“People Believe in What They Want to Believe.”

Myriad Ways to Embed the Romanian-Moldovan State Border in Collective Identities in Everyday Life.

Lisa Gohlke, 285285
University of Eastern Finland
Department of Geographical and Historical Studies
Master's thesis
April 2018

RESEARCH STATEMENT **UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND**

As one of the EU's external borders, the Romanian-Moldovan state border does not only constitute a current significant symbolic border, but has also represented a geopolitically sensitive and contested border in the past between the Russian Empire and the Moldavian Principality/Kingdom of Romania (1812-1917), which was abolished in the times of Greater Romania (1917-1940, 1941-1944), and reestablished later on as the border between the Soviet Union and the Socialist Republic of Romania (1940s-1980/90s), before having represented since 1991 the state border of the sovereign states of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. As a result, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is nowadays embedded in numerous overlapping and conflicting past and current territorial units on the regional, national and international scale that are incorporated into various concepts of collective identities for the inhabitants of Romania and the Republic of Moldova on the macro scale. This research seeks to shed light on how these past and current spatial units on the regional, national and international scale are reflected in everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova nowadays.

Anchored in the analysis of written and oral narratives collected during field research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, this research illustrates that everyday bordering practices result in a multitude of borderscapes with which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is currently interwoven on the micro scale. These borderscapes are not only socially constructed by following patterns of bordering practices such as nesting orientalism on the macro scale, but are far more the product of personal experiences, knowledge and imagination, of every individual's social agency, leading to a plenitude of collective identities ranging from highly inclusive to rather exclusive, essentialist collective identities as well as to the creation of collective identities that do not exist on the macro scale.

By focusing on everyday narratives and bordering practices on the micro scale, this study offers alternative in-depth insights into the meaning people attribute to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, rather than the explanations on the national and international scale are providing. Moreover, this study supplements findings of previous research, which, as far as I know, has not focused on the study of everyday bordering practices related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border with the help of qualitative narrative research methods.

Author: Lisa Gohlke
Student number: 285285
Title of research: "People Believe in What They Want to Believe."
Myriad Ways to Embed the Romanian-Moldovan State Border in Collective Identities in Everyday Life.
Faculty: Social Sciences and Business Studies
Subject: Border Crossings Master's Degree Programme – Human Geography
Number of pages: 165
Work: Master's thesis
Time: April 2018
Key words: Romanian-Moldovan state border, everyday bordering practices, borderscapes, collective identities, narratives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I want to express my gratitude for having had the opportunity to study at the University of Eastern Finland where I have learned a lot in the last two years, where I was motivated to study according to my interests, and where I was simply accepted and supported with all my weaknesses and strengths. I am so glad of having found my "safe haven" here in Joensuu!

I would like to thank in particular my supervisor Dr. Paul Fryer for his advice and for encouraging me to have trust in my own judgments, thoughts, and strengths. Thanks in particular also to Dr. Andrei Cuşco, Dr. Cristina Preutu, Dr. Edit Szegedi, Dr. Elena Platon, Dr. Flavius Solomon, Maria Călin, Dr. Octavian Ţîcu, Olga Lazurca, Rodica Ursu and Vincent Henry for their time and support before and throughout my field research, as well as to Edmund Mitschang and his family for helping me out with their Romanian language skills. And of course, I wish to thank everyone who shared his/her stories with me, for all the very helpful discussions and insights, which were so essential for my research.

Finally, I thank very much my family and friends for their patience when I bombarded them (over and over again) with academic terms, ideas, new thoughts for my thesis, for their kindness and encouragement to just continue writing, and for not doubting one minute that I will finish my thesis sooner or later.

Joensuu, April 2018

Lisa Gohlke

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CIS	**C**ommonwealth of **I**ndependent **S**tates
EU	**E**uropean **U**nion
EU FP7	The **EU**'s 7th **F**ramework **P**rogramme for Research and Technological Development
NATO	**N**orth **A**tlantic **T**reaty **O**rganization
OSCE	**O**rganization for **S**ecurity and **C**o-operation in **E**urope
RM	**R**epublic of **M**oldova
WTO	**W**orld **T**rade **O**rganization
WWII	**W**orld **W**ar **II**

1. INTRODUCTION

> I only visited the Republic of Moldova twice; once to Bălţi, the city that is not more than 80 km from here, from Iaşi. […] I had the impression that there, I find a very different world, a very different world. Also our [Romanian] region of Moldova here in the European Union isn't very developed, but on the other side [of the state border] these problems are even worse. So, that was the first one, a journey through time, but back in time, not into the future. [...] It was just a thought that we have to know how it is on the other side, life there, people. Until then, we had had no idea, no personal experiences. So we made this short trip by car. We spent, I think, one hour, half an hour in Bălţi, we bought sweets and traditional products. I also took some pictures at the market square of the city and at the university. And finally, the trip came to its end. And all that I remember now, what stayed in my mind, is the memory of people, very sad people, really occupied with everyday errands, yes. And the streets, also the streets in the Republic of Moldova and in Bălţi are incredibly worse than here in Romania. In 40-45 minutes we were back at the border with Romania and we could breathe more easily: "Oh, that's nice, we are back home, that's the European Union." That is our feeling. The feeling is that there is a sense of insecurity. [...] So my first trip to the Republic of Moldova was not to Chişinău with representatives of Romanian nationalism, but to Bălţi where there are many Russophiles. Most people spoke Russian, a few words of Romanian were heard on the streets, and all the time I had this feeling of insecurity. [...] And that was proof that our lives here - there is a country, a region on earth that is even worse.
>
> (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

The stories we tell each other help us to make sense out of our experiences, to fit them with the help of our imagination and knowledge to our worldviews and values, and reveal thus how we construct "our" realities, our individual perspectives of the world and the society we live in at one specific moment in time. In this regard, state borders such as the Romanian-Moldovan state border as mentioned by Călin can represent powerful triggers in our imagination, in the attempt to make sense out of their mere existence, to legitimize or challenge them. This is often independent of the fact whether we are talking about a rather closed border whose dividing character is underlined by a physical disruption of the scenery, watchtowers and border fences, or of a highly permeable border of whose geographic existence we are eventually only aware in our minds, since for the eye there might be nothing to be seen but a peaceful, undisturbed landscape.

Imagined differences between one's "own" side of the state border compared to the "other" side, between people living "here" and "there", are often going hand in hand with our attempts to explain the existence of a physical border, turning thus, according to Călin, the Romanian side of the border into an area with a better economic situation where Romanian is spoken in contrast to lower living conditions on the Moldovan side of the border where Russian is the most spoken language. By identifying such differences which we include in stories that we tell

each other in everyday life, we create mental boundaries between “us”, and “others” who are usually imagined of living outside of depicted physical borders such as state borders. These images we have of “here” and “there” might, in addition, be stimulated in case of these depicted physical borders being in line with territorial borders on several scales, through an accumulation of imagined distinctions and similarities on various scales. This amassing of identified dividing or uniting features and their incorporation into ideas we have about places is also perceptible in the narrative of Călin, transforming the Romanian-Moldovan state border into a political administrative border of two sovereign countries, into a border between the Romanian nation (Iaşi) and a non-Romanian nation (Bălţi), into the border between an EU-member state (Romania) and a non-EU member state (Republic of Moldova), as well as into a border separating a safe western (European) sphere from an unsecure, poor eastern (Russian) one.

However, what happens in case of diverging, mutually challenging, overlapping physical borders on the regional, national and international scale that might be completely, only partly or not at all be congruent with the officially recognized state border on the national scale? In the case of the Romanian-Moldovan state border, for instance, on the European scale, the state border does not only represent one of the external borders of the EU since the EU accession of Romania in 2007, as also pointed out by Călin, but is also bridged by three cross-border Euroregions. Similarly, on the regional scale, dividing and contesting territorial units are to be found, too, such as memories of the uniting historical Moldavian Principality or of Bessarabia, as well as on the national scale in the form of either the Romanian national narrative depicting the inhabitants of today’s Romania and Republic of Moldova as members of the Romanian nation, or as members of two distinct nations according to the Moldovenist national narrative. At second glance, this conflict between overlapping physical boundaries on different scales is also apparent in the story told by Călin, who depicts the Romanian-Moldovan state border, on the one hand, as dividing the Romanian nation in Iaşi (Romania) from a non-Romanian nation in Bălţi (Republic of Moldova), on the other hand, however, also the Romanian nation in Iaşi (Romania) from the Romanian nation in Chişinău (Republic of Moldova). By that it is implied that the images of places that people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova communicate in everyday life diverge to some extent from or even challenge powerful discursive representations of geographical areas on the macro scale.

1.1 Research question & methodological approach

Following these reflections, within this research I attempt to shed light on the various ways of how people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova incorporate images of territorial units with which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is interwoven on several scales into their everyday lives by focusing on the overall ***research question:*** How do everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded, reflect bordering practices on the macro scale? In this regard, ***I argue*** that everyday bordering practices in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded follow established patterns of bordering practices on the macro scale that are related to the social construction of past and current spatial imaginaries on the regional, national, European and international scale.

In order to find answers to my overall research question, as well as to verify or falsify my hypothesis, in the following I provide at first an overview of various spatial imaginaries in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded on the regional, national, European and international scale, aiming at providing at the same time key background information about the two countries of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. In a second step, I outline the two theoretical key concepts in which my research is anchored, the theoretical concept of everyday bordering practices as elaborated by Nira Yuval-Davis (2013), and the concept of borderscapes as devised by Chiara Brambilla (2015) and Anke Strüver (2005). Which, in turn, go hand in hand with my overall research approach of the "inverted telescope", as first elaborated by Benedict Anderson (1998) and further conceptualized for the study of borders by Nira-Yuval Davis (2013) and Dorte J. Andersen, Olivier Thomas Kramsch and Marie Sandberg (2015). In line with these theoretical concepts and the "inverted telescope" approach, I resort, furthermore, to qualitative narrative research methods by analysing narratives that I collected during my field research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in September 2017. As outlined in more detail in a third step, these oral and written narratives were either provided in Romanian, English or German and are quoted here in their translated (or original) form in English exclusively. This theoretical part of my thesis is followed by the presentation of multiple narrated collective identities in which the state border is embedded by way of arranging them along two continuums ranging from dividing, narrowly defined to uniting, broader defined identity groups. Moreover, in a next step, I critically assess those research findings by linking them to patterns of bordering practices on the macro scale, before finally providing an overview of my research outcomes and their limitations.

Furthermore, for studying the embeddedness of the Romanian-Moldovan state border in various collective identities on the micro scale, I decided to roughly ground the guiding key paradigms, worldviews, theories and methods of my research in the feminist research tradition. In consequence, as outlined in detail in sections 3.1 and 4.1, I pursue an overall interdisciplinary scientific approach by way of merging scientific knowledge and tools of several academic disciplines, such as of border studies, human geography, cultural studies, history, gender studies, etc. (Prasad, 2015, pp. 173-179). Also central to my chosen theoretical concepts and methods is the key assumption that reality is socially constructed and that these social constructions are the result of power relations as well as of conflicting interests governing individual and collective action in every society (Prasad, 2015, p. 109). Similarly, both theories and methods are shaped by the emphasis of feminist research traditions on the personal, intuitive and aesthetic (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1990, p. 321).

1.2 Social relevance & previous research

Anchored in this overall methodological approach, I hope to gain new scientific insights even though, as one of the external borders of the European Union situated in a historically disputed area with frequently changing borders in the past that have contributed, arguably, to the region's present geopolitical sensitivity, the Romanian-Moldovan state border has already been subject to significant scientific research. As far as I know, however, everyday bordering practices related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border have not yet been studied with the help of narrative research methods, but seem rather to have until now been approached either from a geopolitical point of view (Marcu, 2006; 2009), by focusing on cross-border cooperation (Marcu, 2011), or on various types of collective identities in the Republic of Moldova (Prisac, 2015; Schorkowitz, 2008; Ţîcu, 2016) and in Romania (Cinpoeş, 2010). Studying everyday bordering practices at the Romanian-Moldovan state border by focusing on bordering narratives on the micro scale supplements thus previous research findings and offers an alternative understanding of the perception of the state border and what meaning people attribute to it than what explanations of discourses on the national and international scale are offering.

1.3 Research limitations

Even though representing an alternative approach in the study of bordering practices related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, there are also limitations to my chosen methodological approach. In this regard, on the one hand, pursuant to key criteria of scientific research as outlined by Mel Churton and Anne Brown (2010), my research findings could, at first glance, be considered as highly valid but rather low in reliability and representativeness as well as in

standardization and generalization in addition to the likelihood of being influenced by personal opinions and views. Reasons for that are, for instance, the fluidity and temporality of the narrated data, a lacking stable starting point for conducting research within the concepts of borderscapes, everyday bordering practices and the "inverted telescope" approach resulting in constantly shifting research outcomes (Andersen, Kramsch and Sandberg, 2015, p. 464), and the risk of getting too immersed by establishing rather close, trustful relationships with narrators to elicit stories. Similarly, my research could be considered as low in representativeness due to the limitation of my research participants to only one population group, even though I tried to gain a more holistic picture of society at large by way of gathering narratives in different regions of Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

On the other hand, however, from the point of view of feminist research traditions, the strength of the applied narrative research methods lies exactly in allowing for pluralism and subjectivity, since the uniqueness of every provided personal narrative can in combination with other singular narratives contribute to learning more about the working and mechanisms of social processes in general (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998, p. 8; Chase, 1995, pp. 20-22). That is to say, by way of listening to the stories people tell each other about their everyday life activities, it is possible to understand the variety and multitude of meanings of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as of bordering practices at work in Romanian and Moldovan society as a whole, allowing one to comprehend how people experience the political world and create spaces (Prokkola, 2014, pp. 444-446). Moreover, the need to establish trust and closeness for eliciting stories may not only represent a potential risk but also an advantage, since by dissolving the power asymmetry between researcher and research participants providing data for the study, it can allow for more ethically correct research, rather anchored in the exchanging of views between equal parties and the joint production of knowledge, allowing eventually for the generation of new insights (Czarniawska, 2004, pp. 47-48; Oakley, 1988, pp. 30-31). Consequently, with my overall research approach providing for limited leeway for pluralism and subjectivity, I hope to be able to offer one new in-depth insight into bordering practices at work at the Romanian-Moldovan state border, which in combination with other insights could be helpful for approximating "scientific" truth. And to lay the foundations for this overall research approach, I provide at first in the following section an overview of the embeddedness of the Romanian-Moldovan state border in spatial categories on the macro scale.

2. THE ROMANIAN-MOLDOVAN STATE BORDER

2.1 As political-administrative border & marker of spatial categories

Figure 1: Romania and the Republic of Moldova.
Source: GeoBasis-DE/BKG, Google, 2018.

With a length of about 684 kilometres, the Romanian-Moldovan state border stretches from Criva in the north to Giurgiuleşti in the south along the river Prut as well as for 570 metres along the Danube (Poliţia de Frontieră, 2013). Its current border demarcations were established by the Treaty of Paris (1947), the Treaty on Border Controls (1945), and the Convention on the Regulation of Border Conflicts and Incidents (1949) between Romania and the USSR in the 1950s (Marcu, 2009, p. 418). As the internationally recognised state border between the Republic of Moldova and Romania since the independence of the former in 1991, the border has been subject to international law as well as to bilateral agreements regarding the physical markings of the border, maintenance and functionality of the border regime, border controls etc. between the two countries, as stipulated, for instance, in the latest "Treaty between Romania and the Republic of Moldova on the State Border Regime, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Border Matters" from November 2010 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). As defined by those international, European and bilateral agreements, the Romanian-Moldovan state border provides currently nine international border crossing points (see Figure 2):

(1) Lipcani - Rădăuţi Prut (road)
(2) Costeşti - Stînca (road)
(3) Sculeni – Sculeni (road)
(4) Ungheni – Nicolina (railway)
(5) Leuşeni – Albiţa (road)
(6) Stoianovca – Fălciu (railway)
(7) Cahul – Oancea (road)
(8) Giurgiuleşti – Galaţi (railway)
(9) Giurgiuleşti – Galaţi (road)
(Serviciul Vamal al Republicii Moldova, 2018)

Figure 2: The Romanian-Moldovan state border.
Source: Marcu, 2011, p. 113; border crossing point Lipcani-Rădăuiţi-Prut added by author.

Since June 2015, it has been possible for European Union citizens including Romanian citizens to cross the border to the Republic of Moldova with national ID cards at these nine border

crossing points (Viţu, 2015), while since 2014 Moldovan citizens holding a biometric passport have been allowed to cross the border to Romania and to travel visa-free within the Schengen area for up to three months (Jaroszewicz and Całus, 2015).

However, as pointed out in the introduction, the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as territorial borders of internationally recognised states in general do not only define the territorial limits and limitations of (political) sovereignty over a geographical area on the national scale, but are often depicted as the physical borders of territorial units on several other scales as well. Moreover, in addition to marking the territorial limits of numerous territorial units, state borders usually serve to define who belongs to a specific society living within these borders and who does not. This process of differentiation entails various images of the society living within these borders and those being situated outside based on identified political, economic or cultural differences and similarities (Paasi, 1996, pp. 12-13), resulting in the existence of what Benedict Anderson (1996, p. 6) termed ***"imagined communities".*** These "imagined communities" which can range from small neighbourhoods to broader categories such as national or religious groups and whose finiteness is often imagined as being marked by territorial borders such as state borders (Anderson, 1996, p. 7; Snow, 2011), are, in turn, intertwined with our ***spatial imaginaries.*** That is to say, on the one hand, territorial features such as physical borders are used for defining the limits as well as the character of "imagined communities", while at the same time our spatial imaginaries, i.e. the ideas we have about a geographical area, incorporate images of groups of people living "there". In addition, our imaginaries of a place are also shaped by discourses about the political, economic and social past of the respective geographical area, which are imagined to define the character of the territorial unit and of groups of people living "there" even today (Gieseking, Mangold, Katz, Low and Saegert, 2014).

This interplay of images of a place, representational discourses, identified imagined communities and limiting (physical) boundaries results, in turn, in the social construction of ***spatial categories,*** which means in terminologies and official representations for defining the imagined character of an identified geographical area and of groups of people who inhabit it (Mishkova, and Trencsényi, 2017, pp. 2-3). Spatial categories do not only vary regarding the nature of the group(s) they define but are also subject to change in the geographical location, function and nature of their physical borders, as well as in the impacts they have on defining a group of people within a specific geographical area. In this regard, in Europe, spatial categories had been arranged on an East-West axis in antiquity and were replaced by the concept of a "civilized south" and a "barbaric north" as well as later on a moderate middle region in the late

medieval and early modern period, before being rearranged based on an East-West divide in the 18th and 19th century (Mishkova and Trencsényi, 2017, pp. 3-4). Similarly, religious divisions (e.g. Catholic Latin, Protestant Germanic, and Orthodox Greco-Slavic) resulted in various spatial categories in Europe throughout history, while modernity caused civilizational dividing lines based on terms such as "progress" or "delay", leading to spatial imaginations of "centre", "periphery", "borderlands", etc. and to hierarchically graded regions (Mishkova and Trencsényi, 2017, pp. 3-4). In addition, from the 17th century on, European spatial categories have been extended by the concepts of sovereign statehood and nationality, representing, arguably, one of the most relevant spatial categorizations in Europe nowadays (Mishkova and Trencsényi, 2017, pp. 3-4). In consequence, nowadays territorial state borders are usually linked to spatial categories such as statehood and nationality while representing at the same time borders of numerous spatial categories at the regional, national, European or international scale that vary in significance and can be traced back to different eras. Naturally, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is no exception to this rule, as elaborated in the following.

2.1 On the national scale: the border of a political community and of which nation?

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, the "State border of the Republic of Moldova represents the natural or conventional line marking the external boundaries of the territory over which the Republic of Moldova exerts exclusive sovereignty on land, water, underground and air sectors." (Poliţia de Frontieră, 2013). In consequence, on the national scale, the Romanian-Moldovan state border seems, first and foremost, to be understood as part of the overall territorial borders of two political communities, of the sovereign states of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, turning the state border into one of the physical boundaries of Romanian and Moldovan ***citizenship and/or civic identity.***

Even though scientific definitions and debates about distinctions between citizenship and civic identity might vary, there is usually agreement that both refer to a person's feeling of belonging to a politically defined community such as a city or a state (Obenchain, Alarcón, Ives, Bellows and Alamă, 2014, p. 44; Yuval-Davis, 2006a, p. 205). In addition, definitions of citizenship often emphasize the legal status of each member of a political community, referring to the rights and responsibilities of every member, including social rights as well as "spatial rights", such as the right to enter the territory of one's own political community and of others, the right to remain insight a political community, the right to work, to return, to obey the law, etc. (Yuval-Davis, 2006a, p. 208). Whereas concepts of civic identity tend, in my opinion, to perceive citizenship

rather as practice by way of highlighting the continuous contributions of individual members to the well-functioning of a political community in the form of voting, serving in a jury, joining the national army, etc. (Atkins and Hart, 2003, pp. 156-157). ***Hyphenated identities***, in turn, represent a variation of civic identities and can be understood as collective identities of people such as, eventually, of Romanian-Moldovans, considering themselves part of a national or ethnic community while being legally member of another political community (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler, 2002, p. 330). Furthermore, as pointed out by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006a, p. 209), also identified requirements for being entitled to belong to a specific political community might vary, since in addition to a shared set of values in the political sphere entitlements of belonging may also refer to perceptions of more homogenous political communities whose members share cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic traits as well (Obenchain, Alarcón, Ives, Bellows and Alamă, 2014, pp. 44-45). Consequently, distinctions between civic identity, citizenship and cultural, ethnic or national identities are rather fluid.

A ***nation,*** in turn, can be defined as "a group of people who imagine sharing common elements such as language, history, ethnic background, political institutions, and attachment to a particular territory" (Popescu, 2011, p. 19). One cornerstone of national identities is, hence, the definition of symbolic physical boundaries for differentiating between members and non-members and for marking the physical limits of a geographical area to which a nation feels attached and which it aspires to control completely (Ţîcu, 2016, p. 50). As state borders represent preferred physical boundaries for expressing such national distinctions, the Romanian-Moldovan state border can in terms of ***civic nationalism*** be considered as being congruent with the boundaries between the Romanian and the Moldovan nation, whose respective members are imagined as being united by a joint territory, citizenship, legal codes, etc. (Cinpoeş, 2010, p. 14; Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler, 2002, p. 332). Furthermore, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is also depicted as separating the Moldovan nation from the Romanian nation by the ***Moldovenist national narrative,*** which emerged during the interwar period under Soviet influence, regained in popularity in discourses about a strengthened Moldovan statehood in the Republic of Moldova between 2001-2009, and describes the Moldovan nation as a multicultural and bilingual people (Ţîcu, 2016, pp. 55-57).

However, due to the intertwined history of the Republic of Moldova and Romania, there are nowadays numerous national concepts in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, several of which also challenge the Romanian-Moldovan state border. Based on an ethnic understanding of a nation as expressed by the ***Romanian national narrative*** in the Republic of Moldova and

Figure 3: Greater Romania.
Source: Pinterest, 2018.

the ***pan-Romanianist national narrative*** in Romania, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova are also considered to represent one and the same nation, the Romanian nation, due to their close historical, cultural and linguistic ties (Ţîcu, 2016, pp. 54-55; King, 1994, p. 347). Both national narratives highlight, hence, in particular the time when modern Romania and the Republic of Moldova were united in the ancient Dacian province of the Roman Empire (Cinpoeş, 2010, p. 33), when both the northeast of Romania as well as today's western part of the Republic of Moldova represented the Moldavian Principality between the 14th and early 19th centuries (Petrovszky, 2012, pp. 29-32), when the western part of the Republic of Moldova up to the river Dniester formed part of Romania between 1918 and 1940, and when today's entire Republic of Moldova belonged to Romania between 1941 and 1944 (Marcu, 2011, p. 112). According to this definition, the boundaries of the Romanian nation are congruent with the physical borders of historical ***Greater Romania („România Mare"),*** referring to the territory of Romania between 1919 and 1940 (see Figure 3), as well as, alternatively, to the Romanian territory including Transnistria between 1941 and 1944 (Cinpoeş, 2010, pp. 95-96; White, 2000, pp. 133-135). This understanding of the Romanian nation enjoyed popularity in the first half of the 20th century, as well as directly after the independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991, and finds expression today in discourses of political parties in both countries, as well as occasionally in demands for the reunification of the two countries to reunite the divided Romanian nation (King, 1994, pp. 347-348; Cinpoeş, 2010, pp. 183-184).

Even though differing in their respective imagined territorial boundaries and goals for the future, all these concepts of the Romanian and Moldovan nation combine, arguably, various cultural, ethnic and linguistic elements for defining imagined key features of the Romanian or Moldovan nation. In consequence, these national concepts also draw from existing ideas of either uniting or separating ***cultural identities or ethnic identities*** that are perceived as either being in line with the Romanian-Moldovan state border or as bridging it. In addition, these concepts are also anchored in perceived ***linguistic identities*** on the national scale. In this regard, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova are either considered as sharing a joint linguistic identity by speaking the same language, Romanian, or as speaking two distinct East-Romance languages, Moldovan in the Republic of Moldova and Romanian in Romania,

as highlighted by the Moldovenist national narrative (King, 1994, pp. 348-349). The same applies to some degree to ***religious identities*** on the national scale. Hence, as the majority of the Romanian and Moldovan population are followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Orthodoxy is considered by some as an overall uniting religious identity. Whereas for others the Romanian-Moldovan state border separates the canonical territory of the autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church in Romania from that of the Moldovan Orthodox Church in the Republic of Moldova, representing a self-governing church under the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate that was founded in 1944 under Soviet rule (Heintz, 2012, pp. 557-564). Moreover, these numerous national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities on the national scale are usually anchored in collective identities on the regional scale as well.

2.2 On the regional scale: no border in Moldavia and in the Euroregions?

In general***, regional identities*** can emerge from the shared perception of a distinct territorial unit whose physical shape and borders have evolved along with history, and whose features such as nature, landscape, culture, economy etc. define the character of the group of people being situated within the territorial unit (Paasi, 2009, pp. 134-141). As a result, in addition to the territorial unit as a defining feature, regional identities often lean on perceived unique characteristics of the region's population such as culture, values, language and dialects (Paasi, 2003, p. 477). Moreover, regional identities often draw from established regional institutions that are producing and reproducing regional symbols, increasing thus public awareness of a distinct regional identity (Paasi, 2009, pp. 134-136). By that, strong regional identities may either challenge existing hegemonic collective identities on the national scale such as national identities, civic identities, ethnic identities, etc. or strengthen them (Paasi, 2009, p. 138).

In this regard, on the macro scale, the historical territory of the Moldavian Principality is sometimes depicted as still providing for a strong ***Moldavian regional identity.*** From 1349 to 1812, the territory of the Moldavian Principality constituted today's Romanian region of Moldova and the western part of the Republic of Moldova up to the river Dniester, being bound in the north and northeast by the Dniester, in the south by the Black Sea, Dobrogea and Walachia, and in the west by Transylvania (see Figure 4) (Eagles, 2014, pp. 14-17; Petrovszky, 2012). By referring to the joint history in the

Figure 4: The Moldavian Principality (late 14th century). Source: Rădvan, 2010, p. xxi.

Moldavian Principality, today's inhabitants of the Romanian region of Moldova as well as the western part of the Republic of Moldova are sometimes perceived as being united by close historical, cultural, linguistic and territorial traits.

Figure 5: Bessarabia in the course of time. Source: Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, 2017.

This regional Moldavian identity, in turn, is linked to discourses on the macro scale about the historical region of Bessarabia between the rivers Prut, Dniester and Danube and the Black Sea. In 1812, this formerly mostly eastern part of the Moldavian Principality was annexed by the Russian Empire and transformed into the new Russian province of Bessarabia, even though having historically not represented one homogenous region until 1821 (Cuşco and Şarov, 2012, p. 38). Bessarabia as a Russian province existed until its declaration of independence in January 1918, followed by the reunification of Bessarabia with Romania in April 1918, and forming from then on until 1944, with the exception of the years 1940-41, part of Greater Romania (see Figure 3) (Cuşco, 2012, pp. 56-58). Consequently, ***Bessarabian identity*** can be understood as a distinct regional identity linked to at least three different territories: to a subregion within the Moldavian Principality (see Figure 5, 1st picture), to Bessarabia in times of Tsarist Russia (see Figure 5, 2nd picture) and in times of Greater Romania between the Prut and Dniester in 1919-1940 (see Figure 3), or to Bessarabia including Transnistria in the times of Greater Romania between 1941 and 1944 (see Figure 5, 3rd picture).

Another type of regional identity may refer to perceived ***borderland identities*** along the Romanian-Moldovan state border. According to Gabriel Popescu (2011, p. 20), by way of running through borderlands, state borders create new territorial realities due to the myriad of social bordering practices in which state borders are embedded. Their peculiar social relations and landscapes often distinguish the territory of borderlands from other parts of the country, such as of their landscape being marked by fences, watchtowers, military infrastructure, transportation hubs, detention centres for immigrants, or ethnic minority centres (Popescu, 2011, pp. 80-81). And since they are often representing spaces of gradual transition from one state territory to another, borderlands can be characterized by a mixture of populations, cultural and economic hybridity and cross-border activities (Popescu, 2011, p. 20). All these features, even if only partly

applicable to the respective borderland, can contribute to perceptions of a distinct borderland identity. Depending on the nature of the respective border regime and the type of relations between the centre and the peripheral borderland in a state, the size and shape of borderlands can range from that of narrow land stripes adjacent to the linear state border, to larger regions like Pakistan's Northwest Territories or entire countries such as Afghanistan (Popescu, 2011, p. 74).

Such regional borderland identities can also develop into uniting regional identities bridging the existing state border by taking the form of regional ***cross-border identities.*** In this regard, cross-border interactions and cooperation between regions such as borderlands on both sides of the state border can, at first, result in the emergence of cross-border institutions and cross-border multilevel governance networks, which, by aiming at integrating neighbouring borderlands, might finally lead to processes of region building and the evolving consciousness of uniting cross-border identities (Popescu, 2008, p. 421). In Europe, the EU has increasingly fostered the emergence of such cross-border regions and cross-border identities in the form of ***Euroregions or Euregios*** that span two or more state borders and aim to decrease the barrier role of state borders including along the EU's external borders (Popescu, 2008, p. 419). This entails the goal of deepening and strengthening cohesion within the EU-member states and neighbouring countries by complementing existing national and regional identities by supranational identities grounded in perceived shared European values in the political, social and cultural spheres (Scott, 2014b, p. 81). In the case of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the entire Romanian-Moldovan state border has been covered by the three Euroregions Dunărea de Jos (Lower Danube Euroregion), Prutul de Sud (Upper Prut Euroregion) and Siret-Prut Nistru since 2002, as can be seen in Figure 6 (Popescu, 2008, p. 429). In addition, based on EU regulations adapted in 1991 allowing for EU member states to sign bilateral treaties regarding small amounts of border traffic with third countries, Romania and the Republic of Moldova signed an agreement on border traffic in 2009 (Marcu, 2011, pp. 122-123). At present, cross-border petty trade within a distance of 30 km from the Romanian-Moldovan state border is thus possible for both Romanian and Moldovan citizens

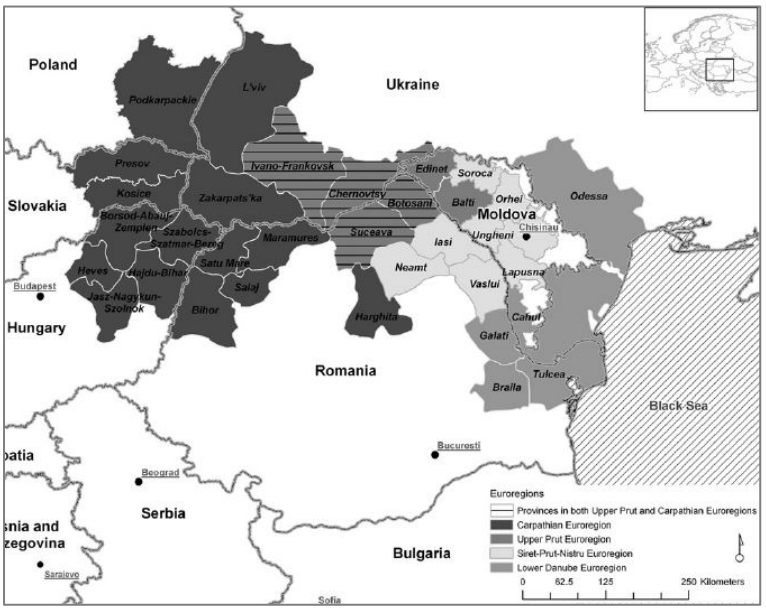

Figure 6: The Romanian-Moldovan Euroregions.
Source: Popescu, 2008, p. 430.

(Marcu, 2011, pp. 122-123). Moreover, the Romanian-Moldovan Euroregions as well as Euroregions in general provide (official) key actors on the supranational scale such as EU institutions, in addition to central governments at the national scale, and, to some extent, borderland citizens, local institutions, and transnational institutions such as NGOs (Popescu, 2008, p. 423). Representing, hence, multi-scalar networked regions bridging the Romanian-Moldovan state border, the Romanian-Moldovan Euroregions are also embedded in spatial imaginaries at the European scale.

2.3 On the European scale: border of Wider Europe, Eastern Europe and the Balkans?

In addition to the established Romanian-Moldovan (and Ukrainian) Euroregions, the Republic of Moldova, even though not a member state of the EU, has so far been included in several EU policies and programmes. In 1994, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova was signed, which was followed by an Association Agreement ratified by the Moldovan parliament in 2014, and the Republic of Moldova's membership of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership.

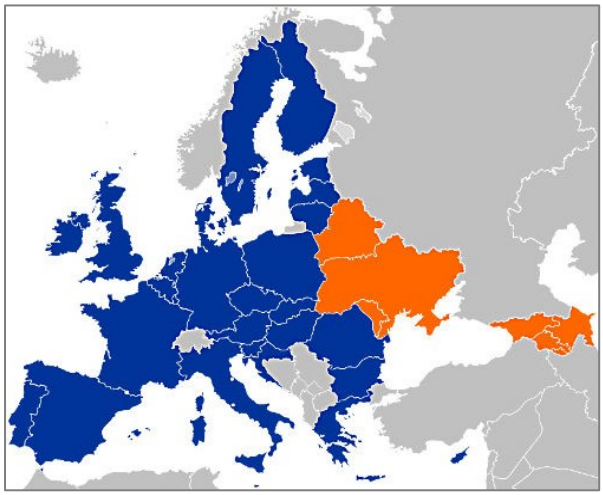

Figure 7: The EU and non-EU member states of the Eastern Partnership
Source: Council on Foreign Relations, 2017.

The European Neighbourhood Policy itself has, inter alia, been criticized for aiming at promoting the adaptation of assumed fundamental values of the EU, such as rule of law, respect for human rights, etc. in neighbouring states in exchange for privileged partnership in order to establish political-economic stability in the EU's neighbourhood, without, however, granting this ring of neighbouring countries EU membership perspectives for the future (Scott, 2005, p. 430). This has, arguably, led to the spatial imagination of ***"Wider Europe"*** comprising a ring of EU neighbouring countries that are to a significant extent economically and politically integrated into the EU as well as in a process of gradual "Europeanization" due to the spread of EU values, without being official member states of the EU (Scott, 2005, p. 430). By that, this discourse on the European scale seems to point out perceived civilizational differences between EU member states and their eastern and southern neighbours, which represent potential security threats and societies with gradually differing values (Scott, 2014a, p. 14; Van Houtum and Boedeltje, 2011, pp. 124-125). As a result, member states of the European Neighbourhood Policy and of the Eastern Partnership are often depicted as "Europe's Others", and are further sub-categorized

based on their assumed level of "Europeanness", i.e. on the perceived extent to which they succeed in incorporating EU values, resulting in new spatial categories on the European scale such as ***"EU-Europe", the "other Europe" and "non-Europe"*** (Scott, 2011, p. 161).

These spatial categories are, evidently, closely linked to the EU's understanding of what it means to be European, to have a ***European identity*** and to share assumed European core values. Yet, in general, there is hardly any consent regarding the cultural, social or even geographical features of European identity. Accordingly, the perceived physical boundaries of the European identity are, for instance, disputed, starting with the overall question of whether Europe represents a continent of its own or a peninsula of the Eurasian continent, continuing with further queries regarding if the Caucasus, Turkey, Russia, the Mediterranean, etc. are part of Europe, leading by that to various spatial imaginations of "Europe" (Žagar, 2012, pp. 75-76). Consequently, according to Sarah Wilczek (2006), instead of being related to a physical entity, the term European identity is mostly associated with a perceived cultural heritage explaining the sharing of key cultural and political values by all members of the imagined European community, whose precise characteristics are, however, subject to discussions. Another core feature of European identity refers to the identification of external "others" in the process of forging European identity: historically, for instance, in the form of the "New World" or the "Turk", as well as of "Russia" and the question of how to incorporate it into ideas of European identity (Neumann, 1998, pp. 39-64). What is more, the European identity is not only anchored in the identification of external but also internal European "others", resulting in the already mentioned spatial units of "Wider Europe", "EU-Europe" and the "other Europe", as well as in depicted ***European transnational historical (meso)regions*** such as Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, etc. (Mishkova and Trencsényi, 2017, p. 2).

As pointed out by Frithjof Benjamin Schenk (2017, pp. 189-193), the concept of ***Eastern Europe*** represents a rather new inter-European differentiation that emerged in the late 18th century and, which, in contrast to other European mesoregions, has always been a term for denoting the "other" geographical, political and cultural space, with usually ambivalent or negative connotations. During modernity, it referred to a differentiation between a "civilized" Western Europe, a "backward" Eastern Europe with potential for historical progress and an eternally stagnating Asia, a strict distinction based on perceived "otherness" that was about to deepen due to an imagined "Iron Curtain" dividing the European continent into east and west during the Cold War (Schenk, 2017, pp. 192-199). Even today, the concept of Eastern Europe has not disappeared, but has instead be reused by linking the term Eastern Europe to distinctions

between countries that joined the EU in the last two waves of expansion, representing the "new" or "yet another Europe", from "the "old" EU-member states or "old Europe" (Žagar, 2012, p. 76). Due to those usually negative and rather discriminating connotations of the term "Eastern Europe", there is usually no agreement regarding where the geographical borders of Eastern Europe are located within Europe. Instead, the mesoregion of Eastern Europe is always perceived of being located "eastwards" of one's "own" territory (Schenk, 2017, p. 189). In consequence, it is debatable whether the physical boundaries of Eastern Europe are incorporated into the Romanian-Moldovan state border or not.

A similar mesoregion based on "othering" represents the European historical mesoregion of ***Southeastern Europe or the Balkans,*** being closely linked to the imagined European "Other" of the "Turk". The origins of the spatial categories of the Balkans or Southeastern Europe that emerged in the 19th century can be traced back to historical geographical regions such as "Turkey in Europe" and "European Turkey" assigned to European provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Mishkova, 2017, p. 143). Again similar to the negative connotations of Eastern Europe, also the term Southeastern Europe and especially the Balkans are associated with other parts of Europe with differing core values, due to its (geo-)politically significant intermediary geographical position between Asia and Europe, as well as due to a perceived required "de-Balkanization" and "Europeanization" of the region after the devastating Balkan Wars in the 1990s (Mishkova, 2017, p. 160). Based on this definition, the territorial boundaries of Southeastern Europe and the Balkans are either localized in the historical borders of the Romanian Principalities including the Moldavian Principality, which had for several centuries been under Ottoman administration, or along the state borders of the countries that were affected by the Balkan Wars.

