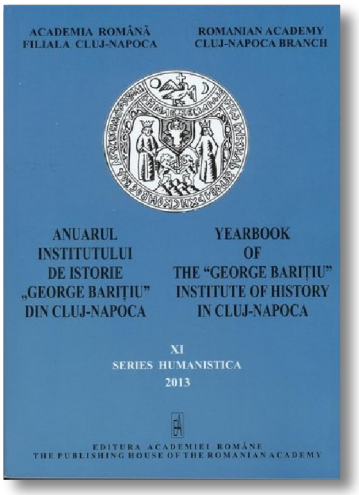

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BANAT-CRIŞANA SOCIAL INSTITUTE AND MONOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

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Abstract. *Banat-Crişana Social Institute of Timişoara was the most important regional institute for social research, its activity being chiefly focused on monographic sociology. Concerned in meeting the need to introduce a "positivist" perspective in administrative and political action, the members of the Institute did not practice "sociology for sociology's sake" like the researchers of the Romanian Social Institute of Bucharest; on the contrary, they programmatically chose to dedicate themselves to applied sociology. Another feature that distinguished the Institute of Banat within the monographic paradigm was the shift from the all-inclusive approach to a social entity, a village for instance, to a certain social phenomenon/process manifested there.*

Banat-Crişana Social Institute initiated and practiced an approach that went in parallel with Dimitrie Gusti's "comprehensive village monographs" i.e. a research that the literature in the field recorded under the name of "special topic monograph". However, the focus on special topic analysis did not mark a major breach with monographic study as such. The field research conducted by the Institute of Banat was more than a mere approach to certain topics/phenomena/processes, it implied the idea that the latter could be explained only by the context (social entity) in which they evolved. Moreover, their method was similar to that employed in the monographic field research of Gusti's teams, the study being accompanied by a sustained social and cultural activity. The "breach" chiefly consisted in the fact that the research was concluded with programs of measures and solutions forwarded to the authorities, which the latter rather ignored, so that the endeavor of the Banat researchers materialized in well-argued solutions was to a great extent not turned to account.

Key words: *Banat-Crişana Social Institute, Romanian Social Institute, monographic paradigm, applied sociology, "special topic monographs"*.

Timişoara is a notable presence on the "map" of interwar Romanian sociology. Although it was not a university town, or perhaps because of this, the capital city of Banat distinguished itself as a major center of monographic social research prevailing in Romanian sociology at that time, where one of the most

An. Inst. de Ist. „G. Barițiu” din Cluj-Napoca, Series Humanistica, tom. XI, 2013, p. 7–20

important regional institutes was set up and carried on its activity. One of the representatives of the monographic research paradigm in the epoch, Virgil I. Bărbat, a professor in Cluj, offered a plausible explanation for its lack of popularity in the Romanian academic milieu. He emphasized that the development of social sciences was generally marked by individualism and absence of cooperation between the specialists in the field. The difference of opinion was also obvious, according to him, in the Romanian sociological high education, where there were "four distinct ways of regarding and approaching sociology"[1]. The situation partly explained the faint echo of the Sociological School of Bucharest in the other Romanian academic centers of the interwar period (Iaşi, Chernowitz and Cluj) as compared to its more powerful impact on the two significant cultural centers of the country, Timişoara and Kishinev, which were not university towns, although they strongly wished to. Nevertheless, the latter distinguished themselves within the framework of Romanian sociology by the most prodigious activity of the two regional social institutes: Banat-Crişana Social Institute (1932–1946) and the Social Institute of Bessarabia (1934–1940).

Throughout a decade (1933–1942), the Banat-Crişana Social Institute carried on a fruitful research activity in the field of monographic sociology. Although it was founded and carried on its activity under the scientific patronage of the Sociological School of Bucharest, the Institute of Banat was not a division of the Romanian Social Institute as many, beginning with the first historians of Romanian sociology, suggested ("The Social Institute also stimulated regional research and spread the interest in social sciences in all significant cultural centers of the country. It first set up branches in Timişoara and Kishinev (Banat-Crişana Social Institute and the Social Institute of Bessarabia)"; "the Romanian Social Institute had provincial divisions as well, such as Banat-Crişana Social Institute and the institution in Bessarabia"[2]). It was an independent and autonomous establishment, the product, like other regional institutes in the field, of a particular way of thinking and acting in full agreement with certain local social, cultural, and scientific requirements[3]. Such requirements, which in the case of Banat dated back at least to the mid-19th century (1859), when a first attempt at elaborating a monograph of this province was made[4], did not spring out of virgin soil, they evolved along the lines of the "attempts at writing down

[1] Virgil I. Bărbat, *Ştiinţele sociale în ţările balcanice şi în Turcia* [Social Sciences in the Balkans and in Turkey], „Revista de sociologie", year I, no. 1, 1931, p. 35–37.

