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Abstract

The paper presents the results of a sociological study conducted in four communities situated in the central area of Moldova. Its main aim was to establish the ethnic identity of Catholic population in the villages of central area of Moldova and to discover the way in which these communities build their ethnic and cultural identity. It was a mixed, quantitative and qualitative study. From a qualitative perspective, we used individual and group comprehensive interview. In the quantitative research, we used the social distance scale, ethnic attributes inventory and social representations inventory of different forms of capital. The results are focused on ethnic aspects and local features of studied communities and the conclusions reveal the methods of ethnic self-defining for each community and their tendency to conserve local identity by refusing external influences that have an ideological stake.

Keywords: ethnic and cultural identity, local specificity, inter-ethnic relations, collective memory, community.

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Introduction

The relatively consistent scientific study on the Csango populations commenced in the 19th century, yet its results did not lead to a consensus; on the contrary, they created controversy. A great deal of attention is being paid to the issue of the Catholics from Moldova (the "Csangos") even nowadays, on a journalistic, political and even diplomatic level, which attests to the fact that the issue of their identity remains open. Consequently, many studies have been carried out on these populations, but from different perspectives (historic, linguistic, folkloric, etc.) which have led to the publication of remarkable works. The perspective which interests us, for the purposes of this thesis, is the sociological one. An analysis of the sociological state-of-the-art in the field reveals the limitation of the complexity of the issue at hand to quantitative aspects, to the detriment of qualitative ones. The studies published and the attempts of some researchers to develop explanatory models regarding the identity of the Csangos - from a sociological perspective - are often inconsistent, the results obtained are generalized, reasons for which this research topic has suffered from a methodological viewpoint. The main objective of our project is to establish the ethnical identity of the Catholic populations from the villages located in the central area of Moldova and the manner in which these communities build their ethnic and cultural identity.

The Ethnic Community

As we have shown in a previous paper (Fedor, 2014a), the definition of ethnic communities requires the identification of its key components and of its dominant characteristics. In the classical approach, the notion of "ethnic community" is closely connected to the concept of ethnos, often related to the concept of race (Lieberson, 1961), whereas ethnos is correlated with the notion of ethnic group, which is defined in terms of cultural differences (Van den Berghe, 1967), social borders (Barth, 1969) or subjective belief in a group's common descent (Weber, [1922] 1968). When referring to the origins of the term "ethnos", Bauman (2004) argues that it comes from the Greek "ethnos", and it is used to refer to gang, tribe, race, people. In the more recent immigrants' and colonists' history, the term "ethnic" comes under the "we" and "they" dichotomy (Stephan, 1985; Williams, 1977), where "we" is the majority seen as non-ethnic, and "they" includes immigrants or minorities (or ethnic individuals). The term "ethnic group" is defined in many ways. It is accounted for in terms of cultural traits or it is analyzed in terms specific to socio-psychology (Rosen, 1959). It is mainly viewed as a way to preserve a particular cultural inheritance, which provides a more intimate connection with broad impersonal societies (Bruhn, 2005).

Research on ethnicity also reflects the manner in which individuals and groups coming from different cultural backgrounds interact or not among them (Huijts, Kraaykamp, Scheepers, 2014) and the manner in which ethnic groups are integrated in society, in the form of spatial (Massey, 1985) or emotional (Ho,

Kissoon, 2012) assimilation. MacQueen, McLellan, Metzger et al. (2001) define ethnos or ethnic community by its social connections, by the sense of spatial location and by the sharing of common values among its members. When analyzing the manner in which ethnic communities influence the society they are part of, Korgen (2008) sees ethnic community as a collective player, one that has its own life. Therefore, ethnic community is capable of collective and concerted actions designed to attain specific goals and objectives. Referring to Anderson (1983), Meier (2011) believes that ethnicity is a big issue in political and public debate. For the most part of the discussion, this subject can be characterized by three main features that dominate the representation of ethnicity. First, ethnicity is considered a problematic issue that is testing societies. Second, ethnicity is used to create a seemingly homogeneous social group whose members are assumed to have similar attributes. Third, ethnicity is considered to cover other elements of social classification like class. Typically, ethnicity is seen as an element of the social groups which are part of the lower classes in the host country. In most cases, this relation is established without any reflection. The term ethnicity is used for a broad spectrum of groups in history. Ethnic community building is used to foster solidarity in macro-group structures, to legitimize social inequalities by descent, and to fulfill individuals' need for belonging. In the social sciences there is a growing consensus that ethnicity is socially constructed and historically contingent, but that many people perceive it as an important, unchangeable part of their identity (Bos, 2015). Ethnicity is a matter of subjective belief in common ancestry but individuals use different criteria for defining their ethnic identity to construct it situationally (Liebkind, Mahonen, Varjonen, Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2015). Ethnicity can be defined as that aspect of a person's self-conceptualization and his or her conceptualization by other individuals that results from identification with one or more broader groups, on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and belief in a common descent. This definition understands ethnicity as multidimensional, situational, and fluid and makes its link with material culture much more complex than traditionally perceived (Diaz-Andreu, 2015).

