Chapter 3. Travelling the Homeland – Diasporic Youth

> "Armenia is not just an ideal of a homeland, a land of churches and mountains to be put up on walls and book covers. It is not a fictional country caged in a historical showcase. It is a real country with real people that needs real engagers to help move it forward. No matter where you now live, you can be one of those engagers."
> *(Birthright Armenia 2014)*[1]

Until the end of the 1980s, the connections between the Soviet Republic of Armenia and Armenian diasporic communities in North America were weak and irregular. It was the 1988 earthquake in Armenia that caused emotional response among North American diasporic communities and a rise in humanitarian aid activity (Ishkanian 2005, 2008). In the 1990s, after the Republic of Armenia gained its independence, many members of Armenian diasporic communities continued to donate sporadically to Armenia and its impoverished economy (Dudwick 2003; Pearce et al. 2011), and a few of them occasionally undertook tourist trips to Armenia on an individual level. In the early 2000s, the popularity of homeland trips through volunteering in post-socialist Armenia has grown, especially among third-generation Armenian Americans or Armenian Canadians. Hundreds of Western volunteers of Armenian descent, mostly young professionals, travel from the West to Armenia rejecting the label of a 'tourist', aiming to carry out a specific mission. Third- and later-generation diasporic Armenians claim to come to the homeland not as passive tourists, but as volunteers to invest in local development through social work. It is worth noting that much of the itinerary for these diasporic

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travels centre on the key tourist attractions of Armenia, including sacred sites such as the holy Mount Ararat[2], the medieval Armenian Church in Khor Virab, the Memorial for the Armenian Genocide on Tsitsernakaberd Hill, and Lake Sevan. Nonetheless, many young volunteers emphasised that their journeys were about more than mere tourism; they understood their activities in a broader context. Their movements constitute a new type of transnational behaviour that challenges the relative immobility of traditional diasporic communities, who tend to fixate on the internal development of local community centres in the United States, Canada or Western Europe. In doing this, I do not claim to offer conclusions applicable to all diasporic Armenians.

This chapter continues exploring an emerging form of temporal return in the context of transnational 'roots' migration.[3] Whereas the previous chapter discussed how a new generation of non-governmental diasporic organisations established pathways and channels for contemporary diasporic migration and mobilised Armenian 'roots', this chapter develops these arguments and shifts the attention to the travellers themselves, demonstrating how the holy homeland is perceived, experienced and incorporated into modern biographies of diasporic youth.

There is a growing academic interest in transnational homeland engagement by foreign-born nationals and second- and later-generation diasporic people (Tarrow 2005; Levitt/Waters 2002; Potter/Phillips 2006; Wessendorf 2013; Jain 2013; Mahieu 2015, 2019). Until recently, these movements have been theorised in migration studies as an 'ethnic return' (Tsuda 2009), as a relocation in terms of repatriation, or as a 'counter-diasporic migration' (King/Christou 2010; Wessendorf 2013). In addition, homeland trips are often viewed as the result of nostalgic longing for the lost homeland and in this context have been defined as a 'genealogical journey' into the past (Markowitz/Stefansson 2004; Basu 2007) or as 'ethnic pilgrimage' (Kelly 2000). This type of transnational exchange among second- and later-generation members of diasporic communities and the homeland draws attention mostly to the investigation of family contexts, where transnational involvement is perceived as an essential part of everyday lives (King/Christou 2010; Wessendorf 2013). In this sense, the existence of relations between second- and later-generation diasporic youth and the 'ancestral homeland' is considered a given.

Recently, some other social scientists (Lyons/Mandaville 2010; Gamlen et al. 2017) have emphasised the effects of state-sponsored diaspora policies, which influence the transnational behaviour of diasporic descendants 'from above' and strategically target young members of diasporic communities.

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Studies have addressed an increasing number of state-sponsored possibilities of organised educational travel to the 'homeland' as a strategy to use established diaspora members for their economies and political stability (Kelner 2010; Mahieu 2019). Although the loyalties of subsequent generations to the homeland may remain strong and their homeland imaginations vivid, scholars have revealed that loyalties are not static, change over time and should be viewed as substantially different from those of the first generation (Levitt/Waters 2002; Kibria 2002; Mahieu 2019).

There are different criteria for identifying the transnational behaviour of second- and later-generation diasporic people. The range of studies has focused on the frequency of homeland contacts, visits, the scope of social and political remittances, property ownership and voting (Levitt 2009; Lacroix et al. 2016; Ahmadov/Sasse 2016). By diasporic transnational behaviour, I mean a border-crossing homeland-oriented engagement which forges social and cultural bonds and connections to their (grand)parents' ancestral country, be it real or imagined. A number of young Armenian-Americans undertake trips to the Republic of Armenia and feel obliged to 'give back' by volunteering in different sectors of Armenian society. This encompasses those domains for social and cultural contact that produce not only knowledge and awareness of the 'ancestral homeland', but also create first-hand experiences of the homeland through travel and interactions. They may play a prominent role in the everyday hyphenated identification of those second- and later-generation Armenian Americans who do not necessarily associate themselves with the Armenian state. Alongside the official state-regulated repatriation policies of the Republic of Armenia, we should take into consideration alternative forms of homeland engagement, which seem to be popular among Western Armenian diasporic individuals. With 'alternative forms of engagement', I mean those forms of transnational behaviour, which are based on 'soft', small-scale, and semi-informal homeland-oriented activities at grassroots level. They lie beyond the prevalent ethnic family contexts and state-sponsored collective programmes with political implications.

Thus, I take a closer look at varying lived experiences of 'being engaged' with the 'ancestral homeland' among young professionals with an Armenian American background. I argue that these 'roots' travellers create their own pathways of transnationalism within a specific trajectory of routes and range of subjectivities. One of my primary research finding is the multiple, overlapping, and often competing and contradicting narratives that participants of homeland-oriented programmes reveal in their understanding of being

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diasporic Armenian and ways of 'getting rooted'. By analysing the individual experiences and motivations of young professionals of Armenian descent, this study sheds light on the following questions: How do volunteers perceive their remote 'ancestral homeland' and opportunities to be engaged with the homeland in a tangible way, and whose future is at stake in these imaginaries? How do they justify their willingness to do unpaid work? To what extent ethnic ties and 'rootedness' remain crucial for taking decision to move and volunteer?

