

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

FEBRUARY 29TH, 2024 | NO. 13 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

CULTURAL CAPITAL

WHY ARMENIA SHOULD BE ON THE RADAR OF TRAVELING ART ENTREPRENEURS

A TALENT POOL UNTAPPED

HELPING EUROPEAN COMPANIES AND THE ARMENIAN TALENT FIND EACH OTHER

MUSICAL ALCHEMY

THE JOURNEY OF AN AMERICAN MUSICIAN INTO KOMITAS' MUSIC AND THE BIRTH OF A JAZZICAL KOMITAS

THE ART OF CITY PLANNING

A JOURNEY THROUGH YEREVAN'S ICONIC ARCHITECTURE

A BRAND IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A LOGO!

GOING UNDERGROUND: AMPLIFYING THE SUCCESS OF PLACE BRANDING

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REMOTE PRODUCTIVITY HACKS

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YOUR REMOTE WORK EXPERIENCE IN ARMENIA



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

For many in the tech world, Armenia's thriving tech scene and robust startup ecosystem make it a prime travel destination. However, Armenia's rich cultural scene offers much more, attracting a diverse range of professionals beyond tech enthusiasts and entrepreneurs.

Whether you're a musician, artist, author, or another creative soul, Armenia offers a unique experience. Every corner of the country boasts cultural significance waiting to be explored.

This issue celebrates those who have found their purpose outside the tech realm in Armenia. We honor individuals who touch the human spirit through their work, highlighting how Armenia serves as a bridge, bringing them closer to fulfilling their dreams and passions.

For digital nomads and remote workers seeking an enriching cultural immersion, I'd joyfully invite you to visit Armenia and experience firsthand what others have found in this country, what made them stay for years, and why they call it home away from home.

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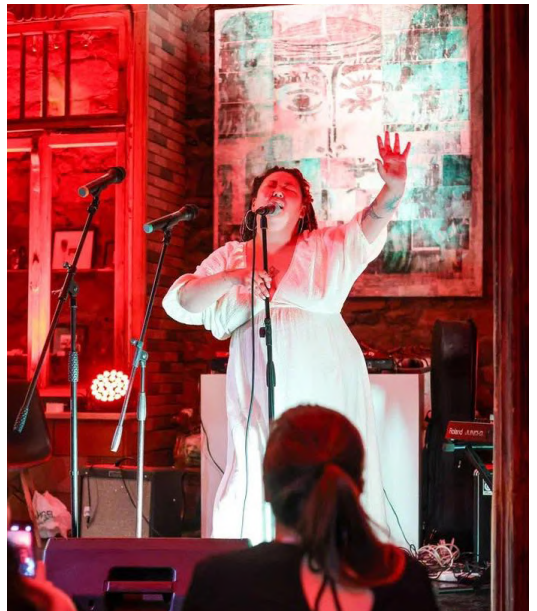
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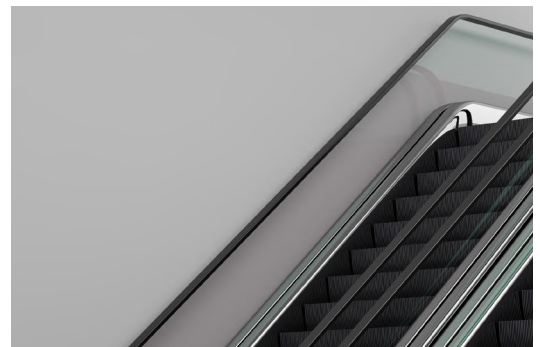
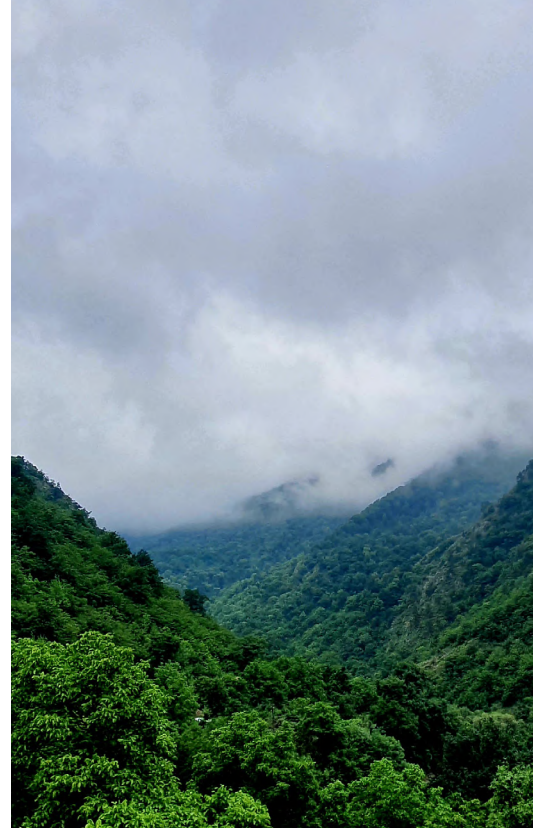
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Discover the thrill of waking up to breathtaking views, exploring scenic trails, and indulging in locally sourced delights. Find out how the mountains redefine productivity and lifestyle, and join Ricardo in embracing mountain life and uncovering the hidden gems of Armenia's peaks.

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CULTURAL CAPITAL

WHY ARMENIA SHOULD BE ON THE RADAR OF TRAVELING ART ENTREPRENEURS



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**NANE
YEGHIKYAN**

DIRECTOR OF YEREVAN BIENNIAL
ART FOUNDATION (YBAF)

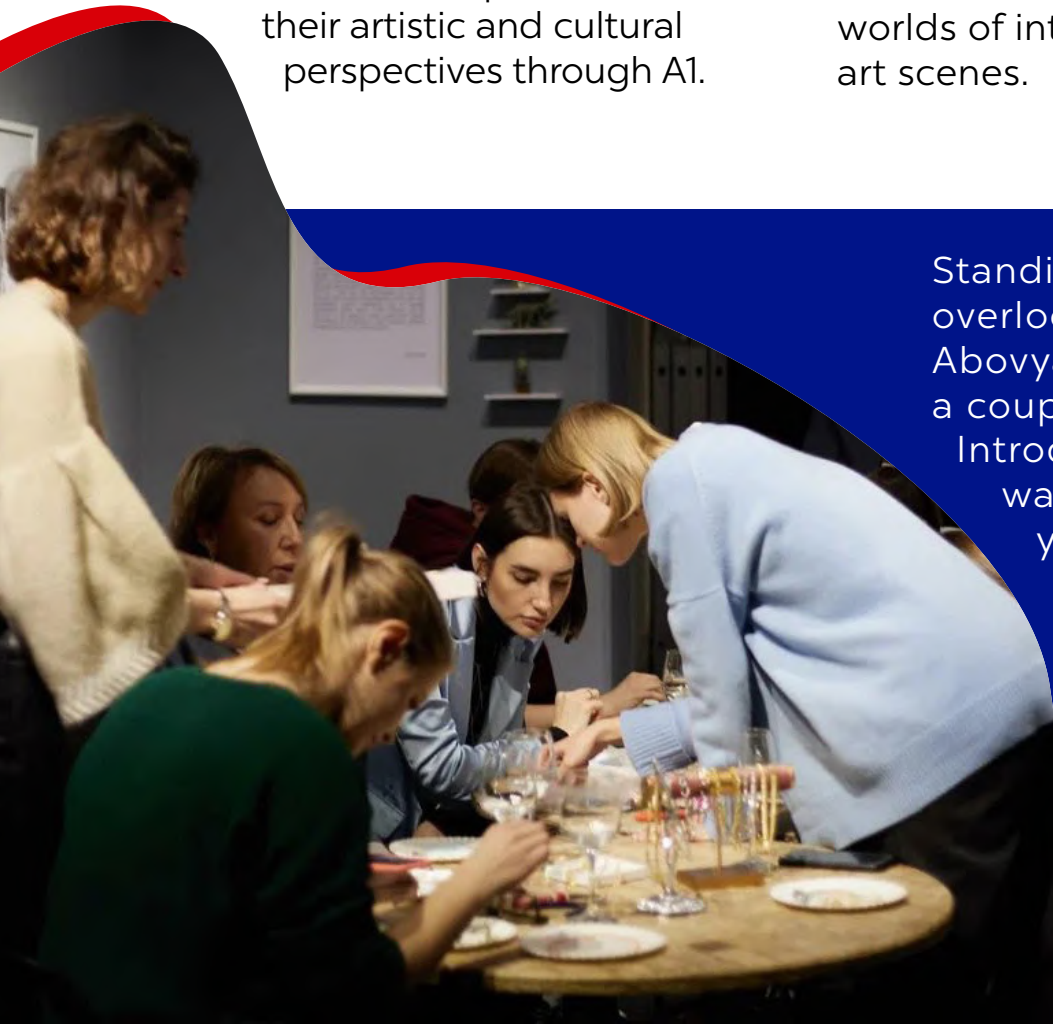


CULTURAL CAPITAL WHY ARMENIA SHOULD BE ON THE RADAR OF TRAVELING ART ENTREPRENEURS

Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing Fabio Lenzi, an Italian who relocated to Armenia and settled in Yerevan several years ago. He is the visionary behind the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation and its' A1 Art Space, a unique cafe, coworking space, and art venue in the heart of Yerevan.

Scrolling through Instagram during my January travels in the Emirates, I stumbled upon a post on [A1's account](#). It highlighted several upcoming cultural events, including a tango night, art speed dating, a sketching workshop, and a sculpting workshop. What truly captivated me was the realization that all **these events were organized by international residents** – individuals who, like Fabio, found a home in Armenia and a platform to share their artistic and cultural perspectives through A1.

Immediately, I texted Fabio to learn more about the mastermind behind these events. Hoping to **gain a deeper understanding of Yerevan's cultural landscape**, I expressed a strong desire to meet this key figure. He promptly connected me with Nane Taguhi Yeghikyan, the Director of the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation (YBAF), who, like him, has a vision of A1 being an international hub serving the mission of the foundation; to bridge the worlds of international and local art scenes.



Standing on A1's balcony overlooking the sun-drenched Abovyan Street, I met Nane a couple of weeks back.

Introduced by Fabio, a warm smile lit up the young lady's face.

From the moment our conversation flowed, I knew I could talk to her for hours, even days.

At first, I was curious about Armenia's unique space in the artistic world. Nane explained it like this: "Imagine art as a battlefield between revolutionary and classical styles, each vying for dominance. Armenia stands right in the heart of this tug-of-war, with **artists from diverse backgrounds pulling the ropes**, each eager to shape the scene and leave their mark."

She continued: Stroll through Yerevan, and you'll witness the majestic architecture of the Soviet era juxtaposed with the sleek minimalism of the modern design. This duality extends to

every aspect of life, from the vibrant street art to the thoughtfully curated galleries. Everywhere you turn, the past resonates alongside the future. It is a time in Yerevan that showcases what the alchemy of the old and new actually looks like, striving to birth the new. **This moment in time**

feels historic as it is a micro example of what can happen globally: to have the strength to "hold the tension of opposites" such as classical art and contemporary art until they merge together and give rise to something completely new, something creative, something that can change the world, as Art often does.

For Nane, the chance to be part of Armenia's current cultural movement was powerful enough to bring her back from the United States. Now, she resides here with her family, raising her almost two-year-old daughter. This dynamic environment feels deeply meaningful, a place **"that is real and raw."** Additionally, her role as director of YBAF grants her access to the world she thrives in, an artistic community where she truly belongs.





Live Music Evening

I asked Nane why she chose to organize such events in Yerevan. She explained that these events are all part of a broader cultural shift YBAF, through projects like A1, aims to spark within the country. Their mission isn't merely to contribute to Armenia's cultural landscape but to actively preserve its heritage while also **shedding a spotlight on new and upcoming artists**. This vision welcomes artists from around the world to flourish in Armenia while fostering an appreciation for various artistic expressions among Armenians.

Nane points out that A1 Art Space activities are mainly organized by Ani Israelyan, the manager of the space and head of business of YBAF, and through her.

Unlike Buenos Aires's bustling tango scene, Yerevan hadn't yet offered regular tango nights for passionate dancers. Similarly, introspective sketching workshops were a rarity in Armenia. A1, however, is changing the landscape. By introducing these unique experiences, they're not just making them accessible but also **infusing them with their signature touch of elegance and class**, elevating the cultural atmosphere in the city.

A1's art speed dating event promised the original concept with a dash of artistic flavor and the venue's signature class. While I anticipated a predominantly foreign crowd, given the novelty of speed dating in Armenia, I was surprised to learn that almost all participant ladies were Armenians, with just one coming from Russia. This highlighted the subtle cultural shift underway - an openness to adopting foreign concepts **when presented with**

finesse and respect for local sensibilities. A1, through such initiatives, sees itself as a catalyst for this positive change.

Join the blossoming scene, showcase your unique creations, and discover your niche within this vibrant, ever-expanding community. Visit Armenia, along with your art projects, to **embrace the opportunity to share your vision** in a land rich with culture and beauty.