Referring to identity, Jimenez (2010) explains the development of affiliative: an individual identity rooted in knowledge, regular consumption and deployment of an ethnic culture that is unconnected to an individual's ethnic ancestry until that individual regards herself, and may be regarded by others, as an affiliate of a particular ethnic group. Identities can be based on our social group memberships. This requires investigation of how people self-define in social categorical terms, how these self-categorizations are produced and reproduced in everyday social practice, and how such social identifications are psychologically and behaviorally consequential (Hopkins, 2015). Ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self, as a member of an ethnic group. An ethnic identity changes over time developmentally and in response to the context (Phinney, 2001). For some, identity is rooted in ancient ancestries and cannot change and thus an immigrant and her or his descendents can never be fully a part of the nation in which they reside. For others, identity is flexible and people can simultaneously celebrate their ethnicity and ascribe to new national and cultural circumstances. Heritage sites often become locations where national identities are reimagined and reforged, commonly to the exclusion

of those who interpret the history presented at these sites differently or feel their identities are marginalized by the representations displayed (Bohland & Hague, 2009).

As we have shown in another previous paper (Fedor, 2014b) we circumscribe otherness as referring to the characteristics attributed to a social character, an individual or a group, which enables us, focus on studying both the attribution process and its result, taking into consideration the contexts of use, the actors and the types of their interaction. Tajfel (1981) ascertains that the mere fact of categorizing objects into distinct groups modifies the way in which they are perceived. Discovering otherness may be done by comparison with our own culture, with the set of values and norms considered by us as being normal, set that often serves as unconscious reference framework in order to manage the daily activities. In the theory proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1999), the concept of otherness is a social construct, being subject to the forces implied in the sociology of knowledge. The experience with the others is made "face-to-face" and this is the prototype of social interaction, and most of the times the contact with the others are typical in both directions (I see the other as a type and I interact with him in a typical situation). The directions of the otherness will be shaped by the social forces, suggests Hazell (2009), forces that, by different means, win and maintain their legitimacy in a discursive universe. A person will coin the image of otherness through the prism of the relations he has with the "other", relations that will influence him in understanding and behaving towards "the other".

Methodology

Thus, we propose to carry out an evaluation of the ethnic and cultural identity of the populations from the Csango communities in Moldova. We conducted our research in the field in two communities of Catholics from Bacau County (Faraoani and Prajești) and in two communities of Catholics from Neamț County (Sabaoani and Gheraești). The research undertaken has a mixed character, being both qualitative and quantitative.

Quantitative research

We opted for ethnic attributes inventory (Chelcea, 1998), which is the most widely used modern method of measuring ethnic stereotypes and it provides most information on their structure, stability and change. Starting from various forms of capital suggested by Bourdieu (1986), we used a simplified tool for capturing social representations of various forms of capital (economic, political, symbolic, cultural and social) of studied ethnic groups. We calculated the following indices: Index of social distance (SDI - describes the number of potential social contacts rejected by the respondent); Index of social contacts (SCI - comes from the number of opportunities for social contacts accepted by respondents); Qualitative index of social contacts (QISC - reflects the attitude of the respondents to the others).

Sample calculation

According to data provided by the National Institute of Statistics for 2015, there are 11863 inhabitants in Sabaoani and 6742 in Gheraești located in Neamț County and 2333 inhabitants in Prajești and 5561 in Faraoani in Bacau County (*http://statistici.insse.ro*). So, the size of collectivity (N) for this study is made up of total population of the 4 settlements (26499 inhabitants). Taking into account the margin of error of 4.5% and using the formula for calculating the sample size, results: n = 466 people distributed proportionally per each community.

