

New Europe College Yearbook  
*Pontica Magna* Program  
2018-2019



---

KAHA BAINDURASHVILI  
CRISTINA BOBOC  
VITALI BYL  
OLGA COJOCARU  
TAMTA MELASHVILI  
ANNA OHANJANYAN  
VASILE ROTARU

---

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

*Pontica Magna* Fellowship Program is supported by VolkswagenStiftung, Germany.

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Andrei PLEȘU, President of the New Europe Foundation, Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Bucharest; former Minister of Culture and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Dr. Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Rector, Professor of Musicology, National University of Music, Bucharest

Dr. Anca OROVEANU, Academic Coordinator, Professor of Art History, National University of Arts, Bucharest

Dr. Katharina BIEGGER, Consultant, Eastern European Projects, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

Dr. Constantin ARDELEANU, NEC Long-term Fellow, Professor of Modern History, The “Lower Danube” University of Galați

Dr. Irina VAINOVSKI-MIHAI, Publications Coordinator, Professor of Arab Studies, “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Bucharest

Copyright – New Europe College, 2021

ISSN 1584-0298

New Europe College

Str. Plantelor 21

023971 Bucharest

Romania

[www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro); e-mail: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)

Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10



## **CRISTINA BOBOC**

Born in 1983, in the Republic of Moldova

Ph.D. Candidate, Ghent University

Dissertation Working Title: *Between Politics and Poetics of Middle Class Identity in post-Soviet Urban Azerbaijan*

Early Stage Researcher, Ghent University

### Fellowships:

Visiting Fellow, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies,  
Harvard University, 2018-2019

Special Research Funds (BOF-ITN), Ghent University, 2018-2019

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie ITN Fellowship, Ghent University, 2015-2018

Participation to conferences in USA, UK, Germany, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium,  
Italy, Georgia, Azerbaijan



# STATE-LED MODERNIZATION AND MIDDLE CLASS SUBJECTIVITIES IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN

## Abstract

This paper brings into to discussion the preliminary findings of an ongoing research project on the characteristics and dynamics of Baku's middle class. More exactly, it aims to examine the relationship between state-led modernization and class transformation in the capital city of Azerbaijan in the context of the modernization and de-Sovietization processes. Azerbaijan inherited a particular pre-revolutionary stratification, influenced by oil discoveries and the first stage of oil exploitation, combined with almost a century of Soviet dominance. During the last two decades, Azerbaijani authorities redirected the revenues from the extraction industries to transform the capital city, Baku, into an architectural mix of the European and Dubai models. However, transforming the face of the country brought with it the transformation of its inhabitants. Eventually, to fulfill the new standards, the government aimed to create a new class which was schooled in "a different, occidental way".

Based on ethnographic data collected throughout 2016 and 2018 in Baku, this contribution examines how the perceived need of modernization of the country, and its citizens, basically comes through the importation and implantation of Western goods, manners and education on local values and norms. However, the modernization project seems to focus mostly on the capital city and only recently have some modest modernization projects started in the other cities of the country. The concentration of the development projects, beautification of the city, expansion of the luxurious shops and shopping centers, and the policy for the importation of skilled foreign specialists, were developed to cater for the local emerging middle classes' new aspirations. The imported occidental lifestyle combined with the luxurious Dubai style, led to the new emerging middle classes' need to distinguish themselves through consumption.

**Keywords:** Middle class, modernization, social change, Azerbaijan, urban transformation, Europeanization

## Introduction

“Azerbaijan is rich. Now it wants to be famous” states an article in the *New York Times* magazine.<sup>1</sup> Although the article seems to be a eulogistic portrait of Ibrahim Ibrahimov, “one of the richest men in Azerbaijan”, as the *New York Times* author claims, it also provides rich insights into the rapid urban transformations. The revenues from oil and gas extractions made the recovery of the post-Soviet Azerbaijan relatively fast in comparison with other post-Soviet countries from the region. The Azerbaijani government paid special attention to “putting Azerbaijan on the map”, as the locals use to say, by hosting international big events, or as the *New York Times* suggests, to making it *famous*. Consequently, especially in the capital city, an intensive modernization process has started; including the beautification of the city, modernization of the infrastructure, improving the public services, etc. a phenomenon called *urban boosterism* by Natalie Koch and Anar Valieyev. The aforementioned researchers analyzed the political strategies behind the big events organized in three cities around the Caspian Sea: Baku, Astana and Ashgabat, all of them post-Soviet cities rich in energy resources.

