

# Gowns in Towns. University Extensions in Transylvania (1919-1945)

Togas en las ciudades. Extensiones universitarias  
en Transilvania (1919-1945)

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*Abstract:* This article provides a detailed, chronological and comparative analysis of the various forms of university extensions (adult education programmes) which functioned in Transylvania between 1919 and 1945. It highlights the contribution of the Cluj university professors to the regional socio-cultural life, as well as the importance of popularizing science to the general public. Knowledge dissemination through the so-called 'popular lectures and courses' was regarded as a valuable and important tool for modernizing the local society in the aftermath of the First World War and the reorganization of Transylvania as a province of the Romanian state (România Mare – Great Romania).

*Resumen:* Este artículo ofrece un análisis detallado, cronológico y comparativo de las diversas formas de extensión universitaria (programas de educación de adultos) que funcionaron en Transilvania entre 1919 y 1945. Destaca la contribución de los profesores universitarios a la vida sociocultural regional, así como la importancia de la divulgación científica entre el público en general. La difusión de conocimientos a través de las «conferencias y cursos populares» se consideró una herramienta valiosa e importante para modernizar la sociedad local tras la Primera Guerra Mundial y la reorganización de Transilvania como provincia del Estado rumano (România Mare - Gran Rumanía).

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*Palabras clave:* Rumanía, Transilvania de entreguerras, extensiones universitarias 1919-1945, educación de adultos, académicos como intelectuales públicos.

## *Introduction*

In the academic year 1924-1925, Professor of Sociology Virgil Bărbat was elected by his colleagues as Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Cluj. Educated in Switzerland, where he had obtained his M.A. and his PhD, Bărbat was not only a well-read scholar, but also a well-travelled one, very much aware of the trends that characterized the international university life of those times, as well as the global social and political atmosphere. The knowledge he accumulated while visiting the USA and other western European countries allowed him to launch several ambitious and interesting projects during his administrative mandate, amongst which the most well-known and long-lived one would be the *University Extension*. Here is how he was characterized by one of his peers:

Professor Virgil Bărbat was an intellectual convinced of the value of democracy, whose achievements he had witnessed in America. [...] Realizing that the influence of culture should not be limited only to schools, he descended into the mass of intellectuals, in order to diffuse it with the help of the *University Extension*, highly appreciated in its activity, which he founded. This is how he understood democracy: an aristocratic cultivation of spirit and talent.<sup>1</sup>

But before we describe the circumstances of the establishment of Bărbat's *University Extension* and its achievements, it is necessary to examine the context and the history of the Cluj University, as well as the general cultural atmosphere of the city. The significance of the local university went far beyond that of a simple teaching institution. The Alma Mater represented a core element of the community, as the town knew a remarkable develop-

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<sup>1</sup> 'Necrologe – Virgil I. Bărbat' [Obituaries – Virgil I. Bărbat], *Revista de Filosofie*, XVI/3-4, (July-December 1931): 385.

For further information about the biography and the professional activity of professor Bărbat see also: Emil Pop, 'Virgil I. Bărbat - Un reprezentant de seamă al sociologiei românești' [Virgil I. Bărbat - A well-known representative of Romanian sociology], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie G. Bariț din Cluj-Napoca, series Humanistica*, I, (2003): 223-232; Nicolae Mărgineanu, *Mărturia asupra unui veac zbuciumat* [Testimonies regarding a troubled century], (București, 2002), 67-73.

ment after its foundation. Furthermore, the twists and turns of the academic life of Cluj accurately reflected the social and political relationships between the various nationalities that lived in Transylvania, and in particular in its cities, namely Romanians, Hungarians, Jews, Germans, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Originally founded in 1872, the University of Kolozsvár/Cluj was a Hungarian language institution, included in the Austro-Hungarian academic system and mainly aiming to train experts for the public service of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>3</sup> After the dramatic changes brought along by the First World War, and the subsequent union of Transylvania with the Romanian Kingdom that took place on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, the University of Cluj was re-founded in the autumn of 1919 as a new, Romanian institution. It took advantage of the infrastructure set in place by its predecessors, while at the same time shaping for itself a new educational and scientific profile, adapted to the geopolitical realities.<sup>4</sup> The first rector of the Romanian Cluj University, Professor Sextil Pușcariu, acknowledged the profound changes which appeared in the interwar period:

Besides a most thorough education for the secondary teaching system, our University intended, since its establishment, to additionally provide a Romanian culture for the students and the opportunity to deepen their scientific knowledge in Institutes of Higher Studies. Consequently, alongside the essential chairs, other new departments were created, especially dedicated to the comprehension of Romania and of its inhabitants, while, in addition to the academic courses and seminar exercises, a few laboratories and research institutes have also been founded. The former give us the specific character of Romanian University; the latter increase, due to the original studies that they do, our prestige and fame as a temple of science.<sup>5</sup>

Naturally, for this new institution, the main challenges would be to find its own, individual and specific voice within the choir of European universities, but also to impose itself as a leading reference point on the national cultural scene.

Since the beginning of its functioning, the Romanian Cluj University reflected upon its mission and defined it both inside and outside the walls of

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<sup>2</sup> For demographic information about the inhabitants of the Transylvania in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Varga E. Árpád, *Erdélyi etnikai és felekezeti statisztikája (1850-1992) [Ethnic and denominational statistics of Transylvania]*, six volumes, (Miercurea-Ciuc, 1998-2002), accessible online at <http://varga.adatbank.transindex.ro/>. Accessed on March 24, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Csucsuj István and Cornel Sigmirean, 'Universitatea Ferenc Jozséf între anii 1872-1919 [Ferenc Jozséf University from 1872 to 1919]', in Ovidiu Ghitta (ed.), *Istoria Universității Babeș-Bolyai [The history of Babeș-Bolyai University]*, (Cluj-Napoca, 2012), 69-126.

<sup>4</sup> Vasile Pușcaș, *Universitate, societate, modernizare [University, society, modernization]*, second edition, (Cluj-Napoca, 2003), 102-245.

<sup>5</sup> Sextil Pușcariu, *Memorii [Memoirs]* (București, 1978), 428-429.

the Alma Mater. Thus, rector Sextil Pușcariu emphasized in one of his speeches of the triple role that the university had to play within the local community: first, the university had to teach and form future generations of intellectuals and/or public clerks. Secondly, the university had to produce original research and thirdly, but not of lesser importance, the university needed to popularize knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Over time, there were many forms in which the professors of Cluj University chose to fulfil this duty and to collaborate with the city or other Transylvanian neighbourhoods. Academics got involved and made their voice heard in the local press, sharing their expertise through the printed word. Often, they founded newspapers and/or journals where they debated cultural, scientific or even socio-political topics. The professors were equally present in the local administrative structures, either as advisers or as hands-on members of the city council(s).

Another form in which the University chose to be present in the community and at the same time to affirm its institutional, academic identity was through a type of schooling slightly different from the regular student courses. The *University Extension*, set up in Cluj since the autumn of 1924, represented one of the most efficient and well-regarded solutions for the third mission of the University – science popularization. The focus on adult education was not, however, an innovative idea at the continental level, not even for Central and Eastern Europe.

As Stuart Marriott has demonstrated, «the clearly articulated concept and practice of *university extensions*» appeared in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 1870's and quickly spread in other European states, from France and Italy to Sweden, Germany or Austria, as well as in the USA, taking different forms and embracing different socio-political and cultural theories.<sup>7</sup> Marriott's thorough research equally highlighted the fact that «the broad rhetoric of higher education for the people contained recurrent sub-themes: the university of course, and also, in various combinations, enlightenment, national culture, science, objectivity, reasonable discussion, political democracy, citizenship, fellowship, class reconciliation, and more».<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sextil Pușcariu, *Cuvânt de deschidere rostit la al doilea congres al Asociației Profesorilor Universitari de la Cluj, în 3 iunie 1921 [Opening remarks at the second congress of the University Professors Association, held in Cluj, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1921]*, (Cluj, 1921): 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart Marriott, "The Popular Universities in Europe, 1890 to 1920: what was being popularized?" in Barry J. Hake and Stuart Marriott (eds.), *Adult Education between Cultures. Encounters and identities in European adult education since 1890* (Leeds, 1992), 86 and 106-108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 87.

In the United Kingdom, the founding father of the university extension idea can be considered James Stuart, a famous scholar of Scottish descent, who was successfully seconded by other academic personalities, such as Robert Davies Roberts and, a bit later on, Richard Green Moulton. Moulton equally played a key role in spreading the idea of university extension in the USA after his career took him there.<sup>9</sup>

Cambridge and Oxford universities count amongst the first British academic institutions to put the ideas of university extensions into practice, while in the USA, the early 1890's saw the creation of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, based on the groundbreaking initiative of Provost Pepper of the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Harvard University would become one of the leading American forces in this field of adult education, based on the relentless work of Professors A. Lawrence Lowell and James Hardy Ropes.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to the English-speaking world, in France, university extensions started around 1899, mainly at the initiatives of workers, such as Georges Deherme. However, these structures would quite soon be 'monopolised' by the French intellectual elite and its famous representatives, with personalities such as sociologist Emile Durkheim reflecting on the real impact of these socio-cultural structures and the responsibilities of the academics taking part in them.<sup>12</sup>

In Central and Eastern Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was equally influenced by the British example. A first attempt was made in 1893, when several university lecturers and professors petitioned the Senate of the University of Vienna to allow the organising of «popular university lectures». However, the first talks took place in the Austrian capital city only in 1895. The University of Innsbruck followed the example of Vienna in 1897.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart Mariott, *A backstairs to a degree. Demands for an open university in late Victorian England*, (Leeds, 1981), 6-22.

<sup>10</sup> *University Extension. Its definition, history, system of teaching and organization*, (Philadelphia, 1891), 2-4.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Shinagel, *The Gates Unbarred. A history of University extension at Harvard 1910-2009*, (Harvard, 2009), 15-46.