Qualitative research

From a qualitative perspective, we resorted to individual (12 in total, 3 in each community) and group (1 focus group) comprehensive interviews. We placed a special focus on the life story with the final aim to shape the individual and collective memory (Atkinson, 2006). The field research was conducted during May-June 2015. The target group of the study included the elderly aged between 75 and 92 years, depositors of collective memory specific to each community. The questions were adapted to the level of understanding of the subjects; their language was adequate to their degree of knowledge. The interviewed individuals, three from each village, agreed to take part in the interview. We informed the subjects about the confidentiality of information supplied during the interview. The interviews took place in a familiar environment and were accepted by the respondents, namely, in the office of the parish house that belongs to the church of each community. The body of data collected during interviews was coded based on the hierarchy of data importance and their recurrence to build categories and topics. We aimed to develop an understanding of latent meanings of the analyzed messages based on the model of Grounded Theory (Corbin, Strauss, 1990), a methodological approach focusing on the way in which data and their analysis are the product of a symbolic interaction. Then, the concepts and the topics were organized in a narrative scheme summarizing the outcomes of research. The research topics were: The memory of inhabitants on the history of village and community; Ethnic self-definition; Controversies linked to ethnic origin of communities/ External interference; Inter-ethnic relations among Romanians, Csangos, Gypsy and others; Traditions, local specificity; The Role of Church and Other Institutions for Community; Preservation of Local Identity; Outlook into the Future.

Results and discussions

Social distance

As regards the social contact indicator (SCI), the highest score indicates a better position. Therefore, the order is Romanian-Hungarian-Csangos-Gypsies. The situation is reversed in the case of the social distance indicator (SDI), in the sense that the lower score shows a higher tolerance for other ethnicities. The qualitative indicator of social contacts (QISC) reflects a strongly positive attitude of the respondents to Romanians, and a low-positive one to the Gypsies. In the case of a comparative analysis per counties, the results show that the situation of the indicators is similar in the two counties.

Table 1. Indicators for the social distance

	SCI	SDI	QISC
Romanians	4.29	2.71	22.21
Hungarians	2.21	4.79	11.07
Gypsies	1.44	5.54	6.45
Csangos	2.13	4.87	15.21

Source data: processing own

Ethnic attributes

The attributes given by the respondents to the 4 ethnic groups are extremely diverse both in a positive and a negative way. Therefore, in what follows, we will present the most important characteristics of each minority in part. The respondents considered the *Romanians* to be hard working, hospitable, intelligent, faithful, good-natured, to maintain their traditions and customs, etc. Being interviewed on the issues which they did not appreciate in the Romanian people, the respondents regarded them as liars, thieves, jealous, selfish, bad people who consume alcohol, etc. When it comes to the *Hungarian* population, the respondents considered them as being united, solidary, hard working, nationalist, respectful, homemaking, cherishing their traditions. While some of the respondents considered the Hungarians' nationalism to be an asset, others regarded it as negative. Moreover, Hungarians were considered to be bad people, and some of the participants in the study disliked their language. Most of the respondents we have interviewed agreed that unity is one of the major characteristics of the *Gypsies*. In addition, their traditions, clothing and dances are some of the characteristics attributed to the Gypsies by the participants in the study. On the negative side, the Gypsies were considered to be thieves, lazy, to have an inappropriate behaviour, etc. The **Csangos** were viewed as hard working people who preserve their traditions, faithful, honest but also cowards, corrupt, indifferent, envious, etc.

Types of capital

The ethnic group that stands out in the category of economic capital is represented by the Gypsies. Most of the respondents regarded the Gypsies as the wealthiest. Apart from economic capital, the Gypsies also predominated in the category of share capital, being considered as most helpful to one another. When it comes to the ethnic category represented by Romanians, the latter were perceived as the poorest, but also the ones who best preserve their traditions. The Romanians are also the ones who have monopoly of the political capital, of the symbolic capital, respectively. The Hungarians do maintain political capital, but at a lower level in comparison with that of the Romanians.

Table 2. Types of capital

	The richest (%)	The poorest (%)	Have more political influence (%)	Enjoys more respect (%)	The best respect for traditions (%)	Most help each other (%)
Romanians	31.1%	36.6%	54.3%	63.4%	44.5%	32.6%
Hungarians	26.4%	5.1%	39.9%	26.8%	26.8%	19.8%
Gypsies	40.7%	30.5%	3.5%	4.2%	38.7%	44.5%
Csangos	3.0%	26.8%	2.1%	4.7%	17.7%	14.2%
Don't know	8.6%	11.2%	7.5%	7.2%	3.0%	6.8%

