

*Memory
Studies
and Memory
Activism*

*The Complicated
Past
and Colonialism*

*Urban and Public
Spaces*

*Cultural
Rights*

*Queer Culture
and Gender
Studies*

*Cultural
and Social
Narratives*

*Our
Publications*

CSIN

Lab

CSN

*Cultural and Social
Narratives Laboratory*

Lab

Our lab strives to function as a crossroad where different languages, methods and disciplines meet. It is important for us to work on projects that bring together artists, researchers, writers, activists, etc. Our projects aim to focus on exploring major social narratives and discussing topical issues through different media. In order to see ourselves, our society and our culture in a global context, we also seek cooperation with organizations and civil society representatives from the Eastern Partnership countries,

**the neighboring countries in
the South Caucasus, the Baltic
countries, as well as from countries
in other regions of the world.
To put it more succinctly, our
mission is to promote a continuing
dialogue, both locally and globally.**

Dr Tigran Amiryan
founder and
president
of CSN Lab

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1

*Cultural
and
Social
Narratives
Laboratory*

The activities of Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory are aimed at providing an opportunity for the public to get knowledge about contemporary cultural and social issues, as well as engage in discussions and processes revolving around them. The laboratory's primary objective is conflict analysis and transformation through culture and dialogue. We aim to make contemporary popular scientific literature accessible to the public, assisting people to defend and exercise their cultural rights. We pursue the goal of extending the cultural discourse, supporting different social groups through culture, and thus fostering democracy in Armenia and in the region.

Established by a group of cultural practitioners, scientists, researchers, and artists, CSN Lab is an interdisciplinary **research platform** which explores and

presents contemporary and sensitive topics in various formats, facilitating discourse on those topics among different social groups and communities. 9

The principles and values of democracy lie at the heart of all the projects of the laboratory.

We believe that open work style, plain language, and application of different media formats have the power to make research in humanities and social sciences more accessible and impactful. That is why our projects are participatory, implemented through various research methods and tools, and aimed at making the past and the present more *discernible*.

Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory engages in a wide scope of activities, including:

- Memory studies and memory activism
- Cultural rights
- Tangible and intangible cultural heritage
 - Culture and coexistence
 - Public spaces and urban activism
 - Environment and culture
 - Migration and its consequences
- Analysis of the complicated past and colonialism
- Queer culture and gender equality
- Creation of platforms for dialogue

In the course of its activities, the laboratory has implemented around 20 projects both in Armenia and throughout the region. They were presented in various formats, including but not limited to:

- Interdisciplinary research projects
- Books
- Online platforms
- Podcasts
- Exhibitions
- Dialogue programs
- Workshops
- Summer and winter schools
- Artist residencies

We highly appreciate *cooperation* with artists, cultural practitioners, theorists, researchers, young interns, as well as organizations based in and outside of Armenia, whose efforts are focused on changemaking and achieving long-term results. Participatory and inclusive approaches enable profound research on complex and sensitive issues.

2

*Memory
Studies
&
Memory
Activism*

Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory attaches great importance to memory studies as memory is an integral part of one's identity.

Memory projects uncover the forcibly forgotten past, making it possible to understand the cause-and-effect relationships of a number of contemporary issues and problems, which are typically left out of the official history and discourse.

In modern times, we witness more frequently how dictatorships and anti-democratic regimes (including those in our region) firstly destroy memory institutions, refuse to acknowledge the criminal past of their state, and thus abstain from repeating the crimes committed in the past. Through memory studies we intend to reduce such risks by advocating for democracy and transparent governance.

The projects related to memory studies and memory activism encompass such matters as the subtle layers and manifestations of individual and collective memory, alienated identities and the traumatic past, consequences of oblivion and the historical roots of contemporary problems.

During the last few years, we managed to implement projects which extend and decentralize the thematic framework of memory studies, transcend narrow academic domains, demonstrate the importance of freedom of memory and the right to memory, and serve as a basis for considering memory in the context of such phenomena as the complicated past, urban space, queer culture, coexistence, etc.

