Open Society Foundations - Armenia

The *Next Step* in the Development of Armenian Civil Society

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Acknowledgements

About research

This research is about Armenian civil society. The units of analysis are the two main civil society -- formal (civil society organisations or non-governmental organisations (NGO): legal entities registered in Armenia), and informal (activists, civic activist campaigns, civic initiatives) -- groups, or actors in the country. This research puts as a priority the idea that, notwithstanding the number of problems the Armenian society (third, voluntary) sector has registered during the period of more than a quarter of century, it will be misleading, if not naive, to define the Armenian civil society as one group only (either formal or informal). This research questions whether the formal and informal actors of Armenian society have been capable to effectively partner in collaborative effort for impact.

The main premise of this research derives from the important similarity that, usually, formal and informal civil society actors share, namely establishing or organising around ideas and a shared commitment. The purpose of this research is to consider the interaction and impact of the two large societal actors, aiming to define the Armenian civil society anew. The specific objectives of research are to identify active civic groups in the country, their differences, mutual perceptions, channels of cooperation, and impact as a result of partnership of the two actors. This paper aims to serve as a guide for Armenian civil society actors who operate attempting to deliver impact. The *impact* is defined as the ability to challenge public authorities and institutions by developing an issue-based society.

The paper uses the primary qualitative data of in-depth expert interviews, analysis of primary data collected by author in 2015, and secondary data analysis. Drawing on the existing studies discussing relationship of formal and informal actors of Armenian civil society (Ishkanian 2011; Ishkanian et al. 2013; Glasius and Ishkanian 2015; Ishkanian 2015; Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016a; Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016b; Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016c), this paper intends to expand the research, by at the same time narrowing down the particular attention on the possibilities and issues for formal and informal actors of Armenian civil society to consolidate their potential. This paper does not pretend to solve a mystery. But it does attempt to summarise the knowledge on Armenian civil society vital actors' previous performance and mutual relationship -- aiming to confirm the longstanding proved importance of the strength of groups concealed in unified agenda and coordination.

Introduction

The concern for democracy, or a better life, has inevitably led researchers and other interested parties to a search of civil society representatives including NGOs, unions, professional associations, active and independent informal groups and individuals.

The availability and independence, as well as the various abilities of civil society entities have been continuously proved to be significant indicators of democratic performance of countries around the world. Solutions to issues via local collective action (prior to making any reference to the government) has been one of the distinguishing public performances, discussed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his cutting edge work "Democracy in America" (Tocqueville 2003 (1840)).

The importance of local collective action, or of small groups as meaningful social units has been recognised by various studies (see, for example Fine and Harrington 2004), not to mention recognising the importance of groups as incubators for audiences (Habermas 1991).

The role of civic participation for democracy has been a constantly appearing subject in debates, with a popular contribution by Robert Putnam advocating that the existing within society indicators such as networks, norms and trust (defined as a social capital) will be determinant whether a society will make democratic practices work, or rather exercise communities facing difficulties in promoting shared objectives (Putnam 1995a; Putnam 1995b; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994; Putnam 2001). Therefore, the practice of connectedness, unification and trust among various societal groups, by promoting the level of social capital, contributes to the expansion of internal democratic space.

Among reasons to justify the lack of civic participation on broader levels is countries' prior long history of authoritarian or clientelistic system (Carroll 1992). The social capital in such countries does not usually progress beyond kin and family relationship (Abom 2004). The weakness of civil society (defined as low levels of membership, trust and volunteering) in post-communist countries has proved to be inevitably linked to the preceding communist experience of these countries (Howard 2003). The experience of former norms, added to a variation of existing social, economic, and political indicators will determine if a country is able to exercise an effective social participation. In case of Armenia, although the influence of the socialist past remains, the low levels of trust towards civil society sector (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014a) are mainly due to the social and political conditions of the country, not the Soviet experience (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014b).

The landscape of Armenian civil society has changed. Since early 1990s the country has witnessed multiple labelling of its civil society sector in search for a representative definition according to the developments at a given period. The various stages of civil society *condition* range from a Soviet society, to *genetically engineered* one,[1] followed by informally developing groups or actors manifested in civic activist campaigns (or civic initiatives) throughout the last decade. Historically speaking, Armenia had vital successful cases of participation marking the *birth of* its civil society (Abrahamian 2001; Abrahamian and Shagoyan 2011). Today however,

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[1] A term used to refer to NGOs by Armine Ishkanian in "Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia" (2008).

we may say, that the Armenian society finds itself in crisis with a number of accumulated problems, discussed later in the paper.

The social capital can be considered as a measure of social cohesion, which for Armenia seems to be low. Looking at available indicators to be able to draw conclusions about Armenia's social capital, the 2011 survey on social cohesion presents not promising results: among other variables, the most popular answer to *"feeling responsible for your community"* question was *"not at all"* (45%), with 42% saying *"somewhat responsible"*; to the question *"to what extent are you satisfied with the level of voluntary mutual support in your community"* 50% of respondents said they are dissatisfied,[2] versus 40% satisfied.[3] Contrary to the satisfaction with one's own community, satisfaction with one's own family projects opposite results: 89% of respondents report satisfaction with family. Speaking about involvement (or participation) in any formal or informal groups during the last 12 months: 96% not involved in health, disability, elderly care and social welfare; 99% not involved in justice/human rights civic groups, 98% not involved in local community or neighbourhood groups (with 1% having participated in already organised event, and 0.2% in organisational issues)[4] (Caucasus Research Resource Centers - Armenia 2011). The overall societal picture depicts that Armenia has strong family, not community bonding, with only family networks being valuable and important. This means that Armenia needs new forms of social cohesion emerging, with the level of social capital in the country having yet to progress. According to the Freedom House Armenia is partly free,[5] with light indicators for political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2017).

It will be inappropriate, if not naive, to limit conclusions about Armenian society to examining its overall population, or leaving the inquiry solely on the marginalised level. The country-case of Armenia necessitates research on separate civil society actors' potential and performance, to be able to contribute to the understanding of societal development dynamics, not to mention finding solutions to issues in an environment with centralised economic and political powers. The relationship between Armenian various civil society actors has been a subject of interest in selected recent studies. Informally developing actors, or civic initiatives have introduced new understanding of civil society in Armenia (Ishkanian 2015), while its formal members are hugely disconnected from their immediate communities and constituencies, government and civic activists (Babajanian 2005; Ishkanian 2008; Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016c). Independence, solidarity, self-organisation, as well as embracing a more political understanding of civil society are components of civic initiatives outlined in previous research (Ishkanian 2015: 1207; 1211).

