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# The Role of Linguistic Resources in the Institutional Organisation of the Armenian Diaspora in Finland

Sonya Sahradyan and Maria Elo

**Abstract** This chapter presents a linguistic ethnographic case study exploring the role of linguistic resources in the institutional organisation of the Armenian diaspora within the Finnish context. Even though the Armenian diasporas across the globe have been extensively studied in various countries, relatively little research has been conducted on linguistic resources employed in the institutional organisation of the Armenian diasporas. In addition, to our knowledge, no single research has focused on the Armenian diaspora residing in Finland or organisational work done at the institutional level within the Finnish context. The study reported here attempts to address these gaps by drawing upon multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, more precisely, participant observations and informal interviews conducted with Armenian volunteers of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) promoting the organisation of the Armenian diaspora at the institutional level in Finland. To do so, we examine the landscape of the Armenian diaspora, which is shaped on the basis of different generations of historical and contemporary Armenian diasporas, who have increasingly diversified backgrounds regarding their migration grounds and legal statuses in

addition to their linguistic and socio-economic characteristics. Some activities, events and festivities arranged by the NGO are then described to illustrate organisational work done by the volunteers with the cooperation of individuals, institutions, associations and schools, apart from with the support of the Armenian diaspora based in Finland. Finally, we discuss linguistic resources that are used by the volunteers in organisational work carried out through internal and external communication within the offline and online contexts. Overall, the study findings indicate that the volunteers of the NGO make use of different linguistic repertoires in organisational work as not all the Armenian diaspora members master Armenian, which is the shared main language for the majority of them. The study, thus, confirms that linguistic, especially multilingual, resources promote the institutional organisation of the Armenian diaspora since linguistic diversity is commonplace among the diaspora members. This chapter contributes to understanding of how the diaspora can be organised at the institutional level through multiple linguistic resources that provides new insights into diaspora communities with little or no common language.

## 1 Introduction

Numerous scholars have paid particular attention to different global diasporas, for example, Indian, Jewish and Armenian, and how such diasporas form their activities and institutions in host settings (Bhat and Narayan 2010; Elo and Volovelsky 2017; Tölölyan 2005). Much has been written about the Armenian diasporas based in a wide range of countries, and academic studies have recently focused on contemporary Armenian diasporas in post-socialist Europe (Siekierski and Troebst 2016), which have been conducted, for instance, in Estonia (Davidjants 2016), Poland (Łotocki 2016), Bulgaria (Papazian-Tanielian 2016) and Russia (Dvatlov 2016). Most of these studies have investigated the organisational features and activities of the Armenian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whereas several of them have explored the Armenians' experiences of migration and settlement in the host country. Research on historical Armenian diasporas has also been carried out in European countries and the United States, and some of them have mainly concentrated on the Armenian migration history as well as on the Armenian community associations (see, e.g., Maciotti 2015; Stave 2015).

Thus, considerable research has been conducted on the Armenian diasporas and organisational structures through community associations across the globe; however, so far, no single research has studied the Armenian diaspora residing in Finland or organisational work done at the institutional level within the Finnish context. Instead of addressing this diaspora as one homogenous entity and actor, Vertovec's (2007) work and the concept of superdiversity support the need to address it in a more emic way; to capture a more in-depth and sophisticated picture of what such diaspora formation and organisation stands for inside the diaspora. This is particularly interesting in a context that is rather peripheral and not a main receiving country. After all, the Armenian diaspora ethnoscape involves also linguistic diversity and is subject to

host-contextual adaptations (cf. Appadurai 1996). Furthermore, linguistic resources employed in the institutional organisation of the Armenian diasporas have received relatively little attention in academic studies (cf. Blommaert 2013), but may be of instrumental value theoretically. The present chapter addresses these gaps in the literature and aims at finding answers to the following questions:

1. how is the Armenian diaspora shaped in Finland?
2. how is organisational work carried out at the institutional level?
3. how are linguistic resources employed in the institutional organisation of the Armenian diaspora?

The study presented here is conducted in the Finland-Armenia Association (Suomi-Armenia yhdistys ry in Finnish) located in Finland, and it focuses on organisational work carried out by the volunteers of the Association. Associations established by migrants and diasporans can be vital for shaping their engagement and fostering their economic participation both in home and host context (Orozco and Rouse 2012). In this chapter, both an association and NGO have the same meaning and refer to a non-profit organisation. The terms NGO and Association are used interchangeably and are related to the Finland-Armenia Association. In a similar vein, institutional organisation pertains to organisational work done at the institutional level within the NGO.

The rest of the chapter has the following structure. In Sects. 2 and 3, we review literature on the organisation of the diaspora and linguistic resources, respectively. Research approach, methods and participants are presented in Sect. 4. Afterwards, we analyse and discuss the research findings in the next three Sections. Finally, Sect. 8 reports conclusions of the study, followed by the implications for diaspora organising.

