New Europe College
Black Sea Link Program
Yearbook 2010-2011, 2011-2012

DIANA DUMITRU
IBRAHIM IBRAHIMOV
NATALYA LAZAR
OCTAVIAN MILEVSCHI
ORLIN SABEV (ORHAN SALIH)
VSEVOLOD SAMOKHVALOV
STANISLAV SECRIERU
OCTAVIAN ȚÎCU
LIA TSULADZE
TAMARA ZLOBINA

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

ISSN 1584-0298

New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74

LIA TSULADZE

Born in 1974, in Georgia

Ph.D., Tbilisi State University (2004)
Dissertation: *Autonomy and Sanctions in Socialization in the Context of Georgian Culture*

Associate Professor of Sociology, Tbilisi State University

Several Fellowships and Grants, among which:
2014-2016. "Performing Europeanization - Political vis-a-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia", an Academic Swiss Caucasus Net project. Research leader.
2013-2014. Research Fellow in the South Caucasus Studies, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford.
2011-2013. "Social Media Development Tendencies in Georgia – Power of the Real Virtual?" Academic Swiss Caucasus Net. Research leader.
2010-2012. Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching: "Anthropological Approaches to Religion and Secularism." Open Society Institute (OSI), Higher Education Support Program (HESP).

2010-2011. "Interagency United Efforts to Combat Domestic Violence in Georgia: Local or Western Agenda?" Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN). Senior researcher.

2010. Carnegie Fellow within CRRC-Berkeley "Field Development Project" at UC Berkeley, Berkeley, USA.

2009. Research Scholar at Institute of Culture and Communication Studies at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. Japan Foundation Fellowship.

2008-2010. "Socio-Demographic and Family Policy for Demographic Development of Georgia." The State Science Grant from Georgia National Science Foundation (GNSF). Senior researcher.

2008. Quantitative-Qualitative Research on Adolescent Reproductive Health. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Quantitative research analyst.

2008-2009. Translation of Anthony Giddens's "Sociology" from English to Georgian. Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF). Project director.

2007-2009. Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching: "Building Anthropology in Eurasia." Open Society Institute (OSI), Higher Education Support Program (HESP).

2007. Research Scholar at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP). American Councils for International Education (ACTR-ACCELS).

2006 – 2007. Course Portfolio Project (CP). Curriculum Resource Center (CRC). Central European University (CEU), Budapest, Hungary.

2006. Curriculum Development Competition (CDC). Curriculum Resource Center (CRC). Central European University (CEU), Budapest, Hungary.

Participation to international conferences and symposia in England, Czech Republic, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Turkey, Estonia, USA

Numerous studies published both in Georgia and abroad

Textbooks:

Quantitative Research Methods in Social Sciences. (2008). Tbilisi: Center for Social Sciences. (in Georgian)

Academic Writing: Intensive Course for MA Students of Social Sciences. (2006). Tbilisi: Center for Social Sciences. (in Georgian)

Tsuladze L. *et al.* (2013). *Social Media Development Trends in Georgia: Power of the Real Virtual?* Tbilisi: Meridiani (in Georgian and English)

BETWEEN WESTERNIZATION AND ASSERTION OF THE NATIONAL: YOUTH PERCEPTIONS IN THE NEW EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE MARGINS OF EUROPE

> The world is "growing both more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned at the same time"
>
> (Clifford Geertz).

Introduction

In the following paper I attempt to contribute to highlighting the issue of the controversial processes of integration and division, of growing sameness and lasting difference, of the search for both authenticity and translation, of blurring and consolidating borders, and of local globalization and global localization. I try to depict how this duality influences the construction and enactment of identities at a time when it is believed that "the politics of identity substitutes for the politics of nation-[state]" (Guillen, 2001, p. 14). And finally, based on the youth discourses from the so called new European societies and the margins of Europe, I argue that this state of duality provokes a new politics of ambivalence, responsible for upholding ambivalent identities driven by the attempt to become Western and to get the best of the local simultaneously.

It is a widespread assumption that today the boundaries are becoming fuzzy and that never was the shifting of places as easy as nowadays. Usually scholars bring the example of the European Union (EU) as a case in consideration. Despite this fact (or probably because of this fact), I guess the discourse on "Fortress Europe" has gained a new incite today. How is it possible that in the conditions of the ongoing EU enlargement the frontiers of Europe are constantly consolidated? How is it possible that the countries that have managed to return to their "Mother" Europe

after the collapse of the communist regime need to constantly prove their Europeanness, while those remaining on the margins of Europe desperately try to persuade the European "Core" that despite their peripheral position, they belong to Europe because of their historical, religious, cultural heritage, etc. The cases of Romania and Poland, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other, represent wonderful examples of attempting to prove one's Europeanness both when it should not be questionable any more (as Poland and Romania are the EU member countries) and when it is still questionable (as Georgia is not a part of the EU).

Thus, I got particularly interested in the youth discourses about the integration with the West (the European "Core") and their attitudes to the westernizing trends (Westernization mainly narrowed down to Europeanization), and was especially keen on the comparative analysis of their attitudes in the light of the EU membership/non-membership. Taking into consideration the communist legacy characteristic to Romania, Poland and Georgia, has this factor played (or does it still play) any role in the perception of Westernization/Europeanization in these countries? Another common feature is that both Romania and Georgia are considered to be quite conventional Orthodox Christian countries, while it is a common assumption that Eastern Christianity is not very open to the changes coming from the West. So, does Orthodox religion play any role in shaping the attitudes toward Westernization/Europeanization in these countries and if so, what role? Does the religious factor make any difference in Poland as a Catholic country? And finally, how do the official political discourses, which are quite pro-Western in all the abovementioned countries, influence the youth perceptions of Westernization/Europeanization?

Besides the impacts of the communist legacy, the current political discourses, and the religious factor on the youth perceptions of the Westernizing forces, I was curious to find out their responses and concrete strategies to the latter. Whether they apply the strategy of "absorption" (Blum, 2007, p. 12) that is eagerly grasping all the cultural trends and elements coming from the West in order to become "truly" trendy or modernized, or whether they develop a more critical approach of "selective incorporation" (Robertson, 1995, p. 342) being concerned about keeping the best of the local; whether for them the change is a means of total renewal and transformation, or they perceive the change as a means of reinvention of tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983) and "confirmation of continuity" (Mazo, 1996, p. 254); and if the latter is the case, what kind of "cut'n'mix" (Pieterse, 2003, p. 315) that is cultural bricolage they

are involved in and whether it can represent their strategy of asserting the national.

In order to uncover these complex questions, I have conducted a qualitative social research, namely, observations and in-depth interviews, as well as focus groups, with the youth aged 17-25 in Georgia, Romania and Poland. I have conducted 50 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Georgia - Tbilisi and 33 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Romania - Bucharest and one of the main cities of Transylvania - Cluj-Napoca. The latter was selected because of a popular saying, which I had often heard from my respondents in Bucharest, that the border between Eastern and Western Europe lies through Transylvania (mainly because of its historical exposure to the Austro-Hungarian influences). Therefore, being particularly curious about the perceptions of Westernization among the youth, I decided to interview the young people in Transylvania and to find out whether the more Western location or character of this region within the country has an impact on the youngsters' views. However, it should be emphasized that the data analysis has not revealed any significant differences in their perceptions. In addition, in order to support my arguments with further evidence, I have conducted 14 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups in Krakow as the old capital and one of the most international cities in Poland, which is also often perceived as its cultural center. The collected data were transcribed and submitted to the qualitative content- and discourse analyses.[1]

Theoretical Part

On Spatiotemporal "Transitionality"

Let's start from identifying the "place" of Romania, Poland and Georgia in a "discourse-geography" (Bjelic, 2002, p. 4). It seems extremely important considering the ambivalence related to these countries' geographic and cultural locations, as well as the debates around this issue.

Many scholars emphasize the ambivalence caused by Romanians' dual representations as sharing both Latin and Slavic characteristics, being both Balkan and not Balkan, located in both Eastern and Central Europe, and finally, being "half Western, half Eastern" (Cioroianu, 2002; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006; Celac, 2006; Severin, 2006; Melegh, 2006; Boari,

Gherghina, 2009). The fact that the authors describe Romanians as the only Latin nation in the region, connected to the Slavic world through their history and religion, does not cause much discussion; however, the fact of being or not being Balkan provokes much more debate as, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (1998), Romania is a Balkan country, while according to the French version (1993), Romania is not in the list of the Balkan countries (Cioroianu, 2002, p. 210). But even more complicated is the debate on whether Romania is the Eastern or Central European country, especially when it takes place within the same publication; say, in the Federal Trust's publication on "The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond" (2006) one can find the claims that Romania both is and is not Central European country. For instance, Mungiu-Pippidi states that Romanians "tried to imitate" Central European anti-communist movements though their "parties have never attained the professionalism of Central European ones" (pp. 20-21), while Celac informs us that "Romania was among the last Central European countries to sign on 4 July 2003...a Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation with the Russian Federation" (pp. 148-149). Whatever the debates are, the scholars unanimously agree that Romania can be viewed as the "bridge" between the East and the West.

The same ambivalence is related to Poland's place in a discourse-geography-geopolitics. In the parliamentary speeches of 1990s-2000s Poland is represented as a country, whose both geography and geopolitics had been changed or underwent the changes (especially in the 20th century), lost between the East and the West on the map of Europe. One of the officials declared that despite de Gaulle's famous words that 'one's geography cannot be changed and one can only change one's geopolitics', both "Hitler and Stalin changed our geography... [and] we have been changing our geopolitics on our own in the recent years" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 104). And quite in the spirit of Romanians, Polish politicians state that "Poland has a unique role as a 'bridge' between Europe's East and West" (*ibid.*, p. 104).

Georgians, most probably, have a very little awareness of the abovementioned Polish and Romanian discourses but the perception of Georgia as the "bridge" between the East and the West, between Asia and Europe, has been dominating their discourses for a long time (Tsuladze, 2011, p. 72). The fact that Georgia appears on certain maps of Europe and is excluded from others, is mentioned in various sources as either South-Eastern Europe or Eurasia, or just South Caucasus that is seldom identified as belonging to either Europe or Asia, provokes lots of ambivalence among

Georgians, especially the youngsters, who regularly hear the official political discourse that Georgia's main political priority is the Euro-Atlantic integration, who see the EU flags hanging on all the official buildings all around the country, and who are often reminded the famous words of the former Prime Minister Zurab Jvania: "I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European!" Georgians, very much like Romanians and Poles, are trapped in the state of both geographic and cultural "in-betweenness".

One more factor that seems to be responsible for such a liminality is the perception of these countries as being in the constant condition of transition – from the soviet to the post-soviet, from the communist to the post-communist, from the nationalistic to the post-nationalistic, and from the traditional to the post-traditional (implying normative perceptions from various aspects of social life). Presumably, this spatial and temporal "transitionality" accounts for "'not-yet' or 'never-quite' Europeanness" (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 29) of these societies pushing the creation of "unstable identities" (Bjelic, 2002, p. 15).

The Stigmatizing and Enlightening Discourses and the Possible Strategies against Them

Before discussing the aspects of such "unstable" or ambivalent identities, let's get familiar with the "Western Imaginary" (Melegh, 2006, p. 31) and the way "the West looks East" (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 35) as the latter encourages particular discourses and respective responses to/ strategies against them in the new European countries and the margins of Europe.