Tango Night



Advertising Collaboration

Life in Armenia

YBAF
YEREVAN-BENJAL
ART FOUNDATION

The Beach
A1 Art Space



fairies'

BROTHEL

SOLO EXHIBITION
SAMSON BASENTSYAN

24|02-08|03

A1 Art Space

19:00

Abovyan 1/1, 2nd floor, Yerevan

A TALENT POOL UNTAPPED

HOW EUROPEAN COMPANIES CAN BENEFIT FROM REMOTE HIRING IN ARMENIA



**ARMIK
YORDEKYAN**

FOUNDER OF COLLAB FABRIK



**EMILYA
GALSTYAN**

CONTENT WRITER AT COLLAB FABRIK



A TALENT POOL UNTAPPED HOW EUROPEAN COMPANIES CAN BENEFIT FROM REMOTE HIRING IN ARMENIA

I grew up in Armenia and then moved to Berlin to study for my master's. Further, I've found my mission in connecting these two worlds - companies from Germany (and the EU in general) and professionals of different disciplines from Armenia.

A Story Starting from My Personal Experience

Back in 2018, when living in Germany, I co-founded a fast-growing startup in Berlin. However, the talent shortage we experienced paused our development and even made it impossible to take on incoming client projects.

The main issue was we needed qualified employees to join the

company as quickly as possible, as we worked on tight deadlines. And as we were starters, we also had budget constraints. So, the goal was to find the most suitable candidates in a cost-effective way without spending too much time on recruitment and training.

Collab Fabrik at
EMERGE conference



Armenia Is Calling

That's when my Armenian blood signaled about the opportunity in my home country. A new generation of young professionals has been actively entering the market with advanced tech skills and exceptional motivation to grow and learn.

I started to look into the potential of hiring from Armenia, and I was amazed by the possibilities. Not only did it offer high-quality candidates with affordable rates, but also a diverse pool of talents with fluency in multiple languages. This opened up new opportunities for our company to expand globally and cater to incoming clients.



Armik Yordekyan and Milena Arsenyan at A1 Art Cafe

Taking Hiring from Armenia to the Next Level

You know the moment you accidentally stumble upon something great, and you can't stop thinking about it? Something similar happened to me. I found a solution to my own problem and saw the potential for it to benefit others as well.

My vision became clear: I wanted no company, big or small, to stop its development because of a talent shortage. In the meantime, I wanted no talented people in Armenia to stop their growth due to the lack of employment opportunities.

So, a small team called **Collab Fabrik** officially started operations in 2021 as an Employer of Record and hiring agency. We are based both in Germany and Armenia, and that gives us an advantage of understanding both markets and cultures, as well as being able to provide seamless services to our clients.



Armik Yordekyan at IFA Berlin

Hearing the Pain Points of EU Companies

Freeing EU companies from all the bureaucratic and legal hassles of hiring employees from Armenia is only a small portion of our job. Beyond that, it's the need to make them grow together and **make sure the professionals we connect with each other are satisfied** from both ends.

We find, train, develop, and match the best talents for EU companies to form their dream team. Our model is based on long-term relationships and trust, where ongoing management and support are included in our services.

The greatest part? Even though people work remotely, **there is a spirit of mutual growth and co-creation** with their employing company.

They don't feel like just a disposable workforce. Instead, **they feel a trusted intermediary has their back**, where they are appreciated for their skills, and where they have the chance to contribute to something bigger.

In turn, EU companies get a unique chance to expand their horizons, tap into a new pool of talent, and save up to 40% on labor costs.

Rich Caucasus Soil

Armenia and some other countries of the Caucasus are rich soil for talent. **Locals are hard workers**, I mean, dedicated HARD workers with attitude. It makes me proud as an Armenian to see how digital nomads from my region are making a name for themselves and how companies from abroad are recognizing their potential.

Collab Fabrik meeting with a customer from Germany



There's no limit to the skill set foreign companies can tap into here. We had an example of finding a Salesforce team for one of the companies, which is quite a narrow niche.

The best part for our fellow citizens is they can work with foreign employers from any part of Armenia. And when it comes to Armenia specifically, CF

breaks the stereotype of having great employment opportunities only in the capital.

We have remote talent from different regions of Armenia, such as Armavir, Vanadzor, Gyumri, etc. These people have the [same access to quality projects as their Yerevan counterparts](#), and that's another thing that makes us smile.

Opportunities for Every Company and Professional

Where do we stand currently in our path to success? There's a two-sided engine inviting every remote worker in Armenia to join the CF talent hub and every company from abroad to come and find the right fit in our talent pool.

Linking them is [the platform that CF has created](#), and it's a win-win situation for both sides.



If you want to follow more of my entrepreneurial journey, let's connect on LinkedIn: [Armik Yordekyan](#). Also, feel free to also check out, more in detail, the services we provide at Collab Fabrik and contact us for consultation: [Collab Fabrik](#)

Berlin office back in 2021, when the idea of Collab Fabrik was born



MUSICAL ALCHEMY

THE JOURNEY OF AN AMERICAN MUSICIAN INTO KOMITAS' MUSIC AND THE BIRTH OF A JAZZICAL KOMITAS



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**JOEL
MARTIN**

PIANIST, PRODUCER, COMPOSER,
AND ARRANGER



MUSICAL ALCHEMY THE JOURNEY OF AN AMERICAN MUSICIAN INTO KOMITAS' MUSIC AND THE BIRTH OF A JAZZICAL KOMITAS

Joel A. Martin is a pianist, producer, composer, and arranger from Norwalk, Connecticut, who thrives at the crossroads of musical styles. He seamlessly blends classical rigor with jazz improvisation, creating a unique brand of music he calls Jazzical®.

When I first discovered Joel's music and his album "Jazzical: Komitas – Passion of Fire," I couldn't resist diving into over ten videos of his work on YouTube. Immediately, questions flooded my mind. Why would an American musician with no apparent

Armenian roots **choose to reinterpret Komitas's music?** What were his interpretations of Armenian musical tradition and culture? Driven by curiosity, I interviewed Joel, and we delved into many fascinating details and stories.

Your 2022 release, 'Jazzical: Komitas – Passion of Fire,' beautifully reimagines the works of Komitas. What drew you to explore this Armenian music legacy?

Truth be told, my discovery of Armenia and Komitas was by accident. That being said, in my world, **accidents are by design by a power higher than mine.**

I was in Queens NY, a little over 4 years ago at an Armenian/Russian/Greek dinner party where I played my signature Jazzical music, weaving between classical and jazz in a seamless fashion for a small group of people. One woman, Emma Arakelyan, came up to me and said to me, "You play this Jazzical music so well, you should apply it to Komitas." I did not know what Komitas was, so I asked her that very question wherein she said, **"Komitas is not a what; Komitas is a he!"**



She proceeded to give me a brief history of Komitas of Armenia and encouraged me to explore the music. It certainly was an interesting story of an Armenian monk who would, in many ways, save a very large portion of Armenian music from extinction when the Armenian Genocide took place. He would later become one of the first internationally known ethnomusicologists, inventing a new music notational system to archive this music.

I left the party later and went back to my normal life of playing, recording, and producing (I was on deadline for a big music project), but Emma's conversation stayed with me. About 6 months later, I had a day where I had no work to do and **decided to look up this Komitas guy and listen to Armenian music online**. I thought it would be 10-15 minutes, and then I would move on to something else. But when I sat down and listened on YouTube, something clicked inside of me. I was compelled to listen to more music. A few hours passed, and I called my family into the Jazzical Lab, my studio, and said, **"YO!! You have to listen to this..."** I have been hooked ever since.



Joel at Conservatory
in Yerevan

Have you explored similar projects with other musical heritages around the world, or was Armenia a unique experience for you?

I have explored through Jazzical the worlds of Brazil (Jazzical: Brazil) and Russia (Jazzical: Perestroika!) in recordings based on my love of Brazilian jazz and Russian classical music. I must say, though, the musical world of Armenia was very “foreign” to me – I had never heard anything like this, and I thought I was a very cultured musician, having played many different styles of music over the years.

Komitas and Armenian music captured my imagination immediately. It was **simple in its complexities**, haunting yet so beautiful, very melodious (a big selling point with me as I am a song-oriented player and stylist), and just different. Unique.



Jazzical Komitas CD Cover

Your ‘Jazzical’ interpretation of Komitas’ music offers a fresh perspective while honoring tradition. How did Armenian audiences inside Armenia and out receive this innovative approach?

Your question is right on point. Jazzical Komitas is a “fresh perspective while honoring tradition.” Yes, I push boundaries in music, always have, but if the music, the song, is destroyed in the process then the art is no good. This matters to me most; it is the artistic and intellectual basis of Jazzical. I have to hear at all times the song/tune in my head even as I am creating something different. Art comes from this creative process, and this is where the

years of practicing pay off – when the technical aspects of playing piano, orchestrating, and arranging become art, and all the styles of music I have learned and played over the years become one singular thought.

Certainly, I had never heard anything like that, and most certainly, Armenian audiences had never heard anything like this. Because **the music affected me on a deep spiritual and emotional level**, it translated similarly to Armenian audiences.

The first time I played what would become Jazzical Komitas happened on the last night of my first visit to Armenia. I was invited to a party on the outskirts of Yerevan. There Emma told me that this evening I would play an impromptu Jazzical concert at an undisclosed location in the mountains. My flight to America was the next morning around 11 am, so I was a little nervous about this offer but agreed to do it. Around 10 pm, a party bus pulled up, and people got in. I was ushered inside and found myself in the company of mostly strangers. Away we went into the mountains, higher and higher. Realizing that we were on essentially a one-lane dirt road in the middle of the night scared me, and most people had no idea where we were going. They just knew that they were going to a private party in the mountains. They had no idea I was the guest of honor.

Around midnight, at the end of the road, we arrived at a giant gate. The door swung open, and it was an estate, all lit up with a huge, long dinner table filled with food. A little while later, the host introduced me, and I sat down at his piano. Boy, was I nervous. I warmed up with some straight jazz, a little classical, then dove right in to the Dance of Echmiadzin (Komitas). For the next hour or so, this merry band of strangers became great friends, the power of Armenia and Komitas filled our hearts, and many tears of joy were shed. By the time we got back to Yerevan around 5 am, **I knew that I had found my home: the music, the people, the culture.**

Even to this day, I cannot tell you why Komitas and Armenian music hit all the right buttons in my soul, but I am forever grateful for it. It forever **connected me to the soul of this country.**

The American and international audiences had never heard anything about Komitas or Armenian music. Through social media, concerts, radio interviews, and podcasts, tens of thousands of people globally came to experience and embrace the Jazzical Komitas way of life and sound.

By the end of 2022, Jazzical Komitas played in active rotation on 150 radio stations and podcasts globally. And no matter where I play, **I always play Jazzical Komitas for the people.** It is my responsibility to share my love of Armenia with anyone who will listen. Fortunately, there is a global audience.

Jazzical Komitas with
ARM Symphony at Dvin
Music Hall



“ In the wonderfully musical hands of Joel Martin, the beautiful haunting melodies of Komitas become epic sonic feasts with gorgeous orchestral arrangements and flights of brilliant piano Fantasia . . . these settings will bring Komitas’ music to the world at large who will see both the Armenian composer and pianist/arranger Joel Martin in a whole new light. It’s incredibly beautiful! ”

**David Darlington,
Grammy-winning mixing engineer**

As a frequent visitor to Armenia, what are your observations on the development of music and the broader cultural landscape in the country?

I have been to Armenia 6 times since 2022, and I would have gone to Armenia again within the last 6 months, but I had to deal with a health issue that kept me in America during this time. No worries, all is good. I will return to Yerevan at the end of April for Jazzical recordings and maybe even a concert.

My observations about Armenia...Ah, it is a loaded question, but I will try to answer it.

There is **so much great artistic talent in music and art as well as in technology, science, and other sectors.** What I see right now is the intersection of the traditional with the future of these industries. As with all smaller countries making the shift to become more relevant on the global stage, there are growing pains associated with this migration. How to evolve culturally without losing the core of their country.

In the case of Armenia, which from its beginning has embraced the arts, music, and culture in utero, I believe **this country will grow into its own unique space.** The biggest issue Armenia faces is bringing its message to the world and cultivating it globally. This is why Armenians and non-Armenians like me must work together to continue sharing the legacy and **majesty of Armenian music and culture with the world.**



Would you recommend other artists to visit Armenia for inspiration?



Joel Martin in Purple -
ThroughPianoTop

Absolutely, and not just artists. Anyone. The music was the first reason for me to explore Armenia, but when I first started working on Jazzical Komitas, I came across a problem: I could not finish it. A conversation with Emma Arakelyan revealed the truth. “Emma, I cannot finish the project. I have to be on Armenian soil to understand this music and what it means to me.” Emma thought about it and invited me to attend an Armenian technology convention in Yerevan. So, a couple of weeks later, I landed in Yerevan and knew only one person. I had to go; I was compelled. It was the “accident” that **became a conscious choice for action.**

By the time I left a week or so later, **my whole entire life had changed for the better.** I met such incredibly friendly people, the spirit of Armenia, their soul. I experienced it up close and in person. It was where I was supposed to be. Really... Every time I go to Armenia I leave a rejuvenated person.