## 2 Literature on the Organisation of Diaspora

The organisation of diaspora can take place as a formal or informal process over time (Cohen 2008; Brinkerhoff 2009). For diaspora, size and time matters. Small diasporas in a host context have limitations of scale that influence their activities and organisational formation (e.g., Kuznetsov 2006). Most diaspora formations have politico-economic reasons and evolve gradually, but wars and crises also generate waves of migration that uproot and relocate societies as extensive communities (e.g., Cohen 2008; Elo and Vemuri 2016). The social life of diasporans, also in transnational space, usually triggers various networks and associations with numerous purposes as social movements within the diaspora emerge and generate such demands (e.g., Sökefeld 2006). The formation of diaspora as an organisational entity is often linked to factors such as common heritage, identity, language and geographical origin that provide a constellation of shared elements of life that constitute a link between diasporans in new contexts and the basis for the organisation of diaspora (cf. Elo and Hieta 2017; Elo and Vemuri 2016; Orozco and Rouse 2012). This organisation of activities fosters the development of informal and formal institutions in diaspora, often starting with social and religious activities. Interestingly, diasporas

tend to have particular “fragments” in the host context although the concept of ethnic enclaves dominates many debates, for example, in employing diaspora resources in entrepreneurship (cf. Dana 2007; Light et al. 1994). The place of origin, not just the country of origin is often relevant in such fragment-developments, for example, the post-Soviet Jewish diasporas across different host settings has largely organised itself based on networks from certain cities with linguistic particularities. In a similar vein, hometown associations may link activities between the host context and the context of origin having a more specific setting than the nation state level (Gitelman 2016; Orozco and Rouse 2012).

Vertovec (2007) coins such fragmentation as superdiversity, which brings complicated dynamics, while also changing the nature of “diaspora”, increasing the number of new, small and dispersed, multiple-origin, transnational, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified migrants and their groups. In other words, this term is introducing the diversification of diversity. Prior to this debate, the discussion was more interested on the diversification of the overall population via migration, but this concept has triggered the debate on the diversification inside the migrant population. Blommaert (2013) continues this research stream and highlights the respective development in terms of linguistic diversity, that also influences the way a dispersed “ethnos” and diaspora development can be built and maintained (cf. Elo and Vemuri 2016). Despite criticisms<sup>1</sup> of the concept of superdiversity, it demonstrates itself in many diaspora associations and their difficulties (cf. Brinkerhoff 2009, 2011).

Commonality and diversity of linguistics has socio-political importance for diasporas (e.g., Darden and Mylonas 2016). Multiple languages generate difficulties and complications in communication across different settings (e.g., Jørgensen et al. 2011), but multilingualism as such is also a cultural asset for a diaspora and part of the heritage value, for example, for the Russian Jewish diaspora or the Finnish-Nordic diaspora (cf. Elo and Hieta 2017; Myhill 2004). Languages unite and divide, but the language use of a diaspora can also be one framing indicating streams of development and orientations of diasporic activity (cf. Romanov 2000). Diaspora associations are like any other institutions and organisations with functions and activities that are communicated using language as a tool. Thus, common goals, strategies, missions and toolboxes are developed, and here diasporans have specific characteristics in terms of perspectives, capabilities and motivations that have also been found in organising transnational business and entrepreneurial activities across nation state and linguistic boundaries (cf. Riddle and Brinkerhoff 2011; Riddle et al. 2010). Time allows development and learning, but also unlearning to take place. Language and diaspora are thus interlinked and dynamic concepts that coevolve and influence each other (cf. Canagarajah 2017; Landau 1986; Rosa and Trivedi 2017). In sum, the linguistic constellation and capabilities of a diaspora forms a significant resource for it, a part of the human resource pool that the diaspora may tap into (Newland and Tanaka 2010).

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<sup>1</sup>See more on criticism of the concept of superdiversity in Meissner, F. (2015). Migration in migration-related diversity? The nexus between superdiversity and migration studies. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(4), 556–567, and Ndhlovu, F. (2016). A decolonial critique of diaspora identity theories and the notion of superdiversity. *Diaspora Studies*, 9(1), 28–40.

Interestingly, the organisation of diaspora seems to face common challenges across diasporas and host contexts- beyond the size of the diaspora, its heterogeneity and superdiversity, and its linguistic divides. One of the issues is the plurality of the diaspora setting in a location, as certain homophily<sup>2</sup> is favourable for fostering diasporic relations and trust creation on the intra-diaspora level (e.g., Chand and Tung 2011; Titzmann et al. 2007). Another related issue is the proximity among them, as a spatial closeness and an adequate number of members are needed for the development of organisation of diaspora. Further, that might also be connected to the need of forming an association on an attractive location with proximity to livelihood and prosperity generation (e.g., Petet 2007; Simonyan 2013). This makes the physical location relevant.

Contemporary diaspora formation and organisation also takes place in the digital space reducing, but not removing, the meaning of this geographical proximity (Brinkerhoff 2009; Minto-Coy 2011). After all, many diaspora associations are built to serve an active, physical community of children, families, diasporic consumers and other members, not some virtual markets. In parallel to rather defined traditional associations for folklore dances and religious festivities, diaspora associations per se develop and take new forms and cooperate with various actors across home-host contexts, making the landscape of diaspora associations more complicated and multifaceted, in fact, broadening the context from physical to digital (cf. Brinkerhoff 2009; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011). The digital space has also facilitated the formation of irregular and negative activities among and between diaspora as an illicit form of organisation, for example, transnational organisation in smuggling and counterfeit business (e.g., Gillespie and McBride 2013).