During the last two decades of independence, Azerbaijani politics have been oriented towards modernization, Europeanization and purification from Soviet residues. Part of the oil revenues has been oriented towards the transformation of the country following a combination of European models and successful development models of the Gulf countries and the Arabian Peninsula. Both the international press and the research speak even of a process of Dubaization<sup>2</sup> of the capital of Azerbaijan.

However, the unexpected oil crisis slowed down the rapid transformations of the capital city. Just before starting my fieldwork, the country had already faced two sharp currency devaluations of almost 50%<sup>3</sup> and has been affected by the economic crisis generated mostly by the drop of the crude oil prices and the unsuccessful administration of the oil revenues in the last decades. Nevertheless, my previous experience in Azerbaijan (between 2011 and 2014) was unquestionably beneficial and proved useful in understanding the current situation and dynamics.

## Methodological Remarks and Conceptualization

Drawn upon ethnographic-based methods carried out in Baku, the capital city and most important city of Azerbaijan, between 2016 and 2018, this

contribution intends to offer only a fragmented reflection of the middle class identity. The extensive fieldwork allowed me to observe the daily life of different middle class clusters. Besides more formal interviews, I have spent nearly two years observing their way of dressing or acting publicly, looking at their shopping patterns, their school or hospital choices, being involved in their celebrations and social interactions. We shared long kitchen talks accompanied by the usual *pürrengi cay*<sup>4</sup>, we shared food, ideas, discussions, and sometimes even political contradictions. Although my approach abounds in thick descriptions, it is still far from providing a full picture of the complex Azerbaijani social identity.

As noticed during the fieldwork, the understanding of this social stratum opens a big debate, and thus the reason I consider it necessary to clarify my conceptualization of the middle class. The definition provided here is assembled from the categorizations that came to light repeatedly from the interviews or informal discussions. To be middle class, in this particular context, means to be part of a layer of society where the distinction is made by profession, education, manners, and an *assumed modernity*. The concept of *assumed modernity* has sprung from the various formal or informal conversations with my respondents and can also be found in the literature that looks at the formation of the middle class especially in the Middle East and Asia. In his study of middle-class training in the city of Aleppo at the beginning of the twentieth century, Watenpaugh notes that the discourse around the birth of the middle class focuses on modernization and Europeanization, a discussion that in a certain way appeared to me very similar to the current trend in Azerbaijan. Most of my interlocutors stressed the need for modernization through the importation of “European culture” into Azerbaijan. I do not consider income an absolute criterion for being part of this class, but I admit that income could offer the possibility of achieving a middle class status.

Referring to the Azerbaijani context, I use the term middle classes rather than middle class, considering that the professional class, once called intelligentsia, now in an economic decline, forms a middle class in itself, one different from the new middle class emerging as an effect of the economic transformation of the last decades. Although their economic status is arguable in most of the cases, the professional middle class (professors, doctors, civil servants) should not be excluded from the broader framework of the middle class based on an economic criterion only. Middle class position is still important when it comes to good manners, good taste, respect in society. From another perspective, the

official income does not correspond in most cases studied with the actual income, given the importance of the second economy and the informal economy very present in post-Soviet spaces. Professors usually have a second income from private lessons (*repetitorstva*) to “correct” the gaps. Doctors, especially in the public system, complete their official salaries with “gifts” from patients who hope to get special attention and better treatment. Even civil servants, taking advantage of an intricate bureaucracy, complete their income by using the power of their status and access to needed resources to resolve certain situations citizens may find themselves in, in exchange for informal payments. In the case of the bureaucracy it is important to underline that the government invests and has partially solved the problem by creating the ASAN Xidmət agencies<sup>5</sup>. From my personal experience, and from the experience of my respondents, ASAN Xidmət agencies seem to have eliminated the bureaucratic processes and informal payments offered in the past. I will not dwell on the phenomenon of the second economy or the informal economy as the subject has been intensely studied, especially in post-Soviet and post-socialist countries. The Informal economy in the Southern Caucasus and specifically in Azerbaijan are studied by Huseyn Aliyev and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann.