Citing just one of the famous examples that is the already classical work by Maria Todorova, most of the scholars researching recent developments in the Eastern and Central European countries agree that the West invents the "Eastern other" as its "opposite" and through this discourse the West essentializes the Eastern identity (Todorova, 1997). Different narratives can be applied to back this "essentialization" up and the Western "inventors" are especially concerned by being tactful in this regard, therefore, these days the most widespread narratives would probably be the one on "the idea of an ongoing transition... to an ideal social form [though] postponed into the indefinite or localized out of the reach of the 'locals'" (Melegh, 2006, p. 20), or the "philanthropic idea" of supporting the upward movement in the name of civilization (Elias, 1994). One could think of other types of narratives or even sub-narratives

though it's not the purpose of this paper to discuss them but to show their impact on the construction of the locals' perceptions of the Westernizing and Europeanizing forces. Therefore, I will try to unite these narratives in some wider categories roughly dividing them in the following two groups: The stigmatizing discourses and the enlightening discourses (though both imply a certain type of stigmatization).

Under the stigmatizing discourses I imply those that voluntarily or involuntarily result in a negative labeling of the representatives of the Eastern and Central European countries, or those located even farther on the periphery. One of the examples of the stigmatizing discourses is the abovementioned "othering" discourse, which views the societies in the light of a descending civilizational scale and emphasizes the difference between the so called "new" or "emerging" European countries (those on the margins, like Georgia, are not even worth consideration) and "real", "old" Europe. Another example of the stigmatizing discourse is the "asymmetrical" discourse, including the one of Europeanization, which is "asymmetrical enough to silence all those somehow denied membership of that 'universally valid' community... This asymmetry alone and the emerging binary oppositions are powerful enough to deny a 'real existence' to those who are in a midway or bottom position on such a scale" (Melegh, 2006, p. 30).

What are the strategic responses of the victims of the stigmatizing discourses that is how do they try to "respond to these vicious games of inclusion and exclusion"? (Bideleux, 2002, p. 35). Concerning the "othering" discourse, Todorova presented a comprehensive analysis of projecting the stigma and the accompanying frustrations on those located farther to the East and, as a result, Orientalizing them, while simultaneously Occidentalizing oneself as the West of the "other" (Todorova, 1997). A wonderful example of such a response is presented in the abovementioned publication by the Federal Trust entitled "The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond" (2006). In the chapter on "Romania and the Future of the European Union" the author talks how important Romania as a political agent is to the EU because of its "cultural and geopolitical belonging" to Central Europe, and because of its neighbourhood with both Eastern Europe consisting of Ukraine, Moldova and Russia, and "South-Eastern Europe (the Balkans), where Romania has a tradition of intense contacts unburdened by hatred and conflict" (Severin, p. 109). In addition, Romania is presented as a real supporter of "Turkey's accession to the EU, as well as that of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and of the Western Balkan countries"

(*ibid.*, p. 107). Thus, here is an attempt to push the borders of Eastern Europe farther to the East and to exclude oneself from both Eastern Europe and the Balkan region;[2] we can also see an attempt to present oneself as a peaceful country, "unburdened by [ethnic] hatred and conflict" and ultimately, more civilized than the Balkans; finally, not yet being a member of the EU herself (as the book is published in 2006), Romania is nevertheless considered such an "important political agent" within the EU that it already promotes other less important agents' (located farther East and South-East) incorporation in it.

The "asymmetrical" discourse provokes its own strategic response as well. As the main danger connected to it is "to silence all those somehow denied membership of that 'universally valid' community" (which is represented by Europe), the ones "in a midway or bottom position" desperately strive to gain the European status and to prove that they are the genuine European societies. "On a 'sliding scale of merit' no one should want to be out of 'Europe' and social and value patterns it represents or, more precisely, is aligned with" (Melegh, 2006, p. 30). Therefore, Romanians need to constantly reiterate: "We are Europeans" or "We are a part of Europe" (Boari, Gherghina, 2009, p. 13); Poles emphasize their "national uniqueness [that] reinforces Poland's attractiveness vis-à-vis the European Union" even in their parliamentary speeches (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 104); while Georgians, whose European status is rather questionable, need to persuade both themselves and the outsiders: "I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European!"

However, in order to sound more trustworthy, they have to persuade the powerful European players that the latter are in need of the Eastern, Central, South-Eastern or more peripheral regions on the margins of Europe. One of the vivid examples can be found in the same paper by Severin having the following conclusion: "Romania needs the EU as much as the EU needs Romania" (p. 111), and alongside the trivial idea that "what is good for Europe is also good for Romania", presenting the new truth that "what is good for Romania is good for Europe" (p. 112). A similar case from the Polish reality can be found in the Polish politicians' discourses on "Polish national mission in the EU" before joining it. This mission is perceived as essential for the EU itself and the politicians argue about Poland's "preferential treatment" by the EU implying that "due to its exceptional mission and national uniqueness, Poland must be treated by the EU in some special, less demanding way... differently than, say, other EU candidate countries" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 110). A corresponding

example can be brought from the Georgian reality represented by the discourse on Georgia's strategic importance for Europe as a potential energy supplier with the pipelines stretching across the country, providing Europe with the gas from the East and competing with the Russian monopoly over gas. Europe is often pitied for having to play by Russian rules in order to survive cold winters, and the alternative energy projects, in which Georgia is considered to be a "corridor" for supplying Europe, are ascribed a missionary value.

Besides the stigmatizing discourses, or rather alongside them, there are quite powerful enlightening discourses, which I would call the euphemistic forms of stigmatization. The enlightening discourses aim to "enlighten" the new European or not-quite European societies and to transform them into "real" democracies of "true" Europe. One of the examples of the enlightening discourse is the "civilizational discourse," which implies that Europe (or more precisely, the EU) has a cultural mission of cultivating "true European values" among those to be transformed into "real" democracies. Consequently, the EU accession and the accompanying Europeanization process is considered as "the most authentic form of modernization" (Melegh, 2006, p. 118). It turns out that usually the main supporters of this discourse are the local intellectual and elite groups, who may "continuously argue that 'Europe' brings 'tolerance' and 'rationality' into our not truly 'European' country" (*ibid.*, p. 114) and may constantly complain about their country's inability to properly encompass and enact European values and modes of life, starting from the distorted forms of individualization, ending with the poor quality of toilets on Hungarian trains. Thus, the "civilizational discourse" is translated into the "elitist discourse" within the local settings. The scholars researching this topic bring various examples of the local intellectuals' call for abandoning "irrational" or "unworthy" local customs and for "the rejection of 'Eastern' local nationalism" (Melegh, 2006, p. 115) drawing a clear line "between the image of the 'national' as past and 'old' and the 'European' as 'future' and 'new'" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 107). Furthermore, Europeanization is considered by them as the only means of overcoming the "backwardness" of their population. Some authors go even further and state that "from time to time the local intelligentsia openly called for the help of the West – in their wording – 'to colonize' the local population" (Melegh, 2006, p. 115).

Thus, certain perceptions are constructed, spread and backed up through the abovementioned discourse, particularly that the locals have various "unworthy" customs, which should be abandoned in the name

of civilization; that the locals are usually "backward", therefore, unable to promote desirable developments in their society and are in need of someone from the outside to teach them; and that the locals need to reject their local nationalism, which no doubt is "Eastern" (whatever meaning it has), and should move to the post-nationalistic state in order to catch up with "true" Europeans as Western Europe has already moved to the post-nationalist era (Bideleux, Taylor, 1996).

The possible strategies of defense from the both stigmatizing and enlightening discourses are sensibly summarized in Kiossev's paper under the subtitle of "the dominant strategies of (dis)identification". He describes two ways of "symbolic escape" representing two extremes: The first strategy is "a radical emigration... [alongside] cultural amnesia" (2002, p. 182) and the second one is a "passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride" (*ibid.*, p. 183).

To start from the first strategy, it's not a secret that lots of people from the Eastern part of Europe migrate to its Western part, especially after their countries' joining the EU as crossing the borders has become much easier, while Western Europe provides more job opportunities and pays better. Poles talk a lot about their compatriots migrating in vast numbers to England and Germany; Romanians produce the same narratives about their compatriots' massive migration to Italy and Spain... But they also talk with a sad smile or an ironic tone how the Poles desperately try to adopt the British accent after a few months' stay in Britain; moreover, how they try to even speak Polish with the British accent! Romanians confess with the same sad smile or the same ironic tone that while staying abroad they try to hide their nationality; moreover, that sometimes they pretend to be Italians! (From the author's in-depth interviews with the Polish and Romanian youth).

I guess these desperate attempts can be viewed as a defense strategy against the Westerners' discourses on how after joining the EU several hundred thousand Eastern Europeans are on their way to "invade" Western Europe, which is well evidenced by a caricature from one of the British newspapers depicting a long line of trucks with the signs: Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, etc. and a large poster on the borderline saying: "Welcome to London, equal crime opportunities for all!" (Mautner, 2008, p. 39). This is one of the numerous examples of the Eastern Europeans' representation in the Western discourses as the criminals responsible for most of the recent ills occurring in the peaceful and democratic societies of Western Europe. But can imitating the British accent or pretending to be an Italian

help avoid stigmatization? I would say it causes double stigmatization (from both one's compatriots and the citizens of a recipient country) and can largely be responsible for a kind of "failure discourse" characteristic to both Romanians and Poles (and probably other "Easterners" as well), which I will discuss later.

The second type of "symbolic escape" is considered to be a "passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride". As illustrated above, it is assessed as a purely "Eastern" phenomenon as the scholars have a general agreement on the fact that the Western European countries have long stepped into the post-nationalist era (though no doubt one could find the examples of nationalistic discourses all around Western Europe). And even if there are expressions of nationalism in Western Europe, they are still more acceptable than the similar phenomena in Eastern Europe viewed through the dichotomy of "civic" (or "Western") and "ethnic" (or "Eastern") nationalisms, the former "characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive", while the latter "glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive" (Brubaker, 2004, p. 133).

The expressions of "passionate nationalism" and the "hyperbolic pride" intertwined with it can be found in different kinds of "identitary concerns". A. P. Iliescu describes them on the example of Romanians and states that such "an identitary obsession... frequently prevails in Romania" (2009, p. 96) and is represented by such traits as "focus upon 'glorious' past events", "the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities [that] leads to encapsulation of 'Romanianism' in a certain distinguishing feature", the emphasis on "being special" and "different from others", "a tendency towards self-celebration", as well as "identitary fear... that one's identity could be affected (forgotten, altered, modified, etc.) by what is going on around (on the continent, in the whole world, etc.)" exemplified by Romanians' complaints about the attempts of ethnic Romanians' "Hungarization" in Transylvania or "Russification" in Eastern Moldavia (*ibid.*, pp. 97-99).

One would probably ask: What is "wrong with one's being proud about one's own identity?" The author answers that "the most alarming problem is that, while celebrating being Romanian as a value in itself, one can hardly avoid the implication that others (non-Romanians) lack something" (*ibid.*, p. 99). He even goes further and states that "exactly the same is the case with religious identity... if one perceives 'being an Orthodox Christian' as a merit, than one can be inclined to perceive 'being

a Catholic' or 'being a Protestant' as some sort of guilt" (*ibid.*, p. 100). And he concludes that this is the very case of Romanians.

