

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

THE FORMATION OF COMMUNITIES AS A SOCIAL-SPATIAL PRACTICE

PECULIARITIES OF THE COMMUNITY
ENLARGEMENT REFORM IN
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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The research reveals the social, political, cultural, and other transformations that have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural and urban communities as a result of the community enlargement reform.



The research fieldwork was carried out in Dilijan, Tumanyan, Vayk enlarged communities in March-April, 2021. A total of 28 interviews were conducted, which were subjected to traditional content analysis.



As a result of the peculiarities of the spatial, formation, socio-historical development, and coexistence of the population in connected communities, different social, cultural, and governance practices have been formed.

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The context of the research

In 2011, the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted a law according to which the rural and urban settlements with a population of less than a thousand should be united into one administrative-territorial unit. According to the initiators of the reform, the administrative reorganization would help increase the efficiency of the local government's budget, improve the quality of public services, contribute to the decentralization of the political system and promote local democracy¹.

However, villages and towns are not only geographical units, but also imply different practices of social and cultural coexistence. Nevertheless, studies of enlarged communities in Armenia focus mainly on the study of administrative and political issues². Therefore, issues concerning everyday life are studied less.

Therefore, the research aims at studying the social, political, cultural, and other transformations that have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural and urban communities as a result of the community enlargement reform.

The village and the town are social-geographical communication systems that assume different forms of human relations, and consequently different social orders.

Theories defining the city and village often link the emergence of cities with the Industrial Revolution, when

1 Vardanyan, Y. (2016): The issue of community enlargement in Armenia: "Banber" bulletin of Yerevan University. Sociology, Economics, № 2 (20), pp: 36-47; Altunyan, K. (2021). Enlargement of communities in the local self-government system of the Republic of Armenia: Analysis of positive and negative outcomes. Yerevan: Artsakh publishing house: Scientific Artsakh, № 1(8); Vardanyan, A. (2014). Local government reform in Armenia: Challenges and prospects for success. Yerevan: American University of Armenia. Retrieved from: https://dspace.aua.am/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/606/Arpine_Vardanyan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Last accessed [2021, June, 20].

2. Ibid

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THE THEORETICAL SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

the transition from an agrarian community to an urbanized industrial society took place³.

In rural communities, social ties are more personalized and emotional, and social status is conditioned by belonging to a certain group, while in urban communities, social ties are characterized by rationality, the impartiality of social interactions, and achieving social status⁴.

Social order in villages is based on the similarity of members' group beliefs, values, and functions. Whereas cities are characterized by organic solidarity between heterogeneous individuals, and the more diversity there is in the urban environment, the more people strive for unity and cooperation⁵.

However, the transition from an agrarian to an industrialized urban society is not a one-sided process⁶.

On the one hand, the processes of industrialization and deindustrialization as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the practices of joint management of rural and urban settlements in large communities, on the other hand, create a mixed reality, which needs to be studied not only in terms of understanding post-Soviet hybrid reality but also for developing tools for effective governance.

3 See: Toennies, F. (1957). *Community and society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, by Ferdinand Toennies. Translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press.

4 Ibid.

5 Durkheim, E., & In Simpson, G. (1933). *Émile Durkheim on the division of labor in society*. New York: Macmillan.

6 Weber, M. (2015). *Class, staende, parties in Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society*. Edited and translated by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters.

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THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Qualitative research was conducted to understand the social, political, and cultural transformations taking place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural and urban communities as a result of the enlargement of communities. The in-depth interview method was used to gather information.

- To understand the impact of the enlargement reform on the governance system **interviews with key informants** were conducted with local government staff in enlarged communities. Officials and experts working in local self-government bodies took part in the survey. Twelve interviews were conducted, and the targeted sampling method was used.
- **In-depth interviews with inhabitants** were conducted to study the peculiarities of their life experiences as a result of the enlargement reform. Respondents were selected through the snowball sampling method. Sixteen interviews were conducted, eight of which were in rural and eight in urban communities.

The research fieldwork was carried out in Dilijan, Tumanyan, Vayk enlarged communities in March-April, 2021. A total of 28 interviews were conducted, which were subjected to traditional content analysis. The interviews were conducted anonymously and the privacy of the participants' personal data was strictly protected.