In addition to the informal economic exchanges, the practice of shared economy and strong family bonds, in which material goods are distributed within micro-communities, minimize the importance of the individual income. Money and goods redistribution between the enlarged family members is not perceived as an aid, but more like a moral obligation, as part of “tradition”. It is not at all surprising that a person with a salary of around four hundred *manat*, the equivalent of two hundred and fifty dollars a month, would be able to take a trip abroad at least once a year, access expensive private health services, and enjoy a lifestyle characteristic of the middle class.

Along with enriching the theory of middle class, this approach will contribute to filling in a gap in the literature of regional studies. The hostile political environment towards researchers kept Azerbaijan away from the direct interest of scholars. In terms of ethnographic studies, there are very limited prospects, especially in the field of ethnolinguistics and local minorities groups.



## **The 'Middle Class'**

To investigate the changes in social stratification of post-Soviet Azerbaijan is a very intriguing opportunity. The middle class theories abound and can be found in a wide range of explorations. However, the literature is by far more generously populated with the westernized approach to the middle class. As Ammara Maqsood remarkably notes, the western middle class, from where the concept evolved, and the middle class groups in the postcolonial context, are two different realities, with their particular subjectivities.

From a theoretical perspective of the social theories, Azerbaijan offers a unique intersection between two distinctive areas. Along with the theories related to social class and urban transformations of the post-Soviet space, the field research showed a similarity to the theories of modernization and class found mainly in the research studies of the Middle East. Studying the emergent middle class in the city of Aleppo, Watenpaugh links the new urban middle class and the lengthy process of modernization found in the Eastern Mediterranean. Expanding the theoretical framework provided by Watenpaugh, I focus on the results of the ongoing modernization process in the middle class formation. In addition, Ammara Maqsood in a recent ethnographic study, offers a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between both middle class and modernization in Pakistan.

Alternatively, there are a few remarkable contributions from scholars focussed on Russian societal changes and inequalities in the new economic phase. Patico's notable study provides a view on the Russian professional middle class, represented by school teachers from Saint-Petersburg. As Patico observes, the Russian professional middle class encapsulates both the occupational prestige and the daily economic struggle.

A consistent framework on class subjectivities in post-socialist Eastern Europe has provided a new perspective in examining the middle class in the transforming societies. The scholars explore the tastes, moralities, normalcy of the new money and new needs.

## ***Мещанство*, Bourgeoisie, Intelligentsia and Different Forms of a proto-Middle Class: Historical Considerations**

To aid our understanding of the situation of the middle class in Azerbaijan today, I propose to briefly examine the historical past of the proto-middle classes in the region. The understanding of the concept of social class