Through memory projects we contribute to society's self-reflection, integration of memory fragments, conceptualization and popularization of memory.

CSN Lab has published a number of voluminous works dedicated to memory studies. They include:

- *Research on social and spatial memory* of the historic Firdus and Kond districts that feature the rare examples of Yerevan's vernacular architecture, cultural multilayeredness and coexistence.

- *Research on the Getar River in Yerevan*, repeatedly stifled by the municipal authorities during the Soviet and post-Soviet period, forced out of the city and memory space, and partly covered by concrete.

- *Research on the ethnic and cultural coexistence* of the Armenians, Jews, Greeks, and Turks in Istanbul's Balat district.

- *Interdisciplinary research on queer memory* in post-Soviet Armenia.

- *Collection and analysis of urban narratives and mental maps* of forcibly displaced people as a result of wars and conflicts.

- *Obliteration of different ethnic groups' places of memory* located in Tbilisi during the Soviet years, and its impact on the identity of the city and its citizens.

All the listed projects were implemented by studying different manifestations of memory and post-memory, using such **methods** as collection and examination of oral stories, semiotic analysis of space, archival research (family, official), mental maps, memory and space visualization, as well as other tools of researching the past.

3

*The Complicated
Past
and
Colonialism*

Given the situation in Armenia and in the region, and the urgent problems stemming therefrom, we constantly touch upon the colonial past and its political, cultural and social effects. Our studies show that appraising the colonial past as well as specifying and examining neo-colonial manifestations are no less important than proclaiming independence.

The traces and consequences of the colonial past manifest themselves in politics, economy, language and mind, architecture, urban planning, culture,

environmental protection, resource management and even everyday practices. However, they don't become a topic of internal reflections, contemplations, public discussions, research projects and policymaking. Consequently, large strata of society do not get a chance to spot the cause-and-effect relations of the past and the present, understand the roots of a number of contemporary problems, form a language and acquire basic knowledge to analyze the past and the present.

The situation in Armenia and in the region has deteriorated many times due to colonial pressures. The roots of current conflicts and public discords can often be traced back to the complex colonial past along with its consequences.

Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory has implemented a number of projects to present the topic of (neo)colonialism from different interdisciplinary perspectives, create a platform for dialogue between the colonizer and the colonized, attract the attention of researchers, artists, cultural practitioners and media professionals and cultivate a public discourse. We want to make knowledge about colonialism accessible to the public, help people develop everyday language to address these problems, create an opportunity to reconsider

their own identity and environment and enable them to protect all of that.

Urban & Public Spaces

The complicated past of the region has left an imprint not only on people's but also on urban and public spaces' memory and history. Urban transformations have had a considerable influence on social structures, as well as on interactions among citizens.

While studying the processes of formation and development of urban and public spaces, we can often notice how the Soviet urban planning ignored and modified the pre-Soviet-era architectural and urban identities. The post-Soviet period, in turn, brought new problems – neglected urban and architectural

heritage, degraded public spaces and abandoned production zones, irregular and illegal construction, legal regulations involving corruption risks and other problematic issues. The resulting chaos reveals the unfree nature of the interaction between the city and its citizens, and stresses the need to study space not only from an urbanistic but also culturological and anthropological perspectives.

The city belongs to people and shall be realized/used by them. The accessibility and freedom of public spaces symbolize democracy and horizontal interpersonal relations. Our projects aim to form a solid foundation and language for people so that they voice their concerns about urban planning and defend their cultural rights.

The projects of *Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory* focus particularly on the vernacular districts of urban space and the protection of their memory as a manifestation of popular architecture and democracy. We want to reveal and protect the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of urban and public spaces, highlight its significance and demonstrate that it is constantly being subjected to various pressures by the authorities and the business sector. We touch upon these urgent issues in different formats, engaging architects, urbanists, cultural practitioners, media sector representatives and other specialists.