If I can give some **practical advice to anyone thinking of coming to Armenia**, it would be this:

Armenians are, by nature, **very friendly but very shy.** It takes time to get to know people. To become part of the people you have to put in the time and energy. Just relax and take in the sights and sounds, and just talk with people. Just the same as any other great friendship or relationship. Sightseeing throughout Armenia, you

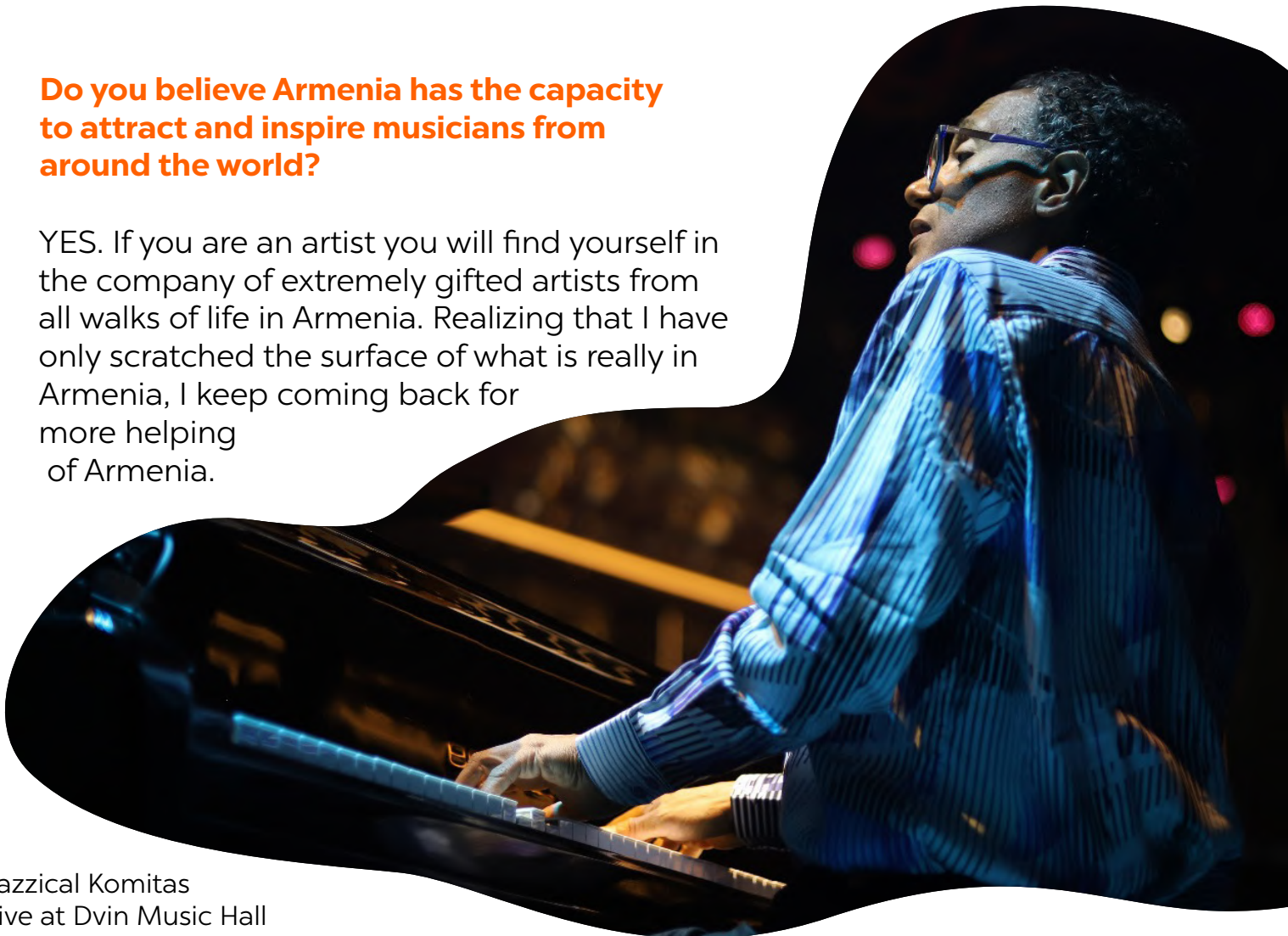
will witness such beautiful architecture and landscapes. That is only a part of the experience. When you have **the opportunity to break bread with the people**, that is when you start understanding the history of Armenia and the many intangibles that make up Armenia.

This experience and journey are not for everyone, but **for those who take the plunge**, the rewards outweigh anything else 100 to 1. For me, it gets better every time I run into Armenians anywhere in the world.

Do you believe Armenia has the capacity to attract and inspire musicians from around the world?

YES. If you are an artist you will find yourself in the company of extremely gifted artists from all walks of life in Armenia. Realizing that I have only scratched the surface of what is really in Armenia, I keep coming back for more helping of Armenia.

Jazzical Komitas
Live at Dvin Music Hall



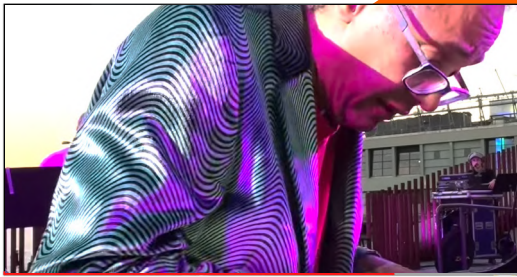
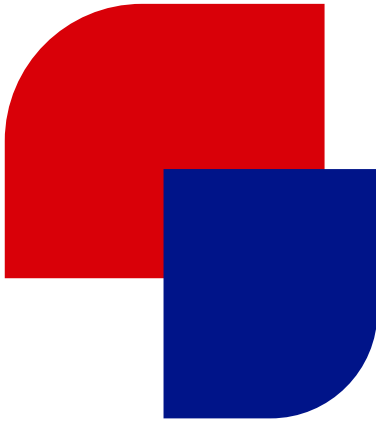
What are your future plans with Jazzical: Komitas Any upcoming releases or tours?


I am hitting the road. Feb 25 I will be in Boston performing new songs from the Jazzical Komitas CD. March 23-April 3, I will be in Crete getting a much-needed vacation as well as practicing. April 20-25, I will be performing in Dubai for “Digital Julfa,” presented by Digital Julfa Network and the Armenian Center Opening in Dubai. Then I head to Yerevan to see my peeps and do some studio recording.

In May, I will release the new Jazzical Komitas project (title to be

determined), and then I will head to San Francisco and Los Angeles for concerts.

Working on a world tour, lining up corporate and private sponsorship. There are also collaborative projects with conductor Sergey Smbatyan as well as Armenian pop star Rosa Linn in the works. More on this later. But I am very excited. Jazzical Komitas is growing organically, and it is my mission to keep on expanding it around the world.



 [Shoushigi - Jazzical Komitas at Little Island NYC - Joel A. Martin pianist](#) 



 [Jazzical Komitas - Joel A. Martin pianist - Live in NYC - December 2019](#) 



 [Sounds of Oberlin - Jazzical Komitas - Dance of Echmiadzin & Chinar Es - Joel A. Martin](#) 



 [Jazzical Komitas - LA Concert Debut - Joel A. Martin](#) 

www.jazzical.com



Do you have any additional thoughts you want to add about Jazzical Komitas?

JAZZICAL KOMITAS - PASSION OF FIRE presents to world audiences the beauty and music of Armenia, Armenian folk songs, and the music of iconic Armenian legend Komitas Vartapet and other well-known Armenian composers re-imagined in the signature Jazzical® style of pianist/composer Joel A. Martin for the 21st century and beyond.

JAZZICAL KOMITAS is an experience like no other. “A masterpiece in 4D – all three dimensions of thinking plus feeling.” Like fire, there are many layers to this music: red, hot, and painfully beautiful. JAZZICAL KOMITAS celebrates the heritage and art of the Armenian people - past, present, and future - through music.

JAZZICAL KOMITAS - PASSION OF FIRE astonished audiences at its world premiere in NYC at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral on December 6, 2019. Bishop Daniel Findikyan said this about the concert: “Nothing short of sensational. Took my breath away...”

Through Martin’s sensitive interpretations, JAZZICAL KOMITAS channels the sublime beauty of Komitas’ music and other ethnic folk songs, fostering a new love, respect, and appreciation for Armenian art and culture. The album features Armenian mezzo-soprano Solange Merdinian, violinist Nune Melik, and 13-year-old Dhol percussionist Hamlet Exoyan from Yerevan on several tracks along with American symphony players and jazz musicians, including flutist Pamela Sklar, drummer Jon Berger, bassist David Dunaway, and the Andrew Smith Strings Orchestra.



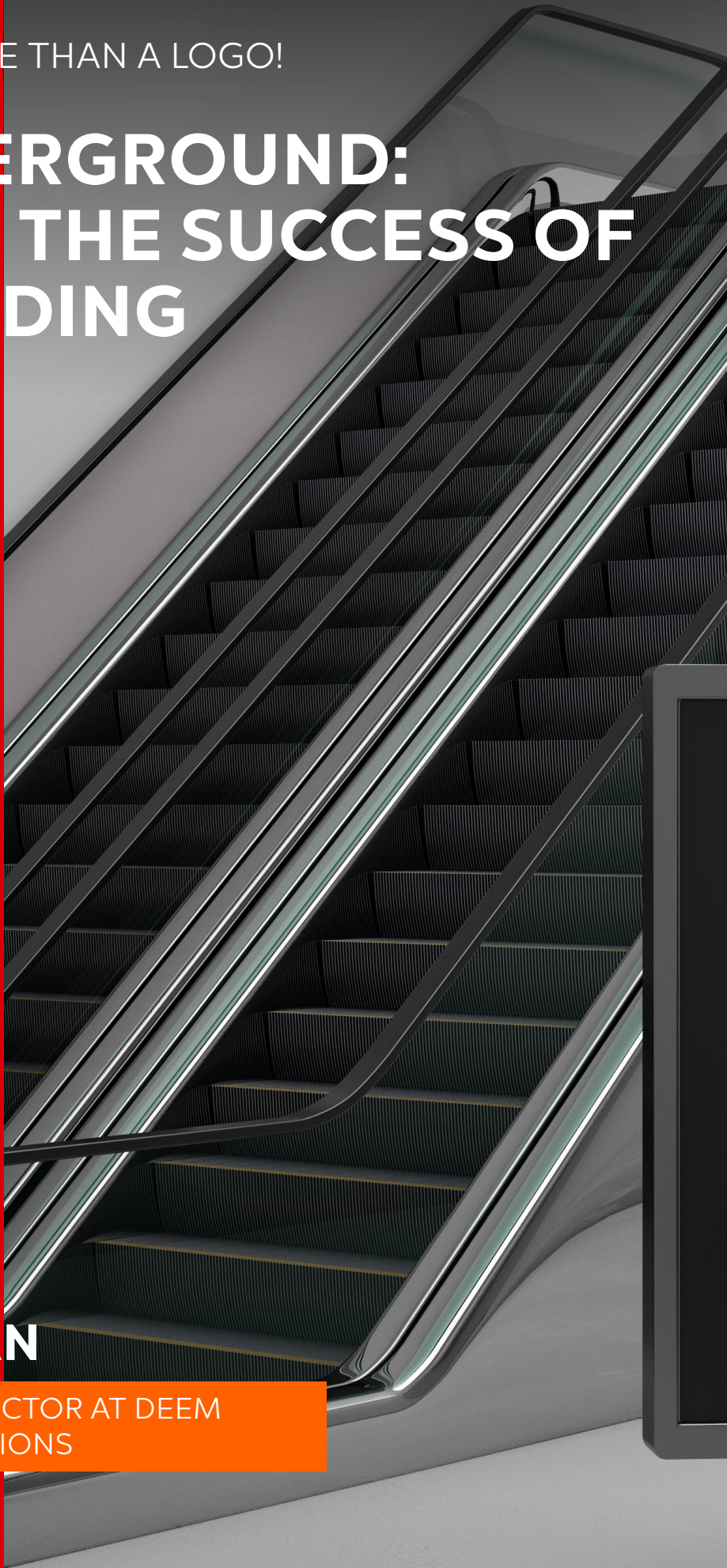
A BRAND IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A LOGO!

GOING UNDERGROUND: AMPLIFYING THE SUCCESS OF PLACE BRANDING



**RAFFI
NIZIBLIAN**

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT DEEM
COMMUNICATIONS



A BRAND IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A LOGO! GOING UNDERGROUND: AMPLIFYING THE SUCCESS OF PLACE BRANDING

Last year, Forbes recognized [Armenia among the Best Places To Travel](#), shedding light on a destination that has remained a well-kept secret until recently. Armenia's absence from the spotlight stemmed from limited place branding efforts in the past, resulting in news reports of conflict and regional unrest. However, Armenia encompasses much more than its tumultuous headlines and comprehensive brand awareness initiatives aim to redefine its image, enticing more travelers to explore its offerings.