However, both the European historical mesoregions of Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe/the Balkans are grounded in their perceived distinctiveness from the imagined European mesoregions of ***Western Europe and Central Europe/Mitteleuropa,*** whose imagined geographical position and borders as well as assumed key features again vary depending on the respectively localized borders and depicted (opposing) key features of Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe/the Balkans. What is more, as pointed out by Stefan Berger (2017, p. 15) the concept of Western Europe is closely intertwined with the concept of "the West", going thus beyond the European scale towards spatial categories on the international scale in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is often embedded as well.

2.4 On the international scale: border between "the West" and "the East"?

One spatial category that transcends European borders and that may be considered as an intermediate spatial category between that of (Western) Europe and the West, from both of which it is drawing, refers to the geopolitical spatial imagination of ***Atlanticism*** or of a ***Euro-Atlantic space,*** which emerged during the Cold War between 1964 and 1990 (Berger, 2017, p. 22). Anchored in the (past or present) belief in a global conflict between a liberal-democratic, capitalist West, fascist anti-Western forces and the (post-)communist East, the USA, Canada and Europe are imagined of being united by close (geo-)political, military and economic relationships, as well as deeper values binding them together as a community (Berger, 2017, p. 22). In this regard, as the Republic of Moldova represents a member state of the OSCE, of the Council of Europe, of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and of the WTO, the country is sometimes perceived as forming part of the imagined Euro-Atlantic sphere, even though not being a member state of NATO (Marcu, 2006, pp. 98-99). At the same time, the country as a whole is eventually also depicted as a border between the Euro-Atlantic space and the East/Russia, whose clashes lead, arguably, to frozen conflicts such as in the case of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova (Marcu, 2006, pp. 98-99).

With its perception of a conflicting liberal-democratic North American-European and a former Soviet eastern community, the geopolitical concept of Atlanticism leans, evidently, heavily on spatial imaginations of ***"the West" and "the East"***. In the wake of modernity, the West was commonly associated with a perceived superior western culture based on the ideas of western modernization theory that all societies on earth pass through a world-historical process in order to reach the final stage of their development in the form of an established western culture (Mirsepassi, 2010, pp. 1-7). During the Cold War, this esteem for assumed western values and achievements experienced a further high point with the West being depicted as an area of peace, prosperity, liberal democratic values and as providing security and protection against the totalitarianism of the "communist East" (Berger, 2017, pp. 22-23). In this regard, it might be argued that these past worldviews depicting especially freedom, democracy and human rights as cornerstones of "the West" have been preserved, having been incorporated, for instance, into current ideas of a European identity and consequent EU strategies to spread those western/European key values to its eastern neighbours, as outlined above. Depending on the varying respective current perceptions and meanings of the West, its associated geographical area has also been subject to significant changes over the course of time, with the result that there is no agreement where exactly to localize the physical boundaries between "the West" and its "Other", "the East" or "Eastern Europe" (Berger, 2017, pp. 18-23).

What is more, based on the modern conceptualization of the development of civilizations, from oriental and southern European ones to western ones in the Age of Enlightenment (Berger, 2017, p. 20), both "the West" and "the East" have also been depicted as two distinct civilizations. Civilizations are usually understood as stretching over larger geographical territories than that of nations or city states, of incorporating a wide range of societies that are perceived to have several key features in common (Boyle, 2015, p. 55). These ideas of civilizations have also been taken up by Samuel Huntington (1996, pp. 20-27), according to whom nowadays civilizations represent cultural and political entities stretching over several countries whose inhabitants seem to share features such as language, ethnicity, common ancestry, and especially religion. Based on this definition, Samuel Huntington (1996, pp. 26-27) identifies nine civilizations that determine the current post-Cold War world order, among those also the Western and Slavic-Orthodox civilizations. The ***Western civilization*** or the West, in this regard, is understood as representing a community of countries mainly connected by Western Christendom (Catholicism and Protestantism) as a joint religion, and as comprising Western Europe, North America, New Zealand and Australia (Huntington, 1996, pp. 155-164). The ***Slavic-Orthodox civilization,*** in contrast, united by a shared Byzantine heritage and the impacts of past tsarist and communist rule, incorporates orthodox countries in Eurasia with Russia at the core, followed by an inner circle of the Slavic Orthodox republics of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan and Armenia, a more outer circle represented by Georgia and Ukraine, as well as by the Orthodox Balkans in the form of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Cyprus and, to a lower degree, Romania, which are surrounded by a buffer zone of Islamic states (Huntington, 1996, pp. 155-164). As can be seen in Figure 8, according to this definition the physical boundary between the Western and the Slavic-Orthodox civilizations separates the Romanian region of Transylvania with its Catholic Hungarian population from other parts of Romania that belong to the Orthodox Civilization (Huntington, 1996, p. 158).

Figure 8: Boundary between the Western and Orthodox civilization.
Source: Wallace, 1990, as published by Huntington, 1996, p. 159.

This perception of a distinct Slavic-Orthodox civilization as defined by Samuel Huntington (1996) seems also to be in line with the arguably popular Russian geopolitical ***concept of Eurasianism.*** Dating back to Slavophil philosophy and Russian exile literature in the 1920s as well as to the (historical) concept of Eurasia of the 19th century stating that Europe and Asia form one geographical ***Euro-Asiatic unity*** (Laruelle, 2001, pp. 72-73; Bassin, 2017, pp. 210-216), the current main concept of Eurasianism emphasizes that Russia constitutes a distinct

geographical and cultural entity positioned in the heartland between Europe and Asia (Mileski, 2015, p. 185). That is to say, by incorporating eastern as well as western cultural traits and mixtures of those, and due to perceived superior ethical and religious values in sharp contrast to the assumedly materialistically orientated consumer society in Europe and its scientific rationality, the Eurasian civilization with Russia at its core is perceived as differing from both the West and the East (Laruelle, 2001, pp. 74-91; Blinnikov, 2011, p. 131). These superior values are explained by the Orthodox religion constituting the spiritual basis of all the main national and ethnic groups in Eurasia, binding these culturally diverse groups together in the form of a supra-ethnical Eurasian community (Laruelle, 2001, p. 80). In line with this argumentation, for instance the Eurasian Economic Union as an economic union of states in Eurasia was founded in 2015, also with the goal to increase cooperation and integration among the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Even though a CIS member state, the Republic of Moldova, however, has so far not opted for its offered membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (ACTMedia, 2014).

Moreover, by arguing that today's civilizations are the outcome of a shift from traditional national and ethnic collective identities to broader cultural identities on the macro scale (Fox, 2003, p. 284), Samuel Huntington's identified civilizations seem to lean on underlying ideas of so-called pan-movements of the late 19th-20th centuries, which have also been defined as forms of macro-nationalism (Giladi, 2018, pp. 82-83). That is to say, based on various cultural, linguistic or racial criteria, pan-movements such as ***pan-Slavism and pan-Latinism*** promoted supranational integration among all, for instance, Slavic-speaking countries or Romance-speaking countries (Giladi, 2018, p. 83). In this regard, with the East Romance language of Romanian representing the official language of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, both countries seem, at first glance, to form part of the pan-Latinist movement. Accordingly, from a purely linguistic point of view, both Muntenian, which is spoken mainly in Walachia, Dobruja, southeastern Transylvania and in the extreme south of Moldova in Romania, and Moldovan that is spoken in the territory of the historical Moldavian Principality both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, and in the northwest of Transylvania and Bucovina in Romania, are considered East Romance Daco-Romanian subdialects (Bochmann, 2012, pp. 609-610). However, since definitions of the actual official language spoken in the Republic of Moldova have been subject to discussions in attempts to create, for instance, uniting national identities as outlined above, it has also sometimes been depicted as representing a distinct East Romance language, Moldovan. Hence, especially in the times of the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic (1944-1989) it was attempted to strengthen the borders between Romania and the Soviet

Republic by stipulating (Russian and) Moldovan written in Cyrillic script as official language and by introducing significant Russian terms to the Moldovan political, administrative, technical and cultural vocabulary (Bochmann, 2012, p. 611). The result is that today the Romanian language spoken in the Republic of Moldova is sometimes also either perceived as "Russified" or as representing a distinct language.

Figure 9: The Republic of Moldova and Transnistria.
Source: Kashi, 2014.

These pan-Slavistic ideas grounded in imagined uniting linguistic, cultural and ethnic traits seem also in some form to have been taken up by the ***Transnistrian national narrative*** in the Republic of Moldova, according to which the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (or Transnistria) forms part of the Russian political and cultural world, as expressed in the slogan "Pridnestrovie – russkaia zemlia" ("Transnistria is Russian land") (Ţîcu, 2016, p. 56). As a result, the internationally unrecognised but de-facto independent Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria), whose territory stretches from the Dniester to the Ukrainian state border (see Figure 9), has repeatedly emphasized its political goal of re-integrating into the Russian Federation. In the last referendum of 2006, 97% of Transnistrian voters were in favour of Transnistrian independence from the Republic of Moldova and its subsequent re-integration into the Russian Federation (Bilger, 2014). And in contrast to the central Moldovan government, Transnistria has expressed its desire to join the Eurasian Economic Union (ACTMedia, 2014).

As can be seen through these examples, on the macro scale there are various spatial categories that are used and combined in multiple ways in order to provide for higher levels of (perceived) legitimation, resulting in intertwined and often mutually dependent spatial categories on the regional, national, European and international scales. And with the help of the following outlined theoretical concepts I want to analyse how these numerous spatial categories on the macro scale are reflected in collective identities on the micro scale.

3. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

My research is anchored in the theoretical concepts of everyday bordering practices, as conceptualized by Nira-Yuval Davis (2013), and of borderscapes, as outlined by Chiara Brambilla (2015) and Anke Strüver (2005). Both theoretical concepts have in common the fact of having been formulated after the major processual shift in border studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the late 1980s, in the wake of globalization and the dissolution of the USSR and guided by the aim to turn geography into a stringent social science, the then common conceptualization of borders as natural division lines in border studies began to be replaced by that of bordering, which viewed borders as permanently imagined and reimagined social constructions, as the outcomes of social processes of bordering and bounding (Brambilla, Laine, Scott, Bocchi, 2015, p. 1; Megoran, 2012, p. 466). Within the newly emerging postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, attention was paid to the political dimension of borders, to the role of language in the social construction of borders, to the symbolic and varying meanings of borders for different people, leading to the emergence of theoretical concepts such as ***everyday bordering practices*** that allowed for the broadening of border studies to wider concerns about territory, identity, citizenship, globalization etc. and their interdependencies (Brambilla, Laine, Scott, Bocchi, 2015, p. 1; Popescu, 2011, p. 26).

In the last years, however, debates on suitable critical concepts of borders allowing for the study of the most important issues within the interdisciplinary field of Critical Border Studies were resumed (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 14-18). Thus, claims were made for a third epistemological, ontological and methodological shift within border studies towards alternative scientific approaches to go beyond the "territorialist imperative of the nation-state" in order to be capable of providing explanations for the complex bordering processes taking place in our contemporary globalized world (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 14-18). In this context, also the ***concept of borderscapes*** has been elaborated and discussed as a critical alternative tool in border studies, allowing to go beyond the "territorialist imperative", by way of highlighting the intertwined relationships between borders, power struggles, territory, political systems, citizenship and processes of identity constructions (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 14-18). These scientific debates about a broader conceptual change in border studies, shaped, arguably, also the recent international EU FP7 research project of "EUBORDERSCAPES", focussing on critically interrogating different conceptualisations of state borders and on developing new theoretical tools for studying fundamental current social, economic, cultural and geopolitical transformations worldwide (EUBORDERSCAPES, 2018). As a result, both the here applied theoretical

concepts of everyday bordering practices and of borderscapes were further elaborated within the EUBORDERSCAPES project.

Consequently, I decided to apply both theoretical concepts in my research, since for me they seem mutually complementary. At first, I focus on everyday bordering practices that are, from my point of view, at the core of borderscapes in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded, before applying the concept of borderscapes itself in order to supplement my findings of everyday bordering practices and to provide an as comprehensive of a picture of the shifting perceptions and meanings of the Romanian-Moldovan state border on the micro level as possible.

3.1 How do everyday bordering practices work?

The theoretical concept of everyday bordering practices as elaborated by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006a; 2006b; 2013; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002; Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler, 2002) is grounded in the ideas of situated knowledge, situated imagination and intersectionality of feminist standpoint theory as well as in the concept of the everyday life.

At the core of ***traditional feminist standpoint theory*** is the rejection of the positivistic idea of "truth", arguing instead that no human being can be purely objective since corporeal particularities such as gender, race, sex, as well as personal experiences, outer social influences that contribute to every individuals unique social situatedness, shape human interests, needs and desires to such a degree that to avoid unselective emphases even in scientific research is impossible (Sullivan, 2011, pp. 133-134). For this reason, objectivity in scientific research can arguably only be reached by way of reconstructing it in the form of different types of knowledge gained through the lenses of various, personal and highly subjective perspectives in research (Sullivan, 2011, p. 134). Within the theoretical concept of everyday bordering practices, traditional feminist standpoint theory is, however, more generally used as a starting point for considering every personal perspective as unique and valuable due to every person's social situatedness, which provides unique knowledge (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 2).

This point of view is also shared by Donna Haraway (1988, pp. 182-183), who argues that the singular ***situated knowledge*** of every human being always depends on individual, personal experiences made throughout life. Furthermore, both Donna Haraway (1988, pp. 182-183) and Anthony Giddens (1991, pp. 56-59) agree that the knowledge we gain throughout life is shaped to a large degree by corporeal particularities of our bodies since those define in various ways

our social positioning in society and thus our access to knowledge. This perception, in turn, implies that our situated knowledge is the outcome of power struggles and power relations within society, defining how specific corporeal particularities allow for specific social positionings (Haraway, 1988, p. 577). At the same time, however, our knowledge is not only shaped by our social positioning, but everyone is also the agent of his/her situated knowledge, being capable of defining, interpreting and using his/her personal experiences for the production of knowledge (Haraway, 1988, p. 592). In this regard, according to Nira Yuval-Davis (2013, pp. 4-5), why, whether and what we are willing to experience and know, and how we are transforming data into conscious knowledge, is not only defined by our social situatedness itself but also significantly by our imagination.

"Imagination" in this sense does, obviously, not refer to the common understanding of an "invention" or a perceived shift of meaning, but to how things are imagined to be (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 127). Furthermore, consistent with feminist standpoint theory, imagination is considered as situated since the limits and processes of our imagination are shaped by our social situatedness while at the same time our imagination provides our experiences with meaning and categories of reference (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 327). That is to say, our whole classification system is imagined by us and others, since we need to have an imagined idea of what, for instance, the term "nation" means before we can determine if we (want to) belong to it or not (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 5). Hence, on the one hand, our ***situated imagination*** can be considered as being shaped by society and as the outcome of power struggles and power relations (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 325). On the other hand, imagination is perceived as going beyond our social situatedness; due to its creative force, the final construction of categories of signification is the outcome of every person's individual creativity and autonomy despite the impacts of various social factors (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 8). Consequently, it is up to every individual and every group of people to define through its intellect and imagination its knowledge, values, visions and goals; in short, its images of the world, in creative, destructive or reactionary ways, providing thus opportunities for social change (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 326). By that, imagination is at the same time individual and collective, it constructs knowledge and it transcends it, and it is both a required condition as well as the product of the process for constructing knowledge (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 316). Moreover, Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis (2002, p. 324) argue that imagination can provide a kind of shelter for goals, values and ideas being in opposition to stipulated "reality principles" of society. As a result, even within one and the same society or between societies with identical structures and social necessities, varying imaginations are to be found, including differing sets

of values, knowledge, etc. due to our individual social situatedness as well as social agency (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 322).

However, our social situatedness does not only define our situated knowledge and imagination but leads to continuous bordering practices as well, which, at the same time, represent the fundament for our social situatedness, as can be seen through the lens of the theoretical concept of intersectionality. Within the concept of everyday bordering practices, Nira Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2006b, 2013) does not merely focus on the traditional understanding of ***intersectionality*** as a tool to analyse the intertwined relationships between the category of gender/sex with other socially constructed categories such as nationality, ethnicity, etc., but also on the outcomes of a multitude of constantly intersecting socially constructed categories in general. Moreover, intersectionality in this context comprises both an inter-categorical approach by way of analysing how the intersection of different social categories affect people's social situatedness, as well as an intra-categorical approach by focusing on the meaning and boundaries of individual social categories themselves (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 6).

Accordingly, ***at first,*** intersecting social categories can be seen as determining the social situatedness of every individual, since the social construction and intersection of socio-cultural categorizations with their perceived specific characteristics produce different kinds of societal relations, often along socio-economic grids of power in which individuals are embedded and that represent the outcome of power struggles (Lykke, 2010, pp. 50-51; Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 6). By that, the countless overlapping social categories define the unique social situatedness of every individual, his/her access to knowledge and to economic, political and cultural resources, the character of his/her experiences, etc., and, hence, his/her social knowledge and imagination. ***Secondly,*** individuals and groups of people require social categories for defining to where they belong, with whom/what they can identify themselves, turning social categories thus into various identity groups (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 6). Typical for identity groups, according to Nira Yuval-Davis (2006b, p. 199), are naturalizing discourses that have the aim of defining perceived (negative and/or positive) key characteristics of a specific identity group, such as of a class, race, ethnicity, etc., which can vary from society to society, and are usually the products of power struggles over the definition of specific identity groups. At the same time, naturalizing discourses have the overall intention of homogenizing social categories by way of considering all imagined members as sharing the identified "natural" key features of the identity group (Yuval-Davis, 2006b, p. 199). By that, ***thirdly*** individuals as well as groups of people differentiate between the members of the own identity group ("us") and "others", creating and

defining with the help of their social situatedness, knowledge and imagination, social categories and their perceived boundaries by establishing who belongs to a specific identity group and who not (Yuval-Davis, 2006a, p. 204). The established social divisions themselves are often, but not necessarily, expressed in institutions and organizations such as national laws, concepts of family, etc., as well as represented in the form of symbols, ideologies, etc., shaping, by that, not only the daily lives of people but also their own perceptions of themselves and of members of other identity groups (Yuval-Davis, 2006b, p. 198). However, as identity groups are continually individually and socially challenged and reconstructed and since the process of creating identity groups itself requires individual and collective creative imagination, the process of bordering in the form of the drawing of boundaries of identity groups can, in the last instance, be considered as a product of human autonomy, turning every human being into the social agent in the creation of identity groups (Yuval-Davis, 2006b, pp. 201-203). Consequently, the drawing of boundaries around different social categories is not only the outcome as well as the basis of situated knowledge and imagination, but takes also place at all levels of society, is realized all the time and everywhere by all members of society and by that part of everyday life of every individual.

Within the concept of everyday bordering practices, Nira Yuval-Davis (2013, pp. 9-10), defines ***the everyday life*** in which bordering practices take place as a realm of habits and continuity that is made up of repetitive and taken-for-granted practices, beliefs and a sense of "normalization", which can be found at any place and at any time. However, since the definition of those taken-for-granted activities and beliefs as well as their maintenance are always the outcome of power struggles, they entail rules of normative behaviours as well as opposing and resisting ideas, leading to constantly shifting meanings of the everyday (Yuval-Davis, 2013, pp. 9-10). Despite or due to the everyday's permanently shifting meaning, bordering practices are constantly taking place.

Based on these definitions, ***bordering practices*** or the border making of different identity groups can be considered as a multi-level process, grounded in situated knowledge and imagination, and part of the everyday life of all members of society. Thus, within the EUBORDERSCAPES project, bordering has been defined as

> the everyday construction of borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism. In our reading, bordering is, by nature, a multilevel process that takes place, for example, at the level of high politics, manifested by physical borders and visa regimes, as well as in media debates over national identity, legal and illegal immigration and language rights. Within this context, borders can be read in terms of: 1) a politics of identity (who is in,

> who is out), 2) a geographical definition of difference (defining who is a neighbour, a partner, a friend or rival) and 3) a politics of interests (in which issues of economic self-interest, political stability and security play a prominent role). Another important and closely related element in bordering is the embedding of everyday border-crossing experience and issues of family, gender, sexuality and cultural in personal understandings of borders. (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 10)

Accordingly, everyday bordering represents an old practice dating back to the earliest societies that erected borders not required by nature, in attempts to create boundaries of various identity groups through socio-cultural, political and geographic distinctions, being thus central to the process of identity formation (Popescu, 2011, p. 15; Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 10). The ***term "identity"*** itself can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, when scholars of various academic disciplines adopted an understanding of the term "identity" that was grounded in the work of Erik Erikson as a conceptual tool, turning "identity" in an irreplaceable technical term and a cultural buzzword by the 1980s (Weigert, Teitge and Teitge, 1990, pp. 1-5). However, as "identity" as a concept is applied by every academic discipline attempting to explain the dynamics and meaning of the lives of individuals and groups (Weigert, Teitge and Teitge, 1990, p. 29), it requires an explanation of its understanding and use within the respective research.

In this regard, the concept of everyday bordering practices is, first and foremost, focusing on socially constructed ***collective identities*** in the form of what Nira Yuval-Davis (2013) calls social categories, even though these are sometimes difficult to disentangle from other conceptualized types of identity, including 'ego', 'felt' identity, social identity and personal identity as used by Erik Erikson (1994), Erving Goffman (1970) and David Snow (2001). Moreover, Nira Yuval-Davis (2013, p. 11) defines collective identities as well as identities in general as types of narratives about the self and its boundaries that are shaped by the processes of their social construction. This definition of identities is also supported by Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson (1993, p. 2), claiming that:

> people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that "experience" is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

Hence, our ongoing readjusting of narrated and communicated identities, provide us as narrators with the feeling of biographical continuity by way of allowing us to incorporate non-fictive events and experiences occurring in our everyday lives into the ongoing narrative about

ourselves (Giddens, 1991, p. 54). ***Identity narratives,*** independent of how fragmented or contradictory they are, serve thus to define who we are, how we understand our place in society, and are the outcome of social and structural interpersonal interactions which affect our actions and beliefs (Somers and Gibson, 1993, pp. 31). By that, as outlined above, identity narratives are shaped by the processes of their emergence through bordering practices regarding their social situatedness, while also contributing to the actual construction of our social situatedness by narrating it. At the same time we, meaning every individual, have the possibility to overcome the constraining dynamics of our social situatedness on our identity narratives since "the self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications" (Giddens, 1991, p. 2).

Consequently, even though the precise contents of identity narratives vary socially and culturally (Giddens, 1991, p. 55), they have several key aspects in common. This refers, in addition to the already mentioned impacts of social situatedness and social agency, to their perceived ***continuity*** and to the constructed ***dichotomy between 'me'/'we' and the 'other/s'*** that is usually at the heart of identity narratives in order to define who belongs to a specific identity group and who not. The reason for that, according to Nira Yuval-Davis (2013, p. 11), is that by recognizing that other/s exist, we, meaning every human being, automatically try to assess in which way we are similar and/or different from others, not only in order to define ourselves, but also in order to know how to treat others. This automatically creates boundaries between ourselves and others (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 12). As these boundaries based on distinctions between 'me'/'we' and 'others' are continuously reproduced and revised by every individual and group of people, identity narratives serve to express and communicate countless overlapping and intersecting identities in everyday life.

What is more, these distinctions might not only be restricted to the social, political, economic and cultural sphere, but can also lead to ***geographic distinctions and borders*** (Yuval-Davis 2013, p. 10). The reason for that may be the goal of an identity group, such as of a nation, to mark the physical limits of a geographic area to which it feels attached, that it considers as one of its identity markers, and which it therefore wants to "own" and control (Ţîcu 2016, p. 50). This implies that territorial borders of collective identities are not given by nature, as already mentioned above, but that they are created by assigning geographic areas to the own as well as to the imaginary 'other/s' of an identity group, who are expected to be situated 'there', in contrast to the own identity group itself living 'here' (Paasi, 1996, pp. 11-15). As elaborated by

Anssi Paasi (1996, pp. 11-15), at least four types of such "us-versus-them" discourses related to space are to be found in everyday life:

(1) ***'We' and 'here':*** refers to a perceived more or less homogenous identity group living in one and the same territorial unit, such as in the case of a nation being perceived as situated within the boundaries of 'its' nation-state;

(2) ***'We' and 'there':*** implies that social groups that are considered as belonging to the same, own identity group are situated outside the imagined boundaries of the group's territorial unit, as in the case of minorities living outside of "their" nation-state;

(3) ***'Other/s' and 'here':*** reveals that distinctions are made between certain social groups and an identity group living together within the imagined boundaries of the territorial unit of the identity group, as in the case of minorities in a nation-state;

(4) ***'Other/s' and 'there':*** inscribes differences between social groups living outside the imagined boundaries of an identity group's territorial unit, and the identity group situated within;

In consequence, everyday bordering practices create the basis for physical and geographical borders that are not only established by high politics, wars, etc. alone but far more by these socio-cultural practices as well (Yuval-Davis, 2013, pp. 14-15). This means that, as in the case of socio-cultural boundaries of identity groups, territorial borders have the intention of "b/ordering" society. They represent borders between the outside and a safe interior by way of defining what is included and what is excluded as well as the nature of the relationships between the in- and outside, by selecting and prioritizing certain social relations, shaping the character of the group(s) living within them as well as their perspectives and imaginations of reality (Van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer, 2005, p. 3). By that, physical borders of identity groups are produced through identity narratives as symbols and institutions for distinguishing between "us" and "others", while at the same time reproducing those distinctions through their symbolic use in education, media, memorials, ceremonies, etc., which are, however, contested and subject to change (Paasi, 1999, pp. 76-80). Hence, physical borders become embedded in the everyday life of people, defining their spatial understanding and knowledge, and being provided with meanings that can range from that of a rampart against threats from the outside to that of an institution that needs to be abolished (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 15). As a result, state borders represent tools for defining boundaries of collective identities, to imagine and express them, for dividing 'us' from 'others' as well as for b/ordering society, however, being experienced and imagined in highly different ways (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler, 2002, pp. 331-332). At the same time, state borders are created through narratives, allowing for binding people together through

the meanings they have for their collective identities of which they are thus becoming part (Paasi, 1999, pp. 75-81). In consequence, understanding the central role and meanings state borders play in the spatial organization of societies, can, in my opinion, best be done by analysing their embeddedness in collective identities of people whose lives they attempt to b/order. Within my overall research question of how everyday bordering practices related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border reflect bordering practices on the macro scale, the concept of everyday bordering practices allows for the initial generalisation of collective identities in which the state border is embedded in everyday life.

3.2 And what are borderscapes?

Even though the theoretical concept of everyday bordering practices seems thus adequate for analysing the multitude of collective identities in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded in everyday life, it has often been criticised as being limited in capturing all the complex new forms of spatiality in our modern globalized world (Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi, 2015, pp. 1-2). This refers in particular to the intricate relationships between bordering processes and geographic locations of borders, which are constantly displaced, (re-)negotiated and multiplied, as well as to new forms or conditions of borders outside of their conceptualizations related to modern territorial states, which might, in contrast, be highlighted by the theoretical concept of borderscapes (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 19-26).

According to Elena dell'Agnese (2015, pp.58-59), the term "borderscape" was first used in an article about the theatre performance "Borderscape 2000" of Guillermo Gomez-Pena in 1999-2000, before being further elaborated by Arjan Harbers, Gabi Dolf-Bonekämper and Marieke Kuipers as well as Anke Strüver between 2004 and 2005. In 2007, Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr resumed in their book "Borderscapes. Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge" (2007) the concept of borderscapes, based on which Chiara Brambilla (2015) further elaborated it in order to deepen the understanding of the contemporary spatiality of politics, serving as the basis for the continued work on the concept of borderscapes within the international EU FP7 "EUBORDERSCAPES" project (Dell'Agnese, 2015, pp. 58-59; Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi, 2015, pp. 1-3).

Even though, as argued by Elena dell'Agnese (2015, p. 58), there is not yet a standard definition for the nowadays arguably rather fashionable term "borderscapes", it is usually agreed that one of the main aims of the borderscapes concept represents, as already mentioned, the overcoming of the "territorial trap" of the nation-state in border studies, which is no longer considered as

adequate for conceptualizing the spatial and temporal bordering processes of everyday life (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 729). This refers especially to the various processes of globalization. As globalization entails uncountable global flows and networks in all spheres of social life, connecting people all over the world, maintaining and/or creating thereby new borders and territories, these processes seem hardly reconcilable anymore with the previously conceptualized forms of spatial organization provided by state borders (Popescu, 2011, pp. 47-59). Instead, due to these fluid and multidimensional processes of globalization, borders, territories, space and spatial relations are rather understood as processes of change that are always in the process of becoming and never temporally fixed (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007, p. xxiv). To grasp this perceived new spatiality, within the borderscapes concept, borders are not conceptualized as static lines on maps, but as continuously performed, mobile, dynamic and fluid in space and time, as "perspectival" constructions varying depending on the interpretive point of view and their constantly changing historical, socio-cultural and political context (Parker and Vaughan-Willliams, 2012, p. 729; Brambilla, 2015, p. 22). Hence, according to Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott and Gianluca Bocchi (2015, p. 2), "borderscapes" can best be understood as a multi-sited approach to bordering processes and their specific geographical and social contexts, to their constantly shifting symbolic and material forms and functions, and the new spatiality they are creating.

By that, the borderscapes concept allows to approach borders as ***zones of competing meanings,*** as ongoing dialectic processes of adaptation, contestation and resistance of a wide range of actors (Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi, 2015, pp. 2-3). This entails the assessing of hegemonic discourses for justifying and maintaining borders, which have been called hegemonic borderscapes by Chiara Brambilla (2015, pp. 19-20), as well as of multiple strategies of resistance against these hegemonic discourses, of so-called counter-hegemonic borderscapes. By that, the concept of borderscapes is in line with the above outlined concept of everyday bordering practices, according to which "imagination" can also provide a kind of shelter for goals, values and ideas being in opposition to stipulated "reality principles" of society (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, pp. 322-324). Corresponding to the understanding of situated knowledge and situated imagination, these hegemonic and counter-hegemonic borderscapes are also perceived as being closely linked to individual and collective ***experiences and representations,*** referring to the subjective experiencing and perceiving of borders by different people in their everyday lives in contrast to rhetoric and assumptions on the macro scale (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 27-28). Moreover, the borderscapes concept allows the shedding of light on ***different temporalities,*** on overlapping emplacements and spatial organizations that create

and incorporate multiple borders at the same place and time (Perera, 2007, pp. 206-208). By that, it takes into consideration hidden or silenced borders and their narratives, the interactions of visibility and invisibility, of power struggles and resistance taking place in and at borders (Brambilla, 2015, p. 26; Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi, 2015, p. 2). As a result, within the context of borderscapes, borders and space are conceptualized as highly ***fluid and complex webs*** of various processes, conditions, relationships, experiences and power struggles. Shedding light on the tensions between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic imaginaries, on the temporality and material basis of various spatial imaginaries and their interactions with social practices, results thus in the emergence of ***new (geo)political, social and spatial imaginaries*** where different imaginations of space, territoriality, identities, otherness are combined with various spatial practices, experiences and representations in everyday life (Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi, 2015, p. 2; Perera, 2007, pp. 206-208).

Among the wide range of potential applications of the borderscapes concept, within the scope of this research, I am limiting its use to the more comprehensive analysis of the reciprocal relations between everyday collective identities and the Romanian-Moldovan state border, as well as to an overall ***bottom-up approach*** by analysing micro scale spatial imaginaries and how they reflect bordering practices on the macro scale. In doing so, my understanding and use of the borderscapes concept is loosely anchored in its conceptualization by Anke Strüver (2005) and Jussi Laine and Miika Tervonen (2015). This refers in particular to the use of the verb ***"borderscaping"*** by Anke Strüver (2005, p. 170) in order to express that borders are continuously constructed through representations, performances, imagination and narration in everyday life, being thus in line with the concept of everyday bordering practices. Again similar to the concept of everyday bordering practices, by referring to the work of Michel de Certeau (1988), Anke Strüver (2005, p. 170) also points out the importance of narratives in the process of everyday borderscaping:

> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ("It's to the right," "Take a left"), the beginning of a story the reset of which is written by footsteps, to the daily "news" ("Guess who I met at the bakery?"), television news reports ("Teheran: Khomeini is becoming increasingly isolated..."), legends (Cinderellas living in hovels), and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past). These narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a "supplement" to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. (Michel de Certeau, 1988, pp. 115-116)

At the same time, her understanding of borderscapes transcends the concept of everyday bordering practices by considering borderscaping as practices of various temporalities that create imagined borders and shape their individual experiencing as real, resulting in the construction of new mobile and multi-scalar spatial imaginaries, in short, in borderscapes (Strüver, 2005, p. 170). In line with that, Jussi Laine and Miika Tervonen (2015, p. 66) apply the concept of borderscapes as a conceptual tool for focusing on new socio-spatial identities, their interplays with established political and territorial accounts of belonging, and the impacts of every individual's social agency on their everyday construction, advocating in addition for the scientific focus on bottom-up bordering practices and imaginaries.

In consequence, based on these understandings and applications, I consider the concept of borderscapes as useful for highlighting the intertwined relationship between identity forming discourses on the macro scale and everyday bordering processes in everyday life on the micro scale, and for paying attention to the countless boundaries intersecting, crossing, circumventing, contesting, or creating and maintaining the Romanian-Moldovan state border. Thus, it is possible to shed light on "hidden" physically boundaries on the micro scale that are stipulated on the regional, national or international scale, or vice versa on in everyday life depicted physical boundaries that are no longer perceptible on the macro scale, on the various types of discourses within which they are created and sustained, their temporalities, as well as on their (contesting, bridging or consolidating) impacts on the state border. It also allows, in my opinion, to assess the perceived shape and nature of the state border for individual collective identities. As elaborated by Gabriel Popescu (2011, pp. 77-126), these can range from that of a territorially rather fixed border such as a linear state border, to different types of borderlands and to that of a territorially highly fluid border such as a networked border, which, in turn, influence and are influenced by the "where" of the state border as well as by its perceived functions such as that of a place of contact and exchange, of an institution providing societal security, etc. Consequently, within my overall research question, I resort to the concept of borderscapes in order to provide answers to the questions of what everyday bordering practices reveal about the imagined location of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as about its positioning in time, function and current and past significance.

3.3 On how to "invert the telescope"

Moreover, in line with the concept of everyday bordering practices and the understanding and application of the borderscapes concept by Anke Strüver (2005) and Jussi Laine and Miika Tervonen (2015), in my research I am pursuing the overall ***bottom-up*** methodological approach

of the ***"inverted telescope"*** as first conceptualized by Benedict Anderson (1998) and further elaborated by Nira-Yuval Davis (2013) and Dorte J. Andersen, Olivier Thomas Kramsch and Marie Sandberg (2015) within the studies of borders.

By "inverting the telescope", it is, according to Nira Yuval-Davis (2013, p. 16), possible to visualize through the analysis of constantly shifting and contested contemporary bordering processes on the micro scale, what borders are at a more general level. Moreover, as argued by Dorte J. Andersen, Olivier Thomas Kramsch and Marie Sandberg (2015, pp. 462-464), borders should not merely be studied and analysed from afar, as seemed to have been suggested by Benedict Anderson's initial "inverted telescope" approach. Instead, it can be understood as a methodological tool for seeing borders through the bordered lenses of others instead of through one's own bordered vantage points, which can allow for gaining new insights and knowledge in the form of newly analysed versions of reality (Andersen, Kramsch and Sandberg, 2015, p. 464). By that, it provides, arguably, the opportunity for highlighting the historicity of bordering processes without assuming that these are merely linked to the emergence of nation-states and their linear, homogenous territorial borders, but as being rather part of their undetermined, eventually contradictory and ruptured characters (Andersen, Kramsch and Sandberg, 2015, p. 464). In my opinion, the "inverted telescope" approach allows thus to pursue and implement key ideas of the concepts of everyday bordering practices and of borderscapes, being in addition in line with feminist research traditions as well as with claims for a new epistemological, ontological and methodological shift within border studies for overcoming the "territorialist imperative" of the nation-state. In consequence, in my research I am "inverting the telescope on borders" by focusing on everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova that may result in other spatial imaginaries than those on the macro scale in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded.

4. NARRATIVE RESEARCH METHODS & FIELD RESEARCH

4.1 Narrative research methods & how to apply them in border studies

In addition, being in line with the theoretical concepts of everyday bordering practices and of borderscapes as well as with key features of feminist research traditions, out of the wide range of possible research methods qualitative narrative research methods seem for me the most suitable ones for my research. At first, because qualitative narrative research methods are considered as emphasizing the personal, subjective, meaningful and aesthetic in scientific research, representing thus one possible tool for opening up new understandings and versions of reality by allowing to see through other lenses (Chase, 2005, pp. 654-655). But also, in a more direct sense, since qualitative narrative research methods provide tools to gather and analyse everyday identity narratives, which, according to the concept of borderscapes and everyday bordering practices, are lying at the heart of collective identities in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded.

Traditionally, narrative research methods have played only a marginalized role within border studies and political and human geography, where despite the "narrative turn in human and social sciences" they have gained in popularity only in the last two-three decades, having before been criticised for their perceived non-theoretical forms and been considered as the "epistemological other" (Czarniawska, 2004, pp. 2-3; Prokkola, 2014, p. 443). Nowadays, narrative research methods are mainly applied in literary geography, in the area of memory politics and landscape narratives, as well as in studies of popular collective narratives within critical geopolitics (Prokkola, 2014, p. 443). In border studies, narrative research methods seem to have gained in importance as well, having, for instance, been employed for analysing everyday bordering practices at the Finnish-Russian border (Paasi, 1996; 1999; Laine and Tervonen, 2015), at the Dutch-German border (Strüver, 2005), the Finnish-Swedish border (Prokkola, 2008; 2009), as well as at the Canadian-US border (Nischik, 2016), and been further conceptualized by Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola (2014). However, what exactly is to be understood under narrative research methods?

According to Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Tammar B. Zilber (1998, pp. 2-3), ***narrative research methods*** are applied in any study using or analysing narrative materials that represent the means of the research or the research object itself. Definitions of "narrative materials " or "narratives", in turn, vary strongly, starting with rather inclusive ones assuming that almost everything can be treated as a narrative and that narratives are omnipresent:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances - as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting […], stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 1977, p. 79)

Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 17) further specifies this rather inclusive definition provided by Roland Barthes by depicting narratives as spoken or written texts providing a chronological account of events or actions. In addition, within my research and in line with the theoretical concepts of everyday bordering practices and of borderscapes, I understand "narratives" as entailing the communication of identities, of ideas about the self and its boundaries, since at the core of every narrative is, arguably, the goal to make sense out of our experiences, to fit them to our worldviews and values, and to communicate them to others, revealing thus how we see the world we are living in, as well as ourselves and our role in it (see section 3.1). By focusing on narratives of people about their everyday life experiences related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border or to the respectively neighbouring country, it is thus, from my point of view, possible to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse perceptions of the state border and its incorporation into collective identities of people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

For analysing these everyday bordering narratives, there are, according to Barbara Czarniawska (2004, pp. 55-56), at least three different ways within narrative research methods:

(1) Collecting narratives as primary data for scientific research;
(2) Narrativization of the gathered scientific data by the researcher;
(3) Analysing the collected narratives as a special kind of text, such as narratives of interviews;

As can be seen in the following, in my research, I follow the first two suggestions by way of (1) collecting primary data in the form of narratives during interviews, by asking for written narratives, and by keeping a reflective diary about observed incidents of spontaneous storytelling, and by (2) narrativizing the gained data within this thesis, since "to write a book or an article on political and human geography is still a matter of writing a good story, a coherent and logical narrative that supports the argument" (Prokkola, 2014, p. 446).

