

SCHOOL OF  
COMPLEX  
PAST  
SELECTIONS



CULTURAL  
& SOCIAL  
NARRATIVES  
LABORATORY



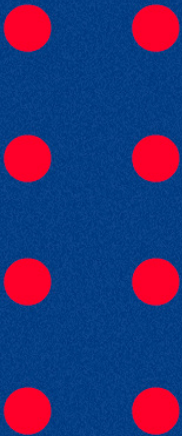
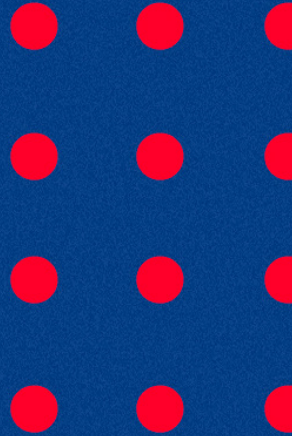
# SCHOOL

## OF COMPLEX PAST

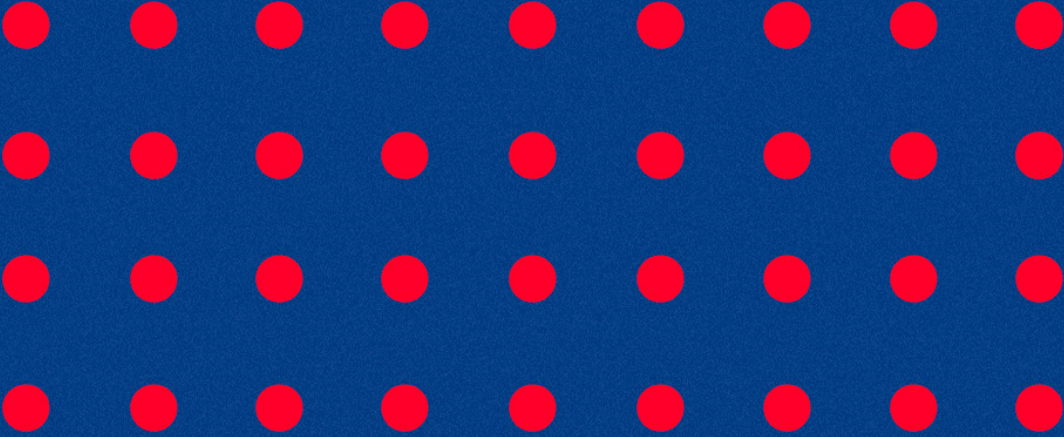
*The School of Complex Past* is an annual alternative education program initiated by CSN Lab. It aims to foster critical thinking and public dialogue around the complexities of past cultural and political issues, as well as their impact on contemporary realities. Through a combination of discussions, lectures, workshops, and dialogue-based formats, the school creates a platform for reflecting on and rethinking the complex past of Armenia and the broader region.

In recent decades, new approaches and bodies of knowledge have emerged within the humanities and social sciences, significantly shaping both civil society and broader public perceptions. Contemporary discussions of political and cultural realities increasingly bring forward diverse theoretical frameworks that approach the past from multiple perspectives: as difficult, colonial, unresolved, or traumatic. The experience of Armenia and the region, however, reveals a distinct and multilayered configuration of complexities that often exceeds the limits of these existing frameworks. For this reason, and in response to current debates in memory studies, we conceptualise this intersection of political and cultural processes through the more inclusive notion of the complex past.

The School of Complex Past is shaped each year in response to contemporary challenges and realities. In previous years, the program has addressed key intersecting themes such as colonial legacies and neocolonialism, displacement and migration, environmental and ecological crises, as well as the politics of memory and questions of identity. By critically engaging with the past, the program seeks to foster a transparent and democratic approach to memory, while creating an inclusive, horizontal, and critical space for understanding the narratives that shape our present.



# SCHOOL OF COMPLEX PAST 2026: S/ELECTION/S



Responding to the geopolitical processes unfolding around Armenia in recent years, the resulting climate of polarisation at the public level, and the electoral processes anticipated in this context, the School of Complex Past 2026 aims to question, examine, and deconstruct political processes in Armenia. It brings into focus their cultural, linguistic, social, and gendered dimensions, often overlooked in both public and, at times, professional discourse. Under the title s/ election/s, the program approaches the current political context and forthcoming electoral processes not as short-term events, but as social and cultural spaces where power, narratives, and meanings are continuously constructed, contested, and negotiated.

Engaging with elections through interdisciplinary perspectives, the program explores the role of representation, participation, as well as language, media, and identity in shaping political realities. This year's program offers participants the opportunity to critically engage with the multilayered nature of electoral processes.