Transformation peculiarities of governance practices

The size of the governance system, both in terms of population and area, and variables related to democracy are interrelated. Some studies show that large communities are more effective in providing public services⁷, while smaller communities are considered more democratic⁸. Although many researchers believe that this contrast is exaggerated, there are some links between the size of the community and various variables related to democracy, such as turnout, citizen participation in community life, and so on⁹. However, the results of the study show that no major changes have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants as a result of the community enlargement reform.

*The situation is the same, there is no change, there is nothing good, it is not effective. There is no improvement, only problems. For paperwork... for example, I can say about my family: I barely see anything good. Maybe if the leadership changes, it will get better, the governance is not normal, I do not know who will come and God knows what will be done. If people have a conscience, they will do it if they want. **Dilijan, inhabitant***

*It's not administered now: it's from one place, Dilijan, the head of the community is an appointed person, this governance system is not effective. At this moment I don't expect any improvement, it's getting worse. **Teghut, inhabitant***

There are no major changes. There are no improvements,

7 Newton, K. (1982). Is small really so beautiful? Is big so ugly? Size, effectiveness and democracy in local government? *Political Studies*, 30(2):190–206; Ehrenhalt, A. (1995). The mystique of government "close to the people". *Governing*, August, 6–7.

8 Leemans, A. (1970). Changing patterns of local governments. The Hague: International Union of Local Authorities.

9 Denters, B. (2002). Size and political trust: Evidence from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 20(6):793–812; Ladner, A. (2002). Size and direct democracy at the local level: The case of Switzerland. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 20(6):813–828; Copus, C. (2006). British local government: A Case for a new constitutional settlement. *Public Policy and Administration*, 21(4):4–21.

everyone thinks about going abroad, leaving, striving to be out [of the country]. **Tumanyan, inhabitant**

The geographic remoteness of rural communities from urban centers in enlarged communities becomes an obstacle for inhabitants in the process of communication with local self-government bodies. Moreover, in the conditions of malfunctioning public transport, geographic remoteness and isolation become more problematic.

Local government officials also note that some communities are getting out of control because of their distance. This issue is especially acute in the Tumanyan enlarged community. Meanwhile, in the enlarged community of Vayk, e-government has helped increase the effectiveness of government-to-resident communication.

There is a distance problem, one has to get to Tumanyan municipality for a piece of paper, walk 6 km, because the transport doesn't work properly, and he can't afford a car. **Tumanyan, inhabitant**

We can mention the distance as a problem. It should be noted that remote communities are difficult to control, they are getting a bit out of control, although we visit them regularly, most of the time the responsibility that the employee of the center takes.. the employees of those settlements are a little overlooked. **Tumanyan, LSG representative**

It was better before, as you'd solve your village issues right there, in any case, it's more effective to solve issues on-site. Simply put, each was caring for themselves, each village was taking care of itself, and now the enlarged [community] will have to care for this one, that one, for as many communities as it unites. **Azatek, LSG representative**

On the other hand, the ineffective communication between the LSG bodies and inhabitants has contributed to the decline of trust toward government representatives. Although the concept of the community enlargement reform states that tax centralization will contribute to more efficient public services¹⁰, inhabitants of rural communities have started avoiding paying taxes as they are now less confident that the changes taking place in community centers can have any direct impact on improving their own or community life.

Peculiarities of civic participation and democracy

In enlarged communities, the Head of the community, as well as the Community Council, are formed through direct elections; there is no quota of representatives from each settlement in the local self-government bodies. This means that urban centers with larger populations elect local government representatives from their communities.

Therefore, small rural communities are under-represented in local self-government bodies. In the enlarged community of Dilijan, rural settlements are relatively more represented and actively take part in community life. However, in this community, there are frequent lifestyle-related conflicts between urban and rural populations when making political decisions. For example, rural communities want to spend the community budget on agriculture development, while urban ones prefer spending it on service provision.

In Dilijan [people] are comparatively inactive, here the participation is mostly at the district level, anyway in villages they're stronger at such matters, more active. It can be said that rural lobbying has a greater influence on decision-making than urban one. The Haghartsin community is more active. Even now Haghartsin community inhabitants are more likely to appeal more often, talk about some matters, raise issues more than Dilijan inhabitants. **Dilijan, LSG representative**

Some people express their attitude to the administration and the latter decides accordingly if it agrees or not. Inhabitants may have an impact if they do not agree with the administration's decision. I have not seen such cases, but I think such cases can happen. **Haghartsin, inhabitant**

In the enlarged community of Tumanyan, the participation of the population in both rural and urban areas is low, the inhabitants are less interested in community decision-making. Although inhabitants mention their involvement in governance, they have low confidence that they can make a difference in community life and influence decisions made by LSG bodies.

