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Community, Memory, Returning. Home Attracting Strategies of the Transylvanian Hungarian Cultural Festivals

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the role of four Hungarian Cultural Festivals (Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), The Whirl in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), Saint Ladislaus Days in Nagyvárad (Oradea), Hungarian Cultural Days of Temesvár (Timișoara) in the life of the Transylvanian Hungarian Community, the local mechanisms that have been triggered by these festivals as well as their impact on those who used to be members of these communities but emigrated to different countries of the world. First, we need to understand the effects of emigration and internal migration, the demographic changes thereafter and also the way local political systems operate/have operated in these cities. Subsequently, we will study the role of the Hungarian Festivals in the lives of the local Hungarian communities and the way former members of these communities get involved again by coming home for these occasions.

Emigration During the 20th and 21st Centuries

Emigration has been a major factor in the last two centuries in Transylvania.¹ During the 20th century it was mainly connected to the ethnic minorities (Germans, Hungarians, Jews), while towards the turn of the 21st century and its first decades it has become a general tendency within all of the ethnic groups living in Transylvania.

The peace treaties that ended the World War I brought over drastic changes in the lives of the Transylvanian people. As a province, Transylvania had previously been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and underwent a very different administrative, social, economic and cultural development from the one of the Romanian kinships. Becoming part of the newly born state of Romania after the World War I

1 The aim of the paper is to deal with only one region of Romania. As a result, we are not going to refer to the different phenomena discussed in the paper on national level.

meant a dramatic change in the lives of the different ethnic groups of this province. The territorial changes after the first and during the World War II resulted in massive migratory flows within the Hungarian community directed towards the United States and large-scale population relocated to Hungary. Due to deportations during the World War I, the Jewish population of Transylvania was reduced by half. Later on, the remaining members of the Jewish community later legally emigrated to Israel and the USA.²

Emigration from communist Romania between 1975 and 1989 was reinforced by the ethnic-based discrimination, the injustice and violence of the political system, the lack of freedom and the fear that the system was attempting to maintain. The German population of Transylvania legally emigrated to Germany from communist Romania, their case was closely managed by the Romanian government (Horváth 2007).

The communist regime took severe steps in terms of ethnicity-based distribution of the population. The political system decided to transfer Romanian population from Moldavia and Oltenia into Transylvanian towns and cities in order to assimilate the indigenous Hungarian and German population. The internal migratory policies affected most of the Transylvanian towns and cities where the Hungarian population was a majority in number. The new Romanian speaking population could hardly fit into the Transylvanian traditions, and was unable to understand its centuries-long multiethnic and multicultural symbiosis.

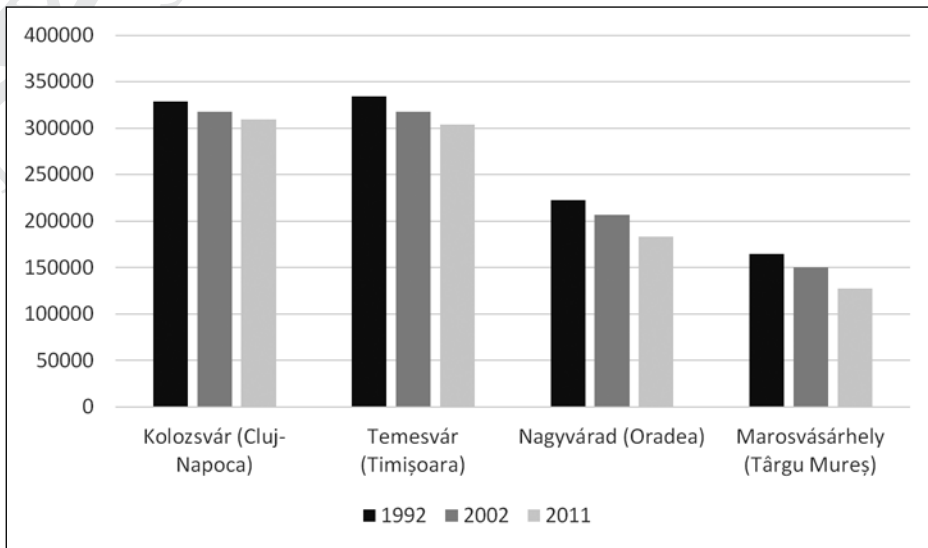
Members of the Hungarian community fled to the neighbouring Hungary, while some of them chose to seek for asylum in Western Europe. Very few members of the Hungarian community were issued legal emigration documents similar to the German or the Jewish population, thus they tried different irregular methods to cross either the Romanian-Hungarian border or the one between Romania and the former Yugoslavia.