<sup>12</sup> For the evolution of French university extensions see : Christophe Premat, 'L'engagement des intellectuels au sein des Universités Populaires', *Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines*, 11, (2006) : 67-84 ; Lucien Mercier, *Les Universités populaires 1899-1914 : éducation populaire et mouvement ouvrier au début du siècle*, (Paris, 1986) ; Geneviève Defraigne Tardieu, *L'Université populaire Quart Monde : La construction du savoir émancipatoire*, (Nanterre, 2012), 35-53.

<sup>13</sup> For university extensions in Austria see Hans Altenhuber, *Universitäre Volksbildung in Österreich 1895-1937* (Vienna, 1995).

In the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the previously mentioned Hungarian University of Kolozsvár/Cluj (forerunner of the Romanian University of Cluj) was equally no stranger to this trend. Schneller István, a famed pedagogy university professor in Kolozsvár/Cluj, wrote a comprehensive, four-part research article, analysing the evolution of the *university extension* phenomenon in Europe and in the USA, with a special focus on the German-speaking regions.<sup>14</sup> Unsurprisingly, Professor Schneller also advocated for the creation of an university extension in his own university, namely in Kolozsvár/Cluj, and such an organism started to function here, with a certain success, in the academic year 1898-1899.<sup>15</sup>

As a general trend, adult education in its various forms (*Universitätsausdehnung, universités populaires, university extensions* etc.) became extremely popular, such schools being highly active in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, as the First World War approached, a decline of public interest for these socio-cultural structures became increasingly apparent.

Although the *university extensions* in Romania and, subsequently, in Transylvania, were chronologically behind their European counterparts when studying their evolution one can easily notice that they reflect, and sometimes even emphasize, many of the aforementioned features. The late appearance of institutions of adult education is explained by several factors. First of all, in the Romanian space, the universities themselves were founded only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, following the creation of the national and unitary state: thus, Iași University appeared in 1860 and Bucharest University was established in 1864 (in 1859 the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia had united in a single country), while the Romanian University of Cluj started to function, as previously mentioned, after the end of the Great War, as did the Romanian University of Cernăuți/Tchernowitz, in Bukovina. Secondly, similar *décalages* or delays in development were also visible on other levels, and many historians, political scientists, and sociologists, Virgil Bărbat included, observed them with great accuracy. According to Professor Bărbat and his colleagues, there were three main setback areas in Romanian society, namely: an educational and cultural gap between the elite and the majority of the inhabitants; big socio-economic and cultural differences between the rural and the urban popula-

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<sup>14</sup> Schneller István, 'University Extension (I-IV)', *Athenaeum, Philosophiai és államtudományi folyóirat*, I-IV, (Budapest, 1899): 1-29; 181-196; 341-356; 501-523.

<sup>15</sup> Makkai László, 'A kolozsvári m. kir. Ferenc József tudományegyetem története 1872—1919', in Bisztray Gyula, Szabó T. Attila, Tamás Lajos (ed.), *Az erdélyi egyetemi gondolat és a M. Kir. Ferenc József Tudományegyetem története*, (Kolozsvár, 1941), 163.

tion; cultural gaps between the Romanian speaking population and the other ethnic minorities living in the country, especially in the historical provinces integrated into the Romanian state after 1918 (Transylvania, Banat, Bessarabia, and Bukovina).<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the establishment of university or academic extensions in Romania not only responded to the need of bridging or diminishing these disparities, but testified as well to a certain degree of evolution and maturity reached by the national intellectuals and other influential local personalities, who internalized the need of involving themselves in the modernization of the country, thus becoming what is generally known as «public intellectuals».

To this day, only a small number of studies approached the work of the *Universities Extensions* in Transylvania, with most of them focusing exclusively on Bărbat's activity and highlighting his work especially from a sociological perspective.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, these texts investigate especially the 1920's and early 1930's and ignore the troubled period of the Second World War. A more recent article, based on archival sources, deals with the local collaboration between the Cluj *University Extension* and other local cultural associations in the Banat region – this is the first case-study on such a topic, partially shedding light on the personal and institutional networks that ensured the success of the professors' lectures.<sup>18</sup>

Comparative and diachronic analysis of the different *University Extension* projects is, however, still missing and is what we are aiming to provide in this study. Future research is also needed, in order to be able to juxtapose what happened in Transylvania with similar Romanian endeavours of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in particular, the Popular University of renowned historian Nicolae

<sup>16</sup> Virgil I. Bărbat, *Exproprierea Culturii [The expropriation of culture]* (Cluj, 1928), 18-20.

<sup>17</sup> Amongst the research regarding Virgil Bărbat's University Extension, we can mention: Ioan Aluaș, 'Extensiunea universitară clujeană, 1924-1931 [Cluj University Extension, 1924-1931]' in *Din activitatea Universității cultural științifice Cluj-Napoca*, (Cluj-Napoca, 1981-1982); D. Dungaciu, '«Mesianismul pozitiv» al sociologiei românești. Virgil Bărbat și «Extensiunea Universitară» [The «Positive messianism» of the Romanian sociology. Virgil Bărbat and the University Extension]', in *Revista Română de Sociologie*, VII, (1996, 3-4): 263-284; Andrei Negru, 'Ideea Extensiunii Universitare [The idea of University Extension]', in *Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane*, vol. 9, (Cluj-Napoca, 2002): 214-222; Mihai Teodor Nicoară, 'Cluj University Extension. Founding and statutes (1924)', in *Annals of the Constantin Brâncuși University of Târgu-Jiu, Letter and Social Science Series*, Supplement 2, (2015): 70-80.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Alexandra Pantea, 'Colaborarea despărțământului ASTREI arădene cu Extensiunea Universitară clujeană [The cooperation of the ASTRA branch from the city of Arad with the Cluj University Extension]', in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca*, LVIII, (2019): 182-193.

Iorga, which functioned near Bucharest, at Vălenii de Munte, between 1908 and 1940. The most recent work attempting a comprehensive, synthetic look at Romania's adult education dates back to the 1980's and is consequently highly influenced by communist ideology, not to mention the fact that it deals just with the years 1859-1918.<sup>19</sup>

Professor Bărbat's *University Extension* does not hold the privilege of being the first academic initiative of the Romanian Cluj University dedicated to adult education. However, this was the most successful, serious and long-standing one, that is why it remained vivid in the institutional history, while other similar projects gradually faded from the local academic memory.

### *I. A timid beginning – the Popular University*

The earliest idea of launching a school for adults in Transylvania (after its union with Romania) belonged to historian Ioan Ursu<sup>20</sup>, a professor at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, who, in October 1922, addressed a proposal for the setting up of a *Popular University* to the Cluj University Senate. The document was unanimously approved, so in January 1923 the *Popular University* opened its gates to «538 students of various ages and various social categories», who paid a 5 lei fee for every course they wanted to attend. Most of the candidates enrolled for courses of Romanian language (300 students), while others chose to improve their knowledge of Romanian history (144 students), Romanian geography (105 students), or French literature (93 students). Morals, hygiene or social policies were also fashionable subjects, each of them gathering around 60 students.<sup>21</sup> The majority of the lecturers were local university professors, led by the founder of the *Popular University*, Professor Ioan Ursu, as well as other specialists from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and the Faculty of Medicine. A few secondary school teachers completed the team, carefully selected from Cluj's best high schools. Courses were held in the evening, usually from 6 to 8 o'clock, most of them being «taught using slide projectors, so that they were enjoyed and easily

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<sup>19</sup> Maria Itu, *Forme instituționalizate de educație populară în România 1859-1918 [Institutional forms of popular education in Romania 1859-1918]* (București, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> For more information regarding professor Ioan Ursu, see Ioana Ursu and Dumitru Preda, *Biografia unei conștiințe: Ioan Ursu [The biography of a conscience: Ioan Ursu]*, (Cluj-Napoca, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Ioan Ursu, *Universitatea populară [The popular University]*, (București, 1923), 15-16.

assimilated by the public».<sup>22</sup> In case of demand, Sunday classes or a more varied choice of courses' topics were equally possible.

Ursu's *Popular University* mission was summed up by the slogan «Light and Country»<sup>23</sup>, thus confirming that this adult school focused predominantly on enlightening the masses and on disseminating information about the national culture, two classical themes of such enterprises. In the inaugural lecture, held in the Assembly Hall (the Aula Magna) of the Cluj University, Professor Ursu explained that he took his inspiration from Western Europe, where

starting some decades ago, there was rarely a town where a popular university had not been founded, in various forms, according to the local necessities, in order to disseminate light and culture in the largest layers of the population. In large cities such as Paris, a popular university was founded in each of its districts. Here such institutions had already seen the light of day in the Old Kingdom [namely in Romania before 1918], in cities like Bucharest, Craiova, Ploiești, etc.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, a popular university had been established in the Romanian capital in 1910, attracting almost 1500 students in the first year, while similar structures appeared in Constanța (1912) or in Galați (1913), however their functioning was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>25</sup>

Returning to Professor's Ursu foundational speech, it is worth highlighting how he envisioned the functioning of his popular university. He emphasized that the professors will concentrate on

teaching useful knowledge – selected by its importance – in an attractive way, so that its absorption would be facilitated. [...] The aim is not to accumulate knowledge, but to assimilate it. We will replace the German quantitative formula with the qualitative one, innate to our Latin genius. Consequently, we will not seek a quantity of accumulated knowledge, but a minimum of assimilated knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the obvious exaggerations, this short fragment demonstrates an idea that dominated Transylvania after the Great War and its union with the Romanian state, namely that of replacing a German/Austro-Hungarian administrative, institutional and especially educational framework with a Latin/French inspired one. In other words, it was time to honour the win-

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Itu, *Forme instituționalizate de educație populară în România 1859-1918 [Institutional forms of popular education in Romania 1859-1918]*, (București, 1981), 161-167.