# THE PROGRAM IS STRUCTURED AROUND THE FOLLOWING THEMATIC DIRECTIONS:

- **The Idea of Electoral Choice: Philosophical and Cultural Layers** — rethinking electoral culture and the concept of choice through historical and cultural perspectives.
- **Electoral Processes: A Historical Overview** — analysing the development of elections, electoral violations, participation, and political narratives across different periods in Armenia.
- **Anti-Democratic Narratives** — examining pre-election rhetoric, disinformation, and narratives targeting civil society.
- **Conspiracy Theories and the Crisis of Trust** — exploring conspiratorial narratives and discourses in both local and global political and electoral contexts.
- **Elections and Gender Dynamics** — analysing gender-based stereotypes, manipulation, and their impact on voter behaviour and political participation.
- **Media Tools and Propaganda** — investigating the role of disinformation and propaganda mechanisms in shaping public perceptions and contributing to societal polarisation.
- **Language of Elections** — approaching elections as linguistic, visual, and cultural discourse, focusing on presuppositions, representation, and the construction of meaning.

# SPEAKERS

## **EDGAR ZATIKYAN**

Edgar Zatikyan is a political scientist. Since 2024, Edgar has been working as a Program Assistant at Pink Human Rights NGO. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy at the American University of Armenia. He has been involved in various student and youth movements. Since 2018, Edgar Zatikyan has been engaged in activism, advocating for human rights, promoting free and transparent elections, and addressing urban issues.

## **MARIAM KHALATYAN**

Mariam Khalatyan is a sociologist and Senior Researcher at the Socioscope Research Centre. Her professional interests include the transformation and development of civil society in Armenia, democratic processes, discourses of war and peace, as well as issues of gender and sexuality. Her research focuses on the interactions between individuals and institutions, social change, human rights, and questions of poverty and social inequality.

## **RAFIK SANTROSYAN**

Rafik Santrosyan is a linguist, PhD in Germanic Linguistics, and Professor at the American University of Armenia. His research and teaching intersect gender linguistics, semantics, multimodal semiotics, and language-mediated cultural practices.

## **SAMVEL MARTIROSYAN**

Samvel Martirosyan is a media expert specialising in information security and new media. He teaches and conducts training at several universities in Armenia and also teaches at Aregnazan School. Martirosyan is a member of the Internet Governance Council of Armenia, a board member of the Civil Society Institute NGO, and a member of the advisory board of TEDxYerevan.

## **TATEVIK GHAZARYAN**

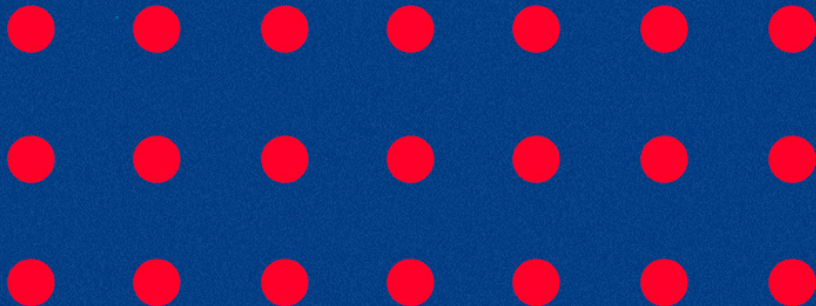
Tatevik Ghazaryan is an expert in elections and local self-government (LSG) and a political scientist. She is the coordinator of the “Akanates” observation mission and an expert at the Regional Centre for Democracy and Security (RCDS). She collaborates with international organisations in the electoral field (ENEMO, EPDE, IRI, IFES) and researches the challenges of electoral and LSG systems.

## **TIGRAN AMIRYAN**

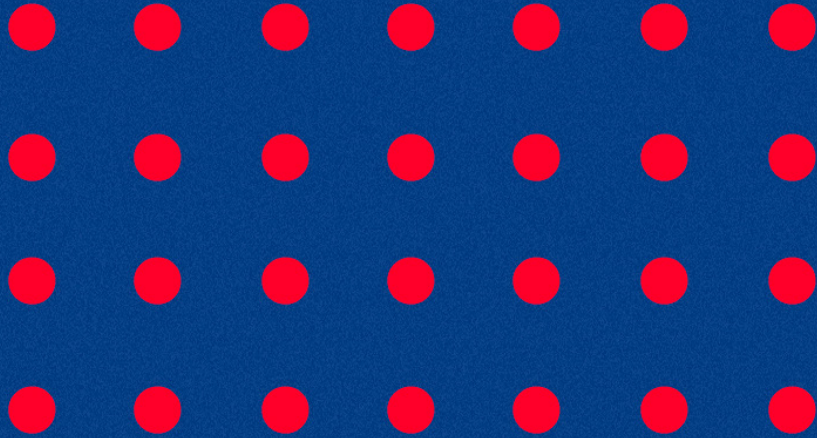
Dr Tigran Amiryan is the founder of the Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory (CSN Lab). Holding a PhD in World Literature, he works at the intersection of semiotics and contemporary cultural anthropology. His interdisciplinary research and publications explore the transformation of urban spaces, the politics of environment and colonisation, and the complexities of cultural and social memory.

