

*The students from the Faculties of Medicine and Letters
from Cluj University during interwar period:
social origin, geographical origin and academic success*

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The interwar student: an 'unmotivated absence' from the University concerns and from the historiographical analysis

In interwar Romania, the university was portrayed especially as a symptom of the institutional development and as the amount of the scientific achievements of the academic staff. A simple survey of the university yearbooks reveals that students are placed only on the last page of these publications, in the statistical reports. It is the image of student as a 'statistical shine' rather than the subject of the higher education. Eventually, this 'attributed role' for the students will develop into a main cause of their frustrations, leading to an increasing number of student associations and to protest movements against both the University and the State.

Regarding the historiography, the main inconvenient is related to a unilateral representation of these student movements. The Romanian historiography portrayed these movements especially as nationalistic and anti-Semitic, ideologically channeled and, later on, politically confiscated. It should be stated that this is rather a simplified view, which sometimes eludes the chronological evolution of the events and prospectively (mis)interprets certain phenomena. It is what Nassim Nicholas Taleb considers to be the logic of the *black swan*, that is the concerted effort to represent the past as a series of predictabilities. The main traits of this concept somehow resume the historical and historiographical interpretations of the interwar student movements. "First, it is an outlier, as it lies outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. Second, it carries an extreme 'impact'. Third, in spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for its occurrence after the fact, making it explainable and predictable. I stop and summarize the triplet: rarity, extreme 'impact', and

retrospective (though not prospective) predictability”¹. So, history is written from the point of view of the one who already knows how the event ended. In fact, the way the phenomena ended makes us choose a certain event as the beginning of our (hi)story. We must understand that “What is now known as *the past* is not what anyone lived as *present*”².

Romanian historiography approached the student movements’ subject according to this logic of predictability. In this respect, the “December 1922” moment was evaluated as the terminus moment, when the “Christian” students from the Faculty of Medicine claimed the idea of *numerus clausus* as an irreducible demand. There is no secret that the nationalistic student body of the interwar Romania transformed this moment into a founding one. But, into the trap of this retrospective cutting up also fell the historiography. It should be stated that in 1922 the students’ most numerous claims constituted a veritable chapter of social activism. In that moment, the goals were to impose the student at the core of the higher education system, to ameliorate his financial condition, to diminish the onerous university fees or to provide quality medical services. Those who supported such claims were students of different social origins or nationalities and with diverse ideological orientations. In other words, it is a proof that the pecuniary difficulties prevailed the national objectives. Nevertheless, this chapter of social activism entered into oblivion. The interwar student is still perceived as a maneuver mass, at the total disposal of some extremist, nationalist or anti-Semitic political leaders. When analyzing student movements, almost all studies recall the figures of A.C. Cuza, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu or Nae Ionescu. At a subliminal level, the historiography creates a false synonymy between the political goals of these leaders and the student movements’ objectives. By omission or by insufficient historical connections, the way of representing interwar students is, for the most part, the result of a metonymic view. While the causal background is eliminated, the construction of a historical evolution less probable in 1922 seems to gain preference. In the same way was conceived the reaction of the authorities. The Romanian state officials believed that these movements would cease by manipulation or by repression. Nobody believed at that very moment that the youth would prefer the total rebellion.

¹ Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Lebăda neagră (impactul foarte puțin probabilului)*, București, Editura Curtea Veche, 2010, p. 16.

² David Lowenthal, *Trecutul e o țară străină*, București, Editura Curtea Veche, 2002, p. 224.

The student: a new social actor in a conservative society

The student movements must be reconsidered, especially through the scientific support of sociological theories of education. In this manner, it is more than obvious that the major cause of the youth radicalization in interwar Romania was the rise of a new social typology: the student. It is the social construction of a new group, which should be analyzed taking into consideration two major sociological options. The first one is about the preeminence of the social origin, which makes the student body an eclectic one. The other option is to emphasize the output, so to consider the student as a future member of a socio-professional group. In both cases, the student body is the youth social segment which is characterized „par un statut et un temps de vie à par, un temps d'apprentissage et d'expectation”³. Thus, the student body becomes a new social actor and an increasing source of economic, social and political demands. As many other social groups, the initial efforts are concerted to legitimate the claims' spectrum. It is also an effort to convert the university reform into a mechanism of improving the student body situation.

