

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

FEB, 15TH, 2025 | NO.23 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

IS YOUR "OFFICE" A TRUE WORKPLACE?

THE REALITY OF WORKPLACES BEYOND THE SURFACE

WHAT CONNECTS YEREVAN TO ABU DHABI AND RIYADH?

WHY GULF INVESTORS SHOULD LOOK TO ARMENIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

THE TRIP THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

WHY DO I KEEP COMING BACK TO ARMENIA?

DOING BUSINESS WITHOUT A COMPANY

HIRE PEOPLE, PAY EMPLOYEES, AND INVOICE CLIENTS FROM ARMENIA

EMBRACING ARMENIA

REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE, CONNECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

BUILDING A STRONGER E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM

ANALYZING THE LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REGIONAL E-COMMERCE IN ARMENIA

TIPS FOR DIGITAL NOMADS

HOW TO FIND A GOOD APARTMENT RENTAL IN ARMENIA

WHERE TIME FERMENTS

ARMENIAN WINES AND TALES FROM THE WORLD'S VINEYARDS



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

Entering our 3rd year with hundreds of published articles and interviews, Life in Armenia has evolved. What was once a passion project is now a responsibility. With nearly 20,000 international readers, the magazine informs a huge audience about this beautiful country, making me mindful of every word I write or publish.

What makes this month different is the foundation of Nomad Armenia, a UK-based project I started with British partners and investors to take things to the next level and promote Armenia on a large scale to foreign remote working travelers and digital nomads.

This year, I've set ambitious goals to double our readership and build the first core community of digital nomads in Armenia. By focusing on this community, I believe the movement will organically grow, further influenced and inspired by the insights and stories shared in Life in Armenia.

Mathew Zein



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WHAT CONNECTS YEREVAN TO ABU DHABI AND RIYADH? WHY GULF INVESTORS SHOULD LOOK TO ARMENIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

Yerevan's startup ecosystem is punching above its weight, ranking close to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh despite its modest economy. While Saudi Arabia and the UAE pour billions into innovation, Armenia has built its ecosystem with a fraction of the resources. So why should Gulf investors pay attention to the Armenian startup scene?

BUILDING A STRONGER E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM ANALYZING THE LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REGIONAL E-COMMERCE IN ARMENIA

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EMBRACING ARMENIA REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE, CONNECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

Discover Armenia through the eyes of two organizational culture experts, Vanessa and Tarek, as they explore its rich history, deep-rooted connections, and unique blend of tradition and progress. Join them as they uncover the "foundational myth" of Armenia, experience the warmth of its people, and reflect on the cultural nuances that make this country so captivating.

THE TRIP THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING WHY DO I KEEP COMING BACK TO ARMENIA?

Ever wondered what it's like to discover a unique corner of the world? Follow Paul Vatistas, from the UK, on his journey to Armenia and find out what it is about this country that captivates the soul and what keeps drawing him back here. Experience Armenia through his eyes, and you might just find yourself planning your own adventure to this fascinating country.

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Step back over 6,000 years in time to a cave in the Armenian mountains where the first drops of wine were born and discover the archeological find that rewrites the history of winemaking and reveals Armenia's central role in this ancient tradition. Raise a glass to this country, where time ferments and the story of wine continues to unfold.

TIPS FOR DIGITAL NOMADS HOW TO FIND A GOOD APARTMENT RENTAL IN ARMENIA

When I moved to Armenia in 2018, one of the toughest challenges was securing an apartment. Back then, rental discussions dominated every expat conversation in Yerevan! Fortunately, the situation has improved. Nowadays, finding a place is much simpler, but there are still a few key details about Armenian buildings, apartments, and rental practices that are good to know.

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Digital nomads can stay in Armenia for up to 183 days without becoming tax residents. However, managing tasks like invoicing clients and paying salaries without a company can be complex. Native Teams simplifies this by handling contracts, payroll, and invoicing in over 85 countries, ensuring tax compliance and automating processes.

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Many visitors to Armenia assume cashless payments don't exist, but they couldn't be more wrong. Armenia offers digital nomads an easy way to make payments through digital wallets. Since 2018, I've used mobile apps in Armenia for all my payments, including utilities, shopping, and loans.

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**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



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“The secret to attracting tech companies to Armenia is...Lahmajoun” That’s what an **AI chatbot once told a US entrepreneur** curious about opening a back office in Yerevan! I’m sure someone put a lot of thought into that blog post (that has clearly fed AI). While I have no takes on the local cuisine—it’s delicious, by the way—I’m pretty sure a flatbread topped with minced meat and vegetables is not the actual deciding factor for companies like Google or Meta. I somehow doubt Mark Zuckerberg is signing off on a multi-billion dollar investment in Armenia because the lahmajoun is good!

The tech industry in Armenia has grown notably over the past few years. But **imagine the potential if the real giants set up regional headquarters in Yerevan** or even the regions. Picture Meta, Google, Amazon, or other companies of the same size joining the Armenian tech ecosystem. Although that’s exciting, these major players have complicated logistical needs.

Sure, Yerevan has much to offer, but that’s not enough to lure such names! **The scale of their logistical requirements is huge.** And one of the most fundamental of those needs? Offices—not just any offices, but the kind of **high-quality, standardized, healthy, and productive environments** they’re accustomed to elsewhere.

Armenia has plenty of office space, right? So, **what exactly is the point of this discussion?**



Rethinking the Ideal Tech Office

Over the past few years, my work as a journalist has taken me **inside tens of Yerevan tech companies**. And let me tell you, there's a certain vibe you consistently pick up in Armenian offices. It's the energy of the team and the enthusiasm they bring each morning. You see it in the coffee machine chats, the lunchtime at large kitchens (Armenian companies embrace large kitchens and dining areas), and the overall feeling that it's a pleasure to be there.

Many of these tech offices were standard spaces similar to those found anywhere in the world. However, others were modern, well-maintained, and sometimes even overly decorated. In 2023, I visited a company in Yerevan and did a double-take at the entrance. **I thought I'd walked into some hip new café**, so I had to go back out to make sure I was in the right place! They had it all, a large balcony seating area, an actual swing, luxury decorations, and platters overflowing with biscuits and fresh fruit; it was **not a typical tech office setup!**



Now, that's undeniably cool. But it makes you think. **Is that really the be-all and end-all of a workplace?** Does that truly motivate an employee at the start and end of their day? And, perhaps most importantly, how does all of that actually connect to their work, their productivity, and their sense of purpose?

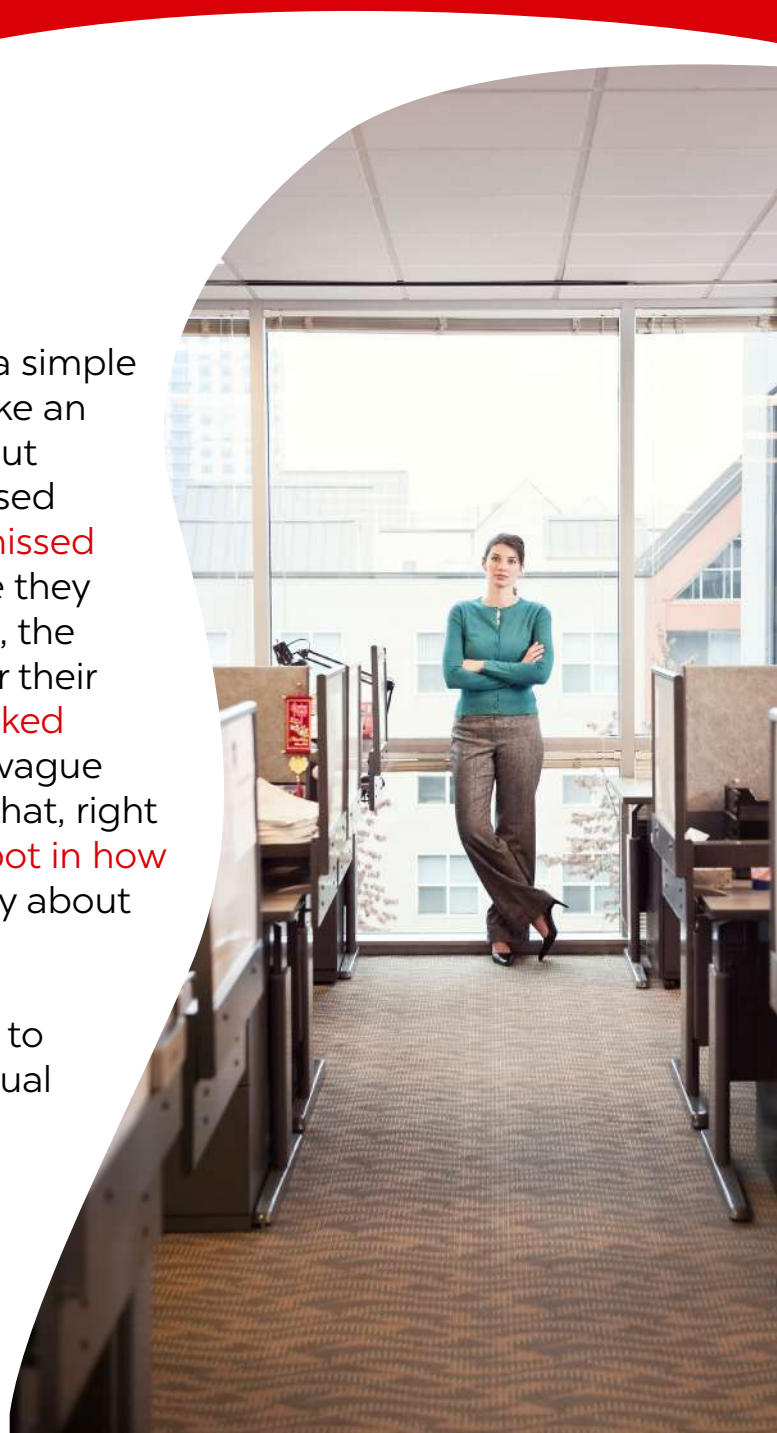
Do employees thrive in beautifully decorated offices, or are they more productive in a coffee-shop-like environment? If neither of those is the magic formula, then **what is the ideal workplace for a team?** We've all seen those Google and Meta offices, where work seems more like play. And I know it's hard to argue those places look amazing. You know there's a whole team of psychologists behind the scenes, making sure the environment is exactly what employees need.

As different as those offices appear, **they all share one important element – a standardized office layout**, where everything has its place and is measured and accounted for, including the smallest detail no one usually thinks of! The oxygen level in the room, the amount of natural light allowed into the working areas, the direction and intensity of sunlight entering the rooms, the dimensions of meeting rooms and their furnishings, and even the ceiling height—the list goes on.

The Psychology of Space

What is a workplace, anyway? It seems like a simple question, but it's deceptively complex. It's like an iceberg – you see the tip above the water, but the real mass is hidden beneath. When I posed this question publicly, **the responses I got missed the mark**. Everyone talked about the culture they enjoyed, the people they liked working with, the overall vibe, and the enthusiasm they felt for their jobs. All important stuff, sure. But **no one talked about the physical workplace itself** beyond vague descriptions like “beautiful” or “fancy.” And that, right there, speaks volumes. It **revealed a blind spot in how we think about work**, a collective uncertainty about what a workplace really is.

Okay, so why is this even important enough to write an article about, let alone conduct actual research? Well, the truth is that a workplace matters to everyone involved. That includes not just the employers and employees but also the **people who live in the city where that workplace is located**.



You're Not Just Getting Older!

You're our greatest asset!" they say. Which, in corporate speak, apparently translates to: "Prepare for anxiety, insomnia, and countless sleepless nights." As an employee spending at least eight hours a day in a particular place, your workday doesn't magically end at 5 pm, even if your employer is considerate enough not to bother you after hours. **You go home carrying the weight of that workplace** like an invisible massive burden.



For example, if your office lacks a proper ventilation system, there is a chance you'll develop respiratory issues, allergies, or chronic headaches. This doesn't just disappear when you clock out. **You take that home with you.** The impact seeps into your personal life, affecting your relationships, your sleep, and your overall well-being. It's not just the work that comes home with you; **it's the impact of the work environment, both physical and mental**, that lingers long after you've left the office.

Can you imagine insomnia, anxiety, and all the other issues you might develop, thinking they're just a natural part of getting older when the truth is they're a direct result of working in a place that **simply doesn't meet basic workplace standards?**

You might think, "I'm just an employee at the bottom of the totem pole. I have to accept that my workplace isn't some modern, health-focused facility." And while that might be true to some extent, there's a bigger picture here, especially for the employer. Because, let's be clear: the biggest beneficiary of a standardized, well-designed workplace isn't just the employee—**it's the employer themselves.**



The ROI of a Well-Designed Workplace

When team members have good oxygen levels, sufficient natural light, and even the physical space to move around and think creatively, they operate at their full potential. **They're more focused, energetic, and productive**, often exceeding the output of teams working in less optimal environments. This isn't just about making employees "comfortable"; it's about maximizing their effectiveness.

It's the company that understands that investing in a healthy, well-designed environment isn't just an expense—it's a **strategic investment in their most valuable resource**: their people. It's the company that recognizes that a productive team is a competitive advantage and that the workplace is an important tool for unlocking that productivity.

So, while you might feel like you're just an employee, remember that your well-being, and therefore your productivity, is a **key factor in your employer's success**. And that gives you more leverage than you might think.

Given all of that as context, let's revisit the question: **What is a workplace?** Or, even more pointedly, what is a standardized workplace?

Beyond Four Wall and a Desk

A workplace, at its most basic, is a space where people perform work. But it's so much more than just four walls and a desk. It's **the entire environment that surrounds and influences that work**. It's the physical space, yes, but also the psychological, social, and even cultural atmosphere. It's the air you breathe, the light you work under, the noise levels, the ergonomics of your chair, the sense of community (or lack thereof), the company culture, the opportunities for growth, and even the commute to get there. It's **a complex interplay of factors that contribute to an employee's well-being and productivity**.

A standardized workplace isn't just about aesthetics; it's about creating an environment that supports optimal performance and minimizes potential risks. It's about ensuring consistency and predictability so employees can **focus on their work without being distracted by environmental factors**.

It's about recognizing that a well-designed workplace is a fundamental requirement for a successful and thriving organization. It's about creating a space where people can do their best work consistently and sustainably.

It's not just a place to work; **it's a physical system designed to facilitate work**.

Google's Googleplex is popular for its focus on employee well-being, exemplified by its bike-sharing program **encouraging cycling to work and around campus**. On-site gyms and fitness classes make it easy for Googlers to stay active, while free food throughout the day ensures they're well-nourished. Nap pods provide a space for short breaks and recharging, and the dog-friendly environment allows employees to bring their furry friends to work. The emphasis on natural light and open spaces creates a bright, airy atmosphere, contributing to a positive work environment. It's worth mentioning that Google has a major focus on LEED certification. They've previously stated that **millions of square feet** of their global office space have been **redesigned to meet LEED standards**.



Healthy Buildings, Healthy Employees

I can't just mention LEED standards without explaining them a bit more given how important they are in today's workplaces, impacting everyone from employees and employers to, as I mentioned in the beginning, **the residents of the cities where these workplaces are built.**

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It's a globally recognized green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. It's a scorecard for **how environmentally friendly a building is**, evaluating various aspects of its design, construction, and operation. So, the evaluation begins early in construction and **continues throughout the building's operation.** Points are awarded for things like energy efficiency, water conservation, materials selection, indoor environmental quality, and even the building's location.

LEED's impact on an employee's workday and after-work life is significant, though often invisible. During the workday, LEED-certified buildings often prioritize better ventilation and use low-VOC (volatile organic compound) materials, **resulting in cleaner, healthier air.** This can mean fewer headaches, less stuffiness, and more energy throughout the day. Optimal lighting, another key aspect of LEED, often means more natural light and energy-efficient systems, which can **improve mood, reduce eye strain, and even boost productivity.**

Comfortable temperatures, achieved through LEED standards that address thermal comfort, mean fewer complaints about being too hot or too cold, allowing for a more focused workday. Reduced noise, thanks to acoustic design considerations, minimizes distractions and can improve concentration. Access to nature, promoted by LEED through **the incorporation of plants, green walls, or outdoor spaces**, can reduce stress and boost well-being. Using sustainable and non-toxic building materials, also a LEED focus, **reduces exposure to harmful chemicals** and improves indoor environmental quality.





LEED-certified buildings have a smaller carbon footprint than conventional buildings. In fact, the U.S. Green Building Council found that **LEED-certified buildings produce 34% fewer carbon emissions** than traditional buildings. Even smoking is not allowed on construction sites of LEED-certified buildings; these are just some of the impacts LEED has on city residents where office spaces are built according to the standard.

More tech companies are opening offices in Armenia, and they're doing so with a focus on creating a positive work environment. Many are investing in modern office spaces and offering benefits that promote a healthy work-life balance for their employees. This trend is helping to grow Armenia's tech sector and is contributing to the country's competitiveness on the global stage.

I have recently learned about the [Dalan Technopark](#), a vertical business district built to international standards, aiming for LEED certification; if this happens, it'll be the **first LEED-certified commercial building in Armenia**. Developments like this make Armenia a much more **attractive destination for tech companies and foreign investment**, and that's only going to become more true over time.

While this business complex is still under construction, it's great to see LEED being applied to office spaces in Armenia. I even visited the construction site with Dalan Technopark's team and had a very interesting conversation, which I'll share in the next issue of Life in Armenia.

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WHY GULF INVESTORS SHOULD LOOK TO ARMENIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



WHAT CONNECTS YEREVAN TO ABU DHABI AND RIYADH? WHY GULF INVESTORS SHOULD LOOK TO ARMENIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM



In a regular conversation about global economics, you wouldn't pair Armenia and the Arab Gulf! After all, *what do Armenia and the Arab Gulf have in common?* At first, second, and even third glance, the answer seems hard to pin down. Scratch the surface, and the answer remains hard to pin down! But dig a little deeper, and the connection begins to emerge.