<sup>26</sup> Ioan Ursu, *op. cit.*, 9-10.

ners of the 1914-1918 conflict, to express loyalty towards Western European values, as well as to impose the Romanian cultural supremacy and national unity by referring to the prestigious and ancient Roman/Latin heritage.

Another important idea expressed in the opening address of Ursu's *Popular University* was the wish to avoid another devastating war in the future and also to steer clear of other types of socio-political crises.

[We aim to] fill this emptiness of the soul [...] and to replace the materialist conception, which threatens us with barbarity's return, with a conception in which the materialistic factor is balanced by beautiful feelings. We aim [...] to create a life conception where feelings have their rightful place, a better, more balanced society, where life can be more peaceful and the world a happier one. Behaving with honour, loving your fellows, respecting other men's rights and possessions, respecting the rule of law and loving your country – these are all beautiful feelings and useful feelings in all circumstances, for all the countries and all the people.<sup>27</sup>

Professor Ursu wished that, following the Cluj example, similar popular universities would gradually be established in other Transylvanian cities. He went even further, ambitiously envisioning the creation of a federation of popular universities, each of them being «endowed with libraries and, as much as possible, with their own headquarters, with museums, laboratories etc.»<sup>28</sup>

Despite the great ideals that animated this initiative, despite the qualities of the educators/ professors, and despite the initial success, the *Popular University* established by Professor Ioan Ursu did not function for too long. In fact, it seems its existence was limited to a single year, although there are not many testimonies regarding the official end of this structure. One possible explanation for its short-lived existence is the Cluj student revolt that started in the late autumn of 1922 and paralyzed local and national academic life.<sup>29</sup>

However, this university offered a worthy example for future structures dedicated to adult education, which would soon appear in Cluj. In fact, it should be noted that sociologist Virgil Bărbat was amongst the professors who accepted to collaborate and teach in Professor Ursu's *Popular University*, being in charge of the Morals course.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> For these events see Ana-Maria Stan, 'The 1922-23 Student Revolts at the University of Cluj, Romania: From Local Anti-Semitic Academic Protests to National Events' in Pieter Dhondt, Elizabethanne Boran (eds), *Student Revolt, City, and Society in Europe*, (NewYork/London, 2018), 286-303.

<sup>30</sup> Ioan Ursu, *op. cit.*, 15.

## II. A cultural landmark – the Cluj University Extension

Consequently, it was unsurprising when just a few years later, in the autumn of 1924, Professor Virgil Bărbat resumed the idea of setting up an adult school, but in a much improved formula. One of the most significant differences between Ursu's and Bărbat's initiatives was their dimension, as Ursu had limited his Popular University exclusively to the city of Cluj, while Bărbat aimed for the whole of Transylvania and other Romanian historical provinces. Furthermore, the scope, social and scientific dimensions of Bărbat's project were broader, more inclusive and of a higher academic quality.<sup>31</sup> «A campaign of cultural propaganda through lectures and popularization publications, a large-scale, systematic, organized campaign, which would be pursued tenaciously year after year – this is what we think it is needed», said Bărbat and his colleagues in the memo addressed to the Minister of Arts and Religious Cults while petitioning the support of the authorities for the foundation of the Cluj *University Extension*.<sup>32</sup>

Another important distinction between Professor Ursu's *Popular University* and Bărbat's *Extension* was the political support that the latter enjoyed from its very beginning. Romania's minister of Cults and Arts in 1924 was Alexandru Lapedatu, Professor of Romanian history at the University of Cluj (consequently one of Bărbat's colleagues) and equally a very prominent member of the National Liberal Party (PNL), which was governing Romania since 1922.<sup>33</sup> When Bărbat petitioned the support of the Ministry of Cults and Arts for his project, the reply he received from Lapedatu was an extremely positive one. In an official letter, minister Lapedatu said:

<sup>31</sup> Andrei Negru, 'Ideea Extensiunii Universitare [The idea of University Extension]', in *Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane*, vol. 9, (Cluj-Napoca, 2002), 216-217.

<sup>32</sup> 'Annex 1 - Memorandum for the setting-up of the «Association of *University Extension*» in Cluj, presented to the Minister of Cults and Arts', in Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *Extensiunea Universitară [The University Extension]* (Cluj, 1926), 73.

<sup>33</sup> The National Liberal Party governed Romania from 1922 to 1926, under the leadership of famous politician Ion I.C. Brătianu. It was a time of profound reforms, political, socio-economical and cultural modernization of the state. For more details of that period, known under the name of the 'great liberal government' see Ioan Scurtu, 'Marea guvernare liberală, ianuarie 1922-martie 1926 [The great liberal government, January 1922-March 1926]', in Ioan Scurtu, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX [History of the Romanians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century]*, (București, 1999), 144-167; Anastasie Iordache, *Ion I. C. Brătianu - un corifeu al democrației și al liberalismului românesc [Ion I.C. Brătianu - a coryphaeus of democracy and liberalism]*, (București, 2007), passim.

appreciating and recognizing the importance of this Association [namely the *University Extension*] ... the Ministry will grant you the financial means necessary for its establishment. Therefore, we will provide you with the sum of 500.000 lei [...] needed for national and cultural propaganda through lectures and popularization publications.<sup>34</sup>

This very generous allowance, offered in four instalments of 125.000 lei each, not only testified to the aforementioned political backing, but also offered a solid foundation for the successful functioning of Bărbat's *Extension*, from its very beginning and for several years to come. Furthermore, if we analyze the list of the founding members, we find many other Liberals amongst the academics involved in the Cluj *University Extension*. Besides Bărbat, here are some of the university professors that shared the political ideology of the National Liberal Party: Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, Nicolae Drăganu, Camil Negrea, Gheorghe Bogdan-Duică, Dimitrie Călugăreanu, Emil Panaitescu, etc.<sup>35</sup>

The *University Extension* saw the light of day in a public meeting attended on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1924, by 30 university professors from Cluj. The assembly was held in the Dean's Offices of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, at the suggestion of three scholars: Dean Virgil Bărbat and Professors Vasile Bogrea (philologist) and Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă (psychologist). These three professors, with Bărbat as their leader, were in fact the *Extension's* «founding fathers», the ones who had penned the preliminary aims and functioning principles of the new institution.<sup>36</sup>

After animated discussions, those present at the assembly unanimously agreed to create the *Cluj University Extension* that was defined as a «cultural association [...] whose purpose was to spread and popularize scientific knowledge referring to the cultural, social and economic problems of our time, and in particular to those closely related to the life of our people».<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 'Annexe 4 - Letter no. 53679 from October 25, 1924, addressed by the Ministry of Cults and Arts to professor Virgil Bărbat and signed by minister Alexandru Lepădatu', in Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>35</sup> Biographical and professional portraits of the members and supporters of the National Liberal Party from the Cluj region, including academics, in Ioan Paert, Virgiliu Țărău, *Liberali clujeni. Destine în Marea Istorie*, [Cluj Liberal Party members. Destinies in History], 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, (Cluj-Napoca, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> In a small comment written at the end of the volume *Extensiunea Universitară [The University Extension]* (Cluj, 1926), Virgil Bărbat equally mentions a series of discussions that he had with his colleague, historian Silviu Dragomir before the establishment of the *University Extension*, thus making this professor its fourth founding father. See Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *op. cit.*, 97.

<sup>37</sup> 'Annexe 2 - Statutes of the *University Extension*, chapter I, art. 2 and art. 3', in Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *op. cit.*, 74.

They also voted the *Extensions'* first statutes and started the formalities of transforming their association into a legal body, a quality which was awarded rather quickly, in May of 1925.<sup>38</sup>

Without entering too deeply into the technical details of the *University Extension's* functioning<sup>39</sup>, there are several points that need highlighting, especially as they explain the success and the longevity of this structure. First of all, there is the fact that the professors who wanted to teach in the *Extension* had to apply and wait to be accepted into the association by its ruling committee. They were also obliged to pay an annual membership fee of 100 lei.<sup>40</sup>

It is hard to imagine that academics interested in working at the *University Extension* were turned down (and in fact no such cases could be so far documented by our research). However, the membership policy testified to the seriousness and commitment demanded of the members, as well as to a certain selection operated between those looking to join the *University Extension*, a selection based predominantly on scientific, pedagogical and oratory skills, and, on a more implicit level, on political or ideological affinities.

A second factor ensuring a smooth performance was the *Extension's* collective management. The founders of the *University Extension* made sure that a lot of its members would be actively involved and have an important role to say in the association's activity. The ruling committee was formed by a president, a general secretary and ten members elected from those who «distinguished themselves regarding their activity and their interest for the *University Extension*». <sup>41</sup> Although the president held the prerogative of proposing the annual program of the association and of selecting the lecturers, the committee could discuss and even modify this project. Another competence of the committee was to decide in which localities the lectures of the *Extension* were going to be organized.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the *Extension* established to hold at least three annual meetings of its ruling committee, as well as one general assembly with all its members, in the month of October, in order

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<sup>38</sup> 'Annexe 7 – Decision of the Cluj Courthouse, May 16, 1925' and 'Annex 8 – Letter of the Cluj Courthouse to the University Extension, May 30, 1925', in *ibidem*, 84-85.

<sup>39</sup> For a lengthier, but rather sketchy analysis of these statutes, see Mihai Teodor Nicoară, 'Cluj University Extension. Founding and statutes (1924)', in *Annals of the Constantin Brâncuși University of Târgu-Jiu, Letter and Social Science Series*, Supplement 2 (2015): 70-80.