Which was the main cause of these student riots? First of all, it should be stated that the Romanian university shifts from the image of 'antechamber for the elitist functions' towards 'a laboratory of sub-elitist positions'⁴. This is what developed a sort of antinomy between *students* and *University*. The former truly believed that social promotion was possible through higher education, while the latter proved itself incapable to allocate social and professional outlets for the graduates' body. It is this antinomy that reduced the idea of social mobility to an impossible phenomenon. Anyway, for the students with a lower social origin, the accession to a sub-elitist position could have been perceived as social mobility. This is why for those students the educational investment should be recuperated, because in many cases their families depended on this. Instead, the rebellion's predisposition seemed to be more likely for students with at least a middle class provenience. As Margaret Scotford Archer put it, the students' attitudes and actions are mostly influenced by their social origin and by "student mobility expectations". This is why, in the same context, students

³ Pierre Moulinier, *La naissance de l'étudiant moderne (XIX^e siècle)*, Paris, Editions Belin, 2002, p. 7.

⁴ „In Dahrendorf's terms, they [students] will join the *service* rather than the *ruling* class, in Touraine's, become *technicians* rather than *technocrats*, and in Etzioni's become *semi-professionals* rather than *professionals*". Margaret Scotford Archer, *Introduction*, in Margaret Scotford Archer (editor), *Students, University and Society (a comparative sociological review)*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1972, p. 24.

with different social origins shape different answers. For example, the students with at least a middle class origin understood that the new mission of university would rather be a social blockage, so for them higher education would no longer be a social mobility vector. Although for their families the investment in higher education wasn't so expensive, the outcome seemed rather modest, in comparison to the family social position and expectations. For them, fighting against university is nothing but to win. This perception was an important reason in trying to redirect higher education toward their social and economic interests. For the Romanian case it's not so difficult to prove that the student movements' leaders had at least a middle class origin, originating in families that perceived higher education as an important strategy for social promotion. "I am the second generation raised from the peasant sandals and I became Mayor. I would have been more emancipated, if I hadn't remained honest [...]. But you, you have to go further, my boy. That was our goal: to see you on the top. You should not be a simple night corrector to an anonymous journal or newspaper, David. You must be at least as your uncle: go into politics or become a professor...". This was the meritocratic ideal of the interwar Romanian society, perfectly synthesized by Mircea Eliade, in his novel *Return from Heaven*. And I should remind that the novel became known as "the novel of an entire generation".

Did the university succeed to meet the youth aspirations? Or, more precisely, did the university transform itself into an institution capable to constructively channel the youth's confidence in higher education as a mechanism for social promotion? Did the university manage to provide a proper answer to the challenges provoked by the new society configuration?

Before trying to answer these questions, it should be stated that university reform, as well as student movements, were part of a larger phenomenon: the syndrome of a social transition perceived as a crisis. The answer the authorities provided was the incapacity to design a long-term project for social development. They preferred a conservative vision, in which the student should have remained a simple university client. Instead of being part of the solution, the student was perceived as a threat and, in this manner, he had to be the subject of the repression. This was the reason why the Romanian authorities preferred to ignore or to blame any initiatives that tried to convert the student into a dialogue partner with the University.

Improvement projects for student life

Nevertheless, there were analysts preoccupied with the student pecuniary or educational problems since the first interwar decade. It was the case of the sociology professor from the University of Bucharest, Dimitrie

Gusti, who was the first to draw attention that students' unrest originated in such problems. Furthermore, he was the first to propose a solution. Unlike the university authorities, who preferred to expel recalcitrant students, to suspend the courses or even to close the University, Dimitrie Gusti deemed necessary the creation of an institution dedicated to student problems. It had to be an institution subordinated to the University, capable of establishing a dialogue with students in order to give advice in choosing the proper study programs or to resolve certain grievances. There was no secret that the living conditions in the student hostels were precarious or that the technical endowment of the university laboratories was poor. In addition, there were problems generated by the geographical and ethnical eclecticism of the student body and by the large amount of the tuition fees. So, Gusti observed that the early student movements in 1922 had an important xenophobic and anti-Semitic component. But he was convinced that improving student life quality would rather settle things. In this respect, he began to implement a sociological survey during the 1922/1923 academic year. And, although this academic year was compromised, in the spring of 1923 Gusti and his team begun the debates regarding a *Student Program for Organizing the University Life*. The discussions took place inside of the *Seminar of Sociology, Ethics and Politics* at University of Bucharest. The innovation of this project was to bring the student in the forefront: "As a social functionary to whom the nation entrusted its most important interests, the student will reveal through his activity the University value. Also he must build the conditions to elaborate and to consolidate the national culture, for which he put all his intelligence and energy"⁵.