After the fall of communism in 1989, migration tendencies intensified among the members of the Hungarian community. Statistics show that during the period between 1992 and 2002 the Romanian national migration index was -3,6 while the Hungarian (referring to the migration rates of the Hungarian ethnic group living in Romania) migration index was -6,6 (Kiss-Barna 2012). These numbers reveal the indices measured by the national censuses. Research conducted in 2003 concludes that the real number of the Hungarians working abroad is much bigger than the ones presented with the population census. The study shows that around 6-7% of the total number of the Transylvanian Hungarians work abroad, although not all of them want to migrate to the country they work in on a long term (Horváth 2003). The huge migration was due to the fact that the Hungarians went to work and study to the neighbouring Hungary to which they felt culturally linked, where they had no language problems and could easily fit in and find work. They could also earn higher

2 For more details on emigration in 20th century Romania, see Horváth 2007.

incomes for the same jobs as they did in Romania. Some of them even travelled to Western European countries.

The census in 2011 showed a continuous decrease in the total number of the inhabitants in Romania, the national migration index between 2002 and 2011 was about -11,3. As far as the Hungarian community was concerned their migration index was around -9,8 which was much smaller than the national percentage (Kiss–Barna 2012). The previous period showed a much bigger migration ratio when Hungary was regarded as being much more attractive and was also identified with a sense of freedom that suddenly became within reach for those who had not been able to travel abroad before 1989. The period between 2002 and 2011 attracted more Romanians and Hungarians towards other Western-European countries especially subsequent to Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007 (Horváth 2003). By 2002 the national and cultural connections between the Hungarians from Hungary and the ones from Romania were well-founded and helped members of the Hungarian community from Romania to develop their local communities in their own native regions. Many young people who had gone to work in Western European countries and to the USA in the 1990s in order to earn enough money to start a sustainable business in Romania, returned, though such positive examples are rather scarce. Much of the Hungarian labour force continued and still continues to migrate to Hungary and other European countries. The Hungarians from Romania living as a diffuse community have shown the same migration processes as the members of the Romanian community.



1. Census data – population

Source: Kiss–Barna 2012: 10.

As the statistics of the last three censuses show, the decrease in the total number of the inhabitants of the four major Transylvanian cities we study have developed different data. *Kolozsvár* (Cluj-Napoca), the second largest city of Romania in 2011, witnessed a minor population decline which is due to its status of being the capital of Transylvania, a most important university centre and an attractive place to work and live for those who graduated their studies. Many indigenous people have migrated to almost all the countries in the world, however they are replaced by newcomers, relocating to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) from all over Romania and foreign countries, mainly the Republic of Moldova and the Arab countries.³

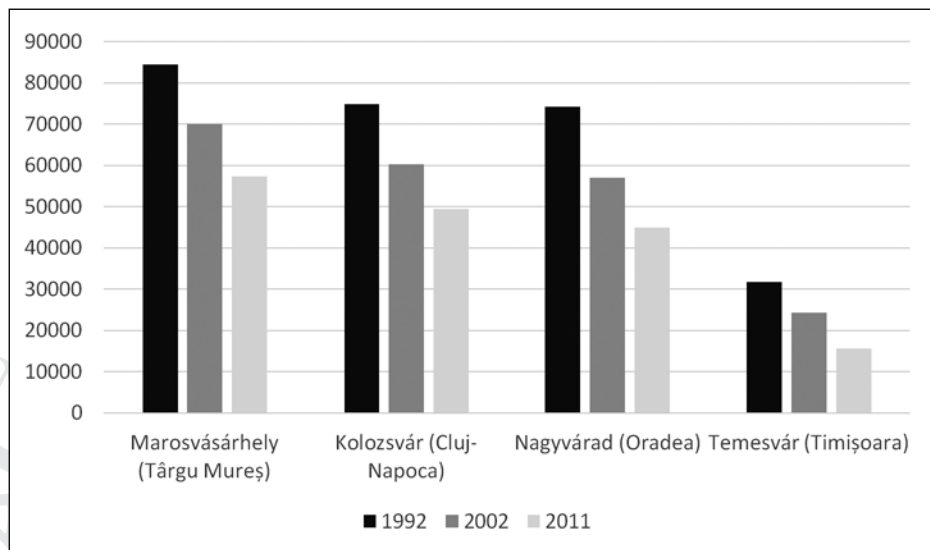
Temesvár (Timișoara), the third largest city of Romania also witnessed a minor decrease in the number of its population between 1992 and 2011. The most important university centre of the Bácság (Banat) Region, home to many ethnic groups, the city used to have a European atmosphere even during the communist regime. Temesvár (Timișoara) is also attractive to many new settlers, entrants and youngsters thus contributing to a positive inner migration.