[2] Tr. Herseni, *Istoria filosofiei moderne* [History of Modern Philosophy], vol. V, Bucureşti, Romanian Society of Philosophy, 1941, p. 574; E. Sperantia, *Introducere în sociologie* [Introduction to Sociology], tome I, 2nd ed., revised and augumented, Bucureşti, Casa Şcoalelor P.H., 1944, p. 535.

[3] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *Institutul Social Banat-Crişana* [Banat-Crişana Social Institute], Timişoara, Augusta P.H., 2001, p. 10.

[4] Carmen Albert, *Cercetarea monografică în Banat (1859–1948)* [Monographic Research in Banat (1859–1948)], Reşiţa, Modus P.H., 2002, p. 11.

the information on the events that occurred in the life of a community" made "right in the rural area, in its own spirit within the Romanian culture" to something which latter on received the name of monograph[5].

The Sociological School of Bucharest was involved in the establishment of Banat-Crişana Social Institute only in later stages, when D. Gusti agreed to "support the B.C.S.I. as an autonomous institute, a self-sustaining unit with specific character and function, somehow different from the R.S.I., but integrated in the joint endeavor to lay the foundation of the *sociology of the nation*"[6]. On the other hand, its independence was reasserted when the Institute of Banat was affiliated to the Social Service Agency, when the management tried to preserve its administrative autonomy and subordinate it only scientifically to the "center" of Bucharest turned into the Institute for Social Research of Romania. Whereas for other cultural centers of the country the Social Service Law was beneficial, namely structures of social research were established or reactivated there, in the case of Banat-Crişana Social Institute the assimilation into this organization resulted only in scientific and financial loss. On the one hand, they had to abandon one of the lines of research inaugurated by the 1938 campaign i.e. the study concerning the impact of industrialization on rural life, and on the other they lost the money they had contributed to the central budget of the Social Service, which they never got back[7].

Leaving aside the autonomy issue, the "founding" impact of D. Gusti's institutions – the Association for Social Study and Reform and the Romanian Social Institute – cannot be denied. "Outcome of a phenomenon of contagion and decentralization of Romanian social research"[8], the establishment of the Institute of Banat was, like in the case of the other two institutions, a "requirement of the age"[9]. It meant, among other aspects, to do away with improvisation and dilettantism in the organization and management of social life, a need acknowledged by several intellectuals from Banat, who had also attempted in the past to meet the requirements of the society by individual approaches. Side by side with attempts at turning to account and integrating the cultural heritage of Banat in the interwar Romanian national culture, as early as the first years following the Union of December 1st, 1918, there was an obvious concern in building a scientific foundation for political action by approaching certain aspects of local social-

[5] A. Mihu, *Preface* to Carmen Albert, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[6] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[7] A. Negru, *Din istoria cercetării sociale româneşti. Institutul Social Banat-Crişana* [From the History of Romanian Social Research. Banat-Crişana Social Institute], Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut P.H., 1999, p. 67–68.

[8] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[9] The scientific institutes – asserted a document of the Department of Social Policy of Banat-Crişana Social Institute – were set up because certain situations needed solutions, which was also true for the Institute of Banat. (See: Ad. Brudariu, *Politica socială* [Social Policy], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", I, no. 2–5, 1933, p. 70–75)

political and economic reality. The need to introduce a "positivist" perspective in political and administrative action was chiefly felt in the new provinces, their de facto and full absorption into the Romanian state requiring solutions for their particular problems, which had to be identified and understood. Petru Nemoianu asserted that the goal could be achieved before embarking upon the strenuous activity of exploring local social reality by a joint endeavor of dedicated intellectuals who could "make an inventory" of Banat's particular problems "starting from a collective plan"[10]. He advocated a method of research organized according to a social-economic cooperation pattern, inaugurated by Ion Clopoţel several years before with the "Social-Economic Movement" that gathered the Transylvanian intellectuals and journalists interested in social research around the Cluj journal "Societatea de mâine" [Tomorrow's Society][11].

The idea of bringing together the social research from Banat into a "serious scientific institution" was advocated by Cornel Grofşorean. As early as 1929, in the context of a growing concern in the situation of the Romanians outside the country, chiefly those in Yugoslavia (whose situation is still problematic!), he strongly supported the idea that the solution for this problem, as well as for all the complex issues in the province of Banat, required a comprehensive scientific investigation[12].