To console Romanians, I would say that the very similar "identitary obsession" can be traced among Georgians. The "focus upon 'glorious' past events" is the most common feast narrative in Georgia; "the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities" exemplified by the narratives that Georgians have a unique alphabet that creates its own language group, that Georgian polyphony is one of the most ear-pleasing, that Georgians are one of the most hospitable nations, or that Georgian food and wine are one of the best in the world, does present "Georgianness" as a distinguishing characteristic; the emphasis on "being special" and "different from others" is not alien to Georgians as well and there is even a popular saying: "All of us, who are the best, are Georgians" ("rac kargebi vart, qartvelebi vart"). And although this popular expression is perceived in a humorous way, the one on "Georgia as a Mother of God's land" is the dominant religious, as well as mundane, discourse of the country. The abovementioned narratives on Georgia's victorious past, Georgia as the first Orthodox Christian country being under the special protection of God's Mother, Georgians' famous hospitality and marvelous food and wine, etc. provides a fertile ground for special pride and "self-celebration". Finally, Georgians have the same "identitary fear" that their "national spirit" can be endangered by the ongoing rapid socio-cultural transformations, by the globalizing forces, by various religious sects and denominations coming to the country and threatening the Georgian Orthodox beliefs that is the only true religious beliefs, etc. But the two most alarming threats are represented, on the one hand, by the powerful northern neighbor (Russia) that has been trying to subordinate Georgia for two centuries and, on the other hand, by certain westernizing forces that, despite stimulating some positive innovations, may be harmful to the local traditions.

Poles would probably echo this discourse in a somewhat modest way. Analyzing Polish political discourse since 1989, Krzyzanowski observes that it is characterized by "the topos of national uniqueness, frequently paired with the topos of definition of the national role [that] appears to have the main role... the topos of national history is invoked to support the said uniqueness of Poland and portray Polish collectivity as exceptionally experienced throughout its history, and, therefore, as able to substantially contribute to the creation of the new Europe and its identity" (2009, pp. 103-104). In addition, "identitary fear... that one's identity could

be affected... by what is going on around", even if it relates to the EU influences (nothing to say about the Russian factor), is not alien to Poles either. To return to the Polish political discourse in the recent period, it seems to underline that "Poland must remain conscious of the non-ideal character of the EU as the object of collective aspirations and motivations: it emphasizes that Poland must always remain watchful of its national interests irrespective of the developments within the EU" (*ibid.*, p. 105).

Thus, in all the presented cases there is an emphasis on one's "national uniqueness", consequently, "a tendency towards self-celebration", as well as "identitary fear" of one's national identity being forgotten or modified in the current changeable conditions. But can the "passionate nationalism" be an effective means of escaping stigmatization? Quite contrary, it evokes further stigmatization being viewed by the post-nationalist West as an expression of chauvinism, racism, and xenophobia, and usually results in various kinds of "external conditionality" supported by "a strong bargaining position" of Western Europe (Schwellnus, 2005, p. 52). For instance, it can be a warning for the countries hoping to ever be incorporated into the EU structures that their integration will be postponed to the even more indefinite future, or it can be the sanctions of different severity for the already acquired EU members.

I would risk arguing that the abovementioned "identitary concerns" (though with culture-specific variations) are presumably characteristic to most of the rather small and powerless nations, who need to establish themselves on the international scene by proving that they also possess certain outstanding qualities. Otherwise, who would ever care about these societies? Who would even notice their existence? I guess there are very few people in the world, who can show where Georgia is located on the world map. And although, I assume, more people would manage to find Romania on the world map, I still doubt they can say much about it; maybe the most prominent association would be the one with Dracula, consequently, "the land of vampires". This general unconcern and the lack of awareness are well evidenced by a TV program on Romania by the famous Romanian sportsmen living abroad, with the most incredible "facts" invented about the life in Romania and bearing a very obvious message: "You know nothing about Romania!" Concerning Poland, it is obviously in a better position due to the fact of being the largest Eastern European country, as well as the long history of Poles' migration to the West – both the US and Western Europe.

The reality described above seems quite sad but what makes it even harder is that the abovementioned unawareness works both ways. Neither Western Europe has a proper understanding of its Eastern counterpart, nor the other way around. What both parts have in their possession is a rich collection of "false representations, prejudice and ignorance". As A. Pleșu ironically notes, "This situation reminds me of the beginning of a novel by Unamuno, in which we are told that when Pedro and Juan are talking to each other, in reality at least six persons talk to one another: the real Pedro and the real Juan, the image Pedro has of himself with the image Juan has of himself, and the image Pedro has of Juan with the image Juan has of Pedro. This is more or less what happens when Western Europe and Eastern Europe meet" (1999, p. 12).[3]

In what follows, I will try to illustrate the impact of the abovementioned multiple discourses on the attitudes to Westernization and particularly Europeanization among the youth of the so called new European countries (the cases of Romania and Poland) and the margins of Europe (the case of Georgia). I will discuss their possible strategies to deal with the westernizing forces focusing on the construction of ambivalent identities resulting from a dual aspiration to "both embrace and eschew Westernization" (Blum, 2007, p. 97).

Empirical Part

Ambivalence Related to the Definitions of Westernization and Europeanization

In order to discuss the Georgian, Romanian and Polish youth perceptions of Westernization and Europeanization, it is necessary to provide definitions of the concepts themselves. As the Merriam-Webster Dictionary informs us, Westernization can be defined as "conversion to or adoption of western traditions and techniques" (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/westernization). However, this seemingly innocuous definition bears a lot of ambivalence (and risk) as it is followed by a comprehensive list of the terms "rhymed with westernization" composed of such contradictory concepts as emancipation and subordination, humanization and humiliation, affiliation and maladaptation, legalization and invalidation, purification and contamination, normalization and degeneration, authentication and falsification, as well as nationalization

and globalization, the latter (or maybe both?) being represented variously as Anglicization, Balkanization, and even Finlandization (though for some reason Americanization, which is quite often associated to Westernization, is missing). What we can infer from this definition is that Westernization has undoubtedly to do with power relations and normative regulations, has a tendency to make certain things look "normal" or even "real", is associated to the perceptions of "purity and danger" (Douglas, 2000), and can promote both exclusion and inclusion, division and integration, nationalization and internationalization. Indeed, it seems a very ambivalent (and risky) process.

Europeanization, as a particular case of Westernization, is defined as "changes in the logic of behavior driven by the absorption of EU norms, attitudes, and ways of thinking" (Grabbe, 2005, p. 134). Thus, the ambivalent process of Westernization is narrowed down to a particular region -Europe or rather a particular conglomeration within Europe – the EU, and is viewed as the dissemination of this conglomeration's norms and ways of thinking over the rest of Europe or even the indefinite others located on its margins who hope to ever become Europeans or even EU-ropeans. And it is a truly complex task as despite the fact that "it is very difficult to define Europe", they try to challenge "an even more difficult problem: in the absence of an adequate definition, they must nonetheless find their way to integration" (Pleșu, 1999, p. 15). It is also noteworthy that Europeanization necessarily implies the "changes in the logic of behavior" of these societies, thus automatically assuming that their "norms, attitudes, and ways of thinking" can by no means comply with the ones of the EU and therefore need a thorough transformation, which can take place on several levels: formal, behavioral and discursive (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2005).

The *formal* level of Europeanization implies "transposition of EU rules into national law or in the establishment of formal institutions and procedures in line with EU rules. According to the *behavioral* conception, adoption is measured to the extent to which behavior is rule-conforming. By contrast, according to the *discursive* conception of norms, adoption is indicated by incorporation of a rule as a positive reference into discourse among domestic actors. Such a reference may indicate that domestic actors are truly persuaded of a norm. Alternatively, it may merely imply that domestic actors 'talk the talk', pay lip service to the norm, or use it strategically in 'rhetorical action'" [emphasis in the original] (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2005, p. 8).

It is assumed that the discursive adoption is the easiest one, while the behavioral one is the most difficult; that the former cannot really influence the reality, while the latter is an indicator of the real changes taking place. It is also suggested that the formal adoption encourages the behavioral changes, consequently, having an impact on the actual social reality; while the discursive one might represent merely a "rhetorical action" derived of an actual transformative power. Nonetheless, I would like to focus on the discursive aspects of Europeanization and to disclose their power in influencing the behavioral ones; moreover, I attempt to illustrate how they can contribute to the (re)production of certain versions of social reality. I believe that "Europeanisation is... a form of discursive change which has been taking place in the diverse national settings of the CEE [Central and Eastern European] countries in the process of adjustment of their national-political cultures and practices (to those known) from the supranational arena of EU politics" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 96); I also suppose that "if the individual narrative is repeated by many tellers in the same or similar canonical form, then it becomes a grand-narrative" (Galasinska, 2009, p. 190) that can shape certain experiences and practices. With these ideas in my mind, I have studied the youth discourses from the new European countries and the margins of Europe aiming to reveal the individual narratives, which have a tendency of becoming a "grand-narrative" and thus have a special power in the discursive construction of social reality.

The Youth Discourses on Westernization and Europeanization

What are the Georgian, Romanian and Polish youngsters' associations in regard to Westernization/Europeanization? Their very first associations are related to the field of culture, particularly, popular music, TV programs, film industry, social media, style and fashion, food, architecture, celebration of holidays, and the lifestyle in general implying "the attitudes toward becoming more open – open to changes, open to something new, and also ready to change something, to do something new" (Raluca, 19). The next round of associations has to do with technological development, economic progress, and the Western languages as in all three countries the young people emphasize their preference for the following three languages: English, German, and French. Thus, Westernization can influence almost all aspects of socio-cultural life as it can be as diverse as Hollywood movies and American fast food, British rock bands, French fashion, German-style architecture, etc. And it

is noteworthy that although the first wave of Westernization is generally associated with Americanization, the second and most recent one is perceived to be closely connected to Europeanization and the impact of the EU, and not only in the new European countries but also in those on the margins of Europe.

One would assume that because of the long-lasting desire to be integrated in the EU that was finally fulfilled a few years ago and because of the fresh curiosity related to the recent membership, Europeanization would most likely be perceived by the new European countries as a largely positive phenomenon. One can even support this claim by the statistical data demonstrating that Romanians' and Poles' attitudes toward the EU are much more optimistic than those of other EU members, well evidenced by the fact that the approval rate of the EU documents, as well as the population's belief in the EU, is the highest in these two countries among the EU member states (Eurobarometers: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm). However, the reality is not as simple as that and the youth discourses reveal that there is a dual attitude toward the EU influences in the newly acquired EU countries: On the one hand, the young people acknowledge certain positive aspects of Europeanization; while on the other hand, the very same young people, in the very same narratives, express their discontent about those aspects that do not fit the local traditions and lifestyle, and are perceived as alien and artificially imposed over them; consequently, they openly criticize the EU for being "blind" to the local realities.

What aspects are considered as the positive outcomes of Europeanization? Both Romanian and Polish youth state that the most obvious positive impact is that the borders have been opened and now they can freely travel to the Western part of Europe both to study and to work. They also emphasize that the EU membership has provided their countries with new opportunities to develop economy and infrastructure as the EU supports the implementation of certain projects in this direction. However, they stress that both the former and the latter have their own side effects that cause lots of confusion.

One of the examples can be cited from the interview with 21-year-old Adriana, who talks about the EU projects being implemented in Romania:

> Definitely, there are some changes. I am thinking of some projects that are supported by and implemented with the EU money as the EU is supposed to help us develop or whatever good intentions it has☺; but there are

> always lots of stories around them as quite often these projects turn out to be a complete failure and the EU doesn't really care about how they are implemented! For example, the case when they organized the computer classes for disabled people with the idea that it would help them in the future employment. The problem is that their backgrounds have no relation with a computer; they actually don't need a computer. They have only learned how to turn a computer on and off and how to use the Word but they still cannot use it for employment. And there are still the debates on whether they need these classes at all, meanwhile lots of money being spent on it and no one really interested to go and discuss this issue with these people themselves.

Thus, in this narrative the EU's "good intentions" are considered as futile being perceived as a mere declaration of the EU's missionary function to "help [others] develop", while not "caring about" the actual outcomes. This effort is perceived as "a complete failure" as, according to the respondent, the EU is not interested in what those, who are supposed to get its support, actually think of it.