What follows bellow, is an analysis of ethnographic data related to inspirations and subjectivities on 'doing diaspora', collected in Yerevan 'on the ground' by using a mixed approach to the field. In order to embrace roots' volunteers' experiences more comprehensibly, I decided to use three different approaches that produced three different materials: text narratives before the relocation, group interviews with volunteers after relocation inside of the diasporic organisations and finally, qualitative biographic interviews with individual volunteers. Regarding text narratives: I did this by looking closely at the written statements expressed by young volunteers in their application letters, submitted to non-state diasporic organisations (AVC and Birthright Armenia) in the period between 2007 and 2013. After having interviews with the leaders of Birthright Armenia at their office in Yerevan, I asked them to help me in approaching volunteers, providing me with a list of volunteer names and emails. After our correspondence, they agreed to meet me and shared their experiences in Armenia personally. The conversations took place at different places in- and outside of the Birthright office: in Yerevan's local cafes, at my apartment and in a city park. I am very grateful to the leaders of Birthright Armenia for their support in approaching young diasporic volunteers and in this way I was able to provide a deeper understanding of social, economic and political backgrounds of engaging with the homeland. My intention was to 'go native' by getting closer contacts to volunteers and their activities by participating at events and excursions. However, I did not feel welcomed in this domain and the programme leaders seemed not to be interested in including an outsider in their programme activities. In this sense, we are dealing with a limited access to 'ethnic' and 'socially' closed youth groups, a community in the making. My experience as a non-Armenian researcher was definitely different to Shaul Kelner's experiences that describe the effectiveness of "tours that bind" in Israel from the insider point of view. Another possibility to meet volunteers and inspire them for a biographic interview I gained through using the classic ethnographic method of 'hanging around' in a space. Indeed, I spent several hours each week at the Birthright gathering room waiting for those who just have fin-

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ished language courses or were entering the office because of appointments. It turned out that I spent more time in the lobby with reading and investigating volunteers guest books then with 'chatting the volunteers'. Whereas many of Birthright programme participants were hurrying up to their next appointments in the city, a few young people, however, were very interested not only in sharing their own stories, but also in showing their places in Yerevan to me.

Differing Motivations for Homeland Trips

Figure 3.1: Birthright Armenia's Advertising Poster

Source: https://www.birthrightarmenia.org. Last accessed in 2011.

The desire of the Armenian diaspora to engage with the homeland is perceived by the leadership of these non-state organisations as natural. More precisely, Birthright Armenia and the Armenian Volunteer Corps frame these trips and youth experiences in the 'ancestral homeland' as a collective moral act of 'giving back'. In this sense, a trip to Armenia is mediated as a performative action of 'doing diaspora' and as an obligation, one that is expected to bring about social and cultural transformation. In this way, the temporary relocation is conceptualised as a semi-formal rite for the building a closer 'tangible' relationship between the Armenian diasporic youth and the Republic of Armenia. The non-profit organizations attract young educated travellers not only in terms of 'a symbolic return to the ancestral past', but also in a search for professional experience and with the concern of doing unpaid 'meaningful' work in a specific place for the benefit of future generations.

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Exploring ethnic and non-ethnic reasons for a temporary settlement in Armenia, I have analysed text materials in terms of phenomenological research. The text materials comprise 76 individual statements formulated by AVC and Birthright volunteers in the period from 2007 to 2013. Each of the selected samples is a statement of 500–700 words in length written in response to the prompt: "Explain reasons for wanting to volunteer in Armenian, how these reasons are related to your past experience and how they might fit in with your future goals". The application accounts differ in style and organisation of contents, as well as in their quality of English, although they follow the same application instructions focused on motivations and cross-cultural experiences. My interpretation of these narratives is based on variables that have been classified under the following categories: cultural attachment; timing; expected effect of a temporary trip; and the image of the homeland.

Between 2001 and 2010, more than 850 volunteers of Armenian descent from Western countries, mostly from the United States and Canada, arrived in Armenia.[4] According to the statistical data I received from Birthright Armenia, the volunteers comprise a wide range of nationalities; more than 30 countries have been registered by receiving organisations in Armenia. Among these countries, 75 percent of volunteers stem from the United States and Canada and the rest come from Western Europe, Brazil and the Middle East. In the last decade, there has been a slight growth in the numbers. Whereas approximately 70 volunteers arrived in Yerevan each year during the period of 2004–2008, in the following two years 85 men and women were registered by Birthright Armenia. During the period of 2012–13, more than 110 people arrived as volunteers in Armenia per year. Two channels of information are particularly important when it comes to the ways in which young candidates learn about AVC and Birthright Armenia. These are (1) personal and family networks, including social networks at community churches or community centres in California, Massachusetts, Chicago, Toronto (just to name a few), and (2) detailed information that is available on Facebook. Volunteers come to the Republic of Armenia as independent individuals and not in a group.

The average age of young adults is 25 years; they are single and unmarried young women and men. One striking point is the gender difference among the volunteers. According to the statistical data, two thirds of volunteers are female. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine whether the drive to relocate to Armenia and the motivations to volunteer are affected by gender-specific life expectations. During my fieldwork, I met volunteers of both sexes,

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although female volunteers dominated the receiving centres in Yerevan and the majority of my respondents were also female.

In terms of ethnic heritage, applicants defined themselves in two different manners: as 'assimilated' into the culture of their country of residence and having lost their 'Armenian heritage', or as a person who still preserves the Armenian identity in the diaspora. Here we should distinguish between different countries of origin. The aforementioned characteristic of 'being assimilated' is more likely to be relevant for those applicants who grew up in the US, the UK, Western Europe, and Russia, and less relevant for volunteers from Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and the Middle East (Syria and Lebanon). This difference has implications for how the applicants formulate their point of legitimisation. Indeed, a variation can be traced among those few applicants who applied for a volunteering placement in Armenia from the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, and Kuwait). Citizens of these nation-states, both female and male, often emphasised the centrality of patriotic feelings in their motivation to visit Armenia. They represented themselves as ethnically 'pure Armenians' based on growing up in a traditional Armenian neighbourhood in a city like Beirut. This difference in argumentation can be explained by the fact that urban societies in Canada, South America and in the Middle East are very much shaped by the policy of multiculturalism or by traditional ethnic and religious segregation of neighbourhoods. Some of the second- and third-generation Armenian Americans and Armenian Canadians started their explanations with the fact that they developed a sense of feeling Armenian by being involved in a local community infrastructure (school, cultural centres, shops and media) along with the Canadian or American one.