Other two "pressing" issues that demanded a joint endeavor of local intellectual forces were: a) the necessity to adduce scientific arguments against the "errors" scattered in the monograph of Timiş-Torontal county and in other monographs of counties with Romanian population in Hungary ("saturated with the old penchant of Hungarian science to justify, claim and reassert a *de facto* rule") elaborated in 1900 on the occasion of the millennium celebrations, as well as against the growing revisionist propaganda of the Hungarian political circles after 1918. "If the aim of Banat-Crişana Social Institute had been only to fight the inaccuracies in the so-called monographs, its *raison d'être* would have been fully justified. But after the second Union of the Romanian people, our neighbors kept on publishing such works"[13]. So "a service of scientific prophylaxis had to be opposed to foreign press activities, whose range of impact extended along our entire border"[14], task undertaken by the Institute; b) the need to become Banat's

[10] P. Nemoianu, *Pe marginea jubileului ISBC* [The Jubilee of BCSI], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", X, May-August, 1942, p. 294.

[11] A. Negru, *„Mişcarea social-economică" – o asociaţie transilvăneană de cercetare socială* [The "Social-Economic Movement" – a Transylvanian Association of Sociology Research], „Acta Musei Porolissensis", vol. XIX, 1995, p. 483–490.

[12] Timiş County Library, Mss V, 180, p. 2–4, *Expunere de motive privitoare la înfiinţarea ISBC* [Exposition of Arguments Concerning the Establishment of BCSI, Timişoara], January, 1932.

[13] E. Botiş, *Raportul redacţiei asupra activităţii Revistei I.S. Banat-Crişana de la 1932–1942*, [The Report of the Editorial Board on the Activity of BCIS Journal in 1932–1942], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", X, no. May-August, 1942, p. 316.

[14] I. Negru, *După zece ani de activitate* [After Ten Years of Activity], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", X, no. May-August, 1942, p. 299.

"cultural citadel", "stronghold of Romanian intelligentsia in this far away and exposed corner of the western border" in the absence of a university, whose necessity was constantly claimed by the intellectuals of Banat: "Banat-Crişana Social Institute, side by side with the old ASTRA, the young division of the Romanian Athenaeum and other cultural societies of Timişoara will not be able to take the responsibility to guide the spiritual life of this part of the country in the future without the spiritual patronage of a University"[15].

The "requirements of the age", hand in hand with other aspects related to them, reinforced the opinion of the sociologist from Cluj A. Mihu, who asserted that: "The major causes laying at the foundation of the emergence of a monographic school in Banat were less Bucharest's influence as appeared at first sight, but the dramatic and acute social problems that affected the life and consciousness of an elite among the Banat intellectuals, who was in part connected with the Romanian administration of the area in a certain epoch and most of all very aware of and concerned in the challenges of the present and primarily in the future of a Romania made whole and united on the 1st of December 1918"[16].

George Em. Marica, an expert in interwar Romanian sociological movement, also emphasized the significance of the local context for the emergence of Banat-Crişana Social Institute by making reference to certain "local circumstances" related to its establishment: a) the presence of a group of intellectuals who, in spite of the fact that they were not "systematically trained sociologists", dedicated themselves to this kind of research; b) the prevalence of acutely manifest and pressing problems in western Romania, which required sociological approaches and solutions: "Let us not forget that between the two World Wars the village of Banat was the most advanced, displaying marked tendencies of urbanization and modernization. In the context of the ethnographic-encyclopedic research dedicated to rural life the sociological questions came into full contrast here more than anywhere else. The presence of certain negative aspects also made its contribution: the rural population decrease as a result of low birth rates, consequence of a misunderstood urban mentality. Local depopulation was the first issue that drew the attention of the researchers from Banat, followed by the impact of industrialization on the Romanian peasantry of Banat"[17]. Another "circumstance" that Marica mentioned, namely the involvement of "one of D. Gusti's most important students and collaborators Anton Golopenția" in the establishment and

[15] E. Botiş, *Memoriu asupra necesității înființării unei Universități la Timişoara* [Memorandum on the Requirement to Establish a University in Timişoara], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", XI, no. September-October, 1943, p. 377.

[16] A. Mihu, *loc. cit*., p. 5.

[17] George Em. Marica, *Migrația populației din mediul rural. Istoricul problemei la noi şi premisele sale* [The Migration of the Population from Rural Environment. The Hhistory of this Issue in Romania and Its Premise], „Studia Universitatis «Babeş-Bolyai» Cluj-Napoca", Series Sociologia, XVI, 1971, p. 107.

shaping of the thematic profile of the Institute of Banat is unsubstantiated at least for two reasons: a) at the time when they made preparations for the establishment of Banat-Crişana Social Institute and then actually set it up (1931–1932), A. Golopenția was too young (n. 1909) to be so influential in such an enterprise; b) applied sociology advocated and professed by the members of Banat-Crişana Social Institute was promoted several years before Golopenția started to claim that the major task of sociological research should be to report and inform the authorities on social realities[18]. It is nevertheless clear that the ideas concerning the part played by social research advocated by the members of the Institute of Banat found a proper scientific expression in A. Golopenția's theory; it was him who defined applied sociology as "that science of social research, which is in direct contact with the administrative authorities of the state, with the view to report to the state authorities on social realities"[19].

