

ABSTRACT

Content

INTRODUCTION.....5

<u>Argument.....</u>	7
<u>Research hypotheses.....</u>	13
<u>Methodology.....</u>	15
<u>The structural course of the thesis.....</u>	20

1. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....26

<u>1.1. The conceptual framework.....</u>	26
<u>1.1.1. Ethnic collective identity.....</u>	40
<u>1.1.2. Ethnic minority.....</u>	49
<u>1.1.3. The construction of the identity discourse.....</u>	57
<u>1.2. Methodology.....</u>	62
<u>1.2.1. The political discourse analysis.....</u>	66
<u>1.2.2. Interview.....</u>	69
<u>1.2.3. Participatory observation.....</u>	71
<u>1.2.4. Visual methodology.....</u>	73
<u>1.2.5. Archive documents.....</u>	75

2. SLOVAKS FROM TRANSYLVANIA BEFORE 1989. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL-IDENTITY EVOLUTION....78

<u>2.1. Slovak nationalism.....</u>	90
<u>2.2. The Slovaks in Transylvania during the Habsburg Empire and during the Austro-Hungarian period.....</u>	97
<u>2.2.1. Slovaks in the area of Arad.....</u>	99
<u>2.2.2. Slovaks in the area of Bihor-Sălaj.....</u>	103
<u>2.3. Slovaks in Transylvania after 1918.....</u>	106
<u>2.4. Slovaks in Transylvania after World War II.....</u>	113
<u>2.5. Conclusions.....</u>	121

3. THE IDENTITY OF THE SLOVAK MINORITY IN ROMANIA AFTER 1989: DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE. 129

<u>3.1. Romanian-(Czech)Slovak bilateral relations.....</u>	131
<u>3.2. Representation of ethnic minorities after 1989.....</u>	141
<u>3.3. Identity at the level of practice.....</u>	143
<u>3.3.1. The actions of the Romanian state.....</u>	143
<u>3.3.2. The actions of the Romanian state.....</u>	152
<u>3.3.3. Actions of the organization representing the Slovak minority in Romania.....</u>	155
<u>3.4. The identity at the level of discourse.....</u>	162
<u>3.4.1. The Analysis of the political discourse of the Slovak (and Czech) deputies in the Romanian Parliament.....</u>	163
<u>3.4.2. Speech analysis of Slovak (and Czech) deputies in the television media.....</u>	170
<u>3.4.3. Speech analysis of Slovak (and Czech) deputies in the written press.....</u>	176
<u>3.5. Conclusions.....</u>	180

4. IDENTITY REFERENCES OF SLOVAKIANS IN ROMANIA: PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS.....184

<u>4.1. Identity landmarks.....</u>	186
<u>4.1.1. The founding myth.....</u>	187
<u>4.1.2. The native language.....</u>	194
<u>4.1.3. Religion.....</u>	207
<u>4.2. Multiple / parallel collective identities.....</u>	215
<u>4.2.1. Relationship with the country of origin.....</u>	221
<u>4.2.2. The perception of others about Slovaks in Romania.....</u>	226
<u>4.3. Conclusions.....</u>	232

CONCLUSIONS.....236

<u>The contribution of the written paper.....</u>	238
<u>The structure of the paper.....</u>	240
<u>General conclusions.....</u>	251

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....258

<u>Books and collective volumes.....</u>	258
<u>Studies and articles.....</u>	275
<u>Magazines and newspapers.....</u>	281
<u>Official documents and statistics.....</u>	281
<u>Speeches in the plenary of the Romanian Parliament.....</u>	282
<u>Archives.....</u>	283
<u>Webography.....</u>	283
<u>Interviews.....</u>	284

ANNEXES.....285

List of Figures

<u>Figure 1 Number of Slovaks in Romania according to the 2011 census.....</u>	86
<u>Figure 2 Main directions of settlement of Slovaks in Romania.....</u>	102

List of Graphics

<u>Graphic 1 Evolution of the number of Slovaks in Bihor.....</u>	104
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List of Tables

<u>Table 1 The population of Romania in 2011.....</u>	87
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Summary

With the fall of communism, Central and Eastern Europe began a process of redefinition within the new political, economic, historical and cultural configurations. In the context of the decline of communist ideology, the influence of socialist ideas declined considerably, and class identity was no longer a viable alternative.

This ideological vacuum was quickly filled by nationalism.¹ The ex-communist countries have taken their "identity revenge", the return to the ethnic dimension involving, in some cases, the use of violence. The new political project, largely made by the elite of the old regime, turned them into promoters of the national cause. At the same time, the project offered the confused society a psychological solution, that the essential values, such as nationalism, did not alter their meaning. The new state authority also involved rebuilding a civil society that would promote a new social bond. This not only legitimized power, but also diverted attention from existing economic and political problems.

Thus, nationalism returned strongly to the political scene, playing a key role in the ideological discourses of the first years of the transition period in Central and Eastern Europe. The return to nationalism was also marked by the issue of national minorities which "regained great relevance (...), which not only affects European integration, but also revitalizes the debate on the nature and future of European nations."²

The concept of ethnic minority is closely linked to the notion of identity which is listed "fashionable" on the political and social scene, in the media and in schools. For example, between the 1960s and the 2000s, the number of records for the literature on identity increased by a factor of 49,5.³ In light of the natural influence of specialists, who label only certain types of identities, the first instinct when we hear the word identity will not be to think about age, gender or class, but rather ethnicity, race, religion.⁴

¹ Adrian Guelke, "The Multifaceted Nature of Ethno-Nationalism", in Adrian Guelke (ed.), *The Challenges of Ethno-Nationalism. Case Studies in Identity Politics*, Ed. Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2010, p. 2.

² Giuseppe Motta, *Less than Nations: Central-Eastern European Minorities after WWI*, volumul 2, Ed. Cambridge Scholars Publication, Cambridge, 2013, p. 229.

³ Vivian L. Vignoles, Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, "Introduction: Toward an Integrative View of Identity", in S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, V. L. Vignoles, (ed.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*, 2011, p. 2.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225212182_Introduction_Toward_an_Integrative_View_of_Identity
accesat la 06.09.2019

⁴Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ernest Gellner and the Multicultural Mess", in Sinisa Malesevic, Mark Haugaard (ed.) *Ernest Gellner and Contemporary Social Thought*, Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 174.

