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**Title of Session:** Armenian Society in Transition

**Name of Session Convener(s):** Gevorg Poghosyan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Armenian Sociological Association, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of ANAS

**Chair:** Gevorg Poghosyan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Armenian Sociological Association, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of ANAS

**I) Title of Selected Paper:** The Transforming of Current Armenian Society

**Name/s of Author/s:** Gevorg Poghosyan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Armenian Sociological Association, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of ANAS

**Abstract:** The social transformations at the end of the 20th century following the breakup of the Soviet Union are remembered as the beginning of a new historical era. Events of this type require time for understanding and scientific comprehension. The reforms continue in a state of implementation process. But definite social changes and consequences of the reforms are already evident. Below, I contribute to the process of evaluating scientifically the outcomes of these reforms, which politicians called “transition.”

Western theories of modernization have recently seen revision. The main idea of the theoretical revision is to account for an absence of a universal modernization model for all countries on the way to “postindustrial” development. The “postindustrial” period which comes after developed industrial capitalism represents the future social order, but there are multiple paths leading toward it. Post-socialist countries involved in the process of social modernization experience serious developmental difficulties, regression, a partial decrease in industrialization, and even some “*archaic reverse*” of separate sectors of the economy.

The “modernization rebound” and some deindustrialization represent a common stage of post-socialist development. As a rule, classical Western models of modernization applied to post-Soviet societies bring some social destruction. The problem lies in the

absence of direct inclusion into models of modernization distinct ethno-cultural variation and processes.

Many researchers believe that Soviet society embraced modernization, but that it could not continue and finish it because of its closed society and lack of democracy because the Soviet government suppressed civil society and did not provide a place for civil initiative and self-organization. The results of social reformations in the post-Soviet countries are not clear yet, even to the reformers and analysts. Whatever the final result will be, it will not repeat the ways of Western development exactly, because of the post-Soviet countries' unique political and economic history.

## **II) Title of Selected Paper:** Alienated Society: From Diagnosis to Action

**Name/s of Author/s:** Manuk Harutiunyan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of ANAS

**Abstract:** The concept of “political alienation” has come to be widely used not only by researchers but also by journalists in the assessment of the public opinion in Armenia as well as by rank-and-file citizens in the assessment of their own sentiments and views. The matter concerns a person who is aware of the fact that “big” politics in Armenia is made behind his or her back and that those who make it pursue their selfish goals and do not take into consideration ordinary people’s interests, problems and opinions. The surveys conducted by Armenian Sociological Association testify that a considerable number of the respondents deem themselves isolated and removed from the political process and feel forgotten and powerless. They are convinced that their opinions do not really matter. They feel manipulated and taken advantage of by those who run the country. Armenians feel alienation from and discontent about not only the country’s leading political institutions but also economic institutions. One can contend that in terms of social groups, alienation is across the board. The changes in the distribution of alienation have affected the entire Armenian electorate to a surprisingly equal degree. The political alienation, which is experienced by many Armenians, is expressed in a specific form. It has become alienation not only from the ruling clique that heads the main institutions but also from politics as such. The crisis of confidence in powers that be not infrequently turns into the crisis of confidence in any institutionalized forms of political action. It transforms into distrust of all those around, of their motives and actions. Consequently, the crisis of confidence in those who head principal political institutions in case of many Armenians turned into conviction that a crisis is unfolding, the crisis of active deeds, which are capable of dramatically changing the situation in the country for the better.

The main reason behind the paralysis of political will of the broad segments of the public is that the growing feeling of alienation is not infrequently accompanied by a growing feeling of powerlessness of an individual and of the society at large to do away with what triggers criticisms and discontent.

## **III) Title of Selected Paper:** Transition Paradigm & Prospects of Democracy in Armenia

**Name/s of Author/s:** Vladimir Osipov

**University/Organization incl. City:** Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of ANAS

**Abstract:** Even though the concept of “transition period” does not have single interpretation within the prevalent theories in political science, sociology and economics, it became a key one in post-Soviet countries immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

By and large the “transition paradigm” was perceived as a description of a number of various ways and strategies from authoritarian (or, less frequently, from totalitarian) regimes and of a gradual transition to democracy. The process includes the creation or evolution of basic political institutions of a democratic system and the establishment of new rules for regulation of political behavior of citizens, organizations and ruling elites. The so-called “post-communist transition” has a number of important specific features, including dual transition (in political and economic spheres). The “deviation” from the classical model of transition is also reflected in the post-communist transition starting not after but *before national unity and national identity have been firmly established*. It is further complicated since being essentially an “ideological” rather than “organic” transition, it aims not to consolidate and codify social practices but to eliminate them. As the post-communist transition is not homogeneous, many researchers prefer the term “post-Soviet transformation” for the description of the situation in the CIS countries.