<sup>40</sup> 'Annexe 2 - Statutes of the University Extension, chapter I, art. 2 and art. 3', in Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *op. cit.*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> 'Annexe 2 - Statutes of the University Extension, chapter III, art. 9 and art. 10', in *ibidem*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> 'Annexe 2 - Statutes of the University Extension, chapter III, art. 12', in *ibidem*, 76.

to constantly deliberate over its evolution.<sup>43</sup> The most important roles in the committee were obviously held by the president and the general secretary – each of them being elected for four-year mandates.<sup>44</sup> During its interwar existence, the *University Extension* management enjoyed a remarkable constancy – having only two presidents, namely Professor Virgil Bărbat (from 1924 to his untimely death in 1931) and Professor Nicolae Drăganu (from 1931 to 1939). However, the backbone of the entire association was actually its general secretary, Professor Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, a well-known psychologist, who did not relinquish his role in the *Extension* even when he was appointed rector of the Cluj University in the 1930's. Goangă's role in the *University Extension* was acknowledged by his colleagues: «the soul and the tireless and skilful organizer of the lectures' series was the *Extension's* general secretary for 15 years, until 1939, Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă».<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the stability (even immovability) of the *University Extension's* top level staff offers another key to its high-level reputation and functioning. Another aspect worth noticing is the fact that Professor Nicolae Drăganu, one of the *Extension's* presidents, was also mayor of Cluj between 1933 and 1938. This implicitly meant that the local city council supported, financially and administratively, the organisation's activity, although further research is needed to determine the exact sums of money that were regularly given by the city of Cluj to the *University Extension*.

The third element supporting the success of the *University Extension* was the fact that it did not have the ambition to operate by using only the human and material resources of the Cluj University. In fact, in order to achieve a real impact with their popularization lectures in Transylvania, as well as in the neighbouring historical Romanian provinces (Banat, Crișana, Maramureș), the members of the *Extension* chose to rely upon the cultural infrastructure already present in various towns or rural communities. Such an attitude was even more imperative given the fact that the *Extension's* work started very quickly after its establishment, the first activities being carried out on October 28, 1924. The annual report of the *Extension* acknowledged this strategy:

since we were lacking any local organization of our own and we could not send the members of the *Extension* to organize themselves, in these centres [...], our ac-

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<sup>43</sup> 'Annexe 2 - Statutes of the *University Extension*, chapter III, art. 15, and chapter IV, art. 17', in *ibidem*, 76-77.

<sup>44</sup> 'Annex 2 - Statutes of the *University Extension*, chapter III, art. 10' in *ibidem*, 75.

<sup>45</sup> Petre Sergescu, *Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj în Banat [The Cluj University Extension in Banat]*, (Timișoara, 1942), 5.

tivity of cultural propaganda [...] through public lectures, and this for financial and professional reasons [...] we decided to call upon the headmasters of the secondary schools and the primary school inspectors to whom we have explained the purpose of our association and we asked them to take the initiative of locally arranging these lectures. We addressed a similar appeal to the presidents of the well-known cultural societies of each town [...] Also, we asked the help of the 'Association for the Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People' - (ASTRA), to whom we offered our collaboration.<sup>46</sup>

All the *Extension's* requests were favourably met, meaning that everywhere, in each locality, the local intellectuals and the local elite gathered and became engaged in receiving their academic guests. In practical terms this implied that in each locality the *University Extension* was granted the free use of the «most spacious and most beautiful room» and a «committee was elected, whose mission was to take care of the local set-up of the lectures, the propaganda, the publicity and of receiving the lecturers».<sup>47</sup> This *modus operandi* exemplifies a model of positive, smooth cooperation between local state authorities: mayors, educational officials such as the school inspectors, other administrative clerks, and the university professors. By providing the venues for the conferences as well as by advertising these events, local authorities showed practical involvement in the life of their communities and concern for their welfare. Accepting the visits of academics in their small towns and villages was a cost-efficient way of improving the socio-cultural local landscape, educating the public towards modernity, increasing civic conscience and creating a sense of shared pride for regional or national traditions and customs. This cooperation also guaranteed an uninterrupted and methodical accomplishment of the *Extension's* cultural program and made possible that 146 lectures were held in 24 towns in its first year of functioning.

In the following years, the *University Extension* developed and extended its activity, maintaining the same approach. For 1925-1926, it managed to reach 11 new small towns in Transylvania and Banat with the courses, and the total number of the public lectures equally increased, although, as the *Extension's* secretary general recognised, «we have the greatest regret that in this second year of cultural activity we were unable to go in every place that we were called to go and where we would have liked to go; and

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<sup>46</sup> 'Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj pe anul 1924-1925' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension in the year 1924-1925], in Virgil Bărbat, Florian Ștefănescu Goangă (eds.), *Extensiunea Universitară [The University Extension]*, (Cluj, 1926), 57-58.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 58.

where we went we could not give as many lectures as we had been asked to give».<sup>48</sup> Certainly justified and explained by time, financial and/or travel constraints placed upon the lecturers of the *University Extension*, these missed opportunities remain relevant for the specialists researching the topic. Actually, the disregarded requests testify to the interest of the general public in familiarising itself with the so-called 'subjects of the day', as well as to its hunger for modernization and synchronization with the European trends. It is a clear confirmation that a project like the *University Extension* was deeply needed in post-1918 Romania. Another signal regarding the relevance of the *University Extension's* work was the fact that, as early as its third year of functioning, «various [cultural] societies, local committees and institutions hurried to give [to the *Extension*] not only their precious and warm moral support, but also a significant financial help for the travel expenses of the lecturers».<sup>49</sup> The donations' total exceeded 230.000 lei in the academic year 1926-1927, a considerable sum, amongst the contributors being many private or public banks, including the National Bank of Romania, mining societies, high schools, women's cultural societies, various municipality councils, etc.<sup>50</sup> As far as donations from municipalities are concerned, hence public money, they could be interpreted in several ways. If we read the list of towns and villages that sent money, we see that some of the amounts came from places that the *University Extension* had visited, thus recognising the work already done, and implicitly wanting to continue and/or intensify the mutual cooperation. In a few cases, money was given by municipalities who wished to be included on the list of future destinations of the university professors. For the present-day historian this is also an indication that a certain level of cultural competition was starting to develop between various cities in Transylvania, all eager to receive academics in their midst. For comparison, we should emphasize that such a good relation between town and gown was not always a given: prior to World War One, in Belgium, the Ghent *University Extension* remained an underdeveloped project partially due to the fact that it

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<sup>48</sup> Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, 'Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj pe anul 1925-1926' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension in the year 1925-1926], in *Buletinul Extensiunii Universitare din Cluj, anul al doilea 1925-1926* [The bulletin of the Cluj University Extension, second year 1925-1926], (Cluj, 1927), 73.

<sup>49</sup> Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, 'Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj pe anul 1926-1927' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension in the year 1926-1927], in *Buletinul Extensiunii Universitare din Cluj, anul al treilea 1926-1927* [The bulletin of the Cluj University Extension, third year 1926-1927], (Cluj, 1928), 219.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 219-220.

lacked institutional funding and support and relied mostly on charity for its functioning.<sup>51</sup> However, the original Anglo-Saxon idea of *University Extension* did not reject the possibility of receiving public money, which explained in most cases the successes of such endeavours. In fact, in Central and Eastern Europe, the state was a rather strong supporter of adult education/ popular universities, because in this region, universities were considered and considered themselves as depositaries of the nation's experience and, therefore, were encouraged to spread their views.

Looking at the subjects of the lectures (detailed in the annual reports or in the annual books of the Cluj University) and analyzing them bearing in mind Stuart Marriott's definition of what the higher education for the people implied, one can observe similarities and differences with other European countries.

Some of the speeches given by the lecturers of the Cluj *University Extension* debated hot social or economic topics of those times, such as: the role of human capital, the workers' importance in the development of the Romanian economy, demographic evolutions, women's presence and status (in politics, on the cultural scene or in sciences), public health and hygiene, citizens' responsibilities, etc. The role of various social classes in their local or national communities had long been at the core of Popular Universities or University Extensions in Western or Northern Europe, in particular in countries such as England, Belgium or Denmark. However, in the case of Cluj's *Extension*, the number of these lectures was rather limited, giving evidence to a certain conservatism of the target audiences, as well as of the professors. Even more limited, yet not inexistent, were the lectures dedicated to political issues, either national or international. Thus, we encounter talks about the activity of the newly created League of Nations (given by one of Romania's representatives in the League's *International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation* – Professor Sextil Pușcariu<sup>52</sup>) or about Romania's political role in today's Europe. In a comparative survey of the development of European

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<sup>51</sup> Apud Dirk van Damme, 'The University Extension Movement (1892-1914) in Ghent, Belgium in comparative perspective', in Barry J. Hake and Stuart Marriott (eds.), *op. cit.*, (Leeds, 1992), 21.

<sup>52</sup> For Romania's participation and activity in the International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations see Florentina Cărbunaru, 'Istorie intelectuală și cooperarea elitelor. Comisiile Ligii Națiunilor pentru Cooperare Intelectuală și România, 1921-1939' [Intellectual history and elites' cooperation. The Commissions of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations and Romania, 1921-1939], in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca*, LII, (2013): 127-143.

university extensions until the 1920's, Tom Steele observed: «If [University] Extension in Northern Europe [Belgium and Scandinavia] could be associated with the relatively steady march of social democracy, although driven by the winds of nationalism and modernity, in the [...] East it was even closely tied to the construction of national identity». <sup>53</sup> Cluj's example verifies this assumption to a great extent, despite the fact that it applies to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and not the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Science subjects proved to be more popular and more attractive to the people of Transylvania and Banat. The *Extension's* reports reflect this interest, as they keep records of geology, mineralogy, geography, physics, mathematics or astronomy lectures. Sometimes, but not often, the professors of the Cluj University discussed more innovative questions, such as environmental protection (in Romania or abroad, especially in the United States). Nevertheless, the main and most comprehensive focus of the *University Extension* remained on cultural themes. These can be divided into several specific categories, with a general slight predominance of historical topics over literary ones.