The term minority does not have a universally accepted definition, so we will operate with the definition accepted by most European Union member states, a definition formulated by Francesco Capotorti⁵ in his report to the United Nations in 1977. According to this professor of international law, the minority is "a group of persons, numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being citizens of the state - possess ethnic characteristics, religious or linguistic different from those of the rest of the population and which show, even if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, aimed at preserving the culture, traditions, religion or language."⁶

In the paper *Reconstrucția identitară a minorității slovace din Transilvania. O abordare constructivistă și discursivă* [Reconstruction of the identity of the Slovak minority in Transylvania. A constructivist and discursive approach] we focused our attention on the situation of the Slovak communities in Transylvania after 1989. Through the approach we set out, on one side, to contribute to the enrichment of information about Slovaks in Romania by bringing to light archival documents, on the other hand, to analyze a topic little debated in the literature: The identity-collective reconstruction among Slovaks in Romania after the fall of communism.

The delimitation of the research involves two coordinates - one has to do with the coordinate of time, on the other hand it is that of geographical space. The delimitation as time (post-December period) begins with the moments immediately following the events of December 1989 and ends at the conclusion of the parliamentary term 2012-2016. The geographical delimitation targets Romania, more precisely the western part of the country, especially Transylvania, Arad, Bihor and Sălaj counties. The considerations for choosing this space were numerical (most Slovaks in Romania live in these three counties), historical (the first settlers settled in these areas) and the importance (here were the first Slovak leaders who militated for the awareness of the collective ethnic identity, the first Slovak organizations / associations were established here).

According to the 2011 census, 13,654 Slovaks live in Romania, ie 0.067% of the total population, who, together with the Czechs, are represented in the Romanian Parliament by a deputy. In this paper we will refer mainly to the two great Slovak "families" in Romania:

⁵ Francesco Capotorti, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Special Rapporteur of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and protection of Minorities*, UN Doc., E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Rev.1 UN Sales No. E.78.XIV.1(1979).

⁶<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/internationallaw.aspx> accessed on 04.04.2021

Lutherans from the Arad area and Roman Catholic Slovaks from the Bihor-Sălaj area (which together form a single ethnographic area).⁷ Throughout the history of the Slovaks on the lands of today's Romania, the largest communities of Slovaks have been concentrated in these areas.

The first notes on the Slovaks in Transylvania were made by priests and teachers who worked in the Low Countries of the Habsburg Empire for XVIIIth and XIXth century⁸. Written in general in the form of press articles and with a political motivation, these works followed the movement of migrants and described their culture and customs.⁹ In the first period since the settlement of the Slovaks in Transylvania, the Evangelical community undertook a rich publishing activity.

With the establishment, in 1929, of the magazine *Slovenský týždenník*¹⁰ [The Slovak weekly] whose editor-in-chief was the evangelical priest Ján Kmeť, the local Slovaks published various articles about the life of the community they belonged to.¹¹ After a short break, in 1936 the publication was relaunched as *Naše snahy* [Our efforts]; even though it also had a break for a few years, it still publishes articles about community life for both Slovak and Romanian.¹²

Initially, the Roman Catholic priests who worked in these communities, wrote about the Slovaks in the Bihor-Sălaj area, mainly in Hungarian.¹³ Subsequently, teachers from Czechoslovakia sent on teaching missions wrote articles about the local community, articles published both in Romania and in Czechoslovakia.

⁷Claudia Cardoș,Radu Carp, Ștefan Herchi, Cristina Matiuță, *Perspectivale minorității slovace din România în contextul migrației și al provocărilor socio-demografice*, Ed. Eikon, București, 2020, p. 9.[Perspectives of the Slovak minority in Romania in the context of migration and socio-demographic challenges, Eikon Publishing House, Bucharest, 2020, p. 9.]

⁸For example: Matej Markovič (1707-1762), Samuel Tešedík (1742-1820), Jánoš Ágošton (1787-1863), Daniel Zajac (1804-1870), Ludovít Haan (1818-1891) și Michal Žilinský (1838-1925).

⁹Ján Botík, „Începuturile cercetărilor slovacilor din Câmpia Maghiară”, / "The beginnings of Slovak research in the Hungarian Plain",] in Jakab Albert Zsolt, Peti Lehet (ed.), *Minorități în zonele de contact interetnic. Cehii și slovacii în România și Ungaria*, [Minorities in interethnic contact areas. Czechs and Slovaks in Romania and Hungary]. Ed. Of the Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, pp. 34-36; It should be mentioned that the customs of the Slovak historians with Romanian training translate Alföld with the phrase Ținuturile de Jos, while the editors of this volume used the phrase Câmpia Maghiară, according to the Hungarian meaning.

¹⁰The aim of the magazine, set out in its first issue, was to educate Slovaks and increase their level of culture.

¹¹Ján Kukučka, “Slovenské kultúrne spolky a tlač v Nadlaku” [Slovak cultural associations and the Nădlac press], in *Variácie* 3, Ed. Kriterion, Bucharest 1981, p. 196.

¹²Ibidem, p. 179.

¹³For example, the Roman Catholic parish of Șinteu preserves a manuscript in Hungarian from the interwar period that presents aspects of the life of Slovak parishioners such as baptism, the feast of the sacrament of the anointing, the wedding, the funeral.

In Czechoslovakia, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a constant interest in the life of Slovaks abroad; the reference volume in specialized historiography is entitled *Slováci vo svete* [Slovaks in the world]¹⁴ and presents the life of the Slovaks to the Lower Lands of the Habsburg Empire from the first waves of colonization to the twentieth century. Among the most famous researchers, we mention Ján Sirácky¹⁵, Ján Botík,¹⁶ Jozef Štolc,¹⁷ Ján Gomboš,¹⁸ Ján Jančovič,¹⁹ Milan Krajčovič,²⁰ Miroslav Kmet²¹. Their main research directions were the description and analysis of migration stages, of the linguistic and cultural phenomena typical of Slovaks abroad, but also the interactions with other ethnic groups and their symbolic importance in the formation of group identity.²²

The fall of the communist regime in 1989 created new research opportunities, so in 1994 the "Ivan Krasko" Cultural and Scientific Society was established. It has a publishing house that has published books and magazines about Slovaks in Romania. Gradually, the Slovak minority also attracted the interest of researchers from Romanian universities and those within the Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues. The Slovak minority in Romania remained on the agenda of researchers in Slovakia even after 1989, had various studies analyzing aspects of Slovak life and history, with predominant themes related to folk traditions, folklore and linguistic peculiarities or comparative research on Slovaks. from Serbia, Hungary etc.