Diaspora associations, whether focusing on host or home country issues, are often grassroot level associations, even informal ones, that concentrate on cultural, social or economic benefits. Economic formations refer to diaspora business, supply chain management, ethnic economy and diaspora entrepreneurship development (e.g., Kuznetsov and Sabel 2006; Elo and Volovelsky 2017). Beyond the cultural events that seems to have often a very central role in diaspora associations in terms of visible activities, there is also a plethora of various religious and business relations that are covered by diaspora associations. The visible cultural aspect of the organisation of diaspora, for example, folk dance festivals, food markets and culinary events, religious temples and festivities, parades and other public events attract attention as part of the cultural life in “superdiverse” cities, like New York, but the organisational forms and hierarchies behind such activities have not attracted much attention in research. There is very little understanding on the actual formation of associations per se and their organisational work, that is, structures and strategies. Both hierarchical and heterarchical diaspora associations, depending on their purpose, structure and ownership, have been documented in the past (Hall 2009). Yet the linguistic organisation and development of diaspora associations remains underexplored. The linguistic diversity of diaspora associations has black-box characteristics explaining and predicting behaviors and conveying knowledge, but most

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<sup>2</sup>Homophily refers to the principle that a contact between similar people, here of similar heritage or origin, occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people, i.e. people of diverse backgrounds.

importantly, it is a key resource for diaspora associations universally (cf. Blommaert 2013). The linguistic diversity and its management creates potential divides fostering the notion of internal-external and belongingness.

### 3 A Conceptual Framework Based on Linguistic Resources

Research into resources has a long history; nevertheless, there is no consensus regarding the definition of this concept (cf. Barney 2001). In international business studies, the resource-based view has been widely applied and is considered to explain competitive advantage of actors over other actors (Barney 2001). In fact, the concept of resources was originally coined by Hymes in 1996, and it has been extensively used in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. This concept has further developed by other scholars, for example, Blommaert (2005, 2010), who has investigated linguistic resources (e.g., language varieties, dialects, registers, genres, or levels of usage). Like Hymes (1996), Blommaert (2010, p. 5) reports that linguistic resources are usually employed “in real sociocultural, historical and political contexts”. In the words of Blommaert (2010, p. 12), linguistic resources have “the indexical value . . . in certain spaces and situations”, which occur in a particular timeframe. Similarly, Heller (2007, p. 1) indicates that “speakers draw on linguistic resources which are organised in ways that make sense under specific social conditions”. Consequently, different linguistic resources are used in different places and times. These time-space configurations affect the usage of linguistic resources in different regions, namely front region and back region (Goffman 1959; Blommaert and De Fina 2017), in which a variety of interactions and activities take place. For the purpose of this chapter, we are interested in studying linguistic resources and, in particular, linguistic repertoires deployed in organisational work done in both back and front regions within offline and online settings. To be more specific, the back region refers to internal communication, and the front region concerns external communication.

The notion of linguistic repertoire, which was introduced by Gumperz in 1964, has a close connection to linguistic resources. This notion refers to both individuals and groups (Platt and Platt 1975), and it is defined as “the totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members” engaged in communities (Gumperz 1972/1986, pp. 20–21). The concept of linguistic repertoire is associated with speech community (see, e.g., Hymes 1996), which is also called linguistic community (see e.g., Gumperz 1962). Even though speech community concerns monolingual communities, different ways of speaking can be used within these communities (Hymes 1974). In the case of linguistic community, it mostly focuses on social groups that can be monolingual, as well as multilingual (Gumperz 1962, 1968). In a similar vein, different new notions or concepts have also been introduced, and one of them is adopted in this chapter: community of practice—a group of people who share a common interest and participate in communal activities organised in various settings. This definition is drawn from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), who first proposed the concept and then renamed it as communities of practice.

## 4 Research Approach, Methods and Participants

For this qualitative research, a case study approach is chosen as the research design because it is suitable for the understanding of a complex real-life phenomenon and its interpretation (Dörnyei 2007; Welch et al. 2011). A qualitative approach allows the generation of rich and in-depth data required (Welch et al. 2011). The research strategy is descriptive (the case NGO) and explorative (linguistic resources in use). The methodological framework is based on linguistic ethnography (Copland and Creese 2015; Rampton et al. 2014), which combines linguistic and ethnographic approaches to study social and communicative processes happening in various contexts.

The research includes different types of multilingual data collected through multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, which were conducted among the Armenian diaspora community involved in a number of activities, events and festivities organised by the Finland-Armenia Association based in Finland. The data collection and analysis was carried out by an Armenian for improved quality (Salmi 2011). Moreover, informal interviews were conducted with the key participants, who were volunteering in the Association and were engaged in organisational work. Thus, the description and analysis of findings are based on the informal interviews and observational data gathered from the offline and online settings of the NGO. Narrative analysis (Riessman 2008) is employed to analyse the multilingual data accumulated in Armenian, Finnish, English and Russian in 2014–2016.

