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Report on the Visiting Lecture

My lecture was held on May 28th and was addressed to the students from the Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies (Cluj-Napoca), who were in the 1st year of their BA studies. The title of my presentation was “Anthropological Perspectives on Post-Communist Deindustrialization Process. A Case Study on Jiu Valley Romanian Mining Region.”

The main objectives of my lecture were 1) to define and introduce the topic of ‘deindustrialization’; 2) to present several anthropological debates and concepts that are useful for the research and understanding of this process; 3) to introduce the findings of the research that I coordinated in Jiu Valley and to integrate these research findings in the theoretical framework; 4) to expose the research methodology involved and to critically assess its strengths and limits.

Because the students were at the beginning of their undergraduate studies, special emphasis was laid on raising their interest for social-anthropological research and on providing them some basic methodological tools.

In order to stimulate their attention, I started the lecture by exploring the students’ representations about the deindustrialization process in post-communist Romania. I also asked them about their images and beliefs with regard to the social changes brought by deindustrialization in Jiu Valley. After this, I presented the theoretical context and the research findings from the region. The last part of the presentation was mainly devoted to the students’ questions and commentaries. The students also had the opportunity to introduce their related personal experiences and knowledge and to compare the situation from Jiu Valley with the realities from their places of origin.

A great part of our discussions concerned the experience of doing fieldwork research. They asked practical questions about the methods to find informants, to design interview guides and to use the tape recorder in an interview situation. Several questions addressed the construction of the relation between the anthropologist and the informant, the ways in which a trust relation can be built. Finally, some students also declared their intentions to start doing anthropological research, brought their proposals, and received advise on them.

My research partners in this program – Serban Vaetisi and Raluca Nahorniac – were present at my lecture and brought important contributions based on their own research experiences in other two industrial regions of Romania. The visiting lecture offers us the possibility to exchange ideas and to put a basis for a comparative research and for a common research article.