The programmatic preference of Banat-Crişana Social Institute for topics related to applied sociology, in contrast with the Romanian Social Institute interested – as C. Grofşorean put it – in "sociology for sociology's sake", stemmed from objective circumstances. Because there were no specialists as required by a theoretical sociological research ("neither the distinguished doctrinaires and theoreticians of the Romanian Sociological School, nor the students of the sociology seminars, among whom they could have easily selected team members able to embark upon monographic field researches"[20]), the Institute of Banat enlisted collaborators among intellectuals, representatives of liberal professions (doctors, lawyers) or public office holders (magistrates, priests, teachers), who had some notions of sociology picked up from the publications of the Sociological School of Bucharest, and who had above all sound practical judgment because they were day in and day out present on the "great building ground of public and state life". "Their concern in sociology was not an interest in pure science i.e. an aim in itself, on the contrary, it was a means – naturally the most appropriate – to find guidelines for state action in order to correct deficiencies documented in the field"[21]. The "expertise" of its collaborators determined the management of the Institute to relate to sociology not as to an aim in itself, but as a means to solve, through scientific research and knowledge, local social problems. The members of the Institute of Banat shared the opinion that the institution could be organically attuned to the life of the area only if it subordinated its activity and efforts to local requirements, dealing with urgent social issues with the view to elaborate

[18] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *Sociologie aplicată. Monografia centrată pe problemă* [Applied Sociology. The Special Topic Monograph], Bucureşti, Tritonic P.H., 2004, p. 22.

[19] C. Grofşorean, book review to: *A. Golopenția, „Die Information der Staatsführung und die überlierte Soziologie"*, Dissertation accepted by the Faculty of Philosophy of the Leipzig University (1937), „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", VI, no. 21, 1938, p. 68.

[20] E. Botiş, *art. cit.*, p. 322.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 322–323.

"sociological conclusions to be applied by the state institutions"[22]. A. Golopenția praised the fact that the social research was finalized with conclusions liable to be applied in real life: "The Social Institute of Banat proved the value of the researches and surveys conducted by scientists for the leaders of the nation… The idea constantly advocated by the directors of Banat-Crişana Social Institute that the special circumstances related to Banat's status of borderline region require special treatment opens the perspective of a differentiated administration that our country needs"[23].

Another aspect that distinguished the work of the Institute of Banat from the monographic paradigm, closely connected to the former, was the focus shift from approaching the social entity village as a whole to dealing with a certain social phenomenon or process manifested there or with a certain problem investigated, it is true, within a social entity regarded as typical for it. The validity of their approach was later confirmed by one of the leading representatives of the Sociological School of Bucharest, H. H. Stahl, who asserted that the researchers from Bucharest had at some point also reached the conclusion that in order to understand social life the mere description of the social entity mattered less than the identification of certain dysfunctions or social processes in progress. "Experience showed that whenever the research on a village did not allow the study of interesting, theoretical or practical issues, whose forms could be analyzed, the monograph could not be more than a mere description, at risk of remaining a simple sociography…"[24].

Banat-Crişana Social Institute initiated and carried on an approach parallel to that of Gusti's "entire village monographs", labeled "special topic monograph" [25] by the literature in the field. "Urged by the need to pass to monographic research, the members of B.C.S.I. of Timişoara elaborated the first version of a comprehensive classic monograph like those produced by Gusti's school"; the procrastination was motivated by certain practical circumstances – the lack of a tradition, of financial means and personnel familiar with field research, whom it was impossible to relocate for a longer period to the studied village – but above all by the Institute's programmatic aim to contribute to the understanding of the most important and urgent problems of Banat area and to determine thus the best means of intervention through state social policy[26].

[22] C. Grofşorean, *„Sociologie Românească",* no. July-December 1942 (book review), „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", XI, no. January-April 1943, p. 196.

[23] A. Golopenția, *Două centre regionale de orientare românească şi de documentare: Institutele Sociale din Banat şi Basarabia* [Two Regional Centers of Romanian Orientation and Documentation: the Social Institutes of Banat and Bessarabia], „Sociologie Românească", II, no. 11–12, 1937, p. 531–532.

[24] H. H. Stahl, *Învățămintele metodice şi tehnice* [Methodological and Technical Lessons], în *** *Sociologia militans*, III, Bucureşti, Scientific P.H., 1971, p. 88.