Before the enlargement, our community, Karinj, and our inhabitants had a very effective influence on the decision-making process, their voice was heard, unlike now, but it is both subjective and objective. That is, for the most part, people don't even participate, which has a reason: they do participate and are not heard, as a result, they're not interested in participating. On the other hand, it's the municipality that's not interested in hearing what they think. There are some people that take part, but now the percentage is very low, while in the past the participation was very high. For example, if the head of the community makes a decision, by law inhabitants can't have an [direct] impact on it. Instead, they can always apply to the Community Council and it can make the head of the community withdraw the decision, so in general, they can

¹⁰ See: RA Government (2011): Concept of community enlargement and formation of intercommunity units. <http://www.mtad.am/files/docs/782.pdf>.

have an impact... but I can hardly recall such a case. **Karinj, inhabitant**

In most cases, inhabitants are not that interested. We work on that, we publish the announcements on the website according to the law on public discussions. Those discussions take place both in rural settlements and in the center, but participation is always low: people are busy with their cattle, their work. **Tumanyan, LSG representative**

The lack of equal representation of rural and urban settlements in LSG bodies has also caused problems in the enlarged community of Vayk related to the Azatek village mine exploitation. Villagers have opposed the exploitation of the mine because it will be difficult to live in the village in the condition of the operating mine. Whereas the Vayk municipality was inclined to exploit the mine, as it was economically more profitable for the community. However, the voice of smaller communities remains insignificant because of insufficient representation in LSG bodies.

The influence of a rural community inhabitant is less than that of an urban community because there are [only] two representatives in the Community Council. **Azatek, inhabitant**

...at this moment there's a huge appetite for Azatek village because the mountains in front are gold-bearing... so it turns out that local authorities convince inhabitants, "let's agree with the exploitation.. so that they have jobs...", but that's a stupid, cruel job, slavery with uranium dust and more. Besides, it's very close to the city of Vayk, and if it's exploited, the city may face an evacuation: it will be impossible to live here because of the radiation and dust. **Vayk, inhabitant**

There are no mechanisms to make the voice of those few inhabitants heard. For example, we've conducted a signature collection and gathered enough and the Community Council could consider the results, reject or postpone mine exploitation processes, collect additional, enough justifications, but they ignored those results and allowed the process to begin. **Azatek, inhabitant**

...in Azatek in particular, there was a woman who spoke out very well... but you see, as a result, she wasn't heard, it didn't have any impact on decisions. The municipality did what they considered convenient... whatever they negotiated with the miners, had a mutually beneficial deal... As a result, they allowed the mine exploitation process to begin. To say that there are mechanisms that the voice of the community can be heard... First of all, there are no such mechanisms, secondly, there is no one listening, thirdly, there is no penalty for not listening to the community. **Vayk, inhabitant**

Thus, the forms of participation and political influence of the inhabitants differ in the enlarged communities of Dilijan, Tumanyan, and Vayk. In Dilijan, inhabitants of rural

communities have begun to take part in community life more actively after enlargement, while in Tumanyan, although the quality of services in rural communities has partially improved as a result of community enlargement, inhabitants of rural communities have become less interested in governance issues. As for the Vayk community, although the inhabitants of rural communities try to participate in community decision-making, they are less confident that they can influence the decision-making process. The study of in-depth interviews shows that if inhabitants have issues or concerns, they try to solve them alone, rather than influencing decision-making through community groups. This means that the inhabitants of the enlarged communities have also failed to build social capital between the inhabitants of rural and urban settlements.

Peculiarities of socio-cultural transformations

Public places are spaces for everyday practices of individuals and groups, social perceptions, memory, and formation of group identity. These are social spaces that people create based on their daily practices and different psychological needs. These are also spaces of public presentation where the formation of the community identity, communication between people, and social organization¹¹ happen.