Thereby, in 1927, due to Dimitrie Gusti's lobby, *The University Office of Bucharest (Oficiul Universitar București)* was founded. A major innovation brought by this institution was the *Student Guide* magazine (*Călăuza studentului*), presenting in detail the student rights and obligations, the higher education specializations and career guidance elements. Also, there were published sociological researches regarding the student life in interwar Romania, as it was Roman Cresin's *Sociological Survey upon Student Life*.

Following this model, in 1928 Ioan Vătășescu will publish *Cluj Student Guide (Călăuza studentului la Cluj)*, presenting the educational offer of *King Ferdinand Ist University*. Also, there were published excerpts from the faculty and university library regulations, as well as the conditions provided by student hostels and cafeteria. This was the first informative and orientative demarche dedicated to Cluj students. One interesting chapter of

⁵ Dimitrie Gusti, *Program studențesc pentru organizarea vieții universitare* (extras), București, 1924, p. 1-2.

this work was the presentation of living conditions in Cluj. This city, the most important of Transylvania, was considered a very expensive one, because it wasn't surrounded by a "productive region". Because of this inconvenient, the city had to satisfy its supply demands from remote regions; a difficult job, if we take into consideration that Cluj was connected to a single railway route, the Bucharest – Brasov – Oradea one. Despite this, the city could offer proper living conditions for the "modest student and for the prodigal annuitant"⁶. For instance, in 1928 the monthly costs for food were situated between 1200 and 1500 Romanian currency, whilst the rent costs varied in the range of 600 and 1500 Romanian currency. The costs list was completed by tuition fees (courses fee, exam fees), varying from a faculty to another.

The details presented in this brochure could affect youth intentions to choose Cluj as the educational investment place. One of the present study goal is to depict the geographical and social origin, as well as the academic achievement of the Letters and Medicine faculties, in order to precisely define the University of Cluj as a gateway to society. In other words, it is a modest effort to quantify the Latin dictum: *Non scholae, sed vitae discimus* (We do not learn for school, but for life). This should be a proper direction for a student's history, as proposed by Konrad Jarausch, who correctly observed that "university historians have written volumes on what goes into institutions of higher learning and what happens within them. But they have all too often ignored their output, namely the consequences of such training for culture, society and polity"⁷. Furthermore, for the student the contact with a new social reality – the city – and with a new way of life – the student life – could develop into a primary source of the interwar student unrests.

The student from Cluj in interwar Romania. Geographical origin of the student body

Revealing the geographical origin of the student body represents a statistical mechanism that can reveal two major aspects. On the one hand, the student intern migration to certain university centers, and, on the other hand, the massive import of foreigner students from the limitrophe countries of Romania. It should be reminded that after 1918, the Europe political map

⁶ Ioan Vătăşescu, *Călăuza studentului la Cluj*, Cluj, Institutul de Arte Grafice Ardealul, 1928, p. 17.

⁷ Konrad Jarausch, „Graduation and Careers”, in Walter Rugg (editor), *A History of the University in Europe, volume 3 (1800-1940)*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 363.

suffered major changes, especially in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Redefining national borders affected the *peregrinatio academica* routes. It is also a new *zeitgeist*, a national(istic) one, that affects the ‘imperial’ university centers (as Wien, Budapest, Berlin or Paris) in behalf of the ‘national’ universities from each successor state. For the Romanian case, illustrative is the foundation of Czernowitz University. The Romanian authorities tried to prevent a student ‘bleeding’ for the university centers with a rich educational tradition and situated in a geographic proximity. For instance, the Bukovina youth (a multiethnic and metalinguistic region) could choose between Cluj or Jassy, and Lvov or Krakow. In addition, the University of Czernowitz was supposed to be the symbolical label for the new political power, the Greater Romania.

Unfortunately, the universities’ statistical data didn’t pay attention to this mechanism of inventorying students. In none of its yearbooks, the University of Bucharest revealed the geographical origin of the student body, although it was the most important university center. The same situation was at Jassy University. In this case, the yearbooks presented the geographical origin statistical data for three academic years. Instead, the University of Cluj considered important to reveal the geographical origin of the student body. Probably it was a continuation of the Austro-Hungarian statistical practices, when the universities had to follow the ‘geographical routes’ of the students, in order to establish the amplitude of the interregional exchanges. Anyway, it is possible to characterize the four university centers of Greater Romania, by analyzing the Rectors Yearly Reports. In this respect, it can be stated that Cluj, Jassy and Czernowitz remained provincial university centers, while Bucharest could be characterized as a ‘national’ university center.

