Yerevan	Continuing
Protecting the Rights of Individual Taxi Drivers	Consumers Rights	February 2009	Gyumri, Vanadzor, Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
Our City Civic Initiative	Cultural Preservation	November 2010	Yerevan	Continuing
We are the Owners of the City – Protect the Dragon’s Grove Park	Public Parks, Green Spaces	November 2010	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
Demanding an Independent Trial for the Murder of Zaruhi Petrosyan	Women Rights	November 2010	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
Stop Changes in Maternity Leave Law	Protection of Labour Rights of Pregnant Women	December 2010	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
SOS! Save Kino Moskva’s Outdoor Amphitheatre	Cultural Preservation	March 2010	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)

We are Against the Re-opening of Foreign Language Schools	Cultural Preservation (Language Protection)	April 2010	Yerevan	Continuing
We are the Owners of the City	Public Parks, Green Spaces	April 2010	Yerevan	Continuing
We are the Owners of the City – Save Students' Park	Public Parks, Green spaces	April 2010	Yerevan	Resolved (negative)
Protect Trchkan Waterfall	Ecology	September 2011	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
Fight Against the Demolition of Architect Rafael Israelyan's Home	Cultural Preservation	October 2011	Yerevan	Resolved (negative)
Jermuk will not Become a Mine Civic Initiative	Ecology	November 2011	Mix of Jermuk and Yerevan based activists	Continuing
SOS Hrazdan	Ecology	November 2011	Mix of Hrazdan and Yerevan based activists	Abandoned
Aram Crossroads Civic Initiative	Cultural Preservation	November 2011	Yerevan	Abandoned
Protect the Rights of Open Air Stall Market Traders	Human Rights	January 2011	Yerevan	Resolved (negative)
Kanach Kapan (Green Kapan) – We are Against the Exploitation of the Open Uranium Mine	Ecology	February 2011	Kapan	Abandoned
Demanding Dignified Public Transport – We will not Stoop in Public Transportation	Human Rights	March 2011	Yerevan	Continuing

The Army in Reality	Human Rights	April 2011	Yerevan	Continuing
We Demand Funding for Science	Science, Education	April 2011	Yerevan	Continuing
We Demand the Return of the Minas [Avetisyan] Frescoes	Cultural Preservation	June 2011	Gyumri	Resolved (negative)
SOS! Let's Save the Afrikian [Family] Building	Cultural Preservation	July 2011	Yerevan	Continuing
Justice for Vernisage (Traders)	Human Rights	August 2011	Yerevan	Abandoned
Save the Home of Sculptor Ghukas Chubaryan from Demolition	Cultural Preservation	August 2011	Yerevan	Abandoned
Khosrov Nature Reserve Civic Initiative	Ecology	October 2012	Yerevan	Abandoned
Mashtots Park Civic Initiative	Public Parks, Green Spaces	February 2012	Yerevan	Resolved (positive)
Save the Closed Market	Cultural Preservation	May 2012	Yerevan	Continuing
We Demand the Punishment of all Those who are Guilty in the Harsnaqar Case and Vahe Avetyan Civic Movement	Human Rights	June 2012	Yerevan	Continuing
Re-defining the Meaning of March 8	Women Rights	March 2013	Yerevan	Continuing
We Will Not be Silent (Chenk Lrelu)	Protection of rights and fighting injustice wherever it exists	Undefined	Undefined	Continuing
We will not Pay 150 Drams	Public Rights	July 2013	Yerevan	Continuing

Image 1: Civic Initiatives. Issues targeted**Image 2: Civic Initiatives. Location**

Why are civic initiatives emerging?

The growth and expansion of civic initiatives since 2010 is due to three factors. First, the coming of age of the first post-Soviet generation of Armenians has meant there is now a generation of Armenians who never personally lived through the Soviet period and hence, they not only have a different worldview, but also, having grown up in the neo-liberal context where a strong welfare state never existed, they have different expectations and understandings about the state and its relationship to citizens. Unlike older generations of Armenians who argue, “the state must provide services” (*ta petq e petutyuny ani*), they don’t harbour any such expectations from the State. As such, they take a more active approach to raising awareness of and addressing problems within society from cleaning up public parks to defending the rights of citizens using public transportation.

Second, the introduction and spread of social media, including Facebook and YouTube, as well as the greater availability and affordability of broadband technology which allows for uploading videos and Live Streaming, has allowed civic activists to organise and mobilise much more effectively and rapidly. Much has been made of the use of social media and mobile communications by activists in the Arab Spring and elsewhere (Castells, 2012, Mason, 2013) and indeed, the grassroots civic initiatives in Armenia also extensively use social media in their campaigns by synergising and combining campaigning in both virtual and physical spheres. Facebook currently has over 350,000 subscribers in Armenia, and while this might only constitute 11.5% of the country’s population of 3.1 million, those who are active on Facebook are the younger segments of the population and their numbers are growing.

While the availability of these new communication tools and technologies facilitate organisation, mobilisation and collective action, we should also be wary of exaggerating their impact when there is evidence that social media has also been a tool for government surveillance and even provocation (Morozov, 2011, Center for Liberation Technology, 2010). For instance, one activist, Yeghia Nercessian, was filmed in December 2012 while giving a public talk on mining to a community group in Los Angeles. Nercessian’s comments concerning the working conditions of miners in Kapan prompted the company, Deno

Gold Mining, to sue him for defamation (EcoLur, 2013, Tert.am, 2013). There have been protests, as activists have publicly repeated Nercesian's claims, thereby laying a challenge to Deno Gold, which is 100% owned by the Canadian Dundee Precious Metals corporation, to bring defamation cases against them all. In an open letter sent to the Corporate Social Responsibility official of Deno Gold Mining, activists accuse the company of "attempting to silence civic groups in Armenia, who are, in fact, struggling under an authoritarian regime for their right to free speech and democratic decision-making". The letter is signed by the Save Teghut Civic Initiative, the Pan Armenian Environmental Front and the Jermuk Development Center NGO (Teghut.am, 2013). As of October 2013, the case continues.

Third, there is the global dimension. 2011 was the peak year of civil unrest, protest and movements for democracy and against austerity across the globe (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2013). In 2011, alongside the global anti-austerity (e.g. Occupy Wall Street, the *Indignados* in Spain, etc.) and pro-democracy movements of the Arab Spring, there was also a rise of civic activism across some former Soviet countries including Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine (Lutsevych, 2013, Dyczok, 2013, Kokichaishvili, 2012, Stop Destroying Gudiashvili Square, 2011, Faryna, 2012, Nikitin, 2010, Ishkanian, Forthcoming). The civic initiatives that emerged in the former Soviet countries in 2011 and 2012 share certain similarities with the anti-austerity and pro-democracy movements across the globe, in that they are driven by a "collective re-imagining of democracy, of its practices, and its relation to everyday life" (Kaldor and Selchow, 2012). Anti-austerity and pro-democracy movements that have emerged in recent years around the globe are an expression of anger and address concerns around the lack of democracy, social justice and dignity (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013, Ishkanian and Glasius, 2013).

While civic initiatives in Armenia are not addressing austerity per se, (largely because austerity is not new in Armenia and the cuts to public spending and subsidies have already been in place for the past 20 years ever since they were introduced as part of the so-called "shock therapy" policies of the early 1990s) they are nevertheless driven by a desire to address the lack of democracy, prevailing corruption and oligarchic capitalism, as well as the absence of accountability and trans-

parency in decision making. Moreover, some civic initiatives, such as Save Mashtots Park, have explicitly identified themselves as being part of the global Occupy movement (Wikipedia, 2013, Poghosyan, 2012) and have used the discourse of the 99% and framed their protests against the boutiques in Mashtots Park in the wider critique of neoliberalism.

Therefore, while civic initiatives address very specific and sometimes narrowly focused issues (e.g. saving one public park), their emergence is informed by and is an articulation of much broader concerns around corruption, the absence of rule of law, the lack of democracy, the rise of oligarchic capitalism, and the failure of formal political elites to address the concerns of ordinary Armenian citizens. For example, in the case of the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative, the immediate goal was to save the park from being cemented over for the construction of boutiques, but the larger goals and objectives were to advance an agenda, which encourages civic participation, respect of rule of law, and sustainable development (Wallace, 2012) and to address the problem of “oligarchy”, which activists defined as “people above the law” who, having economical [sic] and political resources place their interests above those of the people” (Wikipedia, 2013).

In pursuit of these goals, the Save Mashtots Park activists organised and held a Just and Independent Civic Court in which they examined the legality of the boutiques’ construction (Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, 2013). Prior to organising the Civic Court, the activists had made numerous attempts to meet with the Yerevan Mayor’s office and to have their case heard in court. Following the “inaction” of the authorities, the civic court was convened on 13 March 2012 with the mandate “to examine *the problem of the seizure, theft and privatization of public property and national wealth in our state*” (Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, 2012) [emphasis in original].