The Arab Gulf is open for business, that's for sure, but *not all players get a seat at the table*. While global powers like the US and China flex their economic muscles, smaller nations like Armenia have to make their own plays quietly to secure funding and support. *But what is it that Armenia can provide* which larger, more established economies cannot?



The Rise of Startup Cities in the Gulf

Over the past few years, ambitious national visions have swept across the Arab Gulf states. Take, for example, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 or the UAE's Centennial 2071, which articulate a clear desire to break free from the region's historical reliance on oil and [build dynamic, diversified economies](#). The United Arab Emirates has succeeded in that goal, as oil now accounts for approximately [30%](#) of the country's GDP. In Dubai, specifically, oil's contribution is even smaller, now representing less than [1%](#) of the city's GDP.

This drive for diversification has [created the foundation for the growth of tech startup ecosystems](#). Supported by the availability of huge investment funds, guidance from world-class industry experts, and the collective intelligence of local and expatriate talent, tech hubs in the Arab Gulf region shaped fast.

According to the 2024 Global Startup Ecosystem Index by [StartupBlink](#), which ranks the startup ecosystems of more than 100 countries and 1,000 cities, [Abu Dhabi's ecosystem ranks 195th globally](#). Dubai ranks considerably better, securing 50th place. However, Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah lag notably behind, ranking 860th and 1032nd, respectively. In Saudi Arabia, Riyadh's ecosystem holds the 136th spot, while Jeddah, Dammam, and Mecca rank much lower at 378th, 472nd, and 1182nd, respectively.



Against All Odds

So, you're probably thinking, "What does Armenia have to do with that?" Well, that's where things get interesting. According to that same index, Armenia's startup ecosystem ranks 200th globally. Additionally, the mobile app industry in Armenia ranks 11th in Europe! Think about that for a second. [Yerevan's basically in the same group as Abu Dhabi and Riyadh](#), ranking surprisingly close, while Dubai is further ahead. But here's the thing: look at the relative size of their economies, such as Saudi Arabia's GDP of [\\$1.14 trillion](#) or the UAE's GDP of [\\$568.57 billion](#). By comparison, Armenia's GDP is [\\$26.58 billion](#)! If you struggle with math, let me break that down for you: [Saudi Arabia's GDP is nearly 45 times bigger than Armenia's](#). See where this is going?

Overcoming the sometimes complicated geopolitical situation and the challenges Armenia has faced over the past few years, the country has [managed to develop a competitive tech startup ecosystem](#), holding its own against its neighbors and, indeed, the broader region.



The number of tech companies operating in Armenia doubled between 2022 and 2024, with a 30% increase in employees. Additionally, major U.S. tech giants, including Nvidia, Adobe, Cisco, and Microsoft, have established a presence in Armenia. Currently, the startup ecosystem in Yerevan is home to almost 500 startups and 5 active VCs.

The city has already seen the rise of one unicorn, Picsart, while ServiceTitan, which recently launched its IPO and trades on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the ticker symbol "TTAN," has its headquarters in Yerevan and was founded by two Armenian co-founders in the US. More unicorns are expected to emerge soon, with Krisp and CodeSignal quickly climbing the ranks.

Educational organizations like the TUMO Centers for Creative Technologies play vital roles in developing this vibrant ecosystem. Additionally, local and international incubators and startup accelerators such as Plug and Play and AI9 Startup Campus actively support startup founders.

Building from the Ground Up

During a recent conversation I had with [Nejdeh Hovanessian](#), Country Coordinator of the EU4Innovation East program, implemented by Expertise France, he highlighted an important distinction between the development of Armenia's startup ecosystem and its neighbors. [Armenia's ecosystem has grown organically from the ground up](#), driven by the initiative and innovation of individual entrepreneurs and startups; this contrasts with the top-down approach observed in other countries in the region.

In these neighboring ecosystems, such as Georgia, governments often take a more active role, heavily investing resources and implementing top-down strategies to stimulate growth at the grassroots level. In Armenia, however, the government acts as a facilitator, focusing on establishing a supportive regulatory framework and providing a stable environment for startups to succeed. Whether or not that was intentional, it has **allowed the ecosystem to develop naturally** rather than being artificially inflated by government intervention.

This bottom-up approach has led to a more resilient and sustainable ecosystem, as it's built on genuine innovation and market needs rather than being dependent on continued government funding. It's worth mentioning here that when talking about the market needs, **we're not talking about the Armenian local market needs** given that Armenia

is a relatively small country with nearly 3 million population, but the global market needs.

What Mr. Hovanessian said explained something I learned from [Sona Veziryan](#), Director of [BANA Angels](#), last year. She noted that the **Armenian startup ecosystem is maturing**, with companies successfully progressing to higher funding levels, specifically from Seed to Series A. This natural progression, from one funding stage to the next, reflects the organic growth Nejdeh Hovanessian described. This maturation is a direct result of the bottom-up approach, where **startups have had to prove themselves** and build sustainable businesses rather than relying on initial government largesse.



Nurturing vs. Overloading

Circling back to the Arab Gulf region, what can we take away from all this? The Armenian experience raises a critical question: [would injecting massive funds into the Armenian startup ecosystem](#) be the magic bullet to further its development and nurture its bottom-up maturation? Or could it backfire, actually hindering its organic growth? Could it hold down the entrepreneurial spirit, create artificial inflation within the ecosystem, and ultimately cause Armenia to slip in the rankings, jeopardizing its current hard-earned position?

I tend to believe it's a delicate balancing act! Potential funds can provide enough support to accelerate growth and give Armenian startups the necessary resources to scale and compete globally. But overdoing it is problematic! Too much funding, too quickly, [risks disrupting the very foundation of organic development](#) that has made the Armenian ecosystem so successful. It's like over-fertilizing a plant; you might think you're helping it grow faster, but you could end up damaging the roots and killing it. Investments must nurture the existing strengths, not smother them.

DigiTalk Session Organized by
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About the Use of Tech and
AI in Tourism



A huge part of that balance hinges on finding the right VC to partner with, and Armenia, luckily, already has active and quite successful VCs. It's not just about the money; it's about the expertise, the network, and the understanding of the Armenian tech industry. On top of that, it's about the connections to Silicon Valley and the possibility of pushing Armenian startups to international markets. A good VC isn't just a checkbook; they're a strategic advisor, a mentor, and a connector.

formula VC

A quick example that's worth mentioning here is [EasyDMARC](#), the US-based email security firm founded in Armenia, which raised US\$20 million in a Series A funding round led by New York-based firm Radian Capital last September. The company was founded in Yerevan and received initial funding from [BANA Angels](#), then [Formula VC](#).

Angel investors who invested in EasyDmarc preseed round back in 2020 had the opportunity to exit with 20x-40x returns on their investments in almost 4 years. In fact, Formula VC's 1st fund has invested in 22 Armenian-founded startups, many of which have become global leaders in their respective fields, and a few days from now, they're launching the 2nd fund to invest \$30 million in 35-40 companies.



The Missing Link to Attract Gulf Investment

In my recent conversations with [Paul Vatistas](#), a British-American technology growth strategic advisor with experience internationally and in the UAE, and who has recently architected international collaboration for tech companies in Armenia, I asked what might be causing investors in the Gulf to hesitate to invest in the Armenian startup ecosystem. He responded that Gulf investors are evaluating the risks of investing in Armenia in two main buckets: [country-level risk](#) and [company-level investment risk](#), and that these risks may, in fact, be smaller than they believe.

According to him, country-level risk includes [the overall fiscal and political health of Armenia](#), the risk that the government might change its approach to encouraging FDI, and any changes to regulation that might 'move the goalposts' on investments. He feels that Armenia has become less of a risk on all fronts in this regard, and has increased his personal level of interest in Armenia over the last 12 months significantly.

Company-level risk comprises the same set of [risks and requirements for due diligence that come with any investment](#). What is the problem that the company solves? What is the addressable market for its products and services? Is there a strong and proven team in place? Can they be trusted? Has the company properly secured its legal position and ownership of any IP? Is it subject to any government investigation or government or private litigation? Is there a solid business plan that underpins financial projections and value creation? From his own recent activity in Armenia, he feels that the country has a really strong pool of tech sector talent.

Self Learning Quadrant at TUMO
Center for Creative Technologies



Mr. Vatistas believes, “the barriers between Gulf investors and the Armenian tech sector are mostly due to outdated perceptions of the IT sector in Armenia and to underinvestment at the company level in [marketing the skills and successes of Armenian tech companies](#) to the Gulf investment community”. Gulf investors have little knowledge of or interaction with successful Armenian tech companies, and more can - and should - be done to bridge this gap.

Actually, I believe he was right about that; not far from today, Armenian startup [Nomiq](#) won \$50,000 as [EWC Global Champion](#) held in Saudi Arabia, securing 1st place in the idea stage startup competition. Their success was eye-opening for many investors regarding a country they’d probably never visited or perhaps never even heard of!



Armenian Startup Nomiq Wins 50K as EWC Global Champion

Armenian Startup Nomiq Wins 50K as EWC Global Champion



Armenia and the Gulf's Path to Strategic Partnerships

So, how does Armenia get a seat at the table when it comes to building economic ties with the Arab Gulf states? What's the thread that connects Yerevan to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi? **I think it's all about strategic partnerships** – specifically, collaborations between the active VCs in Armenia and their counterparts in the Gulf. This kind of collaboration could be a win-win, a true two-way street.

For Armenia, it means access to much-needed capital for its startups, but with a main difference: the funds are managed by those who truly understand the Armenian tech industry, its unique growth potential, and the specific challenges its startups face. This isn't just about throwing money at a problem; it's about smart, **strategic investment guided by local expertise**.

And what's in it for the Gulf states? They gain access to a proven track record of innovation and success. **Armenia has always punched above its weight in the startup world**, achieving impressive rankings with a fraction of the funding available to startups in the Gulf.

By partnering with Armenian VCs, Gulf investors gain access to this expertise, this “secret sauce” of building successful startups on a lean budget. It's a chance to learn, to adapt, and potentially to **replicate some of those Armenian methods in their own ecosystems**. It's not just about financial returns; it's about gaining valuable knowledge and insights from a thriving, albeit smaller, ecosystem. It's about learning how to maximize impact with limited resources.

Just imagine **the potential of combining the best of the two ecosystems in one!**

I asked Haig Armaghanean, President and CEO of Haig Barrett Partners in the UK, about the potential risks associated with investing in Armenia from the perspective of Arab Gulf investors, given his extensive experience in the Gulf market. He also felt that **Gulf investors often underestimate Armenia's advanced tech sector**. They may not fully understand the technological development, coding, and software capabilities present in Armenia. This lack of understanding can lead to missed opportunities and potentially misinformed investment decisions.



He also highlighted the importance of relationships in the Gulf fiscal system. When evaluating tech startups, [personal connections and recommendations from trusted individuals are necessary for Gulf investors](#). While Armenia excels at developing tech products, it sometimes falls short in outlining go-to-market strategies, market plans, and exit plans. This is [partly due to its history as a non-primarily capitalist economy](#), where market development and investment weren't as heavily emphasized. Gulf investors, accustomed to more sophisticated business plans, due diligence, and exit strategies, may perceive this as a risk.

He also suggested that [Armenia could do much more to leverage its Arabic-speaking diaspora to facilitate communication](#) and build trust with Gulf investors and governments. This lack of a “brokering piece” hinders the development of stronger relationships of Armenia’s capabilities.

Mr. Armaghanian’s comments reminded me of a few comments I received earlier from [Turki Aljoaib](#), managing partner at [Rua Growth Fund](#), after visiting Armenia for the first time in 2024; he expressed that he was surprised to discover the number of unicorn startups that have chosen to set up their tech and engineering offices in Armenia. He believes this speaks to the level of tech talent, which is a key factor in any tech ecosystem.

Mr. Aljoaib told me he met [aspiring entrepreneurs during his trip, solving problems with a global outlook](#). Several of those entrepreneurs were from the US and Europe, indicating that Armenian startups could grow into larger markets in Europe and the US. It’s worth mentioning that Mr. Aljoaib’s visit to Armenia was part of the [Investor Tour](#) organized by [Formula VC](#) during WCIT 2024, which took place in Yerevan.



Cross-Border Startup Success

Although I'm not a legal expert, I can envision the relationship and how it might be designed. A Gulf state entity can channel investment into Armenian startups by partnering with existing Armenian VC funds. This probably involves the Gulf entity committing capital to a fund managed by an established Armenian VC firm. This approach leverages the local expertise and network of the Armenian VC, allowing them to identify, nurture, and manage investments in promising Armenian startups.

The Armenian VC would strategically deploy the capital, providing funding, mentorship, and guidance to portfolio companies. This initial investment phase [allows the startups to mature within the Armenian ecosystem](#).

Once the Armenian startups reach a certain stage of development and are ready for larger funding rounds, they can be [considered for formal registration or incorporation within the Gulf region](#), be it KSA or UAE. This can be facilitated by the partnering Gulf entity, perhaps through introductions to relevant authorities or incubators or by assisting with the necessary legal and administrative processes.

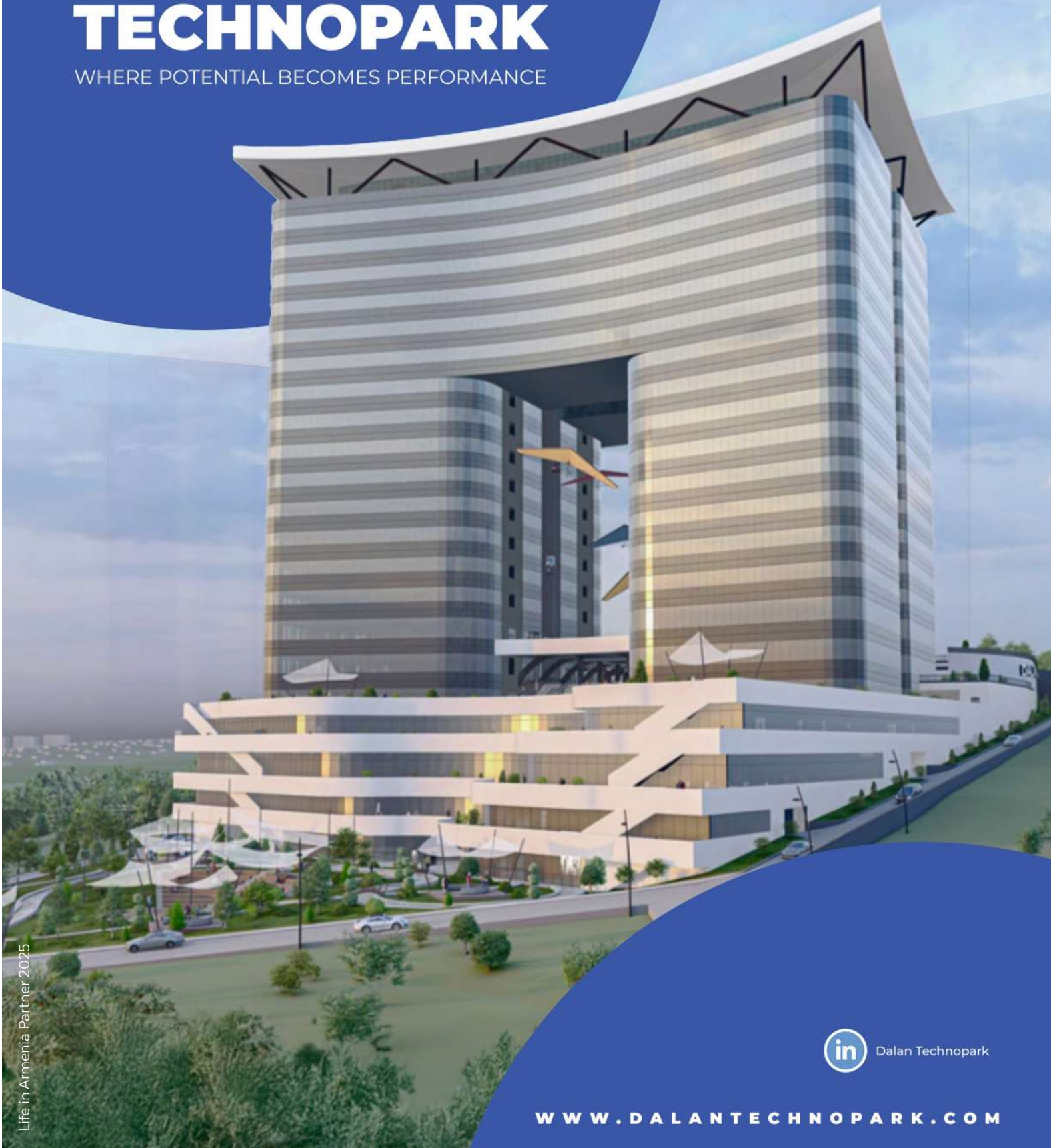
The goal is to put Armenia on the [tech startup investment map for Arab Gulf investors](#) and to ensure the country is at the table when economic relationships with the Gulf states are being built.