In 2022, [Armenia's Tourism Committee](#) unveiled a country brand encapsulated in the slogan "The Hidden Track." While this branding approach may not resonate with everyone, it serves as the Committee's **flagship strategy to showcase Armenia's unique identity**. Yet, the question remains: Can a country brand alone suffice to establish robust place branding recognition? In this discourse, I'll delve into the significance of public transport brands and their potential role in bolstering destination and place brand awareness, illustrating opportunities for Yerevan and Armenia.

A Brand is So Much More Than a Logo!

How many times have you heard this phrase from branding or communications specialists? I've certainly encountered this misconception with at least 30-some clients in my 25-year career. Branding is the root of everything, and thus, I wish to discuss the journey of highly recognizable brands, specifically focusing on subway and metro systems and how they have impacted their own city's place branding efforts.

Place branding means **managing and promoting the image and identity of a specific location** – a landmark, town, city, region, or even country to attract visitors, businesses, and residents for growth and development. We're all familiar with iconic cities like New York City, London, and Montreal, each renowned for their captivating destination branding efforts. In addition to the impressive branding efforts of these cities themselves, auxiliary brands associated with them have significantly contributed to their notoriety, **elevating their recognizability and desirability**. The London Underground, the NYC Subway, and the Montreal Metro have all played pivotal roles in branding their respective cities as easily navigable and accessible travel destinations.

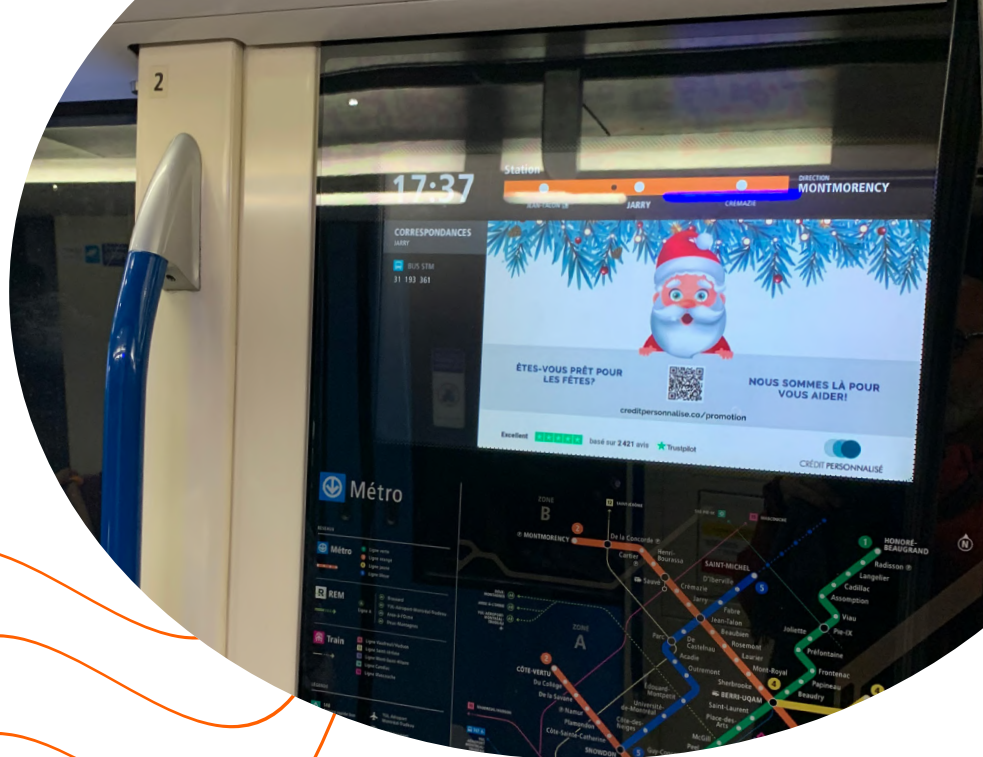
How Did It All Start?

The **New York Subway**, officially launched in 1904, traces its origins back to 1870 when the first subway operated in a short 92-meter tunnel from Broadway to City Hall. It was powered by pneumatic energy. Today, it boasts 423 single stations, marking it also as one of the most utilized systems globally.

The **London Underground**, popularly known as the Tube, holds the distinction of being the oldest underground railway system in the world, starting operations in 1863. Spanning 402 km, it ranks as the world's second-longest system.



Montreal's Metro system, inaugurated in 1966, was uniquely designed to run entirely underground due to the city's extreme winter conditions. Over time, Montreal developed the world's largest underground complex around its Metro stations, covering 4 million sqm and serving half a million daily commuters.



Navigating the Subterranean Public Transport

These complex subway systems encompass intricate networks of intertwined lines, incorporating train lines, major intersections, bus terminals, tramways, and more. Navigating these networks can be overwhelming for both visitors and residents alike, prompting the need for strategic planning and branding solutions.

As time progressed and the population increased, as the post-industrial and post-war markets shifted to labor and urban-centered employment, the city had to move accordingly. In 1970, a more **modern subway brand strategy** and visual guidelines were developed by Massimo Vignelli to help the public get around. The brand's primary focus was the subway map, simplifying it into a non-geographically accurate yet highly effective diagram using color codes, lines, simple dot symbols, and the sleek Helvetica typeface. This innovative approach transformed navigation, with subways commonly referred to by their lettered lines like "the Q" or "the C."

Traveling 600 km to the north, upon arriving in the vibrant city of Montreal known for its rich cultural heritage, diversity, and European charm, the iconic blue and white Metro signs immediately catch the eye in the downtown area, symbolizing the efficiency and accessibility of Montreal's public transportation system. Color psychology and mapping were also predominant for the user-friendliness of public transport. Today, the [Metro and its unique architecture](#) play a pivotal role in Montreal's

identity, intertwining seamlessly with its extensive underground city infrastructure.

Crossing the Atlantic to London, we encounter the Underground brand, which eventually expanded to encompass all public transport modes, even boats and bikes. The round logo with the word "Underground" encapsulated within a rectangular shape – reminiscent of a coffee shop logo – exudes a playful and trendy vibe, contributing to its enduring appeal.

Serving the Greater Purpose of Place Branding

How did these brands become integral parts of their local identities and find their place in place branding? What makes them desirable, even at first glance? What stories do they tell? Why are they top of mind?

Having had the privilege of frequently visiting these cities and even residing in Montreal for decades, I've experienced firsthand the indispensable nature of public transport in daily life. However, I believe that while cities like Vienna and Barcelona boast well-operated public transport systems, they lack the engaging allure of those in Montreal, NYC, and London.



Visitors and residents alike encounter a variety of keepsakes, souvenirs, and decorative items featuring these brands, from logos to maps, reflecting the cities' vibrant identities and telling the stories of their underground transport systems. These visuals often undergo trendy or humorous adaptations, remaining relevant to the times. Thus, donning a T-shirt adorned with the Underground logo signals an affinity for London the city itself.



Bringing it Home

For the past two decades, Armenia has been my home. I have lived, worked, and created in Yerevan, one of the region's oldest cities. Yerevan has its own metro system, comprising only ten stations across a 12 km stretch. Despite being the smallest Soviet republic, the system inaugurated in 1981 was the eighth metro system within the former Soviet Union.

As a strategic and creative communications professional, I see the potential to **enhance and integrate the Metro brand into Yerevan's identity**. The city's metro stations, adorned with Armenian cultural motifs, are screaming branding initiatives. However, infrastructural upgrades, line expansions, and service enhancements are imperative to realize this vision.

Several years ago, my team and I proposed a rebranding initiative for the Yerevan Metro, envisioning a modernized aesthetic and enhanced services aligned with contemporary business models. Regrettably, the proposal was met with skepticism by the administration at the time. Despite subsequent branding efforts, the metro system still awaits a comprehensive revamp.

As Yerevan continues its expansion, grappling with challenges like traffic congestion and the integration of eco-friendly transport alternatives, a cohesive vision, coupled with strategic branding, is paramount to shaping the identity of public transport and bolstering the city's vibrant, forward-looking brand.

Raffi Niziblian is the Strategic & Creative Director of [Deem Communications](#). He founded the agency in 2006 in Yerevan, where he resides with his family. Originally from Montreal, Canada, Raffi has held tenures in Europe, the Middle East, and North America. He has worked on place branding, such as the Open Gyumri Branding Project and the Karabakh Travel destination brand that has been used for over a decade. You can read more about Raffi on his [LinkedIn profile](#) as well as [DeeM website](#).



PEAKS AND PRODUCTIVITY

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO LIVE IN THE ARMENIAN MOUNTAINS FOR REMOTE WORKERS



**RICARDO
BERGMAN**

BUSINESS ANALYST



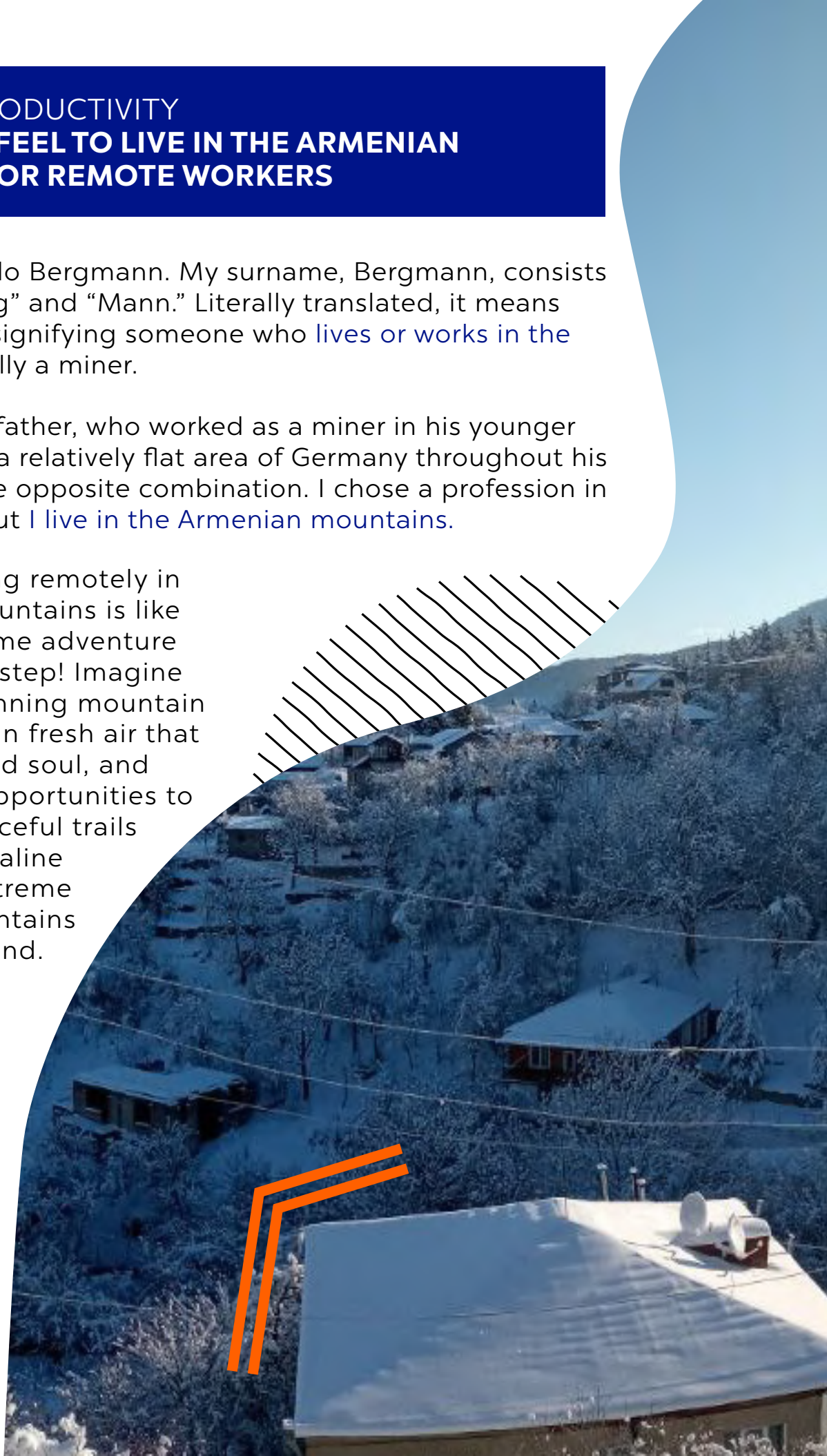
PEAKS AND PRODUCTIVITY

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO LIVE IN THE ARMENIAN MOUNTAINS FOR REMOTE WORKERS

My name is Ricardo Bergmann. My surname, Bergmann, consists of two parts: “Berg” and “Mann.” Literally translated, it means “mountain man,” signifying someone who [lives or works in the mountains](#), typically a miner.