during the Soviet era brought with it a denigrating sense, a fact that left an imprint on the modern perception of the class in the post-Soviet countries. The fall of Azerbaijan under Soviet administration in April 1920, also brought the destruction of the aristocracy and the new local bourgeoisie created in the pre-Soviet period. The destruction of the elite, especially in the 1930s, obviously influences the current social stratification. The policies of the Soviet Union on the elimination of the old elite, the abolition of social classes and the construction of a utopian society based on equality, have done nothing but create another social order equally stratified in the social classes. Despite the official discourse, as demonstrated already in the research on social stratification in the Soviet period, the supposed equality was only a myth. In reality the social stratification of the Soviet Union was very complex and sophisticated. Roughly speaking, and without going into too much detail we can speak of three social classes during the late Soviet era: peasants and the working class; intelligentsia; and the ruling class, also known as *nomenklatura*.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the term middle class entered Azerbaijan through mass media and in the last decade also through political discourse, with its economic significance attached. Furthermore, revenues from the exploitation of natural resources (especially oil and gas) and fast economic growth have given Azerbaijani citizens enormous hopes and aspirations. A new economic class began to emerge and at the same time the professional middle class (called *bakynskaya intelligentsia* in Russian or *ziyali* in the Azerbaijani version) was stuck in the austerity caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changes that followed. The old intelligentsia is too weak and impoverished to form a solid middle class and the new, economically powerful emerging middle class is still too small and fragile to be considered a class in its own right. A coexistence between these two middle class groups is almost impossible because the intelligentsia perceives the new emerging class as *parvenu* (especially the people who moved to Baku from different regions of Azerbaijan). The status of the old intelligentsia, nowadays is often pitied, and it is not perceived as part of the middle class by the new emerging class. This professional middle class enjoys social status, but does not always have the means to lead a decent life. The two categories analyzed must be taken as ideal categories, but in both cases there are also large areas of exception: both in the professional class perfectly adapted to the new neo-liberal market, and in the new emerging class, which manages to get more than just an economic legitimization.

## **Middle Class in Azerbaijan and the Local Political Narratives**

However, in this context, the formation of a middle class has become a point of reference. From the local political perspective, the creation of a strong middle class is part of the country's modernization process. The eradication of extreme poverty and expansion of the middle class issue became priority projects, at least in the public discourses of the local authorities, emphasizing that the problem of "absolute poverty" will constantly be in the centre of attention again, and along with that, the expansion of the middle class and the strengthening of the role of this class is one of the main purposes. The experience of various countries shows that countries with a stronger middle class are more sustainable from political, economic, social and other perspectives, and have a higher development potential.<sup>6</sup> In March 2014, upon receiving the delegation of Henry Kerali, the newly appointed World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, pointed out that the country was carrying out targeted measures to improve the social situation of the middle class<sup>7</sup>. The middle class issue is not only on the political agenda of Azerbaijani authorities, but international organizations and local researchers have also shown a growing interest in the economic middle class topic.

In a report of June 2015, the World Bank estimates an increase to 29% of the middle class of Azerbaijan, with a distribution in Baku to 44%<sup>8</sup>. The situation of the middle class and the impact of the recent economic changes have also been discussed in a media report on the regional office of Radio Free Europe (Radio Azadliq). The interviewed researchers argue that the Azerbaijani middle class is seriously shrinking as a result of the oil crisis and the devaluation of the national currency. The topic is analyzed from an economic perspective as the cited researchers are mostly economists. As shown, the middle class situation has gained an interest in the last years; however the outlook is still limited to an economic approach.

Even though, the economic framework provides an established size of the middle class in Azerbaijan, from a social anthropological angle, to measure the Azerbaijani middle class is an impossible mission and it is not the intention of this research.

### **“I am middle class limited edition”. A false dis-identification**

Nevertheless, despite all the attention to the situation of the middle class mentioned above, introducing myself in Baku and announcing my research topic, I am constantly asked by locals and by foreign residents in Baku, if “there is a middle class in Azerbaijan”, or if I “managed” yet to find some middle class people. These questions are intended more to mark a surprise and/or to express doubt about the existence of the middle class in Azerbaijan today. Moreover, I noticed that whenever I introduced my research to someone new, I also had my answer prepared for the inevitable question: “Is there a middle class here?”

The perception of the middle-class in common knowledge is generally associated with the economic aspects of the middle stratum. According to this understanding, the income is the main criterion which draws the lines of social stratification. In this article, I intend to show that class structure in post-Soviet countries is more complex than a quantitative analyze of income and the ability to accumulate material goods. Moreover, this contribution argues that belonging to a class is expressed not through group identification but in asserting a distinction from the other classes.