4.2 Step no. 1: sampling for the gathering of narratives

For the gathering of narratives, I decided, in a first step, to limit the number of potential research participants by focusing on ***professors and students*** currently living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova as potential storytellers for my research. The main reason for this decision was to find an adequate large target group, since a general cross-section of the population might have gone beyond the scope of this Master's thesis. Moreover, I depicted professors and students as potential research participants, since due to already existing personal contacts of mine to Romanian and Moldovan students and professors dating back to the time of my studies in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and as trainee in Chişinău (Republic of Moldova), as well as due to contacts between my home university and the Moldovan State University in Chişinău (Universitatea de Stat din Moldova), they seemed for me the best accessible population group. In order to find potential participants for my research, I resorted to ***non-random sampling*** in the form of snowball-sampling. For that, before the actual stay of mine in Romania and the Republic of Moldova for conducting field research, I started to inform acquaintances of mine living in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and in Chişinău (Republic of Moldova) about my research project and asked them for help in finding potential participants, a process which created a momentum of its own also throughout my field research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in September 2017. By that, three respondents were found directly via personal contacts I had in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, whereas all other 26 respondents were found via snowball sampling.

Moreover, I decided to focus on collecting narratives in ***four cities/districts*** in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova (see Figure 10):

Figure 10: Field research in Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi, Ungheni/Sculeni (RM) and Chişinău.
Source: GeoBasis-DE/BKG, Google, 2018; "Ungheni" added by author.

(1) The city of ***Cluj-Napoca,*** capital of the county (județ) of Cluj in Romania, with 324,576 inh. in 2011 (Institutul National de Statistica - ROMANIA, 2014)

(2) The city of ***Iaşi,*** capital of the county (județ) of Iaşi in Romania, with 290,422 inh. in 2011 (Institutul National de Statistica - ROMANIA, 2014)

(3) The ***district of Ungheni*** in the Republic of Moldova, where I collected narratives in the city of Ungheni, with 30,804 inh. in 2014, and in the commune of Sculeni, with 4,750 inh. in 2014 (Biroul Naţional de Statistică, 2014)

(4) The city of ***Chişinău,*** capital of the Republic of Moldova, with 339,079 inh. in 2014 (Biroul Naţional de Statistică, 2014)

Main reason for choosing these four cities/districts was, in addition to representing important university locations (with the exception of the district of Ungheni) and of me having found several research participants there before the beginning of my field research, the assumption that the content of narratives might differ due to differences in their geographic locations, with respectively Cluj-Napoca and Chişinău rather in the centre of the country in contrast to Iaşi and Ungheni/Sculeni being located close to the Romanian-Moldovan state border. Furthermore, I assumed that narratives gathered in Cluj-Napoca and in Iaşi in Romania might differ for historical and cultural reasons, since Cluj-Napoca represented the capital of the Principality of Transylvania in the 15th-16th centuries, and was shaped by the settlement of Saxons and Hungarians following the Hungarian conquest of Transylvania in the 17th century, while Iaşi represented the capital of the Principality of Moldavia in the 16th-19th centuries (Pecican, 2010; Primăria Municipiului Iaşi - Biroul de Promovare Touristica, 2006). As Iaşi had formed part of the Principality of Moldavia together with the western part of today's Republic of Moldova (1349-1812), narratives collected there might differ from those in Cluj-Napoca due to for geographical, historical and cultural reasons eventually closer ties between Iaşi and the western part of the Republic of Moldova than between the Republic of Moldova and Cluj-Napoca. Similarly, I also considered it useful to focus on one Romanian city forming part of the Romanian-Moldovan Euroregion Siret-Prut-Nistru, namely Iaşi, in contrast to Cluj-Napoca (see section 2.2). Moreover, narratives gathered in the city of Ungheni with its international railway border crossing point Ungheni-Nicolina, due to which it is also known as "the western Gateway of Moldova" (Ungheni City, 2012), and in the commune of Sculeni with its international road border crossing point Sculeni-Sculeni (see Figure 2) might provide differing insights due to eventually more frequent everyday cross-border activities than in Chişinău. Even though limiting thus my research to one population group as participants, I aim at paying attention to the impacts of social situatedness on identity narratives by considering differing geographical, historical and eventually cultural contexts within Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Moreover, I resorted to ***triangulation*** in order to increase the validity and reliability of the obtained data. For that, as suggested by Barbara Czarniawska (2004, pp. 43-45), I gathered narratives in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova by (1) conducting semi-structured interviews, (2) asking for written stories, and (3) keeping a reflective diary in order to record spontaneous incidents involving storytelling during my field research in September 2017.

4.3 Step no. 2: eliciting stories in semi-structured interviews

Corresponding to the assumption that people make sense of their experiences and worldviews by transforming them into stories and communicating them to others, I decided to conduct ***individual face-to-face interviews*** during my field research in order to discover main topics and priorities of every individual interviewee, which might have been different in case of interactions between several interviewees during focus group interviews. Moreover, in order to elicit everyday narratives rather than reports, the focus was on ***everyday life activities*** of my interviewees and on specific ***incidents,*** that is to say on events that are not happening on a regular basis, as suggested by Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 44).

In consequence, prior to the conduct of ***semi-structured interviews*** during my field research, I prepared with the help of a Romanian native speaker a list of potential questions to elicit stories and to precise narratives in English, Romanian and German, an overview of which can also be found in the appendices 4-6. The first part of these pre-conceptualized interview questions was related to the person and life of my interviewees in general in order to get to know each other, to create a relaxed atmosphere, and to find out if and how certain aspects related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border are integrated in their everyday lives. In a second step, my questions were focussing on specific events such as the crossing of the Romanian-Moldovan state border and stays in the respectively neighbouring country during holidays, business trips etc. Which, in turn, was followed by questions concerning the perception of the own country eventually in contrast to those of the neighbouring country, by questions to further specific spatial imaginaries related to the own country/city, to perceptions of Europe, the EU, etc.

However, as the goal of the interviews was to invite my interview partners to tell me their stories, I focused on finding out what my interview partners were interested in and what they wanted to share with me within the context of my research topic, which I had introduced to them at the beginning of the interview. Instead of strictly concentrating on my pre-conceptualized interview questions, during the interviews my questions were thus rather guided by the perceived interests and preferences of my respective interview partners, as also suggested by Susan E. Chase (1995, pp. 2-4). In my role as interviewer, I concentrated on finding the right questions for eliciting stories, and, if necessary, on assisting my interview partners in structuring their stories or in providing them with more details, assuming otherwise the role of the listener, with the result that the order of asking questions varied, some questions were sometimes not asked at all while other, new ones were asked spontaneously. Furthermore, when noticing that someone wanted to discuss the research topic in a broader context or to debate jointly how

personal experiences could be linked to political, cultural or social tendencies in the country, the nature of the interviews would, in a second step, change from an exclusively narrative-eliciting interview to a more open discussion. As all of my interview partners were either students or professors usually interested in debating the situation in their countries, such discussions would often but not always follow, and I am very grateful that my interview partners seemed to be interested in and enjoy sharing their knowledge and opinions with me. As a result, the pre-conceptualized interview questions were rather a tool for me to prepare myself before the beginning of the interview and was never considered as a strict guide for conducting the interviews. And, overall, I found this approach in interviews very helpful, leading usually to the telling of detailed stories, with interviewees deciding about the emphasis, order, and prioritization of different topics during the interview, and giving them time to reflect about the content of their stories.

In total, I conducted 8 interviews in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in September 2017, out of which three took place in Cluj-Napoca, one in Iaşi, and four in Chişinău (see appendix 1). The interviews were conducted at university offices, libraries, in hostels, or Cafés and restaurants, and either in English or in German depending on the preference and suggestions of my interview partners, while "informal interviews" would also be conducted in Romanian, as outlined in more detail in the following section. Similarly, also time and date for conducting interviews usually depended on the preferences of my interview partners. All the interviews took place in the form of individual face-to-face interviews, were audio-recorded, while additional handwritten notes were sometimes taken, and took in average 01:55 hrs, with the two shortest ones of 01:00 hr and the two longest ones of 03:30 hrs.

4.4 Step no. 3: asking for narratives in written form

I combined the eliciting of narratives in interviews with the gathering of written narratives, as suggested by Barbara Czarniawska (2004, pp. 43-45). The main reason for collecting written narratives was the possibility to avoid the language barrier by way of asking for stories in written form. That is to say, due to my only basic Romanian language skills, I decided to preferably conduct official interviews in English or German, limiting by that naturally the group of possible interview partners as well as eventually the richness of the provided narratives since English or German did not represent the mother tongue of my interview partners. Consequently, in order to extend the group of potential participants and to improve the quality and richness of the gathered narratives, I decided to collect written narratives in Romanian as well.

For that, prior to the beginning of my field research, I elaborated two formal requests sheets (each in Romanian, English, and German), focusing on the eliciting of narratives by referring to ***incidents in everyday life activities***: request sheet no. 1 referred to stories about the crossing of the Romanian-Moldovan state border, while request sheet no. 2 was related to experiences made during stays in the respectively neighbouring country (see appendices 7-12). Both request sheets were roughly based on the example request sheet of Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 48), and their translation into Romanian verified by a Romanian native speaker.

For gathering written narratives via those two request sheets, I informed students and professors found during the process of snowball sampling about the two possible ways for contributing to my research, send them, if interested, the request sheets in their preferred language electronically via email or Facebook, and asked them to return their answers to me by the end of October 2017. In addition, I also asked interview partners of mine to pass the request sheets on to family members, friends, acquaintances, etc., and I also met students and professors personally while conducting field research in Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi, Sculeni/Ungheni and Chişinău, providing them with more detailed information about my research project and the request sheets and asking them for their written narratives in Romanian, English or German. An exception to this process was the collecting of written narratives from 3 professors in the city of Ungheni and of 5 professors from the commune of Sculeni. Through the contact to a professor working at a school in Sculeni, I had the opportunity to visit the school on one day during my stay, and to ask through the mediation of the professor other professors from Ungheni and Sculeni working at the school for their written narratives. However, as the majority of professors did not have an own email account, they decided to write those down immediately during the class breaks and to return them to me in handwritten form on the same day before leaving. As a result, due to the time constraints, some of those 8 narratives are rather short. However, even though eventually not as rich in details as some of the other gathered written stories, I found those 8 stories nevertheless useful for my research, since they usually provided the main message of the narrator in a nutshell, representing by that in combination with other and eventually more detailed narratives gathered in the district of Ungheni a valuable contribution to my research. As a result, even though not planned before the beginning of my field research, this meeting and collecting of written narratives in Sculeni turned out to be very useful in order to gather narratives in the district of Ungheni.

By this approach, I managed to collect narratives from 19 students and professors, out of which 4 were from Cluj-Napoca, 4 from Iaşi, 6 from the city of Ungheni, and 5 from Sculeni (see

appendix 3). All of those narratives were either given to me personally during my field research in September 2017 or send to me electronically in September and October 2017. With the exception of one narrative in English, all stories were written in Romanian, highlighting the preference of many of my research participants to tell their stories in their mother tongue.

4.5 Step no. 4: spontaneous recording of incidents involving storytelling

In addition to the gathering of written narratives and the eliciting of stories in interviews, I also kept a ***reflective diary*** to record observed spontaneous incidents related to everyday bordering practices and spatial imaginaries while conducting field research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Those records referred, at first, to observations that I made during interviews and that I considered as important to put the oral, automatically recorded narratives into context and to analyse them later on by way of referring to the performative, non-verbal sphere of the interviews. In doing so, I tried to take into consideration at least to some extent the performative dimension of the interviews as well, representing one central aspect of storytelling according to Lars-Christer Hydén and Jens Brockmeier (2008, pp. 6-7):

> Every story, as short, vague, and fragmented it is, appeals to understanding, reaches out to someone. All narrative communication and interaction has a performative dimension. Telling a story is performing it, acting out a process of interpreting, constituting, and positioning one's experience. It is an enacting of identity.

Secondly, I also wrote down incidents involving everyday storytelling while meeting students and professors personally in Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi, Sculeni, Ungheni and Chişinău, not for interviewing them, but for informing them about my research project, asking them for their written narratives, for the contact to further potential research participants or for scientific literature related to my research project. Observations that I made during those meetings could include stories that were just implied and not further explained or outlined, stories that were related to something happening during our conversation, etc. A list of these everyday conversations or "informal interviews" can be found in appendix 2. Furthermore, I wrote down in narrative form observations of incidents happening spontaneously during my field research, such as when passing the Romanian-Moldovan state border by train between Iaşi and Ungheni, when crossing the state border by minibus from Iaşi to Chişinău, when searching for a copy shop in Sculeni, when searching for an address at the periphery of Chişinău by taxi, etc., to help me to put information provided in narratives into context.

4.6 Step no. 5: narrative analysis

In order to find out how the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded in everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, I processed the thus obtained three types of primary data in the form of interview transcripts, written narratives and recorded incidents involving storytelling with the help of narrative analysis after having had received all the written narratives by the end of October 2017.

In general, in line with the feminist research tradition, the "inverted telescope" approach and the theoretical concepts of everyday bordering practices and borderscapes, narrative analysis allows for, arguably, rather deep inquiries into the various meanings of people's understanding of the world, since its general goal is to find out how social processes are embedded in narratives by way of analysing intentions and language of narratives (Churton and Brown, 2010, pp. 221-222; Chase, 1995, p. 22). For that, narrative analysis is focusing on the particularities of individual cases, on various versions of representations and of "realities", on experiences and the self that are expressed in the form of stories, and thus rather on the meanings of narratives than on actual facts (Chase, 2005, p. 657). At the same time, narrative analysis also pays attention to questions such as how and why incidents are narrated, for which audience, what cultural resources are interwoven in the narrative, and what the implications of the narrated stories are (Riessman, 2008, p. 12). To guarantee these deep insights into different research contexts, there are at least four different types of narrative analysis, as outlined by Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008):

(1) Thematic analysis
(2) Structural analysis
(3) Dialogic/performance analysis
(4) Visual analysis

Within my research, I resorted to ***thematic analysis*** whose focus is primarily on the content of narratives, allowing, however, to include performative aspects as well depending on the respective research topic (Riessman, 2008, pp. 54-74). As outlined in section 3, performative acts are not only essential for the social construction of borders and borderscapes. Far more, as pointed out by Susan E. Chase (2005, p. 657) and Lars-Christen Hydén and Jens Brockmeier (2008, p. 10), narratives themselves represent socially situated interactive performances, i.e. acts of performance and interaction between narrator and audience that allow to create and communicate worldviews and images about oneself and "others". Due to this high significance of performance in bordering practices and in narrations, when analysing the narratives, I tried

to pay attention to the ***performative dimension*** as well by processing observations that I had made of performative acts during interviews, when meeting people or of incidents in general during my field research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, I aimed at taking into account the respective local and societal contexts and interactions between narrators and audience (me) as well, as suggested by Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008, pp. 53-76). In consequence, due to the limited scope of this research and since the narratives collected in written form allow, in my opinion, only for a restricted dialogic/performance analysis, I decided to resort to thematic analysis and to focus to a limited extent on the performative dimension of narratives.

4.7 Ethical considerations

This overview of narrative research methods and how I apply them within my research, underline also the rather personal and sensitive character of narrative research, since researchers are usually getting involved in the lives of their research participants who share with them stories about their personal experiences and opinions, in addition to which researchers formulate meanings for these shared personal narratives eventually in different terms than would be done by the narrators themselves (Smythe and Murray, 2014, p. 176). In consequence, narrative research requires high sensitivity from part of the researcher, which is the reason why I briefly outline here several key ethical considerations that guided my research and are anchored in reflections on ethical requirements in narrative research by William E. Smythe and Maureen J. Murray (2014).

In this regard, first and foremost all research participants were asked for their (verbal) ***informed consent,*** were informed about the objectives of my research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidential and anonymous handling of their provided data before the recording of interviews and at the beginning of the formal request sheets. However, people were usually not informed about me taking notes of my observations during my field research, due to which, on the one hand, it could be argued that I resorted to covert observations, risking to intrude into the privacy of people (Churton and Brown, 2010, p. 260). On the other hand, when having spontaneous conversations with students and professors during my field research, they were informed about my research project and the reason for my stay in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, being thus aware that I was collecting data for my research. And, with the exception of one person who was not sure of being able to express everything properly in English, no one whom I talked to mentioned that I could not use the information I gained out of our spontaneous conversations. Similarly, I do not think that observations that I made when

crossing the border or of incidents that happened during my field research did cause an ethical dilemma, since they usually referred to everyday activities, were completely anonymous and used only for putting into context what people might have told during the interviews or in their written narratives. Consequently, I do not think that I applied covert observations during my field research, and therefore I hope that keeping a reflective diary about my observations did not cause any ethical harm.

Another challenge refers to the nature of narrative inquiry, making it usually difficult to predict the course and outcome of the data gathering processes and therefore difficult to inform potential participants in a comprehensive way before their consent to participate (Smythe and Murray, 2014, p. 177). For this reason, I emphasized at the beginning of every interview and in my request sheets the narrative nature of my research, assuming that my interview partners and respondents would be aware of the character of their participation and the use of their provided narratives, being themselves from the academia and familiar with different qualitative research methods.

Moreover, in order to guarantee the ***privacy and anonymity*** of my interview partners and respondents, I tried to disguise their identity by way of giving pseudonyms to interviewees, narrators of written stories as well as to students and professors with whom I had everyday conversations. For that, I resorted to lists of names arguably popular in Romania (Bielefeld, 2018) and in the Republic of Moldova (Bielefeld, 2007), from which I randomly chose names. As, however, the rich in detail and highly individual narratives might make it difficult to guarantee the anonymity of research participants despite the use of pseudonyms (Smythe and Murray, 2014, p. 178), I try in addition to ensure their anonymity and privacy by way of avoiding the quoting and direct referring to too private details shared in the narratives. Closely linked to that is the risk of ***causing social harm,*** at first because of the eventual emotional nature of the stories provided, secondly due to the potential emotional impact it might have when recognizing one's own story reinterpreted and analysed, or by failing to protect the integrity of participant's reputations and relationships with others who recognize them in the analysed narratives (Smythe and Murray, 2014, p. 178). In addition to therefore trying to disguise the identity of my respondents as far as possible, I informed them in advance about the narrative and personal character of my research. Moreover, I tried to avoid too intrusive or private questions during my interviews, to avoid highly emotional responses, and to be careful not to cause any inconvenience to my interview partners. In this regard, collecting written narratives might also have represented a valuable alternative to the conduct of interviews, since

it allowed to provide personal narratives in written form instead of telling narratives directly to a person, spontaneously, and maybe not that well thought through during an interview.

This highly personal character of the narratives I asked for might also have contributed to a certain ***sensitivity of my research topic***. However, the majority of people that I asked did not reject to participate in my research, preferring only sometimes to provide their narratives in written form in their mother tongue to narrating them in English or German face-to-face during an interview. In consequence, only once I experienced that participation in my research was rejected due to the perceived sensitivity of the research topic. This happened when I asked professors at a school in Sculeni for their written narratives, some of whom did not want to share any of their experiences with me since, as far as I understood it, they were afraid of saying anything negative about the work of the customs officers or about practices related to the Romanian-Moldovan border crossing points Sculeni-Sculeni and Ungheni-Nicolina close by. Thus, some either refrained completely from providing me with any written narrative, or they declared that "I have nothing to tell.", or "I did not make any negative experiences at the border." This perception is also highlighted by a few written narratives that I collected in Sculeni, such as "When crossing the border, I was pleased […]" (Eugenia, Ungheni, Sept. 2017), or "I have a rather good opinion of the Romanian-Moldovan state border." (Tamara, Sculeni, Sept. 2017). Statements, that were interestingly enough not present in narratives collected in Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi, and Chişinău, and which might be considered as indicators for the high integration of the state border in everyday cross-border activities of the inhabitants in the district of Ungheni (see also section 5). However, in general, I gained the impression that people did not find my questions too intrusive or the topic of my research topic too sensitive but were curious and interested in assisting me in my research by providing their narratives.

This interest in participating in my research project might also have been due to the fact that I was from abroad, an "outsider", who was considered as a neutral person, suitable to talk to about these topics, since I seemed not to take any stand regarding the Romanian nation-building project, the Moldovan nation-building project, etc. Moreover, since I am neither from Romania nor from the Republic of Moldova, my interview partners seemed to be highly interested in explaining to me their perceptions of the political, social and cultural situation in their countries, to discuss those topics also within a broader European context, and, after having found out that I grew up in a border region myself, to compare the situation at the Romanian-Moldovan state border to that of the German-French state border. Consequently, I gained the impression that

my ***(researcher) positionality*** did not hamper the conduct of my research, but that it rather facilitated and stimulated it by way of triggering detailed explanations and discussions.

Overall, I hope that by having thus been aware of the ethical sensitiveness of my research, I was able to avoid the causing of any social harm or of any negative implications during the whole research process, and that, at the opposite, due to the establishing of personal, trusting relations it was possible to generate together with my research participants the in the following outlined hopefully new, deep insights into collective identities on the micro scale.

5. THE EMBEDDEDNES OF THE STATE BORDER IN EVERYDAY BORDERING PRACTICES

One of the first aspects that struck me was that in their stories about their everyday life experiences related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova often refer to the same collective identities with, however, geographically differing physical boundaries, depending on whether they are used to allow for broader identification of larger groups of people, or for a limited identification only of a more narrowly-defined group. In consequence, in order to highlight how these identities can range from a narrow identity group to a broader one, I decided to analyse and represent these various collective identities in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded by arranging them along two continuums, as also highlighted in Table 1 below.

Within ***continuum 1,*** based on which my analysis is divided into three parts, I differentiate between:

a) collective identities clearly stating the Romanian-Moldovan state border as their symbolic physical boundary (e.g. Romanian vs. Moldovan national identity),
b) collective identities that bridge entirely or partly the Romanian-Moldovan state border but do not comprise the whole state territory of either the Republic of Moldova or of Romania or of both, and
c) collective identities that bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border completely and comprise the whole state territory of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova.

Within these three parts of continuum 1, the narrated collective identities are arranged along ***continuum 2,*** ranging from narrowly-defined identities (e.g. linguistic identities), to broader identities with various imagined shared characteristics of their members (e.g. cultural identities incorporating also linguistic identities).

Types of collective identities	Collective identities with the state border as symbolic boundary	De-/re-bordering collective identities (applying for some parts of Romania/RM)	Bridging collective identities (applying for Romania and RM)
Civic identities *(spatial rights, etc.)*	(1) Romanian vs. Moldovan civic identity		(1) Hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity
Linguistic identities *(language)*	(2) Romanian vs. Moldovan linguistic identity	(1) Southern Muntenian vs. Northern Moldovan identity (2) Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity	(2) Romanian linguistic identity
Religious identities *(Orthodoxy, canonical territory)*	(3) Romanian vs. Russian Orthodox religious identity		(3) Slavic-Orthodox religious identity
(Post-)socialist and/or (post-)Soviet identities *(cultural, economic, political traits)*	(4) Non-Soviet vs. post-Soviet identity	(3) Post-socialist vs. Soviet identity	(4) Post-socialist identity
Cultural identities incl. ethnic identities *(traditions, language, religion)*	(5) Romanian-vs. Russian-Moldovan cultural identity		(5) Romanian cultural identity (6) Romanian ethnic identity
Regional identities incl. narrow borderland identities *(cultural, economic and political traits)*	(6) Romanian Moldovan borderland identity (7) Narrow Moldovan borderland identity (8) Bessarabian borderland identity	(4) Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity (5) Narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity (6) Regional Moldavian identity	
National identities *(culture, territory, ancestry, history, etc.)*	(9) Romanian vs. Moldovan national identity	(7) Moldavian national identity (8) Pan-Romanianist national identity	(7) Extended pan-Romanianist national identity
European identity and European sub-identities *(culture, value system, history, European mesoregions, etc.)*	(10) European vs. non-European identity	(9) Extended European vs. non-European identity	(8) European identity
	(11) (Eastern) European vs. Wider European identity	(10) Balkan identity	(9) Wider European identity (10) Eastern European identity (11) Western European identity
Eurasian identity *(culture, political traits, history, etc.)*	(12) European vs. Eurasian identity		(12) Eurasian identity
Borderland identities *(cultural, economic and political hybridity)*	(13) Romanian non-borderland identity vs. Moldovan borderland identity		(13) Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity

Table 1: Dividing, de-/re-bordering and bridging collective identities in everyday life.
Source: own representation.

5.1 The pervasive state border: territorial proximity as the lowest common denominator?

Based on these two continuums, I illustrate at first the borderscapes of collective identities that depict the Romanian-Moldovan state border as one of their imagined symbolic physical boundaries, highlighting by that also the significant role that the Romanian-Moldovan state border plays in the social construction of collective identities in everyday life. These collective identities, which I outline in this section step by step, are:

(1) Romanian vs. Moldovan citizenship/civic identity
(2) Romanian vs. Moldovan linguistic identity
(3) Romanian vs. Russian Orthodox religious identity
(4) Non-post-Soviet vs. post-Soviet identity
(5) Romanian vs. Russian-Moldovan cultural identity
(6) Romanian vs. Moldovan national identity
(7) European vs. non-European identity
(8) (Eastern) European vs. Wider European identity
(9) European vs. Eurasian identity
(10) Romanian Moldovan borderland identity
(11) Narrow Moldovan borderland identity
(12) Bessarabian borderland identity
(13) Romanian non-borderland vs. Moldovan borderland identity

Romanian vs. Moldovan civic identity

- **Type of collective identity:** civic identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan civic identity (dividing) - hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania **or** state territory of RM
- **Temporality:** past, present and future
- **Multi-scalar:** national, European and international scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

I begin the outlining of these dividing collective identities with perceptions of two distinct Romanian and Moldovan civic identities, since one main difference between people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, to which almost all storytellers referred to, are depicted ***differences in citizenship.*** In this regard, both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, narratives such as from Viorica (Ungheni, Sept. 2017) and Oliviu (Iaşi, Sept. 2017) usually emphasize that the Romanian-Moldovan state border represents, first and foremost, the administrative border of ***two distinct political communities,*** of the Romanian state and the Republic of Moldova: "For me […], crossing the border is of no political significance, but just of a bureaucratic one without any meaning." (Oliviu, Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

For Moldovan citizens, however, ***spatial rights*** such as the right to enter the territory of Romania and of Schengen member states seem to be crucial and at the core of Romanian and Moldovan citizenship. Consequently, as highlighted by Viorica (Ungheni, Oct. 2017), Mariana (Sculeni, Sept. 2017), and Oleg, Tudor and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), most Moldovan citizens are aware of a gradual increase in the spatial rights linked to their Moldovan citizenship. According to Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), after 1991, it was rather easy for Moldovan citizens to cross the Romanian-Moldovan state border for business reasons, traveling, etc., transforming by that the state border from a highly militarized and barrier-like border in Soviet times into a highly permeable one. This changed again with the EU accession of Romania in 2007, when Moldovan citizens were required to obtain a Romanian tourist visa or to apply for Romanian-Moldovan double citizenship to enter the Romanian state territory, until the visa liberalization for Moldovan citizens in 2015: "Regarding documents, it is simple now (2017), you have a BIOMETRIC travel passport/tourism passport and you can cross the border without any problems. Initially, when Romania became part of the EU (2007), it was necessary to have a tourist visa, so it was a more difficult time." (Viorica, Ungheni, Oct. 2017)

For Romanian citizens, in contrast, spatial rights linked to their Romanian citizenship at least regarding the requirements for entering the Moldovan state territory, seem of far less importance and people therefore often not aware of changes: "I do not remember very clearly, but I do not think we needed passports, we entered Moldova with our IDs." (Daria, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017). As a result, at least from a Romanian point of view, no further increase in spatial rights regarding the entering of the respectively neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) seems to be required: "[The citizens of the Republic of Moldova] will decide where they want to go, which step to make. And if they are of the opinion that the European Union is better [than Russia], then yes, the borders will be opened. But now it is enough. Now it is good the way it is." (Oana, Cluj, Sept. 2017).

Even though attributing thus different meanings to the Romanian or Moldovan citizenship, in both countries the respective citizenship is perceived as being congruent with the state borders of Romania or of the Republic of Moldova, including the territory of the de-facto independent Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria), as pointed out by Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017). By that, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is depicted as a linear border, representing the physical eastern boundary of the Romanian citizenship and the physical western boundary of the Moldovan citizenship, requiring, arguably, no further alterations for the future. With this perception of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as boundary of Romanian and Moldovan

citizenship being in line with past and current understandings of state sovereignty and entailing duties and rights of state citizenship on the national, European and international scale, it can, in my opinion, be considered as a hegemonic borderscape.

In addition to that, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is often described in Romania and the Republic of Moldova as representing the physical boundary of various linguistic, religious and cultural identities. From a Romanian point of view, the crossing of the Romanian-Moldovan state border seems, for instance, to mark the leaving of a territorial unit, the Romanian state territory, where only the ***Romanian language*** is present in everyday life, and the entering of another territorial unit, the Moldovan state territory, where ***Russian*** next to Romanian represents one of the dominant languages in everyday life, as expressed by Catrina (Iaşi, Oct. 2017): "The first difference I noticed was when I saw numerous posters in the Russian language. This aspect also struck me in the city of Chişinău.", and by Oliviu (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "By all accounts, there are only few who have had the feeling of being in another country. A feeling of alienation stems from the social picture affected by economic problems and the use of the Russian language."

Romanian vs. Moldovan linguistic identity

- **Type of collective identity:** linguistic identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan linguistic identity (dividing) - Southern Muntenian/Northern Moldovan linguistic identity and pan-Latin/Francophone identity (de-/re-bordering) – Romanian linguistic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania **or** state territory of RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

In Romania, this image of a ***"Russified" linguistic landscape*** in the Republic of Moldova extends, sometimes, to perceived significant differences between the Romanian language used in everyday life in Romania and the Romanian language spoken in the Republic of Moldova where it is, presumably, exposed to strong Russian linguistic influences:

> They speak Romanian. But they don't speak it in a grammatically correct way. Err, in which sense? First, they speak it with a lot of Russian words, and that is, I think, the biggest problem, because […] they don't know anymore if a word is Romanian or Russian. […] When they are in Romania, they really try to talk in Romanian. But since they don't know anymore what is Romanian, […] they don't know how to do it.
>
> (Oana, Cluj, Sept. 2017)

Whereas in the Republic of Moldova, the Romanian language spoken in everyday life is often understood as merely a Romanian dialect: "The language was a bit different, and the way of expression. It's like in German, you know, someone from north is different from Bavaria. Language is something taking from air, soil, from the river or where you live, it's very

particular. Of course, this is not a different language, but…" (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). A Romanian dialect which, however, has been influenced by the Russian language: "We're not talking clear Romanian, it's Moldovan dialect, that's why they [Romanians] sometimes couldn't understand us. Moldovan dialect is a combination with Russian and Romanian words. And they… it's hard to get us clearly." (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Consequently, even though Romanian officially represents the state language of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, people in both countries seem to continue perceiving the Romanian-Moldovan state border as the linear physical boundary of two different linguistic landscapes, ranging from imagined crucial linguistic differences to that of merely dialectical distinctions. These spatial imaginaries can, as outlined in section 2, be traced back to the past discourse of a Moldovan nation with a distinct Moldovan language in Soviet times as well as to the current Moldovenist national narrative portraying Moldovan as a distinct language due to the merging of the Romanian and Russian language. Being, however, not in line with the currently official discourses of the Romanian and Moldovan governments on the national scale, those distinctions may, in my opinion, be considered as counter-hegemonic.

Romanian vs. Russian Orthodox religious identity

- **Type of collective identity:** religious identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Russian Orthodox religious identity (dividing) - Slavic-Orthodox religious identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** canonical territory of the Romanian Orthodox Church except for the RM **or** canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** low (only in Romania)
- Hegemonic

Similarly, even though officially representing two Eastern Orthodox countries, cultural distinctions also extend to the ***religious sphere.*** In this regard, distinctions are made between the ***canonical territory*** of the Romanian Orthodox Church, where according to the Gregorian calendar Christmas as a public holiday is celebrated on the 25th and 26th of December, and the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church where Christmas is celebrated on the 6th or 7th of January as stipulated by the Julian calendar. In consequence, as pointed out by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), whereas in Romania Christmas is celebrated in December, it is celebrated in the Republic of Moldova both in December and in January since it is part of the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church and of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In addition to this minor differing religious trait, ***religiosity*** is depicted as very strong especially on the countryside in the Republic of Moldova, and as being supported by some political parties depicting Orthodoxy as one key aspect for defining the traditional Moldovan way of life, being thus, according to Valeriu, one

reason for a more religious and conservative society in the Republic of Moldova than in Romania:

> You still have to deal with a very patriarchal, traditionalist society. And the Socialist Party has played a lot with that because they, they are socialist, but they are also very orthodox, fanatic orthodox, traditionalist: "We are the family people, we are religious, we don't like gay." The gay issue is mostly not talked off in Moldova, but they make a lot of noise about it, because it's, it was a way to define traditional Moldovan way of life, of identity.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

These distinctions seem to be roughly in line with the current discourse on the international scale about a Eurasian community united by perceived superior moral values grounded in the Orthodox belief within the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, including the Republic of Moldova (see section 2). However, as they are only mentioned by Elvira and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca), I consider these distinctions as rather fuzzy and low in importance for people living in the Republic of Moldova as well as in Romania compared to other perceived differences. Nevertheless, these two collective identities can be considered as hegemonic since they are congruent with the current canonical territories of the Orthodox Church.

In contrast to that, cultural differences that seem to be more concise refer to distinctions between a ***non-post-Soviet heritage*** in Romania and a ***post-Soviet heritage*** in the Republic of Moldova. These distinctions can range from mere observations of Soviet architecture in the Republic of Moldova (Matei, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), of the main infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova dating back to Soviet times (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), of the city of Bălţi representing a Soviet creation (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), to that of a past Soviet mindset, influencing, arguably, the mentality and structure of the Moldovan society even today: "The Republic of Moldova was part of the huge territory of the USSR. The language, the mentality of people was really very strongly shaped, yes? That affects everything, social life and so on." (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017). By that, even though both countries are depicted as former socialist countries, the Republic of Moldova is nevertheless often portrayed as still ***adhering to its Soviet past*** in contrast to Romania:

Non-post-Soviet vs. post-Soviet identity

- **Type of collective identity:** (post-)socialist/(post-)Soviet identity
- **Continuum 1:** non-post-Soviet/post-Soviet identity (dividing) – post-socialist/Soviet identity (de-/re-bordering) - post-socialist identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of other countries (not further defined) **or** state territories of RM and of other post-Soviet countries (e.g. Caucasian countries)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Hegemonic

> There is nostalgia for the Soviet Union, of course, for material reasons, mainly. People simply were, or they simply perceive that they were much better off, but they were, in rural areas definitely, especially in the last two decades of the Soviet regime. There is something to it, you know, it's not only rhetoric. In terms of basic amenities, in terms of stability, in terms of medical services, very concrete things, I mean, in terms of access to education, you know. Of course, they remember these things. And then you have the nostalgia. They don't remember other things, like shortages, like queues.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

As a result, strict distinctions are sometimes made between Romania and the Republic of Moldova: "Moldova belongs to Soviet world. It belongs there. It is not, I hope it will change, but it's a fact, the way people are acting, the way politics is working, it's Soviet world, it's not European world. So there is a big difference to Romania." (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017).

These perceptions of cultural differences between Romania and the Republic of Moldova due to the Republic of Moldova's imagined Soviet heritage are shared by Romanians and Moldovans, turning the Romanian-Moldovan state border into the border between a non-post-Soviet and a post-Soviet country. Moreover, these portrayals can be traced back to the time when the territory of today's Republic of Moldova represented the territory of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (1940-41, 1944-91), and find expression in the membership of the Republic of Moldova in the CIS on the macro scale nowadays.

Together with distinctions between a Romanian and Moldovan linguistic landscape, and Romanian and Russian Orthodox religious traits, these differences between a Soviet and non-Soviet heritage are sometimes added up to the image of a ***Romanian cultural sphere*** being divided from a ***Russian-Moldovan cultural space*** by the Romanian-Moldovan state border**.** In this regard, ***Russian cultural influences*** in the Republic of Moldova are especially localized in Russian media and the use of the Russian language in kindergartens, at schools and universities:

Romanian vs. Russian-Moldovan cultural identity

- **Type of collective identity:** cultural identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Russian-Moldovan cultural identity (dividing) – Romanian cultural identity and Romanian ethnic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania **or** state territory of RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

> And here we grew up with Russian television, Russian newspapers, a lot of Russians are living here, Russian schools. We learn English and Russian. English is from 2nd class and Russian is from 5th to 9th, so four years of Russian and then you can choose if you would like to study in Russian school or in Romanian, it's up to you. And then in kindergartens, there are also like Russian groups of kids, also happens at university.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In addition to differing cultural post-Soviet traits and Moldovan linguistic traits, as mentioned above, these current Russian cultural influences are imagined by people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova as mounting up to a distinct ***cultural sphere*** in the Republic of Moldova, as expressed by Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "When I went there, I was of the opinion that I am not in Romania, but that it is a small Romania, it was a small Romania. [But] they weren't Romanians, because the mentality wasn't like it, it also isn't right now, the mentality of most of them is completely different.", and by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> And then when you arrived you saw that, yes, they were speaking the same language, but they had different cultural references, for example. They spoke differently, I mean not only phonetically, their accent, but also the colloquial speech was, the jargons so to say, the used vocabulary was different. So you had a cultural shock.

However, according to Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), there has been in the last years a process of mutual cultural adaptation between the inhabitants of both countries, resulting today often in a simple awareness of cultural particularities: "Well, these differences can be charming." (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017).

Consequently, perceptions of a Romanian cultural sphere and a Russian-Moldovan cultural sphere with the Romanian-Moldovan state border as their physical boundary are rather fuzzy, not necessarily very strict, and can be reduced to simple regional differences. However, they can be traced back to discourses about a distinct Moldovan culture and nation in Soviet times as well as to the present Moldovenist national narrative on the national scale.

By that, in turn, distinctions between a Romanian and a Russian-Moldovan cultural sphere can also be used for depicting the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova and of Romania as two ***different nations.*** For that, linguistic, religious and cultural differences between the inhabitants of the two countries as well as certain cultural similarities are explained with imagined ***distinct origins*** of the Romanian and the Moldovan peoples whose histories only periodically intersected over the course of time, as implied by Galina (Ungheni, Sept. 2017): "Romania is a wonderful country with a rich history." More precisely, both Ion (Ungheni, Oct. 2017) and Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) explain these differing origins and histories mounting up to two distinct nations, the Romanian and the

Romanian vs. Moldovan national identity

- **Type of collective identity:** national identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan national identity (dividing) - Moldavian national identity and pan-Romanianist national identity (de-/re-bordering) – extended pan-Romanianist national identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania **or** state territory of RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national, European and international scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

Moldovan nation, with the origins of the Moldovan nation as dating back to the Moldavian Principality (1359-1811) and the reign of the Moldavian prince Stefan the Great (Ştefan cel Mare, 1433-1504): „we are not the same, we are two different countries; if we look at Ştefan in the past, then all origins are in Moldova." (Ion, Ungheni, Oct. 2017). Nevertheless, in line with the Moldovenist national narrative on the macro scale (Ţîcu, 2016, p. 55), the in this case identified ***territory*** to which the imagined Moldovan nation feels attached to is to be found within the current official state borders of the Republic of Moldova, despite the fact that the territory of the Moldavian Principality comprised the historical region of Moldova in today's Romania as well and did not extend to Transnistria.