Nagyvárad (Oradea), the tenth largest city in Romania is also confronted with a population decline that has shown an acceleration after the 2002 census. Being a border city and a university centre, it could not attract big numbers of new population, meanwhile many citizens have moved to the neighbouring villages in Hungary due to better living conditions.

Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș), the sixteenth major city of Romania, witnessed ethnic clashes in March 1990 called the *Black March* when violent incidents happened between the ethnic Romanians and Hungarians, the latter being supported by the Roma population. The violent clashes and their consequences led to masses of people, especially Hungarians fleeing the country. The census data show a dramatic population decline despite of the role of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) as a university centre for medical and pharmaceutical, as well as theatrical studies. There are five institutions of higher education operating in town which attract thousands of new entrants on a yearly basis, most of whom though do not settle in town after graduation. The city used to be the capital city of Székelyföld (Székely Land) for many centuries.

The Hungarian population of the four major cities of Transylvania which we have targeted in our research show dramatic demographic changes. In Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș), home to the biggest Hungarian community in Transylvania, the number of the Hungarian community was 57362 in 2011, that is of about 44,9% of the total inhabitants. At the census in 1992 the Hungarian population counted 84 493 people, about 51,4 % of the total inhabitants. The census completed right after the 1990 incident revealed a majority of ethnic Hungarians that lost ground by 2011.

3 Unfortunately, there are no official data concerning internal migration to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), we can only estimate based on personal experiences.



2. Hungarian population

Source: Kiss–Barna 2012: 25.

Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) has a Hungarian community counting 49375 in 2011, that is 16% of the total number of the whole population. The data collected in 1992 presented a Hungarian community counting 23% of the whole population. The 2011 census data did not only reveal any decline of the Hungarian community but it showed a growing number of different ethnic inhabitants in a fast-developing city, which was attracting people from all over Romania.

The town of Nagyvárad (Oradea) has a Hungarian community that numbered 44892 people in 2011, about 24,5% of the total inhabitants, meanwhile the number was 33% at the census in 1992. The continuous decrease is also due to the fact that many people have moved from Nagyvárad (Oradea) to the neighbouring Hungary where the living standards are higher, the geographic closeness making it possible for them to commute every day.

The smallest of the studied Hungarian communities is located in the city of Temesvár (Timișoara), numbering 15580 people, which represents 5,1% of the local population. The proportion of the Hungarian population was 9,5% of the inhabitants of the city, which dropped almost to its half by 2011. This is the most dramatic decline as it can affect the educational and cultural institutions of the Hungarian community.

The above order of the cities also shows their hierarchy as to where the largest Hungarian communities live except for Temesvár (Timișoara) which is only the 11th biggest Hungarian urban community in Transylvania.⁴

⁴ Data published by the National Institute of Statistics – Romania showing to the results of the 2011 population census.

The continuous decrease in the number of the Hungarian community may be regarded as typical as it shows the same tendency across the entire country. Although the cities we are researching are all educational and cultural centres and have had an important role in the history of the Hungarian community of Transylvania, they are still facing major migration processes. Being university centres, many young entrants settle there and they also contribute to a positive inner migration.

Hungarian Cultural Festivals

Cultural festivals are usually characterized by their economic, cultural or social role, but they can have other important characteristics as well (Hunyadi–Inkei–Szabó 2006). They represent a *celebration*, a feast in the historical meaning of the word,⁵ when the community spend time eating, drinking and dancing together. Modern festivals step into the footsteps of the ancient ones, and provide a good occasion for the community to come together to celebrate. Besides celebration, they also *educate* with the quality programs they organize, *enlarge the horizons* of the community and offer complex services by combining culture, economics and social action (Hunyadi–Inkei–Szabó 2006).

The real impact of the festivals though can only be measured on a long term as their social effects, the development of the quality of life and the changes in the mentality of the population can only be followed according to the social embeddedness of the festival (Kundi 2012: 119).