[25] Idem, *Amintiri şi gânduri din vechea şcoală a „monografiilor sociologice"* [Memories and Thoughts of the Old School of "Sociological Monographs"], Bucureşti, Minerva P.H., 1981, p. 360.

[26] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *Institutul...*, ed. cit., p. 29.

By its manifest orientation toward the investigation of social topics, Banat-Crişana Social Institute "joined" the line of research initiated by the circle of intellectuals gathered around the journal "Societatea de mâine" mentioned above. The Transylvanian intellectuals who formed the nucleus of this group were also moved by the wish to contribute to the understanding and solving of challenging and pressing questions of the Romanian society at that time. Since in the new context of the national state the Romanian society most obviously felt the "urgent need to investigate social reality and identify scientific solutions for the crisis in the aftermath of World War I and the Union"[27].

We find it significant that the mentors and leaders of the two groups had both had a high regard for the "Hungarian sociological school", extremely active at the beginning of the last century, although the data we possess did not allow us to conclude that the interest in the study of social topics was due to its influence. Like many other intellectuals from Transylvania and Banat in the period before World War I, C. Grofşorean graduated the University of Budapest (1906), where he got in touch with Jászi Oszkár's works, whom he met again a few years later, in 1911, during his visit in Banat on the occasion of a field research in Teregova and Bozovici. Moreover, C. Grofşorean was a member of the Social Institute of Budapest and participated in the collection of data concerning the southern part of Caraş-Severin County with the view to elaborate a work dedicated to the question of the Austro-Hungarian nationalities[28]. In his turn, I. Clopoţel, the leader of the Transylvanian group around "Societatea de mâine", got in touch with Hungarian sociological research during his academic years as well; when he was a student in Budapest (1916) he met two of Jászi Oszkár's most important collaborators, Braun Robert and Aradi Viktor[29].

Like the intellectuals from Banat, I. Clopoţel focused his research on the "complex of actual life, the great whirlwind of necessities". Envisaged as an exclusive study of now and here with the view to find an "instant solution to local needs", the approach he and some of his collaborators suggested and professed was regarded in the epoch as one of the leading lines of research on the interwar Romanian rural area, side by side with Gusti's monographic perspective and the ethnographic approach[30]. Although he was not familiar with the activity of the monographers from Bucharest, I. Clopoţel himself was no partisan to sociological research as such; he opted for involvement in rural life, for an approach marked by

[27] A. Momoc, *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice. Şcoala gustiană între carlism şi legionarism* [The Political Traps of the Sociology – Gusti's School between Monarchy and Legionary Movement], Bucureşti, Curtea Veche P.H., 2012, p. 13.

[28] Aurel Cosma jr., *Istoria presei române din Banat* [The History of Banat Romanian Press], Timişoara, Unirea Română P.H., 1932, p. 136.

[29] *Ion Clopoţel la 90 de ani* [Ion Clopoţel at the Age of 90]– Interview by S. Chelcea and I. Filipescu, „Viitorul social", LXXVI, March-April 1983, p. 160.

[30] I. D. Suciu, *Fragment din monografia comunei Alioş* [Fragment of Alios Village Monograph], „Societatea de mâine", XVIII, no. 1, 1940, p. 21–22.

a deliberately asserted practical aim: "...we would not like to be some recorders of cold, calculated and indifferent remarks. Our hearts throb with enthusiasm to contribute as much as possible to the long-expected improvements"[31]. Like the approach of the intellectuals of Banat, the field research method formulated by "Societatea de Mâine" Research Institute and then the "Social-Economic Movement" – the two forms of social research institutionalization established around the journal of Cluj – aimed at an exhaustive treatment of social questions up to "monographic coverage".

Before the setting up of the Institute of Banat, I. Clopoţel emphasized the need to institutionalize the research on social topics in close connection to one of the most stringent issues i.e. the situation of the inhabitants of Ţara Moţilor [Motzenland], of the highlands in general. "The first condition for establishing a new regime is undoubtedly to give a specific task to a group of people who have economic vision and the gift of field study… The second condition is accurate information, scrupulously checked with a scientific apparatus…The third condition is to analyze the gathered material and to determine the solutions for reconstruction"[32]. In some cases, the field research was accompanied by a desk research, namely certain specialists would tackle specific topics such as syndicalism, cooperative association, minority education, feminism, biopolitics.

The Institute of Banat practiced the same method ("...Banat-Crişana Social Institute worked according to the past method, that is weekly reports of the members, who would gather and discuss various problems: social, sociological, folkloric, monographic, racial, etc., approached in the light of contemporary realities…" an activity report mentioned[33]). For instance, the depopulation phenomenon was dealt with in this way. Fundamental topic for the institute, depopulation was the topic of debates carried on in the departments of the institute and then published in its journal[34], there were two field campaigns (in Belinţ and

[31] I. Clopoţel, *Satele răzleţe ale României. Habitatul răsfirat din munţii transilvani şi bănăţeni*. Studiu de sociologie rurală [The scattered Romanian villages.The scattered habitat in Tansylvanian and the Banat Mountains. Study of rural sociology], Alba Iulia, Alba P.H., 1939, p. 15.

