

FIELD REPORT

Transition and Everyday life

In post-Soviet countries, including Armenia, the transition processes are taught solely as a phenomena related to the progress of economic and political institutional reforms. However, the first years of those processes have already shown that the transition is not a process disconnected from the everyday life of the people and that the discussions of this issue need a new comprehensive approach. The presented syllabus aims at enlarging the presentational framework of the transition issue and at presenting the later in the context of the interconnection with the everyday life.

My visit to the UC Berkeley had several key objectives.

First, I wanted to present the syllabus prepared by me in the academic environment, which had traditions and experience in that area and to modify its content based on the proposals received during the discussions. *Second*, I wanted to get acquainted with the social science teaching methodology of one of the leading universities in the world – UC Berkeley, and to adopt some approaches. *Third* important issue was related to supplementing the bibliography of the syllabus with contemporary literature, which was a problem in Armenia in means of accesibility. And *forth* important issue was the establishment of the academic ties.

Several events have contributed to the implementation of the first objective. Firstly, it was the thorough discussion during the Workshop organized in the Berkeley Post-Soviet Center (BPS). The opinions and proposals presented by Victoria Bonnell, Yuri Slezkine and Edward Walker helped to make the structure and the themes of the syllabus more precise.

The meetings and discussions organized with Victoria Bonnell, Michael Burawoy, Stephan Astourian and Cihan Tugal have also contributed to the revision of the structure and the themes of the seminars. Particularly, extremely productive was the discussion with Victoria Bonnell. Her huge professional experience and big human kindness helped me to ultimately

clarify the everyday life framework, the teaching methodology and to enlarge the bibliography. She even provided me with the PDF files of the literature, which was being recommended by her for learning – the works of Erving Goffman, Georg Simmel and Norbert Elias.

The meeting with Michael Burawoy was very useful for reviewing the thematic framework of the first part of the syllabus regarding the transition. The meeting with Stephan Astouryan was useful with regard to the discussion of the transition issues of Armenia, and with Cihan Tugal we discussed the issues related to the religion and everyday life.

The participation to several classes and seminars of the bachelors and masters courses and the Syllabus workshop led by Kim Starr-Red played a very crucial role for the second objective – the syllabus methodology. As a result, I have decided to apply a methodological innovation which was yet unknown to the Yerevan State University – the reading oriented seminars methodology, which is popular throughout the UC Berkeley masters courses, and to combine it with the discussions of the issues related to Armenia. Our discussion with Victoria Bonnell have contributed to this methodological innovation. She proposed me to carry out the review of the adequate practices in Armenia in parallel with the theoretical issues related to the everyday life. I liked that very much and it made me excited, because in this way the students would understand and process the theoretical material better on one hand and the theory for them would be based on the tangible practical material and would develop their research abilities on the other hand.

The provision of the possibility to use the library of the Berkeley University have significantly contributed to the solution of the third issue. This allowed finding electronic versions and copies of a quite big number of articles and books. The purchased literature has also backed the solution of this issue. As a result, it was possible to elaborate the Reading List necessary for the syllabus.

As for the professional ties, which have been established with the specialists from the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, these are very important for me as a specialist dealing with issues of transition and post-Soviet anthropology.

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