The key participants (n=5) presented in this chapter were Armenians who lived in different cities in Finland. At the time of ethnographic fieldwork, they were volunteering in the NGO and supporting the organisation of the Armenian diaspora at the institutional level. The participants were between 36 and 40 years old, of whom two were female and three were male. They had resided in Finland for between 4 and 20 years. All the participants were multilingual; their main language was Eastern or Western Armenian, and they also mastered Finnish, English, Russian, Arabic, French and/or Hungarian. Pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The research data is part of a larger research project and its collection, use and archiving are subject to the rules by Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.<sup>3</sup>

## 5 Landscape of the Armenian Diaspora in Finland

The Armenian diaspora is one of the oldest and largest Diasporas in the world, and the Armenians reside in nearly every country, including Finland. The history of Armenian migration to Finland is rather short compared to most of other countries, but the Armenians living in Finland also have diverse linguistic backgrounds as in

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<sup>3</sup>See more in <http://www.tenk.fi/en/ethical-review-in-human-sciences>



most of other places around the globe. In fact, Armenian-Finnish relations were established in the 17th century, when Finland was an integral part of Sweden. However, a relatively small number of Armenians resided in Finland until the late 20th century; the number of Armenians started to increase from the beginning of the 1990s (Leitzinger 2009). The official statistics show that the number of Armenian-speaking persons was 17 in 1990, and by 2016, it increased to 295 (Statistics Finland 2016). The official statistics on the language background of foreigners are usually produced from the information provided by the Finnish Population Information System, where foreigners' data are entered after their registration with the Local Register Office (Maistraatti in Finnish).

However, the internal estimations made by the NGO illustrates that the number of Armenians living in Finland were about two times higher than the figure shown in the official statistics. This difference can be explained by the fact that foreigners who stay in Finland for at least one year have to register with the Local Register Office, where they can inform only one language (see Local Register Offices 2017). A further complexity in assessing the linguistic heritage and diversity (cf. Vertovec 2007) relates to these limitations in registering. As the Armenians moved to Finland not only from Armenia but also from other countries, they might have more than one main language, but they have to register one of them. Moreover, the Armenians might not register the Armenian language because they had not had an opportunity to learn Armenian in other countries where they had lived before migration to Finland. They are Diaspora Armenians (Spyurkahayer), who belong to the historical Armenian diaspora. The parents or grandparents of Diaspora Armenians had to spread to numerous countries because of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, which was the major reason for the establishment of the historical Armenian diaspora all over the world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the contemporary Armenian diaspora was formed, and it included Armenians from the homeland, Armenia. The contemporary Armenian diaspora also encompassed Armenians from former Soviet Republics who might have no or little knowledge of Armenian. In brief, the whole picture about the Armenians living in Finland cannot be captured on the basis of the language background data. In other European countries, there are considerable differences between official and unofficial numbers as well, which illustrates "the internal diversity of the Armenian population" and indicates that it "much depends on who counts and who is counted" (Siekierski 2016a, p. 19).

In general, both historical and contemporary Armenian diasporas have settled down in Finland, as in many other countries, due to a wide range of push and pull factors. The major push factor for the resettlement of the historical Armenia diaspora was a war in different Middle East countries, for example, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and nowadays Syria (Tölölyan 2014). In the case of the contemporary Armenian diaspora, the push factors were the devastating earthquake of 1988 in Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1988–1994, and the challenging socio-economic conditions, which arose not only after the above-mentioned events but also after the breakup of the Soviet Union (Łotocki 2016). In addition to the push factors, there was also a variety of pull factors that foster the migration of Armenians to Finland, including marriage, family reunification, better working conditions and the world-renowned Finnish education system. In other

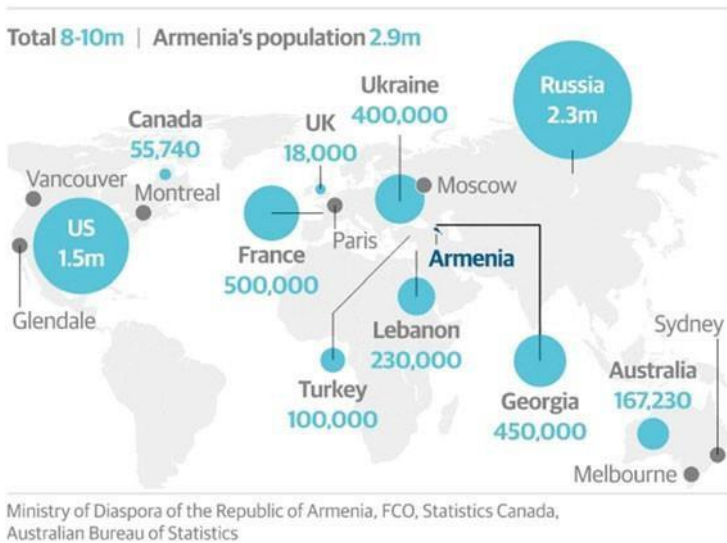


Fig. 1 Number of Armenians living outside Armenia (reproduced from Ghazanchyan 2015)

words, they came as asylum seekers, quota refugees, family members, workers or students and have, therefore, different migration grounds and legal statuses in the receiving country. Furthermore, members of the Armenian diaspora represented different generations in Finland, and the majority of them were adults. According to the classification of generations suggested by Rumbaut (2004), they could be classified into 6 generations: 1.0 (adult age, 18 and over), 1.25 (teenage, 13–17), 1.5 (primary school age, 6–12), 1.75 (preschool age, 0–5), 2.0 (born in the country, with both parents born abroad) and 2.5 (born in the country, with one parent born in the country). The Armenian diaspora members were also heterogeneous regarding other characteristics, for example, gender, education, work experience and marital status. Thus, it appears that the landscape of the Armenian diaspora is shaped on the basis of various generations of historical and contemporary Armenian diasporas, which are spread around the world (see more in Fig. 1). It is also obvious that members of the Armenian diaspora have increasingly diversified backgrounds in terms of their migration grounds and legal statuses in addition to their linguistic and socio-economic characteristics. All in all, the multidimensionality of diversity, that is, superdiversity (see, e.g., Vertovec 2007) is clearly noticeable among members of the Armenian diaspora based in Finland.