Moreover, the ***Romanian language*** spoken in the Republic of Moldova represents one key marker of the Moldovan national identity, being, however, arguably rather of importance for distinguishing between Moldovans and non-Romanian speaking people such as Ukrainians and Russians within the Republic of Moldova: "People are living here for whole their life and they don't know even one word in Romanian. And sometimes Moldovan people that are really patriotic they get crazy about this. They start fighting." (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). In addition, in the Republic of Moldova, especially the perceived ***traditions*** of the Moldovan nation seem to be of importance for distinguishing between the Romanian and Moldovan nation, and are considered as being still preserved in the more traditional south of today's Republic of Moldova: "If you go to the south, there is more like, not poverty, but rustic. There is more rustic style of life. And persons are like it were at the beginning in Moldova, and you can see how Moldova actually is. From where Moldovans became." (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Which is supplemented by, as already mentioned, Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) arguing that there is a distinct traditional Moldovan way of life in today's Republic of Moldova, grounded in religious Orthodox values. Overall, people in the Republic of Moldova are therefore sometimes perceived as being highly attached to their country and its identified ***national cultural heritage:***

> And, yes, also the delicious dishes in the restaurant named "La plăcinte ", which you can also find in Romania in Bucharest or Sibiu (but not in Cluj), stayed in my mind, or the excellent wine I tasted in the wine cellars of Cricova, which I visited in the evening, after the courses, thanks to the kindness of my colleagues at the university, eager to show me as much of the treasures of Moldova, as they boasted so firmly. Yes, the Moldovans I met seemed to love their country very much, as it is rarely felt, I would say, in Romania.
>
> (Eleonora, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

This assumption is also confirmed by Tudor and Raisa (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) despite of being aware of the multiple shortcomings and problems within the Republic of Moldova: "I love this

country. It's my home country." (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), indicating an ***attachment*** to the "own" home country which seems sometimes to be further strengthened by the feeling of being exposed to external (Romanian) ***discrimination:***

> It took us five hours to reach the customs office […]. When it was finally our turn to pass the customs control, I became the witness of a lady working at the border saying, I quote: "I do not love these people, let them stay in the queue until morning, I am in no hurry at all." Please note that five hours after us, I think, there was a queue maybe even bigger than it had been before, I was struck by her words […]. Do you know what is said about the impression you gain about a people after having talked to its (for you) first member, and what do you think what impression you gain after having heard such words spoken towards you? Since then I am against any rapprochement with Romania, especially against a unification.
>
> (Ion, Ungheni, Oct. 2017)

As a result, as pointed out by Ion (Ungheni, Oct. 2017), as well as by Raisa and Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), one goal for the future development of the Republic of Moldova is often not that of a reunification with Romania, but of preserving its ***state sovereignty,*** which is met by similar preferences among parts of the Romanian population of a Romanian sovereign state in its current territorial shape as expressed by Oana and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). In Romania, however, this goal for the future is rather explained by the perceived currently disastrous economic situation of the Republic of Moldova and unwillingness of the Moldovan population itself to reunite, instead of referring to an imagined distinct Romanian nation:

> What this Romanian party is saying, that they want a united Romania, I don't think they really want that, and also Romania doesn't want that, Romania, we people don't want that […]. Because, first, they are poor. If they are poor and we make a united Romania, we have to send money there, or to invest, to reconstruct at first, yes. Romania also isn't, well, I can't say that Romania has that much money to say "Oh, come, we give you money." No. And I can, we cannot do that for another country. They, first, they don't want that, secondly, because there is a big corruption.
>
> (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

These statements seem to confirm the theory of Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), and of Elvira and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) of currently revived ***nationalist discourses*** both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova on the national scale with, however, differing cultural markers. While in the Republic of Moldova the current Moldovan president Igor Dodon is perceived as supporting the idea of a distinct Moldovan nation (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), the present Romanian government is considered as pursuing a strong internally homogenizing form of nationalism as in the past: "This nationalist pressure is against Hungarians, and then often against Roma. But if you ask them if they want to reunite with Bessarabia, then they will already be rather sceptical." (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). As a result, animosities from both sides are, arguably, more often to be encountered again:

> You can have also some people in Moldova, who don't like Romania at all, and they have to, they are in, you know, in another country, and they don't feel well, and they are aggressive, and so on. And it's also valid, both sides. You know, you have a part of Romanians who think that Moldovans that come that the way they are, they are just Russians, or they are stupid and so on, and they speak very bad Romanian. You can have this kind of patriotism. [But] it's very mixed.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Consequently, in this case, by being grounded in the Moldovenist national narrative, in past and current discourses of Romanian civic nationalism in Romania, as well as in international concepts of nation-states whose territorial borders are congruent with the boundaries of a nation, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is perceived as representing the linear physical boundary between the Romanian and the Moldovan nation.

European vs. non-European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** European/non-European identity (dividing) – extended European/non-European identity (de-/re-bordering) – European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of other countries(e.g. EU member states) **or** state territories of RM and of other countries (e.g. Ukraine, Russia)
- **Border function:** security function
- **Temporality:** present
- **Multi-scalar:** European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

Another way to explain perceived cultural differences and especially imagined distinct value systems in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova is to ascribe both countries to two different cultural, economic and political spheres, such as to a ***European and a non-European sphere.*** In this regard, particularly ***social values*** shared by members of the Moldovan society are perceived as differing strongly from those of the Romanian society. This entails, for instance, a rather patriarchal societal structure in the Republic of Moldova compared to Romania and, arguably, other European countries:

> But those that came from the countryside, they were, they really were, they couldn't understand that women are also human beings, that women also have an opinion about things […]. You had an opinion about something: no, it wasn't good, no. You could say it, of course, you could do everything, but all men […] were against you. And they don't say, so what I like, counter-arguments, and strong counter-arguments, [but]: "No, you are not right." Because you are a woman. You are not right, that's it.
>
> (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

And it is closely linked to perceptions of more narrowly defined socially accepted ways of life for women in the Republic of Moldova:

> If you have a child and you are not married, everybody is looking like "Oh, my God! Fie! Stay away from this person!" Like kind of this stuff. And we understand that in other parts of the world it's not like this, it's… situations are different. […] If we go in a kind of village, and you don't have a ring on this [is showing her ring finger on her

> right hand], and you have baby, nobody is talking with you. […] If you go, for example, in cities, it is not like this. I mean, you can find a couple of people, maybe. But if you go to some villages, especially villages where there are less people, and a couple of families together, so it is like this. And if you tell them I am going to party tonight: "Oh my God! You are so bad!" And if you get a housing and you are living with an old woman, she would not allow you to go out somewhere, or to meet someone.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

These perceived patriarchal societal structure and gender inequality are, in turn, often depicted as mere examples illustrating that in general societies in European countries such as in Romania are ***more diverse and less discriminating*** than in the Republic of Moldova:

> People are looking strange if you are dressed differently. If you have like colourful hair, they are too much concentrated on your, like the way you look. And they can also treat you bad. In Europe, no, I saw a lot of people with earrings like everywhere, colourful hair, and all interesting kind of clothes and nobody cares about this. I mean, there is no discrimination.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

> The values that most of the people have, which are very conservative. Try to speak about gay people in Moldova. Even in Chişinău, you will have despite. Try to ask a young woman if she would marry a black person. Try to speak about the place of women to someone on the countryside. So, the cultural background is not the same.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Furthermore, these different values find, arguably, also expression in ***high levels of corruption*** in the educational system, the political system as well as in everyday life in the Republic of Moldova compared to an imagined almost non-existent corruption in European countries such as Romania, as argued by Raisa (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). And, what is more, the "non-Europeanness" of the Republic of Moldova is seen in its ***political system*** being far from that of a democracy, as expressed by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). Together with perceived ***lower living standards*** compared to European ones (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and a ***poor economic situation*** (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), the Republic of Moldova is therefore often described as not forming part of the European sphere, in contrast to Romania:

> I hope it will change, but it's a fact, the way people are acting, the way politics is working, it's Soviet world, it's not European world. So there is a big difference to Romania, which is a chaotic European country, but it's a European country. Moldova doesn't have this European culture. I am also a bit pessimistic because I've been disappointed. I had believed that they can change, but they can't. And it's the same in Ukraine.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Consequently, following these spatial imaginaries, the Romanian-Moldovan state border represents the external physical boundary of a European identity shared by societies in Romania

and other European countries, but not in the Republic of Moldova and other countries such as Ukraine, being by that in line with ideas on the European scale of a European identity shared by all EU-member states. In addition, in contrast to the so far mentioned collective identities, these distinctions between a European Romania and a non-European Republic of Moldova seem to assign a significant ***security function*** to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, being depicted as providing protection against political and social insecurity, low living standards and poor economic conditions, less respect of democratic rights and diversity, etc. on its other side, i.e. on the Moldovan side of the border: "In 40-45 minutes we were back at the border with Romania and we could breathe more easily: 'Oh, that's nice, we are back home, that's the European Union.' That is our feeling. The feeling is that there is a sense of insecurity. So, you're scared." (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017). As a result, the notion whether or not the Republic of Moldova forms part of the European sphere seems to be highly important, also in order to explain and justify the Romanian-Moldovan state border as the EU's external border on the micro scale.

This idea of two societies with different value systems being divided in the form of the EU's external border, is also, evidently, linked to ideas about ***Wider Europe.*** In this regard, the Republic of Moldova is not considered as forming part of an imagined non-European sphere, but, at first, as simply belonging to another part of Europe than Romania, as implied by Amelia (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017): "Of course, I was full of enthusiasm and curiosity, not just because I really enjoy traveling, but also because I had never been to this part of Europe." Moreover, in line with ideas of "Wider Europe" on the macro scale (see section 2.3), the Republic of Moldova is described as a country with a from Romania and other European countries ***differing value system,*** having, however, the potential of becoming a European country and of aiming at becoming an EU member state by undergoing a ***process of Europeanization*** and adaptation of imagined EU-values, as elaborated by Oleg and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), and by Călin:

(Eastern) European vs. Wider European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** (Eastern) European/Wider European identity (dividing) - Balkan identity (de-/re-bordering) - Wider European identity and Eastern European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of other countries (not further defined) **or** state territories of RM and of other countries (member states of the Eastern Partnership)
- **Temporality:** present and future
- **Multi-scalar:** European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

> Most of young people in Moldova are quite oriented towards the European Union. Romania helps in the Europeanization of the country because here it is like in Germany after the Second World War. It first had to work on denazification and democratization of the country [Germany]. Also in the Republic of Moldova, there first needs to be "derussification" and Europeanization.
>
> Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

At the same time, especially due to its membership in the Eastern Partnership, the Republic of Moldova seems similar to other EU neighbouring countries to be perceived as to already some extent ***economically integrated*** into the EU:

> Because of Eastern Partnership and its commercial parts you have a lot of technical, hygienic, normative standards, which are very difficult to reach for a lot of Moldovan producers. Some of them manage to do so. […] You have European or internal partnership [that] has helped some sectors, some, like textiles, shoes. […] So, on some very specific production you have an improvement, kind of. Mostly in Transnistria, because they produce at lower costs than in the rest of the country.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

This partly economic integration led, however, not necessarily to closer economic ties between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, as pointed out by Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). In contrast to that, the possibility to travel visa-free within the Schengen-area did, according to Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), contribute to a perceived further ***political integration*** of the Republic of Moldova as well as to the feeling of being closer to Europe in the Republic of Moldova and to better relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. While the Republic of Moldova is thus considered as being rather at the beginning of the process of Europeanization, Romania is described as being further but not as far in this process than other, imagined more Western European countries: "Moldovans think that Romania is a European country. But not like Germany. […] Well, Romania is, how can I say it, better than Moldova, but worse than Germany or France or Italy or Spain." (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, according to these spatial imaginaries, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is imagined to represent the physical boundary of the "Wider European" identity in the Republic of Moldova and of the European, even though not "core-European" identity in Romania, being thus in line with the current concept of Wider Europe on the European scale, and assigning the Republic of Moldova with a goal for its future development.

Again another way to explain imagined cultural differences as well as differing value systems in the Republic of Moldova and Romania represent descriptions of Romania as ***European*** and of the Republic of Moldova as ***Eurasian***. Loosely anchored in the current concept of Eurasianism on the macro scale, in Romania, the perception of the Republic of

European vs. Eurasian identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European or Eurasian identity
- **Continuum 1:** European/Eurasian identity (dividing) - Eurasian identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of EU member states (e.g. Romania) **or** state territories of potential and actual members states of the Eurasian Union (e.g. the RM)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** European and international scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Hegemonic

Moldova forming part of the Eurasian sphere seems at first to be based on imagined mixed "eastern" and European cultural features of the Moldovan society. In this regard, the "eastern" influence in the Republic of Moldova is especially localised in its Soviet cultural heritage, current Russian linguistic and cultural influences as well as more traditional orthodox values in some parts of the Moldovan society, as outlined above. However, as pointed out by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), this eastern influence can also be traced back to far earlier times when Bessarabia formed part of the Russian Empire (1812-1917), resulting together with Romania's and the Republic of Moldova's intertwined history in a colourful mixture of ***European and Russian cultural traits:*** "We have this unique heritage of diversity, of multi ethnicity dating from the Tsarist period, that we somehow, we don't know how to administer, and we don't know how to turn to our advantage." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017).

Similarly, also the Moldovan ***economy*** is perceived as being linked to the European market due the Republic of Moldova's membership in the Eastern Partnership and the established Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU, and at the same time to the Eurasian market due to the Republic of Moldova's still essential economic ties with Russia suffering, however, under the current Russian economic blockade, and the offer to join the Eurasian Economic Union, with the result that "the Republic of Moldova will also continue for a while to oscillate between the EU and the Eurasian Union." (Fiodor, Iaşi, Sept. 2017). In consequence, as pointed out by Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), in the cultural, economic as well as political sphere, the Republic of Moldova seems to be oriented towards both the Russian and the European model, while Romania is focusing exclusively on the European one.

Based on these reflections, the Romanian-Moldovan state border can be understood as the physical boundary between a European identity in Romania (and other countries) and a Eurasian identity in the Republic of Moldova (and other countries). By that, this spatial imaginary is roughly in line with the current geopolitical concept of Eurasianism on the international scale, as well as to some extent with ideas of a Western and a Slavic-Orthodox civilization as defined by Samuel Huntington (1996), even though including in this case whole Romania in the Western civilization. Interestingly enough, however, in contrast to a perceived "Wider European" or non-European identity of the Republic of Moldova, this concept of a Eurasian identity of the Republic of Moldova was not mentioned in narratives of students.

All these so far outlined spatial imaginaries on the micro scale depicting the Romanian-Moldovan state border as the symbolic physical boundary of different collective identities, are further strengthened by several imagined borderlands stretching along the Romanian-Moldovan state border, which are often portrayed as spaces of gradual transition from one cultural sphere to another. On the Romanian side of the state border, one of these imagined ***borderlands*** seems to be localized in the form of the ***historical Romanian region of Moldova*** (or Moldova Occidentală).

Romanian Moldovan borderland identity

- **Type of collective identity:** regional borderland identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity and regional Moldavian identity (de-/re-bordering)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** historical territory of the Romanian region of Moldova (Moldova Occidentală)
- **Border function:** (limited) place of contact and exchange + security function
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** regional, national and European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

The imagined cultural distinctiveness of the historical Romanian region of Moldova from other parts of Romania refers, at first, to its ***cultural heritage*** from the time of the Moldavian Principality, as expressed, for instance, by the famous historical Romanian Orthodox Churches and Monasteries in its northern parts, such as the Neamț Monastery (Mănăstirea Neamț) and the Văratec Monastery (Mănăstirea Văratec) build under Stephan the Great and his successors (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). Similarly, since the ***Romanian subdialect of Moldovan*** is spoken in the Romanian region of Moldova as well as in the Republic of Moldova, in contrast to the Muntenian subdialect in the south and west of Romania (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), the Romanian region of Moldova is often portrayed due to its past in the Moldavian Principality as culturally and linguistically slightly distinct from other parts of Romania and of sharing several cultural traits especially with the western part of today's Republic of Moldova with which it once formed the Moldavian Principality. This perception of a ***cultural transit zone*** seems to extend to a perceived ***mixture of populations*** in the form of rather high numbers of migrants from the Republic of Moldova living, working or studying in the Romanian region of Moldova and especially in the city of Iaşi (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), and to the rather poor ***economic situation*** of the Romanian region of Moldova similar to other peripheral areas in Romania, such as southern Oltenia (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). This ***peripheral position*** of the Romanian region of Moldova seems also to be further increased by lacking infrastructure connecting the region to other parts or to the centre of the country (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017).

What is more, as a perceived borderland, the Romanian region of Moldova is also imagined to be characterized by ***semi-legal cross-border activities:*** "It is a border region here, there are many smugglers and thieves and so on, human trafficking…" (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017). Which is, from a Moldovan point of view, confirmed in so far as smuggling seems to have been a rather common practice in the past, being, however, limited now merely to the smuggling of cigarettes from the Republic of Moldova to Romania:

> Smuggling of other products was more, more likely to be, you know, you could encounter it in the 90s, basically. And initially, by the way, it was the Moldovans who smuggled goods to Romania because we were better off until about 94, I would say, it went this way. Some Moldovans were selling TVs, for example, all kind of equipment, even clothes and so on. And there was this practice, by the way, the "Bişniza", the small, you know, petty trade, semi-legal. And then, I would say there was a period when Romanians used to do the same, already in the early 2000s, mostly, when Moldova was still very very low, basically. Not that we are much better now. But the pattern has changed. So now, I don't think there is a lot of smuggling besides from cigarettes and heavier stuff, of course, probably. I am not familiar with it. But, obviously, there must be some illegal activity in this sense.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

What is more, this imagined borderland area seems to be marked by ***limited non-institutionalized cross-border economic activities,*** such as of people from the Republic of Moldova and especially of those living close by to the state border buying there cheaper technical equipment (Sofia, Sculeni, Sept. 2017), or simply going shopping, as told by Tamara (Sculeni, Sept. 2017) and Valentina (Ungheni, Sept. 2017): "It was the day before my birthday. I wanted to make myself a gift, I mean, to get some clothes." Similarly, due to the limited infrastructure and possibilities to cross the Romanian-Moldovan state border as pointed out above, people in the Romanian region of Moldova seem to have developed strategies to increase their ***mobility*** in the peripheral borderland:

> Before arriving at the border crossing point, two people, two Moldovan men, asked us to take them with us in our car because it was not allowed to cross the border on foot. We agreed, they got into the car and crossed the border together with us. When we arrived in the Republic of Moldova, they got off and continued their journey on foot.
>
> (Daria, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

Furthermore, as pointed out by Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017) and Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), the Romanian region of Moldova seems not only to be perceived as a borderland between the two sovereign states of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, but also as a borderland of the EU being located at one of the EU's external eastern borders, turning the region into a ***transit zone*** for migrants from non-EU member states to central or Western EU-member states:

> All these people, and they are many, coming to Iaşi, it is a people of migration. Most of them stay, others continue going further to Transylvania and Western Europe. So it

> is like a passageway, yes, a transit zone for these migrants and we have problems here because those people don't have a workplace, they need money, they need food, they search for work, others don't search for work. So life in Iaşi has gotten very complicated in the last 4-5 years. There are problems with flats, with prices, Iaşi has recently been overpopulated. They are coming from the Republic of Moldova, now also from Ukraine.
>
> (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

While in the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, instead of perceiving the Romanian region of Moldova as a transit zone, the region seems simply to be perceived as the closest outpost of Europe: "For Moldovans to go to Iaşi is going to Europe." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017).

In consequence, from a Romanian point of view, the Romanian region of Moldova as a borderland fulfils the function of a place of (limited) contact and exchange, while being at the same time under the impact of a weakened security function of the EU's external border. In the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, almost exclusively the region's function as a place of contact and exchange is highlighted. By that, the perception of the Romanian region of Moldova as a borderland might be traced back to past Romanian nationalist discourses of the historical Moldavian Principality representing the eastern borderland and protective shield of Transylvania as well as of Romania against especially Tsarist Russia (Giurescu, 1968, p. 88), to current discourses on the European scale regarding the security function of the EU's external border, as well as to the historical territory of the Romanian region of Moldova, being thus due to its linkages to past and current powerful spatial imaginaries on several scales of rather high importance also on the micro scale.

On the Moldovan side of the state border, in turn, several types of imagined borderlands are to be encountered, ranging from that of a rather fuzzy, narrow land stripe adjacent to the linear state border to the whole state territory of the Republic of Moldova. In contrast to the rather precisely defined boundaries of the Romanian Moldovan borderland, the exact territory of the ***narrow Moldovan borderland*** seems, however, difficult to pin down. Instead, one clear distinctness of the Moldovan territory adjacent to the Romanian-Moldovan state border from other parts of the Moldovan state territory seems to stem from the time of the Moldavian

Narrow Moldovan borderland identity

- **Type of collective identity:** regional borderland identity
- **Continuum 1:** narrow Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity (de-/re-bordering)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** narrow Moldovan land stripe adjacent to the state border (RM)
- **Border function:** place of contact and exchange
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** non
- **Importance:** medium (fuzzy)
- Counter-hegemonic

Soviet Socialist Republic (1940-41, 1944-91) with the Romanian-Moldovan border as a highly militarized border entailing the support of local inhabitants to securitize it as well as counter-strategies to circumvent its strict barrier function:

> In the Soviet times […] they took us from the school to the biggest of this military units, showed us dogs, how to do these jobs, military weapons and so on. And we were helping to clear the border and so on. And one of the favourite games of this unit was to release so-called training agents. So they released in the villages one man who is very bizarre, you know, because with training you are very vigilant because the enemy is everywhere. And if someone put questions, if someone is very… just call, you know. And I do remember our guys caught one of the journalists from Moldova Socialist, which was a newspaper, official paper. He came very serious and, no, it was very solid. And he started to ask: "Where is the Soviet şediu? Where is the school?" You know. And our guys called, and they came to arrest him: "Hey, but I am a journalist!" Because you probably know, there was a line, if you are not resident in this area, to cross this you need a special permission. And usually, this line was Pîrliţa. Pîrliţa is near Ungheni […] And then, they simply released this kind of training agent [there] and he was going just asking: "Where is the border?" He didn't know how to pass the border, and some young people, of course, they were interested. But what a funny situation with people who wanted to help him to cross the border, you know, saying: "Ah, you want to Romania? Sure, I show you what to do."
>
> (Oleg, Chişinău, originally from Ungheni district, Sept. 2017)

Similarly, it was also in ***Soviet times*** that the inhabitants living next to the border on the Moldovan side had comparably easy access to Romanian TV, radio and propaganda:

> In the Ungheni area, for example, I don't know, maybe in different places, too, but in Ungheni there was Radio Iaşi. Radio Iaşi, which is my childhood's radio because my mother put it on in the morning and we were listening to Radio Iaşi […] And all this propaganda of Ceausescu, everything. And Romanian TV, which was perhaps a little accessible for everybody. I first remember Tom and Jerry, and, oh, Dallas, for example.
>
> (Oleg, Chişinău, originally from Ungheni district, Sept. 2017)

Nowadays, however, as in the case of the Romanian Moldovan borderland, also the distinctiveness of the narrow Moldovan borderland seems to be localized in ***semi-legal cross-border activities,*** with smuggling as a rather common practice of the past being now limited to sometimes legal amounts, sometimes to the smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol, etc. to Romania, as implied by memories of Sofia (Sculeni, Sept. 2017): "When we crossed the border, I was nervous because a citizen in the microbus was turned back because he had more products than was permitted by law.", and of Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> First of all, a lot of people used to have contraband. It was something which is a common phenomenon from 1990. And first, this phenomenon was pursued by Romanians. […] And then situation changed. Romanians changed as a society, as human beings, as country, and they don't do this. So this is one-way direction of contraband. There is small amount going to Romania. Usually, cigarettes, alcohol, minerals, but cigarettes is most. And when I was student, because I finished my, my university in Iaşi, it was common someone to give you a box of cigarettes in the bus.

Whereas clearly ***legal, non-institutionalized economic cross-border activities*** seems nowadays to focus on Romanians buying gasoline and other products that are cheaper in the Moldovan border area than in Romania, as implied by Dorin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "In the future, I intend to cross it [the state border] because I recently bought a car, and in the Republic of Moldova prices are much lower than in Romania. This is an advantage for the purchase of gasoline, sweets and cigarettes.", and by Matei (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "We started the journey with […] the desire to shop (the winter holidays were approaching, and Bessarabian and Ukrainian sweets enjoy high esteem in Romania)." As a result, according to Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), prices on certain products started to raise in the Moldovan borderland due to higher demand, and Moldovan inhabitants are increasingly making Romanians responsible for growing prices.

Another distinct feature of the narrow Moldovan borderland may refer to the usually ***frequent crossing of the Romanian-Moldovan state border*** by Moldovan inhabitants living close by to the border for various reasons, such as studying (Nina, Oleg, Ion), working (Mariana), traveling, having relatives and friends in Romania (Mariana, Viorica), transforming by that the state border into a central part of their everyday life. As a result, inhabitants of the Moldovan borderland seem more often to perceive the ***state border as a barrier*** or as an annoying institution hampering their mobility, in contrast to, for instance, people from Chişinău or Romania: "I have a rich experience in crossing the border. […] Crossing the border is not a very pleasant thing, it actually creates a series of inconveniences, such as infernal queues of cars, obsolete equipment used by the border police, places for positioning cars, etc." (Galina, Ungheni, Sept. 2017). At the same time, people seem to have established strategies to cross the Romanian-Moldovan state border with rather few crossing-points by way of organizing rides to destinations on the other side of the state border: "The customs officers and police officers were kind, because we crossed the border by car and with a person who was often crossing the state border." (Vera, Sculeni, Sept. 2017). And, similar to Romanian Moldovan borderland, also within the narrow Moldovan borderland people seem to have established strategies and networks to increase their ***mobility*** in the peripheral borderland with a rather ***poor infrastructure:***

> We had no idea in which direction to go. The driver, like us, had entered Moldova for the first time. We waited until a woman came walking along the road. We asked her in which direction we should go to get to Bălți. The woman said she could guide us if we would take her by car to a nearby village. We took her into the car and she helped us choosing the right directions until we reached an area with more traffic and passed the first villages.
>
> (Daria, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

In consequence, the narrow Moldovan borderland is rather imagined as a peripheral place of limited contact and exchange by both Romanians and Moldovans with in the past and eventually nowadays closer social as well as to a limited extent economic ties to Romania than in other parts of the Republic of Moldova. This perception, as mentioned at the beginning, can at least be traced back to past Soviet times and represents an adaptation of inhabitants living close by to the state border to current social and economic realities. Being, however, not congruent with any past or current territorial units nor in line with dominant discourses on the macro scale, its imagined physical boundaries and borderland identity seem to remain rather fuzzy.

Another imagined borderland on the Moldovan side of the Romanian-Moldovan state border with, in contrast, clearly defined physical boundaries, refers to the spatial imaginary of ***Bessarabia as a borderland.*** When describing Bessarabia as a borderland, people both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova usually refer to the territory of Bessarabia in the times of Greater Romania between 1919 and 1940, representing today's Republic of Moldova's western part between the rivers Prut and Dniester (see Figure 3). Moreover, its inhabitants exhibit, arguably, a certain ***cultural hybridity*** finding expression in an unclear or from a Romanian identity distinct cultural identity with ***Romanian and Russian cultural traits*** due to Russian cultural influences dating back to even before the annexation of the eastern part of the Moldavian Principality, Bessarabia, in 1812:

Bessarabian borderland identity

- **Type of collective identity:** borderland identity
- **Continuum 1:** Bessarabian borderland identity and Romanian non-borderland/Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity (uniting)
- **Border function:** security function
- **Imagined territorial unit:** western part of the RM (between Prut and Dniester)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** regional, European and international scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

> So, certain things, which, how to say, perhaps, the, in quotation marks, mentality in today's Moldova, are dating back to before 1812. Probably then the Russian administration also reinforced that. […] And that is precisely this, this ambivalence, which one does not want to admit, that after 1812 beyond the Pruth certainly a regional identity has developed and which one did not want to admit anymore after 1918. […] And it is precisely this, this big, this long coinage. One was under Russia for a hundred years, and then another 40 years under Romania, and the Soviet Union. And that's a coinage that is not only about the regime, so that's not just a communist coinage. It is, for instance, also a coinage by the Russian literature.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

> We are perceived as not very trustworthy, somehow, always, always choosing the side of the strongest, you know, very very pragmatic, not in the best sense of the word, you know. Which of course reflects the borderland nature of this, you know, land strip, yes. And generally not quite Romanian. I mean, yes, we are brothers but something is not right […] What you have to do every time is to disprove these stereotypes in a way.

> […] you have to show them that actually you are not a Russian, basically, you are not what they expected. Yes. This is a bit annoying at some point.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

While, however, people on both sides of the river Prut seem to feel still culturally rather close due to preserved (Romanian) cultural traits of the inhabitants of the Bessarabian borderland:

> But otherwise, I think that a lot of this cultural distance has, has been minimized, I would say in the last 20, 15 years, especially after the early 2000s, when a lot of students went to Romania, when a lot of exchanges happened, people interact on a daily basis, so this helps. Because there have been a lot of cases of successful careers, of successful integration of Bessarabians in Romania, and it's very quick. Basically several years and you can't really, you can't really distinguish between someone from, especially those who had their education in Romania.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

… distinctions between Bessarabians and people from Transnistria are rather emphasized:

> On the other side, there in Transnistria, it's much more pronounced, you know: "You are Bessarabian!" And this is not only from the, from the post-92 period, it was also there in the Communist period. […] So, that people from the right bank are Bessarabians. Which is not surprising, I mean, given that prior to 1940, you know, it was, they lived in different states for one generation, and even before in the Tsarist period, there was a very clear difference between us and them, not in terms of identity, but still, territory, and so on. They knew they are not Bessarabians, obviously, you know. So this is a very recent experience, like 50 years experience of living in a common space, which is not enough. […] I am not saying it's an antagonism, but it's simply a sense of that we are different somehow, you know. "Yes, we [Transnistrians] are, of course, not Romanian in any way", I mean, from their part, right? "So we might speak a language that you might call Moldovan or Romanian, but definitely we are much closer to the Russian culture."
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

By that, Bessarabia as a borderland seems to be understood as a ***transit zone*** from a Romanian (cultural) sphere in Romania to a Russian sphere in Transnistria, which is also highlighted by ***geopolitical perceptions*** according to which Bessarabia does not only mark a transit zone between a Romanian sphere of influence and a Russian one, but more generally between a European and a Russian sphere of influence: "We all know that Russia really tightly controls Bessarabia. It is almost impossible to fight with Russia for this country. And you need very strong allies, and nowadays no-one in the world is really interested in having a conflict with Russia to reunite Bessarabia with Romania." (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, similar to the Romanian Moldovan borderland identity, Bessarabia as a borderland is not necessarily described as a place of contact and exchange, but rather as a ***buffer zone*** between different spheres of cultural and geopolitical influence, highlighting by that the ***security function*** of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as of the whole borderland of Bessarabia. In doing so, not only the separating function of the Romanian-Moldovan state

border is confirmed, but also that of the internal border to Transnistria, being depicted as a kind of second outer EU-border in the Republic of Moldova. Despite, however, of being linked to the past spatial unit of Bessarabia in Greater Romania (1919-1940) as well as to, arguably, powerful European securitization discourses and international geopolitical discourses, this spatial imaginary of Bessarabia as a borderland was not mentioned by students, similar as in the case of the depiction of the Republic of Moldova as a whole as a borderland.

Closely linked to this spatial imaginary are also perceptions of the entire ***Republic of Moldova as a borderland*** between the EU and Russia. In this case, similar to a perceived Eurasian identity of Moldovans, as outlined above, the Moldovan society as a whole is perceived as exhibiting a certain ***cultural hybridity*** by way of having incorporated cultural traits of various cultural spheres, especially of the European and the Russian ones. This includes, as already mentioned, Russian linguistic influences on the (Latin) Romanian language, a rich Soviet, Romanian and Moldavian cultural heritage due to the eventful history of the Republic of Moldova, being, for instance, manifested in urban landscapes in the Republic of Moldova:

Romanian non-borderland vs. Moldovan borderland identity

- **Type of collective identity:** borderland identity
- **Continuum 1:** Bessarabian borderland identity and Romanian non-borderland/Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) – Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity (uniting)
- **Border function:** security function
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania **or** state territory of the RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national, European and international scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

> About the city of Chișinău itself, I can say that my general impression was that it is a city of contrasts: on the one hand, whole neighbourhoods, with beautiful buildings and large and quiet boulevards, luxury hotels and restaurants worthy of any European metropolis; on the other hand, markets with mixed people, where rarely Romanian was spoken, people that sell products on improvised stalls (blankets or tablecloths arranged directly on the asphalt, as could be seen on post-communist markets in Romania in the years 91-96, especially). In front of the luxury shops, full of Italian garments and exaggeratedly expensive fur even for Western Europeans, simple, modest people were walking who seemed not to be aware of the sophisticated showcases, and made their purchases at the stalls of the loud markets, with ladies' stockings hanging all the way, flying in the wind.
>
> (Eleonora, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

This perceived cultural hybridity seems also to extent to Romanian-Russian ***bilingualism*** of the majority of Moldovan inhabitants (Daria, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017), to members of various ethnicities living in the Republic of Moldova, such as ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz, etc. (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), as well as to a perceived rather ***unclear national identity***

of the Moldovan society, as elaborated by Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), Valeriu and Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> There are people who are pro-European, and who are very pro-EU, but they are not that much Romanian-nationalists. […] Then there are people who are definitely nationalist Romanian, […] they are very very involved in this national project. But I guess, not so many young people fall in that category – I mean there are, of course, there are, but not the majority, I think. Then in the pro-Russian camp, you have nuances. Because I met a couple of young people who at least, who are, yes, Russian-speaking, but who are not pro-Russian in a way, or pro-Putin. And also there are these Moldovan nationalists that Moldovan in the narrow sense that are both anti-Russian and anti-Romanian.

This perceived hybridity of the Republic of Moldova refers sometimes to an imagined ***economic and social hybridity*** as well, with its economy not only oscillating between the Russian and the European market, as mentioned above, but of it exhibiting Soviet and European economic traits, too:

> In Moldova, I think people have seen better times, with the Soviet technical heritage, you know, woods, technical structures, schools, hospitals and so on. […] But you can't live with this heritage for 30 or 40 or 50 years, you have to improve it […]. So you have European programs to help schools, you have Romanian programs which help schools or hospitals."
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017).

As pointed out by Valeriu, not only in the economic but also in the ***educational and academic sphere*** the Republic of Moldova seems thus to be marked by Soviet traits and to be rather strongly connected to other European countries such as Romania, as confirmed by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Eleonora (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017):

> In Chișinău, I was welcomed with open arms, with utmost politeness, with great interest in all the ideas presented in the academic presentations, and I realized that they have an excellent teaching tradition, inherited, certainly, from the Soviet period, to which, however, extraordinary mobility had been added, finding expression in the participation in conferences and training courses in Romania, but also in the countries of Western Europe.

Similar to images of the Romanian Moldovan borderland and the narrow Moldovan borderland, also descriptions of the borderland economy of the Republic of Moldova do usually not only entail its perceived hybridity, but far more also extend to certain assumed ***semi-legal economic activities***: "You have a lot of groceries, consumer economy, you have, you know, huge magazines, real estate, and you don't know where the money is coming from. And it's, it's money which is, you know, which is laundered." (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). And to this perception often the image of a dubious governing elite is added: "you have Moldovan students who study in Bucharest or Iaşi or Cluj and they stay here, because […] they don't want

to go back to Moldova because there is nothing to do. And if they try to do something, they will have problems with administration, police and mafia there, so they don't want to go." (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). This perception of the political situation in the Republic of Moldova is shared by Moldovan citizens as well, as stated by Raisa and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and by Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> Then our politicians, their well-being is to gain power, to stay in power. They use the maximum resources and money of the state to get big. That's only business. Because they understand that the situation could not be solved immediately. So no one takes care how they deal with the state. If someone would be interested to have a state, a functional state… that is not the case in Moldova.

Together with the internal Transnistrian conflict having caused further internal past and current dividing lines in the Moldovan society, this political and economic ambiguity leads thus sometimes to the impression of the Republic of Moldova as a ***"no man's land":*** "Moldova is a country like this, because someone wanted it to be like this. […] So it's a kind of land of escape, of many problems." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). As a result, according to Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), the Republic of Moldova will, for ***geopolitical reasons,*** very likely also remain a borderland in the form of a buffer zone between the EU and Russia in the future, instead of going further in either the European or Eurasian integration project. Which, however, can also be understood as an advantage:

> It's still a borderland in all kinds of meanings. I mean, in the most material sense of the word, obviously, because it's at the border of the EU, but also symbolically and, and culturally. And the problem here is, we have still not defined, basically, to what culturally space we belong to primarily. And it's not that we should, maybe. Because Moldova has this strength, in a way, of diversity, you know, of simultaneously belonging to the Romanian or, or European, in a very broad way, and, I don't know, space, and the Russian one. So, I would say it's very difficult to define and to choose for most people. Because we still feel at home in both, up to an extent. […] And if you look how people integrate in European countries, you can definitely say that Moldova can be a European country […] But still, that doesn't mean that we can't be open to the East as well, but not in the sense of emulating the Russian political or even economic model, but in the sense of simply a bridge, which is, which is a concept which I find not very clear and abused, you know. But simply in a country that should, should accept this heritage. You know, a common heritage that is, that we share with Russia, and also a common heritage that we share obviously with Romania and, you know, the West.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Consequently, similar to the image of the Romanian region of Moldova as a borderland, from a Romanian point of view also the perception of the Republic of Moldova as a borderland seems to ascribe a ***security function*** to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, while from a Moldovan standpoint the state border rather simply represents the physical boundary of its borderland identity. Nevertheless, being linked to past and current especially geopolitical discourses on the

national, European and international scale, the spatial imaginary of the Republic of Moldova as a borderland can be understood as an important hegemonic borderscape on the micro scale.