The opening statement read,

We, RA [Republic of Armenia] citizens and residents², are implementing our constitutional rights and duties and being the masters of this public space, the masters of our town and our state,

2. “Residents” here refers to the Diaspora Armenians who have repatriated to Armenia but who do not hold Armenian citizenship.

we have demanded that our servants, the representatives of the city and other bodies, perform their constitutional functions and responsibilities, for which they are paid by the public. They have not given a clear and legal response to our clear and lawful demand for a long time now, but have avoided it, [are] trying to complicate or prolong the process (Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, 2012).

The “verdict” reached by the Just and Independent Civic Court found that the municipal government was obliged to dismantle the boutiques and restore the park to its previous form, adding that if this “verdict” was not carried out in 10 days, the activists would begin dismantling the boutiques themselves. Following the “verdict”, the activists continued to obstruct the construction work, but beginning in late March 2012, a group of middle aged, mostly male activists, who called themselves the “Brigade of Dismantlers” (*Apamontazhoghneri Brigad*), began coming to Mashtots Park with the stated aim of supporting the activists and dismantling the boutiques. The attempts by the “Brigade of Dismantlers” to de-construct the boutiques were stopped by the police.

Until now, civic initiatives have neither actively sought relations with or funding from international donors; on the contrary, they vigorously shun relations with foreign donors so as to avoid being perceived as motivated by grants, driven by foreign powers, or tainted by foreign funding.

Civic initiatives’ tactics of refusing grants from external donors is a strategic and political decision aimed at enhancing their credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the public and deflecting claims that they are “grant-eaters” (*grantagerner*). For example, an environmental activist told me,

We want this to be a bottom-up movement. This is about Armenians as self-determined citizens. We don't want grants and we don't need grants. Moreover, we don't trust the international NGOs and donors. They have stayed silent far too long in the face of the abuse of the environment, corruption, and other abuses in Armenia. We don't expect them to change now (Skype interview, 10 January 2013).

The claims made by critics, including some government officials and representatives of mining corporations that activists are driven by a desire to obtain grants, does not appear to be based on any evidence. On the contrary, the attempts to label activists as “grant-eaters” appears to be a diversionary tactic which is being deployed in order to deflect attention from the issues at hand (i.e. mining), by instead questioning the motivations of activists. This strategy, of shifting attention from the message to the messenger, is aimed at raising questions about the probity, integrity and legitimacy of their efforts. Indeed, as one NGO respondent said,

After Mashtots Park, the government recognised that the public is beginning to respond positively to the new activist groups and applauding them for their perseverance and courage. So it's now begun a concerted campaign to denigrate and label activists as being grant eaters and this, that or the other (10 October 2012).

Beyond shunning grants, activists in the Save Mashtots Park initiative also criticised certain international organisations for their silence with regard to how the authorities were cracking down on protestors in the park. In an open letter addressed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) they write, “We strongly disagree with OSCE representatives’ assessment of police actions concerning protests in the [Mashtots] park”, adding,

*We call upon you and other establishments and representatives of OSCE to revise the **evil** practice when inadequate and careless statements or decisions of an establishment or representative catalyze power structures’ violence against the society members [at Mashtots Park] (HETQ, 2012, emphasis added).*

Such overt and outspoken criticism of international organisations is unheard of among Armenian NGOs where the maxim, “you don’t bite the hand that feeds you” stands true. Some of the international organisations and external donors I interviewed in Armenia, which are used to working with NGOs in a donor-grantee relationship, remarked that in the case of civic initiatives, they have been cast in the role of observers. One representative from an external donor organisation told me, “we are watching what happens with great interest. But we are unsure as

to how to engage with activists" (12 May 2012). Another donor stated, "They [the civic activists] have a lot of energy and enthusiasm, but it's not clear what they will be able to achieve" (10 May 2012).

Yet it is clear that their work is attracting the attention of the donor community in Armenia. For instance, in June 2012, then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton joined the US and British Embassies in Armenia, as well as the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia and the Counterpart International NGO to "highlight the contributions of Armenia's civil rights activists" to the "promotion of human rights" by awarding them the Universal Rights Award (Embassy of the United States, 2012). According to the Head of the EU Delegation, Traian Hristea, the award given to the activists involved in the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative was in recognition of their "commitment and perseverance" which led to "important victories for the environment". Hristea went on to add, "With this award, we would like not only to honour their work, but also to promote their future efforts in Armenia" (Embassy of the United States, 2012).

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

THE GROWTH OF THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE RISE OF A NEW WAVE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISM IN ARMENIA

In the Soviet period, mining in Armenia was entirely controlled and regulated by the central government in Moscow (Kursky and Konoplyanik, 2006). But beginning in October 1999, the Armenian Government approved a programme “to rehabilitate and develop the country’s non-ferrous metals industry at a cost of \$508 million [USD] between 2000 and 2010” (Rumin, 2000). Currently, Armenia is a major producer of molybdenum, ranking seventh in the world. Besides molybdenum, Armenia also produces copper, gold, lead, silver, and zinc as well as industrial minerals, including basalt, diatomite, granite, gypsum, limestone, and perlite (Levine and Wallace, 2009, 7.2). With more than 670 solid minerals mines [see the map in Appendix]³, which include by some estimates 30 metal mines (Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2013) and by other estimates 26 metal mines (Agency of the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia 2013), coupled with “the most liberal trade legislation among the newly independent [Soviet] states” (Mining Journal, 2011, 9), Armenia has attracted many foreign investors and the mining sector has rapidly expanded over the past decade.

The “mining friendly” legislation and regulatory mechanisms include a “lenient” taxation system, “no restrictions on conversion or repatriation of capital and earnings”, and “no limitations on wire transfers of money” (Mining Journal 2011, p. 9). In addition, Armenia does not levy taxes on exports and there are no quantitative trade restrictions or limits on the number of foreign employees (Mining Journal, 2005, p. 6).

Foreign investors currently control a “significant share” of Armenia’s mining industry and a number of mines across Armenia are owned by foreign companies (Safirova, 2012) [see Table 2 on p. 71]. According to publically available information, the remainder of the mines are owned by local economic and political elites (i.e., oligarchs). As one environmental activist said,

I don’t think our government officials are so stupid to allow Armenia’s gold, silver and other metals to be taken by foreigners and for them to not profit from that process. This means they are also involved in the plunder. This must be the case (Author interview 13 October 2012).

3. The map, which was specially designed for this report by experts from the Transparency International Anticorruption Center Armenia NGO, illustrates the number and location of mines in Armenia.

This lack of transparency and publically available information about the mine ownership is very problematic from an accountability perspective. For instance, if problems should arise, given this lack of information it is unclear which corporation(s) can be held to account. In Table 2 [page 71] we present the information about the ownership and registration of the 26 metal mines that was obtained by a Freedom of Information request submitted to the Agency of the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia. As some of the information provided by the Agency differed from the information available on the mining corporations' websites, we have decided to include both sets of information.

In addition to foreign direct investments, mining projects in Armenia are also supported by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). In the Foreword to the Mining Industry in Armenia 2011 report, Mr Armen Movsisyan, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources states:

*Today, Armenia, as an independent state, is ready to meet the global demand for metals and minerals...With the mineral and mining industry such an important sector of Armenia, it is important for our country to maintain its **mining friendly status**. In order to maintain and enhance this status, the Armenian government is **upgrading the legislative framework for the country's mining sector with the help of the World Bank and European experts** (Ministry of Energy and Armenian Development Agency, 2011) [Emphasis added].*

The move to "upgrade" the legislative framework, Movsisyan adds, is to "help attract even more investment to a [mining] sector, which is set to play a major role in Armenia's economic development" (Ministry of Energy and Armenian Development Agency, 2011).

It is important to note that Armenia is not alone in this regard and similar to many other developing countries, it was encouraged by international financial institutions to "upgrade" its mining code. Globally, this process of encouraging countries to reform or upgrade their laws on mining began in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s and 2000s. It was at this time that mining began to move from the global North to

the global South⁴ as foreign investors, seeking to increase their comparative advantage, were attracted by the less stringent environmental policies and regulatory frameworks in developing countries (Dougherty, 2011, p. 97). However, these reforms, as Glen Kuecker argues, are often “profoundly undemocratic” and at times reformed mining laws in developing countries allow multinational corporations to operate in ways that would be considered **illegal** in their own countries (Kuecker, 2007, p. 97).

The mining laws in Armenia were “**upgraded**” in late 2011 and the new Mining Code, which took effect on 1 January 2012, has been criticised by environmental campaigners for a number of reasons as described below.