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BUILDING A STRONGER E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM

ANALYZING THE LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REGIONAL E-COMMERCE IN ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

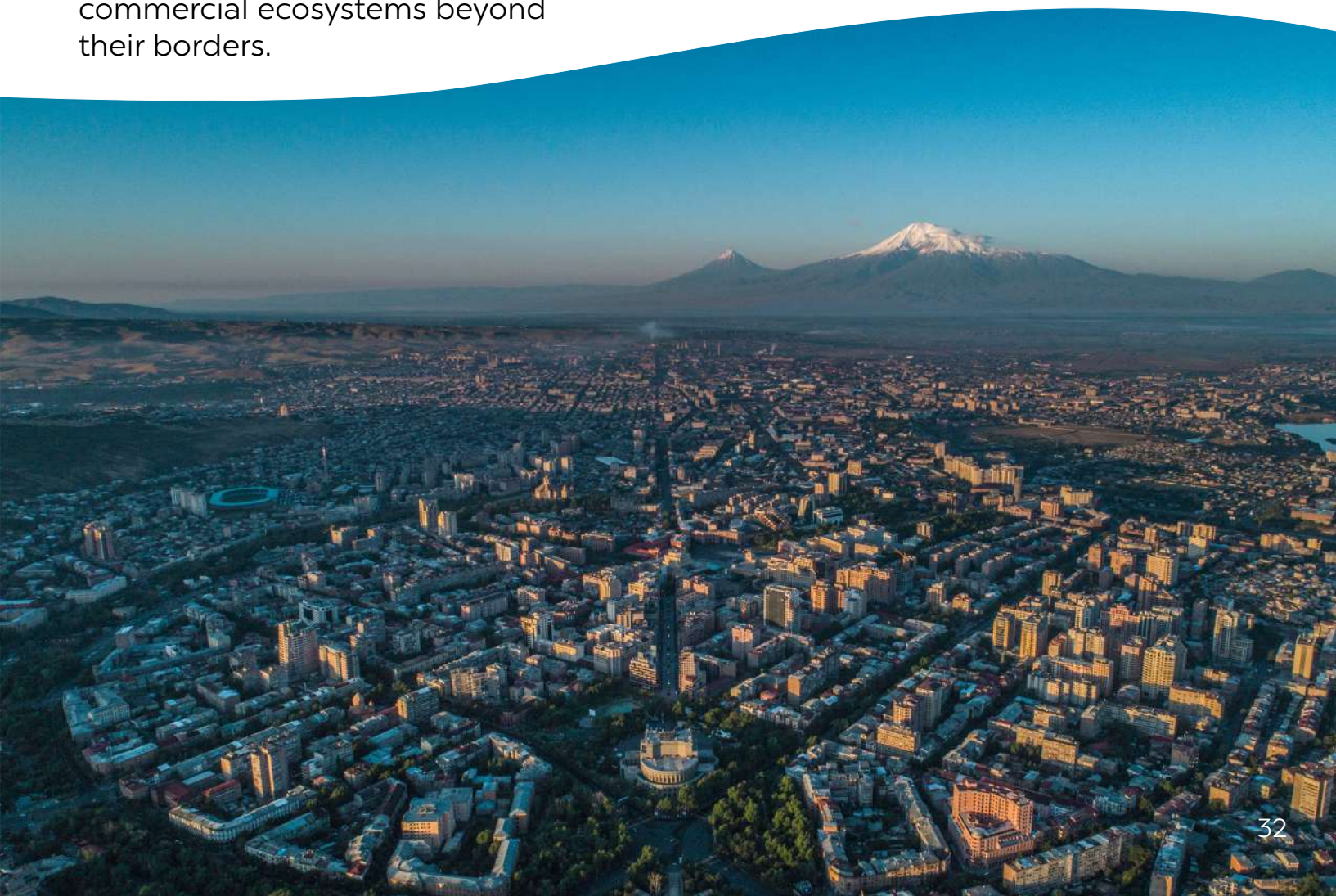
EDITOR IN CHIEF



BUILDING A STRONGER E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM ANALYZING THE LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REGIONAL E-COMMERCE IN ARMENIA

When you talk to Armenians about their history, they often go over and over about the role their merchants played in global trade and how **Armenia was once a major hub on the Silk Road**. Honestly speaking, you can't blame them since their country wasn't just a regular stop on the route! Armenian merchants are believed to have played a key role in **establishing trading centers around the world**. They weren't simply middlemen; they built commercial ecosystems beyond their borders.

Anyway, the worst a nation can do is cling to its past, especially when its present doesn't seem to reflect that past. **Armenia now finds itself at the tail end of the global commerce supply chain**, playing the role of a consumer rather than a facilitator. Without a deep analysis of the situation, we can attribute this to two possibilities: either the country has no value to add to current supply chains, or **it does have value to add, but it's not being leveraged yet!** I would personally go with the second.



Consumer or Contributor, That is The Question!

I'll focus on e-commerce, given its massive impact on international trade and its noticeable influence on Armenia over the past decade or so—something I've observed during my eight years living in Yerevan.

While online shopping has certainly taken off in Armenia in recent years, with platforms offering competitive prices and convenient delivery (sometimes even those sweet return policies!), the country is essentially just the **final destination for goods shipped from large international warehouses**.

Think about it: products travel thousands of miles from places like China or the US, crossing borders and oceans, just to end up in our hands in Armenia!

How did a country go from building commercial empires to simply receiving packages?

Currently, Armenia is a consumer in this system, not really a participant. We pay, we receive. But that's it. Where's the benefit for Armenia? How can the country **move beyond simply being the end of the line and become a link in the chain?**



Delivered to Your Door, But at What Cost?

Let's start by looking at Armenia's e-commerce scene in 2025. A few key players currently dominate online shopping in Armenia. While the hybrid e-commerce model—**part online shopping, part in-store experience with fitting rooms**—has proven successful for some, especially in clothing retail, others have taken a fully online approach and saturated social media with constant, targeted ads, attracting customers with incredibly low prices and a wide selection of goods.

And, of course, we can't forget the international platforms like Amazon or Joom. While they don't offer direct shipping to Armenia, **freight-forwarding services have emerged to bridge the gap**. They provide Armenian shoppers with a virtual address in the US, China, or other countries, allowing them to shop on these platforms.

All of the above sounds cool to end consumers; after all, online shoppers are getting their orders at a competitive price, and everyone across this supply chain is satisfied—**except for one: Armenia!**

For Armenia to capitalize on e-commerce, it **needs to become a key player in the global supply chain**, not just a consumer. Think of it as a connector, a hub facilitating shipping to other countries. This means establishing a strong warehousing infrastructure that allows e-commerce providers to extend their reach, **using Armenia as a strategic distribution point**. But here's the challenge: Armenia is landlocked. It doesn't have direct access to the sea, which makes traditional shipping more complex.

So, the questions at this point are: how can Armenia overcome this geographical limitation, and what countries would actually benefit from using Armenia as a transit hub in their supply chains? Which markets are close enough to make land routes through Armenia viable? Are there specific product categories that lend themselves to this kind of overland shipping? We need to identify the **potential partners and the logistical advantages** Armenia can offer to make this vision a reality.



Connecting the Dots

Several factors could make Armenia a viable option despite being landlocked. Its geographic location between Europe and Asia could be a great asset.

Parts of the Middle East, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia could benefit from using the country as a transit point. In fact, landlocked Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, which currently face logistical challenges, could find a more accessible route to European markets through Armenia. Similarly, trade with Iran could be facilitated through Armenia. However, it would be important to develop efficient and reliable road and rail networks and streamline customs procedures.



But here's where a real opportunity lies for Armenia: **Not everything needs to cross oceans**; certain types of goods are more suitable for overland transport. High-value, lower-volume items, like electronics, pharmaceuticals, or specialized equipment, might be more efficiently transported by truck or rail than by sea, especially if speed is a factor. These types of products **could be a focus for Armenia's e-commerce logistics sector**. The key is identifying niche markets where Armenia's geographic position and developing infrastructure can offer a competitive advantage.

I've been thinking about Armenia's potential in e-commerce and global logistics, and I keep coming back to this image: **the entire country acting as one giant, highly efficient forwarding company**. Just picture multiple countries surrounding Armenia using it as a massive, centralized warehouse. They store their goods there, organize them, and then distribute orders throughout their respective regions, all from Armenia.

In this scenario, every part of Armenia functions as a distributed forwarding vendor, each playing a role in the overall logistics operation. This isn't just about simple storage; **it's about value-added services like order fulfillment**, packaging, and even light manufacturing or assembly for regional distribution. Imagine the economic boost that could bring, with Armenia positioned as a key node in the Eurasian trade network. It's a bold vision, but I think it has real possibilities.

Armenia can't do this alone! Building strong partnerships with neighboring countries, international logistics companies, and e-commerce giants is important. These partnerships can

bring in expertise, investment, and access to wider markets. Joint ventures with established logistics providers, agreements with major e-commerce platforms to use Armenia as a regional hub, and collaborative efforts with neighboring governments to improve cross-border trade.

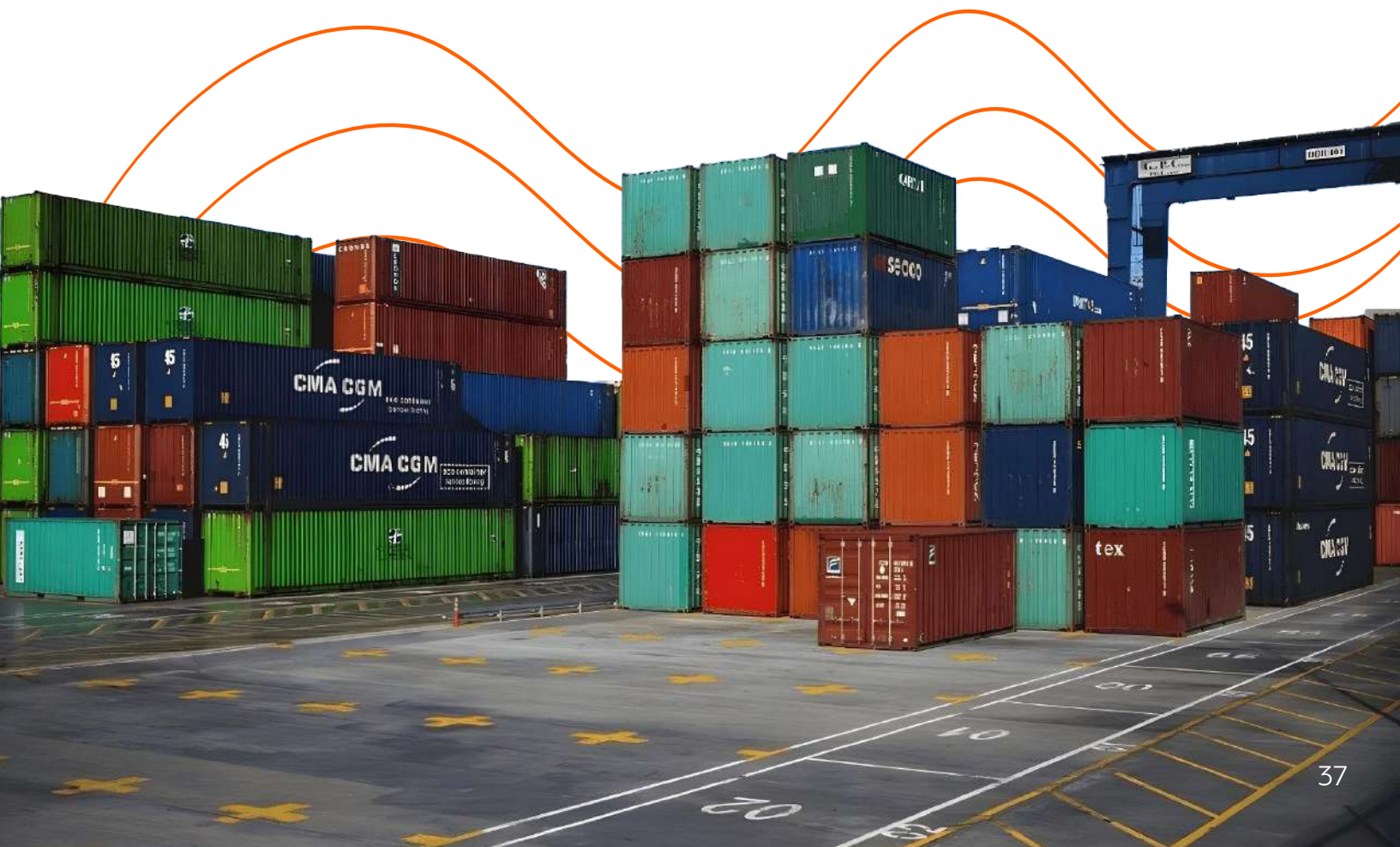
All of this requires significant investment. **Armenia needs to attract foreign investment** and secure financing for infrastructure development, technology upgrades, and the establishment of large-scale logistics facilities. This could involve public-private partnerships, attracting venture capital, and leveraging international development funds.

In this regard, for the first time, Armenia is hosting [E-Logi Fest 25](#) this year – a combined expo, summit, and conference focused on e-commerce, logistics, and supply chains. This event, originally funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), will bring together key players from the global logistics sector. The aim is simple: **get Armenia noticed on the international logistics map** and put it firmly in the spotlight of global logistics investors.

Landlocked But Not Locked Out!

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Mr. [Charle Malas](#), creator, designer, and proposer of the Shirak Dry Port SEZ project concept in Armenia. This project conceptually has the potential to be the first of its kind in the world, combining two very interesting components: a dry port and a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) intertwined in one location. The dry port project planned for Shirak province, specifically Gyumri City, makes me optimistic about Armenia's future in e-commerce and logistics.

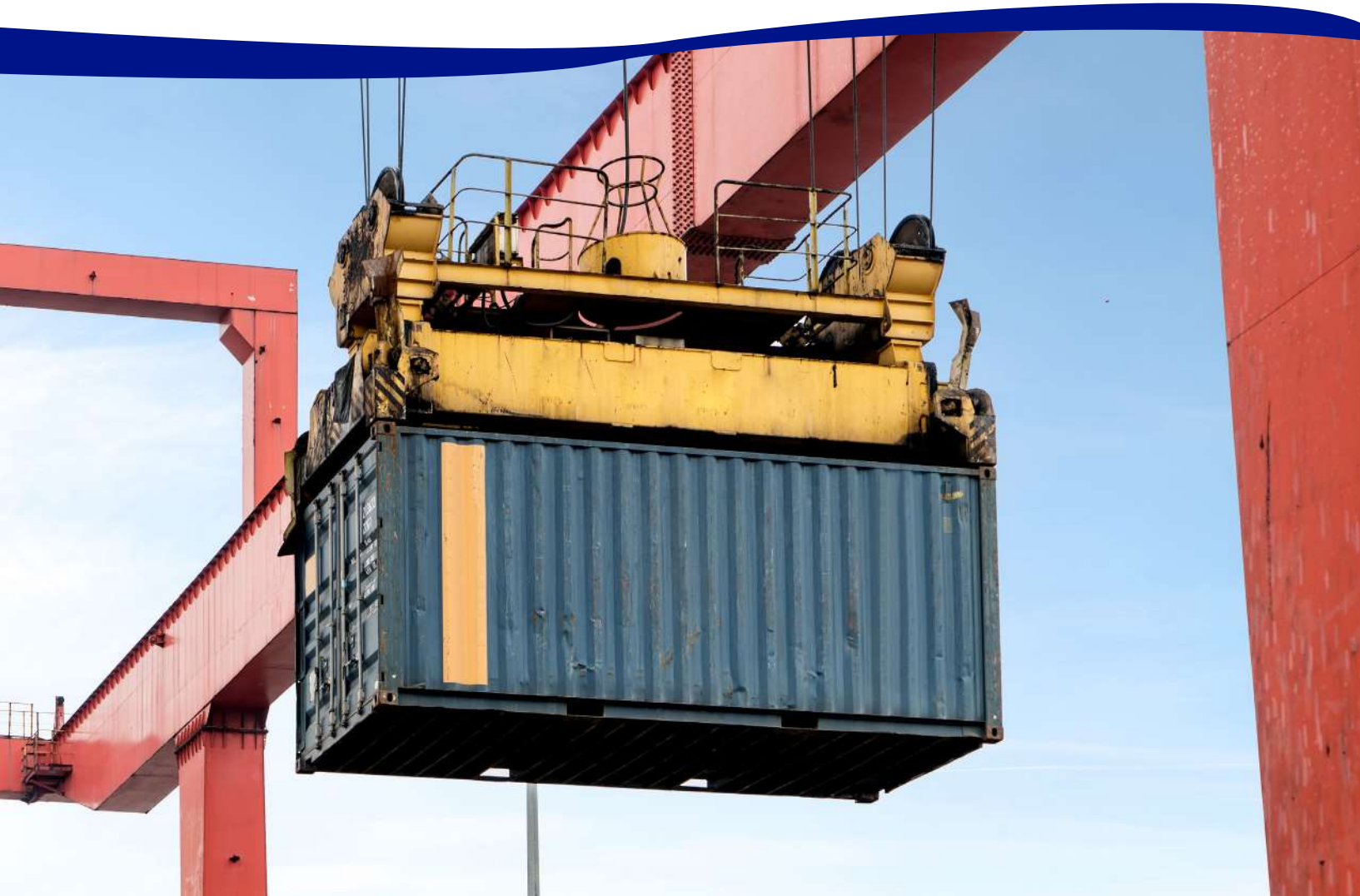
A dry port, by definition, is an inland terminal directly connected to a seaport (even though Armenia is landlocked, it can connect via land routes to various seaports in neighboring countries). The Shirak Dry Port SEZ can serve as an independent self-generating link, generating goods from its SEZ and **facilitating the movement of goods between Armenia, regional countries, and nearby seaports**, effectively extending the reach of maritime shipping into the country and advancing Armenia's ability to create its own ships register and maritime bylaws. This connection could be particularly important for trade with Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.



According to Mr. Malas, he designed the Shirak Dry Port SEZ project to establish Armenia as an export concentric regional trade hub. The project was planned to offer direct access to the **three modes of transport: rail, road, and air, the latter through Shirak International Airport and by extension; sea.** This multimodal connectivity, combined with the presence of specialized, trained teams managing the SEZ's operations and the various benefits afforded by its SEZ status, was intended to position Armenia as a vital link in regional and even international trade networks.

The Shirak Dry Port SEZ can also act as a major regional consolidation and distribution center. Goods arriving from various locations can be consolidated at the dry port and **distributed to their final destinations within Armenia or neighboring countries.** Similarly, goods destined for export can be consolidated at the dry port before being shipped out. The project can attract major international e-commerce companies looking to establish a regional presence.

I can't say Armenia will suddenly become a major shipping hub overnight. But, the country is taking important steps forward, and international funds clearly see its potential. The fact that organizations like the EBRD is supporting initiatives like E-Logi Fest 25 proves that. Essentially, **Armenia is positioning itself to be ready when international partners decide to really take action.**



EMBRACING ARMENIA

REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE, CONNECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

in



**DR. VANESSA
POZZALI**

CO-FOUNDER OF SYNTHOSYS

in



**DR. TAREK
JOMAA**

CO-FOUNDER OF SYNTHOSYS



EMBRACING ARMENIA REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE, CONNECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

During my (Vanessa's) training as a psychoanalyst in group settings and organisations, I was often encouraged to sit and observe what was happening around me. For instance, we were advised to spend an hour in a bar, a church, a park, or a square, simply observing and reflecting on the external environment and our internal reactions.