One male Armenian Canadian volunteer who grew up in Syria explained his attachment to Armenia as emotional and emphasised his bounded solidarity with Armenia's people:

> "Living in Syria for many years and now in Canada permanently, Armenia has always been a place where I and my community have cherished and longed for. During our family gatherings we always discussed issues and matters that deal with the Armenian people, its social life, educational system and politics. I want to volunteer in Armenia because I believe that every Armenian has something special and unique to offer to Armenia. Armenians living in diaspora helped and supported their home country and the people since its independence. Now, that I have the opportunity to go, live, work and expe-

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> rience the everyday life of the people is a chance I don't want to miss." (Aram from Montreal)

Another male Armenian Lebanese from Beirut expressed his strong sense of ethnic attachment by identifying his belonging to a 'chosen nation': "I was born in Armenian family and been to an Armenian school, Armenian scouts and *Hamazkayin*, the Armenian cultural centre. This atmosphere has given me a rich background, when it comes to my roots, my culture, my literature and my history." However, only a few letters explicitly mentioned a patriotic background and the desire to be reunited with the ethnic homeland as the main reasons of applying. Mostly diasporic Armenians from the Middle East and Canada have formulated these parochial statements of being 'deeply rooted' in ethnic culture. These volunteers give a high priority to the homeland attachment. Indeed, a significant number of second-generation Armenian Canadians' parents came from the Middle East (Lebanon, Egypt, Iran) in the 1960s and 1970s (Phillips 1989). In contrast to the Armenian Lebanese sense of ethnic origin, a third-generation male Armenian American from the Boston area points out his 'assimilated' background, his 'uprootedness' in the following manner:

> "While my grandfather was an immigrant to the US, growing up I was not raised in a very Armenian household. No one ever spoke Armenian to me, nor was I taught much about my family's past. I have over the years become close with my Armenian family in France, yet I am not able to converse in Armenian with them. I want to learn more about Armenian culture, language, and history, and to me, there is no better way to do this than by living in Armenia."

In both cases the references to ethnic capital, as a 'lost' or a 'preserved' one, legitimise one's application to the programme. In other words, this trip is associated with strengthening individual Armenian identities. However, one should not overlook the centrality of the multi-cultural background among volunteers that shapes the transnational behaviour of second- and later-generation diasporic Armenians. Volunteers are heterogeneous in terms of social and cultural backgrounds; the majority of applicants are urban educated young professionals. The interesting point is that many applicants as well as group interview respondents indicated the cultural heterogeneity of the social environment in which they grew up. At least 50 percent of the interview respondents identified themselves as being half-Armenian and having grown up in ethnically mixed families:

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> "My mom is half-Armenian, her mother is from Lichtenstein. She was born in India and brought up in Switzerland. My dad is Armenian from Iran. I do not know exactly where they were from. What I know is that they went from Baku like through different countries, India and Iran." (Victoria from Canada)

Diasporic Youth's 'Journey to the Future'

There is a variety of motivations explaining why respondents undertook their volunteer trip to Armenia. For diasporic young professionals, a border-crossing journey to the 'homeland' was primarily associated with a complex and non-ordinary event. This event entails many different aspects such as individual self-discovery, the adventure of travel in a remote place and the desire to 'improve the world' through the philanthropic act of 'giving'. Furthermore, they sought to exercise skills in a new environment and, with the symbolic act of helping the sacred homeland they had heard about in childhood, gain the opportunity to become a 'better person' and contribute to the future of the Armenian nation. However, looking more closely, we can classify diasporic volunteers' desires as attempts to achieve two main goals: improving one's individual career and a quest for personal freedom.

In December 2007, during my fieldwork in Armenia, I interviewed 20 young English-speaking volunteers who had travelled to Armenia as members of the Armenian Volunteer Corpse (AVC). The meeting took place in the AVC seminar room in central Yerevan. The majority of the volunteers came from the United States, Canada, Australia and France. Conducting a group interview, I asked about their direct and indirect motivation for participating in this programme. All the respondents stated that their travel was not necessarily related to the 'natural' behaviour of diasporic decedents and referred to the individual and pragmatic dimension of the trip. A female volunteer from Australia explicitly emphasised in her statements: "I came here primarily as a volunteer…it was not so much about Armenia as it was about me coming here to help people, as I had no real links with my homeland before I came… My travel is kind of giving me a big kick, showing me where I want to be…"

In this sense, similar to the experiences of other European second-generation transnationalists (Turkish Germans, Swiss Italians, Greek Germans or British Pakistani), the motivation of making a 'homeland trip' was articulated as a quest for personal freedom and self-realisation (Wessendorf 2013; King/

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Christou 2011). For instance, Victoria from Washington D.C. talked about her decision to travel to Armenia in this manner:

> "I am not tied down with family, with a career, with all these things and it is a perfect, perfect time to travel. And I always knew that it was the place where I would want to go. There are a lot of life experiences that I think are necessary to gain right now and it is a great time to do that."

Australian-born third-generation Serena, who spent nine months in Armenia, talked about the adventurous side of her 'homeland trip' and 'learning experiences' in an unfamiliar space:

> "I am trying to make my everyday life like an adventure, because I am not in Australia now, and do not have to stick with this or that job, do not have any responsibilities. You could exploit your boundaries and see your capacities, to see how much you can accept and how you can learn out of it."

This and other accounts consider the centrality of pragmatic dimensions of homeland trip motivations among young professionals of Armenian descent. However, the practical timing of doing unpaid work in a remote place is combined with a romantic ideal of travel and adventure that generally is very much comparable with classical motives of any other young non-ethnic volunteer. One common theme is to explain one's motivations with reference to Armenia as a 'developing country'. 'Self-discovery and freedom before settling down into the career of my choice' is the expression of a practical view on the homeland trip's benefit. Based on the functional approach, Gil Clary and Mark Snyder (1999) claim that career benefits are one of the most important reasons when volunteering for non-profit activities in the United States. It appears that the sense of location among young professionals of Armenian descent is likely to overlap with the sense of time. I suggest that this attitude is shaped by the North American middle-class sense of time focused on the present and future, rather than on the past. Ninety percent of applicants justified their desire to travel 'now' by citing the fact that they had just finished school, college or received a bachelor's degree. Thus, individual aspects of motivations are very much shaped by rational frameworks of one's regulated biography.