The last few years have shown an increase in the number of cultural festivals and festivals in general in Transylvania that show a growing urge to build local communities and collective consciousness. The festivals we focus on are organised by non-governmental organisations who gather the necessary funding from sponsors and different governmental projects, some of the entities being also supported by the local government. Their aim is to present the cultural values, the built heritage and the important events in the life of the Hungarian community thus trying to ensure a yearly meeting point for both, locals and those who emigrated from Transylvania. The other main objective of these festivals is to attract members of the Romanian community to their events in order to help them understand, experience and appreciate the values of the Hungarian culture. These events also make possible to connect to different Hungarian communities from all over the Carpathian-Basin, develop international cultural-educational-economic relationships and programmes. Their most important objective is to organize such a cultural event that attracts all the members of the Hungarian community.

The type of festivals dealt with can be denoted by the term Hungarian Days as the original event that founded this type of festival is the Hungarian Cultural

5 Early festivals were the feasts organized in order to celebrate the Gods in Persia, Egypt, Rome, Greece a.s.o. The Middle English dictionary defines the festival as holy day (Stratman–Bradley 1974: 318).

Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), first organized in 2010. Since then many other Hungarian communities have organized their Hungarian Days, just to mention a few cities like Brassó (Braşov), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), Nagyvárad (Oradea), Décs (Dej), Temesvár (Timişoara) a.s.o. Typical to these festivals is that all of them are organized in those regions of Transylvania where the Hungarian community lives in a considerable minority and have not had a major cultural or religious event that the local Hungarian community could join. Although we have seen that the number of the Hungarians living in these cities indicates big communities, their proportion to the total number of the inhabitants is quite small. A major problem with these urban communities is their scatteredness, which makes them more susceptible to assimilation and language loss. These festivals aim to reach all the members of the community in order to develop collective consciousness by offering a chance to gather collective experiences. Such events are also good visiting opportunities for those who have left the city for many years to come back, meet their old friends and acquaintances, and to recover the cosy feeling that they have been missing for a long time.

The program structure and the organizing strategies of the Hungarian Days are built around the example given by the event in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), which means that the main program blocks are as follows: programs for children, youth programs, literature, presentations on different historical-cultural-scientific and economic issues, exhibitions, open-air handicraft and book fair, pop-rock and classical music concerts, screenings of films, folk programs, a theatre mini season, gastronomy presentations, wine-tasting, city guided tours and sports events. All these program types are not found with each of the festivals, they are carefully selected in order to meet the local needs and customs. The events are always organized so as to attract all the age groups irrespective of social status. Entrance is free, therefore, the organizers ensure the same possibilities for each social stratum to attend.

Special programs for those who live abroad are usually organised by their ex-classmates, scheduling the class reunions in the period of the Hungarian Days. Another major program that brings together people from all over the world is the so-called *Meeting of those who used to live here* organised in Nagyvárad (Oradea) and Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş). These meetings attract more and more people of all ages who get together to talk, to recall memories and also to play music together. These programs are popular as they directly connect to those who have emigrated and attract home even those who have never hoped or planned to return again.

Community and returning

The Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) is a good example of the Hungarian melting pot as here you can meet people originating from Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and living in Hungary, Western-Europe, the USA, Canada, South-America, but even Australia and New Zealand have been represented in the last

years. Visitors also come from all over Transylvania as they are somehow connected to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) either by having finished their studies here, having a family member who is somehow connected to the city, or having friends who live here and making them curious about the event.

In order to understand the importance of the first Hungarian Days organized in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) we need to evoke the political and administrative circumstances that used to be characteristic before 2010. The period between 1992 and 2004 was represented by the reign of the famed, strongly nationalist mayor Gheorghe Funar, whose main aspiration was to prove all the nationalist ideas cultivated before 1989. In order to achieve his goals he did not allow of any development be done in the city, he wanted to preserve all conditions at an earlier stage. After a long recession period the city started to flourish only after 2004, 15 years after the fall of communism. The Hungarian community was deeply marked by that period as it had to face the numerous demonstrations of exaggerated patriotism, fanatical devotion and hostility enacted by the local government.

The Hungarian Days brought over the feeling of freedom and the courage to hold open-air manifestations representing the culture of a minority. It was the first occasion after many decades that the Hungarian NGOs operating in the city collaborated in order to celebrate Hungarian culture. The festival responded to the need of the community to get together, to recover after a very long period of depression and to offer a good opportunity for those who had emigrated to come back. It has been proven to be a successful collaboration as the event attracts hundred thousands of people every year. We can appreciate the first Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) as a psychological step taken by the Hungarian community to gather strength and courage for a lot more than sheer survival and to start leading a normal life (Szabó 2016).