This exercise cultivated an acute awareness of dynamics, a skill I now find invaluable in both personal and professional contexts. Tarek and I often apply this technique in organisational interventions, and we aimed to approach our experience of "life in Armenia" with the same spirit.

From Partners in Life to Partners in Business: Our Journey to Armenia

When working with groups, it is important to first understand our own mood and emotional disposition, and to notice [how the group might influence our thoughts and behaviours](#). This reflective practice is something we carry into all aspects of our work. A few months before our trip, we had launched our firm, [Synthosys](#), focusing on organisational and leadership development.

As partners in life and now in business, this visit marked an exciting milestone: [our first international conference together](#).



Professionally, we were already thrilled about the opportunity to participate in the [Annual Regional Leadership Conference](#) titled “The Science of Leadership.” Escaping the cold, grey skies of the UK for Armenia’s warmer climate added to our anticipation, and the timing couldn’t have been better—it was Vanessa’s birthday!

Conversations during online meetings with [Arpi Karapetyan](#) and the [Cascade People & Business](#) team had already sparked our curiosity about Armenia and heightened our enthusiasm to experience the richness of its culture, people, and landscapes. We, therefore, **approached Armenia with a spirit of openness, curiosity, and excitement.**

Discovering Armenia: A Culture Rooted in Connection and History

From the very start, one thing stood out: in Armenia, [relationships are the foundation of everything](#). On our first day, we were accompanied by Alla, a member of the Cascade staff, to the Matenadaran, the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts. There, we met a passionate guide who introduced us to the history of Armenia through the manuscripts that Armenians have conserved, saved, and preserved over centuries. We learned about the Armenian language and how, before the creation of its unique alphabet, Armenians borrowed scripts from other

languages. This revealed [a profound spirit of adaptability and the arte di arrangiarsi](#) (an Italian phrase meaning “the art of getting by”), which we also noticed in our interactions during our short stay in Armenia.

We also felt the people’s deep connection to their language, history, and land. Armenians demonstrated genuine curiosity about our origins too. As Vanessa is Italian and Tarek Lebanese, the passionate guide at the museum [drew connections between Armenia’s history and ours](#). She highlighted similarities in Catholic

traditions that align with Italian practices and noted parallels in food and linguistic sounds reminiscent of Lebanese culture.

This sense of connection extended to our fellow conference participants, who welcomed us with warmth and openness. [Arpi went above and beyond to accommodate our personalities and needs](#), creating an atmosphere of trust that allowed us to open up to one another deeply. This laid the foundation for strong connections and lasting intimacy during our time in Armenia and beyond.



Our discovery of Armenia's history and roots continued at the Sardarapat Memorial and Museum, located at Daniel-Bek Pirumyan. This was where we presented our work, and for us, **it felt like a “return to origins” presentation.** Vanessa explored a neuroscience perspective on the use of AI in HR, revisiting her first love within psychology. Tarek, meanwhile, linked AI to tyre performance, illustrating the importance of the human touch in understanding individual team members and optimising their performance with minimal distortion. Tarek's “return to origins” also reflected his past in engineering, drawing on his PhD research on tyres, which he completed in Italy (where we first met!). In many ways, we felt deeply aligned with Armenian culture, which **preserves the past while remaining oriented towards the future.**

We were made aware that Armenians often prioritise constructive feedback over compliments, focusing on areas for improvement when something goes wrong, we were pleasantly surprised by **the curiosity and engagement of the attendees.** Many approached us with thoughtful questions and shared their future projects and ideas with us. This exceeded all our expectations and made the experience even more meaningful.

Reflection on the “Foundational Myth” of Armenia

Speaking of a return to origins, in our organisational work, we often examine the “foundational myths” that underpin groups and organisations. Armenia’s foundational myth, centred around Hayk—a figure who rebelled against oppression and established independence—resonated deeply with us. It symbolises resilience, self-assertion, and the enduring spirit of the Armenian people. This narrative was vividly reflected in the cultural pride and determination we encountered throughout our visit, whether in conversations, historical sites, or the passionate storytelling of our hosts.

Armenia’s Commitment to Global Engagement and Learning

The international openness of the Armenian people was on full display at WCIT 2024, where we participated in a compelling panel discussion titled “AI Revolution in HR: Redefining Workforce Strategies and Organisational Success.” Moderated by Arpi Karapetyan, the session brought together an extraordinary group of speakers, including Ahmed Adel, Mohamed Samir, and us.

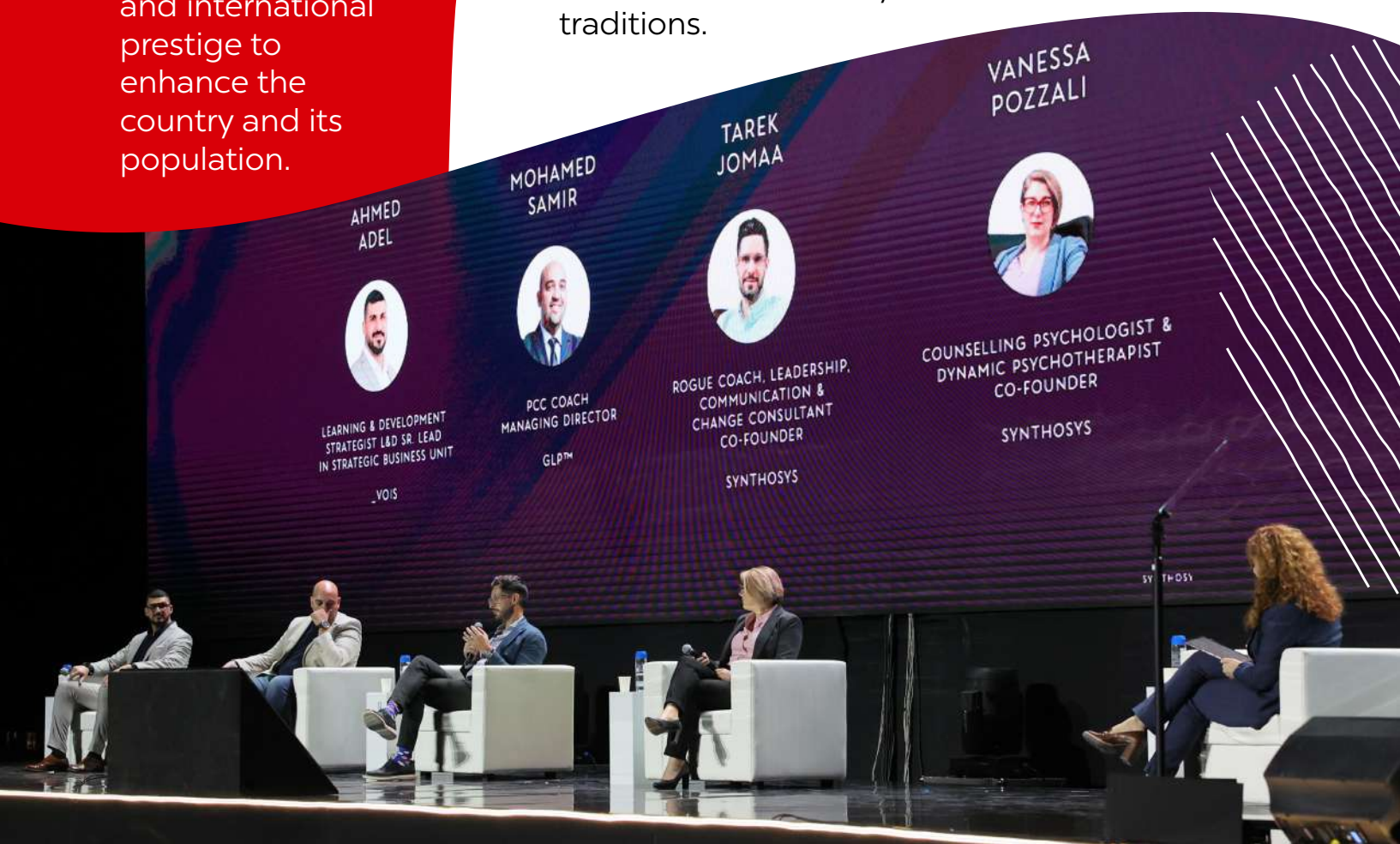
Armenians’ openness to the world was already evident in the fact that the Annual Regional Leadership Conference, was organized in English. Additionally, [everyone we encountered spoke English](#)—a stark contrast to Italy, where a significant portion of the population does not speak a second language. This linguistic adaptability reflects [Armenia’s commitment to engaging with the international community](#) and fostering global connections.



The WCIT panel we joined, along with the gala dinner, provided a glimpse into Armenia's international outlook. It was clear, from the people we had to pleasure to speak with, how eager Armenians are to learn, share, and **bring back knowledge to improve their country's lifestyle, infrastructure, and systems.** This deeply impacted us. In Italy, we don't often see such a strong attitude of openness to learning from other countries. Also, resonates with the effort that many people are making in Lebanon, bringing good practice and international prestige to enhance the country and its population.

Tasting Tradition: Food and Faith in the Heart of Armenia

Between work, we found time to explore Armenia. One highlight was our visit to Geghard Monastery, a stunning site nestled in the hills, where mass celebrations are still held. We were privileged to witness a service during our stay, accompanied by a choir singing in one of the original chambers carved into the rock, creating phenomenal acoustics. Our passionate, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic guide, Lia Arshakyan, gave us the opportunity to explore the surrounding landscape. She showed us the best spots to photograph Mount Ararat and introduced us to local delicacies that showcased Armenia's rich culinary traditions.



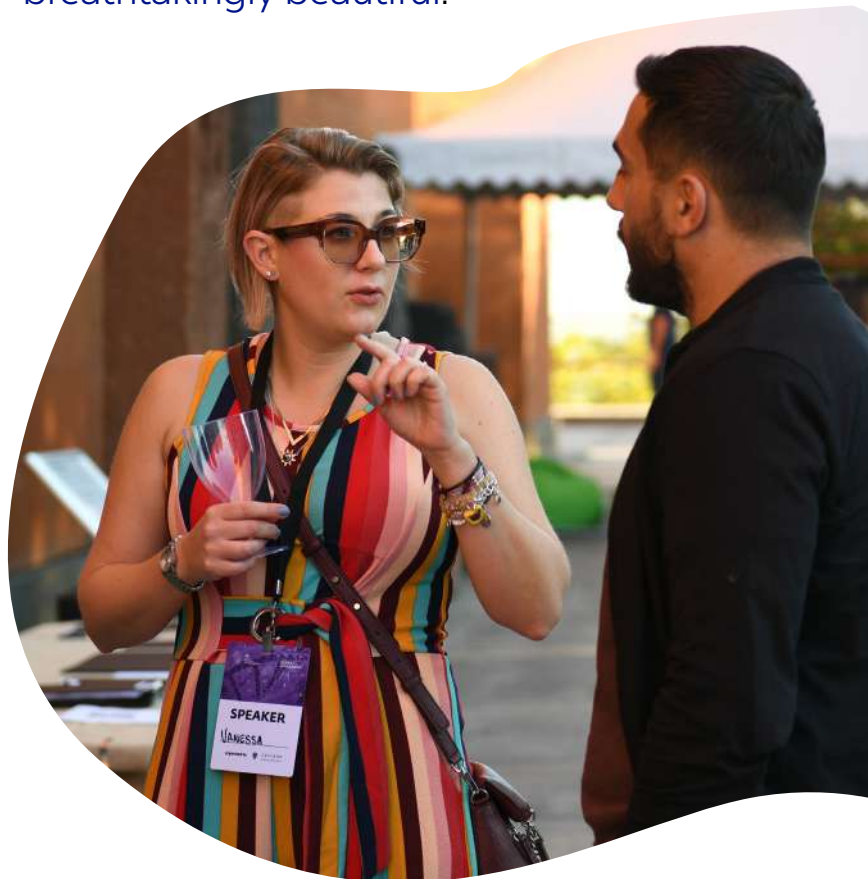


One particularly memorable experience was [trying the traditional Armenian bread, lavash](#), prepared fresh and served with local cheeses and herbs. We felt a deep connection with the Mediterranean way of sharing food and discovered surprising similarities between Armenian cuisine and dishes from Lebanese and Egyptian traditions. Our experience culminated in a traditional lunch overlooking the valley—a setting that was [both relaxing and breathtakingly beautiful](#).

Armenian Culture Through Our Eyes: Networks, Leadership, and Dedication

As expatriates in the UK and experts in organisational culture, we cannot help but reflect on the different cultures we encountered during our stay in Armenia.

We observed that Armenians [place significant emphasis on appearance and professionalism](#). From the phonics team to the cleaning staff, everyone we worked with was focused and intent on delivering their best performance. This dedication to excellence was not only evident in the teams



we collaborated with but also in the audience and the staff at the facilities we visited. Our experience highlighted that [striving for outstanding performance is an important value for the Armenian people](#). However, while this is admirable, we are mindful not to generalise our limited experiences to an entire population.



Drawing from our work with organisations, we know that the pursuit of excellence can sometimes have unintended side effects, such as increased stress, burnout, and fatigue in daily life. Yet, we also noticed a protective factor embedded within Armenian culture: a strong sense of community.

While wandering around the centre of Yerevan, we saw people greeting friends and acquaintances as they passed by. This vibrant network of social connections, combined with the hospitality extended to us at every turn, made us feel at home. It reminded us of the warmth we usually associate with Italy and Lebanon—something we deeply miss in the UK. Having a robust network of people, engaging in meaningful discussions, and sharing intimate connections with others are invaluable protective factors against stress and burnout.

On another note, as a female, Vanessa noticed the absence of the “male gaze” when walking around, which created a comfortable atmosphere. Additionally, we observed a strong presence of women in leadership roles, starting with Arpi Karapetyan. While we cannot say whether this is common across Armenia or specific to Yerevan, we were encouraged by the representation of women in leadership positions at the HR conference (which appeared to have an almost exclusively female attendance) and the WCIT conference on AI.



Closing Notes: Until Next Time, Armenia!

To close our reflections on Armenia, we can wholeheartedly say that we loved the climate, the food, and, most importantly, the people we met, who made this journey vibrant and unforgettable. Although our exposure to Armenian people and culture was very limited, those are the impression we are taking with us after this trip. In our work, we often use our observations to spark discussions with clients, exploring how our reflections resonate with their experiences. Many times, clients share that once we highlight a detail, they can recognise themselves in our observations.

We remain curious to know how our experiences resonate with your own perspective of Armenia. Until next time, **thank you for having us and for making this journey so special!**





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THE TRIP THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

WHY DO I KEEP COMING BACK TO ARMENIA?



**PAUL
VATISTAS**

CO-FOUNDER, NOMAD ARMENIA



THE TRIP THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

WHY DO I KEEP COMING BACK TO ARMENIA?

I was having coffee with a friend just after Christmas, in a cafe close to where I grew up in London, when my friend said, “So what is it like?”

We were talking about Armenia, as I had just returned from some time living and working there.



With Greg and Haig near Republic Square



As I described my experiences, I realized it was not such a simple question because **Armenia isn't really “like” anywhere else.** It has its own history, culture, and language, whose formation goes back three millennia, and modern Armenia is a blend of many different influences. I think this is the thing that I enjoy most about being there. **It's unique.**

My journey to Armenia began a few years ago when I reconnected in London with [Haig Armaghanean](#), an old friend who happens to be of Armenian descent. He suggested that I visit Yerevan with him on his next trip in October 2024, so I agreed to go. I enjoyed being in Yerevan so much on that first trip that I **decided that I would have to go back for a longer stay.**



View from the Cascades

At the time, Armenia was very much a 'blank sheet of paper' for me. I knew where it was and that the Persians and Romans had fought there long ago, that more recently, it was part of the Soviet Union and of the genocide during the First World War. And that was about it. **I had no mental picture of Armenia** - in the way that most of us do if we think or talk about Italy, Spain, Greece, London, Paris, New York, or Los Angeles. I did know that all the Armenian people whom I had met until that moment were very welcoming and hospitable, and I was curious to know more about their home country.

So what is it like? I have to start by saying that I found Armenia full of **some of the friendliest people I have met**, which made a big and lasting impression on me. It is a country with a wide variety of landscapes, great food, great local wine, and a bustling capital city that mostly **reminds me of France because of the style of its stone buildings and wide boulevards**. The weather on all my stays has been much better than I would have anticipated, and I discovered that **Yerevan has more sunny days than Barcelona!**

Armenians are very welcoming. I have been fortunate enough to travel quite widely, and a few countries have really stood out as being both welcoming and intriguing. Thailand, Nepal, and now Armenia seem full of what I can only describe as genuinely friendly people wherever you go, there is a strong sense of community, and as a result, **it felt safe wherever I went at any time of day**. The desire of people to get to know each other better means the pace of life is a little slower and **less rushed than our lives in Europe and the US**.



With friends outside Ground Zero cafe



Outside Ground Zero Cafe on Saryan Street with Mathew

Armenia has a wide variety of food to choose from, with **a strong eastern Mediterranean influence**. In Yerevan, there are many great Lebanese-style restaurants, French-style cafes, wine bars, as well as western fare. Eating out is very affordable, and I find plenty of great restaurants in Yerevan within walking distance.

Armenia is one of the first countries to produce wine, and it has a wide selection of very good and reasonably priced wines. I had a lovely evening trying different Armenian wines with some friends at In Vino on Saryan Street, and I can recommend this as a great place to spend an evening together. I still have much more to learn about Armenian wines and plan to visit some of the vineyards near Yerevan later this month.

By now, you have probably figured out that I enjoy being in Armenia!