Source data: processing own

Inhabitants' memory of the history of the village and community

In the inhabitants' memory, the oldest community transformation processes consisted of Turkish and Tatar invasions, temporally positioned in the 1500s. The human losses, as well as the greatest tributes, determined two types of behaviours among the inhabitants: displacement and migration. The displacement of the village from the lowlands, which were exposed to invasion, to the hills, which were more protected: the inhabitants started by building houses in the higher areas, and ultimately the entire community, including the village church, moved to the better protected areas. The migration over the mountains of some of the inhabitants: the Turkish invasion determined the inhabitants to cross the mountains to Transylvania. The poems reminiscent of this first migration over the mountains of the interviewees' ancestors remained vivid in their memory. Some of the interviewees spoke about migration in the Târgu Mure area, where the old inhabitants spent 100-200 years, a time in which they learned Hungarian and founded the Csango dialect. The second migration or remigration is located in the

interviewees' memory around the 1700s, when the old inhabitants of the village, who had left for the mountains, return to their communities of origin. These ancient inhabitants of Moldova province returned bringing with them Csango Hungarian language and dialect and the Catholic religion. These old inhabitants of the Moldova region returned, bringing with them the Hungarian language with the Csango dialect, and the Catholic religion. Following the interviews, the assumption that the Romanians were accompanied by Hungarians in their remigration also arose, yet their number was considered to be low. Another element that remained in the memory of the community as decisive for its evolution are the floods which caused the displacement of the inhabitants located in the area of the watercourses to higher, protected areas of land.

The transformations underwent by the spoken language throughout history reflect the transformations incurred by the community itself. The research conducted has revealed the following course in the transformation of the spoken language. The interviewees mentioned that, in a first phase, in early 1900s, the community used the Csango dialect most commonly and, more rarely, Hungarian. Many of the inhabitants of this community, especially the women and children, did not know Romanian, encountering difficulties in communicating with the authorities and in integrating in schools. The first factor that was involved in the renunciation of the Csango dialect and the appropriation of the Romanian language by the inhabitants is represented by the school. In this regard, the interviewees mentioned the teaching in the Romanian language. The acquisition of Romanian was a factor of social integration as well as of upward social mobility. Moreover, the sanctioning of students who used elements specific to other languages is also mentioned. An example in this regard was the prohibition to use the Csango dialect both inside and outside the school. The violation of this prohibition was sanctioned by wearing a stump, as we have seen in Faraoani. Little by little, the Csango dialect and the Hungarian language were used only among family members, in conversations between the spouses, where families wished to catalyze the learning of the Romanian language by their children, or in informal meetings between community members. Nowadays, as a result of the economic migration in which the younger inhabitants of the community moved to larger cities or to other European countries - areas which had much more to offer, from an economic viewpoint -, the Csango dialect, spoken by grandparents and known partly by parents, is problematic or unknown by grandchildren/current generation.

As regards the initial religious composition of the community and its evolution, two viewpoints stand out, namely: an initial predominantly Orthodox religious component, and a predominantly Catholic one. In the former case, the population that participated in the first migration also appropriated Catholic religious rituals. Returning to its places of origin, in the remigration phase from the 1700s, the Catholic population became a majority. In the latter case, the localities (mainly Prajeşti and Sabaoani) were occupied by Catholics since their establishment.

Ethnic self-definition

The respondents from Gheraești could not state how their ancestors defined their ethnicity, but their parents considered themselves to be Romanian. Moreover, the respondents defined themselves as being Romanian, and considered their language to be the Romanian language, leaving the legacy of the Csango language behind. The respondents from Sabaoani identified themselves as Romanian, the Csango dialect being, in their opinion, somewhat similar with Romanian, yet a distorted form of the latter. The respondents insisted on language, stating that it was a local dialect, a cultural element that defined the community, which was not spoken in Transylvania, and differed from Hungarian, the Hungarians being unable to understand the Csango dialect. They explained that the latter was a diluted form of vulgar Hungarian which had no connection with literary Hungarian.

As regards the Catholic population from Prajeşti locality, Bacau County, we noticed two ways of ethnic self-definition, even though the entire population proclaimed itself to be Romanian. On the one hand, there were those who recognized the Csango dialect as a cultural heritage from predecessors, without, however, recognizing a connection with the genetic and cultural Hungarian background. The ethnic identity is Romanian, and the respondents considered themselves to be Moldovan. They deny the connection with the Hungarian language and, what is more, nobody knows Hungarian in this community. The emphasis is laid on the Csango dialect. This is an argument in favour of Romanian identity, which should be reflected upon, due to the fact that Hungarian is spoken in other Catholic communities in the area. The subjects of this research cannot explain why the community from Praje?ti does not speak Hungarian. They recall that a part of the church service, i.e. the sermon, used to be held in Hungarian in neighbouring communities. On the other hand, representatives of the local population identified themselves as Romanian, being unwilling to recognize and to accept the Csango dialect as an element inherited from their forerunners. The respondents reinforce the idea that they do not have a Csango identity, that they are Romanians, not Csangos, and support the fact that there are no such people in their community.