This feeling of freedom, the joy of meeting old friends is one of the major reasons why people come back to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). The festival makes them feel home again as it livens up the symbolic places that are essential to the Hungarian community. The fact that the Hungarian inhabitants of the city take part in many programs also contributes to the cosy feeling one has when wandering among the different festival locations and continually bumping into old friends.

Hungarian Days in Numbers

The success of the Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) has given birth to other festivals having the aforementioned objectives. Now we will have a snapshot of the Hungarian Days organized in the cities enumerated above in order to see the people involved, the number of programs organized during the event and the festival locations in 2016.

Festival	Visitors	Programs	Locations	Durations/ Days
The Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár	250000	500	50	8
Whirl of Marosvásárhely	90000	367	14	5
Saint Ladislaus Days	50000	80	1	8
The Hungarian Cultural Days of Temesvár	10000	55	2	3

3. Hungarian days in numbers

Source: data collected by the author.

The 7th Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) attracted over 250 thousand visitors during the 8 days of festival to more than 500 programs in 50 locations.

The Whirl in Marosvásárhely⁶ (Târgu Mureş) organized for the fourth time attracted 90 thousand visitors who could choose among 367 programs in 14 locations during the five days of festival.

The fourth Saint Ladislaus Days⁷ in Nagyvárad (Oradea) had 50 thousand visitors attending the 80 programs during the 8 days of festival organized in the newly renovated castle.

The 1st Hungarian Days of Temesvár (Timișoara) attracted 10 thousand visitors to the 55 programs during the three-day festival in 2 locations.

As we can see the bigger the city, the more resources it has to facilitate and support the outlay of its own values. The festival which attracts the largest audience is organized in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), the second largest city in Romania, where the Hungarian community in Romania is also the second largest. Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) is the biggest university centre in Transylvania, the seat of three Hungarian diocese and an archdeaconry, and home to more than a 100 Hungarian NGOs that operate locally and nation-wide. We can also consider the city as the biggest de facto receiver and, nonetheless, also the biggest emitter of educated people, which contributes to the growth of its population.

The other two large Hungarian communities organize their festivals for the fourth time. The festival in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), organized by the biggest

6 The name itself shows the aim of the organizers to recall the atmosphere of the early fairs and to present the Hungarian cultural traditions of the city. The time of organizing is also symbolic: marks the date when the city gained the right to hold fairs in the 15th century.

7 The festival is organized to mark the memory of the Hungarian king Saint Ladislaus, founder of the city who was also buried in the castle of Nagyvárad (Oradea).

Hungarian community in Romania (their number reaches 57 thousand people) in the 16th largest city of Romania, is the second biggest cultural festival with a varied program. The number of visitors that it attracts is almost double the number of its community members which shows that many people return to the city for this very occasion. The festival also attracts many people from the neighbouring villages and towns.

The Saint Ladislaus Days in Nagyvárad (Oradea) are organized by the third largest Hungarian community, their number is only 10 thousand people less than the community in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), being the 10th largest city in Romania. The festival is organized in the historic castle of the town and it offers a program that is four times smaller than the one in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş). In spite of its location, being close to Hungary and being involved in several cross-border projects, the event could yet hardly attract more visitors than the number of its community members. The city with a rich Art Nouveau heritage used to be home of a prosperous literary life at the beginning of the 20th century, a heritage that the organizers are very proud of and try to present to the audience year by year.

The Hungarian Days of Temesvár (Timișoara) reflect a well-prepared festival with a good feedback on the behalf of the community. Being only at the first edition, it has attracted two-third of its community members if we are to deal with absolute numbers in the 11th largest Hungarian community, which lives in the 3rd largest city of Romania. It is a university centre and it has been the major city of the Bánság (Banat) Region. The Hungarian community of Temesvár (Timișoara) also played an important role in the outburst of the revolution in 1989.

Conclusions

Festivals are becoming more and more popular as one of the major free-time activities throughout Transylvania. Cultural festivals as we have seen above are combining quality cultural events with community building and tourism. Community building can be considered the main objective of the Hungarian communities when organizing their cultural festivals in Transylvania. The atmosphere of appendage, of being together with like-minded people has a reinforcing effect on all the members of the community. Due to these festivals people start to develop their own ideas, to create new occasions for being together and in many cases, such festivals also lead to the economic growth of the city. They also lead to new initiatives in different educational, economic and cultural fields accomplished on institutional levels. By offering a resourceful achievement that everybody can be proud of, these festivals act throughout the year in the favour of the community members. .