> "A few weeks ago, I finished my first year of graduate…After graduating this coming year, I will have entire year-off before beginning law school." (Aram, 23 years, Boston area)

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Though some of the participants arrive in winter, the majority of volunteers travel to Armenia just prior to or during the summer season, the period that overlaps with 'the end of college'. The average time of volunteering is usually related to an individual's period of time between finishing school or college and starting a new level of education or another important turning point in their life course. More precisely, about 90 percent of applicants justified their desire to travel by pointing to the fact that they had recently finished college and received a bachelor's degree. For example, one informant stressed that the age of 24 was a 'perfect time' for a life stage event for gaining work experience and enhancing one's academic biography: "I study in a business school in Paris and I just have finished my second year. We have to do an internship, and in this year, we can organise it within an NGO", argued a 25-year-old male volunteer from France.

From an anthropological perspective, the subjectivities around the settings, timing of transfer from one place to another and the expected rewards from an internship can be interpreted according to the Turnerian notion of pilgrimage, in other words as a liminoid phenomenon. The term 'liminoid' is close to the notion 'liminal', however it differs through the experimental, 'individualised' and creative character. Turner highlighted the optative character of 'liminoid' as form of symbolic action in industrial societies resembling some found in 'tribal society' (liminal rite of passages) (Turner 1974: 65). The merit of this approach is in its consideration of transient, however fragmentary change from one social status to another. Liminoid phenomena mean developing apart from the central economic and political processes, along the margins, in interactions and in interstices of established institutions (Turner 1974: 85). Indeed, applicants emphasise the 'perfect' timing during the intervening period and in this way stand at the 'threshold' between their previous ways of constructing personal identity, career and a new opportunity of 'self-discovery'. However, as Coleman and Eade outlined in their volume on reframing pilgrimages, "it is not made clear how the processual, set-apart character of the institution can feed into structural change" (2004: 4). In this sense, the imaginaries of homeland volunteering as an act of transformation and growth seem to be limited to personal rewards expectations and individual perspectives in a globalised world.

In explaining third- and later-generation motivations to undertake an 'ancestral homeland' trip, one should not forget the financial aspect of such a journey. Twenty-seven–year-old Anna from California was sceptical about how popular Birthright Armenia and AVC would be without the financial

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incentives they currently provide for young volunteers. Her comments echoed some of the opinions of volunteers whom I interviewed in Yerevan in 2013:

> "They come here for two months or longer and enjoy spending their pocket money because it is so cheap here! Without Birthright's assistance it have been much harder, financially at least… So, if you did not have a financial support of having place to live, having your flight paid for, if you are going to come for a year for unpaid work, eventually you are going to run out of money! It is crucial that there is financing in place."

Obviously financial incentives are significant in shaping candidates' motivations to travel to Armenia with Birthright Armenia and the AVC for a longer period of time. At the same time, by placing unpaid work within the framework of a 'heritage homeland', the act of volunteering can gain a specific spiritual dimension, which merges the notion of work with emotional narrations, experiences of hardship with subjectivities and cultural aesthetics. In this context, the act of transnational diasporic volunteering can be patterned as a form of personal sacred journey or secular pilgrimage. However, it is the rational dimension of motivations to volunteer in Armenia that shapes an expected individual reward and moral incentives. The majority of motivation letters explicitly refer to modern benefits such as improving one's CV for a future career path. One male applicant from Canada expressed this very directly: "My primary reasons for wanting to volunteer in Armenia are to improve both my Armenian language skills and to increase relevant work experience on my CV." About two thirds of applicants explicitly mentioned that Armenia is a 'proper' place not only because of traditional interest in the heritage homeland, but also the place where a 'transfer' of Western skills and know-how can be implemented in a part of the world associated with the Global South. The motivations were often reframed in terms of global issues and a 'noble' mission to 'move mountains' through physical engagement with an impoverished and 'backward' society.

Armenian American or Armenian Canadian volunteers in particular gain a sense of incorporation into the remote 'sacred homeland' through the rhetoric of NGO work, engaging with the moral issues of 'development' and 'democracy' in a post-communist society. The desire to 'help poor people' is perceived by Western diasporic Armenian volunteers as a crucial argument that provides the application with a positive legitimisation to sponsor his or her trip to Armenia. This type of reward expectation shows the ways in which the moral logic

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of the diasporic mission is constructed and how global inequality shapes imaginaries of diasporic 'roots' volunteers.

> "As a second-generation Armenian Australian, I have many reasons for wanting to volunteer in Armenia. Firstly, I would like to contribute in a positive manner to the development of Armenia, especially in the fields of human rights and poverty." (24-year-old male applicant from the United Kingdom)

The majority of volunteers admitted having no experience with living outside of the United States or Canada. Given the fact that the content of motivation letter statements entailed explanations of personal cross-cultural experience, applicants provided some examples that should illustrate their ability to interact with 'unfamiliar', 'other' and 'different cultures'. Some volunteers referred to having experience in work with gangs, drug abuse, rampant homelessness, and violent people to support their application. Only very few application statements explicitly linked the motivation to go to Armenia with a romantic and intimate vision of the homeland, as expressed here by a volunteer from California in 2007: "Armenia is an old country, a mystical land with lush forests, sparkling water, and jumbo-sized fruits and vegetables. My grandfather swore that the cabbage there weighted up to 80 lbs!"

Instead, more than half of the volunteers implicitly compared Armenia with the notion of the ultimate 'other', 'backward' country. Some applicants categorised their expectations of Armenia as a poor Middle Eastern country. Global conditions and income differences between the United States and Armenia provide an easy moral argumentation for moving to and even possibility staying in Armenia. As highlighted by Zygmund Bauman (1998), the capacity to move, its timing and the conditions in which the movement takes place, represent a marker of social difference which highlights the many inequalities under which mobility as 'socially produced motion' is constituted (Cresswell 2006; Salazar/Graburn 2016). In this context, diasporic cross-border mobility and diasporic motivations to volunteer in the 'ancestral homeland' are similar to any other Western volunteering to help people in a remote 'poor' place.

Providing moral and sometimes financial support, parents of young diasporic members are only implicitly involved in the intercontinental cross-border mobility in this context, and the volunteers' embeddedness in family networks seems to only partly influence their decision to go to the 'ancestral homeland'. Many of the volunteers claimed their decisions were not directly linked to the ambitions of their parents, but asserted it was 'their idea' to come to Armenia. The majority of the volunteers I interviewed during my fieldwork viewed

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their transnational behaviour in a different way to their parents. To my question whether their parents visited the ancestral place in Armenia or Turkey, the real homeland territory, the majority of young volunteers denied. The generation of the volunteers' parents seemingly followed a 'sedentary' pattern of interaction with the homeland. Lucia (26 years old), whose father is of Armenian descent and whose mother is Austrian, explained her experience in this way: "My father has never been to Armenia…I suppose he is scared to come to Armenia to see how ideal it is not…It is not the utopian ideal society that he kind of wants it to be."