In conclusion, the study of the Slovak minority in Romania, either undertaken by researchers in Romania or abroad, followed an upward trajectory, providing a solid basis for future surveys.

¹⁴Ján Sirácky și col., *Slováci vo svete*, Ed. Matica slovenská, Martin, 1980,

¹⁵ Ján Sirácky, *Stahovanie Slovákov na Dolnú zem v 18. a 19. Storočí*, Ed. Slovenskej akademie vied, Bratislava, 1966.

¹⁶ Ján Botík, *Dolnozemskí Slováci. Tri storočia vystáhovaleckých osudov, spôsobu života a identity Slovákov v Madarsku, Rumunsku, Srbsku a Bulharsku*, Ed. Ivan Krasko, Nädľac, 2011.

¹⁷ Jozef Štolc, "Slovenské jazykové ostrovy na Dolnej zemi ako predmet jazykovedného výskumu", in *Slováci v zahraničí* 1, Ed. Matica slovenská, Martin, 1971.

¹⁸ Ján Gomboš, *Slováci v južnej časti Dolnej zeme: výber z prameňov: od konca 17. do konca 18 storočia*, Békešská Čaba, 2008.

¹⁹Ján Jančovič, *Z kolisky na Dolnu Zem*, Ed. Matica slovenská, Martin, 2004.

²⁰Milan Krajčovič, *Slovenská spoločnosť v Uhorsku. Slováci a Juhoslovania v národnoemancipačnom zápase v 30. až 70. rokoch 19. storočia*, Ed. Veda, Bratislava, 1986.

²¹Miroslav Kmet, *Historiografia dolnozemsých Slovákov v 19. Storočí*, Ed. Ivan Krasko, Nädľac, 2010.

²²Ján Botík, „Începuturile cercetărilor slovacilor din Câmpia Maghiară”[The beginnings of Slovak research in the Hungarian Plain], *op. cit.*, p. 36.

The contribution of the paper

This paper proposes to place the issue of national minorities in the perspective of discourse theory from the desire to obtain a more nuanced picture of the complexity of the subject under investigation. We chose to illustrate these aspects with the help of an empirical analysis on the Slovak community in Transylvania, which is only sporadically the subject of study of Romanian researchers.

This paper is part of the current of constructivism, the optics of discourse theory, language symbols and representation being little used in the analysis of the Slovak collective identity in Romania. Our approach, although multidisciplinary, can be framed in the political sciences, if we think especially about the part dedicated to the political character of the minority group and its relations with both the state of origin and the state of residence. From the perspective of identity analysis, the paper could be considered as belonging to the social sciences.

While most of the work so far falls, in particular, in the field of ethnography and cultural and linguistic studies, this paper can be placed in the field of political science due to the analysis of majority-minority power relations and the discourse of community leaders. Regarding the Slovak minority, these topics have been little studied in the Romanian academic space.

From a methodological point of view, the novelty of this paper is the use of discourse theory and analysis of archive video materials (inauguration of schools teaching in Slovak in Bihor and Sălaj in the interwar period) and in the media (Romanian television shows dedicated to minorities). The study interprets fragments of the past and present of the community through the speech of its members, whether we are talking about political leaders in the rostrum of Parliament, or we are talking about ordinary people in everyday life and holidays. In all these cases, we have constantly kept in mind that discourse cannot be neutral, but is influenced by personal character and common social representations (shared opinions) of the group, reason for which we tried to take into account details such as the occasion of the event, the participants and the social actions.²³

The Slovak minority in Transylvania has a number of particular characteristics. First of all, we cannot speak of a very well-cohesive minority from an internal point of view, with close ties between Slovaks from all regions of Romania, because there are differences of confessional,

²³Teun A. Van Dijk, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, The Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Ed. Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2001, pp. 354- 356

linguistic, as well as differences regarding the way of migration on today's Romanian territory, the region of origin in Slovakia, etc.

Secondly, this community has always had the status of a dominated community in Transylvania, unlike the Hungarians who were the dominant community until the end of the First World War or the Romanians who became the dominant community after the Union of 1918.

We also mention that we cannot classify the Slovaks from Romania in the category of emigrants in the traditional sense of the word, because in the period when the Slovak colonists came on the territory of present-day Romania, these areas were part of the Habsburg Empire, respectively Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Fourth, when the first Slovaks settled in Transylvania more than two centuries ago, Slovak nationalism was not yet formed. As early as the 10th century, the regions of present-day Slovakia were part of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Slovak nobility was Hungarianized, which made it difficult for the birth of Slovak nationalism and the formation of the Slovak collective consciousness.²⁴ At the time of the institutionalization of Slovak nationalism²⁵ in 1861 (*Matica slovenská*),²⁶ the Slovak communities in Transylvania lived away from these turmoil and efforts for about a century.

When the first Slovaks settled on the territory of today's Romania, in the first half of the 18th century, there were tensions between the evangelical and Catholic Slovaks and linguistic divisions.

Another particular feature of this community is the transition from a minority status without a state of origin (for more than two centuries) to that of an ethnic minority with a state of origin in the early 1990s. Slovakia is a young state of less than half a century old, which, after gaining independence, has intensified its ties with the communities of Slovaks abroad.

The analysis of the Slovak minority in Romania has been a constant of my academic concerns, since the period of undergraduate studies at the Faculty of European Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University, materialized through field collections since 2009 in the counties of Bihor, Sălaj, Satu-Mare and Arad.²⁷ The researches materialized in the form of scientific articles

²⁴ Jean Berenger, *Istoria Imperiului Habsburgilor*[History of the Habsburg Empire], trad. Nicolae Baltă, Ed. Teora, Bucharest, 2000, p. 323.

²⁵ Specialists believe that the last phase of Slovak nationalism is the stage of its institutionalization.

²⁶ Paul Pasteur, *Histoire de l'Autriche. De l'empire multinational a la nation autrichienne (XVIII-XIX siècles)*, Ed. Armand Colin, Paris, 2011, p. 58.