It is worth sharing that, for me, that moment of realization came about towards the end of my first trip. I walked up Northern Avenue from Republic Square, past the Opera House, across a statue-filled park filled with people enjoying the warm evening, and climbed the many steps

that make up the Cascades. Arriving at the top and resting in one of the many steps, as the sun went down and the lights of Yerevan came up, I looked across the city towards the breathtaking view of Mount Ararat. What a great vista! What a fun city! I knew I would be back.



View from the Cascades



Quirky statue near the Cascades

Back in Armenia

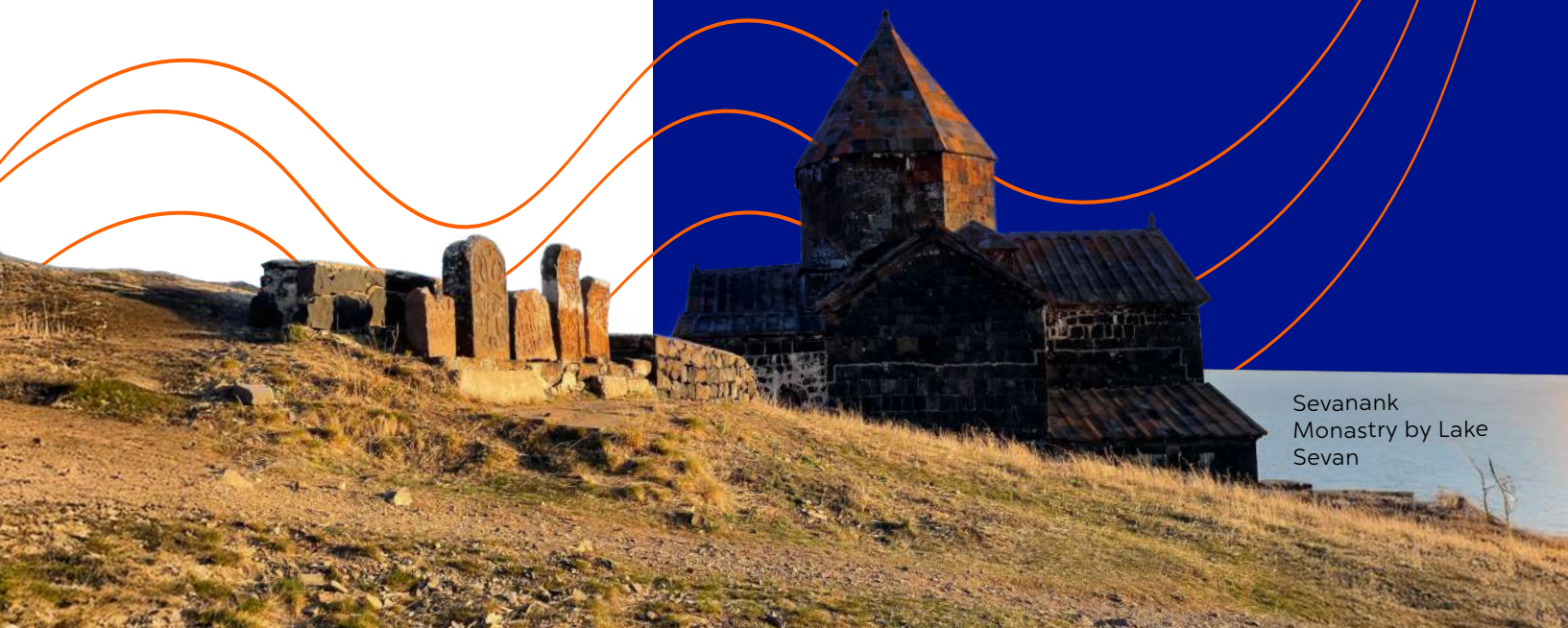
My second trip to Yerevan was at the end of last year. This time I rented an apartment on the east end of Saryan Street - coincidentally not far from In Vino - and my goal was to explore more of the city and some of the surrounding areas.

This was a more immersive experience than my first visit, and after a couple of weeks, **I felt very much at home walking around central Yerevan** or taking Yandex (there is no Uber in Armenia) to meet with people who lived further outside the city center.



Lake Sevan

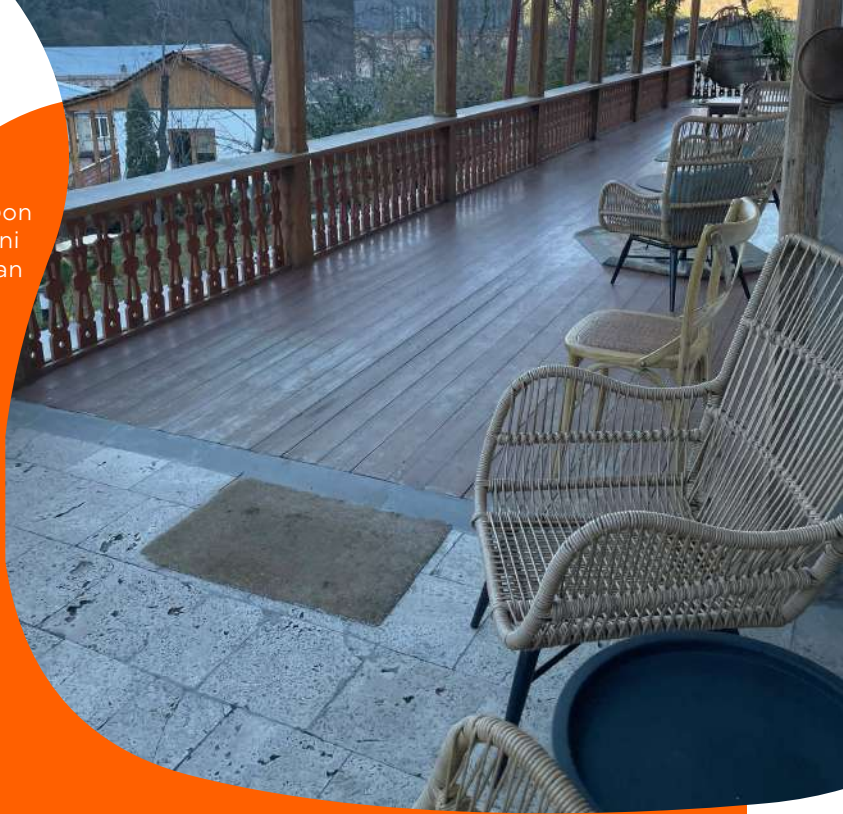
I have always welcomed new adventures in new countries, and one that I particularly enjoyed during my stay was my trips to the local supermarket - trying to shop in a store where all the product names and descriptions are written in Armenian is an adventure in itself! It is full of **delicious-looking options that you don't find in Europe.**



Sevanank
Monastery by Lake
Sevan

During this second visit, I was keen to get out of town on weekends. Hrant and Naré, two of the people I met early in my stay, were kind enough to drive me out one weekend east of Yerevan for a great lunch overlooking Lake Sevan and then on to Dilijan, where I spent the weekend exploring. My newfound hosts were both gracious and generous and proud to show me more of their country during that day. As I mentioned earlier, Armenia just seems to be full of the friendliest people!

At Toon
Armeni
in Diljan



Dilijan is very different from Yerevan, sitting amongst the hill country east of the capital, and feels much more like an Alpine town. In the distance are snow-capped peaks, and I am told there is a ski resort nestling in there somewhere. I went for some great walks above the town and visited the nearby famous Haghartsin monastery. This is an ancient monastery and emblematic of Armenia's status as the first country to adopt Christianity as the state religion centuries ago.



At Toon Armeni in Diljan

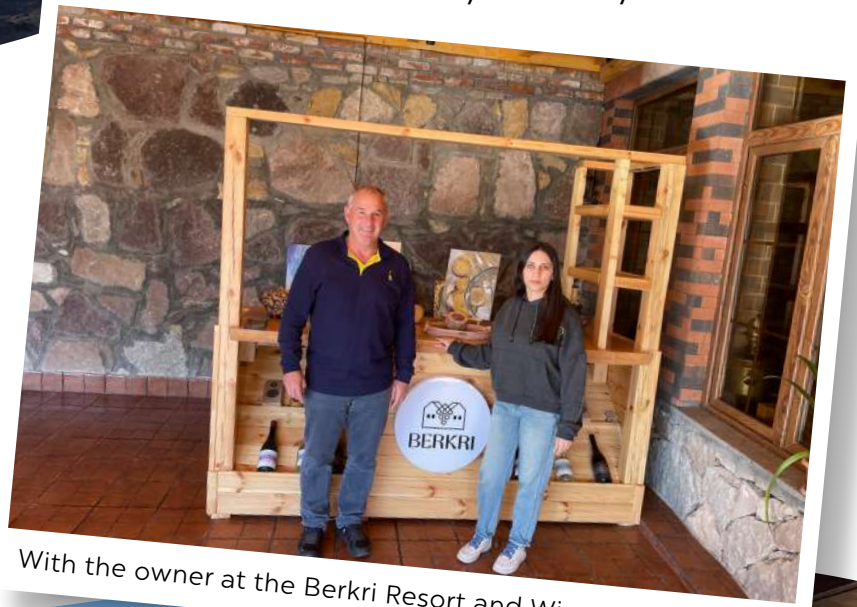


Dilijan

Dilijan

Further along the valley from Dilijan and up the other side of the slope is a small alpine village called Yenokavan. More great walking opportunities in and around **an area that looks even more like Switzerland**. It was a joy to be surrounded by mountains in a sunny blue sky.

I am currently looking forward to further exploring the northern part of the country and am planning a weekend visit to the wine country that lies south of Yerevan. There is **so much more still to see and experience in these areas.**



With the owner at the Berkri Resort and Winery in Yenokavan



View from Yenokavan

My friends in the UK and US have become curious about Armenia since I am spending so much time here. Most of these conversations still start with an explanation of where Armenia is on the map and answering the question, “so what is it like?”. I am always happy to share my experiences with them and to encourage them to visit. I hope now that you have a little more knowledge of Armenia and its people. For me, it is truly a unique place and **one that I continue to enjoy exploring.**

All great adventures, those journeys that expand our horizons and make life more interesting, **have to start somewhere.** So – just as Haig did for me – let me suggest that you visit Armenia soon.



Paul has been working and traveling around the world for most of his adult life, living and visiting nearly 60 countries. One of the pioneers of working from home, he has found that technology now enables working from almost anywhere with good Wi-Fi, and thus, he continues to live and work in new locations every year. Paul's experiences in Armenia have now led to him having an active role in helping others visit, live, and work in Armenia.

“ Having spent almost a year working remotely in Dilijan, Gyumri, and Yerevan recently, I cherish the memories of my time living in amazing Armenia.

There are great cafés and restaurants everywhere, and even smaller towns have co-working spaces. In business and tech, modernity reigns, and there are many IT startups, as well as offices of major global tech companies dotted around the country. The vibe is upbeat, and the focus is on success.

People are friendly and welcoming, while the culture is still traditional and family-centric. Being of Armenian descent, I was surprised to discover a 7th-century cathedral in my ancestral village: there is a lot of history around.

If you ask me, Armenia is the place to go if you're tired of the usual “nomad circuit”, and are looking for a different and better experience. I'll be back, that's for sure!”



George Spark

International Business &
IT Director



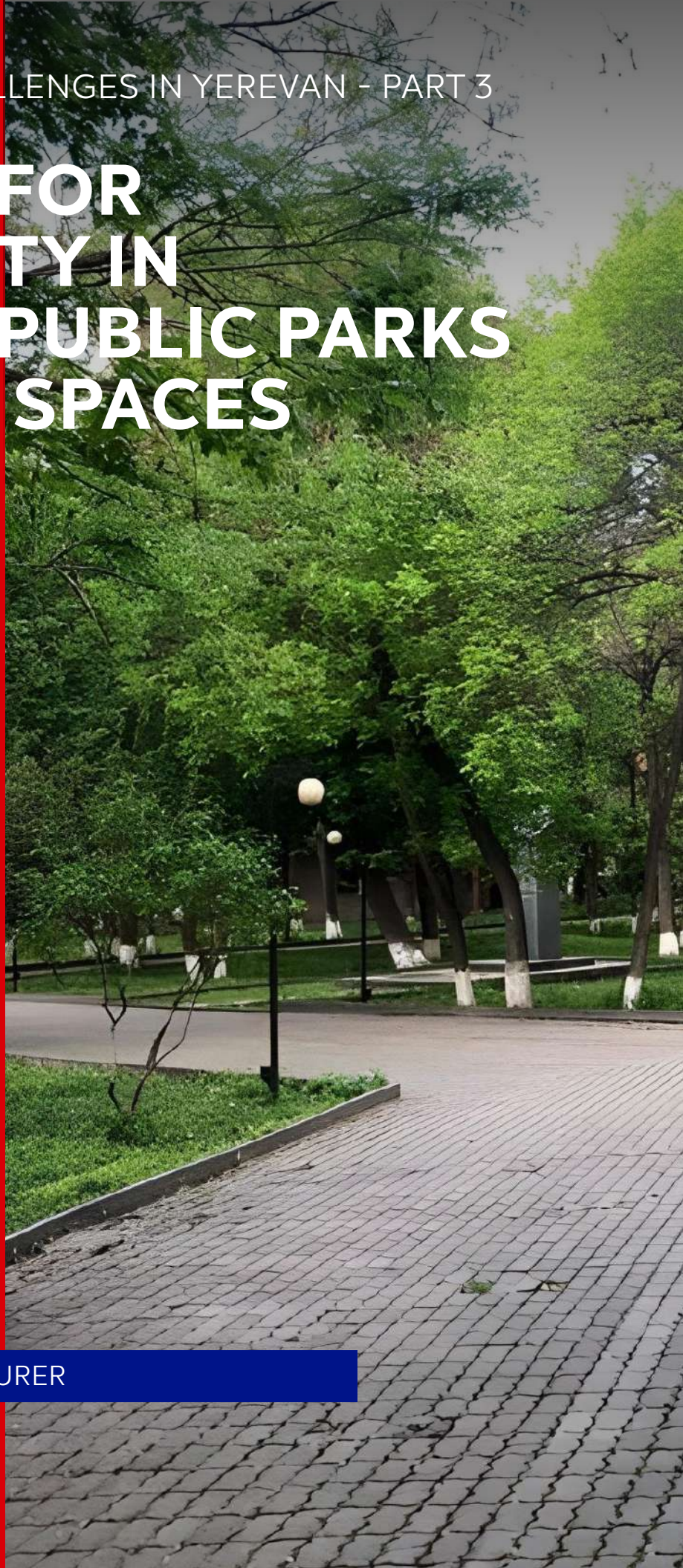
OVERCOMING URBAN CHALLENGES IN YEREVAN - PART 3

THE QUEST FOR BIODIVERSITY IN YEREVAN'S PUBLIC PARKS AND GREEN SPACES



**VAHRAM
ELAGOZ**

ADJUNCT LECTURER



OVERCOMING URBAN CHALLENGES IN YEREVAN - PART 3

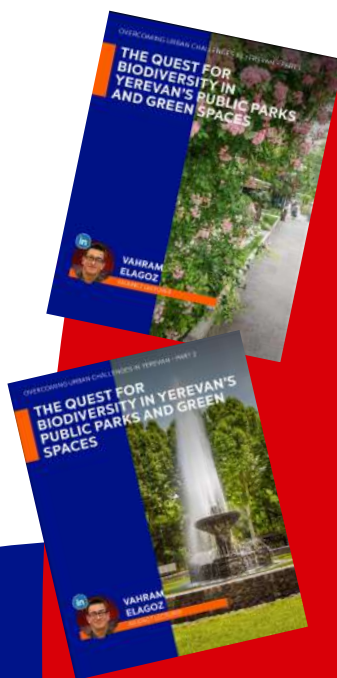
THE QUEST FOR BIODIVERSITY IN YEREVAN'S PUBLIC PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

In the most recent two issues of Life in Armenia magazine I shared with the reader my views on promoting and preserving **biodiversity in urban green spaces and parks**, at the same time highlighting the important role green spaces and parks assume not only as places of recreation but in a manner of speaking also as 'air purifiers', **at the forefront of fighting air pollution**.

As of late –and rightfully so- this topic has gained significant importance and become a major concern not only for Yerevanis but also for those who live in towns surrounding the capital. One of the two primary contributors to urban air pollution are the so-called **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**, a group of chemicals that readily evaporate into the air. They can come from a variety of sources, including factories, power plants, automobile exhaust, and gasoline vapors, to name a few.

Exposure to VOC vapors can cause a variety of health effects, including eye, nose, and throat irritation; headaches and loss of coordination; nausea; and damage to the liver, kidneys, or central nervous system. The second contributor to urban air pollution is **particulate matter**. Smaller particles (with 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter) pose a greater health risk as they can penetrate deeper into the respiratory system, causing respiratory irritation, exacerbating existing conditions like asthma, increasing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, and potentially contributing to cancer development, with the **most concerning effects occurring when inhaled deeply into the lungs**. While stricter regulations and set parameters for permissible levels of air pollutants will drastically reduce urban air pollution, maintaining the existing and establishing new urban green spaces with healthy tree populations, will **undoubtedly play a significant role in curbing air pollution**. The responsibility lies with both the municipal leaders as well as the citizenry.

In the third and final part of my essay, I will discuss the importance of the multifunctionality of green spaces catering to various needs of urban residents, using as examples two other parks I frequently visited in Yerevan, weaving into the narrative my own recollections and impressions: **the English Park** and **the Children's Park**.






The English Park

Yerevan's English Park, home to Sundukyan State Academic Theatre, named after Gabriel Sundukyan (1825-1912, the founder of modern Armenian drama), is located between Surp Grigor Lusavorich and Italy Streets. **It is the first public park in Yerevan**, founded in 1850 and officially opened in 1910. With the financial support of the then mayor Hovhannes Melik-Aghamalyan (in office between 1904-1910 and 1912-1914) various trees were brought from Russia and Poland to be planted in the park. **It is constructed in the 'European style'**, which seems to be one of the main reasons behind the name. The park hosting the first-ever football match in the modern history of Armenia between the teams of Yerevan and Alexandropol (today Gyumri) in 1920 is an interesting fact worth being mentioned here.