## 6 Mapping Organisational Work at the Institutional Level

In Finland, the organisation of the Armenian diaspora has started at the institutional level since the beginning of the 1990s by the Association of Finland-Armenia Culture Society (Suomi-Armenia kulttuuriseura in Finnish), which was registered in 1993 and

engaged in organising various cultural events for a few years. Afterwards, several Armenian families arranged different get-togethers to bring and keep members of the Armenian diaspora together in the host country. In 2005, the Finland-Armenia Association (Suomi-Armenia yhdistys ry in Finnish) was established and registered in Finland, but the activity of the Association has commenced since 2013. The Armenian Apostolic Church Community (Armenialainen Apostolinen Kirkko Yhdyskunta in Finnish) has also started to form in Finland since 2015, and it was registered as an association in 2016. The Finland-Armenia Association and the Armenian Apostolic Church Community usually collaborate in the organisation of the Armenian diaspora within the Finnish context. The former is mainly educationally and culturally oriented, whereas the latter has a religious orientation.

This chapter addresses the activity of the Finland-Armenia Association, which serves as not only a friendship but also a diaspora association. As a friendship association, it fosters the strengthening of friendship and cultural ties between Armenians and Finns; contributes the enhancement of good relations and mutual cooperation between Armenia and Finland; and supports in sharing information and opinions concerning both countries. In the case of a diaspora association, it promotes the maintenance of the Armenian identity, language, culture and history among the Armenian diaspora members; supports the presentation of Armenian history, culture and tradition within the Finnish context; and contributes to the development of strong links and connections of the Armenian diaspora based in Finland with the homeland—Armenia—and with the Armenian diasporas across the globe. The primary objectives of the diaspora association mentioned above are presented and discussed here.

The activity of the Association is based on voluntary work, and it is mostly done by the Armenian volunteers. The Association operates at a national level, and the members live in different parts of Finland, especially in cities such as Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kotka, Turku, Tampere, Oulu, Porvoo and Jyväskylä (see Fig. 2). The majority of members of the NGO represent various generations of historical and contemporary Armenian diasporas with different linguistic backgrounds (see the previous section). Also, some Finns and migrants from various counties are involved in the Association as members, and they are family members of Armenians or individuals who are connected to or are interested in Armenia and the Armenian history and culture. The Association has, therefore, linguistically heterogeneous members with diverse backgrounds.

From 2014, the Finland-Armenia Association started organising the Armenian language club for children with an Armenian background living in Finland. At the beginning, the Armenian language club was not arranged regularly due to the lack of teaching materials and an Armenian language teacher. These challenges were overcome with the help of the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, which provided all the necessary teaching materials. Moreover, the volunteer of the NGO acting as a teacher could take part in the training course organised for Armenian language teachers within the framework of the Diaspora Summer School Program implemented by the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia. This summer school supported the volunteer teacher in developing her skills and

