

Patriotic Youth Camps for Constructing National Attachment in Post-2003

Georgia: Missed Messages?

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the government-sponsored project of Patriotic Camps in the light of national attachment formation process. In order to analyze the relation between political rhetoric surrounding the topic of Patriotic Camps and its actual implications the study provides a synthesis of top-down and bottom-up analyses regarding the project. In the framework of related literature on the topic of the discursive construction of the nation and indifference to nationalism, the research aims to go beyond triggered national assertions and uncover the everyday meanings of nationalist politics. The research argues that the mainstream and largely propagated concept of patriotism was a tool for strengthening national pride and attachment on the one hand, and political loyalty on the other. Moreover, the analyses of video speeches, camp related documents, and participants' narratives suggest a discrepancy between the articulated aims, the content of the camps, and individual experiences.

In a broader context the study can contribute to the scholarly discussion on both nationalist rhetoric as a tool of legitimizing political power, and national indifference as a popular reception to this rhetoric.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Research Questions	2
Structure of the Thesis.....	3
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework	6
1.1. Nation-building and national(ist) sentiments in post-2003 Georgia	6
1.2. Patriotism on a Larger Scale	9
1.3. Discursive Construction of the Nation and the Levels of Agencies	12
1.4. National Indifference.....	18
1.5. Concept of Patriotism and its Implications	20
Chapter 2: Methodological framework	23
2.1. Basis of the research, pilot project and flirting with the Grounded Theory	23
2.2. Narrative inquiry and constructed identity	27
2.3. Document Analysis	30
2.4. The Field Research and Its Limitations.....	31
Chapter 3: Top-Down Analysis	33
3.1. Document Analysis: Gap in the Aims.....	33
3.2. Discourse-Analytical Approaches: Camps as a part of audience.....	38
Chapter 4: The Patriotic Camps and Individual Identifications.....	47
4.1. Bottom-Up Approach: Perceptions of the participants	47
4.1.1. National Indifference or indifference to nationalism	49
4.1.2. Collective Identifications.....	54
4.1.3. Patriotism and its implications	57
Chapter 5: The Dynamics of the Macro and Micro Relations	59
5.1. Agency of the Trainers?	59
5.2. The Relations between a Macro Project and Micro Processes.....	62
Conclusions.....	66
Bibliography	68
Appendix 1.....	71
Data Body 1.....	71
Data Body 2.....	73

Introduction

Bringing back the long-lost Georgian, historical and so-called patriotic mentality was one of the main political projects of the ruling party of Georgia after the Rose Revolution in 2003. The new national paradigm required certain strategies to mobilize popular sentiment and identity rhetoric. One of these strategies was The Patriotic Camps -- a government initiated state-sponsored summer camps to raise patriotic youth in Georgia. In 2005-2012, every summer thousands of young students attended camps for ten days. Participation was voluntary, yet highly promoted throughout schools and media. All the expenses were covered by the Georgian government. During the camp, the camp members were obliged to wear red and white uniform – representing the colors of Georgian flag. “Patriots” were divided into teams; each team was obliged to have their coat of arms, flag, and anthem that provoked patriotic sentiments, also a trained leader. Originally, the explicit aim of the project was to raise national pride that had been diminished by the Soviet era and the first decade of independence. The camps were designed to develop patriotism, strengthen the youth’s physical health, encourage intellectual progress and increase their moral qualities.¹ Apart from sporting activities, patriotic themes from history, literature, performances and discussions were included in the camps’ activities -- these were the officially known aims and objectives of the camps.

However, public mainstream criticism towards the Patriotic Camps argued that these camps were yet another step in military preparation for war and a brainwashing strategy “where the notion of

¹ Malkhaz Toria, “The Soviet Occupation of Georgia in 1921 and the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008: Historical Analogy as a Memory Project,” in *Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors* (Routledge, 2014).

hierarchy and obedience [is] more prevalent than the idea of patriotism”.² Georgia's opposition has also criticized the president for trying to gain political scores among young people through this project. However, the issue of mainstream patriotism and everyday nationalism in the context of Post-Rose Revolution Georgian nationalism still remains under-researched in the academic field.

Research Questions

The research questions of the thesis are the following: 1. What were the social functions and the implicit aims of The Patriotic Camps? 2. How successful was the project in its aims? 3. Why and how was the patriotic narrative influential if at all?

The following thesis is focused on mainstream patriotism as an instrument for the new national identity formation process. The research largely relies on the relations between the macro projects and micro perceptions proposed by Brubaker, Fox and Miller- Idriss,^{3 4} and argues that there is a discrepancy between the political rhetoric surrounding the topic of Patriotic Camps and its actual implications. The main interest of this thesis is to explore the relationship between politicized forms of national attachment on the one hand, and their analogues among individual identifications, on the other hand. To analyze the phenomenon of mainstream patriotism in the context of The Patriotic Camps, the following theoretical concepts are applied: firstly, the mechanisms of practicing and feeding blind forms of patriotism are looked at as the government's intentions to form a new identity narrative simultaneously with engaging in

² Ekaterine Chitanava, “Salome Jashi Shows and Talks about Young Generation Raised in Patriotic Camp,” Georgia Today, February 12, 2010.

³ Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

⁴ Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, “Everyday Nationhood,” *Ethnicities* 8, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 536–63

political self-legitimation rhetoric. New identity narrative serves as a representation of renewal and rebirth in a new space where the soviet legacy has no say anymore; whereas self-legitimation refers to discursive strategies used by the government to gain political scores. By treating the nation as a discursive construct, the research will synthesize top-down and bottom-up analyses. The top-down analysis of political rhetoric will seek to uncover the implicit aims of the project in two ways: by examining articulated aims and propagated messages, and by inspecting the written aims in the government documents; whereas, the bottom-up analysis will shed a light to actual implications of it by enquiring into the participant's narratives.

Thus, this thesis complements the contemporary research on discursive construction of national attachment by combining the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Since the research aims at going beyond the triggered national assertions and uncovering the everyday meanings of nationalist politics, in a broader context it can contribute to the scholarly discussion on nationalist rhetoric as a tool of legitimizing political power on the one hand, and national indifference as a popular reception of this rhetoric, on the other hand.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one firstly sketches out an overview of the existing literature on nation-building and nationalist sentiments in the Post-Revolutionary setting in Georgia. The main goal of this section is to provide the reader with insight into the post-revolutionary political agenda that explains the context in which the research is situated. The second section of the chapter provides a theoretical framework of interrelated concepts providing discursive construction of the nation, national indifference, and patriotism and its relation to nationalism. Conceptualization of patriotism and defining its relation to nationalism is crucial for understanding the case of The Patriotic Camps

and for placing my research in the relevant field. The literature review on the discursive construction of the nation is of importance for the top-down analysis of political rhetoric, while indifference to nationalism describes the scholarship on popular reception of nationalism and is significant for the bottom-up views.

Using these clusters as a basis of the thesis, in the second chapter I provide the methodological framework applied for conducting the research. I briefly describe the pilot project conducted in December 2015 that served as a basis for this research and continue further with the validation of methods of narrative inquiry, and document analysis in the scope of this study.

Chapter three will provide a top-down analysis of the government's political rhetoric and seeks to explore the implicit aims of the Patriotic Camps project. The chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter deals with the discourse-analytical approach to the documents retrieved from the Ministry of Sport and Youth in Georgia. The second subchapter sheds a light on the discursive strategies used at the camp sites by the president and defense minister and demonstrates the self-legitimizing rhetoric in front of a specific target population. Finally, it argues that there is a gap between the articulated and the written aims of the project.

The fourth chapter deals with a bottom-up analysis and seeks an answer to the question of whether patriotic narrative is influential in everyday practices, especially after the camps experience. It focuses on the participants' perceptions, providing a thematic analysis of sixteen interviews and links the results with the theoretical framework. Besides, it further underlines the ambiguous relationship between the goals of the Project and participants' reception of the political rhetoric. Political loyalty on the one hand, and indifference to nationalism, on the other

hand, are explored as the most conflicting categories, yet, existing simultaneously in participants' perceptions.

The final fifth chapter offers an analysis of the agency of trained leaders of the camps, questioning the actual influence of the leaders' ring in the hierarchical chain of the camps. It puts forward the importance of the nature of the camps itself, and closes with theoretical considerations that create space for further discussion.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

1.1. Nation-building and National(ist) Sentiments in Post-2003 Georgia

Opting for complementary top-down and bottom-up approaches, this thesis aims to enrich existing literature on national(ist) projects as strategic tools for upholding political legitimacy. This chapter of the thesis seeks to outline some of the Georgian nation-building and nationalist sentiments after 2003 Rose Revolution. It overviews the development of these sentiments and offers a brief summary of the existing literature on the matter of *new identity* formation process, which had been initiated by the post-Rose Revolution government. This chapter illustrates that nationalism and democratization processes were taking place in parallel. The *new identity* implied a mixture of invented symbols, myths and traditions, and patriotic sentiments alongside with the democratic consciousness of population.

Scholars agree that the new government under Saakashvili was welcomed with high hopes and expectations for democratic reforms and consolidation; however, Saakashvili successfully adopted and implemented the nationalistic rhetoric as well. Some scholars argue that the post-revolution Georgian nationalism is yet another distinct kind of nationalism with rather peculiar relationship with democratization.⁵ Although shortly after the Rose Revolution, Georgia proved a promising testing ground for theories of international influence on democratization,⁶ nationalist ideology never disappeared. George Khelashvili further adds that the Georgian government was a collection of young so called “democrats,” “heavily dependent on foreign (most importantly

⁵ In post-revolution nationalism I mean post-2003-Rose revolution events and main political discourse

⁶ George Khelashvili, “External Forces, Nationalism, and the Stagnation of Democratization in Georgia,” vol. 104 (Ponars Policy Memo, Oxford University, 2010).

American) political, economic, technical, and moral support”.⁷ However, the political spectrum still maintained the overly nationalist flavor.

Other approach argues that during the mid-2000s, president Saakashvili’s often nationalist rhetoric went hand in hand with the gestures of demonstrating the executive strength. He had made it clear that his priority as a political leader was as much building a strong state as forging democratic institutions. “People compare my style to that of JFK, but in terms of substance, I feel much closer to Ataturk or Ben Gurion, or General de Gaulle – people who had to build nation states. Shevardnadze had a chance to become a founding father of the nation, but he missed that chance, so now I have this honor to become one, along with my friends.”⁸ – This speech clearly does not lack nationalistic sentiment: heroic flavor of the narrative provides an order that is meant to be meaningful to the members of the target group. The speech also shows the will of strengthening the state and can be viewed as an example of legitimization of power. Khelashvili also argues that under Saakashvili, the connection between the mainstream understanding of democracy and Georgian nationalism was complemented by a distinctive self-perception of the ruling party. Nationalism embraced the promotion of democracy in Georgia. The rhetoric of liberal democracy and Western values somehow did not interfere with the nationalist rhetoric. Saakashvili’s policies, which were mainly conducted in the name of the national cause, got western approvals of legitimacy as well.⁹

This argument stands close to Billig’s view on Nationalism that it can be a part of how democracies legitimate and re-legitimate themselves. Nationalism is an essential resource for the maintenance of legitimacy in democratic or democratizing regimes. This interpretation is

⁷ Ibid. p.1.

⁸ Arkady Ostrovsky, “How to Be a Founding Father,” Financial Times, July 9, 2004.

⁹ Khelashvili, “External Forces, Nationalism, and the Stagnation of Democratization in Georgia.”

reflected in Jonathan Hearn's work as well: "Nationalism is not just residual background noise in democratic regimes; it is a key legitimizing resource that can be activated and brought into the foreground, for example, during times of war and other social crises."¹⁰ Nationalist rhetoric can be regarded as a part of how democracies legitimate and re-legitimate themselves. "Liberal democracies are premised on a high degree of tolerance for diversity of belief and opinion, as long as conflicts generated by this diversity are acted out within the "rules of the game".¹¹ According to these understandings, nationalism is an essential resource for the maintenance of legitimacy in democratic regimes.