In the case of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) we have witnessed what a huge effect the festival had on the Hungarian community, how it started to come forward and organize newer and larger events throughout the year. All the NGOs operating in town start their preparation for the festival early spring and plan the activities and events they want to show the visitors in a very timely manner. The Hungarian community in Kolozsvár

(Cluj-Napoca) has regained its forces and it successfully attracts new and new members from the outskirts to be part of the festival, to feel that they belong there.

All the four cities witness the same tendencies as in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), the dynamics of each festival is unique thus aiming to reach the targeted long-term impact on the local communities. The cultural impact of these festivals can be measured close to their 10th edition as the changes they bring over can only be felt in a very slow motion. The already visible social results are that all four events attract the members of the Hungarian community to the programs they organize in big numbers. We can also state that these festivals bring back home the members of the community who left their hometowns long ago. The economic results can be measured with the service providers of each event and the booking lists available in town.

All the cultural festivals of Transylvania ranged in the type of Hungarian Days should be studied thoroughly in order to obtain a more detailed picture of their short-term and long-term effects. This is only the beginning of an exciting but very complex and complicated research.

Translated by the author

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Közösség, emlékezet, visszatérés.

Az erdélyi magyar kulturális fesztiválok hazavonzási stratégiái

A jelen tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogy milyen közösségépítő és közösségfejlesztő szerepet játszanak a kulturális fesztiválok négy erdélyi nagyvárosban: Kolozsvárt, Marosvásárhelyen, Temesváron és Nagyváradon. Az első részben bemutatja az említett városok demográfiai változásait, azok következményeit, illetve azokat az emberi erőforrásokat, amelyek segítségével a közösségek fennmaradhattak a változások ellenére. A tanulmány második része a magyar kulturális fesztiválok helyi közösség-szervező és közösségmegőrző szerepére fókuszál, azokra a stratégiákra, amelyek a magyar nyelv és kultúra megőrzését és bemutatását célozzák meg, illetve a fesztiválok fontosságára abban, ahogyan hazavonzzák a közösség azon tagjait, akik már hosszú ideje elvándoroltak az országból. A fő hangsúly Kolozsváron és az ottani magyar közösségen van, a hazatérők motivációin, valamint azon, hogy milyen szerepe van a Kolozsvári Magyar Napoknak (mint a város legnagyobb kaliberű magyar eseményének) a közösségi tudat és a közösségi élmények összekapcsolásában.

Comunitate, memorie, revenire.

Strategii de atragere acasă a festivalurilor culturale maghiare din Transilvania

Studiul de față analizează rolul pe care festivalurile culturale o pot juca în consolidarea și dezvoltarea comunității locale în patru orașe mari din Transilvania, și anume: Cluj-Napoca, Târgu-Mureș, Timișoara și Oradea. În prima parte prezintă schimbările demografice din orașele amintite, consecințele acestor schimbări, respectiv acele resurse umane, pe baza cărora aceste comunități locale au reușit să supraviețuiască schimbările. A doua parte a studiului focusează pe rolul de organizare și prezervare a comunității a festivalurilor culturale maghiare, pe acele strategii, care ținesc de prezervarea și prezentarea limbii și a culturii maghiare, respectiv pe importanța festivalurilor în aducerea acasă a acelor membri ai comunității, care au plecat din țară cu mult timp în urmă. Accentul principal este pe cazul orașului Cluj și a comunității maghiare locale, pe motivațiile celor care revin acasă, respectiv pe rolul pe care o joacă Zilele Culturale Maghiare (ca cel mai mare eveniment maghiar din localitate) în conectarea conștiinței comunitare și a experiențelor comunitare.

Community, Memory, Returning.

Home Attracting Strategies of the Transylvanian Hungarian Cultural Festivals

This paper aims to deal with community building and community development as a result of cultural festivals organized in four major cities of Transylvania: Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), Temesvár (Timișoara) and Nagyvárad (Oradea). The first part presents some data on the demographic changes of the above-mentioned cities as well as the consequences and the human resources of these communities to survive the changes. The second part of this paper focuses on the role of the Hungarian cultural festivals in organizing and strengthening local communities and the strategies they use in order to preserve the Hungarian language and present the Hungarian culture, as well as their importance in attracting home those members of the community, who emigrated a long time ago. The main focus is on the city of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and the Hungarian community living here, the motivations of those coming back, and on the role of the Hungarian Cultural Days of Kolozsvár (as the biggest Hungarian event in town) in linking collective consciousness with collective experiences.