²⁷ Adriana Jozefina Furikova, „Portretul jendarului maghiar în timpul Dictatului de la Viena”[The portrait of the Hungarian gendarme during the Vienna Dictate], Radu Mârza, Marek Syrny (ed.), *Cele două arbitraje de la*

published in collective volumes, being published by the „Arhiva de Folclor a Academiei Române[Folklore Archive of the Romanian Academy]”²⁸ Institute, by the Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues and by the organization Matica slovenská²⁹ from Slovakia.

The motivation for choosing the case study is also based on personal considerations: belonging to this community - a fact that facilitated our implementation of participatory observation and interviews, knowledge of the Slovak language - which allowed us access to specialized literature in Slovakia.

Research hypotheses

No subject is radically new, so reading the literature was essential. In a first stage, studying the bibliography we aimed to synthesize the knowledge about our topic, to collect data and analyze them to develop the frame of the survey. Having prior knowledge and concrete experience with this minority ethnic group, the passion for the subject prompted us to a new research. We are aware that we cannot make the *tabula rasa*; the mixt of experiences, images, beliefs and aspirations, more or less obvious, forms the approach on this subject, reason for which we must be vigilant in formulating some objectives of analysis that do not aim to judge, but to explain and understand, to deconstruct social cleavages³⁰.

This paper aims to be innovative from the perspective of research hypotheses formulated based on the review of literature and field research. We formulated three research hypotheses from which derive several questions to which we tried to provide answers using a multidisciplinary methodology:

Viena[The two arbitrations in Vienna] (1938,1940). *Din perspectiva istoriografiilor română și slovacă*, [From the perspective of Romanian and Slovak historiographies,]Ed. Argonaut, Cluj Napoca, 2017.

²⁸Adriana Jozefina Fúriková, „Ajunul Crăciunului la slovacii din Bihor și Sălaj” [Christmas Eve to the Slovaks from Bihor and Sălaj] Ion Cuceu, Maria Cuceu (ed.), *Mentori și discipoli-85 de ani de la nașterea Profesorului Dumitru Pop*[Mentors and disciples - 85 years since the birth of Professor Dumitru Pop], Ed. MEGA, Cluj Napoca, 2012.

Adriana Jozefina Fúriková, „Credințe despre mana laptelui la slovacii din Bihor și Sălaj” în Alina Branda, Ion Cuceu, Cosmina Timoce-Mocanu (ed.),*Antropologie și studii culturale-Perspective actuale*, Ed. MEGA, Cluj Napoca, 2012.

²⁹Adriana Jozefina Fúriková,“Dynamika obyčaji odpustovej slávnosti u slovákov z rumunského Bihoru a Sălaju” [The dynamics of the custom of celebrating the patron saint of the church among the Slovaks from Bihor and Sălaj] in *Slováci v zahraničí 30* [Slovaks abroad], Ed. Matica Slovenská, Martin, 2013.

³⁰ Luc Van Campenhoutd, Raymond Quivy cu contribuția lui Jacques Marquet, *Manuel de recherche en sciences sociales*, Ed. Dunod, ediția a IV-a, Paris, 2011, p. 18.

- the Slovak minority has built a collective identity of „trouble-free”³¹ type, that is, it was set up as a cooperating group with the majority power and formulated its identity demands in consensus and harmony with the state of residence;

- the rebirth / relaunch of the specific demands of the minority group responds to the need for the political affirmation of a community leadership;

- due to historical and cultural fluctuations, Slovaks in Romania rather assume a regional identity related to Transylvania as a multiethnic space.

These hypotheses will try to answer questions such as: How is the collective ethnic identity constructed? What are the processes by which ethnic identity is created or destroyed, strengthened or weakened? To what extent is ethnic identity the result of internal processes and to what extent is ethnicity externally defined and motivated? What is the minority-state of residence, minority-state relationship of origin? Why is the ethnic community activated through discourse? How is strengthened the identity baggage of a minority; how does the peculiarity manage to become a component of the discourse with political roots? What role has the emerging political elite of the minority played in this process? How do political actors legitimize themselves based on the representation of an ethnic minority? What is the content of the reconstructed identity? What are the consequences of political change in the formation of collective identity? What kind of involvement and sense of belonging develops with the change of the political regime? What symbolic images will be the essence and product of the newly formed collective identity? What is the role of ethnic identity in the context of multiple identities? How much is the ethnic identity debated in the public and private sphere of the ethnic minority or of the state? In what ways does political action and institutions contribute to the processes of collective identification and differentiation? Is the collective identity of a minority a political project? Is collective identity a process or a source?

Methodology

The research hypotheses helped us to trace the methodology we will use. We started from the constructivist assumption that perceptions are crucial for the way groups define themselves and others, relate and respond to events and phenomena around them, contextualizing them and

³¹Piotr Sztompka, *From East Europeans to Europeans: shifting collective identities and symbolic boundaries in the New Europe*, *European Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 481–496 (2004),

giving them meaning.³² In carrying out this approach, we used a multidisciplinary methodology. We appealed especially to the theory of discourse, because the identity has a communicative dimension, the language being the main tool for its construction and reconstruction.³³

We studied the particularities of the speech of the sender (the political representative, the deputy in the Romanian Parliament) and of the receiver (the Slovak community in Romania). Regarding the broadcaster, we have compiled a discursive *corpus* consisting of the transcript of the speeches given in the Romanian Parliament during 1992-2016 and interviews from the written press published by the Slovak-Romanian bilingual magazine „Naše Snahy” [Our efforts] and TV (the show dedicated to the ethnic minorities from Transylvania- „Transilvania Policromă” from the TVR Cluj media grid. In this regard, we also used an adjacent tool: *a language processing software*, which helped us to transcribe the parliamentary speeches of the representatives of national minorities. Bogdan Cioc, software developer, made this material available to us, which he obtained using the natural language processing technique, he used textual queries on speeches extracted automatically from the Romanian parliament's website.

If regarding the sender we collected materials that already existed, without our intervention, in order to research the position of the receiver we used the interview, the questionnaire, the participatory observation - methodological tools that involved our direct intervention.