The most numerous lectures presented and analyzed phases of the historical development of the Romanian people and state, starting from the times of the Dacian King Decebal and going up to the Great Union of 1918. Preference was obviously given to the events of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially to the efforts for a national, independent country that had taken place since the 1848 revolution onwards. Another noteworthy set of lectures, given by various academics, debated the presence of Romanians in Eastern Europe and in the Balkan Peninsula, their relations with the neighbouring nations (Greeks, Albanians, Serbs and other Slavic people etc). Talks dedicated to the idea of Romanity and to Romania's Latin heritage formed another important group, as they emphasized the various, enduring ways in which this heritage had survived. Here the approach was an assorted one – coming from historians, as well as linguists. The evocation of historical personalities did not miss either from the *University Extension's* lectures, Romanian princes such as Michael the Brave, Matei Basarab, or political figures of *quarante-huitards* such as Avram Iancu or Nicolae Bălcescu being presented to the general public.

Literature and linguistics subjects efficiently completed and enriched this comprehensive historical panorama. Obviously, in this field as well, the professors invited to speak in the Transylvanian towns and villages gave a

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<sup>53</sup> Tom Steele, 'A science of democracy: an outline of the development of University Extension in Europe 1890-1920' in Barry J. Hake and Stuart Marriott (eds.), *op. cit.*, (Leeds, 1992), 67.

special attention to Romanian subjects. This meant that many times, lectures were dedicated to the work and life of important Romanian writers, poets or scholars, such as Mihai Eminescu (Romania's national poet), Mihail Sadoveanu, George Coșbuc, Titu Maiorescu, Ion Creangă, Miron Costin etc. More general topics, such as the evolution and value of Romanian folklore, the beginnings of Romanian literature, etc were debated too.

However, as the lists of annual lectures testify, a more international dimension was equally present. Thus, we sometimes encounter talks about Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, English poetry, the English novel and the soul of the English people (all held by the head of the chair of English of the Cluj University, Professor Petre Grimm), about universal geniuses like Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates, or about world-known religious figures, such as Saint Francis of Assisi. Because the *University Extension* counted amongst its founders active members not only Romanian professors, but also some of the foreign scientists called to teach in Cluj – the most prominent example being the French lecturer Yves Auger – these academics brought their own expertise before interested audiences. Thus, in February 1927, Auger lectured about Ernest Renan and Germany in front of the Francophones and Francophiles of Cluj, providing these local elites with a valuable lesson of French language and culture.<sup>54</sup> Other countries often present with their cultural or political references in the annual programs of the *Extension* were Denmark and the United States, but in these cases, the lectures were held by Romanian Cluj professors.

A special note must be made of a series of lectures held in the academic year 1928-1929. The tenth anniversary of the Romanian university of Cluj was fast approaching, a circumstance that can explain why the *University Extension* chose to focus a part of its activity on the state of affairs of the Romanian academic world. The *Extension's* president Virgil Bărbat opened the debate with a speech titled «The modern university». He was soon to be followed by several of his colleagues, who reflected upon and explored topics such as «the women's presence in the academic world» (Prof. M.A. Botez), «the students and the university» (Prof. Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă), or the «university autonomy and its practical organization» (Prof. Emil Racoviță).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Florian Ștefănescu Goangă, 'Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj pe anul 1926-1927' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension in the year 1926-1927], in *Buletinul Extensiunii Universitare din Cluj, anul al treilea 1926-1927* [The bulletin of the Cluj University Extension, third year 1926-1927], (Cluj, 1928), 225.

<sup>55</sup> 'Extensiunea Universitară - Asociația profesorilor Universității din Cluj' [The University Extension - The association of the Cluj University professors], in *Anuarul Universității Regele*

In total, seven separate lectures were organized, all of them attesting a keen interest of the Cluj professors in the evolution of their work environment. The speakers chose to publicly voice their opinion for several reasons. First of all, in this way they made it known that the majority of academics wanted to have an ongoing dialogue with the authorities, as well as be involved in the future decisions regarding the Romanian universities. Secondly, they were confirming an ongoing questioning with regard to their own social utility – as professionals, but also as human beings. Their preference leaned towards a university that had a privileged place within the society, serving as a model institution and a solution provider for various problems.

We cannot end our short examination of the popularization lectures held by the *University Extension* without referring to the sensible question of Transylvanian and Banat multiculturalism. The professors of the Cluj University were well aware of the presence of linguistic and religious minorities in these regions and in particular of the Hungarian and German traditions of many local cities. Despite the fact that one of the *Extension's* primary aims was to «strengthen the idea of order and authority and beyond all, the concept of the national Romanian state and of its social and cultural mission»<sup>56</sup>, its ruling committee did not hesitate to attract collaborators that could address topics relevant for the other ethnic communities living in these regions. Thus, Gyorgy Kristóf, the Professor who occupied the chair of Hungarian language at the Cluj University after 1919 was not only included in the *University Extension* project from its very beginning, but often spoke in towns hosting significant Hungarian minorities of subjects such as: the origins of Szeklers (in Sfântul Gheorghe/Sepsiszentgyörgy - 1927), the life and work of the «democratic baron» Nicholas Wesselény<sup>57\*</sup> (in Braşov/Brassó, as well as in Târgu-Mureş/Marosvásárhely - 1927) or the accomplishments of the famous Hungarian writer Mór Jókai (in Târgu-Mureş/Marosvásárhely - 1925).<sup>58</sup> In 1929, Kristóf chose yet again an interesting literary subject, lec-

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*Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul şcolar 1928-1929* [The annual book of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1928-1929], (Cluj, 1929), 254.

<sup>56</sup> Florian Ştefănescu Goangă, 'Raport...1926-1927', (Cluj, 1928), 221.

<sup>57\*</sup> Baron Miklós [Nicholas] Wesselény de Haddad (1796-1850) was a Hungarian aristocrat, born in Transylvania, who exemplified the liberal, changing social tendencies appearing in Europe in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He abolished several feudal laws and customs on his own estates, freed his serfs, built and ran schools on his own money, and organized lectures on modern agriculture for his former subjects. He established a printing press in Cluj/Kolozsvár to promote his ideas.

<sup>58</sup> Data compiled from the 1924-1927 annual bulletins of the *University Extension*, containing its annual activity reports.

turing about «M. Szalocska, the poet of the people of Timișoara» in the capital city of the Banat region.<sup>59</sup>

The minorities' contribution to the development of Transylvania was similarly acknowledged by a series of lectures made by the first professor of Art History teaching at the Cluj University, Coriolan Petranu. He adapted the subject of his talks to the city he visited, so at times he discussed in detail the art monuments that the Hungarians and the Saxons had created in Transylvania (Arad - 1925), while on other occasions he spoke about Romanian Art in Transylvania (Oradea/Nagyvárad - 1927) or even gave a speech in German, in 1926, titled *Die Kunsthistorischen Denkmäler der Siebenburgen Rumänen*, in the city of Brașov/Kronstadt, where a high number of Saxons were living.<sup>60</sup>

Professor Petranu's private archive offers more glimpses into the complex process that preceded the public events organized year after year by the *University Extension*. Thus, in a letter that Petranu received in October 1932 from the general secretary of the *Extension*, one can distinguish the methodology behind the organization of the popularization lectures. We are quoting fragments of this document, as it summarizes in an exemplary way the tried and tested strategies employed by the *Extension* in its activity:

On November 1<sup>st</sup> [1932], our association will restart its activity. For organizing this year's lectures, we kindly ask you to communicate us [...] the titles of the lectures you want to hold, the month in which you can hold them, as well as your desires regarding the cities where you wish to travel. [...]

In order to ensure the complete success of the lectures we must take into account the needs and wants of the public to whom we address ourselves. Our 8 years of experience have shown to us that the most desired lectures – consequently the most welcomed ones and with the highest impact – are those addressing scientific, cultural, economic and social problems of actuality, especially those closely linked with the life and the needs of the Romanian people. [...] For ensuring the highest possible triumph to the lectures, please choose from your specialty or its neighbouring disciplines subjects related to the abovementioned problems. Topics of religious nature or those including any hints to party politics are not included [on this list]. In order to avoid any susceptibilities, often legitimate ones, such topics should not be addressed, not even tangentially.

It is equally desirable that the title of the lectures is comprehensive, short and suggestive. Often, a skilfully formulated title has a great suggestive power for the public. The previous experiences showed us that we must also take this fact into account.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> 'Extensiunea Universitară - Asociația profesorilor Universității din Cluj' [The University Extension - The association of the Cluj University professors], in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul școlar 1928-1929* [The annual book of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1928-1929], (Cluj, 1929), 257.

<sup>60</sup> Data compiled from the 1924-1927 annual bulletins of the *University Extension*, containing its annual activity reports.

<sup>61</sup> Cluj-Napoca, Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Private ar-

After several more exchanges, in response to such detailed instructions, the *University Extension's* secretary would usually communicate to the designated lecturer where he was sent to present his work. In Petranu's case, one of his chosen topics for the 1932-1933 academic year would be «Art in the Balkans» and the *Extension* decided that his first public talk was to be held in the city of Arad, on January 29, 1933.<sup>62</sup>

Another undated document found in Petranu's archive, presumably also from the early 1930's, provides more insight into the general themes that were to be tackled by the *Extension's* lecturers within a year. This list was divided into sixteen different categories, covering a vast panorama of subjects. What draws the attention is the fact that, despite the *University Extension's* officially stated, obvious preference for political and confessional neutrality in the lectures, its catalogue included categories, themes and subthemes exclusively dedicated to politics and religious institutions. However, it is easy to comprehend that the desired approach to such topics was a purely theoretical one.<sup>63</sup> That translates into the fact the professors potentially interested to speak about politics were not allowed to address the everyday Romanian political life. Instead, they could discuss general political doctrines, with the proposed choice ranging from traditional movements, such as conservatism, to more extreme ones, such as communism or fascism. In the same way, religious issues were included into the category dedicated to Romania's cultural institutions, meaning that speakers could talk about the Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist churches/rites and even about the Jewish one.<sup>64</sup> However, from the information currently at our disposal, it is hard to identify occasions when such delicate subjects were actually and explicitly brought in front of the public. Sometimes though, they could have been included or referred to in lectures dealing with more general themes – one possible example being the lectures on European revisionism delivered by the *University Extension* members in the academic year 1935-1936.<sup>65</sup>

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chives of professor Coriolan Petranu, held by the Chair of Art History, *Letter from the University Extension to professor Coriolan Petranu* (Cluj, 10/10/1932). We thank professor Nicolae Sabău for granting us access to these documents.

