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**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**  
**SUMMARY**

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**Keywords:** interethnic relations, generation change, holistic view, historical-comparative analysis of marriage practices, ethnic spatial structure, neighbour relations, political and economic power distribution of ethnicities, ecclesiastical background, school experiences, WWII experiences, community events, migration, demographic features.

## SUMMARY

The dissertation entitled *Patterns of Cohabitation in an Ethnically Mixed Transylvanian Village* consists of 193 pages of body text, 14 pages of bibliography and 374 pages of appendices. It proposes a holistic research of interethnic relations, through a complex description and interpretation of the cohabitation of Romanians, Hungarians and Roma in the village of Cojocna (Kolozs). The prominent topics discussed in the paper were: the historical context, a historical-comparative approach to marriage practices, the ethnic structure of the space, childhood experiences, the role of the church, community events, war experiences, school experiences, ethno-demographic processes, and the effects of generation change on cohabitation practices. A series of shorter analyses have tackled the political role of ethnicities, and their share in economic activity and entrepreneurship.

The settlement is situated on the eastern borders of Erdőalja region, with a population of 2353 recorded at the 2011 census. As to the estimated ethnic distribution of the population, the absolute majority is the Roma population with 1200 individuals (51%), followed by Hungarians with 662 individuals (28%), Romanians with 462 individuals (20%) and an insignificant number of Gábors with 29 individuals (1%). The majority of the Hungarian population belongs to one of the “historical confessions”: Roman Catholic, Reformed or Unitarian. Most members of the (originally Hungarian but today bilingual) Adventist congregation are also Hungarians. The schism of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic church has also left its marks in the Romanian community, and the most recent Pentecostal church also has some Romanian members. Statistically speaking, the Roma population belongs to the two oldest Christian confessions of the region, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, but most members of the Pentecostal congregation, and the most active ones too, are also the Roma.

The dissertation claims that the existing cohabitation and attitude patterns are historically deeply embedded. The socio-economic system, the hierarchical order of the ethnic groups, the influence of political systems that favour one group and hinder another are stubbornly perpetuated and shape the identity as well as the culture of the groups. The fields

of greatest importance in the historical survey included minority policies, ethno-demographic processes, and the roles of educational institutions and churches. Local data were always interpreted within the context of macro-events. The time frame goes back to the last century of feudalism, but mostly covers the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, and includes data referring to all three ethnic groups.

The introductory part, comprising the theoretical foundations of the research, also includes a chapter on the field work. In the period of 2011–2016, I spent a total time of 32 months living in Kolozs/Cojocna, conducting participant observation, but because of my unsystematic periodical stays in the city required by the doctoral programme I could not be permanently present. The Romanian quotations of the respondents were published in all cases in my translation.

The church registers of the different historical churches offered a rich database for the dissertation. Based on the available records, the research encompasses a period of 150 years, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The Roman Catholic register comprises 144 years, the register of the Reformed Church 109 years, the Unitarian 111 years, the Orthodox only 24 years, and the Greek Catholic 48 years. For this reason the comparative analysis of marriage practices of the Romanian population was limited to shorter periods of time. I analysed the proportion of endo- or exogamous marriages by confession, ethnicity and place of origin in different periods of time. This chapter also looks into the existence of a stronger relationship with a certain ethnographic region through local exogamy.

The more than 2300 inhabitants of the settlement were represented on two ethnic maps, in order to pinpoint the changes in the ethnic structure of the space. The basis for the maps was the reconstruction of indirect verbal communication. The maps also indicate 78 field names, 10 forest names and 8 vineyard names in Hungarian and Romanian, as well as the ethnicity of the majority of the owners of these places. This chapter also deals with the popular etymologies of geographical names.