In the case of the communities from Faraoani, Bacau, some of the subjects define themselves as Csangos of Hungarian origin. However, they do not evaluate themselves as Hungarians, but as belonging to the Csango population, which is unique and distinct from the Hungarian one, even if they come from this people. The dialect spoken is the Csango, which is a hybrid between Hungarian and Romanian. They call the Csango language “our language”, proving their attachment to the spiritual heritage inherited from their predecessors. Language is a criterion for identification, which provides them singularity as an ethnic group. They speak of a multilingualism that affects the communication between generations, as well as between people and institutions, such as the town hall. The Csango language was taught orally by parents who spoke it freely in their households. On the other hand, still in the community from Faraoani, many inhabitants declare, without any hesitation, to have Romanian origin, having Romanian

parents, grandparents and great grandparents, the language spoken being the Csango, "a mongrel language from our ancestors". (Faraoani, focus group). There were people, during the latest census, who declared themselves to be Hungarian, not Romanian, however, they are blamed by the majority of the population.

The Csango community is fairly wide-spread also to other villages in the area. We mention in this regard the communities from Valea Mare, Cleja, Gheorghe Doja, Nicolae Balcescu or Valea Seaca, which used to be called Ferdinand, Joseni. The difference between them is of a linguistic nature; there are slight differences in pronunciation, as well as various influences from the outside, and, perhaps, even differences from the Romanian language from one area to another.

Moreover, we also encountered inhabitants from Faraoani, very few in number – only one family, in fact, which identified itself as Hungarian and which claimed that the pressure from the others determined them to declare themselves to be Romanian. They distinguished between citizenship, which they assumed formally, and ethnicity.

Controversies related to the ethnic origin of the communities / Outside interference

Two attitudes regarding the ethnic origin of the communities studied were identified by means of this research. The interviewees considered the communities to which they belong: either as having Hungarian ethnic origin (to a very small degree), or as having Romanian ethic origin (to a very high degree). As regards the action of some Hungarian organizations to establish the Hungarian origins of the population from Neamț County, in the inter-war period, the repulsion of the inhabitants from Gheraeşti was firm and remained in the memory of their descendants. The anti-Hungarian attitude is also firm in the inhabitants from Sabaoani. We encountered a similar situation in Faraoani as regards outside interference during World War II and afterwards. When it came to the tensions after the revolution, the respondents from Sabaoani spoke about the unfounded Hungarian interference. The respondents from Sabaoani did not relate any major inter-ethnic problems. Moreover, the fact that some of the inhabitants supported the local identity of the community, without assimilating it with the Hungarian one, is proof of local patriotism as well as of assuming their identity. This suggested a close-knit community which is very much aware of its specificity and whose identity is strongly defined. The respondents did not agree with being stigmatized as "Hungarian" by the ignorant, refusing this aspect, recognizing only the fact that the area was contaminated by insignificant Hungarian elements. This type of outside intervention was repeated throughout the ages and still occurs today. It aims to (re)build the sense of belonging to the Hungarian ethnicity. The outside actions consist in sponsoring traditional Hungarian artistic activities and movements and providing housing, clothing and food to those who contribute to these endeavours.

The types of behaviours which are generated by these actions consist, one the one hand, in adherence behaviours (assuming public belonging to the Hungarian ethnicity and the adherence of the Hungarian population, but also of the Romanian one, to Hungarian actions), and, on the other hand, in rejection behaviours (the community members who have a Romanian origin believe that these activities are determined by pecuniary and dangerous interests given their implications on identity).

Inter-ethnic relations: Romanians / Hungarians / Csangos / Gypsies / others

In population in the communities studied has the following ethnicity: Romanian, Hungarian, Csango, and Romani. The relationships established between the people who belong to the first three ethnicities, i.e. Romanian, Hungarian and Csango, can be included in two categories. On the one hand, positive, cordial, conflict-free relations have been established between the inhabitants. The reduced distance between the three ethnicities is also proven by the marriage between people belonging to different ethnic groups. On the other hand, tense relationships exist in cases in which inhabitants who identify themselves as Hungarian conduct actions among the inhabitants aimed at assuming the Hungarian identity. Such an attitude is justified by the interviewees by the political and territorial implications of considering these areas as being predominantly occupied by the Hungarian population. The hypothesis of a conflict between individuals within the community, without extending the conflict to the various ethnicities in the community arises from analysing the interviews we have conducted. Thus, we cannot speak about an inter-ethnic conflict within the communities studied.

