



Develop Armenia Program
July 17 - August 11, 2010
Armenia

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1. Overview

Together for *Develop Armenia*, together for the *Armenian World*.

Real discovery is an intimate encounter, based on a global awareness. Important discoveries need to be shared with the world, tested, and appropriated. Luys Scholars gather in Armenia and share their acquired knowledge with a wide range of communities from the Armenian Diaspora and the Armenian homeland.

The goal of the LUYS team is to create a *transformational experience*. Powerful ideas and powerful learning are transformational.

We want the *Develop Armenia* Program and the Luys initiatives to be transformative for the overall learning environment. We do not want to see only small incremental improvements. Rather, we hope to achieve the lofty goals and realize the promise of technology to open up new pathways for children and our communities. This will be the overarching goal for all of us during this summer. Our challenge will be to discover how to achieve this.

2. Mission

***Develop Armenia* - offers a place and programs where best practices can be drawn together through collaborative work.**

Our contemporary world's knowledge-based economy demands rapid and continuous appropriation of new Knowledge domains and implementation of best practices.

The central task of *Develop Armenia* is to learn how to recognize and continuously appropriate new knowledge and skills and put this into practice through concrete programs. The *Develop Armenia* program aims to hold within itself the variety and complexity of our world on a small scale.

Rather than replicate the existing institutions worldwide concerned with learning, (for example, in corporations, research labs, universities, schools, conference and seminar centers), our goal is to integrate learning into the cultural milieu and productive life of people.

It is necessary to accompany technology transfer with the transfer of the culture of how to use the technology – the know-how and the new practices. In fact, a culture is not transferred, but reconstituted within an existing historical and economy context.

The Luys scholars will gather in Armenia and live for a couple of weeks with small communities spread throughout the country. They will have a chance to rediscover Armenia, by listening to people and thinking with the local communities. They will then design projects that carry the wealth of the knowledge they have acquired abroad and apply their knowledge to the reality and the needs of the local communities they have started to discover.

Notes

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3. Background Information

3.1 Building a Networked Armenian World

Participants in Luys Programs find themselves in an international group of thinkers and doers, where diverse perspectives enrich each other and cross-fertilize. Opportunities exist on all sides for direct engagement with other ways of seeing the world.

People will have a chance to share a common environment for working, and thinking together, and open their mentalities in unforeseen ways. Luys is built on the recognition that the art of sociability is the necessary context for any genuine collaboration.

Luys builds a network of networks, knitting together "invisible colleges" of researchers, policy-makers, and entrepreneurs in a rich range of fields. Each participant is invited to propose projects and collaborate on projects that will benefit Armenia.

3.2 Learning Methodology for the Luys Workshops: Introducing "Constructionist Learning"

People learn most effectively when they construct their own knowledge on the basis of self-motivated experiences that have meaning in their own lives. This is what is meant by Constructionist Learning. This form of learning is non-hierarchical by nature – a collaborative effort where people are by turns learners and teachers, old hands and new explorers.

Even experts see their knowledge deepened and extended by the freshness of the novices. At Luys we want to work at recognizing the existing best practices and building from there.

3.3 On-Demand Learning: A Response to the Need of Armenia's Youth

The *Develop Armenia* program is a response to the twin crises in education and industry. In both schools and the workplace, learning is often separated from doing. In schools, students do not have authentic production experiences; in industry, workers too often do not have authentic learning experiences.

The future effectiveness of schools and competitiveness of businesses will increasingly require links between production and learning, through which real skills are constructed.

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3.4 How to Bring about Change

The Develop Armenia program is designed to create, support, study and improve the learning and doing environments we desire for our communities. By the end of summer the participants should have a better understanding about:

- How to design projects that promote learning in action
- The innovative learning communities they wish to create
- Long-term projects and activities to implement
- Technological tools to use
- Technological tools to design and create

We will try to focus on the more practical matter of how to bring about change. We will collaborate at a more micro level not only in terms of interacting with learners, but also in terms of the project themes proposed by Luys scholars. Here too we hope participants will form networks of collaborators to continue the work, the research and the discussions after they return to their universities. We plan to introduce tools and methods for long-term remote collaboration.

3.5 - An Open Learning Community

The Luys community thinks of the *Develop Armenia* Program as an open learning community with participants engaged in a variety of activities. We do not have in mind a number of classrooms with groups divided in particular ways (e.g. age, speciality etc.). Rather, we are thinking of a more flexible, mixed environment that combines project work within the themes relevant to the local community, with focused workshops to provide learning opportunities for specific topics.

Participants will come from a variety of places and projects. They will range from having many years of experience to almost none. Some participants will have considerable technological experience and others none. *Rather than treating this diversity as a problem, we believe it can be strength.* Just as we advocate not segregating learners by age, and enabling a mixed environment where everyone works with and learns from each other, we believe this can hold for the *Develop Armenia* Program. In this way the experience can serve as a model for local Learning projects.