Among the volunteers I met in Yerevan, only few had parents who had travelled to Armenia before their children visited the 'sacred land'. In total, volunteers' parents rarely visited the Republic of Armenia. They also refrained from visiting the land of exodus of their parents, Turkey, arguing that the threatening and hostile attitude towards Armenians among Turks kept them away from real homeland trips.

Experiencing the Homeland

One of my primary research interests is in the multiple, overlapping, and often competing narratives that participants of Birthright programme reveal in their understanding of being Armenian and the ways of 'doing diaspora'. In the following section, I describe individual views and narratives of experiencing the homeland after temporary relocation to Armenia as told by descendants of Armenian diasporic communities in the United States. I provide three different portraits of Birthright volunteers, US citizens with ethnic Armenian background. Their trips to Armenia took place at the same time, but produced contradictive narratives that may shape their relationship to the homeland and produce different implications for their individual pathway to the homeland.

I have chosen these three individuals as 'protagonists' of diasporic youth travel who enact 'momentous mobility' and illustrate the formation of new frameworks for diasporic motivations to 'engage with the homeland' on a micro level.

Jeff

When I met Jeff in an Armenian street café on a warm autumn afternoon, Jeff was 29 years old. He was dressed like a typical office worker: black trousers and

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a long-sleeved shirt of a yellowish colour. His haircut was neat and conventional; he wore metal-framed glasses and carried a black leather bag. Born in Baltimore, Jeff had arrived in Yerevan as a volunteer in 2012 and, having finished his work with Birthright Armenia, was unexpectedly offered a job at USAID in Yerevan. This was central to his decision to stay in Armenia for another year. It was not clear whether he would get a contract extension and extend his stay in Armenia by another year.

We began our conversation on his background as a descendant of the 'old Armenian American diaspora', a topic he was happy to discuss. Growing up in a lower middle-class family, Jeff said his parents and grandparents never left the United States because they were 'very American' and had run a variety of small- and medium-sized businesses, such as a pet salon: "Since I am from the old diaspora, people are more American now and they don't know Armenian anymore." Jeff vividly described the complex geography of his grandparents' displacements in the Ottoman Empire in the period from 1909 to 1923, before they ended up in Baltimore. Both grandparents were born in Turkey (*Malatia, Sevas, Arabkir*); one of them arrived in America before the genocide, the other afterwards. Nobody from his family had visited either Armenia or Turkey after leaving. Though he had learned some Armenian, mostly reading skills but not speaking, Jeff didn't have Armenian friends until the age of 14 when he entered high school.

Having studied history and fascinated by his family's genealogy tree created by his maternal uncle, Jeff was very keen to travel to Turkey and see the real homeland of his ancestors. He mentioned that he felt "a bit disconnected" in Armenia. When I asked about the reasons and circumstances that brought him to Armenia as a volunteer, he described how friends and family encouraged him to join a trip to Armenia by a church group in 2007, and later to become a Birthright volunteer in 2010. He emphasised, however, that the decision to travel to Armenia was his own; members of his family had never travelled outside of America. At the same time, he admitted that travel had become easier by the beginning of the twenty-first century: improvements in transportation and the incentives provided by Birthright were important factors in his decision.

Jeff's main motivation, however, stemmed from a period of unemployment, which seemed to be the 'perfect time' to 'depart' for the 'ancestral homeland' and make a 'journey to the future'. Whereas graduation from high school had been an opportune moment to travel to Armenia in 2007, in 2012 it was his temporary unemployment, a difficult phase in the life of any young

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professional. After earning a degree in history, he had managed to find a job in finance, but subsequently lost it in the turbulent years following the 2008 financial crisis. In this context, uncertainty at a critical life stage was a factor in his pragmatic decision to depart. Jeff was not that interested in 'cultivating' his ancestral heritage in Armenia, as he was already well informed about his own family genealogy in Turkey. He was more interested in the long-term entrepreneurial effects of the programme, both on Armenian society and on himself:

> "I will go back to United States, but this doesn't mean I'm done with Armenia, it's all…you see where it takes you, and that's Birthright's idea. These people that often come, they just come for summer or for a few months, there's no expectation that they stay here and repatriate, because they came with the Birthright programme. The idea is to get them familiar with Armenia, so it feels like another home**,** and down in the future… Their whole plan is not necessarily that you have to come here and never leave, it's that you come here, you make connections, you get to know it, you learn your homeland and then you go home, you remember that, you help it as you can back home or wherever you are and then if there's an opportunity, or you feel ready and you want to do it, do it! If you don't want to do it, you don't, there's no pressure."

His pragmatic attitude towards Armenia was very much shaped by the material consequences of being a volunteer. In coming to Armenia as a Birthright volunteer, Jeff was able to find his community and an affordable start-up position. He became quite emotional when he described the opportunities Birthright Armenia had offered him as an American. Beyond the fact that it became affordable for him to "live on his own for the first time in his life", Jeff stressed his new feeling of safety, being part of a real community.

> "I didn't know anybody here. But coming with Birthright, you have a group [of people] around you who are in the same situation. They are new to Armenia, they are learning about the country, and they are from America, or another country, they are not from here, they are also kind of a stranger. Birthright and Repat do help you to find jobs here."

The 'safety' and 'success' that come with economic opportunities in a new place are essential to understanding the process of 'doing diaspora'.. When I asked Jeff how newcomers can do business without connections to local society and in a country where the post-socialist economy is defined by the informality of laws and corruption, his answer was completely confident: "I think there is

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more potential for business in Armenia than in America." Jeff stressed the importance of know-how in modern and fashionable small- and medium-sized businesses, for instance in the high-tech sector, start-ups, banking or tourism. On the other hand, he did not underestimate the power of local oligarchs in traditional branches, such as food production, supermarkets and restaurant businesses. Jeff's sense of being a 'pioneer' in the country of his ancestors was supported by the idea that he was facilitating a transfer of specific know-how from the United States to this remote country.