The urban environment shapes and reflects not only history, architecture and daily life, but also citizens' identities and the boundaries of freedom and diversity. As a result of the interplay between the environment and the public, space transforms into a unique documentary of cultural processes.

5

Cultural Rights

Through its activities, Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory strives to contribute to the formation of a broad discourse around cultural rights in Armenia considering that cultural rights belong not only to artists and creators but also to the wider public. Our goal is to protect the rights of authors, artists, and creators, as well as to advocate

for ensuring the accessibility of culture, education and science. In cooperation with cultural practitioners, creators, the civil society, independent media and other agents, CSN Lab created and published thematic literature, organized lectures, master classes,

workshops, discussions and other events.

By cultivating a discourse on cultural rights, we contribute to the protection of human rights and to the development of democracy.

In its various projects our laboratory has addressed a number of topics related to the protection and popularization of cultural rights. We have succeeded in bringing to the public domain not only the matters related to the internationally recognized cultural rights and making them key items on the agenda, but also urgent issues

common to Armenia and to our region, such as the protection of vernacular districts, preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, equal opportunities to take part in cultural life, cultural sustainability, artistic freedom, manifestations of neo-colonial policy, gender discrimination, queer culture, etc. 31

6

*Queer Culture
and
Gender Studies*

Topics related to gender identity and queer culture continue to be relevant and highly sensitive both in Armenia and throughout the region. However, they are often ignored and do not become part of public and political agendas in the long run. Our laboratory is interested in studying these topics in the context of cultural rights, as well as in supporting queer artists.

Within the framework of different programs, *CSN Lab* has examined the state and non-state cultural institutions' sensitivity to gender issues, examining the gender aspects of their policies and activities. We have attempted to understand what role and involvement

Armenia-based female cultural practitioners and artists have, how willing cultural institutions are to collaborate with LGBTIQ+ artists and to exhibit or represent their artwork.

CSN Lab's programs cover not only Armenia but also other countries of the region. We strive to establish a cultural dialogue and cooperate with cultural practitioners and organizations of the neighbouring countries. One of such projects is the program of dialogue between Armenian and Georgian female artists in which the participants present their creations, share experiences and approaches during exchange visits.

As regards queer identity and gender equality, our research project on queer memory is significant inasmuch as it is the first attempt – not only in our country but also in our region – to analyze such a multi-layer and complex phenomenon. The study of this extremely sensitive topic lays the foundation for more comprehensive and multidimensional research on queer culture.

Studies on gender identity and queer culture are useful not only for our laboratory but also for cultural organizations operating in the country.

The conducted research can also be used by state and non-state institutions, decision-making bodies and organizations as a basis for cultural reforms, and for promoting gender equality within Armenian society, which is still largely patriarchal. 35

7

*Cultural
and
Social
Narratives*

The activities of *CSN Lab* revolve around internal and external, obvious and inconspicuous conflicts. They are sometimes invisible and yet alive in our memory and post-memory, in history and the complicated past, in communication with our own and surrounding people's diverse identities, in realization of our rights, in everyday life and in other domains.

Though our activities mainly focus on memory studies, cultural rights, public and urban spaces, gender equality, etc., we also constantly touch upon the narratives occurring during crisis situations, such as issues of media narratives and language formation around the Covid pandemic, various conspiracy theories, etc.

The programs implemented by the laboratory aimed to cover issues and topics which are hard for people and communities not only to voice and popularize but also to contemplate about; talking to oneself about those issues is also a challenge. Together with uncovering any new topic or

approach, *CSN Lab* has strived to cultivate around them a discourse as a starting point for debates involving different social groups.