Given that most of the interviews were conducted in Slovak, we translated the relevant excerpts for this study into Romanian. The *insider* status has facilitated our fieldwork, although doing research at home is a challenging endeavor. I conducted interviews with Slovaks: political representatives, members of cultural, political organizations at local, regional, national and international level, teachers, pupils, students, employees, unemployed, retired, people with higher education.

We decided to conduct interviews with Romanians and Hungarians for several reasons. First, these are the reference communities most frequently mentioned by Slovaks in interviews. Secondly, both Hungarians and Romanians, in turn, held the role of the dominant community,

³² Laura Maria Herța, “Why Re-Imagining the Western Balkans is Important for the New European Union”, in Valentin Naumescu (ed.), *The New European Union and its Global Strategy: From Brexit to PESCO*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2020, p. 238.

³³ Jacek H. Kolodziej, “Democracy as Part of the Polish Collective Identity- the Socio-linguistic Perspective”, în Magdalena Gora, Zdzislaw Mach (ed.), *Collective Identity and Democracy. The Impact of EU Enlargement*, ARENA Report no.4/10, RECON Report nr. 12, Oslo, 2010, p. 310.

respectively the dominated. And from a numerical point of view, the largest cohabiting communities of Slovaks in Transylvania are Romanians and Hungarians.

The interviews were attended by 78 Slovaks, 20 Romanians, 20 Hungarians, and 20 Slovak citizens born in Slovakia of different ages, social status, living both in the rural and urban area, while trying to respect gender parity. For reasons related to the protection of personal data, we decided to give fictitious initials to the names of the interviewees, but to keep the age, sex and real address.

We also conducted interviews with Slovak citizens (20 people who either live in Slovakia or live in Belgium, mostly in urban areas, and had contact, at least by chance, intermittently with Slovaks in Romania) to see what their position is on the Slovaks in Romania and vice versa to see to what extent there is a symbolic connection of belonging to the great community of Slovaks. In order to obtain a complex analysis of the image that Slovak citizens have about Slovaks in Romania, we chose to work with Slovak citizens married to Slovaks in Romania (where we assumed an attitude, mainly positive and tolerant), but also with citizens Slovaks who have been both sporadically and constantly in contact with Slovaks in Romania, people who are not necessarily united by any sentimental relationship with Slovaks in Romania.

We also collected over 50 photographs (some taken by us, others provided by our subjects, including photographs from the early twentieth century), as a visual support of the information obtained and evidence to support or supplement the research data obtained.³⁴

We checked the information obtained during the interviews with the study of the archives and the press of the time. We undertook archival research in Slovakia (Bratislava and Martin) and in Romania (Bucharest, Oradea, Nădlac, Șinteu). We visited the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, the Slovak national archives in Martin, the archives of the Matica slovenská organization in Martin, the archives of the Democratic Union of Slovaks and Czechs in Romania, the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Slovakia, the archives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Office for Slovaks Abroad. This approach allowed us to obtain unique, first-hand information, documents that have not yet been presented by other researchers. We even obtained a video support filmed from the interwar period within the studied minority group.

³⁴ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies. An introduction to researching with visual materials*, (IVth edition), Ed. Sage Publications, California, 2016, p. 329.

The historical-diachronic method will be used, especially, in the second chapter in which we will reproduce the historical aspects of the settlement of the Slovaks on the territory of present-day Romania and the evolution of this community until the end of the twentieth century. The method will mark the temporal course of the stages of internal colonization within the Habsburg Empire. In the third chapter, the applicability of the method will be found in the drawing of historical coordinates regarding the bilateral relations Romania - (Czech) Slovakian.³⁵ and regarding the evolutions of identity policies in post-communist Romania. In the last chapter, the historical method is applied in the treatment of the main identity landmarks of the Slovaks in Romania.

The analytical method will be the main working tool in the last two chapters, which will help us later to issue the relevant conclusions for the studied topic. This method will also be present in the first chapter regarding the choice of the appropriate methodology for this scientific approach. In the second chapter we will analyze the way in which the Slovak nationalism influenced the ideas of the personalities who contributed in order to form an identity-collective consciousness of the Slovaks on the territory of today's Romania.

The comparative method will serve to extract the general and particular aspects both in the realization of the historical chronology, and in the study of the main identity landmarks. The method underlies the operations that generate the comparison of the discourse of leaders with that of community members. It shall apply in particular to Chapters III and IV.

The structure of the paper

In carrying out our approach, we structure the thesis in four chapters, as following: *The Conceptual and Methodological Framework, Slovaks in Transylvania before 1989. Historical and cultural-identity evolution, Identity of the Slovak minority in Romania after 1989: discourse and practice, Identity landmarks of Slovaks in Romania: perceptions and self-perceptions.*

The first chapter is entitled *The Conceptual and Methodological Framework*. The first part of the chapter aimed at reviewing the specialized bibliography and explaining the main concepts with which we operated. The second part is dedicated to the methodology we used: political

³⁵ We decided to use the (Czech) Slovakian because we refer to the period of the 20th and 21st centuries, a period in which Slovakia as an independent state has a short history, most of the 20th century being part of Czechoslovakia.

discourse analysis, interview, participatory observation, visual methodology (photography, video filming) and archive documents.

In conclusion, we can say that the chosen methodology, as a result of theoretical research, provided us with materials that allowed the articulation of the study. Discourse analysis was the main methodological tool, to which we added other research methods. From the application of a questionnaire, to the use of other forms of social survey such as observation, interviews or video filming, all helped us to give shape and consistency to the work. The exploration phase, which showed us where to find information, was followed by analysis, description of findings and comparison of the results obtained with the predicted hypothetical results.

We do not claim that this paper offers a unique or correct answer to the problem, nor do we aim to establish what is good and what is bad, but rather to analyze more plausible meanings and interpretations, even if they are competing and challenging. We admit the fact that we have a partial knowledge and understanding of the community because social life is, by its nature, fluid, diachronic and mobile, which motivated us even more to "arm" ourselves with various techniques to decode the collective identity of the studied group.

In the process of actually writing the paper, I had in mind the question to whom this paper is addressed in order to adopt the appropriate language. The different levels of public put us in front of the difficulty of choosing the style of writing and the way of constructing the subject. In this sense, we resorted to the theory *Grounded Theory* formulated by Anselm Strauss,³⁶ that allows the existence of several audiences, clearly separated categories of readers - the result of the development of the theory from the investigation of a concrete social fact. This is possible due to field research which involves adapting the researcher to field discoveries without the existence of a pre-planned and coded protocol.

