Current Cultural Situation of Transylvanian Saxons in Romania

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Abstract

The thesis deals with the current situation of the Transylvanian Saxons in Romania. Based on multiple field visits, it describes and analyzes the problems related to reconstructing the ethnic identity of the community, noting the minority’s transnational situation and exploring the generational relations, the minority’s position in the ethnically different environment or its political and revitalization activities. The thesis also attempts to reconstruct the actual historical development, looks into how memory is socially conditioned memory and lays out biographies of individual characters.

Methodologically, the thesis draws upon the tradition of ethnographic research, working with theoretical concepts of ethnicity (Eriksen, Anderson), transnationalism (Werbner, Szaló) or memory studies (Halbwachs, Assmann, Nora).

The aim of the thesis is to introduce the Transylvanian Saxons and other groups commonly referred to as Romanian Germans in the Czech environment. It lays out the history of Transylvanian Saxons, describes their negotiations with the state and the framing of their minority identity. Also, it seeks to answer whether the end of the numerically smaller ethnic minority of Transylvanian Saxons is inevitable and how this inevitability is perceived by individual actors of ethnic revitalisation processes.