Table 1. Geographical origin of Cluj University Student Body 1923/24 – 1938/39.

Academic	Greater Romania				Foreign countries			Total
	Old Kingdom	Transylvania	Bessarabia	Bukovina	Iugoslavia	Hungary	Other countries	
1923/24	193	1609	80	27	15	19	24	1967

1924 /25	233	1749	99	30	16	16	32	2175
1925 /26	201	1900	84	25	24	17	46	2297
1926 /27	270	2147	43	20	8	32	34	2554
1927 /28	235	2335	54	20	14	42	41	2741
1928 /29	423	2398	53	21	15	48	63	3021
1929 /30	532	2959	45	20	40	68	55	3719
1930 /31	542	3243	42	39	45	83	70	4064
1931 /32	549	3228	43	38	30	74	78	4040
1932 /33	585	3601	47	45	40	71	80	4469
1933 /34	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4445
1934 /35	681	3235	72	60	31	111	110	4300
1935 /36	613	2617	69	55	29	87	109	3579
1936 /37	628	2244	60	24	20	7	118	3191
1937 /38	643	2191	57	23	25	93	123	3155
1938 /39	676	2137	43	23	22	91	102	3094

Source: *Anuarul Universităţii „Regele Ferdinand I” Cluj 1924/25-1938/39.*

The data presented in this table reveals the provincial feature of Cluj University. The share of students from Transylvania has an important weight, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the entire student body. Anyway, it should be noticed that this weight has a clear descendent trend. So, in 1927/28 academic year, the Transylvanian students represent 85.2% of 2.741, while in 1938/39 academic year their weights descend to 69.1% of 3.094 students. Instead, it is the proportion of the Old Kingdom students that increases: in the 1927/28 academic year they represented 8.57% (235 students), while in the 1938/39 they reached at 21.8% weight (that is 676

students). Another statistical aspect: the number of student body is not affected by the economic crisis (1929-1933), as it was the case for the University of Bucharest. But the decreasing number of Cluj students after 1935 was caused by two major factors. Firstly, it interfered with the negative demographic growth rate, caused by the World War I (the students of the 1934-1938 period being born between 1914 and 1918). Secondly, it was the abolition of the pharmaceutical higher education in Cluj, followed by its merger in Bucharest in 1934.

Criteria delimitation of the analyzing sample of Cluj student body

Following the academic transcripts of the Letters and Medicine faculties in Cluj we intended to depict the social origin of the student body as well as the admission age. Another aspect was to reveal the most important cities where the students had graduated secondary school, and to establish the 'academic success' rate (meaning the graduates rate in the total number of enrolled students in the same year). The academic years chosen for this analysis were justified as following: 1924/25 – the first 'normal' academic year (without overlapping promotions of high-schools graduates or of students returned to studies after the war ended. Also, it is the last year before the Romanian authorities began to implement *baccalaureate* as a mechanism to control student enrollments); 1929/30 and 1932/33 – the debut and the end of the economic crisis; 1935/36 – the reintroduction of the 8th grade in the secondary school; it was also the first year when the Ministry of Public Instruction decided to limit the number of student enrollments; finally, 1937/38 – the last academic year within a 'democratic' political regime.

Also, the reasons we chose to focus the analysis on the faculties of Letters and Medicine lied on the following sociological premises. 1. The faculty of Letters was perceived as a permissive branch study, while Medicine was considered a difficult discipline that required a long term intellectual effort (6 years of studies, while Letters had 3 or 4 years until graduation). 2. It was for sure an economic difference between the students of these faculties, if we take into consideration the tuition fees. At Medicine faculty the taxes were 3 or 4 times higher than those from the Letters faculty. In addition, at the Pharmaceutical branch study, the undergraduate years were preceded by a 2 years internship in a state or private pharmacy. 3. The economic output of these studies were completely different: the Letters Bachelor degree could provide at best an administrative career, while Medicine was essentially a liberal profession in interwar Romania.