Another example of the EU's project to civilize, as well as to make the locals more humanistic, is presented in Elena's (24) narrative. She brings a case of her village, located close to Bucharest, where they

> always killed a pig with a knife and could eat it whenever they wanted so. Now there is a new EU regulation that they should kill a pig using an injection and necessarily under a vet's supervision. The idea is that it is more humanistic but the people respond to it with suspicion thinking they are controlled as a few years ago the vet had to go from a house to a house to check how many pigs and cows each person had. Well, the villagers still practice the knife method though they cannot openly do it. Probably they think: 'that's how we have always been doing' but they also consider the new method as a waste of time (you need to wait for a vet) and money (you need to buy an injection), which doesn't really make the society more humanistic!

Thus, the implementation of the EU regulation is again perceived as a mere performance of being humanistic that cannot really increase the level of humanism in the society. But what it actually does is raising the population's anger for being controlled and causing their dissatisfaction with being restricted to do things in a traditional way. However, the young people are well aware of the EU's "strong bargaining position" and realize

that, to quote Elena's words again, "it is useless to complain: Why should they tell us how to eat our meat? It is like: Why should those, who invest, tell us what to do?"

One more issue seen by the youth as an outcome of the EU regulations is that they might provoke more confrontations and conflicts than it happened before. One of the examples suggested by my respondent is the case of vodka "Palinka" and the debate on which country is authorized to produce it. As 23-year-old Alexandra explained to me,

> now it's all about the question of standardization and who will own the 'Palinka' patent and who is better than whom... Now Hungarians have got the patent and only they can call it 'Palinka', while we [Romanians] and Poles also have it. This evil at some point creates more conflicts than it was before and instead of adapting to the EU, the EU is forcefully assimilating us, which is a big [in a prolonged manner] mistake because we are so happy thinking the EU is coming and helping, the international monetary fund is giving money and we'll get our salaries next month and so on, but there are many other problems the EU would have never thought of. And we didn't envisage them because we had no idea; we just wanted to be in!

According to this narrative, the EU regulations or standardization may provoke a conflict and even an ethnic rivalry ("who is better than whom") among the neighboring countries, instead of solving them. Furthermore, the respondent states that the EU strategy implies not the "adaptation" but "forceful assimilation," which, she thinks, goes against the people's expectations and ruins their trust in the EU. The whole narrative is constructed based on the dual representations: One the one hand, "we are so happy" and believe in the future and the economic prosperity the EU is bringing, while on the other hand, the EU is escalating the conflicts among the neighbors, it is "forcefully assimilating us", and if only we had known... The question is: If only you had known, would you have been against joining the EU? I am pretty confident that the very same young people would say that they would still have been eager to join the EU and that they are still eager to be its members.

Besides discussing the twofold character of the EU regulations, the young people have reflected on the ambiguity caused by crossing the borders: All the respondents recognize that after joining the EU it is much easier to go abroad to both study and work, and it is a common fact that Eastern Europeans migrate to Western Europe. The descriptions of their

experiences of staying abroad are amazingly similar and while listening to their stories one can experience a constant déjà vu. The Polish youth regretfully admit that "people don't have a good opinion about" them in Britain and Germany (those European countries to which Poles most often migrate), while the Romanian youth disclose that they have "a bad name" in Italy, Spain and France (the countries to which Romanians usually migrate). Thus, the ease of crossing the borders can be considered as both a success (new opportunities to study and work) and a failure (negative stigmatization by a recipient society). It is remarkable that the "failure discourse" related to migration is missing only in 2 interviews conducted in Romania (out of 33 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups) and 1 interview conducted in Poland (out of 14 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups).

The following two examples represent the Romanian and Polish youths' narratives related to their trips abroad:

> When I am in Germany, I try to speak German so that people think I live here for a long time and I am a part of their country, because I have a family there and my cousin told me: When you speak Polish here, they think you are stupid, they want to go away from you, etc. Some people abroad are ashamed of our country☹ (Agnieszka, 20).

What struck me in this narrative was a sudden shift from the first to the third person! My respondent did not conceal that she avoided revealing her nationality in Germany though was ashamed to openly admit that she was among those, who were ashamed of their own country. Probably national sentiments are quite strong even when individuals are ashamed of their nationality.

> Many Romanians are ashamed of their national identity because of their compatriots' behaviors abroad. This is what happened to us in Italy: We were the Erasmus program students and were going to organize a Romanian party, four of us. But suddenly there was that episode of the Romanian or Gipsy [pausing here and emphasizing that either could be] crime against an Italian woman and we were in panic. We immediately started speaking English instead of Romanian because our parents would call us and say: 'Don't speak Romanian - otherwise some angry Italians might be around, understand you speak Romanian and revenge!' It was the first time we experienced a racist issue... There was a sudden hope when the Pope appeared on the balcony in Vatican and preached about tolerance.

> You feel a kind of relief but then you hear some people were beaten in a supermarket just because they were Romanians☹. As the Erasmus program students we were supposed to exchange the values and be proud of it, and the weekend we spent was really scary! (Alina, 24).

Here, again, my interviewee does not say anything about her being ashamed of her nationality; rather it is the story of being scared of an offensive treatment by others. However, returning to the very first sentence in this paragraph and realizing that the rest of the paragraph is the evidence for the first sentence, which actually represents the main argument, it becomes clear that the whole story was meant as an example of "Romanians [being] ashamed of their national identity" because of what their fellow Romanians or maybe even Gipsies (often perceived as the ones who spoil the name of Romanians) do abroad.

In this context the case of Georgia provokes a special interest. Although Georgia is not a part of the EU, the desire to join it is very strong and the official political discourses always emphasize the country's foreign policy priority to join the EU and the NATO. The recent nation-wide surveys illustrate that more than 80% of the population supports Georgia's integration into the EU. Moreover, 51% of the population expresses partial or full trust in the EU, which is higher than the one in the courts (29%), the media (32%), the parliament (34%) or the government (34%) (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, CRRC, 2011). However, again, the reality is not as simple as that and the in-depth interviews with Georgian youth reveal that despite being optimistic about the EU integration, Georgian young people are nevertheless concerned about its side effects thinking that

> all the changes have their positive and negative sides. Joining the EU will probably be beneficial in the economic terms as it might bring more investments; however, I am afraid, we will have to adjust to lots of different regulations that are alien to our country. I guess it will cause lots of objections and at least the inner protest of Georgians, who cannot stand being controlled, especially from the outside, and consider it as a form of subordination harming their self-esteem and pride (Sandro, 20).

Thus, the narrative reveals the fear of Georgian youth that alongside some positive developments in the area of economics, the EU may also impose lots of various regulations that do not really fit the local reality,

therefore, being perceived by the locals as an intrusion harming their national sentiments and causing "at least [their] inner protest."

But what is even more harming to the Georgians' "hyperbolic pride" is the discourses on "our compatriots' shameful behavior abroad". One of the vivid examples is represented by the famous case of the Stradivarius violin theft in Austria. The most shameful part of this story as perceived by Georgians was the fact that a Georgian male, who stole the violin, had no idea what he had stolen, and the whole rumor in Georgia was around the issue of the world getting to know how "backward" Georgians are. Even the thief's short interview illustrates that he regretted not the fact of stealing itself but the fact that he did not know he had stolen a Stradivarius violin. And the young people ironically noted that Georgia would never become the part of the EU as after this case everyone would fear that all the Stradivarius violins would disappear in Europe. It is a good example of how a particular case perceived in the light of spoiling the name of a country can produce a nation-wide "failure discourse".

Reflecting on the narratives presented in this subchapter, one gets an obvious impression that all of them are amazingly similar and if not mentioning particular locations in the text, they could be ascribed to the youth of any of the abovementioned country. Moreover, I would say that the following quote by a Georgian respondent representing his perception of Europeanization accurately describes the youth attitudes from other two countries as well:

> What is good about joining the EU is that you won't need to go through all these stages of visa application, which is really humiliating! But I see another danger here: Although I am not very proud of us and our deeds abroad, I still think that it is so easy for the powerful countries to find a scapegoat and it is so difficult for the powerless ones to prove their truth... (Giorgi, 21).

Ambivalence Related to the Impact of Westernization on Local Traditions

One of the hot topics provoking lots of discussions among Georgian, Romanian and Polish youth is the impact of Westernization/ Europeanization on the local traditions. This question is an obvious source of controversy and ambivalence, basic arguments revolving around whether the local traditions are endangered by various cultural trends

coming from the West or whether these trends support the re-invention of tradition or "specificity" (Ditchev, 2005, p. 247); whether they cause total transformation or encourage maintaining the "changing same" (Gilroy, 1994), whether they are blindly adopted or creatively adapted to the local reality.

What is amazing about the youth discourses from all three countries is that despite the fact that two of them are the EU members, while one aspires to be so, and there is a constant attempt to prove one's Europeanness in the official and popular discourses of all three countries, the young people still emphasize the Eastern character of their societies or the domination of certain Eastern traits in them:

> Although today the Western influences are stronger, we still have a kind of Eastern spirit, one of the examples of which is this Eastern laziness so characteristic to Georgians (Tina, 19).

> I think the Western for us [Romanians] is more external, while the Eastern is more internal. The Eastern influences us more on a mental, philosophical level, while the Western – on an external, behavioral level (Raluca, 19).

> Well, for a really long time, I mean for a few centuries, Poland was more an Eastern culture than the Western one, and there was an Ottoman influence, and after the World War II we were artificially moved to the West. So, our identity was artificially changed and since this change we don't really see the connection as a new nation that appears in Europe (Janus, 21).

Thus, the Eastern characteristics can be represented in different contexts in a culture-specific way, starting from "Eastern laziness" and ending with a "philosophical level", and might even cause certain confusion regarding one's place in Europe.

Despite emphasizing their Eastern characteristics, the very same young people express their surprise that their countries need to constantly prove that they are European, that they belong to Europe. My Georgian respondents often reminded me of the following well known expression: "I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European"; my Polish respondents stated that "Poland is and always was a European country"; and one of my Romanian respondents even recalled an emotional episode regarding this issue:

> I remember, when I was in the final grade of high school, there was an essay contest and we were asked to write an essay on how European we perceived ourselves to be. I was very angry as I didn't understand why I was asked how European I felt – I am in Europe anyway, it is Europe! It's a tricky question: How European do you feel? It's certainly imposed from somewhere; it's not a natural question. I don't stay up at night thinking how European I am. Somebody else raises all these questions putting them on the public agenda. By asking them, you turn this process (the EU integration) into the artificial one... And I didn't write anything! (Andrea, 23).

Based on the last narrative, not only my respondent is angry that being territorially located in Europe Romanians still need to prove their Europeanness but also she is persuaded that this discourse is imposed over Romanians from the outside, which complicates the EU integration process itself, making it artificial that is stripping it of its authenticity. Some young people even go further and state that only after a country becomes a part of the EU, is it perceived as a "true European" country; otherwise, even its territorial location in Europe would not help it to be European: "There was a commercial on the national TV about our [Romanian] peasants, who were visited by an official from the city and he was explaining how wonderful it is now, that finally they are Europeans, true Europeans, and it was like: What are you talking about?" (Vlad, 20). Despite the young people's surprise or anger, I should emphasize that while mentioning "Europe" in their narratives, they themselves often unconsciously imply merely Western Europe, and if they want to include the new European countries, they usually add the adjectives "Eastern" or "Central".

Putting this issue aside, let's focus on how this regional mixture of traditions (both the Eastern and European), as depicted by the youth, is influenced by Westernization/Europeanization. The youth narratives reveal their dual perceptions again.

