

Notes

from the

Armenian Town Hall Meeting

9 February 2017

London School of Economics

DISCUSSION – SECTION 1

In response to Susan Pattie’s remarks, the participants’ remarks primarily focused on three themes.

Identity and Subjectivity

Several participants commented on what it means to ‘be’ or to ‘feel’ Armenian. One participant said, “I don’t speak the language but I was brought up with a really deep knowledge of being Armenian. Another participant explained that while she had never been to Armenia and did not speak Armenian, that she felt Armenian.

There was a discussion about the fluidness of identity as one participant said, “Armenians are not just Armenian, but we are also French, or British.” She argued that having these multiple identities in diaspora is the norm and this theme was picked up by several other people. For example, one participant, a woman, stated that she was half Armenian and her Armenian heritage was important to her. She explained that the Church was a place where she went to connect with other Armenians and her heritage. But both this young woman, and others acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to know about events that were happening and that one had to often rely on personal contacts to get involved in the community.

One man said, “There are thousands of Armenians in London but we divide ourselves unnecessarily.” He lamented this situation saying, “There are too many divisions between parties and groups in the community.” This led to a discussion how Armenians in London can connect with each other.

Organisational spaces/institutions

Several participants suggested that one way of overcoming divisions and to increase information sharing about events and organisations, would be to create a website which would list all the Armenian organisations and the events happening in London. One participant said, it would be particularly good to have a place which would be attractive for young people so that they would have a space to congregate.

For one participant, achieving this goal would require the community “to take more proactive steps and to invest in building the community structures.” He added, “This is not just giving £50 a year, but giving more substantial amounts to create stronger institutions that are focused on meeting the needs of the community and of attracting younger people.”

The diaspora’s relation to Armenia

Although this session was focused on the diaspora, some speakers referenced Armenia as either a marker of identity or as a key issue for diasporan organising. Several participants spoke about ‘helping’ Armenia. They discussed charitable giving, volunteering, or more politically informed forms of organising. This led to the question of how the diaspora can thrive and should it constantly be seen as only a support system for Armenia.