<sup>62</sup> Idem, *Letter from the University Extension to professor Coriolan Petranu* (Cluj, 26/11/1932).

<sup>63</sup> Idem, *Letter from the University Extension to professor Coriolan Petranu* (Cluj, 19/11/1936).

<sup>64</sup> Idem, *List of topics for the lecturers of the University Extension, grouped by categories*, undated.

<sup>65</sup> 'Extensiunea Universitară' [The University Extension], in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul școlar 1935-1936* [The annual book The Cluj professors concerned of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1935-1936], (Cluj, 1937), 373-374.

As previously mentioned, the *University Extension* managed to offer a rather large number of popularization lectures during its interwar activity. From the very beginning, its members spoke over 100 times per year in various localities, with a peak of 198 lectures in 42 towns (even some from Wallachia and Moldavia) in 1927-1928. On average, this standard was constantly maintained during the mandate of Virgil Bărbat as president of the *Extension*, namely until 1931. Later in the 1930's there was a visible decline in activity, as the visits made by the Cluj professors to other Transylvanian towns or villages gradually diminished and implicitly the number of delivered lectures did too, varying from 45 public events in 1935-1936 to as little as 13 in 1938-1939.<sup>66</sup> The explanations were simple. The association fully felt the effects of the world economic crisis, which translated into a decrease of its public funding. «The *University Extension* has developed this year too a fruitful activity, but it was a less intense one that in previous years, because its subsidies have been considerably reduced», stated the 1935-1936 annual report.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the accession of King Carol II on the Romanian throne in 1930, and his gradual evolution towards an authoritarian regime, signalled a change in the cultural policies of the state that also reverberated upon the Cluj *University Extension*.

After its first five years (1924-1929) the *Extension* could pride itself with 879 popularization lectures.<sup>68</sup> Until 1936, its activity totalled 1375 visits and public courses.<sup>69</sup> In practical terms, this meant that each year a Cluj professor toured up to 8 or 10 cities, usually delivering lectures on two or three topics of his own choice, sometimes even more. For example, in 1925-1926, the *Extension's* secretary, Professor Ștefănescu-Goangă held a total of 9 lectures, travelling to eight Transylvanian cities, and discussing six different subjects. In the same year, President Virgil Bărbat had 11 lectures (1 in Cluj and 10 in other towns) which addressed six distinct themes.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Andrei Negru, *op. cit.*, 222.

<sup>67</sup> Extensiunea Universitară' [The University Extension], in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul școlar 1935-1936* [The annual book of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1935-1936], (Cluj, 1937), 372.

<sup>68</sup> 'Extensiunea Universitară - Asociația profesorilor Universității din Cluj' [The University Extension - The association of the Cluj University professors], in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul școlar 1928-1929* [The annual book of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1928-1929], (Cluj, 1929), 252.

<sup>69</sup> Petre Sergescu, *Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj în Banat* [The Cluj University Extension in Banat] (Timișoara, 1942), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, 'Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj pe anul 1925-1926' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension

In the summer of 1929, invited to speak in Cambridge, England, at the international conference of the *World Association for Adult Education*<sup>71</sup>, Professor Bărbat detailed how the success and popularity of the *Cluj University Extension* were achieved. The real secret resided in the dedication of the members, as the *Extension's* human resources were limited. The high number of the annual events based itself only on around 50 academics (who represented however 2/3 of the highest-ranking teaching staff of the Cluj University). Usually, *the Extension's* lectures were held on weekends, specifically on Sunday afternoons. Sometimes, depending on the circumstances, they were organized on Saturday evenings, or even on Sunday mornings, but that was the exception, rather than the rule, as Sunday mornings were generally reserved for attending religious services. For delivering their lectures, the Cluj professors had to travel extensively:

the journeys which we must make take from one to up to ten hours on the railway, or even more. Each Saturday, during the work season of our association, you could see in the Cluj train station our professors, sometimes 20 of them, starting towards various places, frequently travelling at night, in order to be able to speak on Sunday in the city designated for each of them, and being compelled to be again on the road the next evening, in order to be back Monday morning to their regular university work. At times, the blizzard and the snow are very heavy, but the professors continue their work with punctuality, a work they have willingly taken upon themselves. Such an attitude contributed a lot to the sympathy that our association enjoys.<sup>72</sup>

With the same occasion, Bărbat launched himself into a comparison between the Western and the Eastern civilizations, explaining the existing disparities. He insisted upon the idea that the East had to modernize and synchronize itself with what was happening in the West, therefore institutions like the *Cluj University Extension* were extremely necessary, as they were meant to bridge these gaps. According to Bărbat, before 1914, the majority of the cultural initiatives from Transylvania and even from the rest of Romania focused on satisfying political ideals. The major question was the

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in the year 1925-1926], in *Buletinul Extensiunii Universitare din Cluj, anul al doilea 1925-1926* [*The bulletin of the Cluj University Extension, second year 1925-1926*], (Cluj, 1927), 61-73.

<sup>71</sup> For this international event see *World Conference on Adult Education, Cambridge 1929. Proceedings*, (London, 1930), passim.

<sup>72</sup> Virgil Bărbat, 'Comunicare făcută la conferința internațională a Asociației Universale pentru Educația Adulților, 22-29 August 1929, Cambridge, Anglia' [Speech at the international conference of the World Association for Adult Education, 22-29 August 1929, Cambridge, England], in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cluj pe anul școlar 1928-1929* [*The annual book of the «King Ferdinand I» University of Cluj in the school year 1928-1929*], (Cluj, 1929), 262.

accomplishment of the national ideal, namely the achievement of the union of all Romanian provinces into a single state. The need for agrarian and electoral reforms equally dominated the Romanian life. All these problems were favourably solved by 1918, but new challenges appeared after the Great War. Professor Bărbat argued that Romanians had to clearly define what «the soul of the modern civilization» meant for them. He equally considered that the universities were the most qualified institutions for «presenting the modern culture in its entire splendour, showing its beauties and its dangers and the way its good parts could be achieved». By taking the lead of the Romanian cultural life, universities could demonstrate their social worth. In this context, the role of Cluj University was even more pronounced.

[Cluj] was a more or less new creation, as it was the Romanian University of the acquired province of Transylvania. In this quality, the [university] felt the need to prove its usefulness, thus searching for a more special, more urgent and, to a certain extent, a more practical field of action. Besides, Cluj University had the advantage of being far away from Bucharest, our capital, where the university professors occupy their spare time with less cultural activities, if not less useful ones for the country, such as politics and so on! We must also mention that the Anglo-American idea of the *University Extension* was better known in Cluj than in the other Romanian universities” explained Professor Bărbat to its Western peers, while describing the impressive results of the association he had created.<sup>73</sup>

Undoubtedly, the sustained, tireless and dedicated efforts of the *Cluj University Extension* had paid off. There were also some minor failures. Insufficient financial resources resulted in the fact that the *Extension* did not manage, although it assumed in its statutes, either to publish brochures with the most appreciated of its popularization lectures, or to set up a printed collection of popular science and socio-cultural news for the general public. So far, we were able to identify just a couple of cases in which the *University Extension* members published, at their own expense, the text of their lectures; and even in these cases, the number of issued copies was limited, hence the public impact was inadequate too.<sup>74</sup> For today’s researchers, the scarcity of sources containing the full text of the *Extension’s* lectures represents a sig-

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, 259-261.

<sup>74</sup> Examples of such brochures are: Ioachim Crăciun, *Cartea românească în decursul veacurilor : conferință ținută la Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj în ziua de 16 Aprilie 1937 [Romanian book production over the centuries: lecture held at the Cluj University Extension, on April 16, 1937]* (Cluj, 1937); George Sofronie, *Arbitrajul internațional: conferință rostită la Universitatea din Cluj-Sibiu în cadrele “Extensiunii Universitare” la 17 martie 1944 [Foreign policy arbitration: lecture held at the Cluj-Sibiu University, for the University Extension, on March 17, 1944]* (Sibiu, 1944).

nificant loss. It is regrettable that we cannot analyze in detail the knowledge disseminated by the Cluj professors as well as the modernity of their ideas. Fortunately, the annual reports and other documents report the titles of all the lectures, offering relevant information on the subject.