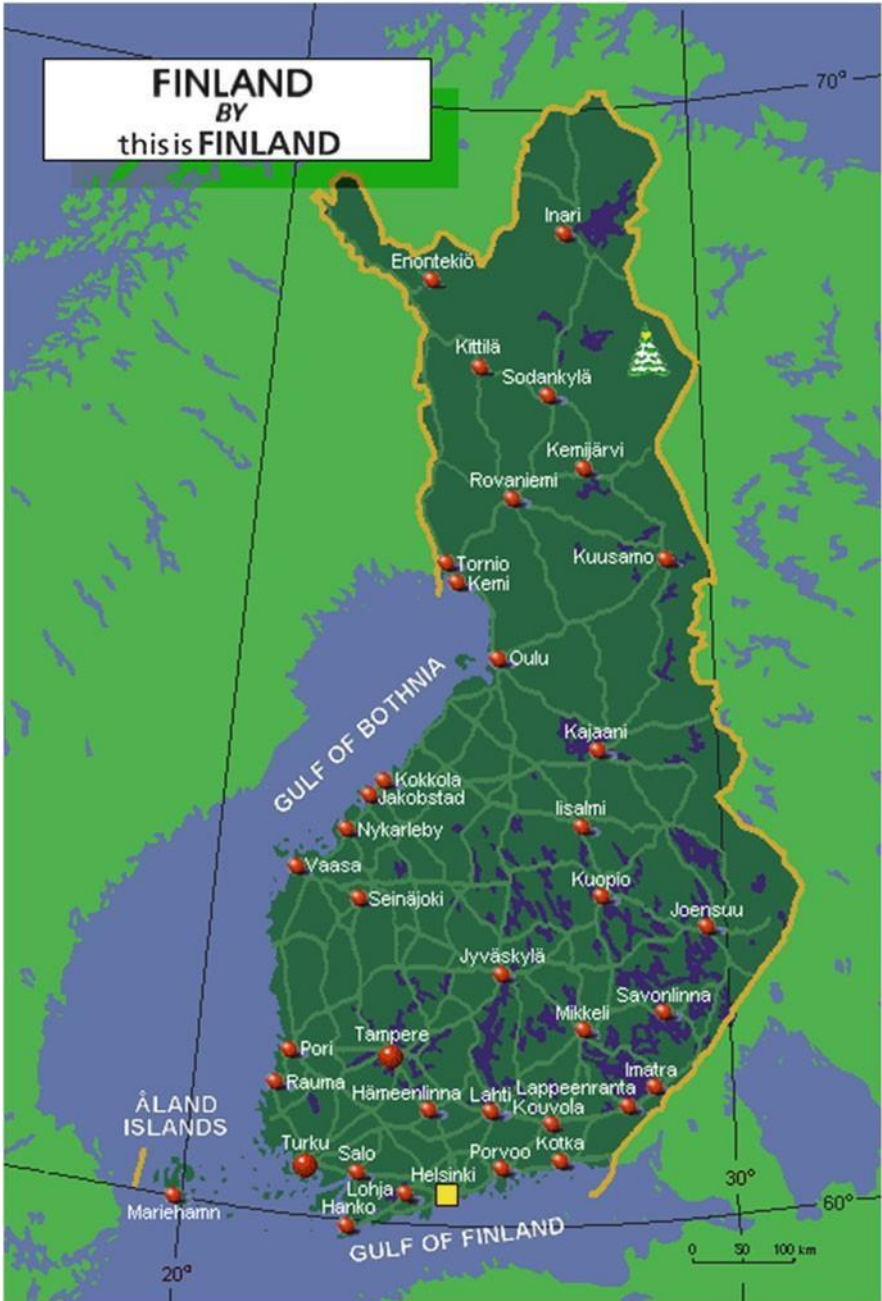


Fig. 2 Map of Finland (reproduced from thisisFINLAND 2014)

competences in teaching the Armenian language, and this point is presented in her narrative: *I could gain useful knowledge and skills related to the Armenian language teaching. I also had an opportunity to meet with teachers from different Armenian diaspora communities and to learn from their experiences* (Ani). Regarding the Armenian language club, she also commented as follows:

Our primary goal is to help children learn the Armenian language and maintain the Armenian identity . . . Most of children learn and speak Armenian at home, so they mainly learn how to read and write in Armenian during the classes (Ani).

The narrative quoted above show that the Association supports the next generation of Armenians in learning the Armenian language so that they can preserve their heritage language and identity, which is also highlighted in various studies carried out in different Armenian diaspora communities and associations (see, e.g., Chaloyan 2015; Davidjants 2016). What is also important is that the NGO collaborates with secondary schools and migrant associations located in Finland, which usually provide a space for organising the Armenian language club. Furthermore, the Association expands its cooperation with the Armenian language clubs and schools arranged by the Armenian diasopras based in other countries, for example, Estonia and Russia to exchange of experiences and to share practices related to the Armenian language learning and teaching.

In April 2014 and 2015, the Finland-Armenia Association with the Armenian diaspora residing in Finland held memorial events to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. For the 100th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the volunteers of the Association supported in the organisation of the concert, exhibition and book presentation with the cooperation of the Embassy of Armenia to Finland and the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra on April 11, 2015. The concert of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centenary took place at the Tampere Hall. The concert was organised under the motto of “I remember and demand”, followed by the exhibition called “The Armenian Genocide and Scandinavian Response”. The presentation of new books on the Armenian Genocide was held within the framework of the exhibition: “The Silenced Voices” book written by the Finnish priest and professor Serafim Seppälä and the Finnish translation of “Armenian Golgotha”, a book written by Grigoris Balakian. Regarding the presentation of the Armenian history in Finland, one of the volunteers gave the following comment during the exhibition:

Today we could present the history of Armenia and Armenians to the Finnish society, which does not know much about it yet, so we need to continue our efforts in addressing this issue through various activities and events of the Association (Ruben).

In sum, as other Armenian Associations across the globe, the Finland-Armenia Association also strongly contributes to the presentation of the Armenian history to bring worldwide attention to the Armenian Genocide so that it will never happen again in any country (see, e.g., Asatryan 2016; Papazian-Tanielian 2016).

In addition, the Finland-Armenia Association organised various festivities, among which were the Independence Day of Armenia (September 21), the International Women’s Day (March 8), and Motherhood and Beauty Day (April 7). For

example, the 25th anniversary of Independence of Armenia was celebrated in Helsinki in 2016, which started with the national anthem of Armenia, and then the Chairperson of the Finland-Armenia Association gave a speech on Armenia and Armenians. Afterwards, the paintings done by the Armenian children were presented in the exhibition called “The Homeland through My Eyes”, followed by the showing of photos entitled “Instants in Armenia” and a film “On the roads of Armenia”. At the end of the festivity, the musicians invited from the Armenian diaspora based in Estonia performed the Armenian folk music and created an Armenian cultural atmosphere. From the above description, it seems that the festivity carried out by the NGO fosters passing the image of homeland and the feeling of connections with Armenia through generations (cf. Chaloyan 2015).

For the children, the Association also arranged the pre-Christmas party (Pikkujoulu in Finnish) and the end of the School Year ceremony in which children sang, danced, recited poems and/or played musical instruments such as piano, violin, flute and clarinet. Before the establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church Community, the NGO celebrated the traditional religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter as well. In these and other festivities, attendees were mainly members of the Armenian diaspora residing in Finland as well as Finns and migrants from different countries. The attendees usually came with their families and brought traditional dishes and cookies with them. The Armenians living in other countries sometimes take part in the festivities organised by the NGO as well. One of the volunteers, who was actively involved in organising various festivities, described as:

We usually invite Armenians from different parts of Finland to participate in the festivities that we organise here. . . . Sometimes we also invite Armenians from other countries. . . . Through these festivities, we want to promote the maintenance of the Armenian culture as well as the formation of social networks among Armenians living in Finland and other countries (Laura).

