

Ethnic Identities Face to Face: Serbian and Romanian Minorities from the Banat between History and Memory

Abstract:

Ethnic identity is not just given but is continuously constructed and reconstructed from generation to generation. Major historical events and also individual or collective experiences influence the members of ethnic minorities differently. In this paper, we analyse the way in which the ethnic identity of the Romanian minority from the Serbian Banat region and that of the Serbian minority from the Romanian Banat region were constructed during the twentieth century. We start by describing ways of expressing ethnic identity in multiple aspects of social life, such as education, cultural life, religion and publications. We also reveal the most preeminent anchors of identity for each of the two minorities. By combining traditional history sources with oral history resources, we aim to identify the mechanisms used by each ethnic group in maintaining and negotiating its identity through the twentieth century. This paper is the result of a cross-border and interdisciplinary collaboration in which, over the course of the last five years, the two authors have interlaced their historical and sociological perspectives in order to enhance their own individual research interests through joint projects. These projects aim not only to increase scientific knowledge, but also to promote the two minority identities on both sides of the border between Romanian and Serbian Banat.

Keywords: *ethnic identity, Banat, Serbian minority, Romanian minority.*