Georgian youngsters state that

> the Western thinking and lifestyle is different from ours – Westerners are individualists, while we are collectivists; Westerners don't have strong family ties, while they are really strong in Georgia; Westerners teach their kids to strive for their rights, while we still teach them to respect elders, etc. It's the whole socialization process and it cannot really be changed like that as our traditions have been established throughout the centuries and they are congruent to our nature, so it would be extremely stupid to

> try to change them only to prove the West that we are so modern, we are like them (Tako, 21).

Thus, in the young people's opinion, the centuries-long traditions, which make an inseparable part of Georgian "nature," cannot be substituted by the Western ones just to prove the West how modern Georgians are. Moreover, even the traditions that are criticized as outdated by the youngsters themselves in a daily life, still seem quite appealing to them:

> What I like about our culture is our tradition to... be emotionally close to your family. Being a youngster in our society, you feel safe knowing that your parents will always support you both emotionally and materially. On the other hand, you never fear to become older knowing that your children will never leave you without attention and support, and you will never spend your last days in solitude in a shelter for elders (Keti, 19).

Many Georgian youngsters stress the difference between the Georgian and Western socialization patterns and the values they convey, and express their concern that the attempt to imitate the West will endanger the local traditions as it means that the Georgian family ties will loosen, emotional support will be substituted by competition, etc. However, paradoxically, the very same young people express their desire to gain both material and emotional independence from their parents, to become more individualist and career oriented, and they even complain that the Georgian perception of independence "still implies dependency on others":

> All of us aspire to become more modern though still retaining all those traditional things... I mean that we need to get free, need to independently decide on the future career, future spouse, future life... It seems there is certain freedom but it still implies dependency on others. This is the Georgian reality (Mary, 20).

The very same ambivalent attitude to the impact of Westernization on the local traditions is characteristic to both Romanian and Polish youth. On the one hand, they complain that under the Western influences the local traditions are being abandoned and forgotten, say, the family ties have loosened and the Western-type cold relations have established between parents and their children; while on the other hand, they think

that despite looking up to the West, they still manage to preserve their traditions. For instance, one can hear such contradictory ideas within the same narratives: "Here, in Poland, we adore everything that comes from the West. It is still a recent trend, after joining the EU. So, we have this feeling that the Western traditions are better than the Polish ones, which we don't want any more. In this way people think they are more modern and cool" (Joanna, 18); while after a few minutes the same respondent announced: "Polish young people are somehow in traditions and they want to keep them. Although they try to mix them with the Western thinking, they still keep them." Thus, there is the discourse on no longer wanting one's traditions vs. being still "in traditions" and "still keeping them".

Here is a passage from an interview with a Romanian respondent, who presents similar contradictory ideas within the same narrative:

> Romanians are like that - so close to the national traditions but so willing to understand what the Westerners say. I think right now people are really, really interested in the EU standards or the Western world, as we say. Ya, but they are kind of neglecting their traditions (Marina, 20).

How come that within three lines we encounter two different realities – "Romanians are... so close to the national traditions" and "they are kind of neglecting their traditions"? How come that the narrative of "what I like about our culture is our traditions" coexists with the perception that "the Western traditions are better"? How come that the Romanian and Polish discourses are so amazingly similar and, at the same time, so close to the Georgian ones? I guess we should consider the Western factor in this context. It seems that the Western gaze bears a special significance for all three countries ("What [will] the Westerners say!") and they desperately try to prove the West, which is usually symbolized by the EU, that they are "modern and cool". Two different types of "conditionality" are in play here – the new European countries seek the EU endorsement; while those on the margins of Europe seek the EU membership, even if it is postponed to an indefinite future.

The ambivalence related to the Western cultural influences on the local traditions is vividly represented by the youth narratives on public holidays such as Valentine's Day or Halloween. On the one hand, one can hear lots of complaints about neglecting the local holidays, while on the other hand, it is stated that the influx of the Western trends even

encourages the recollection and re-invention of the local traditions. The following two passages are good examples of both discourses:

> Western culture has a strong impact on our popular culture, especially the celebrations like Valentine's Day, Halloween, etc. Our [Romanian] Valentine's day is on February 24 but, unfortunately, nobody celebrates it any more, all of them celebrate February 14 and all the shops have imported cards and souvenirs. But why should we celebrate someone's holiday if we have our own tradition? (Claudia, 18)

vs.

> Our [Romanian] Valentine's Day is called "Dragobete" and is supposed to be celebrated on February 24. Most of the young people I know, including myself, discovered it after Valentine's Day on February 14 was introduced. If we look at it from this perspective, it does not seem to be a tradition! I don't like this term "tradition" - I think it's often used to search for some 'historical truths' that are actually not there. People change and traditions might be just a way of 'selling things.' It's very good for trying to manufacture your identity! And if I think carefully about it, probably these Western flows helped the traditional trends to float, the national identity to be expressed, to be more visible (Andrea, 23).

Thus, we encounter two controversial opinions about the local holiday: according to the first one, the local celebration is abandoned because of the one that was imported from the West together with its accompanying commercial stuff; while according to the second, only due to the imported holiday were the locals able to rediscover their own one, which had been forgotten for quite a while, therefore, could hardly be considered as a local tradition. Moreover, thanks to the Western import the national identity was reactivated and asserted. Thus, the Western has encouraged the re-invention of local tradition.

If we shift from Romania to Poland, the very same statement will be true in the context of the Halloween celebration.

> Instead of celebrating this stupid Halloween, we'd rather celebrate our All Saints' Day the following day (Pavel, 19)

vs.

> Halloween is on October 31 and we have our holiday – All Saints' Day on November 1. We all go to the cemeteries and burn candles for the ancestors. And when I make a pumpkin, I don't think about a trick or something joyful but about all these people who I will be commemorating next day. I think we cannot happily celebrate Halloween if we don't remember our own family and ancestors (Monica, 20).

Thus, on the one hand, the Western holiday is accused for shading the local one, while on the other hand, the Western one can be considered as a preparation for the local one and it is believed that they can peacefully coexist, both being celebrated in their own way.

The ambivalence related to traditions is further exemplified by the case of religion. In most of the discourses the young people from all the presented countries consider religion as a part of tradition. I will illustrate the reason for such a perception based on the Romanian case though I dare to say that the very same observation is true for Georgia (also an Orthodox country) and Poland (a Catholic country).

> From a spiritual point of view Romania is a predominantly orthodox nation, a good aspect for some and a curse for others, like the literary critique Eugen Lovinescu. In his book, History of modern Romanian civilization, Lovinescu (1997) states that orthodoxy, with its eastern orientation, has slowed down Romanian modernization. The predominant Orthodox Church insisted that she be called National church and even today orthodoxy is considered by many as the most relevant identitary factor. In other words, when you say you are Romanian you say you are orthodox (Boari, Gherghina, 2009, p. 11).

In the same vein, Georgians state that being Georgian means being Orthodox and that Orthodoxy is an inseparable part of their national identity as it was the religion that helped Georgians strive against the Muslim neighbors, who were invading the country for many centuries, thus being the main factor in preserving the national identity. The most famous national slogan since the 19th century independence movement has been the following one: "Language, Homeland, Religion". Even in the recent past, when the South-Western part of Georgia, which was under the Ottoman rule for more than three centuries and whose population was predominantly Muslim, was regained, an active process of "returning to the Georgian roots" was initiated (which is still in progress) and the

population started to baptize as Orthodox as an indicator of their true Georgianness (Pelkmans, 2006).

Although it represents a Catholic country, the Polish case is quite close to the Romanian and Georgian ones. Poland is quite a conventional Christian country and the religion is perceived as a part of Polish identity. As one of my respondents remarked: "Here, in Poland, we call it not a Catholic Church but a Polish Catholic Church! These are different things" (Anita, 19).

Despite its historical importance, religion gained a new function and power in the post-communist period. The scholars studying the region confirm that after the collapse of the communist regime "(r)eligious sentiments reached unprecedented levels throughout the region, both in countries like Poland... and Romania... religion, alongside nationalism, stepped in to fill the ideological void... and churches assumed new roles in shaping the eastern European democracy" (Stan, Turcescu, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Despite the fact that religion is intertwined with national identity in all the presented cases, the youth discourses reveal that it is also considered as a factor holding these countries back and interrupting the ongoing modernization and globalization processes. This duality is vividly expressed in their narratives: On the one hand, the young people would share that

> I try to fast each Wednesday and Friday, and I don't eat meat at all. It's a combination of religion and personal opinion. I think it's a part of our tradition and although we, Romanians, are not an Eastern culture any more, we went beyond our traditions long time ago, I still cannot say that no one follows the traditions today (Adrian, 24).

Thus, the young people still try to follow religious norms perceived as a part of their cultural tradition and although they think these traditions were abandoned long time ago, they admit that the part of youth still preserves them. On the other hand, one would often hear the following narrative:

> I think most of the young people do not care about the religion as they are pushed back by all those stupid things the church does! There is absolutely no case of a justice system regarding a church issue and I think that's where corruption is officialized because you never get an invoice for the bills you pay to the church and you pay all the time – when you get married, when children are baptized, when someone dies, and you have to pay an

> annual or biannual tax, just because you live in a neighborhood of some church you should pay to this church, etc. And this is all 'black money' in a sense... Our church is like a country within the country, and that's how not only me but also all of my friends without an exception perceive it (Andrei, 25).

In addition, most of my Romanian respondents admit that even if their peers possess religious beliefs they try to hide this fact because of the embarrassment caused by the deeds of the church, and even if the young people cross themselves passing a church, they still deny it in order to prove that they are "modern and cool". Actually, the question of crossing oneself while passing a church is a source of ambivalence itself as another part of my respondents is persuaded that it is just a habit and not an expression of one's beliefs.

Thus, we get a truly complicated picture with the young people both trying to be religious and not caring about religion, as well as crossing oneself as both an expression of one's religiosity and a mere habit distant from religious beliefs. There is an agreement on one question though – that the young people are ashamed of the church's deeds and think that it's the main reason for the youngsters' stepping back from the religion. We can briefly summarize these ideas quoting Elena's (24) words: "I would say there is both religiosity and rebellion to the church here".

The very same dualistic attitude is characteristic to Georgian youth, who would, on the one hand, state that "I highly respect our religious traditions and I think Georgian Orthodox church is one of the most humanistic" (Nino, 17); furthermore, there are even such groups on facebook as "I love my patriarch", whose members are lots of young people. While on the other hand, the very same youngsters would complain: "I am really ashamed of how intolerant our church is to all the minorities, whether it is religious, sexual or even ethnic. And sometimes I blush when listening to our priests' preaching that all the evil comes from the West" (Ana, 18). Thus, Georgian Orthodox church is represented as both humanistic and intolerant, accusing the West for certain "evils" occurring in the society and supporting the argument that Eastern Christianity is not very open to the changes coming from the West.

The readers will have a déjà vu again while getting familiar with the Polish case. Polish youth complain that their peers

> are not proud of the traditions and they don't understand their role because before we had only Polish traditions and now we can compare them with those of the West and think that they have the better ones. It's obvious that it's an influence of the West. And it influences all the aspects of our life – political, cultural, religious... (Natalia, 19).

In this narrative the West is considered as the one endangering Polish traditions, including the religious ones, and the rest of the narrative represents some kind of call for defending the local traditions. However, oddly enough, the very same respondent within the same focus group discussion would say that

> the role of religion is weakening today because the church needs a reform [and other respondents would strongly agree with her]. The church doesn't really follow the changes and it's very conservative. That's why young people don't go to the church. I don't go to the church myself. In addition, in Poland the church is a big politician.