Public spaces are also areas of social training that help people understand the diversity, understand who their community members are and this creates social solidarity and trust¹². Here people are zoned out of themselves and start perceiving the other, which creates a sense of common belonging to a group. The lack of public spaces, and consequently the lack of representation of different community groups, the lack of communication, contributes to the formation of mistrust in each other, and consequently to the weak sense of a common identity, and belonging to the community. Therefore, due to the lack of community centers, cultural institutions, and other public spaces, no social ties were formed between the inhabitants of the enlarged communities.

That's what I'm saying, there are no mechanisms, there is no single public event so that representatives of all villagers gather and get acquainted so that from now on we can consider ourselves inhabitants of one community, preserving our uniqueness, but at the same time feeling like a part of one common thing... There is no mechanism

11 Tonnelat, S. (2010). The sociology of urban public spaces. Paris: Atlantis Press.p.3-4. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/313641/The_Sociology_of_Urban_Public_Spaces. Last accessed [2021, June, 10].

12 Goffman, E. (1963). Behavior in public places: notes on the social organization of gatherings. NY: The free press.pp. 33-64. Retrieved from: <https://ru.scribd.com/document/358398785/Erving-Goffman-Behavior-in-Public-Places-PDF>. Last accessed [2021, June, 20].

by law or any initiative to solve this issue, to make inhabitants of different settlements unite and feel like belonging to one community... there is none. **Vayk, inhabitant**

...there is no public life in the community. People living in the same community don't know each other. Say, teachers don't know other teachers, villagers don't know each other, are not familiar with each other to be able to exchange experiences... women don't know... don't know their resources, can't help each other, are not involved in any united platform despite being in the same community. By and large, nothing significant has changed in people's lives, except for the name: they are not inhabitants of the Azatek community, but the Vayk community. **Azatek, inhabitant**

The lack of a common identity is a result of the lack of spatial infrastructure and, consequently, the lack of social practices associated with it. People collaborate, use their social networks to gain certain public goods, which will help them achieve certain goals¹³. People can make social connections on purpose, but their formation often depends on the context of communication practices. For example, although the village of Haghartsin is part of the enlarged community of Dilijan, the inhabitants are more connected to Ijevan than Dilijan by their practices: young people go to the university in Ijevan, many work in the Ijevan sewing factory, and so on. Therefore, people living in the villages of Dilijan are more connected to Ijevan than to Dilijan. Thus, the lack of connection with the place is a spatial result: the lack of public places on the one hand, and transport infrastructure on the other.

...The city of Dilijan is very quiet, there are very few places of entertainment. If there are more places of entertainment, it seems to me that the youth of the rural communities will start visiting them. For instance, people from the Hovk community and Gosh go to Ijevan, attend the university there, and, logically, they consider Ijevan as a center, and Dilijan is not paid much attention to. **Dilijan, inhabitant**

A sewing factory has opened in Ijevan, they go work there, in Dilijan they work at guesthouses, have always worked, Monte [Monte Melkonian Military and Sports College] has opened, they work there. And it's not related to enlargement: a guesthouse worker has always had their job, Monte worker has had theirs. **Haghartsin, inhabitant**

Peculiarities of social-psychological transformations

As a result of the community enlargement reform, no sense of belonging to the general community was formed in the newly created communities. People living in rural

communities do not consider themselves inhabitants of the newly formed community. The connection to community centers is often weak, too. In terms of both everyday practices and the formation of identity. Feelings of being neglected and discriminated against have developed among inhabitants of rural communities.

...first of all, the other communities develop a complex of being a village while the other is a town, and so why should it become the center? Former communities have this resentment and apprehension that due to enlargement they lose their identity and their name no longer sounds like a settlement. **Vayk, inhabitant**

...and we're neglected. Yes, and everyone will share this opinion: village inhabitants are neglected. I'd like the cooperation to be close and so that there wasn't the segregation of being from a village or a town. **Haghartsin, LSG representative**

As far as I have communicated with them, villagers seem more united to me, and, to be honest, they don't seem to like people of the city. In any case, there are disagreements. **Dilijan, inhabitant**

In the initial stages of the project implementation, inhabitants have formed high social expectations for the results of the project. Many of the inhabitants expected that the reform would lead to economic development and job creation. However, they don't see changes in their everyday life or community life. Inhabitants of urban and rural settlements often have mirrored perceptions: people in towns complain of their financial resources being provided to villages, while in rural communities people think that the grants allocated to them by international organizations are not spent in their communities. Thus, the failure to meet their social expectations leads to mistrust among each other and toward local self-government bodies and the project.