The men / women ratio in the Letters student body evolution

The gender evolution of the Letters student body of Cluj⁸ reveals a quasi-parity (1924/25 – 71 men and 73 women; 1929/30 – 107 men and 110 women; 1932/33 – 108 men and 126 women; 1935/36 – 49 men and 25 women; 1937/38 – 79 men and 74 women). Until the end of the economic crisis the women ratio was superior to the male one. Anyway, the significant decrease of the women ratio in 1935/36 (the women ratio is a third part of the total enrollments) finds two major explanations. A partial explanation is that in 1934/35 the Public Instruction Ministry reintroduced the 8th grade in the secondary school. The direct consequence was the great decrease of secondary school graduates in 1934/35 (5.023) in comparison with 1933/34 (11.564). Meanwhile, the statistics reveal a lower baccalaureate graduation rate. In 1935 the baccalaureate rate was 32.5% (1.633 baccalaureates), while in 1934 there were 5.364 baccalaureates (46.3%)⁹. Although there is no statistic foundation in this case, it is proper to state that the baccalaureate graduation rate was inferior for the women candidates.

Faculty of Letters, Cluj. Gender evolution of the enrolled students in the 1st academic year

	1924-1925	1929-1930	1932-1933	1935-1936	1937-1938
Female	73	110	126	25	74
Male	71	107	108	49	79
Total	144	217	234	74	153

The social and ethnical origin of the students in Humanities

The social origin of the student body sample confirms the hypothesis that in the Letters branch study the rural students were predominant (1924/25 – 76 rural origin and 68 urban origin; 1929/30 – 131

⁸ Statistical data processed from SJAN Cluj, *Fond Universitatea Cluj*, file 427-433 (Faculty of Letters. Academic transcripts no. 800-3600). The enrollment criteria and the undergraduate studies duration at the Faculty of Letters: in 1924/25 – 3 years university studies; 1929/30, 1932/33 – enrollment is conditioned by the baccalaureate diploma, whilst the undergraduate studies duration is 4 years (from which the first one is considered a *preparatory year*); 1935/36 and 1937/38 – the undergraduate studies duration is 4 years but the *preparatory year* is abolished. Baccalaureate diploma is an admission criteria.

⁹ See *Romanian Statistical Yearbook 1937-1938*, Bucureşti, Institutul Central de Statistică, p. 244-245.

rural, 85 urban and 1 unspecified; 1932/33 – 120 rural, 104 urban and 10 unspecified; 1935/36 – 39 rural, 32 urban and 3 unspecified; 1937/38 – 79 rural, 70 urban and 4 unspecified). The males are between 60-70% of the rural origin students, while the women ratio is more than 50% in the total number urban students.

Social milieu	1924-1925	1929-1930	1932-1933	1935-1936	1937-1938
Urban	68	85	104	32	70
Rural	76	131	120	39	79
Unspecified	0	1	10	3	4
Total	144	217	234	74	153

Concerning the ethnicity, the Romanian students ratio from the rural milieu was about 75-80%, whilst the Romanian students ratio per total reached around 50-60%, followed by the Hungarian ones (10-25%), Saxon and Swabia students (German minority, 5-10%) and Jewish students (5-10%). The recruitment hinterland was composed of Transylvania, Banat and Crişana-Maramureş regions, providing during the entire period a 60-70% ratio of the total student body. As for the foreign students, the great part came from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Most of them had a Hungarian origin and they were born before 1918 (administrative speaking, they were born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire), thus affecting the sociological sample of the foreign students. One reason for this great Hungarian ratio in the foreign students is that they were probably the children of some Hungarian families that decided to establish in Romania after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. The other reason is that they were young Jewish who came to study in Romania, because of the anti-Semitic legislation implemented in the Hungarian higher education system.

Regarding the age groups, the most numerous were the 18 – 21 years old students (with a ratio varying between 60-70%). The single year when this ratio lowered under the media was in the 1935/36 academic year, due to the changes occurred in the secondary school, as presented above. The 22 – 25 years old group had a 10-25% ratio and 25 years old and more – 8 – 15%.

The 1 st academic year enrolled students by age group – Faculty of Letters					
Academic year	18-21 years	22-25 years	25 years or more	Unspecified	Total
1924-1925	60.42%	25.69%	13.89%	0.00%	100.00%
1929-1930	73.73%	17.05%	8.76%	0.46%	100.00%
1932-1933	74.36%	12.82%	8.55%	4.27%	100.00%
1935-1936	52.70%	29.73%	14.86%	2.70%	100.00%
1937-1938	71.90%	15.03%	10.46%	2.61%	100.00%