Others would confirm her point bringing their own evidence:

> And the church doesn't do anything for young people here, it doesn't support the young people at all [and here everyone would agree with this respondent]. They say: God will help you to find a job. But why are not they founding some unemployment groups or support groups? There is a reason for that though - the young people can look at the church and say: You have lots of land, you have houses and money. Where did you get it from? And why don't you use it for charity? (Paul, 20).

So, the Polish case, like the other cases presented above, illustrates that the young people consider the church as quite conservative, unable to follow the ongoing changes, and even "stale" (as Victor (24) calls it), while at the same time rather politicized (church as "a big politician"). However, in all three cases there is a clear distinction between the church as the somewhat shameful and the religion as a respectable part of national identity that should be preserved and protected; there is "both religiosity and rebellion to the church".

Thus, the young people express their ambivalent attitude to religion caught between its presentable and shameful aspects. Concerning the impact of the West, it gains a special importance in this context (again provoking ambivalent attitudes) as it is assumed that although it can

encourage some reforms in the church backing more tolerance and less conservatism, simultaneously it can endanger the local religious traditions and weaken the role of religion among the youth, who would show off by abandoning rather old religious practices in order to prove the West they are "modern and cool".

Ambivalence Related to the Perception of the Western Concept of Freedom

After discussing the ambivalence related to the impact of Westernization on the local traditions, it is important to get familiar with the youth perceptions of the Western concept of freedom. This topic is most often discussed in the context of post-communist transformations and is a source of ambivalence again. On the one hand, the young people are certain that the collapse of the communist regime brought freedom to their countries, while on the other hand, one can encounter numerous examples of communist nostalgia in their discourses; on the one hand, they state that communism represented an obvious threat to national identities melting them in a communist pot, while on the other hand, they see the very same danger in the current Western trends, celebrating the post-nationalist era; on the one hand, they state that the Western influences enhance the level of freedom in their societies, while on the other hand, they are concerned that their peers might not know how to deal with the newly acquired freedoms and might perceive them in a "distorted" or "exaggerated" way.

Why do the young people need to refer to the communist past in order to discuss the recent developments in their countries? As D. Galasinski argues on the example of the Polish post-communist discourses, "communism, its discourses and the discourses about it, still provide the framework within which the discourses of new reality are created. It is in contrast and in opposition to communism that the new reality is assessed and constructed" (2009, p. 215).

The young people from the presented countries are persuaded that the collapse of the communist regime brought all types of freedom to their societies, be it political, cultural, religious, even sexual, etc., which is unanimously considered as a positive phenomenon. However, they state that it also brought certain instability and insecurity, which provokes "a huge wave of communist nostalgia" and not only among the elders, who experienced the communist past, but also among the youngsters, who

were born and raised in the post-communist conditions but adopt and incorporate the elders' nostalgic discourses in their repertoire.

One of the vivid examples is Victor's (24) narrative and while listening to him it is hard to believe that these ideas belong to a person raised in the post-communist epoch. My question was about the impact of the EU integration on Romania, to which he responded in the following way:

> We did get the access to information and the opportunity to migrate but that's not what we hoped for, evidenced by a huge wave of communist nostalgia in Romania a few months ago. Economically we don't do well now and we didn't do well then but at least then we had some social stability. The state took care of the citizens: when you left school you already got a job, health system was more organized and it was compulsory to undergo a health check, etc. Certainly, communism had its dark sides – this secret police and so on, but in the communist period Romania produced a lot of things, we had an industrial infrastructure but now we don't have anything; everything has been either destroyed or privatized and turned into something completely different. We are not as productive as we used to be, that's what I know for sure. As I understand, we import immensely, we practically import almost everything. We don't seem to be able to do anything.

Thus, a 24-year-old person, who is supposed to hardly remember anything from the communist past, turned out to "remember" lots of positive things and although he recalls its negative aspects as well, the latter are obviously overweighed by the positive ones. Here we can trace the origins of another "failure discourse" on how "productive" we used to be in the (communist) past and how unable we are "to do anything" now.

This "failure discourse" becomes even more passionate in another respondent's narrative, which is another example of how the communist nostalgia is reproduced in the youth discourses. George (19) brings his own evidence of how the collapse of the communist regime and the spread of capitalism "downgraded" Romania: "Personally I don't believe in democracy and capitalism because it downgrades us, it has already downgraded us. So the politics of the Western countries, which they import to Romania, took Romania down. For example, during the communist era the whole subway was constructed in Bucharest, while within the last 22-23 years only three more stations have been added." The same line of thoughts: we used to be productive and built then, and we do nothing now.

Polish youngsters echo their Romanian counterpart's ideas sharing the following observation: "In my parents' and especially grandparents' generations I have seen many people with the communist nostalgia. That time is considered as more socially secure. They say: 'You finished school and knew you would get a job. Nowadays, look what has happened, so many young people are unemployed!' I have heard such things from the young people too but probably they repeated what they had heard from their parents" (Nina, 20). Analyzing the Polish post-communist discourses, which he calls the "narratives of disenfranchised self", D. Galasinski draws a conclusion that his interviewees try to "balance out its [communist] provisions of social security with the political repression" (2009, p. 214) that is especially noticeable in Victor's (24) narrative. Moreover, according to him, they implicitly or even overtly call for "Komuno wroc! – 'Communism, come back!'. This is one of the slogans forged in the times of post-communism, expressing the nostalgia of the times of job security, of life with barely any decisions to make" (*ibid.*, p. 215).

The very same situation is true about the elders, especially the grandparents' generation, in Georgia; however, not in a single narrative did my interviewees show any signs of communist nostalgia or, to be more precise, any traces of reproducing the elders' nostalgic discourses. Can the possible reason be the recent encounters or rather an ever-lasting conflict (since 1989) with the powerful northern neighbor commonly associated with the flag-keeper of communism? Can it be ascribed to the fact that Russia is not considered as just a Romanian or Polish issue but the one that the EU is supposed to deal with, while Georgians perceive Russia as a constant threat against their cultural and even physical existence? Can it be ascribed to the fact that the dissolution of the great hopes that the EU membership would bring immediate and substantial improvements has produced a wide "failure discourse" in Romania and Poland encouraging the youth to search in the recent past for the stories of success, resulted in the adoption of the elders' discourse of communist nostalgia? These questions need a thorough investigation, which is beyond the scope of my research.

Another dualistic discourse regarding the communist era vs. the capitalist one is how the abovementioned countries' national identities were oppressed under the communist regime and how, getting free after its collapse and the exposure to the Western democratic flows, their identities are threatened again. Thus, both the communist and capitalist regimes endanger national identities and the freedoms promoted by them

are just performances, "spectacle freedoms". As one of my respondents explained: "We used to live in a spectacle and now we live in a spectacle too... You have simulacra of free information and you have simulacra of freedom of movement... I mean, you have it and you don't. It is a 'spectacle freedom'" (Ana, 25). Based on this narrative, both the communist and capitalist regimes pretend to provide free access to information and freedom of movement but in both cases it is merely a spectacle. They cannot be perceived as securing freedom assuming they threaten the sense of national.

And as always, the young people's twofold discourses go hand in hand: the discourse of the communist regime endangering their national identity coexists with the one of communist nostalgia, and the discourse on the Western liberal model bringing emancipation coexists with the one of the West "wiping out the traditions" and harming the national identity. For instance, Romanian youngsters would state: "People say the communists suppressed all our national identity, so we didn't have a chance to grow. Now that we are a free and modern country, we simply copy the elements of national identity from the Western countries. That's why we don't have a clearly defined national identity; we have copied most of it from someone else" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of informatics at Bucharest University). Thus, according to this narrative, despite the fact that today Romania is considered to be "a free and modern country", the national is still suppressed under the Western influences and "a clearly defined national identity" is lacking. The very similar narratives are reproduced by Polish youth, who challenge the Western liberal model stating that "actually, this 'liberal model' does not have much to do with liberal ideas. I think it rather wipes out our traditions and makes a serious problem to the Polish identity" (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of musicology at Jagiellonian University in Krakow). Concerning Georgian youngsters, they directly call their peers for action to "protect [their] deeply cultural from the outside attempts to demolish it" complaining that "the epoch of imitating others and being either pro-Russian or pro-American or something else hasn't yet ended in Georgia and the epoch of being pro-Georgian hasn't started by now" (Anano, 19).

One of the remains of the communist regime or "colonial thinking", as some of the youngsters call it, is the state of passivity. Both Romanian and Polish youth are persuaded that it is their national feature and comes from the past long before the communist rule though it gained a new incite

and a renewed content in the communist period. Romanian youngsters usually recall the legend of "Miorita" and bring it as a support to their argument of the nation-wide passivity, then shifting to the communist past to provide additional examples. Passivity seems to be perceived as the major feature of Romanian youth as being asked to characterize their peers, Romanian interviewees almost exclusively emphasize passivity as their most common trait; the next feature in their list is the constant complaint on how passive they are even not trying to change it. Thus, both passivity and complaining about it (but also complaining that people complain about their passivity) are considered as the most characteristic traits of Romanian youth. According to Adrian (24), "the young people live in a catatonic state though they think they are doing something. In fact, real changes are perceived quite painfully as they don't have any resistance". Vlad (20) agrees that "We [Romanians] usually take things as they are; we are quite an unprotesting nation". While Alexandra (23) adds that "Romanians like to complain a lot: they complain about being passive and not doing anything to change their life. We also have the people who complain that people around them complain about not doing anything."

Georgian youth seem to enjoy complaining about their passivity as well. They would complain about their peers' unwillingness to change their life; furthermore, they would complain about their parents being unwilling to encourage their independence and activity; in addition, they would complain about the governments' inability to provide proper conditions for them to get actively involved in social and political life. Concerning Polish youth, they do not seem to be characterized by so many layers of complaining about the passivity in their society though they definitely mention it as one of their characteristic features: "Yes, we are afraid of changes because we are afraid of freedom of choice as it is connected to certain responsibilities and activities, while we are quite passive and unresisting" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of journalism at Krakowska Academia).

Thus, based on these narratives, the youth from all the presented societies characterize themselves as quite passive and unresisting. However, we encounter another paradox here: this passivity or non-resistance might be a means of cultural, social or political resistance! Several examples can support this argument: Andrei (25), a film director, shares his opinion about the Westerners' perception of Romanians as somewhat "exotic" and Romanians' inability to resist being labeled; therefore, he suggests that Romanians should at least take an advantage of being "exoticized"

getting either material (say, the EU funding) or some other benefits from the West as an outcome of their "passive manipulation". Another example of passive resistance is a "passivity action", which was organized by the Bucharest University professors and students in November 2011 to protest against cutting off the budget in the higher educational system.

Alongside emphasizing both catatonic and active passivity, which seems to coexist among the inquired youth, in the very same narratives they describe themselves as overtly active and eager to initiate changes. Romanian respondents would tell me:

> I don't see young Romanians as being afraid of changes or not able to contribute to them. In fact, I guess, they are willing to make changes and even when they cannot openly do it, they have their own way... There is a word in Romanian called 'shmeker.' It means being smart in a tricky way, like getting away with all sorts of things even if one doesn't have a clue what's that about. And one can be active in a shmeker way. We can really be shmekers☺ (Andrea, 23).

Polish youngsters would state that they are "rather active. To take an example of student life, lots of exhibitions or film festivals are organized by them, not just as an art but also as an expression of socio-political activity. They want to try something new and they are open to different possibilities" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of journalism at Krakowska Academia). While Georgian youth would boast that no changes take place in the country without their initiative: "It usually comes from us. We are the main ones to initiate changes!" (Maia, 18).