## **VARDINE GRIGORYAN**

Vardine Grigoryan is a public administration specialist and the Program Manager of the Vanadzor Office of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly. Vardine Grigoryan coordinates the “Independent Observer” alliance, which, since 2017, has brought together several organisations that carry out observation missions during elections, as well as present proposals on electoral reforms.



# MAY 29–31 | AGHVERAN



## **MAY 29**

8:30–10:00

10:00–10:30

10:30–11:00

11:00–11:30

11:30–13:00

13:00–14:30

14:30–15:30

15:30–17:00

17:00–18:30

18:30–19:00

19:00–20:00

## **FRIDAY**

Departure from Yerevan to Aghveran

Arrival & Registration

Welcome & Introduction

Coffee Break

Tatevik Ghazaryan — The Idea of Electoral Choice: Philosophical and Cultural Layers

Vardine Grigoryan — The History of Electoral Processes in Armenia

Lunch Break

Samvel Martirosyan — Shaping Public Perceptions in the Media Environment

Mariam Khalatyan — Anti-Democratic Narratives in Armenia

Workshop Introduction

Dinner

**MAY 30**

9:00–10:00

10:00–11:00  
Tigran Amiryan — Conspiracy Theories  
and the Crisis of Trust

11:00–12:00 | Workshop

12:00–12:30 | Coffee Break

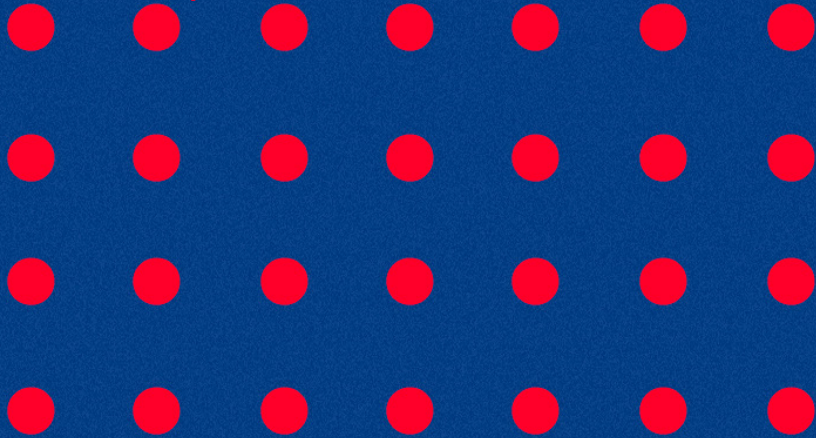
12:30–14:00 | Edgar Zatikyan — Elections and  
Gender Dynamics

14:00–15:00 | Lunch Break

15:00–16:30 | Rafik Santrosyan — Language of  
Elections

16:30–18:00 | Workshop Summary

18:00–19:00 | Dinner



**SATURDAY**

Breakfast

Tigran Amiryan — Conspiracy Theories  
and the Crisis of Trust

Workshop

Coffee Break

Edgar Zatikyan — Elections and  
Gender Dynamics

Lunch Break

Rafik Santrosyan — Language of  
Elections

Workshop Summary

Dinner

**MAY 31**

9:00–10:00

10:00–10:30 | School Elections

10:30–11:30 | Program Wrap-up

11:30–12:00 | Departure

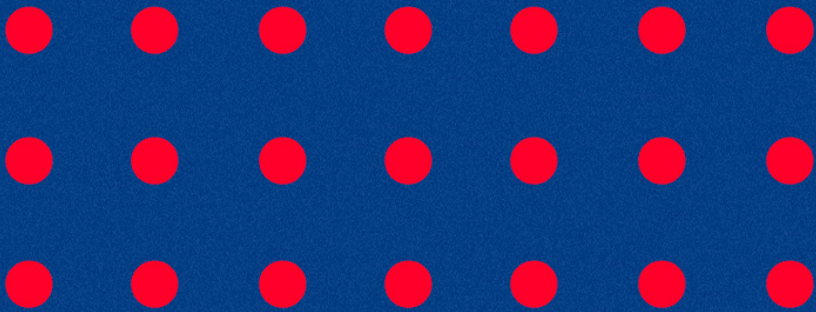
**SUNDAY**

Breakfast

School Elections

Program Wrap-up

Departure



For any questions or assistance,  
please feel free to contact CSN Lab  
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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, hate speech, or other expressions of intolerance.

The School of Complex Past is an annual initiative by CSN Lab that fosters public discourse around complex pasts through alternative education.

The School of Complex Past 2026 is implemented by the Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory (CSN Lab) with the support of the New Democracy Fund (NDF), the Women's Fund Armenia (WFA), and the Marion Dönhoff Foundation.