As a part of his project to remodel the entire state, Saakashvili even made the flag of his own National Movement party into the national flag. However, invention and reinvention of the symbols and traditions in the late 20th century Georgia had not been a novelty. The national project had been on the political elites' agenda several times before the Rose Revolution. Nevertheless, after the Rose Revolution, it once again became relevant. Apart from the flag, the most vivid examples of the invention of national symbols were the national anthem, and coat of arms. All of them were created in 2004 and replaced the symbols established by the Georgian Democratic Party in 1918. The new elites claimed that the new symbols had origins in medieval times and were treated as symbols of the state's attention to Georgia's glorious past (historical "golden age") as well as its Orthodox Christian roots.

Thomas De Waal has analyzed the Georgian nationalism and national idea from 2003 till 2008. Through looking at the nationalist discourse determining itself with the opposition to Russia's

¹⁰ Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan 2006 .p.168

¹¹ Ibid.

politics,¹² it enables us to understand the political background of the patriotic youth projects as well. Malkhaz Toria further looks into the state-sponsored projects that intended to strengthen national and social cohesion. He calls these *memory projects* and argues that the Georgian political elites are destroying possible mental bridges between the Soviet period and the new post-revolutionary era. He provides historical analogy between Russia's annexation of Georgia in 1921 and the August war in 2008 and claims these events are major parts of the attempts to overcome the soviet legacy. Overviewing different monuments, museums, changes in education system, and youth projects with a special emphasis on The Patriotic Camps, he argues that all these are part of the project dealing with soviet legacy, intended to shape the young generation, and propagate the new anti-Russian message. This article solidifies the main argument of the thesis that the Patriotic Camps have strong political and ideological base, and that they are political elite's imposed project designed to develop patriotism and political loyalty. The latter is directly connected to the youth wing of the ruling party at that time, which scholarly research does not appear to bother much to deal with.

1.2. Patriotism on a Larger Scale

“We need to reclaim our promised land – which is a unified, strong Georgia within its old borders – where Georgians can move about freely; where being Georgian is not tantamount to a death sentence; where Georgians, as Irakli¹³ said, are not hiding in forests like partisans; where Georgian citizens of any ethnic origin can move about freely. Our promised land includes the

¹² Thomas De Waal, “Modern Georgia: Rebirth, Rose Revolution, and Conflict,” in *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 188–225.

¹³ Reference to Irakli Okruashvili, then Defense Minister of Georgia

Psou,¹⁴ the Roki tunnel¹⁵ and at the boundaries set as a result of our ancestors' efforts and work. We must reclaim our promised land, our Georgia, peacefully by being united, persevering and strong in spirit" – Stated President Saakashvili at a Patriot forum attended by around ten thousand "patriots"¹⁶ in 2005.

The rhetoric of the Rose Revolution in general, centered on patriotic calls for national regeneration through recalling the glory days of Georgian hegemony in the Caucasus in the 12th century, under Georgia's one of the most favorite kings, David the Builder. Saakashvili even called the revolution and the post-revolution period "the epoch of patriotic renaissance."¹⁷ Thus, President Saakashvili and the government officials gave their nationalist rhetoric a longstanding name of patriotism. "Patriotism" became a calling card for Saakashvili. Gradually, *Patriotism* as a term acquired a mainstream, populist meaning. The patriotic sentiments were demonstrated in two but intertwined directions: one was the military framing of patriotism and the other was the soft, popular framing of patriotism. In this subchapter I firstly do a short overview of each; the interconnectedness of them will be analyzed later throughout the thesis.

As Stephen Jones argues, even the army that had lacked the prestige before became a symbol of Westernization and modernization and points out that under Saakashvili's government the army started to be imagined as an institution in charge of educating new citizens.¹⁸ During the first five years of the new regime the number of the armed forces increased dramatically from 12000 to 32000. Large amount of resources allocated to the army were the proof of the army's

¹⁴ A river in Abkhazia

¹⁵ A tunnel on the South Ossetian section of the Georgian-Russian border

¹⁶ I.e. participants of the Patriotic Camps

¹⁷ Stephen Jones, "Reflections on the Rose Revolution," in *Georgia: Revolution and War*, ed. Rick Fawn (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5–16.

¹⁸ Ibid.

contribution to the new, effective, and disciplined state. Besides, territorial unity was declared as the main priority for the government. Government officials would regularly announce they would celebrate the next Christmas in Sukhumi or Tskhinvali. Similar point was made by the president during the Patriots' second forum as well: "Over the course of millennia, the Jews would greet each other like this: "In the future in Jerusalem." We Georgians; we patriots; we children of our homeland; greet each other here, for all of Georgia and all of the world to see – - in conditions of freedom, peace, unity, friendship and non-violence, but nevertheless, in the future in Sokhumi, in the future in Abkhazia: in our bright, peaceful, guaranteed future."¹⁹

Another framing of the massive-scale patriotism was rather soft, popular-oriented. Soon after the launch of The Patriotic Camps project, in September 2005 the ruling party initiated a national song-competition called "Patri-note". The competition aimed at "raising patriotic spirit in every segment of population so that every citizen sings along and marches to the new patriotic songs and military marches".²⁰ According to the competition rules, everyone was eligible to participate and the winning seven artists would be able to record a video of the song and get promoted on TV channels. The winners, symbolically enough, were announced on November 23, at a government-organized concert dedicated to the two-year anniversary of the Rose Revolution. Indeed, later the winning songs were ubiquitous on TV. However, the assessment about the actual achievement of the afore-mentioned aim of the competition was never carried out.

¹⁹ Tamar Babuadze, "The President's Patriotic Project," *Liberali*, October 2010. p.41

²⁰ ეკა წამალაშვილი. „პატრიოტი და პატრინოტი. ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა აცხადებს კონკურსს საუკეთესო პატრიოტული სიმღერისა და სამხედრო მარშის გამოსავლენად." რადიო თავისუფლება, September 23, 2005. Accessed May 02, 2016. <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/content/article/1543397.html>.
Eka Tsamalashvili. „Patriot and Patri-note. The United National Movement Opens a Contest for the Best Patriotic Song and Military March”, *radiotavisupleba.ge* September 23, 2005. Accessed May 02, 2016. <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/content/article/1543397.html>.

A special video was made for promotion of the project of The Patriotic Camps itself. The video featured camp participants marching in the mountains led by the singer calling for protecting the motherland in need. To my knowledge, for a short period of time there even existed a TV channel called Patriot TV.²¹ In this softer category could be placed another massive planned project of building a new city called Lazika. It was named after the ancient kingdom of Lazica that existed on nowadays' western Georgian territory, therefore appealed to the ancient past and aimed to evoke nationalist sentiment.

There have been different arguments made about the necessity for preaching patriotism on such a massive scale after the Rose Revolution. While the government officials stated that it had been a response to the national nihilism that had taken its roots in the Georgian society, some scholars claimed that this was a way for the state to counterbalance the power of the Orthodox Church. Gigi Tevzadze calls it a clash or competition of ideologies: on the one side, an anti-state ideology spread by the Orthodox Church and on the other side, the state identity promoted by the government through its youth programs, TV channels, songs, and videos.²² Consequently, the revolution rapidly transformed itself into state-directed patriotism, combining the image of strong integrated state with martial propaganda and patriotic youth camps.²³

1.3. Discursive Construction of the Nation and the Levels of Agencies

The overview of the merging democracy-building and nationalist rhetoric calls to analyze the

²¹ I was unable to obtain external verifications of this.

²² Tamar Babuadze, "The President's Patriotic Project."

²³ Stephen F. Jones, *Georgia: A Political History since Independence* (London ; New York : New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

discursive nature of national attachment formation, its strategies, and the levels of institutional or individual agencies. Since this thesis seeks to contribute to a more complete understanding of the intersection of these aspects of the construction process, this subchapter is focused on the existing literature on relevant theories.

My research relies largely on Rogers Brubaker's notion that national identities are not fixed entities, objects in the world, but rather perspectives and lenses on the world.²⁴ Furthermore, Brubaker and Cooper distinguish different meaning attached to the concept of *identity* and propose the concept of *identification* in order to deal with the construction of self-perceptions and perceptions by others.²⁵ Identifications are relational, not static and permanent. A major ramification of this argument is that The Patriotic Camps intend to shape and frame the identifications and identity claims of the participants. Thus, I do not view national identities as certain logical outcomes of an already existing ethnic identity, but rather as practical categories that are shaped by narratives and experiences, and, at the same time, actively participate in shaping them in return.

The model proposed by Brubaker is highly relevant firstly, for conceptual clarification and understanding of identification, its relations to self-perceptions and perceptions by others; and secondly, for analyzing the production and reproduction the sense of belonging, factors of identifications and the anchoring points for these identifications. This approach remains relevant both for top-down and bottom-up analyses of the Patriotic Camps.

²⁴ Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Theory and Society* 33, no. 1 (February 2004): 31–64, doi:10.1023/B:RYSO.0000021405.18890.63.

²⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Byeond 'Identity,'" in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, by Rogers Brubaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28–63.

A number of scholars emphasize the need to treat nation as a discursive construct and turn attention to everyday expressions of nationhood or nationalism. Probably one of the first and the most prominent to challenge the orthodox view of nationalism is Michael Billig, in his book *Banal Nationalism* the author turns readers' attention to everyday expressions of nationalism, less visible but embedded in everyday life. He argues that in daily life nationalism is continuously and repetitively being "flagged" through the routine symbols and habits. Therefore, the banality of nationalism becomes relevant when the individual identification, as well as daily reproduction of nationalism, and state's manipulations of national identity is examined.²⁶

Cillia *et.al.* look specifically into the topic of collective memory and collective identification based on discursive strategies used to construct national sameness. They argue that the process of globalization is accompanied by national insecurities that call for the need for rediscovery and revitalization of the pre-modern sense of community, for emotional patriotic feelings towards one's nation. They focus on nation as a discursive construct by analyzing the Austrian example and shift the focus from discursive construction of difference to the construction of sameness. Looking into the "we" concept, the authors analyze the linguistic tools that reflect sameness and otherness as well. The basic notion is that national identities (treated as specific forms of social identities) are discursively, by means of different mechanisms applied by the elites, produced, reproduced, and transformed.²⁷ This approach is important for the research of political elite's discourse, as well as for including everyday experiences into the social practice analysis. The Patriotic Camps can be treated as micro-strategies of social practice in this process.

²⁶ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (SAGE Publications, 1995).

²⁷ Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, "The Discursive Construction of National Identities," *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 149 (1999): 149–73.

However, no discursive construct is possible without levels of agencies and transmission system. Different approaches have been developed to emphasize the fact that identifications are practiced on different levels. One of the approaches is to distinguish between different kinds of nationalism. Thomas Eriksen, in his article *Formal and Informal Nationalism* argues about two types of organization of nationalism and claims that nationalism is a dual phenomenon, organized formally and informally. While Formal nationalism is derived from the state's demands, its political and cultural consensus among the citizens and bureaucratic nature, the informal nationalism is taking place in collective events, in civil society. By distinguishing these two forms, Eriksen stresses the authenticity of each, and validates it with the empirical study.²⁸ The author further analyses how formal and informal aspects of national politics gain everyday meaning and become embedded in cultural practices and collective events where patriotism and criticism of the state are simultaneously expressed. This understanding of these two forms of organization of nationalism becomes of relevance for my research when it comes to separating the top-down and bottom-up approaches towards national attachment.

Douglas Blum more contextualized the notion of agencies in the Post-Soviet Eurasian framework. He looks into the mechanisms and strategies, new systems of social order and meanings that the states adopted towards youth culture in the process of nation building on the one hand, and globalization, on the other. According to Blum, some countries adopted the new National youth identity policy very soon after; some were latecomers. In his book the author examines the patterns of nationalizing youth through analyzing different agents in the process of nation-building and attempts to answer how societies attempt to manage globalization while

²⁸ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Formal and Informal Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 1, 1993): 1–25, doi:10.1080/01419870.1993.9993770.

maintaining a viable national identity.²⁹ For this he examined three globalizing states and cities in post-Soviet and explored how youth cultures have been affected by the larger forces and national policies. Despite the fact that globalization and transnationalizing cultures are not direct focus of my research, this approach gets pertinent when dealing with the state's strategies in regards with youth in the post soviet space. As Blum argues, official and non-official approaches to youth policy support the states' aspirations to neoliberal and market-oriented reforms as well as the attempts to maintaining national traditions and certain national identity by hybridization of western individualism with nationalistic twist.