The available research, which has looked at the Armenian civil society actors' (namely civic activists and NGOs) mutual engagement, has contended about the tendency for the two groups to disconnect from each other, putting forward variety of reasons for such development. Moreover, the boundaries between the two have mainly been *"blurred",* at the same time remaining *"behind the scenes"* (Glasius and Ishkanian 2015), as well as not on researchers'

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[2] Strongly dissatisfied and somewhat dissatisfied categories merged.

[3] Strongly satisfied and rather satisfied categories merged.

[4] Social Cohesion Survey in Armenia 2011 (n=3,170), documentation and database available at: http://www.crrc.am/research-and-surveys/completed-projects/57-social-cohesion-survey?lang=en

[5] Ranked 45th out of 100 (where 0 = least free, 100 = most free), available at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/armenia

agenda. Regardless of selected successes of the Armenian society, achieved through either formal or informal actors, the challenges for the sector to progress remain.

Armenia's historical experience has therefore put as a requirement to consider both formal and informal actors of societal *arena* when it comes to researching Armenian society.

The oppositional political forces have continuously failed in establishing a serious institutional challenge to Armenian government. In the existing condition of Armenian semi-authoritarian form of government posing a continuous threat to country's development, it is down to civil society to provide a hope for the future. According to a recent study of Armenian civil society, the only sphere being able to lead the development of the country is the civic sphere, due to the inability to recover other sectors imbrued in partisanship and corruption (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016). There is both cooperation and tensions between the *old* formal and the *new* informal segments of Armenian civil society today.

The relationship of formal and informal civil society actors around the world (and in various sectors) has been a subject of academic inquiry (see, for example Wiseberg 1991; Orvis 2003; Aiyede 2004; Abom 2004; Fassin 2009; Spires 2011). Civil society organisations have incrementally developed to increase collaborative relationships and dialogue (O'riordan and Fairbrass 2008). Some activists, due to the failure of political institutions to deliver a change, have established civil society organisations to address their causes and interests (Weiss and Clarke 2001).

The previous research and observations of Armenian civil society were mainly focused on its formal (institutionalised) segment, with several studies looking at (developing in the past decade) informal segment (Ishkanian et al. 2013; Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016c).

This research aims to marry the two: formal and informal segments of Armenian society, to improve an understanding of the importance for the two groups to cooperate for impact, defined as the development of issue-based society.

Methods

This policy paper uses the following research methods: secondary data analysis, in-depth expert interviews, and analysis of available raw data.

The review and analysis of literature and previous research have been completed to provide an understanding of chronological societal developments with particular focus on the two (formal and informal) civil society actors' performance and activities in Armenia.

A total of 11 in-depth interviews were conducted with experts, scholars and representatives of Armenian civil society. All interviews were conducted by author through November 2016 to January 2017 in Yerevan and Brussels. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed (each lasted 56 minutes on average). The analysis was conducted using MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. See Interview guide in Appendix I. The research applied content analysis of qualitative data based on the dominant themes (provided in the indexing scheme) prepared by author. The indexing scheme was prepared based on research questions posed by the study and the main themes which occurred during the data collection process. See Indexing scheme in Appendix II. The analysis of research has been conducted in English language.

The author has served as a senior researcher for an academic study on civic activism in Armenia conducted from 2014 to 2016. The study titled *Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society* has been conducted by the American University of Armenia Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis (website: http://tcpa.aua.am/), and supported by Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (website: http://www.ascn.ch/en.html) (an organisation promoting social science research in the region of South Caucasus). The full manuscript of the study is available at: http://tcpa.aua.am/files/2012/07/English-5.pdf . The study discusses the developing civic activism in Armenia. Focusing on the relationship patterns of informal formal civil society actors, the study addresses both cooperation and tensions between the NGO sector and civic activism elements of the Armenian civil society. Based on research methods including primary and secondary data analysis and case-studies of recent and largest civic activist campaigns, the study discusses the new internal dynamics and the impact of civic activism on the political culture of Armenia.[6] As a result of methods employed by the study (including focus groups and semi-structured interviews with leading activists in civic activist campaigns and members of Armenian NGOs), a significant amount of data was generated about the impact of various civic groups in the country. This paper has partially consulted the available data to support the qualitative findings generated as a result of in-depth interviews with civil society experts and scholars. Final research documents (report and policy brief) were prepared in English, and translated into Armenian.

This research puts forward the following research questions:
I. What are: a. the active civil society groups/actors in Armenia; b. their mutual perceptions, c. relationship (if any)?
II. What are the factors hindering groups' cooperation/mutual engagement? How can these factors be tackled/solved (in any need at all)?
III. How should the relationship of the formal and informal actors of civil society progress in order to: a. challenge public authorities/institutions; b. contribute to the development of issue-based society (defined as: *the ability to understand issues, frame demands, and follow-up on issues*)?

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[6] TCPA Blog, available at: https://tcpablog.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/tcpa-produces-new-study-on-civic-activism-in-armenia/

Qualitative Analysis

Formal and informal civil society actors in Armenia

Although with numerical strength (there are more than 5,000 registered[7] civil society organisations, mainly non-governmental organisations (NGO)), the Armenian civil society is largely fragmented, with low actual potential and majority of officially registered organisations existing on paper only (Paturyan, Gevorgyan, and Matevosyan 2014).

The assessment of the formal sector becomes nearly impossible without filtering of organisations in the first place. The formal civil society sector is divided into one largest group of so-called *pocket NGOs* organised by governmental groups or persons. These organisations leave few, if any, reasons for assessing their impact. The motivations for continuous maintenance of such organisations range from cultivating the negative public perceptions to politicising and, eventually, monopolising civil society sector (similar to private sector), as one of the tools to sustain the regime. The second group of organisations is most usually involved in minor targeted charity work. This group has a meaningless role, similarly providing few reasons for assessing any tangible impact of their operations.

The third (and smallest) group of so-called *advocacy oriented NGOs* is representative of the formal civil society sector, and in focus of this research. Their main characteristics include project implementation, international funding, intra-organisational competition (resulting in internal tensions), latent critical behaviour towards government, ability to introduce issues (but lose momentum to follow-up) and, importantly, a questionable access to (and formation of) public opinion. Administering public attention towards issues and joining civic initiatives (or civic activist campaigns) are among additional and important filtering factors of formal civil society actors. The institutional civil society is therefore largely fragmented and representative of diverse groups maintaining their existence per different missions.

