

## URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

One of EPF's cross-cutting foci is on the preservation, improvement and development of cities' culture and architecture. EPF attaches a great importance to the development of urban culture in all its manifestations. Over the years, EPF has implemented or supported projects in the fields of urban ecology, environmental architecture, homelessness, tree felling, urban tourism, museums, etc. EPF employs a systematic and comprehensive approach to its urban planning-related work in order to find effective, complex and mutually enriching solutions even if the projects are small.

The nexus of human rights-related issues and changing behavioral culture via informal education is at the core of EPF's work in general and urban development work in particular. This work unites in one knot the issues of environment, non-violence, taste, education, gender, anti-corruption and citizenship values. Cities should be convenient for people with disabilities. Urban planning should be implemented taking into account people living in poverty and in difficult socio-economic conditions, and present the valuable culture of the past.

Over the years, EPF, via grant-making and partners, has addressed such issues as the urban sub-cultures: the hippy sub-culture in the Soviet-times Yerevan; the *kyartu* sub-culture<sup>1</sup> today (a youth behavioral culture, usually expressing narrow-mindedness, pseudo-conservative values, tastelessness and intolerance), with its roots stemming from several Soviet sub-cultures; and the *blatnoy* (criminal) sub-culture, which can be called 'anti-culture': the seemingly or really violent behavior inherited from the specific Soviet-type criminal world that the times spent by many Armenians in *gulag*, the Soviet concentration camp system, brought to Yerevan and other major Soviet cities. Unfortunately, this anti-culture survives until today and is at the core of many expressions

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<sup>1</sup> Gabrielyan, A. and Nikoghosyan, A. (2017). *The Kyartu Character as a Representation of Intolerance in Modern Armenian Prose*. In: *Research Book. Manifestations of Tolerance and Intolerance in Armenian Literature / Yerevan, EPF*, pp. 201-224. (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/Manifestations-of-Tolerance-and-Intolerance-in-Armenian-Literature> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019]. Please see the summary of this publication in English at p. 31, p. 332.

of physical or psychological violence, such as domestic violence, bullying at schools or hazing in the army. The root of this anti-culture is the denial of human dignity. EPF studies it and builds recommendations on how to wipe it out from the behavior of independent Armenia's city and town dwellers. Intolerant and violent attitudes to the nature, plants, and animals are also from this range, and also at the forefront of EPF's attention<sup>2</sup>.

One of the problems that Armenia experienced after independence has been the ruthless destruction of valuable old monuments, public and green spaces, at the expense of people's financial and strategic interests. This destruction was brought about by the actions of corrupt oligarchy in the name of short and fast money. EPF has produced several talk shows and movies which addresses these issues. *Old and New Yerevan*<sup>3</sup> focuses on transformations Yerevan goes through, positive and negative changes. *Sos: Termless Hostages of Overarching State Interest*<sup>4</sup> addressed the issues of illegal destruction of old habitat and people's homes. Another show<sup>5</sup> focused on the 2012 struggle to preserve the *Mashtots Park*. This was one of the rare instances during the previous political power, overturned by the 2018 revolution, when people's will and struggle and the common sense eventually won over the banditism of cleptocratic oligarchy.

Started in 2019 with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, a joint project of the Armenian Center for Ethnological Research "Hazarashen" and EPF documents Yerevan's urban cultural history using the methodology of oral history. In-depth interviews with several senior residents of Yerevan are being conducted, their life stories are being recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The research aims at answering to a wide array of questions on Yerevan's history and intangible cultural heritage.

EPF also addresses the urban development issues outside Yerevan: in February, 2019, EPF organized a discussion on the development of Martuni with representatives of educational, cultural, economic, local government and other relevant institutions. A sectoral mapping was exercised on the basis of the actual city map. A number of approaches to further urban development of Martuni were unfolded, holistically and in an interconnected way touching upon many aspects of city development including cultural, economic, environmental, architectural and other angles, to be capitalized upon by the local government, civil society, and other actors in their future steps.

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2. YouTube. (2018). Animal Protection Issue in Armenia (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/vELYm2EAra4> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

3. YouTube (2012). *Article 27. Old and New Yerevan*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/2re9BAHMyg4> [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

4. YouTube (2009). *SOS: Termless hostages of Interest priority*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/uRqq9OG1OCs> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

5. YouTube (2012). *Article 27. Mashtots Park Issue (April 11, 2012). English version*. [online] Available at: [https://youtu.be/dYokc\\_alluU](https://youtu.be/dYokc_alluU) [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