3.6 - An “Emergent Design” Approach

How will we organize the *Develop Armenia* Program? Luys proposes to take an “Emergent Design” approach for a variety of reasons¹. Emergent Design fits our notion of how to operate learning communities, and we will make full use of the concept.

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¹ See David Cavallo's PhD. thesis for a more in-depth description of emergent design. MIT-Media Lab
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There are many participants from many places with vastly different levels of experience focused on different issues, there are many unknowns for this workshop, and this means we need to be adaptive and ready to improvise and let the most effective designs for the efforts emerge from the work itself and the abilities the participants bring.

This means designing a new kind of learning and a new kind of learning place or environment. We want to accommodate the objectives of the participants, and how to accomplish this will emerge through discussion before the workshop and interaction during it.

The workshops are designed over a period of two weeks. The first week we listen, get to know each other, and design the work for the second week based on what each Luys student has to contribute.

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1. Creating a Network of Like-Minded People from Various Fields of Expertise

Participants will come from a number of countries. Within each country there are a number of project themes. The *Develop Armenia* Program attendees will not only enjoy meeting their colleagues during the workshop, they will form lasting relationships with each other. The idea is to create a network of like-minded people to share ideas

The knowledge domains of the present forty-four Luys scholars include:

- Law
- Architecture
- Journalism
- Economics
- Politics and International Relations
- Linguistics
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Computer Science

The projects that each Luys scholar proposes may contribute to a variety of goals. Listed is a set of domains that would benefit from the collaborative thinking and work. They are listed here as resource material. The final plan will be decided by the Luys scholars together with the community they will be working with:

- Creating village and community technology centers
- Bringing new life to informal learning centers such as libraries, community centers, museums, etc.
- Finding ways that local businesses can benefit from connectivity and the youth's newly acquired knowledge
- Finding ways to link local businesses with the schools
- Promoting early childhood learning, revamping kindergartens
- Enabling rural schools to take advantage of connectivity and technology to help get the best from top universities and world libraries while still enjoying the advantages of a small and tight knit community.
- Teacher development: how to provide teachers with up-to-date materials and pedagogical approaches
- Secondary education: how to update the curriculum materials and bring more hands-on experiences.

Time will be devoted to each of the theme decided by the participants in order to brainstorm and plan for concrete ways of working in these domain fields.

Looking at goals on another level, we also know that we want to:

- Better develop concretely our ideas about learning.
- Better develop technological fluency.
- Go deeply into ideas about learning communities, including the role of

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project-based activities
learner-centered activities
doing projects over long periods of time
connecting from projects to knowledge domains
immersive environments
dynamic curricula

2. Luys Workshops:

Designing the Learning Environments / Learning Communities

2.1 Immersive Environments

When running workshops, we create a technologically immersive environment. We gather in groups that are not too large. The activities are a combination of building projects, discussions about learning and learning communities, and some longer talks by Luys scholars and others (including important thinkers from the local community). Each person constructs projects of her or his own choice with the technology available. The workshop facilitators provide examples, guidance, answers to questions and the like. We use the concrete construction experience as the basis for our conversations on learning.

We also want to provide the opportunity for people who already have experience with the tools and knowledge to further develop their technological fluency. We propose to accommodate this by constructing more complex projects, by engaging in focused workshops on more advanced activities.

2.2 Use of Time and Space

Since the Develop Armenia Program differs vastly from typical workshops, our use of time and space must differ as well. Again, we hope to use this as a model to think with, for the learning communities we wish to create.

For example, if we divide into groups that focus on a particular workshop, we will want others to be able to see our projects and learn about our ideas. At times we will want to work in very small groups and at other times gather everyone together. Some activities might not warrant the use of all 2 weeks, while others will. One possible proposal is to use ideas from early childhood programs. They design spaces in three categories:

- The piazza, a large public space
- Ateliers, workshop spaces for bigger groups
- Mini-ateliers, workshop spaces for small groups

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They also have lots of places to post work to show a living memory of projects.

This is just one proposal. During our first week of brainstorming we will invite everyone to propose their own ideas. We can use our website to animate possible scenarios and designs. We will post information and video clips illustrating our thoughts and activities as work is progressing.

The Develop Armenia Program will not be planned and run from above, without regard to the interests of the participants. Rather, it will be jointly constructed by all participants, from both the local community and the Luys community.

No one will be bound to the activity they specify beforehand. That is done simply to give us an idea of numbers for planning purposes. You may re-invent the application of your knowledge field once working with your group.

3. Implementation Format and Plan

3.1 Format

The Workshops will be organized over a period of 4 weeks:

- Week One: Luys Brainstorming and Community building
- Week Two and Three: Luys Scholars work in 5 groups spread geographically in Armenia and Artsakh.
- Week Four: Only Luys and its Education Board, reviewing lessons learnt and defining next steps.