The completion rate of the Faculty of Letters

In the case of the Faculty of Letters, the completion rate approached the national level media, that was 45-50%. From 144 enrolled students in the 1st academic year in 1924, 67 obtained the Bachelor degree; 1929/30 – 116 bachelors out of 217 enrolled students; 1932/33 – 119 bachelors out of 234 enrolled students; 1935/36 – 34 bachelors out of 74 enrolled students; 1937/38 – 46 bachelors out of 153 enrolled students. The decrease completion rate of the 1937/38 enrolled students is due to the geopolitical shifts in summer of 1940. Romania lost a half of Transylvania (including Cluj), so the university was transferred to Sibiu. It was most likely that many students gave up their studies. The academic transcripts registered a number of 77 expelled students from 153 enrolled students. Many of these expulsions were operated in 1948, when the Communist regime began to implement a new higher education legislation. It should be emphasized that the share of women graduates in the total number of graduates is superior to the share of women enrolled in the total enrolled students. That is, the female students were more perseverant and more serious in acquiring the Bachelor degree, rather than the male students. Anyway, the urban-rural ratio is almost the same for the enrolled students and for graduated students. As for the geographical origin, more than 80% of the Bachelor degree students came from Transylvania, Banat and Crişana-Maramureş. Finally, a large proportion of the expelled students were from the Romanian extra-Carpathian provinces and/or had a rural origin. Most likely, for them and for their families the financial effort was beyond their expectations.

Completion rate of the enrolled students at the Faculty of Letters

Enrollment year	Bachelor degree	Expelled students	Retreated students	Deceased	Other	Total
1924-1925	67	30	44	2	1	144
1929-1930	116	83	13	4	1	217
1932-1933	119	74	39	1	1	234
1935-1936	34	31	6	0	3	74
1937-1938	46	77	24	0	6	153

The students of the Pharmaceutical branch: social origin and gender evolution

In comparison with the Letters students, the situation is totally different for the Pharmaceutical students¹⁰. First of all, the males are dominant, with a total ratio between 55 and 65%: 1924/25 academic year – 12 enrolled women and 25 enrolled men; 1929/30 – 17 women and 21 men; 1932/33 – 28 women and 37 men). So was the urban student ratio (more than 60%, excepting one single year): 1924/25 academic year – 11 urban, 16 rural and 10 unspecified; 1929/30 – 22 urban and 16 rural; 1932/33 – 35 urban, 20 rural and 10 unspecified. From the ethnic point of view, the Romanians are in minority, the most numerous ethnic groups being the Hungarians and the Jews (1924/25 – from 37 students: 9 Romanians, 11 Hungarians and 4 Jews; 1929/30 – 38 enrolled students of whom 6 Romanians, 14 Hungarians and 16 Jews; 1932/33 – 65 enrolled students of whom 18 Romanians, 17 Hungarians and 13 Jews). Because of the academic transcript loopholes, it was very difficult to draw the geographical origin map. Anyway, for at least one academic year this task was possible. So, in the 1929/30 academic year there were enrolled 38 students, of whom 31 were from Transylvania, Banat and Crişana-Maramureş (that is, more than 80%). As for the age groups, the 22-25 age group had an important ratio (situated between 20% –30% of the total students enrollments). This statistical evidence finds an explanation in the 2 years internship, performed by the aspirant in a pharmacy that eventually provided him a certificate necessary for the faculty enrollment procedures. That could explain the

¹⁰ SJAN Cluj, *Fond Universitatea Cluj*, Pharmaceutical studies academic transcripts, 1924-1934.

superior non-Romanian student ratio. In this respect, it should be stated that the pharmacies in intra-Carpathian regions belonged to minority owners. For the Romanian authorities, it was a significant reason to call for the abolition of the pharmaceutical branches in Cluj and Jassy in 1934. Regarding the completion rate, the incomplete data provided by the academic transcripts made impossible such a demarche.

The Medicine students

The statistical characteristics of the Medicine¹¹ student body are almost similar with those of the Pharmaceutical branch (1935/36 academic year – 83 urban and 64 rural; 1937/38 – 102 urban and 89 rural). More than 50% of the rural students were Romanians (in 1935/36 academic year there were 64 rural students of which 36 were Romanians, while in 1937/38 from 89 rural origin students 59 were Romanians). Regarding the urban students, in 1937/38 academic year there were 102 students, of which 50 Romanians and 41 Hungarians, Germans or Jews.

The gender evolution reveals a lower ratio of females, which is close related to the women ratio in the national student body (in 1935/36 – 15 females from 133 enrolled students, that is 12%; in 1937/38 – 49 female students from 200 enrolled students, that is 25%). The inferior female ratio from 1935/36 has the same causes as in the Letters faculty patterns explained above, that reinforce the hypothesis of small number of female baccalaureates in 1935.