The forms of sanction usually consist in verbal sanction, exercised by the other inhabitants of the commune. Moreover, the refusal of the personalities of the commune to collaborate with them can also intervene. None of the interviewees mentioned aggressive sanctions of the inhabitants who disseminate elements of Hungarian culture and the relationship between the inhabitants of different ethnicities does not take the form of inter-ethnic rejection. The relationships between Romanians, Hungarians, Csangos and Gypsies are also lacking inter-ethnic conflict, yet the social distance between the three ethnicities and the Gypsies determines the informal norm of the interdiction of marrying local Gypsies.

The interviewees who declared to belong to the Hungarian ethnicity showed two types of attitudes. On the one hand, they feel that they are undervalued by the majority ethnic population. This attitude leads, in some cases, to them formally assuming the Romanian ethnicity, as we have shown above. One the other hand, they also feel proud to see elements of Hungarian culture, such as the Hungarian language and the traditional dance, being revived.

Traditions, local specificity

Only one item specific to the traditional costume is mentioned in Gherae□ti locality, namely the colours used. One of the interviewees mentioned the use of the colours red and block for the adornment of the traditional costume, the latter of which is believed to attest to the difference between the local culture and the specificity of the Hungarian culture. The inhabitants from Praje□ti locality also mentioned the colour used to adorn the traditional costume as a specificity of that place. The colours used are "bright", such as yellow, Vorone□ blue, red.

In Sabaoani, the traditional costume has, according to the interviewees, specific elements that distinguish it from the Hungarian costume and likens it to that worn by the Moldavians from across the Prut River as well as by the inhabitants of the Maramureş region. Its specificity consists of: straps and ribbons tied by girls in their hair and around their head, as well as the colours and stitching of their skirts. The research conducted has revealed that the phenomenon of transforming the traditional costume into a museum object occurs in these areas: from the daily use of the traditional costume in the early 1900s, the costume is now worn only on the days of the village and on important religious events for the inhabitants, such as unction. The respondents from Sabaoani highlighted the difference between customs, namely the fact that there is no traditional Hungarian folk dance, Csardas, in the Catholic communities from Bacau region, thus reinforcing the idea of Romanian identity. When it comes to the deep-rooted Romanian folk tradition, the *hora* and the *sârba* Romanian folk dances are mentioned. The *hora* dance pattern - i.e. the hora was held on Sundays, therefore weekly, in the Romanian tradition - is also encountered in the community from Sabaoani.

Two approaches to the specificity of traditional clothing can be distringuised in Faraoani. The first perspective regards local specificity as similar to the Hungarian one, which is "more original" than that from the surrounding localities. Apart from the traditional clothing, the elements which can also be found in the Hungarian culture include wedding and baptism customs, the dance, without being able to pinpoint exactly what this specificity consists of, and how it differs from the Romanian one. The second approach sees local specificity as neither Hungarian nor Romanian, but Csango, different from both. The specific and the distinctive elements of the Csango culture are not mentioned in this case either. The respondents expressed their pride in the traditional costume of Faraoani, which is Csango- specific, different from the Hungarian one. They regarded it as the most beautiful and the most widely appreciated abroad. There are still keepers of the authentic Csango folk costume who wear it proudly.

Each of the villages studied mentioned specific holidays. The interviewees from Faraoani, who identified themselves, from an ethnical perspective, as Hungarian, recalled some of the customs that are no longer maintained nowadays, such as the special church service performed for women after birth and for the separation of the bride and groom before the wedding, customs which they considered to be Hungarian, even though they could be traditionally encountered

in all Romanian villages. With the exception of the Faraoani locality, where the traditional costume comprises Csango elements, even if they were not clearly specified by the respondents, the folk costume and holidays are specifically Romanian.

The role of the church and of other institutions for the community

In the communities studied, the majority of the locals are either Catholic or Orthodox. Over time, the actions of the church consisted of encouraging the use of the Romanian language through sermons delivered in this language. The sermons delivered in the Hungarian language were consecutively and correlatively discouraged. The fact that religious practices were also performed during the persecution of the priests by the *Securitate* is meritorious. This was possible due to the coalition of the inhabitants aimed at protecting the priests. Moreover, the church contributed to encouraging the interaction of the youth from the traditional communities by providing them with spaces to organize the *hora* dance and the local celebrations. The church was involved in sanctioning initiatives to convince the inhabitants of the communes studied of their Hungarian origin. The sanctions consisted both of verbal sanctions, as well as the refusal of the personalities from these communes to collaborate with the inhabitants who supported such activities that were aimed at disseminating the Hungarian culture and traditions. The church played a fundamental role in encouraging to population to preserve the local traditions, such as wearing the traditional costume. The actions listed above can be grouped into actions of attraction towards the dominant culture and actions of repulsion of cultural elements that are different from the dominant culture. Thus, the role of the church was to disseminate the dominant culture.