There is a low trust towards NGOs in Armenia (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014a). The low trust and the negative public perceptions towards formal civil society segment have accumulated over time, with multiple reasons sustaining such environment. One of the sound reasons is that NGOs do not take responsibility for communicating with public. This is an important role, which the majority of organisations are failing to fulfil. The formal sector responsiveness and accountability seems to be limited to donors only. As a result, the behavioural tendency of organisations' relationship with citizens is largely characterised by spontaneity and intrusion into people's lives. People see NGOs as *project implementers* or *office workers* (not voluntary sector representatives), and due to the incomprehensible to people projects, organisations have become *aliens* to public. NGOs' strategies most of the time exclude civic dimension on practice, while a large layer of marginalised population exercises almost no options of participating in the development of public agenda. The formal segment does not associate itself with bursting problems of marginalised groups. Public distorted perceptions also relate to the lack of understanding organisational goals and missions, leading to a persistent detachment between the two, and civil society institutions becoming *strained entities* to public, as opposed to the ones advocating a public concern. A significant problem of formal sector is thus failure to attract trust (and interest) of Armenian population in their cause. This is a continuous problem necessitating

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[7]Armenian Ministry of Justice, available at: www.justice.am

organisations to think of ways to *step out* of their specific, targeted discourse. NGOs are not part of the *one whole*, but rather isolated entities operating in an introvert fashion.

Another problem of the formal actors lies with the difficulty to make issues recognisable in Armenia. Formal actors have weak ties to media, which leaves the awareness raising part of their missions underdeveloped, not to mention difficulties of putting issues on political agenda of the country. Public authorities use various methods to limit the functioning space for civil society. The main sources of information in the country remain under the state control (Melikyan et al. 2013), which contributes to the narrowing down the range of public choices (and interests). This leaves society operating in a limited environment in terms of knowledge provision, and therefore gaining supporters.

When encountering personal problems on any authority-scale level, citizens tend to apply to NGOs -- as a last resort. Once the inquiries and problem-solving options are spared in the public institutions' domain, only then will people choose referring to a civil society institution for help. This is the result of a low trust towards a possibility of change via civil society sector. A conglomerate of problems accumulated by NGOs over time (among main ones detachment from public, lack of clarity in missions and intra-organisational solidarity) has therefore made the formal segment impaired, and necessitating improvement.

Engagement with informal segment of society or joining civic initiatives is considered to be one of the ways to improve. If an organisation chooses to involve with a civic initiative, as a result it is also able to increase public trust towards itself. Informal segment of society is rather trusted by public, due to some ability of making issues recognisable in Armenia. Perhaps due to continuous failures of formal sector to deliver a change, a new form of civic expression was on the rise. During the last decade Armenia witnessed nearly 40 cases of civic mobilisations (civic initiatives), or reactive struggles to issues and policies delivered by authorities (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016c). The representatives of the active informal sector are primarily members of the new generation, with ability to unite: spontaneously and intolerantly, in an issue-specific and a decentralised manner, and supported by social media. They helped the informal sector to mature, think in political terms, exercise success in one-time policy changes, but be less capable in follow-up and long term strategising. Although the informal actors are considered as the only challengers to public authorities today, they are also recognised as reactions to government's decisions, good for one-time events, rather than pro-active groups aiming for a tangible impact.

The formal and informal segments of Armenian civil society are distinctly different. The mode of two groups' operation (in terms of addressing issues) is an essential differentiating feature of the two. Formal actors choose to maintain a smooth operation mostly manifested in lack of open criticism towards government, whereas informal actors tend to be more radical. Formal actors choose the onsite *still* mode of operation, usually remaining invisible (or behind the scenes) when it comes to taking an initiative. The groups are different based on their *life experiences*, which also seems to determine the mode of their struggle. Personal attachment to issues makes participation of informal actors effective. Many informal actors join for a cause brining a personal issue, and an experience of being affected by it before. The more a person has attachment to the issue, the more real it seems to be. This difference complements the voluntary involvement of informal actors, as opposed to mandatory involvement of formal actors, defined as advocating issues as a part of their employment.

The fairness factor is another distinguishing feature of the groups. In certain cases, there is an overarching inconsistency in the relationship of the two. Informal actors provide link to public

by pointing attention to issues, followed by formal actors getting resources to address these. Informal actors raise issues, while organisations take advantage of implementing *another project* doomed to fail in exercising public impact. International donors also tend to prioritise issues raised by informal actors, whereas formal representatives get to address issues, with financial backing.

Speaking of mutual attitudes, there is a popular perception among organisations that informal actors are not likely to succeed without formals' support. Organisations see their role as professionals guiding civic activists, with a note of arrogance in attitudes. They think there are issues, which can be addressed (and solved) solely by formal institutions.

Even though formal actors prioritise the importance of their participation in civic initiatives, they tend to lack enthusiasm when it comes to engaging on practice. The engagement of formal actors is mainly limited to technical assistance (translation, printing), legal aid (selected cases), and meeting space (NGOs' offices). There has been cooperation between the two groups, as a rule, initiated by informal actors. Typically, activists invite organisations to take part in civic initiatives and contribute with issue-related expertise. Another *type* of cooperation occurs when activists happen to be staff members at organisations. This is an active form of engagement between the two evidenced so far. Although this overlap is how the engagement of both groups can be explained, there is also a problem of formal entities disallowing staff members from participation in civic initiatives.

Case studies of five civic initiatives show that formal actors have gone from minimal to active involvement with informal actors (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2016c). There have also been examples of initiatives registering as an NGO to be able to expand the scope of their activities. This means that no matter the differences (and difficulties as a result of such) both groups need each other and should join forces.

"If we are able to make the informal actors - organisations relationship chain work, we will benefit as a society."
Activist, Gyumri (Male, 38)

Joining forces for impact

Cooperation between formal and informal groups is extremely important. Although Armenia has witnessed successful cases of *winning,* with civic initiatives[8] and issues solved in favour of societal concern, the level of mutual acceptance between the formal and informal civil society actors is yet to be developed. There is a lack of consolidation of available civic forces aiming for greater impact, as opposed to short term changes. The reasons include the lack of new methods of participation, the lack of intergroup relationships sustained by the low levels of mutual trust particularly, and towards a possibility of change, in general.