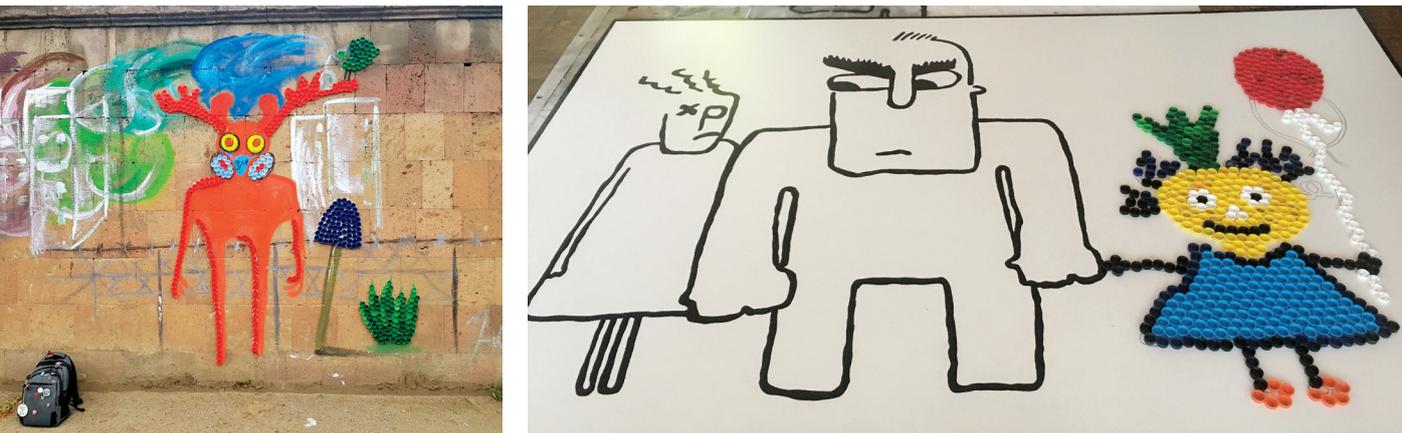


Figure 1. Mosaics from plastic bottle caps in Vanadzor and Ararat raising issues of air pollution and domestic violence.

For several years now, EPF organizes an annual Social Innovation Camp called ‘Mardamej’<sup>6</sup> (Among the People), supported by USAID. This project gives young people from all over Armenia opportunities to learn how to develop innovative and creative ideas addressing needs in the regions of Armenia. Often the resulting ideas touch upon the needs in improving urban environment and cities’ convenience for the inhabitants. One of examples is a project that is developing a set of mosaics from plastic bottle caps in various towns of Armenia. The project will be a touristic attraction as well as enhance the inhabitants’ consciousness on the need to reduce plastic waste.

In another project, “Votnahetq” (Foot mark), young people from Gyumri, Martuni, Sisian and Goris are mapping the accessibility of buildings and putting signs: green if the building is accessible and red if not. Information about the accessible and inaccessible buildings is being pinned on an online interactive map. Special boxes are being installed next to the inaccessible buildings for fundraising to install ramps later on.

Recently a publication<sup>7</sup> on the multi-ethnic ‘Firdus’ district in the center of Yerevan came out. On another occasion, EPF published the work of an international group of architects and experts, who developed a list of architectural monuments of Ani, the medieval Armenian capital, which is currently in Turkey, a wonder included by UNESCO in its world heritage monuments list. The Armenia- and Turkey-based specialists for the first time ever together evaluated the preservation chances of these monuments and worked out methods for joint assessment of the levels of their dilapidation and response urgency<sup>8</sup>.

6. Epfarmeria.am. (2017). “Mardamej” Social Innovation Camp | EPF. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/mardamej-social-innovation-camp> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

7. Facebook.com. (2019). *Firdus: The Memory of a Place / Ֆիրդուս. տեղի հիշողությունը*. [online] Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/firdusmemory/> [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

8. World Monuments Fund, Anadolu Kültür and Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) (2013). Ani in Context. Workshop Report. [ebook] World Monuments Fund. Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/ani-in-context> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].



Figure 2. Ani exhibition in the Museum of Architecture of Armenia.

Similar projects were implemented focusing on Mush<sup>9</sup> and Artvin. This work has been done under the leadership of EPF's long-term partner Anadolu Kültür. The reports are being shared with the governments of Armenia and Turkey, UNESCO and other relevant institutions. Also, in 2017 EPF partners did a comparative assessment of the urban heritage of Gyumri and Kars<sup>10</sup>. The issues of Armenian architectural heritage in Turkey are at the constant attention of EPF<sup>11</sup>. In June 2018, the Ani exhibition by Anadolu Kültür was for the first time opened in the Museum of Architecture of Armenia, with support of EPF. This strand of work is usually funded by the European Union and Sweden.

EPF's focus on urban development issues is one of its long cross-cutting strategic areas of interest, and EPF plans to continue its work on this via its various projects.

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9. Dörter, G. and et al. (2017). Mush. Assessment Report of Tangible Cultural Heritage. [ebook] Anadolu Kültür. Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/Mush-Report-2017> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].

10. Petrosyan, S. and et al. (2017). Common Notepad. Gyumri-Kars Urban Heritage. [ebook] Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/Gyumri-Kars-Urban-Heritage-Common-Notepad> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].

11. YouTube. (2016). Armenian Architecture in Turkey. Talk with Journalist and Architect Zakarya Mildanoglu (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/Y0hYiAmYtsU> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].