

Deindustrialization, social disintegration, and health: A neoclassical sociological approach

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About the towns

Table 1 presents an overview of the essential characteristics of the four towns where we conducted the fieldwork. Ajka is a town in northwest Hungary with a long tradition in coal and bauxite mining and related industrial activities. In the 1990s, the town could attract some new private investors, primarily due to its geographical location. Its "moderate" level of deindustrialization (moderate by Hungarian standards) equaled a 36.1% decrease in industrial employment between 1989 and 1995. Dunaújváros is a town south of Budapest. It is the youngest of the four municipalities, the home of the last significant ironworks operating in Hungary. Dunaújváros also experienced "moderate" deindustrialization in the 1990s (27.6%). Salgótarján is a town in the north of Hungary, a regional center with significant glass industry and machinery plants. It experienced a 50% loss in industrial employment between 1989 and 1995. Finally, Szerencs is a town in Eastern Hungary, the smallest town in the sample, a regional center of sugar and chocolate manufacturing. Szerencs also underwent severe deindustrialization during the 1990s (51.2% decrease between 1989 and 1995).

About the interviewees

The study's first author conducted the first wave of interviews in the four towns, followed by further interviews conducted by research assistants trained by the author on site between September 2016 and January 2017. We identified the starting pool of subjects through local trade unions, civic associations, and political parties. We asked the subjects to recommend further interviewees at the end of the interviews. We faced substantial difficulties in gaining access to interview subjects. There is a very high level of mistrust in Hungary, and respondents tend to be wary when expressing their opinion on social issues. We tackled this issue by establishing contact with interview subjects through interpersonal networks, mainly snowballing. We also collected historical, economic, and political information about the towns to facilitate the conversation.

Most of the interviewees fit Goldthorpe's class category III (routine non-manual workers), V (lower grade technicians), VI (skilled manual workers), and VII (semi and unskilled manual workers). Altogether, we conducted 82 interviews; the subjects' average age was 35.6 in 1989, including three people below 20. The majority of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years old in 1989. Forty-three males and 39 females participated. The overwhelming majority reported having a general or vocational secondary degree (52 subjects), four people had a primary school degree, and 26 had a college or university degree (see Table 2 for an overview).

About the interviews

Below we present an overview of the semi-structured interview questionnaire. The questions were grouped into five sections. The conversations did not follow a strictly preordained pattern but allowed a free conversation flow and encouraged the interviewees to freely recollect their experiences and life histories. Interviews are anonymized, and every subject consented to the use of audio recording devices.

Domain	Questions
Basic personal information	Where did they live? What was their employment history? What happened to the company they were working for? Was it shut down or privatized? What was the financial situation of the family?
Health status	Did they have any health problems? Did they use any social assistance to cope with their condition? What was their health behavior like (drinking and smoking habits)?
Perceptions about the transition	Did they like their job, how was the community life at the company? How was the community life in the town? Did they have a say in the management of the company during different periods? How did they feel when unemployed, how did they try to cope with economic problems?
Perceptions about society	What do they think was responsible for the fate of their company? Did they have a say in the fate of the company or society in general? Were they members of any social organization? Did they participate in any kind of social action to shape the regime change? How was their experience mediated by family or friends?
General perceptions about the transition	Did they feel belonging to any broader social category (such as class or nation), or was the transition predominantly an individual experience? Did they believe that things could get better? Did they experience a loss of hope? What do they think about foreign investors? Do they think anyone represents the interests of everyday people? What do they think about major political actors?