

agenda

school of complex past

2025

SCHOOL OF COMPLEX PAST

The *School of Complex Past* is an annual alternative education program initiated by CSN Lab. It aims to foster critical thinking and public dialogue around the complexities of past cultural and political issues and their impact on today's challenges. Through a combination of discussions, lectures, workshops, and dialogue-based programs, the school creates a participatory environment for reflection, learning, and exchange.

In previous years, the School of Complex Past has addressed key intersecting themes such as memory and urban environment, refuge and migration, decolonisation and neocolonialism, gender equality, and more. By examining the past, we seek to build a transparent and democratic approach to memory and create an inclusive, horizontal environment for understanding the histories that shape our present.

SCHOOL OF COMPLEX PAST 2025: ENVIRONMENT

Remaining committed to its mission of critically engaging with the past and analysing its impact on the present, this year's program explores the theme of the environment, including natural landscapes and cities, green and blue (water) spaces, and the interconnected questions of social and climate justice. In the context of intensifying environmental challenges, including climate change, gentrification of natural landscapes, degradation and pollution, public perception still tends to frame environmental issues and concerns exclusively as ecological challenges.

Their cultural, political, social, and gendered dimensions are often left out of both public and, at times, professional/expert discourse. As a result, our relation with the natural landscape continues to be shaped by the complex legacy of colonial pasts, inequality, and violence, which in turn become the foundation for neo-colonial perspectives and processes.

This year's program stands out for its interdisciplinary and critical perspectives, during which the participants will have the opportunity to delve deeper into key topics of the school, which will include:

- Local Perspectives: Soviet colonial legacies and their impact on natural landscapes.
- Global Perspectives: Water heritage in shaping cultural and social life in urban landscapes.
- Environmental Movements: Grassroots initiatives, activism, and community-led resistance in Armenia.
- Artistic expression in climate justice.
- Feminist theories and the Environment: Exploring hydrofeminism and feminist urbanism.

SPEAKERS

Tigran Amiryan

Dr Tigran Amiryan is the founder of the Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory (CSN Lab). Amiryan holds a PhD in World Literature and specialises in semiology and contemporary cultural anthropology. He has authored numerous interdisciplinary research projects and scholarly articles that explore the transformation of urban space, the colonisation of the natural environment, cultural and social memory, etc.

Mari Chakryan

Mari Chakryan lectures on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and pathways to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Department of Plant Diversity and Ecosystem Studies of the International Scientific-Educational Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. She is currently conducting research on implementing nature-based solutions as a tool for enhancing the climate resilience of Armenian cities.

Arsen Abrahamyan

Arsen Abrahamyan is an architect and cultural researcher, a PhD student at the University of Amsterdam. His range of interests includes the transformations of urban landscape and their causes, the relationship between city environment and public structures, as well as the social, cultural and anthropological memory of architecture and urban space.

SPEAKERS

Harutyun Tumaghyan

Harutyun Tumaghyan is an illustrator, conceptual artist and author. He has years of experience in children's books and has co-authored and illustrated a number of storybooks and graphic essays on the topics of democracy and freedom, urban spaces and environmental challenges. He is also actively engaged in the conceptual visualisation of civic and cultural organisations.

Olivier Pestiaux

Olivier Pestiaux lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. With an interdisciplinary background in architecture and philosophy, and extensive experience in media and social work, he combines research, art, and law through active public engagement. His recent work focuses on addressing environmental challenges and promoting urban regeneration, exploring how legal and artistic practices can contribute to more sustainable and inclusive urban futures.

Damla Barin

Damla Barin is a social scientist, researcher at the Hrant Dink Foundation and later served as Project Coordinator for the Cultural Heritage Project, where she contributed to the 'KarDes: Multicultural Memory Tour Guide' initiative. Her recent work is particularly focused on water heritage in Istanbul and its role in the urban as well as cultural and social fabric of the city.

SPEAKERS

Eviya Hovhannisyan

Eviya Hovhannisyan is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. Her research interests include ethno-political conflicts, nationalism and identity, migration and displacement, as well as infrastructure.

Darya Tsymbalyuk

Darya Tsymbalyuk is an interdisciplinary researcher and creative practitioner whose work lies at the intersection of environmental humanities and artistic research. She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Committee on Environment, Geography, and Urbanisation (CEGU), University of Chicago, and the author of the book *Ecocide in Ukraine: The Environmental Cost of Russia's War* (Polity, 2025).