The chapter dealing with the largest and most complex database contains the methodological analysis of interviews and field notes. In the semi-structured interviews I have asked questions about the essential scenes of cohabitation, and based on the stories told, I have offered a methodical analysis of how people relate to each other. The analysis and interpretation of the texts employ the approach of the *grounded theory* method. The recorded discussions and notes examined all three ethnic groups, with a distribution over three generations (the internet generation was presented based only on Hungarian recordings). The analysis used Karl Mannheim's concept of *natural worldview* (*természetes világnép*) as an

operative term. The data processed was for the most part qualitative, and for the lesser part quantitative. The qualitative material consists of 44 hours and 51 minutes of semi-structured interviews with 43 individuals from Cojocna/Kolozs, selected data from a thematic field journal of 224 pages, and 7 hours 35 minutes of other interviews. The quantitative data is based on interviews with people from Kolozs/Cojocna who attended primary school between 1981 and 2000, chosen on the basis of school catalogues from the period. From these data, I studied the migration indicators of young adults aged 25 to 45. The ethnic and confessional census data and the data on birth rates between 2001 and 2015 from the doctor's office are my personal collection.

The last part of the dissertation deals in a short overview with the political and economic spheres of power distribution. The chapter contains data about the local political leadership of the 26 years after the 1989 regime change in an ethnic division, completed with the pertaining field notes. I compare agricultural statistics data from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the present. The 2011 data is also relevant for the analysis of the ethnic division of estate structures, and the ownership of agricultural machinery and livestock. The ethnic specificities can be well documented even today.

## Conclusions

- 1) The historical survey proved how differently the individual ethnic groups used historical possibilities. The social emancipation of the Romanians has ended successfully, while the Roma could not overcome their disadvantages either on an economic, or on a modernisation level. The earlier social status of the ethnic groups is perpetuated in the strongly hierarchical attitude of the local population.
- 2) Despite the national awakening and gradual social empowerment of the Romanians after the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the economic, symbolic or political capital of the Hungarians has remained decisive over time. All three ethnic groups have preserved their cultural independence over the centuries, assimilation has posed no threat to any of the three. (For the Roma, even in the lack of institutional support, the number of those who have lost their language is insignificant).
- 3) The geographical, religious, educational and political separation of the ethnic communities defines their ways of cohabitation even today. In the case of the Romanian and Hungarian population it means a *volunteer separation*. The Romanians have constructed their own system of institutions, and the Hungarians, losing their nation-constitutive status, have preserved and rebuilt it. In the case of the Roma,

despite their recognition as a nationality after the 1989 regime change, and their ethno-political mobilisation, it is too early to speak about institutions.

- 4) After the 1989 political turn, Hungarians have gradually gained ground in the political leadership (deputy mayor, town council members). Apart from the period 2000–2004, the local Roma population was represented by one or two elected politicians, they never had a deputy mayor's office. The local Roma population cannot turn its demographic proportion of 51% into a political capital, due to reasons including their underdeveloped political culture, their multiple identity, the lack of an intellectual and economic elite, political corruptibility, and low schooling.
- 5) The feasts of the communities, similarly to earlier generations, still happen today *within the ethnic group*. The ceremonies, now organized top-down, have changed over time in that the religious and political break lines further strengthen the ethnic divisions, and in certain cases even (seemingly) overwrite them. The ethnic break lines are not always so sharp, and must also be understood as something natural, including the relatives of multi-ethnic families, close friends of different ethnicities, or the members of political or religious protocol. The multicultural days in 2015 were not continued as a tradition, and just as the common celebration has no tradition on a local level, the ethnic diversity also remained on the level of media communication.
- 6) The segregation of the Roma is primarily *not a volunteer separation*. Their different demographic indicators in pre-school and school education and the fact that Romanian parents take their children out of such classes result in ethnically homogeneous Roma classes. Their presence at the community events of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church is insignificant, the Orthodox Church has been planning to build a separate church for them. The only Roma majority confession (considering the active members) is the Pentecostal congregation, but its members have not considered forming an autonomous congregation. The institutional framework for the Roma's ethno-political independence has been created, but it has no efficient results as yet, they cannot mobilise their human resources.
- 7) The analysis of marriage practices has revealed the differences in the socialisation of the individual according to their confession, and the sharp ethnic break lines within the religions. For Hungarians, their belonging to the Reformed or the Roman Catholic Church often resulted also in a *separate community network*. In some cases, the Roman Catholic Hungarian preferred to marry a Greek Catholic Romanian rather than a Reformed Hungarian. From the point of view of ethnic endogamy, the marriage of