Whitmeyer challenges the mainstream view regarding elites' power on creating popular nationalism. He argues that despite elites' extensive promotion of nationalisms, ordinary people might not adopt it, or ordinary citizens might adopt a certain kind of nationalism before elites appropriate it.³⁰ My research is more interested in the former statement and in the ways and extents the political elites can and do shape the varieties of nationalist discourse. In fact, suggesting that there is no causal link between political elites and nationalism leads us to the need to separate the political national discourse from the popular understanding of it. In order to grasp the essence of the bottom-up and top-down approaches, it is important to take the elite-masses non-reciprocal relationship into consideration.

Andrew Thompson stresses the importance of looking into human agency when it comes to methodological inquiry of national identity. The main thesis of his article is that national identity should be regarded as a sociological category of important practical meanings when giving order

²⁹ Douglas W. Blum, *National Identity and Globalization: Youth, State, and Society in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³⁰ Joseph M. Whitmeyer, "Elites and Popular Nationalism," *The British Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 3 (2002): 321–41, doi:10.1080/0007131022000000536.

to the social world.³¹ This article can serve as an important segway to looking into individual identifications and to shift the focus from the elite's discourse to individuals' day-to-day experiences. It is relevant in order to analyze the three levels of agency that my research is proposing: state, camp trainers, and participants.

Very importantly, John Fox and Cynthi Miller-Idriss in their 'Everyday Nationhood' take a bottom-up approach and explore from below the ways how nationhood is produced and reinforced in everyday life. They point out the processes of construction of the new identity narrative. One can be regarded as 'talking about the nation'. Another is the ways and means that nationhood frames the choices made by the citizens ('choosing the nation'). In the frame of my research, participating in the camps can be viewed as a choice with national flavor. Third way, 'performing the nation', can be analyzed as experiences made by participants at the camp – nationalized in its meaning and practices that the participants are exposed to.³²

Michael Skye refers to the concept of *sedimentation* in order to describe how a particular discourse can be seen as something very natural in society and stresses the need to disentangle this process. He argues that in the sedimentation process different hierarchical units take part. In notes the critical role of institutions in setting limits and establishing normative frameworks. In doing so, he claims, these institutions attempt to create and sustain systems that articulate a specific view of social reality. He further proceeds with the argument that it is not only a top-down phenomenon. In their choices, activities, and routines the individuals underpin the

³¹ Andrew Thompson, "Nations, National Identities and Human Agency: Putting People Back into Nations," *The Sociological Review* 49, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 18–32, doi:10.1111/1467-954X.00242.

³² Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."

operation of these institutions. Interacting with each other, vernacular conversations and practices of ordinary people supplement the process of sedimentation of national discourse.³³

1.4. National Indifference

Despite the apparent need to study the effectiveness of nationalist politics, the actual popular reception has rarely been researched. In order to introduce the concept of *national indifference* in my research, a brief overview of the origins of the term and methodological peculiarities will be necessary. The concept has been pioneered by historians working on 19-20th century Central Europe, arguing that there was no such thing as mass breakthrough of nationalism in Habsburg Empire. Rather, the war created the conditions for small national movements. Thus, the concept of national indifference draws scholarly attention to the construction of national discourses by politicians, but at the same time to the complex reality of everyday life. Judson in his book *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* argues that historically nationalist politicians' extensive attempts to influence the behavior of ordinary people with their sentiments were in fact counter-productive.³⁴

Following this line, my research attempts to argue similar in the light of contemporary nationalist discourses and their reflections on ordinary people. With the confidence that popular reception of the nationalist politics deserves as much scholarly attention, this chapter is a brief overview of scholarly works about interpretive renderings and/or consumption of the nationalist discourses by the ordinary people.

³³ Michael Skey, *National Belonging and Everyday Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

³⁴ Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit, eds., *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, 1 edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

My research aims at going beyond the triggered national assertions and uncovering the everyday meanings of nationalist politics. This fits into Jon E. Fox's argument that in the course of everyday lives, young people very rarely engage in national questions. Based on empirical analysis he examined the ways students engaged (or did not engage) in the conversations about political matters. While students demonstrated the reproduction of nationally polarized views in response to survey questions, they did not show any interest in these events in everyday lives. Therefore, Fox's main conclusion is that "nationalist politics misses its mark".³⁵ Similarly argues Steve Fenton, who further distinguishes the concepts of national identity and nationalism/being nationalist. He claims that national membership is a matter-of-fact condition and should not be mistaken for nationalist sentiment: acceptance of nationality does not lead to enthusiasm for the nation. He deconstructs the idea that national belonging is by any means a powerful marker that is embraced with pride and delight.³⁶ Through empirical investigation among British youth, he argues that theoretical assumptions about national identity are not often reflected in everyday situations and quite the opposite, the national indifference prevails.

Similarly to the concepts of national indifference and national apathy, Fox also analyzes the ways the national commemorations are consumed by the public. Based on empirical study of Romanian and Hungarian university students in Cluj, he explores the propagation tools of national sensitivities and their perception by the audience. He argues that nationalist politics do not always lead to experiencing them by the public in the same national(ist) terms as they are being offered. Therefore, Fox analyzes these experiences through looking at participation of

³⁵ Jon E. Fox, "Missing the Mark: Nationalist Politics and Student Apathy," *East European Politics & Societies* 18, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 363–93, doi:10.1177/0888325404266940.

³⁶ Steve Fenton, "Indifference towards National Identity: What Young Adults Think about Being English and British*," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 321–39, doi:10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00279.x.

holiday and sporting events, which are to boost the national(ist) sentiments in public.³⁷ He also distinguishes between national and nationalist, which are connected to my research in terms of constructing the notion of collective belonging, while at the same time, attempting to enhance the national attachment and feeling of patriotism.

1.5. Concept of Patriotism and its Implications

Patriotism as a term varies in its meanings from a society to a society. Accordingly, different kinds of patriotism and its implicit forms have been identified. Definitions vary also about Patriotism's relation to nationalism. Lowell Barrington defines "nation" and "nationalism" and identifies the tendency of misuses of these concepts in scholarly debates.³⁸ In his classification he strictly divides the terms "nationalism" and "patriotism" and argues that equating of these concepts is a basic misuse in political science. He defines patriotism as a pride in state, while "nationalism first and foremost is about the nation, not the state."³⁹ However, he explains the trap of associating nationalism with loyalty to an existing state by outlining the "nation-state" system of the international state-system. Slightly differently argues Ignatieff, however, he also maintains a clear difference between these two concepts:

"Patriotism is a love of a country one can take for granted as one's own; it is love for a country whose borders are settled, whose identity is more or less secure, and which does not have large groups of its own people subject to the domination or control of another country. ...As an uncontested emotion, patriotism can be, though it is not always, free of intolerant aggression toward other nations or peoples. Nationalism, by contrast, is love of a country that happens to belong to someone else."⁴⁰

³⁷ Jon E. Fox, "Consuming the Nation: Holidays, Sports, and the Production of Collective Belonging," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1, 2006): 217–36, doi:10.1080/01419870500465207.

³⁸ Lowell W. Barrington, "'Nation' and 'Nationalism': The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30, no. 4 (1997): 712–16, doi:10.2307/420397.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.714

⁴⁰ Michael Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration," in *The Politics of Toleration: Tolerance and Intolerance in Modern Life*, ed. Susan Mendus (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 77–107.

Nonetheless, these separate definitions for each term represent Weberian ideal-types and while the authors argue that there is a clear border in these two terms, they simultaneously acknowledge the interrelation of these two in practice. Specifically this deviation from each ideal type was kept in mind while preplanning the research and situating it in the field of nationalism studies.

In their study on blind and constructive forms of patriotism Schatz and Staub look into theoretical and empirical distinctions between the two forms of national attachment. When defining the concept of mainstream patriotism in my research, these distinctions become useful. Constructive patriotism, according to the authors, is defined as an attachment characterized by certain amount of criticism of current national practices that are intended to bring about positive change. In contrast, blind patriotism is defined as a sort of attachment to country which is characterized by unquestioned positive evaluation, blind commitment and intolerance of criticism. In their study the authors empirically examine these concepts and their links to political involvement, knowledge, and behavior. Discussing their implications further contribute to the empirical part of my thesis as well.⁴¹

Marlene Laruelle analyzes contemporary Russia's patriotic discourse, dominant in the state and applied it into youth policies. They argue that patriotism appears as a tool for reconstructing solidarities that helps legitimize practices inherited from the Soviet period. The authors look into multiple layers of meanings and understanding patriotism.⁴² One of them is the patriotic youth club in Russia where extremely diverse activities are practices under a patriotic umbrella:

⁴¹ Robert T. Schatz, Ervin Staub, and Howard Lavine, "On the Varieties of National Attachment: Blind Versus Constructive Patriotism," *Political Psychology* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 1999): 151–74, doi:10.1111/0162-895X.00140.

⁴² Marlene Laruelle, "Patriotic Youth Clubs in Russia. Professional Niches, Cultural Capital and Narratives of Social Engagement," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 1 (n.d.): 8–27.

leadership training, historical reenactments, combat sports etc. These practices are extremely similar to my research object.

However, the absence of scholarly research on national projects in Georgia in general and largely attended The Patriotic Camps in particular is striking. Several journalistic articles have been dedicated to the issue of the president's patriotic program; the articles mainly criticize the project for poor distribution of the state budget and sometimes for "propagandizing patriotism".⁴³

Scholarly debates in this regard equate to scholars' debates and opinions on social networks and talk shows. In the light of the theories reviewed above, this thesis aims to also analyze everyday implications of the grand patriotic project.

⁴³ Tamar Babuadze, "The President's Patriotic Project."

Chapter 2: Methodological Framework

This research seeks to analyze the top-down rhetoric and bottom-up processes regarding the Patriotic Camps project. In order to analyze the mainstream political rhetoric on the one hand, and the individual perceptions of the Camp's participants, on the other hand, I mainly rely on the two different research methods that will be discussed in details in the following chapter. A combination of these methods will enable this thesis to examine the two interrelated dimensions of the Patriotic Camps project, and to seek an answer to the main research questions.

2.1. Basis of the Research, Pilot Project and the Grounded Theory

The following research is based on a pilot project conducted in December, 2015 over skype – as it was the most feasible method at the time of the research. Three interviewees were participants of the camps in 2011 and 2012; one was a trained leader in 2011. Participants had stayed at the camps for 10 days, while the leader was a team leader during the whole summer i.e. at fourteen camps. During the skype interviews, participants were asked to talk about their experiences at the Patriotic Camps in general; to remember one ordinary day; about the reason of participation and aftermaths. As all of the interviews were semi-structured, not all the questions were pre-determined and rigid, the questions varied according to the narration of the interviewee and most of the questions emerged during the dialogues. My questions were primarily of triggering character to let the participants narrate their experience. After the narration, some specific questions were added, e.g. in their opinion, why are the camps called patriotic, if it was an influential factor when they were making a decision of participating, etc. The interviews lasted for 40-55 minutes; each interview was transcribed later and categorized in the themes for thematic analysis.

The most practicable mode for sampling the respondents was the “snowball technique”. The project did not aim at producing any statistical representativeness, but rather outlining the prevalent themes in order to sketch the relevant theory. Moreover, the data obtained was not ambitious to be sufficient for theoretical saturation.⁴⁴ The “data saturation” as Guest *et al.* analyzed, is “the number of interviews needed to get a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion and variability within data set”.⁴⁵ However, the criteria for achievement of theoretical saturation are still unclear and depend on many factors. It may be that saturation is achieved at a very early point especially when the group is homogenous.⁴⁶ Of course, it would be desired to achieve the saturation in the pilot research, but the limitations of time and scale made it questionable.

The analytic categories from the project were not constructed from the preconceived logically deduced hypotheses and it aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness. The literature review for this thesis, therefore, was conducted after developing an independent analysis of the pilot project. In this regard, the pilot project and its further development into the thesis shares some features to a methodological approach, which, in social sciences is known as Grounded Theory.