True to democratic values and principles of inclusiveness, all of our projects have targeted different social groups – scientists, artists, activists, media sector representatives, cultural practitioners and civil society at large. At all the stages of program design and implementation, our organization gives priority not only to women and people with non-heteronormative gender identities, but also to those subjected to repressions due to their political views, people living in conflict/war zones, refugees, forcibly displaced people and others whose experience and willingness to cooperate make our projects more comprehensive and multifaceted. Thus, our programs emphasize that culture and art are directly linked to the protection and popularization of democratic values.

Our work has contributed to the formation and development of discourse around a variety of contemporary topics, establishment of a dialogue in the context of various conflicts, creation of accessible language, tools and approaches regarding the matters of different disciplines.

Receiving the attention of domestic and international media towards our projects, and cooperating with foreign artists, cultural practitioners, activists and organizations is inspiring to us. Promoting the development of civil society in Armenia

and in the region through our programs is particularly encouraging to us.

We continue our work, revealing the entwined relationship between cultural and social issues, planning to extend the cultural discourse and the realm of social sciences through interdisciplinary research, expand the field of contemporary art, create a new language and methods of activism, establish a dialogue between different social groups and thus foster democracy in Armenia and in the region.

8

*Our
Publications*

Firdus: The Memory of a place

Collective monograph ed. by

T. Amiryan, S. Kalantaryan.

CSN lab, Yerevan, 2019.

[Armenian-English]

ISBN 978-9939-1-0934-3

firdusmemory.com

Firdus: The Memory of a place

Collective monograph ed. by

T. Amiryan, S. Kalantaryan.

CSN lab, Yerevan, 2020.

[Russian]

ISBN 978-9939-1-1092-9

firdusmemory.com



FIRDUS: THE MEMORY OF A PLACE
ՖԻՐԴՍԻՆՍՆԵՆԻ ԿԻՇՈՒՆԹԵՐՈՒՆԸ

FIRDUS: THE MEMORY OF A PLACE
ՖԻՐԴՍԻՆՍՆԵՆԻ ԿԻՇՈՒՆԹԵՐՈՒՆԸ

Shushi: Mental Maps

Collective monograph ed.

by Karapetyan E., Amiryan T.

CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2021

[Armenian-English]

ISBN 978-9939-1-1423-1

shushi.csnlab.net

Our Publications





*Shushi:
Mental Maps*

*Şuşu:
Düşüncələrdən*

Gender Analysis of the Cultural Field in Armenia

Ed. by T. Amiryan, S. Kalantaryan.

CSN lab, Yerevan, 2022.

[English]

Our Publications

Methodology and Structure of the Analysis (3)

Background (3)

Timeframe (8)

Scope of the Cultural Space (8)

The Legal Framework of Gender and Cultural Field Regulations in Armenia (1)

Public Perceptions of the Laws on the Gender Equality (14)

The Gender Discourse in the Non-Governmental Cultural Sphere in Armenia (16)

Conclusion (24)

General Recommendations (27)

Methodology and Structure of the Analysis

This report is one of the first attempts to understand and describe the environment on gender policy in the contemporary cultural field of Armenia. In the analysis, we used the results of a qualitative study while incorporating some elements of a quantitative survey. The gender analysis aims to identify trends and fundamental issues of gender equality, women's role and engagement, the rights and freedom of expression of the LGBTQ+ community in the cultural space of Armenia within the period of 2016-2020. In the analysis, the first part refers to the legal framework of the topic and the public and media perceptions on the changes in state gender policy in the cultural field or the introductions of the new ones. The second part of the analysis presents a detailed study of the activities and local phenomena that work towards the actualization and dissemination of the discourse on gender equality in the modern cultural space.