In contrast to my father, who worked as a miner in his younger years but lived in a relatively flat area of Germany throughout his life, I opted for the opposite combination. I chose a profession in the tech sector, but [I live in the Armenian mountains](#).

Living and working remotely in the Armenian mountains is like having an awesome adventure park at your doorstep! Imagine waking up to stunning mountain views, breathing in fresh air that fills your lungs and soul, and having endless opportunities to explore. Hike peaceful trails or get your adrenaline pumping with extreme sports – the mountains are your playground. Top it all off with delicious, locally grown food that explodes with flavor – forget processed stuff! This isn’t just a remote job; it’s [a new way of living](#), exciting and healthy.



Breathtaking Nature

Picture this: you spend your workday surrounded by stunning scenery, with fresh mountain air filling your lungs; this isn't a dream; it's your reality when you live and work remotely in the Lori, Tavush, and Syunik regions of Armenia.

There is no need for fancy equipment or months of training - just download the HIKEArmenia app and discover amazing trails across the mountains, many easily doable within a few hours. It's the perfect way to unwind after a day of work, soaking in the beauty and getting some exercise.



Adventure Awaits

Bungee jumping, paragliding, horseback rides through stunning landscapes, white-water rafting on churning rivers - endless adventure opportunities. New attractions

pop up constantly, so each season brings fresh ways to get your heart racing and reconnect with nature. No matter your thrill level, there's something for everyone. **Work hard, play harder** - that's the motto in the Armenian mountains!



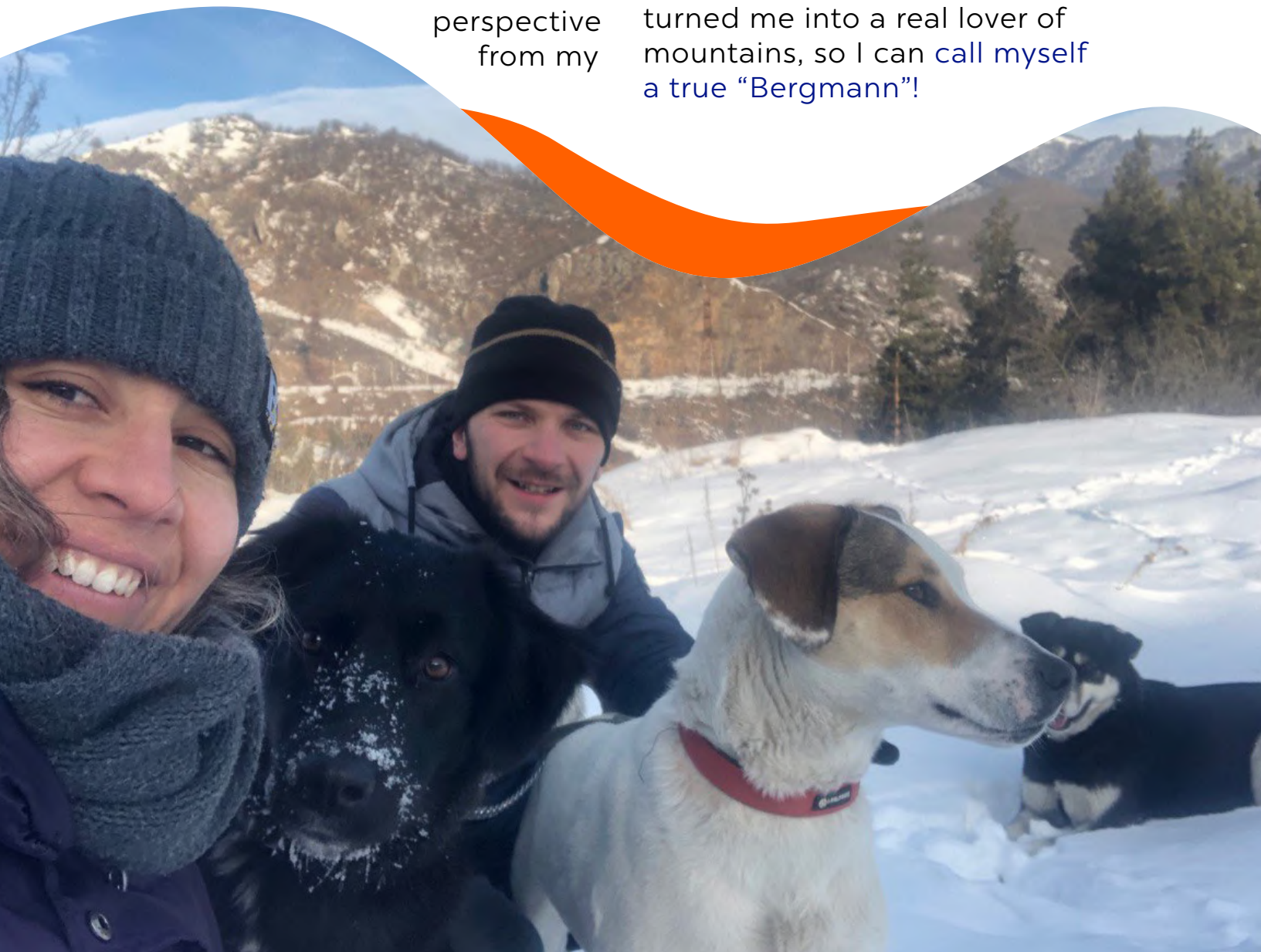
Mountains of Flavor

Step into the Armenian mountains, and BAM! You can taste the difference! Forget bland food - here, **everything's fresh and straight from the farm**. Cheese made that morning? Sure! Meat from happy, mountain-grazing animals? You bet! Veggies bursting with flavor from nearby villages? Absolutely! Plus, don't miss their famous homemade vodka - it's the perfect way to say cheers to your taste buds!

personal life: My wife and I decided to buy our house in Dilijan, a small town in the Tavush region. Each morning, we **savor the view from our balcony and the joy of walking our dogs** in the nearby forest within the city. Small shops and supermarkets for all our basic needs are a pleasant walk away, and from our garden, the calm is broken only by the occasional bird song. Living in Dilijan has offered us a simpler, more connected life we cherish daily.

Ultimately, I want to share a perspective from my

I can proudly say that Armenia turned me into a real lover of mountains, so I can **call myself a true "Bergmann"!**



Advertising Collaboration

Life in Armenia

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to Ijevan



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Experience the joy of working and living in a serene location with family-friendly accommodations and stunning mountain views of Ijevan City.



2024 TAX UPDATE

UNDERSTANDING ARMENIAN TAXES FOR INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMADS AND REMOTE WORKERS



**NERSES
ISAJANYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF VARDANYAN &
PARTNERS LAW FIRM



2024 TAX UPDATE UNDERSTANDING ARMENIAN TAXES FOR INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMADS AND REMOTE WORKERS

The Armenian government has extended the **tax benefits for IT businesses** until the end of 2024. **The favorable 10% payroll tax rate** for IT businesses will continue throughout 2024. However, it is important to note that the accompanying 0% corporate income tax rate will no longer be applicable from January 1, 2024.



Corporate Income Tax

- Micro-businesses (sales up to approx. \$60,000/year): 0%
- Larger businesses (sales exceeding \$290,000/year): 18%

Turnover Tax for Small Businesses

- Trade and services (sales up to approx. \$290,000/year): 1.5-5%
- Restaurants (no sales cap): 6%
- Manufacturing: 3.5%

Value-Added Tax (VAT)

- For imports and sales by larger businesses (sales exceeding \$290,000): 20%
- Export of goods and services: 0% (allowing exporters to claim refunds of input VAT)

Payroll Taxes

- Income tax: 20%
- Pension contributions: 5% to 10%, capped at approx. \$200/month
- Military payments: \$4 to \$40/month

Notable Exemptions

- Individuals generally will not be taxed on capital gains from selling securities, real estate, or other property, nor on pension income.
- No taxes on gifts or inheritance.

Property Tax and Rental Income Reporting

A property tax calculator is available at e-cadastre. Since December 1, 2023, the government has been enforcing more strictly the reporting on rental income. Failure to declare rental income can now lead to a fine of around \$1,250. The tax rate on rental income is 10%.



Advertising Collaboration

with Life in Armenia



VARDANYAN & PARTNERS

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REMOTE PRODUCTIVITY HACKS

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YOUR REMOTE WORK EXPERIENCE IN ARMENIA



**SIRAPI
SAHAKYAN**

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING



REMOTE PRODUCTIVITY HACKS STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YOUR REMOTE WORK EXPERIENCE IN ARMENIA

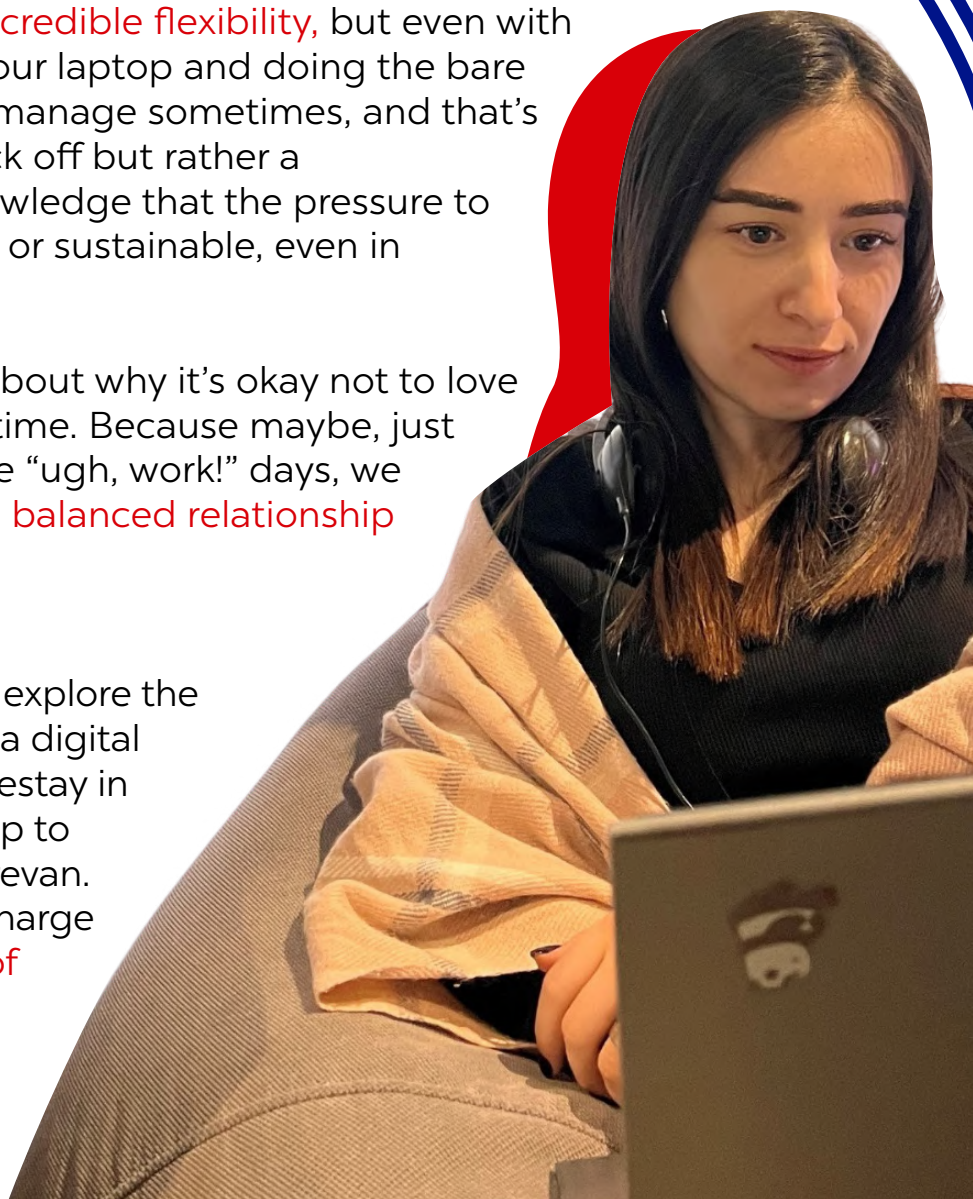
Let's be honest: the words "ugh, work!" have probably escaped our lips a time or two (okay, maybe more). Admitting we don't always want to work feels wrong, like a betrayal of the "hustle hard" mentality. But here's the deal: disliking your remote work, **even in a beautiful place like Armenia**, doesn't make you lazy or unproductive.

When your Laptop Stares Back like an Armenian Mountain Goat, it's Time to Take a Break!

We all experience burnout in our pursuit of constant hustle, and let's face it, some days, happiness and efficiency aren't exactly best friends. **Working remotely from Armenia offers incredible flexibility**, but even with breathtaking views, staring at your laptop and doing the bare minimum might be all you can manage sometimes, and that's okay! This isn't an excuse to slack off but rather a call to ditch the guilt and acknowledge that the pressure to be "on" all the time isn't healthy or sustainable, even in a remote work paradise.