> "[…] Once they (oligarchs) didn't have the knowledge to do it well, like there is a cell phone company Vivacell, which was founded by a diaspora person, and they didn't know how to do that so they left it alone. Now it's the biggest one in Armenia. (In 2015, Vivacell became part of the Russian MTS communication holding. TD). […] No, of course when you have a small business, someone can show up and say: 'if you don't give us half of the business then we're going to do something bad to you'. It's possible. And that's the scary thing. It's not a perfect situation, but meanwhile there are people here proving that it's possible. And especially for a diasporan, it's hard to mess with that person, because if this Green Bean down the street, on Amiryan, which is a diasporan business and it's doing so well, if they came and tried to take over Green Bean, it would be just because of all the foreigners there, all of the diasporans, all of them. And if they tried to get involved in that and tried to make trouble for them, that wouldn't go very well. I don't say it's impossible, everything is possible, but meanwhile at Green Bean they say: 'It takes more money, we have to spend more money to do it, but we do everything legal, we don't take any shortcuts.' (Green Bean is a successful coffee and snacks chain in Yerevan providing free wifi. TD)"

Miriam

Twenty-five years of age, Miriam came to Yerevan from Washington D.C. in 2012. I made an appointment to meet her at the Birthright Armenia office in Hanrapetutyan Street, where she was attending an Armenian-language course. Wearing a pastel-coloured dress over blue jeans with long blond hair, she presented herself as "75 percent Armenian, a fourth generation Armenian American descendant from a typical emigrant family". Born in Michigan, she grew up in Philadelphia in a middle-class American family. Miriam's grandparents ran small businesses such as dry-cleaners and ice-cream shops. Her

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parents went on to work as managers and clerks in a large coffee company. Her multicultural background included Russian and Italian blood, although Armenian heritage dominated her identity. Miriam came to Yerevan as a Birthright volunteer for six months and, at the time of our interview, was working in a recording studio called Ask Armenian Audiobooks.

From the outset she emphasised her membership to the old Armenian Apostolic Church. Moreover, she was proud of having early experiences in singing chorus during Sunday services and learning Komita's *Patarag*[5], a divine liturgy in the Armenian Church and the ancient Armenian language *Grabar*.

> "I think when I was growing up the main identification of being an Armenian was to be a part of the Armenian Orthodox church, because I knew that my church was different from other people's church, because it was in a different language, but I also saw this cultural connection when I got a little bit older. I think everyone eats rice '*plav*' at home, everybody eats shish-kebab. When I grew up I saw there were certain parts of my life that are different from the typical American, but we were very Americanized, super Americanized…My parents did not grow up speaking the language, and my grandparents could speak Armenian, but they always tried to assimilate and to blend in."

Neither her parents nor her grandparents, whose parents arrived in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century from Istanbul and Sebastia as refugees after genocide, have ever been to Armenia. When asked about her family origins, Miriam answered:

> "I think even though we're technically from Turkey, I say 'technically', because it depends on how you define 'Turkey' today – it's Western Armenia. So, if there is a desire to go somewhere, it was to Eastern Armenia. Because this is the place where our language is spoken and this is where our culture exists."

She started to think of Armenia as a travel destination after graduation from college because "I did not know what I was going to do next, I did not have a job yet, I was freelance teaching a public-speaking course over the summer, so I had to do something". Similar to Jeff, job uncertainty was a crucial factor in Miriam's motivation to 'relocate' for the 'ancestral homeland' and make a 'journey to the future' on the territory of an unknown homeland. She found herself in a liminal situation shaped by two sudden events: her parents' divorce, which led to the disintegration of the family core, and her resignation from her job: "Everybody kind of spread out, my brother moved to Minnesota, my sister

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was still in Pennsilvania , now she is in Chicago for college, and my parents divorced." She became more reflective when talking about how her parents' divorce coincided with a demanding job with an aggressive boss and seemed relaxed when describing her decision to quit the job and join the Birthright and AVC programmes instead.

> "So since I was working longer and longer, I felt like I needed to do something different, but my boss had that type of personality, when she knew you're going to leave, to go to a different job, she'd call your future employer and would try to tell him not to hire you…I quit and I volunteered, since going to my homeland was something I always wanted to do. I also knew that she (the boss) couldn't follow me there. But, I really wanted to come, so Armenia was an excuse to quit my job and vice versa. It worked out very well."

The story of escaping a difficult situation gracefully is somewhat reminiscent of classical pilgrim narratives of a personal reunification with a Promised Land after a long trip. And Birthright Armenia turned out to be a kind of therapeutic 'ceremony master', guiding Miriam successfully on her journey to herself in a remote place. She believed that her sense of being human and Armenian had been strengthened, even it was based on a vague awareness of being connected to sacred music and to a country with an ancient culture. The diasporic form of 'innocent yearning' found its expression in individual way of finding one's self with healing effects.

> "Though, I don't look Armenian, I like that I'm doing something, I'm part of the movement in Armenia, I'm part of the growth of Armenia in whatever way it is. It's not necessarily a big way, but I like that I'm a cog in a wheel. I really like being a part of the machine here, because it's a good machine, it's a machine that gives me extra fuel to work."

In contrast to Jeff's pragmatism, Miriam's understanding of her 'journey to the future' is shaped by a nostalgic, patriotic feeling of being connected to the land of desire. Having a connection to the local society via a homestay family play an important role in forming a personal relationship with the Republic of Armenia. Miriam's positive experiences around her trips and her stay with a homestay family derive from her everyday experiences of feeling part of a larger family, which often contrasted with her sense of family and working life in the United States. When describing the ways in which she was incorporated into Yerevan life, she is enthusiastic about the special sense of sociability in Armenia:

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> "It was so anticlimactic, I didn't know, for example, if Armenia had tall buildings or not. I always used to being in a vertical city, and Yerevan is a horizontal city. So first I was kind of shocked. But then I was getting into a *marshrutka* (microbus) with my host sister. This is so different, but I loved it, because I was like: Wow! This girl is offering to put my bag on her leg because I have to stand on the bus right now."

Anna

Anna called me on my cell phone and asked me if I was Bulgarian because of my surname. She was very interested in giving me an interview and suggested meeting up in a café on Abovyan Street, one frequently visited by expats, tourists and diasporic Armenians. The 25-year-old came in with her dog, dressed in a black miniskirt, a hooded T-shirt and sneakers. At the time of our interview, she had already spent two years in Armenia and was preparing to leave for the US.. She had planned to arrive in Yerevan in summer 2011 and spend six months as a Birthright volunteer, but stayed longer on her own after receiving many job offers. In September 2013, she was working as a camera operator for a diasporic charity organisation. . Unlike Jeff and Miriam, she had a good command of the local language and seemed to be quite independent from other volunteers in Armenia: "For me, it was important not to allow Birthright to be my only avenue for engaging with the place and people here."