The second chapter is entitled *The Slovaks in Transylvania before 1989. Historical and cultural-identity evolution*. We tried to place the information obtained in the analytical logic specific to the recomposition of identity discourse, questioning the limits of the community's margin of action and following the majority-minority power relations and the possibilities of negotiating minority status in exchange for cooperation and political support.

We can say that the Slovaks have always been in the position of dominance, pawn of power games and territorial distribution. Among the methods used by the rulers were

³⁶ Anselm Strauss, *La Trame de la négociation. Sociologie qualitative et interactionnisme*, Ed. L'Harmattan, Paris, 1992.

demographic (repopulation of territories left deserted after the Ottoman retreat), political (changing the status of Transylvania from the Autonomous Principality to the Grand Principality led directly by Vienna), confessional (discrimination of evangelicals by the Viennese Catholic Crown), economic (deforestation, transformation of peasants into landowners), cultural (discouraging the use of their mother tongue and the development of their own culture). With the establishment of dualism, the processes of forced Hungarianization intensified. After 1918, the policies of Hungarianization were replaced by those of Romanianization; if in the interwar period the issue of minorities was also encouraged by international organizations (League of Nations), after the Second World War, the nationalist communist regime used measures to limit the expression of ethnic particularities.

The royal power of the Habsburgs with divine legitimacy, because the emperor was understood to be God's representative on earth, was gradually replaced by the power of the nation. The fidelity to the ethnic community took the place of fidelity to the monarch as the awareness of collective existence increased through the reference elements: language, customs, religion, etc.

Facing the otherness with imperialist ambitions, the minorities manifested a confused identity behavior. Gradually, they became interested in ways of representation by mythologizing the past and emphasizing their specificity; they made speeches legitimizing the separation, motivated by the abuses of the dominant group.

Vox populi began to have a growing echo. If initially the fact that 10 main languages were spoken in the territory of the Habsburg Empire did not seem to be too important, after 1914 the dualist monarchy was in great danger.

As for the Slovaks in Romania today, they have been challenged; there has always been pressure to position them between the national identity of their places of origin and the area in which they emigrated. Until 1918 this dilemma did not exist, because the Slovaks did not emigrate to another country, but only moved from one region to another within the same multiethnic empire.

Slovaks have managed to build their ethnic identity and adapt their identity discourse to the dominant regime. Indeed, Slovak nationalism was synchronous with the time dominated by this current, but the preservation of the identity once formed was the result of a continuous collective effort, over a long period, which extends to the present day.

The third chapter entitled *Identity of the Slovak minority in Romania after 1989: discourse and practice* aimed at constant negotiation between the ethnic group and others, focusing on language, because it "is not just a mirror of social reality, but contributes to the social reality."³⁷

Discourse theory allowed us to explain the articulations and meaning of the Slovak collective identity after 1989 from the point of view of political leaders who do not outline an extremist and radical collective identity, even if their discourse is based on the construction of social antagonisms. They draw certain imaginary boundaries between minority and majority. Identity relates to the Other, to which some features of the group are structured in opposition. The collective identity discourse is generally exclusive, without involving negative stereotypes compared to the Other, but rather focuses on glorifying one's own qualities. There is a frequent appeal to historical heritage, which is claimed through collective memory.

The differentiation guides the way we relate to society and the way we conceive the sphere of politics. However, in the case of the Slovaks, the Other is not an opponent in political and social competition, reconciliation was done with the help of institutional mechanisms. Romania's legal provisions outlined the main lines of involvement of ethnic minorities in government (special seats in the Romanian Parliament), created institutions dedicated to minorities (Department of Interethnic Relations) and established how to access state funds on an ethnic basis.

In general, the speech of Slovak deputies promotes an integrative model, emphasizing tolerance and beneficial cohabitation between ethnic groups necessary to strengthen social cohesion. In this context, the concept of multiple identity is also developing, the local and regional identifications is being accepted and legitimized at national level.

They try to legitimize the socio-political organization that develops forms of socio-identity aggregation reached at the ethnic stage, the identity discourse being closely related to identity policies. The Slovak representatives in Parliament alternate persuasive, assertive and directive speeches. The generic form of speech begins with the personal pronoun me or us and is followed by a verb that expresses the promise, the demand, the desire to achieve common goals, that is great and, above all, beneficial to the community. They constantly refer to ancestors, ethnic roots and appreciation of the past and the efforts of their ancestors.

³⁷Petr Drulák, "Motion, Container and Equilibrium: Metaphors in the Discourse about European Integration", in *European Journal of International Relations*, 12, 2006, p. 501.

As with the other candidates for Parliament, the Slovak candidate is more present and active in the election year, when he reaches to the community as a discursive resource. The lexicon of emotion is encountered in the electoral discourse which sometimes includes elements of the commemorative discourse, the latter is not specific to Slovaks, but is often encountered in Eastern Europe, especially during the transition period.

The fourth chapter entitled *Identity landmarks of Slovaks in Romania: perceptions and self-perceptions* is the part of verifying the discursive hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter following the analysis of the discourse of community political leaders. We analyzed how the deputy's speech in the Romanian Parliament correlates with the way in which the members of the community perceive their collective identity.

This analysis showed us that there is a cultural specificity of the Slovaks in Romania that they themselves are aware of and assume, this specificity is still fluid and depends on certain contexts. As mentioned earlier, this study showed us various discursive identities that Slovaks assume.

In some cases, we have been able to deduce the idea of the failure of "final identification" which, according to Slavoj Žižek (who develops the ideas of Freud and Lacan), leads to a dramatization of the search for identity.³⁸ The search for a full identity fuels a repressed and transposed dissatisfaction in discourses in which those excluded from the group are not guilty of failing to achieve a perfect identity.