1. The valuation of natural resources

Previously, under the 2003 Concession Law, holders of mining licences were charged a 1.3 – 1.5% environmental exploitation fee **and** were required to pay royalties of 1% of the aggregate net-back value of sales of metallic minerals, together with an additional royalty which was levied at an incremental rate of 0.1% up to a maximum of 0.8% where an operation's profitability index exceeded 25% (Mining Journal, 2005, p. 7). This environmental exploitation fee was already one of the lowest in the world. For instance, according to lawyer Erik Grigoryan, the fees in Russia are 3.8 – 8.3% whereas in Canada the fees are 10-16% (Grigoryan, 2011). Under the 2012 Mining Code, the environmental exploitation fee has been altogether eliminated. Instead, companies are currently only responsible for paying royalties, which are calculated according to the formula below:

$$R = 4 + [P/(I \times 8)] \times 100$$

- R = Royalty percentage rate
- P = Pre-tax profit in AMD
- I = The income in AMD received from the realization of the product excluding VAT

What this essentially means is that companies are only taxed on the sale of the products and not the amount of natural resources ex-

4. The designations of the “global North” and “global South” are commonly used within academia and they refer to socio-economic and political rather than geographic divides. Generally, definitions of the “global North” include the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, Israel, Japan, etc. The “global South” meanwhile is made up of developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

tracted. As campaigners argue, this creates serious corruption risks. Erik Grigoryan writes, “This means that even if the international price of copper rises to 10,000 US dollars per ton, but the mining company, wishing to minimize its tax basis, sells the minerals at a lower price by several fold, the only basis of the tax accounting would be the purchase and sales agreements” (Grigoryan, 2011). Grigoryan argues that royalties should not replace environmental exploitation fees, but that they should be “complementary to them” and that the environmental fees should be calculated on “real accounting of the damage to the environmental [sic] and public health” (Grigoryan, 2011).

2. Definition and management of waste products resulting from mining activities

According to the 2012 “Law on Rates for Environmental Protection Levies” there are 7 categories of waste. Of these seven, four are classified as hazardous waste. Tailings classified as Level 1, are considered the most hazardous and by law 48,000 AMD [\$117 US]⁵ is to be paid per ton. Whereas wastes that are classified as Level 7, are assigned a fee of zero Drams. The problem, as lawyer Artur Grigoryan⁶ argues, is that in the 2012 Mining Code, the word “waste” has been omitted (Artur Grigoryan, interview 2013) and instead has been replaced with the word “*tsakuyt*” which translates into “piles” or “heaps of rocks” (Grigoryan, 2011, International Business Publications, 2013). According to Hakob Sanasaryan, who is one of the most experienced environmental campaigners in Armenia and the chairman of the Green Union of Armenia, this omission effectively means that “the wastes created as a result of mining are not taxed. Legislation registers the tax for 1 ton of waste is zero dram. The issue has several times been discussed at the cabinet but nothing changed” (Tert.am, 2012).

Thus it turns out that not only are the tailings not classified as hazardous, but that by law mining companies are freed from the responsibility of paying for the future maintenance of the tailing dumps. As Artur Grigoryan explained,

According to Article 14 of the Mining Code, the toxic waste created by mining activity becomes the property of the state and the mining companies do not bear any responsibility for ensuring the safety

5. All currency conversions in this report were done using the Oanda currency converter website <http://www.oanda.com/>.

6. No relation to Erik Grigoryan cited above.

of the tailing ponds. Not only that, but mining companies also do not bear any responsibility to provide payments to maintain these ponds (Interview with Artur Grigoryan, 2013).

Instead, as one academic expert states: “The benefits of mining are privatised, while the costs are socialised and borne by the public” (Author Skype interview, 1 November 2012).

To put the problem of tailings and waste management into perspective, at present there are 16 tailing sites in the country, occupying a total area of around 700 hectares (Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2013) and this is due to increase as more mines become operational. In 2011, 27.6 million tons of waste was produced in Armenia and 65% of the waste was produced in Syunik marz (18147602.7 tons), since the biggest mines are located in this southern part of the state (Armenian Statistical Service, 2012, p. 211). What this means is that future generations of Armenians will not only face the environmental and health risks but they will also carry the burden of paying for the storage and maintenance of the waste created by mining activity today.

In a bid to justify the privileges accorded to their sector, mining companies maintain that they are bringing much needed jobs to Armenia and that they are investing in infrastructural development and even supporting communities through charitable and socially responsible projects (Lydian International, 2013a, Global Gold Corp., 2013b, Vallex Group, 2013, Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine CJSC, 2013). The scope, scale and wider socio-economic impact of these charitable and infrastructure projects however remain unclear.

On the contrary, as stated already, there is evidence that poverty, inequality and emigration persist and are increasing in Armenia (Asbarez, 2013, Grigoryan, 2013, Policy Forum Armenia, 2012, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2010) and 35% of Armenians continue to live under the poverty line (World Bank, 2013, Armenian Statistical Service, 2012). The official unemployment rate is 7%. But other sources such as the *Armenia: Social Protection and Social Inclusion Country Report* cite the unemployment rate in Armenia as 18.7% (Karapetyan et al., 2011).

Moreover, there is evidence that mining is already having a negative impact on the environment and public health. For instance, according to a study by the Armenian National Academy of Sciences’ Centre for Ecological-Noosphere Studies, mining in Armenia has been disastrous

for Armenia in terms of public health and the environment. According to Dr Armen Saghatelyan, who heads the Centre:

Mining production during the past few decades has taken place without proper monitoring. By law, mine operators must neutralize all dangerous contaminants, but this hasn't happened due to a variety of objective and subjective reasons. Today, the ground has sucked in those pollutants like a sponge (Martinyan, 2011).

According to scientific experts at the Centre, mining operators have largely failed to neutralise dangerous contaminants, which have been absorbed by the ground. Furthermore, the country's rural fields are being irrigated with water flowing from contaminated sources due to mining operations. As these pollutants pass from the ground to agricultural produce and then to humans, there are serious public health concerns.

In another scientific study conducted by experts from the American University of Armenia Acopian Center for the Environment, the Blacksmith Institute and two Armenian governmental ministries, scientists studied 25 sites across 5 regions of Armenia. Taking soil samples, the scientists discovered that in many of the samples, especially those from agricultural and residential soil, heavy metal concentrations were above internationally allowable maximum levels. Overall, the study found that tailing ponds in these mining communities were in a neglected state with no proper fencing and no systematic or adequate monitoring. In addition, these locations had reported many cases of accidents that had resulted in leakage of the toxic pollutants. In some cases, abandoned tailing sites were used as pastures or gardens, while in others the tailings were used as construction materials by residents (American University of Armenia, 2013).

With specific reference to Teghut, Hakob Sanasaryan writes,

...those who scrutinise this [Teghut] project will easily be convinced that the prevailing interest in this Project is that of the exploiters of the mine... as far as the assurance given that implementation of the project will greatly benefit the strengthening of the economic security of the country, this also is not justified. Causing the loss of over 3000 stable agricultural jobs, ruining, destroying,

contaminating the environment, making fertile territories uninhabitable, by creating temporary new jobs and hastily consuming the natural resources, not only it's not possible to strengthen the economic security of the country, but such practice will inevitably bring about the collapse of the economy (Sanasaryan, 2012).

For over five years now, environmental activists have been campaigning to not only raise awareness around the risks and dangers of mining to people's health and well-being, the environment and the future, but they have also drawn attention to the fact that these "mining friendly" policies are allowing for capital to flow out of the country instead of into the state budget. From an economic and social justice perspective, they have argued that despite the huge profits, very little money is being reinvested into Armenia's economy and infrastructure. The fact that the Armenian economy currently depends heavily on exporting raw materials, rather than high-value finished industrial products, has meant that benefits to the wider economy have been limited. Studies show that the new private companies have continued the old Soviet practices of disregarding the environmental consequences of mining and that mining has become a symbol of corruption in the country (Armenia Tree Project and Zoi Environmental Network, 2012, p. 29).

Presently, the copper-molybdenum mine in Teghut has become the flagship and symbol of protest. It is neither the first or largest of the 670 mines in Armenia, but as my respondents explained, Teghut symbolises and encapsulates all the debates and concerns around mining in Armenia. One environmental activist described it as a "fundamental" issue of central importance (*voghnasharain gorts*). Adding,

After [the Genocide in] 1915, those Armenians who survived were able to repopulate the country. Today the environment and people's livelihoods are being destroyed (author interview 13 October 2012).

This view was echoed by other interviewees. As one NGO respondent said:

Teghut encompasses all that is problematic in Armenia – corruption, economic injustice, inequitable mining policies, all the issues can be summed up in Teghut as well as human rights issues (Author interview 9 October 2012).

While an environmental activist I interviewed explained:

Teghut is the shining example (var orinak) of the problems of economic and social injustice, the dangers to biodiversity and human rights, not to mention the seismic dangers it poses. Through the prism of Teghut we can address all of the issues, but of course, our activism doesn't end with Teghut (Author interview 12 October 2012).

In a press release issued on 19 December 2012, the President of the Armenian Environmental Network NGO, Ursula Kazarian, is quoted saying:

The Teghut issue resonates with Armenians near and far because it weaves together a number of contemporary issues: rule of law; transparency in decision-making; public health considerations; and public access to information. The unrelenting pillaging of precious and limited natural resources for the short-term financial benefit of a handful of foreign and Armenian investors is both tragic and appalling. Despite the government's lackluster response to our request for an independent EIA [Environmental Impact Assessment], we are encouraged by the increasing civic engagement we are seeing on the ground and in the Diaspora around this issue, and we hope to see that momentum continue (Armenian Environmental Network, 2012a).