Thus, how is it possible to be passive, even to the extent of being catatonic and afraid of changes with their accompanying uncertainties, and simultaneously to be active and eager to initiate changes? It seems this duality is quite possible in all three cases we have discussed. Furthermore, there is a duality in perceiving the freedom gained in the recent years: the young people think that despite the positive aspects of obtaining the so called Western freedoms, there is a danger of "overdoing" them as, to quote one of my respondents, "everybody understands freedom and democracy in the way they want; therefore, there is a kind of confusion about freedom, democracy and capitalism" (Sofia, 20). This confusion is often attributed to the "transitional state". As A. Pleșu observes, "(n)ow, after 'the great change', you are obliged to discover the darker shades of

freedom (those usually referred to as 'the problems of transition')" (1999, p. 12).

To make sense of what the "distortion", "overdoing" or "exaggeration" of freedom may imply, let's get familiar with the youth perceptions regarding this issue. Discussing the changes in Romanian society as an outcome of Westernization, Mihai (21) shared the following observation:

> I think the main issue is that we didn't take well this liberty, the concept of freedom itself. We perceived it differently than the West does. In the beginning we pushed it a little bit more, we overdid it. Being too enthusiastic about this liberty, we just overdid!

My Polish respondents would definitely agree with Mihai as, according to them,

> After the collapse of communism, we suddenly got so much freedom that didn't know what to do with it; while in the recent years, as the opportunities have enhanced with entering the EU, we have gained additional freedoms. Now we have too much of this freedom and some people don't really know how to use it (Martina, 19).

And then the whole discussion revolves around the difficulty of choosing among various options and the responsibilities it requires, and how this difficulty might be the reason for some young people to be "afraid of the freedom of choice they get" and to be scared of "how to live" (Giddens, 1991).

Georgian youngsters further specify the meaning of "overdoing" freedom as a result of not being sure how to deal with it: "Do you know what the most problematic issue is? That the concept of 'freedom' is so wrongly perceived! It seems that the western cultural trends bring more freedom to Georgian youth; however the meaning of freedom itself is distorted" (Goga, 21); "Despite the fact that they want to be free, they don't understand what this freedom means... The line between freedom and unrestraint is erased" (Salome, 20). Inquiring about the reasons of such "distortion" or "unrestraint" one receives quite similar responses as well: "You know our mentality: we 'grasp' everything excessively and always fall into extremes" (Tiko, 19). This excessiveness is considered to be quite dangerous as, in the Georgian respondents' words, it is reflected in all the aspects of social life and may be harmful to Georgian youngsters'

morality. The very same concern is expressed by Romanian and Polish youth, who perceive "exaggeration of freedom" as a moral issue as well.

Thus, the liberation dilemma sensibly summarized by Z. Bauman seems quite appropriate in our context: "Is liberation a blessing, or a curse? A curse disguised as blessing, or a blessing feared as curse?" (Bauman, 2000, p. 18).

On the Local Way of Doing Things

Getting familiar with all those ambiguities related to the youth perceptions of the impact of Westernization/Europeanization on the local traditions, religious beliefs, family relations, migration issues, youth characteristics such as their activity-passivity, and finally, their vision of freedom, it is crucial to find out their coping strategies or the ways of dealing with these ambiguities. It seems their coping strategy is quite ambivalent as well, implying a dual attempt to "both embrace and eschew Westernization", which is presumably their means of preserving "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld, 2005) alongside emphasizing their international integration.

On the one hand, there seems to be an attempt to copy a lot from the West, especially, from the EU, whose standards and norms the presented three countries try to follow, while on the other hand, there is an obvious attempt to do things in the local way, which predominantly implies a kind of bricolage - a mixture of the local with the Western. The youth discourses evolve along the same line: On the one hand, they complain about imitating the West and copy-pasting everything Western, while on the other hand, they stress their own ways of combining the elements from different contexts, making the point that although not all the examples of bricolage can be considered as successful, they still represent their attempts to do things their own (local) way and to keep or invent "specificity".

As noted above, the young people are concerned about the lack of bricolage in their societies. According to the Romanian youngsters' narratives, they "try to look at all the possible examples of those Western countries and to copy them, starting from the first names as lots of Italian, French, etc. names have been imported, especially as a result of this huge wave of migration, and ending with the arts" (Irina, 24). The common perception that everything Western is considered to be "of a better quality, more modern and civilized" is assessed by my respondents as a local "mistake". Consequently, they call for a "selective incorporation" of all

the outside elements: "Recently we have been taking everything from everywhere, especially from the West, and now it's time to select them, to keep only good things, not everything. It's a Romanian mistake to try to adopt everything" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). Some of them state that even the Eastern trends become fashionable among the locals only after the West approves them and they become popular there. For instance, Lelia (18) is confident that "Romanians still look a lot at the West and even the popularity of Chinese food can be considered as the Western influence as Chinese food is quite popular in the West and therefore, it has become popular here as well." Lelia concludes with a sad smile that "we should respect ourselves more".

Polish young people talk about the same type of Polish "mistake" though they might not use this very term: "After the communist era we believed that Poland is an extremely traditional country and our thinking is based on old, outdated ideas, while everything that is Western and can be called European is better and more enlightened! This is a generalization, which makes things really bad here" (Igor, 20). This dichotomy of the old-fashioned/outdated vs. the modern/civilized can be traced in almost all the youngsters' narratives. Georgian respondents also express the concern about their peers' attempts to look "modern" or "cool" that is "Westernized," which may range from the copy-paste of the latest Western fashion that makes everyone look "distinctively similar" (Tsuladze, 2011, p. 70) to the copy-paste of popular music represented by Georgian pop, which is "a tasteless imitation of the Western pop" (Sandro, 17) (*ibid.*, p. 72).

The young people passionately criticize such local "mistakes", whether the latter are Romanian, Polish or Georgian, and suggest various strategies of dealing with this issue, some of which are quite successful, others quite complicated or even strange.

The first and most common strategy emphasized by the youth from all three countries is "rediscovering" the local: "Maybe now a popular trend is to rediscover our own. You know, now all of us are into bio stuff and lots of women I know are rediscovering their mothers' or grandmothers' recipes... and this is searching into the traditional, I guess" (Maria, 21). Alongside "rediscovering" the local in everyday life, the young people bring a number of examples of such a rediscovery from painting, music, cinematography, etc. For instance, Irina (24), herself an artist, states that in response to copying the Western, a few years ago young Romanian artists

started copying the local. She brings an example of the Cluj School of painting, which is characterized by a specific style and distinctive features such as the emphasis on social issues, expressionism, the domination of black and white colors, etc., and can be immediately identified as a Romanian style. She thinks that young Romanian artists tend to imitate the Cluj School as "the whole Western style of painting became not just boring but so common that by going back to the national style one wants to be not unique but, you know, somehow special, not common".

Andrei (25), a film director, talks about the same strategies in cinematography noting that Romanian films have very specific and quite outstanding style easily recognizable as Romanian with its realistic and naturalistic emphasis, long talks, rather shaky camera, less care for technical aspects and more care for how feelings are transmitted, etc. He argues that Romanians can benefit a lot from the Western support but then they can always do things their own way, even if it does not imply only successful cases: "I think we are in a good position, where we try to take money from the EU and it's not by chance I am saying this first! We don't take good examples, we just take money mainly and at the same time, we keep our way of doing things, and this comes with good and bad examples. Even though we are European, we are still very, very much Romanian!"

Alongside rediscovering the local, there is also a trend of creatively mixing the local with the Western. It seems the Western cultural trends encourage improvisation and result in a culture-specific bricolage reflected in the modernized representations of the local. My respondents bring a lot of examples of such a bricolage from various areas of social life, including fashion, food, architecture, painting, music, etc. According to my Georgian respondent Irakli (21), a DJ at one of the popular music clubs: "I may use the western cover to decorate my Georgian sketch but it always remains Georgian and I am extremely proud of it!" Some young people even state that combining the Georgian with the Western has its historical roots and that the Georgian-European bricolage, exemplified by "Shin", "Zumba", "Assa-Party" and other Georgian performers today, has started in the 19th century, and that "Georgian academic music itself is a product of the combination of European music with Georgian folk" (Luka, 21).

Romanian and Polish respondents recall similar examples stating that their cultural traditions, say, traditional music, can be a powerful means of stressing the local and resisting the Western, especially the Western musical styles dominating the musical scene in the world. One of the most often cited examples among Polish youth is the group "Zacopower",

which presents Polish folk songs and music in a modernized way that is "combining it with the best elements of modern Western music"; while Romanian youngsters often mention the group "Fara Zahar" ("Without Sugar"), which "adapts the Western-style music to the local reality and uses lots of irony and sarcasm to present social aspects of Romanian life".

That's how "glocalization" works: by adopting Western cultural elements and combining them with the local ones, especially the folk ones[4] in a culture-specific way so that on their side "reworked traditional themes provide the basis for innovative and adaptive responses to outside influences" (Blum, 2007, p. 27). Though there is one danger the young people envision talking about the bricolage: They express their concern that even the most successful examples of bricolage are often assessed by the locals through the Western lenses, that is they are accepted and become popular among the locals only after they have become popular in the West. As one of my respondents remarked: "I guess we have a number of good examples of remaking things in our own way though in general we are not very creative... I believe we adapt certain things but I don't think we recognize them. I think we take songs and change words in Romanian – that's not creativity but that's the only phenomenon we recognize. There are many other phenomena that go unnoticed" (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of sociology at the University of Cluj-Napoca). According to the young people's narratives, the "recognizable" cases of bricolage are measured by their "respect in the West" though they are afraid that most of such cases are "very commercial and they all seem so similar, like one and the same" (Lucian, 20). Thus, another dichotomy appears in this context – the local heterogeneity vs. the Western homogeneity, and the former as a means of resisting the latter.

Besides those cases of bricolage one can be proud of, the young people recall less successful and even quite strange cases of bricolage. And although some assess them as failures and some perceive them as shameful, they tend to believe that these cases might still represent the strategies of cultural resistance. Georgian youngsters confess that there is a fashionable trend of being intelligent they try to follow, which is more an image than a true aspiration, and they share a number of cases when they spend a whole day at a literary café as if they were getting familiar with the latest fiction though they might stare at the same page all day long, or when they take their own comics to a university library and pretend they are getting familiar with academic material. One of my Georgian respondents commented on this trend:

> I have a feeling it's a kind of response to this political project of 'enlightening our youth' though you would ask: why such a distorted response? I would reply: It is fetishism, a mock on our politicians' obsession with promoting these Western-style educational standards, which stays on the surface and doesn't really go deeper. Maybe it's not a very successful attempt but it's a specific way to cope (Giorgi, 19).

The corresponding examples can be traced among Romanian and Polish youth. The often cited case of Romanian bricolage is "Manele" – the "trash pop, which originates from Turkish-Arabic roots and combines all these strange elements from elsewhere, including the local Gipsy music". As the plot of manele is usually about money, women, expensive cars and houses, most of the young people perceive it as shameful though quite often they confess that despite the fact that their peers would commonly refuse that they listen to manele, many of them still do. And although the young people think that manele can be descriptive of the Romanian reality, not in a sense that "Romanians have all these golden things and expensive cars, or they possess the mansions in Spain, but these ideas and respective attempts can be seen in the society", nevertheless they state that "this kind of music rejects the impact of the Western culture in a way" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). To cut it short, we can conclude that manele, with its carnival characteristics, might represent the resistance to the Western-style order and rule through its emphasis on the "barbarian" elements and its attempts to reverse the normality (the same way as a carnival reverses an everyday routine). It might have a deliberate shocking effect, consequently, being used as a means of resistance.