Greek Catholic Romanian and Roman Catholic Hungarian inhabitants proves to be aleatory. The most closed communities are the Roman Catholic Roma population and the Reformed Hungarian population, with indicators of 70%, and 79%, respectively. The value of local endogamy is generally regarded as high, the highest with the Roman Catholic Roma population, with a proportion of 90%. Confessional preferences have only been given up by the Unitarian and Roman Catholic Hungarian population, with the proportion of exogamy of 75% and 93%, respectively. The *cultural interactions* were fundamentally defined by factors such as the religious geography of the region, the ethnic divisions or homogeneity of the individual religious groups, and the language (Romanian or Hungarian) of the dogmatically close religions.

- 8) The Adventist congregation of Kolozs/Cojocna had no missionary activity towards the Romanians. There was not a single converted Romanian member during the over-one-hundred-years history of the congregation in the village, the Romanian members joined the congregation via multi-ethnic marriages. The policy of the Adventist Church places confessional identity over ethnic one, therefore the congregation has become ethnically/linguistically mixed by now, and ensures a dual, *Romanian-Hungarian socialisation environment* for its members. The other confession with ethnic heterogeneity is the Pentecostal Church. According to my assessment, the congregation consists of 85–90% Roma members, but it radically differs from the Adventist group from a socialisation point of view. For the Adventists, both languages and cultures have an official status, while for the Pentecostal Church the Roma majority community is embedded into a *Romanian institutional system*. My field experiences enforce Johannes Ries's claim that in case of the *multi-ethnicity* of the Pentecostal Church of Kolozs/Cojocna, one can hardly speak about intercultural practices (see Ries 2007: 139–152).
- 9) Kolozs/Cojocna is still a settlement with a *segregated ethnic spatial structure*, although in the past few decades the homogeneous ethnic blocs have started to dissolve. The central, valley-based part of the village is inhabited mostly by Hungarians, the peripheral areas named *Hegy megett* and *Selymék* are inhabited by Romanians, and the three hilltops, the *Zsellér*, *Szentódal* and *Kiátó-hegy* almost entirely by the Roma. The most important finding based on the comparison of the church records and the ethnic map is that the geographical division must not be *overemphasized*. The registers of the 1870s reveal that Gypsies were also living



scattered in the valley at that time, mostly blacksmiths, Reformed or Roman Catholic. According to historical evidence, the presence of Gipsy blacksmiths in the village community of the age was not considered inconvenient, as they served the needs of the neighbourhood village community, suggesting a complementary economic cooperation. (Nagy 1998: 322.)

- 10) As regards the landowners, the nationality borders continue the east–west division also outside the village boundary. East from the settlement the majority of the lands are Hungarian-owned, while to the west the majority are Romanian-owned. The ethnic spatial structure of the village, just like the place names, easily bring on attitudes and etymologies based on similar logic. The Hungarians of Kolozs/Cojocna tend to see the fact that they inhabit the valley and the Romanians live on the surrounding hills as a proof of the earlier presence of Hungarian settlers, while the Romanians consider the same disposition as a proof of their ancestors' being pushed to the peripheries by the Hungarians. The field names also create a strong division between the villagers. The Hungarians condescendingly claim that the Romanian field names *were all borrowed from Hungarian*, while the Romanians all cling to the continuity theory and claim that *the ancient field names were all "magyarised"*.
- 11) In most cases (especially for the younger generations) the ethnicity is not a decisive factor in the contact between individuals of Hungarian or Romanian ethnicity. These contacts are mostly connected to meeting everyday needs, daily routine, or interdependence, and take place with a certain distance maintained, but in the name of common sense. Apart from most of their extended and much needed *superficial relations* (neighbours, economic cooperation, public display of mutual respect, or certain forms of fictive kinship like godparents or milk-kinship, etc.), people engaged in *deep and trusted relationships* (although fewer, like family relations, common feasts or commemorations, close friendships, etc.) most often share the same ethnicity.
- 12) The distancing and approaching gestures of Hungarian inhabitants towards Romanians have been preserved from generation to generation in a balanced proportion. In the case of the old generation (born in the 1920s and 1930s) it must be emphasised that almost two thirds of the distancing gestures are related to the structurally defined situations caused primarily by the ethnic opposition during the wars. The approaching gestures at this generation were connected to a very high number of positive experiences. The need of the old-generation Hungarians for such a high number of positive everyday experiences with Romanians is partly due to the fact that this