Born in Sofia (Bulgaria) and raised in San José, Anna is a citizen of both the United States and Bulgaria. She visited Bulgaria twice before coming to Armenia. Unlike Jeff and Miriam, Anna did not view her ethnic heritage through the lens of the genocide discourse, but saw herself rather as a descendant of the Ottoman Armenians from the Edirne area, a region located on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey. Three generations, including herself, were born in Sofia, but in the 1990s her parents decided to leave Bulgaria for the United States as tourists, because "after the fall of communism living in Bulgaria was impossible and my father has always hated communism". She felt different to other volunteers as she was born in Bulgaria and her parents spoke English with an accent. Though her multicultural background included three different languages and cultures – Bulgarian, Armenian and American English – Anna emphasised that the Armenian element was very dominant in her life in San José, despite the fact that her mother is ethnic Bulgarian. She went to an Armenian school, visited the Armenian Church and was a member of the Dashnaktsutyun Youth Federation.

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Anna explained her decision to travel as a volunteer to Armenia in professional terms as it gave her the opportunity to do a PhD in comparative literature with Armenian and Bulgarian. Without denying that she has 'always' wanted to come to Armenia, Anna took the 'pragmatic' decision to apply for the Birthright programme in her final year of college when her application for a Fulbright scholarship was unsuccessful. Anna's 'perfect time' to depart for the homeland coincided with a gap year between finishing college and preparing for a PhD thesis. Besides the fact that the Birthright volunteering programme included incentives (free flight ticket and free homestay), it was her friends and contacts in the Los Angeles Armenian community who encouraged her to apply.

Although it was clear that she was passionate about the Armenian language, culture and landscape, after arriving in the homeland Anna became quite cynical and even frustrated about the Birthright programme. In particular, she disliked the way Birthright Armenia positioned itself vis-à-vis Armenian society. Another source of disillusionment was related to the visible social inequalities between wealthier diasporic travellers and poorer locals. While she admitted that Birthright was a good resource for coming to Armenia, she was disappointed by the one-sidedness of the programme, what she described as their "naïve and selfish mission of self-discovery":

> "[…] the organization does a very good job of ushering you into certain experiences that keep you away from understanding the serious destraction taking place here. Because then you'd see that you feel the same way the people who live here feel. It is absolutely hopelessness. And that is not Birthright's goal. They want you to stay. So, they'll do their part to make sure that even if you witness unfortunate things, you are still able to take it and flip it and make it into something positive, to not lose hope. I do not think that it is a bad thing, I just think it's very one-sided.."

After living for two years in Armenia, Anna distanced herself from both the community of Birthright volunteers and from Armenia as her homeland. Proud of her multicultural background, she saw her ability to form an independent and critical opinion on the Birthright programme as a source of strength: "I was always hybrid and I was able to exist in many places at the same time. The idea of returning to Armenia is a silly one, because this sentence makes no sense, my family is from Bulgaria." At the same time, she became quite emotional when describing her own ambivalence and how she unexpectedly came to see herself "first and foremost as an American" in Yerevan.

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> "I think that the power structure, the power dynamics between the local population and us as often privileged, wealthier white foreigners, because I think my American-ness makes me quite "white" here, it is something that has to be attended to. And Birthright has been very afraid of touching this subject. […] I am not perceived here as a woman, I am perceived here as a representation of the money that comes from the US and from the West. To me that is whiteness, absolutely! When I was in Africa, it was absolutely the same thing! People would respond to my skin colour, and the second thing they would say was money. You know, whiteness is synonymous with capital."

Anna seemed to be aware that her new identification as 'white' American was shaped by situational factors in one specific place and time. She immediately reflected on the opposite experience of being less 'white' in the American context:

> "I've never felt more foreign than when I came to Armenia. In the US as a kid I always felt like I was different, because I was Armenian. Because I had a different face and my parents spoke with an accent. But now when I go back to the US, I feel completely at home."

She became very serious when I asked her what she means by the 'one-sidedness' of Birthright's mission. In contrast to Jeff and Miriam's positive experiences of 'doing diaspora' in the homeland, she emphasised the limits of interactions with Armenian society and the persistent gap between the Western diaspora and local Armenians:

> "There was an interesting situation. Somebody in Birthright and AVC organized a world anti-tobacco day to promote no smoking here in Armenia. And the ways they represented it, the initiative, made it sound like: 'Come on foreigners! Let's get together and teach the Armenians how they shouldn't smoke!' And somebody responded to this email: 'I am tired of AVC trying to tell me how to teach people here, that is not why I came to Armenia'. Nobody from the BR spoke up. But I said that this is a problem and needs to be talked about. I immediately got a call from Birthright […] and I said: I am sorry, guys. I do not regret what I said, because I said it's better we talk about this instead of partying every night and going to the same bar every night in Yerevan, getting drunk and vomiting everywhere', which is the reputation that the Birthright volunteers had for a while in Yerevan. They come here for two months or longer, spend all their money because it is so cheap here,

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> they party, have sex with each other. So Birthright was very offended by this comment that I made, but unfortunately it's the truth…"

She expressed her solidarity with the local population and smart young people who, like herself, want to receive a good education, do a PhD in Western universities, and leave Armenia.

To sum up, these three portraits show different ways of 'doing diaspora' on an individual level by volunteering in the homeland. The choreography of the volunteers' journey involves a movement from one centre to another, from one home place to the iconic space of the homeland. The decision to make such a journey is very much shaped by individual biographies embedded in the Western system of education and career paths. Moreover, the 'perfect' time for departing and moving to another place often coincides with a gap year in one's studies or career, in other words with a liminal phase between leaving one post (high school, university) and taking up another. Pragmatic, naïve, emotional and painful experiences of travelling the homeland show that the notion of improving one individual career does not necessarily intersect with the desire to discover their ancestral heritage, but rather contributes to a varying degree of self-discovery.