The insignificance and weakness of this social stratum is constantly emphasized by my informants: “Middle class, ahhh! There are a few of us left” (claim the old intelligentsia) and “There is no middle class here” but at the same time “I am middle class” (pretend the new formed middle class group, emphasizing their success and denying a group belonging). This apparently contradictory phrase became a leitmotiv in my research. The prevalent economic perception of a class belonging shows an apparent absence of class identity, and a very sharp distinction and belonging to distinctive groups.

From this perspective, class identity seems absent; moreover it looks more as a class dis-identification. However, beside the narratives of the middle class existence or absence, the research shows a strong group-belonging in distinction to the other groups: “mi bakintsy” (we bakuvians) in opposition to the “rayoniye” (countryside internal migrants); we “kul’turnye ludy” (educated/well-mannered people) or in the Azerbaijani version *ziyalı* (intellectuals) in opposition to “nekul’turniye” (uneducated/ill-mannered people), we “Russian speakers” in opposition to “Azerbaijani speakers”. The class dis-identification is just a false premise, the absence of a strong class identity is materialized in other class marks.

When speaking about class belonging, Azerbaijani people claim that one “does not need to be part of a class, but has to have class”.

### **Living in the Middle**

As the sociologist Sergey Rumyantsev argues, Azerbaijan is in a constant process of modernization of the “country and its citizens”. However, the modernization project seems to focus mostly on the capital city and only recently have some modest modernization projects started in the other cities around the country. The countryside is still totally absent from the modernization process. The concentration of the development projects, beautification of the city, expansion of the luxurious shops and shopping centers, the importation of foreign skilled specialists, created new aspirations for the local emerging middle class. The imported occidental lifestyle combined with the luxurious Dubai style fostered in the new emerging middle class a need of distinction through consumption. The “modernized” lifestyle, including the European manners, way of thinking, way of acting, contradicted local norms and values and started to create an identity crisis. As one of informants pointed out:

When you are on one side or another you know very well who you are. When you are poor you live in your community with you customs and social norms, when you are rich you live as you wish, nobody judges you because people respect money more-than people here. And that’s fine, you know to what side you belong. But when you live in the middle, you try to live with both sides inside and this just creates an inner struggle. You live a double life, in a way you try to fulfill the societal traditional norms, but at the same time you aspire to a modern life, a European lifestyle that is contradictory to our norms and values.

Living with the struggle of being in the middle where someone has to deal with the norms dictated by tradition and the aspirations of a modern lifestyle, this is what links people and makes them want to be part of the same middle class.

## **Embracing the Imposed Modernity**

The rapid change of the city landscape made the Baku residents proud of the transformation of the city. They will proudly express their appreciation for the strangely shaped skyscrapers, these heterotopias of future, for the new Western luxurious shops, for the international events that Azerbaijani authorities were keen to host. Even though many of them could not afford to visit the commercial spaces (restaurants, cinemas, shops, etc.) in the newly built skyscrapers, to shop in the luxurious shops or to attend most of the international events. The new symbols of cityscape became objects of admiration and desire. From time to time, a good friend, Sabina, would invite me to Port Baku Mall (a new Shopping Center - part of a bigger commercial space and luxurious apartments - that would sell only expensive brands). She worked nearby and enjoyed walking on the mall's empty, but clean, shiny and perfumed corridors. Our walks were limited only to window shopping, she would show me what she liked but we never entered the shops. She would also show me the "best pizza place in town" that she knew only because her foreign boyfriend, a BP employee, invited her there. One day she confessed to me that she likes to invite me to walk there also because it makes her feel better when she is accompanied by a foreign friend and people see her speaking English around. "People here like foreigners, our people think that all foreigners are loaded with money. This is because they see only BP employees that are indeed loaded with money. When you accompany a foreigner they respect you more. Well, it depends, sometimes it is the opposite. Such is our culture, full of contradictions." And she laughed. Once, while we were walking on the Port Baku corridors trying to find inspiration for the New Year's Eve Party dress, she showed me several evening dresses that she liked in the display windows and told me: "you see how we do here? We get inspired by the things we cannot afford, and we go after to the Bine or Sederek bazar to find a Turkish or Chinese made dress that hopefully will remind us of the dress from the Port Baku Mall display windows. And we wear the Chinese dress pretending that we wear an expensive fashionable dress. It's all we do here. We pretend. But this is because we see things, we want them, but we cannot afford what we want, so we will pretend that we have more than we actually do."