5.2 The de- and re-bordered state border: to where to shift the border?

In addition to these numerous collective identities with the Romanian-Moldovan state border as one of their physical boundaries, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova refer also to collective identities that bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border either completely or partly, relocating by that the border in other parts of the Romanian and/or Moldovan state territory, such as in the case of the here outlined collective identities of:

(1) Post-socialist vs. Soviet identity
(2) Southern Muntenian vs. Northern Moldovan identity
(3) Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity
(4) Narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity
(5) Moldavian regional identity
(6) Moldavian national identity
(7) Pan-Romanianist national identity
(8) Extended European vs. non-European identity
(9) Balkan identity
(10) Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity

Thus, at first, in contrast to the already outlined spatial imaginary of the Romanian-Moldovan state border dividing a post-Soviet Republic of Moldova from a non-post-Soviet Romania, another closely connected spatial perception refers to Romania and the western part of the Republic of Moldova as both belonging to a ***post-socialist sphere,*** whereas the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria, is considered as still forming part of a ***Soviet space.*** In consequence, despite a past Soviet regime in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and a non-Soviet socialist regime in Romania under Ceausescu, both countries are described by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) as having undergone similar ***transformation processes*** from a socialist to a capitalist society since the 1990s:

Post-socialist vs. Soviet identity

- **Type of collective identity:** (post-)socialist/(post-)Soviet identity
- **Continuum 1:** non-post-Soviet/ post-Soviet identity (dividing) – post-socialist/Soviet identity (de-/re-bordering) - post-socialist identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania and the western part of the RM between Prut and Dniester **or** territory of Transnistria
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national and international scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

> Well, in the year 89, they were taken by surprise in their leadership positions, some withdrew for a while, others not. Anyway, already in the 80s there had been this attitude, which was best described in the form of Honecker in the GDR, it's supposed to mean, how was it called, that you should get a lot more out of the factories. But interpreted in the sense of not increasing the productivity, but of stealing from the factories, from the enterprises. And, well, they already stole from factories in the 70s and 80s, this is not an invention from the period after 1990. And there had also already been corruption. [...] But most of them come from this milieu, this semi-legal, this illegal, abuse of power, where, so to speak, theft was refined into an art. [...] And then at first foreign investors were simply put off even if they had such solid projects. They did not want to keep companies going. And these people are in power today. [...] So for such people, neoliberalism was a heavenly blessing. [...] And in the Republic of Moldova, I can easily imagine that it is the same there. Well, these are politicians for whom the country is a source of money.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

While the socialist past and its legacies are often considered as having an impact even today in the Romanian and the Moldovan society in the western part of the Republic of Moldova, the eastern part of ***Transnistria*** is perceived as not having experienced any transformation processes and of not having changed even a bit since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1991, as best highlighted by a short narrative of Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017):

> And there's a factory in Tiraspol, that somehow produces a kind of ceramic used in industry, I don't know. And it should be something very special. And after a long, long time, he got permission to visit the factory. And then he was, well, he has to drive through the Republic of Moldova, and he was actually rather facing corruption. So he had to pay $20 to even cross the border. And then he got lost in Chişinău, by car, so constantly turning circles, and then he had to pay a number of penalties. But that was, so to say, chicane and so on. And then he drove to Tiraspol and at the border memories came back from the time before 1989, but much worse. And that, so to speak, the border guard put the rifle barrel to his chest and asked him what he was looking for. And then he showed his papers and, well, he was finally allowed to go to Tiraspol and to visit the factory there. So he says, so that was traumatic [...]. Well, he said, well, the Republic of Moldova, it's full of shortcomings, so that's a poorer version of Romania, but you can live there basically [...] so you don't have that feeling of being observed. But if you go to Tiraspol, then it's the Soviet Union in its worst version.

This image of Transnistria seems also to be shared by Moldovans, as confirmed by narratives of Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> So, we had a conference once, on World War II, with my university here, and we had foreign guests, foreign academics, you know, invited, and we went to Transnistria for a tour, basically, to the world memorials there related to World War II. It was a fascinating experience, because we had two Romanian colleagues and they were scrutinized, right, and they were allowed to, still, to go in but scrutinized very thoroughly, so to say, and their passports were held for 15 minutes or something. And then we had a very interesting encounter with a KGB guy, I am saying KGB because it's really what it's called there, they still call them KGB, yes, it's committed to state security. Now even a ministry of state security and, and, KGB, well, anyway. Well,

> this guy was… And it was pretty obvious, you know, that he was the guy from the, the organs, as they say. And he was circulating around, like asking all kind of questions like "Where are you from?", "What happened?" And everyone knew. And the guides from the museum we went to were terrified. That was really serious. Because they knew there would be consequences for them, probably. Although they allowed us to go in, and, but, for us it was an interesting experience, obviously, nothing more, but for them it was serious. […] And then, we leave the museum and we went to eat something and we saw that guy following, I mean, not literally following us, but being there as we enter that restaurant. So it was obvious that he was interested in our group.

Consequently, these perceptions of a collective post-socialist identity shared by people living in Romania and in the Western part of the Republic of Moldova clearly bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border, and localize instead its eastern physical boundary in the western border of the de-facto independent Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria), which is imagined of still belonging to the Soviet cultural and political sphere. By that, these spatial imaginaries seem to correspond with the current Transnistrian national concept and its claims for being for cultural and political reasons reintegrated into Russia. What is more, especially in the Republic of Moldova, references to a "more Soviet" Transnistria seem to be quite common in order to distinguish between a more "Western" or European Western part of the Republic of Moldova and its more "Eastern" part Transnistria.

In addition to that, the state border is also de- and re-bordered by way of referring to linguistic differences. In this regard, roughly based on linguistic boundaries between a Muntenian southern Romania and a Moldovan northern Romania and Republic of Moldova (see section 2.4), also on the micro scale people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova seem to distinguish between a ***"Muntenian" and a "Moldovan" linguistic and cultural space.*** This refers, evidently, at first to the ***Moldovan subdialect*** spoken in the northern parts of Romania and in the Republic of Moldova including Transnistria: "the dialects […], at least those I am familiar with, are very similar to the Romanian northern dialects all the way to Maramureş and Bistriţa and that region, those regions between Moldova and Transylvania." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), to which, however,

Southern Muntenian vs. Northern Moldovan identity

- **Type of collective identity:** linguistic/cultural identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan linguistic identity (dividing) – Southern Muntenian/Northern Moldovan identity and pan-Latin/Francophone identity (de-/re-bordering) – Romanian linguistic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** Walachia, Dobruja, southeastern Transylvania (Muntenian) **or** the Republic of Moldova, the Romanian regions of Moldova, northwestern Transylvania, Bucovina etc. (Moldovan)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** non
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

perceived shared ***cultural traits*** such as hospitality and warm-heartedness are added: "I like Romanians that are more like in Moldova. Not in the south part of Romania. Southern part of Romania is more like cold there […] But people from Transylvania, especially from Mureş County, they are very friendly, they can accept you in their house to sleep a night, they are very hospitable." (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). And this image is sometimes also shared by people living in Romania: "[In Cahul and Chișinău] I found some very warm-hearted people, a warmth that a Western could describe as an "exacerbated sentimentality", which I had only known in the rural areas of the Maramureş where I grew up, and which I, I confess, miss very much." (Eleonora, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

Figure 11: Southern Muntenian and Northern Moldovan subdialects.
Source: Hahn, 2011.

As a result, also these spatial imaginaries clearly bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border, creating instead a linguistic and cultural boundary between northern and southern Romania following roughly the divide between a Muntenian-speaking south and a Moldovan-speaking north, as can be seen in Figure 11. And considering that these spatial imaginaries do not correspond to any territorial unit on the regional, national, European or international scale, they were rather often referred to both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova.

Similarly, linguistic and cultural traits are also essential for defining several regional identities, such as in the case of what I call the regional ***Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity.*** However, even compared to the Southern Muntenian and Northern Moldovan identities, the perceived physical boundaries of the regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău identity or lowlands identity are highly fuzzy, which is also the reason why I gave two names. In its most narrow sense, this regional identity can be understood as comprising the historical Ţara de Jos (lowlands) east of the Prut in the historical Moldavian Principality (today's southern part of the historical Romanian region of

Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity

- **Type of collective identity:** regional identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity and regional Moldavian identity (de-/re-bordering)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** historical Ţara de Jos in the Moldavian Principality (especially Iaşi and Chişinău)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** regional scale
- **Importance:** low (fuzzy)
- Counter-hegemonic

Figure 12: Ţara de Sus and Ţara de Jos (14th-16th century)
Source: Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, 2017.

Moldova) as well as today's district of Chişinău in the Republic of Moldova, while, in a broader sense, it might encompass the whole territory of the historical Romanian region of Moldova as well as the historical Ţara de Jos (lowlands) between Prut and Dniester in today's central Republic of Moldova (see Figure 12).

Similar to the Southern Muntenian and Northern Moldovan identity, also this regional identity is grounded in perceived ***linguistic ties,*** i.e. in similar dialects spoken in this region compared to other parts of Romania or the Republic of Moldova: "[In Chişinău] They spoke Romanian with Moldavian accent, we find this style in the Romanian villages in the region of Moldova in Romania. Therefore, to me, being from Iaşi, their way of talking was familiar." (Catrina, Iaşi, Oct. 2017) Added to these linguistic traits are often perceptions of ***political proximity*** or similar political mindsets and goals: "Well, my first journey in the Republic of Moldova did not take place in Chişinău with representatives of Romanian nationalism, but in Bălţi where there are many Russophiles." (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017). And this point of view seems, especially for historical reasons, also to be shared by inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova:

> Iaşi was an attractive point of unionists in 18th century, in 19th century. […] The governor of Russian Bessarabia, he invited, for example, parties and theatres from Iaşi to play in the scene of Chişinău. And then in the beginning of 20th century, there was a strong unionist movement in Chişinău and the governor, there are some arrests among them, and he flew to Iaşi. And in Iaşi, there were fighters for Romanian unification.
> (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Moreover, these perceived closer historical, linguistic and political ties are, according to Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), eventually also the reason why there are currently closer ***economic and especially academic ties*** between Iaşi and Chişinău than between other Romanian and Moldovan regions or cities.

Based on these defined similarities, even though the imagined boundaries of this regional identity remain rather fuzzy, they clearly de-border the Romanian-Moldovan state border along the river Prut and establish new borders following eventually the historical physical borders of Ţara de Jos. Corresponding "only" roughly with a past regional territorial unit, its significance seems to be rather low, being mainly mentioned in Iaşi, eventually also because it tends to be integrated into a broader overall Moldavian regional identity, or a narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity, as outlined in the following.

In contrast to the regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity, the ***narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity*** seems mainly to focus on ***economic institutionalized cross-border activities,*** covering an area of about 30km on both sides along the Romanian-Moldovan state border, following by that the area defined for free petty trade along the state border by the Romanian-Moldovan border traffic agreement in 2009 (see section 2.2). Anchored in perceptions of a distinct narrow Moldovan borderland identity on the Moldovan side of the border and of a Romanian Moldovan borderland identity on the Romanian side, people living next to the border seem at first due to ***memories of the past,*** especially of the times of Tsarist Russia when the border was more permissible or of the times of Greater Romania, to regain the impression of having certain social and cultural features in common due to in particular past close social ties:

Narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity

- **Type of collective identity:** regional identity
- **Continuum 1:** narrow Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity (de-/re-bordering)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** narrow land stripe (30km) on both sides along the state border
- **Border function:** place of contact and exchange
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national and European scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

> I do remember in 1990 very very clear this picture when first people from our village -they'd done this [Bridge of Flowers]- and people from another village., […] they were talking, they were saying: "Hey, look! Do you remember Nicolai? He is alive!" And the very call of this started to rebuild these memories because 45 years is not so much. […] Because I do remember as a kid also, when people went to a wedding, for example, and guys were drunk, and they were sitting on the hill, shouting: "Hey, Romanian brothers, are you alive!?"
>
> (Oleg, Chişinău, originally from Ungheni district, Sept. 2017)

In addition to these perceived close social ties between people living on both sides of the state border directly after the independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991, the inhabitants of the narrow cross-border region are more frequently aware of rather close economic ties due to the allowed ***petty trade*** compared to other regions in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. This refers not only to possibilities to buy cheaper products in the neighbouring country, as already mentioned in section 5.1, but rather to different types of trade: "In September 2016, in the afternoon, I and my mother, we decided to go to Iaşi to take there a certain amount of diesel that is permitted by law, as we did almost every day in order to earn some additional money." (Ion, Ungheni, Oct. 2017), or to the selling of products on Romanian markets, as illustrated by Fiodor (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "There is a farmers market here in Iaşi with three rows of stalls by Moldovan farmers. They sell more or less the same products as Romanian farmers and additionally products from Soviet times, but they are separated from the stands of Romanian

farmers so that they are easier to find on the market.", and by Elizaveta (Sculeni, Sept. 2017): "Even in my childhood [born in the 80s] I went with my parents to Romania where they sold vegetables and fruits on the market in the city of Iaşi." As a result, as pointed out by Viorica (Ungheni, Oct. 2017) and confirmed by Vera and Elizaveta (Sculeni, Sept. 2017), people living close by to the Romanian-Moldovan state border seem to have perceived the state border less as a barrier since the introduction of the free petty trade:

> So we, the inhabitants of the city of Ungheni (RM), are traveling on the basis of the small border traffic permit. It is convenient because no one is asking you any questions anymore (what is the purpose of the trip, do you have financial resources to support yourself, what is the period of your stay, do you have an invitation/call, etc.), which is very unpleasant when you have been waiting for 7- 8 hours at the customs office and can be returned at the end because you do not fulfil any of the above-mentioned requirements.
>
> (Viorica, Ungheni, Oct. 2017)

However, even though apparently of high relevance for people living next to the state border especially in the Republic of Moldova, it remains debatable whether this regional identity that clearly bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border extends to far more than an imagined economic space with close social ties in the past, also since as expressed by Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017), Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Fiodor (Iaşi, Sept. 2017) "The Euroregions only exist on paper."

This, arguably, sometimes non-awareness of the existence of the Euroregions is also apparent when taking a look at the identified features shared by all imagined members of the ***Moldavian regional (cross-border) identity,*** which seems currently to enjoy higher popularity both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova than the narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity. Key features of the Moldavian regional identity roughly refer to the territory as well as to the imagined joint history of people living in the ***historical territory of the Moldavian Principality*** (1349-1812). Even though the territory of the Moldavian Principality originally encompassed the territory of the historical Romanian region of Moldova and the western part of the Republic of Moldova between Prut and Dniester, parts of Bukovina and stretched to the south up to the Black Sea (see Figure 4), it seems nowadays mainly to refer to a

Moldavian regional identity

- **Type of collective identity:** regional identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian Moldovan borderland identity (dividing) - regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity and regional Moldavian identity (de-/re-bordering)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** historical territory of the Romanian region of Moldova and the western part of the Republic of Moldova (between Prut and Dniester)
- **Border function:** place of contact and exchange
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** regional and European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Counter-hegemonic

joint regional identity of people living in the historical Romanian region of Moldova and in today's western part of the Republic of Moldova between Prut and Dniester.

Moreover, similar to the narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity, ***economic and social features*** shared by all imagined members of this regional identity are depicted as focusing on institutionalized cross-border activities outside of the Euroregions, on academic and educational cooperation on university or school level. These include, as already mentioned-above by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017), close academic cooperation between the university in Iaşi and in Chişinău, as well as cooperation between the universities of Iaşi and Bălţi, such as in the form of a planned joint master's programme. Whereas on a school level, for instance, school exchanges involving pupils and teachers from the Romanian region of Moldova and the western part of the Republic of Moldova are taking place: "One of these crossings of the Romanian-Moldovan state border was at the customs office in Sculeni in May. It included several teachers from our institute since it took place in collaboration with the schools of Miroslava in Romania." (Elizaveta, Sculeni, Sept. 2017)

However, instead of strong economic features that are perceived as shared by all inhabitants of the region, ***historical and cultural ties*** are usually more frequently mentioned, such as memories of the city of Iaşi as past joint capital in the times of the Moldavian Principality (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), as well as currently as a mutual cultural centre mainly due to the realization of a European infrastructure project in Iaşi turning the city of Iaşi again into "a magnet, an apple to Moldovans" (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), and transforming the image of the city of Iaşi in the Republic of Moldova into a highly positive one. Similarly, especially joint cultural characteristics are highlighted, such as hospitality and linguistic ties as expressed by both Catrina (Iaşi, Oct. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> Of course, Iaşi is much more, much closer culturally even, than even Bucharest to Chişinău, yes. Because the, the language basically is the same, aside from the Russian influence that you have here, of course. But the accent, the, you know, the speech generally is quite similar. So, in this sense, that's why many Moldovans of course all went to Iaşi, not only because it's closer, obviously, but also because they don't have, they didn't have this cultural barrier to that extent. […] They felt more at home.

As a result, ties between people in the historical Romanian region of Moldova and in the western part of the Republic of Moldova are often perceived as for historical, cultural and linguistic reasons in particular strong: "In Iaşi and in Moldova region they have this kin relationship. A different perception from Cluj, from Timişoara, from Oradea." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). And the western part of the Republic of Moldova is sometimes considered as a territorial part

of the Romanian region of Moldova (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), being eventually depicted as a subregion in the form of Bessarabia within the region of Moldova:

> And even in Moldavia, in Romanian Moldavia, I would say it is even more pronounced since they are culturally closer to the Bessarabians. But due to this political situation, you know, they sometimes are more frustrated with the Bessarabians, in a way. So I didn't experience that personally, but I know from many people that they perceive the Bessarabians basically as, well, Russified, basically, semi-Russian, not really Romanian, with this strange identity that is not clear. So… And it's… For them, yes, it must be more frustrating because it's basically the same, culturally, the same region.
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, by way of imagining its symbolic physical boundaries along the northern and southern borders of the Republic of Moldova as well as the river Dniester and along the historical northern, southern and western borders of the Romanian region of Moldova, this regional identity clearly bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border. What is more, despite this regional identity finding only roughly (territorial) expression in a past spatial unit, the Moldavian Principality, and being eventually supported by current discourses focusing on cross-border Euroregions on the European scale, perceptions of a regional Moldavian identity seem to be quite common in Romania as well as in the Republic of Moldova, where they are sometimes also transformed into ideas of a Moldavian nation.

Moldavian national identity

- **Type of collective identity:** national identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan national identity (dividing) - Moldavian national identity and pan-Romanianist national identity (de-/re-bordering) – extended pan-Romanianist national identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** territory of the Moldavian Principality
- **Temporality:** past and future
- **Multi-scalar:** non
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

In this regard, in contrast to an imagined Moldovan nation on today's territory of the Republic of Moldova (see section 5.1), the Moldovan nation is sometimes perceived as living in the historical territory of the Moldavian Principality, i.e. in the Romanian region of Moldova, the western part of the Republic of Moldova between Prut and Dniester, parts of Bukovina and in the south up to the Black Sea due to its ***origins in the Moldavian Principality*** (see Figure 4) (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Because of this strong emphasis on the historical, cultural and territorial heritage of the Moldavian Principality, I henceforward refer to this imagined national concept as the ***Moldavian national identity*** in order to distinguish it from the already outlined Moldovan national identity.

Identical to the concept of the Moldovan nation, especially the perceived ***traditions*** of the Moldavian nation are pointed out, which are considered as being still preserved in the more

traditional south of today's Republic of Moldova, as well as imagined national cultural assets, such as the wine cellar of Cricova, the Alexander Pushkin House and Museum in Chişinău where Alexander Pushkin spent three years in exile, Orheiul Vechi and Soroca (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). However, of far higher importance than the depicting of imagined cultural traits are, arguably, attempts to clearly demarcate the Moldavian nation from the Romanian nation:

> I don't like the idea that we have to be of the same country, because, yes, we speak the same language, we have the same religion, but as countries, as origins, we are totally different. Not totally different, but we are different. We can say it's the same as Austria and Germany. They actually speak basically the same language, they have basically the same origins, but they are different countries and they would never be a unity.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, not only a possible future reunification of Romania and the Republic of Moldova is clearly rejected, but far more there is also a desire to ***reshape the current state territory*** of the Republic of Moldova by way of regaining the historical territory of the Moldavian Principality located today outside of the Republic of Moldova, such as the historical Romanian region of Moldova and the Ukrainian territory between the Republic of Moldova and the Black Sea in the south:

> I think that our border must be on the Carpathian Mountains because Stefan the Great had a big country from Carpathians to Nistru. And this was Moldova actually. And Iaşi was ours, was in Moldova, Suceava was in Moldova, and those monasteries from the north of old Moldova because it also were on our territory […] And to the south to the Black Sea because that were also our territory. […] And that's why I don't like the idea of a reunification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova. I've only, I only want our territories back. Because I am, I am like Moldovan and I am a very loyal citizen. […] And I am for a referendum, and I think that most won't vote for this reunification of Moldova with Romania, but will vote for, to gain back our territories. Because the voice of teenagers, the voice of young people is louder than of older ones.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In this regard, these strict demarcations to the Romanian nation are not only justified by referring to the origins of the distinct Moldavian nation in the Moldavian Principality, but also by an assumed ***guilt of Romania*** or the Romanian nation for what happened to Moldovan inhabitants after the end of Greater Romania in the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic:

> Actually, I, for me, it's a, how to say, a plan for a point of discussion because I have, I, I don't like Romanians. […] Because I – my grandparents had just suffered after their appearance here in Moldova. And my grand-grandparent who was in Romanian army like a doctor, and he was sent to Siberia for five years and he had to work there. And my grand-grandmother, she knew nothing about him for five years. She was loyal to him, and she was waiting for him, and when he came back, she was like, just: "How? How did you survive!?" And he came back like in 49, yes.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

And this depicted guilt seems sometimes also to be perceptible in Romania: "So, there, the annexation of Bessarabia in 1940, then in 1944, remained in mind of Romanians as kind of guilt. And that, for example, I felt it when I was student. Professors were more tolerant with Moldovans, Bessarabians." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017).

Similarly, by referring to the imagined past of the Moldavian nation, it is advocated that ***Transnistria*** becomes independent from the Republic of Moldova, having, arguably, never formed part of the historical territory of the Moldavian nation (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). As a result, Transnistrians together with Romanians are depicted as "the Other" of the Moldavian nation: "Romanians are more close, are closer to Moldovans. Yes. Because a majority of Transnistrians are Russians, actually, native Russians, like they appeared from 1940s, and they are speaking in Russian, in Soviet manner and that's why they are more far from our mindset." (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017).

In line with this argumentation, the historical borders of the Moldavian Principality represent the symbolic physical boundaries of the Moldavian nation, which is imagined of being situated within the territory of what I call ***"Greater Moldova",*** as suggested by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017). By that, this national identity clearly bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border, re-bordering it instead in the west and north along the historical borders of the Romanian region of Moldova, in the east and north along the river Dniester and in the south along the Black Sea coast. And even though being linked to the Moldovenist national narrative on the national scale, it seems not to correspond to any (officially) discussed spatial unit on the regional, national, European or international scale, which might be the reason why this national concept was only mentioned by Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), who stated though that it is quite popular among younger people. Even though I could not confirm this opinion in my research, transitions from the understanding of a Moldovan nation to that of a Moldavian nation are, of course, fluid and can be understood as forming part of the same continuum.

However, instead of using the Moldavian regional identity as a starting point for a perceived Moldavian nation, it can also be used in the opposite way for justifying the perception of

Pan-Romanianist national identity

- **Type of collective identity:** national identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan national identity (dividing) - Moldavian national identity and pan-Romanianist national identity (de-/re-bordering) – extended pan-Romanianist national identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania and of Bessarabia
- **Temporality:** past and future
- **Multi-scalar:** national scale
- **Importance:** high
- Counter-hegemonic

the western part of the Republic of Moldova, Bessarabia, as forming part of ***"Greater Romania".*** According to this spatial imaginary, Bessarabia is considered as forming part of the historical ***territory*** to which the Romanian nation feels attached to, even though it is often not clear whether people refer to Bessarabia simply in form of today's western part of the Republic of Moldova between Prut and Dniester or to its historical form including Bessarabian territory in the north and south belonging nowadays to Ukraine (see Figure 5).

Clearly emphasised, in contrast, by most of the narratives, is the perception of for historical reasons close ***cultural and especially linguistic ties*** among all members of the Romanian nation in Romania and in Bessarabia, which were depicted as in particular strong in discourses on the national scale directly after the independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991, having resulted, however, often in a cultural shock for both sides:

> When we arrived in Romania, we were expecting to find people that were not so different from ourselves. I mean we speak the same language, in the 90s there was all over this talk about reunion with Romania, so, especially, you know, well, as aspiring young intellectuals we were very prone to this national discourse. And then when you arrived you saw that, yes, they were speaking the same language, but they had different cultural references, for example, you know. They spoke differently, not only, I mean, not only phonetically, their accent, but also the colloquial speech was, you know, the jargons so to say, the used vocabulary was different. So you had a cultural shock.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

> Then there arrived the first students from the Republic of Moldova and whether that was exaggerated or not, I do not know exactly, but they had a terrible reputation. So they came to Romania, they were as poor as church mice, so were we. And they did not receive a scholarship. They were supposed to get one, and then it went as far that female students got prostituted because they had no income. And, I do not know if that's true, there were dormitories where all the students were thrown out, Moldovan students were thrown out, because they eventually had destroyed furniture, or because they had kept garbage bags in the room instead of throwing them out. I do not know if that's true. But there was this reputation. And, so, on the one hand, there was this official discourse of brothers and this flower bridge and all that, and on the other hand: "Oh my god, not these ones."
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

After this initial cultural shock on both sides and a process of mutual adaptation since 1991 (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), perceptions of cultural proximity and of Bessarabians forming part of the Romanian nation seem nowadays to have regained in popularity especially in Romania, as expressed by Catrina (Iaşi, Oct. 2017) and Matei (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "We started the journey with the sensation of an adventure, as well as with curiosity regarding us getting familiar with the differences between Romanians on both banks of the Prut river (because the vast majority of Bessarabians are, in fact, Romanians)." In consequence, as in former times,

Bessarabia is considered as forming part of the ***territory of the Romanian nation,*** and as representing eventually its territorial semi-core or periphery, as implied by Romina (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017): "I have learned the "truth" about said Republic and I know it used to be part of the Romanian territory, in spite of being severely divided by many foreign occupations. To us it is known as Bassarabia, a name given by Romanians to this territory.", and Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "He said, well, the Republic of Moldova, it's full of shortcomings, so that's a poorer version of Romania, but you can live there basically." As a result, political claims for a ***reunification*** are still present, even though opinions regarding their popularity differ:

> You have a very strong pro-Romanian feeling inside the Bessarabian students who are here. Most of them are not Romanian, they are Romanian, but they come from Moldova, and they are very active. But when they finish their studies, they get to live, they get a job, some stay in Romania or they go further in Europe. So, it is, this activism vanishes very fast. Because for 25 years, you can see in the walls in Romania "Bessarabia e România". But it has never been very strong as a political movement. And here most of this kind of signs, logos, graffiti and so on, they are made by Moldovan, Romano-Moldovan students
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

> I have a couple of friends from the Republic who have come here to study because it seems to be a better quality and experience and they often say that they feel at home. If you take a walk through our cities, you might be able to see on almost every wall a graffiti that says "Basarabia e Romania" which means Bassarabia is Romania. This is another proof that not only politicians and the old population support the unification dream but the young folk as well.
>
> (Romina, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

> Students from Moldova who have studied the history of Bessarabia abroad, especially in Romania, are later on more active in pro-unionist activities.
>
> (Viorica, Ungheni, Sept. 2017)

By that, this imagination of the Romanian nation obviously reflects past and present official pan-Romanianist and national discourses in the Republic of Moldova and Romania on the national scale, seeming thus to enjoy popularity in everyday life in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova nowadays as well. And by referring to the past spatial unit of Greater Romania between 1941 and 1944, it is bridging the current Romanian-Moldovan state border, re-bordering it instead in the east along the Dniester.

Moreover, instead of perceiving Bessarabia as the periphery of the Romanian nation's territory, Bessarabia or rather the western part of the Republic of Moldova is sometimes depicted as sharing a ***European identity*** with Romania for historical and cultural reasons:

> Another defining experience was the Bender experience. So, Bender, Tighina, which is this town in which was to be, which used to be a very important railway junction in Soviet times. Now, when we visited the railway station, it was deserted, simply, because this city was depopulated, basically, it, its population shrank from 150,000 to barely 50,000 right after the conflict. Many people fled to Moldova, others simply went away, I mean… So it's, it's a semi-dead city, basically, and it's very much subordinated to Tiraspol nowadays. Anyway. And our experience was of utter, I don't know, void, basically. So, we were in a big railway station, imagine, and – completely empty, like, literally! Like one or two people. So it was… And especially for our foreign colleagues, of course, it was, you know, very… And they said: "Oh, wow, after that, Moldova really looks European!"
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Extended European vs. non-European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** European/non-European identity (dividing) – extended European/non-European identity (de-/re-bordering) – European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania, of the western part of the RM between Prut and Dniester and of other countries (e.g. EU member states)
- **Border function:** security function
- **Temporality:** present
- **Multi-scalar:** European scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

This is supplemented by ***geopolitical considerations*** depicting the internal border to Transnistria as a second outer EU-border in need of securitization (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). However, this spatial imaginary was only implied by narratives of Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), seeming thus not to enjoy as much support as assignments of the whole Republic of Moldova to either the European or a non-European sphere or as portrayals of the western part of the Republic of Moldova as a borderland between a European and a Russian cultural and geopolitical sphere of influence (see section 5.1).

Another spatial imaginary with a similar rather low perceptibility represents the idea of parts of Romania and the Republic of Moldova belonging to the European transnational mesoregion of ***the Balkans.*** In this regard, especially the western part of the Republic of Moldova between Prut and Dniester as well as either southern Romania or Romania as a

Balkan identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** Eastern European/Wider European identity (dividing) - Balkan identity (de-/re-bordering) – Wider European identity and Eastern European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** (southern) state territory of Romania, western part of the RM between Prut and Dniester and other countries (e.g. Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo…)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** European scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

whole are considered as providing of cultural and political Balkan traits linking them to other Balkan countries. This refers, at first, to the ***political regime*** in Chişinău in the Republic of Moldova (in contrast to the internationally not recognized political regime in Transnistria):

> In fact, what we have is a very curious regime, which is, you know, it's definitely not a democracy, I mean, by any standards. It's some kind of clientele semi-feudal, I would say – ok, I am a bit, I mean it's a bit too much to say that, but in the sense of how goods are distributed and how loyalty is, you know. It has many things in common with, with some kind of feudal structure, you know. With the main coordinator at the top and the others some kind of vassals for circling him and for being loyal to him personally. So it's a client-based, even not only oligarchic – it used to be oligarchic – now it's more or less monopolized by this, the so-called Democratic Party, which is, actually, an alliance of, let by this notorious figure, Plahotniuc, who basically… Well, maybe it would be easier to compare, you know, to speak in comparative terms. I would say he, it's a regime that resembles these Balkan regimes like in, for example, in Macedonia, what they used to have, or in Serbia to a certain point, and even now there are in Kosovo… So these kinds of… Well, of course, there are some different contexts there, obviously. But in the sense of the nature of the regime, it's a regime that has no ideology, that is a hybrid between all kinds of interests.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

This opinion of the current government in the Republic of Moldova is shared by Oana and Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), even though not necessarily being described by them as a Balkan regime, while for Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) political Balkan traits in Romania and the Republic of Moldova incorporate the common ***practice of godparenthood ("naşi"),*** affecting social practices in various spheres:

> If you want to understand public life in Orthodox countries as well, then maybe, I do not know how it is in Greece, but you can find it here, and you can also find it in the Balkan version and in the Slavic one, in the Orthodox and in the Russian version. Well, also the Balkan version is a South Slavic version. And this is the system of godparents and witnesses to a marriage, "naşi". And that's stronger, this relationship is stronger than any kinship relationship. They're relatives, but they're not blood relatives. And then it is, well, to avoid nepotism, you cannot hire relatives. But the spiritual relatives you can. And then there are, for instance, professors who have I don't know how many godchildren. Or no, not godchildren, but they were witnesses. And these are, so to speak, their godchildren. They are, so to speak, their children. And they'll promote them. The godchildren themselves, in turn, have their godchildren. Either children whose godparent they are or witness. So by that, a kind of kinship is pursued which is not genetic but spiritual. And so there's going to be a whole web of kinship, no? A nice network, that's networking, too.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Furthermore, Balkan cultural traits are in general depicted in form of the ***mentality*** of people and the ***architecture*** in southern Romanian cities such as Bucharest (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), as well as in a perceived ***national, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity*** of the Romanian

and Moldovan society similar to former Yugoslavian countries before the Yugoslav Wars at the end of the 20th century:

> I would say that nation-building got stuck in Romania, and that is also fortunate for this country. Because the strength of this country lies in its heterogeneity, and if you leave people alone, then this tension that exists here can turn out to be very constructive. That was the case with Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia could have developed beautifully, because the most loyal Yugoslavs were the, well, Bosnian Muslims. They felt at home in Yugoslavia, but they remained Bosnians and they remained Muslims. It was a completely different Islam than this fundamentalism. That's also the case with Moldova, so there it is also more heterogeneous. And one could also handle this heterogeneity in a quite constructive way.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Thus, by way of incorporating Romania and the western part of the Republic of Moldova within the European mesoregion of the Balkans, this spatial imaginary clearly bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border, emphasizing, in turn, the internal Moldovan border to Transnistria as the eastern physical boundary of the Balkans. However, similar to the European Bessarabian identity, this collective identity was only mentioned by two professors (Elvira and Alexandru), eventually due to the fact that also on the European scale there are various controversial definitions of the Balkans and its geographical area (see section 2.3).

Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity

- **Type of collective identity:** linguistic identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan linguistic identity (dividing) - Southern Muntenian/Northern Moldovan identity and pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity (de-/re-bordering) – Romanian linguistic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** the historical Romanian regions of Walachia and Moldova and the western part of the RM between Prut and Dniester
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

Similarly fuzzy are identifications with the remnants of past historical spatial categories on the European and international scale such as a ***pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity.*** In this regard, pan-Latin traits are imagined to be found in the western part of the Republic of Moldova and in the historical Romanian regions of Moldova and of Walachia due to the past Russian rule over these territories: "Well, there is a paradox, because the Romanian Francophonie and Francophilia are dating back to the Russian occupation in 1821, the modernization of Walachia and Moldova can be traced back to these Russian officers." (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), and where these closer ***ties to the francophone world*** are, arguably, still perceptible today as well:

> But in Moldova, there is always this culture, this opinion that you should also learn French, and learn it well. In Romania, no, there isn't. In Romania, you are learning German now, a lot of German and, well, English. […] Also in Arad, well, there is not

> only one school where they teach German, there are, I don't know how many, but there are really more than two, three, four, I don't know how many. Also in Transylvania, there are two or three schools in Sibiu, there are also many in Transylvania. There, in Bucharest, in the Romanian Moldova and, no, they don't know German. […] In Bucharest there are also a lot of schools which offer very good French language courses. And, no, in Bucharest, French. And I didn't hear German there.
>
> (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

By bridging thus the Romanian-Moldovan state border, this spatial imaginary constructs new physical boundaries along the historical Romanian regions of Walachia and Moldova as well as the western parts of the Republic of Moldova. However, even though being linked to past discourses and spatial linguistic imaginaries on the international scale, this spatial imaginary was again only mentioned by Elvira and Oana (Cluj-Napoca), and may therefore be considered as rather low in significance in the everyday life of people.

5.3 The de-bordered state border: no place at all for the state border?

In addition to these dividing and de-/re-bordering collective identities, also collective identities can be encountered in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova that completely bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border and comprise the whole state territory of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova, such as:

(1) Hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity
(2) Romanian linguistic identity
(3) Post-socialist identity
(4) Slavic-Orthodox religious identity
(5) Romanian cultural identity
(6) Romanian ethnic identity
(7) Extended pan-Romanianist national identity
(8) European identity
(9) Wider European identity
(10) Eastern European identity
(11) Western (European) identity
(12) Eurasian identity
(13) Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity

In this context, for Moldovan citizens, spatial rights linked to their citizenship such as the right to enter the state territory of Romania or of other Schengen members states are usually crucial and people aim at maintaining them (see section 5.1). In consequence, in particular after the EU accession of Romania in 2007 when Moldovan citizens were required to obtain a Romanian tourist visa to enter the Romanian state territory, people in the Republic of Moldova started to acquire the ***Romanian-Moldovan double citizenship,*** which still seems to enjoy popularity in the Republic of Moldova since people are not yet fully aware of the visa liberalization in 2015: "The biggest problem was at the moment of visas, you know. Because it's complicated. We can still not relate to have free access to Romania." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Linked to that are perceived crucial advantages of the Romanian citizenship, such as the possibility to stay for longer than three months in Romania to live, study or work there, or simply to cross easily the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as other state borders within the Schengen area, which is, in my opinion, highlighted by the fact that many of my Moldovan research participants had the Romanian-Moldovan double citizenship. And it is implied by narratives of Mariana (Sculeni, Sept. 2017), Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "I have a Romanian citizenship. And I can go freely to Europe to study there, I can go to make my Master's degree there. But someone who don't have this, this stamp in passport can't get access to it."

Hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** civic identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan civic identity (dividing) - hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and RM and of EU Schengen member states
- **Temporality:** present
- **Multi-scalar:** national and European scale
- **Importance:** high (in RM only)
- Hegemonic

In consequence, despite the visa liberalization, Moldovan citizens seem to continue perceiving the Romanian-Moldovan double citizenship as an advantages and not as contradictory to feel part of a national or political Moldovan community while being at the same time legally a member of another, Romanian political community:

> So, now I am trying to get a Romanian passport to go there for studies, or for, I don't know, working maybe. […] And it is good from Moldova that we can get Romanian documents without - I don't know how is it, we can have like two passports, Romanian and Moldovan. We don't have to say "I am not Moldovan, I will be Romanian.", or like in other countries it is allowed to have two passports.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

By that, this Romanian-Moldovan hyphenated identity clearly bridges, in my opinion, the Romanian Moldovan state border, perceiving at its physical boundaries either the borders of

the joint state territory of Romania and the Republic of Moldova or the borders of the joint territories of the EU Schengen member states as well as of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Despite of being thus closely linked to current discourses and practices on the national and European scale, it enjoys, evidently, only popularity in the Republic of Moldova due to identified advantages in spatial rights of the Romanian citizenship in contrast to not-mentioned ones of the Moldovan citizenship which would make a double citizenship also attractive for Romanian citizens.

Romanian linguistic identity

- **Type of collective identity:** linguistic identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan linguistic identity (dividing) - Southern Muntenian/Northern Moldovan identity and pan-Latin/Francophone identity (de-/re-bordering) – Romanian linguistic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of the RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national and international scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

Another aspect to which people in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova often refer to and which challenges the Romanian-Moldovan state border, represents the ***Romanian language,*** being in general essential for defining numerous collective identities on the micro scale, as already elaborated so far. In this regard, people in Romania as well as in the Republic of Moldova are considered as sharing the ***same linguistic identity*** by way of speaking the same language, Romanian. This perception, even though having been rather contested in the times of the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), seems nowadays to enjoy again general acceptance both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, as also highlighted by the fact that all of my research participants from the Republic of Moldova stated that their mother tongue is Romanian. And it also includes Transnistria, despite a perceived higher percentage of people living in Transnistria whose mother tongue is Russian compared to other parts of the Republic of Moldova and Romania: "So they might speak Romanian or Moldovan, as they call it, although, it's interesting, by the way, just as an aside, judging by their dialect, many of them come from the Maramureş region. They are more Romanian actually. But of course, don't tell them, don't tell that to a Transnistrian." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). In consequence, the Romanian language seems to represent a key marker for distinguishing between Moldovan or Romanian inhabitants and inhabitants of other countries living either within or outside of the Romanian and Moldovan state territories, such as Ukrainians or Russians (see section 5.1), as well as for creating cohesion among the inhabitants of both countries:

> I grew up in a family that is pro-Romania and every, everything in our family – we speak Romanian language, we don't speak Moldovan […] I don't speak Russian, because… Actually, I know Russian and I speak Russian, but I don't speak Russian

> here in Chişinău or in Moldova because I think that our country is, is pro-Romanian, must be, and must have good relationships with Romania. We have to promote these traditions.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

As a result, in the case of this spatial imaginary, linguistic differences are often reduced to mere dialectical ones, to accents, without lowering significantly the overall uniting linguistic ties between Romanians and Moldovans, as implied by Amelia (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017): "Of course, the lexical differences have amused me and were, for me, an oddity." and Catrina (Iaşi, Oct. 2017): "I repeated this experience in 2016 and 2017. By that, I could notice some changes in the visual area regarding a decreasing use of the Russian language on posters along the streets. On the streets, Romanian is heard more and more, but Russian less and less."