generation had still socialised in a *traditional peasant culture*, and could keep their own, organically developed institutions. The far-reaching (non-ethnic) network of the local villagers could also work well.

- 13) The distancing and approaching gestures of Romanians towards Hungarians in case of the old generation are also balanced (showing a similar structure to the Hungarians), but in case of the next generation both the distancing and the approaching gestures show a significant decrease. The metacommunication shows an *unsaid sense of injustice* for the Romanians of both generations, which proves helpless in front of the gradually extending minority rights and the reorganisation of power relations; one can also mention the *problem of the indigenous population*.
- 14) The approaching gestures of Romanians towards the Roma population refer almost exclusively to their musical skills, or that they easily start singing whenever they work. The low number of distancing gestures can be explained by their rare contacts. At the middle-aged generation of Romanians (born in the 1940s and 1950s) the approaching gestures to the Roma – just like in the Hungarian population – are almost completely absent. The distance can be explained by the Roma's higher demographic indicators, the gradual loss of their musical services, their becoming unemployed after the regime change, the increasing number of thefts in the 1990s, so primarily structural factors.
- 15) The ability to disregard the grievances of war of the older generation of the Roma was present just like in the case of Romanians and Hungarians. At the middle-aged generation the gestures of approach to the Hungarian population are very formal, and the negative attitudes rarely imply a value judgment, and tend to come from their own exclusion. An important example of the difference in values is when the utilitarianism of a Reformed Hungarian man appeared as a despised value opposed to their own (Roma) culture.
- 16) The emotionally founded distance from the Roma, based on cultural and value differences, is the most decisive for the internet generation as well. The pragmatic statements meant to reject the Roma are a generational constant: untrustworthiness, stealing, extreme distance kept because of these, and a low work moral. The young Hungarians of the internet generation (born in the 1980s and 1990s) are less likely to formulate value judgments about Romanians, they are just distant. Approaching gestures towards the Roma population appear almost exclusively at the old generation.

However, such gestures of all generations of Hungarians towards the Romanian population have been preserved over generations, although with decreasing intensity.

- 17) If we consider the Hungarians' relations to the Romanians in a historical perspective, we can say that there is a permanent, latently present *natural potential for a socially structured conflict*, which sometimes activates, although as an exceptional, rather than regular situation. War stories become more and more fragmented with each generation, the occasions of storytelling also become rarer in time, and the representatives of the internet generation can only recall simple fragmentary details. The war's role in shaping cohabitation is no longer significant for the middle-aged generation, in their case the decisive factor is the *adaptation to the economic and social environment*.
- 18) The concept of *local trans-ethnic ethos*<sup>1</sup> can be used to describe the cohabitation of Romanian and Hungarian ethnic communities of Kolozs/Cojocna, but has no explanatory power for the relations of the Hungarians and the Roma. In the case of these two latter groups, there is no *local trans-ethnic ethos*, there is no identical fate or local life situation, rather only the common interests of daily life (because of neighbour relations or some degree of economic cooperation). In case of Hungarian and Roma relations even the extended but basic *superficial relations* tend to stay within the ethnic boundaries, just like the *trusted and deep relationships*.
- 19) The differences in cohabitation can be explained by a completely different distribution of cultural or value-based pragmatic rejection. This type of rejection towards Romanians only appeared at the old generation, but only to an insignificant degree, but towards the Roma it is quite thoroughly present with all generations. The particularities of cohabitation between Romanians and Hungarians make a co-working relationship, the other's recommendation as workforce, or friendships easily manageable, but in a Roma-Hungarian relation these hardly exist.
- 20) One root of the problems of Hungarian-Roma relations is that the striving for equality manifested in political decisions and/or their positive discrimination (such as social policies or Roma inclusion programmes) are utterly lacking from the value system of the villagers. This performance-oriented *objective and value-neutral approach* (aiming at the minimisation of conflict and making the society more functional) is often at