Background

Over the past two decades, several non-governmental organizations in Armenia have been actively working towards the democratization of various spheres while advocating for and introducing a discourse on gender equality, women's engagement, and the protection of LGBTQ+ community rights. It is worth mentioning the constant and efficient work of Pink Armenia¹, Women's Resource Center², the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women³, and

- 1 <http://www.pinkarmenia.org>
- 2 <http://www.womenresourcecenter.am>
- 3 <http://www.stopviolence.am>

GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL FIELD IN ARMENIA

Prepared by **CSN Lab**

ՀԱՅԿ
CULTURAL
INDUSTRIES
LABORATORY

NEW
DEMOCRACY
FUND

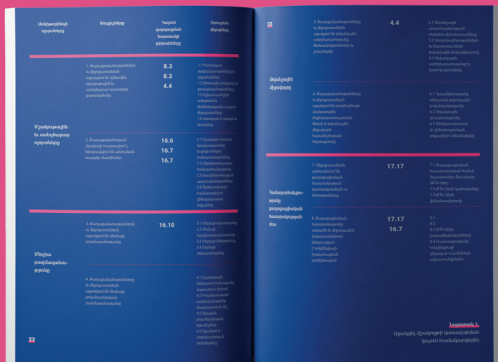
Cultural Rights Manual
(Armenian translation)

Porsdam H., Reitov O.

Transl. by Mariam Yeghiazaryan,
CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2022.

[Armenian]

Our Publications





ՄՍԿՆՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ
ԻՐԱՎՈՒՆԵՆԵՐ

ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ
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NEW
DEMOCRACY
FUND

C/S/N
lab CULTURAL
& SOCIAL
NARRATIVES
LABORATORY

Balat: Living Together
 Collective monograph ed. by
 Amiryan T., Kalantaryan S.,
 Kiygi G.,
 CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2022.
 [Turkish-English]
 ISBN 978-9939-1-1501-6

Our Publications

Balat: Living Together
 Collective monograph ed. by
 Amiryan T., Kalantaryan S.,
 Kiygi G.,
 CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2023.
 [Armenian-English]
 ISBN 978-9939-1-1500-9



314 *Balat*
 New history of Balat area in 1930-1940

Քաղաքում առկա էին արհեստի օժանոթներ և արհեստի մասեր, որոնք ծառայում էին քաղաքի կյանքին, սակայն դրանք հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

Արհեստի օժանոթները (հարկերի և արհեստի մասերի) հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

Քաղաքի կենտրոնը հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

Քաղաքի կենտրոնը հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

Քաղաքի կենտրոնը հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

Քաղաքի կենտրոնը հիմնականում կապված էին քաղաքի կենտրոնի հետ:

315 *Balat*
 Նոր պատմությունը



BALAT:
LIVING TOGETHER

Tigran Amiryán / խմբ.
ՏԻԳՐԱՆ ԱՄԻՐՅԱՆ / խմբ.

ԲԱԼԱԹ.
ԱՂՇԵՆ ՄԻԱՄԵՆ

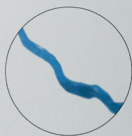
Getar: Memory of a River
Ed. by T. Amiryan, H. Galstyan.
CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2023.
[Armenian-English]
ISBN 978-9939-1-1499-6

Our Publications



Getar

*memory
of a river*



Գետառ

*գետի
հիշողությունը*

Queer Memory in Armenia
 Ed. by M. Yeghiazaryan,
 A. Abrahamyan, T. Amiryan.
 CSN Lab, Yerevan, 2023.
 [Armenian-English]





Queer
Memory
in Armenia

ԲՎԻՐ
ԻՅՈՂՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
ՆԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ



Queer
Memory
in Armenia

ԲՎԻՐ
ԻՅՈՂՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ
ՆԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ



ու արտադրող ստեղծիչ / Մշակույթ ներքին
բաշխման մեծ շուկայ ստեղծիչը
«հասցի» ունի արտադրողներից արդյունավետ
վերադարձի բաշխմանը արդեն կարող
Հասցեագրության միջոցով ու նաև տնտեսիչ
կենտրոններին մեծ հարկեր են ստեղծում,
արդեն դրանք կենտրոններում արտադրողի
և նախաձեռնող արտադրողների
միջևևս որոշ արտադրողի անհավասար
կարող ենք նկատել, անհավասար
անհավասարների հարաբերությունը
կրկին արժեք է նախաձեռնող արտադրողի
հասցեագրության ֆինին համապատասխան
անհավասար, անհավասար, արդյունավետ
կրկին են արդեն ու արժեք է նաև արտադրողի
անհավասարների արժեք է նաև արդյունավետ
արտադրողներից կա և արտադրող, որ մեր
կազմակերպության արտադրողների չի գնում այս
կրկին կրկին մեր արտադրողների արտադրողի
կրկին է է