This spatial imaginary, which is clearly de-bordering the Romanian-Moldovan state border by depicting as its physical boundaries the borders of the joint state territories of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, can be traced back to past and current discourses on the national scale of a joint linguistic heritage of Romanians and Moldovans representing one Romanian nation and to Romanian representing currently the official state language in both countries, as well as to (past) pan-Latin discourses on the international scale. By that, as well as due to the, arguably, in general high significance of languages for defining numerous collective identities in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, this collective identity seems to enjoy high popularity in both countries.

Post-socialist identity

- **Type of collective identity:** (post-)socialist/(post-)Soviet identity
- **Continuum 1:** non-post-Soviet/ post-Soviet identity (dividing) - post-socialist/Soviet identity (de-/re-bordering) - post-socialist identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of former socialist countries such as Romania and the RM (not further defined)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national, European and international scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

Similar to the case of the Romanian language, other cultural shared traits such as religion or a socialist heritage are sometimes identified as key markers of collective identities that bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border, too. In this regard, despite acknowledged differences between a past Soviet regime in the Republic of Moldova and the socialist regime of Ceausescu in Romania, in both countries people seem to be aware of a similar ***socialist past***: "Sighetu has a House of Terror, because there was one Communist [who was] captured, a lot of political, politicians, a famous politician, Iuliu Maniu, who died there. And for me it was very impressive to see the places and how actually the Communism worked." (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017).

Furthermore, as outlined in section 5.2, both Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) depict Romania and the Republic of Moldova as countries having undergone ***transformation processes*** from a socialist to a capitalist society since the 1990s with presumed comparable outcomes in various spheres nowadays. Proof of that is, arguably, the current political situation including similar characteristics of the ***political elite*** in both countries, as pointed out by Elvira (see section 5.2), as well as the perceived revival of a kind of socialist nationalism as under Ceausescu in the past in Romania:

> And I am afraid that the manner in which the government will celebrate it will only make things worse. Because they are preparing something which resembles national communist construct, sorry to say that. Because the previous government, which was not perfect, the technocratic government, they had some pretty, pretty smart people taking care of this organization of committee and so on. And when this government came, even the previous one, at first, the designated government, they just replaced them with all kinds of figures from the old regime, very, very, all young people but all with the same mindset. So I'm, I wouldn't be surprised if this would be a Ceausescu-style ceremony of glorifying one's nation, whatever, unfortunately, yes.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

And secondly, these transformation processes are considered as having resulted in similar ***economic levels*** in both countries, as argued by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "But the sad thing is that there are areas in Romania where the last modernizer was Ceausescu. That is painful. But, for instance, in the south of Oltenia, the last one to build roads there and who tried to introduce somehow industry or to reduce poverty, that was Ceausescu.", and by Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "You have roads from north to south which are Soviet-built roads. The remains of infrastructures in Moldova are Soviet-built. They don't have built anything serious from Stalin on."

In consequence, people living in Romania as well as in the Republic of Moldova seem to be aware of and acknowledge a shared socialist heritage and its comparable impacts in both countries nowadays, constructing by that a post-socialist identity that bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border. What is more, this spatial imaginary can be linked to past national (and international) discourses about socialist nationalism as well as to past and current discourses on the European and international scale about transformation processes of post-socialist countries. And it is often incorporated into a broader imagined shared Romanian cultural identity, similar as in the case of the imagined uniting Orthodox religious identity.

In contrast to other collective identities based on cultural traits, uniting religious aspects and a ***shared Orthodox religious identity*** remain rather imprecise and in lack of details. The only mentioned specific religious trait that is imagined to be shared by people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova (as well as in other Orthodox countries), refers to the already in section 5.2 mentioned joint practice of ***godparenthood ("naşi"),*** which is grounded in Orthodoxy:

Slavic-Orthodox religious identity

- **Type of collective identity:** religious identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Russian Orthodox religious identity (dividing) - Slavic-Orthodox religious identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** canonical territories of Eastern Orthodox Churches (including of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the Russian Orthodox Church)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

> Then it can happen, for instance, that a doctoral supervisor might impose himself and tell a doctoral student that "I want to be a best man." And if he says, well, I already have my marriage witnesses, because there can't be that many, it can happen that the doctoral supervisor harasses his doctor child. This is this "naşie". "Naşi" derives from the Slavic, and yes, there is ... Because there is also, it is in the Catholic Church, there are these godparents if someone enters the monastery. This is something else. Because especially in the Orthodox world, the one who enters the monastery usually doesn't make any career, has no career anymore. That is something completely different. But here in the worldly realm, that's just like the root-knot of mushrooms. You know, the mushrooms are actually these roots. What we see is, in quotation marks, the blossom, because they do not bloom, but ... And if you pick the mushroom, then those mycelia still remain, or whatever their name is. And it's like that with this "naşi".
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Apart from that, however, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova usually refer only to an in general ***shared Orthodox belief*** as one out of several joint cultural traits: „Yes there might be a different accent in the language spoken and the way of life but they speak the same language, share the same religion and traditions." (Romina, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017). In consequence, despite of being rather frequently mentioned, this uniting religious collective identity comprising the whole state territory of Romania and the Republic of Moldova as well as the canonical territories of Orthodox churches in general, remains rather fuzzy and low in significance compared to other mentioned linguistic and cultural collective identities, into which it is often incorporated, such as a uniting Romanian cultural identity.

As expressed by Romina above and confirmed by Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), Raisa and Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), the Republic of Moldova and Romania are often imagined to form part of the ***same (Romanian) cultural sphere*** due to a joint Romanian language, religious beliefs, traditions and customs: "One of the places that people are moving is Romania. Because the language is the same, and the culture is also almost the same. We have the same traditions, costumes, clothes, the food is also awesome." (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). And especially ***linguistic ties*** and the introduction of the Latin script in 1989 in the Republic of Moldova contributed to a perceived cultural proximity, as pointed out by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "I was really first generation in 1989 that started to… I mean we were educated already in the Latin script. […] Which is important, because the cultural distance was much less." Moreover, this perception seems to extend to a ***similar mindset*** of people in Romania and the Republic of Moldova especially in the academic world, as expressed by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "At this New Europe College [in Bucharest], I was surrounded by people who, you know, were mostly intellectuals, so it was some kind, if I may be a bit sarcastic, it was some kind of intellectual ghetto. […] And of course, these people were much closer to me by mindset.", and by Catrina (Iaşi, Oct. 2017): "In the academic environment [in Chişinău], we were very well received as "our colleagues from Iaşi", making no difference between us and them. We had very interesting and constructive scientific and personal discussions."

Romanian cultural identity

- **Type of collective identity:** cultural identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Russian-Moldovan cultural identity (dividing) – Romanian cultural identity and Romanian ethnic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of the RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national scale
- **Importance:** high
- Counter-hegemonic

As a result, linguistic and cultural as well as economic differences between people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova are often perceived as only ***minor regional differences*** within an overall Romanian cultural sphere:

> There are now some people who have made it in show business. [...] So nowadays one plays with his/her origins. And the breakthrough was in 2004. There was this hit, which was so popular especially in Western Europe, nobody understood the lyrics, we found this hit absolutely stupid, but in the west, everyone was crazy about it, "Dragostea din Tei", or something like that. So the text was absurd. But one was so carried away by it. And then there was a band that still exists today, "Planeta Moldova". [...] And they have really smart texts, so ironic. And there was a song, "Alimentara". And they also played a lot with their accent. And it, they were very self-mocking. Maybe it still exists today. And then they made their breakthrough. So those are not these naive people, these people whose Romanian really no one understands, but they are intelligent, and they are funny.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

> For me, the Romanian-Moldovan border is just political. The cultural, historical and linguistic spaces specific for those entities mentioned above obviously overlap. […] Consciously, I do not realize, even when crossing the border, the dichotomy between us Romanians and them, the foreigners. In addition, sometimes other participants of the trip, usually four in number, going for the same motives, are aware of distinctions, but never at a cultural or ethnic level, but only at the economic level.
>
> (Oliviu, Iaşi, Sept. 2017)

Moreover, also this imagined uniting Romanian cultural identity shared by people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova is used for depicting them as sharing a joint Romanian ethnic identity, in line with past and current pan-Romanianist and national discourses on the national scale in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Romanian ethnic identity

- **Type of collective identity:** cultural identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Russian-Moldovan cultural identity (dividing) – Romanian cultural identity and Romanian ethnic identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of the RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** national scale
- **Importance:** high
- Counter-hegemonic

Transitions from a uniting Romanian cultural identity to a ***Romanian ethnic identity*** are, however, usually fluid. In this regard, in addition to the already mentioned shared ***cultural traits,*** especially the ***joint origins*** of people living in Romania and the Republic of Moldova are highlighted: "Moldovans are Romanians when we talk about history. […] But in Moldova, [they are] Romanians in Moldova, not in Romania." (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). Implying by that, that even though currently living in two sovereign states, the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova and Romania are imagined as being united by ***common ancestry,*** as representing ***one people*** due to their joint past:

> It was, I think, in Timişoara, I think. So my dad has some friends there and they met each other in Timişoara for the first time. […] It was the first time of a symposium, yes. They have some summits. And, when they met each other, those guys, they hug my dad, they kiss each other, and… "But you don't know him!?" No, he is their friend! And they were called like brothers, like, how is it, our Moldovan brother. And now when that guys came to the camp they were also like that – when they left, when we had to say goodbye, we were all crying because we got used to each other in ten days and we understand that we are not that far from each other, and… It's only a barrier in talking, language barrier, and maybe it's a kind of mental border.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

> We are brothers with them in the sense of representing one people. We are Romanian, we speak the same language. Some of us from the countryside do not want to identify themselves as Romanians because they were brainwashed by the Russians. But there are still many inhabitants who identify themselves as Romanians in the Republic of Moldova.
>
> (Mariana, Sculeni, Sept. 2017)

Similar to the imagined joint Romanian cultural identity, being in line with past and current pan-Romanianist and national discourses in Romania and the Republic of Moldova as well as congruent with the past spatial unit of Greater Romania between 1941-44, this perceived uniting Romanian ethnic identity enjoys, arguably, high popularity in both countries.

Extended pan-Romanianist national identity

- **Type of collective identity:** national identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian/Moldovan national identity (dividing) - Moldavian national identity and pan-Romanianist national identity (de-/re-bordering) – extended pan-Romanianist national identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of the RM
- **Temporality:** past, present and future
- **Multi-scalar:** national and European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Counter-hegemonic

What is more, perceptions of a shared Romanian ethnic identity are also incorporated into ideas of an overall ***Romanian nation***. Due to the above-mentioned imagined cultural, linguistic and ethnic traits shared by the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova and Romania, people in both countries thus sometimes claim for a ***political reunification,*** not necessarily in form of reuniting Romania and the western part of the Republic of Moldova, Bessarabia (see section 5.2), but rather Romania and the entire Republic of Moldova as in times of ***Greater Romania between 1941-44:***

> So far the language is the strongest argument for unification as the population there speaks it, Romanian language is the first language in the country at the moment, followed by Russian. There is a certain historical tie between the countries and their people, the feeling of belonging together. […] We have learned so far to support the people of the Republic, and just as much as they hope for a unification with Romania, so do we as Romanians.
>
> (Romina, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017)

Being in line with, arguably, essentialist ethnic national discourses in Romania and the Romanian national narrative in the Republic of Moldova on the national scale, which are referring to emotional, ethnic ties between the inhabitants of both countries, also in everyday life claims for a reunification are often considered as being essentialist and not realistic:

> What I'm missing in this whole thing is that actually we have no discussion at all. We scream at each other. It is a technical question, whether, for example, Romania could cope with that. Because, for instance, the German reunification was an immense test of strength for Germany, and after 27 years there are still problems.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

> You have now much more nationalism, the neonist party. But you don't know if it's sincere about it, if they are used by the government […] They want to be Romanian and that's it. So that's a very primitive nationalistic rhetoric. […] They want to get to Romania, they will be, you know, in rich Romania again, and that's it. They don't have any program.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

However, according to Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), at least in everyday life perceptions of people in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova have become more rational and down-to-earth in the last years compared to initial years of enthusiasm about a reunification directly after 1991, as also confirmed by Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017):

> My impression was that all this is in vain, everything is Russian here. That's just a dream. What can we do to reunite this country with this country? That's impossible. That's a nationalist idea, and it has no place in our present. [...] So, if you want to talk about brotherly relations between Romanians and Moldovans, you have to go back at least one hundred years in time. […] But the present exhibits a completely different context. So, that was my perception. Ok, we are really brother-like, but at the same time, we are so deeply different that a current or future reunification is just a matter of populism. So, not realistic.

Despite these still existing claims for a political reunification, both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova less essentialist hopes are therefore rather on in the future closer ties between the two countries through „Europeanization“ and ***EU-membership*** of the Republic of Moldova: “I think that Romania very much wants to have Moldova in the European Union. But with a development, not like it is [now]. Because [...] they also have an emotional attachment, yes, with Moldova, and that's why [...], they also want people to live well there.” (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). Whereas according to Oleg (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) the focus of the future development of the Republic of Moldova should neither be on its European integration nor on a reunification with Romania, but on a Europeanization and Romanization of the Republic of Moldova in the sense of adapting European and Romanian mentalities, customs, strong institutional structures for a future stable sovereign state with close ties to Romania and the EU:

> I think citizens or political parts of intellectuals, they should concentrate on Europeanization of Moldova, Europeanization and Romanization […]. So not integration with Romania, and not integration into the European Union, which is far away from Moldova. The two processes of stretching what means European identity and Romanian cultural identity. And what will make people and society less exposed to Russification, to Russian propaganda. […] And the second is, of course, to strengthen institutions because this is part of what we call Europeanization. Because without, strong institutions we have… Just imagine if one billion dollars could be extract from our national bank with support of presidency, prime minister, bank government, and so on. So everybody were involved. And that’s a big problem. We have no institutions, we have no state.
>
> (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Consequently, while perceptions of uniting Romanian cultural, ethnic and national ties are still strong, the nature of the discourse of a territorial reunification to reunite the divided Romanian nation has changed over the course of time, ranging nowadays from claims for a political reunification to that of remaining two sovereign states but forming both part of the EU to that of being united by close cultural, political and economic ties between two sovereign countries.

In all three cases, however, the barrier role of the Romanian-Moldovan state border is at least challenged and replaced by that of a place of contact and exchange, while in the case of claims for a political reunification it is abolished entirely. And by being supported by powerful nationalist discourses on the national scale, linked to "Europeanization" discourses on the European scale and congruent with the past spatial unit of Greater Romania between 1941-44, this spatial imaginary and discussions about it are of high importance in both countries.

European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** European/non-European identity (dividing) – extended European/non-European identity (de-/re-bordering) - European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania, of the RM and of other countries(e.g. EU member states)
- **Temporality:** past, present and future
- **Multi-scalar:** national and European scale
- **Importance:** high
- Hegemonic

Closely linked to ideas of a future EU integration of the Republic of Moldova are perceptions of both Romania and the Republic of Moldova as forming part of a ***European cultural, political and economic sphere.*** This feeling of belonging to the European sphere refers, at first, to ***geographical definitions*** of Europe based on which Romania and the Republic of Moldova are arguably clearly part of Europe as a continent: "But in sense of geography, we are European, no one will tell you we are not European." (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). In addition, there is also agreement that Romania and the Republic of Moldova ***share decisive historical events*** in European history, such as experiences of Communism and the Second World War:

> So, we had a conference once, on World War II, with my university here, and we had foreign guests, foreign academics, you know, invited, and we went to Transnistria for a tour, basically, to the world memorials there related to World War II.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

> Because there is hardly any family in Bessarabia of which not at least one family member had been in the Gulag. I had a student from Bessarabia, that was some years ago, a very intelligent boy. And of course, he could also speak Russian. And then he said in the exam that his grandfather had also been deported. And they were, he was, for 40 days he had been transported in a cattle car. Imagine that, 40 days, one and a half months! So human beings are very capable of surviving. Yes. And, well, that is, so to speak, this common experience.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

According to Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), this also entails ***economic developments*** such as deindustrialization having taken place in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the 1980s and 1990s, similar to other European countries like (Eastern) Germany. Moreover, as pointed out by Oleg, Tudor and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) as well as Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca,

Sept. 2017), Romania and the Republic of Moldova also form part of the European sphere for ***cultural reasons:***

> Not even in Transnistria, by the way, although they are rhetorically very anti- and pro-East, yes, officially, but in practice young people they are not that different, or very little different from young people here in terms of what they listen to, or what they watch, or how English, and so on. Really, I mean, well, ok, maybe I am exaggerating a bit, but not too much. I mean, because they, they look alike, well, I mean, any European young man or woman would look like, you know, and their references are not very different, aside from the patriotic, you know, invocation of all this. But this is, I am not sure to what extent this is really internalized. Maybe it is, but, again, American mass culture is really present there, that's what I am saying.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

These shared European cultural traits also include perceived (European) mindsets as well as professional and educational standards, as expressed by Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "During this time, of course, I have met many people here in Iaşi from the Republic of Moldova. Most of them are pro-European and very well educated, and […] professionally not different.", and by Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017):

> [Moldova is a European country] because of opportunities that Moldova gives to our students. Moldova is a total open country for foreign students. And that, that's a point of, it's a common point between European countries and Moldova. In, actually, in my university, I have Indians, I have people from Israel, I have students from Dubai, I have students from France, I have students from Germany, because our medicine university is a respected one […] And I heard that the Technical University in Tiraspol is pretty good because they, in the past they were preparing students for automobile construction for Soviet Union and they were pretty developed in comparison to other universities. Our universities, my university of medicine, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy Nicolae Testemițanu, is one of the best med-schools in Europe because we study anatomy on human bodies, on real human bodies, we study physiology on, on animals. It's a pretty strange thing, but we have a lot of practice, and that's why our level of studies is pretty higher than average med-school in Europe. I have some friends, that, they study in Strasbourg, medicine, and they said that they never saw a human body to study. They only study on computers, they study on trainees, and then, that's much more less practice than we got and we do.

Moreover, in this case it is argued that also in the ***political sphere*** the Republic of Moldova is in the process of "becoming European" despite perceived lacking democratic institutions (Alexandru and Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Proof of that are, arguably, the previous visa liberalization for Moldovan citizens (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), the new anti-corruption system decreasing the level of corruption in the Republic of Moldova to those in other EU countries (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), as well as political ties and networks between the Republic of Moldova and other European countries, as pointed out by a narrative of Viorica (Ungheni, Oct. 2017):

> This event took place in 2016, in June, at the 19th edition of an international symposium on the topic: ***"Respect of Fundamental Human Rights - the Essential Component in the Formation of the European Police Professional Profile,"*** during which each representative of a school/educational facility presented shortly his/her institution and shared some teaching methods regarding –***the respect of human rights.*** Well, for once representatives from several countries participated in the International Symposium, such as from> **Hungary, Macedonia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Slovenia, Moldova, Romania**. What I liked very much at this event was that I got to know many people from within the power structures of the represented states. It was a wonderful experience, which made a positive impression on me. I visited great places in Romania, but I also talked to high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Romania, Macedonia... But most of all I liked the fact that we all stayed friends and in contact.

In consequence, the inhabitants of Romania and the Republic of Moldova are described as sharing a uniting European identity due to joint historical, geographical, cultural and economic features, and the Republic of Moldova as working on sharing European political traits as well. Being supported by powerful discourses of "Europeanization" of EU-neighbouring countries on the European scale and of the future EU-membership of the Republic of Moldova on the national scale, this spatial imaginary of both countries forming part of the European sphere seems to enjoy high popularity on the micro scale. Nevertheless, as also in this case the extent to which the Republic of Moldova is considered as European is contested from a political point of view, the Republic of Moldova is instead sometimes ascribed to Wider Europe, as outlined in section 5.1, which is eventually depicted as applying to Romania, too.

Instead of depicting the Republic of Moldova as forming part of ***Wider Europe*** and of Romania as belonging to (Eastern) Europe, as elaborated in section 5.1, also Romania is in this case portrayed as being in the ***process of incorporating imagined EU values*** and of belonging therefore together with the Republic of Moldova to Wider Europe. This perception is, for instance, explained by referring to perceived similar ***practices and levels of corruption*** in both countries:

Wider European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** Eastern European/Wider European identity (dividing) - Balkan identity (de-/re-bordering) – Wider European identity and Eastern European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania and of member states of the Eastern Partnership such as of the RM
- **Temporality:** present and future
- **Multi-scalar:** non
- **Importance:** medium
- Counter-hegemonic

> I like Moldova and Romania, because, if you have friends, you can have friends everywhere, in every domain, and you can… Everyone can help you with a problem. […] In Europe, it's a little bit different. […] I like in Moldova that you don't have to bribe. You only have to call someone and say: "Please, accept him, he is from my name, he is a friend of mine, please help him." And, and that's why I, like one year ago I were in Romania and there I have, I have a friend that works in police, and I passed

> the speed limit, like with 10 or 15km/hour, and it's a small amount, but it's already a, a, how to say it, illegal. And they stopped me and said: "Hi man, you passed the speed limit with 10km/hour, you have to pay this fee." And I said: "Please, may I call someone?" "Yes, ok, for sure." And I called that friend and asked him for help and he said: "Give the phone to that police man." And they just said: "Oh, I am sorry, son, go ahead, you may go." Yes. And that, that's how it works in Romania and in Moldova. But, it's only for small… There is a limit.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Moreover, this seems to entail perceptions of not (yet) incorporated European ***institutional and political values*** and especially responsibilities in a more general sense as well:

> He [Titu Maiorescu] has criticized the modernization of Romania, and he said that forms are adopted, but not the content. [...] So the West means, let's say, consumer society, first and foremost. What one does not understand under the West are the responsibilities that one assumes. [...] And, so it's sad to say, but we're experiencing that too now because many are without protection [by the state]. I know, in my neighbourhood, you have the feeling that there are no poor people, but they exist. And I know a Roma woman, well, I thought she was 40, but she's only 29, and she has four children or five with her husband. And this woman, both of them are illiterate, the children are illiterate, the older ones. They live in a room, her husband has a job, he gets 900 lei, so 200 euros, 400 they pay for the room, which has no electricity, no water and so on. Well, they do not have an identity card because they do not have a flat. [...] You are then in a vicious circle. They do not get social welfare [...] And they have tried many times, but it doesn't work out with the city administration. And I suggested to this woman to go to the Baptists. There is a Baptist church on the Someş shore, which is pretty close to them. And I do not know if they would help them, but as far as I know, the Baptists have such programs. I said that if they have the precondition of them becoming Baptists, then they should become Baptists. The Baptists have a very pronounced social work. They also have day nurseries and afternoon schools and they take care of the poor, the fallen ones, also the Pentecostals and so on. Because those are practically the only ones who support such marginalized people, those are still the churches. Maybe they have some evening school. Because without reading and writing, you cannot hire her as a cleaning lady. [...] So it's a vicious circle and it's very hard to break it. Incidentally, Romania has been warned by the European Commission that they have no, no poverty reduction policy at all. Because, well, let's say, well, you can help this family, but, let's just say, the various churches alones cannot do it.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

This opinion of a mere adaptation of forms and not of contents is roughly shared by Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017), as well as by Alexandru and Raisa (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) arguing that it applies to the Republic of Moldova as well:

> People don't understand that the EU has some conditions. And I think people are not prepared for this, and the country in general is not ready for this kind of changes. For example, here, we have a lot of plastic. Why are we not recycling this? Because in other countries is separated. All, I mean, you know, all rests are separated. People still don't accept and don't do this kind of stuff. […] So, I think, the way of thinking an important one. For example to open a company that is recycling plastic, is one step ahead. And some knowledge. For getting into the EU we need to make some steps ahead.
>
> (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Based on these evaluations, Romania is commonly described as being a bit further in the ***process of Europeanization*** than the Republic of Moldova but as nevertheless still forming part of Wider Europe: "Romania is in itself quite interesting, and it's not fully European either in this sense, I would say." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, by ascribing Romania and the Republic of Moldova to the same spatial unit, Wider Europe, this spatial imaginary bridges the Romanian-Moldovan state border, being, however, in the case of Romania not supported by discourses on the macro scale. This may be one of the reasons why other spatial imaginaries such as the portrayal of the Republic of Moldova as forming part of Wider Europe and Romania of (Eastern) Europe, which are supported by official discourses on the European scale, enjoy higher support in everyday life in both countries.

Eastern European identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** Eastern European/Wider European identity (dividing) - Balkan identity (de-/re-bordering) – Wider European identity and Eastern European identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania, of the RM and of other countries such as Hungary, Poland, former Eastern Germany
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** European scale
- **Importance:** medium
- Hegemonic

However, distinctions between Wider Europe and Eastern Europe in contrast to Western Europe are usually fluid, with the result that sometimes Romania and the Republic of Moldova are also both assigned to an ***Eastern European sphere*** instead of to Wider Europe. In this context, distinctions are made between Western European countries and Eastern European countries such as Romania and the Republic of Moldova, which are perceived as being different in character in particular due to differing crucial experiences they underwent in the course of ***history,*** such as Communist rule and transformation processes from a socialist to a capitalist society (see above) in contrast to experiences of Colonialism:

> But of course, I mean, in Western Europe, the common, common historical experience, was much more, I mean, you were much more closely defined between these Western Europeans. And I like, by the way, recently, you know, there was, there is all these discussions about migration processes, and, why, and our outrage of our migrants. "So, why are Western Europeans so tolerant with the ones originally from the colonies and not with fellow Europeans?" And someone answered something like "Well, but think about it. The British and the French had a very close historical experience with these people from the colonies, right? Whereas Eastern Europeans, for them, well, until, basically, well, with the exception of the inter-war period, they were much more, much less familiar culturally, you know. So why are you so surprised?" The British are much more likely to welcome, you know, a Pakistani, or an Indian, than a Polisher plumber or a Romanian. It's normal. It's due to the historical experience. […] So, I mean, I find

this kind of discourses a bit unnerving in the sense of, you know, "we are more European than all these people". But wait a minute, it's not that simple, you know.

(Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

These imagined historical and current differences between Eastern and Western Europe include also perceived past and present differing ***economic traits*** of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, besides the already mentioned former socialist economic system and economic transformation processes since the 1990s:

For example also the eastern part of Germany has suffered under it. Because, for instance, relations with Poland and the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia up to 1992, are not inventions of the Communists, but are dating back to the Middle Ages. [...] At this moment, Romania has no good relations with its neighbours. This was also the case in the interwar period, Romania had hardly any relations with its neighbours, well, Romania had tolerable relations at that time to Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, partly to Poland, because the two, Czechoslovakia and Poland, had joint borders with Romania. But otherwise, so there was a lot of fixation on Western Europe, which is still there today. So you only want to be with Western Europe. [...] But after all, you're in the eastern part of Europe, and that wouldn't be a problem if one wouldn't be so tense about it. And if you maintain relations with Russia that doesn't mean that you are a supporter of Putin.

(Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

In addition to priorities in economic relations, this also extends, presumably, to differences in ***welfare systems and living standards*** in Western and Eastern European countries:

I think in Romania, the very poorest people would be very happy if they had something like Hartz IV. One might complain about Hartz IV, but in, in countries like Romania or the Republic of Moldova or Bulgaria, people would be happy if they still had at least that much money. Well, poverty in Western Europe is not the same poverty as here for us. I know that there is poverty, but that is another kind of poverty. So here there is this poverty that already existed in the 19th century and also in the interwar period, or in the USA.

(Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

These felt differences especially in living standards between Western and Eastern European countries, in turn, are depicted as one reason for the ongoing high ***migration*** from Romania and the Republic of Moldova to Western European countries:

This Brukenthal school, the Lenau school, which work, practically at least 90% of their graduates are studying in Vienna or in Germany. Which would not be a problem, but they won't come back. That the, the medical universities in Romania are working for the export. The German Cultural Centre, for instance, is for engineers and doctors, because they all want to emigrate. So, I don't know how many there are per year, 90% want to work abroad later. And not to gain experiences and to apply them, they want to leave definitely. I mean, you cannot celebrate that. This is a country that dissolves itself. Well, consider that there are whole villages in Moldova, where there are only old people and children left, where adults do slave labour in Italy.

(Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

According to Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), these migration processes as well as the economic and political focus on Western European countries might also stem from a preserved ***glorification and mystification of Western Europe or the West*** in Eastern European countries such as Romania and the Republic of Moldova: „Here in Eastern Europe, you'll find […] a very centralist reading of what is Europe as well, like, the West." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), which seems to be confirmed by Oana's experiences:

> Moldovans think that Romania is already a European country. But not like Germany. [...] I thought so, too. But now I do not think so anymore. And I think there are also many advantages to being here in Romania, and maybe not in Germany. Yes, there is one, how can I say, a role model, a picture, a mental picture that Germany or France, or as I said Spain, Italy, is better than Romania. Yes, it is better, but only in some aspects, yes. But I think now, […] many Romanians who went to Germany and who worked there [said] that they no longer want to be in Germany. [...] And there are also Romanians or Moldovans who go there who don't feel at home there. And my father also told me when I told him that no, I want to study there in Germany when I was younger, I've told him that I don't want to study or to work in Romania, and then he told me "Ok, you do what you want, but you won't really feel at home there."
>
> (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

And this glorification of the West or Western Europe corresponds, arguably, with the perceived feeling of superiority in Western European countries over Eastern European countries:

> And what annoys me about Mrs. Merkel is that she denies her East German origins. Namely, I, I do not mean that, not the regime, or, that's normal, that she doesn't want to perpetuate that, that's wonderful. But that she has no, no empathy for Eastern Europe. That, I don't know, Junker and so on, who have always lived in the west, that they do not have that, I can understand that [...] I mean, what happens in Hungary or Poland, you just want to take flight. But in part it is also this callousness, no, not callousness, this tactlessness. Well, I, I find it absolutely outrageous that things that one accepts in Western Europe, are now suddenly outrageous in the East of Europe. And, so, one does speak of corruption in the East of Europe, but in Western Europe, there you can find it as well. And in Eastern Europe, it is often kind of pickpocketing. Well, if you have a look now at what very high officials, for instance also of the EU, have captured. And with this attitude people like Orban or Kaczyński are held in power.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

> By some Western European politicians, Eastern Europe is also seen as a supermarket: self-service, just ringing. In this regard, Băsescu was right […] when he said, "If they accept our doctors, then they will accept our Roma, too."
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

This rather hierarchical spatial imaginary which transcends the Romanian-Moldovan state border, is, hence, linked to socially constructed hierarchies between European mesoregions and discourses on the internal European "other" of Eastern Europe on the European scale, as well as central to past and current discussions about differing living standards within Europe and

opportunities to improve them on the micro scale, and by that of rather high relevance in everyday life in both Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Western (European) identity

- **Type of collective identity:** European identity
- **Continuum 1:** European identity (uniting) – Western (European) identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania, of the RM and of other countries such as Germany, Hungary, USA
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

In contrast to that, and eventually as a counter-reaction to the felt feeling of superiority of Western European countries over Eastern European countries, several narratives highlight imagined cultural and historical traits shared by Western (European) countries, Romania and the Republic of Moldova. In addition to the above-mentioned perceived European cultural traits due to a ***common European history,*** specific associations are made to highlight the imagined cultural, historical and political proximity between Romania, the Republic of Moldova and other ***Western European countries.*** In this regard, the experiences of the Second World War are, for instance, illustrated as being shared by in particular Moldovans and people from Western Europe, in contrast to people from other (Eastern European) countries such as Ukraine:

> And my grand-grandparent who was in Romanian army like a doctor, and he was sent to Siberia for five years and he had to work there. […] And he came back like in 49, yes. And my mom, my mom told me that he, when he came back, he already knew German language and Hungarian language, Finnish, and French. Yes. Those languages were in Siberia because there were a lot of Germans, Hungarians, and they had to, they had to communicate. […] We had some friends that were, that worked like historians, and they found information about my, another grand-grandfather that died on 8th of May in 45. Like one day before the end of the war. And another grand-grandfather died at the end of 44 next in Hungary.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

Due to its (Western European) historical traits, the Republic of Moldova is thus portrayed as providing of a ***Western (European) cultural heritage*** as well: "But simply in a country that should accept this heritage. You know, a common heritage that is, that we share with Russia, and also a common heritage that we share, obviously, with Romania and, you know, the West to a large extent." (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017) As a result, also regarding current social issues, comparisons are usually made between the situation in Romania or the Republic of Moldova and past or current similar situations in Western European countries: "I don't like the idea that we have to be of the same country, because, yes, we speak the same language, yes we have the same religion, but as countries, as origins, we are totally different. Not totally different, but we are different. We can say it's the same as Austria and Germany." (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept.

2017). Moreover, people are usually aware that this identification with the West or with Western Europe is used for ***(geo)political reasons*** by governing political elites on the macro scale as well:

> So for them [political parties in the Republic of Moldova], it's interesting to have a clear enemy. Because they can say to Americans or Europeans that "We are the Western guys, and we have to fight the Russians." […] And he [Plahotniuc] has considered it right to write him [the US-American president]. He had written an article, open letters, yes. The third one, I think, and he says that "Well, we are fighting the Russians, we are fighting for liberty and democracy in this part of Europe. Help us."
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

By that, this spatial imaginary, which is broadly anchored in perceptions of a Euro-Atlantic space on the international scale and linked to joint historical experiences, transcends the Romanian-Moldovan state border by assigning both Romania and the Republic of Moldova to the same European mesoregion. In contrast to an imagined mutual European identity, Wider European identity or Eastern European identity, however, this spatial imaginary remains rather fuzzy and seems low in importance, especially in Romania.

Eurasian identity

- **Type of collective identity:** Eurasian identity
- **Continuum 1:** European/Eurasian identity (dividing) - Eurasian identity (uniting)
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territories of Romania, of the RM and of other Eastern European countries (not further defined)
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** international scale
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

Nevertheless, this spatial imaginary might also contribute to portrayals of Romania and the Republic of Moldova as forming part of the ***Eurasian space*** due to an imagined eastern and a western heritage, which can be considered as a compromise between the conflicting spatial imaginaries of belonging to the Wider/Eastern European/non-European space or to the Western (European) sphere. For that, not only the Republic of Moldova is described as providing of a rich ***cultural eastern and western heritage,*** as outlined in section 5.1, but Romania as well. Similar to the Republic of Moldova, these ***"eastern" influences*** are not only limited to a socialist past but are traced back to earlier Russian influences in Romania, such as in form of immigrated Russian Old Believers in the historical region of Dobruja in today's Romania and Bulgaria in the 17th-18th century, or the Russian occupation of the historical Romanian regions of Walachia and Moldova from 1821 onwards (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017). Moreover, it is highlighted that despite of no longer being closely connected to the Eurasian market, Romania had been well integrated into the ***Russian market*** in the past:

> And his wife had studied Slavic Studies, so she often went to Russia. And she said then they kept asking her "Why, where are the furniture from Romania?" Because

> Romania was a big furniture exporter. So you have to keep in mind that the Russian market is huge. And while it is not without competition, but, well, it was the market that, so to say, simply swallowed Romanian goods.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Again eventually similar to the Republic of Moldova, however, this perceived rich western and eastern cultural heritage that Romania provides of due to past occupations by foreign powers such as the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire or the Russian Empire, etc., is often considered as being denied or ignored for nationalistic reasons in Romania:

> That part of Romania that was always Central European or Western European, that is the part that, in quotation marks, was the longest under foreign rule. And that it is this so-called foreign rule that has made this Western orientation possible. But if you deny it all the time, if you ... For example, this city name "Cluj-Napoca", that is, well, the one who doubts now that this is legitimate makes again propaganda for the enemy, but that's an invention of the early 70s. And it is practically about excluding the entire post-Roman history until, let's say, 1919. But you are living in the city that emerged during this time. And there is no discussion about it. There were in the, in 1990, there were some attempts, but they were swept away. And in 1990, for instance, a return to the old name, the Romanian "Cluj", that wouldn't have cost anything, because you had to replace all the letterheads and so on anyway because it was no longer called "Socialist Republic of Romania". Well, so it could have been done, but it wasn't done, and then it got too ideologized. But that really just shows this great uncertainty. This uncertainty will shape the centenary next year.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

Furthermore, in contrast to more frequently mentioned Eurasian traits of the Republic of Moldova, these Eurasian traits of Romania in the form of an eastern, Russian and a western, European heritage were only mentioned by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), turning thus this uniting collective identity into a rather uncommon spatial imaginary despite of being roughly in line with past and current concepts of Eurasia.

Another way to explain this perceived cultural hybridity is to portray both Romania and the Republic of Moldova as ***borderlands between the West/Europe and the East/Russia.*** Similar to the Republic of Moldova (see section 5.1), Romania is thus not only depicted as a borderland between the East and West because of exhibiting a certain ***cultural hybridity*** due to mixed cultural traits stemming from past

Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity

- **Type of collective identity:** borderland identity
- **Continuum 1:** Romanian non-borderland/Moldovan borderland identity and Bessarabian borderland identity (dividing) – Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity (uniting)
- **Border function:** securitization function
- **Imagined territorial unit:** state territory of Romania and of the RM
- **Temporality:** past and present
- **Multi-scalar:** regional (past)
- **Importance:** low
- Counter-hegemonic

territorial occupations by foreign eastern and western powers, but also due to a comparable unclear and ***contested national identity:***

> There is also an identity crisis here, we are experiencing it right now. And if you know, well, maybe only mentally ill persons know for 100% sure who they are, but usually you should know who you are, even though that can change. Well, if, if you do not know who you are, then you can hardly maintain any relationships. But that may be idealized or psychologized, but at the moment Romania also doesn't know what it is.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

As a result, as elaborated by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), different versions of history are contested and historical discussion highly emotional both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova especially due to attempts on the national scale to forge a new, binding national identity by referring to certain versions of history. Due to that as well as due to the above-mentioned adaptation of forms without content, also in Romania the governing political elite is perceived as ambiguous and the inhabitants of Romania as to some extent living in a ***"no man's land"*** with lacking social security provided by the state similar as in the case of the Republic of Moldova, according to Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "Most of the population lives in this state of vulnerability. And, so it's sad to say, but we're experiencing that, too. Well, there are right now a lot more that have, let's say, adapted this western outer appearance, these western forms. But many are without protection [by the state].", and Raisa (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "Sometimes we call this country like 'child without father', without protection."

However, also these descriptions of both Romania and the Republic of Moldova as a borderland between the East and West were only illustrated by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017) and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), representing by that a similar fuzzy uniting spatial imaginary as the joint Eurasian identity, eventually also because of being only roughly linked to spatial realities in Roman times when Romania represented a borderland of the Roman Empire in the form of the Dacian Province.

Nevertheless, independent of the fact whether some spatial imaginaries enjoy high popularity or not, the high number of in this section 5 outlined dividing and uniting collective identities highlights that there is a plenitude of different ways to embed the Romanian-Moldovan state border in everyday life bordering practices, resulting by that in the construction of numerous physical boundaries of collective identities.