Methodological principles of the Grounded Theory comprise a whole package of methods that are believed to be the essential elements of the classic Grounded Theory approach. Glaser has identified these components, among which theoretical sensitivity, i.e. the ability to generate concepts from the data and relate them according to the models of theory, and avoiding pre-conceptualization of the research through extensive literature in advance.

⁴⁴ Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, Laura Johnson, “How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability,” *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (February 2006): 59–82.

⁴⁵ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods.*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2012). p.426

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Bryman summarized several outcomes of the Grounded Theory approach suggested by Strauss and Corbin. Below I will analyze each of them in relations with my project:

First outcomes are the *concepts*; concepts are treated as labels that can later refer to the “building blocks of theory.”⁴⁷ Some of the main concepts produced through open coding after my interviews were: *fun, friends, promotion, seaside/nice summer location, team, independent vacations from parents, etc.* Second outcome that Bryman identifies is a *category or categories*. Category is a combination and a higher level of abstraction from concepts. In the process of analysis the following thematic categories were underlined:

1. Choice without a national flavor – absence of identity claims;
2. The usage of the phrase “The Patriotic Camps” as not reflecting the reality of practices;
3. Constructive (“better”) patriotism put in practice;
4. Temporarily activated identification.

The skype interviews revealed somewhat different from what had been initially anticipated - especially in the aspect of framing the choices of the participants, what Fox and Idriss called “choosing the Nation”. The participants of the camp did not recall any major patriotic themes occurring at the camp except history lessons during the educational part of the sessions. This gradually became my core category and directed me to a larger body of literature on national indifference or indifference to nationalism.

⁴⁷ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Second Edition edition (Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1990).

These thematic categories will be analyzed in details in the chapter 4 *The Patriotic Camps and Individual Identifications* together with more recent findings; however, the interpretation of these early data, separating and synthesizing them led to further developing a hypothesis, which is another outcome of the Grounded Theory approach, as Bryman argues. My main anticipations prior to the project were finally formulated into a hypothesis as following: patriotic narrative is absence from the identifications of the participants of The Patriotic Camps.

The existence of thematic categories and a valid hypothesis further guided me into sketching out the relevant theory after the pilot project. According to Strauss and Corbin, “a set of ... categories... are systematically related through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social...or other phenomenon.”⁴⁸ Two types or levels of theory have been distinguished: one is substantive theory, which relates to theory in a substantive area; the second is formal theory, which is at a higher level of abstraction and can be applicable to several substantive areas – therefore, the generation of this kind of theory requires data collection in different, preferably contrasting, settings.⁴⁹ In my case, according to the scope of my research, I developed a substantive theoretical framework, which I later used as a defining theoretical framework for my final research.

Thus, my pilot project stands closely to and shares some of the defining components with the Grounded Theory; yet, it does not fully represent this approach. The main limitations for it to fully represent the Grounded Theory approach are the merely partial suspension from the relevant theories and the lack of data saturation. In my case, a complete theory-neutral observation was not guaranteed from the beginning as I was partly equipped with theoretical

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.22

⁴⁹ Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods.

knowledge and methodological stances regarding national attachment and personal identifications.

As mentioned above, the level of data saturation was very unclear after conducting four interviews. Although the themes and concepts throughout the interviews were recurrent, there still remained possibilities of emerging new themes in other interviews. However, this step was of central importance for developing a hypothesis and drafting a theoretical framework that was later tested in the final research.

2.2. Narrative Inquiry and Constructed Identity

As mentioned before, the in-depth interviews in my research had narrational character – the participants were asked to remember their experiences at the camps, starting from the decision making and ending with the aftermaths of the camp (whatever they considered as aftermaths of camp). In order to analyze these interviews properly I divide the narration process in three interdependent phases: construction of the narrative, co-construction of the narrative, and performance of the narrative.

Most commonly, narrative has been defined in relation to events. Scholars vary in terms of definition of narrative. In my research, to a large extent, I follow Squire's approach.⁵⁰ She defines narratives of experience in relation to a broad approach to narrative inquiry that presumes that narratives are "sequential and meaningful", "relate to human experience, re-present experience, and "display transformation or change".⁵¹ According to her, narratives are a way in

⁵⁰ Corinne Squire, "Experience-Centred and Culturally-Oriented Approaches to Narrative," in *Doing Narrative Research*, ed. Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou (London: SAGE, 2008).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.47

which individuals make sense of themselves and the world. On their side, these stories are guided from the inside and from the outside; thus, not only individual's memory authorizes the stories, but others' validation of the events actively or passively participates in shaping the narration. "Are you going to ask me about the rumors of tea and the bushes at the camps?" –one of the participants asked me after he learnt I was interested in the participants' experiences at the camps.⁵² This suggests that although narratives are produced from a self, the forces that push them forward are others: culture, society, audience, etc. the existence of the other (or others) in the story of the self is continuously present during the stages of both shaping the narrative and narrating it.

Thus, in my research I treat the narrative production as a construction of narrative. However, besides others' permanent passive or active involvement in the process of producing a narrative, interpretation of a narrative calls for understanding it in relation to the entire interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee.⁵³ In this regard, Wells calls this process co-construction of narrative, and raises a question of the ownership/control over narratives. In order to minimize the interviewer's influence the interviewer assumes the role of a "naïve listener"⁵⁴ and does not interrupt the narration. However, despite the interviewer's attempt, narrative cannot be treated neither as an accurate representation of reality, nor as a product of fiction. The process of performance is mediated by a preferred identity, which, on its own, is directed by the narrative itself. This blurs the line between the actual experience and the construction of narration. By

⁵² Rumors of teas and bushes became a widespread criticism topic; it started with the president's famous phrase you will make close friends here, there are a lot of bushes and trees around" that he stated in 2007 in order to attract the youth to the camp.

⁵³ Kathleen Wells, *Narrative Inquiry* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, and Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, 1 edition (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1998).

doing so, it merges the constructivist and cognitivist approaches to narration – the former suggesting that we construct our own realities based on lived experience and the latter correcting that we manage the experience every time we recall it.

As Margaret Somers points out, people construct their identities “...by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories;... 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”.⁵⁵ Thus, the narrativity helps to conceptualize and measure the formation or transformation of the patterns of identification.^{56 57 58} As memory is stored as mental representation of what the event was like, the narrated version of experience becomes not separable from the lived experience. Therefore, experience-based autobiographical memory becomes immensely relevant while discovering the identification patterns.⁵⁹

Drawing upon these methodological agendas my interviews are treated as oral narratives of events and later will be analyzed in relation to national attachment and nationally framed identifications. These narratives will be linked to the top-down analysis of The Patriotic Camps project, which will be carried out using the political discourse analysis method.

⁵⁵ Margaret R. Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (October 1994): 605–49, doi:10.1007/BF00992905.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Charles Antaki and Sue Widdicombe. *Identities in Talk*. London: SAGE Publications, 1998.

⁵⁸ Martin J. Malone. *Worlds of Talk: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Conversation*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997.

⁵⁹ Szilard-Istvan Pap, “Encountering the Nation Beyond Borders: Hungarian High School Students, Tourism and Micromanagement of Nation-Building” (Central European University, 2013).

2.3. Document Analysis

In order to identify the implied aim of the camps and detect the existence or lack of ideological masterplan behind the idea of the camps document analysis is applied. Political discourse analysis in this research is two-folded: one is an analysis of the documents issued by the government; and the second is the analysis of political speeches and interviews in the popular media.

Document analysis is a form of policy analysis in which a researcher attaches meanings to the topic based on coding the content into themes. In my research I analyze internal documents of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs; these documents were requested and obtained from the ministry as a part of public information.

Lindsay Prior points out the importance of extension of the concept of narrative to policy discourse and argues that documents can unravel the form and content of a narrative. In essence, the document analysis combines techniques of content analysis with a theoretical frame that enables us to detect central aspects of the policy narrative. When it comes to analyzing the government documents, Prior identifies three key features that narratives of these documents contain: chronology, plot, and “characters”.⁶⁰ Following this approach, in my research I treat the government documents as such narratives that will help mapping the analysis of the general picture.

⁶⁰Lindsay Prior, *Using Documents in Social Research*, 1 edition (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2003).

2.4. The Field Research and Its Limitations

After having contacted some of the future interviewees over skype during the winter, I arranged face-to-face interviews that were conducted during the fieldwork in Tbilisi in April 2016. The fieldwork lasted for three weeks and involved major modifications regarding methodology. Initially, several focus-group interviews had been planned as a main method for this research. As George Gaskell points out, the purpose of qualitative research is not counting the attitudes and opinions of the population, but rather exploring different range of opinions.⁶¹ For this purpose, the group interviews were considered to be more effective way of saturating the qualitative data than semi-structured in-depth interviews: they would trigger the discussion among the group members and serve as a means of exploring the shared forms of experiences, knowledge, and understandings that the participants made over the same issue. However, due to, mainly, space limitations, previously planned and desired focus group interviews were cancelled. Instead, several interviews were added to the initial plan and, as previously discussed, the approach to the interviews were slightly modified as well.

Since the snow-ball technique was used primarily for a sampling strategy, the research contained a risk of being one-sided and thus, biased. In order to avoid the bias and cover a variety of experiences I contacted different circles of sources. I got a result of a diverse pool of participants of the camps, and thus covered the majority of the camp locations.

Unfortunately, communication with the youth wing of the - at that time - ruling party was not very effective. Consequently, I only managed an informal phone-interview with a representative

⁶¹ George Gaskell, "Individual and Group Interviewing," in *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: A Practical Handbook* (London: SAGE, 2000).

of the youth wing. This deficiency might affect the findings about the individual perceptions on political loyalty in youth.

A lesser obstacle was created by the refusal to recording of the interviews. Two of the respondents refused the interview to be recorded; the interviews were still conducted, although instead of recording I took notes simultaneously. Obviously this affected the dynamics of the interviews, and therefore, might contain distorted image of the memories.

In total, sixteen interviews were conducted. The thematic analyses of them will follow in the next chapters.

Chapter 3: Top-Down Analysis

In the following section I carry out a discourse analysis of methodologically selected material that will elucidate government's political rhetoric. I aim to illustrate that Patriotism is a widely used category of political practice. Yet, following Brubaker's argument, underline that claims, appeals, and statements made in the name of patriotism do not require its use as a category of analysis.⁶² The main purpose of the top-down analysis is to seek an answer to the first question of the thesis: What are the implicit aims of the Patriotic Camps? It is expected that top-down approach will partly explore the ideological mastermind behind the camps project. Therefore, the first section of this chapter aims at designing a research model relevant to the specific political context of post-2003 Georgia; In the light of document analysis⁶³, firstly I do an overview of the documents retrieved from the ministry; later I will point out the discursive strategies employed by the government through the Patriotic Camps project.

3.1. Document Analysis: Gap in the Aims

In this section, I apply the document analysis approach to the official state documents retrieved from the Ministry of Sport and Youth and government newsletters regarding The Patriotic Camps. Due to not extensive material among government publications and reports, initially I researched newsletters and press-releases on different online media outlets.

⁶² Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity." *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (February 2010): 1-47.

⁶³ Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method." *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27-40. doi:10.3316/qrij0902027.

Firstly, I collected the data through an extensive review of the online materials about The Patriotic Camps. I determined a first data body (Appendix 1, *data body 1*) out of a combination of government publications consisting of press releases and newsletters regarding the camps, and did additional research on broadcast media using general keywords describing The Patriotic Camps, according to the official aims. Throughout this process I gathered a data body consisting of 24 materials on The Patriotic Camps.

Secondly, I identified general key words with help of previously developed theoretical framework on discursive construction of nation, and patriotism and its relation to nationalism. The key words are the following: youth, future, liberty/freedom, territorial integrity, unity, democracy, nation(al), war. The repeated occurrence of these words was expected to shed a light to discursive strategies used for constructing national sameness. While the key words meant to help reduce the scope of analysis, at the same time they had to be general in their meanings and nature: too specific key words would have led to a research bias. Besides, my main aim was to explore political rather than media representation of the camps. When it comes to examining the political discourse in the media, two main points should be taken into consideration: firstly, it is important to recognize that the analysis does not seek to be representative, but rather illustrative of the discourse, and secondly, it is imperative not to mix the political discourse with the media representation of the topic. Therefore, since this study is based on purposive sampling approach, by looking up these key words in all collected material I decided to reduce the *data body 1* to a new body (Appendix 1, *data body 2*). The resulted data body thus comprises of 16 raw materials. Some of the materials from the *data body 1* did not include the identified key words, however I considered that an entirely mechanic selection process would be disadvantageous for the research purposes, and thus, included them in the final data body. In this regard, not only rigorous

mechanic selection method was used, but researcher's critical assessment complemented the analysis. This complementary approach attempts to counter-balance potential weaknesses of the data.