So, let's take a breath and talk about why it's okay not to love remote work in Armenia all the time. Because maybe, just maybe, by acknowledging those "ugh, work!" days, we **can create a healthier and more balanced relationship** with our remote careers here.

Consider a weekend getaway to explore the stunning Armenian countryside, a digital detox in a charming village homestay in Tavush or Lori, or even a quick trip to explore the vibrant culture of Yerevan. Sometimes, all you need is a recharge to appreciate the **unique perks of remote work in Armenia again**.



Evaluate Job Satisfaction and Don't Let «Ugh, Work!» Define your Remote Experience in Armenia

Two years into a remote job, “Ugh, work!” became my daily mantra. No amount of exploring seemed to fix the **unmotivating routine and lack of connection with my company culture**. So, I took the leap and changed roles. Suddenly, I was productive and engaged, fueled by genuine interest and a company vision that resonated with me, all while enjoying the flexibility of remote work in Armenia.

The dreaded feeling can often stem from a lack of direction. But **before blaming yourself or booking a one-way flight**, have you considered the role of clear goals and a company vision that aligns with your values? This is where Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) come in.

Think of KPIs as your personalized map to achievement. Without them, opening your laptop is like **staring at a blank road atlas** – you know you want to move, but where do you go? Having clear goals (your destination) and measurable KPIs (the milestones) shows you where you stand and **keeps you focused on what truly matters**.



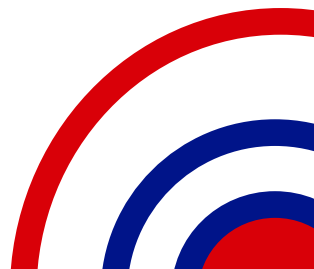
But simply having KPIs isn't enough. The company's vision needs to be equally clear. Are their goals aligned with yours? Do you understand how your role contributes to the bigger picture? Without this context, **even the best KPIs feel directionless.**

Remember, "ugh, work" doesn't have to be your reality. By seeking clarity, aligning with a clear vision, and embracing accountability through KPIs, you can transform your work experience into a **journey of purpose and fulfillment.**

Escape the Endless Scroll and Reclaim your Time with a Social Media Detox in the Armenian Regions

Ever scroll through Instagram, bombarded by pictures of everyone seemingly **"living their best lives"** while you're stuck at home behind the screen? Feeling isolated, uninspired, and maybe a little jealous? You're not alone. But before you hit that "follow unfollow" button on everyone, consider a different approach: a social media detox.

Let's face it: social media can be a **breeding ground for comparison and FOMO** (fear of missing out). The carefully curated feeds rarely reflect reality, leaving us feeling inadequate and disconnected. A two-week detox can be a powerful reset, especially in one of the Armenian regions.



Play Health Detective and Uncover the Mystery Behind Your Energy Levels – Sherlock Holmes style!

Feeling like you're constantly dragging, even after vacations, job changes, and goal setting? Don't dismiss it as simply "low motivation." Unresolved health issues lurking beneath the surface could be **sabotaging your productivity without you even realizing it.**

Last year, I battled with consistent sluggishness and low productivity. No change seemed to help. It wasn't until **a doctor's visit revealed lactose intolerance** that the pieces clicked. My daily dose of dairy, a source of comfort and enjoyment, was inadvertently hindering my performance. Sleepiness, headaches, and brain fog – classic symptoms I had attributed to stress – were actually linked to undiagnosed lactose intolerance.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson: prioritizing your health isn't just about feeling good; **it's about unlocking your full potential.**



THE STORY OF
A MIRACLE
ON THIN ICE



ARMENIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE



READ THE ARTICLE
AT PAGE 63

THE ART OF CITY PLANNING

A JOURNEY THROUGH YEREVAN'S ICONIC ARCHITECTURE



**VAHRAM
ELAGOZ**

ADJUNCT LECTURER

THE ART OF CITY PLANNING A JOURNEY THROUGH YEREVAN'S ICONIC ARCHITECTURE

I am not the first and will not be the last visitor who, upon arrival in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, begins to feel she is guarding something ever so carefully. As if she does not want to show her cards right away, waiting to be discovered. But Yerevan is generous, and sooner or later, the curious traveler willing to look will unveil her secret, though at first, it is not quite so simple to figure out what that something might be.

There are a few challenges to overcome: one being a nearly permanent chaos on its roads and the other an equally chaotic construction spree, advancing at a merciless and relentless vigor, both of which contribute to significant air pollution. However, once one begins to adapt and adopt a certain sense of avoidance, Yerevan's beauty will begin to unfold in front of one's eyes, as it was in my case. Spacious squares, shaded avenues, and wide boulevards, numerous parks with fountains, streets that take you in and out of mysterious courtyards, known as hayats, are worlds in themselves. Even winding step streets, managing of which sometimes requires serious lung power, won't dishearten the determined traveler to uncover -with delight- her secret: that she was designed with intent and purpose.

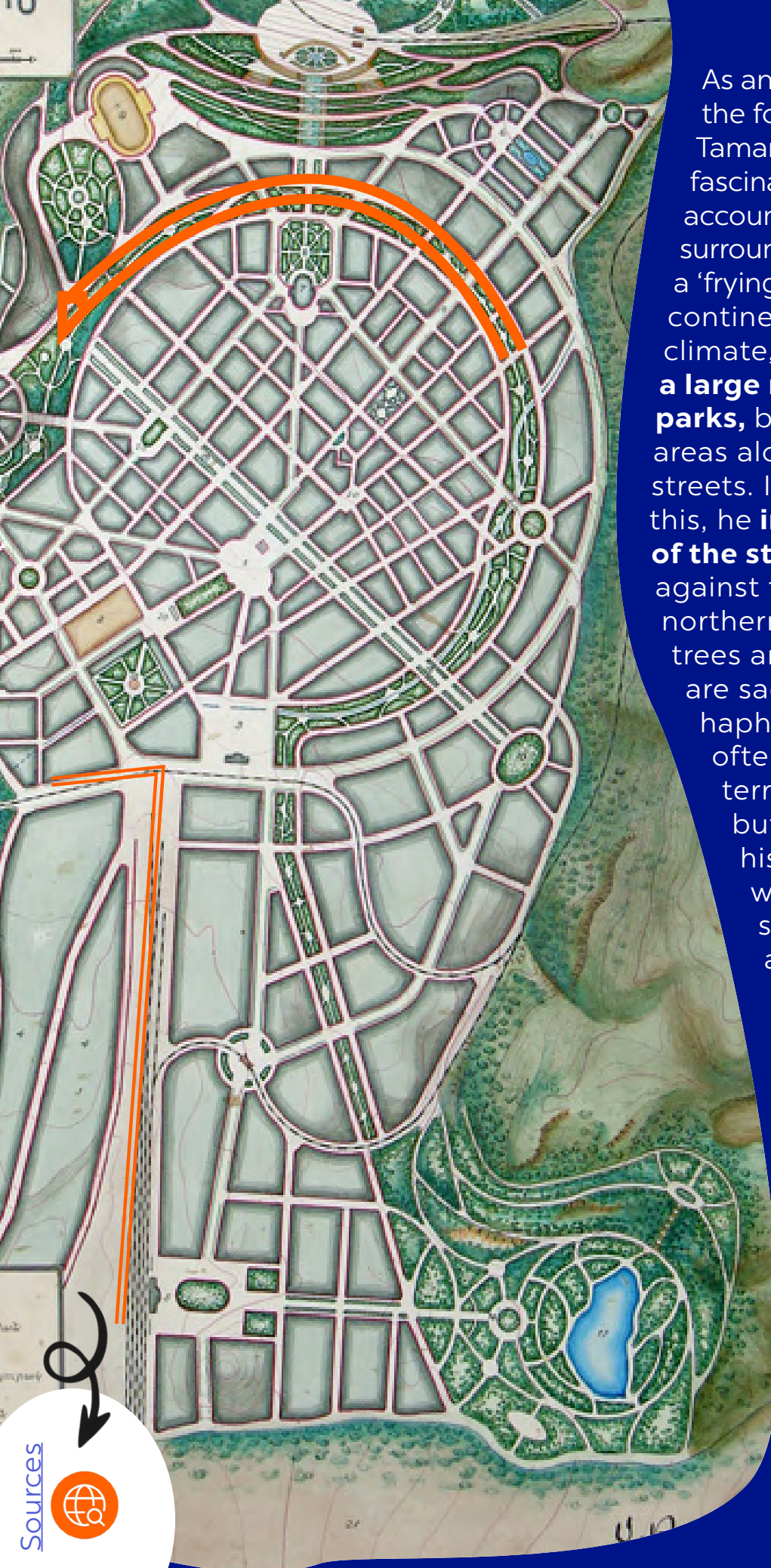
Behind this design with intent and purpose (and perhaps a mission, as well) is the genius of Alexander Tamanyan, regarded as one of the greatest Masters of Architecture of the 20th century. In my opinion, and I admit it is a highly subjective and even presumptuous one, Tamanyan's work in its intention, if not in scale, is on par with **the massive urban renewal program carried out in Paris** in the second half of the 19th century under Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809-1891), the somewhat authoritarian prefect of the Seine region in France.

Any visitor to Yerevan will sooner or later find him/ herself in front of Tamanyan's imposing statue prominently located at Moskovyan Street, facing the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall and the Alexander Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theatre, simply known as the Opera. The statue shows him standing at his desk, arms spread out, scrutinizing one of his projects. Is this statue all that is there to this great man? What can a tourist or a visitor who comes to Armenia –or a diaspora Armenian like myself who spent two years in Yerevan- should know about (or of) him? In this essay, I intend to share with fellow readers some facts about Tamanyan's life and work, and [my own take on his work](#) while walking through the streets of Kentron, the city center.

Evidence shows that Yerevan is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Its foundation is considered to be 782 BC when King Argishti I of the Armenian Urartu Kingdom founded the fortress city of Yerepuni (today's Yerevan). Mindful of this immense responsibility, Tamanyan, as the Chief Architect of Armenia, armed with extensive construction plans, began to work on a Master Plan for the reconstruction and

urban development of Yerevan in 1919, making Yerevan the first city in the Soviet Union for which a [general reconstruction plan was developed](#). The city was initially planned for 150,000 inhabitants, but with the industry beginning to develop and the country's population growing at a fast pace, Tamanyan kept working on revising and improving the master plan throughout his life.





As an environmental scientist, the following aspect of Tamanyan's master plan fascinated me: taking into account that Yerevan is surrounded by hills, resembling a 'frying pan,' with a harsh continental, very hot and dry climate, **his planning included a large number of public parks, boulevards, and green areas along the sidewalks of the streets.** In order to accommodate this, he **increased the width of the streets by 3-10 meters,** against the norm adopted for northern cities. Today, many trees and available sidewalks are sacrificed to give way to haphazardly constructed, often pompous-looking café-terraces on public property, but we can still admire his visionary approach while leisurely walking on several of the inner city avenues and boulevards, such as Abovyan, Sayat Nova, Baghramyan or Mashtots Avenues. In the planning of Yerevan, **Tamanyan applied a radial-ring network of streets** in order to facilitate transport links between the city center and its districts without sacrificing his vision of Yerevan as a garden city: he truly was ahead of his time!