## **Concluding Remarks**

This paper has explored the subjectivities of the middle class in the modernization process of post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The main focus of this paper was to answer what middle class means in present-day Azerbaijan and what is the social role of this social strata. The formation of a stable middle class has become a priority project for the Azerbaijani authorities. Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest in the condition of the middle class, this social stratum is still weak and lacks in a class unity. The class identity is expressed through a group belonging, in distinction to other groups.

The impoverished professional middle class seeks distinction through the language they speak, manners, education and occupation. Meanwhile, the emerging middle class distinguishes itself in terms of power of consumption, including holidays or/and education overseas, western products, westernized lifestyle. These two groups will not see themselves as belonging to the same class and will claim that their position is distinctive from the others. However, to mark clear borders between these two groups of the same class is impossible, as they intersect in their aspirations and achievements.

The rapid modernization process brought to the country new aspirations and a desired western life style that placed the emerging middle class in conflict with the local values and traditions.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/magazine/azerbaijan-is-rich-now-it-wants-to-be-famous.html> accessed 05.03.2018
- <sup>2</sup> Dubaization is a term introduced in 2004 by Yasser Elsheshtawy at the Conference of the International Association for Studies of Traditional Environments in Sharjah, UAE, referring to a certain type of Dubai influence in Cairo. In a short time, the term was used with various meanings, but the most common and always used when talking about the Dubaization of Azerbaijan refers to large architectural projects especially glass and steel skyscrapers. In Azerbaijan, in the various interviews, people also referred to a space for luxury consumption, a space of desire and modernity.
- <sup>3</sup> The first currency depreciation hit Azerbaijan on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2015, when the national currency, manat, lost around 33% of its value overnight. The second depreciation wave happened on the night of 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> *Pürrengi çay* is a strong brewed black tea.
- <sup>5</sup> The first ASAN Xidmət agency was created after the presidential decree signed on July 13, 2012. [http:// www.asan.gov.az/en/about](http://www.asan.gov.az/en/about) Literary, ASAN is the acronym for Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network, originally called in English, in Azerbaijani language *asan* means *easy*.
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.president.az/files/future\\_en.pdf](http://www.president.az/files/future_en.pdf) accessed on 27.04.2016
- <sup>7</sup> <http://en.president.az/mobile/articles/11172> accessed on 15.03.2017
- <sup>8</sup> World Bank report is based on income analyses before the devaluation of the national currency. However. According to quoted World Bank report middle class in Azerbaijan increased between 2007 and 2012 from 4,26% to 28,89%. In World Bank report middle class is considered any household with a minimum per capita consumption above 10 USD PPP. [http:// documents](http://documents).