It is noteworthy that one of the potential weaknesses of the analysis might be a lack of early data: most of the broadcast media as well as the government websites do not include much data dating older than 2009 in their accessible archives. This can possibly affect the analysis of the detailed dynamics of narratives and discursive strategies.

A slightly surprising picture was observed in the government's newsletters and official documents. Patriotic sentiments here take up lesser space and a mismatch of aims and actions is noticed.

Public information retrieved from the Ministry of Sport and Youth consisted of six Presidential orders from 2005 till 2010, and one annexed document regarding the aims and objectives of the camps. However, the document on aims and objectives was retrieved in the .doc format as an annexed document and was missing any stamp, date, or any other sign of an official policy paper. Moreover, the document was written in the past tense and referred to the Patriotic Camps as a past project. Clearly, this document was written after the request on the information was made.

As for the President's executive orders, they contain considerably little, but some useful data for the analysis: Orders are issued regularly approximately at the same time of the year. Following the line of document analysis technique developed by Prior, the chronology in this case is less important and therefore, disregarded from the analysis. However, content-wise, these documents have very similar content with minor changes. In terms of 'plot' they are interesting in two ways:

firstly, all of them start with identical short paragraph listing the aims of the camps: “In order to raise patriotic spirit, create/establish national and universal values, and raise spiritually healthy generation”; secondly, after the first paragraph the whole focus is shifted to technical details, budget allocation and task divisions entirely oriented to technically correct organization and implementation.

This drastic shift in the plot suggests a gap between the ideological implication and ideas about the mechanisms of its implementation. The aims remain empty and floating, lacking the reinforcement instruments. This gap in the plot raises two questions: credibility of the aims or the weakness in implementation of the strong ideological project. These questions can only be fully be answered in the following chapter of the thesis; however, some additional nuances were observed in terms of plot in the data body in government newsletters. For example, in a newsletter from 2011 we do not read the “raising patriotic spirit” among the aims of the camps anymore. The article states: “The project “Patriot” came into existence in 2005 by the president’s initiative. The project serves the purpose of nonformal education among youth; rising of physical, spiritual, and intellectual potential; social integration; encourage friendships; popularization of active and healthy lifestyle.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, the previously identified keyword “patriotism” or “patriotic” is extensively missing from these documents. Similarly, the official annual report of Tolerance and Civil Integration from the same year mentioned the Patriotic Camps project as an important ring in the process of ethnic minority integration. The document stated: “One of the priorities of The Patriotic Camps is an active involvement of ethnic

⁶⁴ “პატრიოტი 2011” დასრულდა.” Ministry of Sport and Youth. October 24, 2011.

“‘Patriot 2011’ is Over.” Ministry of Sport and Youth, October 24, 2011 Accessed May 12, 2016. http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=196&info_id=4885.

minorities in the project”.⁶⁵ Neither this document included the aim of “raising patriotic youth” in the list of the project’s aims.

This disappearance of the first aim of the camps might have been a result of either a major shift in the aims or popular reception of the project. It additionally suggests the flexible nature of the project and the tendency from the government to adjust it to its different priorities.

Besides the plot being incoherent, documental evidence regarding the “characters” reveal a number of main characters in the narrative. These characters are: the Ministry of Culture (later replaced by the Ministry of Sport and Youth), and the media; moreover, the ministry of defense plays an important role as a character in the beginning (in 2005): despite it being well-known that the project was initiated by the president, despite the information being spread in media, the executive orders state that the project was initiated by the ministry of culture and that the president was only accepting it.

One of the most important and ubiquitous characters in these documents are the media, which is given the responsibility to cover the events of The Patriotic Camps accordingly and is given the directive to deliver the messages of the rhetoric through The Patriotic Camps to larger audience. This might suggest that the overall target group was larger than the youth and that there was a clear intention to deliver the message not only to a specific group of people, but to a wider audience. This interpretation will be supported within the following analyses.

⁶⁵ Government of Georgia. “შემწყნარებლობისა და სამოქალაქო ინტეგრაციის ეროვნული კონცეფციის და სამოქმედო გეგმის შესრულების 2011 წლის ანგარიში”
“Tolerance and Civil Integration National Concept and Action Plan 2011 Annual Report,” January 2011

3.2. Discourse-Analytical Approaches: Camps as a Part of Audience

Although documents enable us to study the phenomenon intensely, the retrieved material was not enough to analyze the political aims and rhetoric created around the projects. In order to justify the application of discourse theory in this research, it is important to define the political rhetoric. Political rhetoric has been extensively studied by Michael Billig mainly through analysis of the state's manipulations of national identity.⁶⁶ Recent studies demonstrate examples of studying political rhetoric using variety of research techniques: discourse analysis among them to interpret the speech repertoires.⁶⁷ In my research I define rhetoric as a combination of these speech repertoires and a form of narrative in its rather neutral conception and view it as part of larger political discourse.

Empirical analyses of political rhetoric lay emphasis on argumentative devices and micro features of communication.⁶⁸ Questions related to strategic use of the language, and common-sense values are underlined as important features in political talks and texts. I treat these discursive strategies as tools to maintain political legitimacy arguing that the Patriotic Camps are treated as a specific target group by the state, which persistently attempts to deliver its message of self-legitimation. According to Montesano Montessori, this discourse is directed to maintaining power over social reality “by establishing its own common sense.”⁶⁹ Although Montesano Montessori analyzes the discourse in the light of struggle between two groups for

⁶⁶ Susan Condor, Cristian Tileagă, and Michael Billig, “Political Rhetoric,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 262–300.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Nicolina Montesano Montessori, “Potential of Narrative Strategies in the Discursive Construction of Hegemonic Positions and Social Change,” in *From Text to Political Positions: Text Analysis across Disciplines*, ed. Bertie Kaal, Isa Maks, and Annemarie Van Elfrinkhof (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: VU University Amsterdam, 2014), 171–89.

hegemonic positions, her approach to the present research is crucial, even in the case of single political party that is seeking hegemony.

Three video speeches were transcribed and later analyzed in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis: one at the Sports Palace in Tbilisi after the closing of the first generation of the camps in September 2005, and two relatively recent ones: in 2011 and 2012 at the camp spots.

Unfortunately, retrieving other video materials was not possible due to time and budget limitations. However, the analysis aims at illustrating the rhetoric rather than exhausting it.

Therefore, the main drawback of the analysis is not the size of the data body, but the lack of the data containing immediate post-war rhetoric. This illustrative sample aims at exploring the general dynamics of the nationalist discourse throughout the Patriotic Camps. Overall, the main political elite's narratives are generally structured around the concepts of *sameness* and *otherness*; the speech acts widely use the “we” messages, appeal to the emotions and nationalist sentiments and to the concept of patriotism as a main pillar of democracy. In some cases, mainly in the first year of the camps and right after the Russo-Georgian conflict in 2008, certain appeals are made to the war and the importance of military service.

The primary assumption for this part of research was that the government hoped to gain acceptance from a large group of youth for their prospective projects concerning the future of the state. It was also anticipated that the discursive strategies would play an important role in achieving this acceptance. These strategies were expected to become more imperative during the time of crisis/war in 2008, for narratives play a crucial role in formulating alternatives to the status quo in times of crisis.⁷⁰ Therefore, the instrumentalizing function, that is a function to

⁷⁰ Ibid.

create the meaning, to maintain it, to prove or to falsify, of rhetoric becomes more vivid: that is, However, despite lacking these data, the analysis shows a coherent line of the political rhetoric.

Besides mere nationalist sentiments, the constructions of imaginaries of social life are present in political argumentation of the president's speech acts. Therefore, I focus on the narrative structures in political argumentation and persuasive strategies for political positioning. In discourse analysis framework narrative plays an important role.⁷¹ Therefore, the theory of the relational approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was used to identify whether rhetoric functioned at the levels of persuasion, and a discourse-analytical approach⁷² was maintained to analyze the political rhetoric in more details.

My analysis of these speeches largely relies on the discourse theory and distinguishes linguistic concepts which can be considered as central to the process of maintaining political power. Each concept has its own role to endure intrinsic logic of a political rhetoric as a form of narrative. Two of these concepts are particularly important in this research: Empty signifiers and Nodal points.⁷³

Generally, the president's narrative is structured around the key concepts of liberty/freedom and "building". However, the verb "to build" branches into two main subcategories: building democracy and building economy/infrastructure. In his narrative he appeals to patriotism and national identity through these concepts: "We are a democratic country and this democratic

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, Second Edition edition (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009).

⁷³ Nicolina Montesano Montessori, *A Discursive Analysis of a Struggle for Hegemony in Mexico: The Zapatista Movement versus President Salinas de Gortari* (w.p.: VDM Verlag, 2009).

country is building a new city”;⁷⁴ “Whole society must be involved in this construction”; “We will invite Georgian experts;” “This city is a national project;” “We need to build a successful and prosperous country;” “Let’s turn the Patriotic Camps into schools of democracy;” “We must be the role-model for building democracy and liberty;” This argumentation enables us to apply the critical discourse analysis to his rhetoric.

According to a classic author of Discourse Theory, Ernesto Laclau, Empty Signifiers present signifiers that lack particular “signified”. His argumentation is based on the notion that these signifiers get their meaning through the act of hegemonic operation. These signifiers obtain meaning only when they are charged with a specific contextual meaning. Similarly, I treat “empty signifiers” as relevant categories for maintaining political power. For example, patriotism, the main key word occurring around the camps, here acts as an empty signifier. In this regard, at least two reasons can be identified for signifiers to be relevant for political power maintenance process: Firstly, due to lack of meaning they have potential to be ascribed many different meanings from different individuals and groups. It leaves the space and potential to “unite different groups behind a shared common cause”. While the common cause is big and spacious enough and represents a shared goal, every individual can fill in the space under its meaning, and in return these signifiers are open to different ascription. Therefore, no certain “signified” are needed for the term ‘patriotism’, or even ‘patriotic’. A similar significance is acquired by another key concept of these speeches: liberty/freedom. The freedom that president is referring to implies political independence. However, Georgia gained independence in the early 90s and the mere reminder of the importance of independence underlines the attempt to unite the audience behind a shared common cause.

⁷⁴ He is referring to Lazika, a proposed planned city on Georgia’s Black Sea littoral.

Similarly functions the banner at the entrance of one of the Camps Venue “Ganmukhuri – Town of friendship and peace”. This type of signifier acquires the meaning only in the context of its existence: Ganmukhuri is a village situated near the border of Abkhazia. Abkhazia, on its own, territorial integrity and restoration of peace and friendship with Abkhazia, is largely used in political rhetoric of the President and the minister of Defense in their speeches from 2005. In fact, territorial integrity may have served as another linguistic concept which has been identified in Discourse Theory as the term “Nodal Point”.

Nodal Points, as Laclau and Mouffe⁷⁵ argue, are linguistic concepts that help to form and sustain the main line of the discourse. For this purpose a certain system of stabilized meaning is created and therefore, the whole narrative maintains coherent, seemingly “signified” line. Saakashvili’s territorial integrity may have served as a nodal point in his discourse: “Today we have a historic chance to finally unite Georgia and make it more powerful. This requires much effort and unity... This kind of chance was not given to any generation during past ten centuries.”⁷⁶

When analyzing the rhetoric dynamics, alongside the content of the discourse, the form of production is an important factor to look at. Interestingly, most of the president’s speeches at the Patriotic Camps or other gatherings were broadcasted live by all nation-wide TV channels. Thus, the media was fulfilling the task created for them by the government documents/presidential executive orders.

⁷⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd edition (London; New York: Verso, 2001).