[32] **** Ion Clopoţel şi „Societatea de mâine"* [Ion Clopoţel and „Societatea de mâine"], Anthology by A. Negru, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut P.H., 2009, p. 59.

[33] **** Raportul general ţinut în adunarea generală de către secretarul general M. Şora*, [The General Report Delivered in the General Assembly by Secretary General M. Şora], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", XI, May-August, 1941, p. 272.

[34] Şt. Cioroianu, *Cauzele sufleteşti ale descreşterii populaţiei române din Banat* [Emotional Causes for the Decrease in the Romanian Population of Banat], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", I, no. 2–5, 1933, p. 1–8; M. Şora, *Biserica, familia şi natalitatea* [Church, Family and Birth Rates], II, no. 10–12, 1934; Al. Nicolescu, *Reflexiuni asupra avortului prilejuite de legiferarea lui în cadrele proiectului noului cod penal* [Thoughts on Abortion on the Occasion of Its Legalization by the New Penal Code], III, no. 13, 1935, p. 1–15; Livius Gabor, *Reflexiuni referitoare la legiferarea avortului* [Thoughts on the Legalization of Abortion], III, no. 13, 1935, p. 16–24; Vasile M. Dumitriu, *Avortul în noua legiuire penală* [Abortion in the New Penal Code], III, no. 13, 1935, p. 25–42; P. Râmneanţu, *Soluţii în legătură cu problema declinului etnic al populaţiei româneşti din Banat* [Solutions Concerning the Question of the Ethnic Decline of the Romanian Population of Banat], IV, no. 14, 1936, p. 1–39.

Sârbova) and a complex program of solutions was formulated. "Since the establishment of Banat-Crişana Social Institute (…) the question at the top of our program of activity was the depopulation of Banat… But from the very beginning we wish to emphasize that population decrease is not a phenomenon peculiar to Banat. Many authors who dealt with this topic have come to the same conclusion; in other parts of the country the risk of depopulation by birth decline and infantile death is sadly present and in progress. Banat was just the first region were the plague threatening our nation has first appeared"[35]. It was a real plague with multifarious causes (economic, moral, religious, biological, medical, psychical, and cultural), augmented in Banat by the "luxury of the village woman from Banat" and the "overwhelming practice of abortion and contraception". The state authorities were supposed to implement in this area concerted measures, namely laws against abortion hand in hand with a "sustained activity to enlighten and moralize the peasant, especially the peasant women from Banat" [36].

Another topic that drew the attention of the Institute was the impact of industrialization on rural life, studied in a field research at Ohaba-Bistra, during the summer of 1938. The question the members of the Institute tried to answer was whether the "rushed and forced industrialization" in Romania after World War II, in fact characteristic to the entire post-war Europe, was beneficial to the rural population involved in the process: "if the transition is harmful, weakening the Romanian's moral and psychic stamina, can we urge that the native element were attuned to the sweeping rhythm of industrialization? And if the shift from plough to engine can turn the peasant into a small bourgeois, then we should hasten the process because only in this way we could "Romanize" the alienated towns"[37]. The research, side by side with other surveys planed for the next years in other more industrialized areas of the country, were supposed to lay the foundation for the social policy of the Romanian state. Starting form the results of the field campaign, which revealed an incipient "industrialization" of the rural population in the settlements near Ferdinand Plants as well as a certain tendency toward "proletarianization" (to give up the income from agriculture and restrict to salary), C. Grofşorean showed that state authorities could ebb or stop these processes by facilitating the "contact between worker and soil" in order to ensure not only an income increase but also a certain independence of the workers from their employers[38].

[35] E. Botiş, *Aspectele depopulării Banatului sub prisma cercetărilor monografice ale Institutului Social Banat-Crişana* [Aspects of Banat Depopulation through the Lenses of the Monographic Research Conducted by BCSI], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", VII, no. 25, 1939, p. 54–55.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 58.

[37] C. Grofşorean, *Influenţa industrializării asupra ţăranului român* [The Impact of Industrialization on the Romanian Peasant], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", X, no. January-February, 1942, p. 131.

[38] Idem, *La porţile de fier ale Ardealului* [At the Iron Gates of Transylvania], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", X, no. September-December, 1942, p. 642.