5.4 A plenitude of internal borders & how many "others"?

As can be seen in the following Table 2, this plenitude of bordering, de- and re-bordering practices for constructing all these collective identities leads to several physical boundaries of collective identities along as well as within the state territories of Romania and the Republic of Moldova that are part of everyday life of people living in both countries:

Romanian-Moldovan state border	**Internal Moldovan-Transnistrian border**	**Borders of historical Moldavia**
1. Romanian vs. Moldovan citizenship/civic identity 2. Romanian vs. Moldovan linguistic identity 3. Romanian vs. Russian Orthodox religious identity 4. Non-post-Soviet vs. post-Soviet identity 5. Romanian vs. Russian-Moldovan cultural identity 6. Romanian vs. Moldovan national identity 7. European vs. non-European identity 8. (Eastern) European vs. Wider European identity 9. European vs. Eurasian identity 10. Romanian Moldovan borderland identity 11. Narrow Moldovan borderland identity 12. Bessarabian borderland identity 13. Romanian non-borderland vs. Moldovan borderland identity	1. Bessarabian borderland identity 2. Post-socialist vs. Soviet identity 3. Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity 4. Moldavian regional identity 5. Moldavian national identity 6. Pan-Romanianist national identity 7. Extended European vs. non-European identity 8. Balkan identity 9. Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity	1. Romanian Moldovan borderland identity 2. Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity 3. Moldavian regional identity 4. Moldavian national identity 5. Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity
Borders between historical Walachia and historical Transylvania and/or Moldavia	**Border adjacent to the Romanian-Moldovan state border in the Republic of Moldova**	**Borders of the historical Ţara de Jos (lowlands) and Ţara de Sus (highlands) in Moldavia**
1. Southern Muntenian vs. Northern Moldovan identity 2. Balkan identity 3. Pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity	1. Narrow Moldovan borderland identity 2. Narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity	1. Regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity

Table 2: Physical boundaries of collective identities in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova.
Source: own representation.

Additional ***internal borders*** in the Republic of Moldova are depicted in the form of distinctions between the countryside and urban areas with on the countryside imagined more strictly defined ways of life and gender roles (Oana, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017; Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and

poorer living conditions (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), in contrast to higher levels of education and a perceived pro-European and pro-Romanian attitude in cities such as Chişinău (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017; Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). This goes also partly hand in hand with imagined internal boundaries between a pro-Romanian camp (e.g. in Chişinău), a pro-Moldovan and a pro-Russian camp (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017; Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), and between Romanian-speakers (e.g. in Chişinău) and Russian speakers (e.g. in the north and south) (Oana, Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017; Raisa, Alexandru, Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Furthermore, also several ethnic boundaries within the Republic of Moldova are mentioned regarding the Gagauz minority and ethnic Bulgarians in the south (Tudor, Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), ethnic Russians in Transnistria as well as ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians in the north (Raisa, Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), turning by that the Republic of Moldova into a country with a multitude of internal borders that are embedded in everyday life of people. In Romania**,** in contrast, the only additional internal borders that are mentioned but are not linked to collective identities related to the Romanian-Moldovan state border are those of the historical region of Vojvodina, being today divided between Serbia, Hungary and Romania (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017).

Moreover, as highlighted by these numerous borderscapes in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, in particular linguistic features as well as historical spatial units (e.g. Bessarabia, the Moldavian Principality) seem to be crucial for everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, whose combination with features of past and current identity-forming discourses on the national, European and/or international scale contribute, arguably, to a myriad of collective identities on the micro scale nowadays with a consequently high number of depicted physical boundaries. This plenitude of physical boundaries along and within the state territories of Romania and the Republic of Moldova highlights, in turn, that in contrast to the initial assumption of globalization and modernity leading to fluid, de-territorialized boundaries of identities (Van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer, 2005, p. 1), the territorial symbolic and b/ordering functions of collective identities and their boundaries have been preserved in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. And that the Romanian-Moldovan state border continues to represent one major way in which boundaries of collective identities are imagined and expressed in everyday life in both countries.

In this regard, however, even though the Romanian-Moldovan state border at its current geographical position and function is confirmed by 13 collective identities on the micro scale (see Table 2), it is also challenged by 10 de- and re-bordering identities and 13 bridging

identities, implying thus that in everyday life its legitimacy is contested. This challenging of the Romanian-Moldovan state border is, from my point of view, further strengthened by the in addition strongly pronounced internal ***border with Transnistria*** in the Republic of Moldova, being depicted as the physical boundary of 9 collective identities that either confirm, re-border or bridge the Romanian-Moldovan state border (see Table 2). Due to this significance of the Transnistrian border for various collective identities on the micro scale, this border seems often to be perceived as an alternative border to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, to which the functions of the state border could be transferred to, rendering, hence, the current state border superfluous. That is to say, instead of depicting the Romanian-Moldovan state border as the physical boundary of a Romanian linguistic, cultural or national sphere or of a European sphere, the physical boundaries of these identities are sometimes also localized in the internal Moldovan border with Transnistria, or, as a third outer border, in the state border of the Republic of Moldova with Ukraine along the eastern border of Transnistria, which is perceived as the physical boundaries of 13 out of the here outlined collective identities.

Moreover, due to the depicting of the internal Moldovan border with Transnistria and/or the Moldovan-Ukrainian state border as alternative physical boundaries to the Romanian-Moldovan state border, both Ukraine as well as Transnistria are pointed out as "others", in particular in the Republic of Moldova. While the inhabitants of ***Ukraine*** are usually described as culturally close to Romanians and only "a bit different" (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), ***Transnistria*** is often clearly defined as "the Other". Accordingly, Transnistria is portrayed as still belonging to the Soviet world in contrast to the western part of the Republic of Moldova (see section 5.2), and as being in general somehow more Russian, according to Raisa (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "The difference is that they, they speak only Russian, first. Second, they look like Russian. Because it is from their, the way they are dressing, and, I don't know, it's just different […] And our culture is different. Unfortunately, it is very different." and Tudor (Chişinău, Sept. 2017): "Transnistria is a very strange part of the world. […] It's a small Russia next to Moldova." By that, Transnistria is often illustrated by Romanians as well as by Moldovans as part of the most crucial depicted "Other", namely the Russian Federation. Depicting ***Russia*** as the "Other" is not only used in order to define religious identities (Russian Orthodox and Slavic Orthodox religious identity), cultural identities (Russian-Moldovan cultural identity), national identities (Moldovan national identity), post-socialist and (post-)Soviet identities, Eurasian or borderland identities (Bessarabian, Moldovan or Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity) in everyday life. Far more, Russia is, for instance, depicted as having oppressed and "Russified" people living in the Moldovan Socialist Republic until 1991 (Oleg, Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017;

Mariana, Sculeni, Sept. 2017) as well as having significant influence and control over the Republic of Moldova even today, representing thus to some extent a geopolitical threat, as expressed by Oana (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017): "I think that Russia wants to have back the former USSR." and Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017): "We all know that Russia really tightly controls Bessarabia. It is almost impossible to fight with Russia for this country."

In contrast to Russia, Transnistria as well as Ukraine, Romania and (Western) Europe, in turn, are often described as rather positive "others", as eventually kind of role models. In this regard, in the Republic of Moldova, ***Romania*** seems to have gained in popularity in the last years:

> Recently, Romania has acquired a more positive reputation in some parts of the Russian speaking population, which is something new. And it's related […] to the perceived anti-corruption, you know, credentials of the Romanian prosecutors, you know, and all these things. […] Before that, during the last 3 years, Romania had this image that it was really fighting corruption. It was really, you know, achieving some success. And this led to, in contrast to what was happening here, or still is - no independent justice system, everything simply controlled by politicians - Romania was perceived for the first time, I would say historically, as a positive model by a part, a part, not the majority, but a part of the Russian speaking population, which was very interesting to observe.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In line with that, Romania is also often seen as a country where inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova hope of being able to live a better life than in the Republic of Moldova: "A lot of my friends are studying in Romania, like they get a scholarship there. They applied for studies and now they can stay there, they can live there, apply for some jobs." (Raisa, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). Even more than Romania, however, ***Western Europe*** is depicted in the Republic of Moldova and in Romania as a place where you can lead a better life, resulting, as already pointed out in section 5.2, often in a glorification of (Western) Europe.

In consequence, since neighbouring countries or regions to the south and east such as Transnistria, Ukraine and especially Russia seem to be often depicted as more or less threatening "others" in contrast to rather mystified or glorified identified "others" to the west such as Western Europe (or Romania), the question is raised if everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova are following patterns of "nesting orientalism".

6. REFLECTIONS ON EVERYDAY BORDERING PRACTICES

6.1 Nesting orientalism in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova?

The concept of "nesting orientalism" as a variant of Edward Said's theory of orientalism has been elaborated by Milica Bakić-Hayden in the article "Nesting orientalisms: the case of former Yugoslavia" (1995) in order to explain identity-formation patterns in the region of the Balkans. According to Edward Said's theoretical concept of orientalism, Europe is depicted as a uniform space by way of identifying non-western and non-European peoples and cultures as "others" (Said, 2003). In her article, Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) argues, however, that Europe is not only constructed by positioning itself in opposition to the non-western "other", but also through identifying internal others within Europe by referring to imagined exotic and usually highly stereotyped differences, orientalizing by that depicted internal others within Europe (Segnini, 2016, pp. 215-216). These internal bordering practices follow thus similar patterns as for the construction of Europe based on depicted non-western others by way of establishing a civilizational and cultural hierarchy within Europe (Šetek, 2016). Within this hierarchy, a perceived western culture that is usually depicted as lying more to the west (or the north) and as being more European is positioned at the top, followed by the respectively own region or country, and with the own eastern and southern neighbours that are portrayed as more backward and (even) less European at the bottom (Šetek, 2016). In consequence, internal European bordering practices are often shaped by the goal of justifying the belonging of the own region or country to the Western European sphere and of denying of it belonging to depicted internal European others such as the Balkans, in contrast to eastern and southern neighbours (Šetek, 2016, pp. 282-287). As a result, images of Western Europe are usually glorified, Western European countries and regions are considered almost unchallenged as role models, while stereotypes about the dangerous, primitive, and non-understandable east and south are further strengthened (Šetek, 2016, pp. 282-287).

Based on this understanding of orientalizing bordering patterns within Europe, I argue that everyday bordering practices in Romania and the Republic of Moldova are not focusing on rejecting the label "Balkans", as originally elaborated by Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995), but rather on preventing of being associated with "Eastern Europe" or "Wider Europe". As outlined in section 2.3, the spatial imaginary of Wider Europe often implies civilizational differences between EU-member states and their eastern and southern neighbours which are depicted as being still in the process of incorporating EU values and of becoming European (Scott, 2011; Scott, 2014a). Whereas another internal European Other, namely the European mesoregion of Eastern Europe, is often perceived as a "backward" region being positioned somewhere

between an “eternally stagnating” Asia and a “civilized” Western Europe (Schenk, 2017, pp. 192-199). Since both identity labels are thus not contributing to a positive self-identification, bordering practices in Romanian and in the Republic of Moldova may instead often concentrate on identifying perceived own Western European traits or purely European features in general.

Both in Romania as well as in the Republic of Moldova, this is strongly highlighted by the imagined joint Western European and European identities based on shared (Western) European historical and cultural traits, such as the experiences of WWII, similar mindsets and educational and professional standards. In Romania, in addition to this ***rejection of the label*** “Wider Europe” or “Eastern Europe”, which is also implied by rarely mentioned shared Wider or Eastern European traits, patterns of ***internal orientalization*** of eastern and southern neighbours seem to be confirmed by distinctions made between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, in contrast to Romania, the Republic of Moldova is ascribed to the sphere of Wider Europe since it is, arguably, not as far in the process of Europeanization as Romania, or to a non-European sphere due to the country’s perceived more traditional, conservative ways of life, absence of democracy, economic backwardness and lower living standards compared to Romania and other European countries (see section 5.1). Moreover, it is suggested by descriptions of the Republic of Moldova as an unsafe place on earth (Călin, Iaşi, Sept. 2017), as exhibiting a kind of professional backwardness, and of everything taking place somehow slower, as expressed by Amelia (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017): “What really stayed in my mind vividly until now, is the feeling that things are moving slower there, the services are totally different, from a qualitative point of view, but people are very kind.”, and by Eleonora (Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017):

> The close acquaintance with my university colleagues just confirmed the general opinion of Romanians about their [Moldovans] exaggerated sentimentality, but, for me, it also refuted the myth of their so-called professional "backwardness", as I found them very diligent, involved in a lot of projects which aim at integrating technologies in the educational system, and very eager to get familiar with everything that is new and to reach out to us (the Romanians), which made me understand that they are also extremely modest.

Furthermore, in Romania, this orientalization of the Republic of Moldova as its eastern neighbour seems also to be expressed in descriptions of the Republic of Moldova, similar to those of Ukraine, as one of Romania’s others because of having been influenced until today by the identified (European and) Romanian “Other”, Russia. This perceived “Russification” of the Republic of Moldova is implied by ascribing a Moldovan linguistic identity to people living in the Republic of Moldova, by describing the country as still forming part of the Soviet sphere,

as exhibiting Russian-Moldovan cultural traits, as representing a transit zone between the European (Western) sphere and the Russian (Eastern) sphere in the form of a borderland with cultural and political hybridity, etc. Russia itself as the "Other" in Romania is not only described as a past and present (geopolitical) threat to the European cultural and political sphere with opposing cultural and political values (see section 5.1), but also as being to some extent poorer or economically more backward (than Romania, Europe, or even the Republic of Moldova):

> That was in 1982, I was in the Soviet Union and I took the train from Moscow to Leningrad. And that's a journey, umm, I think the train, I don't know if the train stops. So, at night we continued driving, and in the morning, well, that was in April, that's to say it wasn't really spring in Russia, but there was this poverty that does not exist here, namely these farms, well, they had dogs, but otherwise they didn't seem to have anything else. [...] So in the Republic of Moldova, I know that from a friend of mine who married a man from Bessarabia. So there, the villages are like in our region of Moldova. So, with cultivating farms. They are poor, but you can see that they really work on their farms, too. In Russia, I had the impression that these people do not even know anymore [how to do it]. So they are not lazy, but they do not know [it]. It is bleak.
>
> (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

In contrast to that, in Romania, countries further to the west such as France, Germany but also Spain and Italy are described as providing of better living standards, as being (economically) more advanced and thus potential role models for Romania (see section 5.4). As a result, in Romania, bordering practices seem to follow patterns of "nesting orientalism" by way of having established a mental hierarchy ranging from its neighbours to the west that are perceived as "more" Western European and as positive role models on the top, to Romania as being in the process of becoming Western European, to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine that are to be located somewhere between the more progressive Romania and the orientalized Other of Russia:

> [From a Romanian point of view] talking about stereotypes, then, of course, Moldovans are, they come lower, I would say, in this hierarchy than any Romanian from Romania proper. They are slightly better than the Russians, but they are corrupted by the Russian influence. This is the main thing, you know. First of all, corrupted by Russian influence. Then we don't speak proper Romanian. Again, I am saying not from my experience but about stereotypes.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

> But for a lot of people, they don't really like Moldovans, because they are a little bit afraid of them, because they are a little bit too much Russian, because their appearances, ok, all those types of stereotypes that you can have about Russian people, on a little scale they have the same for Moldovan people. When they are accepted as a Romanian, they are considered as low-level Romanian, with low-level of culture, they have an accent, most of them.
>
> (Valeriu, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017)

In the western part of the Republic of Moldova, in turn, while Ukraine is perceived as more or less equal to the Republic of Moldova (see section 5.4), Transnistria in the East of the Republic of Moldova is depicted as representing a transition zone from a more European western part of the Republic of Moldova to the eastern Other of Russia. This is, as outlined above, implied by assigning the western part of the Republic of Moldova to an extended European sphere in contrast to Transnistria, by portraying Transnistria as still belonging to the Soviet world, as being culturally and politically closer to Russia than "Bessarabia", and as a dangerous place:

> I like to read a lot about travel places and about dangerous places to visit, and like in top ten places to visit, on the seventh or on the sixth places is Tiraspol. Because there is a lot of criminality there. It's like a point of distribution in Europe of drugs, of arms. And there was […] a storage where a lot of armament from the Soviet Union were in there. And that's a distribution point of armament in Europe and eventually to Afghanistan. Yes. I read a lot about that, about army dealing in the world, and Tiraspol is one of the top in the black market.
>
> (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

In consequence, Transnistria is often perceived as belonging either partly or completely to the threatening "Other", namely Russia in the East. In contrast to that, Romania as the western neighbour and other European countries further to the west are perceived as more open-minded, more diverse, as allowing for better living, studying and working conditions (Raisa, Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017; Mariana, Sculeni, Sept. 2017), and Romania as being further in the process of becoming European than the Republic of Moldova (Oleg, Chişinău, Sept. 2017), as also expressed by distinctions that are made between a European Romania and a non-European or Wider European Republic of Moldova. Thus, at first glance, similar to Romania, also in the Republic of Moldova there seems to be a hierarchy ranging from an illustrated highly positive image of European countries and of Romania further to the west of the Republic of Moldova on the top, to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, to Transnistria that is localized as somewhere in-between the Republic of Moldova/Ukraine and the Other, Russia.

In addition, as elaborated by Nika Šetek (2016, p. 285), orientalizing eastern and southern neighbours might not only be done for distinguishing between countries, but also for making distinctions between western/northern and eastern/southern regions within the same country, resulting in ***intra-national nesting orientalism.*** In the case of Romania, such hierarchical distinctions seem to be confirmed by collective identities depicting the north of Romania as more hospitable and warm-hearted (Northern Moldovan identity vs. Southern Muntenian identity), and the south as more "Balkan" (Balkan identity), and as in general more economically backward and traditional (post-socialist identity) (see section 5.2), as well as the historical Romanian region of Moldova in the east as current borderland within Romania (see

section 5.1). Similarly, in the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria is, as mentioned-above, depicted as the threatening and backward Other, even though it is debatable whether de-facto independent Transnistria can be considered as an example of intra-national or inter-national nesting orientalism. Moreover, also the south of the Republic of Moldova is described as providing of a more traditional, "rustic way of life" (Tudor, Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and of differing from other parts of the Republic of Moldova due to pro-Russian ethnic minorities such as Gagauz and Bulgarians (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017). This sometimes perceptible intra-national nesting orientalism in the Republic of Moldova is, however, contested by distinctions made between a perceived more "Russified" or pro-Russian north such as in the case of Bălţi, in contrast to a more pro-Romanian or pro-European centre as highlighted by portrayals of Chişinău (e.g. Romanian-Moldovan lowlands identity), and a more "Moldovan" south with presumably traditional Moldovan ways of life (e.g. Moldavian national identity).

Similar to the case of intra-national nesting orientalism, also the inter-national hierarchy with a superior west on the top and a backward, dangerous east on the bottom is challenged by several counter-borderscapes of collective identities both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, in Romania, especially the western part of the Republic of Moldova is often incorporated into uniting collecting identities, such as a post-socialist, Moldavian regional, pan-Romanianist, extended European or pan-Latin/Francophone identity, making no (discriminating) distinctions between people in the east and west. Similarly, in some cases, both in Romanian and in the Republic of Moldova no discriminating distinctions are made with regard to Transnistria, but considering instead all citizens of Romania and the Republic of Moldova as sharing a Romanian linguistic, post-socialist, Romanian cultural, Romanian ethnic, an extended Romanianist national or even (Western) European identity. And, what is more, also collective identities are to be found in both countries that confirm certain orientalizing distinctions within Europe by way of describing Romania and the Republic of Moldova as Wider European, Eastern European, Eurasian or as a borderland between "East" and "West".

In addition, while it is usually confirmed that Western Europe can be considered as a role model and Russia as the Other in Romania, in the Republic of Moldova both the highly negative image of Russia and a purely positive image of Romania and (Western) Europe seem to be more contested. This entails, for instance, nostalgia for the times of the Soviet Union, the portrayal of Romania as having only recently regained in popularity among all population groups, as well as a perceived recent disappointment with the EU in the Republic of Moldova:

> I would say that now especially with this crisis of the European message in Moldova, for which our government is squarely to blame, unfortunately, I mean, they… Our government has done more to discredit the EU and the integration project, than Dodon, I am sorry to say. Anyway. In this context there is, there is nostalgia for the Soviet Union, of course, for material reasons, mainly. […] Of course there is a pro-Russian tendency which has increased recently, and this was obviously Dodon's election and so on. So, Russia is, well, again, the perception is very polarized.
>
> (Alexandru, Chişinău, Sept. 2017)

As a result, the Republic of Moldova is often perceived as still oscillating between two potential role models, the EU or Romania on the one hand, and Russia on the other hand. In addition to these differences in the mental hierarchy between a superior (Western) Europe and an orientalized East, there are also differences in the popularity or mere existence of the elaborated everyday collective identities in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova.

6.2 Identical spatial imaginaries in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova?

This refers, evidently, at first to the ***hyphenated Romanian-Moldovan-European identity,*** enjoying due to its advantageous spatial rights and its perception as a potential tool for a better life in Romania or in an EU Schengen member state only high popularity in the Republic of Moldova, while being absent in narratives in Romania. Other collective identities that are, in contrast, only mentioned in Romania, include the rather fuzzy and (arguably) less important depicted ***pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity***, as well as distinctions between a ***Romanian religious identity and a Russian Orthodox identity.*** Even though being roughly in line with the current spatial imaginary of a Eurasian community on the international scale, the rather low popularity of both religious identities as well as the often merely general references to a shared Orthodox belief (see sections 5.1 and 5.3), refute, in my opinion, the idea of religion as one major uniting identity marker as argued by the current concepts of Eurasianism and of civilizations by Samuel Huntington (1996) on the international scale (see section 2.4). In contrast to that, cultural traits such as language, ethnicity, traditions, seem to continue to represent dominant identity markers for almost all the here outlined collective identities, being only occasionally supplemented by depicted economic and political traits, as had also been suggested by Samuel Huntington (1996). Resulting, however, not in images of a Western and/or Slavic-Orthodox civilization on the micro scale in both countries.

Instead, depicted linguistic, ethnic as well as cultural traits are employed as identity markers for several national identities that seem to enjoy high popularity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. In Romania, the mentioned ***pan-Romanianist national identity and extended pan-***

Romanianist national identity also often entail claims for a political and territorial reunification of Romania and either the western part of the Republic of Moldova or the country as a whole. Descriptions of a uniting Romanian national identity in the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, seem rather to be employed for underlining the highly close cultural ties between the inhabitants of both countries, while claims for a reunification seem to belong to the past, and were not mentioned in narratives in the Republic of Moldova. This decreasing popularity of a potential reunification seems also to be confirmed by an official survey conducted in the Republic of Moldova (except Transnistria) in 2011, according to which only 28% of the respondents supported the idea of a reunification whereas 63% were against it (International Republican Institute (IRI)/Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization, 2011). In a corresponding survey conducted in 2016, this question was not even part of the survey anymore (International Republican Institute (IRI)/Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization, 2016), which could be interpreted as a sign that due to minimal public support it was no longer considered necessary to raise this question.

Furthermore, in Romania, obviously only one national narrative is to be found that depicts the inhabitants of Romania as Romanians, even though varying in extents to which the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova are either to be in- or excluded from the Romanian nation. In the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, ***several national narratives*** exist on the micro scale, such as the Moldovenist, Romanian, Transnistrian and what I call Moldavian national narratives, referring to different periods and events in the past to either explain the existence of a distinct Moldovan, Russian-Transnistrian, Moldavian or Romanian nation within the state territory of the Republic of Moldova. Among those, besides the Transnistrian national narrative, the concept of the ***Moldavian nation*** represents clearly a spatial imaginary that is only to be found in the Republic of Moldova, most likely since it advocates a division of the Romanian state territory. Moreover, one explanation for this presumably high popularity of several national narratives in the Republic of Moldova compared to only one in Romania might be that the Republic of Moldova is still in the process of nation-building. Whereas in Romania, as implied by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), the Romanian nationality itself is not questioned, but right now rather its specific all-uniting features, resulting in a currently inwards oriented, rather homogenizing nationalism in Romania. And this current revision of Romanian national identity markers entails, arguably, discussions about whether and which imagined European traits are part of the Romanian national identity, leading to debates about Romania as (Western) European, Eastern European or Wider European and contributing to an overall higher significance of these spatial imaginaries and their depicted physical boundaries in Romania than

in the Republic of Moldova. Overall, however, I would argue that there are only minor differences between spatial imaginaries shared by people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, which are eventually more pronounced in differing spatial imaginaries of citizens of different regions.

In this regard, while the pan-Latin/Francophone linguistic identity and differences between a Romanian and a Russian Orthodox religious identity are exclusively mentioned in Cluj-Napoca, depicted collective identities in Iaşi seem especially to cover the territory of the historical Romanian region of Moldova as well as eventually parts of the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, in Iaşi in Romania as well as in Ungheni/Sculeni and in Chişinău in the Republic of Moldova, features of the ***Moldavian regional identity, regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity, narrow Moldovan borderland identity and narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border identity*** are highlighted. Based on that, it might be argued that, on the one hand, in the Romanian region of Moldova as well as in the western part of the Republic of Moldova, memories of past spatial units such as the Moldavian Principality are in particular strong and serve as uniting bond bridging the Romanian-Moldovan state border even today. On the other hand, it might also be an indicator that, as pointed out by Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017) and Călin (Iaşi, Sept. 2017), people in the Romanian region of Moldova and in the western part of the Republic of Moldova are more aware of differences between people living on both sides of the state border as well as of differences between regions on the respectively other side of the state border due to their often argued cultural and geographical proximity. As a result, de- and re-bordering practices and the construction of numerous internal borders in the Republic of Moldova or in Romania might be more common in the Romanian region of Moldova than, for instance, in Cluj-Napoca.

In the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, spatial imaginaries of people living in the district of Ungheni do not differ significantly from those mentioned in Chişinău, except for people being more commonly aware of a narrow Romanian-Moldovan borderland and a narrow Romanian-Moldovan cross-border region due to the integration of the Romanian-Moldovan state border into their everyday activities. And of course, differing spatial imaginaries within the Republic of Moldova could be encountered in regions not forming part of the historical Romanian region of Moldova such as Transnistria, where, however, I did not have the opportunity to conduct field research within the scope of my Master's thesis. In addition to these differences depending on the geographical location of the respective narrator, slight differences are also to be found in narrated past and current spatial imaginaries and those of students and professors.

6.3 What have been major changes in spatial imaginaries since 1991?

In this regard, as everyday bordering practices are the outcome of every individual's social situatedness and imagination resulting in a multitude of competing and opposing spatial imaginaries evidently, no generalizations are possible (see section 3). Instead, I am focusing on outlining certain tendencies of how the popularity of specific spatial imaginaries seems to have changed since 1991 in everyday life of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova based on the provided narratives. Thus, as outlined by Elvira, Valeriu (Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), Oleg and Alexandru (Chişinău, Sept. 2017), directly after the independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991, hopes for a reunification of the two countries were very high. As a result, and due to supporting discourses on the national scale in both countries, the pan-Romanianist or extended pan-Romanianist national collective identity and kinship relations between people living on both sides of the state border were rather emphasised, contributing also to cultural shocks on both sides after decades of hardly any contact and due to too high expectations based on these national discourses.

Following this shock in the 1990s and a process of mutual adaptation, roughly two tendencies can be distinguished nowadays between the spatial imaginaries of not necessarily two distinct generations, but between those that were illustrated by narratives of professors and of students. The impression that I gained is that compared to most of the narratives provided by professors, many of the narratives told by students are more ***essentialist in tone*** in two regards: first, national identities are clearly emphasised, in Romania in the form of Romanian national and/or ethnic ties between people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova (e.g. Romina, Oliviu, Matei), and in the Republic of Moldova either in the form of Romanian ethnic ties (Raisa), of a distinct Moldovan nation (Ion) or of a distinct Moldavian nation (Tudor). Secondly, in both countries, this essentialist tone is, in my opinion, also expressed by a certain black and white thinking, i.e. by declaring that the Republic of Moldova either belongs to the West (e.g. Europe), or to the East (Russia), or of constituting either predominantly the Romanian, Moldovan, or Moldavian nation without allowing for any cultural, ethnic, national or political hybridity. In consequence, borderland identities entailing cultural, ethnic or national heterogeneity, such as the Romanian Moldovan, Bessarabian, Romanian or Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity, as well as Eurasian identities grounded in "western" and "eastern" cultural traits were not mentioned or implied by narratives of students. Instead, it was more frequently stated that the Republic of Moldova has, for instance, to choose between the West (EU/Europe/Romania) and the East (Russia) (Oana, Romina, Tudor).

Narratives told by professors in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, in contrast, seem to be less essentialist in tone by way of, first and foremost, depicting the respectively neighbouring country simply as another territorial unit, highlighting by that different civic identities or differences in citizenship and spatial rights (Elizaveta, Valentina, Eugenia, Galina, Viorica, Daria). Moreover, even though cultural particularities of the respectively neighbouring country are usually noticed and acknowledged, they are often described as an "oddity" (Amelia, Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 2017) or as "charming" (Elvira, Cluj-Napoca, Sept. 2017), without linking them to dividing or uniting national discourses. Similarly, perceived mixtures of "western" and "eastern" cultural traits, such as in form of "European" and "Soviet" architecture or the dual existence of the Romanian and Russian language in everyday life in the Republic of Moldova are often noticed (Amelia, Eleonora, Catrina), leading to portrayals of Romania, Bessarabia or the Republic of Moldova as a borderland (Elvira, Valeriu, Călin, Alexandru, Oleg, Eleonora) or as either the Republic of Moldova or both countries as Eurasian (Elvira, Valeriu, Fiodor, Alexandru). By that, cultural hybridity is often acknowledged, allowing to depict Romania or the Republic of Moldova as a "grey zone" between the West (Europe/Romania) and the East (Russia), which is occasionally perceived as a potential advantage for both countries (Alexandru, Elvira) (see also section 5.3). What is more, among students, hardly any spatial imaginaries are depicted that are anchored in past spatial units or supported by in the past popular discourses on the national, European or international scale. That is to say, even though the Moldavian national identity is mentioned by Tudor, very likely because of it being partly strengthened by the current Moldovenist national narrative, the Moldavian regional identity is only present in narratives of professors, similar to the Balkan identity, (post-)Soviet identities and religious identities. This contributes, in my opinion, to everyday bordering practices of students in both countries tending to be more essentialist by way of excluding certain spatial imaginaries that are not linked to current discourses on the macro scale and might therefore be counter-hegemonic. Furthermore, it might be an indicator for the decreasing importance of religion as identity marker among students, as already argued above.

Overall, spatial imaginaries seem thus to vary only to a certain degree depending on the respective geographical location. Instead, differences are more frequently to be found in spatial imaginaries being popular at different points in time and among different age groups, highlighting that everyday bordering practices are shaped by their specific social context at one moment in time as well as by the social situatedness of every individual leading to diverging experiences and knowledge among different age groups and by that to their differing spatial imaginaries.

7. CONCLUSION

In light of these reflections and in answer to my research question, I argue that overall, even though certain differences are to be found in everyday spatial imaginaries depending on the respective region and age group, everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded differ only to a certain degree, since at the end they seem to be significantly shaped by ***bordering practices on the macro scale.*** This refers not only to reflected patterns of bordering practices on the macro scale that are related to concepts such as state sovereignty and nation(states) for b/ordering societies worldwide (see section 3). Far more, in my opinion, everyday bordering practices follow to a certain extent patterns of orientalizing bordering practices on the (European) macro scale as well, resulting in inter- and intra-national nesting orientalism and the identification or rejection of being associated with certain European mesoregions in everyday life in both countries. In consequence, in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, debates regarding where to localize the perceived boundaries between an often portrayed more progressive Western (European) sphere and a more backward eastern (Russian) sphere both outside as well as within the own country are crucial in everyday bordering practices, as highlighted by the plenitude of different versions of imagined European, Western European, Eastern European, Wider European, Eurasian, borderland and (post-)Soviet collective identities, etc.

On the one hand, differences in identified geographical positions of physical boundaries of these collective identities can be considered as simply reflecting the on the macro scale often overlapping and/or contested geographical definitions and imagined characteristics. On the other hand, this apparent multitude of collective identities depicted in everyday life, which I arranged along the axes of two continuums from narrow to broader identity groups, entails also ***"counter imaginations"*** or ***"counter-hegemonic borderscapes"*** that are anchored in values and ideas in opposition to stipulated "reality principles" (see section 3). This refers, at first, to collective identities challenging inter-and intra-national orientalizing bordering practices by rejecting an orientalization of eastern and southern neighbours (e.g. extended pan-Romanianist or Romanianist national identities, extended European or pan-Latin/Francophone identity), by confirming the own assignment to internal European "others" (e.g. Eastern or Wider European identity, Balkan identity, Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity), or by claiming to be Western (European) as well (e.g. Western European identity). Secondly, it is, from my point of view, expressed in socially constructed new collective identities linked to alternative spatial units that are, at present, not to be encountered on the macro scale, such as an imagined

Moldavian nation, or a felt regional Romanian Moldovan-Chişinău or lowlands (Ţara de Jos) identity, a Southern Muntenian vs. Northern Moldovan identity, etc. And, thirdly, it entails, arguably, the social construction of new collective identities in everyday life by combining key ideas of several existing spatial imaginaries on the macro scale, as done by Oleg (Chişinău) who merges an extended pan-Romanianist national identity with ideas of Wider Europe, of the Romanian cultural identity and of borderland identities leading to an aimed at Europeanization and Romanization of the Republic of Moldova, or as done by Elvira (Cluj-Napoca) and Alexandru (Chişinău) combining ideas of borderland identities and of the Eurasian identity (e.g. Romanian-Moldovan borderland identity, Eurasian identity).

For the social construction of this multitude of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic spatial imaginaries itself, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova resort not only to bordering patterns and spatial units on the macro scale, but also to more subjective, personally felt or heard of cultural traits (e.g. language, religion), social traits (e.g. hospitality), as well as to present and past spatial units and bordering practices related to the Moldavian Principality or even to distinctions within the historical Moldavian Principality (e.g. Ţara de Sus/Ţara de Jos). These different components and ways to construct collective identities in everyday life, highlight, in my opinion, that spatial imaginaries on the micro scale are not only the outcome of power struggles and dominant spatial ideas on the macro scale, but that they also depend on personal experiences, knowledge and imagination since everyone has the capacity of creating autonomously his/her spatial imaginaries. Hence, in line with the theoretical concepts of borderscapes and everyday bordering practices, despite the physical presence of the Romanian-Moldovan state border in everyday life, people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova have the capacity to create their own spatial imaginaries of the world that fit to their values, visions, personal requirements, etc., leading to a plenitude of collective identities on the micro scale that are either completely in line with the state border, only partly, or bridge it. What is more, due to ***every person's autonomy*** in creating them, they are constantly constructed, reconstructed and adapted to current conditions and requirements, and thus constantly subject to change. By that, since (ego, social, personal and) collective identities are never clear-cut and always in the processes of being constructed, one and the same person can also support conflicting collective identities, such as in the case of Tudor (Chişinău), emphasizing, on the one hand, a Romanian cultural identity as well as, on the other hand, a distinct Moldavian national identity. As collective identities are grounded in various temporalities, provide of contested meanings, hegemonic and/or counter-hegemonic characters, are multi-layered and constantly socially (re-)constructed by every individual member of

society depending on his/her social situatedness, the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded in uncountable ***borderscapes*** on the micro scale.

This plenitude of borderscapes entails, in turn, numerous identified ***physical boundaries*** along and within the state territories of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, highlighting by that, as pointed out in section 5.4, that in contrast to the initial assumption of globalization and modernity leading to fluid, de-territorialized boundaries of identities, the b/ordering functions of identities and their physical borders have been preserved. Instead of a "borderless world" (Paasi, 1999, pp. 75-76), it led, in the case of the Romanian-Moldovan state border, to an accumulation of various historical and current collective identities and their boundaries on the regional, national, European and international scale that are incorporated into current everyday bordering processes. And the Romanian-Moldovan state border seems to continue to represent one major way in which boundaries of collective identities are imagined and expressed in both countries, being, however, experienced and imagined in many different ways.

Moreover, as borderscapes and their physical boundaries are usually contested, shifting, and dependent on the specific social and historical context at all scales, the here provided analysis of everyday bordering practices in which the Romanian-Moldovan state border is embedded represents only ***one possible insight out of many*** into "realities" on the micro scale at one specific moment in time. That is to say, even though everyday bordering practices seem at the moment to emphasise physical boundaries of borderscapes, to construct identity groups in particular based on cultural markers and by following patterns of nesting orientalism, are focusing on national identities and often rather essentialist in tone, these patterns of everyday bordering practices are constantly subject to change. It represents also only one version of "realities" on the micro scale, since, depending on the geographical location of the narrator, collective identities narrated in the south of Romania or in other parts of the Republic of Moldova can differ significantly from those depicted within this research. Similarly, depending on the social situatedness of every narrator, narratives gathered from members of other population groups could have provided different insights, which can be subject to future research.

In consequence, with regard to my initial ***research question and hypothesis,*** I argue that overall the Romanian-Moldovan state border is currently embedded in a myriad of everyday bordering practices of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. If these everyday bordering practices follow patterns of bordering processes on the macro scale, is to a significant

degree up to the decision of every individual, since every human being has the capacities and freedom to define with his/her imagination and knowledge his/her "own" spatial imaginaries in rather inclusive or exclusive terms, in essentialist tones or pragmatic ways, with the result that last but not least simply "People believe in what they want to believe." (Viorica, Sept. 2017).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: list of interviews

	Name	City/Country	Gender	Age	Occupation	Interview Language	Month/ Year
1	Elvira	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	40-49	Professor	German	Sept. 2017
2	Oana	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	20-29	Student	German	Sept. 2017
3	Valeriu	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Male	40-49	Professor	English	Sept. 2017
4	Călin	Iaşi (RM)	Male	40-49	Professor	German	Sept. 2017
5	Alexandru	Chişinău (RM)	Male	30-39	Professor	English	Sept. 2017
6	Oleg	Chişinău (RM)	Male	40-49	Professor	English	Sept. 2017
7	Raisa	Chişinău (RM)	Female	20-29	Student	English	Sept. 2017
8	Tudor	Chişinău (RM)	Male	20-29	Student	English	Sept. 2017

Appendix 2: list of unoffical interviews

	Name	City/Country	Gender	Age	Occupation	Interview Language	Month/ Year
1	Eleonora	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	50-59	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
2	Fiodor	Iaşi (Romania)	Male	40-49	Professor	German	Sept. 2017
3	Viorica	Ungheni (RM)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
4	Mariana	Sculeni (RM)	Female	40-49	Professor	English	Sept. 2017
5	Eudochia	Chişinău (RM)	Female	30-39	Professor	English	Sept. 2017

Appendix 3: list of narratives

	Name	City/Country	Gender	Age	Occupation	Language	Month/ Year
	Narratives no. 1 & 2						
1	Amelia	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Oct. 2017
2	Daria	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	40-49	Professor	Romanian	Oct. 2017
3	Romina	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	20-29	Student	English	Oct. 2017
4	Catrina	Iaşi (Romania)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Oct. 2017
5	Dorin	Iaşi (Romania)	Male	20-29	Student	Romanian	Sept. 2017
6	Matei	Iaşi (Romania)	Male	20-29	Student	Romanian	Sept. 2017
7	Oliviu	Iaşi (Romania)	Male	20-29	Student	Romanian	Sept. 2017
8	Eugenia	Ungheni (RM)	Female	20-29	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
9	Galina	Ungheni (RM)	Female	40-49	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
10	Ion	Ungheni (RM)	Male	20-29	Student	Romanian	Oct. 2017
11	Viorica	Ungheni (RM)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Oct. 2017
12	Mariana	Sculeni (RM)	Female	40-49	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
13	Vera	Sculeni (RM)	Female	40-49	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
	Narrative no. 1						
14	Nina	Ungheni (RM)	Female	20-29	Student	Romanian	Sept. 2017

15	Elizaveta	Sculeni (RM)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
16	Sofia	Sculeni (RM)	Female	20-29	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
17	Tamara	Sculeni (RM)	Female	20-29	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017
	Narrative no. 2						
18	Eleonora	Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	Female	50-59	Professor	Romanian	Oct. 2017
19	Valentina	Ungheni (RM)	Female	30-39	Professor	Romanian	Sept. 2017

Appendix 4: framework of the interviews (English version)

Framework of the Interviews

– English Version -

1. Personal Data

Main questions to elicit a story:

Could you please tell me a bit about yourself?