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VAN



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In order to reach this oasis of serenity I would **usually take the Hanrapetutyan and Mher Mkrtchyan Streets** before ending up at a barely visible passageway accessible through Movses Khorenatsi Street. At this point, it would be a disservice to the reader if I withhold the following two fun facts that I will always associate with my visits to this park, invariably bringing back fond memories. One is the parking attendant on Hanrapetutyan Street with whom I used to exchange a few words each time I walked by.

While sipping from his morning cup of coffee, he would supervise each and every car with military precision as if paying his tributes to the person whose name was given to the school across the street, namely Nelson Stepanian (1913-1944), a bomber pilot of the Soviet Air Force of the Baltic Fleet. How very appropriate! The second, albeit a less glamorous fact, is the paid public toilet almost immediately at the end of that very narrow passageway leading to the park that I never saw open: a sure way of keeping it clean!



Upon entering the park I would often see a group of people practicing tai chi near the sculpture of Liparit Mkhchyan (1894-1921), a Soviet commander who died during the February Uprising of 1921. Thanks to the old stands of fairly healthy trees with dense canopies, this park shelters several bird species such as woodpeckers, thrushes, robins and Eurasian jays that one would otherwise find in wooded areas. I am not an ornithologist, therefore, I am not very good in recognizing birds from

their calls but during my early morning walks their calls and songs were a joy to hear. It is common knowledge that the color green, with its connection to nature and life, has a particularly calming and soothing effect on our psyche. Little wonder, then, that color green is closely linked to positive emotions, symbolizing growth, renewal, and life as it is associated with qualities such as harmony, balance, and a sense of security.



One of my favorite features of the park was the elegant sculpture of a boy, known as ջրավաճառ տղան, the seller of water. On hot Yerevan evenings I would, now and then, come to this park to enjoy a glass of cold beer and a snack at the café located not far from the theatre building. As I mentioned earlier in my essay **simple pleasures don't require shelling out wads of money.**

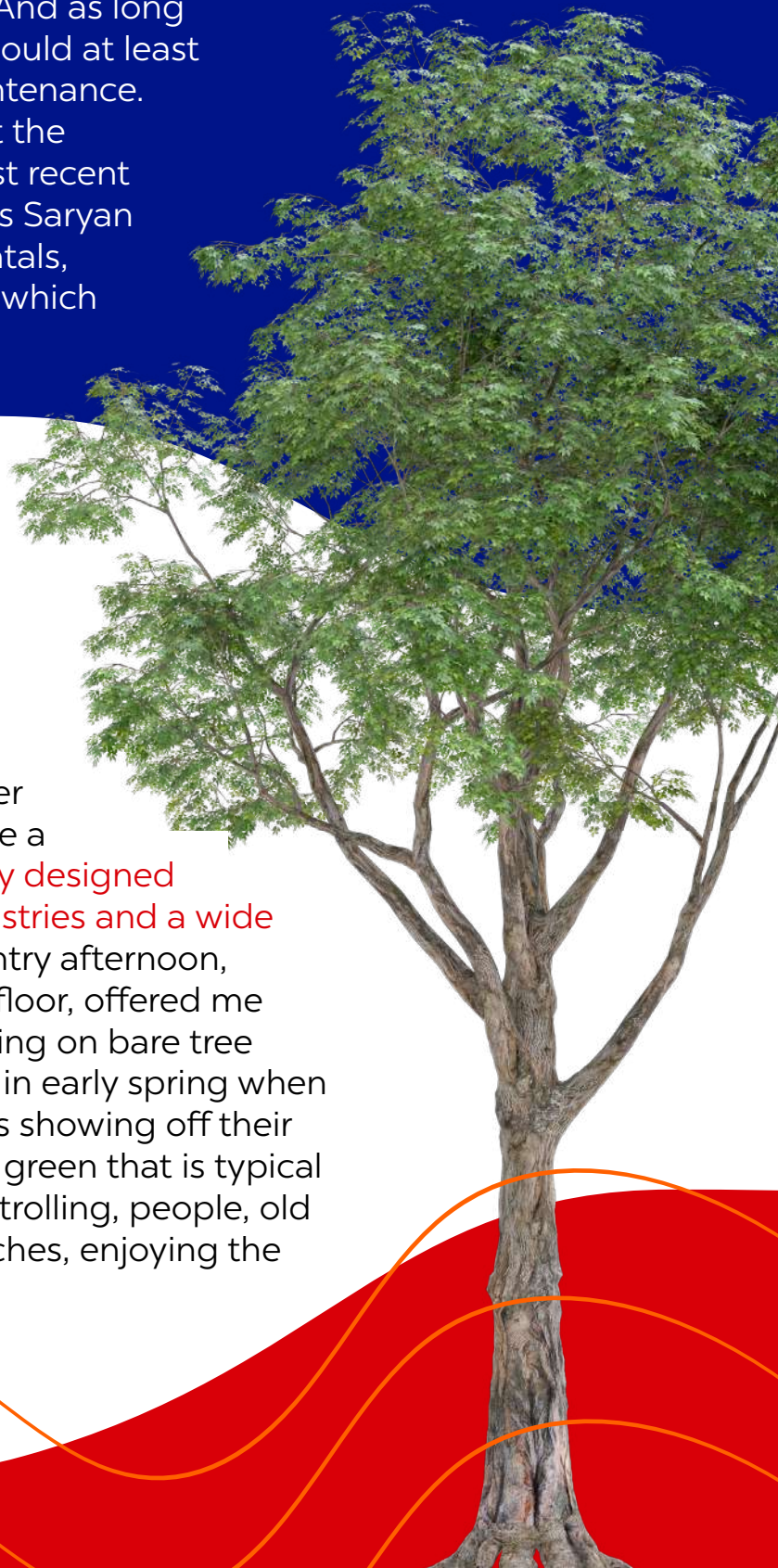
Being a shaded park with the exception of occasional clearances around sculptures and a particularly large one around the large circular fountain as one approaches the theatre, the number of wildflower species one would come across in the park is rather limited. The dominant tree species in the park include oriental plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) along with small-leaved elms. Sadly here, too, one would come across large stands of the invasive Tree of Heaven. From what I could see many flower beds that were placed in previous decades have been visibly suffering from the dense shade dispensed by the trees above.

The Canna lilies that attempted to grow in early spring remained spindly and at a vegetative state. A serious shortage of park attendants –most likely due to financial constraints- with sufficient horticultural skills is the primary reason for the state Yerevan's parks and green spaces are in. I may add that vigorous raking, sweeping, pruning or overwatering are not horticultural skills. And as long as this situation remains, revival plans should at least consider designs that require a low maintenance. One good example that would highlight the case I am trying to make here is the most recent improvements (in 2021/2022) to Martiros Saryan Park that included plantings of ornamentals, requiring intensive care on a daily basis, which sadly wasn't there.

Wasted public resources that should and could have been used wisely through plantings of shade-loving native perennial shrubs!

The Children's Park

The last public park of Yerevan I would like to talk about is the Children's Park a short walk away from the City Hall. I first came to this park on a snowy winter afternoon in order to try out a tea house a friend of mine recommended. **Tastefully designed in Nordic style the café serves lovely pastries and a wide variety of breakfast platters.** On this wintry afternoon, the wide glass windows of the second floor, offered me a dreamy view of snowflakes slowly falling on bare tree branches. My next visit to the park was in early spring when the air was still crisp and fresh, the trees showing off their first fully expanded leaves – a shade of green that is typical of early spring-, families with children strolling, people, old and young, languidly lounging on benches, enjoying the warm spring sun.



While there are many ways to reach this park, I preferred to walk down the Zakyan Street, one of the few remaining residential streets in Yerevan, lined uninterrupted with old oriental plane trees on both sides, dispensing much-needed protection from the heat of the summer sun. The street also houses all sorts of useful stores: bakeries, greengrocers, a butcher and fishmonger, an artisanal cheesemaker, hairdressers, haberdashers, as well as street vendors, offering freshest fruits and vegetables. It became a habit of mine to first walk along the streets surrounding the park –the Zakyan, Grigor Lusavorich, Beirut, and Movses Khorenatsi Streets before entering the park.

I am not sure I can explain why I did that: probably because as a person who recently moved to Yerevan I was curious to see what was happening on those streets. But I have to admit I was also on the lookout for that notorious invader, the Tree of Heaven that made this park its home. My first impression was to realize the degree of damage the initial design of this park suffered from human greed, obtaining building permits, possibly without due process, in order to build... What and for what purpose? Back then most of what I had seen were semi-finished and/ or abandoned structures. Were they meant to become cafés, nightclubs...? A certainty is that whoever closed an eye, did a great disservice to an otherwise beautiful public park.

One impressive structure in the park is an obelisk honoring the 'Warriors of the Red Army'. The park is also home to a bust of Simon Zakyan (1899-1942), commander of the 89th Tamanyan Division, the only one of the six national divisions formed in Soviet Armenia that reached Berlin during [WWII](#).



The Children's Park is densely populated with well-established, healthy trees with limited species diversity. Several paths, crisscrossing the park allow pleasant strolls, some of which, however, were randomly interrupted by small shacks devoid of any aesthetic value, serving refreshments. The most disturbed section of the park, with shade trees being absent, is as you approach the exit at the corner of Zakyan and Movses Khorenatsi Streets. In reality, this neglect could be easily turned into an advantage by giving both the planners and residents of the adjacent street to agree upon a new design for the benefit of many.

The park's central location, the proximity to the City Hall, being surrounded by mostly residential streets among many things is why I consider this park with **the greatest potential among all public parks and green spaces in Yerevan** to become a multifunctional green space, serving a much wider section of Yerevantsis from all walks of life. The already existing semi-circular

amphitheater is a good example that when completely restored to its former glory would contribute to the spirit of a public space, catering to the needs of a large section of citizens with differing interests.

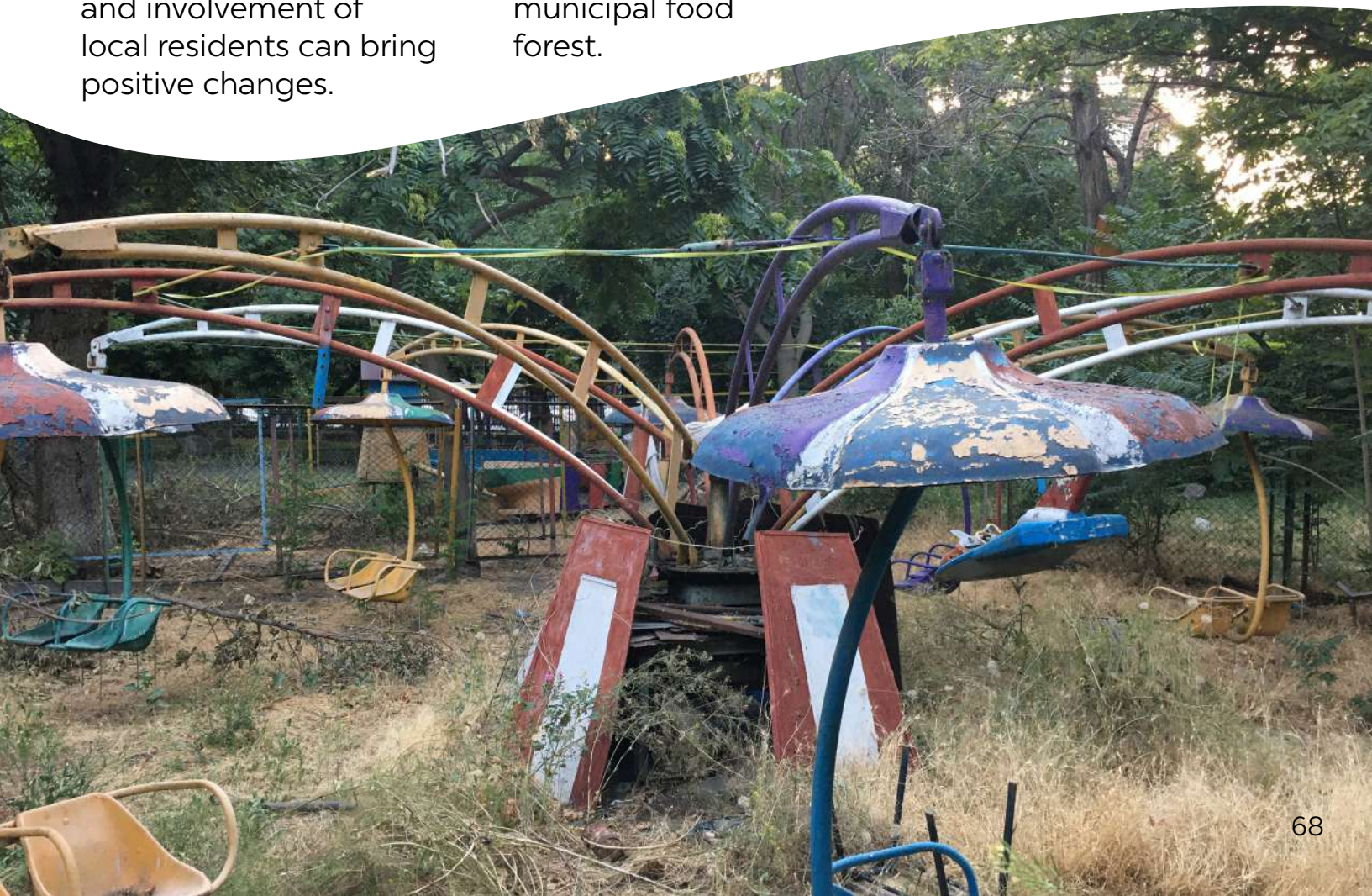
By now, it should be clear to us that today's expectations from parks and green spaces are significantly different than those, say, in the 19th or early-20th centuries. Multifunctionality of green spaces catering to various needs has become a priority. A combination of areas of tranquility with pleasing aesthetics, adequate space for sport activities, cultural and educational events, and the inclusion of community gardens are nowadays part of improvement plans elsewhere. For example, offering small plots to residents for a nominal annual fee to grow their vegetables have been immensely popular in major European and US cities and towns. Such programs promote a sense of stewardship and belonging (սպասկանելիութիւն) I mentioned earlier.



Of course, to expect all of these from each and every park or green space would be delusional. One has to carefully assess the options available and then decide how to proceed. The following is a good example of how an existing but abandoned gem of a green space within an urban setting can be used without costly changes. While the green space in question is a fairly large forested area located within the city limits of Atlanta, it still is a useful example to show how long-term planning and involvement of local residents can bring positive changes.

I came across this example in an article titled “Public food forests grow as cities look for new ways to feed their people” in the [March 2019 issue of Landscape Architecture Magazine](#). Briefly, Atlanta’s urban agriculture director, after surveying this large urban forest and assessing the quality and diversity of its existing vegetation, decided that this was the place to test out the concept of a municipal food forest.

The forest already contained several edible fruit-bearing trees such as pecans, mulberries, and black walnuts, and as such, the site already was a food forest. Improvements at the Atlanta food forest included picnic tables, raised beds, and vine trellises. A vision plan in progress provided more programmed space, meaning areas for various organized functions, toward its two entrances and a wilder area toward the rear. The Mushroom Club of Georgia was among several partners included in developing and promoting this project.



But as I mentioned earlier local residents were actively involved in this project from the very beginning. One may ask what a food forest is, and rightfully so. Here is a brief explanation from the article that I would like to share with you. “A food forest is a vertically layered, publicly accessible edible garden. Based on permaculture principles (sustainable and self-sufficient development of agricultural ecosystems), it is designed to mimic a true forest ecosystem, with layers of plantings that work in concert with one another, from the rhizosphere (the zone of soil under the influence of plant roots) to ground covers to large canopy trees.”

Unfortunately this kind of public involvement does not come naturally in countries like Armenia. We expect a lot from elected officials and when the progress is too slow or things don't happen we begin to criticize and complain. A healthy dose of criticism is sometimes necessary to spur changes but **expecting changes to happen without getting involved is a non-starter.**

To those who may think that projects like these sound like far-fetched pipedreams or fantasies that can only happen elsewhere I can only say to look no further than our doorsteps. **Yerevan is home to a much larger green space within its city limits** namely the Yerevan Botanical Garden with an area covering nearly 80 hectares? A gem at our doorsteps, which I hope will be the topic for another article in the near future.

Let's not keep nature captive and our creativity constricted.

Let's allow both to flourish!