⁷⁶ "სააკაშვილი გაეროს "ამორალური რჩევების" გამო აკრიტიკებს." ["Saakashvili Criticizes the UN for 'Immoral Advice.'"] Civil Georgia, September 06, 2007. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=16045>.

Most interestingly, in these public speeches there is a notorious lack of reciprocal communication about the camp itself, its meanings and importance. Only once, there is a slight hint that these camps have to become a new cradle of democracy. However, the narrative remains entirely one-directional and saturated with slogans, appeals to “enemies”, and catchphrases. Thus, the camps in these situations represent merely a platform for delivering a message, an arena for making a political positioning, and the political rhetoric functions largely at the level of imagination and persuasion.



Figure 1: The President Giving a Speech at a Patriotic Camp⁷⁷

In order to further explore the top-down rhetoric about the camps in more details, discourse-analytical approach has been applied. Major elements of identity formation are observed in the discourse-analytical approach of the video speeches. Here, I follow the theoretical framework of Cillia et.al. and distinguish between three types of *macro*-strategies involved in the discursive

⁷⁷ Saakashvili Mikheil - Саакашвили Михаил. “პრეზიდენტი პატრიოტთა ბანაკში” [The President at the Patriotic Camp]. Filmed [September 2012]. YouTube video, 00:07. Posted [September 2012]. <https://youtu.be/Lj6woDe95SE>

construction of identifications: (1) constructive strategies; (2) justification strategies; and (3) transformation strategies. Although this thesis does not aim at analyzing purely linguistic strategies, some of the linguistic messages are of importance in order to illustrate the larger rhetoric. Constructive strategies comprise of linguistic acts that serve to create a certain identity.⁷⁸ These acts refer to national ‘we-group’ and mostly define national identity in the opposition to the ‘other’. “We chose a path of development. That’s why Russia is so scared of us”.⁷⁹ - This is probably the most vivid illustration of defining one identity through positioning it against another fixed identity. These messages reoccur in all three video speeches. Such constructive strategies directly or indirectly appeal to and invite national solidarity and union. Opposing the united identity against the significant ‘barbarian’ other is central when the President refers to the ethnic minorities and emphasizes the function of the camps as inter-ethnic cooperation as an alternative to, better, and more constructive model than Russian imperial domination on ethnic minorities: “[In Abkhazia] People are asked about their ethnic origins and if the military commanders do not like their ethnicities, they will not be allowed to cross the border. We do not divide people by their ethnic roots.”⁸⁰

It is noteworthy though, that these messages are more explicit in the beginning of the Camps project. Here, we hear: “We are a nation of warriors and if not that, we would vanish from

⁷⁸ Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, “The Discursive Construction of National Identities.”

⁷⁹ “სააკაშვილი გაეროს ”ამორალური რჩევების” გამო აკრიტიკებს.” Civil Georgia, September 06, 2007. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=16045>.

“Saakashvili Criticizes the UN for ‘Immoral Advice.’”

⁸⁰ The official Portal of President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia Addressed Teenagers of Various Ethnicities in Anaklia Patriots Camp”, 2011.

history... We have no right not to take our territorial integrity back.”⁸¹ Later on, emphasis shifts to justification and transformation strategies.

Justification strategies are indeed more visible in the later speeches. The continuation and justification of the discourse can on its own, be regarded as yet another power-maintaining strategy analyzed above. The justification strategies, as Cillia et.a. argue very often defend and preserve a problematic narrative of recent history. These strategies justify the political status quo and expect acceptance on larger scale. Taking into consideration the political context, it is not surprising that justificatory strategies are mostly used right before the elections in 2012. In his speech at the Patriotic Camp in Anaklia, the president appealed to the 2008 war and its aftermaths and presented the youth recent reforms in education: From 2011 on, one year military service would exempt them from the university tuition fees. This speech of his is loaded with transformation messages as well, which appeal to, primarily, new constructions/infrastructure, and secondly, democracy building. This also echoes to Fox’s and Miller-Idriss’ concept about ‘when is the nation’.⁸² Although they looked at this concept from a bottom-up perspective, it is highly applicable in the top-down analysis: both the nation and the state come to matter in certain ways at particular times: the category of nation became unsurprisingly salient during the events of war and elections.

Transformation strategies are revealed through other argumentative messages as well; however these transformation messages largely imply the justification tone. According to Cillia *et.al.*, transformation strategies are discursive attempts to transform the relatively well-established

⁸¹ Defense minister at Meeting with Patriots. September 2005

⁸² Fox and Miller-Idriss, “Everyday Nationhood.”

meaning into a new form of meaning.⁸³ Although in the first goals of The Patriotic Camps back in 2005 we read exactly these messages: to put an end to the soviet mentality surrounded by nihilism and to create new, liberated, independent citizens. In the later speeches, transformation strategies carry chiefly a symbolic character: talks about democracy building, new infrastructural constructions only hint to the power maintaining purpose of these messages and solely represent yet another speech of election campaign with a meaningful structure and order, meaningful to the target group audience.

Thus, these video speeches serve as a good illustration of what Fox and Miller-Idriss called ‘talking the nation.’ The discursive construction is largely fed on the created meaningful phrases and idioms. Patriotism is a widely used category of political practice.

The self-legitimation messages of these speeches also read an effort of mobilizing people for collective projects. These messages aim at resonating with and shaping popular perceptions of the nation. Consequently, the discourse analytical approach to these speeches demonstrates self-legitimation rhetoric in front of a specific target audience. In the next chapter I will analyze the participants’ and camp trainers’ views, which will attempt to shed light to the actual influence of the patriotic motive and nationalist sentiments articulated at camps, levels of national reproduction and forms of lived ideology.

⁸³ Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, “The Discursive Construction of National Identities.”

Chapter 4: The Patriotic Camps and Individual Identifications

4.1. Bottom-Up Approach: Perceptions of the Participants

“Well, obviously there was anthem every morning... maybe not every morning”

Participant, 2016

The previous chapter outlined the existing gap between the aims and the content of the documents regarding the Patriotic Camps project. The following chapter aims at exploring the individual identifications, thus seeks to analyze individual perceptions in the light of narrative analysis. It not only presents the empirical findings, but seeks to situate them in a larger context of ‘nationalism from below.’⁸⁴ In its general sense, the bottom-up approach is comprised of participant’s perceptions and the trainer’s insights. Examining nationalism ‘from below’ is expected to answer one of the main research questions of this thesis: Why and how was the patriotic narrative influential, if at all?

The literature review from the chapter one suggests that the bottom-up processes are similarly, if not more extensively, involved in the discursive-formation of the nation. Everyday reconstruction of national identity, as Fox and Miller-Idriss argue, happens through talking about the nation, choosing the nation, performing the nation, and consuming the nation.⁸⁵ All four categories can be applied in different ways to the Patriotic Camps and its participants. In order to effectively illustrate these practices, participant observation would be the most effective method.⁸⁶ However, due to research limitations and mainly due to the fact that this project transformed massively for the past two years, the only way to observe the bottom-up processes

⁸⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸⁵ Fox and Miller-Idriss, “Everyday Nationhood.”

⁸⁶ Ibid.

was the narrative inquiry. As mentioned in the chapter on methodological framework, participants of the camps were asked to talk about their experience, starting from the decision-making to the (possible) aftermaths of the camps. Through these narratives I identified recurrent thematic clusters and analyzed them in the frame of the reviewed literature and methodology. Each of the themes is interestingly connected with the theories about everyday nationalism, as well as blind and constructive patriotism. I classified these themes to larger theoretical categories.

Overall, the experiences of the participants vary. Some of them have participated more than once⁸⁷, which indicates their positive attitude towards the camps; however, some remembered the experience as “not very pleasant”⁸⁸. One of the interviewees, who participated in the first generation of the camps i.e. in 2005 remembers the camps very nicely, however, she adds:

“The main idea of these camps was to train and to raise youth as patriots, right? For this they maintained the perfect order and even the military spirit sometimes. Sometimes this military spirit even terrified me.... Oh, probably you have heard about how we shot from the rifles during the camps. Later some were saying it was all gossip. But we really did shoot. We were taken to these fields to shoot. Well, what else does it suggest if not military training?although no, next year we did not practice shooting at all, but I was also at a different village in that camp”.

This quote reveals several matters: critical reflection about the camps, yet, more than one-time voluntary participation; existence of military nature and obedience in the camps, disappearance it from the camps and/or remaining it as a gossip among the larger public also suggest the diversity of perceptions around the idea. I classified these and other themes that were explored through interviews -- into larger theoretical categories.

⁸⁷ It was not, however, possible to participate more than one during the same year/summer

⁸⁸ Interview, Participant #7, Tbilisi, 2016

The following thematic cluster was identified as a result of transcribing and coding the interviews. As mentioned in the chapter two, some of the themes were distinguished after the pilot project interviews. The field trip enriched these themes and added a couple of new ones to the discussion. The following sections offer categorization of different thematic implications and their reference to larger theory.

4.1.1. National Indifference or indifference to nationalism

Participation in the camp is a choice without a national flavor.- Initially it had been assumed that participation in the camp would be treated as a choice with a national nuance, and the decision to participate in a camp would be perceived as an act of institutionally mediated choice and “choosing the nation”. However, the narratives revealed that participation in the camp is only a choice. The decision was not triggered by any national or patriotic motives. National indifference and political apathy seems to be the largest category of practice. The resonance of national(ist) claims are extremely low. However, indifference is not a unilateral concept: under the category of national indifference or indifference to nationalism two main subcategories appear: casual indifference (‘never actually thought about it’)⁸⁹ and more specific, rational disregard and even anti-nationalist stance (‘I hate nationalism, these labels are ridiculous’).⁹⁰

Apart from the overall lack of patriot-talks, the casual indifference is mainly revealed through the initial motives for participation in the camps. These decisions stand aloof to the national appeal and are mainly triggered by incentives of entertainment: “my friends were going there, and I wanted to spend summer vacation with them, although eventually we did not end up in the

⁸⁹ Interview, Participant #2, 4, Tbilisi 2016

⁹⁰ Interview, Participant #11, Tbilisi, 2016

same camp”⁹¹. “My friends had been there, and said it was great fun, very exhausting, and very strict, but still fun”.⁹² Nationalism in this context did not frame the choices they made, and was ignored and deflected from the participants’ everyday lives. Similarly: “It was [a] popular [project]. It would be my first vacation without parents; of course I wanted to participate. I never thought I would become a patriot or a different person. I suppose I had not thought about the motives.”⁹³

Meanwhile, the second kind of indifference is more linked to anti-nationalism and critical reflection to propagated messages about the project. However, it is noteworthy that this criticism was triggered through the prompting question: “What was patriotic in the camps?” This kind of critical sentiment is peculiar to either being embarrassed by participation and attempts to justify it (“I was young, I did not care about the possible patriotic background of the camps”)⁹⁴ or being neutral about participation but underlining the anti-nationalist spirit: “Of course I did not want to become a patriot or anything, I wanted to have my own fun and it was fun in the end.”⁹⁵ This latter expression of hostility towards assumed patriotic label stands closer to Calhoun’s argument that individual is “liberated” from kinship ties. Individualism that was expressed through this category of indifference is opposed to nationalism as it is opposed to any categorizations.⁹⁶ On the other hand, this indifference indicates the presence of perceived nationalist rhetoric and, by

⁹¹ Interviewee, Participant #2, Skype, December 2015.

⁹² Interview, Participant #3, December 2015.

⁹³ Interview, Participant #5, Tbilisi 2016.

⁹⁴ Interview, Participant #3, Tbilisi 2016.

⁹⁵ Interview, Participant #11, Tbilisi 2016.

⁹⁶ Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (n.d.): 211–39.

distancing against it, it also reveals the existence of certain informal aspects of nationalist politics.⁹⁷

Fox and Miller-Idriss put forward the importance of the symbolic rewards⁹⁸ that might act as incentives to participation in various nationally flavored activities. In The Patriotic Camps' case, these symbolic rewards existed and were popularized throughout various media channels and internet: a song and a video made particularly for the patriotic camp called for the youth to participate in the project and become patriots of the country, "let their hearts start beating for the nation;"⁹⁹ however, these rewards were not as materially salient to act as incentives to participation and did not structure the participants' choices at the point of decision-making. The popular propagation tools of national sensitivities were not reflected in the participants' memories either. On the everyday experience level, patriotic talk is completely absent.