Inhabitants used to think that the enlargement would be a magic wand to immediately improve the conditions in which the population lives, but everything needs some time, and, I don't know, there needs to be a spark for some action to start. **Vayk, LSG representative**

There have been cases related to community works when villagers from Azatek said "why was our property sold and we didn't see where the money went, why wasn't it spent on our village?" And the head of the community says: "We have paid off some debt", "why should I be concerned about your debt? Why have you paid it off for the money you got for selling my barn?" and so he says "well, we are one community" and Vayk says "so what's my benefit to have joined the Vayk community?"... they have that view, the sense of inequality. **Vayk, inhabitant**

On the one hand, in the conditions of malfunctioning the transportation system, the public goods located in municipal centers become inaccessible to rural

13 Bourdieu, P. (1990) The logic of practice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

inhabitants. On the other hand, inhabitants of municipal centers are not connected to rural communities. The human resources of rural communities are often insufficient to meet the needs of educational institutions in rural communities, and teachers living in urban areas but working in rural areas have difficulty transporting from towns to villages. Therefore, this can lead to a loss of willingness of skilled professionals living in urban centers to work in rural areas, which may lead to unequal educational conditions and a sense of discrimination between rural and urban inhabitants.

...we have teachers coming from the town to the village, work here, it takes travel expenses, transportation: all that creates some issues with those teachers. Sometimes they say, there is a transport issue and we can't come and go every day... Haghartsin, inhabitant

Thus, the frustration of social-psychological needs and disappointment are observed among inhabitants as a result of the enlargement reform. In particular, inhabitants of small rural communities feel more discriminated against and isolated.

Peculiarities of organization of social relations and daily life

As a result of the community enlargement reform, socio-cultural transformations have taken place in people's inter-community relations, in everyday and employment practices. However, these changes are qualitatively and quantitatively different in Dilijan, Tumayan, and Vayk communities.

In the Dilijan community, the governance system and the relationship between people and the government has become less personal and less related to the personal qualities of the representatives of local self-government bodies.

In the past the connections of acquaintances and relatives used to work, the head of the village somehow managed to settle the matter, and now there are elected staff members in Dilijan who deal with all of that, and, naturally, they have to work by the law, and people don't like those who go by the law. There has always been discontent in this process. Dilijan, LSG representatives

On the other hand, in the Dilijan community, changes have happened in the employment practices of the people. Dilijan is a tourist town, which has also had an impact on the employment practices of rural communities.

Rural settlements of the Dilijan enlarged community start shifting from agriculture to the service sphere. For instance, people engaged in agriculture in the past are now staff members at municipalities, are engaged in tourism-related works, and so on.

At the same time, the municipal staff of the [community] center has been replenished at the expense of the village municipality. As such, we haven't had replenishments. Say, a person who used to deal with agricultural matters has now become a municipality staff member. Dilijan, LSG representative

I've noticed many plots of land were cultivated last year, but now they're not. To be honest, people leave their lands and leave for Yerevan for work. Haghartsin, inhabitant

In enlarged communities, the general community budget is formed with the taxes paid by inhabitants¹⁴. Thus, in the enlarged community of Tumanyan villages are in a more economically favorable position, as more people are living in urban centers than in rural settlements. After the enlargement, the quality of service provision has improved at the expense of the Tumanyan town budget, while the town has started to partially provide its financial resources to rural settlements.

Deindustrialization processes as a consequence of the closure of factories after the collapse of the Soviet Union on the one hand, and provision of financial resources to villages as a consequence of the enlargement reform, on the other hand, have contributed to the regression of social practices typical of urban life.

In some cases, people have started engaging in agriculture again in the absence of jobs. At the same time, non-formal relations have developed between the inhabitants of the community. People have started to solve problems through personal relationships, as is typical of rural communities.