Teghut

Teghut Forest, which is one of the last remaining pristine forests in Armenia, is located in the north-eastern part of Armenia – in Lori marz, in the basin of the trans-boundary Debed River. The forest is rich in vegetation and wildlife with 200 species of plants, 55 mammal and 86 bird species, and 10 reptile and 4 amphibian species. Many of these plants and animals are rare and endangered species; 6 plant and 26 animal species out of the above are included in the Red Book of Armenia. The nearest villages are Teghut and Shnogh and have a combined population of around 3,600 people.

In 2001, the Armenian Government granted the Armenian Copper Programme, a Closed Joint Stock Company (CJSC), a 25-year license for exploitation of the Teghut mine. The Teghut mine is the country's second largest copper-molybdenum mine after the Kajaran mine which is operated by the Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine. The territory allocated for mining in Teghut is 1,491 hectares (ha), 82% of which (1,232 ha) is covered with forest. The lands were purchased at very low prices, 38 AMD for 1 m² (around 10 cents US) (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2013a) and the mining project envisages clear-cutting of 357 ha of forest. If exploited, the mining will result in about 500 million tons of tailings (highly toxic wastes composed of heavy metals) and 600 million tons of other types of waste, which will be disposed in the gorge of Duqanadzor River, resulting in 214 ha of territory contaminated with toxic waste.

According to publicly available information, 19.3% of ACP shares belong to Valery Mezhlumyan, while the ownership of the remaining 80.7% of shares remains undisclosed due to offshore registration. There is very limited information, and a great deal of public speculation, about how and to whom the mining license for the exploitation of the Teghut mine, and indeed for all other mines, were granted. Given that many of the mines are registered in offshore territories, there is a lack of information leaving many unanswered questions concerning the identity of the mine owners [See Table 2 on p. 71].

In addition to the lack of information about the ownership of the mines, there have been serious concerns about the lack of proper public hearings and the quality and independence of existing environmental impact assessments (EIAs). For instance, the 2004 EIA for the Teghut mine was conducted by the Lernametalurgiai Institute (LMI) closed joint stock company (CJSC), which is owned by the Vallex Group. Given that the mining license for Teghut is owned by a subsidiary of the Vallex Group, the Armenian Cooper Programme, this raises questions concerning the independence of LMI's environmental impact assessment. Moreover, questions have been raised about the economic evaluations and the projected environmental impacts presented in the LMI assessment where there is evidence that economic calculations were "grossly undervalued, and in some cases, inaccurately compiled" (Armenian Environmental Network, 2012b). On 30 October 2012, a coalition of 14 Armenian NGOs that are based in Armenia and in diaspora

communities worldwide, sent a letter to President Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan requesting an independent EIA for the Teghut Mining Project, arguing that the existing “Environmental Impact Assessment and public notice requirements are “fatally flawed”. They add that irreparable damage is already done to Teghut and that great damage will be done to the region if the mining continues.

The joint letter requests a new EIA in order to: 1) comply with domestic and international laws, 2) determine and present an accurate analysis of the environmental impact of the Teghut mining operations, 3) address the potential public health impacts of the Teghut mining operations, 4) take alternative development options to mining into consideration and 5) restore public faith and trust in government (Armenian Environmental Network, 2012a).

The government rejected the request stating that an EIA was completed within the “scope of the law” and that therefore, the project was approved. At present, ACP has been “aggressively removing a mountain” in order to reach the underground deposits of copper and molybdenum. The company has already cleared large sections of the pristine Teghut forest to create a massive tailing dump for the toxic waste left after mineral processing (AEN ATP 2012). As of October 2013, the mine had not yet opened for full operation; however, many activists believe that it will open in the coming months.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

THE SAVE TEGHUT CIVIC INITIATIVE

The Save Teghut Civic Initiative which was formed in 2007, aims to “preserve Teghut forest with its surrounding eco-system and protect the fundamental rights of the local population to live in a healthy and safe environment” (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2013d). The Save Teghut Civic Initiative (STCI) is entirely comprised of volunteers, is non-partisan, and as the website makes clear, the civic initiative “does not aspire to gain political power”.

The Save Teghut Civic Initiative has framed its opposition to the Teghut mine around environmental as well as governance issues. According to the group’s manifesto, the Save Teghut Civic Initiative is “guided by the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia calling for a healthy and dignified life, freedom, prosperity and happiness of generations”. They cite “systemic corruption”, “uncontrolled overexploitation and profit-making from our natural resources”, and “unfair distribution of the wealth” as creating “social injustice and mass emigration” from Armenia (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2012a).

The STCI has made repeated calls for the Government to focus on creating more environmentally friendly and sustainable development projects. In order to achieve its goals, the Initiative has employed various strategies ranging from protest actions; flash mobs; bicycle tours; cultural events (e.g., concerts); boycott campaigns; petitions; conferences; and negotiations with government officials. STCI consists of 35 – 40 active members and has approximately 8000 followers on its Facebook page. While many actions draw on the main core group of supporters, there have also been larger actions, such as in January 2012, when 150 people travelled from Yerevan to Teghut to protest against the mine. In September 2013 the STCI organized a Honey Fair in Shnogh village thereby creating an opportunity for villagers to sell locally produced honey and other products. The aim of this event was to highlight the possibilities of “an alternative economy”. In 2012, the STCI had again organised the sale of around 1 ton of honey produced in Shnogh and Teghut (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2013b).

Since 2007, the STCI has become a focal point for concerned individuals to meet one another, to discuss issues, to educate themselves about legislation and policies, and to establish connections and networks. The STCI has also become a mobilising platform for the creation of other civic initiatives and many individuals that are or were actively

involved in STCI have subsequently been involved in other civic initiatives (e.g. Protect Trchkan Waterfall, Save Mashtots Park etc.) and/or created more formal institutions and structures, such the Ecoera NGO, through which they can consolidate and scale up their efforts.

In addition to creating a base of activists, STCI has also been influential in shaping the actions and practices employed by other initiatives. For instance, it was the first to engage in creative public actions called “flash mobs” or “smart mobs” which are sudden gatherings of groups of people who come together to perform seemingly pointless actions, such as dancing, reciting poetry, riding their bicycles in a circle, or letting off balloons, to publicise and draw attention to a social issue. These actions are then videotaped and posted on YouTube, Facebook or spread through mass emails. STCI organised and implemented these creative actions alongside more traditional forms of protest including picket actions in front of government buildings; letter writing campaigns and signature collection, and legal court actions.

While more traditional forms of activism are important to gain the attention of policy makers and to engage them in policy dialogue, more creative actions have been very useful in attracting media attention and for engaging the interest and participation of younger participants, who often find such activities as bicycle rides and flash mobs quite entertaining. In addition to these efforts, STCI has worked with formal NGOs to widen impact.

Engaging with Armenian NGOs

Working with a number of Armenian NGOs, the Save Teghut Civic Initiative has also been involved in lawsuits and appeals to international bodies. In June 2009, the Transparency International Anti-corruption Center, Ecoera and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor NGOs filed an appeal to the Administrative Court of Armenia against the Armenian Government, Ministry of Nature Protection, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, citing the violation of constitutional, national as well as UN international convention laws. The question of NGOs’ access to justice has been litigated at courts of different instances for two years now. In its decision dated April 1, 2011, the Cassation Court stated that a non-governmental organisation couldn’t claim for the de-

fence of other persons, regardless of its statutory goals (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2013c).

The STCI together with the same three NGOs later appealed to the United Nations Aarhus and Espoo Compliance Committees arguing that Armenia had violated its international obligations during the commissioning of the Teghut mine. Particularly, they raised concerns regarding how the decisions relating to the mine's operation infringed a number of major requirements of the Convention such as the requirement of clear, transparent and consistent framework for implementation of the public participation provisions and that of public participation in the decision-making process. According to the findings and recommendations of the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention, "...the Party concerned failed to inform the public early in the environmental decision-making process and in a timely manner" (hra.am, 2012).

On 13 July 2012, the Save Teghut Civic Initiative addressed an appeal to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Twenty-eight national and international organisations signed the appeal. The signatories of the appeal were requesting about an "urgent visit" of relevant special rapporteurs to Armenia so as to further investigate and report on this issue. They write, "There is a pressing need to take steps to stop the practice of unsustainable and irresponsible mining that puts under the risk the existence and well-being of the tiny country with a territory of only 29,000 sq. kilometres and its population" (Save Teghut Civic Initiative, 2012b). In late 2012, the UN contacted local parties to start the process of delegating special rapporteurs.

On 3 November, 2012 a shadow report was submitted to the European Union, which provided evidence that "current Armenian authorities demonstrate no progress towards ensuring a proper, independent and effective internal public financial control, nor do they demonstrate progress towards implementation of the pledged actions aimed at alignment of Public Internal Financial Control policies to the policy and practice in the EU" (HETQ, 2012b).

The aforementioned are all examples of the attempt by STCI, working together with Armenian NGOs, to scale-up their impact.

The Role of Political Parties

STCI firmly embraces an inclusive stance towards political parties and it does not subscribe to any one political party or ideology. This is due to both the desire to remain firmly rooted as a civil society movement and also because members involved in the Initiative hold different political views ranging from liberal to left-leaning socialist to nationalist. The group neither actively seeks nor courts relations or assistance from any political party.