The phrase "The Patriotic Camps" as not reflecting the reality of practices. –Interestingly, when talking about the title of the project, the participants reflected not on its actual implications, but rather the reason why the government might have given this title to the project. Propagation tools were remembered in this context more than in regards to their decision to participate.

"Q: why do you think these camps were called patriotic?

A: I actually do not know why they called it so. This was probably the government's way to make it more popular, with catchy words. Do you remember, there were even commercials asking "are you a true patriot, or not?"¹⁰⁰

A: This was probably to attract more people in the beginning. But I was from a later generation as I said. Honestly, I went there because it was at the seaside."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Eriksen, "Formal and Informal Nationalism."

⁹⁸ Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."

⁹⁹ Welcome to Georgia. "Lex-Seni - "Patriots" - "პატრიოტები" Advertisement. Youtube.com. July 18, 2009. Accessed May 12, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTEHLMU3LqA>.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Leader #2, Tbilisi 2016.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Participant #3, Tbilisi 2016

This leads us to the assumption stated before: that the phrase “The Patriotic Camps” is not reflecting the reality of practices. As mentioned above, the participants recall these camps as nice summer vacations.

Some of the interviewees also mentioned and described memorable moments of the camps, which are primarily linked to the emotional memory, however, and not to the identity claims: “Real camp-fire moments were so nice, it was really worth to run whole day for those moments, we used to sing, tell stories, very cheerful, and very emotional.”¹⁰²

Bearing in mind that this prompting question was nationally-framed, there was a risk to receive a nationally framed answer. Therefore, I only voiced the “patriotic” question after I had noticed that the nation-talk was massively missing from participants’ narrative. The prompting question became a major part of the co-construction of the narrative, described earlier in the chapter on methodological framework. By asking the question “what was patriotic in the camps?” I prepared myself to distinguish a “national talk” as an “artefact to research settings win which it is solicited”.¹⁰³ However, even the triggering question did not reveal the salience of the patriotism rhetoric:

An interviewee reflected very deeply upon the prompting question, suggesting that the camps were called patriotic because of the government being afraid of losing its image in front of their electorate.

"I think it was a selling point. They wanted to sell the idea that hey, listen, yes we share the Western values, and want to join the NATO and everything, but we are not traitors,

¹⁰² Interview, Participant #9, April 2016

¹⁰³ Fox and Miller-Idriss, “Everyday Nationhood.”

we have to strengthen the local values, because people would accuse them of being too much pro-Western. Of course we did not care about that, and we should not have cared, too.”¹⁰⁴

This quote further strengthens the uncertain interpretation developed in the top-down analysis that the Patriotic Camps were not targeting only the teenagers, but a larger audience.

Another interviewee categorized the patriotism of the camps in a very illustrative and interpretable manner:

“Yes.. Well, obviously there was anthem every morning... maybe not every morning, but at the opening event and for closing for sure, don’t remember exactly, a big flag, there were flags in general, there were uniforms... actually uniforms were in the colors of the Georgian flag – these were patriotic, what else... not much. With uniforms it was difficult in the beginning, we wanted to wear our ordinary clothes, but then they asked us to wear at least a t-shirt of the uniform, or a cap, something, some small detail.”¹⁰⁵

These practices resemble of those analyzed by Billig, Fox, Brubaker and other scholars of Nationalism Studies. National symbols and their meanings on parades and public events remain mostly unnoticed by their potential audiences.¹⁰⁶ Although national symbols do reify and essentialize the nation,¹⁰⁷ even the most visible and impressive monuments, statues, or other symbols vary in their ability to attract the public attention.¹⁰⁸ Fox calls this “missed messages”.¹⁰⁹ Although it might have seemed extraordinary and unusual in the beginning, proliferation of the national symbols at the camps led to their assimilation to an ordinary and

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Participant #11, Tbilisi 2016

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Participant #8, Tbilisi 2016

¹⁰⁶ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

¹⁰⁷ Pål Kolstø, “National Symbols as Signs of Unity and Division,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 4 (July 1, 2006): 676–701, doi:10.1080/01419870600665409.

¹⁰⁸ Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Fox, “Missing the Mark.”

very standard event. Additionally, the “patriotic” nature of these acts is not even remembered by the participants without a prompting question from a researcher - the sporadic invocation of national symbols at the camp is not sedimented in the memories of the participants. However, the effectiveness of these memories should be measured not through the moment, but in lifetimes.¹¹⁰ Thus, when the noticed flag turns into an unnoticed flag, the extents to which national sensibilities are produced and reproduced through these heightened experience of national belonging are not the greatest. And as Fox and Miller-Idriss point out, again, “unseen, unheard, and unnoticed, symbols do not and cannot generate national attachments.”¹¹¹

4.1.2. Collective Identifications

Belonging and Groupness: In order to describe collective forms of consciousness I opt for using the term identifications, similarly to individual identifications. As it was demonstrated from the memories of the participants, collective identifications were one of the most prevalent category activated at the camps, and probably the most prevalent category that remained in the memory after years: “I went next year as well.. probably because this togetherness was formed somehow. 10 days we were together, we were scolded together, we were having fun together. The last moments were the most terrible... everybody was crying.”¹¹²

These collective identities are referred to as “we”; while the leaders are called “leaders”. One participant recalled an evening cultural activity, where this relation towards leaders was

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Fox and Miller-Idriss, “Everyday Nationhood.”

¹¹² Interview, Participant #8 , Tbilisi 2016.

illustrated: “In the evening, we would gather altogether, us and the leaders”. This quote stands as a vivid example of “groupness” as an event rather than a static actor. Similarly to Brubaker’s challenge toward social scientists about his notion that individuals do not simply belong to fixed entities of groups and that groups are not coherent social agents,¹¹³ I observed the activated groupism in the participants’ memories juxtaposed to temporarily contested and constructed identities on spot.

The groupness and collective identifications were fostered through the rituals. I call rituals what participants recall as “cultural activities”, namely campfire events in the evenings, where they were playing quiz games, and theater performances on a national topic. These activities were repetitive and had formalism, sacred symbolism, and performance elements enough to be called rituals.¹¹⁴ Additionally, these events provided not only collective experience, but nationally defined collective experience: the content of that experience did not have to be necessarily and unambiguously national: the event was enough to form a collective identification, shared memory and invoke nostalgia in the future: “I still remember those times very warmly and nicely” – said an interviewee who participated in the camp more than ten years ago.

However, this memory is a memory of something not connected or very loosely connected to their current everyday reality. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they gained very close friends at a camp, some of them met their future husbands and wives, however, when asked about if they keep in touch with their camp co-participants (“co-patriots”), participants regrettably shook heads and said the contacts were more active in the first couple of months, but later on they became more and more rare.

¹¹³ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, New Ed edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions--Revised Edition*, Reissue edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Political Loyalty and Strategic Resource: “Then there was this President’s visit. These euphoric preparations and all... while all he wanted was our votes in the future, or he wanted us in his youth wing.”¹¹⁵

Anesthetizing youth and ensuring their political loyalty was one of the main criticisms that The Patriotic Camps project faced from the opposition or resistant-minded youth. In their perceptions, instilling in the students’ taken-for-granted loyalties to the abstract notion of the patriotism was a mere technique for the ruling party to expand their membership. Similarly thought another participant, who said she was counting down the days to leave: “They had their lists of people, I guess of loyal people, and then they would call them next year as leaders, or ask them to help with party activities.”¹¹⁶ Although this argumentation was quite common, the aim of the bottom-up analysis is not of investigative character, therefore we can only draw conclusions based on the perceptions and opinions of participants. This particular insight suggests the certain kind of resistance to adopting perceived offered rhetoric from elites and goes in line with Whitmeyer’s main thesis on opposition to appropriation elite’s version of nationalism(s).¹¹⁷ Thus, the participants are seen by each other as “strategic resource”, which might become potentially useful in the future in achievement government’s goals in case of successful cooperation. Similar tendencies, yet rather implicit, are visible in some narratives about intentions of participation in the Camps:

“I think our family friend was in the youth wing of the United National Movement,¹¹⁸ he asked me if I wanted to participate, he would be a leader, he convinced my family he

¹¹⁵ Interview, Participant #10, Tbilisi 2016

¹¹⁶ Interview, Participant #10, Tbilisi 2016

¹¹⁷ Whitmeyer, “Elites and Popular Nationalism.”

¹¹⁸ Then Ruling party of Georgia

would take a good care of me;”¹¹⁹ also: “these youth part of the party was not doing on enthusiasm, of course, they were paid I think, so in some way the “grown-ups” bought the “youngsters”.¹²⁰

4.1.3. Patriotism and Its Implications

Constructive (“better”) patriotism in practice: However, this was another answer that only occurred after asking about the meaning of the Patriotic Camps. When asked about the patriotic implications of the camps, participants remembered activities dealing with ecology (cleaning the seashore, etc.), activities about tolerance (group-games), and emphasized that these activities would cause positive change in the society, therefore it is patriotic. In this regard, this practice resembles the concept of constructive patriotism by Schatz et. al. According to them, “constructive patriotism is an attachment to a country characterized by support for questioning and criticism of current group practices that are intended to result in positive change.”¹²¹

“You know, how polluted the seashore gets during the season, it is ugly, also catastrophic for ecology, and it is really not nice that people do that. But we did not go blind onto that. We had cleaning days, cleaned the shore from the litter around. This was a good example for the participants of patriotism. That’s what patriotism means to me as well. Sharing valuable knowledge and not blindly following the orders, traditions or whatever.”¹²²

Schatz et al.¹²³ distinguished constructive patriotism from the blind patriotism. In their research *On the Varieties of National Attachment* they identified blind and constructive patriotism as two different dimensions of positive attachment to the country. Blind patriotism was defined as “an attachment to country characterized by unquestioning positive evaluation, staunch allegiance,

¹¹⁹ Interview, Participant #4, Tbilisi 2016.

¹²⁰ Interview, Participant #6, Tbilisi 2016.

¹²¹ Schatz, Staub, and Lavine, “On the Varieties of National Attachment.”

¹²² Interview, Leader #3, Tbilisi 2016.

¹²³ Schatz, Staub, and Lavine, “On the Varieties of National Attachment.”

and intolerance of criticism”. In the participant’s citation above, a reference was made to this kind of patriotism as well as something unacceptable for him.

Interestingly, this understanding of “better” patriotism was only pointed out by the trained leader, not by the simple participants. This leads us to the question of shaping of collective systems of meanings. The individual agency becomes predominant and of key importance in the assumed role of a team leader. However, even in the case of a trained leader, these activated meanings seem to be of temporary character and only functioning during the camps, not later on.

This suggests that the intentions of the framers coming from the elites get transformed by the actual participants of the project. This leads to other questions such as what and how influences the ways in which the participants perceive the whole experience at the camps and to the argument that, self-understandings of the participants are influenced not by the governmental intentions, but by their and their colleagues’ experiences and practices.

Chapter 5: The Dynamics of the Macro and Micro Relations

This thesis provides a targeted picture of the Patriotic Youth Camps project from the top-down and bottom-up perspectives and seeks to situate it in the larger context of the mainstream patriotic narrative of post-2003 Georgia. The “Rose Revolution” is taken as a starting point, as the new young government came to power with a package of reforms and experimental projects, Patriotic Camps project among them. These experimental projects aimed to reshape Georgian identity with a main element being distinguishing this identity against the barbarian enemy. The Patriotic Camps was a part of this wider plan and therefore, not the only project directed to shape certain identity or national attachment. However, as a part of a wider masterplan, it carried certain features that elucidate the government’s intentions behind it.¹²⁴ This chapter further stresses the general findings and analyzes the broader relations between top-down and bottom-up processes.

5.1. Agency of the Trainers?

As mentioned before, a gap was discovered and analyzed through this research between the government’s official documents and political rhetoric which suggests the existence of a larger audience beyond a narrow target group for the nationalist politics. Thus, three main implicit aims were underlined: political loyalty from the specific target group, persistent political self-legitimization, and a sense of national pride in a (implicit) larger audience. However, the reception of the nationalist politics through the particular project of Patriotic Camps turned out to be indifferent. The Patriotic exercise had been experienced differently by its participants. Their self-identifications and understanding of the wider world were emptied from politics completely, and were disengaged from the nationally framed discursive talks.