The first factor involved in the assimilation of the Romanian language by the inhabitants is represented by the school. The interviewees mentioned the courses taught in the Romanian language. The acquisition of the Romanian language was a factor of social integration and of an upward social mobility. It was also the school that dealt with sanctioning students who used elements that were specific to other ethnicities. An example in this regards was the interdiction to use the Csango dialect, both inside and outside the school. The violation of this interdiction was sanctioned by wearing a stump, as we have already mentioned in a previous chapter. Over time, through the two major actions it performed: the dissemination of the most important element of the dominant culture - the language, and by sanctioning the use of elements belonging to other cultures, the school performed the role of disseminating the dominant culture, a role similar to that fulfilled by the church.

Maintaining local identity

The traditional costume is still preserved in the community as a symbol of identity. It represents a true value for the community, the inhabitants of which wear the traditional costumes only on certain special occasions, such as a traditional wedding. There are differences in the customs from this area, especially when it comes to traditional religious practices, such as processions related to the church patronage. These are elements of local identity that are still maintained in the Catholic regions of Europe, the Romanian cultural influence being the traditional costume. The respondents' initiative to continue the folk tradition is a form of preserving the local cultural identity.

The actors who contribute to the preservation of local identity are individual actors and institutional actors. The individual actors are locals of various ages, who are concerned with local traditions. They participate in ethnographic endeavours aimed at identifying the traditions and histories related to the life of the ancient community, they preserved the traditional costume and make endeavours to pass its manufacturing process onto other generations, they organize folk dance and singing groups. The institutional actors are the church, the political organizations and the foundations. The latter are considered by the locals to pursue the creation of a sense of belonging to the Hungarian ethnicity for monetary and territorial benefits. The actions undertaken for the purpose of preserving the traditional customs and costume consist in ethnographic approaches aimed at identifying the traditions and histories related to the community life. This endeavour was identified in the inhabitants of Faraoani commune who claimed to have a Hungarian ethnicity. Their approach aims, as we have shown above, to encourage the community to (re)gain its sense of belonging to the Hungarian ethnicity. Other actions consist in coordinating dance and song groups and organizing shows and artistic performances. Such endeavours were identified both in Faraoani as well as in Sabaoani. The interviewees from Faraoani commune also mentioned the organization of social soirees. They have a demonstrative role and aim to popularize the customs of the old community, customs which were abandoned by the current generations. The actions of preserving the traditional costume, of passing on its manufacturing process to future generations and of exhibiting it at fairs and exhibitions are also important. This endeavour also entails the preservation of explanatory and demonstrative materials related to the manufacture of traditional clothing.

Courses or tutoring for learning the Hungarian language are also organized by families who want their children to be able to speak the Hungarian language. This action is part of the endeavour to (re)gain the sense of belonging to the Hungarian culture and to trigger a positive attitude towards it. They were encountered in Faraoani commune, yet the interviewees also mentioned similar approaches in Cleja and other communes from the area. The Csango dialect is preserved only through oral transmission from one generation to another, given the fact that it is merely a spoken, not a written language. This method proves to be ineffective, as younger people cannot understand the language spoken by their older siblings or parents.

Another method of preserving local identity is writing books in which information on the history of the community and its personalities are recoded. The inhabitants from Ghera?ti and Sabaoani published books recording the history of their own communities. The large volume of information provided by the interviewed subjects regarding the opportunity of developing companies - social cooperatives - in their communities was structured according to a model based on various levels of expected changes. These levels are: behavioural, which are expressions of the actions of the elderly in relation with various contexts; a system of values, which mainly refers to the attitude of the elderly towards current norms; a new identity (different from the cultural and ethnic one, yet as its continuation and in its support) assumed through the internalization of the new system of values. In other words, the elderly from the two communities wish for the creation of social enterprises. They feel the need for a change. Being faced with the depopulation of localities due to the massive migration of the younger population, the creation of social enterprises could bring many benefits for the behaviour, attitudes and identity for their beneficiaries.

Future perspectives

A multilingual perspective regarding the importance of the new international languages learned by the new generations has been identified. Consequently, the native language is forgotten by the children, which entails a linguistic alienation and the beginning of a new process of acculturation. If, at first, the sub-group of locals who proclaimed themselves to be Chango was faced with influences exercised by the proximity to other Romanian communities, it is now experiencing the effects of globalization.