Thus, these and other activities, events and festivities organised by the NGO play an important role in the preservation of the Armenian identity, culture, language and history in the host society (cf. Siekierski and Troebst 2016). Furthermore, they as “the formal transnational fields” support not only becoming aquatinted but also keeping connections with the Armenian diaspora members living in the receiving country (Chaloyan 2015, p. 112). They also bring together members of the Armenian diasporas residing in different countries and promote their involvement in “the wider diasporic network” (Siekierski 2016b, p. 207). Overall, it seems that the activities, events and festivities are organised with the cooperation of institutions, associations, schools and members of the Armenian diaspora. As one of volunteers puts it: *Cooperation is a key driving force for the Finland-Armenia Association, and we want to increase it [cooperation] and to make it [cooperation] more effective and productive in our Association* (Aram).

## 7 Linguistic Resources Employed in the Institutional Organisation of the Armenian Diaspora

From 2014 to 2016, the active members of the NGO acted as volunteers and organised a variety of activities, events and festivities, which were planned and prepared through face-to-face or virtual meetings, phone calls, emails and Facebook group chats, that is, via internal communication. In planning and preparation processes, the volunteers employed not only Western and Eastern Armenian but also Finnish, English and Russian, illustrating linguistic diversity in diasporic action (cf. Blommaert 2013). In fact, the volunteers often employed Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian, which are two standardized forms of the Armenian language, and one of the volunteers gave the following comment regarding the usage of Western and Eastern Armenian in internal communication:

During our event preparations and discussions, the volunteers who were born and grew up in Armenia employ Eastern Armenian, and the volunteers who were born and grew up outside Armenia employ Western Armenian . . . It usually does not create any difficulties as Western and Eastern Armenian has the same alphabet, only spelling and pronunciation are a bit different(Garegin).

What is also interesting is that the volunteers drew upon their multilingual repertoires in internal communication because they got used to it in daily language use, and this is a typical comment made by most of them: *I usually use different languages, for example, Armenian together with Finnish, English or Russian in everyday situations, so I do the same in our organisational work* (Ruben). This implies that the usage of multilingual repertoires is a distinctive characteristic of contemporary life (Pöyhönen et al. 2018), and it is a central aspect in organisational work done through internal communication within offline and online contexts.

For the dissemination of information about activities, events and festivities, the announcements were mainly posted on social media sites, such as Facebook, a platform for the organisation of communities (Seargeant and Caroline 2014). The announcements were posted on the Facebook group page created by the volunteers. At the beginning, the group was closed for the outsiders, but later it became a public group so that everyone interested could join the group, regardless of membership to the Association.

In general, the volunteers employed different linguistic repertoires in making announcements that were disseminated through the Facebook group page as well as on-site, more specifically, via external communication. In the case of Armenian, the announcements were mainly provided in Eastern Armenian because most of the volunteers mastered Eastern Armenian, and they did not have knowledge and experience of writing in Western Armenian. Eastern Armenian was spoken by members of the contemporary Armenian diaspora who migrated to Finland from Armenia, where Eastern Armenian is the official language. Western Armenian was spoken by the historical Armenian diaspora members who moved to Finland from other countries, for example, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey and Syria. Actually, the majority of Armenians read or write Western/Eastern Armenian as they studied the Armenian

language at school, and some of them can read or write Western/Eastern Armenian only with the Roman or Cyrillic letters as they learnt the language from parents and grandparents at home. Meanwhile a few Armenians have no or very little knowledge of spoken and written Western/Eastern Armenian because of various circumstances related to the pre- and/or post-migration life.

Therefore, in addition to Armenian, Finnish and/or English were utilised in the announcements so that all the members of the Armenian diaspora could get information and could participate in the community life. More specifically, information was prepared and posted on Facebook in Armenian along with Finnish and/or English because some Armenian diaspora members did not know Armenian or they knew little Armenian since they were born and raised in different countries. Some of them were newly arrived Armenians and mastered English but not Finnish, and the others were early arrived Armenians and could communicate in Finnish. Concerning the announcements, another volunteer commented as follows: *Several times the announcements were posted only in Armenian, but almost all the time the members asked to give information in other languages as they could not understand what about the announcements were* (Aram). What is remarkable here is that utilising only Armenian in the announcements would not be enough as members of the Armenian diaspora have diverse linguistic backgrounds, and a common narrative regarding the usage of multiple linguistic resources is presented below:

We mainly use Armenian, our language, but we also use other languages because we want to bring together all the members of our Armenian community who have various language backgrounds, we want the Armenians who have no or little knowledge of Armenian to be with us and one of us (Laura).

From this narrative, it is obvious that the volunteers employ different linguistic repertoires so that all the Armenians can be informed and involved in the Armenian community, even though they do not have the shared main language, and in this case Armenian. This kind of language situation is exemplified in the study conducted by Galstyan (2014) in which she reports that not all members of the Armenian diaspora in the Netherlands master the shared main language, Armenian, as well. Meanwhile, the study shows that either the language of the host country or the language of the home country is mostly employed in Armenian community associations. However, the organisational work done in this way excludes some Armenians from the diaspora as not everyone knows “either/or” language chosen by associations.