Until quite recently, opposition political parties, apart from a few individuals, have been largely silent on the matter of mining. Of these, the Heritage Party MP, Zaruhi Postanjyan, has been one of the most outspoken critics of mining for the past several years. She has spoken out publicly against the mines in Teghut and Kapan. In January 2012, Postanjyan spearheaded a written declaration which was made public at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's 2012 plenary session. The written declaration condemns what it calls "the man-made environmental disaster project of Teghut" and argues that the Government of Armenia is:

...violating its international obligations, such as Article 1 of the Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, the Aarhus Convention, as well as Armenian legislation, by considering the agricultural lands of community and private ownership as being under the public supreme interest, against the will of their owners and the general public, forcefully takes those lands from their owners, changes their purpose and turns thousands of hectares over to mining, including the Teghut mine (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2012).

Other political actors include the Chairman of the Social Ecological Green Party of Armenia, Armenak Dovlatyan, who has supported the work of the activists.

While not connected in any way to the work of the Save Teghut Civic Initiative, on 25 December 2012, the leader of the Heritage Party and presidential candidate at the time of speaking, Raffi Hovanissian also made a statement to the press arguing that "the time for change had come" stating that it would be necessary to redraft "the environmental

code and the tax code to ensure that, in the future, national resources are extracted only with due regard for the environment and to the benefit of the entire Armenian people” (HETQ, 2012a).

Despite the scale and scope of mining in Armenia, the involvement of political parties has thus far been minimal. Apart from the engagement of individual political actors, a broader political level and public debate are absent in Armenia. Also, our review of the press coverage of the Teghut mine from 2007 – 2012 demonstrated that discussion around Teghut would peak during election periods and decrease thereafter indicating a lack of continuous engagement with the issue by political parties.

Diaspora Connections

Currently, several diaspora communities in Europe and North America, have also become involved in the addressing the Teghut issue. In 2012, the Los Angeles based Armenian Revolutionary Federation’s Shant Student Association, organised a public event titled “Stop Destructive Mining” which addressed the “deforestation and destructive mining practices” in Armenia and highlighted the “importance of education and activism” arguing that things have “reached a critical point” (ARF Shant Student Association, 2012). Also in Los Angeles in 2013, the Green Armenia Environmental Group was established with the aim of raising awareness around environmental issues and to provide “practical and sound solutions to environmental problems” (Green Armenia, 2013). That same year in Geneva, Switzerland, the Building an Alternative Future non-profit organisation was created which also addresses the concerns around Teghut, but is positioned in such a way as to address sustainability issues more broadly.

Singer Serj Tankian has also been a long time defender of Teghut. In 2012 Tankian released a 3-minute video in which he discusses the environmental degradation and damage in Armenia within a global context (Armenian Environmental Network, 2012). In the video he states,

The destruction of wildlife and environmental havens can no longer be excused for the sake of progress or the attainment of natural resources. Civilization walks a tight rope between survival

of self and destruction of all. Based on our historical past and our current geopolitical reality, self-reliance for food, water, and energy is extremely important. The destruction of wildlife and the resulting addition to carbons in the air have created the conditions for global warming that severely limit our self-reliance. Mining is against our combined interest as a people and nation (Tankian, 2012; video available at Armenian Environmental Network 2012b).

It should be noted that activism against mining in Armenia is not a diaspora-wide issue in the same way as Artsakh (Karabakh) or genocide recognition. Moreover, there are also individuals in the diaspora who support mining in Armenia, presumably due to the perceived economic benefits for the country. For instance, a number of the mining corporations currently operating in Armenia include diaspora Armenians in positions of leadership (executive and non-executive). Van Krikorian from the US, is the Chairman and CEO of Global Gold Corporation which operates the Getik, Marjan and Tukhmanuk mines. Krikorian, who also sits on the board of the Armenian Assembly of America (Global Gold Corp., 2013a) joined Global Gold in 2003. Hratch Jabrayan from Canada, became the Vice President and General Manager of "Deno Gold Mining Company" CJSC in April 2013 (Armenian Chamber of Commerce in Armenia, 2013). Previously, Jabrayan was the Director of Administration (2011-2013) at Deno Gold Mining, which is exploiting the Shahumyan gold deposit near Kapan. In March 2013, Armen Sarkissian, the former Prime Minister of Armenia, who resides in London, was appointed as a non-executive director of Lydian International LTD which is developing the Amulsar gold mine near Jermuk in southeast Armenia (Lydian International, 2013b). Since being re-appointed Ambassador of Armenia to the UK in September 2013 (a position he has held twice before), Sarkissian has resigned from his position on the Lydian board (Lydian International, 2013c).

Mining companies describe their work as bringing economic development and jobs to Armenia as well as investing in the country's infrastructural development (Lydian International, 2013a, Global Gold Corp., 2013b). Appointing prominent diaspora Armenians to leadership positions may be intended to draw on their "wisdom and knowledge" (Lydian International, 2013b), but it could also be perceived as an attempt to bolster the legitimacy and to improve the image of foreign mining companies among Armenians.

Despite the concerted and persistent efforts of the Save Teghut Civic Initiative and NGOs including the Transparency International Anti-corruption Center, Ecoera and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor, as well as their supporters both in Armenia and the diaspora, the plans for opening the Teghut mine remain on course.

In January 2013, a new group, the Pan Armenian Environmental Front (PAEF), was established with the aim of creating a “pan-Armenian network” to monitor the environmental situation in Armenia and to promote sustainable economic growth and social justice. It seeks to do so by engaging the active participation of Armenians across the world. As this report goes to press (October 2013), three PAEF members were travelling to different diaspora communities in the United States to raise awareness of the dangers of mining in Armenia and Artsakh. It is too soon to tell whether their efforts will lead to greater diaspora involvement with and activism around environmental issues in Armenia. Yet, as I discuss below, it would be incorrect to state that the efforts of these civil society groups have been without any impact.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

THE IMPACT OF CIVIC INITIATIVES: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Achievements

If we consider direct or specific impacts at a policy level, we can see the success of a number of civic initiatives including the Stop Changes in Maternity Leave Law, Save the Kino Moskva Open Air Amphitheatre, as well as the Protect Trchkan Waterfall and Save Mashtots Park civic initiatives. In the case of Protect Trchkan Waterfall, in October 2011, the civic initiative succeeded in stopping the construction of the proposed hydroelectric station which would desiccate the waterfall. Following two weeks of occupation by activists near the waterfall accompanied by protests in Yerevan, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan halted the construction of the hydroelectric station on 3 November 2011. By December 2011, the construction had been called off entirely and Trchkan Waterfall was granted “protected” status. Whereas in the case of Mashtots Park, the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative, which began in February 2012, was able to save the park from being cemented over for the construction of luxury boutiques. The success of these, and other small civic initiatives, can be explained by the fact that they addressed very specific targets and they were not challenging economic projects where billions of dollars are at stake such as is the case in Teghut.

Even so, while the Save Teghut Civic Initiative and other civic initiatives, which address more politically sensitive issues, such as violence and deaths in the Armenian army (addressed by the civic initiative the Army in Reality), have not been able to register policy level and structural changes; they have opened up these problems to public scrutiny. Therefore, if we move from a productivist logic and examine the more generalised impact that civic initiatives have had in Armenia, we find that these civic initiatives have indeed raised awareness of the issues and given voice to citizens. More and more people are speaking about Teghut in Armenia and in diaspora communities around the world. Recently, in November 2012 and April 2013, the American University of Armenia Acopian Center for the Environment⁷ organised two international conferences that have addressed issues related to mining.

7. The American University of Armenia Acopian Center for the Environment “promotes the protection and restoration of the natural environment through research, education, and community outreach. AUA ACE’s focus areas include sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity and conservation, greening the built environment, clean energy and energy efficiency, as well as information technology and the environment”.

Challenges and Obstacles

Apart from the obvious fact that civil society organisations are challenging the work of very powerful multi-national corporations which are supported by vested political interests and international financial institutions (e.g. the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), there are other factors which limit impact and the widening out of participation. This section draws on findings from the 16 focus groups we conducted across Armenia, where we found fairly common factors in people's attitudes and access to information across Armenia.

First, fear limits wider public participation in civic initiatives. The fear factor, which is particularly strong outside of Yerevan and in the southern part of the country (Syunik marz), prevents people from joining these groups and voicing their concerns. All participants in the focus groups were told that the discussions are anonymous, and their names would not appear anywhere. Even so, at the end of some discussions, a few participants refused to sign their full names (first and last), arguing that they feared that what they had said to us in the focus group would be leaked and that they could lose their jobs.

If you talk about something you don't like, you lose your job. This is what Armenia is.

Female, 18-30, Alaverdi

The company sends people to protest against the activists. Whether I want it or not, I go. If I refuse to go, I will lose my salary and even my job. If I had another job by which to earn my living, I would not want the mine to operate in our community.

Male, 18-35, Teghut

Second, while the sense of activism has been emerging in Yerevan, there is widespread apathy and a lack of ownership and empowerment in Armenia.

Do you know why there is no mass activism? Because 70% of our citizens fight for their own survival, it is a struggle for the material; their minds are busy with this.

Female, 36 and above, Yerevan

We know that nothing is going to change anyway, it doesn't depend on you and it doesn't depend on us either.