Regardless of the level of assimilation and the resources, social and cultural capital, diasporic youth's 'making a homeland' involves the notion of journey, which is structured by three main overlapping motivations: a journey to the past, a journey to the future and a journey to the self. The journey to the past is a metaphoric understanding of a return to the lost culture of ancestors, a belief in traditions, which existed in some prior time 'before the genocide' kept in memories of young people. However, these memories are limited to the names of the places where grandparents come from and few cultural traits learnt at school. This journey to the past, however, is a motivating factor to the desire to establish a link to a cultural 'timeless heritage' with 'an imagined homeland' that has been re-activated not by family and relatives but diasporic organisation leaders. The notion of a journey to the future coincides with Birthright's cultivation of the links to the iconic place, Armenia, with individual visions of a future career path in a society where volunteering is a requirement for graduation and for the promotion of a global cosmopolitan's career. This notion is very much related to the third individualised motivation, a journey to self, which takes a form of symbolic action. These latter values of journey are perceived as an elevation in status for volunteers that emerge in the form of experimental social capital valuable within the society where volunteers grew up.

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While Birthright and AVC organisations may speak of a desire to 'serve the nation' and claim to 'develop the homeland' with volunteer work, the 'journey to the future' should not be understood as purely 'collective' form of Armenia-centred political socialisation. Many of the volunteers are attracted by the idea of 'saving the planet' as well as looking for something useful for their individual professional future via a homeland trip. A considerable argument in support of a long-distance 'homeland trip' is the possibility of finding personal career pathways in a developing country, especially in an 'adventurous location' of the new Global South.

Conclusion

This insight in the experiencing the homeland as 'roots' migrants in Armenia among Western volunteers of Armenian descent reveals a significant phenomenon of temporary 'homecomings' among young professionals and underlines the growing popularity of cross-border diasporic mobility. For Armenian Americans or Armenian Canadians, homeland trips and volunteering in the 'ancestral homeland' have not (yet) evolved into a mass phenomenon, however this 'structurally invisible' mobility shapes a new pattern of attachment to the homeland. Generally, homeland trip motivations among third-generation diasporic Armenians are diverse and they organised neither along kin and family networks, nor by state-centred institutions, but activated within international and informal civic diasporic organisations. US-based intermediary organisations, which were described in the previous chapter, reclaim Armenian soil through the rhetoric of a temporal 'journey to the future' and play an important role in creating a 'grey zone' of transnational activity for youth beyond state bureaucracy. I argue that through these trips diasporic identity is materialised and reproduced for a specific social group, i.e. young diasporic elites and individuals from a multi-cultural background.

Imaginaries play an important role in envisioning the sacred homeland. Similar to Salazar's notion of migration trajectories (2011), the Armenian diasporic 'journey to the future' is very much about imaginaries that came to be turned into a physical movement from one locality to another and back. The fact that the homeland trip is emotionally represented as a 'sacred journey' is reminiscent of a sort of modern secular pilgrimage. This is a way to combine liminal practices with subjectivities of young urban middle class, who enact 'momentous mobility'.

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State-based authorities may claim homeland trips are political in nature yet other factors emerge on the level of the individual. These include an understanding of one's career path, the social status of being a part of a middle-class educated volunteer's community, and financial incentives. In this sense, one can say that an emerging form of diasporic mobility moves away from certain aspects of conventional homecoming and ethnic repatriation movements[6] such as a one-way-destination, the centrality of ethno-national attachments and the ideology of blood (Glick Schiller 2005; King/Christou 2011). The specific features of contemporary diasporic 'homecoming' differ from classical return migrations significantly, as they include the temporariness of mobility, the voluntary and pro-active character of relocation, the lack of a hostile attitude from the side of the mainstream society where the travellers reside, and the fact that the travellers are not foreign-born returning nationals (Bakalian 1993; Kaprielian-Churchill 2005). Though the ideology of 'roots' plays a significant role in mobilising motivations to travel, the homeland volunteering can hardly be called a linear way of the 'counter-migration' and 'counter-diasporic' movement identified by scholars on the studies of return migration in Europe (King/Christou 2011). Moreover, the aspirations of young people differ from those of second-generation returnees who return to their parents' houses and lands relying on their specific cultural capital (Wessendorf 2013). Similar to what Noel Salazar identified as a "momentous mobility" (Salazar 2018), this is a temporary movement that can be a central element structuring the modern biographies of diasporic youth. Volunteers perceive the remote 'ancestral homeland' not only as a nostalgic memorial landscape, but rather as a place for opportunities and 'start-ups' related to personal future career plans.

Many predicted that diasporic 'roots' migrants predominantly renew and reinforce bounded identities and social relations as such movements pull people in specific destinations (Clifford 1999; Glick Schiller 2005). My main argument in this chapter is that among third- and later-generation diasporic Armenians from the United States, Canada or Australia, diasporic mobility is shaped less by long-distance, nationalistic urges for vengeance in regard to the past, but rather by individual career plans and a middle-class activists' romanticism. It is in this way, rather than on notions of a bounded community, that resources of individual power and status are constructed. As this examination of motivations for embarking on a 'journey to the future' reveals, diasporic volunteers remain very much conscious of a global understanding of mobility as an individual marker of social status within the society in which they grew up.

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Young professionals and highly skilled migrants take advantage of career opportunities and chances to improve their CVs, which are valued in the Global North. What is on display here is a variety of imaginaries among members of the paradigmatic diasporic group such as Armenians, which shows how second- and later-generation diasporics take advantage of their multi-cultural background to become transnational global actors.

Notes

1 Source : http://repatarmenia.org/eng/why-move/. Last accessed in 03. 2014.

2 The holy Mount Ararat is located approximately 50km eastward of the Armenian capital Yerevan behind the Turkish border.

3 More generally, some research has been done in the field of transnational homeland trips among foreign-born returning nationals and second-generation root migrants. See Levitt/Waters 2002; Potter/Phillips 2006; Wessendorf 2013; Jain 2013.

4 See more about the life of Armenian migrants and their assimilation into the North American societies in Bakalian 1993 and Kaprielian-Churchill 2005.

5 Patarag (Badarak) is a classical Armenian word used to define the celebration of the Eucharist or Divine Liturgy in the Armenian Church. The word is a translation of the biblical Hebrew and Greek words that mean 'animal' and 'offerings'. Komitas, an Armenian priest and composer of sacred music (1869–1935) created Patarag in 1933 as a polyphonic version of Armenian sacred music that was innovative for that period. He named it "Polyphonic Sacred Liturgy for Men's Chorus".

6 For example, the Armenian repatriation campaign in the 1940s. See Mouradian 1979.

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