As most of the CIS countries, Armenia experiences “democratic deficit”. It is further aggravated by social deficit (when social protection, benefits, job security, decent pay, etc. are sacrificed for putative economic efficiency and investment attractiveness). My contention here is that socio-political and socioeconomic “reforms” (or, more precisely, experiments) of the past 15 years or so failed miserably owing to the «elites» lack of vision and competence, to their insatiable greed and to alienation of citizens from decisionmaking. The opening up process of the Armenian society was reversed. It has begun to degenerate into a closed, non-meritocratic society with the bureaucratic hierarchy capturing the State, concentrating power and resources and ignoring the public will. The prospects for democracy and for the rule of law are bleak. The ruling class becomes a closed corporation. A new “nomenclatura” is on the rise, while the strengthening of new hierarchies and the formation of new elites takes place in an undemocratic and non-meritocratic fashion, thereby enhancing social polarization and distorted social stratification. Such profound transformations as privatization, market economy reforms, promotion of free and fair elections, political and ideological pluralism as well as independent media, etc., were occurring with significant distortions and did not yield expected results because of the monopolization of political power and public administration and politics by the “elite” and of marginalizing citizens in public life.

**IV) Title of Selected Paper:** A Shifting Mosaic: Yerevan ’s Cultural Landscape in Transition

**Name/s of Author/s:** Diana Ter-Ghazaryan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Since 1991 many of Yerevan’s neighborhoods have been transformed due to ardent investment in the construction sector. In addition, many of the city’s parks and other public spaces have been commercialized for private and exclusive use, creating

spaces that are accessible to few. These changes have resulted in the partial erasure of the city's existent landscape, and in the creation of a new image of the city. The concept of landscape has been a prominent tool for theoretical inquiry in cultural geography for quite some time. This concept has come to encompass not only the visible, tangible features of the land, which include landforms, flora and fauna, the built environment and artifacts, but also the abstract layer of meanings and messages that can be imagined and memorized about particular locales. Landscapes contain sets of cultural experiences, they are created with the help of stories told about them and territorial claims laid to them. At the same time, landscapes are also media in which power relations are encoded, but they are not passive recipients of information—they play a role in shaping power relations, and affect social relations of a particular time and place. Urban landscapes in particular are vivid composers and transmitters of contemporary culture. This paper will explore the cultural landscape of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and the changes that it has experienced after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In order to illustrate the extent of change, the presentation will include photos and other visuals acquired during research trips.

**V) Title of Selected Paper:** Armenian young immigrants in Poland. At the edge.

**Name/s of Author/s:** Tomasz Marciniak

**University/Organization incl. City:** Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland

**Abstract:** Studies of culture as an assimilation tool for the newest (from 1994) Armenian immigration to Poland are part of my long-term research programme devoted to the Armenian migration and Diaspora. Paper is based on research focused on post-soviet Armenian migration in Poland done during last a couple years. I analyse a group of Polish immigrants; the following sub-groups, which are considered particularly important, are subject to observation: children, youth and students. This problem, among others, is addressed by *Centrum Badań Ormiańskich UMK w Toruniu* (The Center for Armenian Research UMK Toruń), which was founded by the author. The focus of my interest here is *Generation 1,5* - young Armenians, born in their own Motherland but as the children taken to the country chosen by parents – Poland (*generation 1* – people, who have decided to emigrate; *generation 2* – children born in Poland). Who are they now, sometimes at the end of university path? Without good knowledge about reach culture of own nation, without good command of own language and alphabet? What role in maintaining national identity play three small schools, established by Poles?

what questions will be touched

- primary schooling of Armenians in Poland;
- Armenian students in Poland, Armenian Youth Association;
- The role of mass media in everyday socialization;
- The double identification of youngest generation
- The lack of official Armenian network in Poland (i.e. for example, organisations of imigrants);

**VI) Title of Selected Paper:** The Role of Sociology in Raising the Education Level of Students in Higher Educational Institutions of Armenia

**Name/s of Author/s:** Yuri Gasparyan

**University/Organization incl. City:** State Pedagogic University of Armenia, Yerevan

**Abstract:** Taking into account that the system of Higher education is a field of interaction for the interests of the State and Society, it will be clear that each of the subjects of education matter is to bear its share of concernment and responsibility to create conditions, necessary for fulfillment of the requirements of the State and Society. In this connection one of the main purposes of contemporary higher education is to build up such theoretical and practical sociological knowledge for the future pedagogues, engineers, lawyers that will promote their productive creative participation in social life of the society through different ways and training methods. At the same time with this in mind only with the help of sociological knowledge the interrelations that every day arises in the process of education between the lecturers and students of the Higher Educational Institutions are strengthened and improved. In particular these interrelations fully express not only the level of the social development of the rising generation but also the concernment and responsibility in teaching staff with a purpose of socialization of the further specialists.

Matching the pedagogical and sociological skills in the learning process the future pedagogues, engineers, lawyers must not only be adapted to occurred impetuous social changes but also to be able to evaluate the events in his private life, practically to contemplate the way of social changes and transformations in all the areas of public life. With an aim to solve tasks in the learning process of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic (particularly where the study of sociology as a separate discipline has been delayed till now), along with humanistic, socio-cultural, socio-mobile, investment, socio-integrative, forecasting and other pedagogic functions, it should be taken into account the below-mentioned functions of general sociology: cognitive-theoretical, critical, informational, descriptive, forecasting, world view, etc.