Teaching the Romanian language in schools equals, in the interviewees' opinion, irrecoverably giving up the Csango dialect. Under the influence of reflexive modernization, the youth become the authors of their own identity model, consciously selecting those affiliations which become sources of identity having greater benefits than those with which they were born. Youth emancipation has many forms. The main difference between generations is that they no longer feel attached to their home and their origins, the sense of belonging to the community being practically non-existent. In the interviewees' opinion, the phenomenon of migration emerges as a main cause of the transformations suffered by the community. The transformations mentioned by the interviewees mainly consist in undermining the authority of the courts which used to have the authority in the past. The church is targeted. On the other hand, the parents no longer pass onto their children traditional values such as observing religious rites, respecting their parents and work. On the other hand, children refuse, according to the interviewees, to observe these traditional values.

A major impact is the significant reduction of the number of inhabitants, having repercussions on the community's workforce. The interviewed inhabitants of the communities studied no longer benefit from the help of others as a result of the low workforce of their aging population. The establishment of social

enterprises dedicated to the production of traditional costumes in these rural communities could serve to integrate people who belong to a particular vulnerable group - i.e. the elderly - on the labour market, while significantly contributing to the preservation of the cultural and ethnic identity of those respective communities.

Conclusions

The study carried out on the four communities previously mentioned has revealed the fact that, with the exception of a low percentage of the population which identifies itself differently, the population is undoubtedly Romanian. The inhabitants define themselves as members of their Romanian community and share a common ethnic identity. Thus, the consented and affirmed ethnical belonging of the population from the areas studied is, to an overwhelming extent, Romanian.

Differentiating between localities, the inhabitants from Gheraești, Neamț identified themselves as Romanian and considered their language to be the Romanian language, leaving behind the heritage of the Csango dialect. The inhabitants from Sabaoani, Neamț, identified themselves as Romanian, the Csango dialect being, in their opinion, similar to a distorted Romanian tongue. In the case of the inhabitants from Prajești, Bacau, two methods of ethnic self-definition have been noticed, even though the entire population proclaimed itself to be Romanian. On the one hand, there are those who recognize the Csango dialect as a cultural heritage from their ancestors, without, however, recognizing a connection with the Hungarian cultural and genetic background. On the other hand, there are representatives of the local population who neither recognize nor accept the Csango dialect as an element inherited from their forerunners. Only some of the subjects from the communities from Faraoani, Bacau define themselves, from an ethic viewpoint, as Csango. However, they do not assess themselves as Hungarian; they claim to belong to the Csangos, who are unique and different from the Hungarians. The dialect spoken is the Csango dialect is a hybrid between Hungarian and Romanian. They call it “our language”, proving their attachment to the spiritual heritage inherited from their forerunners. The indices calculated reflect a strong positive attitude of the respondents towards the Romanians, followed by the Hungarians and the Csangos, and a weak positive attitude towards the Gypsies. Even though they perceive themselves as poor, the Romanians show the greatest respect for their traditions and have “monopoly” over the political capital and over the symbolic capital, respectively.

The church plays a leading role in encouraging the preservation of local traditions, such as wearing the traditional folk costumes and celebrating specific holidays. Moreover, the school also has the role of disseminating the dominant culture, a role similar to that performed by the church, by means of two major actions: the dissemination of the most important element of the dominant culture, i.e. the language, and by sanctioning the use of elements belonging to different cultures.

External influences were perceived by the inhabitants of the communities studied, consisting of the actions of Hungarian political organizations aimed at creating a positive attitude towards the Hungarian culture and determining a sense of belonging to the latter. The attempts made in order to create a positive attitude towards the Hungarian culture are considered, by the majority of the population, as being financially motivated. Despite the fact that there are no interethnic conflicts between the communities studied, the subject of ethnic belonging determines a strong attitude against the Hungarian influence. The political organizations and foundations identified as a result of our research serve to promote the Hungarian culture, which differs from the dominant culture in this area, which can lead to tensions between the members of the communities studied, especially in Bacau County. The tendency to preserve local identity is shown by members of all communities and must be supported. This study was conceived as a continuation of the anthropological research conducted on the same communities, confirming its results. However, for the purpose of obtaining more nuanced results, we propose to extend the research to other communities from Moldova which are predominantly inhabited by Catholics, especially to the neighbouring communities indicated in this study. The ultimate goal of such a study would be to reveal the local specificities of the communities and the differences between them, which could lead us to the creation of a sociological atlas.

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