Another example of the "shameful" bricolage from a very different sphere of life though still applied as a means of cultural resistance can be found in the Polish reality. My Polish respondents share the following observation: "After the collapse of the communist regime we were desperate to adopt everything Western; then we found out that the actual Western didn't coincide with our ideal of the Western and our expectations were not met. Now, searching for the solution out of this difficulty, we invented a very strange thing - we have combined Soviet and European bureaucracies, which is a dangerous combination but we have tried to find our own way" (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of humanities at Jagiellonian University, Krakow).

Thus, based on the abovementioned discussion, there can be various strategies of cultural resistance, from rediscovering the local, even copying the local, to mixing the local with the Western. Despite the fact that not all the examples of such a bricolage can be considered as successful, it turns out that even the "strange" examples of bricolage can be applied as a means of cultural resistance; the most important thing is that all of them represent the local ways of doing things.

Furthermore, the young people blame their peers for lacking national sentiments encouraging them to be prouder of their national identity. Both Romanian and Polish youth think that they lack the sense of national. They think it is especially visible now, when "a very strong idea of the united Europe has been promoted" and many young people consider their identities as European rather than just Romanian or Polish, which can shadow the feeling of national. As Anita (19) has put it: "I still feel that I am Polish but some people just forget about that and they want to be European; they try to be European and forget about their roots"; or to quote Alina (24): "I think we [Romanians] somehow lose our identity. It is bad for the country. We have to be more nationalistic... I think we should be prouder of our culture, our values. We start to forget about these things and to adopt the Western or, as we say, European ones." However, there are some respondents, who state that after their country joined the EU, they have become more nationalistic: "After entering the EU I have become more nationalistic than I was before. When you feel that you are a perfect market for the developed countries to sell their products and in addition, they make you believe that it is only you who benefit from them, that before you were not civilized, and that you are a true European now, it's hard not to become a nationalist" (Andrea, 23). Another respondent sharing the very same concern calls it "European hypocrisy" suggesting everyone to be aware of it "for our own good" (Lucian, 20). And it is noteworthy that although Georgian youth usually consider themselves quite nationalistic, they still state that "the epoch of being pro-Georgian hasn't started by now" calling their peers for action to "protect our deeply cultural" and to preserve the "national spirit".

Despite such alarms, the young people seem quite optimistic about the future revealing their ambivalent attitudes once again as the idea of lacking national sentiments and the idea of caring about the national do coexist in their narratives. Therefore, it is not surprising that after hearing their complaints about losing the national identity one can suddenly come across the following statements: "The fact that there are still some

young people, who don't want to leave this country, who want to help this country grow and they want to change things here, shows that we still care about our national" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). "Today the Western influences overweigh the Eastern ones; however, the specific Georgian overweighs both. The fact that such concerts as "Art-Gene" are organized, the people from different regions of Georgia gather to perform folk songs, dances, traditional sports, etc. demonstrates that Georgian culture hasn't been lost and still exists among the youth" (Lela, 18). I can boldly say that such statements can be found in the majority of interviews and they sound so similar as if the young people were constantly reproducing the same narrative.

I would like to summarize this chapter with the words of one of my respondents, who along the whole interview was persuading me that her peers and she herself lacked national sentiments and from time to time repeating that sometimes they were ashamed of their national identity. At the end of interview, when I asked her to give me some examples of the local food, moving to the examples of the local folk songs and dances, inquiring about some details of the local holidays, and finally, discussing the issue of regaining the lost territories, she gradually got so passionate that finished her discussion with the following sentence: "And now I realize I am a nationalist. Yes, definitely yes! Da, da!" (Elena, 24).

Conclusion

In the presented paper I have attempted to reveal the construction of ambivalent identities in the new European countries and the margins of Europe. Based on the youth perceptions, I have aimed to illustrate how the Westernization and particularly Europeanization discourses uphold such ambivalent identities promoting the construction of certain reality, in which the young people constantly negotiate between the westernizing forces and the national. I have argued that the attempt "to both embrace and eschew Westernization is a marked ambivalence" among the youth from the presented countries (Georgia, Romania and Poland) and that this dual aspiration coexists within the same narratives by the same young people.

The abovementioned duality is reflected in the youth discourses on the impact of Westernization/Europeanization on the local traditions, family

relations, religious beliefs, migration issues, youth characteristics such as their activity-passivity and their vision of freedom, as well as their coping strategies, which seem quite ambivalent as well, implying both rejecting and accepting Westernization/Europeanization as a means of preserving "cultural intimacy" alongside emphasizing international integration.

The research has revealed that in all the studied cases (Georgia, Romania and Poland) the youth narratives are constructed throughout the ambivalent perceptions of the Western, primarily seen as EU-ropean. The recent Western trends are perceived as, on the one hand, encouraging improvisations and resulting in a culture-specific bricolage reflected in the modernized representations of the local, thus promoting the re-invention of the traditional, while on the other hand, being imposed over and incongruent to the local reality, therefore endangering the traditional. Consequently, the youth responses are also quite ambivalent: on the one hand, attempting to extensively copy from the West, basically symbolized by EU-rope, while on the other hand, doing things the local way, whether it is rediscovering the local, even copying the local, or selectively incorporating the Western, predominantly EU-ropean, into the local.

NOTES

1 The interviews with Georgian youth were conducted in Georgian, while the ones with Romanian and Polish youth were conducted in English.

2 Just to compare this vision of Romania's location with the one in Encyclopedia Britannica, here is the definition from the latter: Romania is a "country lying in the eastern half of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/508461/Romania

3 This issue is widely discussed today, when in the conditions of a harsh socioeconomic crisis the survival of the EU itself has become a concern. In his interview to the "Guardian" on 26 January 2012, Umberto Eco pointed out that "European identity is 'shallow'... So whose faces should we print on our banknotes, to remind the world that we are not merely 'shallow' Europeans, but profound? 'Perhaps not politicians or the leaders who have divided us... but men of culture who have united us... [and] there are books we have yet to read that will help us reflect on cultures different from our own. Little by little: that is how our European identity will become more profound'." (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/26/umberto-eco-culture-war-europa?fb_source=hovercard)

4 "Privileged forms of national identity have been those assumed to be linked with... a 'folk' culture" (Edensor, 2002, p. 141).

Bibliography

Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities,* Verso, London and New York, 2006

Bauman, Z., *Liquid Modernity,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000

Bideleux, R., "The New Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: The Limits and Divisions of Europe" (28-49) in *Nation and National Ideology – Past, Present and Prospects,* New Europe College, Bucharest, 2002

Bideleux, R., and Taylor, R., (eds.) *European Integration and Disintegration: East and West,* Routledge, London, 1996

Bjelic, D. I., "Introduction: Blowing up the 'Bridge'" (1-22) in Bjelic, D I, and Savic, O, (eds.) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2002

Blum, D. W., *National Identity and Globalization: Youth, State, and Society in Post-Soviet Eurasia,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007

Boari, V., and Gherghina, S., "Old Essence, New Flavors: Searching for Identity at National and European Levels" (1-17) in Boari, V, and Gherghina, S, (eds.) *Weighting Difference: Romanian Identity in the Wider European Context,* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2009

Brubaker, R, *Ethnicity without Groups,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2004

Celac, S., "Romania, the Black Sea and Russia" (145-151) in Phinnemore, D, (ed.) *The EU and Romania: Accession and Beyond*, Federal Trust for Education and Research, London, 2006

Cioroianu, A., "The Impossible Escape: Romanians and the Balkans" (209-233) in Bjelic, D I, and Savic, O, (eds.) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2002

Ditchev, I., "The Eros of Identity" (235-250) in Bjelic, D I, and Savic, O, (eds.) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2002

Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2000

Edensor, T., *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life,* Berg, Oxford and New York, 2002

Elias, N., *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA, 1994

Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Caucasus Research Resource Centers, *Knowledge and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia*, CRRC, Tbilisi, 2011

Eurobarometer, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm

Galasinska, A., "Small Stories Fight Back: Narratives of Polish Economic Migration on an Internet Forum" (188-203) in Galasinska, A, and Krzyzanowski, M, (eds.) *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe,* Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2009

Galasinski, D., "Narratives of Disenfranchised Self in the Polish Post-Communist Reality" (204-217) in Galasinska, A., and Krzyzanowski, M., (eds.) *Discourse*

and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2009

Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991

Gilroy, P., *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, Verso, London, 1994

Guillen, M. F., "Is Globalization Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? A Critique of Five Key Debates in the Social Science Literature" (4-17) in Ritzer, G., and Atalay, Z., (eds.) *Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates,* Wiley-Blackwell, Malden and Oxford, 2010

Grabbe, H., "Regulating the Flow of People across Europe" (112-134) in Schimmelfennig, F., and Sedelmeier, U, (eds.) *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2005

Goldsworthy, V., "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization" (25-38) in Bjelic, D. I., and Savic, O., (eds.) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2002

Herzfeld, M., *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (2nd ed), Routledge, New York, 2005

Hobsbawm, E., and Ranger, T., *The Invention of Tradition,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983

Iliescu, A P, "Two Kinds of Identitary Concern" (96-112) in Boari, V, and Gherghina, S, (eds.) *Weighting Difference: Romanian Identity in the Wider European Context,* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2009

Kiossev, A., "The Dark Intimacy: Maps, Identities, Acts of Identifications" (165-190) in Bjelic, D. I., and Savic, O., (eds.) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, USA and London, UK, 2002

Krzyzanowski, M., "On the 'Europeanisation' of Identity Constructions in Polish Political Discourse after 1989" (95-113) in Galasinska, A., and Krzyzanowski, M., (eds.) *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe,* Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2009

Mautner, G., "Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines and Other Printed Media" (30-53) in Wodak, R., and Krzyzanowski, M., (eds.) *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences,* Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2008

Mazo, M., "Change as Confirmation of Continuity as Experienced by Russian Molokans" (254-276) in Slobin, M., (ed) *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1996

Melegh, A, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2006

Mingiu-Pippdi, A., "Europeanization without Decommunization: A Case of Elite Conversion" (17-28) in Phinnemore, D, (ed.) *The EU and Romania: Accession and Beyond*. Federal Trust for Education and Research, London, 2006

Pelkmans, M., *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2006

Pleșu, A., "Some Eastern European Neuroses" (11-18) in *New Europe College Yearbook 1995-1996,* Humanitas, Bucuresti, 1999

Pieterse, J. N., "Globalization and Culture: Three Paradigms" (309-318) in Ritzer, G, and Atalay, Z, (eds.) *Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates,* Wiley-Blackwell, Malden and Oxford, 2010

Robertson, R, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity" (334-343) in Ritzer, G., and Atalay, Z., (eds.) *Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates,* Wiley-Blackwell, Malden and Oxford, 2010

Severin, A., "Romania and the Future of the European Union" (103-112) in Phinnemore, D., (ed.) *The EU and Romania: Accession and Beyond*. Federal Trust for Education and Research London, 2006

Stan, L., and Turcescu, L., *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2007

Schimmelfennig, F., and Sedelmeier, U., "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe" (1-28) in Schimmelfennig, F., and Sedelmeier, U., (eds.) *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2005

Schwellnus, G., "The Adoption of Nondiscrimination and Minority Protection Rules in Romania, Hungary, and Poland" (51-70) in. Schimmelfennig, F., and Sedelmeier, U., (eds.) *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2005

Todorova, M., *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997

Tsuladze, L., "Youth Identities through Bricolage in a Changeable Society: The Case of Georgia" (67-76) in Gallagher, K., (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Critical and Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives,* Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2011