Part of the reason for accumulated problems in the voluntary sector today is that society has gone out of methods of struggle (and participation), which seem to be all *consumed.* The previous methods have overdeveloped themselves ending up in deadlock. There is a need for informed and advanced forms of participation defined as struggle. New possibilities for engagement are needed for diverse civil society groups, as there is a need to reach out to

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[8] Including *Save Mashtots Park* and *Stop Changes in Maternity Leave Law Civic Initiatives.*

marginalised layers of population. Without introduction of new methods in the relationship of the two (and beyond), and without developing a pattern of *walking together,* both actors will face continued stagnation.[9]

There is a need for new methods to appear as a result of actors' joining together around same values: values lacking popularity before. Presently, *the street protest mentality* seems to prevail, with changing things being possible solely *on the street.* This can be of potential use for public authorities too, which are usually ready to use force to *dismantle* disagreements. Numbers change policies. The likelihood of one individual to join civic movement will depend on the number of others involved (Granovetter 1978). Armenia's history of the last decade demonstrated that the number of people (an initiative was able to mobilise) is a determining factor of success. Civil society actors should seek to challenge public authorities within civic domain by becoming a challenge in numbers. Numbers is unity, which is a basic reason for both groups to unite, and which is why targeting individuals via membership or other means has to be vital for formal actors.

There is a latent environment of mistrust in society, leading to low participation, and necessitating a shift in societal relationships not to let these developments stabilise. There is a need for new relationships being open and transparent, non-violent and horizontally organised, as opposed to clear hierarchical lines of command-structure, largely practiced by formal and (some sound) informal (civic initiatives) actors. The potential of other groups operative within a larger landscape should be recognised (such as grassroots youth associations, women's coalitions, professional associations, labour unions, charitable, ethnic and religious organisations, private organisations, expert and policy community, academic institutions and students, research institutions and individual researchers, parents' and teachers' councils in schools, cultural activists). Formal and informal actors will have to employ inclusive strategies, be flexible in including other members, and open to change. Armenia needs stronger mutually fulfilling, not hindering, civil society: a new format limited neither by formal nor informal actors. The engagement of different groups has proved to be a factor of success, despite the evident differences and, at times, negative mutual perceptions. In fact, it is in spite of the differences that the two groups should consolidate their strengths and resources for impact. The two groups should not be acting against each other, as promoting agenda separately will be a threat leading both groups to eventually find them in confrontation, a scenario which will exclusively benefit public institutions, not civic domain.

What comes next in Armenia's civil society development? What comes next to civic activism? Is there a way to progress even more than that? Armenia's formal and informal actors should think about the *next step* of civil society development, namely the development of issue-based society -- an equivalent of institutionalised and professionalised platform able to challenge public authorities and institutions, and establish a system of checks and balances in the country with centralised political and economic powers. The *next step* in the development of Armenian civil society should be taking civic activism to the next level, orienting potential towards

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[9] *Author's note*: the data shows that the overwhelming majority of research participants think in plural terms. When reflecting about possibilities for civil society development, participants refer to *groups,* as opposed to *individuals* or *leaders* (in singular). The leadership of groups -- as opposed to persons has shifted the understanding of people in relation to developing a challenge to public authorities or institutions; *self-organising* is another frequently used term by participants when reflecting about the impact civil society is able to exercise.

developing a different type of logic (and thus struggle) by introducing new methods, and occupying civic domain by joining forces.

<div align="right">

"All we plan since childhood is marriage."
Expert, Yerevan (Female, 36)

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Towards an issue-based society

An important challenge to public authorities from the civic domain will be to develop an issue-based society defined as the ability to: understand, frame and advocate issues, put forward informed demands, and follow-up on them.

Understanding issues, as the first *check* to help unite marginalised groups of population, is the primary task for both formal and informal actors in the quest of developing an issue-based society. In order for the marginalised population to become sensitive towards issues, solutions to foundational problems are required. Formal civil society actors are usually focused on a particular agenda. They underestimate the importance of advocacy of foundational problems, before they can start stressing one particular issue (which is why their mode of operation remains on an artificial, impact-free level). Finding a common *issue* to unite marginalised groups of population is number one challenge. Issues related to social justice could become a common denominator uniting both actors, and beyond. The issues of social justice and equality developed on the groups' (meso) level will have to serve as a model for larger society.

The *framing* of issues lies at the heart of the inability of exercising an issue-based society. The formal civil society actors do not develop agenda as a result of public needs. They are rather project-oriented, as was mentioned earlier. The framing of issues should come from below. An important component of framing from below is the expression of public will. In order to challenge public authorities, civil society sector should speak the same language with the marginalised groups of population. The language used while addressing the public is essential. In theory, NGOs are messengers and professional negotiators serving as bridges between public institutions and marginalised population. However, professional communication of issues has become a normative challenge to formal actors. They not only lack the capacity to target population, but seem harmless to*,* and in a silent agreement with public authorities. Such conformist behaviour, or lack of framing,[10] is a systemic error of formal sector helping to stabilise regime, whereas exercising framing which resonates with public understanding will be a serious challenge to governmental policies and decisions (lacking public interest and trust). Accurate framing will help civil society actors make sense of what they are doing (Fine and Harrington 2004), as well as help explain reality and select responses among groups, in which individuals distinguish between what does and does not constitute a social problem worthy of collective action. Framing is an issue definition followed by bridging and aligning with other (informally connected) groups (Fine and Harrington 2004: 345).

Armenian civil society has a problematic political culture, which excludes the component of *planning* per se*.* The lack of thinking in terms of planning of strategies is heavily ingrained in public consciousness (a reality attributed to a variation of historical and psychological factors). As a result, this lack on *micro* (individual) level leaves fewer hopes for developing its

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[10] Speaking the same language with government as opposed to public.

understanding and application on *meso* (organisational), and *macro* (country) levels. Formal actors lack long-term strategic planning (if have it at all). There is a huge gap in public understanding of what **advocacy** means. Public does not perceive the term *advocacy* as an act of protection of citizens' rights, rather an act against national values. The lack of understanding of the term generates an alienating feeling of threat and insecurity. Armenia needs initiatives to contribute to people's personal wellbeing. Advocacy should be oriented towards improving the economic condition of individuals. The civil society actors should develop their private agendas to address social issues of marginalised groups in the first place.