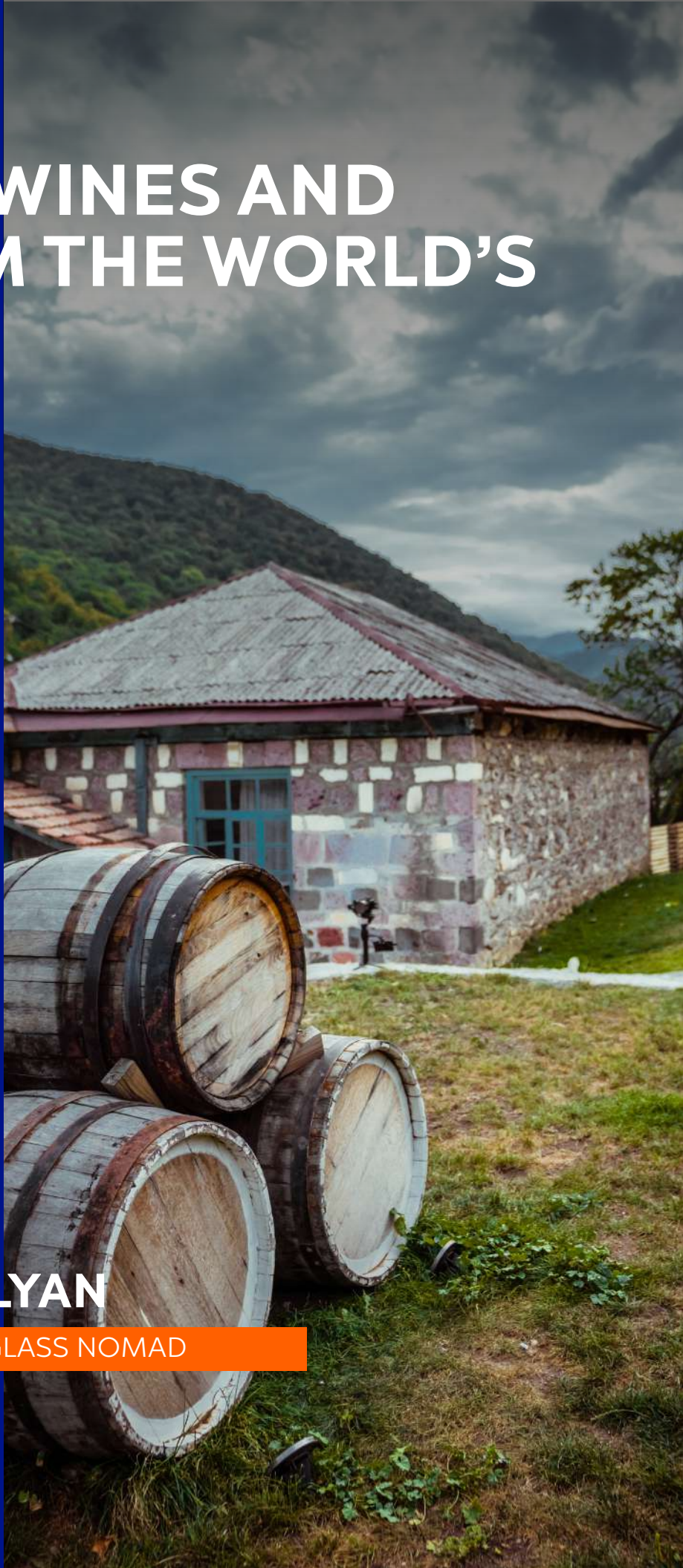
WHERE TIME FERMENTS

ARMENIAN WINES AND TALES FROM THE WORLD'S VINEYARDS



**DIANA
KHANDILYAN**

FOUNDER OF GLASS NOMAD




WHERE TIME FERMENTS ARMENIAN WINES AND TALES FROM THE WORLD'S VINEYARDS

Picture yourself standing in a cool, dimly lit cave over 6,000 years ago. The air is thick with the earthy scent of fermenting grapes, and faint, flickering torchlight dances on the stone walls. This is no ordinary cave; it is a place of discovery, where ancient hands pressed grapes, watched their juice transform, and stumbled upon the magic of wine for the very first time. Right here, in the shadows of Mount Ararat, [humanity's relationship with wine was born](#).

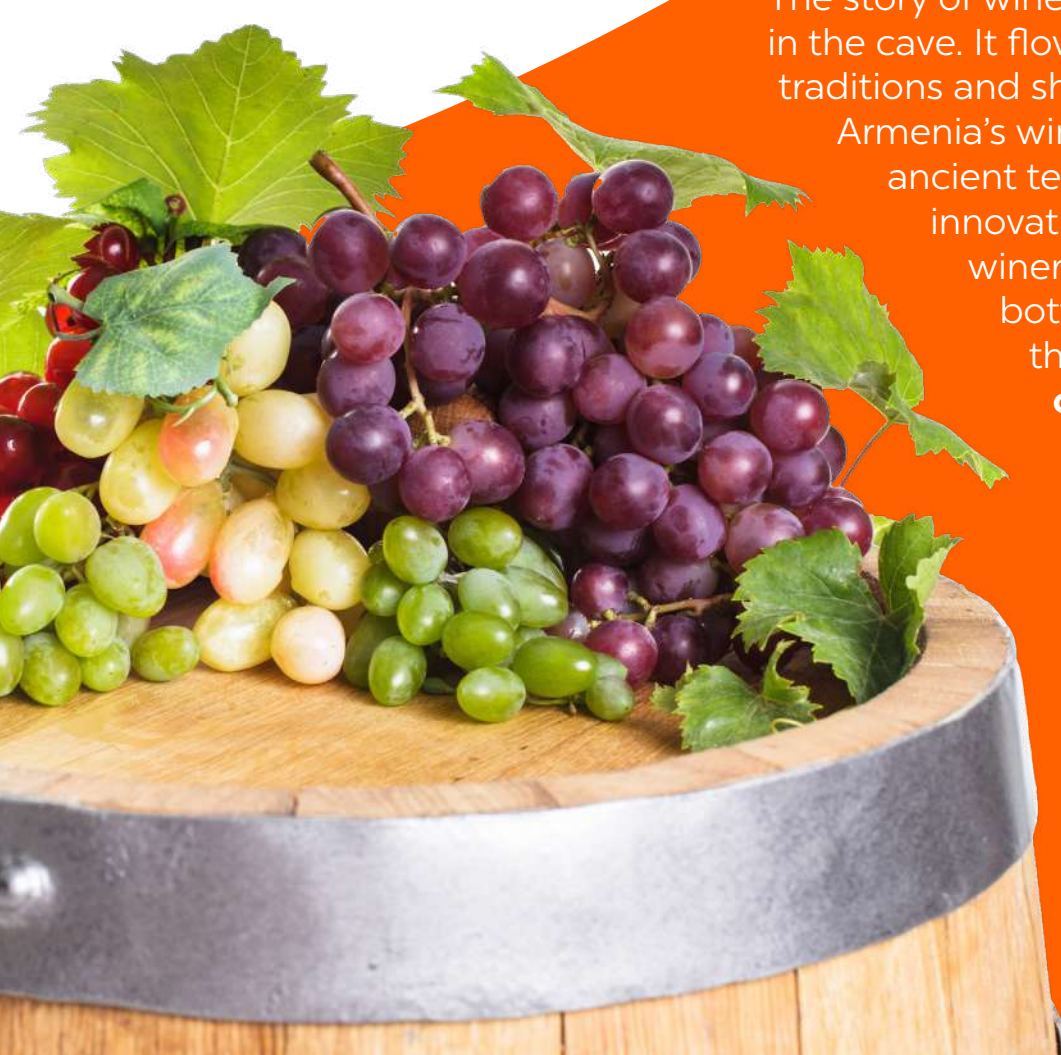
But how did the prehistoric man come about discovering the magic juice? I picture him or, most likely, her surrounded by wild vines heavy with grapes, their skins bursting with juice under the brining South Caucasus sun. While men hunted for sustenance, women gathered herbs and fruits, munching on the ripe harvested grapes. Perhaps they took too much, left the grapes in the hollow stone or clay jar, and got distracted by caveman chores. Days passed, and [what she expected to sour instead transformed into something magical](#)—a drink that warmed the soul and lifted the spirit. Over 6,000 years ago, that man, or likely a woman, unknowingly sparked a tradition that would [define Armenian culture for millennia](#).



The Areni-1 cave complex in the Vayots Dzor region was uncovered in 2007. This groundbreaking archeological discovery revealed [the remains of a winery dating back to 4100 BCE](#). The excavation revealed an elaborate setup, including fermentation vats, a wine press, and clay storage jars known as “karases.” Perhaps the most astonishing find was evidence of grape seeds and skins from the *Vitis vinifera* species—[the same grapes used in modern winemaking](#). Scientists even detected remnants of tartaric acid, a key indicator of wine production. This discovery places Armenia at the heart of wine’s ancient history, linking the past with the present in a continuous thread of cultural identity.



The story of wine in Armenia doesn't end in the cave. It flows through time, enriching traditions and shaping connections. Today, Armenia's wine culture thrives, blending ancient techniques with modern innovation. From boutique wineries crafting award-winning bottles to festivals celebrating the spirit of Areni, **the legacy of that first sip lives on.**



Visiting the Areni Wine Festival, held annually in Vayots Dzor, offers a chance to immerse yourself in this living history—tasting wines that echo the discovery made millennia ago.



Fill your glass with Areni wine from your favorite producer, and as you face the Ararat Mountain, feel the aromas of the wine. This is the same grape that the first cavemen used to create their wines. Swirl the glass, **feel the connection to the history of my land**, and let the magic juice activate your senses and transport you to a time when the simple act of fermenting grapes began a story that continues to unfold with every sip.

This is just the beginning. What other ancient secrets does Armenia hold? Let's explore together in future stories of Life in Armenia.



TECH EVENTS



with
ARTAK N. G.



TECH BLOGGER

FEB 2	Networking and running with tech founders		
FEB 2	Unicorn Makers meetup		
FEB 7	Python Community Meetup by PyData Yerevan		
FEB 11	Quantum Girls by Russian - Armenian University		
FEB 14-15	Science and Technology conference by The Gituzh Initiative / Գիտութեան նախաձեռնություն		
FEB 16	Networking and running with tech founders		
FEB 20	Management from Z to Z by PMI Armenia		
FEB 21	CyberSprint by Tumo Center for Creative Technologies and Information Systems Agency of Armenia		
FEB 22	Startups Demo Day by Plug and Play Tech Center		
FEB 23	Networking and running with tech founders		

TIPS FOR DIGITAL NOMADS

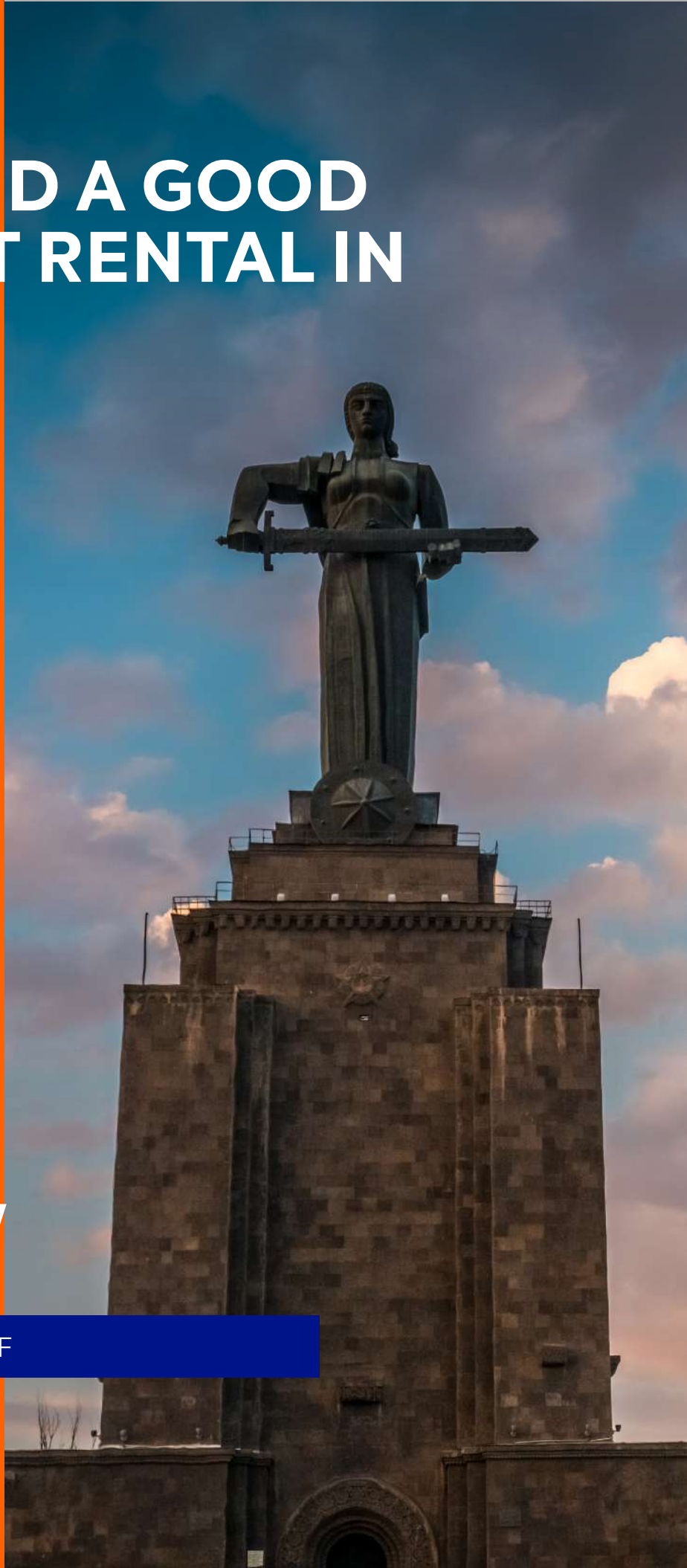
HOW TO FIND A GOOD APARTMENT RENTAL IN ARMENIA



in

**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



TIPS FOR DIGITAL NOMADS

HOW TO FIND A GOOD APARTMENT RENTAL IN ARMENIA

One of the biggest challenges I faced when I first landed in Armenia back in 2018 was finding an apartment to rent. Honestly speaking, rentals were a major topic of conversation at every expat gathering in Yerevan!

The good news is that **things have changed a lot since then**. Finding an apartment nowadays is a lot easier. However, there are still a few things about Armenian buildings, apartments, real estate agents, and the rental market that are good to know beforehand. I've put together a few important points to help you make a more informed decision when looking for an apartment for the first time in Armenia.



Panel vs. Stone - Who Will Win?

If you've never been to Armenia before, you might come across some unfamiliar terms related to buildings when checking rental marketplaces or Instagram ads.

Panel Buildings

These are large, multi-story apartment buildings (typically 7 to 11 floors) constructed from prefabricated concrete panels. They were popular during the Soviet era and are still common in many Armenian cities.

Panel buildings usually have no balconies (to me, the balcony is more important than the living room), and the majority of them are not energy-efficient. This means these buildings were not insulated against weather conditions and currently consume more energy than others to keep them warm in the winter or cool in the summer. It's important to note that panel buildings typically have thin walls.



Many panel buildings also have a garbage chute, which is a vertical pipe or shaft within a building designed to transport waste materials from upper floors to a collection point on a lower level. While mainly not in use today, **these chutes can sometimes cause unpleasant odors** within the building, especially in the summer.

Panel buildings often offer more affordable housing than stone buildings. Many apartments within these buildings have been extensively renovated and furnished in a modern European style. Additionally, some panel buildings have **incorporated energy-efficiency measures** and permanently sealed off the garbage chutes.



Stone Buildings

These buildings are **constructed from natural stone**, such as tuff or basalt, which are abundant in Armenia. Stone buildings are shorter than panel buildings (typically 4 to 5 floors), and most of them have small to medium-sized balconies. Many of these buildings have no elevators; those with elevators are **mostly old-style Soviet-era ones**, but they generally function well.

Stone buildings have thick walls and are **well-insulated due to the use of stone** in their construction. This approach makes them warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Additionally, they don't have any garbage chutes, which is a big advantage over panel buildings. However, it's important to check the entrances of these buildings. Sometimes, the entrances are quite old and may be dirty, so you should pay attention to this when evaluating an apartment.



By the way, sometimes you'll find that renting an apartment in a stone building in Yerevan, even if it's the same size as one in a panel building, often costs more. In some cases, the panel building apartment might **even be larger and more recently renovated**



Mathew's Personal Tips

When apartment hunting, I always lean towards stone buildings over panel buildings, even though panel apartments can be more tempting and look quite better from the inside. Personally, I like stone buildings. They have a cozy charm reminiscent of a small home where you and your family can enjoy your time. Of course, this is a personal thing!

Renting an apartment in a panel building often results in higher utility bills at the end of the month, especially in the winter. The thin walls and lack of energy efficiency contribute to this. Based on my own calculations, gas heating costs can be almost 50% higher, and the same applies to electric heating.

When renting an apartment, whether in a stone or a panel building, I always request a meeting with the owner in person. I consider the owner to be responsible for 30% of my decision-making process. If I don't feel comfortable with the owner, I refrain from renting, even if the apartment itself is otherwise suitable. I'm someone who trusts his gut instincts a lot.



By the way, Armenia also has modern, recently constructed residential buildings almost identical to those in other countries. However, in my article, I'm sharing information about the buildings and terms you might not be familiar with if you've never visited this part of the world before.

Where to Find Apartments for Rent in Armenia?

Finding an apartment in Yerevan is much easier than in other regions of Armenia. In some areas, your only option might be a **Facebook group that's only available in Armenian**. However, this isn't the case everywhere. Some regions have been influenced by international travelers and have **adapted to providing renters with more options**.



Armenia has a major online marketplace called [List.am](https://list.am), which is likely the most well-known in the country. There, you'll find many apartment listings, some from owners and some from real estate agencies. While not every listing is accurate, the platform is undergoing internal processes to improve authenticity and eliminate such listings. In fact, I found my last apartment on List.am **after just 30 minutes of searching the app**, and I'm quite happy with it.



Another resource is Facebook expat groups. A popular option is Repats & Expats: Real Estate in Armenia. There, you'll find many active real estate agents, and sometimes owners list their apartments directly as well. You can post in the Facebook group describing your preferences and budget and **real estate agents will start reaching out to you** with offers (when applicable).



Real estate agencies are another option. Almost all agents speak English

reasonably, at least when it comes to written communication. **They can share listings with you via**

WhatsApp. While some agencies have websites with apartment listings, many use Instagram to showcase properties. They often create **TikTok-style videos that walk you through the apartment,** highlight its features, and provide details. Even if the videos are in Armenian, you can usually translate the descriptions below the posts .

In Armenia, long-term rental contracts typically involve the following:

- Paying the first and last month's rent upfront
- Paying a broker's fee equal to the monthly rent (the renter pays 50% and the apartment owner pays the same amount)

I always recommend using a formal rental contract. Even if someone tries to convince you otherwise, **having a contract is important** to protect both your rights and the rights of the apartment owner.

Recently, we started seeing a reasonable amount of listings in Armenia on Airbnb. You can check the international marketplace to explore options in various cities, although **Yerevan remains the most common location.** While primarily focused on short-term rentals, some hosts offer long-term leases at potentially more favorable rates.

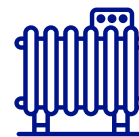


Utilities in Armenia

I still remember when I rented my first apartment in Armenia and the owner said “you can find the PAXI in the closet” and I was like “Excuse me, I can find what?” There are a few things you should learn about before renting a place in Yerevan, so I’m putting together a short list based on my experience.



Paying utilities in Armenia requires specific codes (unique set of numbers) for electricity, water, and gas. You can use these codes to **pay utility bills at terminals available on the street or through mobile apps**, where you can also check your bill balance. Most mobile banking apps offer utility payment options.