To conclude this section, we can say that the *Extension's* decades of activity in the interwar years played a key role in defining the identity and the national and international reputation of the Cluj University. Indeed, as Professor Ștefănescu-Goangă reported, the greatest achievement of the *Extension* was that it transformed the university «into a living reality», as an academic institution was «unable to evolve in a social environment with limited cultural concerns». Furthermore, the *Extension* succeeded in

establishing between Cluj University and the intellectuals of these Romanian regions [Transylvania and Banat] not only a lively and direct contact, but also relations of mutual trust and understanding. They had the occasion to see most of the Cluj University professors successively appearing before them [...] in a word, the chance of knowing these guests as professors and as scientists. In turn, the university professors had the opportunity to enter into a direct dialogue with the intellectuals and the public, to discover in person, at the scene, the cultural, social and national interests of the local cultural actors, as well as of the public. This way they could better understand the real cultural, social, and national needs of each city [or village], as well as the concerns and the opinion trends which are agitating the Romanian population of these regions.<sup>75</sup>

Another relevant proof of the value of Professor Bărbat's initiative was the evolution of the *University Extension* during the difficult times of the Second World War. In 1940, following the Vienna Award issued on August 30 by Hitler and Mussolini, the frontiers of Transylvania were modified and its territory was divided between Romania and Hungary.<sup>76</sup> This affected the city of Cluj in the most direct way, as it implied that the town entered once again under Hungarian administration. Consequently, the Romanian University had to leave Cluj and take refuge in Romanian territory. The institution split in two parts: the Faculty of Sciences went into exile in the capital city of Ba-

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<sup>75</sup> Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, 'Raport... 1925-1926' [Report of the activity done by the Cluj University Extension in the year 1925-1926], in *Buletinul Extensiunii Universitare din Cluj, anul al doilea 1925-1926* [The bulletin of the Cluj University Extension, second year 1925-1926], (Cluj, 1927), 77.

<sup>76</sup> For the Vienna Award see: *Reports of international arbitral awards. Award relating to the territory ceded by Romania to Hungary, 30 august 1940*, available online at [http://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol\\_XXVIII/407-412.pdf](http://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXVIII/407-412.pdf); Cornel Grad and Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *Al doilea arbitraj de la Viena* [The second Vienna Arbitration] (Iași, 1998); Béni L. Balogh, *The Second Vienna Award and the Hungarian-Romanian Relations 1940-1944* (Boulder, Colorado, 2011)

nat, Timișoara, while the faculties of Letters and Philosophy, Medicine, and Law found refuge in the town of Sibiu.

After a troubled year, spent in reorganizing and reopening the teaching activity in the new circumstances, the Cluj academics decided to restart also the activity of the *University Extension*. So, in the autumn of 1941, a new ruling committee of the *Extension* was elected with Professor Silviu Dragomir, a renowned historian, as president and Professor Liviu Rusu (literary historian and aesthetics specialist, former assistant of Professor Ștefănescu-Goangă) as secretary general. Amongst the new members of the committee, we must equally highlight the presence of Lucian Blaga, famous Romanian philosopher, playwright and diplomat.<sup>77</sup> However, the distance between Sibiu and Timișoara, and the existence of the Hungarian-Romanian border made the functioning of the *University Extension* under a single management a tricky task. As a result, 9 professors of the Science Faculty of Timișoara, some of which had previously participated in the interwar activities, decided to create a separate section of the *Extension* and organized themselves under the presidency of Professor Petre Sergescu (mathematician and historian of sciences), choosing geologist Victor Stanciu as secretary general.<sup>78</sup>

From December 1941 to March 1942, the Banat section of the *University Extension* held 34 lectures in 7 local cities of the region. For just a single faculty of the Cluj University, this number was higher than what it had been accomplished during the most prolific time of the *Extension* in the interwar period, and that in more terrible conditions. Indeed, Professor Sergescu reported that «at least 20 programmed lectures could not take place due to unforeseen causes: flooding and disruption of rail communications, overlaps with other official events, hardships in obtaining the authorizations, lack of heating material for the conference rooms». Travelling conditions and equally the financing of the professors' travel expenses represented other challenges for the Banat section, yet its members managed to overcome them.<sup>79</sup>

During the same period, the lecturers of the *University Extension* from the three faculties of the Cluj University that had taken refuge in Sibiu held 49 lectures in 8 different nearby cities. Additionally, two academics from Sibiu, one from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and another from the

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<sup>77</sup> 'Raport asupra activității Extensiunii Universitare pe anul școlar 1941-1942 [Report on the activity of the University Extension in the school year 1941-1942]', in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I Cluj-Sibiu în al doilea an de refugiu 1941-1942 [Annual book of the King Ferdinand I University of Cluj-Sibiu, in its second year of refuge 1941-1942]* (Sibiu, 1943), 748-749.

<sup>78</sup> Petre Sergescu, *op. cit.*, (Timișoara, 1942), 7.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, 7-9.

Faculty of Medicine, managed to visit the city of Arad, in the Banat region, and present interesting lectures there too.<sup>80</sup>

The last well-documented year in the *University Extension's* activity is 1942-1943, when the Banat section succeeded in organizing a total of 76 lectures on various topics, not only scientific ones, but also «literary, historical, juridical, and philosophical». The lecturers of the Faculty of Sciences, coordinated by Petre Sergescu, were in fact helped by their colleagues from Sibiu, both financially and logistically. Thus, professors coming from Sibiu held 22 lectures in the Banat region, while five professors from Timișoara presented nine lectures in Sibiu and its surrounding area.<sup>81</sup> There are several clues that the lectures continued until the spring of 1944, but only in the city of Sibiu. However, the proofs of constant, uninterrupted *University Extension* programs during the final war years remain scarce and in need of more research.

The close collaboration between the four faculties of the Romanian University deserves appreciation, as it shows how the academics of Transylvania reacted to a time of crisis. In a context of territorial, political and military difficulties for the country, the professors understood that their mission was to strengthen the trust of the public in Romania's fate and to provide a good moral and civic education. Most of the historical and juridical lectures addressed the national question and the territorial losses that Romania had suffered since June 1940, emphasizing the rightfulness of the Romanian claims to those territories. There were no lectures dedicated to the minorities. Forced by external circumstances, the *Extension* had thus partially reverted to what Transylvanian cultural action had been before 1914, that is the need of satisfying political goals, as Bărbat had so rightly put it in its Cambridge speech. The striking transformation was openly acknowledged by the *University Extension's* management: «From an association whose main goal was to disseminate knowledge and to infuse dynamism into the cultural life of Transylvania, it suddenly became the most vibrant representative of Romanian feelings from beyond the Carpathians, the most authentic embodiment of all our grief and all our aspirations».<sup>82</sup> Through the activity

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<sup>80</sup> 'Raport asupra activității Extensiunii Universitare pe anul școlar 1941-1942 [Report on the activity of the University Extension in the school year 1941-1942]', in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I Cluj-Sibiu în al doilea an de refugiu 1941-1942 [Annual book of the King Ferdinand I University of Cluj-Sibiu, in its second year of refuge 1941-1942]* (Sibiu, 1943), 749-752; Petre Sergescu, *op. cit.*, (Timișoara, 1942), 8.

<sup>81</sup> Petre Sergescu, 'Extensiunea Universitară din Cluj în Banat în 1942-1943 [The Cluj University Extension in Banat in 1942-1943]', *Revista Banatului*, IX/10-12 (1943): 27-28.

<sup>82</sup> Raport asupra activității Extensiunii Universitare pe anul școlar 1941-1942 [Report on

of the *University Extension* during the Second World War, the Cluj University strived, and to a great extent managed, to remain the leader of the spiritual, cultural and national life in Transylvania. The instauration of communism after 1945 abruptly interrupted the tradition started in 1924, deeply transforming the role of Romanian academic institutions.

Despite its numerous transformations and changes imposed by political, economic or administrative circumstances, the *University Extension* founded by Virgil Bărbat was during its entire existence a relevant example of cooperation between scholars and their surrounding environment. Instead of isolating themselves inside the classrooms and the laboratories, the university professors reached out to the community, disseminating knowledge in practical, accessible ways. Their efforts were not only well received and appreciated, but also inspired other similar socio-cultural projects.

### *III. Friendly competition – the Extension of the Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies*

Besides the University, interwar Cluj hosted several other superior schools, which attracted many young people in the city. Although considered by the educational legislation as being of an inferior ranking compared to the national universities (which functioned in Iași, Bucharest, Cluj and Cernăuți), these academies trained valuable specialists in fields such as trade, engineering, forestry, agriculture, various industries, etc. However, these institutions aimed to do more than merely teach their students and competed with the local University for a more significant presence in the public life of the city. One of the most visible and active schools was the Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies, which, as we would see shortly, also played a great role in adult education and popularizing science in the 1930's Cluj.

The tradition of studying economy and commerce in special schools started as early as 1878 in Cluj/Kolozsvár. In 1902 these schools were re-organized following the model of Western Commercial Academies.<sup>83</sup> After the union of Transylvania with Romania (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918), the existing structures were taken over by the new state authorities. As a result, the Cluj

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the activity of the University Extension in the school year 1941-1942]', in *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I Cluj-Sibiu în al doilea an de refugiu 1941-1942* [Annual book of the King Ferdinand I University of Cluj-Sibiu, in its second year of refuge 1941-1942] (Sibiu, 1943), 748.

<sup>83</sup> *Academia de Comerț din Cluj. Dare de seamă pe anii 1920-1921 și 1921-1922* [The Cluj Commercial Academy. Report of the years 1920-1921 and 1921-1922] (Cluj, 1922), 3-6.

Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies opened its gates as a Romanian institution in November of 1920. From that moment onwards, the entire teaching process began to be modelled after the standards of the Bucharest Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies. The courses were extended from 2 to 3 years and the program implied the study of modern languages, geography and history, mathematics and arithmetic, law, chemistry and physics, national economy and statistics etc.<sup>84</sup> Over the following years, the reforms continued: two separate sections were created for the third year of studies – a banking section and an industrial one, and a pedagogical seminar was introduced for the students who wished to train for becoming professors of economy or commerce. More importantly, the Academy's teaching staff improved its quality, being selected from «intellectuals of superior and tested scientific training». From 1920 to 1928, the Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies was able to enrol a total of 1679 students, consequently an average of 212 students per year – a 3.5 times increase compared to the Austro-Hungarian period.<sup>85</sup> Thus, with sustained efforts and good management, this superior school gradually became a regional reference for qualified training in commerce and other economic professions.