Male, 18-30, Teghut

The sad thing is that we all think we don't have [a] future in Armenia, most of the young people think so. All of us would like to live abroad, to have a good education, professional growth and social security.

Female, 18-35, Yerevan

There is also the lack of a culture of protest; while this is changing in Yerevan where protesting has becoming popular, in rural areas people remain conservative. One respondent said:

Nobody will take a poster to protest, because we are Armenians, first of all, we have hang-ups, and more than one of them, especially in the villages.

Male, 18-35, Shnogh

But as the Yerevan activists I described earlier said, they draw inspiration and now look to themselves to bring the change they wish to see. Slowly this sense of personal responsibility and ownership is emerging in other parts of the country. For instance, one young participant in the Gyumri focus group said:

Everyone says that nothing depends on them, and only several people are willing to try something. It's not right to say that nothing depends on you, if everybody thought so, we wouldn't have anything. Everything, even state management, starts with the individual, then with the family, city and country.

Male, 18-30, Gyumri

The challenge for civic initiatives is to fight the reigning apathy and sense of disempowerment and to share information more widely. The latter remains difficult as civil society does not have access to the mainstream media. For many Armenians living in rural areas, television remains the primary form of information and they don't access information from other sources including blogs or Facebook.

Third, there is a trade off in people's minds between jobs and environment. This was what killed off the 1988 movement, as environmental-

ists were scapegoated for having focused too much on the environment and not enough on people's economic needs. As mentioned earlier, activists from the Save Teghut Civic Initiative have now started micro development projects focusing on selling honey, preserves and knitted items produced by villagers from Teghut and Shnogh. In this way, they have tried to highlight alternative paths to economic development. Yet much remains to be done if these micro projects are to grow and become more sustainable.

Civic initiatives are working to encourage and promote a growing sense of responsibility and ownership and highlighting alternative paths to development. They argue that people should not expect "others" (*urishner*) to act for them. They say to people, "You are a citizen, you have a voice, exercise it." They do this by exercising solidarity with people across the country. But as one prominent activist from Yerevan, Mariam Sukhudyan said:

People call me all the time and say they are cutting down trees or destroying such and such. I tell them: "Thanks for letting me know, but don't just call me. You can address that problem yourself. Of course I will help you, but it is your yard, your community, your park and you must act for yourself as well" (Interview on 18 September 2011).

Much remains to be done, but the persistence of the Save Teghut Civic Initiative has paid off in that after 5 years of campaigning around the issue, the matter of Teghut is now being discussed more broadly in Armenia and in many diaspora communities around the world. But many critics argue that civic initiatives are only suited for addressing narrowly focused, localised issues and that their lack of institutional development and experience prevents them from making a broader impact at a policy level and from gaining wider public support.

One NGO respondent said, "So far, the civic initiatives have been working on an specific (*tochichni*) scale. They are not addressing the systemic issues that need to be addressed. You need a political movement or a political party to address those issues" (10 October 2012). An academic, who was a supporter of the Mashtots Park civic initiative said:

Impact is happening on a case by case basis. But to have implications on policy conduct and to affect policy making ex ante as

opposed to ex post, takes a different kind of pressure. It not only takes the grassroots activism to sound the alarm and raise the flags, but you also need structures that will identify the alternative policies (Author interview via Skype on 25 November 2012).

Indeed, several NGO representatives and representatives from political parties have criticised civic initiatives for being unwilling to engage with political parties. One respondent from a diaspora based political organisation said that he recognised that “civil society is the only outlet for the young for expressing their ideas” but went on to add:

*My bone of contention with them is the lack of connection between civic activism and political activism. There is a **rabid paranoia** of established politics from the civic activists. And I would blame both sides for that. I would blame the established opposition political parties that they have not done enough in opening the channels of dialog with civic initiatives to try to incorporate their views more. At the same time, I would also level criticism at civic activists for being very closed. They are very, very anti-being referred to as this party or that party. They don't want to be **Dashnaksakan**⁸, they don't want to be **Levonakan**, they don't want to be **Hanrapetakan**, they don't want to be “anything-**akan**”, they just want to be whatever their issue is and that's it. I find that respectable in terms of keeping their hands clean and for not wanting to be labelled or categorised. But it also creates a ceiling in terms of their effectiveness of policy change (Author interview via Skype on 23 November 2012) [Emphasis added].*

While civic activists recognise that they may have hit the so-called “ceiling” of effectiveness, they are also wary of becoming too closely aligned with political parties for fear of being co-opted or exploited. The fear of co-optation is not unfounded. During the 2013 presidential campaign, Serzh Sargsyan attempted to represent the activists' victory in Mashtots Park as his own and in one of his election campaign videos, Sargsyan is presented as the defender of civil society and the rights of citizens, instead of the leader under whose administration oligar-

8. The suffix “akan” in Armenian indicates belonging or membership to that particular group. So Dashnaksakan means a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation political party. “Levonakan” refers to supporters of ex-president Levon Ter Petrosyan and his Armenian National Congress party and “Hanrapetakan” refers to the Republic Party of Armenia.

chic capitalism has been allowed to persist and expand. But it is not only Sargsyan who has attempted to appropriate the success of the movement in order to bolster his democratic credentials. Opposition political parties and movements, have also claimed responsibility for the success of Mashtots Park. As one activist from the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative said:

The attitude of opposition political parties towards civic activism is very consumerist. They want to tap into and benefit from the political and social capital accumulated by civic activists. For example, there is a video where representatives from the Pre-Parliament claim to not only have taken part in the developments of Mashtots Park, but they claim that they were “coordinating” it. That is their word, “to coordinate”. But I think such an approach to civic initiatives is problematic because we are independent and for them to claim that they are coordinating us is misleading. To me, if that is going to be the approach of political parties then why should we trust them? (Interview 5 April 2013).

The concern that political parties will exploit their actions for their own political gains is of concern to many activists, but following the successes of Trchkan and Mashtots Park civic initiatives, disagreements have begun to emerge among activists over how and indeed whether to scale up. Some activists are for building alliances with political parties, while others argue that this will lead to co-optation and de-radicalisation and instead advocate maintaining their distance from political parties.

Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia

MINING: THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Mining exists in countries around the world and social mobilisations against mining are a global phenomenon. Within any country where extractive industries emerge, the growth of a mining economy “changes the opportunity structure for a wide range of livelihoods, with some seeing opportunities where others see dispossession” (Bebbington et al., 2008b, p. 2891). The debates around mining have focused on what some have termed the “resource curse” or “Dutch disease” arguing that mineral rich countries “consistently underperform” their mineral-poor counterparts on a variety of economic and political indicators including economic performance, good governance, income inequality and democracy (Weinthal and Luong, 2006). Indeed, studies consistently demonstrate that reliance on mineral rents feeds patronage, clientalism and graft (Auty et al., 2000) and that mining has a “dismal track record to date in poverty reduction” (Pegg, 2006, p. 376). Findings within this body of literature focus on the “quality of institutions” (Auty et al., 2000) demonstrating that weak institutions allow for corruption and minimal monitoring from civil society in some countries (Weinthal and Luong, 2006). Moreover, there has been research on how local movements engage in transnational activism against mining in which activists seek to “jump scales” (Hurley and Ari, 2011, p. 1398) and build links beyond their borders with global NGOs and movements in order to enhance their leverage at a national level (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, Tarrow, 2011). The latter has not happened in Armenia. Instead, in Armenia, civic initiatives have sought to increase their leverage and impact by building links with, as previously mentioned, Armenians in the diaspora. There are no links between the Armenian civic initiatives and global civil society or international environmental movements at present. As one activist from the Save Mashtots Park civic initiative told me:

*If we try to build links with global environmental movements, the Government will accuse us of “working for foreigners”. So our only option is to work with diaspora Armenians because while they live abroad, they are not considered “foreigners” (**odar**) (Author interview on 9 October 2012).*

The Save Teghut, Protect Trchkan Waterfall and Save Mashtots Park civic initiatives all had strong support from various diaspora Armenians living in Europe and North America who followed the protests on Facebook and YouTube. Diaspora Armenians signed petitions, wrote open letters to the Prime Minister and other government officials

(including the Minister of the Diaspora). One such open letter to the Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobyan states:

The most sacred duty and responsibility of the armed forces of any country, is to defend the borders of the said country and protect the safety and the security of its citizens. It is not, to control, silence or terrorize innocent citizens protesting the illegal use of public spaces, i.e. Mashtotz Park, Teghud Forest or the unlawful and criminal exploitation of the resources of the country, causing long term damage to the environment and the ecology of our Homeland (Misakyan, 2012).

Mining companies which face grassroots civil society resistance often engage with locals by promising people they will all get jobs, share royalties, and have new infrastructure as rewards for their support to the mining (Kuecker, 2007, p. 101). Moreover, they contest the “resource curse” hypothesis, countering it with the “resource endowment” thesis which posits that mining can bring economic growth and benefits to a country. This also happens in Armenia and one cannot discount the fact that people living in areas adjacent to mines are often attracted by the economic incentives and benefits. But many villagers we interviewed also stated that they would prefer to earn a living in ways other than mining.