Follow-up questions:

Name or Pseudonym:

Gender:

Year of Birth:

Place and Country of Birth:

Citizenship:

Occupation:

Place and Country of Residence:

Mother Tongue:

2. Country of Residence

Introductory questions:

- How long have you been living in your current country of residence?

Main questions to elicit a story:

- Please tell me a bit about your current country of residence and its citizens.
- How would you describe your current country of residence and its citizens?

Follow-up questions:

- How would you define it geographically?
- How would you describe the current social/political/economic situation of your country of residence?
- How would you define its culture?
- Which terms do you associate with your country of residence?
- What is the national language of your country of residence and how would you describe the language?
- How/where do you see the future of your country of residence?
- In your opinion, what are the challenges for the future development of your country of residence?

3. Neighbouring Country

Introductory questions:

- How would you describe the relations between your country of residence and its neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?
- What are your links/ties to the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?/ How would you describe your links to the neighbouring country in general?
- Do you have relatives and/or friends living in the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?
- Did you travel to and/or live in the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) in the past?

Case 1:	Case 2:
- If yes, when, to where and why? - Usually for longer or shorter stays? Why?	- If not, why not? - Did you travel to and/or live in other neighbouring countries in the past (such as Hungary/Bulgaria or Ukraine)? Why/why not? - Could you imagine going to the neighbouring country in the future? Why/why not?

Main questions to elicit a story:

Case 1:	Case 2:
- Please tell me about one of your experiences in the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and/or with its citizens. - Which stories did you hear about the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and/or its citizens?	- How do you imagine the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and its citizens? - Which stories did you hear about the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and its citizens?

Follow-up questions:

- How would you define the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) geographically?

- How would you describe the current social/political/economic situation in the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?
- How would you define its culture?
- Which terms do you associate with the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and/or its citizens?
- Which stereotypes are very common regarding the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and its citizens? Would you support those? Why/why not?
- What are the differences and similarities between the two countries (Romania and the Republic of Moldova)?
- What are the differences and similarities between the citizens of Romania and the Republic of Moldova?
- What is the national language of the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) and how would you describe the language?
- Do you think that Moldovan and Romanian are two different languages? Why/why not? What are the similarities and differences?
- How/where do you see the future of the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?
- In your opinion, what are challenges for the future development of the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova)?
- Do you think the social/political/economic/cultural ties with the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) should be fostered in the future? Why/why not? If yes, how?

4. The Romanian-Moldovan State Border

Main questions to elicit a story:

Case 1:	Case 2:
- Please tell me about one of your experiences when crossing the Romanian-Moldovan state border. - What is your image of the Romanian-Moldovan state border? - Which stories did you hear about the Romanian-Moldovan state border?	- How do you imagine the Romanian-Moldovan state border?/What is your perception/image of the Romanian-Moldovan state border? - Which stories did you hear about the Romanian-Moldovan state border?

Follow-up questions:

- Where and how do you usually cross the Romanian-Moldovan state border? What documents do you need and/or how is the procedure when crossing the border?
- In your opinion, what are the current functions and tasks of the Romanian-Moldovan state border?
- What are the current issues and/or challenges for the Romanian-Moldovan state border?
- Do you think the Romanian-Moldovan state border should be secured? Why/why not?
- Do you think it should be easier to cross the Romanian/Moldovan state border? Why/why not?
- How do you see the future of the Romanian-Moldovan state border: What could be its tasks in the future? What could be future challenges?
- Do you think the Romanian/Moldovan state border should be completely opened or abolished? Why/why not?
- What do you know about the three Euroregions (Dunarea de Jos, Prutul de Sud, Siret-Prut-Nistru) along the Romanian-Moldovan state border? Do you see them rather positive/negative/neutral? Why?
- Do you consider the Romanian-Moldovan state border a region where it is easier for people living on both sides of the border to get into contact and to work together/cooperate? Or is this the case for whole Romania/the Republic of Moldova and not limited to the Romanian-Moldovan border region?

5. Europe & the European Union

Main questions to elicit a story:

- How do you imagine Europe? How would you describe Europe?
- How do you imagine the EU? How would you describe the EU?

Follow-up questions:

- How would you define the territory of Europe and its borders geographically?
- Do you consider your current country of residence (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) a European country? Why/why not?
- Do you consider the neighbouring country (Romania or the Republic of Moldova) a European country? Why/why not?
- How would you define the territory of the European Union and its borders geographically?

- Do you think that the Republic of Moldova will become a member state of the European Union in the future? Why/why not?
- Do you think the Republic of Moldova should aim at becoming a member state of the European Union in the future? Why/why not?

- Is there something you would like to add or continue talking about?

Appendix 5: framework of the interviews (German version)

Interview-Fragebogen

– Deutsche Version -

1. Persönliche Daten

Hauptfragen um Geschichten erzählt zu bekommen:

Können Sie mir bitte ein bisschen von sich erzählen?

Folgefragen:

Name oder Pseudonym:

Geschlecht:

Geburtsjahr:

Geburtsort, -land:

Staatsbürgerschaft:

Beruf:

Wohnsitz:

Muttersprache:

2. Wohnsitzland

Einleitende Fragen:

- Seit wann leben Sie in Ihrem derzeitigen Aufenthaltsland?

Hauptfragen um Geschichten erzählt zu bekommen:

- Bitte erzählen Sie mir ein bisschen über das Land in dem Sie zurzeit leben und dessen Bewohner.
- Wie würden Sie das Land in dem Sie zurzeit leben und dessen Bewohner beschreiben?

Folgefragen:

- Wie würden Sie das Land in dem Sie derzeit leben geographisch beschreiben?
- Wie würden Sie die derzeitige soziale/politische/wirtschaftliche Situation des Landes beschreiben, in dem Sie derzeit leben?
- Wie würden Sie dessen Kultur beschreiben?
- Welche Begriffe assoziieren Sie mit dem Land, in dem Sie zurzeit leben?
- Was ist die Landessprache des Landes, in dem Sie derzeit leben und wie würden Sie die Sprache beschreiben?
- Wie/wo sehen Sie die Zukunft des Landes, in dem Sie derzeit leben?
- Wie/wo sehen Sie Gefahren oder Herausforderungen für die zukünftige Entwicklung des Landes?

3. Nachbarland

Einleitende Fragen:

- Wie sehen Sie die politischen/wirtschaftlichen/sozialen Beziehungen zwischen Ihrem derzeitigem Aufenthaltsland und dessen Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau)?
- Was sind Ihre Verbindungen zum Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau)? / Wie würden Sie generell Ihre Verbindungen zum Nachbarland beschreiben?
- Haben Sie Verwandte oder Freunde, die im Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) leben?
- Sind Sie in der Vergangenheit in das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) gereist oder haben Sie dort gelebt?

Fall 1:	Fall 2:
- Wenn ja, wann, wohin, und warum? - I.d.R. für längere oder kürzere Aufenthalte? Warum?	- Wenn nicht, warum nicht? - Sind Sie in der Vergangenheit in andere Nachbarländer gereist (wie z. B. Ungarn/Bulgarien oder in die Ukraine)? Warum/warum nicht? - Könnten Sie sich vorstellen in der Zukunft ins Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) zu reisen oder dort zu leben? Warum/warum nicht?

Hauptfragen um Geschichten erzählt zu bekommen:

Fall 1:	Fall 2:
- Bitte erzählen Sie mir von einer Ihrer Erfahrungen, die Sie im Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und/oder mit dessen Bewohnern gemacht haben und die Ihnen aus irgendeinem Grund in Erinnerung geblieben ist. - Welche Geschichten über das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und/oder dessen Bewohner haben Sie von anderen gehört?	- Welches Bild haben Sie vom Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und seinen Bewohnern? - Welche Geschichten über das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und/oder dessen Bewohner haben Sie gehört?

Folgefragen:

- Wie würden Sie das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) geographisch definieren?
- Wie würden Sie die derzeitige soziale/politische/wirtschaftliche Situation im Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) beschreiben?
- Wie würden Sie dessen Kultur beschreiben?
- Welche Begriffe assoziieren Sie mit dem Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und dessen Bewohnern?
- Welche Vorurteile über das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und dessen Bewohner sind sehr verbreitet? Stimmen Sie diesen zu? Warum/warum nicht?
- Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den beiden Nachbarländern (Rumänien und die Republik Moldau)?
- Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den Staatsbürgern beider Nachbarländer (Rumäniens und der Republik Moldau)?
- Was ist die Landessprache des Nachbarlandes (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und wie würden Sie die Sprache beschreiben?
- Sind Rumänisch und Moldauisch Ihrer Meinung nach zwei verschiedene Sprachen? Warum/warum nicht? Was sind die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede?
- Wie/wo sehen Sie die Zukunft des Nachbarlandes (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau)?
- Wie/wo sehen Sie Gefahren oder Herausforderungen für die zukünftige Entwicklung des Nachbarlandes (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau)?
- Sollten Ihrer Meinung nach die sozialen/politischen/wirtschaftlichen/kulturellen Beziehungen mit dem Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) in der Zukunft ausgebaut werden? Warum/warum nicht? Wenn ja, wie?

4. Die Rumänisch-Moldauische Staatsgrenze

Hauptfragen um eine Geschichte erzählt zu bekommen:

Fall 1:	Fall 2:
- Bitte erzählen Sie mir von (einer) Ihrer Erfahrungen beim Überqueren der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze. - Was ist Ihr Eindruck von der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze?	- Wie stellen Sie sich die rumänisch-moldauische Grenze vor? / Was ist Ihr Eindruck von der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze?

- Welche Geschichten über die rumänisch-moldauische Staatsgrenze haben Sie gehört?	- Welche Geschichten über die rumänisch-moldauische Staatsgrenze haben Sie gehört?

Folgefragen:

- Wo und wie überqueren Sie in der Regel die rumänisch-moldauische Grenze? Was sind die Formalitäten und/oder wie ist der Ablauf beim Überqueren der Grenze?
- Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die gegenwärtigen Aufgaben und Funktion der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze?
- Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach aktuelle Herausforderungen und/oder Probleme der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze?
- Sollte Ihrer Meinung nach die rumänisch-moldauische Staatsgrenze gesichert werden? Warum/warum nicht?
- Sollte es Ihrer Meinung nach einfacher sein die rumänisch-moldauische Staatsgrenze zu überqueren? Warum/warum nicht?
- Wie sehen Sie die Zukunft der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze: Was könnten zukünftige Aufgaben und/oder die Funktion der Grenze sein? Was könnten zukünftige Herausforderungen und/oder Probleme sein?
- Glauben Sie die rumänisch-moldauische Grenze wird in der Zukunft vollständig offen sein oder aufgelöst werden? Warum/warum nicht?
- Was wissen Sie über die drei Euroregionen (Dunarea de Jos, Prutul de Sud, Siret-Prut-Nistru) entlang der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze? Sehen Sie sie eher positiv/negativ/neutral? Warum?
- Glauben Sie, dass das Grenzgebiet entlang der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze ein Gebiet ist, indem es verstärkt zu Kooperationen sowie Kontakt zwischen den Bewohnern beiderseits der Grenze kommt? Oder trifft dies generell auf das gesamt Staatsgebiet Rumäniens/der Republik Moldau zu und ist nicht limitiert auf das rumänisch-moldauische Grenzgebiet

5. Europa & die Europäische Union

Hauptfragen um eine Geschichte erzählt zu bekommen:

- Wie stellen Sie sich Europa vor? Wie würden Sie Europa beschreiben?
- Wie stellen Sie sich die EU vor? Wie würden Sie die EU beschreiben?

Folgefragen:

- Wie würden Sie das Gebiet Europas und seine Grenzen geographisch definieren?
- Ist Ihrer Meinung nach das Land in dem Sie derzeit leben (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) ein europäisches Land? Warum/warum nicht?
- Ist Ihrer Meinung nach das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) ein europäisches Land?
- Wie würden Sie das Gebiet der EU und dessen Grenzen geographisch definieren?
- Glauben Sie, dass die Republik Moldau in der Zukunft ein Mitgliedsstaat der EU werden wird? Warum/warum nicht?
- Sollte Ihrer Meinung nach die Republik Moldau anstreben in die EU aufgenommen zu werden? Warum/warum nicht?

- Möchten Sie noch etwas hinzufügen oder gibt es weitere Punkte, die Sie gerne ansprechen würden?

Appendix 6: framework of the interviews (Romanian version)

Chestionar pentru interviuri

– Versiunea română -

1. Datele Personale

Întrebări principale pentru a obține o poveste:

Vă rog îmi puteți povesti ceva despre Dvs.?

Următoarele întrebări:

Numele sau pseudonimul:

Sex:

Anul nasterii:

Locul și țara de naștere:

Cetățenia:

Profesia:

Locul și țara de reședință:

Limba materna:

2. Țara de Reședință

Întrebări introductive:

- De când trăiţi în țara dvs. de reședință?

Întrebări principale pentru a obține o poveste:

- Vă rog să-mi povestiți puțin despre țara dvs. de reședință și despre cetățenii ei.
- Cum ați descrie țara dvs. de reședință și cetățenii acesteia?

Următoarele întrebări:

- Cum ați defini țara din punct de vedere geografic?
- Cum ați descrie situația socială/politică/economică din țara dvs. de reședință?
- Cum ați descrie cultura țării?
- Ce noţiuni asociați cu țara dvs. de reședință?
- Care este limba națională a țării dvs. de reședință și cum ați descrie limba respectivă?
- Cum/unde vedeți viitorul țării dvs. de reședință?
- După părerea dvs., care sunt provocările pentru dezvoltarea viitoare a țării dvs. de reședință? Unde le-ați localiza?

3. Țara vecină

Întrebări introductive:

- Cum vedeţi relaţiile politice/economice/sociale între ţara dvs. de reședință şi țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova)?
- Care sunt legăturile dvs. cu țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova)? / Cum aţi descrie legăturile dvs. cu țara vecină în general?
- Aveți rude și/sau prieteni care locuiesc în țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova)?
- Aţi călătorit deja și/sau locuit în țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova)?

Cazul 1:	Cazul 2:
- Dacă da, când, unde, și de ce? - Mai ales pentru şederi lungi sau scurte? De ce?	- Dacă nu, de ce nu? - Aţi călătorit deja și/sau locuit în alte țări vecine (cum ar fi Ungaria / Bulgaria sau Ucraina)? De ce/de ce nu? - V-aţi putea imagina să mergeți în țara vecină (România sau Repblica Moldova) în viitor? De ce/de ce nu?

Întrebări principale pentru a obține o poveste:

Cazul 1:	Cazul 2:
- Vă rog să-mi povestiți despre una dintre experiențele dvs. facute în țara învecinată (România sau Republica Moldova) și/sau cu cetățenii ei. - Ce povesti ați auzit despre țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) și/sau cetățenii ei?	- Ce imagine aveţi despre țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) și cetățenii ei? - Ce povesti ați auzit despre țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) și/sau cetățenii ei?

Următoarele întrebări:

- Cum ați defini țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) din punct de vedere geografic?
- Cum ați descrie situația socială/politică/economică din țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova)?
- Cum ați descrie cultura țării vecine (România sau Republica Moldova)?
- Ce noţiuni asociați cu țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova), respectiv cu cetăţenii ei?

- Ce stereotipuri ale țării învecinate (România sau Republica Moldova) și ale cetățenilor ei sunt foarte frecvente? Ați confirma acele stereotipuri? De ce/de ce nu?
- După parerea dvs. care sunt diferențele și asemănările dintre cele două țări vecine (România și Republica Moldova)?
- Care sunt diferențele și asemănările dintre cetățenii României și ai Republicei Moldova?
- Care este limba națională a țării vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) și cum ați descrie limba respectivă?
- Credeți că limba moldovenească și limba română sunt două limbi diferite? De ce/de ce nu? Care sunt asemănările respectiv diferențele?
- Cum/unde vedeți viitorul țării vecine (România sau Republica Moldova)?
- După părerea dvs., care sunt pericolele respectiv provocările pentru dezvoltarea viitoare a țării vecine (România sau Republica Moldova)? Unde le-ați localiza?
- Credeți că legăturile sociale/politice/economice/culturale cu țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) ar trebui să fie consolidate în viitor? De ce/de ce nu? Dacă da, cum?

4. Frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească

Întrebări principale pentru a obține o poveste:

Cazul 1:	Cazul 2:
- Vă rog să-mi povestiți despre una dintre experiențele dvs. cu trecerea frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești. - Care este impresia dvs. despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească? - Ce povesti ați auzit despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească?	- Cum vă imaginați frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească? Care este impresea dvs. despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească? - Ce povesti ați auzit despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească?

Următoarele întrebări:

- Unde și cum traversezi, de obicei, frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească? Ce documente sunt necesare și/sau cum se desfaşoară trecerea frontierei?
- În opinia dvs., care sunt sarcinile şi funcţiile actuale ale frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești?
- Ce considerați a fi probleme și/sau provocări actuale ale frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești?

- Credeți că frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească ar trebui pazita? De ce/de ce nu?
- Credeţi că trecerea frontierei de stat româno-moldovenească ar trebui să fie mai simplă? De ce/de ce nu?
- Cum vedeți viitorul frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești: Care ar putea fi sarcinile respectiv funcțiile sale în viitor? Care ar putea fi problemele respectiv provocările viitoare?
- Credeți că frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească ar trebui să fie complet deschisă sau desfiintată? De ce/de ce nu?
- Ce ştiţi despre cele trei Euroregiuni (Dunărea de Jos, Prutul de Sud, Siret-Prut-Nistru) de-a-lungul frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești? Aveți o impresie pozitivă/negativă/neutră a acestora? De ce?
- Credeţi că reginuea frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești este o regiune unde este mai uşor ca persoanele care trăiesc pe ambele părți ale frontierei să intre în contact și să colaboreze? Sau acesta este cazul întregii Românii / Republicii Moldova și nu se limitează la regiunea transfrontalieră româno-moldovenească?

5. Europa & Uniunea Europeană

Întrebări principale pentru a obține o poveste:

- Cum vă imaginați Europa? Cum ați descrie Europa?
- Cum vă imaginați Uniunea Europeană? Cum ați descrie Uniunea Europeană?

Următoarele întrebări:

- Cum ați defini Europa şi graniţele ei din punct de vedere geografic?
- Credeți că țara dvs. de reședință (România sau Republica Moldova) este o țară europeană? De ce/de ce nu?
- Credeți că țara vecină (România sau Republica Moldova) este o țară europeană? De ce/de ce nu?
- Cum ați defini Uniunea Europeană şi graniţele ei din punct de vedere geografic?
- Credeți că Republica Moldova va deveni un stat membru al Uniunii Europene în viitor? De ce/de ce nu?
- Credeți că Republica Moldova ar trebui să urmărească să devină stat membru al Uniunii Europene în viitorul? De ce/de ce nu?
- Doriți să adăugați ceva sau continuați să vorbiți despre ceva?
- Ar fi în regulă, dacă vă voi contacta pe Dvs. din nou în cazul în care am întrebări suplimentare?

Appendix 7: request sheet no. 1 (English version)

Request Sheet No. 1: Written Narratives

1. Introduction

Stories help us to make sense of our experiences, to provide them with a meaning, both for ourselves as well as for telling and explaining them to others. They allow us to fit our experiences to our values and worldviews, and thus to integrate them in our understanding of ourselves.

Well, what is your story?

The objective of this research project is to collect written narratives of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova regarding their perception of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as regarding the images they might have of the country and its citizens on the respectively other side of the border. By that, I aim at finding out what meaning people attach to the Romanian-Moldovan state border and how they integrate it in their everyday lives.

Having grown up in a border region on the German side of the German-French border along the Upper-Rhine valley, I continued being interested in the origins, functions and impacts of various types of borders in different parts of the world, now studying those within the study program "Border Crossings: Global and Local Societies in Transition" at the University of Eastern Finland. This research project is part of my Master's thesis. By sending me your story according to the below-mentioned instructions, you will help me to gain a more comprehensive image of the varying perceptions and impacts of the Romanian-Moldovan state border.

The participation in this research project is completely voluntary. All collected narratives and data will be used confidentially, anonymously, and for research purposes only. If you have any further questions regarding this research project or this request sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124*

Narratives can be sent to: lisago@student.uef.fi

2. Personal Data

Name or Pseudonym:_____ City/Country of Residence:_____

Year of Birth:_____ City/Country of Birth:_____

Citizenship:_____ Gender:_____

Occupation:_____ Mother Tongue:_____

3. Instructions

Please think for a moment about when and why you crossed the Romanian-Moldovan state border in the past for travelling, business, visiting friends or relatives, etc. Please take now your time to write a short story about **one** time you crossed the Romanian-Moldovan state border, when, where and how you crossed it, the reasons for it, the people involved, what you needed for being allowed to cross the border, observations you made, any incident that might have happened, how you felt when crossing the border, and/or other aspects you would like to write down. You might also add why you chose to describe this time when crossing the border. If you want, you can also add descriptions of further experiences of yours when crossing the Romanian-Moldovan state border.

Alternatively or additionally:

In addition or in case you cannot think of any experience of yours you would like to write down here, please outline stories others have told you about their experiences when crossing the Romanian-Moldovan state border, and/or your general image of the Romanian-Moldovan state border, what you associate with it, how you see its past, present and future role and function, current issues and challenges, etc.

Thank you very much!

Appendix 8: request sheet no. 2 (English version)

Request Sheet No. 2: Written Narratives

1. Introduction

Stories help us to make sense of our experiences, to provide them with a meaning, both for ourselves as well as for telling and explaining them to others. They allow us to fit our experiences to our values and worldviews, and thus to integrate them in our understanding of ourselves.

Well, what is your story?

The objective of this research project is to collect written narratives of people living in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova regarding their perception of the Romanian-Moldovan state border as well as regarding the images they might have of the country and its citizens on the respectively other side of the border. By that, I aim at finding out what meaning people attach to the Romanian-Moldovan state border and how they integrate it in their everyday lives.

Having grown up in a border region on the German side of the German-French border along the Upper-Rhine valley, I continued being interested in the origins, functions and impacts of various types of borders in different parts of the world, now studying those within the study program "Border Crossings: Global and Local Societies in Transition" at the University of Eastern Finland. This current research project is part of my Master's thesis. By sending me your story according to the below-mentioned instructions, you will help me to gain a more comprehensive image of the varying perceptions and impacts of the Romanian-Moldovan state border.

The participation in this research project is completely voluntary. All collected narratives and data will be used confidentially, anonymously, and for research purposes only. If you have any further questions regarding this research project or this request sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124*

Narratives can be sent to: lisago@student.uef.fi

2. Personal Data

Name or Pseudonym:_____ City/Country of Residence:_____

Year of Birth:_____ City/Country of Birth:_____

Citizenship:_____ Gender:_____

Occupation:_____ Mother Tongue:_____

3. Instructions

Please think for a moment about the experiences you made when spending some time in the neighbouring country (Romania **or** the Republic of Moldova) for travelling, or business, a visit to friends or relatives, etc. Please take now your time to write a short story about **one** of your stays in the neighbouring country (Romania **or** the Republic of Moldova), when it took place, where, and why, the people involved, what you liked and what not, an incident, the impression you gained of the country and its citizens, and/or other aspects you would like to write down. You might add why you chose to describe this stay in the neighbouring country, why it had an impact on you. If you want, you can also add descriptions of further stays of yours in the neighbouring country (Romania **or** the Republic of Moldova).

Alternatively or additionally:

In addition or in case you cannot think of any stay of yours in the neighbouring country which you would like to write down here, please outline stories you have heard so far about the neighbouring country (Romania **or** the Republic of Moldova) and its citizens in general, and/or your general impression of the neighbouring country (Romania **or** the Republic of Moldova) and its citizens.

Thank you very much!

Appendix 9: request sheet no. 1 (German version)

Fragebogen Nr. 1: Schriftliche Erzählungen

1. Einleitung

Geschichten helfen uns, unseren Erfahrungen einen Sinn zu geben, ihnen eine Bedeutung zu verleihen, sowohl für uns selbst als auch um sie anderen erzählen und erklären zu können. Geschichten erlauben uns, unsere Erfahrungen mit unseren Werten und Weltanschauungen in Einklang zu bringen und sie dadurch in unser Selbstbild zu integrieren.

Nun, was ist Ihre Geschichte?

Ziel dieses Forschungsprojektes ist es schriftliche Erzählungen von Menschen aus Rumänien und der Republik Moldau zu sammeln hinsichtlich ihrer Wahrnehmungen von der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze sowie ihren Vorstellungen vom Land und dessen Bewohnern auf der jeweils anderen Seite der Grenze. Dadurch möchte ich herausfinden, welche Bedeutungen verschiedene Personen der Staatsgrenze zuordnen und wie sie diese in ihren Alltag integrieren.

Selbst aufgewachsen in einem Grenzgebiet auf der deutschen Seite der deutsch-französischen Staatsgrenze entlang des Oberrheins, studiere ich momentan die Ursprünge, Funktionen und Auswirkungen unterschiedlicher Arten von Grenzen in verschiedenen Regionen der Welt im Rahmen des Masterstudienganges „Border Crossings: Global and Local Societies in Transition“ an der Universität Ostfinnlands. Dieses aktuelle Forschungsprojekt ist Teil meiner Masterarbeit. Indem Sie mir Ihre Geschichte(n) basierend auf der folgenden Anleitung (s.u.) zukommen lassen, helfen Sie mir ein umfassenderes Bild von den vielfältigen Wahrnehmungen und Auswirkungen der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze zu gewinnen.

Die Teilnahme an diesem Forschungsprojekt ist freiwillig. Alle gesammelten Geschichten und Daten werden vertraulich und anonym bearbeitet und ausschließlich für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet werden. Bitte kontaktieren Sie mich, sollten Sie weitere Fragen zu diesem Forschungsprojekt oder Fragebogen haben: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124*

Bitte senden Sie Ihre Geschichte(n) an: lisago@student.uef.fi

2. Persönliche Daten

Name oder Pseudonym:_____ Wohnsitz:_____

Geburtsjahr:_____ Geburtsstadt/-land:_____

Staatsbürgerschaft:_____ Geschlecht:_____

Beruf:_____ Muttersprache:_____

3. Anleitung

Bitte denken Sie kurz darüber nach, wann und warum Sie bisher die rumänisch-moldauische Staatsgrenze überquerten, um zu reisen, aus beruflichen Gründen, um Freunde oder Verwandte zu besuchen, etc. Nehmen Sie sich nun bitte Zeit eine kurze Geschichte über **eine** Ihrer Überquerungen der Grenze zu schreiben, wann, wo und wie Sie die Grenze passierten, mit wem, aus welchen Gründen, Dokumente die Sie dafür benötigten, den Ablauf, Ihre Beobachtungen, evtl. einen Vorfall, was Sie beim Überschreiten der Grenze empfanden, und/oder andere Aspekte, die Sie festhalten möchten. Sie können auch erläutern warum Sie sich dazu entschlossen haben genau diese Erinnerung an das Überqueren der Staatsgrenze zu beschreiben. Wenn Sie wollen, können Sie Beschreibungen weiterer Überquerungen der Grenze hinzufügen.

Alternativ oder zusätzlich:

Zusätzlich oder sollte Ihnen keine eigene Erfahrung einfallen, die Sie hier niederschreiben möchten, erläutern Sie bitte welche Geschichten über die Überquerung der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze Sie von anderen gehört haben, und/oder welches Bild Sie generell von der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze haben, was Sie mit der Grenze assoziieren, wie Sie deren Funktion und Aufgaben in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft einstufen, aktuelle Probleme und Herausforderungen, etc.

Vielen Dank!

Appendix 10: request sheet no. 2 (German version)

Fragebogen Nr. 2: Schriftliche Erzählungen

1. Einleitung

Geschichten helfen uns, unseren Erfahrungen einen Sinn zu geben, ihnen eine Bedeutung zu verleihen, sowohl für uns selbst als auch um sie anderen erzählen und erklären zu können. Geschichten erlauben uns, unsere Erfahrungen mit unseren Werten und Weltanschauungen in Einklang zu bringen und sie dadurch in unser Selbstbild zu integrieren.

Nun, was ist Ihre Geschichte?

Ziel dieses Forschungsprojektes ist es schriftliche Erzählungen von Menschen aus Rumänien und der Republik Moldau zu sammeln hinsichtlich ihrer Wahrnehmungen von der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze sowie ihren Vorstellungen vom Land und dessen Bewohnern auf der jeweils anderen Seite der Grenze. Dadurch möchte ich herausfinden, welche Bedeutungen verschiedene Personen der Staatsgrenze zuordnen und wie sie diese in ihren Alltag integrieren.

Selbst aufgewachsen in einem Grenzgebiet auf der deutschen Seite der deutsch-französischen Staatsgrenze entlang des Oberrheins, studiere ich momentan die Ursprünge, Funktionen und Auswirkungen unterschiedlicher Arten von Grenzen in verschiedenen Regionen der Welt im Rahmen des Masterstudienganges „Border Crossings: Global and Local Societies in Transition“ an der Universität Ostfinnlands. Dieses aktuelle Forschungsprojekt ist Teil meiner Masterarbeit. Indem Sie mir Ihre Geschichte(n) basierend auf der folgenden Anleitung (s.u.) zukommen lassen, helfen Sie mir ein umfassenderes Bild von den vielfältigen Wahrnehmungen und Auswirkungen der rumänisch-moldauischen Staatsgrenze zu gewinnen.

Die Teilnahme an diesem Forschungsprojekt ist freiwillig. Alle gesammelten Geschichten und Daten werden vertraulich und anonym bearbeitet und ausschließlich für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet werden. Bitte kontaktieren Sie mich, sollten Sie weitere Fragen zu diesem Forschungsprojekt oder Fragebogen haben: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124*

Bitte senden Sie Ihre Geschichte(n) an: lisago@student.uef.fi

2. Persönliche Daten

Name oder Pseudonym:_____ Wohnsitz:_____

Geburtsjahr:_____ Geburtsstadt/-land:_____

Staatsbürgerschaft:_____ Geschlecht:_____

Beruf:_____ Muttersprache:_____

3. Anleitung

Bitte denken Sie kurz darüber nach, wann Sie bisher im Nachbarland (Rumänien **oder** die Republik Moldau) waren, um zu reisen, aus beruflichen Gründen, um Freunde oder Verwandte zu besuchen, etc. Nehmen Sie sich nun bitte Zeit eine kurze Geschichte über **einen** Ihrer Aufenthalte im Nachbarland (Rumänien **oder** die Republik Moldau) zu schreiben, wann und wo dies war, aus welchen Gründen, mit wem, was Ihnen dort gefallen hat und was nicht, einen Vorfall, welchen Eindruck Sie von dem Land und/oder dessen Bewohnern gewannen, und/oder andere Aspekte, die Ihnen einfallen. Sie können auch erläutern warum Sie sich dazu entschlossen haben genau diese Erinnerung niederzuschreiben, warum diese einen Eindruck bei Ihnen hinterließ. Wenn Sie wollen können Sie Beschreibungen weiterer Aufenthalte und Erfahrungen hinzufügen.

Alternativ oder zusätzlich:

Zusätzlich oder sollte Ihnen kein eigener Aufenthalt im Nachbarland einfallen, den Sie hier niederschreiben wollen, erläutern Sie bitte welche Geschichten Sie bisher über das Nachbarland (Rumänien oder die Republik Moldau) und dessen Bewohnern gehört haben, und/oder welchen Eindruck Sie generell vom Nachbarland (Rumänien **oder** die Republik Moldau) und dessen Bewohnern haben.

Vielen Dank!

Appendix 11: request sheet no. 1 (Romanian version)

Chestionarul 1: Narațiuni scrise

1. Introducere

Narațiunile ne ajută să înțelegem experiențele noastre, să le oferim un sens atât pentru noi cât și pentru a le povesti și le explica altora. Ele ne permit să ne adaptăm experiențelor noastre la valorile și la viziunile noastre asupra lumii și astfel să le integrăm în imaginea despre noi înșine.

Deci, care este povestirea dvs.?

Scopul acestui proiect de cercetare este colectarea de narațiuni scrise ale persoanelor care trăiesc în România şi în Republica Moldova în ceea ce privește percepţia lor despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească, precum şi imaginea pe care au despre țara și cetățenii ei de pe cealaltă parte a frontierei. Astfel, intenționez să analizez semnificația pe care diferite persoane o atribuie frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești și modul în care aceste persoane integrează frontiera în viața lor de zi cu zi.

Eu însămi crescând într-o regiune de frontieră pe partea germană a frontierei germano-franceze de-a lungul văii Rinului superior, studiez acum în cadrul programului "Trecerile transfrontaliere: societățile globale și locale în tranziție" la Universitatea din Finlanda de Est, originile, funcțiile și impactul diferitelor tipuri de frontiere din diferite părți ale lumii. Acest proiect de cercetare face parte din teza mea de masterat. Trimițând-mi povestirile dvs. urmând instrucțiunile de mai jos, mă veți ajuta să obțin o imagine mai cuprinzătoare a percepțiilor și impactul diferite ale frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești.

Participarea la acest proiect de cercetare este complet voluntară. Toate narațiunile și datele colectate vor fi folosite confidențial, anonim, și numai în scopuri de cercetare. Dacă aveți întrebări cu privire la acest proiect de cercetare sau la această fișă de solicitare, vă rog nu ezitați să mă contactați: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124.*

Narațiunile pot fi trimise la adresa de email: lisago@student.uef.fi

2. Datele Personale

Numele/pseudonimul:_____ Oraşul/țara de reședință:_____

Anul nasterii:_____ Oraşul/țara de naştere:_____

Cetățenia:_____ Sex:_____

Profesia:_____ Limba materna:_____

3. Instrucțiuni

Vă rog să vă gândiți pentru o clipă când și de ce ați trecut frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească până acum, pentru a călători, din motive profesionale, sau pentru a vizita prieteni sau rude, etc. Vă rog să vă luați acum timp pentru a scrie o scurtă povestire despre una dintre traversările dvs. ale frontierei de stat româno-moldovenescă, când, unde și cum ați trecut-o, motivele, persoanele implicate, ce documente erau necesare pentru a trece granița, observațiile pe care le-ați făcut, un incident care s-a întâmplat, cum v-ați simțit când ați trecut frontiera, și/sau alte aspecte pe care vreți să le scrieți. De asemenea, puteți adăuga motivul pentru care ați ales să descrieți traversarea frontierii.

Alternativ sau suplimentar:

În plus sau în cazul în care nu vă puteți aminti de nici o experiență a dvs. pe care aţi dori să o scrieți aici, vă rog să descrieți o povestire despre trecerea frontierei de stat româno-moldovenească pe care alte persoane v-au spus-o, și/sau imaginea dvs. generală despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească, cum vedeți rolul și funcția frontierei de stat, problemele și provocările actuale, etc.

Vă mulţumesc mult!

Appendix 12: request sheet no. 2 (Romanian version)

Chestionarul 2: Narațiuni scrise

1. Introducere

Narațiunile ne ajută să înțelegem experiențele noastre, să le oferim un sens atât pentru noi cât și pentru a le povesti și le explica altora. Ele ne permit să ne adaptăm experiențelor noastre la valorile și la viziunile noastre asupra lumii și astfel să le integrăm în imaginea despre noi înșine.

Deci, care este povestirea dvs.?

Scopul acestui proiect de cercetare este colectarea de narațiuni scrise ale persoanelor care trăiesc în România şi în Republica Moldova în ceea ce privește percepţia lor despre frontiera de stat româno-moldovenească, precum şi imaginea pe care au despre țara și cetățenii ei de pe cealaltă parte a frontierei. Astfel, intenționez să analizez semnificația pe care diferite persoane o atribuie frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești și modul în care aceste persoane integrează frontiera în viața lor de zi cu zi.

Eu însămi crescând într-o regiune de frontieră pe partea germană a frontierei germano-franceze de-a lungul văii Rinului superior, studiez acum în cadrul programului "Trecerile transfrontaliere: societățile globale și locale în tranziție" la Universitatea din Finlanda de Est, originile, funcțiile și impactul diferitelor tipuri de frontiere din diferite părți ale lumii. Acest proiect de cercetare face parte din teza mea de masterat. Trimițând-mi povestirile dvs. urmând instrucțiunile de mai jos, mă veți ajuta să obțin o imagine mai cuprinzătoare a percepțiilor și impactul diferite ale frontierei de stat româno-moldovenești.

Participarea la acest proiect de cercetare este complet voluntară. Toate narațiunile și datele colectate vor fi folosite confidențial, anonim, și numai în scopuri de cercetare. Dacă aveți întrebări cu privire la acest proiect de cercetare sau la această fișă de solicitare, vă rog nu ezitați să mă contactați: *Lisa Gohlke, lisago@student.uef.fi, +49/17682557124.*

Narațiunile pot fi trimise la adresa de email: lisago@student.uef.fi

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2. Datele Personale

Numele/pseudonimul:_____ Orașul/țara de reședință:_____

Anul nasterii:_____ Orașul/țara de naștere:_____

Cetățenia:_____ Sex:_____

Profesia:_____ Limba materna:_____

3. Instrucțiuni

Vă rog să vă gândiți pentru o clipă la experiențele pe care le-ați făcut când aţi petrecut timp în țara învecinată (România **sau** Republica Moldova) pentru a călători, din motive profesionale, sau pentru a vizita prieteni sau rude, etc. Vă rog să vă luați acum timp pentru a scrie o scurtă poveste despre **una** dintre șederile dvs. în țara vecină (România **sau** Republica Moldova), când a avut loc, unde, de ce, persoanele implicate, ce v-a plăcut și ce nu v-a plăcut, un incident, impresia pe care ați câștigat-o despre țară și cetățenii ei, și/sau alte aspecte pe care vreți să le scrieţi. Puteți adăuga motivul pentru care ați ales să descrieți această ședere în țara vecină, de ce a avut un impact asupra dvs.

Dacă doriți, puteți adăuga, de asemenea, descrieri ale altor vizite şi experiențe ale dvs.

Alternativ sau suplimentar:

În plus sau în cazul în care nu vă puteți aminti de nici o ședere a dvs. în țara vecină pe care aţi dori să o scrieți aici, vă rog să descrieţi ce povestiri ați auzit despre țara vecină (România **sau** Republica Moldova) și cetățenii ei în general, și/sau impresia dvs. generală asupra țării vecine (România **sau** Republica Moldova) și cetățenilor ei.

Vă mulţumesc mult!