

# MY EXCHANGE SEMESTER BAKU / AZERBAIJAN



Heydar Aliyev Center



Mosque of the Martyrs

## UNIVERSITY & STUDIES

Where? Khazar University

When? September 2019 – January 2020

What? Elementary Education

Since Khazar University does not offer classes for cultural anthropology, I registered to the department of elementary education which is related to my minor studies at the University of Tübingen (education science). However, I put my focus on courses which involved cultural topics and selected four: Azerbaijani Folk Dances, Modern Azerbaijani Language, Culture of Turkic People and Introduction to Psychology – Child Development. All of them were offered in Azerbaijani language and especially MAL was challenging, since it was a language class for native speakers. Culture of Turkic People was focused on historical developments of the society organizations, literature, architecture etc. of the people considered to be Turkic. These two theoretical classes with national orientation gave me the chance to develop ideas about my main scientific interest in Baku.

## SCIENTIFIC INTEREST & METHODS

In its history, Azerbaijan has always been a region with several outer impacts and dynamic inner structures when it comes to the (national) identity question. I wanted to gather insights into self perception of university students in the context of nationality.

The main methods were the participant observation, informal conversations as well as unstructured interviews and a questionnaire. I have conveyed two unstructured interviews with two university students with distinct background stories, from different university departments and sexual identities. It was interesting to hear out what they found relevant in the national identity question and how it was intertwined with their biographies. In the questionnaire, 29 university students provided usable data. It consisted of six open-end questions about the perception of national identity and nationalism, as well as six questions about the basic data (age, gender etc.) including their connection to Azerbaijan (e.g. since when they live there).

## PROBLEMS

Contact with informants: Patriarchy plays a significant role in Baku. Many of my female friends were not allowed to spend any time out of the university which made it difficult to build up trust-based relationships. I made different experiences with males: Many friendly attempts of mine were considered to have other intentions due to the forms of interactions between different genders. This either made me feel uncomfortable or led the informants to have other expectations which obstructed a healthy communication.

Concerns of informants:

Due to the current regime in Azerbaijan, I have encountered preoccupied attitudes from the informants about discussing their opinions on politics. For example some did not have trust on me as an outsider or some were afraid to be spied on in the public areas.

It was not a big problem, since this way of interaction itself had a meaning. However, it often created an uncomfortable atmosphere.



My class at the Khazar University at breaktime



Traditional music instruments of Azerbaijan



Conference room of Azerbaijan Communist Party