Demands should be presented in accordance with legal provisions. Understanding the importance of a demand based on law will serve an exclusive function eliminating possibility of other options in civil society - public institutions' relationship (such as, for example, hopes and requests). Civil society actors should develop mechanisms to help marginalised groups understand the importance of a demand based on legal provisions to speed up the next stage of societal development. The issue-based society will only be possible by learning the law, and understanding the power of its application by marginalised groups. The formal actors do not question the performance of public institutions to the extent they should, and have potential to. The protection of public interests should be based on critical evaluation of issues. The ability to question issues will develop critical thinking among groups, as a prerequisite for an issue-based society. The critical development of demand-based culture is also a problem due to the lack of mechanisms protecting the rights of workers.

One of the reasons for the overwhelming mistrust towards formal civil society actors in Armenia is the lack of **follow-up** on issues raised. Even in cases where civil society has been successful in addressing issues, it is usually the lack of follow-up mechanisms for an issue to register success. One of the reasons is public institutions' mode of operation characterised by an environment of continuous crisis. This leaves less space for civil society actors to react consistently. An example is the civil society consultative participation in public councils, aimed at generating expert opinion prior to decision-making over an issue. There is a lack of mechanisms to monitor councils' performance. Recommendations provided by civil society are usually excluded from the *final product*, leaving expert opinion usually disregarded when it comes to final decision-making. This means that while selected (legal) civil society participation mechanisms are available, those to regulate an effective implementation of the process are lacking.

Armenia needs civil society groups to orient towards advocacy and policy-making with joint forces and potential. Providing the poor and the marginalised opportunities for voice in making or adjustment of policies should be the overarching unified objective of the two civil society actors. The unity of direction for the two actors will also be essential for effective use of scarce resources. The achievement of an issue-based society is not an event, but a process, which necessitates evidence-based research to complement its all stages. Every sphere of public policy requires research. An open enquiry to issues will be essential prior to resorting to each of the stages of issue-based society. The attitudes and perceptions, fears and hopes, values and understanding of the reality by the marginalised should remain primary sources of enquiry for formal and informal actors to develop an issue-based society.

A value-based society?

People organise, join forces and develop relationships around common values. Focusing on individual values, political culture has served a sign of democracy around the world (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1997). Which values has the Armenian society used to develop relationships between its various groups? One of the main problems of organising forces is failing to recognise the different layers of population and groups in it. The lack of knowledge breeds contempt and confrontation, firstly among societal forces, which should by all means be avoided. Such limited perceptions generate division among societal forces, necessitating mutual understanding and cooperation. Armenian society is in an ideological crisis. Differentiation of groups based on values is required to challenge public authorities. Addressing ideological ramifications and finding ways to unite (by preserving the plurality of opinions) is necessary. Based on the data of World Values Survey and European Values Survey socio-political scientists explain the differences of values uphold by societies among countries around the world (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The world cultural map, developed as a result, explains classification of societies based on cross-national variables: traditional vs. secular-rational values, and survival vs. self-expression values. The analysis reflects the differences among countries based on the popular values sustaining their societies. Armenia shows greater compliance with traditional and survival values, expressing low levels of pluralism and tolerance; highlighting national pride and obedience to authority.

The patriotic and national discourse is the one widely available (and understandable) among the marginalised groups of Armenian population. Traditional values supported by arguments mostly advocating national (and personal) security are the ones that prevail in governmental advocacy. As a result, a frequently occurring conflict in the country revolves around the clash of national and liberal values. This means that the operation of the value-system is usually a trade-off between personal security and self-development and expression -- an internal problem hindering possibility of participation and reforms.

Although we could ask to what extent it is fair to demand a high level of civic consciousness from a previously-almost-a-century-long Soviet society? Or, perhaps focusing on selected-history-changing-success-stories, we can instead ask: how to develop a different (from previously-advocated) societal value-chain based on issues of social justice, individual wellbeing and rights? How to achieve a different type of logic of struggle, defined as an issue-based society?

One of the solutions will be to help shift priorities, putting forward prevalence of issues of social justice over patriotic discourse. So far the society has demonstrated tendency of *exiting* the social justice sphere, and enthusiastically joining that of patriotic values upheld by security concerns. Due to the inability of identifying and promoting social justice, individual rights (human rights) values, people resort to a less thorny road of patriotic rhetoric, which has a popular practice of strengthening authoritarian tendencies. Another prevailing cultural value is respect towards elderly, increasingly practiced in society. The protection mechanisms for aging population however are lacking. Such and similar inconsistencies in the practice of values and their implementation should be areas of enquiry, and source of advocacy towards marginalised groups of population, contributing to gradual shift from established *conformist* and repetitive practice of values to protection of individual wellbeing and rights.

Civic groups do not offer solutions; solutions, which may come as a direction or orientation to the marginalised groups of population. In cases where people lack education or experience (and

thus remain largely detached from any form of citizen participation), availability of organisations or groups to give them orientation will be supportive. The formal and informal civil society should start offering solutions to citizens, to be able to keep them engaged. Armenia needs a new societal definition in terms of understanding public's roles and needs. The economic wellbeing of individuals seems to be the top priority issue in Armenia today. The poverty rate has reached 30% percent.[11] This means there is an overarching need of understanding social problems: the pronounced issues of consumers. Issues such as distribution of material resources and public participation in it, economic relations, monopolies and equality, importance of public institutions' reporting and accountability to public, the notion of public good and risks for marginalised groups of population are bound to introduce a change of values to exercise a social-cultural change. This change will help civil society to become synonymous to success, and contribute to a thinking which prioritises social responsibility and justice. In consolidation, the formal and informal civil society groups should aim to change societal values. Other attempts to strengthen civil society (project-specific capacity building, experience exchange etc.) do not work, as it is difficult to develop connection (and understanding) with ideological differences between the groups. Both formal and informal actors should start addressing social issues in order to attract attention of marginalised groups. Social justice issues should become a source to help unite various groups within population, with foundational ideological differences. Armenian society is in a need to come closer to appreciating the rational-secular values and diverting from traditional ones, which help sustain *the most-easy-sustainable* patriotic discourse, underpinned by security. Changing the customary discourse in the country should be the primary aim of formal and informal actors. The Armenian society should aim to shift societal values perspective. Self-reflection and strategic planning mechanisms, speaking language of (and accountability mechanisms towards) the marginalised, consolidated decisions of civil society segments, alternative education and communication channels will be important prerequisites to *step* towards the value-shift change.