If the approach to the impact of industrialization on rural life was a premiere in Romanian sociology, another equally significant issue and closely connected to the former, the "urbanization of the peasantry", was a topic of investigation and reflection for some of D. Gusti's collaborators, illustrative in this respect being A. Golopenția's study on the Bessarabian village Cornova[39].

The urbanization of rural life, the impact of the peasants' contact with city lifestyle were regarded by the members of the Institute of Banat from a twofold perspective: a) changes in rural lifestyle caused by the peasants' transitory (seasonal work, military service, etc) contact with urban centers; b) changes suffered by the population of rural extraction that had permanently embraced urban life. There was a certain "national" hazard related to the latter aspect, namely it was the way that could lead to the emergence and development of an ethnically Romanian middle class, key-element for "conquering" and "Romanizing" the towns in the provinces annexed to the Romanian state after 1918. On the other hand, the researchers of the Institute were well aware that the failure of assimilation into the urban body of the people come from villages could have nefarious consequences: "The osmosis of the two populations can fail in case of permanent contact and then we are confronted with a highly significant sociological phenomenon as far as its consequences are concerned: as the permanent contact is unable to generate the desired bourgeoisie the peasant would become element of a population which is neither peasantry nor bourgeoisie, but something that we might call proletariat, which leads to a decay in our archetypal lifestyle"[40]. Under these circumstances, the question of preserving and treasuring our traditional rural civilization and culture undergoing "contamination" with elements of urban culture was raised and explored relentlessly.

By regarding the village not as an autarchic entity but in connection with the other type of human community, the town, the Institute of Banat followed the lines of a dynamic approach to social communities deemed to be open and interdependent entities[41]. The specialists of Cluj gathered around the journal "Societatea de mâine" shared this view, and undertook to understand the process of change sweeping the interwar Romanian village as well as to outline its evolution[42].

[39] A. Golopenția, *Aspecte ale desfăşurării procesului de orăşenizare a satului Cornova*, [Aspects of the Evolution of the Urbanization Process in the Village of Cornova], „Arhiva pentru ştiința şi reforma socială", vol. X, no. 1–4, 1932, p. 544–572.

[40] E. Botiş, *Cercetarea comportării populației rurale în contact cu oraşul distrugător de viață țărănească* [Research on the Behavior of the Rural Population in Contact with a Town that Ruins Rural Life], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", VI, no. 22–23, 1938, p. 107.

[41] I. Chelcea, *Literatura monografică a satelor noastre şi probleme în legătură cu studiul satului românesc*. *Momente principale* [The Monographic Literature of Our Villages and Problems with Study Romanian Village. Key Moments], „Sociologie românească", Serie nouă, II, nr. 5–6, 1991, p. 355–364.

[42] *** *I. Clopoțel şi „Societatea de mâine"*, ed. cit., p. 107.

Side by side with these questions important for the entire Romanian society, but more manifest in the area, there were two "themes" more specific to Banat region and its capital city. Due to its economic superiority as compared to the rest of Romania's areas, the seeds of a phenomenon which is now common in Europe, and not only, began to appear in Banat: the population migration from less developed to richer areas. In the 30s, there was a "systematic immigration" of people with physical and mental impairment from the poorer areas of Romania to Banat and chiefly its capital city Timişoara, and the magnitude of the phenomenon required, according to the collaborators of the Institute, both restrictions and measures of social and professional integration of the new-comers, as well as measures for their social security and protection[43].

A second special problem was the minority question, Banat having a high degree of ethnic diversity. In this context, they emphasized the minorities' economic ascendancy[44], naturally due to objective circumstances (membership in the "ruling nation" of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire), but unacceptable in the new political context, the economic "conquest" of the new provinces becoming a main concern of state policy: "Deeming that the significance of a people is measured not only in numbers but chiefly in its spiritual and material resources, we have to investigate the Romanians' economic progress…until we do not seriously aspire to become owners of the soil we toil and the houses we live in we will be masters in name only because the country belongs to those who own her"[45].

Another side of the problem, the political aspect, concerned the battle against Hungarian revisionist propaganda, more and more virulent in the years before World War II. Although only C. Grofşorean was involved in these problems, he made a substantial contribution by investigating the social-political, economic, and cultural life of the minorities, the relations between Romanians and minorities, the

[43] Dr. Virgil Popoviciu, *Orbii despre lumea lor. Din spovedaniile orbilor din Timişoara*, [Blind People on Their World. From the Confessions of the Blind People of Timişoara] „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", II, no. 10–12, 1934, p. 56; Gh. Atanasiu, *Ce putem face pentru copiii surdo-muţi*? [What Can We Do for Deaf and Dumb Children?], I, no. 1, 1933, p. 27–29; Idem, *Defectivii fizici şi mintali* [Physically and Mentally Impaired People], III, no. 13, p. 1935, p. 152–161.