Last Day: Acknowledgments and Thanks

The Luys students will have a day with the founders and sponsors of the Luys Foundation. This will take the format of Presentations by the founders, sponsors and Luys scholars and “Luys Café” round table discussion format. It will allow for real exploration and exchange of experiences and advice on all parties involved.

3.2 Communication

We will maintain a regular electronic contact between Luys and the outside world through regular up-dates on the web site. During week 2 and week 3, when the Luys students will be spread over three different locations, we will continue maintaining the contact between all Luys scholars in order to share best experiences and advice.

Every morning, we will hold a 15-minute Skype exchange between each of the five workshop locations.

Each evening, each location will have prepared for the next “25-minute check in” with each other. This will also be a rich source of material that each of the groups will edit and post on the web. We are expecting a one-page posting or a photo reportage or quick time extracts, from each group every three days for the two-week period. This will allow the country to follow our respective group’s work in each of the locations. Documentation is crucial.

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4. **Week One: Getting to Know Each Other**

All LuysScholars, Students and Mentees together in one location

Luys Students, Staff, Board Members, Mentees are coming together to discover Armenia, discuss each other's proposals etc. The venue event will be set in Yenokavan.

5. Weeks Two and Three Spread Over Five Locations

LUYS scholars knit together communities both real and virtual.

A two-week face-to-face program to be continued virtually on internet at the end of the workshops.

5.1 About the Two-Week Program

We base our initial work in five different locations in Armenia.

The participating residents of the neighbourhood will be invited to adopt a participatory emergent design approach to assess the needs of their community and introduce them to our Luysteam. They will then design and implement new devices and applications in a variety of digital media to meet the needs that have been identified. We are proposing a community-based youth project. Participants learn engineering, math and science in a social context by determining, designing, constructing, and deploying systems of their own choosing.

Luys Scholars, will engage for a two-week presence. Week One they will work with a group of twenty young people to perform the needs analysis, design, and implementation of projects and apprenticeship.

Throughout the project one group of participants (Citizen Journalists) will document the process in video, image and text. This process not only provides an opportunity for learning the digital media and tools, but also provides a basis for reflecting on and debugging the process, and creating materials for subsequent dissemination to a broader population.

All five Luys communities will be in daily contact to share the lessons learned and support each other.

5.2 First Week of the two-week period on location:

Open Your Mind – Open Your heart !

We learn to understand each others' realities, we learn to listen and work together.

Make room to everyone and listen to everyone. This is a gift that we all owe each other.

Luys scholars will spend the first week of the two-week workshop in the villages, meeting people and visiting their work places and living places. They may visit farms and listen to the farmers' concerns, dreams, joys and difficulties, the same will be applied to the local school, businesses and Village administrators.

The Luys students will organize a day or two of community work. It is left to the imagination of the group and the need of the community to decide what concrete actions they wish to carry out.

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The important message here is to engage in community work to show its potential and positive impact on everyone's life.

Every morning and every evening the Luys team brainstorms for an hour on what they are learning from their new community, how it fits their particular offering, and how to organize their second week of the workshops, when it will be their turn to make presentations to the community and work with the local people and youth.

5.3 Second Week of the Two-Week Period on Location: Develop Armenia

The Second week of the two-week period is when our Luys students, with the help of their mentees and new friends, will start sharing the knowledge and experience they acquired abroad. They will share their thinking tools and strategy-building experience. They will create mini-communities or interest groups around the themes of their expertise. They will learn how to integrate each others' strengths within the present reality and within the future they wish to build together.

The intellectual merit of the Two-Week workshops lies in explaining and bringing to life the following:

- a socially-contextualized constructionism where learning through design and construction are connected to social inquiry and enhancement of community life
- an emergent design approach to learning environments that facilitates a dynamic curriculum where the knowledge needed to be acquired is encountered opportunistically based upon the needs of individuals and of the project
- application of multiple agency on the part of the learner where the learner adopts a variety of roles as designer, engineer, and teacher in order to ground the knowledge better and open more opportunities for entering into the knowledge
- an integrated approach towards learning, where the disciplines and technologies are more organically connected
- a different approach to growing beyond pilot programs through a developmentally-based concept to learning at a macro scale – this process encourages us all to think globally and act locally.

5.4 Broader Impact of This Project Emerges in Three Categories:

- The first is methodological where we endeavour to create an existence proof of the potential of a more adventurous open approach to youth development.
- The second is through the development of new, technologically-based learning materials and collaborative environments to support appropriation and application.
- The third is social where the fruits of the youth-based projects enhance community life and also serve to re-knit the youth into a productive social structure.

6. Week Four: Lessons Learnt to Improve and Implement the Future Steps of Our Mission

All Luys Scholars, Students and Mentees are coming back to be together for a short week of three days.

This is the week when we all share our experience over the past three weeks. We will evaluate our work and identify the lessons learned. The goal is to improve our work and define the future steps of our mission. This is also our week to say "thank you" to all who participated in the program and supported Luys.

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