Mining’s supporters across the globe also argue that opposition to mining is an “anti-development” stance, which they perceive as “selfish and insincere” (Dougherty, 2011, p. 415). In Armenia, such supporters even accuse activists of “working for foreign powers”. For instance, in an open letter sent by Hratch Jabrayan, the Vice President of Deno Gold Mining, to a Canadian Armenian activist, Sevak Harutyunyan, Jabrayan writes:

Don’t lose yourself and become the victim of those “activists”, who are carrying out the orders of foreign governments in their desire to obtain grants (Jabrayan, 2013).

Such arguments which attempt to describe environmental activism as “carrying out the orders of foreigners” conveniently overlook the fact that it is indeed the mining companies themselves that are often owned and operated by foreign, multi-national corporations and that

the current “mining friendly” policies in Armenia are being “upgraded” with the “help of the World Bank and European experts” (Ministry of Energy and Armenian Development Agency, 2011).

Dependence on mining comes with risks, some of which have already been discussed in this report. The evidence globally also shows that the economic benefits of mining may only exist in the short term, leaving mining communities worse off in the longer term (Bebbington et al., 2008a). Mining is highly dependent on global commodity prices, and shifts that come from events like the 2008 global economic crisis are immediately experienced. One year after the current crisis began, the Armenian economy in 2009 shrank by over 14% due to the global decline of metal prices which led to some mines being temporarily shut down so as to limit economic losses due to unprofitable production (Armenia Tree Project and Zoi Environmental Network, 2012). Evidence from other countries across the globe also demonstrates the risks of over-reliance on mining as an economic growth strategy. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, Zambia experienced an economic boom fuelled by the export of copper and other primary materials. In the mid-1970s, Zambia was a middle income country with “excellent prospects for “full” industrialization and ultimate admission to the ranks of the “developed’ world” (Ferguson, 1999, p. 6). In 1969, Zambia’s gross domestic product (GDP) was not only one of the highest in Africa (three times higher than in Kenya and twice that of Egypt), but it also was significantly higher than Brazil, Malaysia, South Korea and Turkey. While these latter four countries are flourishing today, Zambia’s growth “slipped off track” because of the decline in the buying power of copper on the world market in the 1980s. The country, which had an over-reliance on copper exports, experienced severe economic decline and contraction from which it has yet to recover (Ferguson, 1999, 7).

Of course, one cannot simply compare countries to one another; there are many differentiating factors and circumstances. However, it is useful to examine and consider international experience vis a vis mining because it can provide important insights and lessons. Innumerable studies of mineral-rich countries in the developing world show that, since the 1970s, these countries are more prone to corruption, income inequality, and authoritarian regimes (Weinthal and Luong, 2006). This is what some have called the “paradox of mineral wealth”.

CONCLUSION

This report discussed and analysed the rise of civil society activism around environmental issues in Armenia. It examined why civic initiatives are emerging and their demands, aspirations and tactics. The report discussed how these grassroots groups relate to more formal NGOs, political parties and the Diaspora. As mining and social mobilisations against mining are a global phenomenon, the report also contextualised the discussion within the broader global context. While civic activists have not been able to stop mining, their mobilisation and persistent efforts in this area have increased awareness, public scrutiny, participation and discussion in Armenia and in different diaspora communities. It is important to note that not all civil society organisations and activists are entirely opposed to mining, but rather to how mining is currently practiced in Armenia. A number of my respondents characterised the current “mining friendly” legislation as leading to the “robbery” (*goxubut*) or “plunder” (*talan*) of Armenia’s natural resources arguing that stronger regulation of the mining industry is required. Because while Armenia’s lenient tax policies and “mining friendly” regulations are undoubtedly attractive for foreign investors and local economic elites, such policies coupled with the rapid growth and spread of mining activity do not necessarily benefit the wider population. On the contrary, extensive mining activity and lenient regulatory frameworks and policies pose a risk to the environment, public health, and livelihoods.

Sustainable development, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, is “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, p 43). In Armenia, although the government has ratified many international conventions on the preservation of biodiversity and natural heritage, and the Armenian Constitution explicitly addresses nature protection and the rights of people to lead healthy lives, these concepts have been “neglected or only implemented selectively” (Policy Forum Armenia, 2010, p. 31) as the voice of Armenian’s civil society has been largely ignored by policy makers. As scholars and activists point out, sustainable development implies a more careful use of scarce resources, adding that economic development should not be a trade-off between short-term economic benefit and long-term sustainability of the environment and livelihoods (Agyeman et al., 2003).

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's recent book, *Why Nations Fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty* (2013), examines the huge differences in incomes and standards of living that separate the rich countries of the world from the poor. They argue that in order for countries to prosper, citizens need "inclusive institutions" which empower broad cross-sections of society (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013, p. 458). The process of developing inclusive institutions, as opposed to "extractive institutions" from which a narrow segment of elites benefit, happens gradually. While there is no magic formula for creating inclusive institutions, what is needed is the political will; some pre-existing political institutions that introduce a modicum of pluralism; as well as the presence and participation of civil society institutions (including the media) which can coordinate the demands of the population (2013, pp. 460-461).

In Armenia, more robust environmental governance; greater accountability, transparency and participation in decision making; and the strengthening or reform of laws and regulatory frameworks to ensure that the interests of corporations and economic elites (i.e., oligarchs) are not placed above those of the people and the environment are required if the country is to prosper and embark on a path towards sustainable economic growth and development.

This report focused on civil society and environmental activism. While civil society organisations and activists have played an instrumental role in raising awareness and opening up issues for public debate and scrutiny, much remains to be done. As the findings show, it is unlikely that activists working in civic initiatives alone will be able to achieve this without scaling up their efforts and the broadening out of participation and engagement. But one thing, which is certain, is that it is high time to open up these discussions and to consider the real costs and benefits of mining, not just for a narrow set of elites and corporations, but for the country as a whole.

MINES IN ARMENIA

By Lena Nazaryan,

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According to the Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources' State Register of Solid Mineral Resources, by 2013 more than 670 mining deposits had been registered, of which 30-metal mines.

Over the past decade, from 2003 – 2013, 439 of the 670 identified mines were granted exploitation rights. Of those that were granted those documents 413 were non-metal mines and 26 were metal mines. Six metal mines are located in areas where there are dozens of historical and cultural monuments.

According to the Agency of the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia, out of the 26 metal mines, 12 have shareholders that are fully or partially registered in offshore zones.

At present, 141.94 km² have been allocated for mining (52.528 km² are allocated to metal mines and 89.42 to non-metal mines). Additionally, 3506 km² are under geological exploration¹.

The waste generated during the process of mining mineral deposits is and shall be accumulated in 16 tailing dumps, which cover an area of about 700 hectares (i.e., 7 km²). Of these 16 tailing dumps, 1 is in the construction phase (the Teghut copper- molybdenum deposit), 8 are active, 3 are subject to re-cultivation, 1 is being reconstructed, while the remaining 3 have not been exploited².

1. Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources writ number N 01/24.1/1669-13 submitted to the president of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, Vardan Ayyvazyan, October 2013.

2. More detailed information available at <http://transparency.am/assets/mines>

Table 2: Metal Mining Companies in Armenia

#	Mine name	Mining Company ¹	Mining Company Ownership ²		
			October 2013		State share
			Official information ³	Online information ⁴	
1	Meghradzor Gold	"Meghradzor Gold" LLC	Vardan Margaryan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Megradzor Gold is owned by the Global Gold Corporation ⁵ . Global Gold Corporation has been headquartered in Greenwich, Connecticut since 2003 ⁶ .	0%
2	Meghradzor Gold (Lusajur area)	"Paramount Gold Mining" LLC	Tigran Arzakantsyan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Paramount Gold Mining sold its shares to Sberbank of Russia . A 51 % controlling stake in Paramount Gold Mining is held by Tigran Arzakantsyan ⁷ .	0%
3	Armanis Gold-polymetallic	"Sagamar" CJSC	"Global Metals Limited" (100%) Registered in Nicosia, Cyprus (offshore territory)	Information is not available	0%
4	Hanqasar Copper - Molybdenum	"Ler-Ex" LLC	"Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Mine" CJSC (100%) Registered in Armenia	60% of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Mine is owned by CRONIMET Mining GmbH, Germany ⁸ .	0%
5	Hanqavan Molybdenum	"Golden Ore" LLC	"Geopromining Gold" LLC (99.9%) Registered in Armenia "Agarak Copper-Molybdenum Combine" CJSC (0.1%) , Registered in Tortola, British Virgin Islands (offshore territory)	Global Gold Corporation retained the right to participate up to 20% in any new exploration undertaken by GeoProMining or their successors in Armenia ⁹ .	0%
6	Shamlugh Copper	"Akhtala Ore Processing Combine" CJSC	"Metal Prince LTD" (100%) Registered in St. Kitts and Nevis (offshore territory)	Metal Prince LTD is registered in the British Nevis Island . ¹⁰	0%
7	Shorzha Dunite and Peridotite Magnesium-silicate	"Gegamet Plus" CJSC	Information is not available	Information is not available	0%
8	Hrazdan Iron	"Fortune Resources" LLC	"Caspian Baunty Steel Limited" (72%) Registered in the British Virgin Islands (offshore territory) Suren Ayvazyan (28%)	Fortune Resources LLC is registered in Armenia. The largest shareholder of Fortune Resources LLC is Fortune Oil company ¹¹ which is registered in England and Wales. Fortune Oil PLC is listed on the London stock exchange and its operational headquarters is in Hong Kong. The largest shareholders in Fortune Oil are First Level Holdings Limited, Vitol and major Chinese state-owned corporations.	0%
9	Dastakert Copper-Molybdenum	"Molybdenum World" LLC	"Dinefex Trading Limited" (100%) Registered in Nicosia, Cyprus (offshore territory)	Information is not available	0%
10	Shahumyan Gold-Polymetallic	"Dundee Precious Metals Kapan" CJSC	"Vatrin Investment LAD" (100%) Registered in Tortola, British Virgin Islands (offshore territory)	Dundee Precious Metals is a Canadian-based, international mining company ¹³ .	0%
11	Tukhmanuk Gold	"Mego -Gold" LLC	"JJCR Mining" (100%) Registered in Delaware, USA (offshore territory)	Global Gold Corporation acquired the Tukhmanuk gold mine, plant, and surrounding exploration sites in Armenia. The property is held by the Armenian company Mego-Gold ¹⁴ .	0%
12	Sotq Gold	GeoProMining Gold" LLC	"Dies BV" (100%) Registered in Amsterdam	Global Gold Corporation retained the right to participate up to 20% in any new exploration undertaken by Sterlite Gold/ Vedanta/GeoProMining or their successors in Armenia ¹⁵ .	0%
13	Mart gold	"Multi Group Concern" LLC	Gagik Tsarukyan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Information is not available	0%