Most apartments in Armenia are heated using a traditional gas “boiler and radiator system.” In my experience, **gas-heated apartments are a better option than electricity-heated apartments** (which use ACs). Gas heating costs less and is more efficient.



In Armenia, apartments often use a device called a 'PAXI' to control gas. It's a wall-mounted unit that uses gas to supply hot water to the pipes (kitchen, bathroom, heating system, etc.). **Ask the owner to show you how the PAXI works**, as you'll need to use it. This device lets you control the water temperature, apartment heating temperature, and gas pressure. It's not complicated, just something you might be unfamiliar with. Don't worry about it too much, just make sure you learn how it operates.



When renting an apartment, be sure to inquire about the internet connection. Confirm that the internet is already installed and functioning properly before moving in. If not, request internet installation and **make it a precondition for moving in**.



Utility bills are typically issued on the 10th of each month for the previous month. When renting an apartment, be sure to clarify with the owner or broker who is responsible for paying the bills starting from your move-in date. For instance, if you move into an apartment on June 8th, **the owner would be responsible for the June 10th bill**, which covers May's usage. Always double-check the billing month when paying utilities.



Renting an apartment in Armenia is no different in essence than in other countries. You just need to be careful when choosing one. After all, if you're a remote worker like me, you know you'll spend hours in the apartment working on your laptop.

“Magazine Feedback”



N. A.

I read “Life in Armenia” cover to cover. It is a wonderful magazine, very positive and informative, that opens a new door to the Armenian world. It allows readers to think twice about a country that has been destroyed many times but has rebuilt again.

Matthew heralds a new nation-building process, a new era that would change Armenia forever and make it a qualitatively and quantitatively different country with forward-looking people who value science, education, and human value.

DOING BUSINESS WITHOUT A COMPANY

HIRE PEOPLE, PAY EMPLOYEES, AND INVOICE CLIENTS FROM ARMENIA



**ANI
SAFARYAN**

MARKETING MANAGER AT NATIVE TEAMS

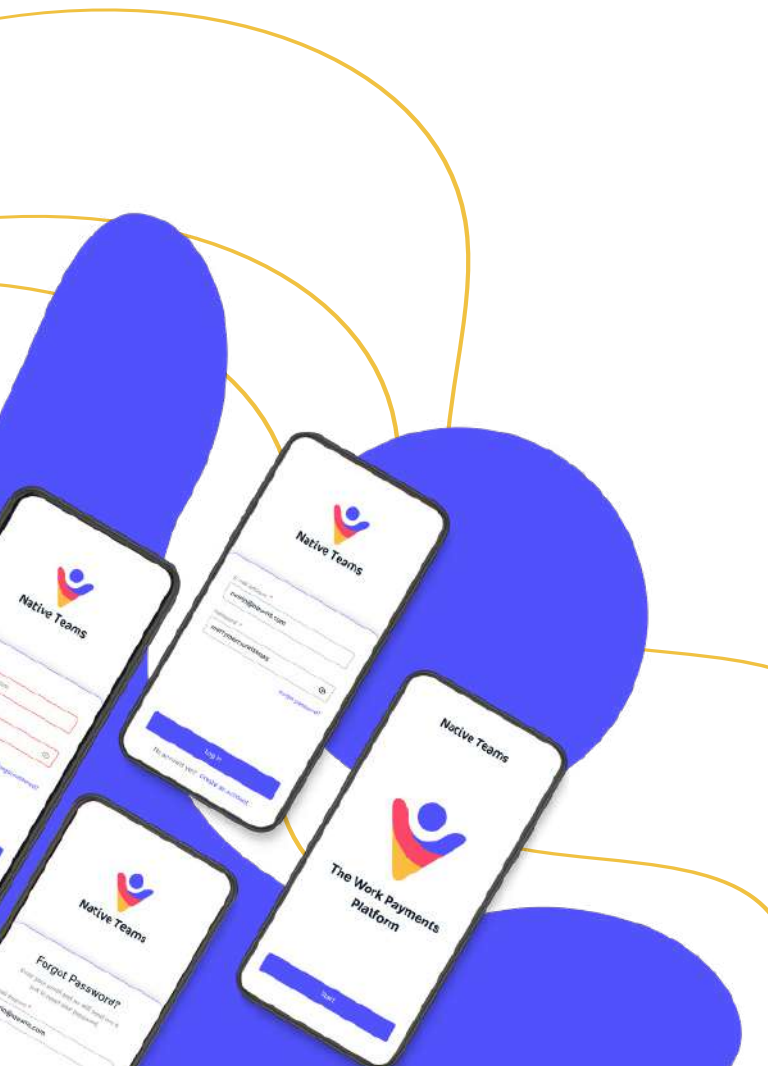


DOING BUSINESS WITHOUT A COMPANY HIRE PEOPLE, PAY EMPLOYEES, AND INVOICE CLIENTS FROM ARMENIA

Digital nomads exhibit a flexible lifestyle, from spending a week in one location to staying for months. The duration of their stay in a new destination is influenced by personal preference, local tax regulations, and work restrictions, especially for those without residency or work permits.



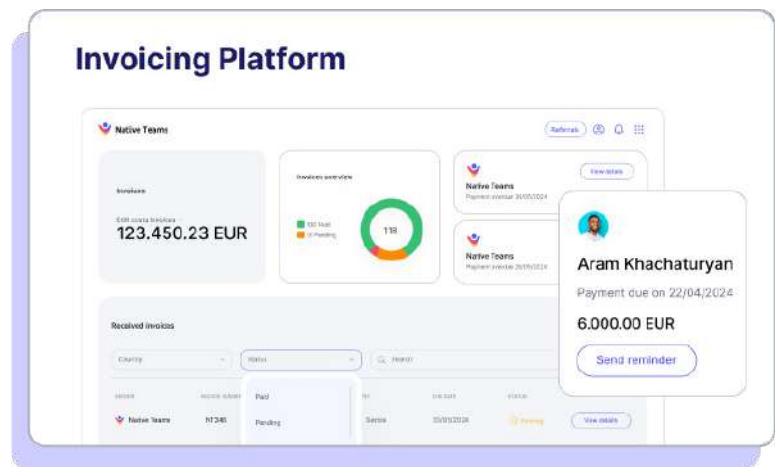
In Armenia, digital nomads can **legally stay for up to 183 days without becoming tax residents** in the Republic of Armenia; this allows them to continue working for international clients and earning income as they would in their home country. However, for some, managing the complexities of their business operations, including invoicing clients and paying employee salaries, necessitates establishing a legal business structure, such as a company. This step can present challenges for the nomadic lifestyle, which often needs constant movement. On the one hand, you need to manage all business operations, and on the other hand, you need to **ensure compliance with all regulations in the country where you stay.**



You're not alone! Many entrepreneurs and businesses are looking for efficient ways to hire employees, pay salaries, and invoice clients without worrying about registration. That's where Native Teams comes in—offering easy, stress-free solutions in more than 85 countries.

Without a registered company, payroll, taxes, and compliance can quickly become overwhelming. Navigating tax laws, managing salary payments, and ensuring compliance can eat up valuable time. Hiring employees is another challenge; without proper contracts and payroll tools, legal risks and inefficiencies can arise.

Then there's invoicing—**clients expect professional, tax-compliant invoices**, but without a registered business, getting paid can be a struggle. Delays in payments or tax errors can result in financial setbacks that slow down business growth. Moreover, handling multiple administrative tasks manually can drain resources and take focus away from strategic business expansion.



A Comprehensive Solution in Armenia

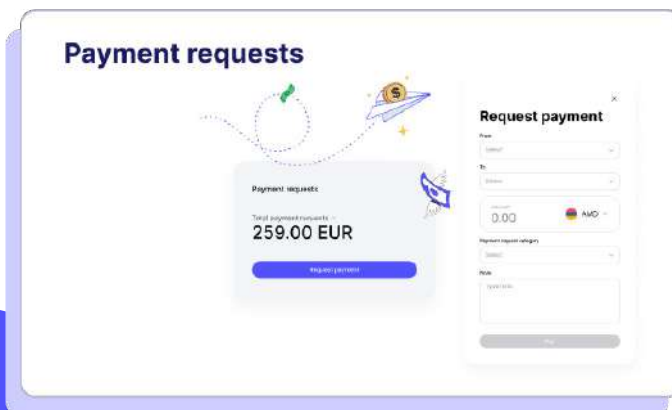
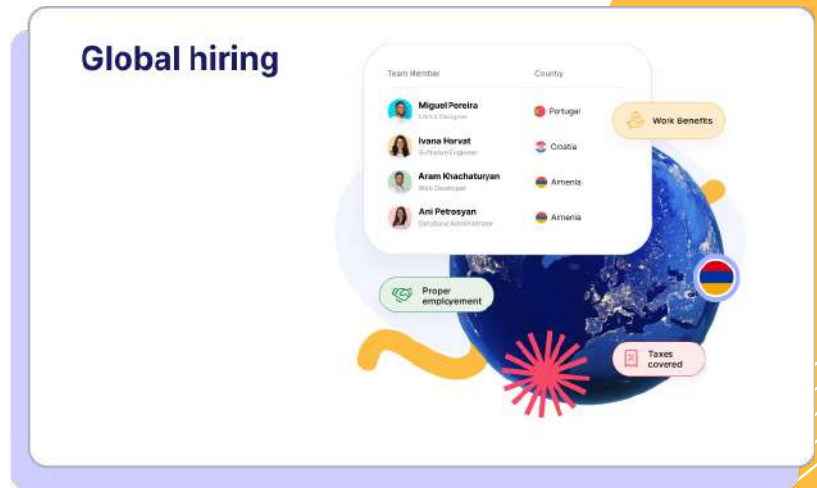
We handle employment contracts and payroll, ensuring compliance with labor laws. Our automated payroll system efficiently manages tax deductions and filings, so **you never have to worry about staying compliant**. When it comes to invoicing, our platform allows you to generate professional, tax-compliant invoices in just a few clicks, making transactions with clients easy and stress-free.

Interested in expanding internationally? **We support businesses in over 85 countries** and offer multi-currency transactions, allowing you to send and receive payments across borders effortlessly. Plus, our centralized dashboard helps you track payroll, expenses, and invoices in one place, keeping your finances organized and under control.

How Native Teams Works for B2B Clients

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ARMENIA GOES DIGITAL

THE PUSH FOR CASHLESS PAYMENTS IN ARMENIA

in



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

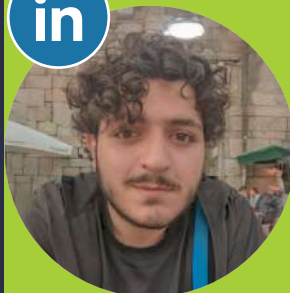
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**GOHAR
GRIGORYAN**

MARKETING STRATEGIST
AT EasyPay

in



**HARUT
SARGSYAN**

Head of Creative at EasyPay

INTERVIEWING



ARMENIA GOES DIGITAL THE PUSH FOR CASHLESS PAYMENTS IN ARMENIA

Whenever I talk about Armenia with my European friends, I get the same questions from those who've never been to the country before. Do you have an internet connection in Armenia? Do you have online banking? Do you use mobile apps in your daily life? I always laugh at these questions and tell them that we use pigeons as messengers and barter to get what we need instead of using money in Armenia.

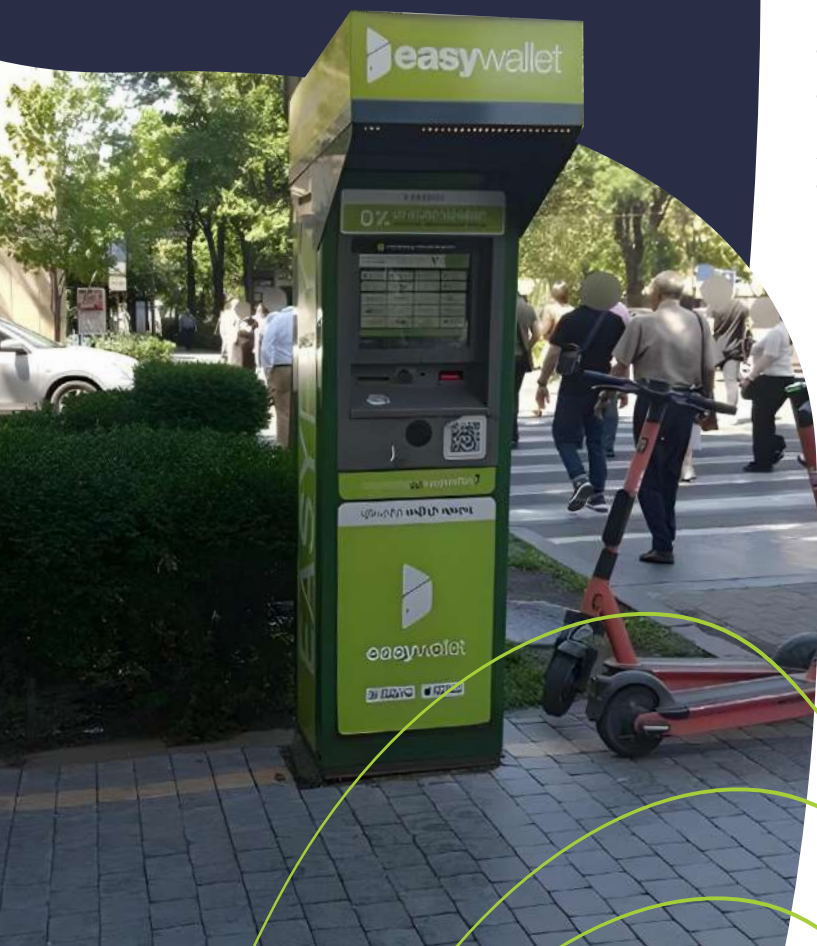
In summer, I often invite my friends to visit me in Yerevan and spend a few days enjoying **the city and the surrounding mountains**. You should see the look on their faces when I use my phone to pay everywhere! Many people abroad have outdated ideas about Armenia, **assuming things like online payments don't exist here**. Unfortunately, such misconceptions are why countries like Armenia don't fully realize their potential to attract and benefit from the global digital nomad community.

When I arrived in Armenia in 2018, it took me a while to get used to the Armenian currency, the Armenian Dram. There are coins and paper notes of various denominations, ranging from 10 Dram coins to 100,000 Dram bills, although you rarely use the latter, as the 20,000 Dram note is much more common. In the beginning, I only used cash payments, which I soon started to dislike because, in a short time, **my pockets overflowed with coins**, and I knew it was time for online payments.



Nowadays, I only use online payments and can't even recall the last time I handled a paper note in Armenia for paying or receiving, probably over a year ago. I use the [InecoMobile](#) banking application, which belongs to Inecobank. I have used it for all personal transactions and payments, including utilities, purchases, online shopping, consumer loans, and more.

While working on this article, I recalled using [easywallet](#) in my first few years in Armenia. It's a digital wallet and online payment app I used after obtaining a residence permit, **even before I had a bank account**. Back then, the app allowed me to pay for utilities and make online payments. I used to charge my digital wallet through payment terminals on the streets.



If you've ever visited Armenia, you likely noticed the [considerable number of payment terminals on the streets](#). These terminals enable utility payments, money transfers, account reimbursements, paying traffic fines, governmental duties, and other similar financial services.

I contacted EasyPay and met them for some questions about my article. Gohar and Harut from the marketing department were nice enough to join me for a morning coffee on Saryan Street; they explained that easywallet as a mobile app was the company's [response to Armenia's shift toward cashless payments](#). It turned out that before launching the digital wallet, EasyPay operated and still operates thousands of payment terminals throughout Yerevan and other Armenian regions. But why all these terminals? Why would a relatively small country need all these terminals?

Here it's worth mentioning that EasyPay is not the only company operating a digital wallet app and managing payment terminals in the Armenian market. Other competitors exist, such as [Telcell](#), [Idram](#), and [Fastshift](#), which [offer a similar financial ecosystem](#).



Well, according to Gohar and Harut from EasyPay, in rural areas of Armenia, cash remains the predominant form of payment despite ongoing efforts to encourage the adoption of digital methods. However, **a huge obstacle lies in the age demographic of the rural population**. Many older residents lack the digital literacy and technological familiarity to use these payment methods. As a result, EasyPay, for example, still operates these payment terminals as an **intermediary phase between a fully cash-based and a fully digital economy**.

“

Harut Sargsyan

Head of Creative at EasyPay

We understand that a complete shift to a cashless society is a gradual process. That's why our company still operates payment terminals with a focus on Armenian regions. This way, no matter where you are or how tech-savvy you are, you can easily join the growing world of digital money.”





The way EasyPay offers its products and services has a lot to do with the company's philosophy. As the names **EasyPay** and **easywallet** assume, the company continuously strives to make payments easy for everyone, fostering an easier life. This philosophy is reinforced by their values—focusing on customer needs, acting with honesty and transparency, and being responsible for each service provided.

It crossed my mind that digital nomads **who are considering** a stay in Armenia but don't have local bank accounts can have a digital wallet, open a bank account right in the app, charge it with a terminal, and start making payments in Armenia digitally through an app like easywallet.

In ten more years, finances in Armenia should be different, with **online payments dominating all other forms**. I'm not sure if payment terminals will still be available on the streets by then. In fact, I personally believe they will be phased out as everyone transitions to online payments and digital wallets. Perhaps some terminals will remain in certain rural areas of the country, but I don't expect to see many, if any, in Yerevan.

When planning to spend a few months working remotely from Armenia, you don't have to worry about making online payments or having an internet connection. Rest assured, we don't barter and we don't use pigeons to deliver messages here!





VANESSA
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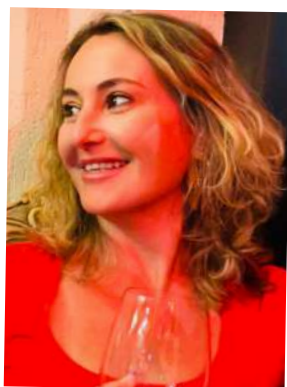
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