The students' geographical origin is more diversified. 50% came from intra-Carpathian regions, and about 20% were foreigner students, especially from Bulgaria. For instance, from 148 enrolled students in 1935/36 academic year 71 were from Transylvania, Banat and Crişana-Maramureş, while 27 were foreign students. In 1937/38, 200 students were enrolled, out of which 94 were from Transylvania, Banat and Crişana-Maramureş, while 44 were foreigners.

It seemed that Medicine as a study branch was a well-articulated decision, a real social and economic promotion strategy. This explains the overwhelming proportion of the 18-21 age group (1935/36 – 121 out of 148; 1937/38 – 155 out 200, that is 80%). It was an ascending trend that implied the Letters students, confirming the idea that the temporal difference between secondary school graduation and higher education enrollment became smaller and smaller. So, it is proper to say that in the second

¹¹ SJAN Cluj, *Fond Universitatea Cluj*, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy Cluj. Academic transcripts 1935-1936 and 1937-1938 academic years.

interwar decade higher education was perceived as a necessary stage in order to complete the educational investment.

The 1 st year enrolled students at the Medicine Faculty by age groups					
Academic year	18-21	22-25	25 or more	unspecified	Total
1924-1925	45.95%	21.62%	5.41%	27.03%	100.00%
1929-1930	55.26%	31.58%	13.16%	0.00%	100.00%
1932-1933	46.15%	32.31%	4.62%	16.92%	100.00%
1935-1936	81.76%	14.86%	2.70%	0.68%	100.00%
1937-1938	77.50%	16.50%	1.50%	4.50%	100.00%

Note: for the 1924/25, 1929/30 and 1932/33 academic years the table contains the Pharmaceutical study branch. In this case, the statistical sample may be affected by the fact that academic transcriptions didn't specify the student birth year. As we mentioned above, the Pharmaceutical studies were preceded by a 2 years internship, therefore the 22-25 students age group had an important ratio.

The Medicine student promotions analyzed here were supposed to graduate in 1941, respectively 1943. Because of the World War II, the completion rate was affected. From 148 student enrolled in the 1st study year in 1935/36, only 8 obtained the PhD¹², while from 200 enrolled students in 1937/38, 52 were declared Phds. It should be stated that Medicine was a very difficult study branch (with exam entrance), and very expensive (for each academic year, the student had to pay a 1500 Romanian currency enrollment fee, while the laboratories fee was about 2000 Romanian currency).

Was the interwar university a social mobility factor? (instead of conclusions)

The University of Cluj was the third Romanian university center for the entire interwar period, in terms of student body number. The first one was, of course, that of Bucharest, followed by University of Jassy. Still, the Cluj University didn't establish any new faculty (it had 4 faculties: Law,

¹² The name for the bachelor degrees was varying from a faculty to another or from a higher education institution to another. So, the faculties of Law, Letters, Sciences, Theology, Economic Sciences and Pharmacy granted the title of Bachelor degree; the Medicine and Veterinary Medicine – title of PhD, and Polytechnic and Agronomy – the title of engineer. For all this institutions, after the undergraduate period of studies, there were PhD schools, that granted the PhD academic title.

Medicine, Letters and Sciences). The University of Jassy had 6 faculties (out of which 2 were established in interwar period, like Theology and Agronomy that functioned as extensions in Kishinev, the Bessarabia ‘capital’). The fact that in Cluj, Theology wasn’t included in the University can be perceived as a shift from the *universitas litterarum* model toward the *universitas scientiarum* one¹³. However, the University of Cluj remained a regional one. As for the foreign students, the fact that they came from the former Austro-Hungarian space should be interpreted as a proof that the ‘Versailles political borders’ didn’t affect so much the *peregrinatio academica* routes. And, for the Hungarian Jews, Cluj was an academic option in geographical proximity and financially affordable. It is also true that the great number of Jewish students, especially at Medicine and Pharmacy Faculty, ‘contributed’ to the proliferation of the anti-Semitic discourse. It was the case of some ‘Christian Student Associations’ that tried to reinforce this kind of discourse as an ideological demand. Nevertheless, the statistical data didn’t register major ratio oscillations in terms of ethnicity. So, despite the occurrence of an anti-Semitic state of mind, the idea of *numerus clausus* remained until 1938 a sort of ‘programmatic claim’ of the nationalist students.