"No civic issue is possible without a set of groups to provide sponsorship and endorsement."
Gary Alan Fine and Brooke Harrington
"Tiny Publics: Small Groups and Civil Society" (2004)

Conclusion and recommendations

Armenia has gone through the various stages of civil society development to find itself in crisis, defined as lack of internal cohesion and low levels of impact. The society necessitates an understanding of its potential (on behalf of formal and informal actors) if it is to progress to the next level of civil society development. The demand for cooperation among societal groups has matured. The recognition of each other's potential and legitimacy will have to be followed by work with the marginalised groups of population, targeting social problems, and putting forward demands based on evidence-based research.

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[11] The World Bank country data (2014): http://data.worldbank.org/country/armenia

Formal sector is closed today, operating in isolation, with intra-organisational competition, and detached from the marginalised. The project-implementing mode of operation has negatively influenced public perceptions towards formal civil society actors. However, the same organisations have had fewer problems with attracting donors. If they are able to attract donors, they should also be able to establish communication channels with public. Organisational support to informal actors (or lack of it) is a decisive factor of public trust towards NGOs. Although formal actors might be providing technical support to informal actors, it is the informal actors who provide the link to public and can help increase public trust towards civil society in the country. To achieve success in public support (as a result of increased public trust) formal actors will have to unite with informal actors. How to do that?

Formal actors should establish all-inclusive platforms inviting other entities and individuals to join forces. Inclusivity is not about interests of particular individuals' or organisations, but about showing that concerns of the marginalised are taken seriously by institutionalised groups. Without open and transparent cooperation, their impact is minimal due to limited functioning of closed circle of organisations hindering new membership, and enhancement of potential. Formal and informal segments are key civil society actors that have to engage for future planning, to disallow the process of internal decay within each group. Informal activities should be merged with formal ones, professionalised, and complementing each other with horizontal partnership, not exploitation for own goals. The civil society potential will be conditioned by the ability of two actors to reach out to the marginalised via alternative (and informal) channels of education and tangible cooperation with media, in a country exercising centralised media control. Armenia necessitates an all-inclusive network-oriented approach for both actors to be able to stimulate country's development. Orienting professional skills to strategic planning and establishing alliances with informal actors will be a decisive factor in the promotion of formal actors' agenda. Informal actors have been a stimulating factor for formal actors to receive impulses. However, informal activities should be merged with formal ones. Otherwise even informal actors (although having registered success) will similarly end up in crisis. The formals, in their due, should find ways to *attract* and join informal forces instead of looking for ways to get funding followed by a *silent* working on their own. The two groups should understand each other's agenda, acknowledge each other's legitimacy, and consolidate potential based on issues relevant to public concern.

This paper presented the reasons for the two segments of Armenian civil society to join forces for impact: an impact defined as developing an issue-based society. Armenia should strive neither for strong formal nor informal sector, but a whole society. One segment should not replace the other, but rather merge together to develop a unified entity ready to develop a high level of social capital. The Armenian society should not aim to reinvent the wheel, but take existing structures (NGOs, independent groups and individuals) professionalise, and use them. There is no need of establishing new groups, but using the existing ones to connect.

The Armenian society should aim to shift societal values perspective, by prioritising secular-rational and self-expression values. Understanding and working with the marginalised from the values perspective will help actors in the development of issue-based society. A common discourse and a tangible operation of shifted value-system will provide good chances for such development to occur. The unity should come through new values, different from the ones advocated by existing discourse and developed based on similar priorities and interests.

Both groups should limit the general, abstract political democratic claims, but rather concentrate on the promotion of social welfare issues of the country, followed by orienting their potential towards advocacy and participation in policy making.

Joining formal and informal civil society forces means a foundation for the long-term development. Foundation for the long-term development means by being critical about the future, achieving an issue-based society. Exercising an issue-based society means the *next step* in the development of Armenian society, which means the development of the country. To negotiate the future, civil society groups should come together in agreement where unity and coordination will replace division and competition. This paper puts forward the following recommendations.

Recommendations for Armenian civil society actors

- **Increasing membership bases for NGOs**
  Membership in organisations and attending activities organised by organisations are indicators of formal social capital, which in Armenia is low. NGOs have to seek for societal support in the form of membership. Armenian NGOs have to increase membership bases, as the number of members in organisations is low (especially women and youth) (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014b). Problems should trigger reassessment. NGOs should develop a self-assessment mechanism to explain the low levels of their constituency. In order to promote membership, organisations should revise their missions to include open membership for everyone. Regular meetings and activities should follow via delegating available resources to create inviting spaces for the members of their immediate communities. Activities should primarily target presentations about their critical missions, purpose and objectives, nature of their performance, etc. Importantly, NGOs should deliver the message on why it is worthy to become a member of their organisation and stay involved. NGOs should aim to take out potential from among latent, marginalised groups of population. NGOs should unite with civic activists. Formal actors should take the leadership of inviting and mobilising active individuals' interests. The decentralised manner of operation of informal groups or individuals will not hinder cooperation, if NGOs take the lead in identifying individuals and creating open space for them to join. NGOs should build membership bases by preserving diversity and pluralism: for more people to join, and new ideas to be generated. Formal civil society sector should be open to all kinds of cooperation with other civil society actors. Free membership will be conditioned by conducive environment. There is a need of consistent and inclusive engagement of formal, informal groups and the marginalised to provide a space in which the society can grow.

- **Creating umbrella NGOs**
  Armenian NGOs do not attempt solutions at a collective level. Armenia needs umbrella civil society organisations (in every field of operation) to coordinate activities. Leading, independent, experienced and trusted by public NGOs should take the lead of establishing umbrella organisations. Umbrella organisations should aim to become comprehensive institutional structures encompassing significant parts of the marginalised, including other

NGOs and rural populations. This will, in a way, create an institutional nationwide network for support of civil society sector. Sphere-specific umbrella bodies will be different from coalition-format of NGOs (practiced in Armenia, and encompassing NGOs only) in a way that these will develop issue-based action networks, uniting relevant constituencies, including: activists, professional associations, women's groups, labour unions, research institutions, rural activists and others in the decision making over a particular agenda. The main characteristic of umbrella organisations should be responsibility of taking leadership to coordinate the network – without limiting authority of each constituent within network. The meetings and discussions could be formed as non-governmental initiative forums via public announcements for constituents to meet periodically (for example on a bi-annual basis), and converse in defining agenda. Umbrella organisations should take the lead in organising such forums, with available resources allocated for this initiative and effective organising in the times of crisis. All groups should be able to join, and spread information further to their immediate communities and members. Importantly, umbrella organisations have to reach out to, and incorporate potential of low-level, latent organisations established in Armenian towns and villages. Umbrella organisations and periodic meetings with all constituency will be important also from the perspective of face-to-face interaction and recognition of each other. Similar to the effective practice of international organisations, or intergovernmental agencies, the Armenian civil society should start collecting members under one front, an umbrella, to represent collective voice on issues to government and international donors. It will be difficult for public institutions and authorities to ignore availability of ideas and decisions generated as a result of one united civil society front.