Mind maps do not overlap with state maps; Romanians point out that Slovakia is the country of origin of Slovaks, to which they belong at a symbolic level, while Slovaks in Slovakia consider that the country of origin of Slovaks born in Romania is Romania. Many times, they do not even address them with the name *Slovak in Romania*, but call them *Romanians*. Hence, the ambiguous position of the Slovaks in Romania, which creates internal tensions regarding the country of origin and, therefore, develops diffuse identities. In this case, mental maps about the own identity of Slovaks in Romania contain not only voluntary borders, but also forced by objective factors (such as geographical ones) and subjective factors, such as collective memory and interactions with Romanians and Slovaks in Slovakia.

Ethnic inhibition is replaced by a phenomenon of return to identity elements; the connection with the territories of origin is intensified, the connection to the Roman Catholic

³⁸ Slavoj Žižek, "Invisible Ideology: Political Violence Between Fiction and Fantasy" in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1996, vol. 1, nr. 1, pp. 15-32.

world, respectively the reformed one. The identity landmarks on which Slovaks in Romania are based (language, religion, traditions and customs) have been recognized and mentioned by the communities with which they interact. Among these, language is reported as the most important identity landmark, which is very natural, because any contact is primarily linguistic (by phone, on the Internet, letters, etc.). In addition, individuals construct reality through speech, writing, argumentation, negation, action,³⁹ all involving the language.

It is interesting that this landmark of differentiation has a double connotation built in opposition depending on the country: in Romania ethnicity will prevail (speaks Slovak, is Slovak, so it is different from us), in Slovakia prevails the identity which is associated with state borders (he speaks a Slovak different from ours, he is Romanian, so he is different from us). Power relations impose the vision of the majority on otherness. This only confirms that, as Tilly explained, citizenship implies a complex, interdependent link between State and citizens.⁴⁰ Involving mutual rights and obligations, the privileged relationship between Slovaks, as citizens of Romania, and the Romanian state, influences the relationship with the citizens of Slovakia, the latter not recognizing in any context belonging to the same country of origin.

Closely related to language, the educational system in the mother tongue is essential for maintaining and transmitting identity landmarks, whose role is to socialize students in the social order. Another strong social mechanism is the church, which targets not only young people, but the whole community, is religion being acquired as a language within the community.⁴¹ Over time, religion has left a strong mark on the Slovak community in Romania and continues to have an important influence today.

As a revenge for the constraints of communism that created a problematic social and cultural background, after 1989, the assertion of identity was adapted to a social context of accelerated dynamics. In general, in rural areas we are talking about homogeneous communities, while in urban areas we are dealing more with heterogeneous communities, where ethnically

³⁹ Jonathan Potter, "Discursive social psychology: from attitudes to evaluative practices", în *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1998, vol. 9, nr. 1, p. 235.

⁴⁰ Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, Identity and Social History", în *International review of social history*, 1995, vol. 40, pp. 1-17.

⁴¹Emile Durkheim *apud*. Martine Segalen, *Etnologie- concepte și arii culturale*[Ethnology - cultural concepts and areas] Ed. AMARCORD, Timișoara, 2002, p. 50.

mixed families are more common. Only in recent years, this type of marriage has become a habit, becoming a positive integrating factor of interethnic relations.

Beyond being a simple polarization of the others, the research demonstrated a regional tolerance that Slovaks show towards their cohabiting communities, with which they could identify in certain contexts under the umbrella of the Transylvanian appellation. This demonstrates the flexible and adaptable nature of identity to the social context. Like self-presentation, heterorepresentation (representation of the majority minority) is a discourse that is based on both identity and collective memory.

However, in the context of the interaction, the identity specificity is underlined by the inclusion-exclusion mechanism. Both at the level of public and personal political discourse, after the First World War, Slovaks understood by otherness, especially Romanians; before the Great Union of 1918, the Hungarians were the otherness of reference, it is always the dominant group. Therefore, the chapter ends with an exploration of the perceptions that Romanians and Hungarians have about Slovaks in Romania.

At the imaginary, discursive and practical level, Slovaks are portrayed rather positively, and this image persists to this day. At the discursive level, there are stereotypes accepted as such by society: Slovaks are characterized by attributes such as: diligence, malleability, group solidarity.

Finally, we would like to mention that we do not claim to have analyzed the multitude of possible identities, but the interviews conducted are sufficient to draw a general analysis scheme, which can be complemented by new details and particular cases. The existence of clear stereotypes, at first glance, is just the starting point of a careful inspection process that outlines a nuanced image with many facets. However, the purpose of this chapter was to bring to the fore the investigations that constitute the tangible, visible everyday reality. The chapter's conclusions remain open because, in the future, these empirical data need to be deepened and expanded by virtue of the fluid nature of collective identity.

In addition to the practical-applicative importance offered by the chapter *Identity landmarks of Slovaks in Romania: perceptions and self-perceptions*, the material can be used as a starting point for studies targeting the Slovak minority in other countries or other minorities in Romania in terms of reconstruction of post-communist collective identity. In order to comply

with space restrictions, we limited ourselves to investigating the main identity landmarks that can be developed and expanded later.

Conclusions

The main objective of the thesis to understand and analyze the process of construction and representation of the collective identity of Slovaks in Transylvania after the fall of communism was achieved. The empirical data gathered by applying a methodology based rather on qualitative methods were processed in the discourse theory grid which allows us to state that the research hypotheses have been confirmed. The purpose of Chapters II and III was to test the first hypothesis: the Slovak minority has built a collective identity of the „trouble-free” type.⁴² In the third chapter we focused on examining the second hypothesis: the rebirth / relaunch of the specific claims of the minority group responds to the need for the political assertion of a community leadership. The last chapter served us as the main support for the analysis of the third hypothesis: due to historical and cultural fluctuations, the Slovaks in Romania assume rather a regional identity related to Transylvania as a multiethnic space.

The empirical research has shown that Slovaks refer to the idea of cultural diversity in Transylvania and to an internal cultural diversity related to "Slovakness": we noticed differences between Slovaks in Bihor and those in Arad, but also differences between Slovaks in Romania and those in Slovakia. These differences find their reconciliation in the concept of Transylvanian identity, which go under the same identity umbrella the Roman Catholic Slovaks of Bihor and the evangelical Slovaks from Arad, offering an answer to the internal identity dilemmas.