¹²⁴ Malkhaz Toria. “The Soviet Occupation of Georgia in 1921 and the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008: Historical Analogy as a Memory Project.”

In order to fully grasp the discursive construction of the national attachment, it is imperative to keep in mind the levels of agencies and transmission system. As was outlined during the literature review, different approaches have been developed to emphasize the fact that identifications are practiced on different levels. Before the fieldwork, it was expected that the trainers would reveal to be an important ring in the chain of the agencies' and the camps' hierarchy. However, two main topics that were determined during the analysis of the interviews in respect with the leadership were career opportunities and strong hierarchy. The agency of the leaders was explored through leaders' as well as participants' interviews. As a result, the gap that had been outlined in the document analysis chapter was most reflected in the leaders' ring of the chain.

The patriotic talks were largely absent from the leaders' narratives as well. The patriot-talks come to surface, again, only after the prompting questions of the researcher. The leaders did not demonstrate the existence of a certain patriotic package that had to be delivered to the participants, despite some government authorities claiming it.¹²⁵

Before interviewing the leaders, I had in mind the critically acclaimed documentary about The Patriotic Camps by Salome Jashi, entitled “The Leader is Always Right”. The film depicts the “symbolic and evocative camp activities, ranging from team-building exercise to performing plays. It also helps document nationalist education and the performance of nationalism in

¹²⁵ *Heinrich Boell Foundation*. Proceedings of პატრიოტიზმი: ინდივიდუალური განცდიდან სახელმწიფო პოლიტიკამდე [Patriotism: From Individual Feeling to State Politics], Tbilisi. December 09, 2009. Accessed May 16, 2016. https://ge.boell.org/sites/default/files/downloads/12_Patriotism_GE.pdf.

Georgia".¹²⁶ Its title also suggests the strict hierarchy and obedience cultivated during the camps. The main story-line is developed around a boy who decides that he cannot stand the strict hierarchy of the camps and is determined to leave the project. After several conversations with the camp leaders convincing him that he is "a fertile soil to become a good man, and that he should not allow this weakness to win over him".

Although the documentary is accessible online and anyone with internet access is able to watch it, unfortunately, not many of my interviewees had seen it and thus could not comment on it. However, participants who had seen it believed that the hierarchical order and unreasonable strictness was correctly depicted in the documentary, and that the leaders' mechanisms of keeping the order was excessive: "I think it was too much, they wanted to raise us as patriots and sometimes the scolding mechanisms were inhumane. I remember one participant, I don't even remember what he did wrong, but they made him stay several hours in the direct sun. This is inhumane".¹²⁷ However, these scolding mechanisms are not associated with patriotism. They are more of technical character: "if someone would get up late, or escape from the morning exercises, or eat at wrong time, or respond rudely to the leader, that's when we would scold them"¹²⁸ From the perspective of the research bias it is hard to assess the leaders' scolding behaviors without applying a method of participant observation. It is hard to tell the extent to which the assumed roles of leaders had been overplayed. And ascertaining said extent was not the aim of this research either.

¹²⁶"2012 Film Presentations." *The Leader Is Always Right Directed by Salomé Jashi*. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://nationalities.org/conventions/film-presentations/asn-2012-film-presentations/the-leader-is-always-right>.

¹²⁷ Interview, Participant #2, Tbilisi 2016

¹²⁸ Interview, Leader #4, Tbilisi 2016

One common complaint in respect to the leadership of the camps and its hierarchy is that most of the trained leaders were using the camps as a stepping stone into higher levels, mainly in the United National Movement party. As mentioned in the participants' perceptions' analysis, political loyalty was one of the recurring themes. However this political loyalty is of perceptual character, and most of the time, is related to others, rather than oneself. A very similar was the case in case of the leaders as well. Interviewees kept mentioning the issue of political loyalty and reconfigured political opportunities in the camps; however, they did not represent any political faction of the ruling party. On the other hand, during the interviews with the leaders, the "fun summers" were the two words by which the leaders would describe the camps.

5.2. The Relations between a Macro Project and Micro Processes

Apart from these two categories, the overall analysis leaves us space to conclude the perceived diverse practices were a result of the specific nature of the camps in general: a temporary location, a heterotopic experience outside of real life. Although there were nine different camp locations, none of them stood close to the realm of routinized space and time, but belonged to an unusual space and represented particular, extraordinary set of experiences. The festival-like atmosphere that was provided during these events and activities contributed to the extraordinariness of the event, making it sharper and more memorable. The space created a micro-setting for the invocation of collective identifications; it created a heterotopic environment that functions as a space that has more layers of meanings and relationship to other places, and that is, in a way, a microcosm of different environments.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Psychology Press, 2002).

Therefore, the main mediation is guaranteed not by the trainers' agency as I had assumed before the analysis, but by the specificity of the camps itself. An “independent system of its own”¹³⁰ – this is how the director of the documentary *The Leader is Always Right* assessed the camps in an informal interview with me. However, the explicit consequences of this mediation are insignificant: after a certain period of time the experiences are fading out and only get activated in the process of narration, when memories are recalled.

Temporarily activated identifications. Very closely related to this, another thematic category that was identified during the interviews was the temporarily activated identifications. However, this category was only visible in the leaders' interviews. By temporarily activated identifications I mean the symbolic reminders of national attachment and the national pride that took place during the ten days' experiences at the camps. They are temporary as they are forgotten later. As the interviewees pointed out, the reason they went to the camp was mainly the promise of nice vacation and nice location (mainly, the seaside). However, the fact that Anaklia resort is only 25 kilometers away from Abkhazia, a disputed region in the northwest, serves as an acute reminder of the temporariness of the state. Romanticized and exoticized discourses are therefore shaped, in which the inaccessible destination (Abkhazia) is portrayed as something that is alienated but not always alien, faraway but belonging to the same nation. A leader mentioned this in a very trivial manner though. In the beginning of the interview, when he was introducing the campsite: “I was in Anaklia, you know, 25-30 kilometers away from Abkhazia”.¹³¹ “We were at the seaside, having fun, but at the same time reminded that this fun is limited”.¹³² Therefore, the camp sites represent in a way the reminders of the necessity of territorial integrity in achieving national

¹³⁰ Salome Jashi, n.d.

¹³¹ Interview, Leader #4, Tbilisi 2016

¹³² Interview, Leader #3, Tbilisi 2016

utopia. However, the existence of this thematic category through the narratives of the leaders and not of participants can be ascribed to simply the amount of time that the leaders had spent at the camp sites: if participants would spend only ten days during the summer, most of the leaders were there throughout the whole summer. Moreover, this thematic category is a finding that should be understood with the synthesis of constructivist and cognitivist approaches to narration: the realities are not only constructed based on lived experience, but also they are managed accordingly every time the recalling takes place. Therefore, the shaping of self-understanding also happens during the production of the narration.

From the analyses it is visible that the camps themselves acted as mediators, therefore camps together with their content and form can be regarded as the main agents. Camps were the sites where the political messages were not only transmitted intentionally and rationally, but sites where the system was happening. The collective identifications and groupisms happened; however, the apparent purpose of group mobilization is absent. This absence is replaced by empty signifiers, rhetoric about patriotism, and due to lack of this visible purpose, we do not see any major implications of the project, its formal and informal repercussions.

The gap that was mentioned in the top-down rhetoric analysis is also visible when the leaders remember their training experience. These memories also went against my preliminary prediction that the leaders would have been trained in a manner that would all the time remind them of the aims of the camps. However, the patriot-talks were, again, absent from these practices. The leaders remember their trainings as any other youth/scout camp training would be like: developing organizing skills, quick decision-making skills, sense of discipline, taking into consideration young peoples' needs, etc.

Thus, the analysis suggested the symbolic repertoires that had been collectively shared at the camps might have had nationalist sensitivities, but at its best it can only reach a momentary outburst of nationalist pride.¹³³ The patriotic exercise was not consumed in the same way as it was offered and propagated to large audience; the camps hardly made their participants nationally oriented, and the ideological masterminds did not ignite patriotic sentiments. As Fox points out “National content does not follow unambiguously from national form.”¹³⁴

Since 2013 the Patriotic Camps project has undergone a massive transformation process. The camps are not called Patriotic anymore; instead they are “Future Camps”. Alongside the title, the content has been dramatically altered. As the website shows, the camps obtained a rather educational nature and are emptied of ideological claims. The main aim of the transformed camps is to raise awareness of human rights issues, children’s rights, and ecology; however, one main similarity with the previous camps at a first glance is the aim to deepen the knowledge in Georgian history. Apart from the shift in aims, the camps project keeps a low profile in terms of reaching out for every youngster: it is not as massive anymore and every summer hosts only one pupil from every school in Georgia. Interestingly enough, these drastic modifications in the camps were introduced right after the government changed. Therefore, the experiences that were gathered between 2005 -2012, in many respects, are unique and their activation in the memory depends on participants’ reflections on them. Currently, when the youth wing of the ex-ruling party is not as strong, we cannot assess the success of the government’s allegedly insidious attempts to consolidate party power and extend party membership through the Patriotic Summer Camps project.

¹³³ Jon E. Fox, “Consuming the Nation: Holidays, Sports, and the Production of Collective Belonging

¹³⁴ Ibid. p.232

Conclusions

This thesis explored the government-sponsored project of The Patriotic Camps in the light the national attachment formation process. A massive project that quickly gained its popularity among the youth can be situated as arguably one of the hugely ideologized projects of the Saakashvili's government. The synthesis of the top-down and bottom-up analyses of the project suggested that the mainstream and largely propagated concept of patriotism was a tool for strengthening the national pride on the one hand, and political loyalty, on the other hand.

Top-Down analysis of the government documents and video speeches of the President at the camp sites demonstrated a discrepancy between the articulated aims and the activities of the camps. The analysis of the video speeches illustrated the government's discourse and self-legitimation political rhetoric in front of specific target audience. However, the discourse analytical approach to the documents suggested the lack of propagated messages. These suggestions were further strengthened by the bottom-up analysis, treating the everyday experiences and actual banal "living of ideology" as a part of discursive construction of the nation. I conducted narrative inquiries with the participants and trainers of the camps, expecting to sketch out two different levels of individual agencies in the camps: trainers to be more "trained" from "above" and the participants as rather coincidental reproducers of the ideology. However, the narratives demonstrated a divergence between the nationalist rhetoric and perceptions. Whatever was being offered as a patriotic exercise, turned out to be consumed very differently. Some consumed it for other than nationalist purposes, while others seemed to explicitly reject the nationalist/militaristic implications.

The thesis suggests that patriotism was merely a widely used category of political practice. 'Talking the nation' is mainly applied in the top-down political rhetoric, whereas 'choosing the

nation' is completely absent, and 'performing the nation' is happening at the camp sites for a short period of time. Thus, following the respective literature on the matter and methodological frames, the research led to another main finding of the thesis, that the main mediator between the state and participants was the camp itself and heterotopic experience that it created, rather than the trained leaders.

Another mediating agent was the media that was mentioned in the documents as a main actor and was actively covering the propagating rhetoric and reached out a larger and more diverse audience, thus served other targets of the government's rhetoric, and, intentionally or unintentionally, strengthened its national image not necessarily for young people. Although assessing the actual influence would be highly desirable, it was beyond the limits of this particular research. Therefore, this fact left the first, investigatory question of the thesis about the government's implicit aims partly unanswered. However, the document analysis also suggested the flexibility of the project's aims according to the government's current priorities. This finding further strengthened the argument about the discrepancy between the official aims and actual implications.

Another angle in which the thesis could be extended further is the relation or comparison between The Patriotic and the Soviet Pioneer Camps. Despite the attempts to eliminate the soviet legacy through reshaping the collective consciousness, it still remains an important aspect to research in terms of structural similarities between the Georgian Patriotic Camps and Soviet Pioneer camps. Therefore, the question remains where these camps are merely a part of the symbolic transformation.

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Appendix 1

Data Body 1

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