As far as the students’ social origin concerns, the academic transcripts were helpful in establishing the social milieu. But there is no data regarding parents’ social status or professional achievements, so it is difficult to draw a map the social mobility phenomenon through education. Anyway, the significant rural students’ ratio confirms the idea that higher education was ‘open’ for all social classes. Yet, as we tried to explain, a decisive reason in choosing a specific study branch was the financial criteria. In fact, the financial aspects developed into a ‘selection instrument’ of the student body. This was why the ‘rural’ students predominated at Letters, while the ‘urban’ students, at Medicine. As for the economic output, the ‘humanities’ students had a limited careers range, especially as public servants. Although the educational investment was an affordable financial task, the ‘amortization’ depended on the state’s capacity to absorb the Letters graduates. In the context of the budgetary savings during the economic depression of 1929-1933 (that affected the public servants incomes), the ‘intellectual unemployment’ phenomenon increased. Probably this could be another reason for the enrollments’ descending trend at the Letters Faculty of Cluj after 1933. And it was a national pattern, too.

¹³ Vasile Puşcaş, *Universitate, societate, modernizare (organizarea și activitatea științifică a Universității din Cluj 1919-1940)*, Cluj, Editura Eikon, 2003, p. 280-281.

We must admit that the conclusions reached in this study cannot have a generic character. There are some historiographical hypothesis that this study confirms. Despite this, it is more than obvious that this sort of quantitative studies and the sociological interpretation of the statistical data can reveal the ‘connection degree’ between higher education outputs and the Romanian society ‘need for expertise’ or ‘professionalization’. We should give up the historiographical clichés that envisage the Romanian university as a space for national(istic) claims, or, on the contrary, as the outbreak of science and culture. The Romanian historiography still lacks a ‘vertical, in-deep analysis of the relationship among state, society and education. Such an interpretative research option can encompass the positivist pattern and makes a better connection with the sociology of education. We should envisage higher education as a new social activity in continuous development during the 19th and 20th century. Eventually, it became a “differentiated system of society”, “the source of several different kinds of outputs that in various ways are important in other sectors of the society”¹⁴. It was this period in which the university tried to meet the social demand for learned professions. In interwar Romania, the state preferred to delay this shift and the university was considered just as a place of science and culture. What historians have to do is to analyze the university contribution in the social change and communitarian development phenomena. The approach proposed is a modest contribution in this direction. Anyway, in order to evaluate the modernization side of the university, one had to see who came to university and what they became latter.

*Les étudiants des Facultés de Médecine et Lettres de l’Université de Cluj
pendant la période d’entre deux guerres:
origine sociale, géographique et succes académique*

(Résumé)

Mots-clés: *L’Université de Cluj, la mobilité sociale, le corps des étudiants, la réussite scolaire*

Concernant le corps des étudiants de l’entre-deux-guerres en Roumanie, l’historiographie a accredité l’idée qu’il a donné lieu à des mouvements politiques exclusivement nationalistes, extrémistes et xénophobes. Et sur l’université de l’entre-deux-guerres, à quelques exceptions près, les études montrent l’importance de ce forum pour le

¹⁴ Margaret Scotford Archer, *Introduction*, p. 5.

développement de la science et de la culture roumaine. La conjugaison des deux acteurs est, le plus souvent, ignorée.

Une nouvelle approche de ces problèmes serait souhaitable, pour être au plus près des théories de la sociologie de l'éducation. Vu à travers une telle perspective, il est facile de constater que la radicalisation de la jeunesse en Roumanie entre les deux guerres a comme cause essentielle l'apparition d'une nouvelle typologie sociale: l'étudiant. Il y a à propos de la construction sociale d'un groupe, et dans la définition de l'étudiant deux options sociologiques essentielles: la préemption de l'origine sociale (qui transforme les étudiants dans un groupe éclectique), puis l'étudiant comme un futur membre d'un groupe socio-professionnel.

Les étudiants, grâce à une présence sociale plus difficile à ignorer, se transforme en source de revendication économique, sociale et même politique. Ce qui suit est un effort considérable de légitimation de son spectre revendicatif, tout en essayant de déplacer le focus de réforme universitaire visant à améliorer la situation des étudiants. L'objectif principal était de transformer l'enseignement supérieur dans un mécanisme de répartition socio-économique du capital humain dans la société.

L'université a-t-elle réussi à répondre aux aspirations de ces jeunes? Mais, surtout, l'université a-t-elle réussi à devenir une institution capable de canaliser de manière constructive la propension des jeunes pour la promotion sociale par l'éducation? Etait-elle capable de répondre de façon appropriée aux crises qui ont éclaté à la suite de l'insuffisance de l'enseignement à la nouvelle configuration de la société?