- **Networking and online platforms**
  a. Armenian organisations are in a need of new functioning tendencies. How many NGOs in the country have internal database of contacts, public stakeholders, other NGOs with similar critical missions? Although this particular and practical question has not been addressed by research before, the existing studies however show that Armenian NGOs operate in a short-term, project-specific and low impact level (Hakobyan et al. 2010; Blue and Ghazaryan 2004; Ishkanian 2008).

  In general, the practice of organising networking events is not popular in Armenia. Networking events will be a precondition in establishing some community norms and developing organisational culture, not to mention increasing the levels of social capital. Formal actors of Armenian society should take the lead in periodically organising networking events. To pool human resources, NGOs should identify and develop lists of available entities with similar issue-based missions (from popular to small village-based NGOs), active citizens, potential members, academics, donors, embassies, and friends. There has to be a constant exchange of information between NGOs working in the same field, as well as available informal groups. Expanding ties abroad, with international NGOs, similar sphere-specific groups in regional countries will be essential. Advocacy-oriented international ties must be used as a local strength for Armenian NGOs. This will necessitate identifying, establishing links and inviting such groups to networking events (via online participation mechanisms). Networking events will be essential in order to set objectives in coordination with other civic groups attempting to promote a similar agenda.

b. NGOs should develop websites. Websites should allow people to get directly in-touch with an NGO, sign-up to receive information about open to public regular meetings, join organisation online, and access information about specific policy field the given NGO advocates. Access to trainings for NGO members on modern rapid communication techniques (including how to use tape recorder, video cameras, online gadgets etc.) will also be supportive. Some NGOs choose isolation to escape government's attention (Clark 1995). In the case of Armenia however, isolation has proved to decrease public trust and lead to low levels of impact. NGOs should take the maximum advantage of networking, information and communication technologies to achieve visibility and impact.

- ▪ **Social messages as communication channels targeting population**
  The formal and informal actors should put accountability to population as a priority, and target the marginalised with social messages. Formal and informal actors should undergo self-assessment by answering the question how and to what extent their activities include marginalised groups? Their missions, strategies, goals and objectives should prioritise the benefit of marginalised population based on their activities. Public authorities use information to sustain regime by the usage of information flows. Formal groups should confront the stereotypes about them to be able to confront distorted information. The distorted about (particularly) formal sector perceptions could be used by organisations (and supported by informal actors) as a ground to develop an appropriate understanding. Informal actors should also help improve stereotypes related to formal actors, by presenting examples of formal actors' support and achievements as a result of these. The groups should organise joint visits to Armenian marzes, listen to what marginalised groups have to say, and build the advocacy narrative based on the necessity of addressing social concerns. Such behaviour will build trust on behalf of marginalised society. Additionally, it will be possible to attract public attention and increase trust if actors develop a motivation-mechanism to allow citizens checking on their influence and impact on developments related to particular issues of public concern. People should be able to see, track and measure the impact of their participation.
  The content of social messages should be oriented towards explanations on how various issues (for example, constitutional rights, gender equality, fair elections etc.) are related to social welfare. All seemingly abstract for public issues advocated by NGOs so far, should be providing explanatory depth of linkage to issues of social justice.

- ▪ **Systematic monitoring of public institutions' performance**
  Monitoring public institutions' performance in different sectors will generate data to be used in issuing demands, which is a prerequisite for an issue-based society. The limited (or artificial) civil society presence in policy and decision-making generates gaps in legislation, and (in the cases where legislation is fine) its application. If the society is conditioned by the lack of mechanisms providing societal input in decision-making, public institutions' performance monitoring should complement the un-preferable for society arrangements. Formal and informal actors should join in observation and collection of facts through constant monitoring. There is a tangible lack of formal (organisations) and informal

(individual researchers) actors initiating monitoring practices, whereas the areas necessitating improvement of governmental processes are many. Civil society actors should become effective monitors of governmental performance.

- **Media-targeted work**
  Civil society actors need media to gain allies. In the event of the government using mainstream media as a source of legitimacy to increase its leverage, civic groups should accordingly use alternative media sources to increase societal leverage. It is important for formal and informal actors to promote their agenda through carefully planned cooperation with media. Local, home grown formal actors tend to be the most successful around the world, their success however is (importantly) evaluated based on the ability to win media's attention. Armenian formal and informal segments today have fewer ties to media. It is necessary to develop strategies specifically aimed at how the work with media will progress. While the primary aim of centralised media control is self-sustaining of the ruling regime, it does also do harm to the same regime, as it helps governmental forces to remain ignorant about the realities and actual dynamics of the marginalised groups. Limited information thus prevents decision-making bodies from interpreting the reality. This is why formal and informal actors should aim targeting media, by at the same time providing information linkage between government and the marginalised.

- **Alternative channels of education**
  The civil society sector should concentrate on public education. New and alternative sources of education should be developed to access the marginalised. The formal and informal groups should orient resources to develop alternative educational (both physical and online) platforms. These can be discussion and debate clubs, online forums. The important agents of socialisation are educational institutions, whereas the existing Armenia's educational system suffers from state control, and is characterised by politicising attempts. To raise the level of civic consciousness the society ultimately needs to have alternative educational sources, to help confront the effects of centralised streams of information. The more there are informal, alternative channels of education, the higher the probability will be of enhancing socio-economic awareness through introduction of issues, and increasing political awareness of underprivileged social groups.