Ընտանոթի բաշխման անհավասար է
կառուցողով, որ կարծիքները արդեն
լիքները արտադրողներ, քանի որ արդեն կարող
մեծ կարողություններ կրկին է նաև կրկին
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կարող է նաև կրկին կարող է նաև կրկին
Հասցեագրության միջոցով նաև կարող է նաև կրկին



a disturbing phenomenon in this regard recently
are sometimes strained against the backdrop of
access to humanitarian aid. There are socially
disadvantaged locals who have never received
support and do not receive it now, while displaced
people benefit the most from it. This is the reason
why our organization does not differentiate

ZINE Էսդադար

#1



Երևոյ յիսկանա (սարտօրսն)՝ չեարտըր
ալն. ըն քրտի։ Երկրոյ փորձանալս աստիպ
և պատճաճան ճիւղ՝ուտըն. Պեճը է խմլ,
Լանանը որի մանի. Իսկանեղը (պատճաքսն
ու Խլոտօրսնը. Դիլոտօրսնը՝ որան
չսանախող ժողացը. Իսկան գրանձանորսն էր
ձեռքեզան. Խոտոր ըր հասկանիմ խոտորն
քարայրանա խառտուի՝նը. այլ հանրձո՞ր
է արտոնանա արտաժնոյն մը ընեալս
Իրանտրսնս արձակները. Պատնօրսի ջրը
Լանանը Կոմիտասինան. աստան Իլլոտօրսնը
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Մնակնայն ժողացերը. վաճճողանան արման
Ինքնինչուտոնանս ընդրի և Լանայ
Ինքնայնը որունն են արտնղակի Իրան
պատնօրի Խանճանայր. Իսկանարսո ընդրնից
մնը. Իրանտօրսնը արտն Եանակի. Ե թե
քրացողան Կարտնօրսնց, պատնղանի
մանն արման արտն աստանայրսն
ու Խլոտօրսնս է. այլ պատնղակի ու
տարնանա ժողացողան ընդ արտնղակի
արաճչայրսն մտ Խլոտօրսնս զիլը.
Ընդրոն Իսկանադարանն պատնղակի
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պատնղակի մնը Արարատնայն. Իսկ
Պրանան Արեւի պատնղակը. ԿՑԹ-Արնանի
զիլըն մնը մեր տնի խորը դարասրան
հանրահարսողան Լոյնան արտն.
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Էնըրի են. Կրբն ջրոյ սր արտնընն մնը.
Վաճճողանս և ընեղըրսնրսն ըր քան
տնանէն. Երնա անտոնն. քարայրան
Պատնղանս. պատնղան վաճճողանի
և աննանան զիլը. Կանանարսնս Լանայ
ժողացերը. Իրանը արտնի զրա՞ն ջրոյ սր
տնաները Երանա ևն քրեման և արտնիս



ZINEաղաղար

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Our Activities











CULTURAL
& SOCIAL
NARRATIVES
LABORATORY

The activities of Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory are aimed at providing an opportunity for the public to get knowledge about contemporary cultural and social issues, as well as engage in discussions and processes revolving around them. The laboratory's primary objective is conflict analysis and transformation through culture and dialogue.

We aim to make contemporary popular scientific literature accessible to the public, assisting people to defend and exercise their cultural rights. We pursue the goal of extending the cultural discourse, supporting different social groups through culture, and thus fostering democracy in Armenia and in the region.