Judging from the linguistic diversity presented above, it seems that not all the Armenian diaspora members know the Armenian language due to a variety of migration experiences and circumstances. Therefore, it is important and necessary to employ “multilingual resources and repertoires” as they are “crucial capital for successful communication, action and interaction” (Leppänen and Peuronen 2012, p. 389) within communities. In addition, the usage of multiple linguistic resources was also needed as the Finns and migrants with different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were involved in the Armenian community as well, and they were mostly family members or friends of Armenians representing both the historical and contemporary Armenia diasporas. Hence, it appears that the volunteers’ multilingual



repertoires enable them to be engaged in organisational work done through external communication, which usually take place in both offline and online settings. It is also evident that the community practises have no given homogenous basis linguistically or spatio-temporally.

## 8 Conclusion and Implications for Diaspora Organising

In this chapter, we have presented how the Armenian diaspora is shaped within the Finnish context. The findings show that the Armenian diaspora was established and evolved over time due to various waves of Armenian migration. The Armenian diaspora in Finland includes different generations of historical and contemporary Armenian diasporas who came from Armenia as well as from other countries around the world. In addition to their linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, their migration grounds and legal statuses were also considerably diverse. This shows that the multidimensional diversity exists inside the Armenian diaspora, which can be described as superdiverse (Vertovec 2007). Based on the internal estimates of the NGO, it is also revealed that the number of Armenians living in Finland was approximately twice higher compared to the number of Armenian-speaking persons ( $n = 295$ ) reported in the official statistics of Finland for the year 2016. This implies that the accurate number of Armenians cannot be provided on the basis of the official statistics on the language background data, which exclude not only Armenians who do not master the Armenian language but also Armenians who have more than one main language or have little proficiency in the Armenian language. In other words, demographic dimensions and, in this case language, cannot provide the accurate numbers as societies are becoming unpredictable and more diverse (Pöyhönen et al. 2018). Overall, the landscape of the Armenian diaspora in Finland represents a small number compared to the historical and global Armenian diasporas residing in different parts of the world, underlining the meaning of diaspora size. However, as in most of countries around the world, the Armenians diaspora members in Finland have linguistically heterogeneous backgrounds as well.

The organisational work carried out by the Finland-Armenia Association has been analysed illustrating the use of multilingual repertoires that are both a resource and a result of complexity stemming from the diverse diaspora members. The findings indicate that organisational work of activities, events and festivities was mainly done with the support of the Armenian diaspora residing in Finland. For the institutional organisation of the Armenian diaspora, the NGO also collaborated with a number of individuals, institutions, schools and associations based in Finland, Armenia and other countries. From the findings, it is also obvious that through these activities, events and festivities the Association promotes the maintenance of the Armenian identity, language, culture and history in the receiving society. Furthermore, they contribute to the strengthening of links and connections of the Armenian diaspora in Finland with the homeland on the one hand, and with the Armenia diasporas around the world on the other. Thus, activities, events and festivities are important instruments in shaping and maintaining the diaspora even in such remote locations.

We have also reported how linguistic resources are employed in the organisation of the Armenian diaspora at the institutional level. The findings presented in the previous section illustrate that Eastern Armenian alongside Finnish and/or English utilised in external communication, whereas Eastern/Western Armenian together with Finnish, English and Russian were used in internal communication. Actually, internal communication was related to planning and preparing activities, events and festivities and was done through face-to-face or virtual meetings, phone calls, emails and Facebook group chats. External communication concerned the dissemination of information relating to these activities, events and festivities about which the announcements were posted on the Facebook group page or provided on-site. Thus, the findings illustrate that the Association's volunteers usually employed multilingual repertoires in organisational work, which they carried out via internal and external communication within both online and offline contexts. Taken together, these findings seem to confirm the importance of using multilingual resources in the organisation of the Armenian diaspora as not all the members can communicate in Armenian, the shared main language of the majority of the diaspora members.

The findings discussed above provide new insights into diaspora communities with little or no common language, and, therefore, contribute to a better understanding of the institutional organisation of the diaspora through multilingual resources. This contribution illustrating both sides of the linguistic token might be vital not only for the Armenian diasporas residing in various countries but also for other diasporas across the globe. This suggests that policymaking and diaspora organisational management need to consider the linguistic resources and diversity degree of the diasporans when creating framings for their activities. The findings, however, do not illustrate how different linguistic resources are chosen and used along with semiotic resources in organisational work within offline and online settings of the NGO. Further studies should, therefore, be conducted to explore language policies and communication practices in the organisation of diaspora at the institutional level.

Theoretically, these findings point out a key weakness of diaspora theory assumptions regarding linguistic capabilities, since not all Armenians possess similar linguistic resources. Further, they suggest that diaspora networks and communities may face challenges related to their inherent diversity when forming formal institutions and associations. The concept of homophily (cf. Titzmann et al. 2007) and trust building in diaspora (Chand and Tung 2011) can be impeded by such high diversity (cf. Blommaert 2013; Vertovec 2007) resulting in different kind of diaspora formation and organisation than that of a more homogeneous diaspora. Thus, the idiographic nature of diasporas needs acknowledgment particularly for research and analysis, while the "all in one bucket"-diaspora approaches can be questioned in research, policymaking and management.

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