---

**Bibliography**

- Adam, F.; Tomisc M., "Elite (Re)configuration and Politico-Economic Performance in Post-Socialist Countries" in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 435-454, 2002
- Aliyev, H., "Post-communist informal networking: *Blat* in the South Caucasus" in *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 89-112, 2013
- Altstadt, A. L., *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, Hoover University Press, Stanford University, Stanford, 1992.
- Baghirzade, B. (Багирзаде, Б.), *Gorod moyey molodosty (Город моей молодости)*, Şərq-Qərb, Baku, 2015
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1979
- Chelcea, L., *Economia informala in Romania. Piete, practici sociale si transformari ale statului dupa 1989*. Paideia, Bucarest, 2005
- Donner, H., "Making the middle class families in Calcutta" in *Anthropologies of Class: Power, Practice and Inequality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015
- Dunham, V., *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, Duke University press, Durham, 1976
- Elsheshtawy, Y., *Dubai: Behind the Urban Spectacle. Planning, History and Environment Series*, Routledge, Abingdon-on-Thames, 2009
- Fehervary, K., *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2013
- Grant, B., "Cosmopolitan Baku" in *Ethnos*, Vol. 75, No. 2, 123-147, 2010
- Grant, B., "The Edifice Complex: Architecture and the Political Life of Surplus in the New Baku" in *Public Culture*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2014
- Heyat, F., *Azeri women in transition. Women post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, ed. Chashioglu, Baku, 2005
- Hair, I.K., "Boundaries of middle-class identities in Turkey" in *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 675-697, 2014
- Humphrey, C., "The Villas of the New Russians: a Sketch of Consumption and Cultural Identity in Post Soviet Landscapes", in *Focaal: globalization/localization: paradoxes of cultural identity* Vol. 30-31, 85-106, 1998
- Koch, N; Valiyev, A., "Urban boosterism in closed contexts: spectacular urbanization and second-tier mega-events in three Caspian capitals" in *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol.56, No. 5, 575-598, 2015
- Krishtanovskaya, O., White, S., "From Soviet Nomenklatura to Russian Elite" in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5, 711-733, 1996
- Kepplova, Z., *The Paradoxes of Mainstream: Investigating Transition-Era Youth Cultures in Slovakia*. Eastbound, Budapest, 2012

- Lankauskas, D., "On Modern Christians, Consumption, and the Value of National Identity in Post-Soviet Lithuania" in *Ethnos* Vol. 67, No. 3, 320-344, 2002
- Liechty, M., *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2002
- Maqsood, A., *The New Pakistani Middle Class*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2017
- Merkel, I., "From a Socialist Society of Labor into a Consumer Society? The Transformation of East German Identities and Systems" in *Envisioning Eastern Europe. Postcommunist Cultural Studies*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1997
- Morris, J., Polese, A., "Institutional Transformation and Informality in Azerbaijan and Georgia" in *Informal Economies in Post-Socialist Spaces: Practices, Institutions and Networks*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2015
- Morris, J., "Unruly entrepreneurs: Russian worker responses to insecure formal employment", in *Global Labour Journal*, No. 3, 217-236, 2012.
- Patico, J., *Consumption and Social Change in a Post-Soviet Middle Class*, Stanford University press, Stanford, 2008
- Polese, A., "If I received it, it is a gift; if I Demand it, then it is a Bribe" on the Local Meaning of Economic Transactions in Post-Soviet Ukraine', in *Anthropology in Action* Vol. 15, No. 3, 47-60, 2008
- Polese, A., "Drinking with Vova: an individual entrepreneur between illegality and informality", in *Informal Post-Socialist economy: Embedded practices and Livelihoods*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014
- Rausing, S., "Reconstructing the 'Normal', in *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, Berg Publishing, Oxford and New York, 2002
- Rumyantsev, S., "Uskalyzayushchaya Sovremenosty: PostSovietskaya Modernizatsya Azerbaidjana. Sotilogicheskoe Esse" (Ускользящая Современность: ПостСоветская Модернизация Азербайджана. Социологическое Эссе) in *Historians*, 2015.
- Savage, M., *Social Class in the 21st century*, Pelican Books, London, 2015
- Savage, M., Silva, E., and Warde, A., "Dis-identification and class identity", in *Cultural analysis and Bourdieu's legacy: settling accounts and developing alternatives. Culture, Economy and the Social*, Routledge, London, 2010
- Shlapentokh, V., "Social Inequality in Post-communist Russia: The Attitudes of the Political Elite and the Masses (1991-1998)" in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 51, No.7, 1167-1181, 1999
- Yalçin-Heckmann, L., "Informal economy writ large and small: from Azerbaijani herb traders to Moscow shop owners" in *Informal Post-Socialist economy: Embedded practices and Livelihoods*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014
- Yurchak, A., "Russian neoliberal: the entrepreneurial ethic and the spirit of „true careerism" in *The Russian Review*, No. 62, 72-90, 2003

- Verdery, K., *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1996
- Volkov, V., "The Concept of Kul'turnost' . Notes on the Stalinist civilizing process," in *Stalinism New Directions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000
- Watenpaugh, K. D., *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2006