Arpi Manusyan

Arpi Manusyan is a sociologist and the president of Socioscope NGO. Her primary research interests include civic movements and contentious politics in Armenia, public and critical sociology, as well as issues related to gender and sexuality. Her research explores topics such as human rights, mechanisms of social change, and the interaction between the individual and society within the context of the key social and environmental processes of our time.

SPEAKERS

Ani Khachatryan

Ani Khachatryan is an environmental activist and hiking guide, and since 2013, a member of the civil initiative “Armenian Environmental Front.” She organises various environmental events, festivals, workshops, and other initiatives, focusing on ecological issues such as biodiversity loss, mining, illegal logging, and other environmental challenges.

Tinatin Lobzhanidze

Tinatin Lobzhanidze is a researcher and social scientist whose work focuses on environmental anthropology and the study of ecological anxiety. She holds a degree in Social Sciences and is currently pursuing a master’s program in Modern Georgian History. Originally from Racha, a sparsely populated mountainous region of Georgia facing severe ecological challenges, her personal background strongly informs her research interests.

Aghunik Ter-Stepanyan

Aghunik Ter-Stepanyan is an architect whose work explores urban environments and architectural heritage through social and feminist perspectives. Her research and projects focus on inclusivity and safety in urban spaces, with particular attention to the role of women and marginalised groups in urban design.

Nanor Hovanessian

Nanor Hovanessian is a member of the Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory team. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English and Communications from the American University of Armenia. Her research interests extend to climate studies, particularly the intersection of climate change and feminist urbanism.

OCTOBER 17 | FRIDAY

AGENDA

10:00 | Departure from Matenadaran to the Woods Centre

10:30—11:00 | Registration of participants

11:00—11:30 | **Tigran Amiryan** | The Rights of the Rivers: Introduction

11:30—12:30 | **Mari Chakryan** | From Soviet Scars to Sustainable Solutions: Rethinking Armenia's Environmental Future

12:30—13:30 | **Green and Blue Profiles** | Intro Session

13:30—14:30 | Lunch break

14:30—15:30 | **Arsen Abrahamyan** | Kond: The Natural History of Networking Architecture

15:30—16:00 | Coffee Break

16:00—16:30 | **Harutyun Tumaghyan** | Sevanik: Art and Environment

16:30—17:30 | **Green and Blue** | Group Work

17:30 | Departure from the Woods Centre to the Matenadaran

OCTOBER 18 | SATURDAY

AGENDA

10:00 | Departure from Matenadaran to the Woods Centre

10:30—11:00 | Registration of participants

11:00—12:00 | **Tigran Amiryan & Arsen Abrahamyan** | Blue Yerevan

12:00—13:00 | **Damla Barın** | Water Heritage of Istanbul

13:00—14:00 | Lunch break

14:00—15:00 | **Olivier Pestiaux** | SAMBRE2030: Towards Legal Recognition of the River

15:00—15:30 | Coffee Break

15:30—17:00 | **Eviya Hovhannisyan** | Infrastructural Projects and the Colonisation of Natural Landscapes in Soviet Armenia

17:00—17:30 | **Darya Tsymbalyuk** | Ecocide in Ukraine

17:30—18:30 | **Green and Blue** | Group Work

18:30 | Departure from the Woods Centre to the Matenadaran

OCTOBER 19 | SUNDAY

AGENDA

10:00 | Departure from Matenadaran to the Woods Centre

10:30 —11:00 | Registration of participants

11:00 —12:30 | **Arpy Manusyan** | Environmental Activism and Its Transformations in Armenia

12:30 —13:30 | **Ani Khachatryan** | Environmental Activism and Amulsar

13:30 —14:30 | Lunch break

14:30 — 15:00 | **Tinatin Lobjanidze** | Watered Frames

15:00—15:30 | **Nanor Hovanessian** | Mamour. Urban and hydro-feminist zine presentation

15:30—16:00 | **Aghunik Ter-Stepanyan** | City Designed by Women's Experience

16:00—16:30 | Coffee Break

16:30—17:30 | **Evaluation Session**

17:30 | Departure from the Woods Centre to the Matenadaran

For any questions or assistance,
please feel free to contact
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The CSN Lab is a cultural organisation committed to promoting cultural dialogue, democracy, and peace in Armenia. We do not accept any form of sexism, racism, homophobia, hatred, or intolerance.

The “School of Complex Past” is an annual project that fosters public discourse around the undisclosed past through alternative education. The “School of Complex Past” is implemented by the Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory with the support of the Dansk Kulturinstitut / Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) within the New Democracy Fund (NDF) program and the Women’s Fund Armenia (WFA).