Changes are noticeable in the village and nothing has changed in the town yet. There may be changes in the future, let's be optimistic that the town, too, has to develop more. There hasn't been any change in the town yet, everything is as it used to be: we're still working on the villages. Tumanyan, LSG representative

...I'll repeat myself: villages have benefited [from the reform], results are visible in villages: water lines, preschools were built in rural settlements, lighting infrastructure was set up. Some villages didn't have lighting infrastructure at all, roads to the mountains were repaired from time to time during the year... It can be said that their problems have been solved. Tumanyan, inhabitant

¹⁴ See: RA Government (2011): Concept of community enlargement and formation of intercommunity units. <http://www.mtad.am/files/docs/782.pdf>:

MAIN RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

The study of the transformations that have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural and urban communities as a result of the community enlargement reform shows that the reform had different effects on the enlarged communities of Dilijan, Tumanyan, and Vayk. As a result of the peculiarities of the spatial, formation, socio-historical development, and coexistence of the population in connected communities, different social, cultural, and governance practices have been formed.

This means that in the process of community enlargement it is necessary to take into account the spatial, historical, and other features of the population which are to be included in the newly formed communities.

Although almost five years have passed since the start of the enlargement reform, the rural and urban areas of the communities remain weakly connected in social, cultural, daily life, and other aspects, which is largely due to the lack of spatial infrastructure and, consequently, social practices.

As a result, inhabitants have failed to create social ties between each other within communities, to form a common identity, to create an atmosphere of trust in each other, in the governance system, in the representatives of local self-government bodies. As a consequence, many obstacles to the organization of coexistence arise in various spheres of governance and daily life.

Studying the experience of joint governance of post-Soviet cities and villages as a result of the community enlargement reform, according to economic development, socio-cultural transformations, and political influence, several types of coexistence can be distinguished. In the rural areas of the enlarged community of Dilijan, some manifestations of socio-cultural change are noticeable, which to some extent had economic consequences in the lives of the inhabitants.

Moreover, the political participation of rural inhabitants in community life has increased. This type of coexistence can be conventionally called “cooperative”.

In the Tumanyan community, rural areas have retained their former way of life, as in the absence of local self-government bodies, villagers have become less interested in political processes. However, due to enlargement, the

economic situation of rural areas has improved at the expense of the budget of Tumanyan city. It should be noted that in this case, the rural areas do not contribute to the economic development of the general community, to the increase of public goods.

Therefore, conditionally, this case can be called a “parasitic” type. As a result of enlargement, neither economic development nor socio-cultural change has taken place in rural communities in Vayk. Moreover, rural communities have lost their political influence. However, as a result of enlargement, the town also did not undergo cultural change or economic development. This type can be defined as “hindering each other”.

Given the differences in the types of rural and urban co-governance, it can be assumed that different manifestations are possible in other enlarged communities. It should be noted that the types described are pure forms that can be used to study enlargement processes in other communities.

Moreover, there arises a need for new empirical studies to understand the specifics of the types described, to validate and revise this approach, as well as to identify the features of enlargement in other communities.

SUGGESTIONS

Building a sense of community and trust is a necessity for building social solidarity between urban and rural settlements. Therefore, to create an atmosphere of general trust, it is first necessary to create spatial infrastructure, public places, and transport infrastructure, to promote the formation of inter-community associations, and to organize joint events.

On the other hand, a more accountable and transparent approach of local self-government bodies will create a sense of equality and justice, which will increase trust.

Moreover, to increase the atmosphere of trust, in parallel with the traditional means of communication, digital management technologies can also be introduced, the effectiveness of which is reflected in the Vayk community. However, it should be borne in mind that their use is not only a technological objective but also a social one.

Hence, therefore, their adaptation among the population should also be accompanied by the involvement of social scientists. So, when introducing administrative-territorial reforms, it is necessary to focus not only on the structural and administrative components but also, more importantly, on the population, from social expectations and values to transformations of behavioral-mental practices.

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THE FORMATION OF COMMUNITIES AS A SOCIAL-SPATIAL PRACTICE

Peculiarities of the community enlargement reform in the Republic of Armenia



The study of the transformations that have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural and urban communities as a result of the community enlargement reform shows that the reform had different effects on the enlarged communities of Dilijan, Tumanyan, and Vayk.



Although almost five years have passed since the start of the enlargement reform, the rural and urban areas of the communities remain weakly connected in social, cultural, daily life, and other aspects, which is largely due to the lack of spatial infrastructure and, consequently, social practices.



Building a sense of community and trust is a necessity for building social solidarity between urban and rural settlements.

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