- **Protection of workers' rights**
  There is a lack of functioning space for civil society, limited by political and legal constraints. The effective participation of civil society is rooted in effective mechanisms regulating this very participation. One of the root problematic reasons for the lack of public participation is the lack of strong mechanisms to protect the rights of workers. Organisations are said to have concerns related to their staff members' active behaviour. The same is true for individuals who fear losing their job as a result of informal activities compromising their formal status. Armenia needs improved mechanisms to protect workers' rights, as a part of the solution. Powerful and independent institutions, strong enough to confront issues, not be compliant to state control, are needed to help solve this issue. The unprotected nature of workers' rights makes voluntary participation a fundamental problem. It might be necessary to put together and initiate a program on development of labour unions.

- **Free information and evidence-based research**
  The formal and informal actors should develop information sharing platforms, to include the past, on-going and future activities, funding information and their results. This will help facilitate transparent, free and accessible to all interested parties information, which will (in its turn) positively influence public trust. All public policies necessitate objective research and analysis. Armenian civil society actors should employ the evidence-based research on practice. Independent research is necessary to identify issues that would contribute to building an issue-based society, as well as help with monitoring function. Research findings should be a resource base for: a. framing issues and demands, and planning advocacy strategies; and b. employing a monitoring function towards public institutions' performance. Academic institutions, think tanks and individual researchers should maximise impact of their research by communicating their findings to the marginalised, and policy and decision-making bodies via formal and informal actors. Academic and research institutions could perhaps think of conducting a nationwide survey with population to ask what would make public interested and involved in active membership and involvement in civil society organisations.

Recommendations for Armenian civil society actors and government officials

- **Political will**
  There is a lack of political will to engage in meaningful (not artificial) dialogue with civil society representatives. The Armenian public authorities and institutions necessitate self-assessment upon starting to treat civil society as a serious and equal partner in policy making. As a result of civil society consultative engagement with government, their recommendations usually remain disregarded when it comes to the final decision making. The Armenian government should deliver on civil society recommendations and create *inviting spaces* for NGOs and activists to meet and present concerns, by representing issues of the marginalised. Government officials, most of the time detached from society and its problems, should understand that accountability is an asset, not a shame. To deliver a meaningful change, the government should primarily shift the political will, along with shifting the system of government.
  Civil society actors, in their turn, should understand that cooperation from the government towards civil society would come from certain individuals from within that government, not generally from government *as a whole.* NGOs should identify sympathetic individuals in governmental agencies, who NGOs can work with in promoting agenda. Government is a big structure with different branches, agencies, people and agendas. Identifying individuals who they can work with might be of potential impact.

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Appendix 1 Interview Guide

The next step in the development of Armenian Civil Society OSI Policy Research Fellowship Initiative
Research leader Valentina Gevorgyan vgevorgyan@aua.am November 2016 – January 2017

Name, Surname_____   **Date** _____

Position_____   **Location** _____

1. What is "civil society" (CS) in Armenia? Who is part of it?

2. What are characteristics/qualities of *active* actors/groups in the country? (According to your personal definition of *"active"*. Please elaborate.)

3. Do you think that **formal** and **informal civil society actors**/**groups** (hereafter: the two actors) should cooperate/interact for **impact**? (Yes/No: Why?)

4. Do you think they do? (If so, provide examples; if not: why not?). Elaborate on the main factors hindering the two actors' mutual cooperation and interaction (if any).

5. Do you think consolidation of strengths (of the two actors) will be beneficial to Armenian society at large? Or, rather, the two groups should promote agenda separately? Why?

6. What should be the role of formal CS actors in their relationship towards informal CS actors, and vice versa? What are the mutual perceptions (existing stereotypes)?
   6.1 Do you think there is a need of exchange of qualities between the two actors? (*Probe: CSOs should gain some qualities of activists' or vice versa*).

7. How should the relationship of the two actors progress (if any) in order to create a serious challenge to government authorities/public institutions? In which case/s of the two actors' involvement, political authorities can be effectively pressured?

8. Which components (if any) of the two actors' strategies should change, in order for the governmental strategy towards the Armenian CS sector to change? (*Elaborate on linkage*) *(Probe: do you think that any change in any of strategies of the two actors will result in the change of governmental strategy towards Armenian CS sector?)*

9. How should the relationship of the two actors progress (if any) in order to eliminate barriers/obstacles for civil society participation in policy making processes, and improve the channels of CS impact on decision making?

10. Recommendations for the two actors.

Definitions
- Formal civil society actors/groups = civil society organisations (NGOs, foundations, other legal entities representing civil society sector)
- Informal civil society actors/groups = civic activists, activist campaigns, grassroots associations, youth groups (non-registered individuals/groups/entities representing civil society sector)
- Impact = ability to understand issues, frame demands/concerns, and follow-up on these with the aim of developing an issue-based society

Supporting answers with examples will be useful, but not necessary. Thank you.

Appendix 2 Interview Indexing Scheme

The next step in the development of Armenian Civil Society OSI Policy Research Fellowship Initiative
Research leader Valentina Gevorgyan vgevorgyan@aua.am November 2016 – January 2017
MAXQDA Coding: In-depth Interviews with civil society experts and scholars

1. Civil society actors/groups
1.1 who
1.2 characteristics, qualities (general)
1.3 formal actors' qualities
1.4 informal actors' qualities
1.5 personal definitions of *active*

2. Mutual perceptions; roles & differences
2.1 Formal actors towards informal actors
2.2 Informal actors towards formal actors
2.3 Formal actors' role towards informal actors
2.4 Informal actors' role towards formal actors
2.5 For exchange of qualities: reasons
2.6 Against exchange of qualities: reasons
2.7 Differences explained

3. Cooperation
3.1 Normative_positive: reasons
3.2 Normative_negative: reasons
3.3 Current situation
3.4 Examples
3.5 Factors hindering
3.6 Factors supporting
3.7 Existing interaction/communication channels
3.8 Promoting agenda in unity: reasons
3.9 Promoting agenda separately: reasons

4. Civil society intergroup relationship strategy
4.1 Current situation
4.2 For change: reasons
4.3 For change: recommendations
4.4 Against change: reasons
4.5 Against change: recommendations

5. Civil society – public institutions relationship
5.1 Challenge public authorities/institutions
5.2 Change of governmental strategy towards civil society
5.3 Improvement of civil society participation in policy making

6. Impact: issue-based society
6.1 Understanding issues
6.2 Framing issues
6.3 Advocacy and demand
6.4 Follow-up on issues
6.5 Values (general)
6.6 Values (Armenia)

7. Additional material
7.1 Recommendations (general)
7.2 Interesting material
7.3 Quotes
7.4 Future research