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of the concept is as follows: "[...] the contact in cohabitation is structured not by the differentiating aspects of ethnicity, but much rather the values created by a common fate, an identical local life situation, and the common interests of daily life." (Biczó 2013: 81–82.)

odds with the *subjective, value-based* moral system of the local groups. According to this system, the Roma gain undeserved advantages, as it is simply one's existence or citizen rights that make them be entitled for the same rights and advantages, disregarding the cultural qualities of the individual groups.

- 21) The most important functions of *neighbour relations*, such as lending household objects, basic food supplies, or small amounts of money, exchanging variable degrees of physical work and products, offering food and drinks, having short and usually (but not always) superficial conversations, exist within all three ethnic groups and seven religious confessions. There is a kind of primary moral responsibility among the people of Kolozs/Cojocna to help out neighbours, which is in fact not influenced by ethnic diversity. My experience during field work and the interviews revealed exceptional cases of deep and honest Hungarian-Roma neighbour relations, but this is not a prevailing form of cooperation. Their profound or superficial relationships tend to vary according to their social status; the Roma community, because of their predominantly low financial status and their culture fundamentally different from that of the other two ethnicities, only has weak relations with the Hungarian and Romanian community.
- 22) Compared to the data from 1895, larger estates have almost completely disappeared by now; the middle layer of the peasantry has seemingly strengthened, but the proportion of cultivated land is lower. The *farmland of the middle peasantry* owned by Hungarians and Romanians is fairly *equally* divided according to the ethnic proportions. The economic power of the Hungarians is somewhat greater: they own estates larger than the upper category of the middle peasantry, and also possess 2/3 of the tractors. Due to the restitution process started in 1991, the *earlier dominance of the Hungarian landowners* becomes visible, there are no Romanian owners of farmlands larger than 100 acres, only the descendent of the former aristocratic landlord of the region has this amount of land. No member of the *traditionally not farming Roma population* has an estate larger than 10 acres.
- 23) Compared to the 1895 data, the number of livestock keepers has dropped to a tenth, and their proportion within the population from 28.5% to 4.37%. Buffalo breeding, which used to be significant in the region, has practically disappeared since then; it used to have an ethnic character as well: buffalos were mostly kept by Hungarians, Romanians bred oxen instead. Goat keeping is insignificant in Kolozs/Cojocna, therefore its ethnic interpretation is uncertain. Romanian owners however keep eight

times as many goats as Hungarians. In *sheep breeding the Romanians are clearly dominant*. Romanian livestock owners typically own several tens of animals, or even more than one hundred (5030), but the Hungarians' share is also significant (1611). *Hungarians are dominant in cattle and pig keeping*. The number of cattle bred by Hungarian farmers (506) is 5.27% higher than the number of cattle owned by Romanians (96). In case of pigs, the proportion is 1.81% (241 and 131 animals, respectively). *The livestock keeping of the Roma is statistically barely detectable*, but they keep more pigs than officially recorded.

- 24) The most significant difference in ethnic cooperation can be seen between *local Romanian entrepreneurs* and *non-local Romanian entrepreneurs*. The local Romanian entrepreneurs typically serve the people living in their neighbourhood, where Hungarian villagers or tourists rarely go. Non-local Romanian entrepreneurs opened their shops in the proximity of public institutions and the salt lake resort which attracts many tourists, all of which are located in the Hungarian-inhabited valley area. The employment of bilingual Hungarians who speak both languages is supposedly also an economic interest for the shop owners. However, for local Hungarian entrepreneurs it is not a plus to employ Romanian natives. Local Hungarian and Romanian entrepreneurs strive to choose their employees from their own ethnicity. However, the ethnic borders can be easily crossed, which is primarily typical for the Hungarians. There is only one ethnic Gipsy person who opened a shop in Kolozs/Cojocna.