[44] See: Tr. Topliceanu, *Românii şi minoritarii în judeţul Timiş-Torontal* [Romanians and Minorities in Timiş-Torontal County], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", II, 10–12, 1934, p. 78–88; C. Stoicănescu, *Situaţia economică şi problema naţionalităţii în oraşul Timişoara* [The Economic Situation and the Nationality Question in Timişoara], IV, no. 16, 1936, p. 49–75; C. Grofşorean, *Tabel statistic despre avocaţii, avocaţii stagiari şi stagiarii înscrişi la Baroul din Timişoara până în ziua de 1 dec. 1936* [Statistic Table of Lawyers, Law Students and Apprentices Recorded in Bar Association of Timişoara until December 1, 1936], IV, 16, 1936, p. 103–105; I. Negru, *Pierdem şi pământul* [We Are Losing the Soil Too], IV, no. 16, 1936, p. 17–48; V, no. 19–20, 1937, p. 33–39; Gh. Birăescu, *Naţionalizarea industriei* [The Nationalization of the Industry], VII, no. 25, 1939, p. 13–19.

[45] N. Blaga, *Transformările imobiliare din oraşul Arad în timpul de la 1 ianuarie 1925 până la 30 iunie 1933* [Real Estate Changes in Arad Town from January 1, 1925 to June 30, 1933], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", II, no. 6–9, 1933, p. 66.

influence of the land of origin on the minorities, as well as the situation of the minorities in the neighboring countries. His approach was marked by total objectiveness, the materials included in the column "Minority Questions" of the Institute journal were elaborated starting from "exclusively minority sources" (articles, news, studies, polemics exclusively published in the minority press of Transylvania and Banat) or from "studies in the field published in Hungary"[46].

If economic and political aspects of the minority question were quasi-general in the new provinces of the Romanian state, in Banat there also was a national – manifest in the tendency of the Serbian ethnic element to assimilate Romanians wherever they were a majority – and religious facet – the Magyarization of the Banat Swabians' in order to hinder the religious unification of the Germans of Transylvania and Banat.

Another major concern of the Institute was the question of the Romanians living abroad, chiefly those of Yugoslavia. Teams of researchers[47] as well as individual specialists dealt with this topic and the results were always accompanied by concrete suggestions to solve the problem[48]. The situation of the Romanians abroad was to be dealt with again in a monographic research "in the field".

The range of topics included in the future program of the Institute of Banat was quite wide and aimed at a deeper understanding of previously investigated aspects (villages with mixed population, "industrialization" of the rural area in other industrialized regions) and approaching new topics (social and economic problems of colonist villages, the emergence of a middle class in the urban settlements)[49]. The programmatic focus on the study of certain aspects did not mark a major "breach" with monographic research as such. The field campaigns of the Institute of Banat were more than mere approaches to questions/phenomena/processes as they started from the idea that such issues could be explained only by exploring the entire context in which they manifested themselves. Furthermore, the method used in these campaigns was similar to the manner in which D. Gusti's monographic research teams conducted their investigation. Besides surveys, the "monographers" of Banat-Crişana Social Institute carried on in their field researches, "in the manner of D. Gusti's school, an ample range of social, cultural, medical, and didactic activities in which the members of the respective communities were involved". At the same time, "following the tradition of the Sociological School of Bucharest", the Institute of Banat organized in collaboration with the local intelligentsia,

[46] C. Grofşorean, *Problema minoritară* [The Minority Question], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", V, no. 19–20, 1937, p. 56.

[47] See: „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", IX, May-August 1941, p. 248–266.

[48] Gh. Ciorman, *Românii din Iugoslavia* [The Romanians of Yugoslavia], „Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crişana", VII, no. 25, 1939, p. 47–51; I. Duma, *Situaţia românilor din Banatul iugoslav* [The Situation of the Romanians in Yugoslav Banat], VIII, no. 37–38, 1940, p. 633–638; Tib. Morariu, *Românii dintre Morava şi Timoc* [The Romanians between Morava and Timoc], IX, May-August, 1941, p. 228–242.

[49] A. Negru, *Din istoria cercetării sociale româneşti…*, ed. cit., p. 184–185.

besides the field campaigns in which the latter was usually involved, a series of cultural-educational activities in the surveyed settlements, chiefly during the winter months[50].

The "breach" with the monographic research chiefly consisted in the conclusion of their research with a program of measures and solutions forwarded to the authorities, which were then, like now, overlooked by the latter in most cases. So that the endeavor of the Banat researchers materialized in well-argued solutions was to a great extent not turned to account[51], like many other researches of other institutes in the period or later on.

[50] Carmen Cornelia Bălan, *Institutul…*, ed. cit., p. 35 and 41.
[51] *Ibidem*, p. 37.