14	Kajaran Copper-Molybdenum	"Kajaran Copper and Molybdenum Combine" CJSC	Information is not available	Kajaran copper and molybdenum deposit is exploited by Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Mine. The latter is owned by CRONIMET Mining GmbH, Germany (60%) ¹⁶	0%
15	Sofi-Bina Gold-Polymetallic	"Vardani Zartonqe" LLC	Suren Ayvazyan (40%) Hrachya Hovhannisyan (40%) Artashes Kakoyan (20%) Registered in Armenia	Information is not available	0%
16	Amulsar Gold	"Geoteam" CJSC	"Lydian International" LLC (100%) Registered in Tortola, British Virgin Islands , (offshore territory)	Lydian International is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange ("TSX") in Canada. Lydian's largest shareholder is the International Finance Corporation (IFC; part of the World Bank Group). The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is also a major shareholder in the Company. Other major shareholders include a number of North American and European natural resource institutional investors ¹⁷ . The registered office is in Jersey, the Channel Islands .	0%
17	Lichqvaz-Tey Gold	"Sagamar" CJSC	"Global Metals Limited" LLC (100%) Registered in Nicosia, Cyprus (offshore territory)	Information is not available	0%
18	Agarak Copper Molybdenum	"Agarak PMK" CJSC	"Comsap Industries" LLC (100%) Registered in Tortola, British Virgin Islands (offshore territory)s	Information is not available	0%
19	Azatek Gold-Polymetallic	"Vayk Gold" LLC	Zhanna Muradyan (50%) Ashot Hovhannisyan (50%) Registered in Armenia	The Azatek mine is 74% owned by Anglo-African Minerals Plc ¹⁸ , which is "a mining investment company that aims to capitalise on special situations in Africa and Armenia" ¹⁹ . Anglo-African Minerals Plc acquired this 74% interest in Azatek from the Caspian Resources Development Pte Limited, a Sistema associate company in 2010. ²⁰	0%
20	Teghut Copper-Molybdenum	"Teghut" CJSC	Owned by Armenian Copper Program (100%) Information is not available ²¹	Information is not available	0%
21	Terterasar Gold	"Sipan-1" LLC	Pavel Manucharyan (50%) Armen Manucharyan (50%) Registered in Armenia	Terterasar Gold is 100% owned by the Iberian Resources Corp. 86.2% of the latter is owned by Tamaya Resources Limited ²² , Tamaya Resources Limited is headquartered in Australia ²³ .	0%
22	Alaverdi Copper	"Armenian Copper Program" CJSC	Information is not available ²⁴	The company is registered in the Republic of Armenia. It is one of the companies of the Vallex Group ²⁵ .	0%
23	Marjan Gold Polymetallic	"Marjan Mining Company" LLC	"Global Gold Mining" LLC (100%) There are discrepancies in the publicly available information concerning the location of registration.	Global Gold Corporation retained the right to participate up to 20% in any new exploration undertaken by Sterlite Gold/Vedanta/GeoProMining or their successors in Armenia ²⁶ .	0%
24	Aygedzor Copper-Molybdenum	"Active Lernagorts" LLC	Vardan Margaryan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Information is not available	0%
25	Aygedzor Copper-Molybdenum (Tghkut area)	"Tatstone" LLC	Leonid Arevshatyan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Information is not available	0%
26	Lichq Copper	"Tatstone" LLC	Leonid Arevshatyan (100%) Registered in Armenia	Information is not available	0%

1. The term "Mining company" refers to the company which is granted the right to extract the minerals from the soil.
2. The term "Mining company ownership" refers to the actual registered shareholders of the company.
3. Information in this column was obtained by Transparency International Anticorruption Center NGO from the official website of the Agency of the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia, at www.e-register.am.
4. Information in this column was compiled by Socioscope NGO from online sources including the mining companies' official web sites, press releases, official documents, etc. It has some differences and discrepancies with the official data collected from the e-register. Please note, although the information on the web sites might not be up to date, it is the only information that is publicly available.
5. Armenian Joint Venture Agreement, September 30, 1999, <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/filings/filing.php?filingid=23>
6. <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/background.php>
7. <http://metalminingwire.com/news/sberbank-acquires-49-percent-of-armenia-paramount-gold-mining/2093/>, Article from July 18, 2011
8. <http://www.cronimet-mining.am/en/cronimet-mining-in-armenia/zcmc/>
9. <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/background.php>
10. <http://www.metalprince.am/pages.php?al=common-info>
11. <http://fortune-resources.am/company/>
12. http://www.fortune-oil.com/en_us/our_company.htm
13. <http://www.dundeepriceless.com/operations/producing-mines/kapan/default.aspx>
14. <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/news/20050801release.php>
15. <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/background.php>
16. <http://www.zcmc.am/eng/our-operations/>
17. <http://www.lydianinternational.co.uk/company-overview.htm>
18. <http://www.anglo-african.net/resources/docs/e%20v478.pdf>; http://www.proactiveinvestors.co.uk/genera/files/companies/2_angloafrican_minerals_presentation_july_2010.pdf
19. http://www.proactiveinvestors.co.uk/genera/files/companies/2_angloafrican_minerals_presentation_july_2010.pdf
20. <http://www.dgap.de/dgap/News/corporate/angloafrican-minerals-plc-anglo-african-minerals-plc-acquires-interest-million-ounce-gold-equivalent-resource-armenia/?newsID=638157&print=1>
21. On 10.06.2008 (N 01-16/6-816) the Ministry of Economy of RA in pursuance of 16.05.2008 (N 012-2262) recommendation of the Prime Minister of RA, in connection with the query addressed to the Government by RA MP Z. Postanjyan, presents a reference which states as follows: "Based on the reference provided by "Armenian Copper Programme" CJSC we notify that 81% of shares of Liechtenstein-registered Vallex F.M. Establishment company is owned by Valeri Mejlumyan, who also owns the remaining 19% of shares of "Armenian Copper Programme" CJSC. The copy of official letter from ACP is available for review at Transparency International Anticorruption Center office in Yerevan.
22. <http://www.24hgold.com/english/project.aspx?id=66685644F8350>, <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=9673989>
23. <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=9673989>
24. See the footnote 22
25. <http://www.acp.am/en/about/History.htm>
26. <http://www.globalgoldcorp.com/background.php>

THE GEOGRAPHY OF MINING DEPOSITS IN ARMENIA



The map provides a description and location of mining deposits.

Please note that the map does not provide the precise geographical location including latitude and longitude coordinates.

Information about the location of the mining deposits indicated on the map was collected by Lena Nazaryan, Transparency International Anticorruption Center and designed by Nora Galfayan, Utopiana.am creative-cultural NGO.

For more detailed information, please see <http://transparency.am/assets/mines>

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This report is based on extensive qualitative research conducted by Armine Ishkanian in Armenia in 3 field visits: September 2011, May 2012 and October 2012. The research was funded by a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The report examines the recent rise of social mobilisations by civil society groups around environmental issues in Armenia. It examines why civic initiatives are emerging and their demands, aspirations and tactics. It particularly focuses on civil society campaigns against mining in the country. Through an examination of recent activism in Armenia (2007-present), Ishkanian highlights the achievements as well as the challenges and obstacles facing civil society in Armenia. The objective of this report is to contribute to on-going debates within Armenia and in diaspora communities around the globe about mining in Armenia, but also about the wider socio-economic and political developments in the country.