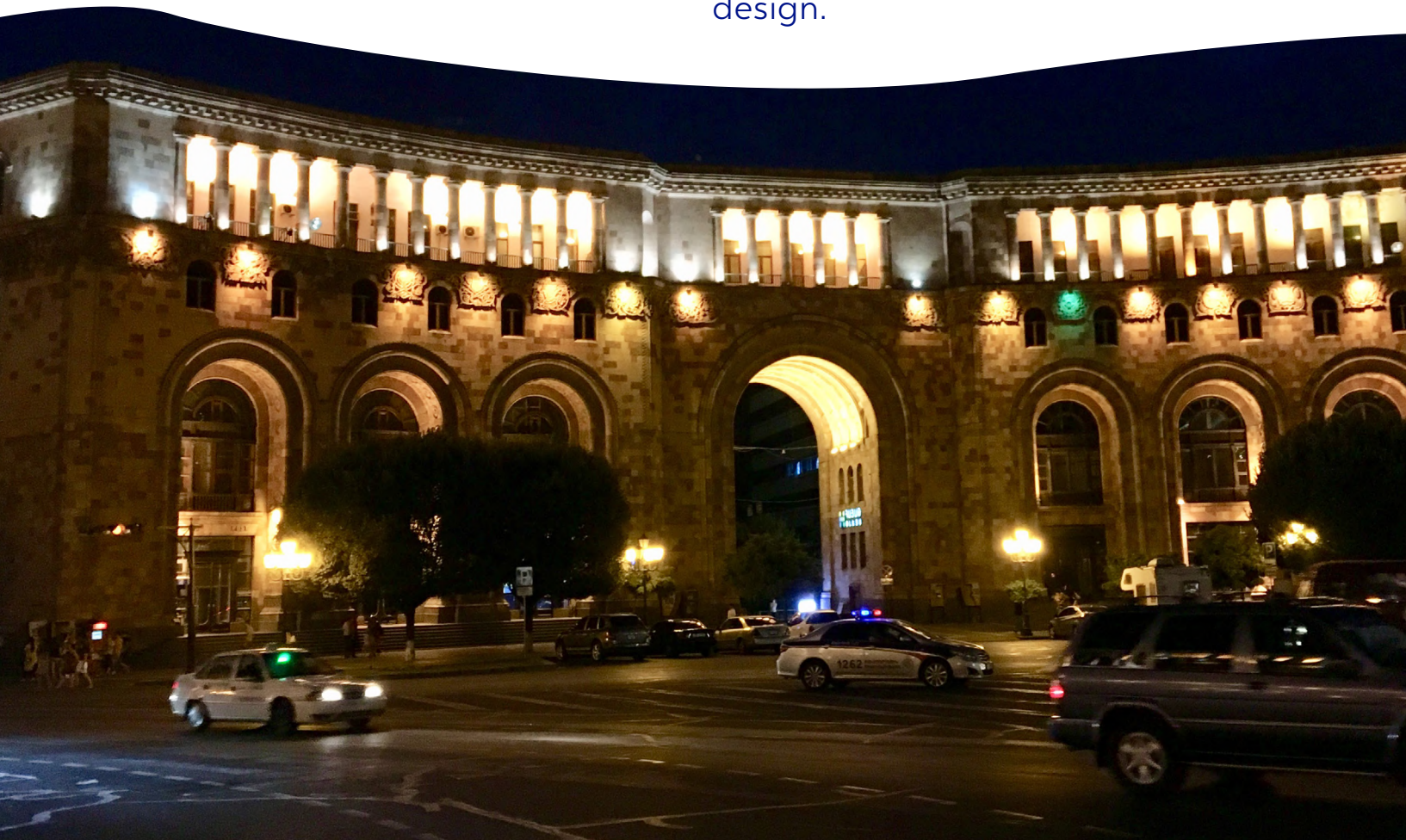
As the reader will see from the enclosed map, the heart of the city center is the oval-shaped Republic Square, surrounded by administrative buildings, including the Government House and museums. Near the administrative district in the south-west direction, Tamanyan placed a shopping area with commercial buildings arranged around a market square. And not far from the market square in the south-eastern direction an industrial area with railway tracks was placed in such a way that the prevailing winds would take the dust and soot away from the city. The university district in the north-east of the city center still retains its original design: buildings grouped according to various departments, including the Medical Faculty with a clinical hospital. Also included in his plans were a new theater square, a conservatory, and an art school in the northern direction; in the north-western part of the city, on an elevated plateau a stadium; and in the western part of the city, on the Kond hill a Museum District with a wide staircase along the slope of the hill lead people down to the main avenues of the city.

Tamanyan was **mindful of the city's climate and the health of the city's residents**, planning a circular parkland area around the city with fountains, swimming pools, and playgrounds for children. Sanatoriums (medical facilities) were located on the left bank of the Hrazdan River, protected from the wind with views of Mount Ararat. Alexander Tamanyan was creating a modern capital on the site of an old, unattractive, and provincial town. **Modern Yerevan is also known as the 'Pink City'** because of the unique volcanic stone of characteristic cream and pink shades used in the construction of its many buildings. Tamanyan chose this stone called 'Tuff,' which is found in abundance in Armenia and rarely can be found outside the region. **Yerevan is the only large city built from this stone.** Despite attacks in the press and at public rallies in 1927-1928, which caused a lot of emotional pain to Tamanyan and affected his health, he was able to successfully prove the necessity of such a plan.



I am one of those who never felt the need to learn how to drive. I cannot see myself sitting behind the steering wheel, trying to navigate through congested streets or to guess what other drivers around me might do next. I am, by nature, a worrier, and over the course of the years, I figured it was best to **let others worry about congestion and unpredictable drivers**. I was fortunate enough to have lived in places with efficient and reliable public transportation networks, and in their absence, I would walk, use my bike, or rely on the generosity of friends with a sense of charity. Walking to me is the easiest and most convenient mode of transport, especially in cities. It is the best way to explore neighborhoods at a leisurely pace, run into people, and strike up conversations. And **Yerevan is not an exception**.

The beautifully laid out wide avenues and boulevards, the squares are easy to navigate; numerous parks, winding roads, steep streets, and courtyards offer new worlds, satisfying one's curiosity. Part of the two years of my stay in Yerevan coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic, restricting my movements like everyone else. After the initial confinement indoors, the rules have been gradually relaxed, permitting outings within a particular radius allowed per order of the day. This was, I admit, **one of the best times I had in Yerevan**: a printed form stating where I resided and for what purpose I was leaving home tucked in my pocket; I immensely enjoyed my solitary walks: hardly anyone on the streets, practically no traffic, and best of all, the otherwise polluted air crystal clear! This is **when I came to truly appreciate Yerevan's design**.



As I explained earlier, Tamanyan's master plan for Yerevan not only anticipated the future of Yerevan with an increasing population but also included the topographic realities surrounding the city. The layout of the wide boulevards and avenues, lined with shade trees, **provide pedestrians with much-needed shade**; the height and positioning of older buildings are such that they allow, unlike many of today's structures popping up like mushrooms, the unobstructed flow of cooling winds through the city, which temper the excesses of summer heat. The Circular Park surrounding the city center was one of my favorite places where I spent hours observing many statues and monuments, some prominent and others rather obscure, but needless to say, **adding excitement to the time I spent outdoors.**

Yerevan is like Boston or Vienna – cities where I lived and worked- a **very walkable city**. And more so than Bostonians or Viennese, **Yerevantsis love and live the outdoors**: many street side cafés, the florists with their permanent stalls, the fruit and vegetable vendors offering their produce in any imaginable color on improvised stands, and not to forget the dadigs and babigs, elderly hawkers from nearby villages, offering seasonal goodies piled up in huge bags, are like magnets pulling the residents out of their homes.

There are two aspects the city has to offer, and I loved them both: the static with its monuments and statues and the fluid with its nature that changes with seasons. And, of course, its people. This is what I mean by the intent, the purpose, AND most certainly the vision a genius named Alexander Tamanyan put into the design of this city, our beloved Yerevan that I came to love.

Sources



Kenats Hats

WORK PRODUCTIVELY
IN THE MIDDLE OF NATURE
IJEVAN CITY, TAVUSH



Professional



Modern



Spacious



Equipped



Indoors



Outdoors

FOUNDING CARPET JAM

FINDING PURPOSE OF LIFE IN ARMENIA'S ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**ARTHUR
AGHADJANIANS**

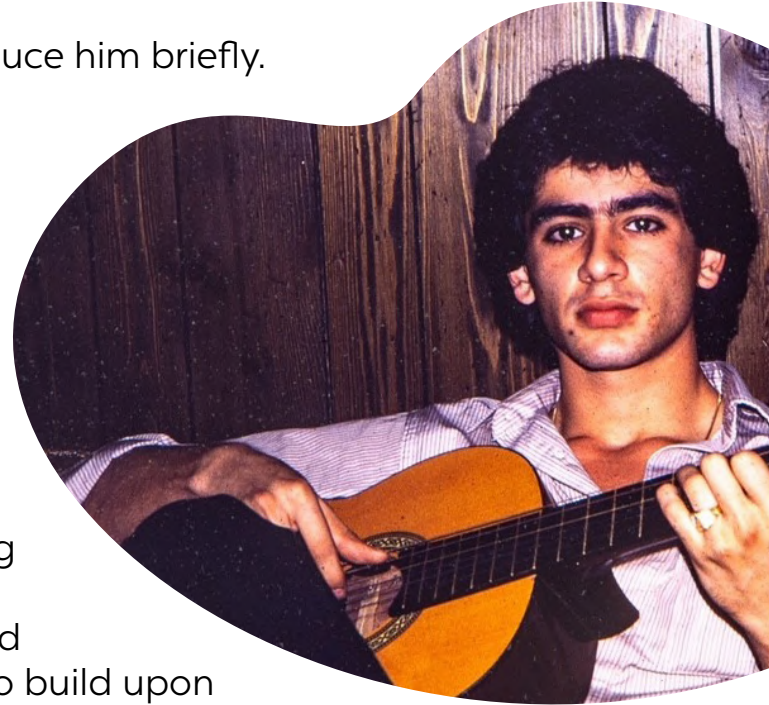
FOUNDER OF CARPET JAM



FOUNDING CARPET JAM FINDING PURPOSE OF LIFE IN ARMENIA'S ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE

Before I tell Arthur's story, allow me to introduce him briefly. Understanding where he comes from and what brought him to Armenia is key. Arthur Aghadjanians is an American-Armenian builder who, by the age of 18 in Iran, harbored a passion for playing guitar. For some reason, circumstances during his youth drove him away from pursuing this passion further.

Throughout his adult life in the USA, he established himself as a builder, constructing buildings across Southern California. During a visit to Armenia in Late 2019, a piece of land captivated him, and he made the decision to build upon it. After meticulously planning the project, he departed for Yerevan. However, something unexpected arose: the COVID-19 pandemic hit.



Migrating from Iran to US at 19

The Rise of Levels High and Carpet Jam

Weeks of quarantine afforded him the time to tinker with his guitar, searching for the ideal melodies to compose new songs. Within two months, he had enough material for an EP, and the next steps to fulfill his vision began. He collaborated with local musicians, and together, they entered the studio to bring these songs to life.

As Arthur grew close to Armenia's talented community of musicians, he realized that his project had the **opportunity to revitalize the musical community** devastated by lockdowns and help the musical culture flourish again. The project was called Levels High, meant to evoke images of people who chase seemingly out-of-reach dreams.



On top of the world 2024

It drew a variety of musicians from the deep well of talent in Armenia, and they came to record with his team to showcase their best creations. In 2021, Levels High, founded by Arthur, launched a [YouTube channel](#), Carpet Jam, which became a platform for Armenian musicians to showcase their creativity to the world.

““ Carpet Jam is an example of taking life’s lemons and making lemonade. ””

Arthur Aghadjanians

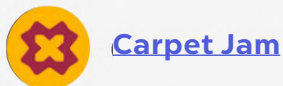
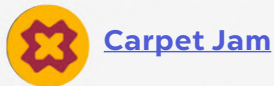
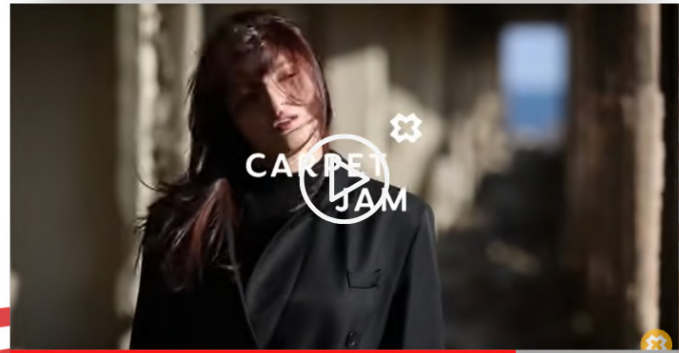
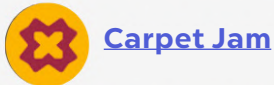
The Phenomenon of Carpet Jam

Many artists were already seeking opportunities to play their music and foster connections. [Carpet Jam provided a chance for them to succeed in sharing their music](#). Recording out of the historic Composers Union of Yerevan, Arthur and his team began releasing new content week after week. Suddenly, Arthur’s life was turned upside down.

The American builder is now [a popular music video producer in Armenia](#) and seems to have found his life’s purpose. His goal is not only to highlight Armenian talent but also to create a long-term legacy showcasing the creativity of young talents spread across the Diaspora.

By the time I met Arthur, he was producing 52 videos a year and had [already spent over \\$80,000 of his personal money](#) on the project every year, knowing that the YouTube channel barely generates any monthly income. “Why would someone do that?” you might wonder. The answer is simple: purpose. [Arthur, like many others, had found his purpose in Armenia.](#)

Today, [Carpet Jam boasts over 27,000 subscribers](#) on [YouTube](#) and more than 6,000 followers on [Instagram](#). When a new video is released through the platform, it reaches tens of thousands and often surpasses one hundred thousand views globally. Notably, the channel’s reach has been steadily growing, with videos accumulating tens of thousands of views—a far cry from the initial hundreds. This suggests the potential for even greater viewership, reaching hundreds of thousands or even millions in the near future. There’s one thing Arthur knows for sure: [Armenian music is quickly gaining traction online.](#)



A Vision for Armenian Youth and Global Talent

On August 2nd, 2023, Carpet Jam, in collaboration with the Armenian Government, hosted an [open-air concert](#) for 600 young Armenian guests attending the “Youth Forum” from around the world. This event aimed to connect Armenian youth with the Greater Diaspora and was a resounding success.