The institutional prestige of the Cluj Academy would reach even higher levels in the late 1930's due to its active involvement in the local society. In 1934, the professors of the Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies decided to create their own association, aiming «to serve not only from the height of our chairs, but also through civic activities, the ideals of our school [...] and to cultivate, in a time of isolation and discomfoting adversity, the wonderful *spirit of solidarity* between those who work dedicatedly at the same saint shrine of the national culture».<sup>86</sup> The obvious nationalistic character of this society could be explained by several factors. On the one hand, it fitted well with the general atmosphere of the 1930's in Europe, dominated by a gradual rise of authoritarian and right wing political trends. On the other hand, the objectives of this society responded to the cultural policies initiated by the reign of King Carol II after his accession to the Romanian throne in 1930.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, 13-15.

<sup>85</sup> *Academia de Înalte Studii Comerciale și Industriale din Cluj. Dare de seamă pe anii 1926-1927 și 1927-1928 [The Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies. Report of the years 1926-1927 and 1927-1928]* (Cluj, 1929), 46-47.

<sup>86</sup> *Asociația profesurilor de la Academia de Înalte Studii Comerciale și Industriale din Cluj. Conferințele Extensiunii Academice, anul 1935-1936 [The Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies. Lectures of the Academic Extension for the year 1935-1936]* (Cluj 1936), 3.

In practical terms, the Professors' Association of the Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies wanted to accomplish many interesting things. Besides organizing scientific trips in Romania or abroad, publishing students' manuals and several scientific journals reflecting the Romanian socio-economic realities, it also established an *Academic Extension*. Ion Mateiu, Professor of Civil Law at the Commercial Academy and president of the Professors' Association<sup>87</sup>, described the mission of this *Extension* as follows: «to popularize, in particular beyond the Carpathians, the realities of the economic sciences, and to make serious inquiries in the Transylvanian enterprises and institutions, in order to reach some fair conclusions, capable of guiding the industry and the commerce in a sane, national-Romanian spirit».<sup>88</sup> These were ambitious tasks, more practical and business oriented than the ones proposed by the *University Extension* set up by the Cluj University. Consequently, the professors of the Commercial Academy did not waste too much time before starting their work.

The *Academic Extension* opened its gates in January of 1935 and functioned uninterruptedly for three school years, until the summer of 1938. On average, it offered 12 public lectures per year. From its very beginning, it also succeeded in publishing in separate volumes the text of the most relevant or important subjects that were presented to the Cluj audiences, something the more prestigious and famous *Cluj University Extension* failed to do during its long existence. In their printed form, some of these lectures were even transformed into real scientific studies, in order to be more useful for those interested in learning about such specific problems.

The topics chosen for the *Academic Extension* lectures were rather varied, although most of them focused on economic subjects. Some debated the benefits of various economic branches and questioned their relevance for the country's development, while others presented the importance of natural or artificial resources. Thus, a 1935 lecture was questioningly titled «Industry or agriculture?», while other ones from the same year spoke about artificial oil or about coal as an energy source. However, the socio-economic information was not limited to Romania only. The situation of the Swiss peasantry (1935) or the economic policies in Atatürk's Turkey (1937 and 1938) were also amongst the topics presented to the public. More general cultural themes were not absent either and were slightly more exotic than what

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<sup>87</sup> Biographical information about professor Mateiu in Ioan Ciupea, Virgiliu Țărău, *op. cit.*, (Cluj-Napoca, 2002), 232-235.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, 3-4.

Professor Bărbat's *Extension* used to bring to the attention of the audiences. Thus, the economists spoke about Palestine or Egypt.<sup>89</sup>

Many other comparisons are possible between the *University Extension* and the *Academic Extension*, but they can be summed up into several relevant points. The *Academic Extension* established by the Commercial Academy can be considered a friendly competitor of the Cluj *University Extension* created by Prof. Virgil Bărbat. The former was certainly inspired by the success of the *University Extension* and managed to offer viable, attractive alternatives to what the Cluj academics were already doing. Although we lack precise information regarding the number of auditors benefiting from the *Academic Extension* lectures, we know for sure they were also popular and widely-attended events – for example, in 1938, four lectures of the *Academic Extension* were hosted by the auditorium of the Academic College of Cluj University<sup>90</sup>, a room that could receive around a thousand people at a time. The *Academic Extension's* activity also testifies to a gradual growth of social prestige of the technical elites in interwar Romania. The country had started to modernize, a fact that was reflected by the appearance of a more educated population and of a larger, more comprehensive and stratified middle class.

### Conclusions

The various university extensions created in Transylvania between 1919 and 1945 belong, to a certain extent, to the typical definition of adult education in Central and Eastern Europe. In this region, as Barry J Hake and Stuart Marriot have pointed out, «the enthusiasm for popular universities was not disconnected from the ethnic and nationalist self-discovery»<sup>91</sup>.

Indeed, one of the main reasons for setting up so many educational projects was the need of offering the largest possible percentage of the Romanian population of Transylvania (residing mainly in rural areas) access to information and, consequently, the means to develop or advance their general socio-economic and cultural status. Replacing the local urban elites, which in pre-war Transylvania were mainly formed by Hungarian, German or Jews with well-trained Romanian civil servants, loyal to the Romanian sta-

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<sup>89</sup> *Asociația profesorilor de la Academia de Înalte Studii Comerciale și Industriale din Cluj. Conferințele Extensiunii Academice, anul 1937-1938 [The Cluj Academy of Higher Commercial and Industrial Studies. Lectures of the Academic Extension for the year 1937-1938]* (Cluj, 1938), 3-4.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>91</sup> 'Introduction' in Barry J. Hake and Stuart Marriott (eds.), *op. cit.*, (Leeds, 1992), 3.

te, in its extended, post-1918 form, was another strong motivation for the creation of these university extensions. However, it should be noted that, while the subject of many lectures was the Romanian history and culture, their general tone was a moderate, balanced one. The extensions' programme even offered, as we have already exemplified, several debates regarding the other nationalities living in Transylvania (namely the Hungarian and the Germans), thus encouraging a better mutual knowledge and cooperation between the local communities.

The success and popularity of the 1919-1945 Transylvanian university extensions can be explained not only by the fact that these institutions filled a gap in the local educational landscape, after the changes brought on by the First World War. They also provided a cheap, but high-quality training in a period marked by general economic difficulties and numerous social problems (especially in the late 1920's and the 1930's).

The large number of Cluj professors (both from the University and from the Commercial Academy) who were involved in the activity of the Transylvanian university extensions shows that academics considered that it was their duty to make themselves visible in society and not remain isolated in the so-called 'ivory tower' (namely within the walls of the Alma Mater). As Professor Sextil Pușcariu, the first rector of the Romanian University of Cluj had so aptly expressed, the popularization of science represented a task which by no means was to be taken lightly:

The Romanian university, at least for a certain number of years - until we, like the peoples of ancient culture, will also have a plethora of scholars, in addition to academics - still has a [...] duty to fulfil: that of popularising science. In keeping with the democratic spirit that prevails today, the high-level school must maintain contact with the intellectual stratum of the nation and awaken in the widest circles of the population a love of science and respect for its achievements.<sup>92</sup>

Giving university extension lectures to a large audience enhanced the public visibility of the Cluj academics, while equally attracting potentially interested youth to study at the Cluj University, Academies and superior schools, thus guaranteeing their institutional existence for the long term. The intense dialogue and collaboration which developed between the city of Cluj and the smaller Transylvanian towns because of these adult education programs had

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<sup>92</sup> *Asociația Profesorilor universitari din România. Cuvânt de deschidere rostit la al doilea congres al Asociației la Cluj, în 3 iunie 1921, de Sextil Pușcariu, președintele asociației, [Romanian Association of University Professors. Opening speech delivered at the second congress of the Association in Cluj, June 3, 1921, by Sextil Pușcariu, president of the Association], (Cluj, 1921), 6-8.*

other significant effects too, as it stimulated local cultural and scientific activities and subsequently spread credible information into the communities.

What distinguishes the university extensions of Transylvania from other similar European initiatives is not only the timeframe of their existence (namely the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), but also the fact that there was almost no friction or rivalry between them, although they all stemmed from or functioned in the same city, the city of Cluj, sometimes even having parallel activities. In fact, the successive attempts of creating university extensions testify of a gradual professionalization of this phenomenon, professionalization which took place mostly through a process of trial and error. The success of adult education in Transylvania had to do with finding a fine balance between the real needs and demands of the public, and the dedication and skills of the professors willing to provide the lectures.

Another peculiarity is how the Romanian situation compared to that of other countries. In Western Europe, UK in particular, the adult education initiatives had partially lost their stamina before 1914 and would gradually lead to a democratization of culture and science, which translated into the appearance of several, new provincial superior schools and universities (less prestigious, however, than the universities which, like Cambridge or Oxford, had initiated the university extensions). By comparison, in interwar Romania the process was slightly different. Here, the university extensions served mainly to reinforce the prestige of the founding university – thus, the status of Cluj as the cultural capital and ‘knowledge-hub’ of Transylvania was confirmed and perpetuated well into the following years.

The Second World War and the instauration of communism in Romania would bring these democratic and interesting initiatives of ‘gowns in towns’ to a rather abrupt end, despite their uncontested reputation. After a while, various structures dedicated to adult education would be revived by the successive Romanian communist regimes, this time in a formula highly imbued with Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Undoubtedly, the issue of university extensions and of adult education invites further questioning on what can be done for strengthening the bonds between the society and the schools, as well as on the role of education for the future. This research was intended to add a new page to the study of this vast field and to stimulate future comparative analyses in educational history between Western and Eastern Europe.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Acknowledgements: our gratitude goes to Gavin Bowd, Uschi Klein and to our anonymous reviewers for their helpful linguistic and scientific comments on this text.

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