Throughout its history in Transylvania, the collective identity of the Slovak minority as a cooperating group without a wide range of radical demands is influenced, first and foremost, by the role of the dominated community it has held since the early years of its establishment in this territory. From an ethnic point of view, the Slovaks in Transylvania have always been in the position of the dominated group. In terms of religion, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, only Lutheran Slovaks in the Arad area were a minority, while Catholics in the Bihor-Sălaj area were part of the majority, which changed after 1918, when both major families of Slovaks from

⁴²Piotr Sztompka, *From East Europeans to Europeans: shifting collective identities and symbolic boundaries in the New Europe*, *European Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 481–496 (2004),

Transylvania became a minority and from a confessional point of view in Romania, mostly Orthodox.

Possible identity threats have been resolved by compromises with the majority. The geographical space played an important role, the speech of the first leaders of the Slovak community in Transylvania involved a strategy of "rooting" in the new places of residence. Identity building appealed to stimuli in order to strengthen internal ties in newly founded communities; the church, the parish, the school, even the cemeteries, became significant dominant, being at the same time evidence of the continuity of the Slovaks in these lands.⁴³

Secondly, Slovakia was formed as an autonomous independent state only at the end of the twentieth century (with the exception of that short episode from 1939-1945), which made it difficult to create a very close link with the country of origin. That is why, in many situations, citizenship takes precedence over ethnicity in the collective imagination of Slovaks in Romania. And vice versa, because Slovaks from Transylvania who visit or settle in Slovakia are named by Slovak citizens, in most cases, *Romanian* or *Slovak from abroad*, a situation in which mental boundaries coincide with territorial ones.

The "trouble-free" identity status was also facilitated by the very good Romanian-Czech (Slovak) bilateral relations, because since the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Romanians and Slovaks have collaborated against the Hungarianization process to which both communities were subjected. After the First World War, they again formed a common front against Hungarian revisionism, continuing to collaborate on similar claims of the Hungarian minority in Romania and Slovakia until now.

After the fall of communism, the international context regarding ethnic minorities and Romania's desire to join the Euro-Atlantic structures created favorable conditions for ethnic minorities in Romania: political representation in Parliament, access to special funds on ethnic criteria, creation of state institutions dedicated to minorities and so on. Taking into account their numerical inferiority, the Slovaks framed their demands in the institutional-legislative framework developed by Romania in the transition to democracy, a process that also included taking measures for the integration of national minorities, such as public language and education policies.

⁴³ Ján Botík, *Lokálna komunita ako analytická kategória obrazu Slovákov na Dolnej zemi*, în *Identita, historia a kultúra. Dejiny Slovákov na Dolnej zemi*, zborník konferencie 11.-12. novembra 2010, ed. Anna Kováčová, Ed. Výskumný ústav Slovákov v Maďarsku, Budapešť, 2011, p. 45.

The analysis of the Slovak MP's political discourse in the public sphere, but also of the questionnaire and interviews conducted, showed us that Slovaks do not feel negatively discriminated on the basis of ethnicity, but rather positively which shows that the collective identity of the "trouble-free" type satisfies their group desires. This situation is of the win-win type, because it responds to the needs of the community, but also of Romania to outline a state profile that supports multiethnicity, to which the Slovaks make an important contribution.

The presence of Slovak deputies in the Parliament is not a specific feature of post-communist Romania, because the first Parliament of Greater Romania after the Union of 1918 had in its composition two Slovak deputies from Nădlac. In a distinct framework, starting with the first elections held in 1992, the Slovaks along with the Czechs have a representative in the Chamber of Deputies. The articulation of the discourse of these Slovak political leaders is based on identity landmarks, which emphasize the actions of the Romanian state in preserving and promoting the values of ethnic minorities. The main recipients of this discourse are community members, for whom involvement in activities to represent ethnic particularities is to ensure collective identity, the state being perceived as a partner capable and willing to provide the necessary legislative and institutional conditions. The discourse of Slovak political leaders has two main components: one formed around the requirements and the other focused on the thanks given to the state of residence - guarantor of the rights of ethnic minorities.

Thus, the rebirth / relaunch of the specific demands of the minority group also responds to the need for the political assertion of a community leadership, a fact impossible to conceive during the communist period. In the absence of the elements of a radical extremist language, their speech emphasizes the mutual advantages that the presence of ethnic minorities in the Romanian Parliament brings to both the minority and the Romanian state.

The situation between two worlds (Romania and Slovakia) without belonging entirely to either, leads to the emergence of identity dilemmas solved by the concept of Transylvanian. In this context, the "Other" not only has different ethnic, linguistic, denominational characteristics, but receives geographical specificities. In search of their own identity, Slovaks reinvent a "tradition" related to a regional reality - the uniqueness of the Transylvanian space that can feed the needs of an identity authenticity through a „cultural hybridization.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Homi K Bhabha, *Culture's in between*, în David Bennett (ed.) *Multicultural States. Rethinking difference and identity*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 30.

Interviews with Slovak citizens allow us to say that there are two general trends - on the one hand the Slovak community in Romania is appreciated for the effort to preserve its language, even in an archaic form, and traditions, cultural identity, on the other hand, the Slovak community in Romania is rather pejoratively defined, making contact with the Roma (gypsy) in Romania presented in negative terms. The trend towards positive opinion was observed more in Slovaks who visited Romania or who live outside the borders of Slovakia, and the least positive in Slovaks who live in Slovakia and had only sporadic contact with Slovaks.

In conclusion, our research allowed us to understand the springs through which the Discourse of collective (re)construction of Slovak's identity in Transylvania is structured, clarifying the ways in which the mixture of political commitment and representation of ethnic specificity intensified after the fall of communism. We could not analyze in detail the multitude of possible identities. However, the results obtained allowed us to trace the most predominant existing identities within the Slovak community in Transylvania, which can be completed in the future with new details and particular cases targeting Slovaks from other regions of Romania, who were not subjected to research in this work. Given the dynamic nature of the concept of collective identity, we admit that in the future the conclusions of the paper can be deepened and expanded, they remain open to new discoveries.

The research also opened a series of directions for future projects, especially regarding the welding of empirical concepts with the theoretical ones, which we failed to develop in this paper. We also want to expand the research on the Czech minority in Romania, which we did not analyze in this study. These possible research directions will be able to generate new elements regarding the understanding of the phenomenon of identity-collective reconstruction in ethnic minorities in Romania, or even in the wider ex-communist space, having the situation of Slovaks in Romania as an archetype of evolution.