Team picture 2023

Inspired by this experience, Arthur now envisions an [annual Carpet Jam Fest specifically for volunteers in Armenia](#). Estimated costs for permits, stage, lighting, equipment, sound control, entertainer/ band fees, video crew, and a host amount to approximately \$15,000. Another goal of Carpet Jam is to visit Music Schools in Villages monthly and donate an instrument and provide support and encouragement especially by making a short video bringing awareness to the public. For this reason, Arthur is currently [seeking funds or collaborations with international foundations](#) interested in promoting young talents in Armenia.

“ Art is the soul of a culture, and Carpet Jam is here to keep the light in people’s hearts shining, showing that humans can create meaning and beauty despite adversity. We exist to keep the culture alive—and we’ll see it flourish. ”

Arthur Aghadjanians



Group picture during recording during Covid

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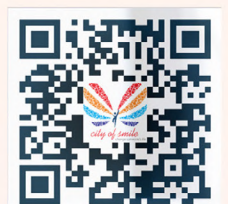


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A MIRACLE ON THIN ICE

THE STORY OF ARMENIA'S HOCKEY LEAGUE FOUNDATION



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**NATALIA
KAZANTSEVA**

HEAD OF LEGAL, COUNCIL MEMBER OF
THE ARMENIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE

A MIRACLE ON THIN ICE THE STORY OF ARMENIA'S HOCKEY LEAGUE FOUNDATION

In December 2023, Ground Zero Specialty Coffee hosted Vadim Guskov, the Head Coach of the Armenian National Ice Hockey Team, for a talk on business and psychology lessons related to leadership, strategy, and success. This choice of guest speaker, a sports figure invited as part of Ground Zero's event series, **suggests a deeper story behind Armenian ice hockey**, and I got interested in learning more about the details.



Karén Gyulbudaghyan, Vadim Guskov
and Natalia Kazantseva



Mathew Zein and Natalia Kazantseva
in Downtown Yerevan

Natalia's Narrative

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of meeting Natalia Kazantseva in downtown Yerevan. For two hours, she enthralled me with a story about hockey in Armenia. It's **a story unique to Armenia** that could not have unfolded anywhere else. For that reason, I'm excited to share it with Life in Armenia readers.

As Natalia spoke, I relived the **American classic “Miracle” through an Armenian lens**. Instead of Team USA facing the Soviet Goliath, a ragtag band of Armenians take to the ice, sticks clutched in determined hands, not against the Soviet Union, but against the odds themselves. No, this isn’t a cinematic fantasy; it’s the very real story

of the foundation of the Armenian Hockey League and its way to the **World Championship 2025**.

Hold on tight, for I’m about to share Natalia’s story just as authentically as she told it to me. Hopefully, you’ll feel that same magical spark ignite within you.

One Man’s Passion

Planning to stay long-term in a new country presents two options: adaptation or introduction. You can either adapt to what you find or **introduce something new from your home**. The latter path represents one of the most amazing forms of cultural exchange, where relocants integrate aspects of their lives into their new home, sharing their love with a place that has warmly welcomed them.

Russian hockey player and businessman Petr Lebedev opened a new chapter in his life in May 2022, relocating to the Armenian capital, Yerevan. Despite the many similarities between the two nations, a stark contrast emerged when it came to Petr’s passion: ice hockey. In Russia, rinks dotted the landscape, buzzing with the slap of pucks and the roar of adoring fans. Armenia, however, presented a different reality. Imagine Petr’s astonishment upon **discovering only two ice rinks in the entire country**.



Petr Lebedev
During a
Hockey Game

Driven by his hockey passion, Petr visited one of the two ice rinks in Yerevan, hoping for a pro game. But reality crushed his dream. Players barely cared, some even smoking between periods. A lone goalie waited, the other missing. It was just casual fun between some friends, not professional hockey.

At that moment, Petr stood at a crossroads. He could walk away from the ice rink, pretending nothing happened. Or, he could face the unknown, roll up his sleeves, and dedicate himself to bringing professional hockey to Armenia, no matter the cost or sacrifice. At that moment, **all he saw before his eyes was an opportunity**, and for that reason, he went for it.

AHL Teams

The Armenian Hockey League was established in February 2023 with the support of the Armenian Ice Hockey Federation (AIHF). Currently, there is an agreement between the League and the Federation granting the League **exclusive rights to organize domestic championships until 2028**. The second Armenian Ice Hockey Championship, organized by the AHL, is underway. Four teams competing for the national cup: HC Lions, HC Peppers, HK Pyunik, and HC Falcons (from Georgia).

As a first step, Petr organized several tournaments and invited teams from Georgia and Russia. The tournaments were amateur, yet **they captured the attention of the audience**. Moreover, Petr ensured their high-quality broadcast and commentary. The success of these events was a decisive argument for creating a hockey ,league.

“ Great moments are born from great opportunity.”

Herb Brooks, Miracle

The increasing interest Petr saw in Armenian ice hockey encouraged him to dream big and aim to found the entire league, a foundation for Armenian hockey that would extend far beyond the rink and serve the country as an additional reinforcement on the world stage.

HC Lions is Armenia's flagship hockey club. The team's players are hockey players who trained in Yerevan long before the arrival of Petr Lebedev. Thanks to a large part of them, hockey in Armenia did not disappear completely after disqualification. Their dedication to this sport allowed hockey to be included in the Pan-Armenian Games in 2014, and it was the Lions players who participated, representing Yerevan.

Coach Vadim Guskov and the team

In 2022, Vadim Guskov, a talented coach from Russia, moved to Armenia. Soon, he became the coach of the Lions, which had a significant impact on their growth as professionals.



Later, the Kuznetsov brothers, Maxim and Artem, professional players also from Russia, joined the team. The appearance of such figures in Armenia was also an argument for carrying out plans to participate in the World Championship. HC Lions became the winners of the first Armenian Championship, thus inscribing their names in the country's sports history.

The Kuznetsov Brothers



Yerevan Derby
Lions vs. Pyunik

Each match between HC Lions and HC Pyunik rightfully earns the title of the Yerevan derby, with fights often happening in their matches. It should be noted that **fights are a normal phenomenon in hockey**, but in Armenia, they have their own specifics. Coaches of the teams needed a considerable amount of time to discourage players from jumping off the benches to help their teammates. While one-on-one fights are accepted in hockey, Armenians have proven to stand for each other.

HC Pyunik was founded in March 2023 jointly by Petr Lebedev and Artur Sogomonyan, the owner of the eponymous football club, the most popular one in Armenia. Football fans regularly attend hockey matches to support the club. Currently, Tigran Manukyan, a well-known figure in the hockey world, has joined HC Pyunik. He, along with several other players, significantly strengthened the team, and now it is **a serious contender for victory in the Championship**.

Tigran's brother, Artem Manukyan, a current player from Russia, also dedicated this season to training in Armenia to help local players improve their skills. Currently, he plays for HC Peppers, which can be called the most intellectual team in the League. There is always a kind and friendly atmosphere in their locker room, which doesn't hinder them from achieving high results in the game.

The Manukyan
Brothers





Petr Lebedev Giving the Trophy to the First Winner of the Regular Championship- HC "Lions"

And yet another team vying for the Grigory Mkrtchyan Cup is HC Falcons. These players train in Tbilisi. There aren't enough hockey rinks in Yerevan for the entire League. The whole team regularly travels to Yerevan for games. The League acknowledges them for their dedicated approach to hockey and their significant contribution to its development. It's worth noting that the goalkeeper of this team is the top contender for the role of the national team's first goalkeeper. Denis Surkanov literally soars on the wings while guarding the net.

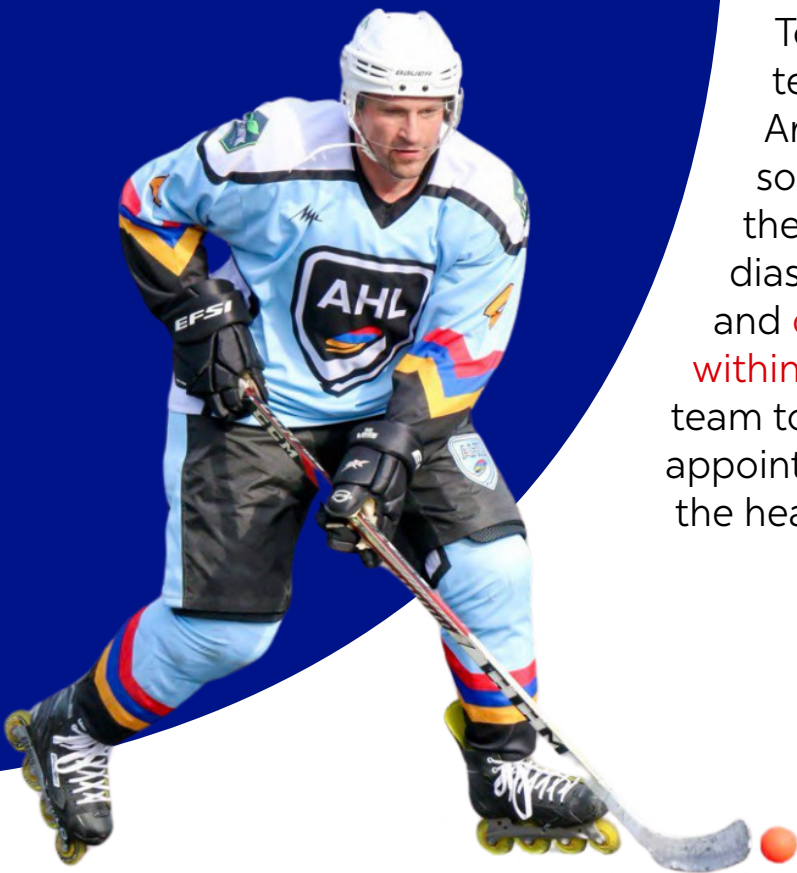
Do you Believe in Miracles? Yes!

Organizing a hockey game is as simple as grouping players, booking ice time, and arriving on schedule. Building an entire hockey league, however, presents significantly more challenges. Petr understood that a thriving league required strong community backing. Without it, success would be improbable.



Petr Lebedev Showing Students in QSI School in Yerevan How to Dress up as a Hockey Player

He is building the community engagement. This involves initiatives like fan clubs, attracting hockey enthusiasts, engaging audiences, offering kids' classes, and organizing school tours, to name a few.



To build a strong National ice hockey team, Petr began by seeking out Armenian hockey players with a solid level of professionalism. He then turned his focus to the Armenian diaspora, extending invitations to players and **offering various forms of support within his means**. Gradually, the national team took shape, and Vadim Guskov was appointed by the Federation as the head coach.

At the beginning of 2024, the expanded roster of the national team gathered for the first time and played their first friendly matches as part of an international tournament, “Yerevan Nights,” organized by the League.

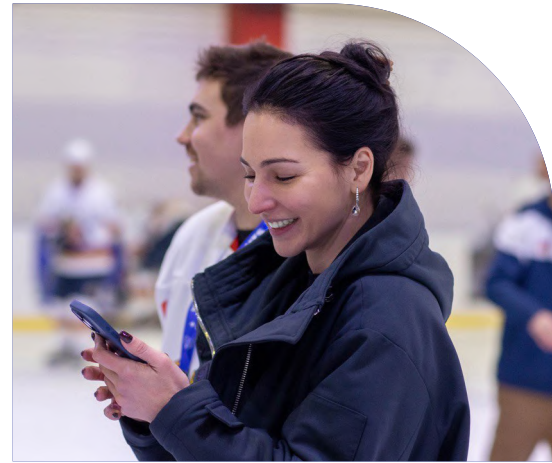


Vadim Guskov, Coach of the Armenian National Team - 3

“ I’m often asked: what’s it like for a woman to work in the hockey league? I must say that we, along with the League, face similar challenges. As representatives of the organization, we’re often asked about the reason behind our project. Considering our investments and the goal of reviving the national team, this question sounds absurd, although it’s asked quite frequently. The same goes for doubts regarding gender. Gender doesn’t determine professionalism; professionalism determines results, and our results are outstanding. ”

Natalia Kazantseva

This year, Armenia submitted an application to join the World Championship and is awaiting a reply in April.



Armenian National Team



NANE
YEGHIKYAN



ARMIK
YORDEKYAN



EMILYA
GALSTYAN



JOEL
MARTIN



RAFFI
NIZIBLIAN



RICARDO
BERGMAN



NERSES
ISAJANYAN



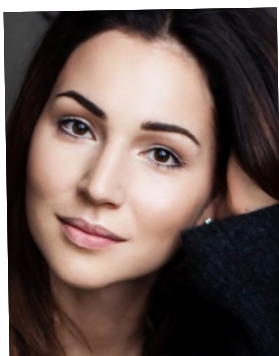
SIRAPI
SAHAKYAN



VAHRAM
ELAGOZ



ARTHUR
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CREDITS AND SPECIAL THANKS



ARMÉNiA
The Hidden
Track



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